

joy

Re: “This is going to be fun.”

No way. Absolutely not. I’m not going to write that. I’m not going to write it “in quotation marks,” like it was someone else saying it instead of me. I’m not going to write it with a period at the end, as if to acknowledge that anyone who did say it would have less than exclamation-point-worthy enthusiasm. *Because even then it would still be a lie.* This is so not going to be fun and everyone knows it.

I don’t care if you are “the chair,” that you think this is “your decision,” that it is “just a flyer” and that “people expect a certain amount of optimism in these things.” I did not ask for this job. You decided to stack the important committees with your toadies and banish me to Publicity. In so doing, you made me the steward of every word this department distributes to its professors about social functions. I may despise my colleagues, but I will not lie to them for you. Especially not with a falsehood so bald-faced as ““This is going to be fun.””

If this was going to be fun, people would attend *voluntarily*. The Dean would not have needed to send a memo declaring that anyone absent would receive no raise next year. My own extensive research has yet to reveal another department, anywhere in any discipline, that has subjected its faculty to a Mandatory Fun Day. Retreats, sure. Morale-building workshops, yes. Compulsory charades and “Marty, Adults’ Favorite (Clean-Humor) Clown,” never in the known history of the academy.

I understand you are desperate. The constant backbiting, the slammed doors, the screaming fights in meetings, the defamatory memos slipped anonymously under doors in the dead of night. All point to a department in turmoil. If it really was one of us who keyed that vulgarity onto your Volvo, I hope the miscreant is severely reprimanded. But wiffleball and whack-a-mole will not save us now. The discord that Joy and her misdeeds have sown will only be made worse by

forcing us to stare down college kids who fancy themselves a “socially-conscious improv comedy troupe.”

No one argued when the Dean said we needed to bring in someone from elsewhere to be the next chair. We recognized that Joy had destroyed relationships so thoroughly that we could not govern ourselves. But we did not anticipate the Dean hiring someone so drunk on insipid theories of personnel management. We are not corporate hacks who just need to “blow off some steam.” Rather, we are serious scholars who happen to hate one another. We are immune to the charms of Cranium and horrified by your rental of a karaoke machine.

Your sycophants will not tell you what a disastrous idea this is. You should know these same people regularly make derogatory comments behind your back about your competence and your strange penchant for orange pants. Bear in mind also that, of everyone, I was the only one with the foresight to vote against hiring Joy in the first place. Of course, I did not foresee specifically that she was going to sleep with half the men in the department and three of the women. I did not know she would write a thinly-disguised “novel” that would depict so vividly how self-involved, catty, and apparently sexually inept we all are. I could tell from the beginning, though, that she was trouble.

You are right that “we are stuck in this together.” You cannot clean house, because we have tenure. And, unlike Joy, we cannot leave. We cannot make a comparable salary doing any other job, and no one will hire us to do this job elsewhere. You could at least have the mercy to let us stick together as far apart as possible. Instead, you will be morally responsible for any injuries caused by “mistakes” made swinging at that piñata. For the flyer, I am willing to write either “Under different circumstances, this could conceivably be fun” or “Our chair asserts, against all reason and evidence, that this is going to be fun.” Take your pick.