

Janitorial Duties

Written By

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HARD CUT:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A perfect blue sky drapes behind Spicket High, it's fall. With orange and brown leaves filling the landscape around the school.

(V.O.) LESLIE

So Rupert, how are you settling in to Spicket High?

INT. JANITORS BREAKROOM

Dim lighting and solid concrete blocks line the room. With just a handful of lockers, a crappy table and a single stool. It feels like a prison more than somewhere for the custodians to take a break.

LESLIE an older gentleman who has been working for the school for some odd years.

Dressed in a navy blue custodians outfit. A white and grey beard drapes over his chest, and a voice gravelly from time resides within his mouth.

Across the room is RUPERT. four o'clock shadow, tall and skinny. He has the face of a man who's beat and wishes he was working any other job.

RUPERT

It's alright, not really all that different from the other schools I worked at.

(pause)

The only real difference is having my son around.

LESLIE

How is Tommy doing? Still giving you the cold shoulder when he sees you around school?

INT. HALLWAY

Colors of brown and off white, and the look of a school that hasn't been updated since they banned smoking from public spaces.

We see TOMMY walking with his friends in the hallway, He looks across the hall and sees his father waving. Completely

ignoring his father Tommy and his friends continue to walk right past without acknowledging Rupert.

RUPERT (V.O.)

Just as he's been doing ever since I transferred here. The thing is, now he seems to be ignoring me at home as well.

INT. JANITORS BREAKROOM

LESLIE

Well have you tired talking to him about it?

RUPERT

I've tried everything.

Rupert lets out a sigh of defeat. His eyes begin to tear a little from it all.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

Melina would've been able to get through to him. She knew just what someone needed to fix them.

(pause)

God! I just wish she didn't run off with that guy. Leaving Tommy and I by ourselves.

Leslie trying to be as caring as a 57 year old custodian male can, tosses Rupert his Tasty Cake from his lunch box.

LESLIE

You're doing your best. I'm sure Tommy knows that, and for Pete's sake, he is only 16 after all. Kids his age always have that kind of behavior.

(pause)

And at least he's still being a part of some after-school activities.

RUPERT

I guess you're right.

(pause)

The thing is, though, ever since he joined that choir, all his time has become dedicated to it.

LESLIE

Bill puts those kids through the
(MORE)

LESLIE (CONT'D)
ringer. I'll walk by the choir room
after school, and he's giving those
kids hell for messing up the smallest
things.

(pause)
I definitely wouldn't want to know
what he's like outside of this
building.

Rupert decides to take a seat on the floor as his legs begin
to tire from standing.

RUPERT
Well, I can definitely say what it's
like to be on that side of Bill.

INT. HALLWAY

Rupert is in a section of the school mopping the floor. It's
quiet. The only sounds are the squeaking of the wet mop and
the whisper of music coming from Rupert's headphones.

Out of the corner of his eye, he catches someone moving down
the opposite hall. It's Tommy laughing while texting on his
phone.

Rupert trying to have a funny moment with his son sneaks up
behind him.

RUPERT
Excuse me young man, but where is your
hall pass?

Tommy frightened jumps around to see who's behind him. Seeing
his dad, Tommy blows him off and continues his way down the
hall texting.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
Uh, hello? Earth to Tommy? I maybe the
janitor at your school but I'm still
your father!

Rupert grabs Tommy's arm to spin him back around.

TOMMY
What are you doing let go of me!

RUPERT
Who are you texting that's more
important than your father? You're
(MORE)

RUPERT (CONT'D)
lucky I don't take that damn phone
away!

The anger on Rupert's face becomes more and more intense, as Tommy struggles to free himself from his dad's grip.

TOMMY
It's none of your business dad, why
can't you just leave me alone for
once!

As Rupert is about to snatch the phone out of his son's hands Bill enters the hallway where this commotion is happening.

BILL
Excuse me! Now what do you think
you're doing to this poor student?

Rupert embarrassed tries to utter a word to Bill to defend himself for his actions toward Tommy.

BILL (CONT'D)
Just because the school has a zero
phone policy doesn't give you the
right to put your hands on him.
(pause)
Tommy are you ok?

Bill and Tommy begin to walk away towards the choir room.

Looking back Bill gives Rupert a nasty look while still having his arm wrapped around Tommy.

RUPERT(MUMBILING)
No it wasn't what it seemed...

That's my son.

Rupert now stands alone staring as his son walking away. This makes Rupert truly feel as though his son is torn apart from him.

