

THE FACULTY MEETING

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Ken Jones

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PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

**P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011**

THE FACULTY MEETING

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SYNOPSIS: The world of academia in one act. Six characters are meeting in a conference room at an academic institution located in some city in some state . . . somewhere in the United States. The rules of the faculty meeting and the protocol of rank and tenure seem to trap Mr. Wright, a junior faculty member, in a crazy, bizarre world from which he cannot escape.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FOUR MEN, TWO WOMEN)

MR. FONDLE (m).....The department chairman. He tends to go with the majority. (103 lines)

DR. QUAGMIRE (m).....A senior faculty member. He is pompous, uncaring and the king of the mixed metaphor. (68 lines)

DR. LIPSWICH (f)Also a senior faculty member. She has a habit of saying ‘Ha’ before everything she says. She monitors the meetings for procedural mistakes. (44 lines)

MS. CRUMMIE (f).....A part-time teacher. She is eager but lost. She is also pregnant and two months past her delivery date. (41 lines)

MR. BLAND (m).....A junior faculty member. He will do anything to get promoted. He cannot make a decision on his own. (48 lines)

MR. WRIGHT (m).....A junior faculty member. Hardworking, honest, but often overlooked. (90 lines)

SETTING

The action of the play occurs in a faculty meeting at an academic institution in any city, anywhere in the United States. The set is a meeting room. There is a large wooden table surrounded by large wooden chairs.

DO NOT COPY

THE FACULTY MEETING

AT RISE:

A MEETING ROOM. MR. FONDLE enters and sits at the head of the table. HE is carrying an enormous manila file folder under his right arm and a huge college diploma under his left.

QUAGMIRE, a huge man, enters with a stack of papers topped by several college diplomas. QUAGMIRE sits in the seat immediately to the right of FONDLE. Throughout the play, HE can be found cleaning beneath his fingernails or picking at his teeth with the torn corner of a file folder.

LIPSWICH follows QUAGMIRE into the room, pulling behind her a dolly loaded with books of company rules and regulations. She also has her diplomas. LIPSWICH busies herself by reading papers. NOTE: She has a speech disorder and often makes a 'HA' sound.

WRIGHT enters. He attempts to shake hands with the others, but he is ignored.

BLAND stumbles into the room dropping a huge collection of high school documents and awards. HE finally manages to move his heap closer to a chair. HE continues to sharpen a pencil with a hand sharpener throughout the course of the meeting.

CRUMMIE shuffles into the room. SHE is two months past being very pregnant. SHE moves about the room, but there is no available seat.

ALL but CRUMMIE take their seat.

FONDLE: Good day.

QUAGMIRE: Mr. Fondle. It's a pleasure.

FONDLE: Thank you, Dr. Quagmire.

BLAND: Dr. Quagmire. Chairman Fondle.

QUAGMIRE: Bland. Fine to see you.

LIPSWICH: Excuse me...

BLAND: Lipswich. Good afternoon.

QUAGMIRE: Mr. Wright.

WRIGHT: What?

BLAND: Ms. Crummie. You're looking very large today.

CRUMMIE: Oh, my goodness.

LIPSWICH: Excuse me.

FONDLE: Dr. Quagmire, I thoroughly enjoyed your article in the newsletter.

QUAGMIRE: Which one?

FONDLE: The one entitled, "Kindness...so what?"

QUAGMIRE: Thank you. Many long hours.

BLAND: Mr. Fondle, I must commend you on your published pamphlet dealing with the crisis of the comma in the English language.

FONDLE: Why, thank you, Mr. Bland. I just finished re-reading your letter to the Alpo Dog Food Company. Never have I come so close to actually tasting dog food as when I read your essay.

QUAGMIRE: And he did it in less than twenty-five words.

LIPSWICH: Excuse me.

FONDLE: Wright, I heard that you have been writing a series of articles dealing with the plight of the hobos.

WRIGHT: Homeless.

FONDLE: If you prefer.

QUAGMIRE: Not to beat a dead nurse...but I can't wait until they stop all this whining about their problems.

WRIGHT: They're homeless! They have nothing.

CRUMMIE: We know.

FONDLE: All right, all right. First thing on the agenda.

LIPSWICH: Excuse me, - - ha - - but according to my watch, we still have - - ha - - five minutes.

FONDLE: Well, I thought that since we were all here...we could get an early start.

LIPSWICH: No. I - - ha - - would like those five minutes.

FONDLE: Does everyone feel this way?

WRIGHT: I'd like to start now, so that we could get out of here early.

