

THE MERGER - EPISODE 1

FADE IN:

EXT. CAR PARK. DAY.

Title over - 'Week One'

A large car park full of smart cars. A car parks in a tight space and ROSS struggles out with briefcase and files. He locks the car and heads to the building. He struggles through revolving doors into a modern, steel & glass, barren reception area. There is a spiral staircase, echoey, with a gallery above, & offices behind.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE OFFICES:

Typical corporate office, desks chairs etc. LIAM, JASON and EDWARD are in the office. Jason and Edward are working on computers at the desks. Liam is watching Ross through the window.

LIAM

Here comes another one

Jason & Edward go over to the window.

JASON

... hmm, that'll be their Ops guy

EDWARD

Their HR woman was in here before I
was this morning. That's a bad sign
isn't it?

JASON

Yeah. It's a dawn raid... it was
the same yesterday. It'll be more
clear out

EDWARD

Shit!

LIAM
Hardly a dawn raid for that lazy
bugger... look, he doesn't know how
to get in

CUT TO:

ROSS AT THE ENTRANCE

We see Ross struggling to gain entry.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE OFFICES

JASON
... back to the CVs lads

They all move back to their desks. A secretary's head pops round the corner.

SECRETARY
Thought you'd want to know. Six
more gone

JASON
Where?

SECRETARY
In property

JASON
(under breath)
Jesus they're quick.
(to secretary)
Who?

SECRETARY
Brendan, Colin, Alec and their PAs

LIAM
No great loss. They've done nothing
for years bar pick the paint

JASON
You'll be a bit more sympathetic
when it's your turn...

CUT TO:

VIEW FROM INSIDE THEIR OFFICE TO THE OPEN PLAN AREA OUTSIDE.

We see a busy general office, people working at desks or moving about. Nic Starling, businesslike, approaches a man with his head down working. She taps him on the shoulder and indicates for him to follow her.

JASON
... which could be any minute now

FADE TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA. DAY.

The reception desk is manned with an attractive youngster and a dragon. Ross approaches the reception desk all smiles, met with stone faced glare from the dragon.

ROSS
Hello, I'm Ross Bailey from group

STONE FACE
To see...?

ROSS
I'm not here to see anyone, I'm just here. Did no one tell you I was coming?

STONE FACE
Do you have an appointment?

ROSS
I don't need an appointment, I...

STONE FACE
(cutting across him rudely)
I'm sorry, you have to have an appointment. Who was it you wanted to see?

ROSS
Look, I'm from group

STONE FACE
... and who was it you wanted to see?

FADE TO.

INT. RECEPTION. DAY.

Ross is on the mobile frustrated.

ROSS

Ruth?... where am I? In bloody reception. Lucrezia Borgia on the desk won't let me in... yes, well she did threaten to call security and have me tossed out on my arse so perhaps you can understand why I'm not giving her a bit of leeway because of the upheavals.

(so the receptionist can
hear)

... make sure her name's on the hit list... Mary something... she's wearing a name badge but I didn't want to look too closely in case she thought I was staring at her leathery old tits

Ruth appears on the verandah above reception, talking on the mobile.

RUTH

Got you... you're in reception

ROSS

I told you that, for God's sake!

Ruth comes down the spiral staircase still on the mobile.

RUTH

I'll get you a name badge and make sure reception know who you are

ROSS

You can put the phone away now.
Where are we?

Ross walks towards Ruth and starts up the staircase.

RUTH

I've blagged Ian Taylor's old office till we get the floor plan sorted out

ROSS

You've removed the corpse and mopped up the blood, I hope

RUTH

He went yesterday. He wasn't happy,
I can tell you. He's supposed to
clear out his personal things but I
doubt if he'll be back

ROSS

I heard he put the bloody window
through

STONE FACE

(calling)

He hasn't signed in...

ROSS

(quietly to Ruth)

Tell her to go fuck herself

STONE FACE

... if there's a fire we won't know
he's here

By now they're at the top of the stairs. Ruth calls back
down.

RUTH

I'll be back down later and sort it
out

ROSS

(quietly to Ruth)

With her bloody P45

FADE TO:

INT. LARGE OPEN PLAN OFFICE WITH IND. OFFICES OFF. DAY.

Ross and Ruth traipse through a busy office to a glass fronted cube office off the main open plan. All eyes are on them. They enter Ian Taylor's old office. One of the windows is blanked with plywood.

ROSS

Stone me this is big... it's twice
the size of mine back at group...
look, he's even got his own pour &
serve. Is it working?

RUTH

I don't know Ross. I've just come
in the same as you

ROSS

Can we get a brew on, try it out? I
could murder a coffee

Ross puts his brief case on the desk and starts looking at
the chair, phone, computer etc.

ROSS (CONT'D)

Have you seen this? It's a better
chair than Charlie Strong's. They
knew how to look after themselves.
No wonder they went bust. This desk
is oak isn't it?

RUTH

I'm not good with woods. It's
probably a veneer. Ask me anything
about flooring though...

