

The Times

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Deadlines, dead lines

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"...The plot mostly involves office treacheries. The Owner, as the unseen publisher is called, sends in two slick vandals: Nicholas Woodeson's baseball-hatted Lionel, who boasts he has "terminated three publications this afternoon", and Annabelle Apsion's Tamara, an image expert who has a hairdo like a Thai temple with chopsticks sticking out. Backs are prolifically and interchangeably stabbed by everybody except William's secretary, in Prunella Scales's performance a nice, comfy sort who speaks ("Mothers who don't put their daughters in a brace have a lot to answer for") like one of Alan Bennett's Talking Heads.

She duly falls, while William's deputy, in Tom Hollander's performance a cowardly nerd with a blundering survival instinct, somehow contrives to rise. The logic of his promotion is slight; but then Oakes's point is, I suppose, that there is little logic in the business madhouse..."