

RENTER'S MARKET

BY
Ryan Millar

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Ryan Millar
Flat 5 Elderfield Court
Elderfield Road
London E5 0LE
rsmillar@gmail.com
07969 44 9590

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FADE IN:

INT: APARTMENT - DAY

A young COUPLE are being shown around an empty flat by estate agent DANIEL WHITBY. The place is a little shabby, but comfortable-looking. DANIEL's smile is bigger than a politician on the campaign trail. He throws open the door of the bathroom.

DANIEL

And here's the bathroom,
stand-up shower, and sink.

WIFE

OK. Thanks.

Daniel is standing by the toilet, pointing.

DANIEL

Toilet.

The husband and wife look at each other.

HUSBAND

We'll think about it.

HUSBAND and WIFE are making their way out of the bathroom towards the front door. DANIEL beats them to it and stands blocking their path.

DANIEL

I think the landlord would
take an offer.

WIFE

Oh.

DANIEL

I can almost smell those
summertime barbecues in your
backyard.

WIFE

It is such a big garden...

HUSBAND

I could landscape it myself.

DANIEL

Piece of advice: I'd say,
offer 270 and it'll be yours.

HUSBAND and WIFE look at each other. They shrug.

DANIEL

Let's go get those papers
signed.

INT. KITCHEN OF A FLAT - DAY

CATHY WHITBY is on the phone. Sunlight streams into the flat as she's on the phone. A steaming cup of tea and a newspaper sit on the table in front of her.

CATHY

It's a generous offer, but...
I don't know Sal. What would
Danny do without me?(pause) I
know, I know... It's just...
(Pause) You're right.

She flips the paper that is on the counter in front of her and sees the headline: "Retire to Spain? Ole!"

CATHY (CONT'D)

I don't know, why not?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A busy open-plan office piled high with papers and real estate detritus (maps, contracts, listings). DANIEL is at the door, saying goodbye to the couple he has just shown the flat to.

DANIEL

You're welcome. It was my
pleasure.

The door shuts. DANIEL watches the couple retreat, he is smiling and waving. As the couple turns the corner, DANIEL

turns back to the office. A colleague, the devastatingly handsome WILL, smiles.

WILL

Congratulations Dan. Feels good doesn't it? That's how I feel every single day.

DANIEL makes a face at WILL. Then looks at the faces of his co-workers who are all staring at him.

DANIEL

They said, uh, that they had to think about it.

WILL

You didn't close that? Ouch.

DANIEL

We spent forty-five minutes going over the paperwork.

WILL

well, at least you're getting lots more 'we'll think about its'.

DANIEL

DAMMIT!

WILL

Hey. Don't worry. You can't suck forever. I mean, I think.

DANIEL

Gee, thanks.

DANIEL hangs his head. As he does so, the bald head of ALFRED MCBRIDE, Head of Office appears out of his door.

ALFRED

Daniel, a word if I may.

DANIEL

Right away.

ALFRED's head returns into his office. WILL has already moved on from the conversation and is restyling his hair in the mirror.

WILL

Sorry buddy, it must suck to suck.

DANIEL follows ALFRED into the inner office, his colleagues snigger and laugh as they resume their work.

INT: ALFRED'S OFFICE - DAY

The main feature of the office is a big desk, in front of a wall full of real estate awards. There is a glass meeting table in one corner. ALFRED moves to the windows and closes the blinds.

ALFRED

Your father was the best estate agent this estate agency has ever seen.

DANIEL

Well... thank you?

ALFRED

(Shaking his head)
You... you're alright.

DANIEL

Thanks.

ALFRED

Actually, you're not alright.
But you're learning. And I believe.

ALFRED checks over his shoulders, then leans in towards DANIEL.

ALFRED

Your father ever tell you about the Siblinghood?

DANIEL

No.

ALFRED

Maybe he didn't think you were ready.

DANIEL

Ready for what? My father died when I was twelve.

ALFRED

How old are you now?

DANIEL

Twenty-four.

ALFRED

Has it been that long?

DANIEL

Yes.

ALFRED leans in even closer, and lowers his voice to a whisper.

ALFRED

How long have people been building?

DANIEL

Building what?

ALFRED

Buildings.

DANIEL

50,000 years?

ALFRED

In this country.

DANIEL

I don't know... 1200 years?

ALFRED

Good guess. But that's really not the point... Who built them?

DANIEL

The buildings?

ALFRED

Yes! The churches, the inns, the guildhalls, castles, high-rises, all of them...

