

# OFFICE SEX SURVIVAL GUIDE



FROM THE EDITORS OF

**WORKS**

BY NICOLE WILLIAMS

# WORKS

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# WORKS



*Welcome to the Boardroom Table Club.  
(And you thought the mile-high club was exciting!)*

Let's be honest. We're all doing it... and if we're not, we're *thinking* about doing it. The old-fashioned advice on dating at work has always been uncomplicated—JUST DON'T—and totally unrealistic. When tensions are flaring, office space is tight, and we're logging 60 hours of face time a week, how couldn't we expect a little chemical reaction? I'm all for dipping your pen in the company ink, but you've got to play it smart. In the *Office Sex Survival Guide* I'm giving you everything you need to know about navigating office nookie. From sex at work to your *other* other, it's time to get down and dirty.

...and that's what WORKS

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be the name 'Nicole'.

# dating at the office

the office is the singles bar of the 21st century

# Can Powerful Women Find Love?

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Today, more women than ever are wildly ambitious and intellectually curious. According to Harvard Business School's e-publication "Working Knowledge," women now make up 35 to 40 percent of business school applicants; women also make up the majority in the undergraduate populations at more than one Ivy League college.

According to the BBC, the average woman's workweek is now half a day longer than it was five years ago—sometimes with more work waiting to be done at home. The media has coined the term "alpha female" to describe these assertive, strong, successful women who are big on work.

But how do these hyper-ambitious alpha females navigate the dating land? What's an alpha female to do if she wants a male counterpart as ambitious and powerful as she? Historically, men have been breadwinners and women have played the supporting role, and that made up a huge part of gender roles and the balance of masculinity and femininity in relationships.

Well, it's 2008 and things have shape-shifted: women are entitled to their capabilities and desires to earn professional success and money. However, they're not automatically entitled to a supportive boyfriend who is completely, totally cool with his girlfriend or wife being just as successful (if not more!) than he is. While a power couple could fuel each other's success (like Bill and Hillary Clinton), because of outdated ideas on women's roles, men might look outside the relationship to have a gentler, more amenable feminine presence in their lives (like Bill and Hillary Clinton). While it sounds retro for successful women to be wondering whether their power will turn men off, unfortunately, it's often a pertinent issue.

In her book *Are Men Necessary?: When Sexes Collide*, the *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd discusses the ups and downs of sex and gender today, and some of her findings aren't encouraging. She discusses how in movies like *Maid in Manhattan* and *Spanglish*, powerful men find their ambitious female counterparts loathsome and instead fall for women working as maids and nannies. Dowd discusses her life as a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist (and the sole female columnist on the *New York Times* op-ed page) and the lives of her similarly successful friends, who have to temper their success to seem desirable (Dowd wrote of a friend who was disappointed after having won a Pulitzer prize because she'd have an even harder time getting men to date her). Dowd sees the highly successful men of the baby boomer generation as repelled by successful women: "If there's one thing men fear, it's a woman who uses her critical faculties."

In Ross Douthat's book *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class*, the reporter looks at his four years at Harvard (where he claims to have learned relatively little) and writes that Harvard women found their affiliation with the Ivy League school to be a big problem in the dating sphere. He writes that his female classmates referred to telling a guy that they attended Harvard as "dropping the H-bomb," which could blow the romantic pursuit at hand to smithereens. On an episode of *Sex and the City*, Harvard Law-educated Miranda Hobbes pretends to be a flight attendant because she senses that her lawyer gig is making men run.

# Can Powerful Women Find Love?

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Last July, Hilary Duff told the London newspaper the *Guardian*, “The women I know are more successful than the men. It’s hard for me to meet someone. I don’t need someone who, like, has as much as me, but I don’t want someone who has much less because then you never really feel taken care of. And it would always make a guy feel not like a man.”

But in “real life,” some don’t see this as such a huge problem. Perhaps today’s guys—the twentysomethings who were raised alongside the girls who were taught that it was cool to be smart—will be more open to ambitious young women. Says Allie, a young aspiring actress from New York, “I sense that some guys want to be with women who are less successful than them and that some guys might feel less masculine if their significant other was the breadwinner. But if a guy were to admit that, I think most people would see that as really out of style.” Allie, who says she’s been an overachiever her entire life, has never had problems finding guys who appreciate her drive: “The guys I’ve dated, I think, have tended to admire my ambition and in some cases have sort of fed off it and become more ambitious and successful because of being around me.”

Amber Madison, author of *Hooking Up: A Girl’s All-Out Guide to Sex and Sexuality*, who tours the country lecturing at colleges about sex, is very familiar with being a successful woman on the dating scene. She feels that, for the most part, the panic over successful women having trouble finding a mate is inflated, and that the successful gals will find a guy. “As a successful woman, there might be a lot of guys who are insecure who don’t want to date you because of your success. But you don’t want to date them anyway. The guys who are going to be turned on by your success are the ones who you want to date, and they are out there.”

“At first I think guys might be intimidated when they first meet me, but within five minutes they realize, ‘Oh, she’s funny and she falls all the time and she’s always spilling things. She’s not threatening, she’s Amber!’,” says Madison.

Allie agrees: “Women should present their success and their accomplishments as something that’s really sexy and makes them sexy, and I think that guys will sort of pick up on that and see women’s accomplishments and success and such as something that’s appealing, too.”

There may be some ego issues along the way, though. When Erin, a 33-year-old editor, met her future husband David, he was a struggling grad school student. “I had established my career a little earlier than David, and in turn, was making about three times as much as he was,” she explains.

When it was clear that his budget didn’t allow him to pick up the check for every dinner, movie, and museum exhibit, money quickly became a sticking point—from his perspective. “I didn’t want to emasculate him, so I got strategic: We would take turns paying for dates. I made sure his turn was breakfast or something else inexpensive, and I’d cover dinners.” When he caught on, she says she smiled and explained that she wanted things to be fair, and it was her turn to

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# Can Powerful Women Find Love?

