

Context: This is an early scene where Tim pitches the costing for nature accounting software to his firm. This sets up Tim's decision to leave his job as a financial accountant.

I headed to the conference room and sat down amidst the pot plants in the waiting area. 'By valuing the ecosystem and everything that depends upon it, we will protect it,' I whispered earnestly to the Areca Fern and Rubber Plant. 'Unless we cost for nature...'

I stopped quickly as several suited men and a woman trailed out, leaving Martin and Simon at the table. Through the glass walls, I saw Simon open up his laptop and show something to Martin. They talked animatedly, probably working out how inputting the environmental and social impacts of each project would affect the overall costs. I stood up and paced to relieve my nervous tension, muttering under my breath, trying to control my eyebrows. Just as I'd pushed them from an anxious forty-five degree tilt up down into a menacing glower, Martin looked up and beckoned me in. I forced my brows horizontal again and entered with the gait of a confident man who was bringing them the best thing since sliced bread.

'Hi there. Right er...'

'That's us on the beach,' Simon was saying.

'Looks lovely,' murmured Martin.

'Four star resort but I wouldn't go back....'

I sat down at the table opposite them and placed my briefcase on the top pointedly. I coughed and rustled some papers. Martin eventually looked over.

'What are we meeting about again Tim? Remind me.'

Remind him!

'This is to talk about the Costing for Nature software that will transform the way we do business. For the better.' I added quickly.

'Okay, go ahead.'

'We need to cost for nature.' Simon was still swiping through his photos. I paused, but he showed no sign of looking up. 'For example, when we cost a project for time and money, we factor in the carbon cost too, and allow money to offset.'

Martin looked doubtful.

'I know it's not a perfect solution from an environmental perspective, but at least the environmental costs would form part of the cost-benefit analysis.'

No reaction.

'My degree was in biology, I don't know if you knew that? So I've been able to feed the latest environmental data and predicted carbon costs into the algorithms.'

'Sounds expensive,' Simon finally looked up.

'No, erm, my... er a qualified software consultant I know, developed some software that calculates it all for us.' I searched in vain for a sign they'd checked it out. 'There was a link in my email?'

I waited while they murmured amongst themselves. It was a short conversation.

'Thanks for your idea, but it's not something we'll be taking forward right now,' said Martin.

'Right.'

That seemed to be it.

I went to my desk, sat down in my ergonomically designed, blue fabric chair among a sea of similar chairs and desks in the open-plan office and gazed at my screen. The screensaver showed endless forests against a startling blue sky. I tapped a key and up came accounts for a global IT company we were helping to make richer.

Standard financial modelling indicated that designing products to fail with parts that couldn't be replaced was the most profitable business model. I gazed blankly at the numbers as it sank in. They hadn't even looked at my CFN analysis that costed in the e-waste, unnecessary carbon emissions, and health costs from sweatshop conditions and toxic ingredients that seeped into the water. A new screensaver sprung up. A tropical island with clear turquoise sea filled with colourful fish. I was suddenly furious. They hadn't looked at any of the sample scenarios. I grabbed my laptop and marched back in.

They were still there exchanging holiday horror stories.

'Borneo was crap too. You couldn't swim in the sea.' Martin informed Simon.

'It's not more expensive.' I declared loudly, striding in and banging the door behind me. Well I tried to, but it was a glass door on a hinge designed to shut gently. I opened my laptop and pointed to the example scenario.

'See that,' I pointed at a graph showing two lines comparing current costs with costs using the CFN.

'What's CFN?' Simon deigned to glance over.

It's Costing for Nature accounting software,' I told him through gritted teeth.

'Well it costs more, doesn't it?'

'Now look.' I typed three years into the time box. The two lines for standard cost and CFN costs came together. 'Now look.' I typed five years into the box and the CFN line shifted below the standard cost line. 'CFN saves them money. This scenario is for the construction companies we deal with that we walk past every day coming into work. Simply switching to green cement, for example, substantially lowers CFN construction costs due to its lower carbon footprint.'

'I drive,' Simon said.

'What? Why would you drive?'

'I've got a Ferrari.'

I looked at him in his perfectly cut suit, luxuriant beard, clipped to precision, shoes too polished and shiny for public transport and hated him.

'Way overpriced for what you get. Now if it were a Porsche...' began Martin.

'But the point is,' I shouted over him, 'for every company we deal with, in the short term, yes it costs money to properly cost in environmental impacts, but in the medium to long term it costs way more not to.'

'I'll tell you what costs too much money,' Martin said.

'What?' Simon asked.

'A Ferrari,' said Martin.

'No, two week holidays swimming in plastic,' Simon retorted.

'Ouch.'

I took a deep breath, determined to stay calm, to do justice to our CFN software that would save us from ourselves, restore the planet to perfection and enable me to saunter past XR protestors head held high. The daily commute, the hours sat at my desk gazing at the screen, the inane conversation in the coffee room about cars - all would be redeemed if I was working for something worthwhile. Simon clicked on his laptop and slowly an image of him with his perfect beard and smiling wife and young son came into view. I lost it.

'I don't care about your car or your two weeks holiday on your tropical island.'

'The holiday was shit anyway,' consoled Simon. 'We had to return early, my son got asthma and we couldn't get him in a local hospital, they were all full.'

'Don't you see we're the engines of all this?' I cried. 'Plastic didn't get in the sea by magic. The asthma didn't just happen. It was the pollution from clearing rainforests. The whole of bloody Indonesia has breathing difficulties. We crunch the

numbers and depending on what goes in, out comes the decisions. If we added waste and air quality and climate change to our numbers you wouldn't get plastic in the sea and asthma. You must see that? It's us, it's all us! It's all our fault.'

They looked at me aghast as my voice hit soprano pitch. 'It hurts I know to admit it. I understand that. I tell you what.... Okay... I've not told anyone this, I've never admitted it to a soul, but I'll tell you now.' My heart was pounding. Dare I say it? I must. I must set an example and own up. I tried to look them in the eyes as I made my confession, but looked away at the last minute. 'I set the parakeets free. It was me. There. I've owned up and you know it feels good. My bad. I did it. It wasn't Jimi Hendrix, it was me and now they're taking over. They're an invasive species. I'm not jealous of your Ferrari or your holiday, or your beard.' Simon looked up sharply and stroked his beard possessively.

'Well maybe the beard.' I admitted recklessly, still riding the confession wave.

Simon shot Martin a look. Was it guilt? I pressed the point home. 'Surely you must see it's our fault? But that's okay, because the Costing for Nature software can put it all right. We crunch the numbers, what goes in is what comes out.' I knew I was repeating myself but was unable to stop. 'We're not just complicit, we're guilty, but we can make it right!'

'Mmmhmm,' soothed Martin. I petered out as I finally deciphered the look in their eyes. It wasn't guilt. It was compassion.

I fell silent and packed up my laptop and left the room.

Note: But make sure that you know what you're talking about - no point promoting green solutions if you don't know what works, so this scene was followed up later, (see extract about zero carbon budget later) when the costing for nature software was critiqued and a more effective solution proposed.