

Het volgende fragment is het begin van een kort verhaal, geschreven door Leland Cheuk.

“Office of the Mind”



(1) On the first day of work, I sat at my desk in the bedroom and put on my company-issued Office of the Mind (OotM) glasses, earpieces, and haptic gloves. Immediately I was transported into an office again, in a half-cubicle, a new clean desk, a 55-inch HD curved monitor at my workstation, with coworkers chattering all around me in their cubes, like the old days. All of us wore work clothes, and the pop-up tutorial prompted me to customize mine with a few taps of my index finger and thumb tips. In reality, we were likely in the clothes we slept in, inside our various homes, hiding from all the diseases.

“Welcome aboard,” said my cubicle neighbor, a sales engineer named Murray, a middle-aged white gentleman, who added that he was based in Mozambique, originally from the UK. He had moved to Maputo after getting fed up with Brexit and earned citizenship. “Wanna get coffee?” he added. “We can get coffee?!” I squawked.

(2) He laughed and beckoned me to follow. We walked across the virtual cubicle floor, turned the corner at the elevator bank, and waited for the elevator to take us down. In my apartment, I had traversed my bedroom and turned into my closet. I could feel my hanged clothes brushing against my face.

“Where did you work before?” Murray asked.

(3) “I was a freelancer for a long time,” I said, taking a step back. I left it at that. I had been a little shocked I got the job. But every multinational needed readable content these days for the search engine algorithms.

“A lover of freedom, eh?” Murray said.

“Until it became too much.” I kicked myself for saying that. It made me sound like a layabout instead of what the freelancer life was really like: doing fifteen

assignments one day for \$30 each. Then doing zero assignments the next week and eating packaged ramen for dinner. I just felt lucky to have health insurance for the first time in a decade.

(4) The elevator doors opened. The interior was gold-plated. I felt the familiar unbalanced feeling as we descended. How did my OotM hardware simulate those sensations so accurately?

“It’s the earpieces,” Murray said, as if reading my mind. “They emit electrical pulses that mess with your sense of balance.”

“Wild,” I said with childlike wonder.

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