

The Fury of Friday Evenings, by Vasilis Koutsomarkos

Summary: *After a tough week, a group of engineers vent about the red tape that keeps them from improving lives.*

Characters:

IONA (f), non-Scottish background. Late 20s or early 30s, an engineer.

TIM (m), Scottish, late 20s or early 30s, an engineer.

JULIA (f), Scottish, late 20s or early 30s, an engineer.

MARGARET (f), late 30s or early 40s, Iona's boss.

A pub on Friday night. Loud clanky noises of people talking loudly over upbeat music.

TIM: Oof, I tell you! Beer does taste better after a long hard day!

IONA: In that case they should hand us a can every time we leave our office. After a day like today though...

JULIA: That bad? I thought Fridays had all the meetings crammed in so that everyone can find a pub-pal.

IONA: Yes but more and more I feel that my life is taken out of a lousy TV show.

TIM: Did your senior go all Malcolm Tucker at you, Iona?

IONA (*takes a massive sip*): You're engineers, you get my pain. You know we've started certifying our fire safety designs using this new method?

TIM: Yeah yeah, it's like your energy performance rating, just about fire performance. Why do you bother applying it?

IONA: It has helped a lot with communicating design solutions, and it *is* supposed to make our lives easier – just not *my* life.

JULIA: Why? Didn't your design pass?

IONA: That's the thing, it did! It's perfectly safe, we just want to optimise it with minor tweaks.

Problem is it's so painfully hard to get everyone through the process.

TIM: Isn't this society's main mode of operation?

IONA: Well Paul's mode for sure/

JULIA: Divorce-y Paul?/

IONA: Divorce-y Paul. The architect/

TIM: Is he still drowning his sorrows with that barista?

JULIA: Why do you ask? Do you want to “drown your sorrows” with that barista?

TIM: *Go on*, Iona. I’ll pretend I’m interested, so we can avoid talking about my sex life.

IONA: To talk about something Tim, it needs to be conceivable! Anyway, he’s treating the whole thing like a tick-box exercise, when it’s a genuine opportunity to make the building more fire robust.

JULIA: Which is exactly what you told him, am I right?

IONA: Well, yes and no? I just said that with a few clever tweaks we could have a much better design, even though it wouldn’t earn us that many more points in the evaluation/

TIM (interrupting and mimicking Iona in the past): “because surprise-surprise, no model captures the complex enormity of fire”.

IONA: Apparently Paul didn’t want to be exposed, and then Margaret had to jump in...

TIM: Margaret is the Cruella de Vil one?

IONA: Well, *Dr de Vil*. Nothing is ever good enough for her, unless you’re able to detect dark matter – then she may then give you a cold “well done”.

TIM: Sounds like my parents.

JULIA: Oh boo hoo Tim.

So she wasn’t happy, business as usual. Do you have to take all of this to heart?

IONA: No, it was the way she said what she said

(mimicking Dr de Vil) “these numbers mean nothing... we could have done more finite element modelling and computational fluid dynamics analyses - bring me those spotty dogs!”

JULIA: Don’t let Cruella get under your skin! Remember why you cared in the first place!

IONA: I care for solving actual real-life problems! Not enabling sloppy fast-tracked rulebook “engineering”!

TIM: Please try to be positive... It’s only another 10-15 years of kissing ass and turning the other cheek before you’re the only human amongst pigs on the poker table! Or the only pig amongst humans? Can’t really tell...

IONA: Who invited Orwell to the table?

TIM: Gets me through the week! Cheers/

JULIA: Oi! Careful! You spilled half your pint on my boots!

TIM: That's why we're wearing boots Julia, to keep our feet dry.

IONA: Did I tell you that because of this certification we *also* have to consult the housing reps in a non-technical way now? They can hardly keep up.

At least I finally have a rational structure to help me go through the design process, that's written by engineers and not lawyers.

(breath) But yeah, the actual ratings mean nothing...

JULIA: Here we are, ranting about work again.

TIM: It's not like anything else defines us! I heard that they don't allow you into business district bars if you value your hobbies as much as your work.

JULIA: Is this your sales pitch to climb on a table and start reciting poetry again?

TIM (shouting): Hemingway did it all the time!

JULIA: Well, you're not Hemingway, even if you do get the drinking part right.

TIM: (declaiming loudly) Two roads/ diverged in a yellow wood...

JULIA: /Stop! Don't stand on the chair you'll fall down! Come down!

....

Anyway, so did you actually argue or did you let it drop?

IONA: I didn't get the chance...

Everyone else was "happy" and wanted to get this done and over with – that's the sad part actually; we just moved on with our lives. So here I am...

TIM: Here you are; the road not taken.

Iona's phone buzzes

JULIA: What kind of person sends an email at 8pm on a Friday night?

TIM: Well, a happier person than the one who reads them...

IONA: Pipe down, I'm trying to ... Shit – I've to go in tomorrow morning. Apparently the housing rep spoke to someone and we have to "clarify some of our choices". They want everyone from the meeting to be there.

TIM: Oh that's painful!

IONA: I have to reply now – do you think if I triple-check and have no typos they won't realise I'm quasi-pissed?

TIM (snorts): I'm sure they won't.

MARGARET (stepping in): I'm sure someone will...

General surprise as the realisation sinks in:

IONA: Margaret?? You're here as well! What a day, right? Here are my friends Julia and Tim.

JULIA/TIM together: hi!

MARGARET: Hi there, I'm "Dr de Vil" – Quite a day, wasn't it?
Anyway, me and my friends from the table *behind* were just leaving! I'll let you enjoy your drinks and finish your story. See you tomorrow!

MARGARET leaves

IONA (long, quiet, and drawn out): Noooooooooooo

Julia consoles her. Tim takes this chance to climb on the table and start reciting *The Fury Of Sunsets* by Anne Sexton

TIM:

And I wonder about
this lifetime with myself,
this dream I'm living.
I could eat the sky
like an apple
but I'd rather
ask the first star:
why am I here?
why do I live in this house?
who's responsible?
eh?

...

JULIA: Tim, for fucksake get down off the table.

END

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