LIPSWICH: I don't think - - ha - - that this is an issue for discussion. I have the right not to participate in a faculty meeting - - ha - - until the designated meeting time as so specified in Monday's memo and Wednesday's follow-up mandate.

THE FACULTY MEETING

QUAGMIRE: Now, there's an issue that has really burnt my bridges before I've gotten to them! I never received my Monday memo.

FONDLE: Did you get your Wednesday follow-up?

QUAGMIRE: Yes...but I must admit I was a little lost in the fog as to what it was following up.

WRIGHT: Every Monday and Wednesday we get the same memo telling us of the same thing! How could you not know what the Wednesday follow-up memo was for?

LIPSWICH: Mr. Wright, - - ha - - Dr. Quagmire has the right to be confused - - ha - - as stated in the Faculty Handbook of Right's and Adjustments.

WRIGHT: You're so right, Mrs. Lipswich. I'm so sorry. What was I thinking?

CRUMMIE: I don't have a chair.

LIPSWICH: Was Mr. Wright - - ha - - being sar - - ha - - castic?

QUAGMIRE: I still don't have a copy of Monday's memo.

WRIGHT: You're here! What the hell do you need that memo for?!

QUAGMIRE: My Personnel Progression File.

BLAND: I have an extra.

WRIGHT: God help us!

LIPSWICH: Excuse - - ha - - me. But - - ha - - according to my - - ha - - watch. The meeting should have begun three minutes ago.

FONDLE: Sorry.

LIPSWICH: I will - - ha - - need to leave seven minutes early.

CRUMMIE: I don't have a chair.

FONDLE: We need a chair.

QUAGMIRE: Even though I have been here for eleven years and have already been passed over for promotion several times, I am sure that my leadership abilities would best be served...if I step forward like a bull in a tea kettle. So I will blunder forth and volunteer for the position of Chair.

FONDLE: Thank you, Dr. Quagmire. All in favor?

WRIGHT: We need a chair, not a chairman! Crummie needs a seat!

BLAND: I'll second Dr. Quagmire's bid for Chair.

WRIGHT: A seat! Not a chairman!

BLAND: Then I second the need for a seat!

FONDLE: All in favor?

ALL: (Except WRIGHT.) Yea!

FONDLE: All opposed? (Silence.) Good. First motion passed. There is a need for a seat.

QUAGMIRE: Mr. Fondle, I don't need the water off my back like some of these other young roosters here, but I would like to volunteer for the Chair of the chair committee.

FONDLE: Is that good with everyone?

WRIGHT: This is a farce.

FONDLE: Then we have a Chair for the chair committee. We now need a committee.

BLAND: I'll do it.

LIPSWICH: I would - - ha - - but I am already on the Committee for Women's Rights in Staff Parking Areas - - ha - - as well as the Committee for Higher Wattage Bulbs in Supply Rooms. I'm just too - - ha - - overworked.

QUAGMIRE: Not meaning to blow my own nose...but I am on eighteen committees...and I will gladly invite more misery to my party. I will serve on this committee.

WRIGHT: You're already the Chair!

CRUMMIE: I need a chair!

QUAGMIRE: Pestilence pays off!

FONDLE: Yes, well, does the chair committee have anything to report?

QUAGMIRE: Mr. Fondle. Fellow employees. The chair committee has nothing to report.

WRIGHT: This is ludicrous, as usual.

QUAGMIRE: If the honorable Mr. Wright feels that he could Chair the chair committee better than I...

FONDLE: Do we have a motion on the floor?

WRIGHT: Oh no, Quagmire's the man for the job.

FONDLE: As the Chairman of this department, I hereby state that Ms. Crummie does not and will not have a seat.

CRUMMIE: But I'm eleven-and-half months pregnant.

FONDLE: The chair committee has reported, and from their findings and recommendations, I will have to deny you the privilege of sitting.

CRUMMIE: Fine.

THE FACULTY MEETING

LIPSWICH: Ha - - according to the Women's Rights of Gestation in the Faculty Handbook...ha...Ms. Crummie has a right to a seat if she can prove a delayed labor.

CRUMMIE: Is eleven-and-a-half months delayed enough?

LIPSWICH: I'll have to check.

QUAGMIRE: Not meaning to bury the hatchet in a dead dog, but as a senior faculty member, I should be able to keep my seat.

FONDLE: Noted.

LIPSWICH: I have a bad back!

FONDLE: Noted.

BLAND: Of the new members of the Board, I've been here the longest.

WRIGHT: Ms. Crummie may have my seat.