ROSS

It's not veneer. It's the real deal

Nic Starling suddenly appears in the office.

NIC

Stop creaming yourself over the
office furniture. You've got a shit
load to get through today.

ROSS

Jesus, Nicola, can't you knock?

NIC

I haven't got time to bloody knock.
I've got to waste thirty people in
here before I go back down south

ROSS

Thirty! I didn't know we were up
here for a cull. I was told it was
to evaluate their team and sort the
workers from the shirkers, do a bit
of thinning out

NIC

(sarcastic)

Oh, that's so sweet
(hard)

Charlie paid over three hundred
million for this collection of
shagged out doss holes. He's got to
get his money back somehow

ROSS

You are going to leave me with some staff. I can't absorb an extra twenty four hotels into my patch on my own

NIC

Oh, not up to the job?

ROSS

That's not what I meant

NIC

Selwyn Reed's still on the books.
Perhaps he could do it

Ruth has been studying the carpet, keeping her head down.
Ross realises she's still in the room.

ROSS

Ruth, can you nip and see if you
can rustle up a couple of coffees?
Shut the door behind you

RUTH

Certainly
(to Nic)
White with?

NIC

Just piss off, luv

Ruth leaves and closes the door after her. Nic starts in as soon as she leaves.

NIC (CONT'D)

Listen you, it's going to be a blood bath in here today. The hit list is still fluid, you know. I can easily add your name on the bottom. Move Selwyn across to fill the gap

ROSS

Come on Nic. Greedy Reedy? He's taken more back-handers than Andy Murray. There's more Sunshine Hotels furniture in his two houses than there is in the bloody hotels

NIC

As may be, but he's still a good operator.

(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)

He was running these crap holes at over 70% GP. The best you ever did across your region was 66%

ROSS

These are budget...

NIC

Three star

ROSS

Alright, three star, but my revenue figures were...

NIC

(laughs)

Piss off. I'm winding you up

(serious)

Reed's toast. Just don't whine.

Keep your head down and deliver the new budget... or Charlie will look at you and see a cost saving

ROSS

(relieved, looks skyward)

Thank you God

NIC

Hey. Don't call me God. She has a merciful side that I look on as a weakness. I'm off. I've got to give a motivational talk to Selwyn bloody Reed. Who the hell calls their kid Selwyn. The bloke never stood a chance.

FADE TO:

INT. OUTSIDE REED'S OFFICE. DAY.

Reed enters the scene in a fluster, briefcase in hand. Another glass office. Outside is a desk with a secretary busy.

REED

Stuck on the bloody motorway, today of all days

SECRETARY

There's someone in your office

REED

Who?

SECRETARY
Nicola Starling

REED
Stalin!

SECRETARY
(whispers)
Who is she?

REED
She does the purges. Shit, shit,
shit!

SECRETARY
Shall I get coffees?

REED
No. Just keep the area clear in
case we end up brawling

SECRETARY
With a woman?

REED
Don't be fooled. She wouldn't pass
a hormone test

Reed goes into his office.

REED (CONT'D)
Hi, Mrs. Starling
(offers handshake)

NIC
Call me Nicola, for Chrissakes.
We're all on the same team
(shakes hand firmly)
Nice place you've got here
(picks up desk photo)
You're lot?

REED
That's Jenny and the twins, yes

NIC
D'you get to spend much time with
them?

REED
What do you mean?

NIC
Running a big region like this

REED

Oh, it keeps me busy. We could do with a capital injection. Fighting you guys off has drained the Capex budget of course...

NIC

(cutting across)

The thing is, Selwyn, we know all about you. We've been through your records

REED

(cautious)

Meaning what?

The door opens. Enter Jason carrying sheets of paper.

JASON

I've got the first quarter returns...

REED

Sod off Jason. Sally, I told you no one, right!

SECRETARY

Sorry

Jason exits looking bewildered, closing the door behind him.

REED

What do you mean, been through my records?

NIC

You're a bit of a beast, aren't you?

REED

Beast? What do you mean?

NIC

Top figures three years in a row. Best GP, best occupancy, lowest regional wage bill. You're a top man

REED

(relieved)

Oh, thank Christ. I thought I was for the...

(makes chopping sign)

NIC

A star player like you... with your length of service? You're too expensive to be made redundant. No, there's a place for you in the new team... unless you don't want any part of us, you having been the competition for bloody centuries

REED

Fantastic. No, I want in... Even with my twenty years experience in Ops you never know these days with a merger

NIC

Not a chance. We need all our best talent to run our poorest performing hotels... of course you'll have to relocate...

REED

(wary)

What do you mean?

NIC

You can't run the Cumbrian region from this office

REED

(angry)

I'm not going up there! The Twilight Zone! Sod off...

(calmer)

You're joking, aren't you? There's only three hotels up there and no bugger ever goes to them. Christ, the locals haven't got two ha'pennies to rub together. I'm running twenty four hotels now...

NIC

(hard faced)

Were... You were running twenty four hotels. Ross is running the show as from today.

REED

Who's Ross, for Christ's sake?

