

'Initiative'

by Michael Mulcahy

Characters:

Harry: 22-years-old. Lazy, uninspired general convenience store Clark.

Glenn: 25-years-old. Slightly overweight and grubby looking deliveryman.

Jane: 22-years-old. Friend of Harry's as well as his love interest. Often pops in to see him at work.

Customer: Early thirties. Scruffy-looking with a beard.

Synopsis

Harry is a bored and frustrated Clark at a local General convenience store. He spends his days doing very little work and talking to his friend, Glenn about everything from pornography to Transformers 2. He's also visited by his friend, Jane, whom he has been in love with for year but has never told her. When a she becomes interested in dating Harry's boss, it prompts him to finally confront her.

SCENE 1 - DAY - Inside the general convenience store.

Harry is standing up behind the counter looking as bored as ever. After a moment, a customer enters the store and

approaches Harry, who is daydreaming and remains completely oblivious. After another moment, Harry gets a small shock when he notices the man standing in front of him.

Customer: Hey. Um, do you guys sell any rope?

Harry: What kind of rope?

Customer: You know, the kind of thick, strong rope you use to tie heavy things?

Harry: Um, I'm not sure. Have a look over at the back there.

Customer: Thanks.

The customer heads over to the other side of the store. Browsing the shelves. At the same time, Jane enters, smiling at Harry, who beams back.

Harry: Hey, you.

Jane: Hey, how's work going?

Jane hoists herself up so that she is sitting on the counter, swaying her legs.

Harry: Shithouse. I hate this fucking place.

Jane: (sighs) I'll never understand why you won't just quit.

Harry: I could. But then what else would I do? It's not as if there's a whole lot better out there. In any case, the last time I quit my job I ended up here.

Jane: I think that if you really hate your job, you should quit, and get a better one this time. You're probably going to get fired soon anyway. You might as well go out with some dignity for chrissake.

Harry: Who said I was going to get fired?

Jane: That boss of yours. What's his name? James?

Harry: (angrily) What the hell were you doing talking to my boss?

Jane: Jesus, Harry. Don't get so defensive. I saw him at a party last night.

Harry: You were at a party last night with my boss?

Jane: (defensively) You make it sound like he was my date. I was only talking to him for about ten minutes. I mentioned you and he just launched into the big rant about how you are without peer, the worst employee he's ever had.

Harry: The worst employee he's ever had?

Jane: The worst employee he's ever had.

Harry: Jeez, I didn't think I was that bad.

Jane: Well, you don't do anything around here. You just sit around all day talking to Glenn about anal sex and Batman.

Harry slumps onto the counter with his face pressed down against its surface in defeat. Jane begins rubbing his back in an attempt to comfort him.

Jane: Oh, don't feel so bad, Harry. It's not that you're a complete goof-off or anything. You just don't care, that's all. I'm sure that if you really tried, you could be great at something one day. Just show a little initiative sometimes. It wouldn't hurt.

Harry: (voice muffled into the counter) I just can't find anything that really grabs me, you know?

(Pause)

What else did James say?

Jane: Not a whole lot. He was more interested in me to be honest.

Harry: What do you mean he was interested in you?

Harry gets up from the counter

Jane: Well, he was definitely flirting.

Harry: Did you flirt back?

Jane: (sheepishly) Maybe a little.

Harry: Jesus, I can't believe you! He's my boss!

Jane: Calm down, Harry. I can flirt with who ever I want.

Harry: But does it have to be in my face like that?

Jane: Well, I'm sorry, but what do you want me to do?

Harry: Stay away from him.

Jane: No. You can't do that, Harry. I'll go out with whomever I want and it's not your place to have any say in it.

(Pause)

Why do you have to be so protective of me all the time?

Harry: I'm not. All I'm saying is that you could do a whole lot better than him. That's all.

Jane: Yeah, I'll be the judge of that.

(Pause)

Harry reacts suddenly as if he has just remembered something important. He quickly bends down behind the counter and out of sight. A moment later he returns to sight, lifting up a big black box marked 'Flashlight'. Upon seeing the box, Jane jumps off the counter and backs away in a mix of fear and confusion.

