

STEP UP

Written by

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Based on, If Any

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INT. OFFICE - MARK'S CUBICLE - DAY

MARK, early 30s, portly, well dressed, is at his desk. He types away on his keyboard, but looks miserable.

He looks at his screen, frowning. The screen shows a mess of bad grammar, terrible spelling, and generally poor quality, with his edits standing out due to their better structure.

He checks the author of the file. It's none other than Harold Price, his manager.

Mark sighs, shaking his head.

He gets back to work.

Behind him, a coworker passes by, and looks over his shoulder before sneering at him.

COWORKER

Aw, come on, Marky, lighten up. You need to quit moping, you debby downer.

The coworker walks away. Mark clenches his fist, before relaxing and sighing.

MARK

Christ, that's the third time today. Ever since the boss was hired.

He stares at the screen for a moment, having a thoughtful expression. He pulls out his phone and does a quick internet search of "should i quit my job" (sic).

Mark looks over an article that talks about reasons one might quit their job, including bad management, hostile work environment, and more.

He runs a hand over his face, slouching in his seat. He glances up at the clock, which reads 12:30 PM.

MARK (CONT'D)

Time for lunch, I guess.

He scratches his head before he stands up, grabbing his lunch bag from his desk

He leaves for the break room.

INT. OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Mark arrives, lunch bag in hand. He approaches the coffee machine and fills it up with water from the cooler.

He prepares to make coffee when he hears a commotion behind him.

TERRY, 49, slim and short, is flinching while their boss, HAROLD, 29, average height, yells at him.

HAROLD

You think I LIKE having lazy employees like you around? Huh? You think that's funny?

TERRY

N-no, sir, it's not funny. I apologize, it--

HAROLD

No excuses! I want it done by next week, or your ass is grass! Got it?

Terry nods meekly.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Good.

Harold turns around, before noticing Mark staring, and narrows his eyes.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

What are you lookin' at?

Mark says nothing. Harold snorts; he walks past and intentionally shoves Mark aside on the way out.

Silence for a moment. Mark starts the coffee. He approaches Terry.

MARK

Hey, you alright, man? What the hell was that about?

Terry sighs and puts a hand on his head.

TERRY

Harold being... Harold. He was chewing me out for something I couldn't control.

Mark tilts his head. Terry coughs and continues.

TERRY (CONT'D)

He wanted me to fix the coffee machine, but it wasn't broken, as I'm sure you can see. Wouldn't take no for an answer.

Mark goes wide-eyed, and frowns.

MARK

What's his deal? He's been a man child ever since his dad made him the manager.

TERRY

Beats me. All I know is that he's practically invincible, since nobody wants to invoke Price Senior's wrath.

Mark furrows his brow.

MARK

What a douchebag. There's got to be a reason for his bull.

TERRY

I've been here long enough to know his dad's got a heart of gold. I have no idea why his son's an asshole.

The coffee machine beeps. Mark walks away to pour two cups, before coming back and handing one to Terry.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Thanks. Ugh, this is so unfair.

MARK

I know, man.

A pause as the two sip their beverages.

Mark nurses his drink, and sits at a table, before he stops and smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)

You know, that's it!

Terry raises a brow.

TERRY

What is?

MARK

Harold's a jerkwad, but his dad's a sweetheart. I think if I go over his head, I can get him canned!

Mark smiles. Terry gains an alarmed expression.

TERRY

Mark, are you nuts? Harold may be an ass, but I'm sure he knows how to keep this stuff away from his dad! If he finds out--

Mark shakes his head.

MARK

So what? I can take him.

TERRY

You don't understand, man. I mean, you could take him in a fight, but job-wise? He'd ruin you! That's why nobody's stood up to him!

MARK

We'll hash out the details later. I need to eat. I'm starving, man.

He opens the bag and takes out a sandwich and a bag of chips. He looks at Terry, who stares at the food wistfully.

MARK (CONT'D)

Forgot your lunch?

Terry nods.

Mark splits his sandwich in half and gives part of it to him. Terry beams and digs in.

INT. OFFICE - MARK'S CUBICLE - DAY

Mark is at his desk, working. He looks more determined instead of miserable like before.

Terry approaches, fidgeting.

TERRY

Mark.

Mark looks up.

MARK

Oh yeah, I was about to drag you over. Alright, so here's what I got in mind.

TERRY

I'm listening.

MARK

Okay. So, Harold's likely got a bad attitude with everyone, not just you. But it sounds like you're his most recent target.

Terry winces.

MARK (CONT'D)

I know, you're gonna hate me, but listen. You can do something that pisses him off to make him focus on you, and while he's running his mouth...

TERRY

Uh huh?

MARK

I head off to his dad's office to bust him! Bam, Harold's out of here.

