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have you got plans for your day off? nothing special

I think I will spend it with my parents: My mother has been ill and needs help.

You are good to your family giving them your wages. Aren't you saving to get married?

Why should I? I haven't met anyone I like (giggle). I have high standards.

bye see you tomorrow? Have a good day at work!

Oof ooooww! Clumsy boy? sorry I hit you. Look my bike is broken... The wheel is buckled!
Bike! You clumsy boy expect me to care? Look at my bleeding hands and my ruined clothes? Damn you!

Wow... ummm... Look I said I was sorry. I was just daydreaming. And besides, I am only 8 years old.

We all have dreams but we cannot let dreams get in the way and hurt others.

That's very philosophical... Say where do you go to school?

School?? You are so silly! I work at the textile mill down the road. The one with the red fence. But how can I work with bleeding hands? And you?

Oh I work as a stone cutter, like my dad used to do.
Oh What does that mean? Stone cutter?? Is that for graves??

Oh no I cut gemstones for rich people so they can impress each other. I hear even famous actresses buy our stones.

Oh you mean diamonds and things? (sigh) wish I was rich..

Yes maybe one Day I will give you one..

Oh Gosh I am late for work and will have to wheel my bike.

He walking his damages bike in the background.

ONE YEAR LATER

I saw that boy who ran into me last year, remember? I met him last week and he asked me out.

he was kinda cute..

Oh Really? Do you like him?
I've only just met him. Ask me about work. I am embarrassed about him.

Hi stranger! Since you have been going out with that boy I hardly see you!

Sorry... we are sorta serious. I really care about him.

In fact we are talking about getting married next year when we have saved some money.

He even gave me this cute kitten. I called him Gem.

6 MONTHS LATER

Oh are you OK you look really upset. Why are you crying?

My boyfriend is really ill. The doctors told him he has a serious lung disease like TB. He may die.
I, I, I can't... keeping going... sorry.

Come on let's keep running. We will miss the bus.

he had been saying his eyes were sore and his nose was stuffed up, but we thought it was flu.

His dad died young of a mysterious lung disease. They thought it was lung cancer. My boyfriend remembered him being short of breath too.

he's been getting very short of breath lately.

The doctor said that he was like his dad and had weak lungs. But his dad was a stone cutter too.

Now doctor said he has TB, and working with the stone dust makes it worse.

There is no medicine. No way to cure it. The doctor says that he is already at stage 2.
I am sorry so. I am not going to be worth marrying. I wish I had known.

What could you have done. I still really care for you.

What does the future hold?

It looks like my lungs will harden and it will get harder for me to breathe.

But the doc says it's TB. I am confused.

I won't be able to work... at this type of work... at least... and it's the only skill I have. I will have to see if I can get compensation.

dad couldn't get compensation as he was working at home. Ma traded the stones. We ended up very poor until I started work.

but for TB? I need to sort it out...

The doc said that I might have case against the company.

Are you a member of a trade union? We will need some help.

Did you say 'we'... You intend staying with me?
Of course... let me see where we can get help. Don't lose hope. Go and see your boss at least.

I am sorry I can't help you. The Labour department said this place is safe. Sorry you are not getting any money. Not our problem.

I have never seen them visit.

Hey haven't seen you at work for a week. You look down my friend.

Just been told have got sick from work.

And the boss says it not his fault. I am on my own. I was going to get married.

tell me what the problem is. I am not to well, and I know a couple of others are not too good either, but we all have families so we haven't done anything.

Yeah me too!

I have been really struggling to breathe. It's bad when I run or go upstairs.
Really I thought it was only me or having TB.

the boss turned me down. We all have to work together for justice.

I was talking to a friend at the factory who told me that there is place to go for help. It's not too far. It's part of a trade union.

I am happy to go... now I know so many people share my problem

Maybe I can help them!

TWO DAYS LATER

yes we have lots of workers came to us with this problem. Some from foundries, miners, sand blasters, and gem stone cutters.

Can you help?
I bet the doc said you have TI! But first I want you to know that this disease is preventable. It's the silica in the dust that is dangerous.

The bosses know how to prevent the dust getting into your lungs. We have laws and regulations about this.

You mean this sickness could have been prevented but the boss was too stingy?

Yes there are many ways to prevent the dust getting into your body and causing this serious illness.

