

12. THE BOSS

George wants me to report for work early tomorrow. I am prepared to do whatever he wants keep the organization together and running smoothly. If this is about sacrifice, I am ready to sacrifice. I am a team player. I don't know how things got this far. But I am ready to go down with this sinking ship. It is what I have to do to keep my life together.

George is trying to impress us with his insightful management style. What could we have done differently to avoid conflict?

You could have started by not being a DICK!

Conflict avoidance is first on the agenda

The primary cause of conflict in the organization is a component that does not fit. Take out the faulty component, power up the machine, and it will run as if there was never anything wrong.

The secondary cause of conflict in the organization is failure to abide by the rules of the group. This failure is usually due to a faulty component in the chain. First, test out the chain of command by reissuing the stipulated order. If this does not work, then you have a faulty component. Of course, the component must be replaced—no questions asked.

George is so used to making a mood face that the scowl just becomes permanent on your face. It's all part of a balance as I try to hold things together

I remember my prescription for myself. No violence before dinner.

My job is located in a sick building. Worse, I got to work the other day, and someone's perfume was really bothering me. I had a headache, and I was going to puke. I passed out in the middle of everyone. They're trying to revive me. All the while, George is making these jokes that I have a weak stomach.

"This job is made for someone who's tough."

When I came to and heard about what he said about me, I wanted to pound him in that gut of his. What we do for love.

I am sick of this guy lying to me. He promised if I made all these quotas of his that I would be in for a promotion. There is no promotion as he claims that the sales figures were down. If they were down, it was not thanks to me. I did a brilliant job. I'm making this company go. But not as far as he's concerned, I'm just a cog in the old machine.

The man can barely put together a sentence. I'm surprised that he can even get around in the world. That's why he directs this office. The blind leading the blind. The man even forgot my name. Remember it and know who I am. I've got your number, baby.

I actually wish that he was better at his subterfuge. Then I could pretend that he had some creativity. He doesn't. He is the absolute worse. He lies when the contrary evidence is staring him right in the face.

"We're expanding this division to Akron."

They close down a plant and move it out of the country. He doesn't even notice. He's buried in what he calls work and whistling the time away. I'm just waiting for the next bomb to fall. So much for leadership. This clown is leading us over a cliff. And we're all falling for his brilliance. Where's the net to catch me?

He acts as if his lies are part of a system. Their internal coherence blesses them with

truth. In other words, the more that you fuck up, the better that it eventually gets. I think that's what they told him when he got his MBA. I know the company is making a profit in spite of him. And he is pocketing more than his fair share. But we employees keep taking it in the chin. Is it time for us to bend down yet?

Every day I plot out what I am going to do to this rat. I hear that violence in the office is up. I wonder why. I don't need counseling. I've got to take care of a little problem. I plan to do just that when the time comes. I think about the day when I just storm past his secretary.

"I'm going to have to call security."

Security is downstairs munching on a pizza and taking a peek at the camera in the women's washroom. By the time that they make it up here, the action will be over. Of course, he is complaining about his bad back. Or his heart problems. I'm going to run that mother fucker until it collapses.

"Help me, I need some water. I'm dying. My medicine."

Now you've got a little of your own medicine.

"You don't understand. I'm doing all this for your best. Corporate central has made change. I have to adjust."

We need to cut ourselves free from corporate central. We need to overturn George's regime.

He has invited me in the office to praise my work.

"I wish that I had a hundred more like you."

But he refuses to talk about wages.

"You know I don't make those decisions. I send the recommendations to the central office. You're always high on my list."

What list? The shit list. I'm waiting for my reward. He's on my list. And I'm counting down right towards his name. Poor guy. He's going to regret the day that he was born.

"Make it stop."

"Why, you asked for it."

I'm learning how to make complicated things really simple. It's not like I am going to need a trial to resolve the sentence. Sometimes you have to take things in your own hands.

This place is becoming a regular gossip fest. They're still laughing about my collapse the other day. I can't help it if I live in the middle of hell. This place oozes with all kinds of pestilence. Everyone just takes it lying down.

I'm ready to stand up and let them know how I feel. If I have to take them on one at a time so be it. I know that I'm going to get a real pleasure about sharing myself with George. Once it starts with him, I won't want to stop.

