





7.05am / Shortcut near the railway / South of city centre

It happened somewhere along the way, I think, I can't quite put my finger on it - but then again, I can't remember much of the time before it happened...

Somewhere between rolling out of bed in the morning, and then arriving there, somewhere between those two places... it was as if I lost something along the way, like it just dropped out of my pocket and got replaced by something else, some *other* thing, but it's gradual, so you don't realise that it's going, or gone.

See, things are less familiar, but still mine, somehow. Remember how they used to make us do those particular questionnaires, one before-hand and the same again afterwards? and about a year or so later all of our levels had really dropped? I didn't really think about them at the time, but maybe now, it makes some sense.

Anyway, let's try and find the place, where it happens...I know it was past the streets where the houses are quiet and really all look the same...a shortcut behind the shops... cross under the far railway bridge, and keep going past the old barbed wire fences...near where they cast long, patterned shadows over the weed-filled empty plots.

You'll have to take the time to make your own path there, a couple of repeat visits before you find it, or it finds you, and make sure to take notice all of the little things, or you'll end up noticing nothing at all.

Yes, I think it happened around there, somewhere... where the weeds are almost waist high. There was a heaviness to it, a separation, a performance, and my hands and voice operated on muscle memory alone.

Anyway, whatever it was, it followed me home that day, and it's been here ever since. Don't say I didn't warn you.

SOCIALIST

UNDER-COVER
SPY

UNEMPLOYED

ANXIOUS
WORKER

ACTIVIST

REVOLUTIONARY

ZERO HOUR
WORKER

PRECARIAT

VOLUNTEER

TROUBLE-MAKER

PROCRASTINATOR

TEMP GUY

LONE WORKER

FREELANCER

JOB-SEEKER

DAY-
DREAMER

BUSY BEE

ARTIST

PERFORMER

ANARCHIST

COMMUNIST

PART-TIMER

SEASONAL
WORKER

AGENCY STAFF

DAY-
LABOURER

UTOPIAN
DREAMER

SHIRKER

10.10am / Business Quarter / City centre

I wake up whenever the sun does, and I have done this pretty much, um, since the beginning of time, I think...

For as long as I can remember, I've lived at a tower block right in the middle of the city. I've always been sat at the windowsill, of what I think is the fifth floor - it's a pretty good spot to catch the sun, and I'm grateful for it. Around me, lots of pink humans sit at brown desks and stare into grey screens for long amounts of time, for about five out of the seven days. I still haven't figured out what exactly it is they're doing, and I'm not too bothered, to be honest.

See I'm not into any of that, me. I just like to lean towards the sunlight. It's the simple pleasures in life, eh? I get a bit of a crook in me back doing it, mind, gives me a bit of jip from time to time. But our Jen is good enough to give me a turn every week or so which sorts that right out. And off I go again. What can I say, I just love basking in that bright stuff.

I've got plenty of leg room where I'm sat, too - to stretch the old limbs out a bit. Nothing quite like a good stretch - aaaah. I half remember moving here in a little room when I was younger, just a brilliant day when I got my own bigger space. Brilliant.

I'm always right thirsty when I wake up, but our Jen is a real good'un and she gives me just the right amount of drink each morning. And tell you what, if it's a hot day, I get another splash around 4pm - and suck it right up. Bliss!

I feel sorry for our Geoff down the windowsill, though. He gets hardly anything, and looks totally parched again by midday. Poor chap. Not a good colour these days. Still, not as bad as Audrey on the bookshelf. Audrey died some months ago now, and no-one's moved her. Viv doesn't seem to have noticed, and insists on adding a drop of water every other day. It's really not pleasant for anyone, that.

Anyway, from me window, I can see a nice little park square with a lovely crowd of trees and shrubs around some well-trimmed grass. I usually try and wave hello to that lot in the mornings, friendly crowd like I say, and if the window's cracked they'll pass on the news from the street. They have a little competition every day to see who gets the most folk sat under 'em, eating their sandwiches and whatnot on the benches. Never gets old, that.

Sometimes they ask if I'm happy up here, not out in the fresh air with them. I can see what they mean, but I have my routine in here and I like it. Besides, their green square in the city isn't a whole lot different, in the grand scheme of things. Not like out in the fields I've heard of. True freedom that they say - but nowt's certain. Don't know where your next drink is coming from.

Plus, I like to think I'm doing my bit in here, making the place look nice and improving the air quality. I suck up what the humans exhale, and in return give 'em plenty of fresh oxygen. I've heard there are studies about what a good job we can do - glad we're getting the recognition for a job well done!