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pay. “He knew exactly what was going on, but it offered him a way to contribute,” she adds.

Erin, who continues to outearn her husband, says that she occasionally wishes things were different. “Sure, I’d love to be surprised with some glittering rock of jewelry, but it’s not going to happen. I knew that going into the relationship,” she says. “I’d rather have a partner who is emotionally and physically present than some Wall Street guy who’s never home and apologizes with presents.”

Personally, this reporter has faith: the Bill and Hillary show might have had a few bumps in the road, but when Bill was a Yale Law grad and a Rhodes scholar, he chose the smartest girl at Wellesley... Hillary!





# Sex at Work

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The office is the singles bar of the 21st century. After all, most working folks spend more waking hours at work than at home. Today's working singles have little time to socialize with existing friends, much less meet enough new people to successfully find love. An estimated 10 million couples met their mate at the office in 2003. Some found themselves in sticky situations with far reaching career consequences, even resulting in the loss of their job. Others had a fling, married co-workers or engaged in extramarital affairs. It's no longer just the classic image of the male boss chasing his female secretary around the desk. Women are initiating the trysts as well, and are even doing so with subordinates.

It is becoming more common for companies to ask workers to sign love contracts, which require them to alert their bosses to an office romance, confirm that it is indeed voluntary and inform them when they break up. Other companies have policies against in-office relationships. However, with or without these restrictions, negotiating an office love affair can be tricky. It's difficult to avoid

## *Tricks:*

- ✓ Know your company policy
- ✓ Don't Hide
- ✓ Act Professional
- ✓ Keep Sexual Harassment in mind

distractions, conflicts, and gossip, not to mention the complications if and when the relationship ends. Ultimately, if you start an office love affair, you need to keep your résumé up to date, because it's likely that one of you will need to look for a new job. Of course, if you understand the risks and insist on taking them for the sake of finding love, here are a couple of guidelines to follow:

### **Know Your Company's Policy on Inter-office Dating**

If there are special rules, make sure you talk together about it first and are clear about the potential ramifications before moving forward.

### **Don't Keep It Secret**

If you are hiding your relationship, it's likely that you shouldn't be in it in the first place.

### **Be Discreet and Act Professional**

Nothing will put off your colleagues and superiors more than public displays of affection, much less sexual exchanges on office property. I've heard some great stories about the places in the office couples find to have sex; the boardroom seems to be the favorite, followed by the snack room and elevator. But these quickies are often discovered and may result in much more dire consequences than a little gossip around the cooler.

### **Be Aware of Sexual Harassment**

This is true especially if you are thinking about starting a relationship with a subordinate. Even if you are both enthusiastic, if the relationship gets rocky, you might find yourself facing charges. A subordinate is arguably incapable of consenting freely to a relationship with her supervisor, because of the inherent pressure and influence of a direct superior's advances. By the way, your company is the one that pays the harassment bill. And insurance doesn't cover it.

# Sex at Work

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Finally, if you find yourself in an office entanglement that has gotten tricky, or if you have doubts about how to handle the office politics around your affair, think about making use of the human resource department. They will be able to advise you and advocate for you should you need it. In general, while an office affair can work out, it's often more trouble than it's worth. But, as Shakespeare once put it, "The heart knows reason that reason knows not." In other words, "sometimes we just can't help ourselves."



# Dating At The Office

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We don't all come to work with visions of hearts and flowers but it happens anyway. Work is where we spend our days, explore ourselves and build our networks. Why would dating be excluded? That said, deciding whether to date a co-worker or figuring out how to handle an in-office relationship are extremely personal. There are no right answers. There may, however, be a company policy. Legislation doesn't regulate matters of the heart, but you definitely want to understand the potential implications of a relationship with a co-worker. Find out how your organization views at-work relationships, and start your decision making process from there. The following strategy can help you sort through both the emotions and the day-to-day realities of dating at work.

## *Tricks:*

- ✓ Know what your intentions are
- ✓ Fess Up
- ✓ Tell your boss first
- ✓ No PDA
- ✓ Think before you share

### **Know what your intentions are.**

No shame here, it's just important to acknowledge your purpose. The parameters of the relationship and the level of risk are directly proportional to your intention. Are you having a one-nighter with the company CEO to leverage a promotion? (High risk). Are you wildly infatuated with the boss you barely know? (Medium risk). Or have you developed a mutually supportive relationship with a co-worker you've come to trust and respect? (Low risk).

### **Fess up.**

If you think you can hide your affair from your co-workers, think again. I've worked with more than a few "undeclared" couples who thought they had the office duped. Note: Do not leave for vacation at exactly the same time, both return with a tan and outright refuse to know anything about each other's whereabouts. Attempts to keep the relationship a secret usually fail and invite interest, speculation and gossip.

### **And make sure to tell your boss first.**

This might sound a little goodie-two-shoes, but my suggestion is to share your relationship with your boss first. Not in an, "I'd like your permission" or parental kind of way, but rather in a "We've thought about this relationship responsibly and care about your business and our careers" kind of way. Inevitably your boss will find out anyway, and you want her to be confident you will behave in a professional, ethical and responsible manner. Your boss can even be an ally to help create personal and professional boundaries.

### **Nix the public displays of affection.(PDA)**

Blatant and indiscreet PDA is difficult to stomach at the best of times, but most certainly restrain yourself at the office. No one wants to watch you make out in the office corridor.

# Dating At The Office

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**Think before you share.**

If you've decided to date a colleague, your days of coming into work to gossip about last night's Tantric sex session or wicked fight are over. Your new lover is someone else's co-worker or boss. Create some ground rules as a couple about sharing personal information with your professional peers and don't let your relationship play out over the office email. Your on-site tech support might be enjoying your new boyfriend's racy messages as much as you are.

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# The Hook-Up Hotspot? Work!

