

Oversleeping & Getting in Trouble for It

by Smiley McGrouchpants, Jr-Esq-III

10:45 AM *Shit shit shit* I thought, cursing myself
shit shit shit running up the hall — no, trotting, no, *walking fast* —
composure, Leanna, composure now — shit shit shit shit ... *FUCK!*
At my desk. Whew! *I'm calm, I'm calm, no-one can tell* . . .
freshly showered (hopefully not *too* freshly, *too* obvious — is my hair
completely dry?), everything's buttoned correctly . . . hang my jacket
on the coat peg, press the red button, the computer's booting up
now, good . . .
Okay, okay . . .
Whew! No-one noticed.
I breathe. Take a sip of my now still-(*somehow*,
some *what*)steaming coffee.
I made it.
Just have to worry about the timesheet now, but I can probably—

“Miss MacFarlane?”

I looked up. “Brian Ian” was Eye-in' *me*, now. He just suddenly
appeared at my cubicle, as though he'd known all along, and been
waiting.

“In my office, please?”

Not asking. But with that benevolent-but-stern High School
Principal voice that I knew all too well — and not as a *teacher*, but
as a *student*.

(Had I come full circle?)

I rose from my squeaky office chair [betraying me with another loud noise as I rose: **SQUEAK! SHE DID IT! SQUEAK!**] and “fell in” behind him as we marched towards his office.

I knew he was serious.

I had done “wrong.”

(Me rehearsing in my head the expected “I’m very disappointed in you . . .” speech I knew I was *bound* to hear — why did I put up with this?)

How had it come to this — and over *what*?

“Can you *believe* these people?”

Jim and Jessica, a couple of temps from the office, nodded their assent. *Somebody* was willing to “speak out,” to say “The Emperor Has No Clothes.”

Still — they were just *watching* me, mostly, at this point. So like “temps,” even in their off hours: they *knew* they could lose their jobs at any moment. They let me talk — to see what *I’d* say, to see which pointless bureaucratic ridiculousness I’d actually *articulate* as being so.

I was “full-time”; I had “status.”

“Where did *you* come here from, Jim?” I asked, before languidly exhaling the long drag from my blue American Spirit into the warm summer air. It was a relief, to find the porch vacated from the ongoing chatter and nonstop “aren't-we-so-smart-and-clever?” shenanigans of my “peers” at the office. The lull of the temperate Portland climate helped exacerbate the moment's peace the three of us were lucky enough to happen into.

“Uhh . . . Laurelhurst? D'you know . . . around Burns—?”

“No no no,” I laughed. Jessica grinned. She knew what I had meant; she tended to keep quiet, taking more in, while Jim was the one who ventured forth and talked a lot. “I meant: what *city* . . . or *state* . . .”

“Ohh!” he said, drawing it out, with an extended “silly me” emphasis. Jessica added her own “Ohh!” halfway through, in harmony, as though to say: “Duh!”

He shot her a “what, are you *mocking* me?” look. She broke off, looked instantly down and diverted herself by taking a quick sip of her beer, accompanied by a mostly-successful attempt not to laugh. (This last followed by a conspicuously sudden gaze upward at the starry night sky.)

“*Colorado*,” he pronounced decisively. “*Boulder*.” Looking at Jessica, who was still fascinated with Ursa Minor, and determined to avoid being called on her “mock” of Jim.

“Really?” I said. “I’ve heard—”

“This beer sucks,” Jessica interrupted, with an involuntary shudder. Then, looking up at us: “Really . . . *really* sucks.” Another shudder. Then she stuck her tongue out — “BLEAH!” — to get the taste out of her mouth.

“Wanna bail and go back to my place?” I offered. “My roommates are gone for the weekend, and we could— ”

But Jim wasn't going to let me off so easy.

“Wait, did you just say ‘bail’?”

Jessica looked at me like, *I think he's got you there*. “Yeah.” Like a judge, agreeing with a lawyer calling a witness on a technicality.

“She did. She *did* say ‘bail’.”

“What?” I said, *faux*-innocently, like I didn't know perfectly well they were just fucking with me for no other reason than that they were bored, and felt like it.

“People say ‘bail’ . . .”

“When.” Jim questioned this, full-stop. “Tell me when people . . . *actually*, actually said ‘bail’ in everyday conversation.”

Jessica was looking right at me, awaiting my response.

“Welllll — you know — *kids* . . . back in the ‘50s . . .”

Not good enough.

Jessica, half-smiling, looked out over the porch railing. *Nice try*.

“No.”

“NO,” Jim said, simultaneously. They weren't going to let me off for this. “*No* they didn't. You just felt like . . .”

“Well let's just FUCKING LEAVE then!” I cut him off.

Jessica started at my cutting to the chase and tried to check herself from laughing too much. It would actually be kind of awkward, getting out of this insufferable party, since everyone here was from work and it would look like we were spitting in the face of “team spirit” if we just dashed out the door after spending little more than 15 minutes here.

Or something.

[FUCK FUCK FUCK hurry up! FUCK FUCK (*glancing nervously at watch*) order! . . . ORDER, already! FUUUUCK! *Yes*, a latte has more foam than a cappuccino — just *pick!*]

“What's *with* all these fucking people?”

Jim surveyed the room. After 30 min. of waiting, we had finally gotten a table, but the spaces between them were so narrow that we repeatedly had to endure people squeezing by on their way to the bathroom, to go talk to so-and-so over *there*, to go *back* to their own table, etc.

