



# R A N D O M C H A R A C T E R

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L A U R A B . G I N S B E R G

“You mighta thought we’d get you a cake,” said a slippery voice coming from the glass-walled office.

An echo of grease and caution became a ruthless decoration within the structure of his last day at the station. He’d likely have to turn in his keys almost as soon as the flames on the cheap candles burned out.

The pendulum of retirement was about to swing him out the door.

“You turn 65, and you get the boot. You knew it was coming, ya old bastard.”

There was singing about a jolly good fellow, but all he could feel was a sense of humid anxiety.

The rest of the day was a sugary blur. Even then, he couldn’t put down the candy, so he unwrapped a peppermint and shoved the plastic back in his pocket with that silver dollar and his grandfather’s timepiece.

He decided it was dark and stale enough in the shop to turn on some lights. That common electric click was ruthless and somewhat irrelevant as he decided to neglect the clock and stay late anyway.

Everyone else had already gone home. Who would know?

The slope of the mop handle leaning in the corner caught his focus. Why scramble home if all there was to do was reminisce? He grabbed the bucket from under the sink and unsealed the water from the faucet into the foolproof receptacle.

It would take a clever and desperate man to clean these floors that hadn’t seen a mop in a decade.

Within minutes, he was whistling, and hours later, a baritone voice could be heard plodding throughout the metallic building.

