

MICHAEL'S RESIGNATION

BY ALEX CAMERON & JOBY STEPHENS

CONCEPT

A traumatised ex-soldier who has begun a new life in the city as an office clerk breaks down after being made redundant as a victim of the “credit crunch” and finding his fiancé having an affair with his boss. Determined to exact revenge, he suffers a nervous breakdown and films himself ruthlessly slaughtering all his co-workers before being shot down by armed police officers in a final blaze of glory.

CHARACTERS

Michael Jones

The story's central character. A 33 year old office clerk who recently completed his last tour of duty for the British Army in Afghanistan to seek a new life in the City,

Judith Layton

Michael's highly-strung and dishonest fiancé who lives with him in their Richmond flat. A self-seeking and duplicitous 31 year old woman who works as a personal assistant to the CEO of an oil company in the City. She is no longer in love with Michael but is unable to break off the engagement, but seeks fulfilment with his boss, Richard.

Sarah Whitecliffe

Michael's 28 year old love interest, and the HR manager in his office. She is gentle, kind and understanding, but also jaded and drifting. She wants to change of life to something else but can't work out what. She is in the tail end of a relationship with a much older man that has been gradually fading out for several months.

Richard Chambers

A calculating and two-faced 35 year old office politician that is one of the senior middle managers in Michael's department and will stop at nothing to advance his career and take what he wants from those around him. He is secretly having an affair with Judith after meeting her at an awards ceremony she attended with Michael.

LOCATIONS

- ST JAMES' PARK
- CITY OFFICE (ANGLO BANK)
- MICHAEL & JUDITH'S FLAT
- WHITECHAPEL PUB
- ELECTRONICS SHOP

ACT I – THE WORLD STARTS TO COLLAPSE

Mild-mannered Michael Jones is a 33 year old logistics manager at Anglo Union Bank in the City of London who completed his last tour of duty as a British Army soldier in Afghanistan 9 months previously. War has left him disillusioned and traumatised, and through his commanding officer's connections, he began a new life as a white collar office clerk, determined to get a proper 9 to 5 job, settle down with his fiancé Judith, and start a family.

All should be well with Michael, but all is not well at all.

Judith is no housewife, and office work is just another different kind of hell that is beginning to take its toll on Michael's fragile mind. The only thing that gets him through the day are the subtle glances he exchanges with Sarah, the beautiful and gentle office HR manager. The love developing between them can never be realised because they are both with someone else – people they are both starting realise that they are no longer in love with.

The story begins on the day when the news has broken that the previously-untouchable Anglo Bank has unexpectedly collapsed with the loss of 40,000 jobs as a victim of the "credit crunch", including Michael's and Sarah's departments. Together they have defiantly taken the afternoon off and decided to spend it together having an ad-hoc picnic in St James' Park. It's a beautifully sunny day, and even though they are on Death Row with the axe of redundancy hanging over their heads, it doesn't seem to matter when they are with each other playing around with their shoes off in the grass.

Michael opens up to Sarah about his military past as she asks him what he will do now his new office life has collapsed. Neither of them know what to do next, other than to wait to be fired, but both strangely feel a sense of freedom. Sarah tells Michael she's taking tomorrow off as one of her remaining holiday days off to look for a new job.

As they go their separate ways and leave the park, Michael's mood starts to dampen as the anaesthetic of Sarah starts to wear off. Fear and worry start to creep in. As he heads home, he becomes increasingly more anxious about how Judith will react when he tells her. He knows he will be home a few hours earlier than her so decides to make a special meal for them both that evening in vain attempt to soften the bad news he knows she will be hysterical about.

As he walks up the cold empty stairs to his flat, his heart begins to sink. He opens the door gently in a disheartened way and puts his keys on the table. Whilst he is reading his post, he starts to hear noises coming from the spare room and his heart jumps. As he stops to listen more, he realises it's Judith. She's home early. The long walk the hallway to the spare room takes forever and the noises are getting louder – she's really starting to enjoy herself.