There is a pause as ALFRED looks at DANIEL, who looks blank.

ALFRED

Freemasons!

DANIEL

Right.

ALFRED

A powerful secret society of master craftsmen. Using tools, quarrying stone, and constructing masterful man-made structures.

DANIEL

I thought masonry was just an allegory they used to organize their complex symbolism.

ALFRED

(ignoring DANIEL'S comment)
But they didn't - don't - know how to sell them. They don't know the markets, shifting property values, supply-demand. They have no idea how to overextend a subannuated fixed-term mortgage. That, my boy, is the job of The Siblinghood - the velvet glove to the Freemason's iron fist!

During ALFRED's speech DANIEL has picked up a pen from the table. He is trying, discreetly, to balance it on his upper lip.

DANIEL

What does this have to do with me?

ALFRED

Your father was a Grand Chieftain.

DANIEL

Of a secret society of estate agents?

ALFRED

The Siblinghood. Yes. He was a Grand Sub-Chieftain.

DANIEL

What does that make me?

ALFRED

Nothing yet. But you will be...

DANIEL

(whispering)
Son of a Chieftain.

ALFRED sees that DANIEL is shaking the pen like he's conducting an orchestra. ALFRED snatches the pen out of his hand.

ALFRED

Close some deals. Appraisals are upcoming, and I'd love to give you a recommendation.

DANIEL

I understand.

ALFRED

Say hi to your mother for me.

DANIEL

Shit!

DANIEL hurriedly gets to his feet and dashes out of the office.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

CATHY WHITBY is sitting by the window in an Italian restaurant. There is a basket of breadsticks and a pitcher of water on the table in front of her. DANIEL rushes in breathless.

DANIEL

Hi Mom.

CATHY

Sweetheart, you're late.

DANIEL

Today's been ...busy.

CATHY

A wheeler-dealer, just like your father.

DANIEL

Stop it.

CATHY

Well, I'm just so proud of you for sticking through these first few months. But I knew you'd start closing deals.

DANIEL

Yeah... Alfred says hi by the way.

CATHY

He's been so good to us.

DANIEL

Yeah.

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CATHY reaches across the table and hands DANIEL a menu.

CATHY

Daniel, order some lunch - I saw their salmon special - it looked good.

DANIEL looks at the menu for a moment.

DANIEL

Yeah. I'll have that.

CATHY

There's something I need to tell you.

DANIEL

What?

CATHY

Let's order first.

DANIEL

Mom. Are you OK? It's not cancer is it?

CATHY smiles at him and shakes her head.

DANIEL

Jesus it's cancer!

CATHY

No, sweetie. I sold the flat. I'm moving to Spain.

DANIEL flaps his mouth noiselessly a couple of times, like a fish. CATHY pours him a glass of water and hands it to him.

DANIEL

What?

CATHY

It's sold. I hope you're not mad I didn't list it with you.

DANIEL

How long has this been going on?

CATHY

Sweetie, it was just a crazy idea and I thought why not? I received a fair offer, and so... I just did it. I'm close enough to retiring. Spain is a nice country.

DANIEL

What about me?

CATHY

Well... you are 24 years old. Maybe you could find a flat on your own.

DANIEL

But you'll be lonely.

CATHY

You could come visit me in Spain.

DANIEL

It's just...

CATHY

What?

DANIEL

Since dad died, I've always been there for you. Are you sure you'll be okay?

CATHY

I'll be fine.

INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

DANIEL is poring over the ads looking for a flat. WILL wanders over with a cup of coffee.

WILL

Trying to think like a renter? Psychological angle, hm? Interesting.

DANIEL

No. I need a flat. One B-D-R or studio. New build. Zone 2 or 3. You got any leads?

WILL

Sure. What's your budget?

DANIEL

Well, this month has been slow... I'd say 350.

WILL

A week?

DANIEL

A month.

WILL bursts into hysterical laughter. Then it dawns on him that DANIEL is serious.

WILL

Ouch. Good luck.

He turns to leave.

DANIEL

You always get the best leads.

WILL

You'd be lucky to get steak knives.

DANIEL

I know. I'm screwed. Help me.

WILL turns back to DANIEL.

WILL

You can stay at my place.

DANIEL

Really? Thanks.

WILL

No. Not really. Good luck though.

WILL laughs far too loudly and walks away, shaking his head. Daniel picks up the phone and dials.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - DAY

Alfred is on the phone, He is speaking in hushed tones.

