

To: All  
From: Maxine, xt. 2208  
Re: 'Personal Days,' a novel by Ed Park  
CONFIDENTIAL AND PRIVATE

---

Everyone,

Please read the attached sample chapters from Ed Park's novel *Personal Days*, published by Random House. Let me know if you have any questions

—Mx.

### **Jackrub!**

Everybody needs a routine. Jack II's thing these days is to drop by your cubicle between two and three every afternoon and say *Who needs a backrub?* Even if you don't exactly raise your hand he latches his mitts onto your shoulders and starts working away. It was nice at first and then it was funny but now it's out of control. His stress-release technique is itself stressful. At the sound of Jack II's voice we automatically tilt to face him so that he can't sneak up and get a grip.

*Jackrub!* Pru will shout-hiss, a warning signal to all in the vicinity.

Today, to everyone's surprise, Lizzie accepts a Jackrub. She says she did something awful with a calculator: She punched in the Net Pay from her paycheck and multiplied it by 26. The total was so low she was sure she'd dropped a digit, like maybe she had multiplied by 6. I have to economize, she says, but I've already been economizing.

Except for the shoes, says Pru. ¶  
Lizzie needs a new job, but for now she'll take that Jackrub.

*Lots of tension in this room*, says Jack II, cracking his knuckles.

### **Because**

Whenever we sniff a layoff coming, which is always, each one of us thinks, It can't be me because \_\_\_\_\_.

Because I have *too much work to do*.

Because I'm *exploited as it is*.

Because, really, how much money would they save by getting rid of me versus what untold profits my labor/hard-earned know-how brings in?

*I mean I'm joking but seriously.*

Realistically, no way can it be me.

And then, all of a sudden, it is.

### **The college of noncompetitive running**

People put too many things on the bulletin board. Bizarre newspaper items, notices for group shows exhibiting the disgruntled visual expressions of friends of friends, ironically saucy or inscrutable postcards. Wish you were beer.

Laars polices this corkboard commotion, giving everything a week before tearing it down. Schedules, announcements, responsibilities: These weigh on his spirit. When Laars started with us—six months, nine months, a year ago?—he was full of pep, but we managed to squeeze it out of him.

Laars occasionally gives off an Ivy League vibe, but he actually went to a small liberal arts college called Aorta or something. None of us have heard of it, a school in the Pacific Northwest that doesn't have grades or even pass-fail. It emphasizes feelings rather than performance. On the website you see pictures of a guy with the eraser tip of his pencil resting on his lip, two girls running noncompetitively—one's wearing jeans—

on a weedy-looking track, a white guy with an Afro reading under a tree.

### **Mathemating**

Laars says there's a mating rule: You can go out with someone half your age, plus seven years—that's your lower limit. By the same formula, your upper limit would be determined by doubling your age and subtracting seven. This is not helpful, really, or even relevant, but we amuse ourselves with calculations for a while. For the rest of the afternoon.

### **From 'The Jilliad'**

*Are you an Ernie—or a Bert? You remember this comical duo from your youth. Ernie is a carefree sort, always up for a gag or a razz, ready*

*to bust out into gales of laughter—usually at Bert's expense. He's a classic hysteric. Bert, on the other hand, is his exact opposite: An organized, goal-driven, no-nonsense dude. He's an obsessive, the sort of person who probably spends a lot of time organizing his sock drawer. He's a nebbish, and maybe a bit of a dud.*

*Most people like to think of themselves as Ernies—the life of the party, having a good time. That's fine, as far as it goes. But guess what? Your boss doesn't want an office full of free spirits. Such a workforce would get nothing done, and spend the hours from 9 to 5 blowing dandelion seeds and skipping stones. Your boss is most likely a Bert—and he's going to want more Berts on his team. Wouldn't you?*

—Ernie and Bert in the Boardroom, by Dr. Tal Champers, Ph.D.

