

A N G E L A J

***DEMOTED &
DEGRADED***

**“Trixie the Secretary” by Angela J.
A Tales of Transformation Story**



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TRIXIE, THE SECRETARY

FIRST MONTH

A creeping trail of yellow light crept across the carpet of the office, reminding me just how slow the morning was going. I checked my purse for a mint. At least sucking on it for a few minutes would be a slight relief to the monotony. My purse was empty except for a few cosmetics. The salespeople who occupied cubicles at the far end of the office all wandered about, aimlessly, looking bored and restless. Our office had ten small cubicles for the sales staff, but only three of them were being used. I had heard that in the past, there were more people working for the company but that was long before I started working here.

A tall partition separated us, me at the executive end, and the sales staff at the sales end. As they were just beginning their day, they were restless.

Right after the salesmen left the office to make their sales calls, the office phone rang. It was early Monday morning. I answered it as I always do: "Jones Enterprises, an authorized seller of Hill Office Equipment, Cindy speaking. How may I direct your call?" That was one part of my job as the secretary of Jones Enterprises. I got this job right after my father passed away. Without my father's income to support me, I had no choice but to drop out of college and look for work. I still remember as if it was yesterday, the day I came in for my interview. I was extremely nervous because I desperately needed the job and had no prior experience. My guidance counselor told me to "embellish" my resume a little but I just couldn't bring my self to lie. That's just not how my father had raised me. I was almost sure that I wouldn't get hired. But Mr. Thomas D. Jones, the President of Jones Enterprises, never looked at my resume. He just asked three questions. "Can you type?" "Does your coffee taste good?" "Are you single?" The last question gave me a little pause because I felt that it was a little too personal. But I answered affirmatively to all three questions, without complaint. To my surprise, I was hired on the spot.

Despite my short time at this job and lack of prior experience, I knew how to answer most phone calls. Potential new customers would call and I would provide them with the appropriate salesman's mobile phone number. New accounts were supposed to be assigned to a salesman based on a rotation system. But sometimes, Mr. Jones reassigned the new accounts to a different salesman at a later date. Most of the established customers already knew to call their salesman directly. Other times, someone would call asking for parts or repair service, I would just give them the number of the Hill Office Equipment certified service company in their area. Occasionally, we got calls from disgruntled customers; these calls were transferred to Mr. Jones or to his voice mail. Mr.

Jones would rarely take a call without some research into the problem. He would want to see the customer's file and talk to the salesperson assigned to the customer before returning the complaint call. A salesman would also often call to ask Mr. Jones to authorize a discount for a customer or one of the salesmen, – typically Jim, Mr. Jones' friend and one of the younger salesmen – called to complain about another salesman. Mr. Jones also instructed me to transfer these sorts of calls to his voice mail so that he could return them when it was more convenient for him. Despite this slacker attitude, once he got to it, he was able to resolve the problem in a decisive and authoritative manner. Surprisingly, even with Mr. Jones' young age, he was the boss and everyone knew it.

He was in his late twenties, and not much older than I was. Dark brown hair, fair skinned and even a little skinny. In my heels I was taller than he was. But he was still intimidating. He



could shut you up just by looking at you. I guess that's just how life is. Some people are born with leadership skills like Mr. Jones, and some people are not, like me.

Of course not all calls were business. On occasion, a family member or friend would also call. On this day, that's exactly what happened. "Cindy, it's me," said a terse voice when I picked up the call. I instantly recognized the voice as that of Mrs. Barbara Jones, Mr. Jones' wife. As I usually did many times before, I told her that Mr. Jones was on the other line and that I would let him know that she called. It was a white lie that Mr. Jones insisted I use with her so that he appeared busier than he really was – but this time before I could finish, she interrupted me.

Her words were: "I don't want to talk to him. I want to talk to *you*." She slowed herself down and said the next words to me very deliberately: "I know *everything*."

These words sent a chill down my spine. What she meant by that I wasn't sure. But I feared the worst. What if she somehow found out about me and Mr. Jones? I would be in a horrible mess. I didn't need this now. With my father passing away from a heart attack just last year, I had enough difficulty in my life.

"Meet me at the coffee shop at Main and Fifth in thirty minutes and don't tell my no good husband anything," she continued.

"But I can't..." was all I got to say.

"You can and you *will* meet me," she said, "just give him an excuse to leave the office," and then she hung up.

She was not requesting, she was demanding – that to me was obvious. But what should I do? Should I tell Mr. Jones? I just sat at my small secretarial desk, near the front of the door to the presidents' office, for several minutes not knowing what to do. I wished that my father was still alive. He was so strong and decisive. My mother and I had relied on him to guide us. Now, he was gone. I thought about calling my mother and asking her for advice. But as soon as that thought entered my mind, I quickly dismissed it. Getting her advice would require me to tell her what happened. She probably wouldn't understand and she definitely wouldn't be on my side.

As usual, during the day, only Mr. Jones and I were left here at the office. The salesmen would not be back from their sales calls until late afternoon. They came in briefly in the morning and then left for most of the day. Then they'd come back and fill out paper work in their respective cubicles. Each day ended with all of us in the large conference room, where the salesmen reported to Mr. Jones. The conference table had twelve seats but only four people sat on them. Mr. Jones always sat at the head of the conference table. The other seats were taken by the three member sales staff. Richard White sat to the immedi-

ate right of Mr. Jones and Jim Hunt and Sara Campbell sat to his left.

They would each take turns to report to Mr. Jones about their daily activity. Mr. Jones would either congratulate them for a good sale or would offer words expressing his disappointment. Then, right before closing time, Mr. Jones closed the meeting by offering the same old advice we had all heard a hundred times before. I usually stood in the corner near Mr. Jones and took notes when I wasn't busy bringing everyone coffee or other drinks.

But for today, the meeting was still several hours away.

Mr. Jones was in his large executive office either doing some paperwork – or more likely surfing the net for porn. That's how he passed most of his time. I guess there wasn't much for the President of Jones Enterprises to do. Other than the few phone calls, his only duty was to keep the company records, make regular reports to our mother company, Hills Office Equipment, do payroll, and keep other company documents in order.

I knew about the internet porn because I walked in on him a few times. I, of course, tried to pretend not to notice as he fumbled to close his internet browser and close his zipper. Each time, he yelled at me for not knocking and told me to leave his executive office immediately. I always apologized profusely for my error as I closed the door behind me. Actually, it really bothered me that he would engage in such disgusting and inappropriate activity in the office. But I didn't dare speak my mind. It just wasn't my place. My father would disapprove of Mr. Jones' behavior but would also frown upon me if I had objected. My father had always said that I should respect authority.

Of course, Mr. Jones would then lecture me on privacy the next time he saw me, and I had to listen and nod attentively. He was entitled to this because he was the President and CEO of Jones Enterprises, and I have to admit, I did respect him for that. Jones Enterprises acquired this company from another entity couple of years ago. I don't know the details, but according to Sara, that's when Mr. Jones took over. She told me because he was so young, people just assumed that his father was rich or something and was given this job to learn how to manage. Regardless of how Mr. Jones acquired this business, I could not afford to anger him. The economy was in a bad shape and I needed this job.

If it had ended with his internet browsing and masturbation, I guess I would not be in this predicament. But about three months ago, he started to target his attention on me. At first, he just stared at me for no apparent reason. Then he became bolder. I could feel his eyes on my chest when he stood before my desk to give me a task. He would also stare at my behind as I filed or copied. I wasn't used to getting this type of attention from men. I always dressed conservatively and stayed away from bad boys. So I didn't know what to do. I guess I should have stopped him there. But I just didn't know how to do it without angering him and risking his firing me or making this into a federal court case (literally).

