

23056 Twitter : The age of loud firing has begun

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Doing hard things requires sacrifice,” Esther Crawford tweeted in November when a picture of her sleeping on the floor at her office went viral. Elon Musk had just taken the helm at Twitter and told his new employees that they had to be prepared to either go “extremely hardcore” or go home. Crawford, the head of Twitter Blue at the time, was clearly out to prove herself as hardcore as it comes.

Alas, she risked back pain for nothing. Over the weekend Twitter laid off around 200 people, about 10% of its current workforce, including Crawford. Her firing made waves: if someone as devoted to Twitter as Crawford wasn’t safe, then who was? And it’s not as if Crawford and the others were sympathetically laid off; they were abruptly fired on a Saturday night. Martijn de Kuijper, a senior product manager who was also a victim of Musk’s latest cull, tweeted that he found out he’d been let go when he woke up on Sunday to discover he had been locked out of his email. “People receive email at 2am on Saturday and access cut immediately,” said one poster on Blind, a platform for verified employees to communicate anonymously. “This will go down as one of the most extreme layoffs in entire corporate history.” Live by the hardcore sword, die by the hardcore sword. And that sword, by the way, has felled a lot of people. Pre-Musk, Twitter had 7,500 employees; now it has less than 2,000.

Does Crawford have regrets about everything she sacrificed for Twitter? If she does, she is keeping them quiet. “The worst take you could have from watching me go all-in on Twitter 2.0 is that my optimism or hard work was a mistake,” Crawford tweeted on Sunday, in response to her firing. “Those who jeer & mock are necessarily on the sidelines and not in the arena.”

I’m very much on the sidelines – I’m not going to dispute that. But I’m not here to jeer or mock. I take no satisfaction in anybody being fired. On the contrary, I think it’s depressing that so many people have adhered to Musk’s mantra about going extremely hardcore. Sacrificing your personal life in service of a megalomaniac who will cut you dry without a second thought is deeply sad. Hard work and optimism are great! But thinking a deeply immature narcissist like Musk gives a damn about anyone other than himself, we have learned, is not great.

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