I've thought that the best way to begin would just be just to use my fists on George. Then he wouldn't no what to do. Start pounding away. And once I drew blood, it would be such a thrill. Love at first sight, you miserable scoop of slime. Back to the waters out of which you crawled, you monster of the depths. I am really getting the hang of this. I could scream and scream and scream at the top of my lungs. And he would cower before a superior force. You never thought that you'd face judgement, shit head. Now it's in your face. I want to watch you suffocate as I give you the love embrace that I know that you deserve. Is this enough love, or do you want more? I just can't stop giving you what you so richly deserve, my love baby.

I know that they've written books about troublemakers like me. I know that George and his lackeys have read all the shit that they've written. They want to put this shit in effect so that they can finally be done with all my shenanigans. But it's not going to do very well.

I feel that I am on trial over this Brenda thing. I am feeling a little desperate. I thought that I'd use some of my leverage with her. That I'd do what I can to help advance her career. I know that she feels flattered that I would show her such attention. And one thing leads to another.

"Do it fast to me!"

Wow, it did seem pretty weird already.

"Just do it fast and get it over with."

And it get a little experimental if you know what I mean. And Brenda seems willing to try anything. Just as long as no one else finds out about what's going on. I think that she's trying to compensate for how she feels about her body. It's not as if she does this sort of thing all the time. She just surrenders herself completely to all this craziness. And it doesn't stop

I know that I'm taking advantage of the situation. As I said, I am feeling at the end of my rope. I really need something like this to hold me together. It's not as if I'm going to do this kind of thing again. But that's not what she thinks. She just acts like this really giving lover. And if she is willing to give and give. Then I am game. I merely have to suggest something. She is really getting off on games with my dick.

For her this is not just sex. She is so open because she feels that she is sharing a deep part of herself. If I am open to this part of her, then I will become more attached to her personally. So she doesn't see this as some kind of sport. This is something that lovers do. They lose themselves in each other's bodies. I have no respect for any of this. I have to admit, that I find it a little dirty doing all these things with her. And it keeps getting more bizarre. And she seems to suggest. I let her do what she wants. At least, she pretends that this is good for her.

Brenda never holds back. This is not a dirty deed for her. She believes every minute of it with her heart and soul. Even as I am taking pleasure with her, I am a little disgusted by it all. I know that this makes me a little reckless. And she enjoys how I am acting. But there is no way that I am going to do this again. Whereas, she is starting to like me more, I am just liking her less. And if she doesn't realize what's really happening, this is another fault in her character. I hate her because I am rejecting her. How reprehensible on my part. But that is how I feel. I would never give myself so readily to someone else unless I knew for sure that the other person was committed to me in some way. I have nothing to give her.

It does get weird next time that I see her at the office. I nod briskly to her, and then I turn my hand. I want nothing to do with her. I hate to be so mercenary. I have got what I want. And that has been just fine with me. But there is no way that I could go out with this girl. She detects my resentment. At the very least, she expects some kind of help on my part. I want to be the model employee. But it's not as if I'm going to waste my accumulated points at the firm on someone else. She was lucky that I gave her the time of day. Really lucky. I don't see a line of lovers knocking down her door.

I hear some rumor about her saying things about me. And there is this veiled threat implied in what she is saying. I know that George is afraid of a law suit. But nothing is really out in the open. So they get me to talk to the company shrink. And the company shrink is a

pervert. He acts as if it's part of his job. But he want to hear about all our activities. He gets a real kick hearing about her exploring tongue. And what she was willing to do. He writes all this in a book. And it's supposed to be private and all.

The psychiatrist totally violates doctor-patient privilege. But the company is protecting its ass. They have to make sure that Brenda doesn't have a case. And when they realize that they don't have a legal leg to stand on, they decide that they'll use the backdoor method to fuck me up.

George reveals a lot of the private details from my file. And I even see some graffiti about me in the washroom. I know that it didn't come from anything that Brenda said. Her resentment has been expressed more professionally. She is just seething beneath the surface.

Brenda may not have a lawsuit, but I know that I do. They want to do everything to quash my efforts. George isn't going to threaten my job at this point. But things just get worse. And if I already hate George, I am starting to feel even worse towards him. I am beyond thinking about doing harm to him. I just want to figure out how to dispose of the body.

Some of my coworkers make these lewd gestures at me. I know that they are making jokes behind my back. On the other hand, the women seem a little more open with me. They want to find out about my tricks in the bedroom. I know that George's strategy is backfiring on this account. He just doesn't know how to handle a lecherous soul such as me. I just don't know how long I can take it working here. I know that I am going to snap. I'm just not sure when.

