

NO REGRETS

ACT 1

HOTEL RECEPTION, EARLY EVENING SUNDAY

The receptionist is a rather dour but super-efficient Eastern European woman in her 20s.

James Timbrall is a good-looking man in his early to mid 20s, dressed a bit scruffily like a student.

Nicole Colbert is an attractive French woman, also in her mid 20s, dressed casually but chicly.

Nicole is at the front of the queue at reception, ahead of James. Nicole has rather nice luggage; James a large hold-all.

RECEPTIONIST

Looking up briefly from her screen

So, Miss Colbert. We have you booked in for five nights, breakfast included. Account to go to your company, Lebeau. You're on the first floor.

The receptionist hands Nicole her key card and smiles briefly before moving quickly on to the last in line, James.

James takes the opportunity to sneak a quick glance at Nicole as she gathers her bags and heads for the stairs, before scrabbling to find his booking documentation.

As the receptionist starts to look him up on her reservation system, he spots a French passport on the desk.

JAMES

Shouting out to Nicole and holding up the passport.

Excuse me. I think you'll need this. At least you will do at the end of the week.

Nicole rushes back to reception, looking embarrassed but happy.

NICOLE

Merci, monsieur. I'm sorry, I mean ...

JAMES

It's OK, I know what you mean. No probs.

THE HOTEL BAR, SUNDAY EVENING

James is sipping a pint of lager as he doodles in his notebook.

Nicole is still full of nervous energy, engrossed in a video on her iPad. She has a glass of sparkling water by her.

As the video comes to an end, we see her typing a quick comment to share with her fellow new starters. She leans back to take a breather. Looking round, she catches the eye briefly of James, sitting at the next table.

She smiles politely and he, rather embarrassed to have been caught out, responds in kind before returning hurriedly to his activity.

Nicole gathers up the courage to speak to him.

NICOLE

Hi, I should probably introduce myself, if just to say thank you again for helping me out earlier. I'm Nicole. What are you up to?

JAMES

Oh, well... just some doodles. It's what I do when I'm bored. Sorry. I'm James by the way.

Nicole comes over and takes a look over James's shoulder.

NICOLE

These aren't doodles. They're very good - and they're of me!

JAMES

Well, yes they are I suppose. Nothing personal. I'm not some stalker or something.

NICOLE

Don't worry, I didn't think you were. I hope I get to keep them. I'm very protective of my image rights you know.

JAMES

Of course. So what about you? What are you doing? You look very busy.

N COLE

Just some last minute study. I start my induction tomorrow as a trainee retail manager. I'm joining Lebeau, you know the fashion brand - they have their European head office here.

JAMES

They do? I thought they were French.

N COLE

I know it sounds like it, but actually they're American, although I'm *definitely* French.

JAMES

Never in doubt. So if you don't start until tomorrow, how come you're working in your own time?

N COLE

Oh I don't mind. I'd rather find out as much as possible about the job before I start rather than put pressure on myself in the first week. Actually Lebeau have been really good so far.

JAMES

In what way?

N COLE

Well, once I'd got the job, they had me fill in a questionnaire so they could work out what I really needed to concentrate on in my induction. I'd worked in lots of fashion stores as a student, so I wasn't a complete - what do you say? - 'newbie'.

And I did business studies at university. They called me up on the phone and we talked it all over. Anyway, they put together this programme for me and here I am now.

JAMES

So what's on the iPad?

N COLE

Just some videos, PDFs and other stuff to help me prepare. Mainly about Lebeau, how they're organised and what they do. That sort of stuff.

JAMES

Sounds boring.

N COLE

Actually not so boring. Quite inspiring really. Nicely done and gives you a real insight into the brand. Also means that we can focus on the practical stuff this week, rather than getting bogged down in detail. Everyone seems to have found the videos useful.

JAMES

Everyone? How do you know? You haven't started yet.

N COLE

That's true but I've met all the other trainees in a Google hangout and we've been finding out about each other ...

JAMES

Interrupting

A Google what?

N COLE

Google Hangout. It's a tool that allows us to chat to each other using webcams.

JAMES

Cod.

N COLE

Anyway, they seem like a nice bunch. How about you, what brings you to Brighton?

