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Monday morning - 7:30. Could there be a worse time? You start that mad rush every damned week just so you can have two days of supposed relaxation. But that is for another time, this story is about work. Just another day in the office.

Here you are with the alarm beating you awake and drool all over your beard and pillow. I have a theory about drool. It only happens when there are too many blankets over your head so it must be because it is too hot! I guess the question you're asking yourself is why does the idiot have the blankets over his head? Well, there is a perfectly good reason for that. It is summertime. Along with summertime comes our lovely little neighbors, the insects.

Someone left the screen door open again and the little buggers are on a feeding spree with my nose as the main course. But what they can't see they can't eat. Oh, enough procrastinating, wipe your mouth, get up, face the world.

It's easy, swing your leg over the bed, push off the mattress and stand up. And that is when it happens every Monday morning. "Crack". Your head bounces off the roof of the bed. "Dammit, this thing is made for midgets and masochists!"

The bed is my wife's from a bygone era when waterbeds and dark oak were groovy, or something. It's funny -- she has never left blood from her forehead on the canopy and cannot understand how this wonderful bed could ever attack me. That coming from someone who's legs dangle from a chair when she sits down. The little shortass would need a rebounder to get to my atmosphere.

Well I'm awake now! Let's get the job done. To me getting ready for work is a job. Think about it, there are similarities. You walk around half asleep, you spend a lot of time in the john, and there is always a lot of coffee.

Okay, things are going pretty smoothly. I have negotiated the walk over the piles of laundry scattered throughout the bedroom and am now making my way into the bathroom. There. I am inside with the door closed. Safe at last. Aaah, my throne awaits me. That exquisite parcel of porcelain, that giver of relief that no amount of Roloids could provide. This ivory tower that takes all that I force upon it without asking for anything except to caress its chrome handle and lower the seat.

Yessir, I am on a roll. The shower went on without a hitch and I only bellowed once when the temperature change forced me to the back wall like some demonic Garfield clinging to a car window. Somebody has turned on the washing machine.

As I peek out of my humid cocoon, I notice the maze I negotiated seems to have cleared and it's smooth sailing to the closet. Now, what to wear? The shirt with the stains on the pocket, the one with a rip under the arms or the one with both? I knew we should have washed clothes yesterday. What the Hell, put on the one with both it matches my mood.

I make my way down to the kitchen to get my daily injection of java and to have my ear talked off only to find my wife has left! She's gone to work! I've got some quality time! Yes!

Now don't get me wrong. I love my wife, but it is Monday morning. Some things should be respected. You can have your Sunday afternoon in front of the television. Me, I'll take Monday mornings with a little bit of solitude and nobody squeezing my head with chatter. So what if it's information I need to get through the day. Like "Don't forget to pay the electricity bill today or they are going to cut off the power." Everyone knows that on Monday mornings the human brain can't retain anything. You could tell me anything and after it spews from your mouth my deflector shields are at full power and nothing is going to penetrate. Just give me my coffee and I'll be with you in an hour or two.

Holy crap! Is that the right time? Slap on the shoes and hit the highway or I'll be listening to someone besides my wife telling me about my personal habits and how to improve myself. Do you ever notice when you show up late for work looking like a sack of crap that your coworkers look at you as if you're a second class citizen? Who do they think they are? Sure, they got to work on time, their clothes are clean and they probably even have matching socks on, but that doesn't give them the right to feel superior. It's Monday morning, for shit's sake.

I walk in ten minutes late to the sneers and distaste of my lofty comrades and head directly to the coffeepot. Do not pass go, do not greet anyone, just keep your eye on the black gold.

After a couple of gulps I'm ready for the morning ritual. Coffee talk. The topic this morning is "how busy I am". The panel this morning consists of our lovely receptionist Paula, our friendly (too damn friendly) office manager, Bob, and our plump and underdressed saleswoman, Joan.

Bob begins by telling us all that was discussed at the last board meeting and how he will have to work till midnight for weeks to get all the tasks completed.