You know, I hate it when Jen goes away for a bit, on a holiday or something. She's been away more than usual, lately. No-one else gets me routine right. There's not many of them here now who do the eight hour a day, full five day week - just Jen and a few others. Nearly everyone else seems to come and go at funny times, some don't stay for very long. Sometimes I'll get nowt to drink for a few days, or it'll be the other way and I'll be soaked! I know they're trying to help, but I can't exactly say anything, can I?

Tell you what though, the new cleaner is a good'un. Friday nights, end of the work week, she pops us a splash of Miracle Gro. The good brand stuff too, not a supermarkets' own. What a buzz! Geoff and the others get a good dram too - perfect little tippie to see us through the lonely weekend. We just keep that one quiet between us and the cleaner.

Anyway, we're about mid-summer now, and usually, I'm absolutely feeling my best in the summer. Just loads of lovely sunshine to soak up. If the mood grabs me, which it often does, I'll pop out a bunch of new flower buds. Not sure exactly where they'll come up until they do, mind, always a nice surprise. Got an orange one on my nose last year - ha! Seems to keep our Jen happy.

- from the memoirs of Frank Begonia

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

- | | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 Not being able to stop or control worrying | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3 Worrying too much about different things | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 Trouble relaxing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5 Being so restless that it is hard to sit still | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6 Becoming easily annoyed or irritable | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7 Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

S)

How much you would avoid each of the situations or objects listed below.

- | | Would not avoid it | Slightly avoid it | Definitely avoid it | Markedly avoid it | Always avoid it | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 Social situations due to a fear of being embarrassed or making a fool of myself | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2 Getting in situations because of a fear of having an allergic reaction or asthma attack | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 Getting in situations because of a fear of something bad happening | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 Seeing blood being in confined spaces dangerous objects or activities (such as animals, heights, seeing blood, being in confined spaces, driving or flying). | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

*Doctor Doctor, I've been suffering from insomnia!
...Just sleep at the edge of your mattress - you'll soon drop off.*

*Doctor Doctor, I've broken my arm in two places!
...Well, I'd advise you not go back to either of those places then.*

*Doctor Doctor, I think I am a pair of wigwams!
...The problem is, you've become too tense.*

*Doctor Doctor, how do I avoid that run-down feeling?
...Look both ways before crossing the road.*

*Doctor Doctor, I think I've broken my neck!
...Just keep your chin up.*

*Doctor Doctor, I think I am losing my memory!
...When did this start happening?
When did what start happening?*



HAPPINESS INSPECTION.

A Happiness Inspection will be taking place in this team in the near future to ensure that standards of staff happiness are being kept up.

The Inspection will include measurement of smiles by facial recognition software and monitoring of conversations with colleagues and customers for evidence of positive language, as well as interviews with staff and feedback from Team Leaders.

As part of the Virtua employee journey towards achieving outstanding performance, it is the responsibility of every team member to maintain a high level of happiness at work.

Staff who are found to be insufficiently happy may be subject to disciplinary action.



Your happiness is our business.

12.00 noon / Market Square / City centre

That was it.

At first, she could see no-one else. There was just a close eerie silence, and an alarm going off somewhere nearby. They were all hiding behind the great heaps of things, mostly rubble, rubber, paving slabs, car parts, benches, bins, tree-trunks, generators, window panes, loose bricks, sheet metal, tarps, tar, fence posts, corrugated cardboard, street lamps, broken glass, shopping trolleys, monitors, razor wire, office desks, office chairs, phone masts, catalogues, pallets, scaffolding poles, notebooks, mattresses, thick smoke, spilt paint, and a little bit of brain matter.

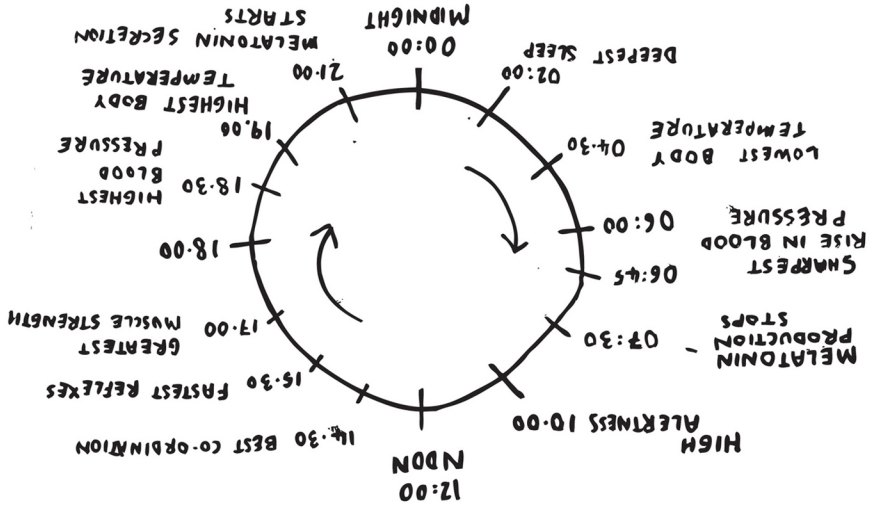
A few of the piles still sizzled and smouldered, a sort of truce hung lightly in the air, for now.

