

A Bill To Pay

By

?

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FADE IN:

EXT. GARDNER OFFICE BUILDING - CITY CENTRE - DAY

BILL gets out of a taxi. Thirties, skinny, casual clothes. He carries a bulging plastic bag.

Peers up at the old building with an anxious expression. Checks the address against a text on his phone.

He strides towards the entrance. Hesitates before he enters, turns around, takes a few steps, pauses. Steels himself then goes inside.

INT. ELEVATOR - MINUTES LATER

Bill's alone. He straightens his hair in a mirror while the floor display increases.

BILL (V.O.)
It's hard to recall all the events
of how exactly I came to be here.

A loud Ping! as the elevator doors open.

BILL (V.O.)
I'm half toying with the idea of
forgetting the whole damn thing.

He steps out of the lift.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Bill steps onto plush carpet. At a desk a few metres away a RECEPTIONIST, forties, frizzy red hair and bright red lipstick, glances up from a computer monitor at him. Bill flashes a nervous grin. Gazes back into the empty elevator.

BILL (V.O.)
Last chance...

Just as he takes a step toward the elevator the doors close. He stares at the elevator Call button.

RECEPTIONIST
Can I help you?

Her tone is on the harsh side in an accent from the rough side of town. Bill glances at her. Bites his lip, steps to her desk.

RECEPTIONIST
Are you alright?

BILL
What? Yes, fine thanks. I've an appointment.

RECEPTIONIST
Ahuh. To see?

Bill puzzles. Pulls out his phone. Brings up a text.

BILL
A Mrs. Halliman?

RECEPTIONIST
Name?

BILL
Like I said, Mrs...

RECEPTIONIST
No. Not her name. We done that already. Your name.

BILL
Oh me? I'm Bill. Erm, William Bracks.

The Receptionist taps on her keyboard.

RECEPTIONIST
I.D..

But Bill's glancing around the office.

RECEPTIONIST
Do you have some identification?

Bill searches his pockets. Pulls out a tatty driving licence from his wallet. The Receptionist examines it, eyes Bill then eyes the licence again. She gestures to some seating.

RECEPTIONIST
Sit.

Bill sits. His eyes roam the posh interior again. He spots a wall clock - nearly 3. Takes out his phone. Fires up 'Angry Birds'.

LATER

Bill yawns. Puts his phone away. Glances up at the clock - 3:35. The Reptionist types loudly with huge speed causing a sneer on Bill's lips. He's about to speak when a door opens.

A well dressed OLD MAN with a cravat around his neck leaves Mrs. Halliman's office. He smiles at the Receptionist as he makes his way to the elevator.

She smiles back before returning to typing furiously. Bill breathes out with boredom. She ignores it.

MINUTES LATER

The Receptionist stands, picks up a Security Wand and approaches Bill. He notices she wears big Dr. Marten's boots.

She gestures for him to stand. He does so, sheepish and puzzled. She waves the wand over him. It howls over one of his jacket pockets. Bill pulls out his phone. She takes it from him to dump it on her desk. He frowns.

RECEPTIONIST

What? You'll get it back.

Waves the wand over him again. Returns to her desk.

RECEPTIONIST

You can go in now.

She gestures to the open door. It seems very dark beyond it.

Bill picks up his plastic bag. Takes a few steps towards the door. The Receptionist watches him with bemusement.

Bill reaches the door. Peers inside into the darkness.

BILL

Hello? Anyone here?

As he steps into the room the door closes with a Bang.

INT. MRS. HALLIMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Curtains block the windows. Shafts of light from them barely break the gloom. Bill blinks to adjust to the darkness.

MRS. HALLIMAN (O.S.)

Over here.

He turns to see MRS. HALLIMAN, sitting behind a desk. A candle burns near her. Casts shadows over her craggy face.

Her white hair sits in a large bun on her head. She gestures for him to sit opposite her. He does so. She speaks with a slightly posh Scottish accent.

MRS. HALLIMAN

Apolgies about my receptionist. The manners of a goat, that one. But she's family, what you gonna do? Now, what can I do for you?

BILL
I was told you could help me. I've
a problem with my boss.

MRS. HALLIMAN
You and half the world. Be more
specific, dear.

