

30 December 2020

The Setters Zoom meeting

The following may be viewed by some as **9a** (*Satire*) or perhaps **23a** (*Emotive*).

Me? I'll **22a** (*Own up*) to being **11a** (*Candid*).

There may be *SPOILERS*.

Five minutes – better get a move on, she thought as she pushed the plunger down on the cafetiere, poured the contents into her mug then added the requisite amount of milk and sugar. Coffee in hand, she sat at the kitchen table, cleared a space and placed the steaming mug down carefully. She opened the lid of her sleeping laptop, waited for the screen to light up, then clicked on the teleconference app icon, checked the code scribbled on a note stuck next to the touchpad then entered the code. She was in.

Six compartmentalised, familiar faces appeared, live on screen (including the small version of her own face) and after cordial greetings, her department boss (the Crossword Editor) started the session.

“Thanks for all logging on at such short notice. It seems we’re all here, so I’ll cut right to the chase and let you know why I’ve asked you to join in today. You may, or may not have noticed, depending on whether you bother to read the comments below the line, that there have been a number of complaints about the veracity of many of the clues and answers lately.”

“Ain’t that the truth” cut in top right face. General nods of agreement and murmuring all round.

“Yes, well, be that as it may, the Chief has emailed me with a suggestion that we might want to pull our socks up and ...”

“Pull our socks up?” top right face cut in again, “What exactly does that mean - and, more to the point, why?” More murmuring and nods from the others.

Editor face sighed, then continued. “It’s come to my attention that we’ve had numerous letters from crossworders’ solicitors suggesting that unless the clues become much more specific and error-free, we may very well be sued for, and I quote from one particularly strongly worded missive, *Critical Cruciverbal Inaccuracies* which may lead to compensation payouts for injury to perceived expertise and on-going mental anguish.”

The few moments of stunned silence were eventually broken by bottom right face. “Seriously? Is there even such a thing?”

“Apparently so” replied Editor face, “Therefore a decision has been made that all clues must now be stringently precise and all-encompassing of every conceivably possible meaning of the answer word. There must be absolutely no room for any hint of ambiguity. I’ll be sending each of you a large

consignment of technical books on engineering, history, science, physics, humanities, geography ...”

It was now her turn to cut in, “You can’t be serious Boss! That would mean making every clue about 3 pages long! It’ll take us a year just to compile one crossword. It’s insanity – I can’t believe you’d even suggest it!”

“You’re right of course,” Editor face was laughing “It was a joke! I’m pulling your legs. I just wanted to say thank you to you all for all your sterling work this year. It’s been a tough one for sure, so don’t let the pedants, complainers, curmudgeons and armchair experts get you down. Just keep doing what you’ve been doing all along. I’m sure there’s *some* crossworders out there that appreciate what you do.”

“Ah, good one Boss!” top left face laughed.

“Yeah, you *really* had us going there Boss.” She said, “Just for a little while, mind you. Oh, and while I’ve got you on screen, about that remuneration I suggested ...”