

Employee (OF THE) MO N TH

The relationship between a man and his (cute, adoring) female assistant can be...complicated. Still. This is extreme.

By Wendy Spero

So I thought it would be funny to give my boyfriend a blow job in the handicap bathroom at work. He concurred. We picked a time with low hallway traffic, snuck in one by one, and had a blast. (Yes, the handrail was helpful.)

Afterward, I experienced a renewed zest for the office and a strong sense of achievement. I shuffled back to my cube dying to tell someone. Actually, dying to tell my boss. He'd appreciate the story more than anyone and be massively impressed.

His door was closed—he was probably in a meeting—so I e-mailed him that an urgent matter needed immediate discussion. He poked his head out of his office and glared at me.

"Wendy, what the fuck is so important right now?"

I whispered a one-sentence summary and his face lit up like the nose on that awesome old game Operation. Then he kicked the other executives out of the room so we could order Japanese and fully gab. As we ate our sashimi, he beamed with pride.

"To giving head in a place of business!" he exclaimed, raising his bottle of Dasani.

"Long live the office hummer!" I replied.

Objectively, it was an absurdly good blow job. But telling my boss the story (and basking in his reaction) was probably the most orgasmic part of the entire escapade. In fact, I think it was the real reason I did it in the first place.

WHEN MY BOSS arrived at the company a couple years earlier, I had been working as an administrative assistant for two young, fragile, high-maintenance men in different departments. So when I noticed this sane-looking person setting up his office on his very first day, I marched in, pleading, "Save me..."

He laughed.

"I'm serious," I said. "Let me be your assistant. I'm really good at assistant crap. Sorta. Like, I'm good at phones. I'll be fun to have around."

I think I was simply too pathetic to reject—or maybe he was blinded by my neon-red hair—but he hired me. I remember feeling relieved to see pictures of his wife on his desk and to hear that a baby was imminent. He was really sexy, and I did *not* want to work for an attractive guy who was single. My new boss may have had a beard to die for, but he was completely off-limits. A perfect combo.

It's scary adjusting to a new supervisor. But at least mine was the "new guy" joining an already formed family. Together the department tried to assess its future administration. Will he insist on actually looking at our dubious overtime sheets before signing off on them? Or worse, is he the type to bcc:? We all agreed that this dude seemed nice enough. He dressed a little too preppy, but the J.Crew ensembles went well with his cherubic face.

There was only one red flag. When asked about his week-old baby, he said, "I love it so much, obviously, ya know, but, well, ya know, I feel a little weird kissing it. I mean, it's a guy."

My friend Jessi and I made intense eye contact. Were those the words of a homophobic frat boy?

But the very next day, my boss's boss visited our office and hollered to her assistant, "In five minutes you need to start rolling some calls, okay?!" (This is the retarded business practice whereby an assistant makes a call ahead of time and connects



her boss when the other person is actually on the phone.) Within two seconds, my boss hollered, with the same urgency, "Wendy, in five minutes you need to start rolling some joints, okay?!" I was in good hands.

And so the assisting began. Now, just to be clear, I am a really bad assistant. I am highly disorganized, have no short-term memory, and spill salad dressing on the message pads. But I offer something far more valuable than professionalism: an interesting office environment. I put Drakkar on the Post-its. I answer the phone with bad accents. Often I take significant pinchfuls of exceptionally prissy pink glitter from my makeup drawer and sprinkle it all over his budget reports. Once, early on, when my boss was doing his first on-camera interview, the reporter stopped and said, "Uh, people, we're gonna have to do that again. Sir? I... I think you have a sparkle?"

Afterward he called me into his office and said, "Wendy, I'm serious. I found glitter in my kid's inner ear. Enough."

"Look," I replied, "I'm never gonna be one of those typical, boring, 'legible handwriting,' 'efficient,' 'competent' people. So if that's what you want, then I have to leave."

"Calm down," he said. "I don't want you to leave. You're the best. Last Tuesday you stuck a gold star on my paycheck."

And for the first time as an administrative assistant, I felt truly appreciated and accomplished. I had always been properly thanked for specific tasks, but I'd never been particularly praised. I had never heard a resounding "Amazing job!" Probably because I never did an amazing job. But it's nearly impossible to do an *amazing* job at coordinating a conference call. You either coordinate the call or you don't. You can't put in tons of extra hours and coordinate the shit out of it. Because it is my responsibility to make everything go smoothly, my work is invisible unless something goes wrong. But this man noted my stupid little pranks and actually liked me for them.

My boss, it appeared, was a rare breed—incredibly smart and driven without being cocky. And most important, he didn't seem to take his job too seriously. There's nothing worse than corporate people who act like they're in the ER.

