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Secretary

By Erin Cressida Wilson

I got out of the institution on
the day of my sister's wedding.
I'd started to get used
to the place...

breakfast at 8:

therapy at 4:

You can call me anytime, Lee.
I will always try
and be of help to you.
Inside, life was simple.
Thank you, Dr. Twardon.
For that reason,
I was reluctant to go.
Bon voyage.
Come on kiss her, kiss her.
Give her a big wet kiss...
Save some for the honeymoon.
Hi, Peter.
Peter, yeah, who you
almost successfully forgot.
No, I did not.
Are you happy to be home?
I mean, are you happy
to be home?
How did you know?
I know what you mean.
Here's a little something
for the lovebirds.
You look so beautiful.
Thanks, Dad.
I thought you stopped.
Do you know how much
we missed you, pumpkin?
I missed you too.
You know what?
I don't feel so good.
Let's go sit down.
You want to talk to me
like a child.
I'm not a child!
Think I don't know what I'm doing?
You act like a child!

You don't act like a man.
You've been fired!
Well, I'm glad I'm fired.
I'm glad I'm fired.
Boy, I hated that job.
I don't care that you hated it.
You're drunk!
I'm not drunk. Why do you...
why do you... I'm not drunk!
Why do you always say that?
Get off my fucking back!
Watch this.
Watch this, huh?
Avoid the temptation
of placing your fingers
on the home keys by sight.
Strike each key so that your
fingers bounce with each stroke.
Do not strike without thinking.
Do not even attempt to steal
a glance at your paper.
'My flowers had just about
given up in despair,
so with the exception of a few
potted plants from the florist,
we're flowerless
for the first spring in years.'
And... time.
I'm so proud of you, honey...
being out in the world like this.
When my accident happened
we were in the kitchen
and my back was to her.
Upstairs, my dad was just leaving
for work at Havis Department Store.
Because there was
a limited amount of time
that my mom's
back was turned...
Lee!
- I slipped and cut too deep.
I'm not sure how
I could have misjudged.
I've been doing it

since 7th grade.
Just a precaution.
'Be a leader.'
I have never
had a job before.
But I can assure you
that I am very excited
about this opportunity.
Thank you.
Oh... well...
I don't have any references yet.
But I think that
the Municipal Tax Office
would be a wonderful place...
to begin...
my career.
'Secretary.'
Hello, I...
Wait. I...
Hello?
Hello?
In here.
Hi.
Hi.
Are you the lawyer?
Yes.
I'm sorry, I'll come back later.
- No.
No, stay.
It said, 'secretary.'
That's right.
Are you pregnant?
No.
Do you plan on getting pregnant?
No.
Are you living in an apartment?
- A house.
Alone?
- With my parents.
Siblings?
My sister is going
to live in the backyard,
with her husband,
in the pool house.

Are you married?

No.

Have you ever won an award?

Yes.

- What did you win the award in?

Typing.

Are those your scores?

Yes.

Lee...

Holloway.

Could you get me

a cup of coffee with sugar?

Do you really

want to be a secretary, Lee?

Yes, I do.

You scored higher than anyone

I've ever interviewed.

You're really

overqualified for the job.

You'd be bored to death.

- I want to be bored.

I have a part-time paralegal.

All I need is a typist,

who can get to work on time...

and answer the phone.

- I can do that.

We only use typewriters here,

not computers.

That's fine.

- It's very dull work.

I like dull work.

There's something about you.

You're...

you're... closed tight.

Wall.

I know.

Do you ever loosen up?

I don't know.

I'm not here.

Less sugar in the coffee.

How did it go?

Lee:

I knew you could do it!

'Hello...'

'Hello. You have reached the office
of Mr. E. Edward Grey.

Please leave your message
and the time you called
along with your phone number
and the best time to reach you...
and we...

will get back to you
as soon as possible.'

'We.'

Secretary...

