

“The Freshening”

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The hum of fluorescent lights fills the open-plan office. Desks are cluttered with paint swatches, order forms, and empty coffee cups. At one end of the room, two employees, **LINDA** and **GARY**, sit at adjacent desks. Both are typing on their computers but speaking in hushed voices. Other employees, scattered around the room, try to focus on their work but occasionally glance toward Linda and Gary, visibly uncomfortable.

LINDA (leaning closer to Gary) You know the new “mandatory air fresheners” Barry ordered? The ones he insisted would make the office smell “inviting”?

GARY (rolling his eyes) Oh, you mean the ones that smell like a mix of old pinecones and regret? What about them?

LINDA (smirking) Turns out they’re not air fresheners at all. They’re rodent repellents. Designed for barns.

GARY (choking on laughter) Wait, you’re serious?

LINDA (nodding) Dead serious. Penny looked up the label because her eyes were watering so bad she couldn’t see her screen. Apparently, it’s meant to “deter vermin through olfactory discomfort.”

(One employee nearby sniffles and adjusts their chair, visibly uncomfortable.)

GARY (mocking) Olfactory discomfort? That should be our new slogan. “We paint. You suffer.”

LINDA (grinning) It gets worse. Penny said Sandra snuck into Barry’s office and swapped his air freshener with one of the “extra-strength” ones. He came out after an hour looking like he’d just run a marathon.

GARY (laughing) So that’s why he canceled the staff meeting! I thought he just had another “migraine.”

(A few desks away, an employee shifts uncomfortably, their eyes darting toward Linda and Gary. The sound of someone clearing their throat cuts through the awkwardness.)

LINDA (lowering her voice) And you know how Mike has that thing about “smelling professional”?

GARY (grinning) Oh no. What did he do?

LINDA (chuckling) He brought in his own diffuser and set it up in the break room. Except he used “essential oils” that smelled like bacon grease. Within ten minutes, Jason started handing out complaints about “unprofessional hunger inducement.”

GARY (snorting) Unprofessional hunger inducement? Is that a real thing now?

LINDA (laughing) Apparently. And now HR is “investigating inappropriate aromatherapy practices.”

(Another coworker coughs awkwardly, clearly listening but pretending to be engrossed in their screen. They exchange uneasy glances with someone seated nearby.)

GARY (sipping his coffee) Honestly, I don’t know what’s better—the drama or the fact that no one ever learns.

LINDA (smirking) Oh, just wait until you hear what Penny told me about the warehouse “ghost.”

(The murmured conversation continues as the camera pans out, showing other employees shifting uncomfortably in their seats, stealing glances at Linda and Gary, their curiosity barely contained.)