NIC

Ross? Ross Bailey? He's our top Ops man, super-Ross.

(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)

He'll light a fire under this lazy bunch of skiving tossers you call your team and inject a bit of flaming energy...

REED

There's nothing wrong with my team's performance. Our percentage GP is...

NIC

Piss off! You can't bank percentages. It's about cash. Your revenue stinks! Charlie's not going to put up with that state of affairs for very long, is he?

REED

I'm not going!

NIC

(ignoring him)

Of course you'll have to get rid of that top of the range Mercedes you're swanning about in now. We've still got a few old Mondeos left in the pool...

REED

I've been here twenty years. I started in the pot wash...

NIC

... and you're going to have to take a cut in salary. The twins will have to leave that dinky little private school they're in, unless your old lady has independent means...

Reed slams his hand on the table.

REED

Piss off!

NIC

Is that a no? Are you turning down my job offer?

REED

This is classic constructive dismissal

NIC

Count your lucky stars it isn't
classic thrown into fucking chokey!
I had a little chat with the
architect that built your notorious
extension...

REED

I paid every penny back for that...

NIC

Really? By the time our forensic
accountant's been through your
Capex accounts you'll be looking at
doing more time than Doctor Who

REED

(fuming)

You'll be hearing from my
solicitor!

NIC

(mocking)

... hearing from my solicitor...
help! The brown envelope kid is
threatening me... Clear your desk
and fuck off

Nic leaves the office and speaks to the secretary as she leaves.

NIC (CONT'D)

You might want to get him a coffee
now, Sally, and a couple of
cardboard boxes

FADE TO:

LIAM, JASON & EDWARD'S OFFICE

Liam and Edward are still working on their computers. Jason joins all excited with the latest gossip.

JASON

(to Edward)

... I just watched Greedy Reedy get
shonked up the back passage by
their HR woman

LIAM

Reed's gone?

JASON

Didn't last more than three
minutes. She chewed him up and shat
him out

EDWARD

(derisory)

Weedy Reedy!

LIAM

Shit they're brutal. Reedy's a
brawler... We've had it

JASON

They can't get rid of all of us at
head office, can they? They'll need
some of us to tell them where the
bodies are buried

EDWARD

They did when they took over Greens
Hotels. Their HR woman Nicola
Starling...

LIAM

(jumps in)

I've heard her nickname's Stalin

EDWARD

... got them all into the
cafeteria, gave them the no one
need worry speech on Friday and
closed the office over the weekend.
The poor sods were wandering around
the car park for days looking for
somewhere to plug in their laptops
till somebody put them out of their
misery and gave them their
envelopes

JASON

Lads, I don't think anybody from
the offices upstairs will survive
today...

EDWARD

I can't afford to lose this job

JASON

You haven't got kids, I have

LIAM

I have!

EDWARD

(snaps at Liam)

Having kids doesn't give you a free
pass

JASON

(thinks)

Hang on... We just might be okay.
They're only getting shot of the
big salary guys so far... we need
to get in quick

LIAM

... and do what?

JASON

Find their Ops guy... he'll need a
continuity crew... we need to make
sure he knows we're essential

EDWARD

How?

JASON

Take him on a show round or
something so he can see we know
what's what

LIAM

I'm not convinced...

The secretary appears round the office door again.

SECRETARY

(to Liam)

Liam, your boss has just got the
bullet. Do you want to say your
goodbyes?

Liam looks at Jason and Edward, with a stunned expression.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Suit yourself

The secretary disappears. The three are galvanised into
action and move quickly.

LIAM

Let's find this Ops guy

We hear Liam as they leave.

LIAM (CONT'D)
... we could take him to a hotel
for lunch

FADE TO:

INT. HEAD OFFICE TEA ROOM:

Small room with a work top with hot drinks / sink etc. There are a few tables & chairs. Nic is sitting studying files. Selwyn Reed's secretary (Sally) comes in carrying a cake. She puts it down on the work top then starts making a coffee.

NIC
(to secretary)
Are you okay?

SECRETARY
I'll survive... sorry, that's down
to you, I suppose.

Nic gives her a stern look then goes back to the files.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Would you like a piece of cake?

NIC
Sure... I'm way past worrying about
my figure

The secretary puts a slice on a plate with a fork and hands it to Nic. She tastes it.

NIC (CONT'D)
This is good. Did you make it?

SECRETARY
No, Gill Moore did. It's her
birthday

Nic looks up at her with a blank face.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Jill Moore... Alan Rudd's PA

Nic still looks blank.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Alan Rudd... your opposite number.
You sacked him yesterday

NIC
 (remembers)
 Oh him!... What was her name again?

STONE FACE
 Jill Moore

Nic consults a list in the files as she finishes the cake.
 Spots the name, picks up a red pen and strikes through it.

NIC
 (under breath)
 Good cake or not she's no longer
 needed
 (to secretary)
 Right, better get on... new people
 to meet, new friends to make

Nic leaves.

