

Driven to Madness by Workplace

Woman recovering after on-the-job “freak out”

Co-workers watch as woman tears through office

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SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Yesterday, a 38-year-old Pickering woman ran screaming from an office building and had to be sedated by paramedics. The worker has been apparently suffering from acute job stress.

The woman, identified by police as Alivree Bane, of no fixed business address, was working for a job placement agency and was on extended temporary assignment at a publishing firm, in Markham, where the incident took place.

The firm’s spokesperson refused comment; however, the victim’s co-workers said she was distraught by working conditions.

“She seemed particularly disturbed by the stench from the washroom,” said one worker. “She was always complaining about how bad the bathrooms smelled. I think she was going to call the Ministry of Health.”

John C. Burrock, a Manager of the Highest Redundancy at the Ministry, said their records showed no complaint had been launched about the so-called stinky loos.

The manager did, however, confirm that the Ministry had received a complaint about an infestation of black ants in the company’s cafeteria. “The matter is under consideration,” remarked Burrock, “so I’m not at liberty to proceed with a dialogue as it related to outside sources, especially in

regards to the possible pending outcome.”

Both the managing editor and supervisor of the area expressed shock at the events of yesterday and said that Ms. Bane was one of their best workers.

“Productivity wise, she far exceeded our expected values for daily data entry competence,” said department supervisor Olivia Lungstead.

The department manager, Jim Schlenger was in agreement. “Agreed,” he said.

Temporary employees suggested the company’s misuse of the English language pushed the former Compliance and Tax Administrator over the edge. Specifically, the use of “prior history” and “later history” in the organization’s proprietary software. She was said to have been debating the severity of suspected language abuse with a co-worker when she finally “snapped.”

Witnesses allege the woman was “rambling on” about erosion of the English language by corporations and in particular, software programmers, when the overly pedantic woman “flipped out” and she stomped back to her desk, clutching a handful of her colleague’s hair.

Back at her cubicle Bane smashed a printer, punched her computer monitor and then whipped downstairs to the lunch room where she attempted to tip over a vending machine before stomping out of the building. Once outside, she attacked a sign in which auxiliary verbs “may” and “be” had been misapplied as a transitive verb. When paramedics arrived on the scene they found the woman holding her bleeding head and screaming about sign-painters not knowing the difference between “expressing possibility” and its adverbial cousin “perhaps.”

Witnesses also said the woman grumbled about “those geniuses at Microsoft” who can’t distinguish between UK and Canadian spelling, “but somehow found time to program a handful of synonyms for sexual climax.”

Later, the unemployed writer told police that she could not understand why she has not been able to get a job in her field of expertise. She also said that she hoped “the publicity would show prospective employers how much I care about the English language. By the way,” she added, “I am definitely open to job offers.”

Ms. Bane is recovering at the Hospital for Sick People.

Valerie Poulin is a freelance writer who, when not churning out overpriced verbs and corporate jargon, tends to her creative writing habit.