CRUMMIE: Thank you.

BLAND: Excuse me, Mr. Fondle, can gestures of warmth and kindness help me to move up the tenure ladder?

FONDLE: I believe so.

BLAND: Great! Ms. Crummie, take my chair.

CRUMMIE: Well, Mr. Wright has kindly offered...

WRIGHT: Take his. I have no warmth and kindness.

CRUMMIE sits in BLAND's seat. BLAND sits on the floor.

FONDLE: Great! Let's move on. First on the agenda...we need to make a decision as to which legal writing pads we should order for the department.

QUAGMIRE: Before rushing into the ear of the storm, I would like to hear the Legal Pad Committee's report.

FONDLE: Mr. Bland.

BLAND: Yes...well...I am a little unprepared. I didn't think you'd be calling on me. I mean, I thought the memo I issued would be sufficient.

WRIGHT: More than sufficient.

LIPSWICH: Mr. Bland, this doesn't look good - - ha - - as far as - - ha - - promotion is concerned.

BLAND: Yes. I see. Well, I'll try to recap by findings.

WRIGHT: Oh, come on. Let's just buy some paper and move on.

QUAGMIRE: Fools are Russian...while wise men refuse to be.

FONDLE: I myself would like to hear the information.

BLAND: Well, after two months of intensive research, I've discovered that there are three primary species of legal pad.

QUAGMIRE: Now, you see, Mr. Wright, this is something we might have missed.

WRIGHT: The idiot sent us all a thirty-two page memo.

CRUMMIE: It was a lovely memo.

BLAND: Thank you.

LIPSWICH: I have a few criticisms of that memorandum, -- ha -- but I will gladly have a conference with you at a later time.

BLAND: I would enjoy that.

WRIGHT: Just get on with it!

BLAND: Yes, well, the three types of legal pad. The yellow legal pad. The white legal pad. And the green legal pad with holes.

FONDLE: My God! I had no idea!

QUAGMIRE: Good work!

BLAND: Thank you.

CRUMMIE: What do you recommend?

BLAND: My whole-hearted recommendation is for our department is to purchase the yellow legal pads.

QUAGMIRE: Really? I always liked the white.

BLAND: The white is good. We should buy the white.

LIPSWICH: I prefer the green with holes. It's so much easier to store.

BLAND: The green is the best.

FONDLE: I like the yellow.

BLAND: By far.

QUAGMIRE: I would like to speak on behalf of the white legal pad.

FONDLE: Dr. Quagmire.

QUAGMIRE: Pen and ink. Pen and ink has existed for hundreds of years. And in those many years, white paper was most often been used as a recipient of the ink from the pen. Traditional values insist that we must promote the proper choice of legal pad. The white pad.

LIPSWICH: I object to the discriminating remarks against the yellow pads.

QUAGMIRE: If the shoe fits, eat it.

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LIPSWICH: History has proven - - ha - - that traditions must evolve with knowledge. The repression of the woman in the workspace, for example. We have - - ha - - long since disregarded the apron of man's repression, and we have charged forth into mankind. Taking the man away from the kind and placing ourselves there in return.

CRUMMIE: Bravo! I vote for the green pad with holes!

FONDLE: We have not brought a motion to the floor.

CRUMMIE: Then I would like to bring a motion to the floor.

FONDLE: Do we have a motion to allow a motion to be brought to the floor? (*Silence.*) I'm sorry, Ms. Crummie, but your motion for a motion is denied.

CRUMMIE: Others make motions.

FONDLE: Rank and tenure! Rank and tenure!

CRUMMIE: I forgot.

FONDLE: Now, as Chairman, I could just declare what pad we will order, but I would prefer to satisfy each one of you.

WRIGHT: Just pick a pad!

QUAGMIRE: Obviously, Mr. Wright doesn't see the danger of ordering the wrong style of legal pad.

LIPSWICH: The pads are before us. Ha - - we must choose.

BLAND: I vote for whatever the majority votes for.

WRIGHT: We know that, you worm.

FONDLE: Then if it's all right with everyone, we'll vote on the pad selection now.

QUAGMIRE: White!

LIPSWICH: Green!

CRUMMIE: Green!

BLAND: Abstain.

FONDLE: Yellow.

THEY all look to WRIGHT.

WRIGHT: I just need to know one thing. Are these pads the short pads or the long pads?

BLAND: Short...

QUAGMIRE: Well...I...

LIPSWICH: Ha-ha!

BLAND: I didn't know there were different sizes. I focused on color.