SECRETARY
 ... I don't think so

FADE TO:

INT ROSS' OFFICE. DAY.

Jason, Liam and Ed are milling about outside the office door.
 Inside Ross and Ruth are chatting but we can't hear what's
 being said.

EDWARD
 Is that him, the great white hope?

LIAM
 Looks a bit gormless

The door opens and Ruth emerges, walking straight past the
 three. Ross pops his head out and looks at them confused.

ROSS
 Who the hell are you lot?

JASON
 We wanted to introduce ourselves

ROSS
 (to himself)
 Ah, the first wave of toadies
 (to them)
 Come in

They traipse in after him.

ROSS (CONT'D)

So, you'll be the guys with the
donkey pictures then

LIAM

(confused)

Sorry?

JASON

I'm Jason Tiperick, Operations
Manager. This is Ed Shipham who
heads up sales, and Liam Tovey who
works in the marketing team... er,
is the marketing team as of a few
minutes ago

They all shake hands.

ROSS

Listen, can any of you work this
coffee machine? I'm as dry as a
nun's nasty bits...

Liam rushes to try to get it going but all his fiddling is to no avail. In the meantime the others press on without him.

JASON

I thought you might want to glance
at these... this month's scores on
the doors

Jason hands him the papers he was going to give Reed. Jason bubbles trying to impress. Ross studies the figures but is at a loss to understand them.

JASON (CONT'D)

(commentary)

... suffered a bit like for like
against last year overall, probably
due to the weather and loss of
wedding trade. They're all
buggering off abroad to get
hitched, even the preggies

ROSS

What the hell am I looking at? It's
like the bloody matrix

JASON

Compare the left hand columns to
the right...

Nic pops his head round the door.

NIC

Reed's toast. Give it ten minutes till the smell of him shitting himself blows through and you can blag his office

ROSS

Does that mean I'm officially the new Ops Director for group?

NIC

(grandstanding to the underlings)

What? Does it bollocks. You're getting a tad ahead of yourself. It just means you're the poor sod that'll cop for all the shit till we can find someone half decent to run the show

ROSS

Oh. Do I have to move?
(looks round office)
I was rather hoping that I could stay here

Ross gestures with his hand at the smart office.

NIC

You're joking, aren't you? We can get six of these skinny little twats in here

(gestures to the delegation)

... and don't get too cozy in dead man Reed's cave either. Charlie might want to sell the building off to try and make some money from this poxy deal. I'm off to make some other poor bastard's day.

(to Jason)

You. Where's Tom Keitch's office?

Jason looks bewildered and frightened.

JASON

Tom Keitch? Head of Finance?

NIC

No, Tom Keitch, Head of sitting on his arse waiting for the bullet, you dozy twat

JASON
... er... er, top floor, middle...
no, end office

NIC
You'll go far. Watch this one,
Ross. He's razor sharp. See ya

Nic leaves. There is a sudden bang. Ed has taken a belt from the coffee machine. He shakes his hand to numb the pain from the shock.

EDWARD
I don't think it's working

FADE TO:

EXT. INSIDE A CAR. DAY.

Inside a car travelling through countryside. Ed is driving, Liam next to him. Ross and Jason are in the back seat. Ross is on the phone.

ROSS
... somewhere on the...
(to Jason)
Where are we?

JASON
A57 heading towards Warrington

ROSS
Did you hear that? We're going to look at a couple of hotels...
(pause)
... because I've never actually been in one yet
(pause)
I know that's what I was told to do but you know how busy we've been.
When have I had the time? Tell me that!
(pause)
I had to get out of the office to tell the truth. The atmosphere was unbearable. It was like Calligula's birthday party...
(pause)
... I'm being shown round by a few of their blokes, Jason something and... leon?

LIAM

Liam

ROSS

Liam, and?...

EDWARD

Edward

ROSS

There's a couple of their hotels
within shooting distance of their
head office so they're taking me
for lunch

(pause)

... of course I'll charge it to
their budget. I'm not an idiot.
I'll be back about five'ish

(pause)

Love you too. Bye darling

Ross switches off his phone.

ROSS (CONT'D)

(to Jason)

One of the down sides of marrying
someone in the company's finance
team. There's nowhere to hide

We see a road sign for the hotel and a slip road.

EDWARD

We're here

The car swings into a car park and edges up to an automatic barrier. Edward opens his window and slips in a card and the barrier lifts. They drive through.

FADE TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA OF HOTEL. DAY.

Typical 3* reception area. There is a reception desk facing the entrance, carpeted, dichromic lighting, bland musak, uniformed workers darting about but generally not much happening. An oldish chap and a young woman man the reception desk. The party go over to the desk but have to wait while a customer is served by the woman, and the man is busy with some admin task. They wait and Ross becomes impatient.

ROSS

(to Jason)

Is this normal?

(MORE)

ROSS (CONT'D)
You make your guests stand around
until they're so bored they wander
off to another hotel?

JASON
Sorry. I'll sort it out...

ROSS
No. Leave it. See what happens

EDWARD
I'll go and book a table

Ed goes off leaving the other three to stew. Eventually the woman is free.

