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BELLBOY

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Written by

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EXT. LONDON - DAY

Grey winter light, bare trees, mist clings to the air.
COMMUTERS and TOURISTS pours from GREEN PARK station.

JEZ (V.O.)

I love London. And I hate London.
But it's my only way out.

Faces rush past, anonymous, urgent.

JEZ (V.O.)

Every face here's a mask. Crooks
dressed as bankers. Artists
pretending to be rich. The rich
pretending to be artists.

Through the crowd is ABBY (35). Jet-black hair. Sharp
eyeliner. Blood-red lips. Fur coat. Gliding effortlessly.

JEZ (V.O.)

Her? Definitely an escort. Top-
shelf. I can tell. I work at The
Royale Hotel.

Abby checks her Apple Watch, pivots towards PARK LANE.

JEZ (V.O.)

I'm a bellboy there, and it's where
I plan to make my fortune. And then
escape... to Bangkok.

EXT. THE ROYALE - DAY

OUR BELLBOY, JEZ (21). He wrestles a Louis Vuitton trunk onto
his trolley off a black cab. Uniform pristine, wide smile.

JEZ (V.O.)

That's me. Jeremy Roberts.
Professional smiler. It's in the
job description. Smile wide and
pretend you care.

He spots Abby glide into the revolving doors. She doesn't
even glance at him.

JEZ (V.O.)

See? I'm invisible. That's the
armour.

A bark of American vowels cuts across. PETER (60), Armani,
yapping into his iPhone.

CECE (55), his wife, dripping diamonds and nerves, rummaging
in her Birkin.

PETER

Ten million or we walk, Jason.
Christ!

CECE

Where's my Xanax-- oh, thank God.

She pops two, then eyes Jez.

CECE

You. Bellhop.

JEZ (V.O.)

Bellhop. That's a new one.

CECE

Champagne. And tea. Sri Lankan. Not
that Lipton swill.

Peter waves her off.

PETER

Just go, Cece. I'll pay the boy.

She scowls, zeroes in on Jez.

CECE

You stock Molton Brown, right? Not
one of those...

Behind her, WE SEE the glittering lounge, marble staircase,
chandeliers.

CECE

...budget places.

JEZ

(smile, salesman mode)
Only the finest, Madam. Black
Peppercorn. Eucalyptus. Even--

CECE

Good, good. Move it. Park View
Suite. And don't scratch the trunk.

She vanishes inside. Peter peels off cash for the CABBIE, who
groans, clutching his stomach.

CABBIE

Bloody hernia...

Jeremy lifts another suitcase. His smile wavers. Arms
tremble.

JEZ (V.O.)

This is light work. Try six cases,
a Chihuahua, and a Peruvian stick
insect with asthma.

FLASHBACK - NIGHT (A YEAR AGO)

Jeremy, younger, arms full of luggage, Chihuahua yapping, terrarium balanced precariously...

And then he trips. The terrarium SMASHES! Insect motionless. Jeremy's horrified face.

POSH OWNER in tweed, letting out a high-pitched SHRIEK...

BACK TO PRESENT

Jeremy winces at the memory, shakes it off. Forces the smile back on.

JEZ (V.O.)

Point is, always smile. Even if you're one wrong step from crushing a life. Metaphorically. Usually.

He pushes the trolley into The Royale Hotel.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - DAY

Roaring 20s glamour (once upon a time). Gilded mirrors, velvet drapes, crystal chandeliers. Luxury overwhelm.

Jez enters. MONTAGE begins.

JEZ (V.O.)

Being a bellboy is 'simple'. You do everything.

ON LUGGAGE

JEZ (V.O.)

Luggage porter. Of course.

AMENITIES

Jez points out the spa to two BOTOXED LADIES. They ignore him, fixated on their phones.

Jez gestures, whilst firmly massaging his neck. They look at him like an oddball.

JEZ (V.O.)

Hotel Tour guide.

WEDDING

GUESTS in tails. Jez lights candles, claps in time to the DJ from the very rear of the dance-floor.

And then he helps a totally pissed BRIDESMAID up off the floor, shepherds her by other drunkards towards the lifts.