Jessica grinned. I think she was starting to find Jim's blunt candor appealing. (So was *I*, truth be told.) There wasn't any way every single person in the immediate vicinity *couldn't* have heard him but — obviously unperturbed — he nonetheless kept scanning the insides of the place, trying to get a bead on them all.

A few people bristled and looked directly at Jim, but since he — deliberately or *not* — was avoiding their gaze and instead checking out the clock that ran backwards (“Hey! . . . That clock runs *backwards!* What time is it . . . two . . . thirty? It looks like *ten-thirty!*”), they had no choice but to return their attention to their own table and pretend to pay attention to the conversation they previously had been pretending to pay attention to.

"Clubs let out," I said, backing up to Jim's previous comment, causing him to take a moment to realize what I was referring to.

"That's why—"

"I see, I see," he said, taking in the crowd with renewed interest. One person who had bristled got caught in Jim's visual inventory-taking and had to break eye-contact and nervously shuffle in his seat. Jim saw the t-shirts they had for sale on the wall.

"That . . . is fucking . . . AWESOME!" he said with a finger-point and accompanying laughter.

Me and Jessica grinned at each other. We were inclined to agree.

[FUUUUCK! *Why did I order a cappuccino I should have just — (glances at watch) 9:12 oh! great, normally I'd have been sitting at my desk already for—*"Thank you . . . thank you very much . . . no, no, thanks, I don't need a 'sleeve' " *out out OUT the door — calm now — dart around this dude and—*

Whew!

Shit.

Where did I park . . . again?]

SCREEECH!

"Whoa! Watch out." Jim said, unnecessarily.

"What the—"

"What *was* that?"

"Some dude." Both of us, just spitting shit out to hear ourselves talk. "In a truck." Jessica in the back seat, silent, though through the rearview mirror I could see her eyes darting back and forth between Jim and I as we talked, put labels to what it was that had just happened.

"Running a red light . . .?"

"Yeah, I should hope so." Jim putting the lid on the boiling kettle, with this. "I should *hope* it was red. I mean, if it wasn't . . ."

"That dude was fucking crazy." Jessica, some of the color coming back to her face. "He ran it like it wasn't even there."

"I know! Shit!" Jim looked out the window, the activated fight-or-flight instinct in him prompting him to "check" for something, though by now we were going on ten blocks past the "threat."

I — for *my* part — reached for one of my Spirits from the pack which had tumbled from the dashboard to the middle of the seat bottom between myself and Jim. Kept my eyes on the road.

Eyes on the road, Leanna. Eyes on the road.

[AARGH! *it figures the bridge would be up today . . . no, it doesn't "figure," I guess, but still why—* "YES! YES! YESSSSSSS! DID YOU KNOW 'YES' IS THE SINGLE MOST PRODUCTIVE WORD IN THE ENGLISH LANG— [snap!]" *no, actually, I didn't "know" that until you said so, and when did the radio suddenly get so loud? HONK! What's this? Is it— HONK! HOONK! Oh, shit yeah, the bridge is moving HOONK! BEEEP! HOO-HOONK! oh . . . a "chorus of approval" . . . I'll join in: BEEEEP!]*

"Is this *yours*?" Jessica asked, pointing at a selection on the CD rack, back at my apartment.

"Uh . . . no, ha ha—" (like I didn't know which one she was talking about, of course, like it could possibly be by any *other* . . .) "—that's my roommate's."

"Hannah Montana?" she asked, incredulously, still trying to grasp that's what she was seeing, as though it was a completely foreign object, like something from a lost continent.

"Where's the BEEER?" Jim bellowed, with a faux-loud-indignance. "I need BEEER!" (*again, in the same loud voice*)

"Hannah Montana . . ." Jessica repeated, as though making herself more comfortable with the subject, as she approached it.

"Well—" I chose to switch my attention to Jim's hailing me. "It's in the — the *freezer*, actually, I just bou—"

"A — *HA!*" Again, a bellow.

My, weren't we all perking up.

“Hannah Montana.” Jessica, now, with a soothing tone in her voice, as she picked up the CD and held it gingerly, brushing her index finger across the cover, as if to confirm its existence.

“Oop!” Jim tossed me a beer from the kitchen entrance, holding his opened one in his other hand. “Oop!” The next a toss to Jessica, who, still in her Hannah-Montana reverie, didn't see it coming, and therefore got a cold can of Pabst™ trounced off her right shoulder blade.

“Hey!” That did it.

“Oh — sorry!” Jim said, doubled over laughing, then: “No: *really* though!” Then laughing again. “Sorry!” Still laughing, regardless.

The can of Pabst rolled in a semicircle across the floor, describing an arc of droplet-wetness on the carpet. (I know, because I *watched* it!) Jessica picked up the Hannah Montana CD she had dropped.

She pivoted, and pointed at it with her other hand, showing it to Jim, as though it were a prize he had won on a game show. Just: “Hannah Montana!”

“Yup.” Jim, unimpressed, took another glug from his beer. “I *see* that.”

[taken . . . taken . . . taken — *oop!* that one's — *shit it's a compact car* — taken . . . taken — *oops*, there's one over there — god-*dam*-mit you just had to — *FUUUCK!* Am I *really* going to have to park way over *there?*]

“Shit's fucked up,” Jim said, eloquently.

[REST OF TEXT "UNDER CONSTRUCTION": PLEASE STAY TUNED FOR FURTHER UPDATES!]