Interpretation: I'm going to sit on my fat ass with my left index finger up my nose collecting overtime while the rest of you flunkies do all the work.

Joan bursts in with her tale of all the orders she has taken and how she really needs an assistant. "Well," I say, "Don't look at me, it's almost time for my break."

Nobody found that funny. Joan is looking at me like I just broke wind and forgot to say excuse me. So I say "Joan, that's a joke. You get it?"

Oh, now she puts a smile on that huge head. Did I mention Joan was on the hefty side? I think having sex with her would be a challenge. A challenge to your blood circulation. If you cut a main artery and were bleeding to death you could use her for a tourniquet. She could just sit on you and there would be no blood pumping anywhere, and I do mean anywhere.

Did I mention Joan wasn't overly attired? She is sitting in a chair wearing a pair of shorts and a top that I swear is my missing three-man tent and her stomach is hanging out. This is something you learn to live with or you leave whimpering and retreat to your office never to be seen again. We're talking about a full-blown visual attack and no wimps allowed.

Now Joan is smiling and I am starting to feel like a deer trapped in the headlights of an oncoming Freightliner. "That's cute Frank", she says as she swings one leg over the arm of the chair. "That's not!" I think to myself. I know I should look away, should be turning to the lovely receptionist Paula but something is holding me there. My eyes are fixed on the thighs of a mammoth. Is it morbid curiosity or am I feeling sympathy for all the pork and meat by-products that went into creating these massive chunks of bone and flesh called legs? Whatever the reason I cannot remove my eyes from the sight before me. Joan seems to be smiling at me a little too much and then realization hits me. Suddenly coffee doesn't have the same appeal it had earlier.

She must think I'm enjoying the view! That I like what I see and baby, there is a lot more where that comes from. Whatever she is thinking, it is time to extricate myself from the situation and make tracks to my office.

"Well, it's been fun gawking, er, talking to you but I've got numbers to crunch and memories to purge." With that I scurried away leaving Bob and Paula to deal with that ungodly sight. Wow, this is going to take some work clearing my little twisted mind. For some reason a vision of Sharon Stone at a police interrogation fills my head. Only in this

picture, Sharon is being played by Ed Asner, and crossing her legs would be an improbability. I think you know where I'm going with this.

Come on now, let's change the subject. Did I mention that I am an accountant? Yep, that's me, the old bean counter. The maestro of math. The boss of boredom. You know who I am. The one person in the office that sits in his own little world while everyone talks around him. I'm known by many names - geek, pencil pusher, nerd. I am so infamous that many a Monty Python skit revolved around the dry, quiet, straight-laced life of an accountant.

Don't pity me, just leave me the hell alone. Oh sure, you approach me once in a while and try to make small talk. But I know what you really want. Money.

You start sniffing around my door at 10:00 a.m. with your oily words trying to get me to laugh at your humorous little stories. But I know what you really want -- it's money. After listening to your verbal diarrhea I feel like I need a shower. You are pathetic but I toy with you. Why? Because on this day accountants rule. This is payday. If you do something I don't like: "Oops, your paycheck has the wrong deductions. I'm going to have to send it back through the computer. You understand don't you?"

"What do you mean you handed in an expense claim two weeks ago, I can't find it anywhere. Well, I can try getting it out today but the boss is out and there is no one to sign it."

Just try messing with an accountant. I may be anal retentive but I can always work it out with a pencil.

Where did that come from? Nothing like a power gorge to nourish your self-respect.

I guess I better get to work. I've been here for half an hour and I haven't seen my desk. There you are, my little cubbyhole. My little corner of the world filled with all the sentimental mementos of my life. There's the picture of my family. Wait a minute. That picture is around here somewhere under a pile of papers. Then there are my degrees and awards hung on the walls. Uh, the office hammer has gone missing and they never were hung up. And of course the souvenirs of my favorite trips. Oh that's right, I haven't been anywhere. Well, at least I can see my favorite pencil sitting atop my desk gleaming in the morning sunlight. All is well in the world. Now, if only I can get my computer to work today.

