

END OF THE DAY

By James McCormick

jimbostories@hotmail.com

INT. OPEN OFFICE - DAY

We're in a large, open office crammed with flimsy, box like cubicles.

A crimson sunset bleeds through large windows, bathing the area in bloody light.

A fly buzzes through hot, stagnant air.

An imposing wall clock dominates the front of the office, a mechanical, impersonal tyrant.

The second hand slow motion ticks its way around the face, working its way towards 5- 0- Clock, the end of the day.

Below, bound by invisible chains to their cubicles, hive like workers sit, heads bowed at their desks, each one in their own solitary confinement.

One figure, JACK LOWE (35) watches the clock, his brows furrowed beneath thick frame spectacles.

A rivulet of sweat runs down his temple.

He frowns and goes back to work, typing inanities on the computer before him, shuffling papers from one pile to another.

He does this for some moments then looks up again.

His eyes widen in surprise.

The second hand still hasn't completed its circumnavigation of the clock face.

It is still a minute to five.

He sighs, stamps a few more documents.

Then looks up again.

His jaw visibly drops. It still isn't time.

Sweat drips down into his eyes. He takes his glasses off and wipes it away with a handkerchief.

He checks his phone. The digital numbers tell him 4:59 but the seconds flicker unclearly.

He lets out a soft curse.

Then slumps back in his chair, his face flushed with heat and frustration.

He drags sweat slick hair back from his face.

His eyes fall on the photograph in front of him, a snapshot of himself, wife and children.

A faint smile plays over his lips.

He flips his phone open and speed dials a number. We see the name "Susan" flash up on the screen.

- beep

- beep

- beep

No connection.

Jack snaps the phone shut.

He puts his hands to his tie and begins to loosen it.

One by one heads in the other cubicles rise, haunted eyes turning towards him.

Jack's fingers slow around the knot as he finds himself staring back at a sea of faces.

He pulls the knot loose, slips the tie out of his collar and pockets it.

JACK

What?

One by one the eyes fall back to their desks.

He picks a document from the top of a pile, runs an eye over it and for a moment looks as if he will go back to work.

But then he slams it down again.

He jumps up, ready to leave.

Footsteps sound down the middle section.

From out of shadows a tall, dark clad, ivory white figure comes striding towards him. This is the OVERSEER. He looks like a cross between an undertaker and a serial killer.

He glances left and right, predator eyes roving across the worker drones on either side.

Each one cringes as he passes.

JACK (CONT'D)

Damn!

He throws himself back into his seat and snatches up a pen, pretending to work.

The footsteps grow louder and as they do a shadow creeps over his cubicle.

He bends a little further over his work.

The shadow passes and the steps begin to fade.

Jack looks up and finding no one there wheels his chair into the aisle.

The area's clear.

A WOMAN in the next cubicle across looks at him.

WOMAN
What are you doing?

JACK
Me?

He does another quick take up and down.

JACK (CONT'D)
What does it look like? I'm leaving.

The woman's eyes flit to the clock on the wall and its perpetual one minute to five display.

WOMAN
But it isn't time. You can't go.

JACK
Watch me.

He makes a dash for it, half crouching as he races down the aisle.

Yet getting out is not so easy. Quickly he finds himself zig-zagging and turning corners that only lead to a series of dead ends.

He mutters to himself, glancing left and right as he tries to determine the way out.

Eventually he grows so disorientated that the place seems to spin around his head.

And then, on the verge of hysteria the way finally opens up before him.

He stumbles out of the maze, heaving a grateful sigh of relief.

He takes no more than a couple of steps though when we hear a harsh, inhuman cry.

He turns.

The Overseer stands in the center of the maze, staring towards him.

He raises an arm, extending a bony finger that points accusingly towards him.

Jack stands frozen in terror.

The gnarled finger curls, beckoning him.

Jack shakes his head.

The pale man strides towards him.

Jack turns and races into the lobby.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

He slides to a stop in front of the elevator.

He slams a hand against the controls.

He waits, shifting from foot to foot impatiently.

The Overseer grows closer by the moment.

Jack slams a fist on the controls.

JACK
Come on!

He hits it a couple more time.

BING

The doors slide open.

Just in time. The Overseer appears at the lobby doorway.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

JACK dives inside, pushing the ground floor button. The doors start to close with a painful slow rattle.

The pale face appears and as the doors shut he thrusts an arms inside.

Jack jumps back just in time to avoid the grasp.

The doors close and the cage begins to move downwards.

As it closes on the ground floor however it begins to slow then comes to a halt.

For a moment all is still.

Jack waits for the doors to open yet instead the elevator begins to move again, this time upwards.

JACK

No!

He watches the number anxiously as the lights blinks its way up the floors.