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Today's Workplace is a "Romantic Petri Dish."

We're working more hours than ever before, according to the Center for WorkLife Policy. Plus, we're staying single longer. "Add to that the dressing down of the stuffy workplace, a new emphasis on teamwork on the job, and you have a window of romantic opportunity," says Janet Lever, PhD, professor of sociology at California State University, Los Angeles, who has studied human sexuality for 25 years. In fact, says Lever, in recent years the office has outpaced all other locations (including college) when it comes to finding love. Anthropologist Helen Fisher, who is also the chief scientific advisor to , likens the modern-day office to a "romantic Petri dish."

This is in part because the work-life pyramid is inverting, warns Arlie Russell Hochschild, PhD, professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Our jobs have become the vibrant part of our days, while our personal lives practically fit on the head of a pin. And intra-office relationships further blur the boundaries: Take Kristine, 31, who met her boyfriend—a fellow newspaper reporter—on the job. They soon moved in together. "It's great to have someone who understands why a day was so hard," she says. "But sometimes it seems like all we talk about is work."

## **Everyone Has an "Office Spouse"**

Clocking longer hours at work also means less time spent at home. So now we're creating someone to "come home to," right in the confines of cubeland. According to the 2007 Office Romance Survey, published by career services company Vault, 23 percent of workers have an "office husband" or "wife"—that is, a coworker (often of the opposite sex) with whom you have a close platonic relationship.

This is the person you look out for, share information with, and consider before making a coffee run. But the rapport isn't necessarily sexual. The surrogate feeds our emotional needs in a professional sense, something a real spouse, who lacks day-to-day knowledge of your workplace, can't do. Angela, 32, developed a deep friendship with her coworker Brian when they worked together at an advertising firm. "We became close quickly by virtue of seeing each other five days a week," she explains. "My day didn't feel complete unless I'd processed everything with Brian. The funny part is, we never saw each other outside the office, even though he was dating a friend of mine!"

Courting an office spouse is a phenomenon that Tina B. Tessina, PhD, a Long Beach, California-based psychotherapist specializing in relationships, calls "hyper-cliquing": In other words, when you bond rapidly with a single colleague at the expense of the group. But, she warns, having a nine-to-five hubby can be problematic if your ties become so intense that they threaten preexisting relationships.

# The Hook-Up Hotspot? Work!

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## **Technology is Taking Our Private Lives Public**

The rise of the blogosphere and social networking sites means technology is revealing our personal sides to our coworkers—like it or not. “Sites such as MySpace and YouTube are expanding the reach and scope of office gossip,” says John Heins, senior vice president and chief human resources officer of staffing company Spherion. In fact, a 2004 Harris poll showed that nearly one quarter of all individuals Google their colleagues. In other words, your boss knows what you did last weekend—and she’s probably accessed the slideshow.

All of this insider information adds up to nebulous personal boundaries. “Our work selves tended to be less emotional and more disciplined than our private selves,” says Tessina. “But now, high drama behavior is moving into our professional environments.”

Josh, 31, a nonprofit organization fundraiser, can attest. “During our last work retreat, my boss was having trouble in his relationship and had an affair with a coworker. We shared a room, and I spent most of my time helping him interpret texts from the new interest—and craft nonchalant emails to send home to his partner. It was exhausting,” he sighs. The added risk: How to go back to being boss and underling once you’re safely out of the woods?

## **The Office Tryst is Going Offsite.**

When the workplace is a buzzing nest of gossip, what do office lovers do? Lately, they get away—on the company dime. In fact, corporate travel budgets have gone up every year since 2004, according to the National Business Travel Association. “Technology is allowing us to work remotely, plus, travel’s becoming a bigger part of the job,” says Professor Lever.

Hooking up on the road covers two key agenda points: It keeps prying eyes away—and provides a great alibi for time spent together. “The great thing about off - sites is you get your [work crush’s] undivided attention for several days straight,” says Lisa, 34, a brand developer based in New York City.

Just be prepared: Sparks may fly—even if you’re not looking to kindle them. “It’s common sense when you put men and women on the road together,” says Lever. “You think the office has gotten informal? That’s nothing compared to a dinner meeting at a hotel over wine.” Especially when you can expense the Rioja.

## **You’re Primed to Love Your Coworker (Or Boss).**

When it comes to finding a mate, studies show that from socioeconomic background to education level, we’re drawn to people like us. In that sense, work is like a homogeneous dating pool, full of candidates prescreened by HR. Beth was 22 when she took her first job. “I fell hard for my boss, Evan,” she says. What hooked her? Little habits she came to know—and, eventually, love: “The movements of his long fingers over the keyboard. The way he threw his coat over the chair after lunch.” Eight years later, “We work together again, only now I can’t imagine what inflamed that passion,” she laughs.



# The Hook-Up Hotspot? Work!

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It could have been proximity—or power—at play. Your boss seems sexier because of his or her position of power, a result of paternal/maternal transference, explains psychiatrist Dr. Gail Saltz. And it's a common phenomenon: One in five people in Vault's survey said that they'd dated somebody they reported to, yet 60 percent of workers disapprove of the idea. The downside of dating up? "Real career gains will not be credited to your ability," Saltz warns.



# Create Boundaries At Work

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Do you recognize this person? Within minutes of meeting your new co-worker, you know her boyfriend just dumped her, her mom is premenopausal, and she hasn't slept in days thanks to a killer migraine. If this woman is anything like the people I've known, it won't be long before she's calling you "sweetie" and embracing you in a big, fat hug.

Whatever you do, don't become that person. If there's one thing I can promise you, it's this: Your ability to create boundaries is hands-down one of the most memorable, effective ways to differentiate and express yourself. Be aware of where your personal boundaries stop and your professional boundaries begin.

These are just a few of the confusing and challenging boundary issues I most frequently encounter with the young women I work with. Do any of these quotes sound familiar?

