

## One

Monday morning, 8:10. I haul my sorry ass out from under the duvet where it's warm and cozy. I can hear the patter of large drops of water pelting against the bedroom window. Scratching my aching head, I stagger over and part the curtains. I peer out through the space between the heavy lined fabric. The morning is cold, wet. The sky's dull, dark. The rain has been pouring down for hours now. It's August, but to look at it you'd think it was the middle of November. The road outside is sitting under two inches of flood, the pavement glistens and the surfaces of the puddles are covered in ringlets as the heavy raindrops batter down hard. I'm badly hungover. My kidneys are beginning to protest, my guts are churning and I can't tell which end I need to expel my toxic waste from first. I feel like shit, and have no desire to go to work this morning. But then, if I'm honest, my lack of motivation to make it to Corporation national HQ has very little to do with my condition. Moreover, you could say that my condition is the result of my reluctance to make another eight hours down at the bloodsucking life-robbing land of evil which is the Corporation. See, I drink to forget, especially on Sundays. Sundays suck. Day of rest, supposedly. Yeah, right. Day of getting your shit together in preparation for returning to the grind of Corporation drudgery, more like. So Sunday nights are given over to some serious alcohol consumption, simply because it means that I can avoid grieving over my lost weekend. Alas, all good things must come to an end, I suppose, but oh, my beautiful free time, why must you leave so soon?

My churning guts dictate a move into the bathroom. I pull the chord and gain some illumination on the grimy hole which passes for a bathroom. I catch a glance of my pallid face in the smeary glass of the cracked mirror, which I really must replace, since it's been that way for four months now. Jesus! Four days' stubble has

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encroached upon the lower half of my face, and my eyes are so bloodshot it's no wonder my cock's so goddamn flaccid. The sight of my own ghoulish visage makes me retch slightly, but the grinding growl in my lower abdomen is the commander here. I whip down my creased, dingy boxers and deposit a greasy turd, high in ale-content, into the skid-marked bowl. It stinks, and my anus stings with the heat of the poppycock departing my bowel. I groan. I wipe, flush, wash my hands and return to the bedroom.

A typical Monday morning, really. I forgot to remove the washing from the machine last night, so most of my clothes are still way too damp to wear. I was drunk. I forgot. At least I can achieve some of my goals. I took my last clean dirty shirt out of the wardrobe. Stain-free, at least. I sniffed the armpits. Slight curry-whiff, but not too bad. I sprayed a shedload of Lynx over the offending areas, then covered my own sweaty torso with the stuff. I almost asphyxiated on the stench, but at least I would be able to move about at the office in the knowledge that I didn't reek of week-old dried perspiration. Equally, the alcoholic guff emanating from my pores would be well masked, at least to all but the most sensitive of noses. Yeah, reformed smokers, mainly. They'd maybe notice, because they're always so sharp with their sense of smell. Buggers. Usually so damn self-righteous and holier-than-thou about it all, too. Me, I tend not to talk about it. I picked my trousers off the floor and pulled them on over my shaking legs. The alcohol withdrawal symptoms were kicking in early today.

I lug my sorry self into the kitchen, fill the kettle and toss a bag onto the first mug which comes to hand which doesn't have an inch of old dregs in it or a mould-ring developing quarter of an inch from the top. Shit, I have to wash up. Maybe tonight. Yeah, maybe. The kettle boils, I fill the cup and whist the bag around with a spoon hauled off the draining board. I pour in the final dregs of milk and mix in the swirling fluids, mixing the colours to a mid-brown blandness. I flop the soggy bag out onto a stained side-plate, where it steams. Inevitably, the leaves within the papier-mesh will cool and fester on the side prior to my return from the Corporation. Gotta clear this shit up: the tart aroma, that slightly bitter tang of moldering vegetation and uneaten inedibles *was* beginning to turn strong, its rancid sharpness causing my nose to twitch offensively as I entered the cooking area.

Moving into the hall and glancing in the other smeary mirror, I ran my fingers through my hair in an attempt to flatten down the worst of the unruly tufts. It wasn't keen to do as it was told, so I applied yet more gel to my already lank and

well-oiled unwashed head-fur. Unsure if it would hold, I slapped a generous dollop of Vaseline, my preferred choice of emollient for topical application, onto my scalp. It seemed to tame my tresses suitably, so I headed through to the living room in order to dig out my shoes. Where the fuck were they? Ah yes — in the hall. The communal hallway was often left open by the fat whore who resided on the first floor, so I prayed to Dog that my only pair of shoes without a hole in the sole hadn't been abducted by some vagrant who may have stumbled into the hall area to doss whilst sheltering from the downpour. I'd left the stinking things out there because I'd mindlessly stumbled into a behemoth pile of reeking dogshite on the way home from the boozier the night before. Ah, fuck it: I'd pick them up on the way out, or head out to work barefoot. It mattered little. I stank either way, and if I looked a fool too, then what did it matter?

I guzzled my tea, scalding my gullet as it slid down from the greasy vessel, and headed back into the bathroom, wherein to scour my wine-stained teeth. Red wine always greysens les dents, and after the weekend which had just passed, my gnashers were well grimy-looking, to say the least. Okay, so my better half had been away visiting friends, and while to say I'd capitalised on the fact would be to cast a cloud over the brilliance of our relationship, it had been an opportune time to cop off with the foxy fiancée of one of our mutual friends without great fear of repercussion. I scoured my teeth with a generous squeeze of Pearl Drops and headed back to the bedroom in order to exhume my manky old jacket, purchased aeons ago from the Imperial Cancer Research shop. I tug a tie from beneath a heap of clothes and hastily wrap it around my neck, loosely knotting it in some kind of concession to the Corporation's expectations.

8:28. No chance of a shave today. Ah, what the hell. Returning to the living room once more, I rifled through a gigantic stack of CDs piled high on a scandic shelving unit. I needed something to wake me up, so Leonard Cohen was most definitely out this morning. The Fall? Maybe not, but I tossed the tape onto the table beside my Discman and continued my hunt for the ideal start to the morning... ah, Ministry! Some hard, heavy industrial sounds should do the trick, although my throbbing cranium would doubtlessly be protesting by the time of my arrival at Corporation HQ. I chucked the disc into the player, pulled on my donkey jacket and stuffed the Discman into my pocket. I gathered up the Fall CD, my wallet and a

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handful of other miscellaneous personal effects and headed out into the grey drear.

Just another Monday, and no mistake.