So I just ignored his unwanted attentions. Then a few weeks after he started staring, he began “accidentally” touching me. He would brush up against me as he walked by and just say “sorry.” When I didn’t stop him, he started to make comments about my look and how much he wanted us to be “good friends.” I knew this was wrong, but I just didn’t know what to do. I called my mother once to ask her advice, but she pretty much just ignored what I said. She just told me to stop wearing outfits that would provoke men. I tried to explain to her that I wasn’t doing or wearing anything to provoke Mr. Jones, but she just didn’t seem to understand. I guess that she was in denial like I was.

It didn’t take long before he started to pressure me to have sex with him. No, he never threatened me directly. But he would comment about the bad economy and how hard it is to find a job and then put a hand on my side, or worse, my behind. He would tell me how much he liked me and then would tell me that some people he knew were having a hard time finding a job and it would be a shame if I had to go through that hardship. He even gave me a line about being “friendlier” so that I would not have to worry about the economy. The message was obvious.

Then about a week ago, it became even worse. He called me to his office and told me how he and his wife were not getting along and how lonely he was. He asked me to give him a hug to make him feel better. Like a dope, I obliged. I knew that this was a trick but I still could not say no to him. He continued to hold me tight, long after the hug should have ended. I tried to get free of his hold but just didn’t have the strength. “Cindy, I’ve always been attracted to you,” he said. He loosened his hold on me slightly. As I tried to get away, he kissed me on my lips. Before I knew what was going on, he kissed me again. I should have slapped his face and quit on the spot, but I didn’t. I guess I just didn’t have the nerve. Maybe, deep inside I was a little attracted to him. Physically he wasn’t the type of guy that I liked. He was handsome, but a little too skinny and short for my taste. But he was to me, because of his position, a powerful man, and that was attractive regardless of what he looked like.

His kisses intensified and I didn’t resist. I should have, but I didn’t. When he started to undress me, I finally spoke up. “This is not right,” I said, “you’re married.”

Then he looked into my eyes and asked, “do you like your job?” I didn’t respond. He continued to undress me and I offered no resistance. I should have – I really, really should have – but I didn’t. It was like I was in a trance. I just let him take the lead. Soon we were both naked and then were having sex. Then all of sudden it was over. One minute he was breathing on top of me as I lay on his big desk, and the next minute, he was done and was off me, and started to quickly get dressed. Without a word, I started to get dressed too. I felt deep shame. After all, he was a married man, and I had no intention of being the other woman. I guess he knew that too because when I started to cry after-

wards, he apologized and promised me that he would not pressure me again. I hoped that for both our sakes that he would keep his promise.

Since that time, it had been awkward in the office when we were alone. Each morning, after the sales staff left the office, I mostly sat at my desk doing clerical work and he stayed in his executive office doing what he does. We didn't talk about our encounter. I didn't tell him how worried I was that I might've gotten pregnant from the incident and how I relieved I was when I finally got my period. We only talked about work and only when we absolutely had to communicate. I had hoped that this was all in the past and that soon our relationship would normalize. But the phone call from Mrs. Jones brought it all back to the present.

If I sat at my desk any longer I would be late. I had to make up my mind about what I was going to do soon. If I only had family or friends to help guide me but I was all alone. I had to make a decision. I needed to find out what Mrs. Jones wanted before I would decide on whether to tell Mr. Jones. Having made up my mind, I walked to the door to the executive office and knocked on the door.

"Just a minute," I heard Mr. Jones' voice, and then a moment later, "come in."

"Mr. Jones," I said, "I... Have to leave the office for a few hours... I have to go take care of a personal matter."

"What is it?" he asked, "I need to know what it is before I can give you permission to leave in the middle of a workday."

"It's personal," I said, "I'm sorry but I can't tell you."

"How long?" he asked, looking rather annoyed.

"I'm not sure," I replied.

"I can't allow..." he began to answer.

"Please Mr. Jones," I pleaded with him and with the best serious look I could muster I said, "It's important."

Usually when Mr. Jones made a decision there was no way to change his mind. I habitually just followed his orders. But when he saw my persistency and heard the desperation in my voice, he must have realized how important this was to me.

"All right, but I'll take it out of your vacation time..." he finally said.

"Thank you, Mr. Jones," I said.

"Don't make it a habit," he said.

I quickly exited the executive office, grabbed my purse, and ran out to my car and drove to the designated coffeehouse. On the way there, I contemplated in my mind what I would say to Mrs. Jones if she confronted me with the extra

marital affair. But what I could say? “Sorry, but it wasn’t my fault.” How weak? Weak or not, that’s how I truly felt.

As I walked into the coffee shop, I suddenly realized a tiny problem. Because I was so busy worrying about what I was going to say to Mrs. Jones, it never occurred to me that I hadn’t ever met Mrs. Jones, and therefore had no idea what she looked like. Sure, I recognized her voice because she called the office often enough, but with knowledge of voice alone; I would have a difficult time picking out the correct woman from the four ladies, sitting by themselves at the coffee shop. I figured that the women sitting in various groups were not her. The topic of our conversation was mostly likely going to be too personal for company. How odd that Mr. Jones did not have a picture of Mrs. Jones in his office. Perhaps they really were having marital problems.

I looked around. I guessed that Mrs. Jones would be either the same age or younger than Mr. Jones. Presidents of companies often marry young beautiful women. One of the women sitting by themselves fit the description. Smartly but casually dressed, her hair long and glamorous, and sipping a small cup of tea as she grinned to herself. As I was about to approach, to ask her if she was Mrs. Jones, I heard, “Cindy, over here,” from a table near the back. I recognized the voice as the one on the phone, belonging to Mrs. Jones.

“How did she know what I looked like?” I thought to myself

“Sit,” she commanded pointing to a chair. Her apparent age and attire surprised me. The woman appeared to be in her mid to late forties, about twenty years older than Mr. Jones. A slight scowl on her face has already creased some wrinkles into the sides of her lips. She wore an expensive looking business suit and pants. I was expecting a young housewife in mid to early twenties. But here she was, appearing to be a mature, successful businesswoman commanding me to sit down. She sat across from the seat she pointed at, with a lonely large cup of coffee on the table and a briefcase next to her seat.

I sat.

She put the briefcase on her lap and opened it so the cover of the case blocked its contents from my view. She took out a plain blue colored file and handed it to me. In it were several pictures of Mr. Jones and me in compromising positions.

At first I did not know what to say... I sat there for what felt like an eternity. Not daring to look up from the file, in fear that my eyes would meet Mrs. Jones’ eyes. “I’m sorry...” is all I managed to say. It sounded even weaker than I first thought it would.

“Don’t be,” she said, “As I stated on the phone, I know everything.” She then handed to me a mini tape player with a headphone. “The tape is cued, just push play,” she ordered.

I put the headphones to my ear and pushed play as instructed. It only took a

few minutes of listening to the tape to figure out that it was recording of Mr. Jones' attempt to pressure me into sexual indiscretions.

I had heard enough and took the earphones off and turned the tape player off. "How?" I asked.

She smiled. "The technology today is amazing, a monitoring device can be hidden anywhere."

I just sat there staring at the pictures and the recording device, not knowing what to say.

"Cindy," she continued, "I know it wasn't your idea. So I am not mad at you. If it wasn't you, it would have been someone else. But since you played an essential role in his cheating... I want you to help me punish him."