ALFRED

Shamrock witch... Yes...
Velvet target... Yes, for me,
he could be the one... It's
been written... No. I
tried... Confused... Like his
father... He holds the
spark... Your faith will be
repaid.... Heavy bison, hot
sauce.

ALFRED places the phone down on the cradle and looks out to see DANIEL drop a stack of papers.

INT. GARDEN-LEVEL FLAT - DAY

Daniel is being shown around a flat by AGENT 1.

AGENT 1

That's a sweet garden.
Especially for your price
range.

DANIEL

I know.

AGENT 1

It's the kind of garden...

DANIEL

...That you can imagine me
having a BBQ in.

AGENT 1

...Uh, yeah. Exactly.

DANIEL

I'm one of you.

AGENT 1

Gay?

DANIEL

Estate Agent.

Daniel opens the door.

AGENT 1

Maybe... hang on before going
out there.

DANIEL

I'll just be a sec.

DANIEL walks out into the garden. There is total stillness.
Then a FUCKING HUGE DOG charges across the yard. DANIEL
turns around and races towards the door, just getting
inside and shutting the door as the dog arrives.

DANIEL

Holy. Fucking. Shit.

AGENT 1

He's the previous tenant's.

DANIEL

Jesus.

AGENT 1

Names Boyo.

Daniel looks daggers at the agent.

DANIEL

I could have been eaten alive!

AGENT 1

So... you're not a dog person.

EXT. GARDEN LEVEL FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

DANIEL is storming out of the door, AGENT 1 is chasing him.

AGENT 1

Call me if you change your
mind. I've got others in the
area.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel is breathing heavily, and pounding the steering wheel. Outside the window a MYSTERIOUS STRANGER in a black hat walks by, keeping his eyes on Daniel the whole time. Daniel notices the man. His phone BEEPS.

DANIEL

Huh?

Daniel pulls his mobile from his pocket and answers it.

DANIEL

Hello... Yeah. ...Great.
Thanks for calling me back.

INT. ANOTHER FLAT - DAY

AGENT 2 is taking DANIEL through an ugly and cramped flat. He has the manner of a circus ringleader.

AGENT 2

Ta Da!

DANIEL looks at the cramped flat and then back at AGENT 2.

AGENT 2

What do you think? I know,

perfect, right?

DANIEL

A little small.

AGENT 2

On your budget, it was this
or a broom closet.

DANIEL

Well I prefer this.

AGENT 2

Thought so. It comes
furnished.

DANIEL

Super.

The two men head into the kitchen. AGENT 2 turns on the tap, opens the cupboards and then closes them quickly. Daniel notices this, and goes over to open the cupboard. The back of the cupboard is bumpy with a BUBBLING MOULD. It is giving off some kind of gas. DANIEL SLAMS the cupboard door.

DANIEL

Yuck!

AGENT 2

I'm sure the landlord would
fix that up.

DANIEL

Fix it? That's a lifeform!

AGENT 2

Look, I'm not a scientist.

DANIEL

I think I'm allergic.

AGENT 2

I could call the landlord.

DANIEL

Don't bother.

EXT. STREET I FRONT OF FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel is walking to his car, coughing. He looks up to see the same MYSTERIOUS STRANGER walking by.

INT. WHITBY KITCHEN - DAY

CATHY is taking photos down off of the walls and generally packing up her flat. Flamenco music is playing. DANIEL comes in the door looking exhausted.

DANIEL

Hi mom.

CATHY

You look terrible.

DANIEL

I feel it.

CATHY

How's work?

DANIEL

Well, to be honest, I've been spending the last little while finding a flat.

CATHY

I won't be made to feel guilty.

DANIEL

I don't want to make you feel guilty Mom.

CATHY

I know, that's why I wanted to give you this.

CATHY hands Daniel an envelope.

DANIEL

Thanks Mom. Is it my birthday?

CATHY

Nope.

DANIEL

Oh. What is it?

CATHY

Well, I figured that with this flat hunt you could probably use a boost.

DANIEL

A good luck card?

CATHY

It's a cheque. For half of what the flat is worth.

DANIEL

I don't know what to say...

CATHY

I think it's the right thing to do. Save a little bit, so you can afford to come visit me.

DANIEL

I'm just not sure I can let go of this place.

CATHY

I know sweetheart, but we have to move on.

DANIEL

Do we really though?

CATHY

Yes.

DANIEL

OK. Thanks for this.

CATHY

Sweetie. I'm not leaving you,
I'm just realizing I need
some space. And so do you.

INT. RIGHT MOVE OFFICE - DAY

The office is busy, and everybody is working hard. ALFRED walks by DANIEL's desk as DANIEL is on the phone.

