

One Screwy Day 22

by

Simon Wiedemann

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Bruce Juster is a 25 year old bearded man wearing a name tag on his multicolour-swirled tracksuit. The tag also says 'Security'. He is wearing a similarly colourful cap. He walks up a straight corridor. It is lit with blues, reds and greens by lights and lasers on the ceiling that slowly move in circles. A security camera is in one top corner and a speaker is in the one next to it. A metal, fortified door with a number of padlocks is at the front of the area. The walls are glass and behind the glass are a number of forks ranging from beetle-sized to tall as a horse. They are 'seated' on golden thrones of matching sizes. They are lit up a brilliant white. Bruce examines the tallest fork, nods and mutters to himself 'Perfect'. A sinister, monotone voice is heard from the speaker 'Lunch break is now'. Bruce sighs 'I was enjoying looking at these forks...' He opens each lock one by one and opens the door.

He walks into the cafeteria. It is a huge square area seating 500 noisy, multicoloured workers. Each table seats ten and has the expected amount of cutlery. The lack of options may be a little disappointing, but the quality is high. The lighting is pure red and a huge flatscreen TV visible by all, hangs at the front of the room, above the area people get served food. Above, all around, forks hang by thin golden chains. A news jingle is heard. The room goes quiet as they listen and watch. A reporter with a microphone is seen in a rainy town with Constable Smith. The former comments 'News just in! Since one of the biggest cutlery burglaries in the whole of Charltonham yesterday, no one has been caught. Constable Smith is here to tell the tale...' The officer does so, scratching his ear 'You should have seen the thieves! A whole army of police cars and helicopters were chasing them and many missiles were fired at them, yet the felons dodged every single one. It was quite incredible.'

Bruce sits down by a munching worker, now half watching the TV. A name tag says 'Senior Staff: Gary Thompson'. Bruce then starts a conversation with him as he casually pockets the cutlery in front of him 'Hi, I'm Bruce. Awful business, this whole fork robbing situation...' Bruce bites his thumb nervously 'Still though, you have to be brave to do what those felons did, right?' Gary laughs 'Ha, good one.' Bruce laughs too 'Right, right... Just a joke. Gotta keep our spirits up, eh? We could be targeted next!' Gary chuckles 'Yeah, not likely. This is the most secure fork facility in the UK!' Bruce nods 'Of course.' Bruce looks shifty and twiddles his thumbs 'Say... You're a senior member of staff and have access to the company's most advanced fork... Mind if I have a look? I've heard all about it.' Gary shrugs his shoulders 'I guess. Sure...' Bruce smiles 'Great! I know this will sound weird, but when I get there, would you mind if I... had a look on my own? So I can really take in the atmosphere. Know what I mean? ...' Gary nods. 'Yes, I do. Being alone with an amazing fork is a very special experience...'

Bruce laughs 'You wouldn't think I would steal it, would you? I AM security!' Gary laughs, too 'A member of security stealing from his own company?? You should write a sitcom!' Bruce puts his hand on Gary's shoulder 'You know what? Maybe I will!' Bruce chuckles again. Gary leaves his seat and talks to his co-eaters 'Bye fellas. Just showing Bruce here the company's best fork...' Another worker comments 'He should see it when he's on his own... It will be much better...' 'Right, that's what he's going to do!' 'Have fun!' Bruce also leaves his seat as Gary leads the way past the tables one at a time. Eventually they reach the food grabbing area. Gary asks Bruce a question 'Fancy a snack? I bet your patrolling duties have made you hungry...' Bruce shakes his head 'Na, I'm not hungry. I'm too excited. It sounds silly, I know...' 'No, not at all. It's your first time.' The two walk to a door in front of them and pass through it.

The two encounter a new corridor that seems to go on forever. This time the red lighting is somehow perceived as sinister, rather than cool. On the plain metal walls, 'Thieves will die!' is written in what looks like blood. The ceiling is of countless, metal spikes. The metallic floor is covered with dead, bleeding bodies. Bruce stutters 'T-they're... not r-real dead bodies are they?' Gary sighs 'Yep. Just try to ignore them.' Bruce wipes a tear 'What did they do wrong?' 'They got cocky. They had thoughts of becoming urban legends. They wanted to take the best fork of this company and throw it on some road to screw with people. Our boss is known for flying into rages and the rest is obvious...' 'How come I didn't know about this?' 'Dunno. I guess no one ever felt there was a right time to tell you. Most here just talk about pizzas...' 'All the time??' 'Haha. You're clearly new here, aren't you? Yes. All the time. Weren't you listening to the hubbub before?' 'No...' 'All about pizza. That's why the food isn't served here. It would drive everyone crazy.'

After several minutes of walking, the two reach a door, this time with over a dozen padlocks from top to bottom. Gary comments as he undoes them 'Undoing these will be boring... But worth it, right? I bet you'd love to have a feel of the fork for yourself. Maybe even take it somewhere?...' Bruce laughs nervously whilst observing his new friend 'No, no, no. Not me. I'm a good and honest worker.' Gary nods 'Good. Because if you're not, you'll end up on this floor.' Gary kneels down to undo the lowest lock. As a curious Bruce kneels too, his fork falls from his pocket. He freezes. Gary looks to him 'What's that?' Bruce wipes his forehead 'Just... my fork from dinner. I must have forgotten to give it back to the caterers. Gary looks blank as Bruce re-pockets it. Gary sighs 'Ok, whatever.' He opens the last lock and slowly pushes the door open.

The room revealed has a grid of lasers in the front. Cliched, but very effective at stopping people over 5 centimetres tall. Behind the lasers is what seems to be an every day fork on another golden throne, this time disproportionately huge.