He smashes the door open and sees Judith having very passionate sex with Richard, his office manager. Sudden silence and shock fills the room, and he turns his back silently and walks out of the flat. He can't breathe. Storming down the pavement he gets angrier and angrier in a desperate crushing rage. He introduced them at an Angle Bank awards event and memory of Richard's days off and Judith's unexplained missed calls come flooding back.

After walking around for hours mesmerised with disbelief, and almost on autopilot, he heads to Whitechapel to a rough and dishevelled pub to find to find 3 friends from his regiment that have taken a less respectable path than him after leaving their Afghanistan tour and becoming heavily involved

with gun-running and organised crime. He is numb and the city lights are a haze. He stops at a cash machine to withdraw his last £200 from a cash machine outside the tube station.

When he enters the pub there are stares all around because of his tidy office suit, and the atmosphere is incredibly threatening. After getting a strong scotch he asks several locals where he can find Charlie, the guy he went through officer training with.

As he walks to the back of the pub where there is an open side door, without warning he is knocked sideways from being punched in the head. His vision hazes as 3 men rain punch after punch, kicking him continuously as he lays on the floor trying to survive the onslaught. A loud voice bellows through the crowd demanding they stop. It's Charlie. Charlie leads Michael through the pub into a small back room. After greeting each other and tending to Michael's bloodied face, Michael puts his money on the desk and explains to Charlie that he needs a gun. Charlie reluctantly agrees and tells him to wait in the office.

Charlie returns 20mins later, breaking the cold silence of the back room. He presents a semi-automatic pistol and 5 magazines filled with bullets. As a gift for an old friend, he has added in a silencer for free. He tells Michael to take a taxi home and not to tell anyone what about he is about to do. Michael shakes himself down, puts the gun in his jacket pocket and leaves through a dimly lit alleyway to get into the car Charlie has waiting for him to take him wherever he needs to go.

The long slow walk up the stairs to the flat are even longer this time. The very moment he walks through the door, he is confronted by a furious and hysterical Judith who attacks him with weak fists and kicks wherever she can. She screams and screams about how much she hates him, how cold and boring he is, how unhappy she is, how awful he is in bed and how he's ruined her relationship with Richard. Michael is numb and cold, restraining her hands and silently walking past her.

Judith sits on their bed, crying, as Michael sits on the sofa with a thousand-yard stare, contemplating the horror of what he is going to do. As Judith falls to sleep, he walks into their room and slowly pulls out the pistol, placing it gently at her head.

But he can't do it.

The stage is now set. He is going to kill Richard, and he will record the killing on a camcorder for Judith to watch, before he kills her.

ACT II – SHE WASN'T MEANT TO BE IN TODAY

The next morning Michael wakes up to find Judith already gone. He packs the gun into his rucksack and leaves through the front door to go to work. The countdown begins. He coldly and blankly makes his way into work, dead to the world.

As he walks down the pavement to the Angle Bank office, as an omen of what's to come, a man in a suit bumps into him violently, knocking him over and spilling his red blackcurrant drink all down Michael's pristine white shirt, leaving him looking like has been shot. He pulls himself up and stares at the man who knocked him over incredibly violently, who is apologising profusely but walks off in shock at the look in Michael's eyes. He knows the confrontation with Richard is minutes away.

When he gets into the office, Richard isn't there. When he asks a colleague where he is, they tell him Richard has taken the morning off and will be back after lunch. He knows Richard is with Judith. He wants to search for Sarah but remembers she has taken the day off.

He sits down for a long morning and finds a redundancy notice on his desk. He takes the post from home out of his rucksack and sees bill after bill, that he can no longer afford. He reads the news, which is all bad. He tries to make coffee and can't. He walks to the top roof garden to breathe after nearly collapsing with claustrophobia. The walls are closing in when he is in the lift or in the toilet. Nerves are beginning to kick in. He alternates between shaking and going numb, knowing he will have to deal with Richard in a few hours.

The head of his department bursts in and calls an ad-hoc meeting, demanding that all their work deadlines be met, despite the redundancies. Even though the work is pointless and the department doomed, everyone is ordered to work hard, and work fast. For nothing. Michael starts to crack up under the stress and can't see properly as his vision is blurred.

