

THE FULL TIME POST

By Olivia Arieti

EXCERPT

Characters

MARTIN - In his 40s.

KATE - In her 20s.

HELEN - Martin's secretary.

BARBARA - Martin's ex-wife. In her 30s.

Setting: Martin's office. A desk, chairs.

Time: The present.

Props: Papers, a letter.

Synopsis

Worried by the shortage of space at the cemetery, Martin has a practical approach to the issue; he has adhered to the city's campaign of gravesite sharing and has posted an ad. Kate, who needs a job desperately, replies, unaware of the particular position her potential employer is offering.

(MARTIN is sitting at his desk. HELEN enters.)

HELEN: The documents you required, Mr. Burns.

MARTIN: Thank you, Helen, hope you've put in the contract too.

HELEN: It's there alright. *(Looks at him.)* Say, don't you think it's a bit too early to plan for your after life?

MARTIN: Hopefully it is, but I've been told that it's pretty crowded down there and it seems that double burials are unavoidable. I believe you, too, have heard of the city's latest campaign about sharing. *(Chuckles.)* It surely won't be a lonely place any longer.

HELEN: Mr. Burns, how grim!

MARTIN: Got to be realistic, dear. Besides, now that I'm divorced I want to settle the matter once and for all, can't risk spending my eternity with my ex-wife.

HELEN: So that's the reason for your ad...

MARTIN: Better to get to know each other while we're still up here, don't you think so?

HELEN: Still sounds creepy to me... By the way, there's a young lady outside asking to see you.

MARTIN: Let her in, Helen, let her in. And if you want a piece of advice, start planning for your future too, *(Chuckles.)* there will be no more room in the inn for newcomers soon.

(HELEN exits horrified. KATE enters.)

KATE: Mr. Martin Burns?

MARTIN: *(Gets up.)* That's me. Miss...?

KATE: Kate, Kate Jones. I saw your ad and thought I might be interested in the post.

MARTIN: Glad to hear that. Have a seat, Kate.

(They sit down.)

KATE: To tell the truth, I need it badly, Mr. Burns.

MARTIN: Good grief, I hope you're not ill.

KATE: (*Startled.*) Ill? No, no, not at all. Do you require a good health certificate?

MARTIN: It would be quite useless, my dear. Mine is an offer for a particular sort of post...

KATE: Is it a temporary position?

MARTIN: Permanent, my dear, and full time... Can't deny that the issue always makes me nervous considering it's about my second home...

KATE: So it's a family business.

MARTIN: Somehow... I really care for it. (*Nervous laughter.*) You know, my second home, my second castle.

KATE: (*Laughs.*) Of course. However, I believe it's fair warning you that my main concern is climbing up the ladder even if that implies changing jobs.

MARTIN: It won't be necessary for you'll be sky high, Kate.

KATE: Wow, a heavenly offer!

MARTIN: The location... is... is right at the city's cemetery.

KATE: I don't mind that, I live nearby. I'd go anywhere if necessary.

MARTIN: No need to go farther after that journey.

KATE: Journey? I might go there on foot.

MARTIN: It never happens, trust me.

KATE: Well, when should I start?

MARTIN: Your enthusiasm is admirable. We'll have our names together in capital letters and whatever font you prefer, I'm not too fussy about that.

KATE: On the door?

MARTIN: I also appreciate your sense of humor, dear. It's so encouraging in deadly moments.

KATE: If you could be a little more explicit...

MARTIN: I'm sure you, too, have heard about the shortage of space over there... Every soul fighting for his post... The situation makes me worry...

KATE: Frankly, I don't understand...

MARTIN: You can't. You're so young and pretty and so full of life... To tell the truth, I didn't expect a person like you.

KATE: If you believe I'm not fit for the post, I'll leave. No bad feelings, really.

MARTIN: No, no, you're fine, Kate, more than fine. By the way, you can call me Martin. (*Chuckles.*) Since we might spend an eternity together, we could start being friends as well.

KATE: You're pretty confusing, Martin, not to mention your ad.

MARTIN: There's not much to say in such cases, you only have to deal with the pesky formalities that I hate.

KATE: The contract, you mean.

MARTIN: Exactly, you need one even for that.

KATE: You certainly know better, you're the boss.

MARTIN: Not for long. Sharing is part of the deal.

KATE: It wasn't specified that capital was required, not to mention that I'm broke.

MARTIN: No problem, I can anticipate your share... I'm saying that because of the good impression you've made on me. The thought of being full time with someone as sweet as you is most comforting. Barbara, my ex-wife, has always been a real hell. I'd never stay with her, either dead or alive. By the way, Kate, do you like me?

KATE: Why... why are you asking?

MARTIN: Well, I thought it might be fair that you, too, would be pleased with your choice.

KATE: Yeah... you do seem a nice guy...

MARTIN: Good... If the situation wasn't such, I'd ask you out. (*Takes her hand.*) You're really gorgeous, Kate.

KATE: I was looking for a job, actually, not a date.

MARTIN: Too bad it can't be both. What's more romantic than *eternal* love?

KATE: I'd really appreciate your telling me what the job is about, Martin.

MARTIN: Listen, honey, since the issue is so depressing why don't we get out of here and talk about the details over a glass of bubbly?

KATE: (*Annoyed.*) Hey, man, if you're looking for some fun you've got the wrong person here.

MARTIN: No, no, please, I didn't mean to offend you, the matter is the deadliest honest there is.

(BARBARA enters, furious, a letter in her hands.)

MARTIN: Barbara!

BARBARA: *(Waves the letter.)* You've got to tell me what's this all about, Martin!