

Barry's toes dug into squishy foam slippers prior to his grand commute approximately three metres from bed to kettle facilitating the grabbing of mug & pastry to go en route the living room.

For the most parts he considered himself a man of simple needs, actively stifling the suspicion that others thought his pathologically low desire for material things to be odd. Yet Barry inwardly knew that he only craved what eluded him the most. Company.

Not full on 'party til' you drop' stuff but a warm smile with maybe a dash of concern for his general well being. 'umm' That would be nice. Fat chance though he mused pushing and pulling at a jumble of items currently invading his sofa.

With all the shapeshifting properties of mutant beanbags his ample buttocks nestled in to the tiny space that had opened up whilst he rummaged about for the remote control.

'Got'ya' Barry exclaimed, aiming the remote with precision to fire up the enormous television. Groaning audibly with the realisation that the news was full of... Doom. Doom & more gloom. Wait. He'd misheard surely? Second Lockdown? No! Can't be right. Aghhh no!

Crumbs from the desiccated croissant that he had been munching floated down to spear themselves on crusty spikes of fabric formed by a previous milk spill.

Mouth agape he absorbed the shocking fact that this house arrest sorry working from home malarky was to continue. Leading his to realise this meant only one thing.....Zoom. Zoom & even more gloom.

Barry had come to resent all manner of virtual things preferring as he did the feel of paper & pen in his hands amidst the 'cut and thrust' race for tea trolley jammy dodgers. Smiling wryly to himself recalling the day he could have given Usain Bolt a run for his money to nab the last one. Arthur had been narked but these small daily triumphs had become his only source of motivation in the workplace. In one way or another he found his colleagues increasingly more difficult to deal with.

The bottle caught his eye. No! He couldn't. Could he? He probably shouldn't he thought as his hand lifted the vessel to slosh a generous measure of whisky into the coffee mug & began guzzling quickly. Like an intravenous infusion a strange fiery sensation slowly began to creep around his circulation causing his eyelids to shut....

Peering quizzically he poked the sofa. Felt real. Yet gazing around the walls now seemed black with what looked like a glass panel to the fore. Involuntarily he rubbed his temple which throbbed. Noise beyond the door caught his attention so gathering all the intent he could muster he rose to investigate. 'Umm careful lad' his inner voice cautioned as he ventured along a precarious gantry with several doors along each level.

Gingerly turning the first door handle to peer inside he immediately clicked it shut again. Heart pounding back to the jamb trying to process what he had seen. Arthur? Office? Bombastic mansplainer to the unsuspecting had been sat facing a glass screen Barry involuntarily shivered at the now never to be unseen image of Arthurs white patent leather shoes and flared slacks peppered in rhinestones.

Trying to compose himself Barry slowly moved forward, mushy marbles of sweat rolling from brow soak the collar of his robe. Door two opened to reveal the trim rear view of redoubtable Gwen. Relentless dotter of 'i's' & crosser the of 't's' whose raison d'être was to return documents decorated in comment notes... Seemed to be. No! Not possible...but what looks like a twerk..slightly mesmerised by swishing crimplene the colour of burnt custard creams. 'Get a grip Barry lad' voice in his head interjected to break his reverie but there was no mistake that phone was on Tik Tok record.

'Shit' winced Barry after pinching his arm. Was he dreaming? Gulping back waves of trepidation the next door knob rotated in his grasp to reveal the most disturbing image yet..... Tyron Baker sorry Ty Baker, self appointed arbiter of all things cool with his office persona the very antithesis of Barry was.....