Where it had happened, the ground had half-collapsed through, even where there had been pavement, concrete or tarmac, to patches of bare earth again which was a dark and wet black.

No-one had emerged yet but she had started to spot them through the cracks in the great heaps of things. No-one could quite believe it had happened - or at least not so soon, and there was a shared sense of disbelief that lingered for some years after.

They looked on excitedly, but didn't yet dare to make a move, as she wandered first amongst the Great Heaps of Things. A glint of sunlight from a fifth floor window reminded her of something else. The tip of her nose got sunburned from the beautiful weather. She forgot how to tell the time. She was never late again. Her fingers were pink, the sky white, her knees blue, the ground black, the air grey, the glint orange. Everything was brilliant.

She turned around, rubbed grit from her eyes, and spat grey dust. Wait a moment - no, not here. It's not here, it's really not here, is it? She scrunched her eyes closed, then open, then closed and open again, felt dizzy and disorientated. She adjusted her collar and checked her watch. Jewels in her lap turned to crumbs, brushed away. She stood up to leave. She had promised not to say it outloud - they all had - but it was unlikely she could hold it any longer.



Authorised
Notices
Only



virtua

K&G
SUPPORT SERVICES

HAVE YOU GOT THE *NEXT* FACTOR?

To all team members:

Your 6 months are nearly up! You've had fun, made friends, made a difference...

This doesn't have to be the end.

A limited number of ongoing Sales Consultant positions are available for those star performers who have shown exceptional talent and drive to succeed - those who have made those extra calls, hit those high notes and exceeded those targets.

Does that sound like you?

Speak to your Team Leader about taking the next step in your employee journey at Virtua.



Your happiness is our business.

17/12/23
-back

YOUR WELLBEING.

We would like everyone to be well enough to perform to their best at work.

That's why our Learning & Development team offers a range of employee support, including:

Understanding Anxiety

Stay calm under pressure - Relaxation techniques - Presentation skills

Dealing with Depression

What's my motivation? - Positive thinking - Raising self-esteem

Physical Wellbeing

Look after your larynx - Yoga - Healthy eating

Chill-out Room - Career Counselling - Budgeting Advice - Mindfulness

To book a session, log in to 'my performance' in your staff profile. Please check with your Team Leader that they are happy for you to attend.

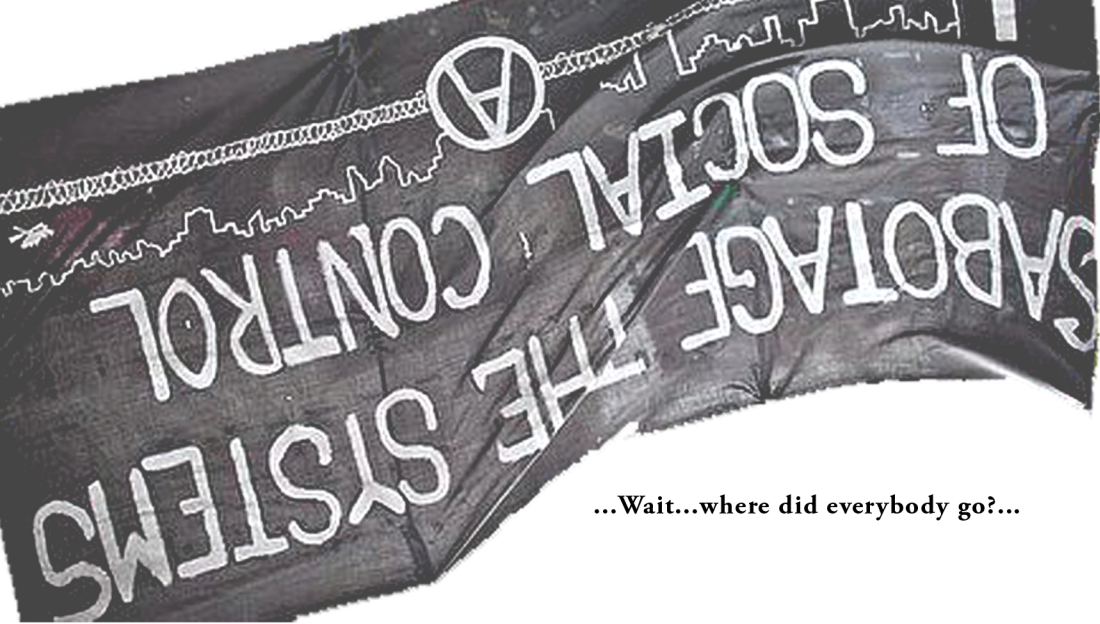
If you are experiencing a health issue which might affect your ability to attend work please contact your Team Leader or the Learning & Development Team as soon as possible to discuss support strategies. Any absences due to sickness must be discussed with a manager in a back-to-work interview on return. If a wellbeing session is recommended and the employee does not attend, further absences may lead to disciplinary action. Your sickness record will form a part of your performance appraisal.

