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A Story of a Young Man in an Office with a View

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Author Bio

Corey Katzelnick is currently a senior at the College studying the major English with a Writing Concentration. He lives in Hillsborough, New Jersey. On campus, he is involved in CHEERS and the Eisenhower Institute group SALTT. After school, he plans on either going to law school or entering the publication field.

A Story of a Young Man in an Office with a View

Corey Katzelnick

There is a man outside running, running very fast, his briefcase slapping the back of his arm after every stride while children on bicycles are forced off their seats trying to stop before him and other men and women walking to work quicken past him or stop and stare, wondering where he is off to, as I do, from my sixth floor wall window that covers the east side of my new office, an office I greatly deserve because winning cases at Ropes & Gray LLP is standard and the partners have found me extraordinary, and what I lack in manners I make up for in observations, insights that seem to be ordained only for my discovery except in the case of this man outside who continues to run and second after second has performed with un-businesslike but not wholly un-Olympian speed until unexpectedly he stops in front of one of Boston's many small fountains and, with my eyes on his back, has decided he has arrived where he needs to be and why he had needed to run to it, because he will not move now, not after this beat, or this beat, or three beats. He has made me in an oddly imitative way not move either as my third client of the day asks again about the selling of his real estate and why it has taken so long for the bank to give us a price but instead I evade this concern and talk rather about finding prospective buyers and perhaps a real estate agent because selling in the West End of Boston at this unfortunate-to-be-selling-real-estate-period of the winter of 2008 is hopeless and infuriating and oddly immobilizing. The man will still not move.

I shift my feet uncomfortably, keeping my head still and eyes focused, and where my lips are near the glass follows a buildup of saliva that is now sliding uneasily in methodical succession on the glass and the client notices this once it reaches its descent below my waist and imaginatively I find myself adopting his perspective of seeing me standing there at the window, flatly ignoring his presence while I possibly have a stroke or something because no one in their right health would ever willingly salivate uncontrollably for no apparent reason. But his patience rivals that of this man, outside, stock-still and staring at the water of the fountain, having just run there presumably to do this, as my client, a businessman

with many responsibilities today one would think, tolerantly waits for me to return to consciousness and say something rational and productive but this option seems significantly less important than continuing to admire this man's commitment at staring at the undrinkable and useless water. I wonder what he was thinking this morning, as he dressed to go to work in a rush of ecstasy, anticipating this theoretically never ending event of water recycling from a drain and up through a pipe and into a sculpture of a man and out through his mouth in a light jet to produce a soporific and yet also sustainably captivating art for certain passersby.

My head begins to pound and I realize my thoughts are running in tangents, from him to me to my client behind me. Something must be done. I release my neck and head from its locked gaze and see the saliva sliding down the pane, the momentum of its mass accelerating as it falls. I rush over to my desk and grab tissues, ignoring all else, and return to wipe up the six-foot mess. This is not a quick process either and the urge to look beyond the glass takes hold of me once more, a siege of mind I've never known before, and so I shoot my head up to look through the glass, satisfied that the man has still not moved from his spot near the fountain, his eyes presumably still studying the curvature of the spouting water.

A booming voice overcomes my captivation and I spin around to see my client standing and yelling my name, throwing his arms and swiping the papers on my desk into the air, repeating in his rage that he has been saying my name over and over again this entire time and, dissatisfied with my lack of response, turns and leaves and slams my door while the echo of his voice still hangs in the room, the papers in his wake pausing in their flight as if relaxing at their raised vantage point until the edges finally catch and, tilting, drop to the ground.

This room has never felt right, always I've had an itch to look out the window, to leave and escape. This is the office Ropes & Gray LLP give to the best first year associate and, as such, is passed on from year to year to the next best first year associate, only ever a temporary office with a temporary view. Mostly the associates will then move into a cluster of offices on the other side of the floor after another successful year, closer to the conference room, closer to the junior partners, closer to the kitchen.

It is an honor they say, but since the get-go I have been filled with the eerie feeling that the partners or years' past associates are watching me in the office somehow, from outside the door or within the room, although I lack any shred of evidence of these suspicions; I have looked through my entire office and found nothing, not a camera, not a recording device, nothing, despite having looked through every folder in the wall-high shelf that sits next to the window, or in or below or behind the sofa that sits directly across from it, or my desk and its single drawer for pens, throwing

them all out last week in a fit of sudden and anticlimactic phobia, or in the firm's issued leather chairs, or behind the lone painting of Paris that hangs on the wall to the west, or under the desk-wide carpet that cuts the room in half. Nothing. And yet the fear remains, and it is with this feeling that I am reminded of the ceiling, solid and white and forbiddingly uncheckable. I cannot look behind it, or behind the other walls, or the floor for that matter. The absence of evidence does not disqualify the validity of these fears because the possibility that they are recording what I am doing certainly remains, though admittedly yet undiscovered, and the truth is that since I have moved into this office three weeks ago this feeling has gathered into me slowly until, like inordinate heat gathering in the Earth's crust to manifest within a magnum reservoir, it will percolate outward, through the conduit pipe and to the surface, where I will find myself breaking down the walls with my fists in another fit of uncontrollable and baseless phobia. And it is this vicious and hauntingly immobile cycle that has withheld me from doing my work, which only intensifies my paranoia that whoever is watching is observing my laughable inactivity and writing horrible reports about me. And then, suddenly, I realize, the window! The one place I had never thought, had never suspected and would thus prove to be the least suspected and most likely of all places to put a camera. I look at every inch of it from the floor to the ceiling, nothing, but it must be here, it must — and whack! I'm punching the window — whack! whack! whack! — and my knuckles quickly bruise but I continue and increasingly punch with more force — whack! whack! — and it is here, so close to having finally discovered it, that my bosses run frantically into my office, halted and silent and confused while I continue to pound on the unbreakable glass.