Use a vacuum like system to remove the dust as soon as it comes off the wheel.

Use water to wet the dust, so it falls.
Sand should not be used at all in workshops that do abrasive blasting. Metal shot or slag can be used instead. It's as cheap and safer!

You can use zircon sand or diame in foundries; they are safer and the particles are larger so they cannot get deep inside the lungs, which means workers can cough or spit up any stuff that gets into the breathing passages like the nose and throat.

There are many other types of substitutes for silica-containing materials like alumina in pottery.

But in mining quarrying and stone grinding it is still a problem, so we have to use the types of controls I told you about.

Can you remember what they are?

I think so.

We need to understand what type of dust you are working with, and the amount of silica in that dust and in the air.

If there is a lot of free silica in the air your chances of getting sick from the dust is very high. We knew that in gem grinding the amount is high so we can say with almost certainty that your disease is due to the work you do and not primarily from TB.
we would like to know about the form and particle size of the silica because if it really fine, it can get deep into your lungs where it causes scarring.

So bring us a sample of the dust so we can look at it, and maybe get lab checks done. And you need to take the sample to the doctor.

Here doctor

In a workplace like yours if you can encase the task or use point source extraction, wet cutting will reduce the dust by 75%.

Sweeping and vacuuming the floors needs to be done almost all the time to prevent dust accumulating and drying out. Use wet mist sweeping to make sure dust does not rise from the floor and get into workers breathing area.

75%

if the workplace is still heavy with dust and it cannot be controlled then you have to wear the proper respiratory protection. In cases with a lot of dust (above 25 mg/m³) of air the international bodies recommend self contained breathing apparatus; that shows you how dangerous it is, even at the exposure limit they recommend air purifying respirator with high efficiency dust filters as a minimum requirement.

Workers in dusty conditions should have X-rays every 2 years paid for by management.
Tomorrow we are having a meeting of workers who are in similar situations. Why don't you come?

I think I will.

Later

Thank you for telling me about the workers' center. They are having a meeting tomorrow.

Can I come if we are going to be in this fight together? I want to learn all I can.

Oh yes, I am so happy having you with me. It makes me feel healthy again.

Next evening

He's so good.

Yes.

The most important thing we can help you with is making sure you get compensation. For that you need to see a doctor.
As some of you have already found out, the bosses will resist paying you your due. My colleague will tell you more.

Good evening to you all. I am the trade union CHS expert. I will guide you through how to prepare a good case so that you get compensation. First you have to have a good doctor.

We can help you with the names of doctors who know about work-related illnesses. Make sure you get a sample of the dusts, if you can, take photos of your workplace. Borrow a camera from your rich friends.

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I know this sounds technical so let me explain. Imagine a big box of air that is one meter in all directions. Now 0.1 is a tiny amount which is allowed to enter that cube of air.

The standard in some countries is as low as 0.1mg/m³. When I say standard, that is the amount of dust you can be exposed to in one normal 8-hour day, for 5 days per week without any effect on your health.
That is what the standard describes as safe. Does that make sense to you?

Do you understand??

I think so but I work longer hours and 6 days a week.

If you work longer hours as most people in Asia do, then without PPE, that standard cannot guarantee you are safe.

Any questions?

Yes. How do we know the dust level in our workplace?

I think we could happily say, if you can see it in the air it is too much. The company should monitor the air and count the amount of dust and let you know.
he didn't have to.
It was so thick we could not see the clock to see if it was time to go home!

Did your boss measure the dust in the air?

ha ha... maybe he did it on purpose so you would all work overtime and not know.

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Do you have a camera?

No but now you can get really cheap ones that work well enough.

maybe if all the workers in your factory contributed a bit of money we could buy one together and use it to collect evidence.

He you are full of good ideas

It's 'cos I am a woman!
lets talk about it with the union

Great idea!

Great idea!

Now we have to make an appointment to see a doctor.

lets go home and feed gem.

I'll try and get a day off so I can be with you.

Remember when we first met, I jokingly promised you a stone?

Yes, ages ago. And you gave me Gem.

well here's a real one. Will you still marry me even I can't predict a rosy future?
Comic 2: follow as our hero and his love got to the doctors and learn about this disease. Watch him get his examination and learn how to tell if it is silicosis or TB.

Find out what he can do .....will she marry him?