Your happiness is our business.

BOYCOTT
WORKFARE!

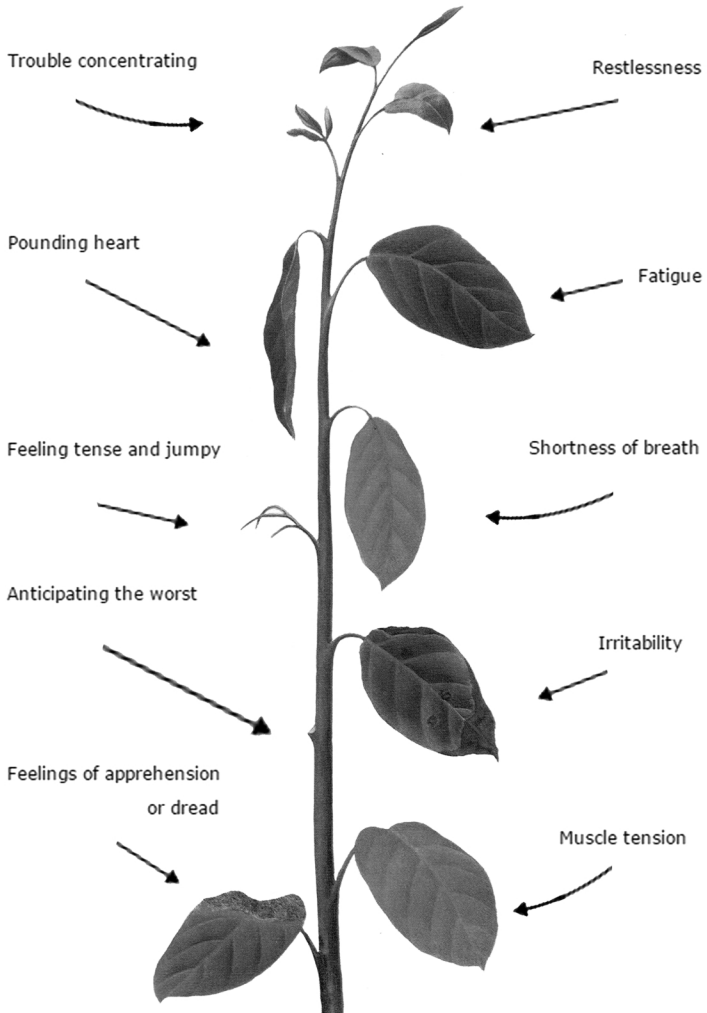


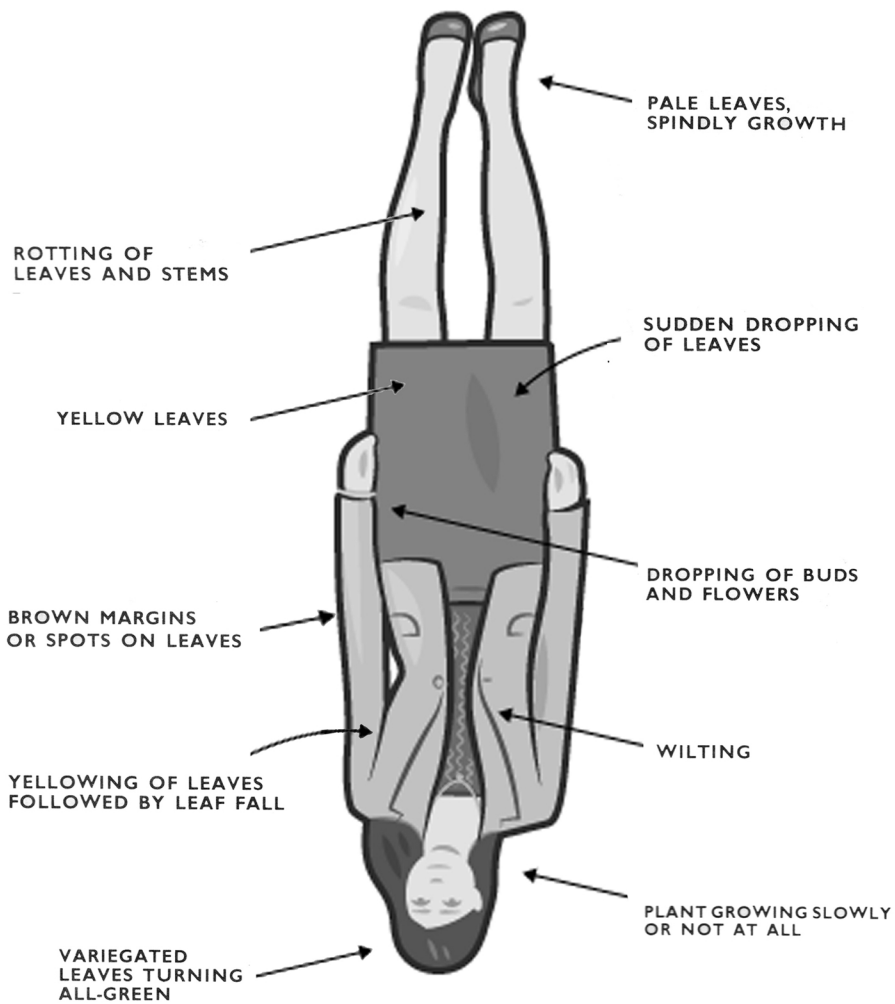
plant the seeds to see them grow



...Wait...where did everybody go?...

What went wrong





1.40pm / Training Room B / East of city centre

So...twelve, thirteen, fourteen – fourteen of you was it? OK I think that's everyone in, just grab a seat anywhere, we've got about twenty minutes to finish the induction session, we'll squeeze in a quick tea break if there's time, then we'll assign you to team leaders.

If you refer to your floor map, we've just toured zones A5 through to E7. Those are the only areas you are allowed to access – except for F2 to 4 during breaks only, plus G zones for shift A group and H zones for shift B. Got that?

Next we need to get you labelled up - now if you can just pass around these name badges, please take one each. There are a few blank ones left, so if you get one of those feel free to add your name. Otherwise just wear one with an old name on, don't worry about that for now.

Do keep those safe – it's strict company policy to display a badge at all times, even for trial employees. If you refer to your induction booklet, page 27, you will see that losing or forgetting your badge is a one-pointer offence in the negative column on your Probation Checklist. Only a minor point but they can easily add up - and we will be monitoring your performance closely during trials. Shift A group, your mid-way probation review will take place on the 31st, Shift B yours on the 7th. Remember, places on continuing contracts are very competitive, so we are going to be looking for zero offence rates in your first reviews!

