

Toil

15-DE08-W045

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

With a soft chime, elevator doors open and a pair of polished black shoes click down the center of a long, cubicle-filled room.

BOB, 40s, nebbish, with coke bottle glasses and business attire, walks past a series of motivational kitten posters hung above each cubicle, reading "WORK HARDER," "MAKE MORE MONEY," and "MOTIVATION!" before reaching his own cubicle, with a poster reading "LIFE IS SHORT".

Bob sets a briefcase by his chair and sits straight, facing two large monitors.

He squints closely at the one on the left. It displays row upon row of random numbers and letters.

When he finds the one he is looking for, he types on a keyboard and the monitor on the right displays, "GOOD JOB! +\$0.05" and a counter begins counting down from 7:59:59.

LLOYD

Well, I'm off.

Bob looks to his left, where LLOYD, 60s, is peeking his head over the divider between their spaces.

BOB

Off?

Lloyd nods and extends a small, brown potted flower to Bob.

LLOYD

My last day. I want you to have my personal item. You don't have one.

Bob takes it, hesitantly. Suddenly he shakes it.

BOB

It's dead.

LLOYD

Very easy to care for.

As Bob sets it on his desk, the room floods with light.

Lloyd and Bob look up to see the MANAGER standing as a silhouette in the doorway at the end of the hall, back-lit by warm, natural sunlight. The wall inside his office is nothing but windows.

MANAGER

All accounts settled, Lloyd?

Lloyd nods to the Manager, straightens his tie, and heads toward the elevator, eyes downcast.

The elevator doors open, and FLOYD, 20s, steps out. He's wearing a suit identical to Lloyd's. He is followed by ALAN, 40s, a short, balding man.

ALAN

Ah, Lloyd, meet your replacement!  
Right over there, Floyd, cubicle  
eight. I've brought you a new human  
resource, Stanley.

Floyd walks toward Lloyd's former cubicle, nodding at Lloyd as they pass each other.

The Manager nods from his door.

MANAGER

Very good, Alan. Please make sure  
he is apprised of work space  
etiquette.

As Floyd settles into his chair, Bob turns back to his desk and looks at the flower, illuminated by the light from the Manager's office. It seems healthier than a moment before.

The Manager's door closes, returning the room to dim fluorescence, and the plant wilts slightly, losing color.

ALAN

Please make yourself at home.  
Stanley is quite adamant that  
everyone have one personal item. He  
believes it boosts morale.

Floyd opens his briefcase and removes a photo of a tropical beach.

FLOYD

Yes, I have it right here.

ALAN

Excellent. Enjoy your time in DATA!

Alan returns to the elevator. Bob watches the elevator doors close on Alan and Lloyd. An arrow pointing down flashes red above the door.

Bob turns to see Floyd pinning the photo to his cubicle wall. Floyd smiles at Bob.

FLOYD  
Someday, right?

Bob nods curtly, and returns to his screen.

**JUMP CUT TO:**

The display flashes "NICE!" "WAY TO GO!" and "FASTER!" until the timer counts down to 4:00:00 and "LUNCH!"

Bob leans back, lifts his glasses, and rubs his eyes.

When he lowers the glasses, his motivational poster comes into focus. The kitten sits in a field of daisies. The daisies rustle softly as if from a breeze.

**DAYDREAM: EXT. FIELD - DAY**

With the sun beating down, hands plant a flower in rich, damp earth.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)  
You must eat before continuing.

**END DAYDREAM**

Bob snaps out of a day dream with a shake of his head.

**INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY**

Bob opens his briefcase, and removes a prepackaged, vacuum sealed lunch full of neutral colored, vaguely edible objects, and a small lidded cup labeled "ORANGE."

He sits at a long table, coworkers hunched over identical lunches to either side.

Bob sighs, staring into space.

**DAYDREAM: EXT. FIELD - DAY**

Hands dig a potato out of the earth, brush it off, rinse it under crystal clear water. The sun shines brightly in the sky.

**END DAYDREAM**

Fluorescent lights flicker pallidly overhead. Bob looks at a darkly tinted window, where the sun is reduced to a glowing orb peeking between skyscrapers gray clouds.