Jane: What the hell is that thing?

Harry: You wanted me to show a little initiative? Well, here it is.

Jane: I don't get it?

Harry: It's a Flashlight.

Jane: What's a Flashlight?

Harry: Well, it's looks like a torch. But when you unscrew the lid at the top, there's a rubber pussy inside of it.

Jane: Um...what?

Harry: Yeah, you're meant to fuck it. Like the way you would a blow up doll or something.

Jane: (shocked) I don't know what to say. Where does the cum even end up?

A look of confusion comes across Harry's face.

Harry: Hmm...I guess there must be some sort of deposit at the bottom of it.

Jane: That's disgusting, Harry.

Harry: Why? I know you have a dildo. So why can't I have my fleshy?

Jane: (Laughing) Please don't give it a nickname.

Harry: Come into the bathroom. I'll show you how it works.

Jane: (sarcastic) Oh, how charming.

Harry puts the 'Fleshlight' box back under the counter.

Jane: You see how frustrating you are? Look at the lengths you'll go to when you're interested in something.

Harry: What can I say? I like to cum.

Glenn enters the store pushing a large trolley full of Stock.

Jane: Hey, Glenn. Harry bought a Fleshlight.

Glenn: (outraged) Oh, you sick fuck.

Harry: I really don't see why everyone is so put off by it.

Jane: (sighs) I've got to get out of here. I need groceries.

Harry: Why don't you get them here?

Jane: Yuck. Are you serious? This place smells like urine. I don't even want to know what you get up to when no one else is here. Especially now that I know you have *that* thing.

Jane leans over and kisses Harry on the cheek before leaving the store.

Jane: I'll see you later on.

Harry: Are you coming back here?

Jane: Yeah but I'm not sure how long I'll be. Bye.

Harry: Bye.

Harry watches Jane until she is well out the door.

Glenn: (Breaking Harry's stare.) Hello?

Harry: What are you doing here so late? Your delivery was scheduled for three hours ago.

Glenn: Oh, nobody actually pays attention to those things. I arrive when I arrive.

He sets the trolley down beside the counter with a clatter, giving the impression that whatever was in the box has just broken.

Harry: Don't you ever get pulled up for it?

Glenn: Yeah, you get the occasional dirty look from a customer. Maybe even get called a few names sometimes. But hey, at least I'm doing things on my own terms. Much less letting some other asshole lay down the law for me. You should try it. You'd feel a lot better about yourself if you just let go once in a while. Like, why don't you finally quit your job and get out of this place?

Harry: I can't. Not at least until I find something better.

Glenn: Anything's better than this shit.

The customer from earlier returns to the counter

Customer: (To Harry) Do you sell any knives or sharp objects like that?

Harry: Umm, yeah just over near the hardware.

Customer: Thanks.

He heads back over to browse

Glenn: By the way, I was only kidding around about the flesh light thing. I have one too.

Harry: Really?

Glenn: Yeah, except mine has a rubber arsehole on it instead.

Harry: I didn't know about that one.

Glenn: When I saw it, I didn't even think twice. Why get the standard pussy when you can just as easily go for it's dirty, often neglected cousin?

Harry: I-dunno, Glenn.

Glenn: What was Jane doing here just before?

Harry: Just popping in to say "hi" I guess.

Glenn: Man, the chick is attached to you like crazy.

Harry: (sighs) Yeah, I guess.

Glenn: What was that?

Harry: What?

Glenn: Your tone. Jesus Christ, Harry. I don't know why you keep seeing that chick. She drives you nuts.

Glenn picks up a newspaper and leans against the counter, reading it.

Harry: It's not my fault. I can't help it. I've known her since forever.

Glenn: That's where you're wrong. It *is* your fault. You've been letting this drag on for way too long. My advice? Tell her how you feel before she finds someone else. It'll save you a lot stress.

Harry: I can't do that. If I tell her now she'll get freaked out and I'll lose the friendship.

Glenn: Suit yourself. But it never ceases to amaze me how many issues could be solved with a little upfront honesty.

In the background, the customer grabs the rope and knife and heads into the bathroom. Shutting the door behind him.

So you had sex with her, how long ago?