"You want me to testify against Mr. Jones in the divorce," I asked.

"Divorce?" she said, smiling briefly, "Heavens no, child." She paused, her expression returning to a scowl then said, "I never got a prenuptial from him. That's the biggest mistake in my life." She took a sip of her drink. "I should have never allowed my emotions control me like that. He did a great job romancing me. Thomas never pressured me to have sex. He would be content to just hold me for hours while I complained about my work. He just listened and let me vent. Thomas just seemed to understand me. Did you know that he gave me little gifts everyday? Nothing expensive, but they were all romantic. He would give different flowers that he picked from a garden or would write me a poem or would record a song that reminded him of me."

I had to admit that sounded wonderful and couldn't help but feel a little jealous. Mr. Jones never did any of those things when he was seducing me.

"But it was all a lie," Mrs. Jones continued, "and like a simple silly girl, I fell for it. He was manipulating me the whole time. He was probably even laughing at me behind my back. No, I don't want a divorce. Who knows what he would allege against me to steal my assets. I worked too hard and sacrificed too much. Divorce is too unpredictable. That is a risk I don't want to take. No, not divorce, I want revenge – and I want you to help me get it."

"But how can I help?" I asked.

"You can start with this," she said as she put the briefcase on the table and turned it around to show me its contents. Inside was a clear plastic bag with a shiny disc inside it.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's a computer CD," she replied, "It's for him. Make sure he plays it on his computer. The program will do the rest. Go ahead take it out of its bag."

I did as told and asked, "how do I get him to play it and what will it do?"

"You're a smart girl. I'm sure you will figure out some trick to make him play

it. And as for what it will do, you'll find out soon enough." She replied. With that, she put the folder with the pictures, the tape recorder, and the now empty plastic bag back into her briefcase and closed it shut. "Do as instructed. Today, before you leave the office, you will make sure he starts to play the CD. And then next month, on the same date as today, you will meet me again at this coffee shop at 8:30 a.m., before going to work. You will bring that CD with you. You may go back to work now." She took hold of her coffee and started to drink it.

I just sat there staring at the disc in my hand. What should I do? "Please. I don't want get involved..." I started to say.

"You are *already* involved," she interrupted. "I told you to go back to the office," she commanded.

I put the CD in my purse and I walked out to my car and drove back to the office. I still had to decide what to do. What would my father want me to do? I wasn't too sure. As I entered the office, I still had not made up my mind. I put my purse behind my desk and took out the disc and looked at it, the light catching the silvery surface. What should I do? Mr. Jones was the president of this company and as an employee I owed him loyalty. I needed to keep my job, at the very least. But at the same time, what he did to me was wrong. With the CD in my hand, I walked towards the door to the executive office and entered. I guess I was going to make a spontaneous decision after I was inside. I was either going to tell Mr. Jones about my meeting with Mrs. Jones and give him the CD as evidence or I was going to somehow get him to play it.

He was sitting facing away from the door to his office, looking at his computer on his credenza, with his pants and underwear down. He was browsing pornography again. His executive chair thankfully blocked most of his nudity and what he was doing with his hand but it was obvious what was going on. I tried to back out of the office slowly and close the door. But Mr. Jones stopped me by saying, "Cindy, is that you?"

"Yes sir," was my meek reply.

Mr. Jones then turned his sit around to face me with nudity clearly visible. His desk did not do a good job blocking his penis or his moving left hand from my view. "Damn it Cindy," he said, "I told you to knock first." As he looked at me he continued to masturbate. I just stood there as if frozen not knowing what to do. I couldn't even look away. In what probably was a few seconds later, but what felt like much longer, he came into a tissue paper while looking at me. After wiping his penis clean, he threw the tissue paper into his waste basket. Then he pulled up his underwear and pants up and then turned back around to close the internet browser. "You almost gave me a heart attack." He turned to face me again. "I don't know what I would have done if it was someone else," he smiled and then said, "Luckily we rarely get visitors in our business. You understand, don't you? A man has needs. If I'm not going to get anything from

you in the future, then I have to take care of that need myself.”

When I didn't respond to his reasoning, He continued, “I tell you what. I won't count your little break today against your vacation time. After all you were only gone for a few minutes and we are friends”

“Thank you, Mr. Jones,” I said with gritted teeth. He really had some nerve. I kept my mouth shut and was about to walk out of his executive office, when he stopped me again.

“What's that in your hand?” he asked.

“It's nothing,” I said suddenly panicking and not knowing what to do.

“Did that DVD come in the mail in a plain paper envelope?” he asked, “I've been waiting for it. It's... It's some files for the office. Leave it and go back to your desk, and don't forget to knock next time.”

“Yes sir,” I said and left the CD on Mr. Jones' desk and walked out of his executive office. The decision had been made for me.

I sat back at my desk and got back to work, typing up letters and emails that were dictated previously by Mr. Jones and answering a few phone calls. My mind kept drifting as I wondered what the CD was and if Mr. Jones was actually playing it. Did the CD contain a message to Mr. Jones? Was it blackmail? I didn't really get a lot of work done as my curiosity started to eat me up. After about two hours, I just couldn't take it anymore and quietly went to the door to Mr. Jones' executive office and knocked. But he didn't answer. I knocked again, this time a little louder. But there was no response. I slowly opened the door to the executive office a bit to get a look. A part of me was afraid that Mr. Jones was already playing the CD and was afraid of the potential the contents of that disc and another part of me was afraid that he was masturbating again. Twice in one day? Not even Mr. Jones would masturbate that often. Would he?

Luckily, Mr. Jones was facing away from the door and into his computer. From my vantage point, he seemed to have fallen asleep. The screen on his computer looked like it was on a strange screen saver and very soft music was playing. “Strange,” I thought, and closed the door behind me.

I got back to my desk and tried to concentrate on my work. I couldn't help but continue to wonder what was happening to Mr. Jones, and I kept thinking about it until the sales staff came back that afternoon. That's when I noticed that both Mr. Jones and I had missed lunch.

After the sales people finished their paperwork, we all gathered in the conference room and they took their usual seats and I stood in my normal spot with a pen and notepad ready. At this point, I was expecting Mr. Jones to order me to get every one drinks – but he just sat there, looking confused.

“Hey boss,” Jim said, “shouldn't we start the meeting? We got some issues to cover today.”

“Yeah,” stated Richard, “and how about some drinks?”

That seemed to snap Mr. Jones out of his funk. “Cindy, make yourself useful and get everyone drinks... you know what everyone likes.” I quickly exited the conference room and went to our little office kitchen to get drinks for everyone.

Even before I got back in the conference room, I could hear the yelling. “This is fucked up,” Jim yelled. “He tried to steal one of my customers again... even after you told him not to do it”

“Hey, I can’t help it if Stevenson calls me because you don’t return his calls.” Richard replied.

“Bullshit...” Jim spat, “you called him and were trying to convince him to...”

“Why you little punk,” Richard stood up from his chair. He was a large man, more than six feet tall. “You’re damn lucky we are in the presence of ladies, otherwise I would kick your tiny ass for questioning my honesty.” Even though his grey hair showed his age, it was obvious that he was still in good enough shape to easily carry out his threat.

“Enough!” Mr. Jones commanded. “Dick, I told you to stop trying to steal Jimmy’s account.”

Everyone in that room knew that it was only Jim’s account because Mr. Jones gave it to him but no one dared to say anything. According to the normal rotation the account belonged to Richard but Mr. Jones gave it to his friend Jim instead, once it was clear that this account was lucrative.