I am not some kind of pervert. I just like it raw. I want it real. I love the body. And I hold nothing back. That is why I am surprised that I am being so tolerant with George. He has messed with my promotion. And now he has revealed my private files. What could be next? I have to act quickly to prevent something really bad from happening. I have to make something really bad happen.

I want to storm into the office and pound the fucker in the face. You have to know how great that will make me feel. To pound and pound and pound again.

"Does that feel like fun? Do you want to do things to my dick?"

I still am pissed at not getting my promotion. He is using me. I have sacrificed. I have given years to the firm. And what am I getting for all these years. If I could torture him for every second that he has had me in the wringer, it would be one humdinger of a torture fest. A veritable orgy. This is what I have in store for you, dear George.

As George cries out in pain, I will be my perfectly caring self. There's really nothing that I can do to help you. But I will give you a kind word. It's the best that I can do. And it really is a lot to share. It's the thought that counts. And my thoughts really are with you. But how is a thought going to undo the years of commitment that I have surrendered to the company without anything to show. I've got a life. I'm a man. And you've treated me like an insect or worse. Hey, I'm respecting your dignity. It's just that things have to end up this way. If this isn't fair, I don't know what is.

Good torture is not spontaneous. It has to be planned. I am giving you pain. But it is pain that has been constructed to maximize all the lulls. It truly gets you thinking about the advanced mind who has placed you in this situation. That is why I offer you this excruciating gift. Do no cry out, dear prince. The best is yet to come.

I know that George will want to die after he has experienced such a crushing effect.

Should I let the poor thing run off without that final climax? He wants the open-mouthed kiss. That is why he has been so severe with me. He is teaching me a lesson about mercy, and it is in such short supply.

“Please let me go!”

It’s not even time to negotiate. I’m doing all that I can to insure that your stay is replete with every discomfort known to man. A little tit for tat, this for that.

I give you tears for cries of agony.

“Release me.”

Why should I stop now? I’ve taken you to the heights, and there is a long way to go.

I am sure that George wants the opportunity to present evidence to defend himself. He wants a fair hearing just as he has done for me. Who is he kidding?

I am judge, jury, and executioner. Guilty, guilty, guilty!

I have ample motive for sharing my love with my superior. But if I acted prematurely, all the blame would fall on me. I have to use my wiles to devise the perfect end for this prick. As long as none of the suspicion falls on me.

I have to make the office work for me that way that it has formerly worked against me. I am able to get schematics of the building’s ventilation system. I discover what has been making me sick. The ventilation system has been releasing a small quantity of poisonous gas near my cubicle. This is due to some flaw with regards to the computer system. If the quantity of gas can be increased and diverted to George’s office, the noxious chemical can finally do its intended work. I will have to make a couple of pipes look as if they became naturally corroded and released the nasty fumes.

When George finally succumbs to toxins, they can justifiably say that the building killed him. I really had nothing to do with it. I just hope that I can be there for his final breath.

“Are you not man enough to breathe in the wonderful air that you have so graciously supplied out to your loving employees?”

I will not be able to have that satisfaction as I need to make sure that no suspicions falls on me. I realize that this will look like an accident. But I don’t want them investigating too closely.

I wonder if the operation will deprive me of the satisfaction that I so richly deserve. It’s one thing to want to kill George. But to let it happen in a way that deprives me of witnessing the act is almost as if the event is not occurring at all. That his murder will be replaced by this accident. It may be just too remote for me.

That is probably why others like me eventually get caught. They want recognition for their deed. Remember in my case, my motive is primarily revenge. If I am to be successful, I need to see the look on his face when he realizes that the act of love originates with me. I am at the center of this storm.

Some days I have had to restrain myself as I see him walk to the elevator from his car. I could mow him down then and there. But I would have all this blood on my car. It would be too much for even me to bear. I need to learn some way to minimize the mess that is going to result from this little procedure.

I wish that I could wave a wand, and he would go down. As I twisted the little stick, he would feel his gut contort, and the pain would be distributed throughout his body. A poison in

his food might have this effect.

“I don’t even realize what I’ve eaten.”

He goes through those periods where he tries to get hungry. I fear that he will live forever. At least, he might outlive me. I have to tamper with that version of events. He must go down and stay down before my watchful eyes.

Strangulation would be a preferred method. I could use surprise on my side

I have learned how to hack into the company files. My original intent was to do harm to George. But I get a thrill reading the psychological files on Brenda. I know that George already leaked my files. I want to go further in sharing Brenda admits to the company shrink that she likes men to drip semen all over her breasts.

