

Recession

Tuesday, 02 December 2008

It is November 14. That month when the sun never seems to be able to break through the thick carpet of cloudshanging over Berlin like a statement. We're in the year of the big, global recession, and I am minutes away from becoming one of its victims.

The boss sends me a message via msn messenger (nothing like the impersonal approach) could we have a quick meeting, and for whatever reason, I knew what I was in for as N. & D. had already been made "redundant". Now the third, recently hired employee, i.e. myself, would get the sack. He sits opposite me, I try to focus on his droopy eye, and the smoke from his menthol scented Marlborough stirs a cough in me that I try to swallow and as a result my eyes water. I don't want him thinking I'll break down and cry. He slides the piece of paper over the desk. It makes a hissing sound. He mumbles explanations but I keep staring at the header "Notice of termination of contract" or something like that. No particular reason given. I can hear myself say three things: Will I get paid for this month, can I go home now, (I mean, immediately), and make sure you hire a chain smoker next time. Answers: Yes, yes, and a baffled smile.

I leave the room, shut down my workstation, to hell with whatever I was in the middle of doing anyway, they'll figure it out. I pack my few personal things in a plastic bag, go and shake my puzzled colleagues' hands, thank the boss for the opportunity, and then I close the door behind me, go out into the Berlin haze, and cannot help but feel relieved. Worried, about the fact that both of us are out of work now, worried about how to take it from here, but relieved that I can breathe freely again, and won't stink of smoke every night from having spent 8 hours in what must be the last "smoking office" in town.