

Ellie has just walked in on Jack interviewing a copywriter called Monikka and has decided that he's obviously thinking of replacing her - she's been too tricky with him for too long. Rather than wait for the inevitable, she hands him her letter of resignation.

Ellie was chucking the contents of her desk into a black bin liner when Jack reached her office.

‘Ellie, this is stupid, I'm not accepting your resignation.’

She ignored it, ignored him and kept on filling the bag.

Jack lowered his head and came into the room, placing the envelope on the desk. He watched as Ellie kept sorting through her papers and winced as she stamped on a blow-up strawberry to get the air out of it.

‘Come on Ellie, stop being so dramatic.’

Ellie continued to ignore him. He looked at how she was holding herself, how she was moving and it all shouted, 'Manic woman,' to him.

‘Look, I think you got hold of the wrong end of the stick with Monikka.’

No reaction, still the frenzied sorting and chucking.

‘It's Gavin's job to keep up to date with the creative talent out there. He hasn't been doing that, so I am.’

Ellie gave him a disbelieving look. ‘Don't waste your breath, Jack. Besides, Monikka's an excellent copywriter. A crap human being, but an excellent writer. There might be a few personality glitches, like between her and everyone else who works here, but I'm sure you'll sort them out.’

Ellie tied the top of the bag and looked at the few remaining items on her desk. She picked up the wastepaper bin and swept everything into it.

‘Well, I’m off,’ she said in a brittle voice. Hauling the bin liner into her arms, she turned and moved towards her handbag.

Jack got to it before she could.

‘Right, stop this now,’ he said. ‘Calm down and talk to me.’

‘Give me my bag, Jack.’

‘Not until you’ve calmed down and we’ve had a talk.’

Jack got himself between her and the door. He lowered his voice and tried to establish eye contact. ‘Ellie, I would have hoped that we could sit down and discuss anything that was bothering you,’ he said. ‘You know I’m always willing to listen to any concerns that you have.’ That sounded pretty reasonable to him.

‘Ha!’ Ellie said, with some force. ‘Ha! bloody ha. Pardon me while my pelvic floor collapses.’

There was a standoff during which Jack debated whether to try again, before the decision was taken out of his hands.

‘If you don’t give me my bag back, I am going to slap your smug face, you arrogant Yorkshire git,’ Ellie shouted at him. ‘I’m going home. I don’t care if you think I should be handing in my notice or not. That’s my decision. And stop pretending that you’re put out about it. You’ve been chipping away at me since you got here.’

Jack clutched her handbag tighter. 'Ellie, don't be so idiotic, and stop sodding shouting at me. All I've ever tried to get you to do is raise your game. You know I think your work's brilliant.'

He went to take a step towards her, but Ellie let out a too high, too quick laugh and it made him hesitate.

When Ellie spoke again she did it so quietly that he found it more disconcerting than when she had shouted.

'Oh, come on, Jack,' she said. 'I'm never going to be good enough to meet your high standards. I'm not high-profile enough, not glamorous enough, not Monikka Steel enough.'

Before he could stop her, she had wrenched the handbag out of his arms, and while he was still nonplussed by that, he felt the flat of her hand on his chest and she shoved him out of her way. Then she just walked out of the door.

Jack looked at the doorway as if expecting her to reappear. What the hell? Nobody pushed him about. If there was pushing to be done, he did it.

And how had she managed to shift him anyway? It must be all that fury. She was boiling at the end; he could see it in her eyes.

He sat down heavily in Ellie's chair. He'd made a right mess of that, completely ballsed it up.

Looking around the office, he noticed the mini-fridge on the cabinet. Had that always been there? Soon he had a bottle in his hand and was slamming it against the edge of the desk to get off the top. He took a long drink. That

Monikka stunt was a mistake. Now he was a copywriter down and just about to can the creative director. Why the hell had Ellie gone completely over the top like that when sacking her hadn't ever been on the agenda?

Didn't she understand how these things worked? You had a spat with your boss; he let you get away with it for a while; then he slapped you down and gave you a bit of a taste of how bad things could be. Result: you took the hint and toed the line.

How she'd managed to survive this long in the business when she was so sensitive was a mystery. Everything he said to her, she took the wrong way.

He had another swig of lager.

Maybe, though, if he were honest, she did have a point about him chipping away at her. It was just so damned annoying seeing someone who was as good as she was not making more of herself. That's all he'd been trying to do, wasn't it?

He'd let her cool off for a couple of days then send Lesley round to talk to her. She'd listen to Lesley.

How come she'd got him on the back foot when he was meant to have the upper hand? As he thought of the way he'd just mashed up those different parts of his body, Ellie's comment about his tendency to use 'a tortuous set of metaphors' drifted into his head and he took another long drink.

Why did he feel as if he'd lost their fight when she was the one with her possessions in a black plastic bin liner?

Jack frowned as he thought about coming into this office tomorrow and seeing Ellie's empty chair and suddenly he was back in his first-ever flat, the one he'd had in Leeds.

The memory came out of nowhere and made him put down his bottle on the desk with a clunk.

He sat there for a while trying to find some sense of calm before slowly bending down and retrieving the things that Ellie had swept into the bin. Carefully he put them on the desk, trying to position them where she'd had them before, as if doing so he could peg her back into place. Or perhaps, if he got the order exactly right, conjure her up again.

She had no right to leave him like that. No bloody right at all.