Harry: 3 years.

Glenn: Wow, I didn't realise what I was dealing with here. How was she? In bed I mean?

Harry: Fine I guess. We were only nineteen.

Glenn: And you've done nothing since?

Harry: Nope.

Glenn: Have you done it with anyone else since?

Harry: Nope.

Glenn: Now, that's another problem. Go out and fuck someone. Anyone. It'll take your mind off it for a while. You know?

Harry: Easier said than done.

Glenn: Look, I'll pay for an escort.

Harry: No, I'm definitely not going down that path.

Glenn: Suit yourself. I'm getting a drink. Do you want anything?

Harry: There're drinks here!

Glenn: As if. It smells like a bag of dead cats in this place.

Glenn exits the store, leaving his trolley behind.

SCENE 2 - NIGHT - Small car park of the general convenience store.

Harry is looking upset. Sitting on the pavement next to the car park outside of the store. Ambulance and Police lights are flashing around him. Glenn arrives from the

left holding two drinks. He sees Harry but stops and looks toward the store.

Harry: What took you so long?

(Glenn is still staring through the shop window)

Glenn: Had an argument with the store Clark. We started chitchatting about movies. When he brought up 'Transformers 2' I told him how much I hated it. He threatened to blacklist me.

Harry: What an asshole.

Glenn: Yeah I know, right? People get so fucken defensive about shit like that. I started telling him about how it didn't make sense that the old transformer had a beard and a walking stick. He just lost it.

Harry: I'll never understand it.

Glenn: But in all seriousness, how can a robot grow a beard? And where the fuck did he find a fifty-foot high walking stick?

Harry: They're transformers, man. They can do all sorts of shit that doesn't make sense.

Glenn: Well, I'm sorry. But if they're going to show how they age, isn't about time that they gave us some insight into other things? Like how do they reproduce?

Harry: I think it's mainly for kids, Glenn. Nobody wants to see Optimus Prime whipping out his forty-ton robo-cock.

Glenn: One day, we'll know the truth about one.

Glenn sits down in the pavement beside Harry and hands him his drink.

So what happened here?

Harry: This customer committed suicide in the bathroom.

Glenn: Jesus.

Harry: (solemnly) Yeah. He slit his throat and then hung himself. There was blood everywhere. He left a note. The police have got it now, but I read it before I called them. He said that he loved his kids, and that he was sorry to his wife. He always wanted her to be happy, but he couldn't bear to live with the fact that she'd left him for another man.

(Pause)

Glenn: Dark fucken world.

Harry: Yeah.

(Pause)

You really think it was that bad?

Glenn: Was what that bad?

Harry: Do you think it was worth killing himself over his wife?

(Pause)

Glenn: Remember that Melissa chick I used to fuck behind the counter after closing?

Harry nods

Glenn: One time, after we'd finished, I told her I loved her. I don't think I really meant it, but I still said it.

Harry: What did she say?

Glenn: Told me to get fucked. That made me sad. But no, I wouldn't kill myself over a chick.

(Pause)

Jane finally returns. She looks frightened at the sight of the flashing lights.

Jane: Oh my God! What happened here?

Glenn: Some guy committed suicide in the bathroom.

Jane: Who was he?

Harry: I don't know.

Jane: Are you both ok?

Harry: Yeah, we're fine.

Jane: I can't believe that. Why would he do a thing like that?

Harry: Who knows?

A policemen's voice is heard from inside the door.

Policeman: Urgh, what the fuck is this?

Glenn: Oh, I think they've found your Fleshlight. Don't stress, I'll sort it out.

Glenn exits the car park and heads into the store, leaving Harry and Jane alone. Jane sits down next to Harry, in the spot that Glenn left.

Jane: Sure you're ok?

Harry: Yeah. I just feel bad that it took so me so long to find him. I'll never forget that image for the rest of my life. Just hanging there, bleeding all over the place.

Jane: It's sad.

Harry: Yeah.

(Pause)

Hey. Can I talk to you about something?

Jane: What is it, Harry?

Harry: I just wanted to let you know that I'm sorry about earlier today. You're right, you can see whomever you want. It's not my place to try and interfere.