JEZ (V.O.)
Events 'co-ordinator'...

CAR PARK / COURTYARD

Jez struggles to direct three cars into too few spaces. Two drivers HONK simultaneously.

One nearly runs over his toes. He leaps backwards and grimaces. But then remembers to smile.

JEZ (V.O.)
Traffic 'co-ordinator'...

MAIL ROOM

Jez sorts a mountain of envelopes, one labelled *CONFIDENTIAL DIVORCE PAPERS*. He double-takes then shoves it into the pile.

JEZ (V.O.)
Postal clerk.

LOBBY

Jez discreetly signals SECURITY to intercept a staggering HOMELESS MAN from stealing an expensive glass.

JEZ (V.O.)
And even security guard.

He wipes sweat off his brow, but then remembers to flash that smile.

SNAP BACK TO PRESENT (LOUNGE)

Jez steadies the trolley, cap askew, smile straining.

At the front desk, LIA (28), Italian, perfect smile, soothes an OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN mid-complaint.

A CONCIERGE beside her, intently listening in.

OLD GENT
I don't want the bloody courtyard
outside. I didn't pay for a view of
pigeons.

Lia's smile never falters. She glances at Jez as if to say 'watch and learn, bellboy'.

JEZ (V.O.)

Giulia Pisa. Champion smiler. Best in London, probably the world. Rumour is her face muscles atrophied. Permanent reflex. She's had zero complaints. Zero.

Jeremy trundles past, humming Mozart's *REQUIEM AETERNAM*.

FITZ (25), short, wiry, a BELLBOY from Glasgow, passes with a tray. They share no words.

JEZ (V.O.)

Fitz doesn't speak. At all, if he can help it. Which, frankly, is the proper way for a servant. Silent, invisible, anonymous.

HENRY (45), the manager, intercepts. Immaculate suit, the air of a pilot, Royal Air Force.

HENRY

Jeremy. Why is your smile cracking? Lack of sleep?

JEZ

No, Sir. Lack of looking miserable.

Henry doesn't laugh.

HENRY

Cut the deranged look. And stop humming. For God's sake.

Jeremy freezes. Smile widens absurdly.

JEZ (V.O.)

Henry. The most sophisticated manager you'll ever meet... with the largest insecurity complex. Giulia swears he keeps a 'smile ratings' card for the staff. She's top of the list. I'm somewhere between Fitz and the janitor.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Henry at his desk. Big office, but crammed with faux-posh clutter. A portrait of the hotel's 1927 grand opening above.

He pecks at a typewriter, bashing out a STAFF WARNING NOTICE.

INSERT FORM. *Employee - Jeremy Roberts. Offence - Caught twice with a grumpy face.*

Henry rips the page free, folds it with military precision, and places it in a folder labelled DISCIPLINE.

INT. GRAND PARK VIEW SUITE - DAY

On the surface, luxury. But UP CLOSE, peeling gilt, stained carpet, rusted window frames.

Cece paces. Peter scrolls on his phone, unfazed.

CECE

Aspirin! Where-- damn you, Peter.
It's in your case!

She claws open a suitcase. Silk blouses explode. Other cases topple. CRASH.

Jez rushes to help. Amid the chaos, a firearm case tumbles open...

Revealing A PEARL-HANDLED PISTOL.

FREEZE FRAME on Jez's face, alarm breaking through the smile.

JEZ (V.O.)

I expected corruption. But not of
the artillery kind.

Peter swoops in, snatches the pistol.

CECE

Why!

PETER

You know I'm licensed.

He shoves it in the large WARDROBE.

PETER

Mike wants to go to the range
later.

JEZ (V.O.)

Note to self. Some guests come with
talons. Often *les américains*.

CECE

Boy. Hopper!

JEZ (V.O.)

Hopper. That's new.

CECE

Room service menu.

Jez produces a leather-bound menu. Cece sniffs it.

CECE

At least it's not one of those
vulgar app menus.

JEZ
Many of our guests prefer to--

CECE
Apps ruin the experience.

She thrusts the menu back.

CECE
Read it. My eyes are tired from
looking at him.