- ✗ **"I didn't mean to make out with my boss at the office party."**  
You can think about your boundaries until your head throbs, but it's pointless to live in fear of stepping over the line. Why? You'll truly understand your limits when you cross them. You don't even have to spend time thinking about it. Your body will send immediate signals when you've crossed the line, so it's up to you to protect yourself.

Even if you do step over your boundaries, you're free to come back. The experience will actually help you draw better limits next time. And don't think a "line cross" ever defines you. So you made out with your boss. You're not going to do it again, and you're definitely not doomed to a life of professional prostitution. In the words of Marianne Williamson, "The problem is not that you attract unavailable people, the problem is that you give them your number."

- ✗ **"I'm not going to tell him to back off. I want him to like me."**  
The "him" in this scenario is a young woman's boss, and, in one form or another, I hear this sentiment way too often. Please repeat after me: Work is not a popularity contest and there is an immense difference between being liked and being respected. People respect others who respect themselves enough to establish personal and professional boundaries—people who have opinions, people who demand what they're worth, people who say no.

- ✗ **"I swear she picks on me."**  
Bullies can sniff out fear a mile away. They sense your vulnerability and get poised to attack, and they're relying on the fact that you won't call them on their actions. Just like in the schoolyard, bullying is rooted in insecurity—theirs, not yours. I can almost promise that if you call your bully's bluff and expressly define your unwillingness to take her bullshit, she will back off and find a new victim.



# Create Boundaries At Work

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✗ **“I’m so stupid, I can’t believe I told her I forgot the deadline.”**

While it’s crucial to define what people can say and do to you, don’t forget about what you’re revealing to others. Monitor your conversations. What do you tell people about yourself? People will believe what you tell them, so refrain from saying, “I’m so lazy” or “I’m so stupid.” Instead tell them you are smart and responsible. If you tell people you’re tired and lack focus they’ll believe it, and even worse, so will you.

✗ **“I thought we really made a great connection, but she didn’t say hi on the way to her office.”**

You will make amazing friendships in the workplace—maybe even with your boss—but please remember, unlike in mutual, healthy friendships, there is a definitive power imbalance. It’s your boss writing your performance review, signing your paychecks, and assigning your projects—not your friend. If you do find yourself with a budding friendship at work, take the time to acknowledge and define the boundaries between your personal and professional relationships.



# Touchy Topics

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Unless you're paid to kvetch with Barbara Walters on a daily basis (and with the speed at which the door is revolving at The View these days, that's not such a long shot), one of your main job functions is to coexist peacefully with your co-workers. Easy, right? Even easier if you watch what you say around the watercooler. You're free to say what you like (it's a constitutional guarantee), but your co-workers are just as free to judge you—or resent you, or just plain not want to work with you—based on the words that come out of your mouth. Some topics are so loaded with controversy and emotion that forcing your views upon your colleagues (or simply bringing up the topic for discussion in the first place) could have you branded as the office loudmouth. Unless you're eager to wear that crown, steer clear of these hot-button topics.

## Politics:

Office politics are contentious enough without bringing in a play-by-play of the goings-on in Washington. Whether you have already slapped a Clinton 2008 bumper sticker on your hybrid or spend your lunch hour reading Hannity and Colmes' website, political debate can divide an office as quickly as it can divide a country. With the nation embroiled in a controversial war and an epic election looming on the calendar, it's getting harder to avoid chatting about politics around the watercooler. But if productivity and sanity are priorities for you, leave the debating to the candidates.

## Religion:

Oh, God. Most of the great moral issues of our time are closely tied to religion. Gay marriage, abortion, end of life: Wherever people stand on these issues, their viewpoints are always passionate, often immovable, and inevitably tied directly to their spiritual views. You don't stand a chance of altering these beliefs (let alone revamping anyone's soul) during a 15-minute coffee break.

## Sex:

The series finale of *Sex and the City* left you inconsolable, and it wasn't just because Mr. Big chose Carrie instead of the more obvious option (you). You mourned the end of those Sunday-morning brunches, where the gals recounted their between-the-sheets triumphs and trip-ups in deliciously graphic detail. In your grief, you attempt to re-create the chats around the watercooler, 'cause nothing builds camaraderie and sisterhood better than sex talk, right? Wrong. Not only can sex talk degrade your professional stock in the eyes of the people you need to impress, but forcing graphic innuendo on people who don't want to hear it is a form of sexual harassment. Save it for gabfests with your girlfriends.

## You:

You're not going to get fired or sued for zeroing in on this topic, but rambling on about yourself and showing absolutely no interest in the people around you will definitely alienate your co-workers. The more cringe-worthy the details (salary, divorce, excessive happiness), the more people are going to scatter when you enter the break room. The remedy for self-absorption is simple: Start asking your co-workers questions and then actually listen to their responses. Also, wait for them to ask you about your life before spilling all the details. Now, if only asking for a raise was so simple.

# Anatomy of an Affair

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When was the last time your handsome, married boss marched up to your desk and whispered, “Hey, let’s have an affair”? That’s what I thought. Of all the women I’ve talked with about illicit office affairs, the most common opening line is, “It all started out so innocently…” While office affairs have a funny way of sneaking up on you, I have some good news – there is a distinct pattern that once deconstructed, you can begin to understand and control. The stakes are extremely high with an office affair. When you’re single, you’ve got to take care of your heart and your professional credibility. When other partners are involved, you’re playing more than just your own romantic hand. Keep your cards on the table and play fair.

## *The Pattern:*

- ✓ You meet and sparks fly
- ✓ You have a crush
- ✓ You think about him all the time
- ✓ You start bumping into him
- ✓ You cross the line

### **Sparks Fly**

You meet someone who sparks your interest. He appreciates your ideas, you make a great professional team and he always says how smart you are and how great you look in your new suit. He may not be your usual type, but there is chemistry and he makes you feel alive.