The walls have more blood writing, saying 'I'm serious! If you're even THINKING of stealing this fork you will DIE!' Gary comments, coolly 'All this danger... All this excitement... Kinda makes you want to steal that fork, huh?' Bruce shakes his head dramatically 'Oh God, no! Not me! Again, I just want to spend some time alone with it, believe me... After the lasers are disabled... So I can see the thing properly, I mean.' Gary laughs 'Come on. I know the real reason you're here. You want to throw it in front of a policeman than speed away...' Bruce goes white 'No!' Gary snarls 'Oh yes you do.' Bruce sheds another tear 'Please!' Gary winks at Bruce and pauses 'We're the same. Both of us here want that thing. The fork in your pocket is to replace it, isn't it?'

Bruce exhales deeply 'Wow... Wow.' He regains his colour 'This is a load of my mind...' Gary puts his hand out for Bruce to shake it 'We're going to be notorious. I hope you have no further plans of working here. Unless you want to have a 'special meeting' with the boss...' Bruce replies 'I'm really good at sailing and catching fish.' Gary gives a thumbs up 'Random, but great. I think I'll be a travel agent. Bit random too, right?' Bruce looks confused. Gary continues 'Anyway, to turn the lasers off, all you have to do is clap a weird polychromator. I'll clap 7/8 whilst you clap 5/4...' Bruce scratches his head 'That's different...' Gary agrees 'Yep. The boss got that idea a while ago from the Sausage Roll Killer. It's a long story.' Bruce replies 'How do you know?' 'I AM a senior member of staff, you know?' Bruce looks down, embarrassed 'Of course'. Much clapping follows. It isn't as straightforward as it sounds. Eventually the lasers deactivate.

With pride and euphoria, Bruce marches up to the throne as Gary watches with admiration. He takes the fork from his pocket and switches it with the highly sought after treasure like doing so is nothing. He marches back to a jumping up and down Gary whilst holding the utensil in front of his face with pride. Gary shouts 'We're doing it!' Bruce whispers loudly 'Not so loud!' He then pockets the item. Gary shakes Bruce's hand again. He then claps the lasers back with a 23/32 rhythm. No polychromator is required this time, thank God. Just as the two start the long walk back to the cafeteria, the boss appears in front of them from nothing. He is 6 foot tall and is wearing robes. He looks like King Henry VIII. The thieves shake.

The boss speaks with a booming voice that tries to be friendly. His hands are on his hips 'I see you've been admiring the super fork?' Gary stutters 'I-incredible... A-absolutely... i-in-incredible. Best fork ever. By m-miles.' The boss squints his eyes at the every day replacement 'Ohhhh yeah. Definitely my finest work. I've spent half of my life developing that little thing alone.' The boss bites his thumb 'You weren't... thinking of taking it for yourself, were you? ...' The two robbers tremble more. Gary improvises 'No, no, no. Never... Not that I wouldn't want to...' The boss's and Bruce's eyes widen.

Bruce cuts in 'No! That's not what he meant! He meant he would love to own it legally! Nice and legal! With your much wanted, complete and utter approval!'

The boss gives a hearty laugh 'You better not be robbing from me or you'll end up all over the walls and floor!' The boss rubs his chin as the thieves shake even more 'Say... What do you think of those fork, knife and spoon thieves on the news? Heroes, right?' Gary replies, manically 'Scum! Scum of the Earth!' Bruce joins in 'Worse than scum!' The boss stares through Bruce 'You don't admire them? Not even a little bit? Think they're pretty rad geezers? I know when you're lying to me, so don't make things worse for yourself.' Bruce looks down, ashamed and defeated. He mutters with sadness 'Well... I guess it was cool the way...' Gary shouts 'NO! What Bruce means is it would be cool if the crooks were splattered all over the walls!' The boss replies with evil eyes 'Yes. Anyway, I know you haven't stolen from me. I know that fork from anywhere. Just playing a game with you. With my super-vision I can see you haven't even touched it. But if you do, you...' Gary cuts in 'We die?'

The boss winks. He looks at the fork again, then goes red '... What the HELL is that?!' Bruce and Gary jump and freeze. Bruce looks traumatised 'What??' The boss growls 'Would you like to explain yourself? As I said, I know when you're lying!' Bruce starts to full blown cry 'Nothing is going on... Please! Trust us! We're nothing but common fork enthusiasts! Please!' The king lookalike smiles 'Ok, ok. No one has ever tricked me twice before. Or once. I know you're being honest. Please enjoy the special fork when I go. Cheers! The boss disappears. Bruce tries to pull himself together. Gary smiles warmly 'You handled yourself pretty well there, man. I was preparing for a long and drawn out, fatal pummelling.'

Bruce makes a fist 'Why didn't you tell me the boss could appear out of thin air??' Gary facepalms 'Dear God, Bruce. What DO you know? I thought maybe you were a hardcore risk-taker like the others when you didn't turn back!' 'Let's just get out of here.' The two walk back through the evil corridor. Once again, the blood kinda catches the eyes. Bruce comments 'Anyway, what the hell is wrong with that boss dude? Are there dead bodies in other places?' Gary shrugs his shoulders 'God knows.' After much disgusted chatter, the duo have just reached the canteen. The hubbub continues. Gary speaks to Bruce, casually 'Hear that? Notice what everyone is talking about...' Bruce widens his eyes 'Everyone's talking about pizza...' Gary nods 'Told you so. Now let's leave this place, too. I know the perfect place where we can dump our special thingamabob...'

Gary is driving a Ferrari on a starlit motorway in light traffic. The windows are open. Bruce is by his side. Both are wearing sunglasses. Gary nods to Bruce. Bruce nods too. He retrieves the special utensil from his pocket and throws it on the central reservation like it was a piece of trash.

Gary nods again as he speeds away.