Type up this letter and send
four copies to O'Malley & Barrett.
Right away, sir.

That's good.

That's good.

So you're the new secretary?

Yeah.

Excuse me?

What exactly is a paralegal?

See ya.

Okay...

up...

and... wide.

I brought you these.

I think I accidentally threw out
my notes on the Feldman case.

Maybe you could...

- Go through the garbage?

Yes, Lee, thank you.

Why are you here?

I'm just waiting for you, honey.

But I'm here for five more hours.

I know.

Excuse me, sir?

It's okay.

I found another set.

This needs more sugar.

- Sugar?

And six copies of these.

Freshen up that trap, Lee,
and put out one more.

Mice like to go behind

the chairs too, Lee.
Just because
it's hard to reach...
does not mean we don't
take care of every possibility.
Here, give me that.
Thank you.
E. Edward Grey's office,
may I help you?
We're very happy with AT&T.
Thanks, though.
Is he in?
- Could you just wait one moment?
You're right,
that is a very good offer.
I'm going back now.
- Could you wait one minute, please?
Yes, I do understand that.
Submissive.
Excuse me?
Edward!
Listen... I have no idea
if we make...
over \$40 worth of long distance
calls to Chattanooga each month.
Tell him it's Tricia O'Connor.
Mr. Grey?
Hello?
Mr. Grey?
Ms. Holloway.
Mr. Grey?
I'm not here.
Okay.
I'm afraid he's gone.
Is that right?
E. Edward Grey's office.
Is that you honey? It's me.
- Daddy?
It's so good to hear your voice.
Dad... where are you?
I'm downtown... somewhere.
Could you please hold?
Do you have a message, Ms. O'Connor?
Tell him to sign the settlement.

Hello?

Hello... ?

Hello, Dad?

How's work?

Fine.

How's Mr. Grey?

He's fine.

Well... Peter called.

Some people have to wash something...

as soon as they've worn it

for like half a day.

Yes.

- And then you got...

your more laid-back folk, who will

wash this stuff when it's dirty.

Which kind are you?

I'm the type of guy...

who wants to get married

and have a kid.

I wash my clothes

just when they're dirty.

Me too, and that

is what counts in a relationship.

Compatibility.

In a relationship?

- In a...

relationship.

May I interest you

in a little more?

Just a little more?

- Why not? Okay.

You're different than you were

in high school, Peter.

I've changed.

What happened?

- I had a nervous breakdown.

Me too.

Sort of.

Tom, I have this and these.

Peter?

- Yes, Lee?

I've read that if you wear that

kind of underwear that it squeezes...

your 'thingies.'

Balls... my balls?

- Yes.

My 'grapes'?

- Your grapes.

My...

- Your testicles.

Your sperm gets 'squozen'
and then you can't have babies...
and I thought that you said
that you wanted to have babies.

There you go,

I said it.

To babies.

Diapers.

Diaper rash.

Breast feeding and crying.

Vomit.

Look at it.

Do you see that?

- What?

This letter has
three typing errors in it,
one of which is,
I believe, a spelling error.

I'm sorry.

- This isn't the first time, either.

There have been others
that I let go...
in the first few weeks.

This cannot go on.

Do you know what this
makes me look like...
to the people who receive
these letters?

I'm sorry.

Type it again...
and get it right.

You're wasting my time.

Bye.

Go type up a bill
for that woman for \$500.

Aren't you going
to proofread the letter?

Lee...

when people come
into this office, ...
you are a visual
representation of my business ...
and the way
you dress is disgusting.
Sorry.
You're tapping your toe all the time
and playing with your hair.
You're either going
to have to wear a hair net
or stop playing with your hair.
And another thing ...
do you realize that you
are always sniffing?
I'm sniffing?
And what is with
your tongue ...
when you're typing?
I'm sorry,
I didn't know I sniffled.
Well, you do.
'Mr. Grey ...
thank you so much for
your helpful suggestions.
Because I am trying to be ...
the very best secretary
that I can be for you.'
The sentence should read, ...
'Without proper guidance
from a knowledgeable source, ...
my client would never have made ...
these material decisions
on her own.' Period!
I have repeated the sentence ...
Are you sure
you wouldn't like some wine?
We make it homemade,
don't we, Stewart?
Try it, it's good.
- Would you like some, Lee?
No, thank you.
Not right now, Sylvia.
Peter talks about you all the time.