REC 2
Good afternoon. Welcome to The Riverview, part of the Sunshine Hotel group. How may I help you today?

The receptionist offers her hand to shake. Ross looks at it bemused.

ROSS
(to Jason)
What's this about?

JASON
It's a brand standard. The receptionist welcomes all our guests with a hand shake when they check in

ROSS
Then what? She gives them a hand shandy when they get to their room? I've never seen anything more ridiculous in all my career. What happens when someone checks out? You give them a wave bye bye?

LIAM
The staff don't like it... well, hate it actually.

JASON
They get a lot of abusive complaints

ROSS
Why?

JASON

Tired businessman, long queue. By the time he's shuffled to the front he's pissed off. Then the receptionist sticks out her hand. He's too polite to tell her to piss off, so he puts down his brief case, suitcase, laptop bag, and gym bag and shakes her hand, then picks them all up again only to be told we haven't got his room ready

ROSS

(to receptionist - not
shaking hand)

Hello, I'm Ross Bailey from Betta Hotels group head office...

REC 2

... and how may I help you today?

ROSS

Can you get the General Manager for me?

REC 2

I'm sorry, the General Manager isn't available today. Can anyone else help you?

ROSS

The deputy GM then?

REC 2

I'm sorry, the Deputy General Manager is not available right now. Can anyone else help?

JASON

(embarrassed, cutting in)
Is the Duty Manager here?

REC 2

I'm sorry, the Duty...

ROSS

For Christ's sake! Is there nobody here running the place? It's like the fucking Mary Celeste!

REC 2

(less polite)

They've all been called into head Office by your lot.

(MORE)

REC 2 (CONT'D)
They're probably picking up their
fucking P45's even as we speak!

She starts to look tearful. The 2nd receptionist looks up from what he's doing. He hasn't been listening.

REC 1
Is this bloke trying it on, Jen?

JASON
(to Ross)
We get a lot of that, what with
this only being a three star hotel

ROSS
(to Rec 1)
Who's in charge?

REC 1
What's it to you?

ROSS
I don't believe this. Is this how
your guests are greeted?

Ed reappears.

EDWARD
The restaurant's closed

JASON
(looks at watch)
Shit! It's after two

ROSS
It gets better. The restaurants
actually closed... what, for lunch?

JASON
It's policy to close early on
Mondays and Tuesdays, unless the
hotel is exceptionally busy. It's
to save costs

ROSS
Unbelievable... and what if a guest
wants something to eat after two
o'clock? It has been known in the
catering world

JASON
We've got a coffee shop... would
you like some cake?

LIAM
 (trying to help)
 They do Paninis

ROSS
 We'll skip lunch. Just give me a
 show round

Jason starts explaining to the receptionists what they'll be doing as we fade.

FADE TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OF HOTEL. DAY.

Ross is being shown round by an elderly housekeeper, Liam, Jason and Ed traipsing behind. A maintenance man in a boiler suit hovers behind. The corridor is narrow so they have to squeeze past each other as they walk, stop and talk.

HOUSEKEEPER
 (points at carpet)
 I've been here ten years and it
 hasn't been changed since I've been
 here... and I've been here ten
 years

They look at the carpet in the corridor which is worn and threadbare, and a trip hazard.

ROSS
 Someone could stumble over that...

Ross struggles to see, then looks at the dull light coming from the light fittings.

ROSS (CONT'D)
 ... the lighting's awful

MAINTENANCE MAN
 (chipping in)
 That's them energy saving bulbs
 they make me fit. No bloody use at
 all

HOUSEKEEPER
 ... this is a King room

She taps with her master key on the door before opening it, not giving the occupants time to react.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)
 Housekeeping!

She opens the door steps inside then immediately reacts.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)
Sorry!

There are noises of alarm from inside. She withdraws closing the door quickly.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)
It's occupied. Reception hasn't updated my rooms list properly

JASON
(to Ross)
We get a lot of that during the day, with it being a three star hotel

HOUSEKEEPER
It makes it very hard for the girls to turn the rooms around for a six o'clock let

ROSS
(trying to lighten things,
suggestively)
Has its compensations though, eh?

The ageing housekeeper glares at him.

HOUSEKEEPER
Are you implying my girls are on the game?

ROSS
(flustered)
No, I'm, er, it's just they may see...
(turning to maintenance man)
Why are the low energy bulbs no bloody use?

MAINTENANCE MAN
'Cos people nick 'em. It's bad enough they give off bugger all light but at a fiver a pop the scratters we get in here just have 'em away. Costs us a bloody fortune. Far more than what we're supposed to save on electricity. These tossers up in head office haven't got a clue, heads up their own arses...

JASON

Thanks Jack. We've taken up enough
of your time. You must be very
busy?

MAINTENANCE MAN

No

They try a different room. The housekeeper checks her paperwork.

HOUSEKEEPER

This is an executive... it says on
my sheet this is empty

She knocks as before.

