

*Too late – he sprays the squirty cream under his shirt.*

*They stare at one another, frozen, as Shen comes back in.*

**Shen** A nice little office you have, Mr. Lyons.

**David** (*lowering his arm, as gently as possible*) David, please.

**Jean** Cream and jam scone, Mr. Shen? English delicacy?

**Shen** . . . Thank you. The rest of my group are already at the football match?

**David** Oh, yes, you're right, we should get cracking.

*He claps his hands together to 'mean business'. From the drawer, the Dancing Snowman begins its song, as everyone slowly sits, pretending they can't hear it, David trying not to squelch his creamy armpit.*

**David** We really just thought, in addition to touring our proposed site for your plant at the old quarry, it would be good to have a private chat, to put our case to you properly. Prove we're the – the erm . . . the *cream* of the crop, ahah. Erm –

**Shen** We have your proposed outline, it's all there in black and white –

**David** No, I know, I know, but. We know you have offers from Zeebrugge, and Gdansk. But I suppose I wanted to communicate personally, how . . . how hungry, we are, for this. Our location is unparalleled, right?

**Margot** Smack bang between the M1 and the A1 –

**David** Yep, the, the main arteries that run through Britain. We have . . . there is a large potential workforce, sat there, waiting, raring to go –

**Shen** But they are – untrained, in these sorts of skills, no? And currently unemployed? Many thousands . . .?

**David** We . . . areas like this, the economic down- . . . we're particularly vulnerable, with so many jobs in the public

sector, to cuts from this new government, it's the same cycle we went through, areas like this, under the *last* Tory governments, time and time again, and –

**Shen** Since the quarry closed, and before that the coal mines – the main source of employment has been these new government centres, am I right?

**Jean** The Data Centre, yes. It's a – *was*, a records bureau; the government digitized all public records, and so it acts, acted as like a central call centre too.

**Shen** Call centre for what?

**Jean** To – to transfer calls. Between government departments. All the hotlines were amalgamated into one central one, here. David fought hard, very hard –

**Shen** So people phone this new hotline, that the government pays for, to send them to the same department, where the phone lines were cut?

**David** . . . It – when the quarry . . . there's been limestone mining, in this area, for centuries but, as the work disappeared to . . . (*Gesturing, ironically.*), well other countries, the effects of globalization, all that, we needed something to be built 'on top', of the holes. Jobs that would lead to spending and lead to growth and then to jobs that could sustain themselves, and –

**Shen** So, before, there was government money pouring into these quarries, and mines, across the land, digging for things you no longer needed. Your answer was to fill in those holes, and build on top these 'centres'. Which you didn't really need. And . . . now they're closing too? Is that not work for work's sake?

**David** *takes a beat. Calm, now. A flash, perhaps, of the politician of old.*

**David** Mr. Shen. We *can* make things, here, we can build your trains, it's in our DNA, with just a bit of training –

**Shen** Of course. Once the 'workshop of the world', this country, of course.

**David** Yes, in fact, Arkwright's mill, the first ever factory, Spinning Jenny, just down the road, what fifteen, twenty minutes drive from here?

**Margot** About that. I could check. (*On her phone.*)

**David** You don't need to check, just –

**Shen** Really? The first factory?

**David** Yep, birthed the industrial revolution. Without which, no trains, no . . . Apple, no Google, no nothing.

**Margot** Yeah, twenty-three minutes it says, by car. Or you could cycle in one hour thirty-one, it says. (*Showing him her Google maps.*)

**David** And, look, I negotiated a government guarantee of capital –

**Margot** Oh wait, no, shit, that's from my house –

**David** – Yes, thank you, Margot; our inclusion into their 500 million pound government guarantee of shared capital investment which should make coming *here* . . . a little more palatable.

**Shen** Tempting us with 'gifts', hmm? I read that you personally got – what's the phrase, a lot of 'stick', for that. Working with the enemy party.

**David** I'm a pragmatist, Mr. Shen.

**Shen** A pragmatist over an idealist?

**David** No point in having ideals if you have no means by which to deliver them. Ideals don't put bread on the table. This is what I do, Mr. Shen; I get things done.

**Shen** Well. Our decision will be transparent, and most important, quick.

**Margot** We should get you to the Forest game.

**Shen** (*standing*) Yes, 'Nottingham Forest'. Where Robin Hood used to live, right? 'Robbing from the rich to give to the poor.' The first real socialist.

**David** Aha, yes, a proud Nottinghamshire lad.

**Shen** Your party? You no longer sing the *Red Flag*, is that right? 'We'll keep it flying here'. You no longer sing this, it no longer flies?

**David** It's still sung, in – some quarters.

**Shen** We still fly ours, of course, haha. Although we too found our 'third way' – was that what he called it? We are now in our 'Third Plenum'. The old values, but with . . . (*Gesturing David.*) 'economic pragmatism'. You would describe yourself as – Democratic Socialists, I think, here?

**David** Uh, Jean would, I'm more a . . . Social Democrat.

**Margot** I've never thought to define myself anything; what's the difference?

**David** Well, crudely, she's got more socialist in hers and I've got more democrat in mine, but it's all cheese on the same board.

**Jean** (*as a private dig*) Although I think of you more as a Social Corporatist sometimes, David.

**David** Do you, Jean?

**Margot** Is that another one?

**Shen** This new Scottish government? They are on the Left?

**David** Yes, but they have – I suppose they're a popular nationalist movement, with Social Democratic tendencies –

**Jean** *Democratic Socialist* –

**David** Democratic Socialist tendencies. But they're a nationalist party too.

**Margot** Oh well, I like them, that's me then, I'm a *National Socialist*.

**David/Jean** No.

**David** No, you're not, Margot, not a National Socialist.

**Margot** Am I not?

**David/Jean** No.

**Margot** Oh.

**Shen** Well. Thank you for clearing all that up. And for your hospitality.

**David** Bye then, take care.

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**Shen** *leaves, lead by Margot. A moment.*

**David** *(to Jean, questioningly)* Well that . . . went . . . OK?

**Jean** *(beat . . . pacing . . . shaking her head).* He'll not bring it here.

**David** What, why?

**Jean** Dunno, sixth sense, women's intuition, I dunno just something.

**David** I think that . . . Jean, could you not at least like *pretend* that I did an alright job, maybe once? / I actually think we have a real shot at –

**Jean** You did, I'm just saying, it was – it feels rigged against us from the off. You heard him, the 'tempting with gifts' thing. I dunno, maybe we should have been less desperate, a bit of integrity.

**David** Integr- . . . right.

**Jean** Not you, *us*, it, everyone, you're / yet again misinterpreting what I'm–