He says he's found his soul mate.

Did you say that?

I did.

- Peter's sister Lindsey...

is getting married

this coming winter in Vegas.

Did you know Peter has

a very stable job at J. C. Penney?

They even gave him a cell phone.

- Perhaps it'll be a double wedding?

Mom...

Ms. Holloway.

Come into the library...

immediately.

'...the remarks made in print,...

in summation

of the events in regard...

to the Rubin Berkowitz libel.

Yours sincerely,' etc.

Okay.

The phone is ringing.

Answer it.

I'm sorry...

- Brr-ing!

Brr-ing!

Oh.

- Brr-rr--!

'Hello.

This is the office of...'

Listen... you're a big girl.

You can get a much bigger voice

out of that tiny throat of yours.

Tiny?

- Ms. Holloway,...

you told me when I hired you that

you were used to answering phones.

I am.

Did you get

enough sleep last night?

I...

- The phone is ringing.

'Hello...

this is the office

of Mr. E. Edward Grey.'

You see? You see?
That's showing a little spunk.
I'm not running a mortuary.
No.
Lee.
Mr. Grey...?
Come here.
Did you have a date recently?
Yes.
With whom did you have a date?
Peter.
- Peter.
Did you have sex?
No?
I don't know.
Are you shy?
I'm shy.
You're not shy.
You're a lawyer.
I'm shy.
I overcome my shyness...
in order to get things done.
I don't think you're shy.
Lee, I'm going
to be frank with you.
I know I'm your employer...
and we have
a proscribed relationship...
but you really should feel
free...
to discuss your
problems with me.
What's going on with
the sewing kit and the Band-Aids?
Lee...?
I feel...
Shy.
Do you want some hot chocolate?
Okay.
Why do you cut yourself, Lee?
I don't know.
Is it that sometimes the pain
inside has to come to the surface...
and when you see evidence

of the pain inside...
you finally know
you're really here?
Then when you watch the wound heal
it's comforting, isn't it?
I...
that's a way to put it.
I'm going to tell you something.
Are you ready to listen?
Yes.
- Are you listening?
You will never...
ever...
cut yourself again.
Do you understand?
Have I made that perfectly clear?
You're over that now.
It's in the past.
Yes.
Never again.
Okay.
Now, you know what
I want you to do?
I want you to leave work early.
You're a big girl...
a grown woman,...
your mother doesn't need
to pick you up every day.
I want you
to take a nice walk home,...
in the fresh air,
because you require relief.
Because you won't be
doing that anymore, will you?
No, sir.
Good.
Oh, it's early.
Mom...
I'm going to walk home
from now on.
I took a shortcut
through Hawkins Park,...
and it was as if
I'd never taken a walk

by myself before.
And when I thought about it,...
I realized that I had probably
never had taken a walk alone.
But because he had given me
the permission to do this...
because he'd insisted I do it,
I felt held by him as I walked along.
I felt he was with me.
At the same time I was feeling
something growing in Mr. Grey...
an intimate tendril creeping
from one of his darker areas,...
nursed on the feeling that he
had discovered something about me.
The next day I didn't even bring
my cuticle scissors and my iodine...
but I did make
another typing mistake.
What is wrong with you?
That is all you have to do...
type and answer the phones.
Is that beyond you?
I'm sorry.
- It certainly seems to be.
I'm sorry.
- Don't apologize to me.
What goes on inside
that head of yours?
Come into my office
and bring that letter.
Put the letter on my desk.
I want you to bend over the desk
so you're looking directly at it.
Get your face very close to the letter
and read the letter aloud.
I don't understand.
There's nothing to understand.
Put your elbows on the desk...
bend over...
get your face close to the letter
and read it aloud.
'Dear Mr. Garvey,...
I'm grateful

to you for referring...'