“It makes me hot. I feel that it is a little perverse. I don’t even care if it’s a stranger. I just enjoy that sort of thing. Even at work. I know that some of my workers have abused that desire on my part. I know that they won’t like me. I just want to do it.”

I have such information distributed around the office. Brenda seems pissed, really pissed. I know that it will help her gets dates. Everyone has something to hide. I am just bringing these lost souls together. At first everyone is at each other’s throats. Then they all realize how easy it is to satisfy their most bizarre fantasies. It’s almost like a personal column in a magazine. George reassures everyone that it will not happen again. He fires the computer specialist.

In her sessions, Brenda admits to this deep level of solitude. That is why she is so driven. The job only makes it worst. I should recruit her to help me kill George. Then I could engage in some weird sex acts with her while George’s body lies in front of us. I am just doing my job.

How long is this going to go on? The abusive George. He has made monsters of us all. Brenda is almost the totally opposite of me. She vents all her hostility against herself. I take it out on George. Much healthier. If only I could turn her around. I could get her to do the nasty deed for me—WOW! I have a new idea.

“No matter who you are, I am going to get rid of you.”

This should be my cue to eliminate the lunatic. I feel that I will have to have sex with Brenda a few more times if my plan is going to work. I hate learning about her private fears. If it’s private, keep it to yourself. Besides I’ve read your files.

There are many things in those files that I kept to myself. If there had been totally open revelations, the office would have seen a mass revolt once I found the juiciest tidbits. The very exhibitionistic stuff. A lot of Brenda’s sessions dealt with her depression. I think all of that was aggravated by George. He has overworked her. He never offered her a chance to rest and cast off her personal cross. She turned to degradation as the only way to deal with her troubles.

I did find evidence that George slept with her. He has a wife. Semi-appealing in a gaudy way. But he loved the power trip with Brenda. She never expected a promotion. She often did it in spite of his cold reaction to her. It encouraged her in her self-loathing. She really has no courage to confront him. If she went over the edge, he could only plead innocence.

I now have this strange power over Brenda. I feel that I have this same power over others in the office. I can use their secrets against them. They will never know how I learned these things. I never even tell them. I’ll just share the same fears and the same desires.

“Yeah, I had to learn to conquer my fear of heights. Maybe we could jump off a cliff together.”

“Hang gliding?”

“No. But you can jump first. And when you get to the bottom just yell to me what it was like going down.”

Everyone just seems so open to suggestion. It is great comforting these sweet young things after the death of a loved one.

“My bother’s in the hospital.”

“That’s terrible.”

“It really is.”

“Can I do anything to help?” She puts her hand on mine.

Touching is the first step in her surrender. If I had a brother, and he was in the hospital, it was probably of my own doing.

I feel that I could lure her to a place of danger. She is not the only one. I could have a field day. But I have learned not to feast where I work. A little snack won’t hurt now and then.

With these personal files, I feel all the power of the organization at my disposal. It is like playing pieces on a chessboard. I am the master. No wonder George is so reprehensible. He uses his position against everyone. More than that, he uses his knowledge. He knows what buttons to push. He has these files sitting before him for his perusal.

I am sure that I could drive him insane with what I know. That seems like the perfect solution. What would it take for him to do personal violence against himself. He has protected himself so well up to this time. Even if his loyal wife found all about Brenda, she might find humor in the situation. Or George could claim that this was simply an error on his part.

“I’m so sorry. I’ll never do it again.”

I’ll never do it again (in her office).

With such confidence in himself, how can I break down his psyche. This seems like trying to upset a complex national economy. I might be able to shock one of the supply curves. But even upsetting a key commodity such as fuel can be compensated by adjustments elsewhere in chain. So the disruption is eventually processed by breaking up the components of commodity distribution. In other words, an influx of capital is able to erode a monopolistic deprivation on the home economy.

For George, the psychic disaster results in his dumping Brenda for a more accommodating woman in the office. And her appeals more than make up for Brenda’s screaming about her well-deserved revenge. Brenda finds other distractions, and George also discovers wonders to fill his daily appetites.

None of this is good for me. Brenda is just too tolerant of his inappropriate behavior. It’s not as if I’ve treated her any better. But much of my reprehensibility has been practiced in secret. George has been completely open with regards to his mischief.

