

8:15AM Morning Meeting – 09/30/02

It is about 8:10AM on Monday morning. I make my way into a conference room and settle myself into a position at the far end of a rectangle-shaped conference table with chairs for six people. I am the first to arrive and be seated. Two people enter the room just after me and take seats on opposite sides of the table. As I face them, the first one is on my immediate left and the second is two chairs away on my right.

The one on my left has a large cup of coffee and a stack of papers balanced on a clipboard. The one on my right has a small Styrofoam cup of coffee and a couple of loose sheets of paper. The one on the left shuffles his papers, sorts through them all creating three piles. He then pulls three pens and a pencil from his pocket and places them strategically on the table beside his piles of paper and overflowing clipboard. Next, he pulls a crumpled wad of paper from his pants pocket and begins to scribble on it. The man on my right sits slumped in his chair disinterestedly, and his eyelids begin to fight gravity almost as soon as he settles into the chair.

About two minutes later at 8:12AM, one more gentleman enters the room and takes the far corner seat on the left side of the table (just to the left of the fellow busy scribbling on his little piles of paper scraps). This third man enters with a scowl on his face and a swagger in his step, plopping down hard in his seat without speaking. The Scribbler stop scribbling, faces the scowling man, and says, "Good morning," followed by "how's it going?" The Scowler makes brief eye contact then rolls his eyeballs upwards, but says nothing and makes no additional gestures. The sleepy guy directly across the table perks up for a moment as a smile breaks across his face and he addresses the Scowler, "Hey boss, what's up? You look like you had a rough night." Followed by a sarcastic, deep-voiced "heh, heh" laugh. The Scowler huffs, places his left hand hard on his left cheek, rolls his eyes towards the wall and keeps them there, and still maintains his silence. The Scribbler returns to his compulsive art on with disorganized bits of paper. The smirk fades slowly from Sleepy's face and he immediately recommences the struggle with his sleep-heavy eyelids.

At 8:15am a fourth person enters the conference room and takes a seat on my immediate right, just to the left of Sleepy. She plops down heavily in the chair, opening her newspaper in the same movement, and states a dry, unfriendly "good morning" in no particular direction. She pushes her horn-rimmed spectacles up the steep slant of her long pointed nose and focuses all of her attention on her paper.

At 8:17am a tall, slender man with an unironed shirt, barely groomed hair, a fake smile and dark bags under his eyes walks in and plops into the chair at the opposite end of the table from where I sit. This last gentleman to enter is evidently the boss as everyone's attention focuses on him, and the atmosphere

noticeably takes on a more serious tone. As good morning greetings are lightly exchanged by some, Sleepy opens his eyes fully and takes a swig from his Styrofoam cup. The grimace appearing across his face tells me that the coffee is now very distastefully cold. The Scribbler stops writing and shuffles his papers to cover his most recent chicken-scratch notes (as if anyone would want to read them even if they were legible). The Pointy-Nosed lady folds her newspaper and places it to her left, just in front of me. She then opens a legal pad and commences taking notes furiously, even before anyone begins to speak. The Scowler still sits there like a wax statue, aggressively pressing his left hand into his face.

The man with the uncombed hair begins by doing a little drum roll with his hands on the table, and stretches a long-chinned open mouth goofy and obviously fake smile out to those in attendance. He then starts to tell the gathering about the continual problems with the construction of his new pool. As he works his way through this useless tale, the Scowler rolls his eyes again and now shifts his stare to the wall on his right. The Scribbler aggravatedly shuffles his papers in unspoken frustration. As the worthless meeting progresses, the unkempt man finishes his personal stories and then begins with an uninteresting review of some irrelevant activities that took place the previous week.

After the barely heard review of the past weeks failures (evidently there were no successes to speak of), the unkempt leader then gives everyone an opportunity to speak or ask questions. This round table process starts with the Scribbler. "Nothing to report," he states quickly, immediately followed by a goofy tight-lipped, scrunched-chin, raised-eyebrow look, which appears to be searching for approval (and praying for no questions).

Now it is the Scowler's turn. All eyes turn in his direction. He briefly removes his hand from the tight grip he has maintained on his chin and cheek, just long enough to give a quick wave signifying his lack of input and lack of interest in sharing. As all attention now moves across the table to Sleepy, the Scowler tosses his eyes upward in disgust and attacks his reddened left cheek once again.

Sleepy begins with "Well," in his slow southern drawl, and proceeds into an extremely long, drawn out dissertation of pretty much everything that has happened in the past week. Possibly just for good measure (although few would agree) he also throws in several reminisces of unrelated events which occurred as far back as three years. His multi-subject, non-sequential speech continues for fifteen minutes before the Pointy-Nosed lady is finally fed up and interrupts him with an abrupt "okay, can we stick to an agenda relevant to all members in attendance and focus *solely* on current events?!" Caught off guard by this sudden attack, Sleepy reluctantly stepped down from his soapbox and conceded the floor. With a blank stare, Sleepy said, "well, I guess that's enough for now," and quickly retreated once more behind the solitude of his eyelids.

Now annoyed, on top of being annoying with her incessant note taking (which has continued furiously even as the Scowler did his hand wave and eye roll combination), Ms. Pointy-Nose began talking without pause. She spouted off a list of items that she had accomplished during the past week. As she spoke of how she single-handedly carries this organization, her eyes remain glued to the legal pad and her note taking actually speeds up.

I cannot believe it. This woman, who I had previously dismissed as simply an annoying self-centered know-it-all, is evidently a highly intelligent person with an extremely impressive talent of multitasking. I can only admit that I am extremely impressed, even to the point of embarrassment at this savant's incredible abilities. Amaze, impressed, and overcome with awe, I inch forward slightly to catch an undeserving glimpse of this masterful woman's genius notes. I am stunned and appalled at what I see. The page is filled with the dark scars of a heavy handed doodler. There is not a single word, letter or note on the page, only a deformed kaleidoscope: very evidently the work of an extremely demented woman.

As if she had somehow heard my thoughts, the Pointy-Nosed cuckoo lady abruptly ends her torrential note taking and looks in my direction. Maintaining her eyes locked on me, she slowly slides the newspaper toward her, then works her bony fingers slowly rolling the paper into a tight cylindrical shape. Now everyone is quiet as they notice that for the first time this morning her attention had been drawn from the legal pad. Now all eyes turn in my direction (except for Sleepy who was again losing his private battle) as the room fills with curiosity as to what this Pointy-Nosed woman is up to. I admit that I feel uncomfortable with all the attention that I had so intentionally avoided during today's meeting. My eyes are transfixed on the Pointy-Nosed lady as she pushes her glasses back up her nose with one hand and raises the rolled up newspaper high above her head with the other. What is she up to? Oh no, now she's swinging the paper down in my direction with incrediBUH!!! Oh, what happened? My face is pressed flat against the glass tabletop. I can't move. I can't even feel my legs.

As the life flows quickly from my fragile, badly mutilated body, I hear the Pointy-Nosed lady exclaim "I just had to get that darn fly that was sitting there at the end of the table the whole time." The whack of the paper on my back evidently woke Sleepy as I heard him follow with a low-toned chuckle of confused delight "heh, heh." And then the lights went out.

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