Continue.

Ms. Holloway, read.

'...for referring me to your case.

The subject of animal captivity...

has been of interest

to me for quite a while,...

and my secretary has prepared...

research material...

that I think you will

find illuminating.

If you would be so kind...

as to send me the June 5th letter

of which we spoke,...

my associates and I

will review it immediately.

Please feel free to call me

at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

E. Edward Grey.'

Read it again.

'Dear Mr. Garvey...'

'I am grateful to you...'

'for referring me to your case.

The subject of animal captivity

has been of interest to me...'

'...for quite a while.

And my secretary

has prepared research material...

that I think you

will find illuminating.'

Now straighten yourself up

and go type it again.

Ms. Holloway?

Good letter.

Mom?

The lock can

come off the cabinet now.

Oh, honey.

Replace the light bulb

in the hallway to my office.

Mr. Grey.

- Good to see you again, Mr. Garvey.

You remember my secretary,

Ms. Holloway.
I'm sorry about the typo.
It's porterhouse steak,
mashed... no...
creamed potatoes, green peas,
iced tea and ice cream.
Okay. Just a scoop
of creamed potatoes...
and a slice of butter.
Four peas...
and as much ice cream
as you like to eat.
'Cosmo's' advice for
'getting your man...
to share his feelings
more intimately'
is to first try
some 'breezy humor.'
Whatever you do, don't jump too
quickly into 'relationship talk.'
I'm your secretary.
I'm your secretary.
Just one scoop
of creamed potatoes,
one slice of butter...
oh... and four peas...
How many inches away
was the furnace...?
Had you turned off the furnace before
you went down into the basement?
Okay...
maybe you didn't
squeeze it hard enough.
There's always concern
about it bursting.
No, God no.
I haven't had time to get to that.
I'm doing as much
as I possibly can.
Where was she when you
crawled under the house?
And the lock box? Did you cover it
with dirt before you left?
Mud upstairs?

No, I'm confused by that.

Ah, but...

this was the overweight child
or your nephew from Baltimore?

On the banister.

I have to work.

Okay. Give me a week
and I'll have something for you.
I'm sorry, the office has been...
overwhelmed.

Mr. Grey, I'm going
to go home now.

If you need any more typing done
I could come back later.

Thank you, Ms. Holloway.

Good night.

That will be all.

Oh, here's just one example.

He asked me out to Red Lobster
the other night for a nightcap.

And yesterday he asked
if my hose were control top...

and if they were,

I certainly didn't need it.

Your boss?

- Yeah.

You should sue him
for sexual harassment.

I like that idea.

- Hello?

My lawyer is representing a woman who's
suing her boss for sexual harassment.

Is he a good lawyer?

He's the best.

'He's the best.'

- How long will he be there?

Who was that?

He checked himself into the hospital.

Lee...?

Yes, Lee?

Hi.

I...

I just wanted...

I needed you...

I wanted you to...
You need me to what?
I just wanted you to not forget to
go over the Lynch papers for tomorrow.
No, I haven't.
That's good.
Thank you, Lee.
After he turned me
away from his house,...
he put me back at my old desk
and he just stopped doing it.
He threw out all his red pens.
I kept making typos...
but he just treated me
like a regular old secretary.
Are you coming?
After a while I began to wonder
if that was all I was.
Have we received
any checks from Mr. Garvey?
No, sir.
File these.
That's a pretty tie.
But I guess you
won't be golfing today.
What?
Your tie...
it has golfers on it.
Right.
Damn it.
Don't be scared.
I'm not.
That's not what I meant.
I'm sorry.
Look here, see...
I'm sorry.
Okay...
but my clothes get to stay on
and I want the lights out.
I didn't hurt you, did I?
No.
Ms. Holloway?
Yes, Mr. Grey?
Come in to my office.

