

Paint War: By Stephen Trolly

January 14

Julie made a point of pretending to be extremely pissed off about having to inform me that I have an appointment tomorrow. And then, she got worse when I asked her what the appointment was, or what general part of the day “tomorrow” referred to. Apparently, she expects me to know everything that is supposed to be happening in both of our lives, because she gets defensive about her inability to remember anything.

Days like these make me look forward to going to work.

January 15

I managed to track down what the appointment was: the dentist. Whenever you think things are sort of going the way you want them to, it's always the dentist that turns up. Since I have a business trip for two days, starting tomorrow, I can't go, but I can't cancel either. Stupid twenty-four hour notice policies. Actually, I'm going to blame this one on my boss. If he hadn't decided we were taking the train, I would be able to go and let the medical profession's equivalent of the sadistic younger cousin stick sharp pieces of metal into my gums.

January 16

What a nice guy my boss is. Why spend two hundred dollars and get there in two hours when you can spend one hundred and take the whole day? Days like this make me feel like I'm the last sane person on the planet. Other days, I know I am.

January 19

The trip went well, but, I'm disappointed that I had to go on it. That's because, while I was away, Julie did something, and I'm still trying to figure out if it was unforgivable or not. She painted the house. Well, she didn't paint it. She hired a decorator without at least telling me that such a thing was happening and had him paint it. What the worst thing is, she told the git who did the painting to use what she described as "vegan colours." Whatever in hell "vegan colours" means, I think this guy nailed it.

January 20

My therapist says that writing things down is a good way of moving past anger. Then again, the only reason I go to a therapist is because my girlfriend thinks I have anger issues. At least I got to decide which therapist I go to. So, I'm trying this writing down thing. I have a funny feeling that it isn't going to work.

Our living room, which I used to be able to describe as iron grey, is now a somewhat offensive shade of green. She claims its name is "zesty." It looks more like electric puke. It's just offensive. It's a bright room already (big windows and laminate flooring), it doesn't need bright paint to go with it. I don't care if Julie hates the idea, I'm buying curtains tomorrow. She doesn't get a say in what they look like either. They are going to be the thickest, heaviest, ugliest curtains I can find. And they are going to be a colour that in no way can be mistaken for anything that a designer would come up with. If she wanted painting done, I would have done it. My hand is cramping. I guess I'll "work through my anger" some other time.

January 22

I have a good dentist. I complain about the dentist a lot, but she let me move my appointment so that I wouldn't have to cancel it. I wish more places did that. (This part of the entry is something

my therapist recommended. For every negative entry, put in something positive. If I had that much to be positive about, I wouldn't need a therapist.)

The least offensive choice she made was painting the kitchen white. Of course, it isn't actually white, but I stubbornly refuse to use its real name in front of her. It would mean that I've given in and accepted this desecration of my home. The name is something stupid anyway, I know it is, but to be honest, I can't actually remember what it is. Pearly sheen? No, stupider than that. Fresh fallen snow? Close, but I'm Canadian. I know what snow looks like. Snow is white, not ... milk? It's something to do with milk. Almond milk? No, coconut milk. That's it. Sweet coconut milk. That's why the kitchen smells like coconut. She says that's all in my head.

She also bought new pots and shit. They're red. To be honest, they remind me of that fondue set that's buried in my attic somewhere. Have to remember to dig that out sometime.

I like the way my kitchen smelled before, when it used to be brown. It smelled manly, like a really bloody steak cooked to a perfect rare. To be honest, I wouldn't have objected to a pink kitchen. It would've reminded me to buy a barbecue. I'm definitely buying myself some steak tonight, and probably that barbecue I've always wanted.

So ends this segment of Nightly Negativity. I'm your host, Carl.

January 23

The bedroom is henna, supposedly. I thought henna was a kind of tattoo, but it's not for no reason that Julie repeatedly refers to me as "uncultured." Whatever henna is supposed to be, the bedroom is the only newly painted room that I don't entirely object to. It's sort of possible to suggest a hint of forced similarity to the brown that my kitchen used to be. That said, it's not

dark like my former kitchen. It's the colour of milk chocolate mixed with runny dog shit.

Actually, that description just put me off of the colour. Dammit, I have to sleep in this room.

Definitely getting new bed sheets. Buzz Lightyear sheets or something like that. Something with dark, useful colours. Colours that don't suggest dog shit in any way. She enjoys telling me that these colours were the best of the selection that her gay designer friend picked out. I know that he's gay. He's actually a nice enough guy, just ...flamboyant. She gets mad that I won't even look at him most of the time. She thinks I'm a homophobe. I don't generally try to be an ass, but I just can't stand bright colours, which is all he wears, and which is now all that I'm surrounded with. It's terrible. Apparently, though, the colours she picked out have some kind of emotional resonance, whatever that means. I can't help it. I see dog shit.

I've bought lumber to build a new deck for my barbecue. It's going in the back yard, right where she wants to put in a flower garden.

January 24

The one thing positive one thing negative thing isn't working. At the moment, I have far more to be negative about. My boss heard me complaining to one of my coworkers about how we had to take the train instead of flying. So now, I've had four projects dumped on me, none of which are even for my department, and I have to be finished them all by Friday. Friday is in two days. I tried talking to Julie about it, we are supposed to be emotionally supportive of each other after all, but she's still upset about the garden she isn't getting. All she said was that I'm not allowed to quit.

And now, for the truly, potentially, unforgivable offense. As if painting my living room, kitchen, and bedroom wasn't bad enough, she had my office painted. No, I'm going further. She

desecrated my office. The designer, Thomás (he's white, but he pronounces it with a Latino accent, I don't understand why), had to move things so that he could paint, but then he didn't put them back in the right places, when he put them back at all. Two of my posters were gone, and the others were hung back up in the wrong order, and they aren't even close to where they were before. Okay, there like three inches away from where they were hanging, but when I'm looking at them, it's that feeling that you know something's wrong but you aren't entirely sure what it is. My desk isn't sitting in its same indentations anymore either, because she had my shag carpet ripped up. That was not fucking acceptable. But even worse than the defilement already suffered was the colour she chose. Vanilla. She. Chose. Vanilla. Of all of the colours she chose, even the white, whatever it's called, for the kitchen, is less boring than vanilla. And it isn't even vanilla coloured. Vanilla is like some kind of darkish see-through brown. This vanilla is like ... not-ripe peach. She painted over my intellectually stimulating dark blue with her mentally draining, mind numbing, permanently offensive unripe peach.

February 4

The whole thing turned into a war. I hired a really hot designer with bright pink hair to change everything back the way it was. She wasn't too happy about basically being a glorified painter, but that wasn't really the point anyway. It wasn't perfect, but it was better: dark brown kitchen, dark blue office with orange shag carpet, grey living room without the ridiculous curtains. I didn't mind the bedroom colour, but I had her make it darker, as much on principle as because I didn't want to sleep surrounded by walls the colour of dog shit. I also planned it so that Julie would be getting home while the designer was there.

Julie retaliated by painting everything even more offensively bright colours and bought a new couch: white leather. I hate leather. I got the better of her by painting everything black. I dragged the new couch out to the curb and put a free sign on it. It seems that you can't really paint over black. She gave up. I changed the locks.

It turns out, the painting was unforgivable.