TERRY

You make it sound so easy.

MARK

I've recognized the patterns to know it should be easy as pie.

TERRY

Should?

MARK

Yep.

Mark gets ready to say something else, but Harold's voice suddenly cuts in.

HAROLD

And just what patterns are you two bleating about?

Mark and Terry turn to see Harold standing there, arms folded, looking unamused.

MARK

Oh, the patterns of the stock market. You know?

Harold rolls his eyes.

HAROLD

I'm not deaf, you know. I heard every single word.

TERRY

Shit.

Harold leans over, giving the two of them a very dangerous look.

HAROLD

You know, I'm feeling a bit generous. I'm not usually generous, but today's kind of special. So let's have a deal.

Mark and Terry stare at him.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You two forget about this conversation, and I'll forget about it as well. No fuss, no muss.

MARK

And if we don't?

Harold snarls.

HAROLD

Then I'll be sure to make both of your lives hell. I will NOT let either of you destroy what I've made.

Mark doesn't back down, and instead, stands up, looking Harold in the eye.

MARK

What you made?! Look around! This place has been falling apart ever since your daddy brought you on board!

Other workers walk out of their cubicles to see what's going on. Harold sweats, and balls his fists.

HAROLD

And without me, the lot of you
would be out of jobs, begging for
scraps!

MARK

We did just fine before your
abusive ass came! And we'll do even
better when your dad finds out
about this!

HAROLD

Oh yeah? It's your word against
mine. And why would he believe some
lowly grunt over his own boy?

Harold spots something behind Mark, and looks over his
shoulder.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

The hell's that?

Mark turns, and sees that it's Terry holding a cell phone.
With the camera pointed right at them.

MARK

Terry?

TERRY

Price Senior will believe video
evidence. Sorry, Boss, but I can't
take it anymore.

Harold gives a truly bestial snarl.

HAROLD

You punk! GIVE IT HERE YOU LITTLE--

He reaches for the phone. Mark cuts in and shoves him back,
before swiping the phone from Terry's hand.

MARK

I got it!

Mark scrambles towards Price Senior's office.

HAROLD

God damn it!

Harold bolts after him.

INT. OFFICE - CEO'S OFFICE - DAY

PRICE SENIOR, 60s, balding, is at his desk, chatting on the phone.

PRICE SENIOR

Yes, yes, I understand. The poor man obviously could use a break after that injury. I'll arrange for a replacement. I wish him well.

He puts the phone down. Mark bursts through the door.

MARK

Sir! I got something you need to see!

Harold rushes in and slams into Mark, just barely avoiding falling over.

HAROLD

Don't listen to him! He's just... playing a game! Yeah, it's all just a game! Give it here.

Mark holds it out of his reach.

MARK

Mr. Price, I have evidence that your son is abusing his position!

Harold's father goes wide-eyed. Harold and Mark fight over the phone, trying to get control of it.

PRICE SENIOR

Enough.

Both men stop cold and turn to look at him.

PRICE SENIOR (CONT'D)

Such an accusation against my son makes me concerned. But you mention evidence, which means that I do have a reason for it.

HAROLD

Dad, you don't need to--

PRICE SENIOR

Silence, boy. I'll be the judge of your innocence. Give. Me. The. Phone.

Mark hands it over happily. Price Senior plays the video, watching quietly. Harold squirms where he stands, looking very uncomfortable.

Price Senior remains stone-faced until the video ends. He is silent for a long moment. Then he looks up at his son with pure fury.

PRICE SENIOR (CONT'D)

You and I need to have a little chat, young man. Mr. Stacker, you're free to go. My son... will be facing consequences for his actions, as any adult should.

Harold hangs his head, defeated. Mark quickly runs out, grinning like an idiot.

INT. OFFICE - MARK'S CUBICLE - DAY

Mark works at his desk, looking genuinely happy. Harold is seen walking away from his father's office, followed by Price Senior.

The son and father leave the room, and Terry passes by Mark, smiling wide. The office is full of cheering all around.

TERRY

Was that...?

MARK

Yep.

TERRY

Pinch me, I must be dreaming.

Mark reaches and pinches Terry on the arm, making him wince.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Ow! Okay, not dreaming. Hell yes! You took him to town!

MARK

All thanks to you, buddy. Gotta admit, bringing your phone out like that and recording Harold's buffoonery? Major guts.

Terry rubs the back of his head, shy.

TERRY

Oh, it's nothing.

Mark laughs.

MARK

You know, us heroes deserve a
reward, yeah?

TERRY

Yeah?

MARK

Why don't we get dinner after work?
My treat.

Terry gives a big smile.

TERRY

You're awesome.

MARK

No, we're awesome.

Mark and Terry high-five.