But Mr. Marvel is waiting.
Ms. Holloway,
come in to my office.
Yes, sir.
Finally.
Ignore it.
Now pull up your skirt.
Why?
You're not worried that I'm going
to fuck you, are you?
I'm not interested in that,
not in the least.
Now pull up your skirt.
Lee...? Lee?
I said, pull up your skirt.
Peter?
I'm not going to be able to come
to the diner today, okay?
Okay.
That's okay, 'cause...
it's all right.
Pull down your pantyhose
and underwear.
I told you I'm not
going to fuck you.
Get these forms filled out.
And then you can
take your lunch break.
Bring me my sandwich,
I'm eating in.
And...
go have the usual.
No mayonnaise this time.
And...
send in what's-his-name.
Okay?
Mr. Grey.
Cock.
Place your prick in my mouth.
Screw me.
Oh shit. Fuck.
Mayonnaise.
Orchid.
Oh, Mr. Grey...!

Edward.

Most people think that the best way
to live is to run from pain.

But a much more joyful life...

embraces the entire spectrum
of human feeling.

If we can fully experience
pain as well as pleasure,...

we can live a much deeper
and more meaningful life.

Ms. Holloway?

Yes, sir?

- Bring your typing scores.

Okay.

What happened?

Are you pregnant?

No.

Do you plan on being pregnant?

- Could I...

You plan on getting pregnant?

No.

Are you living in an apartment?

A house.

Alone?

- With my parents.

Are you married?

No.

Are those your scores?

Yes.

Do you really want
to be my secretary?

Yes, I do.

This isn't just about typos,
tape, staples and pencils,...

is it, Lee?

- No, sir.

What?

No, sir.

I like you Lee, but I don't think

I'm going to offer you the job.

Why?

It's your behavior.

What about my behavior?

It's very bad.

I'm sorry.
You can collect your things.
Time out.
- Time out?
You're fired.
- You're fired!
You're fired!
Now, Lee. Get out!
Why did you get glue smear
all over the Ramsey papers?
Because I was fixing your shredder.
You saw me.
Are you aware you kick
your shoes off under your desk?
I can smell your feet.
Do you ever change your pantyhose?
Every day.
- Every time you erase...
there are little shavings
all over your desk.
I told you to take
that Walkman home.
I don't want the possibility
of your listening to music...
when you're supposed
to be working for me.
I saw it in your desk...
I know it's there.
I'll move it.
You have to go
or I won't stop.
Don't.
I cannot do this anymore.
But I want to know you.
I'm so sorry for
what happened between us.
I realize what a terrible mistake
I made with you.
And I can only hope
that you understand.
Be assured you can count on me
for excellent references.
Get out.
Get out.

What are you do...

- Get out!

I opened the envelope

the second I got home.

It was a check for \$680.

More than he actually owed me.

It occurred to me

to tear up the check, but I didn't.

I felt like I was doing

the right thing.

And I didn't tell anybody

about any of it.

I pretended to go

to work as usual,...

and watched his office

from across the street.

He hired a new girl and

changed the locks on the doors.

There was just nothing

for me to do about it.

My doctor at the

institution once said,...

'Every journey begins

with the first step.'

So I decided it was time

to meet someone new.

There was one who tried

to grab and pinch my nipples...

before we even

made it to his car.

Hi.

Another guy kept ordering me

to pee on his patio...

and when I refused, he said...

- I thought you were a masochist.

Then there was the one who liked

being tied to a gas stove...

while the burners were on

full blast.

I had to throw tomatoes at him.

- Thank you.