Bob lifts a beige wafer to his mouth, his eyes still on the window. When he tastes it, he sets it down in disgust.

He stands and goes to the window.

He lifts the creaking latch and slides the window up with a harsh scraping sound.

Sunlight pours into the room. Coworkers shield their eyes from the glare, frowning. Bob smiles into the blue sky, white fluffy clouds, and shining sun.

He looks down and sees a small plant, with two small leaves, in a long discarded window box.

As he is staring at the plant, a slight breeze disturbs it. One of the leaves is dislodged, falling to the linoleum.

Bob hurries back to his lunch and grabs the "ORANGE," as his coworkers look on, squinting, stupefied.

Bob takes the cup to a nearby sink and rinses it out.

He returns to the window and carefully digs under the plant, lifting it and the dirt surrounding it, and placing it in the cup.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

Back at his desk, Bob places the cup carefully next to the other plant.

He settles himself back in front of his monitors and begins to work, but almost immediately glances back to the plants.

The manager's door opens again, and the plants gain color in the natural light. Bob is transfixed, until a throat clears behind him.

MANAGER

What's this, a second personal  
item?

Bob spins abruptly, to look up at the Manager, who gestures to a sign on the wall that reads "ONE PERSONAL ITEM PER WORKSPACE."

Bob quickly shoves the new plant into the top drawer of his desk, and returns to his work.

The Manager frowns briefly, then moves on.

Bob glances after the Manager, then quietly opens the drawer. The plant looks even worse than before.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

With a soft chime, elevator doors open, and pair of polished black oxford shoes click down the center of a long room lined with cubicles.

When Bob reaches his desk, he sits with his briefcase in his lap and glances around.

He unscrews the fluorescent bulb from his desk lamp

He opens his briefcase and places the bulb in it before withdrawing a new one. He screws the bulb into the lamp. It gives off ultraviolet light, lending his cubicle a slightly different hue than the rest of the room.

He pulls the lamp to the edge of the desk, directly above the plant, just as the manager's door opens, lighting the room.

Bob shoves the drawer shut and turns to his monitor, just as the Manager's shadow passes over him.

MANAGER

Is there a problem, Bob?

Bob looks up, guilty. The Manager points to Bob's screens.

MANAGER

You haven't begun your work.

Bob's display reads "PLEASE BEGIN! - \$0.00 8:00:00"

Bob scans his screen quickly and enters a number on the keyboard.

He smiles meekly up at his boss, then focuses intently on his monitor again, until the manager moves away. After a moment, the door closes and the room dims again.

Bob opens his briefcase again and withdraws a small bottle of water.

He sprinkles some on Lloyd's flower and then the one in the drawer.

FLOYD

What on earth are you doing?!

Bob looks up to see Floyd staring at him over the edge of the divider. Bob goes back to watering.

BOB

They're very easy to care for.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

With a soft chime, elevator doors open, and pair of dirty black oxford shoes click down the center of a long room lined with cubicles.

When Bob arrives at his cubicle, he flips the lamp on and opens the drawer.

He removes the plant and dumps a briefcase full of dirt into the drawer.

He makes a small hole in the dirt and carefully places the plant into the hole.

He begins to make more holes, taking seeds from his pocket and dropping one into each hole.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

Bob hurries from the elevator to his desk. He no longer wears his suit jacket.

He sits at his desk, flips the lamp on, and opens the drawer.

There are now six healthy little plants growing inside.

He turns to his computer and begins to work.

**JUMP CUT TO:**

The display flashes "NICE!" "WAY TO GO!" and "FASTER!" until the timer counts down to 4:00:00 and "LUNCH!"

Bob closes the top drawer and opens the one below it, revealing a strawberry plant.

**INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY**

Bob sits at the table with a small pile of strawberries, while coworkers hunch over flavorless lunches to either side.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

With a soft chime, elevator doors open, and pair of dirty black oxford shoes click down the center of a long room lined with cubicles.

Bob hurries from the elevator to his desk. His sleeves are rolled up.

He sits at his desk and turns on the lamp with an arm that is noticeably sunburned.

He opens the strawberry drawer, which is flourishing.

He opens the deep, bottom drawer, revealing a pumpkin nestled among a bed of vines.