As he bursts through the office doors into the daylight and fresh air at lunchtime, the pressure is lifted and he can breathe again. He wanders aimlessly as people pass him by. He stops at an electronics shop and goes inside. Using his last credit card, he buys a cheap camcorder, throwing away the packaging on his walk back and experimenting with the buttons to see how it works.

It's time. Now or never. The gun is waiting in his rucksack under his desk. Put them together and the show is complete.

As he re-enters the office, suddenly he sees the worst possible scenario – Sarah is unexpectedly back in the office. She wasn't supposed to be there but has come back for the afternoon, just as Richard is supposed to do. She smiles sweetly at Michael as he broods and sweats at his desk. They both drift to the office kitchen and she gives him a long gentle hug as she can see he is deeply distressed.

He can't do it. Not with her there. Maybe it's time to tell her how he feels and they can escape all of it. When he returns to his desk, he starts writing an email to say what he can't in person. He looks over to her at her desk and presses "send". As hope returns, he takes out the new camcorder and connects it to the computer to make it work.

As he looks back over at Sarah, she is hiding behind her computer monitor and avoiding any contact across to Michael's side of the room. As he looks back at his email, he sees her reply, which simply says "i can't". His heart sinks. Black clouds gather. His anger surges as his face goes red. Humiliated again. He gets up to go the roof garden once again to breathe as the claustrophobia swallows him.

He goes back in, and notices that someone is in Richard's side-office room. Another glance and he sees the man he has to kill, briefing Michael's team without him there, including Sarah. The pressure is cracking him. He looks around the room to see phones, computers and doors.

It's time to set up the turkey shoot. Everyone is going to die.

ACT III – THE RAMPAGE

Michael heads downstairs to reception, where he tells the security guard that he has a confidential emergency, requesting the guard to follow him. They walk down the corridor and Michael points to the disabled toilet, Confused, the guard walks inside with Richard following.

The door clicks quietly clicks shut.

In the dim light, Michael pulls out a computer wire from his pocket and puts it round the front of the guards neck, pulling him backwards. A violent struggle sparks off as the guard is laid horizontal with the psychotic Michael pulling on the wire as tightly as he can until the legs of the guard stop kicking. Michael walks out and locks the toilet door from the outside. No-one heard a thing as the ground floor is virtually abandoned.

Michael immediately paces strongly to the door at the end of the long corridor, marked “IT COMMS”, which is empty. Inside are a mess of computers, gadgets and wires. He goes into a white rack and rips out all the wiring, as well as wall-fixed piping holding all the trunk wires together. He picks up a set of screwdrivers and a tube of glue from the nearest desk. At that moment, all the phone and internet connections cut off. He locks the door from the inside and escapes through a fire exit onto an external spiral staircase leading up his office floor’s roof garden.

The events are in motion. There is no turning back now. A blaze of glory or a humiliating court appearance and being sodomised in prison. This is the final battle. The final show.

His army training and cold psychotic veneer kick in. The mild-mannered office clerk transforms into a cold, calculating and systematic violent psychopath. All of the deadly rage from Afghanistan was nothing in comparison to this.

He walks down from the balcony roof garden back into his office where all the staff are in still in Richard’s office for their meeting, although it seems they are finishing. Silently and stealthily he walks to his desk and pulls the gun out of his bag into his back pocket. No-one notices. He slips back out of the same door. The office is empty and desolate, and all the equipment is flicking, connection-less, in a very ominous way. All the staff in Richard’s office have no idea what is about to happen.

Michael walks around the corridors surrounding his office department in a hasty but militarily organised way. In each door he jams a screwdriver into the door lock to destroy the key hole and fills it with the fast-setting glue to seal it shut. All but the door nearest to his desk is locked.

He stands behind that door, pulls out the gun from his back pocket and breathes in. He looks down for a second and calms himself. He slowly raises his head as his eyes glaze over. The door shuts behind him with a massive click in the office silence. He flicks the bolt on the door quietly to lock it. Everyone is now back at their desks after the meeting. Nobody has noticed the gun in his hand.

As he begins the slow walk to Richard’s office, in the background one of the of girls in his department is tugging at the door to try and open it, confused and becoming distressed as to why she can’t leave. Two male colleagues are trying to help her, but to no avail.