“You need to fire him,” Jim said looking at Mr. Jones instead of the threatening Richard. Mr. Jones and Jim were fraternity brothers in college and that’s how Jim got the job. Everyone knew it and hated Jim for it. They were tight friends and even kind of looked alike. Jim was about the same age and height as Mr. Jones, meaning they were both young and short. The biggest difference was that Jim had a beard. I am sure that Jim grew his beard to make himself look older but even with the beard it was obvious that Jim was still in early to mid twenties.

“I said *enough*,” Mr. Jones repeated and gave a look to Jim to show him that he meant it. “Half of the commission from this sale will go to Dick and the other half to Jimmy.”

“But I got Stevenson to upgrade and get ten new copiers,” Richard bragged, “Why should I share my commission with Jimmy?”

“It’s not your account,” Jim replied, “and don’t call me Jimmy, only my friends call me that.”

Both men were about to complain some more, when Mr. Jones added, “if either of you don’t agree, then you can give me a letter of resignation. And Dick, if you ever pull this shit again, you are going to face serious conse-

quences.”

“I got a new account today,” stated Sara. “I sold several copier/scanner combos. I didn’t even need to give them a discount.”

“That’s a good girl,” Mr. Jones smiled for the first time since we started the meeting. “See, that’s what I’m talking about...” He started his usual speech that I tuned out. I heard its variations many times before. How the company was a family. He wanted everyone to get along. He stated how disappointed he was with some of the staff’s actions but had hopes that everyone would do better. He then congratulated Sara for a great sale. The meeting was over and so was the work day. I went home and tried to forget what had happened.



During the next few weeks, things at the office were just the same old routine. Mr. Jones sat in his executive office most of the day doing whatever he does and the day would end in the conference room with Jim and Richard arguing. Jim would repeatedly demand that Richard be fired but everyone knew that Richard was too good of a salesman to be let go. Richard would make a threatening remark towards Jim and Mr. Jones would get involved to stop Richard. Sara and I would ignore these arguments and just stay clear of them as much as possible. Things were so normal, I almost forgot all about Mrs. Jones’ request for me to help with the revenge and her CD. Sure, I knew that Mr. Jones played the CD for about three hours each day, but it didn’t seem to do anything other than stop him from watching porn. This was a positive.

At one point, a DVD, obviously porn, in a plain envelope arrived and when I gave it to him, he just tossed it into the trash can. It amazed me. Maybe the CD was helping him with his addiction to porn. I was all for it. It was better for me if he spent his day playing the CD then viewing porn and playing with himself. I had convinced myself that I was doing a good thing. Father would be proud.

SECOND MONTH

Exactly one month after meeting Mrs. Jones at the coffee shop, I met her at the designated date and time again as instructed. I had thought about it for several days, if not weeks. I had myself almost convinced that the first meeting never took place. But I wound up going to meet her just as she had instructed. Just like last month when we first met, Mrs. Jones sat at the table near the back with a large cup coffee on the table and a briefcase next to her. As soon as she saw me, she nodded for me to sit across from her.

“You forgot to bring back the CD,” Mrs. Jones stated.

“I...” I was shocked that she knew that I forgot to bring the CD until I connected the fact that she probably had surveillance equipment installed in our office. I felt like an idiot for forgetting it.

“You can’t even do a simple task,” she said putting the briefcase on the table. She opened her briefcase and turned it around, revealing to me its contents. It had another clear plastic bag with another CD. “Take out the disc,” she ordered.

“I thought the last one was it... And we were just meeting to finalize everything.” I said.

“Just do as instructed,” Mrs. Jones said, impatiently.

“I was worried at first, but it was effective... The CD made him stop watching porn...” I continued while taking the new CD out of the bag.

“How *wonderful*,” Mrs. Jones sneered.

I looked at the CD, marked simply as ‘#2.’ “But I don’t understand,” I said, “I think the other CD cured him from his addiction to porn and his advancements towards me has stopped... why do we need another one?” I asked.

“You ask too many questions,” she replied, “Go to the office and retrieve the first disc and make sure he plays this one. On the same date, next month, at 8:30 am, meet me here again. This time make sure to bring back this CD and the first CD.”

“What will this one do?” I asked.

“You will find out soon enough,” was her reply. “You may go to work now.” She said and started to drink her coffee.

I just sat there looking at the new disc.

“That was not a request,” Mrs. Jones said.

I put the disc in my purse and walked out of the coffee shop and headed to work.

Throughout my drive to work, I thought about how to make Mr. Jones play

the second CD. Yes, I had already decided to make him play it. The first CD seemed to do him good. I had high hopes that the second CD would be the same. But as I arrived at the office, I still had no idea how exactly I was going to get Mr. Jones to play it.

After checking for messages, I took out the CD from my purse and just looked at it, as if looking at it somehow would give me an idea as to how to make Mr. Jones play it. That's when Mr. Jones walked into the office. He looked at the disc.

"Is that the second CD?" he asked.

Not knowing what else to say, I simply replied, "yes."

"Good, I was expecting it." He grabbed it from my hand and immediately took it to his office. After the sales people came into the office and checked in and went out on their sales calls, I sneaked into Mr. Jones' office to check on him. He was facing away from the door to the executive suite and was staring at his computer screen. The screen simply flashed shapes and colors and I could hear soft music. Just like last time. Was it hypnotic? I suppose it was. Suspecting that Mr. Jones was in some type of trance, I relaxed and started to look for the first CD. I was careful not to make any noise that would break his trance. After a quick search, I found it on his desk. I took it and quietly walked out of Mr. Jones' suite.



For the next couple weeks, everything was as it should be. The office ran smoothly, almost to the point of tedium. Each morning Mr. Jones would go into his office for several hours and not make a sound. Around lunch time, I would break his trance by buzzing the intercom, asking him what he wanted for lunch. He almost always ordered a steak sandwich from Charlie's Restaurant. Then, after lunch, I had to remind him to get his work done.

Usually, I wouldn't have to tell him that, but he seemed to be avoiding the basics of his job lately. He was always the procrastinating type, but these days it seemed that his procrastination was getting worse. I was starting to get a few complaint calls from clients that did not receive a call back from Mr. Jones even after leaving multiple messages. I had to remind him about the calls, sometimes multiple times before he returned them. The sales staff was also beginning to complain a little. They were not happy that they had to wait to get answer on a discount request.

One day, Jim called, demanding to speak to Mr. Jones right away. I told him that Mr. Jones was on the phone and that he would call back soon. After I hung up the phone with Jim, I went to Mr. Jones' office to deliver the message and got a huge shock. He was sitting in his chair with one of his bare feet on his

desk and he was painting his toenails blue.

“Damn it Cindy, how many times do I have to ask you to knock first!” he was fumbling to hide his feet and the nail polish. His face was red from embarrassment.

“I’m sorry,” I said, trying to catch my breath, and was about to leave.

“It’s alright,” he said before I could leave. He sat up straight and proud, to look in-command and nonchalant. “Well, this is a little embarrassing. You see, I’m trying to... Get along with my wife and she commented the other night that she was having trouble reaching her toes to properly paint them, and... Well, I lost a bet. Now, I have to paint her toes for her. I... was just practicing. It’s nothing unusual. Besides, it’s blue,” he said putting back his feet on his desk to show me. “It’s dark blue, not baby blue, it’s very masculine,” he said.

I didn’t know what to say. But I’m sure my expression showed that I was still in shock and didn’t believe his excuse.

“Cindy, you won’t tell anyone?” he asked with a pleading look.