WRIGHT: We don't want to make the wrong decision.

LIPSWICH: I agree.

FONDLE: Mr. Bland, can you have this new information by next week?

BLAND: I might have to cancel my classes.

FONDLE: That's fine. This is an important issue. Great! Let's move on to our second item on the agenda. I'd like to hear our report on policy changes in the faculty handbook.

QUAGMIRE: Chairman Fondle. Fellow employees. I have been combing through our policy change request forms like spilt milk before the cart, and I have come across one particular item of interest.

FONDLE: Is it all right with everyone to hear the item of interest?

BLAND: If you want it, I want it.

LIPSWICH: Does the item conflict with anyone of the ninety-two acts of privacy as listed in the Doctrine of - - ha - - Internal Faculty Affairs?

QUAGMIRE: I believe not.

CRUMMIE: I'm having labor pains.

FONDLE: I'm sorry, Ms. Crummie, the scheduled baby delivery is last on our agenda for today.

CRUMMIE: Sorry.

QUAGMIRE: The item is that our own Mr. Wright has made no policy changes.

WRIGHT: So?

QUAGMIRE: Everyone must make policy changes.

WRIGHT: Why?

LIPSWICH: Good Lord.

WRIGHT: Why would I change policy? You all know my feelings. You have all heard me talk about what needs to happen to make this place equal for all. To give all faculty and staff a chance to contribute all that they have to offer. It's time for you to make the changes. Not me.

QUAGMIRE: That's not the point. If I may speak out of tune for a moment...the institution is counting on all of us to complain.

WRIGHT: Why?

THE FACULTY MEETING

FONDLE: Mr. Wright, all questions concerning acts and laws voted on by the Board of Regents are not...well...questionable.

WRIGHT: That's stupid.

FONDLE: Please remember that the Board of Regents controls all funding, all decisions, all requirements including personal hygiene specifications and faculty dining room seating orders.

QUAGMIRE: Let me go down on the record and blow their horns for a moment. I think they do a fine job.

FONDLE: Do we all agree on the fine job?

BLAND: Whole-heartedly.

QUAGMIRE: Not meaning to make a mole hill out of a pant leg, but we have to face the issue of change.

CRUMMIE: Maybe I could make a few more changes in my department.

QUAGMIRE: That's the spirit.

FONDLE: Ms. Crummie, you have no department.

CRUMMIE: Oh.

QUAGMIRE: Now...Mrs. Lipswich has made more changes than other faculty in this department.

THEY applaud.

LIPSWICH: If anyone needs assistance - - ha - - in making unnecessary changes, - - ha - - I'd be glad to lend you a - - ha...ha...hand.

WRIGHT: I'm not making any unnecessary policy changes. I would hope, however, that you make necessary changes now.

LIPSWICH: This will look very bad to the - - ha - - Promotions and Gardening Committee.

WRIGHT: My life is over.

LIPSWICH: Sarcasm. I felt it.

WRIGHT: That's all you've felt in a long time.

LIPSWICH: Sexual harassment!

WRIGHT: Oh, Lipswich, you dream of sexual harassment!

LIPSWICH: Invasion of my privacy! How can you let this happen, Chairman Fondle?

FONDLE: What?

BLAND: Mrs. Lipswich, I've never noticed you to be offensive.

WRIGHT: Brown nose.

BLAND: I resent that remark!

WRIGHT: Spineless follower?

BLAND: That's better!

CRUMMIE: Have we gotten to item four? I really need to have this baby.

FONDLE: Do we have a motion to rotate the order of the agenda so that Ms. Crummie may have her child?

CRUMMIE: I so move.

FONDLE: Do I have a second?

WRIGHT: Second, for God's sake!

FONDLE: All in favor? (*WRIGHT and CRUMMIE raise their hands.*)
All opposed? (*EVERYONE ELSE!*) Motion to change agenda fails.
I'm sorry. You'll just have to wait.

CRUMMIE: All right.

FONDLE: Coffee break!

THE COFFEE BREAK. QUAGMIRE bolts for the door, knocking LIPSWICH to the ground. BLAND stumbles over the fallen LIPSWICH, crashing into FONDLE. CRUMMIE desperately tries to maneuver her bulk through the chaos. Finally, only Mr. WRIGHT is left in the room.