She glares at Peter, who gestures wildly on a phone call.

JEZ
Our oscietra caviar--

CECE
I want wine, you idiot. And why is
there no champagne waiting for us?
Just some crummy cookies. This
isn't a Hilton! There had better be
good lotions.

Peter covers his phone.

PETER
For God's sake, call the bar.

CECE
You call!

PETER
I'm on a call.

She storms to the window, jabs at the rust.

CECE
Two grand a night for rusted
windows. Peter!

He stares at his wife.

CECE
What happened to our Platinum
status?

PETER
(aside to phone)
It's a suite. With a park view.

CECE
There is no bloody park in winter!

Jez's smile tightens.

JEZ (V.O.)

It can be like birdwatching. Keep one's distance. Note peculiar habits.

Cece wolfs down a cookie in one angry bite and circles the room.

JEZ (V.O.)

Category A: neurotic and wealthy. Appetite feral. Plumage trembles when threatened by cheap things. No eagle here, but one can never be too cautious.

CECE

(startling Jez)

Well? Can you do anything besides grin like a serial killer?

JEZ

Oh, I can assure you--

CECE

Red wine!

Jez whips out his notepad.

JEZ

Our finest reds. The Pomerol 2015, notes of blackcurrant--

PETER

(steps into frame)

Your most expensive under a grand.

JEZ

Five hundred, Sir.

PETER

Fine. Six bottles.

CECE

Six? He doesn't need six. Four.

PETER

Six.

CECE

Four!

They glare at each other. Jez scribbles, Cece grabs his pad.

CECE

No. Four!

Shoves it back at him. Jez flicks the nib of his fountain pen and writes 4 *GIRONDE*.

CECE

You can go.

JEZ

You are most welcome.

Jez exits, smile plastered on. Peter hangs up. Frowns.

PETER

Tip him extra.

CECE

What? Why?

PETER

He's less likely to steal your
Regent.

Cece gasps, clutches her necklace. Peter falls onto the bed,
chuckling to himself.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Jez taps his temple, a tic.

JEZ (V.O.)

I grew up in service. My foster
father preached fellowship while I
washed the cups.

FLASHBACK - DAY

A METHODIST CHURCH HALL. Within, a bustling post-service
coffee and cake gathering. Parishioners laugh, sip tea.

In the corner, YOUNG JEZ (10), tiny and earnest, sleeves
rolled up, scrubs mugs and stacks cake plates high.

His FOSTER FATHER, genial, chatty, stands with a group of
men, oblivious.

JEZ (V.O.)

Second nature to serve until I was
wobbly in the knees.

YOUNG JEZ lifts a tower of crockery that nearly topples. A
parishioner thanks the father for his 'helpful boy'.

Foster Dad smiles, taking credit. YOUNG JEZ forces the same
wide smile we know too well.

BACK TO PRESENT

Jez passes Reception and catches Lia's eye. A micro-
expression of despair flashes between them.

Her smile is being tried by a restless MODEL (20s), face-deep in her phone. Model shoves a credit card across the desk.

MODEL

Just like authorise it? Or not? I'm late.

(under her breath)

I can't believe I'm doing another collab shoot.

JEZ (V.O.)

I don't envy Lia. Centrepiece of The Grand Delusion. Good job bellboys are outcasts. Seeing everything. Indeed, as a clandestine messenger is how I think of myself.

Jez hovers by the computer.

JEZ

System overkill?

LIA

Too many credit cards.

JEZ

Ah, too little credit.

MODEL

Excuse me!

Lia's smile returns. Jez flees.

LIA

Madam, you're... 'ShakePay Bitcoin' card isn't accepted by the Celestial Hotels Group. I'm very sorry.

A tongue-tied stare off between them...

INT. BAR - DAY

MATT (MATTHIEU DANIEL BOLAND) (38) a true cocktail technician, precise, joyless, and very handsome.

An actor in another life. Jez approaches, and puts on his Parisian accent.

JEZ

Ça va Matthieu! Quatre bouteilles du raisins de Pomerol, s'il vous plaît. Pour les désespérés de la suite vue grandiose.

(Four bottles of Pomerol, please.)

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