I GOT (PERHAPS TOO) seriously invested in our relationship the first time we smoked pot together. My boss had invited me to an office party at a bar. I was so psyched he had asked and so psyched to be out with him. There was this antique phone booth in the corner. We decided it would be fun to get high in it. As we walked over, it became apparent that Hugh Grant was leaning on the door. So my boss tapped Hugh on the shoulder and said, "Hey. We're gonna do drugs in there. Wanna come?"

"Okay!" Hugh replied, and the three of us tried to squeeze in. But there was clearly only enough space for two.

"Get out," I told my boss.

"No, I'm staying," he said. "I'm not gonna let anything happen here. I'm gonna cock-block Hugh Grant."

"No, you're not," I replied, and pushed him out of the way.

So I'm standing there with Hugh Fucking Grant (who definitely had foundation on his face), and as I passed him the one-hitter, I looked past him and saw my boss. Waving. Giving me a thumbs-up. And then all of the sudden Hugh started coughing in an embarrassing manner. "This grass is horrid!" he yelled. "You're poisoning me!" He had the audacity to insult my weed. And it was from *Amsterdam*.

"Well," I said. "You obviously can't handle good drugs."

He stormed out. And my boss rushed in, begging for details.

"He's an idiot," I announced, and we high-fived, then collapsed into the booth, laughing hysterically. Later, after a few more hours at the bar and a pit stop for fries at a late-night diner, he put me in a cab and insisted on giving me fare for the ride home.

In bed that night, I tried to identify what had been so darn exhilarating about the evening. Oddly, it wasn't Hugh Grant (or even Hugh Grant's makeup). The adventure seemed somehow different from a fun night out with a friend, but it wasn't romantic, either. My boss is hot, but kissing him would have been incest. Huh. It occurred to me that I had never been close to an older male figure. (My boss is only in his thirties, but be-

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cause he has a family and is so successful, he seems much older than me.) My father died when I was a baby. I was raised by a frighteningly feminine mother who only recently remarried. I decided I felt like a little kid who had just gone fishing with her supercool dad.

The next morning was a little awkward. Like when you wake up after a potentially problematic one-night stand. Attempting to break the ice, I walked into his office to show him a funny photo of a really, really fat pigeon. He wasn't there—he must have taken the new *Us Weekly* to the men's room—but I saw that he had framed this picture of me holding a trophy at a knife-selling convention (don't ask) and put it on his desk.

We started going to lunch every now and then, and I'd ask his advice about everything from serious boyfriend quandaries to writing my Friendster profile to understanding the basic concept behind a 401(k). He was actively concerned with my well-being, and this made me feel safe.

And then one night (after another work event), we went to this massive candy store he'd been telling me about for weeks. Turned out the massive candy store was actually very small—it just sold massive candy. Anyway, as we chomped on our golfball-sized Skittles and hugged goodbye, my adoration for this wise and caring hedonist became simply unbearable. "I love you," I mumbled into the collar of his jacket.

It made him extremely uncomfortable, and he pretended not to hear. Regardless, I was so relieved because it was finally out there. I wasn't *in love* with him. (Okay, maybe a little, in a subconscious, reverse-oedipal way.) I just loved him so goddamn much.

A couple weeks later, while we were quietly judging our col-

leagues' outfits at the company Christmas party, he said, "I really love you, too, Wendy."

And I couldn't stop smiling.

MY ODDLY PATERNAL AFFECTION toward my boss was probably accentuated by the fact that I was watching him become an actual father. The same man who originally expressed concern about smooching another guy (even though he was a week old) began kissing his son on the lips for five minutes straight.

I find the boy just as irresistible. When he smiles, it's like he's struggling to lift the corners of his mouth due to the weight of

in our booth at our Japanese restaurant—I'd be telling him the gory details about how my ex-boyfriend's schlong was actually too big, and he'd be laughing up a storm, holding up various glasses to guess the size—and the next I'd be back at my desk being told in a very strict manner to make copies as soon as possible. As if we hadn't just been talking about penises.

He also began to take his aggravation out on me (probably because we had gotten so comfortable), and I'd find myself crying to my boyfriend about how this other man in my life yelled at me about a scheduling mishap. Normally, it wouldn't have been that upsetting to get chastised by a supervisor. (I'd been fucking up at work for almost a decade.) But with him, I couldn't *not* take it personally, even though I knew he'd been up all night with a screaming baby and was simply in a pissy mood. Plus, I began to panic that my administrative errors would count against me as his friend.

Basically, my work life had become a totally fucked up, modern-day version of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* punctuated by faxing. And it followed me home at night and on weekends.

WHICH MAKES IT all the more relieving/difficult to leave him. My acting career has just necessitated a permanent, scary move to California. I am a born Manhattanite with zero ability to drive. I know no one in Los Angeles. I think I'm allergic to the sun. But somehow my biggest worry is that my boss won't love me anymore.