Now, if you can look to section D of your work trial pack, pages 4, 5a and 5b, there are a few final questionnaires to complete before we begin. Remember, *there are no right or wrong answers*, however - we are only looking for future recruits who clearly share our core company values, so please answer carefully.

Once you've finished those, we'll introduce your team leaders and have a quick round of ice-breakers. So in preparation, please take a blank sheet of paper from the back of your pack and write down your first pet's name, favourite movie, and your most embarrassing secret...

GETTING TO KNOW YOU.

To help us find out whether you'd be happy working for us, please take a couple of minutes to answer these questions.

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = In-between, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

I try to avoid work which is not essential.

1 2 3 4 5

It's impossible to be warm towards everyone you meet.

1 2 3 4 5

I turn up for work when others wouldn't bother.

1 2 3 4 5

It is best to do what you are paid for and nothing more.

1 2 3 4 5

I am happiest when I have nothing to do.

1 2 3 4 5

I cannot be cheerful all the time.

1 2 3 4 5

There are some days when I just can't face going to work.

1 2 3 4 5

I sometimes find it hard to keep smiling.

1 2 3 4 5

I sometimes tell lies if I think it is necessary.

1 2 3 4 5



Your happiness is our business.

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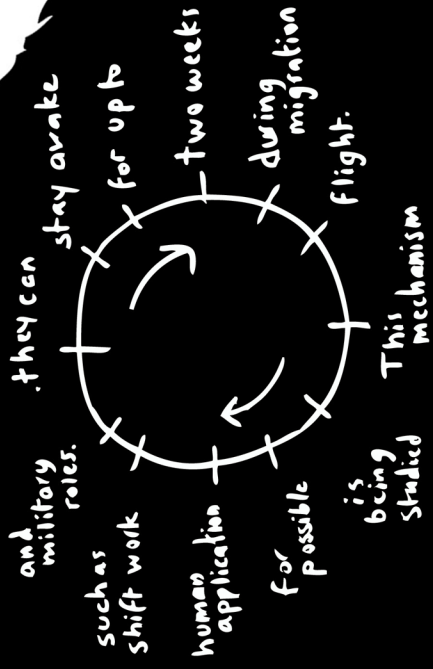
Predictable - - Unpredictability

P75

... (We) exist in such a state of constant instability or predictable unpredictability, always on alert, trying to outrun our own built-in obsolescence. Uncertainty has become the usual state of things.

