

Enough is Enough

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After giving birth to my son, I returned to work to a few surprises. I was employed by an import/export company. The company made children's book bags imported from China. I was a sales assistant and my job required a lot of follow up with sales orders, design, production, and warehousing. I worked on the computer all day. I would remain working with the same sales executives I had been assisting for the last five years. Since I was last employed there, the company had hired a new sales manager. I was told I would be working with him very closely. Under him, I now had more responsibility; for example, I would manage larger accounts, ones that required me to be very detail oriented. My co-workers warned me about the new sales manager: "He is very arrogant, and a very difficult person to work with." I was told, "Just be careful." My guard was up, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

My office was located at 33rd Street in Manhattan across from the Empire State Building. The energy in the area was always uplifting and motivating, people talking business while on their cigarette breaks, tourists taking pictures of the skyscrapers, workers buying Starbucks at the corner, and, at night, the lights of the Empire State shining brightly in different colors. It was, unfortunately, also where I once witnessed a man jump off the Empire State Building. His leg landed a few feet away from my building.

Upon entering our office you would see beautiful showrooms with a sea of book bags. Most of the bags had either a cartoon character or some kind of superhero printed on them. I worked out of a cubicle covered with mountains of papers, large binders, coffee, food, cigarettes, shoes, extra clothing and a cell phone. There was no time for breaks due to the amount of work— I lived out of my cubicle.

The extra responsibility I was given was good experience for me. I learned a lot of new skills, especially when I traveled to different cities to learn computer systems for retailers. The systems were needed to set up items in a database, almost like a tracking system. I was involved with working with the buyers directly. I was a liaison between the sales team and the other departments within the company.

While I was very grateful for the opportunities life was giving me, I had a baby that I needed to take care of, and always found myself in a rush. I recall being challenged every day between completing my work and picking up my son by 6:00 p.m. every night from daycare. I was often late to pick him up because of being held up at work by my manager. I felt he was doing it on purpose. Everything started to become stressful, and I was always in a state of worry. I began to notice the sales manager was very inconsiderate towards my situation regarding my child.

He would give me last minute work. There would never be enough time to complete the task. In addition, his behavior started to become inconsistent. I did not know what to expect anymore. He began to open up to me about his love for wine. In my opinion, the love was excessive and the discussion was creepy. I acted interested because he was my boss. The smell of alcohol reeked out of the pores of this man, and he was often sleeping at his desk. His attitude and mood were very unpredictable due to his drinking. Some days he was your best friend and other days he didn't want to hear anyone else talk but himself. He would shout at me and the owners of the company. His favorite line was, "I have been doing this for a long time and all of you are still wet behind the ears." He often forgot what he said, which led to conflict because he would always turn around and say I was not listening when he gave instructions. He preferably would do this in front of the bosses to make me look bad. It was not me, however. I had done nothing.

I began to feel a lot of frustration and I dreaded going to work every day. I took days off when my child was sick because I didn't have a nanny at home, and my child always comes first. On my days off, the sales manager would bad mouth me to the owners because of the time I missed from work. My coworkers shared with me what they had heard him saying to the owners. He recommended that they hire someone with no kids. I knew very well that was discrimination, but I let a lot slide because I had to support my family. I suggested to the president that he hire a new person to take some of the load off of me. I asked with a lot of conviction and the tone was that of someone who is fed up. "I am doing the job of four people; you know that and so do I." I went into detail about the amount of work I was doing. It was easier and cheaper for him to give me a raise than it was for him to give someone a new salary, but for me it was no longer about money. I needed help and it would be in the best interest of the company to get the help. That way I could hopefully get my sanity back.

My recommendation went unnoticed for a long time. As the company began to grow, I started to feel as if I was being taken advantage of. The owners were penny wise and dollar foolish. One day the sales manager's wife, who also had a drinking problem, came to the office to visit her husband. I had a conversation with him beforehand about how overwhelmed I was. I thought he would help make the situation better. Just wishful thinking, I guess. My cubicle was very close to his office and I could hear everything. He and his wife were making fun of the fact that I was overwhelmed. "How is she is overwhelmed?" he said, "I help her with everything." His wife responded with a chuckle, "She is overwhelmed, that is a joke." Being in that cubicle was a living nightmare at this point.

That is where I drew the line. I reported him to the owners at that very moment. I told the owner, "I am so sick of this fucking guy!" I had had enough, no more holding back, no more trying to get help, and no more asking for things nicely. I was pissed off to the point of no return. I no longer wanted to work there or even in the industry. As I expected, nothing was done about my report. I did not know what to do or where to turn for help. I needed my job, and I saw no hope in sight. All I could think of was ways out of the situation. Not only was this man

putting all of this work on me, he was trying to intimidate and belittle me at the same time. I never met someone so awful in my life. The old man was not going anywhere, and I knew it was either him or me.

I needed a change and an opportunity presented itself. A friend of mine knew a young attorney who was opening his firm. I interviewed and I got the job. With great pleasure I went into work and resigned. I stood my ground, and I let it be known that it's not OK to treat someone that way. I felt this weight and stress lift off of me immediately. It felt good standing up for myself, and I wouldn't change anything about the day I resigned. Finally I was able to move on. I worked for the attorney for three years, and I loved it. My boss encouraged me to finish school, and this is why I am here today, pursuing a degree in legal assistant studies at New York City College of Technology.

Nominating Faculty: Professor Carole Harris, English 090W, Department of English, School of Arts and Sciences, New York City College of Technology, CUNY.

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