JAMES

Bit like you really. I'm starting a new job too. Nothing so grand as you - just working in a call centre. Insurance. I'm staying here until I find somewhere to live.

N COLE

Très bien. So obviously you're all prepared well in advance, unlike me, still frantically revising at the last minute.

JAMES

Don't be daft. I know absolutely nothing about the job - except that it doesn't pay very well. I'll see what happens tomorrow at nine.

N COLE

I'm sure they've got it all organised. Where's your training taking place?

JAMES

Down in Hove. A bit of a trek. Weather forecast's rubbish, otherwise I'd walk along the seafront. Still, expect I can get a bus.

N COLE

Hove? Really. That's where I'm going too. International House. Do you know it?

JAMES

Yes, I think I've seen it - all gleaming glass and power dressing. Not expecting too much from the place I'm going.

N COLE

Well, I've got a car with me and I start at nine too. I could give you a lift if you like.

JAMES

Brilliant. If it's really no trouble.

N COLE

De rai n Perhaps in return I could have those lovely pictures?

James hands over the pictures.

JAMES

Of course.

What's that you said? Oh yes, *de rai n*

N COLE

Smiling

Meet me in reception at 8.30.

ACT 2

THE HOTEL RESTAURANT, MONDAY NIGHT

James and Nicole are sitting together at dinner. Nicole is examining the wine list.

NICOLE

I'd go for the Sancerre. What do you think?

JAMES

The what? You're the expert, you choose. We don't do wine *en Angleterre*.

NICOLE

I think you do. Some of the best sparkling wines in the world are made just a few miles from here.

JAMES

They are? Wow, I had no idea. Anyway, I can't afford that sort of stuff. More of a lager man myself.

NICOLE

Have a lager then. I'll just ask for a glass of wine for myself.

Anyway, how was your first day?

JAMES

Where do you start? At a right mare. When I arrived they had no idea who I was and nobody had prepared anything. They did eventually find me a desk and gave me the annual report to read while they sorted out what to do next.

NICOLE

OK. Well, actually not OK.

JAMES

Absolutely. They sat me next to one of the experienced operators, but I couldn't make head or tail of what was going on. All impenetrable insurance jargon.

NICOLE

Sounds awful. Is that the best they could do?

JAMES

Well, when I complained that I was struggling to understand all the technical stuff, they decided to put me on my own to do something they called *e-learning*.

Like going from the sublime to the ridiculous.
Mountains of information, most of which I'm sure I
don't really need, at least not yet. Here, take a look

...

James shows Nicole a photo on his smart phone, which shows some horrible
e-learning.

N COLE

Yuk.

JAMES

Like drinking from a fire hose. Maybe it's me -
perhaps I'm just thick.

N COLE

Could be, but I've never met anyone who liked
being on the receiving end of - what do you call it?
- *an information dump.*

JAMES

Gripping

It gets worse. Turns out you have to *pass* the e-
learning - you know, like an exam. Fifty questions,
checking whether I could remember all sorts of
trivial stuff you could probably look up on some
system when you actually needed it. Surely
nobody actually remembers that stuff - other than
for the time it takes to do the quiz.

N COLE

I'm sure you're right. Still, stick with it. I'm sure it
will get easier. Seems like I've had a much better
day.

JAMES

You have? Why, what happened? Did you manage
to avoid the e-learning?

N COLE

Actually no, but seems like there's good e-learning out there too. We've spent quite a lot of time in our group sessions working through interactive scenarios showing situations that can occur in store. Here I took a picture too ...

N Cole shows a shot of a small group sitting in a circle discussing stuff, looking like they're enjoying themselves.

N COLE

They have a whole load more scenarios that we can use on our own for further practice.

JAMES

A bit like *Call of Duty* without the ultra violence.

N COLE

Not quite that exciting, but a more useful way of spending your time.

JAMES

What else do you do in your group sessions? Listen to lectures?

N COLE

No, not really. The meetings are more for discussion and to get answers to questions we might have. We learned most of the theory before we started.

Anyway, that's enough about work. I want to see more of your pictures. You promised, remember?

JAMES

You're right, I did. Studying tonight?

N COLE

No, just trying to address my work-life balance. Talking of which, fancy trying to empty the mini bar in my room?

JAMES

You have a mini bar? Don't tell me you're on the executive floor.

