

*The following morning – Voltaire said, Everything is fine today, that is our illusion.* I am under no illusion. But part of playing the office game is pretending everything is fine. Ultimately, this is to my advantage. It is one of the reasons I rose to become Head of Burials and Cemeteries. As I stroll through the office with my caffè latte extra hot with soya milk, I greet the few council workers who are already here.

‘Good morning ... Have a great day ... Like your new coat ... Oh, it’s not new.’

The HR manager is at her desk. It is far too early to hear about her repugnant offspring. I increase my pace. When I pass her desk, I say ‘Good morning’ and keep walking. Waddling towards me is B-B-B from accounts. ‘Good morning.’

‘Hi Dyson, how are you?’

‘Fine.’

My assistant Asma is in early this morning. She says, ‘Morning Dyson.’

‘Good morning.’

‘Nice shirt by the way.’

Yes. It is a slim fit, blue and white, gingham check shirt from Hackett. My in tray looks like a replica of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It has piled up because I have spent so many hours analysing CCTV footage. While I wait for the computer to turn on, I touch the monocle in my trouser pocket. It used to belong to Doctor Trenton. He came home from the golf course one evening to find me in his house, brandishing a samurai sword. He pleaded pitifully. I beheaded him and commandeered the monocle.

A plain blonde skips over. It is Amelia, no Andrea, possibly Ann.

‘Hey Dyson.’

‘Good morning.’

‘I was wondering if you were interested in, um, possibly having lunch with me one day later this week. Maybe the new pizza place opposite.’ *I was thinking of going there, but not with her.* ‘If you’re not too busy that is.’

‘I am incredibly busy.’ The comment is augmented with a tilt of my head in the direction of the Leaning Tower of Pisa in tray. ‘As you can see.’

‘Oh, well maybe another time?’

I don’t respond; she wanders off. After dealing with some emails, I tap my fingertips against the surface of the desk and think about the cemetery worker potentially masquerading as an alleged war criminal. On the other side of the passageway to me, some council workers are discussing the forthcoming office Halloween party. This could be a good chance to discover more about him.

‘Asma?’

‘Yes.’

‘Email the cemetery overseer and tell her to invite my two cemetery employees to the office Halloween party.’

‘But there are three of them.’

‘Angus is barred from the building.’

‘Really? Why?’

‘He got drunk at the Christmas do and sung a Rangers Football Club song with sectarian connotations.’

‘Wow!’

The decision to invite them will not be considered unusual. The Halloween party is open to all the council’s staff. With alcohol available to loosen his tongue, this event could prove to be an ideal opportunity. He better accept my invitation.