

## FINALE

Jack Shannon sat facing the empty chairs in that desolate board room. Less than ten minutes ago, the room had been filled with frowning faced Directors, tailored in their pin stripes and bold as brass double cuffs. Jack was as cold as his cappuccino, his hands clinched tightly around that horrible, commercialised cup that apart from being absolutely worthless to the environment, only encouraged you to be psychologically brainwashed into buying another take-out.

Jack had been overlooked again for promotion. Nothing to do with his spreadsheet presentation or voluminous report – the kind that no bugger will read. It was his old-fashioned style, in their words, “he wasn’t what they were looking for.” It had become personal to the point of Jack just getting up and saying, “you know what, sod yer promotion, I’ll go and cut grass for a living.”

The door to the board room cried open and Dave marched in.

‘You’re a big lad, Jack. You’re get over it. Besides, you’re still in my team and that’s what counts, right?’

“Why don’t you just fuck-off, Dave. Go home to your obedient wife and 2.4 children.”

A stunned Dave just stood with his mouth open. He had never heard Jack so abusive. They had joined the company on the same day more than twenty years before. They had gone through marriages and divorces together. Attended conferences and got drunk at the company’s expense.

“I can’t leave you here mate. You know what to do. Sleep on it. Come back tomorrow and start over. That’s what we do. Who wants a Directorship anyway?”

Jack suddenly felt the blood rush to his head and pointed his right index finger firmly in Dave’s direction. He yelled, “NO! It’s not what we do, Dave! I am sick up to ‘ere with the poxy excuses. I’ve given everything to help grow this company. I’ve parked my life to make sure our clients knew nothing of the chaos behind the scenes. And for what? A lousy £30-grand a year, ford escort, expense account and twenty days holiday that I hate taking cos my wife is no more.”

“You’ve got your kids. Talk to Mike. Wise head on young shoulders there. I should know. I am his bloody godfather.”

Jack, shaking for the first time, rose slowly from his chair. “See this boardroom. This is where lives are shattered mate. My life. Shattered three times in this board room. I’ve never got up from this table and gone on to the restaurant with the Directors to celebrate a promotion. Look at the empty chairs – about as empty as my life. They hold all the keys, Dave. And all they are, are jailers. They keep you locked up where they want you as your worth far more to them formulating bloody spreadsheets, converting presentations to pdfs and zip-filing monthly reports with appendices.”

Jack threw his company car keys at Dave. Dave knew this really was the end.

“See you around, Dave.”