BILL
Well. He's stealing from the
company. Using me to cover his
tracks, to erm, cook the books.

She leans closer over the desk. Stares at him.

MRS. HALLIMAN
You're an accountant of some sort?
(he nods)
You look more like someone on a
skateboard. Takes all sorts I
suppose, these days. And why don't
you go to the authorities?

BILL
If I do he'll bring me down with
him. He reminds me often enough. I
can't go to jail. I've two kids and
a wife and a mortgage.

MRS. HALLIMAN
I see. You don't look the type. So
what would you like to happen?

Bill inhales, fidgets. Glances around the gloom.

MRS. HALLIMAN
You can speak freely here, Mr.
Bracks. We sweep this room for bugs
twice a day. Security is paramount
for us.

Bill looks down at the floor. Exhales through clenched teeth.

BILL
I need him gone. If he... went, all
my problems would disappear.
There'd be no evidence against me
if he were to, you know... to go.

Mrs. Halliman rubs her chin. She picks up a fountain pen to
scribble a note. Slides it across the desk to Bill. He picks
it up, squints to read it then gulps.

BILL
That's an awful lot of money.

MRS. HALLIMAN
We're not the mafia, Mr. Bracks. We don't make folks 'go' in exchange for favours. This is a serious matter, requires a serious amount.

BILL
I'm not sure...

MRS. HALLIMAN
Yes you were and indeed are. If not you wouldn't have come this far.

Bill rummages in his plastic bag. He pulls packages wrapped in newspaper. Unwraps them to reveal bundles of cash. He counts them quickly. Stacks them on the desk.

BILL
What guarantees do I get?

MRS. HALLIMAN
You get my word, William. He'll be gone soon.

BILL
I'll need more than that.

MRS. HALLIMAN
Oh will you now? You little prick. The boy who shat his pants on his first day at school. The one who left his friend Timmy in the woods to die when he was twelve years old.
(child like voice)
Don't leave me out here, Billy!

Bill's jaw drops. His face flushes red.

MRS. HALLIMAN
I suggest you leave before I get offended further.

BILL
I'm sorry. I didn't mean... Do we still have a deal?

MRS. HALLIMAN
Go now. Your boss will be gone soon, then you can go back to your more usual life of having sex with hookers on the back seat of your car where your children sit.

Bill heads for the door. Stops to turn back.

BILL
 Don't you need his name, his
 address?

MRS. HALLIMAN
 Hardly. We know all that, Mr.
 Bracks. I thought you'd have
 guessed that by now.

He leaves. Mrs. Halliman examines the bundles of cash.

INT. RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

The Receptionist types, hard. Bill stands before her. She hands him his phone without looking up from her computer.

Bill wanders to the elevator. His cheeks are still a little red. He presses the call button.

BILL (V.O.)
 I don't know how she knew that
 stuff. Nobody else knew about that.

Bill gets in into the elevator, head hung low.

The Receptionist waits for the elevator doors to close. Takes a torch from a drawer in her desk. She tests it then heads for Mrs. Halliman's office.

INT. BRADMAN PUBLISHING - BILL'S OFFICE - DAY

Bill sits at his desk in a cheap suit and tie. He pours over a computer printout. A knock on the door makes him look up.

SEBASTIAN enters. He's a big guy, smartly dressed, forties. He closes the door. Sits on the end of Bill's desk.

SEBASTIAN
 Did you manage to get it done?

BILL
 Get what done... Oh, yeah. It's
 done.

He takes a memory stick from a drawer in his desk. Hands it to Sebastian who turns to leave. Pauses.

SEBASTIAN
 I know we haven't always got on.

Bill tries to plant a pleasant expression on his face but it's clear there's still a little contempt.

SEBASTIAN
 It's all going to work out well.
 For both of us.

The contempt on Bill's face appears in full as soon as Sebastian leaves. But it disappears quick as Bill stares into space. He gets up to go to the window.

EXT. BRADMAN PUBLISHING - CAR PARK

Sebastian stands beside a shiny new Mercedes. The Old Man with the cravat shakes Sebastian's hand like they're old friends. Neither sees Bill watching them through a window.