Even though we've spent a solid amount of time smoking really good bud, the feelings he has for me still stem from the fact that I've been his employee. Once I'm no longer in his face every day, will I become just another one of his many fondly remembered former assistants, getting a mere family-photograph card during the holidays? Or will our relationship transcend the job?

I wish I knew.

In the meantime, what's plaguing me is that he'll need to hire a new assistant. And there is someone already under consideration. About three months ago, I got off the elevator and spied a patch of short red dyed hair in a distant cube. As I got closer, I saw that the head was attached to a frilly Betsey Johnson dress.

Some imposter who looks exactly like me had started working on the eleventh floor.

Coworkers tried to assure me that there could never be a second Wendy. But my boss mocked my pain and referred to her as "New Wendy." "Hey, there goes the newer version of you," he would say.

I kept passing her in the hallway. "Hi!" she'd chirp, and I'd barely make eye contact. Finally, I forced myself to address the situation head-on. "So," I said one afternoon when I ran into her in the stairwell. "Uh... guess we look like each other, huh?"

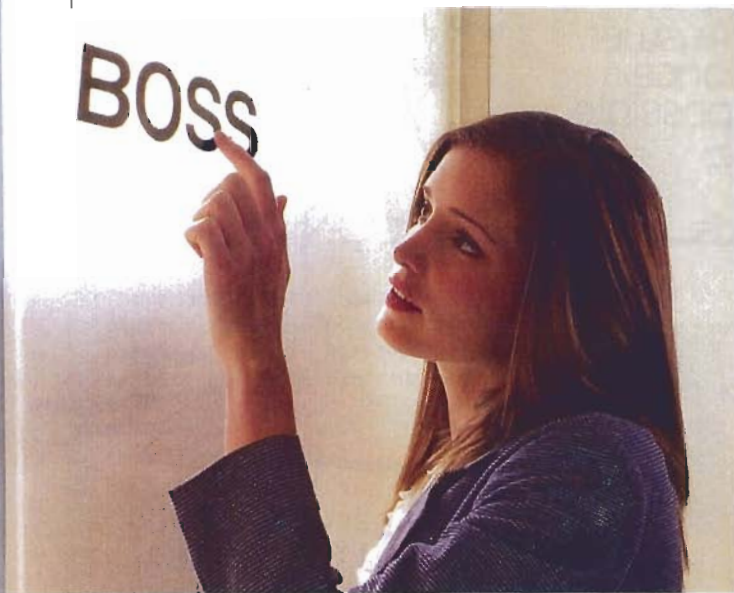
"Yeah... heh," she said.

I glared at her hair, sending a subtle but unmistakable message. And the hue of her do got slightly brownish the very next day.

But guess who just inquired about my position? Dealing with the traumatic separation from my boss is one thing. Imagining someone else, particularly a woman, sitting in my chair attending to his needs (probably in a way more reliable manner) is quite another. But having that person resemble me? That is... *unacceptable*. If he really loves me, he won't hire her. This will be his first test.

Meanwhile, I've arranged for a young, intimidated male temp. I guess I'm okay with that.

Wendy Spero's first book, Microthrills, will be published next year by Hudson Street Press/Penguin.



his puffy cheeks. He needs a cheek bra. And there's no end to the cuteness. He's cute and he's cute and he just continues being cute. There is no closure, no cuteness orgasm. His thigh is like a juicy calzone. I want to devour him. People are always saying, "Oh, look at that child, he's so cute, I could just eat him up!" But I mean it. After a few visits to my boss's apartment, where I'd play with the child for hours, I started to feel like a peripheral member of the household. A sort of lovable borderline stalker. With a growing urge to consume the entire adorable family.

One evening I stayed after the kid's bedtime and convinced my boss to smoke a joint and hang out. When his wife got home, she put on her pajamas and said, "I guess I'll hit the sack now."

"Okay," I said. "Great to see you!"

And then my boss and I stayed up for another hour watching *The Matrix* and munching on Corn Pops. Maybe it was the marijuana, but as I left, I got a little paranoid. His wife had never been anything but incredibly welcoming to me, but I wondered whether I might be just a little annoyed if my husband's secretary was in my living room at midnight, being excessively giggly and eating all of our breakfast cereal.

Weirdly, though, it didn't seem to bother her. If anything, it brought us closer. I began bonding with her about his moods. "Don't talk to him this afternoon," I'd warn her. "Just e-mail. Trust me." I was proud to be the official Other Woman in his life, monitoring his mania.

But soon this level of intimacy began to fuck with my mind. My boss called the shots both professionally and personally, and the gears would shift too fast. One minute we'd be sitting