“No sir, I won’t tell anyone and yes sir, it’s *very* masculine,” I said.

With visible relief on his face, he again started to paint his toes. “You know this is much harder than I thought, I may need a lot of practice,” he said. “And... um... I need to see how different colors look... That way I can give good recommendations to my wife. Cindy, can you go buy some nail polish on your lunch break? Just use our corporate card.”

“I’m not sure if that’s appropriate,” I said.

“Please Cindy, I’m trying to save my marriage,” he pleaded. I could hear the desperation in his voice. He had never used this tone of voice with me. He had never been anything but business-like and authoritative. I guess I had to give in.

“Sure Mr. Jones, what ever you ask,” I said. I was desperate to leave the room, and leave him to his peculiar little hobby, when he stopped me again.

“What do you want?” he asked, “why did you come into my office?”

“Oh,” I said, happy to be talking business again, “Jim called and he said he needed to talk to you right away.”

“Thanks for letting me know,” he said still giving all his attention to this toes.

During lunchtime that day, I bought him two nail polishes. Both were in what I thought were masculine colors of dark green and black. He seemed disappointed when he saw the dark shades I had selected. But he accepted them anyway, and began to remove the color on his toes in preparation of painting them with the new colors.

Apparently, Mr. Jones continued to paint his toenails over and over again and did not bother to call Jim back. Because when Jim came into office, he looked

furious. He yelled at me for forgetting to deliver his earlier message before he stormed into the conference room. I just sat at my desk and did not respond. Mr. Jones, Sara and I entered the conference room together and I was about to get drinks for everyone when Richard walked in and took his seat.

“*You son of a bitch!*” I heard Jim yell at Richard, “You stole another client.”

“What are you going to do about it?” Richard said standing up from his chair.

Jim looked for Mr. Jones to help him. This is usually when Mr. Jones got involved and yelled at both of Richard and Jim. But he just sat there, looking scared of Richard.

Richard, noticing that Mr. Jones was not going to interfere, grabbed Jim by his shirt and pulled him towards him over the conference table.

“Stop acting like little boys,” Sara finally interjected. “This is an office not the jungle. I swear that you are going to kill each other.” She turned to Mr. Jones. “Boss, aren’t you going to do something? I thought that your solution last time was fair. Split the commission.”

“Yeah,” Mr. Jones finally stated, “split the commission and stop fighting. You guys are really scaring the girls,” he said.

I guess Mr. Jones didn’t feel like giving his usual speech that day and just ended the meeting with, “if no one else has anything to add, well... I guess the meeting is over.”

He got up and quickly went back to his office.



The next day, after the sales staff left in the morning, Mr. Jones gave me a list of nail colors and asked me to buy those during my lunch break. The list included baby blue, yellows and various shades of pink and red. I didn’t question his request and just did as told.

From that day on, Mr. Jones would spend at least couple hours coloring his toe nails. He’d pick a color, admire it and then remove the polish and start all over again. I knew this because he would ask me to come into his executive office and ask my opinion on how well he did the job. This really bothered me because I knew that his fascination with his toes began after he started to play the CD. I figured the CD had to have something to do with it. I felt really guilty about it. That’s when I started to question if I should continue to help Mrs. Jones.

I also worried about our company. Mr. Jones continued to spend all his mornings alone playing his CD and with his new hobby he didn’t have much time to do any work. I really had to pressure him to even return calls. Unlike in the past, he didn’t even bother to look at the files before calling the client back.

Without any knowledge of what he was talking about, he was unsure and hesitant, and that caused the calls to usually go bad. Then the sales staff would complain to me. Like I was responsible for this mess? Maybe I was. Regardless, why would they assume I could do anything about it? I guess they were afraid to complain directly to the boss but they were obviously unhappy.

It wasn't long before Mr. Jones started to wear slippers around the office when the sales staff wasn't there to show off his toes to me. I'd just nod and continue on with my work. Right before the sales staff got back, he would wear his socks and dress shoes and no one but me would know that his toes were painted.

I knew that Mrs. Jones wanted revenge on the man, but until then, I didn't know what this revenge entailed. But now it was obvious, that it entailed ruining Mr. Jones. It was meant to humiliate him and also possibly cause him to lose his job. It was a matter of time before someone walked in at the wrong time and saw what he was doing. I really wished that my father was still alive. I could lean on him when times got tough. But without my support system, it was very difficult for me.

The only thing that allowed me to not go in full panic mode when Mr. Jones walked around in his slippers was the knowl-



edge that we rarely got visitors without an appointment. Our mail man and delivery guys came in each day around 10:00 in the morning. Mr. Jones knew to stay in his office during that time. But one day, a man showed up around 11:00 a.m. without an appointment. He was a tall young man that could easily be described as the “tall handsome type.” He wore an expensive looking suit.

Luckily Mr. Jones was still in his office. Nonetheless, it reminded me that we needed to be more careful. The man’s name was Peter Smith and he told me that he was there to apply for a salesman’s position. When I told him that he needed to make an appointment, he told me that he knew Mr. Jones well and that Mr. Jones would see him even without an appointment. I used the intercom system to let Mr. Jones know that Mr. Peter Smith was here to apply for a job. When Mr. Jones did not respond, I decided to go to his office. Mr. Jones was in trance, still playing the CD, so I had to wake him from his trance. Once I was able to get Mr. Jones’ attention and let him about Mr. Smith, Mr. Jones smiled oddly. “Good old Peter,” Mr. Jones said while continuing to smile. “By all means let him in.” I had to remind Mr. Jones to put on his socks and shoes and to put away the nail polish. After making sure that Mr. Jones did so, I left the executive office and headed towards my desk.

As soon as I returned to my desk, I told Mr. Smith that Mr. Jones would see him now. Mr. Smith quickly entered the executive office and closed the door behind him. About ten minutes later, Mr. Jones asked me to join them in the executive office. When I entered I was surprised to see Mr. Smith on his knees in front of Mr. Jones who was standing.

“Go ahead,” Mr. Jones stated to Mr. Smith.

“Please, I am begging you, Thomas” Mr. Smith said, “please give me a job.” I was obviously called into the executive office to witness this act. This must have been very humiliating for Mr. Smith and I felt terribly sorry for him. I knew that my father would not approve of such behavior.

“Fuck off,” Mr. Jones said and laughed.

Mr. Smith quickly got off from his knees and without saying anything, turned around and headed out of the executive office, passing me on his way out. I followed him out of the executive office. After making sure that the door to Mr. Jones’ office was closed, I said, “I am really sorry that he treated you that way.”

Mr. Smith turned around and looked at me in my eyes and smiled. He then paused before saying, “Don’t worry about it. Thomas has always been a jerk and I knew that this could be his response. I was just stupid and desperate enough to ask for a job.”

“I am still sorry,” I said, “He shouldn’t have treated you that way.”

“What’s your name?” Mr. Smith asked.

“Cindy,” I replied, “Cindy Webster.”

“I’m Peter,” he said, “Well, Cindy, I’m sorry that you have to deal with him every day. That must be very difficult.”

“It pays the bills,” I said.

“I wish you luck,” he said then left our office.

I thought that it would be the last time I would see Mr. Smith but I was wrong.

That month ended before I knew it. The evening before my next meeting with Ms. Jones, I waited until everyone else left the office and gathered that second CD. With both discs in my purse, I went home.