HOUSEKEEPER (CONT'D)

Hello? Housekeeping...
(waits this time - no
answer)
We're okay

They all pile into the room. It is nicely laid up with a huge bed, ageing but smart fittings & furniture, en suite, lamps on. They crowd in, the maintenance man bringing up the rear.

MAINTENANCE MAN

Those lights shouldn't have been
left on... see, ordinary bulbs.
Nobody pinches them!

Ross' phone rings.

ROSS

Ross Bailey?

CUT TO:

INT. IAN TAYLOR'S OLD OFFICE. DAY.

Alternate between Nic's and Ross's location with the speech.
Nic is sat on the edge of the desk with Ruth on a chair the other side.

NIC

(annoyed)

Where the hell are you?

Ross tries to move away for privacy but the room is too cramped.

ROSS
(quietly)
Nic. You sound your usual happy self

NIC
We're in the middle of massive dismembering here. You're supposed to be at the centre of this picking through the body parts and gluing the bits together to make a new team

ROSS
I'm doing my bit. I'm at the coal face learning more about the mechanics of the brand

NIC
Don't give me that bullshit! You've done a runner 'cos you can't stand the smell of death

ROSS
You won't believe what I've found out already...

NIC
I couldn't give a toss! If you'd caught the chairman shagging his Grand national winner in a maid's bedroom I couldn't be less interested. Get your arse back here now and do your bit!

ROSS
Ruth was going through the personnel records for me

NIC
Ruth! She's a bloody grunt!
(to Ruth)
... no offence
(back to Ross)
It's your job. Now get your bag of bones back here double pronto. And bring the dream team back with you

ROSS
Dream team?

NIC
Yes! Those three shit lizards hanging out of your arse
(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)

(checks notes)

Tiperick, Tovey and Shipham. Tell them I've just flushed their respective bosses down the chute, so they're the last men standing

ROSS

... er, I'll pass on the good news
(Nic hangs up on him)

Nic is it possible...? no, gone.
(to housekeeper)

Something urgent's come up back at head office so we're going to have to leave now

HOUSEKEEPER

You haven't seen the state of these sheets yet. You've no idea what the girls have to put up with...

ROSS

(exits through the muddle)
I'll be coming back to do a full inspection soon. We can have a long chat about...

MAINTENANCE MAN

They all say that
(to housekeeper, points at Ross)

We'll never see this bugger's face again

ROSS

(sarcastic to maintenance man)

Thanks again. I really appreciate your time

Ross, Liam, Jason and Ed shuffle down the corridor.

FADE TO:

INT. INSIDE THE CAR. DAY.

Same seating as before. They drive in an embarrassing silence for a short while. Jason breaks the silence.

JASON

It's not one of our best hotels

ROSS

I should hope so

LIAM

We do a lot of coaches, mainly OAPs
on tours. They're a nightmare

ROSS

(understands)

I know. We use them when we're
desperate for occupancy. They pinch
everything from the rooms that
isn't screwed down, and eat like
locusts... all inclusives are the
worst, obviously. If breakfast's
not included they bugger off to the
caffs up the road... Can we stop
for a sandwich somewhere? I'm
starving

FADE TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA OF HEAD OFFICE AS BEFORE. DAY.

The group negotiate the revolving door and enter walking
straight past the dragon on the reception desk, the others
trailing, trying to keep up.

STONE FACE

(to Ross)

Can I help you?

Ross ignores her and walks straight up the stairs.

ROSS

(under breath)

Sod off sweetheart

As they walk into the open plan it's deserted bar a couple of
angry looking people filling cardboard boxes.

JASON

(looks round room)

What the...?

FADE TO:

INT. IAN TAYLORS OLD OFFICE. DAY.

Ross is behind his desk with Ruth stood in front of it. She
has reports in her hand and is briefing him.

RUTH

Nicola said you have to go through
this list today and red pen the
dead

ROSS

How does she expect me to do that?
I've never met these people. How do
I know who should survive and who
gets the black spot?

RUTH

She said it'd be easy. If you
haven't met them yet they're toast

ROSS

That only leaves me with three
people... and I'm not convinced
about them. That Liam seems a bit
simple to me. Three extra people to
help me absorb twenty four new
hotels. She's taking the piss

RUTH

... er, I think this comes directly
from Sir Charles

ROSS

Is he involved at this level of
detail? Talk about micro managing.
This is ridiculous. Hasn't he
anything better to do?... buy the
Isle of Man or something?

RUTH

I'm only passing it along. Don't
get titty with me

ROSS

(resigned)

When do I start this killing spree?

RUTH

To be honest Nic's already been
through the building like ISIS
through a Kibbutz. There's only the
stragglers to do

ROSS

Okay...

(sighs)

Have they all been told they're on
notice of being at risk?

RUTH

All done through group a month ago,
so you can pop them off one after
the other like Bernard Matthews on
a Christmas turkey line

ROSS

Give me their files then start
reeling them in... and could you
get me a sandwich or something? I
didn't get any lunch

FADE TO:

INT. SAME SCENE. NIGHT.

