

A WORKDAY

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"A Work Day" by Jelena Borojevic

Monday.

You arrive to work in a rather cheerful mood. Not because you like Mondays, but simply because work has to be done, people have to be spoken to, tasks have to be completed. Might as well crack a smile and attempt to make the most of it.

The coffee you got this morning is nice. Bitter, because you forgot to pick up the little sugar bags before you left the shop, but still good. Hey, a little bitterness is always good to kick start the brain. Everything is fine.

You look around to see what your other colleagues grabbed on their way to the office. Mostly coffee. A few cups of tea. Oh hey, that guy has a bagel! What is that? Cream cheese? Looks nice. You usually have toast at home for breakfast. Bagels are a bit expensive. It's not like you don't treat yourself to a bagel every once in a while, of course you do! But it can get a little pricey as a daily breakfast.

Oh the boss is here. Time to get to work.

You don't mind your job. It's a nice, stable job. Not many responsibilities, but it pays the bills.

Doesn't leave a lot behind after the bills are paid though. Hehe. Can't complain though, right? Everyone is in the same situation, right? Maybe the bagel guy is a little better off.

Oh right, work.

You work at a semi-leisurely pace. There's stuff to be done, sure. A lot of checking, data entry, printing. Oh, the printing is fun! You get to walk over to the little kitchen. They put the printer in front of the kitchen so that everyone can see it. Apparently, some people were a little too cozy with the "print" button, so now everyone can see the printer and mark how many times you used it in a day. But you like it because of the little conversations that go on in the kitchen. You're always curious to hear what people did on the weekend. You can't really hear everything they say, but you catch bits about bars, family gatherings, and graduations. Cool. You don't really take part in these conversations. There's not much for you to contribute to them. It's ok. You had your own film night at home. It was fun.

Everyone looks so busy with their heads down. Their phones ring a lot. Your phone doesn't ring as often, but that's because you haven't yet been assigned as many clients. You have three. Two of them are sweet, but the third one is a bit of a douche. Oh boy. But you can handle him! It's all part of the job. You need to learn to use a more "authoritative tone" when you speak to clients.

That's what last week's staff meeting was all about. Your colleagues were all nodding and taking notes. You decided to nod a few times too.

The people around you seem very ambitious. They always tell you they have big plans for their future. You think it's impressive how driven they are. They don't share their plans with you though. You've asked them to tell you their future plans a few times, but they always change the topic to something else, their heads still high. You don't have plans like that for your future. You didn't really plan anything further than university, so when you got your bachelor's degree the next logical step was to find a job that fit the degree. This job doesn't fit the degree, but it was the first one you managed to get, and because it was so hard to get it you decided to stick it out until something better comes along. It's been nine years. Wow time really flies. Oh hey, the college reunion is next year! Should be fun.

It's time to print the spreadsheet you've been working on. That means a trip to the printer! You look up to see who's in the kitchen. There's no one there.

It's ok, the printer is a fun ride on its own. You organize the file on your computer and press "print". You're not one of the people who use the printer too often, so that's why no one lifts their head to look at you as you walk towards the machine. Would be nice if someone was in the

kitchen right now. You grab the warm paper from the printer and head back to your desk. Now you get to staple the papers together; a fun little 'click' sound. Oh, your stapler is missing. Weird. It was there on Friday. That's ok, you can borrow someone else's.

Your colleague at the table on the left might have one. You try to call her. She doesn't respond. Maybe she didn't hear you. You try calling her name a little louder. Still no response. You're pretty sure you know her name, so why isn't she- Ohhh. She has earphones on. You didn't spot them right away. Ok, well you won't bother her.

Maybe the colleague next to the window has one. You call him and give a bit of a wave to get his attention. He raises his eyes at you. Does he have a stapler you could borrow real quick? No, he says. Huh. Not a good day for staplers today. You figure a paper clip will do the job instead. There. You add the papers to their assigned pile.

Oh, you're phone's ringing! A client!

You pick up the phone with enthusiasm. It's the douche. You don't get past much more than a "Hello". He's already yelling about not receiving regular reports. He wants you to know just how much his money is worth and that he won't be giving it away to just anyone. He wants to be treated with priority for what he is paying. You

try to gather that "authoritative tone" everyone else seems to have, but nope. He interrupts your breath with a sharp yell. Wants you to know that time is money. Your eardrum is pulsating. He says he will leave if the next report isn't the best one he has ever gotten. The back of your head tingles. He hangs up.

You put the phone down. That didn't really go as well as you were hoping. Your eyes burn. You wonder what everyone around you hears on the other side of the receiver. They don't seem nearly as bothered about the phone calls they're getting. Maybe they have degrees that were specific for this job.

You still have some coffee left, so you take a sip from it. The bitter taste helps divert your thoughts away from the phone call at least a little. You open a new spreadsheet and continue to punch in data until the day ends.

At 5pm you shut down the computer and organize your table a little for tomorrow. The others are leaving in a hurry. Some of them have gathered into groups, deciding where they would spend the evening together. You aren't part of any group. It's ok. You like quiet evenings at home.

You pass by them and head towards the door. No one says "Bye" or "See you tomorrow". They don't

really need to, you think. It's given that you'll see them again soon. Tomorrow.