

FILE UNDER: SECRET DESIRES

TO HIS COY COLLEAGUE

I had a dream last night:
You kicked off your pumps,
I loosened my tie,
and together we ran through a field
of yellow Post-Its;
Climbed the green and white
slopes of piled ledgers:
A years worth of payables and receivables.
At the cliff's edge we found the sea:
Shimmering blue-black toner stretching
to headquarters and beyond.
I held you close,
Tighter than ever before:
Your plastic ID badge,
Clipped to your skirt,
Gently gouged my thigh.

-Dean Frazier, Purchasing manager (Cleveland)

THE TRIP

I wasn't looking for love
When we went to Omaha for that seminar

And I wasn't even thinking about you
when we sat next to each other on the American Eagle 737
You with your Powerbook®
Me with my ThinkPad®

And I wasn't thinking about you
when I went to bed that first night
and stayed awake for hours
wondering if Glifinglad got the FAX I sent him
in time
and if it was satisfactory

But then at breakfast
You had such a relaxed look about you
And your lipstick wasn't perfect
The way it always is at the office
And your suit was a little wrinkled
You didn't seem so prepackaged

You were suddenly a woman, not a coworker

And I couldn't wait until later
After the seminar
Back at the Courtyard by Marriott ®
When I would have my chance
Maybe
To be alone with you
Take a swim in the heated pool
Maybe
Or ride the Lifecycles next to each other
with the CNN Business Report on the TV
And we would share the day on Wall Street together
And then dinner
And we'd walk through downtown Omaha
Or go for a moonlight drive to the beach
(Beach? What beach?)
Or to wherever the hell people go in Omaha
And I'd kiss you passionately on the lips
And we'd go to heaven and back in the Avis midsize
And we'd both know that it could never be anything more than this one
night
Because of the office politics
Because of Dave Leary who would make a stink
But we'd have this one night
On our trip

If only I could figure out a way
To meet up with you
by accident
But the Courtyard by Marriott ® is a big hotel
A full service hotel
It is a comfortable place to spend the night
The beds are firm and comfortable
The way your arms would have been
Your bed was so comfortable
You told me the next day
as we sat next to each other
on the 737
filling out our expense reports
that you had fallen asleep without even bothering
to go downstairs for dinner
While I
And I did not mention this of course

I wandered the Goddamn full service Courtyard by Marriott ®
Its dining rooms and its workout facilities and its out door and indoor
pools and its business services station and its lobby and its bar and
giftshop and hallways
Until 2 a.m. hoping to find you
And God knows what I would have said if I had
And what you would have said
It's all probably just as well
But I cannot stop thinking about the smell of your hair
the next morning
as we carried our overnight bags out to the car
And could not figure out which green midsize was ours
There were so many
And you laughed
You brushed your hair out of your face
and we were close together
and some of the hair wiped against my nose and mouth
I wanted to grab you then
But I didn't
And it's just as well

-Bill Peel, Community Relations Director (Houston)

TEMP

When I first saw you
It was through the doorway of the Xerox room
The light from the Canon copier struck your face
like the sun brightening the day

You lifted the document tray
and the earrings hanging from your lobes
jiggled

Something was wrong
Something was very wrong

You seemed to have gotten double-sided copies without wanting them

Your angry voice rose above the drone of the machine
Damn! Fuck!
And then you noticed me and turned away
You muttered I'm sorry
You were talking to me!
But I couldn't talk back

I was so intoxicated with your beauty
And I wanted to take you away from
that Canon copier
I wanted to punch it in the drum and rescue you
I wanted to say, Listen to her! Damn it!
Do as she says or I'll destroy you
I wanted to take you back with me
to the executive wing
where the floors are hard wood
where the light is soft
where you can have a drink and a snack any time
I wanted to give you my office and let you send ME to make copies

But I already have a secretary
And she is Nathenson's niece
She is a bitch
She wears too much makeup
She is always going to the bathroom
I think she goes in there and masturbates
And flushes the toilet to muffle her screams
I've heard other secretaries gossiping
And if there was some way
To get rid of her
I'd hire you
If I could find you
But you were only a temp

I didn't even get your name
And now it is too late
Personnel doesn't know it either
Neither does Ms. Francis who was supervising you
Or else she won't tell me
Because she knows I'm in love with you
And she's jealous
That anyone would be in love with anyone
Because no one would be in love with her

So you are lost forever
And if I was that Canon copier I would have flashed my camera at you
While you weren't looking
And captured your beauty
Forever
On a 256-color emulation

-Dave McNabb, Jr. VP R&

FILE UNDER: LONELINESS

MY OFFICE

When I had to share a cubicle

It was terrible

It was a nightmare

It was humiliating

I had an MBA

What the hell was I doing sharing a cubicle

With some kid who didn't even finish college?

Bill used to hog the phone

He hung his personal photos and other artifacts all over the cloth walls leaving me barely enough space for my daily Filofax™ wall planner

Bill's hair was always a little wet

His face had a wetness about it

A just born wetness

Shiny

That made me afraid he'd somehow drip onto me

And mess everything up

And I had lots of plans back then

But my most urgent plan

was to get my own office!

Now I have my own four walls

My own phone

With a hands free capability

There is a secretary outside

And she is good to me

Very professional

But I miss Bill

Isn't it strange?

He no longer works for the company

He got another job

I think he's in Seattle now

Working for Riboflex Windows

A unit of Gleason Construction Materials Corporation

I wonder if he misses me

Probably not

Bill was always good at making friends

He knew how to be close to people

Even if he didn't know them

I guess I'm a recluse

I guess I'm a loner

I don't want to be

It makes me sad

I wish there was a way to have someone share this office with me

But that sort of thing isn't done

You get your own office and you are happy then

And you are supposed to want a bigger office next to other, bigger offices so that you get interrupted less often

And that scares me

I think that if I ever get an office that is as big

as Fiori's office that I will find myself

Going out through the window

Bill won't come to the funeral

He'll learn many years later what happened to me

And he'll go, "Oh... Mmmmmmm..." And shake his head

He'll take a deep breath

And forget about me as quickly as he can

-Len Marcus, Legal Affairs Director (Miami)

FILE UNDER: DEATH

VIRTUAL OFFICE

Lou's office is dark now,

the PC cold and silent

the mini-blinds drawn tight,

the room empty

except for

the chipped black metal desk

with the walnut veneer
except for
the pair of chrome
and orange fabric
side chairs on which he used to stack
old issues of Barron's
and Fortune.
(The chairs sit empty now too,
the last unwanted magazines
stacked in the hall
and marked "basura"
for the cleaning crew.
All the good issues,
the ones with articles on
"reinventing competition"
and "creating a virtual office"
got picked over
the same afternoon
the vanpool left for the cemetery.)

Lou's office is empty now --
nothing coming in the "In" tray,
nothing going out the "Out" tray --
the desk drawers hollow
and bare
except for
a few limp and discolored
rubber bands and
unused packets of
salt and pepper
from years of half-eaten
lunches at his desk.

A company phone directory,
pages torn and dangling
from its comb binding
lies sprawled on the credenza:
the cover photo
a glittering black and white
of our glass cube headquarters.
Somewhere inside,
around page 9,
you can still read Lou's name
and extension:
1638.

Punch in the number and
who knows?
Perhaps you'll get the new temp
down in Accounting
his voice swollen with fearless
self-importance: "Payroll! This is Tom!"
Or maybe Lou's voice lives on...
captured on voice mail
like a fly in amber,
forever promising
he'll get back to you.

-Elain J. Avery, Accounting Clerk (Buffalo, NY)