



THE WAY OF ALL FISH

INT. MS ASQUITH'S OFFICE

MS. ASQUITH

You know, Miss Riverton - Jane - you're the best secretary I've ever had. I can't tell you the idiots I had to put up with until you came along. I don't think I could get along without you, Jane.

MISS RIVERTON

Joan. Well... thank you. I try to do my job.

MS. ASQUITH

Joan? Oh, what a fool I am.

MISS RIVERTON

No, no, no -

MS. ASQUITH

To have had you as my secretary for so long and not know your first name.

MISS RIVERTON

Well, you don't call me by my first name. And you were very close. Jane... Joan. Shall I get the other bottle of wine?

MS. ASQUITH

Yes. Thank you. You know, Joan, I'm having just a wonderful time. I'm glad the Stradners cancelled our sailing trip around East Hampton.

MISS RIVERTON

This is very pleasant.

MS. ASQUITH

So... tell me more about your childhood.

MISS RIVERTON

When I was young I so wanted to be someone special.

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MS. ASQUITH

Well, you are someone special.

MISS RIVERTON

I mean, you know, someone special, who everyone knows is special. I guess what I'm saying is I wanted to be famous.

MS. ASQUITH

Ah, well.

MISS RIVERTON

Because being famous is... like being immortal, isn't it?

MS. ASQUITH

Well - only if you're very famous for a very long time.

MISS RIVERTON

But you can be. Anyone can be. And I know how. You can kill someone famous... It's just meeting someone famous isn't so easy. When I was younger that's all I thought about - who can I kill, who's famous and where can I meet him? I thought of killing the president, but everyone who tries to kill the president is such a slug. I mean, I made a list of successful presidential assassins who still had some kind of stature, and you know who there is. Booth. Because he killed Lincoln. And where are you going to find another Lincoln?

MS. ASQUITH

You... you've given this a lot of thought.

MISS RIVERTON

I have. I mean, if there was another way - but I can't write a novel. I can't become a movie star. I can't even invent a vaccine because I have no talent. Not that talent is any guarantee of fame, but with talent I'd have a shot at it. An honest shot. And I'd have taken it.

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MISS RIVERTON (CONT'D)

I didn't want an easy way out. I didn't want to resort to murder. But fame is fame. My curse has always been that I'm a special person with no special ability.

MS. ASQUITH

Yes. That... is a problem.

MISS RIVERTON

And then, as the years passed, I realized how hard it is to meet someone famous and I thought maybe I should just kill someone rich and important or socially prominent.

MS. ASQUITH

How far away is the restaurant you ordered from? Tokyo? Just joking. But it has been a long time since you ordered.

MISS RIVERTON

I've made you nervous, haven't I?

MS. ASQUITH

What? Not at all.

MISS RIVERTON

Yes, I have. I've ruined everything.

MS. ASQUITH

Nonsense. You've ruined nothing. Talking about murder is just a little... always a little... edgy.

MISS RIVERTON

I think I should go. I've really upset you. You know this was just a hypothetical discussion. It's not like I would really kill someone. I'm not like some madman who gets fired from the post office and shoots everyone for revenge.

MS. ASQUITH

That's right.

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MISS RIVERTON

I'm just this little secretary who makes thirty thousand a year and that's all I'll ever be.

MS. ASQUITH

No! Joan! What are you talking about?

MISS RIVERTON

But you're only paying me thirty thousand a year and I don't think you'd pay me less than I'm worth.

MS. ASQUITH

No... Okay, how would you like to be my assistant? I'll give you a very nice raise.

MISS RIVERTON

I... I wish I could be sure you're not doing this because in some way I made you nervous.

MS. ASQUITH

Don't be ridiculous. Why would you make me nervous? Because when you were younger you wanted to kill someone famous? Hey! Who hasn't wanted to... pick up a gun and shoot a few famous people at one time or another...