DANIEL

You're interested in a 2 BDR
in Shadwell? I don't think we
have anything... OK, good
luck. And if you find
anything, let me know. I'm
also looking for a flat.

ALFRED motions to his office, but DANIEL holds up a finger.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

OK. Sure. I guess we'll just
have to agree to disagree,
Bye-bye.

DANIEL looks around furtively, then goes to put his coat on. ALFRED appears out of his office door.

ALFRED

My office.

INT. ALFRED'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

ALFRED is doing the blinds up again.

ALFRED

How's the househunt?

DANIEL

Oh great!

ALFRED

Come truthful, young one.

DANIEL

Um, it could be better.

ALFRED

You need to find a flat, and get re-focused. We- I mean I - have high hopes for you.

DANIEL

Really? Great. I think I'm getting it.

ALFRED

Call this man, Simon Willis. He'll get you what you need.

DANIEL

OK. Will do.

ALFRED

And then I need you to get hopping. Performance reviews are coming up.

EXT. DANIEL'S CAR - DAY

DANIEL is driving through London on his way to his viewing. He drives by the MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

EXT. REDBRICK TERRACED HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

DANIEL pulls up out front and parks the car. He is greeted immediately by AGENT 3.

AGENT 3

This. Is. It. My friend.

DANIEL

Hi. You must be the estate agent.

AGENT 3

No, you are the estate agent.

DANIEL

Well, we're both estate agents, but I'm the one looking to rent a flat, so in this case it's more accurate to say you're the estate agent.

AGENT 3

You are a sharp one, mate.

DANIEL

So what are the specs?

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

AGENT 3

Look at this bedroom!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

AGENT 3

Second bedroom!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

AGENT 3

Living room. Spacious.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

AGENT 3

Ta da!

CUT TO:

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INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

AGENT 3
Shiny!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT ATTIC - MOMENTS LATER

AGENT 3
Storage Space...

AGENT 3 flips back a curtain to reveal a dusty corpse. He
SCREAMS

EXT. REDBRICK TERRACED HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

An ambulance and police car are there. Daniel is sitting on
the curb with a blanket around his shoulders. He is
drinking some tea. TWO POLICE OFFICERS are talking to him.

POLICE OFFICER #1
How dead was the body?

DANIEL
Extremely.

POLICE OFFICER #2
Yuck.

DANIEL
Man, I'll never unsee that.

POLICE OFFICER #1
You'll get used to it. See a
lot of dead bodies in this
line of work.

DANIEL
I'm an estate agent.

POLICE OFFICER #2
It's a figure of speech.

DANIEL looks up. He sees the MYSTERIOUS STRANGER across the street. He throws the blanket to the ground and races across the street.

DANIEL

What the fuck?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

Excuse me?

DANIEL

You've been following me!

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

You're angry, that's good.
You do have a spark. The Seer
was right.

DANIEL

What?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

I'm Simon Willis, I'm your
estate agent.

DANIEL

You're Simon Willis?

SIMON

Yes? The Siblinghood sent me.

DANIEL

You're going to help me?

SIMON

Oh yes.

DANIEL

Great. Househunting sucks.

SIMON

Tomorrow we'll see a place
and I think it's perfect.

DANIEL

Great

SIMON

I will pick you up at 10.

DANIEL

OK.

SIMON

Don't sleep in.

INT. PUB - EVENING

CATHY is having a drink with ALFRED. They are relaxed with each other. It is clear they've known each other a long time.

ALFRED

You look great. Seriously.

CATHY

Just knowing I'm going. I feel ten years younger.

ALFRED

Daniel seems distracted. He'll be OK. We'll look after him. I'll look after him.

CATHY

I can't thank you enough. The whole Siblinghood has been very supportive. Always.

ALFRED

When one of our own falls for the Greater Cause, we never forget.

CATHY

Well, it's great the way you've been keeping an eye on Daniel.

ALFRED

He's a good kid.

CATHY

I know. He means well.

ALFRED

He's special. He's got to be.
But I'll have to really make
sure he stays on top of his
sales.

CATHY

He's not a natural like his
father, but he's got his
genes.

INT. WHITBY HOUSE - THAT EVENING

The house has been dissembled. It is filled with stacks of
boxes, except for DANIEL's room.

CATHY

Hi sweetie.

DANIEL

Hey mom.

CATHY

You should get this room
packed son.

DANIEL

I know. It's just hard to say
goodbye.

