

Chill! That's an Order

My work periodically requires successive days of ludicrously long hours that far exceed the labor schedule authorized by the demented Pharaoh who once enslaved the Israelites. After the most recent string of such days, I staggered home to be greeted by my wife, Dale, who was dressed in a toga and proclaimed, "Let my people go!"

Fifteen years ago, it didn't really bother me to work three 16-hour days in a row. I could bound out of bed the next morning and be ready to hit the new day with vim and vigor.

These days, I don't so much bound out of bed as ooze from the mattress and leach slowly into my pants so I can claw at the new day with anti-vim and a massive dose of caffeine.

Although my boss has explicitly and repeatedly authorized me to take some time off after a brutal few days, I am cursed with a twisted Protestant work-ethic DNA that renders me genetically incapable of taking a day off unless I have contracted some kind of incapacitating medical condition, such as scurvy, rickets or the loss of a couple limbs.

So as I reached for the alarm one morning, my wife said: "If you even think about going into work this morning, I will have you hauled off to an institution for the clinically busy. You have worked more than 48 hours in the last three days, your eyes are bloodshot and you are drooling."

"But I'm not technically dead yet," I protested.

"That can be remedied," she said. "Get back in bed. Just because you don't show up at the office it does not mean that islands will plunge into the sea and thousands of little lambs will be lost in the wilderness."

I rolled my eyes to convey my disagreement.

"Well, perhaps I can take just the morning off," I said, as my 250-pound solid-granite head slammed back into the pillow and crushed all the feathers into tiny little puffs of goose-down dust.

It was not because of noise but due to my coffee-bloated bladder that I finally awoke and tottered into the bathroom. The act of standing up forced me to quickly conclude that my wife was right. I was in no shape to go to work.

But I couldn't quite manage to cut myself completely off from the office, so I snuck a quick peek at my email. The first email sent chills down my groggy spine. My colleague had called in sick. The office was entirely unmanned.

This was a crisis of global proportions, cosmic even. In a horrifying moment, dozens of unread memos and unstapled documents passed before my bloodshot eyes. I could hear the islands gurgling in dismay as they sank into the watery abyss, and the lost little lambs were filing a class-action lawsuit against me for negligence.

I threw on my clothes and drove to work. Moments after I sent my first urgent email, my boss called me from our main office 75 miles away.

"I got your email. Why are you at work? Go home!"

Curiously, the earth didn't collide with the moon while I took a day off. Apparently, the only truly indispensable person is God, and He tells us to rest. Sometimes when we don't listen to Him, He tells us through our wives.

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