

# Work Day

“Hurry up. We are going to be late.” Gerrit yelled through Adamo’s door. Gerrit could have signaled that he was outside but he was more than happy to yell.

From inside Adamo returned the call. “We can’t be late you old fool.” Adamo liked to tease Gerrit about being one month younger. They had been assigned to the same maintenance team for three years along with Wesley. They were essentially all the same age and virtually had the same level of physical prowess yet Gerrit was older by one month than the other two. With a lack of much else to pick at each other about, Wesley and Adamo decided to dub Gerrit the old man of their crew.

No sooner than Gerrit decided upon a retort did Adamo’s front door slide open. Adamo was clad in his maintenance uniform which was composed entirely of a dull green broken only by the white number 24 emblazoned upon his pack and on his back. All three men on the team wore identical clothing and each of their packs had the same large 24, indicating their crew designation. They were one of 30 teams of three that made continual rounds throughout the entire campus of facilities. The overwhelming majority of their assignments were simply to check calibration levels and confirm settings, dull unexciting work. Occasionally there would be a repair to make but most repairs were automated and corrected long before they ever made it to the location to make a report.

Adamo caught Gerrit as he opened his mouth to speak. “Let’s go. There is no need to keep Wesley waiting.” Gerrit just closed his mouth, he didn’t have a reply and it was too early to get into a verbal sparring match. He just groaned.

They two men walked to the adjoining residence and signaled to Wesley that they were outside. This was unusual because Wesley almost unfailingly came outside as soon as Adamo did, eager and ready to get moving. Wesley was easily the most energetic of the group, especially on their early runs like today’s assignments. A few minutes passed and Wesley didn’t respond or come through the door with his trademark childlike grin.

“What did you do? He obviously doesn’t want to work with you today.” Adamo jokingly nudged Gerrit with his elbow as they stood waiting for their partner to emerge. After another few minutes passed, the smile faded from Gerrit’s face as he tapped his arm unit. “He’s not answering.”

The two men approached the door, sent an emergency notification, and were granted entry. “Wesley? Wesley, it’s us.” Gerrit started sheepishly then raised his volume with each attempt. “Wesley. Hey man, are you in there? Wesley ... we are coming in.” With his last call going unanswered, the two men passed through the threshold and walked to the back of the residence, calling out to their teammate along the way.

“Wesley?”

They were relieved when they found Wesley in his room, looking as if he was just sleeping off a late night. Adamo crossed the room and pushed the sleeping man’s shoulder. Wesley rolled from his side onto his back and they could see his face for the first time.

Adamo jumped back as if Wesley was poisonous, “Oh man, you look terrible. What did you do last night ... and why weren’t we invited?”

Wesley moaned an unintelligible reply then cleared his throat. “I didn’t go out. I think I’m sick.” Adamo laughed. “You think? You look dead.” Adamo talked over his shoulder to Gerrit but more for Wesley’s benefit. “I guess we are on our own today, this one says he’s sick.” With a half hearted punch to Wesley’s shoulder, Adamo turned to leave. “Rest up man, we need you back out there tomorrow. You can’t lay around sleeping everyday.” Wesley didn’t reply, he just rolled back to his side.

Gerrit and Adamo went back to the path and waited until they were well out of earshot before saying anything. Adamo was first. “Man, he didn’t look good.”

“No and he sounded worse. Should we get the physician?” Gerrit asked sounding unsure.

“Nah, he’s just sick. It’s not impossible. It does happen once in a while.” Adamo sounded more sure but not completely. “He’ll be fine tomorrow. We need to go unless you want to go back and hold his hand for a while.” The men laughed and set out for their first assignment. Four hours later and they were approaching the fifth location on their agenda and Gerrit was falling behind a few steps.

“Something wrong? You need a break old man?” Adamo called out to Gerrit, teasing him as much as he could and expecting an equally mocking return.

“You know, I do. Why don’t we go ahead and take our break. It may just be in my head but I don’t feel so great.”

Gerrit’s reply was weak and had none of the expected sarcasm that should have been there. Adamo wanted to pick on his partner but the softness in his voice made him decide against it. “No problem. You just have yourself talked into feeling bad because of Wesley. He’s fine.”

Gerrit half sat and half fell onto a bench just inside the outer wall of R7 which held their next assignment. “I know. Maybe, I just didn’t sleep well.” Gerrit closed his eyes and was asleep within minutes. Adamo sat down beside him and relaxed as well. There was no need to rush, none of their assignments for the day were marked as urgent. Adamo wouldn’t admit it but he wasn’t feeling his best either. He decided he would close his eyes briefly.