Suddenly, the entire faculty bursts back into the room. Except for CRUMMIE who is eating a stack of doughnuts, each COMPANY member has two cups of coffee in their hands and two or three danishes in their mouths. WRIGHT sits staring. Furiously, they chug the coffee and eat the pastries. Suddenly, all except WRIGHT and LIPSWICH shove two or three cigarettes into each of their mouths. Just as QUAGMIRE pulls out an oversized cigarette lighter to light them LIPSWICH holds up a giant 'NO SMOKING' sign. They all groan and toss their unlit cigarettes into the garbage can.

FONDLE: Coffee break is over. (They all sit.) Good news. I have received the report that some of our students are passing.

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QUAGMIRE: Not to burst my own balloon, but I feel that I personally had a lot to do with that.

WRIGHT: I'm sure. (*THEY applaud.*)

BLAND: Bravo!

FONDLE: Congratulations to all of you.

FONDLE: Next issue, wage reduction plan. Everyone's paperwork is correct, except for Mr. Wright's.

WRIGHT: I filled out everything I was asked.

LIPSWICH: Forms A, B, D, and F-12?

WRIGHT: In triplicate.

BLAND: Yellow and blue copies of the Proposal Manifesto?

WRIGHT: Twice.

CRUMMIE: The W-62 and W-94s?

WRIGHT: Yes.

QUAGMIRE: Were you given the proper series of interviews?

WRIGHT: For two weeks, including the mental examination and rectal scan.

FONDLE: Well, I'm not sure what went wrong.

QUAGMIRE: Not meaning to ice the bottom of the cake, but perhaps it's your issues?

WRIGHT: I see.

CRUMMIE: Well, that's the reason, I'm sure.

LIPSWICH: Mr. - - ha - - Wright, you have to expect a little delay.

WRIGHT: Why? Why do I have to wait?

QUAGMIRE: I think you're putting the chicken before the egg. We always let you in the line.

WRIGHT: And for that you feel you should be thanked.

BLAND: What's your point?

WRIGHT: My point is that you want to be acknowledged for doing what is right. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Silence.

FONDLE: All right. Next on the agenda.

WRIGHT: Typical.

FONDLE: It has been brought to my attention that some of the teachers have been neglecting their teaching duties. Also, I have been presented with allegations of sexual mistreatment of the staff by certain faculty members.

QUAGMIRE: I would like the opportunity to put my two cents on the table, Mr. Fondle.

FONDLE: Please.

QUAGMIRE: To think that a faculty member would abuse the powers of his or her role as a leader...disgusts me. To think that someone in here would try to affect the minds of our staff, especially ripening young nubile female workers with long slender legs, cuts me to the heart of my matter!

FONDLE: Dr. Quagmire, thank you for your sincere admonishment of such goings on. *(Pause.)* Moving on...

WRIGHT: Wait a minute! Is that it? We're just going to drop this issue?

FONDLE: How does everyone feel about this?

LIPSWICH: It's awfully damaging to our institution.

CRUMMIE: Too hot to handle.

QUAGMIRE: I move to drop the whole issue.

FONDLE: Do I have a second?

WRIGHT: Wait a minute.

FONDLE: What is it now?

WRIGHT: Are we sure that we are sensitive to what may be an act of misconduct? Someone came to me and filed a grievance. A complaint.

FONDLE: Was the door shut?

WRIGHT: They requested that the door be shut.

QUAGMIRE: Were they wearing underwear?

WRIGHT: How would I know?

QUAGMIRE: So the lights were off?

WRIGHT: Of course not! The lights were on!

BLAND: Had you been drinking?

WRIGHT: It was nine o'clock in the morning.

CRUMMIE: A little early to be hitting the sauce, don't you think?

WRIGHT: I was not drinking!

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FONDLE: Mr. Wright, I'm afraid that with the evidence before us, I will have to submit a report of your affairs to the Board of Regents.

WRIGHT: This is amazing.

CRUMMIE: Another contraction!

QUAGMIRE: Excuse me, Mr. Fondle, but I've noticed that we have no secretary taking down the minutes of this meeting, and I feel that we should make a record for our posterior.

FONDLE: Well, as you remember, at our last faculty meeting we voted five to one to have the secretary executed.

WRIGHT: Not executed. We said the order to have her dismissed would be executed, not her.

CRUMMIE: Whoops.

QUAGMIRE: You're as wet as rain!

FONDLE: Moving on...

WRIGHT: She wasn't. Was she?

FONDLE: I'm sorry?

WRIGHT: The secretary? Executed?

FONDLE: We voted for it.

WRIGHT: No. We didn't.

FONDLE: I thought we did.

WRIGHT: She was killed?

FONDLE: I believe so.

QUAGMIRE: Mr. Wright, you act as though we've never voted for an execution before.

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