First thing you do is turn on the switch and you should hear a beep. There is a couple of whining noises, or is that whiney? Come on you old bugger. In computer terms this is an old bugger. An old 486 with about as much memory as myself after drinking about a dozen brown soldiers. I drink to forget and it works. Anyway, back to the machine.

A little clunk here and then the screen lights up. So far so good. Come on, you damned boat anchor. Then two beeps and a message appears. "Error, cannot detect hard drive." What, you good for nothing Cyclops. This is not good. I am going to have to go into plumber mode and fix a few plugged pipes.

One thing I've learned over the years is that the old trick of smacking the side of your television set does not work on computers. The picture is fed to the monitor by a little cable. So it does not help to take out your frustration on the screen.

So, you assume the position. You crawl under your desk exposing the crack of your ass like any good plumber and smack the box where the cable goes to! Wham! Now are you going to surrender, R2D2? Bingo! The screen lights up and there is only one beep. Who says I'm illegitimate? Or is that illiterate. Whatever, at least I won't be using my toes to count with today.

No matter what office you work in you will always find politics. Whether you work for the government or you are one of those annoying insects who sells junk over the phone. You know the ones. "Hello could I speak to the man of the house please?" says the woman. You reply "I'm sorry, no speaker English". This has absolutely no effect on her as she launches into a double-flush load of verbal diarrhea. "I'm calling to offer you our special this month on carpet cleaning. We offer a three-room cleaning for \$12.99 as long as your rooms are the size of a closet."

"I haven't got time to listen to this I'm waxing my legs" you say in between breaths.

"If you act right now we will also throw in a free family portrait which our technician will take with a Polaroid as he pulls onto the driveway. Just make sure to have everyone standing in front of the house at 10:00 o'clock sharp Tuesday morning with cash in your hand. Just tell me your name and where you live and let me get to my next call." She says.

"Well my name is Ivan Yerkinov and I live at 111 Blueballs Road." I reply wittily.

"Is that Ivan with an I?" she asks.

"Is that loser with an L?" I replied and then hang up the phone.

Well, anyway, back to the office politics. The point I am trying to make is that when you are in an office you keep your back to the wall. There is always somebody ready to stick a knife in it to get one step higher on the ladder.

You working stiffs that go and knock a bunch of boards into submission until they relent and some kind of building gets erected sure think we got it easy. "Oh there goes that flabby pencil pusher off to polish his chair with his fat ass. That guy

doesn't know what work is." Buddy, work comes in all forms. You try spending your day dodging questions because some secretary can't get the photocopier to work after you were in there. Sure, you were trying to copy your face so you can send a picture to your mother, but how were you to know your knees would jam the keyboard? You have to spend the whole morning walking around with a dopey "Who - me?" expression on your face. Then denying that a squished face on a piece of paper found in the copy room is you. That is work!

I worked for years in the construction profession as the executive assistant to the guy who swung the hammer. In other words, I was the lackey. "Frank, we need more nails. Climb down and get a box and I'll hold the ladder. I promise." Yes, those were the good old days where the only way to climb the corporate ladder was to climb the actual ladder.

People depended on each other to get the job done and if you didn't carry your weight you carried your pink slip. Not so working in an office. The office is where you make your own little kingdom and defend it to the death. Defending includes rumors about coworkers, deflecting blame, being able to bullshit. This is a game I do not play very well.

In an office, if you want to change the way you do your job and at the same time become more efficient you don't go talk to your boss and explain it to him or her. No, that would be too easy. Your boss would just say "No" and look at you like you are crazy.

The proper way to do it is to go to your fellow downtrodden and drum up support. Don't tell them your idea directly. That would be rejected immediately. Your coworkers are all selfish SOB's so you have to make sure there is something in it for them personally. Here is an example.

Suppose you worked in an office that operated totally without computers. All your letter writing, bookkeeping, mailing lists were all done manually. Now, you really believe that a

computer at your desk would save you time, and you tell the boss about your idea. The boss would tell you that everything works fine just the way it is. Get out of my office.