LESLIE (V.O.)
Shit Rupert, that seems pretty
serious. Did you say anything to Tommy
that night?

FADE TO:

INT. JANITORS BREAKROOM

RUPERT

By the time I got home he was already
in his bed asleep. So I just ate alone
and called it a night.

Leslie looks down at his watch and sees that its time to go
back to work. He helps Rupert off the ground and they both
punch back in on their time cards.

LESLIE

Hopefully you both can get this whole
thing settled between you two.

(pause)

Especially because if we keep having
these therapy sessions during break,
I'll have to start charging ya!

Leslie gives Rupert a pat on the back before exiting the
room, leaving Rupert by himself with nothing but the buzz of
the overhead light.

With the weight of everything going on, Rupert flops himself
into the chair of the break room.

INT. MAIN OFFICE

White plain walls, and grey matted carpets. A place where
noting but the sound of breathing and ruffling papers fills
the air.

Joy is the last thing this part of the school sees.

We see Rupert with a vacuum, cleaning what he can of the
carpets, that should've been changed out years ago.

The sound of the vacuum is muffled by the music playing in
Rupert's ears. Another sound can be heard amongst everything.
Someone trying to get Rupert's attention.

PRINCIPLE HIGGINS

(muffled)

Excuse me!, Hello? Rupert!

Rupert realizes someone is trying to get his attention and
takes off his headphones to check whose muffled voice it is.

PRINCIPLE HIGGINS(CONT'D)

Rupert?

Turning around Rupert becomes nervous when seeing its Higgins shouting for him.

RUPERT

What can I do for you sir?

HIGGINS

I hope you know that this school has zero tolerance for putting your hands on a student. If I hear that you ever do such a thing again, I'll have you fired and blacklisted from this district.

Rupert starting to become angered by the situation he's in, tries to defend himself.

RUPERT

Is this from Bill? Cause I'll have you know that the student was my son.

HIGGINS

(cutting off Rupert)

I don't care who the student was! Your son or not this doesn't look good from what Bill informed me of.

(pause)

I'm not sure where this behavior is coming from but you're starting to scare some of the staff here Rupert.

RUPERT

(confused)

I'm scaring the staff?

HIGGINS

Your actions are leading you down a dark path Rupert. I think you should start thinking about getting some help.

Rupert's knuckles are white from how hard he's hold onto the vacuum. The heavy mix of emotions cause Rupert's hearing to go in and out.

RUPERT

(timid)

I'm sorry sir, it won't happen again...

Higgins now starting to exit the office. Turns to say one last thing to Rupert.

HIGGINS

I'm going to be making sure Bill keeps
an eye on Tommy during school hour's
until I feel your behavior has
improved.

Higgins exits the office leaving Rupert once again to be standing in his own mess of emotions.

He crumbles to the floor sobbing as we fade to black.

INT. JANITORS BREAKROOM

We see the clock on the punch card box read 9 P.M., Leslie and Rupert are finally punching out and getting ready to head home for the day.

LESLIE

Finally, the best part of the day is
here!

Leslie looks over to Rupert who seems to be absorbed in his phone.

We see a string of texts to Tommy, trying to contact him about their situation, and how much he means to him.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Rupert, are you alright? You're
looking like the students who can't
get off those damn things.

Rupert finally breaks from the screen to look over at Leslie, with an emotional look on his face.

RUPERT

Tommy hasn't answered me back all day.
I'm worried Leslie.

LESLIE

Rupert, I'm going to say this with the
utmost care.

(pause)

YOU ARE OVERTHINKING THIS! My daughter
was the same way when she was Tommy's
age. You just have to give them space
and they'll figure it out.

While saying this Leslie is taking his hat and coat out of his locker.

RUPERT

Leslie didn't your daughter move
across the country after college and
hasn't called you since?

Leslie now with a disgruntled expression stares at Rupert for a moment.

LESLIE

Have a good night Rupert.

Leslie puts his hat on with some aggression and leaves.

Rupert looks down at his phone one last time and still an empty area of responses.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Rupert is walking to his beat-up 1989 brown Ford Festiva, in a nearly empty parking lot outside the school. He's trying to get the key in the side door lock.

The keys fall from Rupert's hands and he reaches down to grab them, when he hears someone unlocking their car. Looking up he sees Bill putting his things into his 2010 yellow Toyota Tacoma.

RUPERT

HEY!

Rupert shouts to Bill across the parking lot with discernable anger.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

I have a bone to pick with you!