### **You’re Infatuated**

There is a skip to your step and a buzz in your head – you have a crush, and at this point it seems fun and harmless. Your new flame is giving you the praise and conversations that you miss with your mate. In the back of your mind, you hear a faint

warning bell, but this is way too much fun. You quickly hustle away the warning signs.

### **Welcome to Fantasy Island**

You are now thinking constantly about this person. All of a sudden, you could care less if your boyfriend doesn’t bother to call. You’re too busy expertly contriving ways to bump into your new flame in the corridor and thinking up interesting, yet provocative questions to ask via e-mail.

### **Let the Games Begin**

You’ve been “bumping into each other” for a while now. Your confidence in this interaction is growing. One of you finds a way to let the other person know there is an interest. Think of it as a game of tennis. He may hit the first volley into your court with, “I so enjoy spending time with you.” If you respond with “I like spending time with you too,” you may find yourself engaged in a warm-up game, volleying subtle remarks back and forth during your interactions. Watch out. The intimacy level deepens and the momentum quickens with every volley.

### **You Cross the Line**

At some, often indiscernible point, you’ve started having an affair. Whether it is purely emotional

# Anatomy of an Affair

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or emotional and physical, you've crossed the line and you know it – actually you knew long before you crossed but now you have to face up to it.

## **Look in Your Own Backyard**

If you are involved in a committed relationship and you find yourself attracted to a man at the office, the real issue resides in your own backyard. In all likelihood, you're discouraged, lonely and you feel taken for granted. On some level, you feel an emotional vacuum in your personal life. It has been a while since you really felt 'seen' by your partner.



your other, other

no wedding, no bridesmaids - your work spouse

# Your Other, Other: Your Work Spouse

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There was no ring, no bridesmaids, no teary-eyed dance with Dad, but somewhere along the way, you found yourself with a spouse. You see him every day...at the office. He's your work spouse. And whether you chose each other or were thrown together, you probably know more about him than your best friend. Chances are, he knows you pretty well too, down to what kind of cheese you like on your turkey wrap. You're not alone. According to a recent study by the Vault, an on-line career and research source, 32% of the people they surveyed had a close relationship with a co-worker of the opposite sex they recognized as a "work spouse." And just like a marriage, there are the good times, and the bad, until 5 p.m. do you part.

## Work Spouses Come With Perks

It's no secret that men and women think differently. With a work spouse, you have a perfect ying to your yang. He may be an introverted strategist; you may be an outgoing people person. That means one of you does the detailed thinking; the other one sells it. It's simple. Find each other's strengths and work with them. Together you both win.

Some people respond better to women. Some to men. It's not very PC, but that's just the way it goes sometimes. But lucky you. Since there is one of each on your team, you have a 100% chance of getting a favorable response.

Also, you get all the benefits of a male point of view. Stuck finding a birthday gift for your brother? Want to delve deeper on the mysterious behavior of the guy you're dating? The answers are just a desk away.

## Your Home Away From Home – The Office

If you cohabit in an actual office, it helps to set boundaries about the shared aspects of your daily life, such as music, neatness, décor and phone etiquette. Knowing what pushes each other's buttons in advance (like your fluffy pink chair covers and his love of Rush) will help you work out your differences and set the tone for a shared partnership that can weather the battlefield of compromise.

You probably aren't interested in cars, wrestling and hockey. Well, he's not interested in nail polish colors, feminine hygiene or why you chose to wear those boots with that skirt. So find mutual topics of conversation. Like how you can't stand your co-worker that shamelessly sucks up to the boss.

It's fun to be a two-some. But being too cliquish will make you unapproachable. That's why it's important to have your own identity. It'll alleviate feelings of alienation from other co-workers, not to mention broaden the amount of people that will want to sit at your lunch table.

## It's Not Always a Joyride

Sometimes having a work spouse gets too close for comfort. That's why taking time

# Your Other, Other: Your Work Spouse ---

apart is good. Remember, it never should be personal. That's why declaring your need for space should be as simple as saying; "Hey, I need some quiet time this morning." Or try working from Starbucks for a few hours. Just remember to come back with a donut (sprinkles optional).

If there are problems, it's best to talk it out than letting it fester. Because when you two argue, you sound like a married couple fighting (yes, that's right, you do). At least that's what it sounds like to anyone within earshot. And no one wants to hear it. Especially the boss.

## Let's Talk About Sex; Shall We?

When it comes to hooking up with your work spouse, the best advice is don't. But if you just can't help yourself, know in advance that he will cease to be your work spouse and will suddenly become your boyfriend. And from then on, everything will be personal. From why he asks you to leave when he takes a call, to why he didn't bring you coffee this morning.

Even if you two aren't having an affair, your co-workers will think you are anyway. Quash these myths as quickly as possible. Talk about your boyfriend or husband to other co-workers. Avoid coming up with cute nicknames for your work spouse or touching them excessively. Keep it professional and your co-workers will have less reason to suspect you two are an item.

You still can talk about sex. Just find your comfort level. Knowing where the line is helps define the boundaries of your personal and professional relationship. Some topics are off limits, and that's not a bad thing. Besides who wants to hear about the non-stop lovefest that was your work spouse's weekend with his wife in the Poconos? Not you.

## Your Real Spouse or Boyfriend

The bottom line is there will be jealousy from your real spouse or boyfriend towards your work spouse. The degree of which depends on you – and how you balance your work and personal life.

Let your real spouse know honestly and up front why you need to work with this other man and how it benefits your career and livelihood. Instead of talking about how fabulous your work spouse is at home, tell your real spouse how fabulous he is. And don't compare the two. Doing so will only blur the lines and make for misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

On the positive side, you no longer need to bore your real spouse with endless stories about the office. Instead, you can jaw on and on to your work spouse about work dramas, and on company hours. That way your home life can be focused on the important things at home, like how the dog got into the garbage...again.