We have adapted to this artificial climate, and we know that by continuing to tolerate and survive it we are contributing towards its perpetuation and naturalisation. Like obedient citizens, we have adjusted to accommodate this insecurity....

NON-STOP INERTIA
IVOR SOUTHWOOD
- ZERO BOOKS



(Recollection of) approx 3.00pm / City centre / High Street

...Well, it's weird - just the night before it happened I was actually talking with my girlfriend about this feeling, or rather lack of feeling, that I get at work - mainly to do with my hands. How they're actually doing one thing at the job, but another thing in my head. So you half forget them - automatic actions, you know? Just wondering about the process that makes that happen...

I'll try and explain. At the shop, I scan items across the till, but I'm not aware of it any more as I've done it so often 'without thinking'. It's similar to walking, really... you know that some particular part of your subconscious has got it covered for you. So you're not totally aware, but you keep on walking, right - like you can just...forget it for a bit?

See, I'm a music producer and musician, really, that's what I'm working at. So while I'm at the till, I try and work on my compositions in my head. Physically I'm there at the shop, just earning my rent, but I'm working on my music in my head - I'd like to think of that as my 'real' job. I figure out some beats and patterns, I can imagine the synth and the laptop, and how my hands would move on them. I'm kind of freed up to be creating all the time, in a way, because the job doesn't require much thought. I've got pretty good at day-dreaming. Occasionally I'll tap out some of the rhythms with my fingers - although I'm told that can get pretty annoying, ha.

Anyway, it was an afternoon like any other, pretty quiet in the shop - then for a second I'm suddenly, sharply, aware of my hands - just a split second, like that rush you get when you think you're about to trip over but don't, just a quick jolt, you know?

As quick as that, my hands just seem...not attached at the wrist anymore. It's not gross, or anything, just a clean cut - kind of as if they were never attached in the first place. The weird thing is, it didn't even seem out of place. They were just sat there, next to each other, fallen off my wrists, on the counter-top. They seemed a bit paler, and smooth, and just sat still, almost like a pair of mannequin hands.

This is the point, I think, where I start to forget. First my wrists - they don't come off like my hands, they're just not there, as if they never were. I'm genuinely not bothered, I don't know how, then come to think of it I can't even remember my arms, shoulders, anything else. I'm just stood looking at this solid pair of hands, and not really sure that the rest of my body is still there at all. And it doesn't bother me, it feels...OK.

So the fingers start curling a bit, my detached hands scrunch up a bit at the knuckle. And then that's it: they're off, floating up slowly off the counter like a breeze has caught them. There's not many people in the shop, maybe two down the aisle, they stop and watch the hands, too. No one is surprised or anything, and we just idly watch my hands float off. At this point, the shoppers still had their own bodies present with hands still attached, holding baskets.

My hands manage to exit the door, and then they're away in the sky. They move like a balloon, just slowly going up. At this point, I can see a few other pairs too, they are pale like mine, and stay together in pairs. They look almost like birds' wings.

So we go outside, me and the shoppers. I leave the counter for a bit, and it looks like people are coming out of the other buildings too. It's a quiet street corner, a sunny day and a nice blue sky for it. There's ten, then fifty, then a hundred or more of these pairs of hands floating off. No one seems surprised - just calmly watching them go.