Adamo opened his eyes and found that he had fully reclined against the wall. Without looking he could tell that he had fallen asleep and for longer than he intended. Adamo pulled up the time in his visor and found that the two of them had been on the bench for almost two hours. Adamo threw his hand out as he turned to Gerrit only to find that his partner wasn’t on the bench. Gerrit was sprawled out face down on the ground in front of the bench. Adamo kicked him in the leg but he didn’t respond. He didn’t even move.

“Gerrit. Gerrit!” Adamo yelled at him but still didn’t get any response. Adamo stood and kicked him harder than he probably should have and it

worked. Gerrit jumped to his feet like he had been scared out of a bad dream. When he turned around, his snarled expression caused Adamo to question whether he was still asleep on the bench. “What in the ...?”

“Gerrit. What’s wrong with...” Adamo couldn’t finish because Gerrit launched at him like a wild animal. The two men toppled to the ground with Gerrit screaming like he was on fire. Adamo was stunned and didn’t know what to make of the situation. His brain simply didn’t want to process that his best friend was savagely attacking him. It made no sense. It couldn’t be happening. Gerrit was screaming and Adamo was trying to hold him at bay with all of his strength.

“Gerrit! Stop! What’s wrong with you?”

“Gerrit!”

Adamo was getting fatigued quickly and it settled in that his friend really was attacking him. One last try for reason, “Gerrit!”, but there was no recognition in his eyes.

Adamo let go with one hand and hit his partner as hard as he could in the temple. The savage beast, that was his friend just seconds ago, winced slightly but didn’t waiver in his attack. Adamo delivered another blow with the same result. Another blow and still no indication other than a slight wince that he had even struck him. Desperation was replacing shock as he realized Gerrit was not letting up and even seemed to be getting stronger and more ferocious.

Adamo arched himself up on his right hip and reached behind him into his pack. Scrambling for whatever he could grasp he came out with a standard lightweight wrench. It wasn’t heavy enough to cause any damage but it would provide support in his hand for what he had to do.

Adamo looked into the face of his friend one last time and only saw a violent expression consisting of bloodshot eyes and snarling teeth jutting out of a drooling mouth as an indescribably inhuman scream poured out. Adamo slid his hand up Gerrit’s arm and braced his palm at the end of a

stiff arm against the side of his friend's head. Adamo wrapped his hand as tightly as he could around the wrench and crashed it into Gerrit's temple.

"Gerrit please stop!" He hit him again with everything he had.

"Gerrit!" Another strike.

"Gerrit!" Another.

"Stop!" Another.

"Please!" Adamo hit him again and this time the resistance was less. He could feel that he had caved in the side of his skull. Adamo drew back for another blow and Gerrit collapsed on top of him.

Pushing out from under his assailant, Adamo scrambled to his feet and looked down at a lifeless body. Adamo then looked at his own body and saw for the first time that he was covered in blood, his friend's blood. Adamo had just bludgeoned his best friend to death and it was too much for him to accept. Adamo fell to his knees and cried out for help through his sobs.

"Someone ... help me! Help us."

"I need help."

"Gerrit."

"No."

Adamo pulled himself to a standing position and went through the motions to send a distress signal from his arm unit. He wasn't sure what anyone could do to help. He wasn't even sure what had happened but he knew his friend was dead and he was responsible.

Adamo didn't get an answer. He had never actually sent a distress signal before but he knew the response was supposed to be instantaneous.

Adamo sent a second signal. After a few seconds an automated visual message scrolled across his visor.

## **EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS ENACTED**

### **RETURN TO YOUR RESIDENCE**

The message continued to scroll across his visor until he made the motion to acknowledge the message. This made no sense. What could be happening? He needed help and he wasn't getting it. He activated the distress signal again and only got the same message in return. The emergency protocols were part of everyone's training but they had never been enacted. Adamo began to panic even more than before which he wouldn't have thought possible.

"What is happening? Does this have something to do with Gerrit?" Adamo searched his brain for how these two events could be related. His friend attacked him out of nowhere. He calls for help and can't get an answer. Then his mind jumped to Wesley. Wesley was sick and he left him at home. If there truly was an emergency, one even bigger than his friend turning psychotic and trying to kill him, Wesley was in danger. Almost before he could finish that last thought, he broke into a sprint, running as fast as he could back to Wesley. He just lost one friend. He didn't know what was happening but he could not lose another.

Gerrit Marcell

22.02.2665 - 04.04.2718

Wesley Abraham

11.01.2665 – 05.04.2718

Adamo Demetro

13.01.2665 – 07.04.2718