You still believe in your idea so you approach your coworkers. You walk up to one of the secretaries and say "Boy, that's a lot of corrections on that letter you typed for Ted. He sure can't dictate very well. He is so useless and it is a pity you have to put up with his idiocy." At this point she is getting stirred up and you decide to get the spoon and help her.

"Ted should have his butt kicked around the block for asking you to retype that whole letter." You've got a friend now.

"You have to type it, I guess, but it sure would be nice to edit it on a computer with just a few keystrokes. Just think of the time you would save and Ted wouldn't believe how fast you could throw that letter back on his desk." You just picked up an ally.

Now you walk over to Ted's office. "Hey Ted, how you doing? Did that rash ever clear up? Sorry to hear about your wife, but there's a lot of good-looking guys that are younger than you. It was bound to happen."

You've got him just where you want him.

"So I heard that if you had a computer they have loads of S&M websites you can access through the internet. Yessir, there are pictures you can download and have on your screen in full color. You would never have to leave your office. Just pack your toothbrush and fresh underwear and stay right at your desk. Ted, all joking aside, being able to fax and receive E-mail right from your desk is the way of the nineties and that is exactly the way I see you. You **are** the nineties. The future of this organization depends on guys like you."

Put another notch on your pencil, baby, because Ted has just been screwed, glued and tattooed. The whole idea is to show everyone how important they are and how sniveling and inadequate you are. Maybe this is why I don't take my own advice. The thought of one of my office neighbors getting more of a swelled head than they already have makes my sphincter tighten. Believe me, a tighter sphincter on an anal-retentive accountant is not a pretty sight. Good thing I have that pencil.

Where was I? Oh yeah. You just won over another one and it's time to work on your finale - middle management. Middle management people are all schizophrenic. One minute they are stomping on your fingers trying to keep you on your lower rung and in the next they are puckering up to kiss that huge butt perched just above them. Can you imagine walking tall and erect around the typing pool and then down on all fours crawling into the boss's office? It must have an effect on a person's psyche. Now imagine if rumors are flying around the office.

" Excuse me, Mr. Perkins. Could I have a word with you or should I just f-off and go back to my desk? Thank you, Mr. Perkins. I know just how much your time is worth but I really need your wisdom to help me with a problem."

"Thank you, Mr. Perkins, and may I just say that your tie looks marvelous. I didn't know that a tie could be knitted and in so many bright colors. It goes so well with polyester. What was that, Mr. Perkins? Of course I can get to the point. It is just that it is not very often that I get a chance to speak with a management-type person. "

" Well, here is my dilemma. On one of the times I am allowed in the copy room I happened to find a memo in the photocopier. Don't get me wrong. I was not snooping but the memo must have been forgotten by The Boss doing his own copying. I assumed it was the Boss who left it because the memo was about you. I can't see any of the staff saying such

rude and embarrassing things. Also included in the note was a reference to a technologically inept stooge who wouldn't know what a computer was if it jumped up and bit him on the hard drive."

"After reading this it made me fear that your job was on the line. This office could not run without you, Sir. Of course your computer skills are probably nonexistent and you would be hard pressed to find another middle management job but what would happen to me and the other staff ? "

"Seriously, you know how the Boss deals with ineptitude. We've got to do something and fast if you ever want to see another two hour coffee break again."

Yeah, right. Two hours - more like two years of coffee breaks for you, big guy. Yesiree Bob, things could get a little dicey for you.

"Well, I've got to return to my desk. I feel an urge to crunch some numbers. So Sir, if my knowledge of computers could be of any help to you I would gladly offer my assistance."

" What's that Sir, you are ordering me to help you? Of course I can and may I just say that it would be an honor to-- Oh, get out of your office. Thank you, Sir."

Success is measured in many ways. In this instance success means the Boss and middle management gets computers and the rest of us get new shiny pencils. But in management's eyes we are all pond scum. What did you think was going to happen?