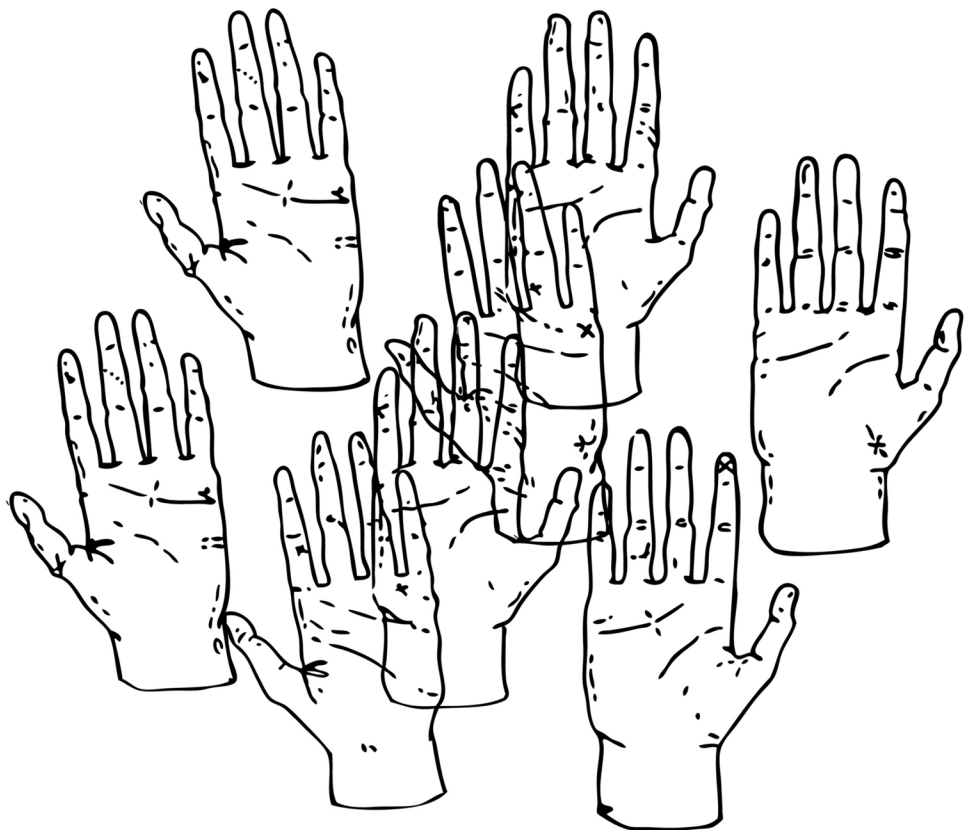
I can just see my girlfriend's office block from my shop, it's a high rise near the markets, she's on the fifth floor. All the floors have windows cracked open since it's a nice day, and I can see some hands coming out of those too. Just floating up.

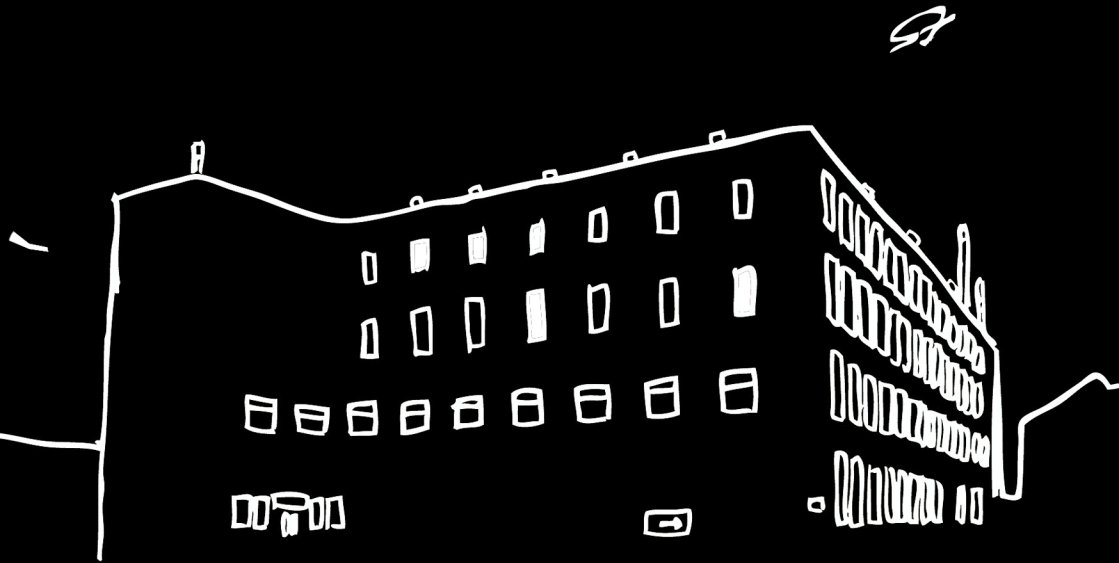
So everyone pretty much finished work early that day because, well, nearly all of our hands had floated off and most of our bodies had been forgotten, too. It was a really nice warm summer evening so we stayed out, just walking around town and the park. Well, it was just like walking, but our bodies had gone, of course...

As we made our way home, I overheard a radio in someone's garden - I could hear them talking about what had happened with the hands, but it was just briefly mentioned during the weather report, followed by good news of more sunshine.

There were just a couple of sets of hands that didn't seem to make it into the sky to disappear, they lay where they had fallen on the streets, which seemed a shame. I saw a pair that lay very still, and a few that were still twitching. But I reckon that it was thousands that had gone up alright.

I only saw one other pair again after that, which were still there the last time I looked. On our way back to the house, around dusk, we saw some that had got tangled together in a big oak tree on the corner, their fingers sort of stuck amongst the branches and leaves. And I couldn't believe it when we saw that a bright little sparrow had already started to make a nest out of them.





I blink in one of the upper rooms, trying to focus on the old newspaper in the hands of the new night worker, who sits under fluorescent light.