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## 'Til Pink Slip Do You Part

No matter how great a team you and your work spouse may be, know that one day it most likely will come to end. Still, breaking up is hard to do. Fortunately, there are no divorce procedures or legal fees, and both of you can sit in the same room without an attorney present. Ex-work spouses make for great future references, so it's one bridge you shouldn't burn. Besides, how many "ex's" do you have that you don't mind being around?





# The Gray Zone: What Counts As Cheating? —

Sometimes the French really do live up to their adulterous reputations. Even the French president, Jacques Chirac, has publicly admitted to having extramarital affairs—news that barely caused a stir in France. In American culture, though, a full-blown affair—involving love, intercourse, or both—can end relationships faster than you can say, “cheater!”

We have been taught that the definition of cheating starts with a kiss, and that a physical tryst is the ultimate betrayal. But a lot of other flirtatious behavior can cross into the gray zone. Anything from sexy text messages and phone sex to a lap dance from a stripper and intense lunches with a coworker may not be immediate cause for a break-up, but these acts may be enough to make people re-evaluate what constitutes being unfaithful.

Take Eva, 25, a curator who lives in Chicago. Knee-deep into her relationship with her boyfriend, Rob, she started to feel restless. The sex with Rob was passionless and infrequent. Eva still loved him, but felt a need to jumpstart her love life. One day, she found a three-word email from an ex-boyfriend in her inbox: “How are you?” What started as innocent catch-up emails escalated into graphic reveries about their racy sexual past. Eva felt a thrill she hadn’t felt for months in her relationship with Rob. The ex-boyfriend lived in Italy, so the exchanges never resulted in a face-to-face meeting. Late at night, though, she wondered, “Am I a cheater?”

“There are two rules of thumb: if one of you is doing something that would make the other uncomfortable, it’s wrong,” says Dr. Bethany Marshall, a marriage and family therapist and author of the forthcoming *Deal Breakers: When to Work on a Relationship and When to Walk Away*. “And if you or he is getting emotional and sexual satisfaction outside the relationship, that’s a bad sign, too.”

What is dangerous about “cheating light,” as Marshall calls it, is that it can easily intensify into something more. “Don’t minimize these interactions,” Marshall advises. “The person who is doing it is going to get emboldened over time...borderline cheating activity should be taken as a warning signal of what’s to come.” She’s right: Eva’s sexy emails to her ex-boyfriend in Italy didn’t end there. “The first time I ever ventured into the territory of non-physical cheating on Rob was through these emails. But once I started down the path, I never looked back.” Eva’s computer cheating with one ex, she believes, led her to have sex with another ex a month later. “It was the deception, not the physical activity, that was the breaking point,” says Eva. “Once I betrayed his trust virtually, it was easy to do it physically.” Eventually, Eva’s relationship with Rob imploded and, after three years, he moved out. Meanwhile, Chirac’s devil-may-care admission of infidelity—which he claims never threatened his relationship with his wife—begs the question whether cheating is culturally or individually relative. Is there a universal danger zone? That is, if one partner feels guilty about his or her own questionable behavior, can it still be cheating even if the other partner doesn’t feel jealous? “I deal with people who try open relationships all the time. Some people are not born with the jealousy gene,” Marshall points out. “But regardless, if one person is expending emotional or sexual energy outside the relationship to compensate for something missing, it’s going to destroy their union.”

# The Gray Zone: What Counts As Cheating?

What hurts about cheating is not simply that your partner has had sex with someone else—it's that he or she has engaged in intimate activity that does not include you. For this reason, cheating could be categorized as more of an intuitive sense rather than a definable act. It may help to talk to your partner and set explicit boundaries, since cheating doesn't always boil down to a tangible act. "Feelings are evidence enough," Marshall says. "As long as you're being rational and not abusive with your jealousy and insecurities, your partner has to seek solutions to any discomfort you have."



# power couples

whose career takes priority?

# Power Couples: Whose Career Takes Priority? —

There was no ring, no bridesmaids, no teary-eyed dance with Dad, but somewhere along the way, you found yourself with a spouse. You see him every day...at the office. He's your work spouse. And whether you chose each other or were thrown together, you probably know more about him than your best friend. Chances are, he knows you pretty well too, down to what kind of cheese you like on your turkey wrap. You're not alone. According to a recent study by the Vault, an on-line career and research source, 32% of the people they surveyed had a close relationship with a co-worker of the opposite sex they recognized as a "work spouse." And just like a marriage, there are the good times, and the bad, until 5 p.m. do you part.

Having trouble balancing two high-octane careers? One of you has a great opportunity... a state away? How do modern power couples make it work?

Recently, I was wondering the same thing. I am lucky enough to have a boyfriend who cares almost as much about my career as he does his own. Together we are hardworking, ambitious and successful, and our friends often refer to us as a "power couple". We're passionate about each other and our work and are always trying to find time for the other; as he likes to say, we strive for equality. All has been fine and dandy, but recently, our egalitarian relationship has been put to the test and we've been forced to negotiate whose career REALLY comes first.

What happened to jostle my perfect 21st century relationship? Well, we decided to think about living together. There was just one tiny problem—we reside in two separate states. This meant one person was going to have to pick up and move to a new city and get a new job.

Early in the discussion about who should move, we made the usual lists: which city had the best restaurants, the best parks, which was cheaper. Soon the conversation turned to reality. And the reality was that he makes significantly more money than I do.

The answer seemed clear: I was going to have to uproot my job and my life to promote his. Needless to say, this was not the right answer for either of us. I looked at other successful couples I knew and wondered how they determined whose career comes first.

Not so long ago the man's career always took precedence. Men and women abided by stricter gender roles: the man went to work every day and the woman supported him by staying home, keeping the kids happy and the house clean.

