

THIS IS THE BOOK BOSSES DON'T WANT YOU TO READ!

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE
BIG, BAD BOSS?



How to Survive 13 Types of
Dysfunctional, Disrespectful,
Dishonest Little Dictators

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CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

"... I'm way over qualified, but I had been searching for a job at my level for a long time, and I finally needed to earn some money, so I took this customer service job about 2 ½ months ago. I know more about this business than my co-workers and my boss, and I've worked at levels above his boss. I see them doing things that are wrong. Once, I mentioned something to my boss and he said, "That's what's good about our location; we're so far away from headquarters that they don't know what we're doing and they don't bother to check."...

"...I work with another woman who's really incompetent. Ever since I got there, she's been complaining to our boss about me, saying, 'I can't work with that woman!'—but offering no specific reasons. I think she's jealous of me because I know the job and do it well.... My boss knew I was doing a good job, so I wasn't too worried, even though I noticed that the two of them were very chummy with each other. I suspect they have a romantic relationship going on. ...

"One day, while I was dealing with a customer who had a problem, my coworker...was standing next to me and her customer started yelling at her over the counter. I kept doing my job, taking care of my customer. After her customer left, she went into our boss's office crying. Later, the boss called me in and asked why I hadn't stepped in and helped [my coworker]. I told him I was solving another customer's problem at the time. He said I should have stopped what I was doing and helped [my coworker]. Then he said he was writing me up and putting me on notice for improper behavior! I couldn't believe he thought I should have left my customer in the middle of a problem to deal with another situation that was already being handled! ...

"Now, he watches me like a hawk. I think he's looking for a reason to fire me because his 'girlfriend' doesn't like me. What can I do to keep from getting fired?"

Dear Underemployed Customer Service Representative,

You are part of a growing population of unemployed middle-level managers in the US who need to work at jobs requiring fewer of their skills, while they conduct a search for a position at their level. Unfortunately, *your* interim situation is very precarious.

Your coworker may very well be jealous of you, or intimidated by you, and your boss may be, too. From your brief description, he sounds like a Cult-Maker Boss, as defined in "*Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Boss?*" Here are two excerpts:

"Cult-Maker Bosses create a following of marginally capable or unqualified, but loyal, employees to shelter them while they do as they please at the expense of the organization that employs them."

"Cult-Maker Bosses encourage infighting between their loyal gang of followers and competent employees who may question or challenge them."

You have been treated unjustly for doing a good job. Unfortunately, this is common in organizations in which upper management abdicates responsibility for managing managers.

Since you've already mentioned something to your boss about "doing things that are wrong," he knows that you know he isn't doing the job he's supposed to be doing—and you can be sure he's uncomfortable about you knowing this. Also, since he's playing *Buddies* with your co-worker, he's going to be more inclined to protect and defend her at your expense.

Your boss is trying to tell you that he doesn't want you around. The situation is completely within his control since his bosses are disengaged from operations at his site. Your boss doesn't need a reason to terminate your employment within your first 3 months on the job. Because you've been working at this job for 2 ½ months already, he will probably terminate your employment within the next two weeks. The only way to avoid termination is to resign.

Try to find another job quickly. Don't list this job on your resume, and continue to search for a position at your level. If you must find a lower-waged job during this interim period, try working through a temporary agency. If you are assigned to a temporary job that is incompatible with your principles, ask the agency to reassign you.

Try not to dwell on this experience while you put your energy into finding the right job for you. I wish you the best of luck.