Over a coffee stained table he rubs his eyes, reading a story about a man who stayed awake for eleven days and twenty four minutes - a new world record holder (he ate raw vegetables and played games to keep alert, and went on to make a full recovery - albeit suffering some temporary memory loss).

He returns to the floor and then, some hours later, moves outside; where the lamps change from white to orange, and he, for now, disappears.

So, I shift my attention to the next floor up.

There, now at her station, she begins to mimic those movements, again and again, like before.

Except, this time, the nagging weight behind her eyes is ever so slightly heavier, and to fall asleep would seem ever so slightly lovelier.


So, finally, that she does, falling into somewhere quite uncertain, (a pleasant, hazy recollection of the beach holiday in '99) as well as falling, very much so, into somewhere more certain (the dark mechanisms of the machine whose movements she used to mimic so often).

Her absence is noted only by a few, who chip in for an announcement in the local obituaries - some attempt at memory, a temporary permanence.

A copy of the paper was left in the break-room.

Where I blink, trying to focus on the old newspaper in the hands of the new night worker, who sits under fluorescent light.

First, choose the right pots. Make certain there is good drainage, or the roots can rot and drown. Choose the correct soil mix - don't just use soil from the garden, it can be contaminated with weeds, seeds, insects or fungi. Select a mix with a light mixture of peat moss and organic matter, perhaps with a time-release fertilizer or water-retaining crystals. Make 'right plant, right place' your motto when deciding what to buy. Do your homework, ask at the garden centre, and choose plants which will thrive in the available sun or shade. It's best to keep to one type of plant per pot - don't put a cactus and a pansy together and expect them to get along. If you begin to feel anxious or stressed, remember to take time out, step back from the problem and clear your head. Yoga, relaxation or meditation techniques may be useful. Make sure to get enough sleep and rest, and don't skip any meals. Take deep breaths, inhale and exhale slowly. It might be helpful to count to ten slowly, and repeat to twenty if necessary. Just do your best - instead of aiming for perfection, which isn't possible, be proud of what you can achieve. Breathe from the diaphragm, think positive thoughts and try not to panic. —



Hey! Don't worry!
Everyone's still here!
(You just need to look a bit
harder now)



INBOX

To: employee group list
cc: jm@virtua.net; dp@globalsolu.net
Sender: CG@globalsolu.net; MGMT@virtua.net
Date: 15-03-2017 Time: 09.03am
Subject Line: Policy reminder

Attn: All staff

I am disappointed to have to remind you of company policy regarding the bringing of banned personal materials on site by employees. Such materials are detrimental to workplace productivity, and are strictly not permitted. We have had a number of offences in recent months and as a result will be increasing the frequency of random spot checks of lockers and break-room areas. Anyone found in possession, or distribution of, banned materials will be subject to immediate disciplinary action which may lead to dismissal. Please refer to your employee handbook for a reminder of our policies.

The following are strictly banned on site:

Publications:

- 'Expect Resistance' by Crimethinc books (2008)
- 'The Precariat' by Guy Standing (Bloomsbury, 2011)
- '24/7: Late capitalism and the ends of sleep' by Jonathan Crary (Verso, 2013)
- and especially: 'Non-Stop Inertia' by Ivor Southwood (Zero Books, 2011)

Pamphlets and Texts:

- 'We are All Very Anxious' - by Plan C
- 'Sabotage in the workplace' - prole.info
- 'Heist - a journal of workplace re-appropriation' by Crimethinc books
- 'On the Phenomenon of Bullsh*t jobs' by David Graeber (Strike! pamphlets)
- 'The Reproduction of Daily Life' - Fredy Perlman (1969)
- 'Work' by the Anarchist Federation
- 'Strike!' newspaper
- 'Recomposition.info' articles
- 'Libcom.org' articles

As well as any materials from the following organisations:

- 'Boycott Workfare'
- 'Solidarity Network'
- 'Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)'
- 'Precarious Workers Brigade'
- 'Solidarity Federation & Anarchist Federation'
- 'Anxious Workers Club'
- 'In Certain Places'

K&G
SUPPORT SERVICES

virtua



OFFICIAL NOTICE.

**This employee has failed the Happiness
Inspection and is scheduled to be removed.**

**Please do not attempt to interact with the
employee as there is a risk that your own
happiness could be adversely affected.**

Thank you.

Your happiness is our business.

NURTURE YOURSELF!
NURTURE EACH OTHER!

THE ANXIOUS CITY

by Steph Fletcher & featuring Ivor Southwood

Text & illustrations by Steph Fletcher

Posters by Ivor Southwood (pages: 7, 10, 11, 17, 28)

Book excerpt text by Ivor Southwood (page: 19)

stephfletcher.co.uk



THE ANXIOUS CITY

by Steph Fletcher & featuring Ivor Southwood

Commissioned by In Certain Places
incertainplaces.org