The ride isn't a smooth one either, the higher it goes the more the cage shudders, and the sound of grinding cogs almost deafen us.

It's also growing hotter.

Jack hangs his tongue out like an overheated dog, undoing two of his top shirt buttons.

The light flashes for the top level and the elevator slams to a halt, throwing him against one of the panels.

The doors part, yet they open no more than a few inches before the mechanism shudders to a stop.

Jack thrusts an arm through, shouldering his way out. He's red faced, sweating before he makes it through.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

He drops to the corridor's carpeted floor on the other side, breathing hard for some moments.

Then he notices the second elevator. The floors are lighting up rapidly.

His eyes widen as the light flashes for the top level.

The doors open.

The Overseer steps out.

Jack sprints away, down the corridor and races around a corner.

Almost immediately he's forced to come to a dead halt in front of a large, red door. The title on a large gold plaque reads: PRESIDENT DE ABLO.

Jack hesitates but the shadow on the wall behind tells us that the Overseer is just a few steps away.

He grabs the handle but let's go almost immediately, shaking his hand.

JACK

Damn!

He checks his palm. It's red, burnt.

He pulls his tie from his pocket and uses it to grab the handle.

He opens the door just as the Overseer turns the corner.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - RECEPTION - DAY

Jack slams the door behind him.

He finds himself looking at a stern faced, heavily made up SECRETARY.

Mascara ringed, cold blue eyes stare back at him.

The file she's been using stops over a long, painted nail.

SECRETARY
He's expecting you.

JACK
What?

A pencilled eyebrow arches. She regards him like an imbecile.

SECRETARY
Mr. De Ablo's expecting you.

She waves the file towards a smoked glass door.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
You can go in.

She goes back to her nails.

Jack regards her but she seems to no longer be aware of his existence.

He looks towards the glass door.

INT. DE ABLO'S OFFICE - DAY

Jack stops just inside the office's threshold. He winces as a blast of furnace heat overwhelms him.

The door closes at his back.

Behind a polished desk is a large, well dressed man with slicked backed hair and neat goatee beard.

His natural authority and air of quiet power overwhelm the other man. His cool composure provides a striking contrast to his flushed, sweating visitor.

DE ABLO

Jack.

His voice is not unkind, almost warm.

JACK

You know my name?

The man nods.

DE ABLO

Of course.

He opens a box and takes out a cigar.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)

I know everyone's name.

He lights the cigar and gestures to the chair opposite.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)

Please.

Jack shuffles forward and takes the proffered seat.

The president turns the cigar box towards him.

JACK

No thanks.

De Ablo shrugs and lights his cigar. He takes a long, leisurely draw on it.

DE ABLO

So.

He blows out a stream of tobacco smoke.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)

It seems we have something of a situation.

JACK

Situation?

He looks down at the tie in his hand. He places it back in his pocket.

JACK (CONT'D)

Guess you could say that.

De Ablo regards him, his face implacable.

DE ABLO

Indeed. You left your desk.

JACK

That's right.

The president glances at his very expensive watch.

DE ABLO
But I make it only four fifty nine.

Irritation spreads across Jack's face.

JACK
It's always four fifty nine.
Something isn't right.

De Ablo takes another, long, contemplative puff on his cigar.

A look almost of sympathy passes across his face.

DE ABLO
I see the problem.

He lays the cigar in the ashtray and then steeples his large fingers, regarding his guest.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
You fail to appreciate where you are.

He reclines into his high backed chair.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
Or the true nature of your existence
here.

He glances around.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
You think you are free?

JACK
Of course I do.

DE ABLO
I'm afraid not.

He smiles.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
You're a prisoner Jack, a slave.

He sighs.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
Your lot is to toil, to labor
ceaselessly, knowing that what you do
has no meaning, importance or merit of
any kind. It is the most exquisite form
of suffering is it not?

Jack shakes his head.

CARL
I'm out of here. I quit.

De Ablo smiles sympathetically.

DE ABLO
If only it were that easy. I have some
advice for you Jack.

He leans forward.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
Abandon all hope. It only makes your
suffering worse.

He glances behind his guest.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
Now.

Jack turns to see the corpse- like Overseer stood behind him.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
I believe you have somewhere you
should be.

Jack stares at the pale man, surprise then despair spreading
across his features.

The Overseer fastens the man's shirt buttons, then fishing out
his tie, slips it around the collar and knots it into place.

Jack's head drops.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
I'm glad we could have this talk. I
trust you understand the nature of
things now.

The Overseer turns his charge around and begins to guide him
towards the exit.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
And remember.

They stop at the doorway.

Jack turns to look at the president.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)
Around here.

He taps his watch.

DE ABLO (CONT'D)

The day never ends.

THE END