Michael walks into Richard’s office and smiles, shocking Richard, who stands up behind his desk. From long distance, we see 2 flashes in the office as Michael shoots him twice – once in the head and once in the chest. Blood splatters over his face and suit.

Michael walks out into confusion as the people in the office try to work out why they can't get out. He stands in the floor, covered in blood. A girl at her desk sees him, and sees Richard lying dead in his office. She screams and all hell breaks loose as they see Michael walking around menacingly, working out who to kill next.

A man tries to call the police from his office phone, and when Michael sees, he shoots him straight away in the head. Another girl tries to call on her mobile and is shot. People are forming into small huddled groups and screaming. Michael is smiling psychotically, laughing to himself.

He hurriedly walks over to his desk and grabs the camcorder, switching it on as he places it into his hand. As it records, he walks in a circle round the desks as the groups run away from him in the same circular track. He fires wildly into the groups, laughing maniacally and shouting at them about how good it feels to do something meaningful by slaughtering city drones and greedy pigs. He looks into the camera with blood all over his face to introduce himself and his day.

Everyone is screaming for him to stop but he can't hear – his bloodlust has completely taken over and the victims are just statistical targets he needs to meet to complete the mission. He climbs onto a central desk and changes the gun's magazine. He shoots out the windows and madly fires at anyone and everyone as they run around trying to open the doors or hide under desks. Blood is everywhere.

As 3 people remain, he realises one is Sarah, who is crying and screaming for him to stop, but he can't hear her. He looks under a desk and sees a crying and whimpering office temp praying for her life, and kindly and gently tells her to stand up and get out of the way. As she does, he puts his hand to her cheek and shoots her in the face.

The last man to survive put his hands up and desperately pleads for him to stop and not shoot him, trying to shield Sarah at the same time. Michael punches the gun into his face, knocking both his last victim and Sarah to the floor. He stands on the man's chest and shoots him in the chest.

Sarah crawls away, whimpering for him to spare her. Something happens, and he pauses. He remembers who he is and starts to break down as he looks at her on the floor covered in blood. She fearfully stands up and finds her way to him, to try to comfort him as she puts the gun down by his side. He cries into her neck as she brings him down to earth.

All falls silent as we notice the camcorder sitting on a desk, still recording.

He whispers in her ear "i don't want to do this." She holds him tighter and tells him everything will be ok. "If i don't...", he whispers again.

BANG.

"Then i'll regret all of this forever."

Sarah's limp and lifeless body slides slowly from his arms towards the floor. Michael had pulled up the gun between their bodies and shot her in the chest from inside, killing her instantly. He had shot her during his dramatic last words to her, not after, as the audience would have expected.

He lowers his head in shame, surveying the devastation around him in eerie silence. 27 have been murdered in cold blood, with their blood splattered all over him, and the camcorder.

He sits at his desk looking downwards between his legs, holding the camcorder and breathing heavily in a massive panic attack, as a return to the first scene. As police sirens hail in the background, he tries

to connect the camera to his computer, but fails because he ripped out the comms wires. He panics and smashes the computer monitor in frustration.

As he stomps around, he sees a colleague's laptop underneath a packet of bloodied paperwork with an antenna sticking out. His nervy shaking hands can't open the casing but finally when he gets it open, he is able to get an external internet connection through it and loads up a video website, connecting his cameras haphazardly as he can manage. As he starts to upload the footage, he sits at the desk silently and coldly as the office doors are being nagged on by men wanting to get in.

He points the camcorder at himself to deliver his final words, which are being recorded live on a the website as a separate piece of footage. He sweeps his bloodied hands, face and hair across and delivers a sombre and painful speech about what is meaningful in this life and how he can't regret what he has done. He leaves messages for his family and Judith, and as he carries on, chat messages flood through onto the page in support of his actions, willing him on to kill more and to kill himself.

He sets up the last and final scene – his last stand. Knowing the police will soon break through, he turns the camcorder round so it faces the office doors, picks up his gun and stand in front of the camera with his back to it.

As armed police break through, he wildly fires off the very last bullets in his magazine, and falls to the floor in a massive hail of automatic weapon fire dispensed by a troop of SO19 police officers.