Rupert now storming over to Bill.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

You stay out of my life and especially
my son's you got it?

Bill still packing his car is unphased by Rupert's words

BILL

Rupert this is the type of behavior I
thought Principle Higgins talked to
you about.

BILL (CONT'D)

(pause)

We wouldn't want this to escalate any
future now would we?

RUPERT

Don't you dare threaten me. My son is
everything to me and I wouldn't dare
lay a finger on him..

Rupert being inches away from Bill is shoved away.

BILL

(slightly frustrated)

Rupert I don't care if he's your son
or not. Don't you know putting your
hands on a child is wrong.

RUPERT

You're acting like I was beating my
son.

BILL

Well from what I've seen I wouldn't be
shocked if you did. Hell I'm surprised
I haven't found a cigarette burn on
him.

RUPERT

You think you're being funny?

BILL

No I'm being realistic.

(pause)

Between a lousy janitor and a choir
teacher whose been at this school for
30 years. I'd say my word is stronger
than yours.

Bill then begins to get into his car

RUPERT

(frustrated)

You have no right trying to control my
life!

Bill starts the car and speeds off tires screeching.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

Stay away from my son!

INT. RUPERTS CAR

Lighting strikes as Rupert frantically jumps into his car. Shaken up from the altercation, he has a hard time getting the keys into the ignition.

He finally gets his car started and speeds off. Worry fills his mind as the threats from bill echo in the cold nights air.

EXT. RUPERTS HOUSE

A small one floor home is seen. front yard barley big enough to call a yard, and a drive way that perfectly fits only one car.

Rain is pouring down, and one light is on. It seeps through the front window toward the opposite side of where the drive way is. Rupert steps out of his car covering himself with his jacket, trying not to get wet.

He see's Tommy's bedroom light is on.

RUPERT

Thank god, he's still awake.

Rupert closes the car door and walks into the house in a hurry wanting to talk with his son.

INT. RUPERTS HOUSE

Walking through the front door Rupert calls out for Tommy. There is no response.

RUPERT

(out of breath)

Tommy! Are you still up bud?

Rupert puts his bag on the couch and hangs up his coat. He notices the house is a mess.

Walking through his home the sight of blankets scattered around the floor, books thrown from the shelves, and many of the kitchen cabinets are wide open.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

(whispering to himself)

What the hell happened here?

Rupert turns toward the hallway in a slight hurry and begins to walk toward Tommy's room.

RUPERT

Tommy I'm sorry for the way things
have been recently.

Can we please just talk about all
this?

Still no words are given from behind the door of Tommy's
room.

Rupert is becoming uneasy and is almost frozen when reaching
for the doorknob.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for the other day bud. I
just wanted to have a funny moment
together-

Before another word could be muttered, Rupert opens his son's
door. Petrified seeing Tommy laying on the ground lifeless. A
pill bottle lays next to his son's opened hand.

Time almost seems to come to a crashing halt. In a panic
Rupert rushes to his son knocking over some of the items
within the room.

Kneeling over top of his son, all of Tommy's color is
stripped from his skin. A gloss washes over Tommy's eyes, and
stale foam sticks to the side of his face.

All life has left this body.

RUPERT

(mortified)

Tommy!? TOMMY!

(pause)

No god please, not like this!

During his panic of trying to do whatever Rupert can to
resuscitate his son, he sees a note laying on Tommy's bed.

Rupert begins to read.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

Tommy you are a special boy one that
people like your father couldn't
understand.

(pause)

The things that you and I have shared
and the moments we have together are
special.

Confusion fills the room as Rupert doesn't understand what this letter is about.

He continues to read.

RUPERT (CONT'D)

Uttering a single word about this
could cause a lot of trouble for you
Tommy.

(pause)

So it's best if we keep that pretty
mouth of yours SHUT.

Attached to the letter are polaroid's of Tommy in his underwear.

Bruises and scratches covering Tommy's body and in red lipstick a kiss mark can be seen on top of one of the pictures.

Rupert spiraling from what he has just read, grabs his son's phone. Upon opening it, he sees texts from what his son told him was none of his business.

Thousands of inappropriate texts from (Billy with a heart), sent to his son.

Talk of sex, nudes, and threats of hurting Tommy if he ever spoke out about what has transpired between them.

Rupert drops the phone in shock. His eyes welling up with tears.

He grabs his son's lifeless body and weeps.

RUPERT

I'm sorry Tommy..

(pause)

I'm so sorry....

The sound of Rupert's cries echo as the screen fades to black.

FADE OUT