Same office but dark outside. Ross is slumped in his chair exhausted. His phone rings. He looks at it before answering. We see 'Pete Smith' on caller display.

ROSS

Pete, how's it going down south?
(pause)
You lucky bastard! She's a babe.
I've had Stalin up here... yeah,
wearing a long black robe and
carrying a scythe... it's to let
them know what's coming. Gives them
a chance to run...
(pause)
The lot! You jammy bastard. I only
get to keep three, and they look
like lobotomy rejects...
(pause)
... you keep twenty? How did you
swing that?
(annoyed)
Come off it that isn't fair...
(pause)
Well, I'm telling her, if it's
discretionary, then it's my call
not the angel of death's
(pause)
... no, 'course I'm not scared of
her. I don't report to her. She's
just a functionary...
(pause)
She's a tool for me to use... call
her a tool?... a fiver says I dare

Nic suddenly appears next to him.

NIC
Dare what?

ROSS
(startled)
Jesus Nicola! Can't you knock?
(to Pete)
I'll call you back Pete

Ross ends the call.

NIC
Was that Pete Smith?

ROSS
Yes

NIC
How's he doing down south with the
Rose Hotels merger?

ROSS
I'm a bit miffed, to be honest,
Nic. He says he's kept all his
people down there. He said because
it's a merger not a takeover he's
allowed to pick and choose how many
he can keep on the books... his
discretion

NIC
Oh, is that what he told you?
You're more gullible than I
thought... and I suppose you're
about to tell me to go and fuck
myself, you're keeping more people
eh?

ROSS
No!... not in those exact words

NIC
Pete's pulling your pisser, you
numpty! They've had the full cull
down there as well... the lot went.
You're the lucky one. You at least
got to keep the three wise monkeys.
Pete's well and royally screwed! He
has to take on thirty new hotels
with no extra support, six of them
in London. Can you imagine that?
Six budget hotels in the middle of
the capital...
(MORE)

NIC (CONT'D)

all the pervs, dossers and tramps
staggering in and out with no one
to staff the place but a bunch of
Albanian gangsters and cockney
retards?

ROSS

Yeah, but Pete's got more resources
than me at group

NIC

Piss off. They're a bunch of kids,
barely out of the womb. You've got
big Melanie. She's worth ten of
anybody on Pete's team

ROSS

Has Charlie got a thing going for
Big Mel?

NIC

He admires the woman's
professionalism. He thinks she's a
great little operator

ROSS

Little's stretching it a bit... she
doesn't need much water in the bath

NIC

Some people like big women...
Charlie certainly does. You've seen
his wife

ROSS

Christ, yes. You know old Charlie
started this business from a
transport cafe. That's where I
reckon his bigger half developed
her taste for eating everything she
can reach

NIC

Don't ever let him hear you making
jokes about his beloved. He has a
long memory and bears grudges. Did
I ever tell you he bought the
Shetland Hotel just to sack the
head Waiter because his brother
couldn't get a table one Saturday
night?

ROSS

That's quality evil, that is, not
like the stuff we do

NIC

Right. We're entry level light
compared to him

ROSS

Talking about sandwiches...

Ruth enters with a selection of sandwiches and a pot of coffee, cups etc. on a tray.

RUTH

Joining us Nic?

NIC

No thanks. I'm off to see if
there's anyone skulking in the
toilets I can flush out and kill
off before I head south. Are you
travelling back tonight Ross?

ROSS

No, I think I'll stay over. I can't
face two hours in the car with Jo
Whiley and Cerys Matthews

NIC

Right! I'm off. Be happy, and if
you can't be happy, make some other
poor fucker's life a misery too...
Hey! That could be the new group
motto. Luv yah and leave yah!

Nic leaves.

ROSS

She brings so much joy to so many
people

RUTH

(arranging crockery)
I could only get Brie and grape.
It's all they had left

ROSS

I hate grapes. Can you pick them
out for me Ruth?

RUTH

You seriously want me to pick
through your sandwiches?

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)
(looks at him. He does)
.. okay, no problem

ROSS
I haven't got the energy. Can you chew for me as well? You know, like gulls do... just regurgitate the mess into my mouth... I'm not implying anything sexual with that

RUTH
I know... you're just worn out

Jason appears at the door.

JASON
Is this a bad time?

ROSS
(sighs)
Come in...
(sarcastic)
Help yourself to a sandwich

To his surprise he does, and starts munching as he speaks.

JASON
We've got an issue at the Riverview, you know, where we were this afternoon

ROSS
I do remember its bloody name.
What's the problem?

JASON
Well, you know that female receptionist you swore at?

ROSS
(defensive)
I didn't swear at her... I swore,
I'll admit, but it was to myself...

JASON
Whatever. Anyway she's walked out

ROSS
No biggie. Good riddance. She was like a fart in a trance anyway

JASON
The thing is... Unison

ROSS
(alert)
What?

JASON
Yeah, we're unionised... well,
we're not at head office but they
are at the hotels

ROSS
(to Ruth)
Did you know this?