Things are very different today and deciding whose career is the top priority can be a struggle. By my count, there are several obvious things that can make one job more important: who makes more, who has been in the workforce longer, who is most satisfied in their current position. Some other factors can include whose job is more "valuable." Working for a non-profit may not be profitable, but the job benefits the common good. A person in law school may not have a large salary but it is sure to increase at the end of three years.

# Power Couples: Whose Career Takes Priority? —

What I have found is that for ambitious couples, flexibility may be the key to a happy two-career relationship. I now view my potential move as an opportunity to switch gears and pursue my dream of writing a book. A move that initially seemed like a sacrifice now genuinely feels like an opportunity.

Despite my optimism, the nagging feeling that his job is more important than mine persists. I am working on breathing deep and trying to come to terms with the idea that in any successful relationship there must be compromise and understanding because it is inevitable that at different times and for different reasons either of our jobs may take the top spot.

It all comes down to the idea of the power couple and what it means. For me, more than work ethic, ambition, and money, being one half of a power couple means that though we're both successful on our own, and our true power comes from our shared strength. We'll get even bigger and better by valuing both of our capabilities. That's a pretty powerful idea I can get excited about.



# After the Breakup

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Breaking up is hard to do...especially when you have to go to work the next day. After spending an entire evening arguing with your (now ex-) boyfriend, the last thing you want to do is deal with the idiots in accounting or the crazy client who can't make up her mind. Unfortunately, business doesn't cease because of your broken heart. Here, readers tell us how they survived a breakup—and the ensuing workweek—and lived to love again.

## Don'ts

- ✗ Don't call in sick
- ✗ TMI! TMI! TMI!
- ✗ Don't argue with him at work
- ✗ Don't forget how fab you are!

### **Don't call in sick.**

It might seem tempting to spend the day moping in bed with daytime TV and a tub of Häagen-Dazs, but you'll feel better after you shower and get back into your routine. "Work was a good distraction, and since I was living with my ex, it was really good to get out of the house," says Erica, an account exec for a PR firm whose boyfriend of three years recently dumped her. Erica adds that she "eventually took a morning off, which was nice, but keeping up my routine was definitely key—it reminded me that there was more out there and that life moves on."

### **If you must spill, stick to the facts.**

Your intern or cubicle mate does not need to know that your boyfriend slept with your ex-roommate's sister. Avoid TMI by simply saying, "We broke up," then changing the subject so you won't be tempted to dwell on it. Erica says she told "one good friend, and let her know it was okay to tell co-workers. That was really helpful, as there was no way I could hide that there was something going on."

### **Don't call, text, or e-mail your ex on office time.**

According to Carrie, a paralegal who broke up with her long-distance boyfriend last winter, "you definitely don't want to argue with your ex on the phone in front of your co-workers. It will get emotional, and it's just not good for anybody. Wait until 5:30 to call [your friends] and vent to them about all the stupid things your ex did." Trust that you broke up for a reason, and allow yourself to move on. This is where keeping busy with work and friends comes in handy!

### **Take care of yourself.**

Breakups can wreak havoc on your sleeping and eating patterns, so after the initial shock wears off, try to ease back into exercising and going to bed at a reasonable time so you'll feel rested. Carrie suggests that you "carry tissues, and maybe download a lot of empowering music on your iPod to listen to while you work. I listened to a lot of Beyoncé during my breakup." And after a long day, buy yourself a bouquet of flowers or treat yourself to a manicure. It may take some time, but you will start feeling like your fabulous and independent self again. With or without him.

# Long-Distance Love

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It's a common 21st-century love story: Boy meets girl. Boy or girl gets a job offer in another city. The other person already has a job they love and decides to stay put. Pretty soon, boy and girl are conducting their courtship through text messages, e-mails, and weekend rendezvous courtesy of JetBlue.

Sound familiar? If you're contemplating a long-distance relationship (LDR) or if you're already in one, then here's what you need to know to go the distance, literally and figuratively.

## *Tricks:*

- ✓ Communication is key
- ✓ Show him you care
- ✓ Jump on the Red-Eye
- ✓ Ask to telecommute
- ✓ Don't ignore your friends

### **Keep communicating.**

Whether you keep in touch using IM, e-mail, snail mail, text messaging, webcam, cell phone, carrier pigeon, or all the above, communication is key for any relationship. It becomes even more important when you can't have regular face time with each other. When I was living in Boston and dating a guy in Philly, we had weekly phone chats every Sunday. We'd e-mail on weekdays, but I always looked forward to his calls on Sunday night so I could hear his voice and tell him about my week. If you're dating someone in another country, Skype.com lets you make international calls for free through the Web.

### **Find unique ways to show your S.O. you care.**

The Internet is a fast and efficient way to communicate, but it's not the most personal method. Laura Anderson lives near Boston and stays connected to her boyfriend in San Francisco by sending him funny cards. "I used to send chocolates, candy, cupcakes, muffins, and things to show I was thinking of him," she says, "but I also found he loved when I sent a card showing humor and sentiment. We need that reassurance that one is thinking about the other." Recording a mix CD of sappy romantic melodies or creating a collage of photos are other ideas to ease the separation.

### **Get creative in how you schedule.**

LDRs are notorious for eating up vacation days. To avoid this, Anderson says she'll "leave around 7 p.m. on Friday night and arrive there around 11 p.m. Pacific time. Then come Sunday, I fly the red-eye back to Boston and into work, sometimes running on four hours of sleep and a Starbucks Venti skinny mocha." Fortunately, her boyfriend takes business trips to the East Coast, so they sometimes meet up in New York City. If one of you is allowed to telecommute from the other's city, that's another possibility. Or you can plan to visit on holiday weekends like Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

### **Don't ignore friends and activities in your home city.**

One of the nice things about LDRs is that they give you plenty of time to see your friends and get things done. But if you're always skipping happy hour or Pilates class to chat with your boyfriend,

# Long-Distance Love

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then you're missing out. Having a support system of friends and co-workers close by will take your mind off of missing him and help you stay balanced. "It's really difficult to maintain a semblance of normalcy, but my academics and friends keep me busy," says Nisha Venkatesan, a graduate student at Georgetown whose boyfriend lives in Germany. She manages to see him every four or five months thanks to her school schedule and a study-abroad program in Geneva. They use Skype to keep in touch in between.