INT. BRADMAN PUBLISHING - BOARDROOM - DAY

Bill, now in a different, but equally cheap suit, sits at a table with three other PEOPLE in business suits. One of them, HELENA, thirties, long hair pulled back and earrings long enough to touch her shoulders, glances at her watch.

BILL
 Should we keep waiting or...?

HELENA
 He said he'd be here.

BILL
 You said that half an hour ago.

All eyes turn to the door as it opens. Sebastian enters, pale, blood shot eyes, in a tracksuit. His voice is croaky.

SEBASTIAN
 Sorry I'm late, everyone.

He takes a seat as far from the others as he can. They all stare at his hands twitching on the table.

HELENA
 You sure you're okay, Seb?

SEBASTIAN
 Just a bug. My other clothes were itchy, okay. Let's get on with it.

He scratches the backs of his hands. Swallows hard.

HELENA
 Okay. So, first item on the agenda is the budget for the next quart...

Seb ducks down to throw up under the table. It's loud, nasty. When he comes back up he's even more pale and sweaty.

SEBASTIAN

Oh god. Maybe I'd...

He points to the door, stands up. His eyes roll as he falls forward onto the table. He hits it with a thump.

HELENA

Somebody call an ambulance!

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Helena sits on her own in a corridor. Doctors and nurses pass her. She smiles when she sees Bill approach.

BILL

I thought I'd come down, see how it's going. How are you?

She puzzles at him.

HELENA

I'm fine, Bill. Aren't you going to ask about Sebastian?

BILL

Yeah, of course. How is he?

HELENA

He's in a bad way. They don't know what's wrong with him. I could hear him screaming before. It was...

BILL

Can we go see him?

HELENA

He's in surgery.

BILL

For what?

HELENA

Exploratory, they said.

Bill sits down beside her.

INT. BRADMAN PUBLISHING - BILL'S OFFICE - DAY

Bill loosens his tie and yawns while he looks at pie charts on a lap top. There's a knock on the door. Helena enters, her eyes red. She blows her nose into a handkerchief.

BILL

Hey. What's the latest?

HELENA
 (tearful)
 They keep dosing him up with
 morphine but he keeps waking up
 anyway, screaming his lungs out.
 They're moving him to St. Xaviers.

Bill nods then frowns.

BILL
 Hang on. Isn't that the nut... I
 mean mental care facility?

HELENA
 They have soundproof rooms.

INT. GARDNER OFFICE BUILDING - FIFTH FLOOR - DAY

The Receptionist reads a magazine. Bill rushes out of the
 elevator. As Bill approaches she stands up and moves to block
 Bill's way into Mrs. Halliman's office.

BILL
 I want to see her. Now.

RECEPTIONIST
 Take a seat. She'll see you when
 she's good and ready.

BILL
 This is urgent.

RECEPTIONIST
 Sure it is. Now sit down.

Bill takes a few steps towards the seats then dashes into -

INT. MRS. HALLIMAN'S OFFICE

Dark as before. The door slams. Bill's about to hold it shut.

MRS. HALLIMAN
 Don't bother. She won't follow you.

BILL
 What the fuck did you do to him?

MRS. HALLIMAN
 Really? You're feeling sorry now?

BILL
 I didn't think you were going to
 torture him. It's been three days
 now, him screaming in agony.

MRS. HALLIMAN

And what, you wanted him to have a nice little sleepy time before they put him down in a coffin?

BILL

Just stop it. Whatever the fuck you're doing or did, please. Just make it stop.

MRS. HALLIMAN

You're certain?

BILL

Of course.

MRS. HALLIMAN

You want me to stop it?

BILL

Yes!

She takes a phone out of the drawer. Taps out a text message.

BILL

What are you doing?

MRS. HALLIMAN

What? You expected me to get my broomstick out and fly over there?

Bill's about to open the door. Stops.

BILL

He will still die, won't he?

MRS. HALLIMAN

You told me three times to stop. Your boss will make a full recovery.

BILL

I meant stop screaming and just bloody well die.

MRS. HALLIMAN

Aww, just like little red haired Timmy did in the woods all those years ago. My receptionist wasn't always an only child. She would like a word with you about that. On your way out.

FADE OUT.