I fussed around, already nervous about tomorrow. I barely ate my dinner. I did find a little bit of solace in a bottle of wine, though. As I prepared to go to bed, I looked at both CDs, as I had laid them out on the kitchen table, and I began to cry. These CDs were destructive things that were designed to tear down a man. I had played a part in this destruction. Sure, I was pressured into playing this role, just like I was pressured into the tryst with Mr. Jones. But that didn’t relieve my guilty conscience. What could I say to Mr. Jones, after he was humiliated? “I am sorry, but it wasn’t my idea.” It sounded so lame. My father would definitely chastise me. But what could I do? Could I really stand up to Mrs. Jones and tell her that I can no longer help her. I felt so weak. I needed support. I called my mother again to ask for her help. But as usual she was no help. She just kept talking without really listening.

“Mother,” I said, “it’s me. I need your help.”

“Are you eating right?” she asked, “did you gain weight?”

“No,” I said, “my weight is fine.”

“Are you on a diet again,” she said, “I read in an article that crash diets don’t work.”

“I am not calling about that,” I said.

“Did you eat dinner?” she asked, “it’s already nine.”

“Yes, mother,” I lied, “I didn’t want to get lecture from her about eating three meals per day.”

“Is it about a man?” she asked, “Did you finally meet someone.”

“Well it’s about a man,” I said, “but not what you think.”

“Oh my God,” she said, “you are pregnant? I told you about men. You have to...”

“No, mother,” I said, “I’m not pregnant. I’m not even dating anyone.”

“Why not?” She asked. “How you are going to marry if you don’t date? You are not getting any younger. Men don’t like old women.”

“Mother,” I said, “I need your advice on something very important.”

“You remember Lance, Jane’s son,” she said, “Jane tells me that Lance is go-

ing to graduate soon and he is single. He is a good boy. I can set you up.”

“Mother,” I said.

“You could do much worse than Lance,” she continued, “I can set you up.”

“Mother,” I said, “I don’t want that now.”

“You have to lower your standards,” she said, “you are not the *prettiest* girl, you know.”

“It’s not that,” I said, “I just don’t feel like dating any men right now.”

“Oh my God,” she said, “are you telling me that you are lesbian? I always suspected but... Oh my God!”

“No! I am not a lesbian!” I said. “Mother, I got another call.” I lied again. I lied twice in one evening. I hated to lie to my mother but what could I do? “I’ll have to call you back.” I quickly hung up the phone. I should have known better then to ask my mother for help. I wished my father was still alive to help me. He would know what to do.

THIRD MONTH

That night, I couldn't sleep. I kept repeating, in my mind, Mrs. Jones saying the word "revenge." Now that I knew what the CDs were doing, I shouldn't help her. I couldn't help her. My father wouldn't want me to help her. I had never imagined this kind of power existed, and I was terrified I was playing a part in it. Mrs. Jones was obviously trying to humiliate Mr. Jones. It wasn't right. I didn't want Mr. Jones to be a target of scorn. Sure, Mr. Jones may have deserved it. But that didn't mean that I should be involved in it. After a restless night, I decided to tell Mrs. Jones that I won't help her anymore. That's what my father would tell me to do.

The next morning, I woke up late, which wasn't a surprise since I had such a hard time falling asleep. I got ready as quickly as I could and got in my car. It was already 8:45 am, which meant if I drove straight to the office, I would be about ten minutes late. I knew from previous rare occasions when I was late that Mr. Jones would yell at me. If the prospect of being yelled at for being late wasn't bad enough, I had another problem. I had to tell Mrs. Jones that I couldn't help her. I had to tell her face to face that I could not participate in her revenge. I knew that she wasn't the type of woman that would take no for an answer. So I practiced what I was going to say and promised to my self that I would stand by my decision. As I pulled into a parking spot at the designated coffee shop, my watch told me I was really running very late. I hoped that she was still there.

When I ran in, I saw her sitting at the same table as our prior meetings.

"You're late," she said.

"I..." I began, suddenly losing all of words that I practiced in my head over and over again. "I am not going to get involved," I started to say "It's not..."

"It's a little late for that now Don't you think? You're already involved," she said, interrupting me. My defiance seemed to only amuse her. She brought an envelope out of her case and showed me the pictures of me with Mr. Jones again. "If you don't do as I instruct you, these pictures will be all over the news. That's the only other way to protect my family's assets. My family will suffer great embarrassment but you will be known for the rest of your life as the bimbo secretary that had an affair with her boss. Good luck getting a legitimate job after that. Maybe, you could be a stripper. You would need to get a breast job, but otherwise you will be perfect for that job."

"Please," I begged.

She placed her briefcase on the table and opened it and turned it towards me. "Take the CD out of the bag," she said.

I did as told. I still wasn't sure what I was going to do. I needed to placate

her, though. I would just decide back at the office if I'd go through with it.

"Now place the two prior discs in the bag and place the bag back in my briefcase." She ordered.

I complied with her order and she quickly closed the briefcase and put it next to her.

"Make sure he plays the third CD," she said. She paused to close the clasps on her case and then looked at me with a frown. "You may go now," she said, impatiently.

As I was already late, I quickly grabbed the CD, put it in my purse, got out of the coffee shop and drove to the office. Despite driving like a maniac, I was about twenty minutes late. When I entered the office, I heard Mr. Jones scream my name.

I quickly entered his office. "*You little bitch!*" he yelled, *How dare* you be late again, after I gave you that *warning?*" He looked right into my eyes, "you obviously don't like your job."

He was going to fire me. After all I had done for him, he was going to fire me just because I was a few minutes late. At that moment, I hated him. But was still afraid to stand up to him. I had to think quickly. Then it came to me. I knew what would distract him. "I had to stop by the store and get some new nail polish for you," I said, "I noticed that you were running out."

Mr. Jones looked confused, his eyes wandered for a moment and then they focused in on me again. He smiled and said, "I'm sorry for yelling at you Cindy. I'm under a lot of stress. Please forgive me."

"It's all right Mr. Jones," I said and was about to walk out.

"Where's the new polish?" he asked, pensively.

Luckily, I had an almost new nail polish in my purse and took it out and handed it to him.

"It's lovely," he said, taken with the shiny little bottle. He then glanced at my open purse. "What's that?" he asked, pointing to the new CD.

Not knowing what to say, I just handed the CD to him. "It's a sequel to the others."

"Thank you!" he said, very excited.

I left him alone with his new CD and the nail polish and went back to my desk and continued my work. Who am I kidding? I didn't get much work done that day. I was too busy feeling sorry for myself. I didn't want to hurt Mr. Jones. But at the same time I didn't want my affair to become public. Plus, he really was an arrogant jerk.

Hours of silence went by. He hadn't used the phone, he didn't buzz me. He didn't even come and ask what I thought of the new color on his toes. I started

to get really worried about Mr. Jones. Around lunch time I knocked on his office to check up on him.

“Come in,” he said. He was blowing on his finger nails while admiring the fresh coat of paint. That’s the first time I noticed how long his finger nails had gotten. They were definitely too long for a man.

“Um, Mr. Jones,” I said, “what would you like for lunch?”

“I’ve been drinking slim fit diet shakes. I think I’ll just have another,” he said.

That surprised me. He was so thin already. Why was he on a diet? Maybe it was the CDs. Yes; it definitely had to be the discs. I didn’t like this turn of events. I wanted to shake him out of it, but instead just played dumb. “Even on a liquid diet, you’re supposed to eat a meal during lunch,” I said.

“You are *so* smart,” he said, “but I don’t know what I want. What should I eat?” He blew on his nails again.

He used to be so decisive about what he wanted. “How about a steak sandwich from Charley’s Restaurant,” I said knowing that was his favorite.

