

Trainee Tim newly renamed to **Spuddy the Potato** issued first disciplinary write-up (*"Dave's 'herbal tea' is warfare"*)

Day Shift Reactions:

- *Supervisor* cried in fetal position (*"I just wanted Excel..."*)
- *Dave* tried to unionize the clown horns (*"They deserve benefits!"*)

CONTROL ROOM OF THE VOID: SPUDDY'S AWAKENING

The fluorescent lights of the Control Room of the Void buzzed incessantly, their flickering glow casting long shadows across the cubicle farm like a dying strobe light at the world's worst rave. It was in this pit of despair that Trainee Tim—now legally rebranded as "Spuddy the Potato" through some unholy HR alchemy—found himself staring at his new identity badge with the hollow-eyed resignation of a man who just realized his life had taken a sharp left turn into absurdity.

No one could remember exactly when or why the potato naming convention had started. The official story involved Stefan, the desk's previous occupant—a man whose entire personality had apparently consisted of boiled potatoes and unexplained absences. One day he was there, methodically mashing a spud with his bare hands, the next he'd vanished, leaving behind only a sticky note that read: "Gone to find better carbs." The spelling error made it art.

Management, in their infinite wisdom, had decided the best way to honor Stefan's legacy was to force every subsequent hire at that desk to embrace potato-themed nomenclature. Thus, Tim became Spuddy, because corporate culture thrives on psychological torture disguised as team bonding.

Spuddy's training manual lay before him—a single sheet of paper with one word in 72-point font: "PANIC!" No instructions. No emergency contacts. Just a bold-faced directive to lose his shit immediately. It was the most honest onboarding document he'd ever seen.

His first day unfolded like a workplace simulator designed by Satan himself. Gary tossed him a stress ball shaped like a screaming face with the ominous warning, "You'll need this," with the gravitas of a doctor delivering a terminal diagnosis. Tiny slid a stapler across the desk while muttering, "Defend yourself," as if office supplies were the only thing standing between Spuddy and certain death. Lisa introduced him to her emotional support potato (a russet named Steve) and asked, with unsettling intensity, if he wanted to be friends.

Then there was the raccoon.

No one knew how or why the office had a raccoon, but it was there, perched atop the copier like a furry little godfather, sizing Spuddy up with beady eyes before demanding a granola bar as tribute for the privilege of sitting at his own desk.

Spuddy turned to Carl, the only person who seemed marginally sane, only to find him arranging pepperoni slices into occult symbols on a pizza box. "Eat," Carl said, shoving a slice into Spuddy's hands. "It'll make the pain funnier."

By week two, Spuddy had begun his slow descent into madness. He caught himself bargaining with the printer like a hostage negotiator. ("What do you want? Color cartridges? A blood sacrifice?") The microwave's beep made him flinch like a war veteran hearing fireworks. He even found himself considering Lisa's invitation to the "Potato Empowerment Circle," which sounded like a cult but at least promised free snacks.

The breaking point came when Dave—now "Vade" thanks to the raccoon's inexplicable typo curse—assigned him to "HR Mindfulness Training." This turned out to be ten minutes of silent screaming into a filing cabinet while HR watched approvingly, taking notes.

Something inside Spuddy snapped.

In a move that would have made Stefan proud, he stole the break room toaster and barricaded himself in the supply closet, shouting demands for "answers or at least a better name." The raccoon, impressed by this display of initiative, mediated a truce: Spuddy would surrender in exchange for a revised training manual (now two pages: "PANIC!" and "BUT ALSO, MAYBE DON'T?"), a 10% reduction in his snack tax, and the right to occasionally go by "Tim" when no one was listening.

As dawn broke, Spuddy sat at his desk, chewing on a pilfered bagel and staring into the abyss. Gary clapped him on the shoulder. "You're one of us now." Tiny nodded solemnly. "The raccoon approves. That's worse than a promotion."

From the shadows, the raccoon chattered what might have been a welcome or a death threat. It was hard to tell.

EPILOGUE

The toaster never forgave Dave. The next morning, it incinerated his bagel with prejudice. The raccoon, in a show of solidarity with small appliances everywhere, filed a formal grievance on its behalf.

Somewhere, Stefan was smiling. Probably. Assuming he'd found those better carbs.

MAYBE TO BE CONTINUED...

The microwave starts whispering secrets. No one escapes the Void. Not even the potatoes.