I need to find some way to wear down George. If his hunger has grown more voracious, it is only because his satisfaction has proceeded leaps and bounds beyond his wildest imagination. This is one of the advantages of being the director of such a well-oiled machine. He is almost a god. How can I strip him of his pedestal and make him fend for himself among the wild.

I need to expose the dirty little secret. As long as he exhibits his prowess, then the king of the jungle will continue to roam triumphant. Where is the mouse that might scare off this

roaring creature. But how can the other employees possibly feel secure if this raging monster is allowed to prowl unchecked.

George's psychological profile reveals how a number of manias conceal beneath the surface a fundamentally violent type. These manic disorders more or less distract him, and, in some respects, mute the effects of his violent tendencies. These tendencies have been channeled into a complex system of rewards. Such are the benefits of his directorship. As his employees become more and more frustrated in this system, they manifest the very violence that is at the heart of his personality. We are all becoming more and more like George. Watch out little man. Her I come for you! I am your lover incarnate. I am the perfect complement for your ambitious personality. I mirror your savagery.

It is so obvious that my plans hinge on turning one of the other employees against George. That person will sacrifice security to act out the very aggression at the core of the self. How can I turn the mild-mannered Brenda into the lunatic killer who will finally seek her revenge against George? This experiment in social planning may see difficult under the circumstances. Brenda has been so mild up to this point. She turns all of her frustration inward. I have to completely transform her personality. This is not going to be easy. She has accustomed herself to her habits of degradation. It has led her to neglect her own health.

If we assume for the moment that Brenda is ready for a completely overhaul, will she only steal the fruits of this transformation for her own pleasure. This will only make her appear more attractive and foster more attention among her co-workers. The spiraling effects are obvious. She will become more immersed in a life of the libertine. This is hardly to my advantage. I say this from experience.

I decide to engage Brenda in a crash course. I may have to fight the rigors of biology and the web of trauma to release the swan beneath the duckling trappings. But that is my sacred task that I accept with all the commitment of an artist. I am creating an assassin. I take my task seriously. It is somewhat analogous to the sense of rivalry that is developed in cheerleading movies. As the ideal is fashioned, Brenda realizes that she is more and more envied by those around her. She perceives this envy as an affront to her. So her only solution is to try to eliminate her rivals.

In my tutelage, she is able to direct her aggression into a more rigid training program. She attacks the body. She is regimented about her diet. She works out twice a day. On the weekends she combines strength and endurance training. She runs, she bikes, she does weights. The girl is almost ready for the Olympics. She bears none of the defects that formerly made her cling to the earth. She is now reaching for the stars.

Dear Brenda is becoming somewhat of a celebrity in the office. She realizes that this only makes her more remote from everyone else. She needs to protect herself against encroachment. I am succeeding in turning a mild-mannered person into a killer.

I know that there has already been some resentment with revelation of personal material, But once a bad reputation has been established some of the employees felt that they had to outdo themselves. If they were attracting other outrageous types they needed to prove themselves to maintain all the attention. Even though this might seem like a distraction from work, it helped balance out a schedule full of drudgery.

Brenda rises above the fray. She is no longer subject to the petty intrigues. I have made

her ready for a masterful rise to power. I will rely on her will. I will submit.

All these days of excruciating pain have been focused on one enemy, George. She has done this to get back at her humiliation at his hands. She has attained a superiority over all her former peers. She expects worship, and she almost gets it. This feeling is a significant contrast to the resentment encouraged by George. Brenda is ready to strike.

How will she decide to use her new strength? She can direct all her energy to confronting him face to face. She can knock him down. She can pummel him. She can destroy him.

“I really think it’s better that I left the company. As long as I stay here, I am plagued by thoughts of revenge. My only recourse is to go out on my own. That way I can escape the cage. I no longer despise myself. I don’t want to act out my hatred against someone else.”

I was perfect in encouraging her to change. But I did not realize that she would turn her back on the company that inspired her change.

And so we move on and we move on and we move on. I have to tackle the sonofabitch myself.

“Do you know who I am? I am the angel of death. I am your one man grim reaper.”

And I pull him down and pummel him. He is gagging. I do not stop. He seems helpless. It gives me more delight. I will destroy him once and for all.

As his lifeless body lies on the desk, I have to think about disposing of the body. Then I have to escape detection. This is not going to work. OK, I won’t hurt him for now. I have to rethink this. It is taking much too much of my time to get rid of the bastard. And get rid of him I must.