MISS RIVERTON

Actually I only going to shoot a man. If it was a woman, I'd stab or strangle her... But if you try to stab or strangle a woman and her strength is too close to yours she can inflict so much damage you can't get the knife in. That's why I got so strong.

The phone rings.

MS. ASQUITH

I'll get it.

(answering)

Hello?... Hi Charles. Miss Riverton and I are just about to have dinner together. In the office. Just the two of us.

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CONTINUED: (4)

The buzzer sounds.

MISS RIVERTON

That'll be the food.

Miss riverton moves to exit.

MS. ASQUITH

And the delivery man is here and Miss Riverton is just going to get our food now. She's walking out of the room... she's... Charles! Miss Riverton is psychotic! She's just told me she wants to kill someone famous - but now she wants to kill someone important to be famous - she's just terrifying. But I think I might be safe if I just do whatever she says - -

Miss riverton enters with take away in hand.

MS. ASQUITH

- - I have to hang up now, Charles. Miss Riverton is back and I don't want to keep her waiting.

Miss riverton begins unpacking the food.

MISS RIVERTON

You're looking at me so, so hard.

MS. ASQUITH

You're fascinating. This is fascinating. It's almost relaxing. I wonder if this is what Dostoyevsky meant when he wrote about the voluptuousness of surrender.

MISS RIVERTON

Who's Dostoyevsky? Stalin?

MS. ASQUITH

No, he's Dostoyevsky.

MISS RIVERTON

Oh, I just thought... you were talking about Hitler before. So I thought Dostoyevsky is Stalin.

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MS. ASQUITH

Miss Riverton, I don't think I can submit to you if you go on like this.

MISS RIVERTON

What do you mean?

MS. ASQUITH

I mean, I can't play cat and mouse with a bimbo.

MISS RIVERTON

That really upsets me. I'm not a bimbo and I'm very strong.

MS. ASQUITH

As strong as I am?

MISS RIVERTON

You saw me carry those file boxes.

MS. ASQUITH

No, I didn't.

MISS RIVERTON

You said you did.

MS. ASQUITH

I lied.

MISS RIVERTON

Well... I carried them.

MS. ASQUITH

Really? So did I.

MISS RIVERTON

You carried file boxes?

MS. ASQUITH

Yes.

MISS RIVERTON

How many?

MS. ASQUITH

How many did you carry?

MISS RIVERTON

When?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MS. ASQUITH

Anytime, the time you carried the most.

MISS RIVERTON

Six.

MS. ASQUITH

So did I.

MISS RIVERTON

You carried six file boxes.

MS. ASQUITH

Absolutely.

Miss Riverton studies her for a moment then drops to the floor and begins doing marine push ups.

MISS RIVERTON

Can you do this?

MS. ASQUITH

Sheer physical strength isn't that necessary, Miss Riverton. Will counts too.

MISS RIVERTON

No it doesn't. Get down on the ground and try a push up, Ms Asquith, I challenge you.

Miss Asquith gets slowly down, brushes away some dust on the rug and sits back up.

MISS RIVERTON

See? You can't do it. But don't give up trying. Keep using that will of yours. You know what makes you strong? Carrying file boxes, climbing three flights of stairs to a walk-up so you can live in Manhattan, hard terrible labor. It's insane to think that a multimillionaire woman like you who hires a trainer to get her little hour of physical labor would be as strong as someone who actually...

Miss Riverton breaks off as Ms Asquith suddenly rises in a marine push, and another and then another... Then another.

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MS. ASQUITH

You're right! It's not will. But is it that personal trainer. See, it would be very hard to kill me Miss Riverton, I'd inflict a lot of damage. Well, now, don't cry. That's no way to end a contest. Everything is just the same as it was this morning. And you weren't crying then. Now let's have our picnic, shall we? It's getting late.

MISS RIVERTON

So you're going to fire me?

MS. ASQUITH

Never. You're going to be the reason I stay in shape.

END.