“Salad,” he said, “I think I want a salad, and hold the dressing...”

“Are you sure,” I said, a little puzzled. He never ate a salad in my time with this company. I figured he was a strictly meat and potatoes kind of guy.

“I...” he said, “I’m not too sure.” He had a distinct look of confusion on his face, like one part of him was fighting another. “But I think I want a salad,” he said. He then thought about it again. “But if you think I should have a sandwich, maybe you’re right.”

“No,” I said, “If you want a salad, I will get you a salad,” I said, not wanting to get into a pointless back-and-forth. While I was going to do that errand, I figured I might as well remind him to get caught up on work. “You have several messages on your voice mail, and some of them are complaining that you’re not returning their calls.”

“Okay,” was his response, but he didn’t seem to care.

I left the executive office and called Charley’s and ordered two salads, one with ranch dressing and one dry. A few minutes later I told Mr. Jones that I was going to go pick up the salad. I told him, “don’t bother answering the phone and let the voice mail pick up.”

I took my time walking to the restaurant. I briefly thought about just not stopping and walking the hell out of this nightmare. Instead, I picked the salads up, and went back to work.

“Here’s your salad, Mr. Jones,” I said. He turned to face me. His eyes were wide open but seemed a little strange. His pupils were almost fully dilated.

“Thank you, it looks delicious,” he said, and then placed his salad on his credenza. Did the CDs change his eating habits too? This was becoming scary.

I sat at my desk and tried to organize some files but did not make much progress. I just couldn't get the image of Mr. Jones' strange behavior out of my mind. For the rest of the afternoon, I just took several messages, and apologized for Mr. Jones for not returning calls.

A few minutes before the sales staff was scheduled to be at the office, I decided to get Mr. Jones ready so that he didn't miss the meeting. I knocked on the door and Mr. Jones asked me to enter.

"You have to get ready for the meeting," I told him, "and you still have nail polish on your fingers and you're still wearing sandals, for God's sake! It shows the nail polish on your toes!"

He looked puzzled at first then replied, "You're right, Cindy. Please help me get ready."

I helped him remove the nail polish from his fingers and made sure he wore his socks and shoes to hide the polish on his toes. He thanked me again and we went to the meeting.

"Thomas!" Jim began as soon as we got into the conference room.

"Boss!" Richard, began.

"This joker stole another account," Jim bellowed, pointing at Richard. "If you don't fire him, he'll just continue to do this, and I won't have any more accounts left. As a friend, I am begging you to help me and put him straight... or I'm going to have to quit."

Richard got up from his chair again, "I'm getting tired of these accusations. Be a man! If you're going to accuse me of something," he said while reaching over the table. He grabbed Jim's shirt and pulled him towards him. "You talk to *me*," It looked like Richard was going to hit Jim.

Mr. Jones, surprisingly, looked frightened and just sat there while his friend was being physically threatened.

"Aren't you going to do something?" Sara asked, looking disgustedly at Mr. Jones.

She got up and came between the two men who were about to fight. "I'm getting a just little sick of this!" She then turned to speak to Jim. "It's obvious, Tom is not going to help you, so why don't you just quit."

That's the first time anyone called Mr. Jones "Tom." Before it was either "boss" or "Mr. Jones." Sure, Jim called him "Thomas" sometimes to get the point across that he and Mr. Jones are friends... But no one called him "Tom." I looked to see a reaction from Mr. Jones, but he sat there looking frightened.

"All right, then," Jim said with a look of regret on his face. "Get your hands off of me and I'm out of here."

Richard let him go and Jim turned to face Mr. Jones and said, in a disgusted

voice, “thanks for nothing, Tom.” Then he was gone. Mr. Jones went after him and I could hear him apologizing profusely to Jim as they walked away.

“I guess the meeting is over,” Richard said and walked out of the room.

When Mr. Jones did not come back, Sara and I also left the conference room. She left for the day and I waited a little longer in the office for Mr. Jones to come back. After a few minutes with no sign of anyone, I left the office and locked up for the night. I didn't see Jim again for a while. The next time I saw him in the office it was under very different circumstances.

By the next day, Mr. Jones seemed to just ignore the fact that his good friend quit. So everyone else followed his lead. It was as if he had been edited right out of everyone's lives.

I wasn't sure if it was the loss of his friend or something in those evil little discs, but over the next few weeks, Mr. Jones just didn't seem sure of himself. Richard or Sara would ask for a discount and he couldn't make a decision. He would ask me what I would do if I were him. At first, I was reluctant to help him, figuring I didn't want to get blamed for a bad decision. But when it became obvious that Mr. Jones could not make the decision, I started to advise him. I also found myself having to help him complete other aspects of his job. He told me what to do, between his nail-painting activities, but still asked my opinion.

One day, I heard a scream from Mr. Jones office. I quickly ran to his office and found him with what appeared to be a piece of paper with bits of hair attached to one side. His right leg was on his desk and a portion of his leg was devoid of hair.

“What are you doing?” I asked.



“My body hair itches,” was his reply, “I want it off.”

What he was doing, was a sort of homemade leg waxing. “Why don’t you shave?” I asked.

“It’ll just grow back,” he responded, as if it were the obvious answer.

“Mr. Jones, this going to far,” I said, “please stop this odd behavior.”

“I can’t,” he said. “I want to stop but I can’t. Cindy, I need your help.”

The look of desperation convinced me that he was telling the truth. He really believed that he couldn’t stop. I had to convince him to stop. So I decided to scare him with the possibility of exposure.

“I am not qualified to help you,” I said. “Let me call someone.”

“Everyone will know!” he objected.

It was working. He wouldn’t dare risk someone finding out.

I decided to add more pressure, and I so grabbed from my desk a business card from a beauty salon. I made sure Mr. Jones could see what it was. “It’s the only option.” I said.

“It’s too dangerous,” he said. That’s exactly what I wanted to hear.

“Then I am afraid you won’t be able to wax your legs,” I said feeling that I had a small victory. I turned to leave his executive office when Mr. Jones stopped me.

“Call the salon,” he said, “tell them I need to wax my legs for a swimming race.” He had called my bluff. “Tell them that I can’t come to the salon because someone may get the wrong idea. Tell them to send someone that’s going to be discreet. I will pay what ever they charge. Just put it on the corporate card.”

“Are you sure,” I said, “it sounds risky.” I hoped that he would change his mind.

“The office is empty during the day, except for me and you,” he said. “Besides, it’s either this, or I have to live with this hair. I can’t do that. We just have to be careful. Unless *you* want to help me, Cindy.”

Since there was no way in the world I was going to spend my time pulling hair off my boss myself, and knew that he wasn’t going to change his mind, I decided to call the salon.

Several minutes later, a lady came from the salon and I ushered her into Mr. Jones’ office. I went back to my desk as she worked on him.

For the next hour, each time a strip of wax was ripped off of his body, he screamed into a towel which I could hear outside the office door. I knew that she would not believe the lie about the swimming race. She definitely would know that it was a lie when she saw his toes painted all red. I just hoped that she was indeed discreet. By the time they were done two hours later, and the

beautician paid with the office Credit Card, Mr. Jones begged me to tell him what I thought of his new, smooth skin. He was still wearing a feminine robe that the beautician had brought with her. When I asked about it, he just told me that he bought it from her because it was comfortable. He raised the bottom of the robe to show off his hairless legs. His legs, especially, with his toes painted, looked like woman's legs. In fact, the only hair left on him was his eyebrows and the increasingly long-ish hair on his head. I asked him about his rather long hair he had let grow over the past several weeks, and he just ignored me.