Jane: I appreciate that, Harry. But I'm not going to see James again anyway.

Harry: Why not?

Jane: You were right. He is a bit of an asshole. I saw him at the grocery store just before. He called me "Laura".

Harry: (laughs to himself) Complete, asshole.

(Pause)

Jane: You know, I thought about the way you reacted today when I mentioned him.

Harry looks Jane in the eye, but says nothing.

I think it's really sweet that you still care about me like that.

(Pause)

Harry: Don't. I was being selfish when I said that. There's nothing sweet about it at all. I still love you, Jane. I really want this friendship to work, so I've never said anything. But now I realise that it'll never work like this anyway. Trust me when I say that I wish it wasn't like this. I really do. But what am I supposed to do here?

Jane: I don't know what to say.

Harry: Tell me how you feel, Jane.

(Pause)

Jane: I don't love you.

Harry looks down at the ground.

I'm sorry.

Jane gets up and leaves without taking a second glance at Harry, who remains sitting, looking into the pavement below him.

SCENE 3 - DAY - Inside the general convenience store

Harry is back behind the counter, writing something down on a piece of paper. Glenn arrives through the front door, grabbing Harry's attention immediately.

Glenn: How's it going fuck-face?

Harry points to the clock on the wall

Harry: Four hours.

Glenn: I was hungry. Have you ever tried driving a truck through a KFC drive-through? Fucken hard work.

Harry: I can only imagine.

Glenn: You know, on my way over here, I noticed two guys holding hands, and it got me thinking, do you think gay guys get better blow jobs than we do?

Harry: I've never really thought about that one to be honest.

Glenn: I think they'd have to. I mean, who knows more about cock than another guy? I don't think there'd be one woman on earth who could channel a dick more than even the most repressed man.

Harry: I wouldn't go that far. I think a hooker would know more than a priest.

Glenn: Priests are jerking off too. I don't care what they say. There's no way they can resist.

Harry: No, they have to live a life of complete celibacy.

Glenn: What about when they give out the bread everyone in church? Some people like to stick their tongues out instead of having it handed to them. You're telling that if some hot, young babe sticks her tongue out to him, so that the can put the little white bread in her mouth, that he's not going to be turned on?

Harry: He's allowed to be turned on. He's just not allowed to jerk off about it afterwards.

Glenn: Well, I'm saying that he does.

They both laugh

I'm gonna miss you, you know. Who else is going to listen to my bullshit?

Harry: I'm sure you'll find somebody.

Glenn: Yeah, but most people get freaked out by it. Why did the world become so repressed?

Harry: It's a mystery to me.

Glenn: Well, I'll see you around, Harry.

Harry: See ya, Glenn.

SCENE 4 - EVENING - Out the front of the general convenience store.

Harry is locking up the front of the store for the final time. He turns and starts heading off.

Jane: Wait, Harry!

Harry turns to see Jane running toward him. She stops in front of him.

Jane: (slightly panting) Hey.

Harry: Hey. What are you doing here?

Jane: I just wanted to say goodbye before you left. I only heard that you were leaving today. Where are you going?

Harry: I got new job in Queensland.

Jane: Really? Doing what?

Harry: Porn star.

Jane: What?!

Harry: (chuckles) I'm joking. It's just another store up there. I just wanted a change of scenery, that's all.

Jane: I'm sorry.

Harry: What are you sorry about?

Jane: I'm sorry it ended like that.

Harry: Hey, I've already told you, it's not your fault. It was mine.

Jane: Yeah but...oh, Harry I just can't believe that you're going, forever.

(Pause)

Jane gives Harry a hug

Harry: I might come back one day.

Jane: Please do.

Harry: Well, I've got to get going. I have to be at the airport by 8.

Jane: (pleadingly) Don't leave.

Harry: I'm sorry, Jane. I have to. Remember all those months ago when you told me about taking some initiative?

Jane: I didn't mean leaving the state.

Harry: That's just how it's panned out. It'll be good for me I think.

(Pause)

Jane: Goodbye.

Harry: Goodbye, Jane.

Harry exits the stage, leaving Jane behind him. She stands there for a moment.

Black out, Curtains close.