FLOYD  
We have a problem.

Bob looks up to see Floyd holding a small pumpkin, attached to a vine.

FLOYD (cont'd)  
You're spreading.

Bob stands to look over the divider, where the pumpkin vine trails back behind Floyd's desk.

He takes the pumpkin from Floyd, and examines it.

Suddenly, the room is illuminated.

Bob shoves the pumpkin back at Floyd and turns to close his desk drawers.

Floyd glances around before setting the pumpkin on his desk. He tears his tropical beach picture down and tosses it in the trash, just as the manager reaches them.

MANAGER  
We need to speak about your work space.

Bob looks up, startled.

BOB  
My cubicle, sir?

The Manager looks at Bob, frowns, and turns to Floyd.

MANAGER

The janitors have reported a strange leakage under your desk, Floyd.

Floyd is speechless.

MANAGER (cont'd)

Hopefully nothing, but it will take a while to get a plumber in. I'm going to have to ask you to change desks for the time being.

Floyd stands.

FLOYD

Yes, sir. Where would you like me to sit?

The Manager looks at Floyd's desk.

MANAGER

Please pick up your...personal item and follow me.

FLOYD

My personal item?

The manager nods and Floyd follows his gaze to the pumpkin, then turns to leave.

Floyd looks at Bob, who shrugs.

Floyd picks up the pumpkin and goes to follow the manager, but is quickly halted when the vine grows taught.

Floyd pulls, sharply, but the vine doesn't give.

He picks up a pair of scissors from his desk and extends them toward the vine.

Bob's eyes grow wide and he reaches toward Floyd.

BOB

Wait!

The manager turns and sees Bob, Floyd, and the pumpkin. He walks over to Floyd and grabs the vine.

He pulls, hard, and Bob's desk moves, his lamp and monitors shaking.

The manager turns to Bob's desk, and leans down to look underneath it, then straightens.

MANAGER

Bob, open your drawers please.

Bob looks at Floyd, who shrugs.

Resignedly, Bob opens the bottom drawer, revealing another pumpkin.

MANAGER (cont'd)

ALL of your drawers please.

Bob slowly opens the middle drawer, with the strawberries, and the top drawer, where the little plants spring up, well over the top of the desk. Finally, he opens the keyboard tray, which is full of grass.

The Manager takes a deep breath. He turns to Floyd.

MANAGER (cont'd)

Floyd, your scissors, please.

Floyd hands them over, and the Manager turns them toward Bob's desk.

Bob jumps between the manager and his desk.

BOB

You can't!

MANAGER

Stand aside, Bob.

Bob pulls a small pair of pruning shears from his pocket and holds them up in front of him. The manager frowns.

MANAGER (cont'd)

Put those away!

The manager steps forward, attempting to pass Bob.

Bob reaches out, grabs the Manager's tie, and cuts it in half.

The manager stops and looks at Bob, confused.

Bob looks back at the manager, with a tie in one hand and a pair of shears in the other.

**JUMP CUT TO:**

The elevator doors open to reveal Alan, smiling.

Bob stands holding Lloyd's flower, head held high. Behind him stands the Manager, arms crossed over half a tie. Behind him, Floyd and the rest of the office look on.

Bob steps into the elevator beside Alan and the doors close.

**INT. ELEVATOR - DAY**

Bob and Alan stand quietly for a moment as Alan find the correct button. The elevator begins to move.

ALAN  
DATA isn't for everyone.

Bob just looks down at his flower.

ALAN (cont'd)  
Did you really grow strawberries in your desk?

Bob nods, and pulls a napkin out of his pocket. He hands it to Alan.

Alan opens the napkin to reveal a perfect little strawberry. He pops it into his mouth.

ALAN (cont'd)  
You know, there are other departments.

**EXT. BUILDING - DAY**

Glass doors open, and a pair of work boots clomp down a sidewalk, then onto some grass.

Bob is wearing khaki pants and a jacket that reads "GROUNDS" on the back. He carries Lloyd's flower.

He kneels down in the dirt beside the building and digs a small hole with a trowel.

He takes the flower out of the pot and places it carefully in the hole, patting the ground around it.

Bob lifts his face to a bright blue sky and smiles.

**THE END.**

