

The Annoying Office Plant

By Kristopher Miller

Regina typed a memo furiously. Her concentration did not waiver until she heard leaves shuddering and saw the spider plant lean towards her.

The plant spoke up. "Trying to write a memo?" it asked. "Hope you're sending it through e-mail because using paper isn't *treerific* anymore."

The public relations director adjusted her glasses to make sure she was not hallucinating because of caffeine deprivation. "Okay, did you just talk to me?" Regina asked disbelievingly.

The laurentil's leaves shook. "Well, I'll admit I don't have any *eyes* but I do have *ears*."

Regina raised an eyebrow at the plant. "What the hell did you just say?"

"Oh, sorry, I was making a *corny* joke," the plant laughed. "You know, about corn having *ears*, get it? Looking for good jokes can be like walking through a *maize*."

"Ugh, please be quiet," Regina muttered while clutching her face. She tried reeling her focus back to the keyboard. "The last thing I need right now is having a voice in my head telling stupid plant jokes while trying to write a memo to management about misplacing lab supplies."

The laurentil chuckled. "Well, whoever mismanaged the lab is in the wrong *field*. I'm happy to see an employee trying to *root* out the problem!"

Regina leaned closer to the plant and stared at it murderously. "If you don't shut up right now, I'm going to throw you out a window and watch a car turn you into a crushed vegetable."

"Wow!" the plant exclaimed. "That sounds like a good premise for a *pulp* fiction novel!"

Regina stood up from her seat. "All right, I *really* need some coffee right now. I must be going crazy because I'm working too hard." She walked hurriedly out of the office and into the rec room to make a cup of Folger's. Five minutes later, Regina took a piping cup of coffee with her on the way back. She glanced at the plant to see if it would say anything else. Not a single word was uttered.

Regina took a good sip out of the cup and sat down at her keyboard. As she typed, the plant said, "Excuse me, but I think there is a rumor that you're into that new hot, young male intern working in research and development. Oh don't worry, I won't spill the *beans* that you're working to get into a relationship with him on a *grass roots* level!"

Regina clenched her hands into fists and eyed the plant with hatred. "Right now, I'm not sure if you're actually talking or if I'm going crazy but you are crossing a thin line."

Regina stopped talking as soon as the young male intern walked in. "Hey Ms. Mahoney," he said. But he raised an eyebrow at Regina who leered at the laurentil. "Are you doing okay?"

Regina snapped out of her angry haze to face the intern. She brushed her hair and blushed in embarrassment. "Oh, oh yeah Greg, I'm doing great. I've just been typing some memos all day and it's been very exhausting." Her arms still shook. "How's everything going in R&D? Learning some new stuff about the product we're about to market?"

"Well, yeah," Greg said. "The formula is making our test soybean plants grow forty-five percent faster than the untested plants. Not only that, but pesticide damage has been reduced fifty-five percent."

Regina smiled, but probably more after looking at Greg's scruffy, sexy appearance. "That's great! We certainly need people like you to help our company help out people in third-world countries."

Greg grinned in satisfaction. "Oh, thanks. That's what's inspiring me in my work. Not only am I learning new skills for other research jobs but I'm motivated by the fact your company is dedicated to using this product for the greater good."

Regina rose from her chair. "So, there aren't any problems so far?"

Greg stifled a bit. "Actually, that's what I've come in to talk to you about. There's been some weird stuff happening with the researchers during testing."

"How weird?" As Regina held her coffee cup up, she barely held a solid grip due to her shaking hand.

"Well, some of the researchers experience some funny feelings being around the plants, even when they have their chemical suits on. They feel very anxious. Their limbs shake uncontrollably. The medical staff is looking into it, but researchers have also been seeing things."

"What kind of things?" she inquired.

"Hallucinations," Greg said uneasily. "Oh, one researcher working with the plants claimed there were bugs all over the specimen and his suit, but we did not find anything."

"And you're not feeling anxious?" Regina asked.

Greg shook his head. "No. Are you sure you're doing okay? You're a little jumpy."

Regina laughed almost hysterically. "Oh, don't worry! I'm just on my caffeine rush."

Greg nodded slowly. "All right. We're getting the symptoms looked at, and we've also noticed the formula leaves a residue that emits vapors. The researchers must have got a shot from the vapors when they were examining them up close."

"Has anyone heard the plants talk?" Regina asked.

"Well, not really. Why?"

Regina shook her head. "Oh, nothing. Just curious. I hope we don't have anyone go completely crazy working with the formula. You haven't felt anything, have you?"

"Well no, I just keep records. Did you get my message about the missing equipment?"

"I did."

"We've also noticed a few laurentils went missing from the lab, I forgot to mention that." Greg pointed at the plant by her. "We believe they've been misplaced, but no one that stupid could have put them in the office."

Regina cringed by looking at the plant next to her. Greg tapped his foot. "You've been feeling okay?" he asked.

"Sure, sure." Regina replied hastily. "Like I said, caffeine rush. Work and caffeine do a number on me but I'm keeping steady. Don't worry."

Greg held a hand by the door. "I also came in to see if I could use you as a reference."

This comment made Regina beam. "Why, of course! I really enjoyed working with you, however I could."

Greg gave a thumb up as he backed out of the office. "Well, okay. I need to get back to work really fast. See you later."

Regina waved goodbye and then she looked at the plant. It did not talk anymore. She resumed work on her memo when the plant snickered. She froze up and turned around to see the laurentil quiver like a bush trapped in the wind.

"You're really into that intern, aren't you?" it said. "Do you have a *plot* to get closer to him?"

Regina covered her ears and closed her eyes. "Shut up. Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

"Ohhh," the plant cooed. "Sounding a little *prickly* are you?"

She tapped the keys weakly and tried to maintain whatever sanity she had left. But the plant would not let up.

"Now come on. I just could not help but notice that your *budding* affection is in *bloom* with him."

Regina typed in her name under the signature line on the memo when the plant said, "I know why you're a little scared though. You're scared the company will *uproot* you if they find you are *nuts*."

Regina slammed her hands down on the desk. "All right, that did not make any sense." She was close to sobbing. "Oh God, I'm talking to a plant."

"Not just any plant," the laurentil chirped. "You're talking to a *power plant*!"

"Leave me alone," Regina hissed. "Just leave me alone."

“I know what you are thinking,” the plant whispered. “You’re thinking of *branching* out to a department closer to the intern. And you think when you two are alone, he might plant a *seed* in you.”

Regina gritted her teeth as she realized her finger nails scratched the table’s surface. “Stop it right now.”

“But who knows?” the plant mocked. “He’s looks to be the kind of guy who likes to spread his *oats* around. Maybe he’s found another *rose* to *pollinate* with-”

Regina shot up from her chair and screamed in rage as she snatched the lauentil in its pot from the table and rushed over to the nearest waste can. Regina ripped the plant out of its soil and tore the roots from its stalk in front of other employees. She violently threw the leaves and pulp down the basket. Regina examined at her dirt-encrusted hands in horror when she noticed the employees gaped at her with fear.

She gulped as she backed away from the can. “Work related stress.” Regina retreated back to her office. The plant coughed within earshot of Regina.

“Man,” it lamented. “I was gonna offer her some *weed!*”

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