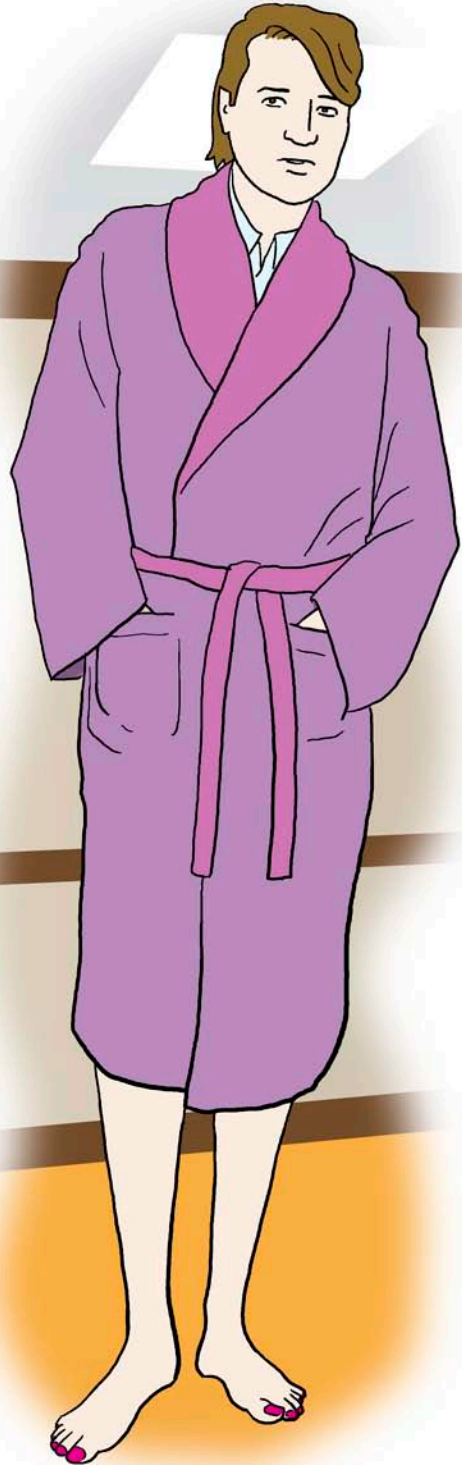


The very next day, I got a huge surprise. Mr. Smith called the office. Mr. Smith, the salesman who had been treated so badly. Correction – he called *me*. He wanted to have dinner with me.

“You were so nice apologizing for your boss,” Mr. Smith said, “you made the most embarrassing moment in my life a little more bearable. I was so filled with self pity that I didn’t even thank you. The least I can do is buy dinner.”

I needed some distraction from the things that were happening in the office. He seemed like a nice guy and knew that my father would approve. So I said “okay.”

He was waiting for me in the parking lot of our office building when I got off of work. He drove a black



Mercedes that looked very nice. As soon as he saw me come out of building, he quickly drove his car towards me, stopped the car, got out and opened the front passenger door for me. He was such a gentleman. I think I've only seen my father do something similar for my mother. He wore an expensive looking dark blue suit with a white dress shirt.

"You have a beautiful car," I said.

"It's all part of the image that a salesman must present," he said, "it's actually a little too showy for my taste."

"I hope you like Italian," he said, "I made reservations with Antonio's"

"That place is expensive," I said, "How can you afford it? I thought you didn't have a job."

"I just got a job," he said, "so we're celebrating."

On the way to the restaurant and inside the restaurant, he told me all about his new job. It was salesman position with a manufacturer and wholesaler of gloves used in various industries. It turns out he used to be a sales manager of another company that went bankrupt. He had no warning that his former company had financial problems and was taken off guard. When he checked with his friends for possible leads for a new job, he was surprised to find out that Mr. Jones was the president of a local office equipment company and that he had recently given a job to Jim. Mr. Smith, or Peter, told me that he, Mr. Jones and Jim and were all fraternity brothers back in college.

"Then I don't understand. Why was Mr. Jones so mean to you?" I asked, "he seems to be very fond of Jim."

"I was a senior and he and Jim were pledging with our fraternity," he said, "I was young and dumb and took the pledging thing a little too far. I made them do some crazy things. In hindsight, I realized that what I did was wrong. Later, I asked for their forgiveness but they never got over it. You see, it's actually my own doing. It's karma," he said smiling. "But it all worked out in the end. This new job is a much better fit for me. If I work hard, I have an opportunity to be a manager again soon. If I had been hired by Thomas, I would not have found this opportunity. Even if I had found it, I would have felt obligated to stay with your company."

"I am glad things worked out for you," I said.

"What about you?" he asked, "are things working out for you at your company?"

I seriously thought about telling him everything. He seemed so nice and helpful. He reminded me of my father. He was a lot better looking than my father but seemed to have the same type of personality. Unlike my father, I would describe Peter as dark and handsome. He seemed very confident and self assured. That reminded me of daddy. Maybe he, like my father, would be

able to help me. But I didn't know him that well and nice or not, a first date is not the proper place to tell secrets. "Everything is great," I lied. I didn't sound too convincing, even to myself. But Peter didn't press me on it.

Trying to change the subject, I asked, "Why were you surprised that Mr. Jones is a president of our company?"

He smiled. "I don't want to say anything bad about anyone. But since he's successful now, I guess there's no harm. Thomas used to be only into parties and girls. He almost flunked out several times. Don't get me wrong. He is very smart. It's just that he never applied himself. But I guess he has changed a lot since then. Becoming a president, even of a small company, is impressive at such a young age. He must've worked really hard to achieve such a success. I just hope that Jim also changed. I may've not shown it when we're in college, but I really liked them. That's part of the reason why I was so tough on them."

We had many more pleasant conversations that evening before he drove me back to my office building. As he stated good night to me, I hoped that he would end the date with a kiss. I closed my eyes as I turned my face towards him. But he didn't kiss me. He just opened his car door for me.

"I had a great time," I said.

"Me too," he said.

"Will you call me again?" I asked.

"Um," he said, "sure."

"Please call me," I said as I stepped out of his car. I again turned towards him and in anticipation of a kiss, closed my eyes. But he didn't kiss me. After a few awkward minutes, I entered my car. He waited until I started my car and was on my way before he reentered his car and left. I saw him drive away in my rear view mirror and really hoped that he would call me soon. I didn't know much about him but something told me that he would make a great boyfriend.

The next day, I thought that Peter would call me again and ask me for another date. But he didn't. I kept asking myself why he didn't kiss me that night. Did I dress too conservatively? Did I say something wrong? I hoped not. I desperately wanted Peter to call me. I would try harder to impress him if I ever got the chance. Every time office phone rang, I hoped that it was Peter. But it wasn't. As days became a week and I didn't get a call from Peter, I looked for and found his resume in Mr. Jones' office and thought about calling him. But I knew that my parents would disapprove. It wasn't ladylike to call a gentleman. So I decided to keep my mind off of Peter until he called. I kept his resume in my left top drawer, just in case I changed my mind.

After another day's work, I checked the calendar, and it was the evening before my next meeting with Mrs. Jones, I retrieved the third CD from Mr. Jones' office and put it in my purse. This was too much for me. My father would want me to stop playing a role in this evil scheme. I decided to tell Mrs. Jones that I

couldn't help her anymore. I chose to face the consequences. Even if everyone was going to know about my affair, I wasn't going to help Mrs. Jones anymore.