For a while I stopped trying

and stayed at home...

helping Dad adjust

to his new sobriety.
Until one day,
out of the blue, ...
Peter proposed marriage to me
in the basement of J.C. Penney's.
I think I said yes because
I didn't know what else to do.
I guess I was a little lighter
than you in those days.
Okay.
If you hold your breath through
the wedding, you'll make it.
Don't move.
I'm going to get Stewart.
You're beautiful,
you're just too beautiful.
Lee...?
No! I'm not supposed to see you
before the wedding.
Where are you going?
I have something to say to you.
- Lee.
I love you.
Lee, you should not be here.
I love you.
I'm sorry, I... but I don't
believe that to be true.
Well, it is true.
It is.
This matter was resolved...
when I received your canceled
severance check.
I love you.
We can't do this 24 hours a day,
seven days a week.
Why not?
Put both your hands
on the desk, palms down.
I want to make love.
Keep both your feet
on the floor until I come back.
Hello?
- In case you're wondering, ...
your fiance is at my office.

Lee, I'm very fond
of you as well...
Oh, it's you.
Lee, what are you doing?
Lee, I don't... I don't know
how to deal with...
I'm sorry, I'm going to have
to ask you to leave.
I'm your fianc, Lee.
You are trespassing.
You are making
an unwarranted incursion...
a gradual or stealthy entrance
into the sphere of another.
Okay, Lee...
are you doing something...
sexual, right now?
Does this look sexual to you?
I don't know, Lee!
Why don't you move your hands?
Because I don't want to.
No!
Peter...
I don't want you.
Now, get out.
Get out.
Get out!
I brought you some peas.
There are no statutes
capable of controlling...
the relations between
men and women.
There are other ways
to show your feelings, Lee.
More conventional ways.
I expect that dress back,
dry cleaned, in perfect condition.
I'm just going to leave
you with this literature.
Why don't you read
about women's struggle first?
You know, Lee,...
there's a long history
of this in Catholicism.

The monks used to wear
thorns on their temples.
And the nuns wore them
sewn inside their clothing.
Two years ago when it didn't
work out between us, that was it.
I let him slip through my fingers.
You are part of a great tradition.
- I admire you, Ms. Holloway.
Without question, he is the most
isolated man I've ever known.
The worm... amazing.
Who's to say that love
needs to be soft and gentle?
'You are the child of God's
hoIy gift of life.
You come from me,
but you are not me.
Your soul and your body
are your own,...
and yours to do with
as you wish.'
Thank you, Daddy.
Drinks.
Take what you ordered.
Don't take anybody else's drink.
What you ordered.
We are here on day three
of what has come to be known...
as the 'Lee Holloway Hunger Strike.'
You may have heard...
that there are those
in the community who wonder...
if Ms. Holloway is even willing
to starve herself to death.
'In one way or another,
I've always suffered.
I didn't know why, exactly.
But I do know that I'm not
so scared of suffering now.
I feel more
than I've ever felt,...
and I've found someone to feel with,
to pIay with, to love,...

in a way that
feels right for me.
I hope he knows that I can see
that he suffers too,...
and that I want to love him.'
Each cut, each scar, each burn,
a different mood or time.
I told him
what the first one was.
I told him
where the second one came from.
I remembered them all.
And for the first time in my life,
I felt beautiful.
Finally part of the earth.
I touched the soil
and he loved me back.
Where did you go to high school?
What was your mother like?
What was her name?
What did it say...
under your senior
yearbook picture?
Who was your first love?
When did your heart...
first get broken?
Where were you born?
Des Moines, Iowa.
All our activities melted into
an everyday sort of life...
until we looked like
any other couple you'd see.
Pull it over, yes.
Just pull it tight.
Now these pillows
like to be stacked...
largest to the smallest.
We had a June wedding, by ourselves,
at the justice of the peace.
Then we honeymooned
in the mountains.
We only had the weekend, because
Edward had to get back to work.
Edited by Raymy