

diverted so I don't need to worry about those. Come on – hopefully you can sort this quickly. I don't think I can cope with one more phone call from the top floor moaning about it.'

Her heels clacked across the high sheen of the tiled floor before she held open a solid wooden door and stood to one side to let him through.

As Spencer's eyes adjusted from the brightness of the reception area to the subdued hues of the software company's working environment, he couldn't help but feel that the large room now seemed cluttered – there were so many groups of desks and chairs, it was hard to recall the enormous space that he had worked in over the summer.

Even the high ceilings had been lowered and disguised by acoustic tiles that masked the

maze of wiring that he himself had been partly responsible for.

He heard a gentle *swish* as the door closed behind him, and then Gemma gestured across the room to an open area beyond.

A waft of roasting coffee beans teased his senses as they made their way around the perimeter before advancing on a space in the middle that included a small kitchenette and a seating area where employees could take a break. Spencer tried to ignore the sweet aroma of fresh doughnuts in case his stomach roared in protest, and bit back a smile at the sight of the state-of-the-art coffee machine. His wife had been nagging him for one like it but he couldn't see the sense in spending that sort of money when it only cost a couple of quid for a jar of the stuff from the supermarket.

Eight men and women milled about, chatting between themselves in low voices as they opened refrigerator doors, fetched milk cartons and handed out china plates and mugs.

‘Bad timing, I’m afraid,’ said Gemma. ‘Those who come in early usually take a coffee break and grab a bite to eat about now.’

‘That’s okay,’ said Spencer. ‘I’ll only need to open one of the ceiling panels to start off with. I’ll put a couple of chairs out to block off access. No sense in disturbing everyone until I find out what the problem is.’

He noticed her shoulders relax a moment before she let out a breath he didn’t realise she had been holding.

‘Oh, that’s great. Thank you – I was expecting some grief from this lot if I had to tell them to move out of the way. Do you want

a coffee or anything while you're working?'

'I'd love a coffee, thanks. Milk, two sugars.'

Spencer set the ladder against one of the Formica tables that were spread about the area then spun three of the chairs around. He opened his toolbox and pulled out the drawings for the air-conditioning wiring that his wife had printed off for him that morning, before glancing at the ceiling as he got his bearings.

'Here you go.'

He swung round at Gemma's voice, then reached out for the steaming mug of coffee she passed to him. 'Thanks. Back behind the chairs now.'

He winked and waited until she'd joined her colleagues at a table two sets away, then turned his attention to the drawings as he took a sip of his drink.

Satisfied he had the right panel, he placed the coffee mug on the table and then bent down to his toolbox, focused on the task at hand.

He whistled under his breath as he worked; a tune that had been playing on the radio that morning when the kids were getting ready for school, his younger daughter annoying her sister by dancing around singing the current hit single at the top of her voice, and now it was stuck in his head.

Spencer straightened and ignored the curious glances from the breakfasting staff. He needed to concentrate; to find the fault, fix it with as little fuss as possible, and try to ensure that whatever was wrong didn't impact his profit on the original job.

He pulled the ladder closer, placed the tools on the table, and then climbed up the first