When everyone returns from a long weekend, George is nowhere to be found. I am told that he was eaten by a family pet. The police stop by in the hopes that maybe they can find some leads as to George’s disappearance. I feel as if my prayers have been answered. I have had nothing to do with his demise. This couldn’t be better than expected.

It was difficult loading the guy’s body in the trunk. It wasn’t all that heavy. But it seemed to slip and slide. It was wrapped in layers of plastic to prevent the blood from leaving evidence around the office. No one was there when I did the deed. Enough people hate the bastard that they can be blamed for the deed. I really have little connection to him. For my part, this is almost a random act!

I can feel that the effects of death surround me on all sides. The demons can appear at any moment. I do not praise them. I do not serve them. I just take what they offer me.

Rage is this weird thing. You tell yourself that it’s not there. Then it erupts. It takes over everything that you do. And then it dissipates just as quickly as it arrived. Gone! It wasn’t me. I didn’t do a thing. I’m not even sorry. It wasn’t me. If I want to hide what happened, it is fundamentally because I had nothing to do with the consequences.

It just takes the littlest thing to set it off.

“You’re never going to go anywhere in this company. I can get rid of you at will.”

Get rid of me. No one is going to get rid of me. Least of all you. We are married for your descent into hell. Just a little push, and I slip over the edge. And once I begin to contemplate the necessary resolution, nothing will stand in my way. Nothing at all.

One day I have to take my car in for some minor repairs. They tell me that I can pick it up in a couple of hours. I go get some lunch. As I am walking out of the shop. I almost literally

run into Brenda. She is obviously a changed person. She is so cheery, not her former morose self. She agrees to come with me to lunch.

“I almost felt that you were trying to recruit me for a cult.”

I can't very well tell her my true motives.

“I just thought that you needed a change in your life.”

She is eating a salad. There is a real grace in her every gesture.

“I made the change. I got away from all that negativity. I'm even with a guy that cares about me.”

For me, she actually seems more exciting than ever. In spite of her confidence, she is still the same girl that she has always been. And she welcomes risk. If I didn't have enough to worry about, I would have made it a longer lunch.

Despite my success with her, I am a little taken aback that I could not turn her into the killer that I needed. I am still wondering what really happened to George. Maybe it was Brenda who now lives two lives. The bitter harpy and the charming ingenue. In a darker moment, she may have been the one who sent George packing for good. And now she doesn't even remember a thing.

The police show up at work to ask some questions of me. I am willing to oblige. They want to strike before the trail goes cold. I do want I can to help them. If George has disappeared, we need to find him.

“If you were going to get rid of a body, where would you do it.”

I think about the inanity of the question.

“Have you thought about the trash incinerator?”

That would be so anti-environmental.

As long as I'm around, you're never going to get another job. And I'll make your job miserable here.

Brenda is in a pair of tight jeans and white high-heeled sandals. She is really turning me on. She drops her wallet and need to bend down to get it. Her jeans pull down and I can barely see the edge of her ass crack. I slide my hands along her smooth skin. She purrs.

I reach deeper inside her pants. She is getting excited. She cannot resist.

When she wants something Brenda is unable to help herself. She just gives in. This appears to be the key to her behavior..

Her hands on his neck

Brenda, you need to squeeze harder.

“I am. It's just that he's putting up a fight.”

“You're stronger than he is.”

“I know. He's still struggling.”

The cop tells me, “George was belligerent. He could have drank too much and then pissed someone off at the bar. The guy could have followed him home and killed him along the way. Just dumping the body. We still haven't found it.”

I breathe easier. No one suspects me. I really have nothing to worry about. I cannot be stopped.

“I'm not like you. I'm not a hateful person,” she tells me. “I've done some stupid things. But nothing that would take over my life and control it.”

She has finished most of her lunch. She is still hungry. But it is important for her that she doesn't eat anything more. She has a changed relationship to her appetites. At least at a moment such as this.

The next day, I am called into a meeting with the directors for the central office.

"We were going to replace George anyway," one of them tells me.

"He told me that you planned to fire me."

"That was the farthest thing from the truth. We planned to promote you all along. You demonstrated your skills with your sales figures. George was going to be demoted."

The regional director has recently disappeared. The police suspect foul play. The CEO visits with plans to replace him.

"I'm glad that I could sit down with you face to face."

"What is this about?"

"George, you have done such a good job here. And the director is probably dead. We want you to take over."

"It seems like a lot of work."

"You're just the type who can rule with a confident hand."

Did he say **iron hand**?