RUTH
I thought you knew. It was in your
briefing pack

ROSS
Don't be clever. You know nobody
reads that. It's five inches thick

JASON
There's been a walk out across the
region

ROSS
Jesus Christ!

JASON
... and of course there's no
management back up, what with...
y'know... events today

ROSS
Oh Christ!... this is all Nicola's
fault! The whole thing should have
been done in phases... sod her, sod
her!

RUTH
Do you want to eat your sandwich
while I get Nicola on the phone?

FADE TO:

INT. SAME OFFICE. NIGHT.

Ross is still in his chair. In front of him on the desk is a plate with a pile of grapes and the remnant of a sandwich. He is listening to his mobile phone.

CUT TO:

INT. NIC'S CAR INTERIOR. NIGHT

Nic is driving south, the phone on speaker. She is going ballistic. Cut between scenes with dialogue

NIC

For Christ's sake! You've only been in charge a few hours. A bloody strike! You... you'll go down in history as the biggest cock up on two legs since... I don't know a since... I can't think of a bigger cock up!

ROSS

Nic, it wasn't my fault. I didn't swear at the fucking woman. Okay, I'll admit I swore, but not at her... near her

NIC

Stop flapping...

ROSS

In fact it was her that swore at me! I should be giving her a disciplinary, that's a written warning offence

NIC

(shouts)

You useless pile of waffling shite!
(angry)
... Get her on the phone and apologise right now. Lick her kitten heels if you have to... just head this thing off at the pass. Jesus, the press'll have a field day. If Charlie gets wind, you're down the shit-well and he'll be poking your head under with a big stick

Nic hangs up. Ross, on the verge of losing it, swears at his phone but struggles for appropriate curses.

NIC (CONT'D)

Fucking... useless... bloody... twat!

FADE TO

INT. IAN TAYLOR'S OLD OFFICE. NIGHT.

Ross is on the mobile to the receptionist eating shit pie.

ROSS

Yes, I see what you mean...

(pause)

I can only apologise for the misunderstanding. I wasn't swearing at you, I was swearing, yes, but not at you... just near you...

(pause)

I know it was inappropriate language, yes, for anybody, let alone the group Regional Operations Director...

(pause)

In fairness you used the eff word too...

(pause)

No, I'm not trying to be funny...

FADE TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA OF RIVERVIEW HOTEL. NIGHT.

As before but busy. Ross is at the back of a huge queue trying to book in. He is on the mobile to his wife, cases all around his feet, laptop bag over his shoulder.

ROSS

... no, just for tonight. Sorry, darling, I couldn't face the drive...

(pause)

... it's been a truly awful day... I've still got the taste of blood in my mouth...

(pause)

No I hadn't forgotten your brother was coming round to show us his Disney videos. It's a pleasure I'll just have to forego...

(pause)

... tell him pressure of work. Tell him we're in the middle of this bloody merger. He'll understand...

(pause)

... I don't suppose they do get many mergers in the army, no, but he'll still understand, surely?...

(pause)

(MORE)

ROSS (CONT'D)
We'll just have to do it another
night then. Got to go, I'm at the
desk, love you, bye

He hangs up & puts the phone in his pocket, picks up the array of cases and shuffles forward to the desk. There is the same woman he's just apologised to on the phone. She gives a big smile and the spiel.

REC 2
Good afternoon. Welcome to The Riverview, part of the Sunshine Hotel group. How may I help you today?

She offers her hand for him to shake. He is laden with cases. He looks at her proffered hand as we fade.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE 1

Cast list - Series main characters:

Ross Bailey - Middle aged, running to fat, pleasant looking medium height, corporate type, educated

Ruth Blood - mid thirties, smart, good looking, clever, patient, shapely, businesslike

Nicola Starling - late forties, corporate dresser, thin, attractive (once a stunner), educated

Jason Tipurick - late twenties, corporate, ambitious, medium build, good looking, smartly dressed, sharp

Liam Tovey - late twenties, running to fat, corporate but scruffy, early balding, unattractive

Ed Shipham - early thirties, weedy, corporate, slower than the rest, nice guy

Selwyn Reed - Early fifties, beefy, balding, bullet headed, corporate, hard faced

Receptionist 1 - old, sour faced, pinched features, jobs worth

Receptionist 2 - Young, attractive, smartly dressed

Receptionist 3 - thirties, drab, big built

Housekeeper - mid fifties, homely, not bright

Maintenance man - Mid fifties, not bright, tall, pot bellied

Andrew Strong - Early forties, tall, slim, handsome, God's gift

Tom Carvery - Fifties, fat, pig faced, scruffy corporate, educated

Dominique Laurents - late 20s, Stunner, thin but shapely, clever

Vanessa Hicks - looks like Camila Batmanghelidjh

Terry Dent - Mid 50s, average looking, corporate, tough faced, northern accent

Pushy man - business type, mid 40s, dull and chubby

Jeb Shcneider - late 30s, tall, handsome, slick

Ludmilla - late 20s, curvy & flash looking