CATHY

We gotta move on, it's for
the best.

DANIEL

I know. Well, I'm looking for
a new place tomorrow - I
think I'm almost there.

CATHY

I love you son.

DANIEL

I love you too.

EXT. WHITBY TERRACE HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

The neighborhood is peaceful and tranquil. A black Mercedes with tinted windows rolls up to the curb and parks. SIMON gets out and looks around the neighborhood.

INT. WHITBY HOUSE - DANIEL'S BEDROOM

ALARM RINGS. DANIEL looks up and realizes it's 10am. He sits up in bed, wide awake. The DOORBELL rings.

DANIEL grabs some clothes off of his chair and races to the front door. He pulls it open and there is SIMON.

SIMON

Good morning.

DANIEL

G'morning.

SIMON

You slept in.

DANIEL

Yeah, a little bit.

SIMON pushes his way into the flat. And begins looking around.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Very nice, very nice.

DANIEL

I just need to get ready,
I'll be five minutes.

SIMON begins to walk around the house, commenting on items to himself and DANIEL.

SIMON

Hey! This the master bedroom?
It's nice. Big. Could use a
coat of paint. A touch up at
least.

DANIEL

Huh? Yeah.

SIMON

Terrace? Very nice.

SIMON continues around the flat inspecting things. He joins
DANIEL in the bathroom. DANIEL is brushing his teeth.

SIMON

Nice bathroom. We could put
in a new fan.

DANIEL

OK.

SIMON

All set?

DANIEL

Yup.

SIMON

Good.

DANIEL

Aren't we late?

SIMON

For what?

DANIEL

To see the flat.

SIMON

We're here.

DANIEL

What?

SIMON

You like?

DANIEL

I don't understand.

SIMON

The Siblinghood, Daniel.

DANIEL

OK.

SIMON

Your father was a very important man. When he died, leaving your mother a widow and you a half-orphan we decided to step in.

DANIEL

That was 12 years ago.

SIMON

The Siblinghood waits. The time was right. We came.

DANIEL

Well, shit. Thanks for nothing when I was 12.

SIMON

Remember your football coach Big Dave?

DANIEL

Yeah.

SIMON

An Exalted Junior Guardian.

DANIEL

That guy was a prick.

SIMON

Tough love. That's the task of any Guardian.

DANIEL

He's the reason I quit the team.

SIMON

Yeah. I know. That's why he's still a Junior Guardian.

DANIEL

Well, you tried, right?

SIMON

Indeed we did. Tried and waited. You're special, Daniel.

DANIEL

Really?

SIMON

Yes. The Seer has seen... true potential. Estate Agency of a high order.

DANIEL

Actually, I'm not very good, yet.

SIMON

The seer is never wrong.

DANIEL

Phew.

DANIEL

And now we know what we can do, to honour the Former Sub-Chieftain, The Widow, and the Chosen Half-Orphan.

DANIEL

Yeah?

SIMON

We bought this flat from The Widow.

DANIEL

I just call her mom.

SIMON

And we're going to finance it for you.

DANIEL

Well. OK. Then. How are the terms?

SIMON

Favourable.

DANIEL

Great.

SIMON

Go ahead and unpack your stuff.

DANIEL

Will do.

SIMON

Welcome home.

DANIEL

Thanks.

A pause. DANIEL looks at SIMON angrily.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

All of the flats I saw were awful. Did you guys have anything to with that?

SIMON

Honestly, I'm not sure. The Siblinghood is really mysterious. But if they were awful, as you say... then now know the other side.

SIMON makes a complicated hand gesture, bows, and then leaves. DANIEL looks around the flat and smiles.

INT. BIG MOVE ESTATE AGENCY - TWO MONTHS LATER

Daniel is much more relaxed at work, he has a pack of SOLD folders in his outbox. There's a postcard on top. DANIEL picks it up and looks at it. It's Spain. He flips it over. There's written "Hi honey! Hope work is good. Looking forward to your visit! Love Mom. The PHONE RINGS.

DANIEL

Daniel Whitby, how can I help? OK, sure. I can definitely help.

ALFRED comes out of the office over to DANIEL's desk and shakes his hand. DANIEL puts the phone down on the desk.

ALFRED

Congratulations on your performance review.

DANIEL

But I got a four.

ALFRED

That's an improvement. As foretold. I'm never wrong.

DANIEL

Yeah, maybe I am getting the hang of this. Oh wait.

DANIEL picks the phone back up.

DANIEL

Hello. Hello? You still there?
(to ALFRED)
They hung up.

END