N COLE

Actually I am, although don't get carried away. It's not like I have a suite.

JAMES

You don't? Huh. Nevertheless, on balance the answer's still a yes.

N COLE

Smiling

Good. Bring your laptop. You can show me your entire portfolio of drawings. In the meantime, we'd better order those drinks.

ON A BENCH OVERLOOKING THE SEAFRONT, FRIDAY EVENING

N COLE

Can't stay out here all night. I've got to get up at some unearthly hour to get the ferry back to France from Newhaven.

And I'm tired. That's three afternoons now I've spent on my feet up at our Catwick store. Interesting though - I've earned a lot.

JAMES

You're retired? I'm still recovering from that three-hour Power Point I had to suffer yesterday.

N COLE

You poor d d thing. Anyway, I start next week as a management trainee at Lebeau's flagship store in Paris. Exciting. I'll be there for six months. I wish you could come.

JAMES

So do I, but my d a m n s need me here, otherwise they'll have no one to shout at down the phone. What would I do in Paris anyway?

N COLE

Well, I've been thinking about your drawings. You know, you're not just a good illustrator, you're the best I've ever seen. Really. And your style lends itself perfectly to fashion. Everyone knows Paris is the centre of the fashion world. I reckon you could find yourself a career there that you would really enjoy.

JAMES

You're joking. Me, in Paris? *Je ne parle pas français*. And I can't believe there aren't hundreds of artists better than me just lining up to take whatever jobs are going.

N COLE

I think you're wrong, but it's up to you. Take a chance and come stay with me in Paris, just to see what might happen, or prepare yourself for a frustrating life doing some job you hate. In years to come, you don't want to look back and say 'if only I'd given it a try'.

James takes a while before eventually responding.

JAMES

Look, thanks for the offer, but right now you know I just can't see it. Let's get back to the hotel. We need to get some dinner and then you need your sleep. ~~O~~ whatever.

N Cole raises her eyebrows as she gets James' meaning.

ACT 3

IN THE HOTEL CAR PARK, EARLY SATURDAY MORNING

Nicole is packing her cases in her car. She takes one last look back at her hotel and then gets in the car.

She places her iPad on the seat beside her and we see her searching for a podcast.

As the podcast begins playing, Nicole engages gear and prepares to drive off. Before she can get the car in motion, there's a banging on the passenger's window and she nearly jumps out of her skin, stalling the car in the process.

It's James. Before she has time to respond, he opens the back door to throw his bag in, then sits down next to her, breathing heavily. She just manages to recover her iPad before he sits on it.

NICOLE

What the ...?

JAMES

Changed my mind. I'm coming. That's if the offer's still open. What's this? Radio 4?

NICOLE

No, it's work. Sorry. I'll put on some music.

She stops the podcast and gives James the iPad to hold. She then presses a button to start some music playing.

NICOLE

What's happening? You're really coming with me to Paris?

JAMES

I am. I may never be a famous fashion illustrator but at least you'll be there to keep me from turning to the bottle.

Nicole is overcome and throws her arms around James.

NICOLE

Let's go then. A new adventure.

She drives off, smiling from ear to ear.

As they begin the journey to Newhaven, James studies the iPad.

We see the iPad screen close up, which clearly shows the text which James then reads out.

JAMES

Ned Colbert. Trainee Manager Programme.
Sounds posh. Looks like they've got a deal lined up
for you.

N COLE

They do. I've got a mentor to call upon over the
next six months while I'm in Paris. And of course
I'm still part of the graduate trainee network along
with all the other people I met last week. It will be
nice to keep in touch.

JAMES

And are you an expert now in all Lebeau's
products?

N COLE

Well, I've made a start but I'm not expected to
know everything. They have a fantastic network
with all the information you could possibly need.
The most important thing is I know who to ask and
where to look.

JAMES

Makes sense. Certainly a lot more enlightened
than the company I was working for.

N COLE

So, have you resigned?

JAMES

Well, I'm certainly not going back, I let's put it that
way.

He pauses, listening to the music.

JAMES

I recognise that. Edt Raf is it?

N COLE

That's right. It's my Mum's iPod. I borrowed it for
the trip.

'No regrets', the song's called.

JAMES

Non, je ne regrette rien

N COLE

You see, you're half French already

She turns up the volume.