Most importantly, savor your time together. "It's nice when you don't see the person," Venkatesan says, "because when you do see them, you really appreciate the time that you have with them. [Missing] the person makes you realize how important they are."





# Coping With Financial Inequality

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Once, I dated a man, who was very, very poor. That's what he said, and I believed him. Why wouldn't I? He had wads of medical bills left over from a bout with cancer; he had child support; he had business expenses; and—oh, yes—he had the Chinese symbol for money tattooed on his Achilles tendon.

Since I lived in Manhattan and he was in North Carolina, we spent much of our relationship commuting. Plane tickets cost money, and though we tried to split the fares, I ended up paying for the bulk of them.

I didn't really mind. He'd had a hard couple of years; I'd just sold a book and had some extra cash, and I wanted to see him. I was hardly wealthy, but if I had to shell out more money than he did, so be it. He wasn't so happy about the financial disparity.

Though he would never admit it, much of his masculinity was tied up in his wallet; he felt less virile for not being able to pay his (and my) way. And I'll confess: sometimes, it bothered me too. Such as the time I eyed a \$70 dollar bracelet in a store window hoping he would buy it for me (he didn't), and when I wondered how we would afford to have kids if we ever reached that point (we didn't).

But for the most part, our money issues weren't a problem for me. That is, until he canceled a trip we'd planned to Panama— after I paid for the tickets, mind you—pleading poverty. A few weeks later, he mysteriously found the resources to buy a brand new motorcycle.

I was livid; I was hurt. I couldn't believe he'd canceled our plans, especially when he knew how important they were to me. And for a motorcycle! "I thought you didn't have any money!" I said. "I put it on my credit card," he replied. "I can always sell it. You can sell an object. You can't sell a trip."

And that's when I realized that our issues weren't about money. They were about priorities and power and his need to assert himself in a situation where he felt inferior. The one way he could do it? By hitting me where he knew I'd feel it.

It goes without saying that relationships are tough work, filled with endless compromises—and many couples feel the challenges smack in their billfolds.

According to a 2006 Money magazine poll, 84 percent of respondents reported that finances caused tension in their marriages, and 15 percent said they fought about money several times a month. Sharyn Soho, a Boston divorce attorney and cofounder of divorcenet.com, notes that one spouse earning significantly more than the other—or experiencing overwhelming success—is a leading cause of divorce.

If you think about it, that's actually not too surprising. Wealth, and one's association with it,

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alters the balance of power in any interaction; it follows that those who have grown up around money, or earn a lot of it, or have piles of it at their disposal, view the world differently than their less fortunate counterparts. While riches might not buy happiness, they do buy freedom, and the bottom line is that the person with more freedom has more options.

“Money is like an engine, it drives other things,” notes Helga Hayse, author of *Don’t Worry About A Thing, Dear: Why Women Need Financial Intimacy*. “People make assumptions about money, but in my experience, whoever has more of it has more leverage in the relationship.”

Lola Smith, 35, is living proof. The pharmaceutical representative from Arlington, VA, once dated a man with an exceedingly large trust fund; he wooed her with expensive dinners and lavish gifts, and flew her around the country in his private plane.

Although Smith grew up in an upper-middle-class household, she was not used to such extravagances. “I always tried to pay my own way with him,” she says. “I didn’t want him to think I was with him just for his money. I also knew that if I let him pay for me all the time, he’d feel a certain amount of control over me. I didn’t want to feel like he owned me.”

Losing leverage in a relationship can be unsettling. James Willis, a 37-year-old theater director, comes from a very well-to-do family. He has always been financially generous with his lovers, many of whom have abused his impulse. Once, when he had forgotten his wallet at dinner, a boyfriend said to him, pointblank, “Well, I expect you to reimburse me. You have way more money than I do.”

Willis was furious. “It wasn’t about the money—it was about the effort and the expectation,” he said. “Why did I have to pay all the time?” He felt taken advantage of. Did people become involved with him solely because of his deep pockets?

But he also felt guilty. Who was he kidding? A hundred bucks was no big deal to him, whereas he knew it was a significant sum of money to his boyfriend. He broke off the relationship, and decided to not be so forthcoming about his finances in the future. “I just figured it was best to make sure people were with me for me, and not because I had money,” he explains.

As often as not, issues of wealth disparity can become complicated by traditional gender roles. “It’s a cultural expectation that men are going to be the breadwinners,” says Ginny Graves, co-author of *For Richer or Poorer: Keeping Your Marriage Happy When She’s Making More Money*. But today, when 35 percent of married working women earn more than their husbands, that expectation plays out in complex ways.

David Zweifler met his wife, Sarah, in 1997. Zweifler, now 34, was a research analyst for Bear Stearns; Sarah was head of marketing for a multinational law firm, raking in \$30,000 more a year than he did. “I respected the fact that she was earning that much money,” he says. “But I

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made a point of covering at least half of the dates and dinners—and probably a little bit more, because I’m the guy.”

Sometimes, money issues can stop a relationship in its tracks. For five years, Sheila Velazques, 30, lived with a man who was unemployed for most of their time together. Part of the problem, she admits, was that he didn’t actively seek work—and by default she ended up paying his way. “It was a huge turnoff,” she says. “He had no ambition, and didn’t show any signs of changing. What if I had wanted to stay home with our kids?”

Melissa Jacobs, 34, had a more successful experience. The social worker from Greenville, SC, married a man whose family has considerably less money than hers (his father was a transit worker; hers was a lawyer). They met in college, and since he was working to pay the bills, she would pay when they went out on dates.

“I had everything handed to me and he didn’t—and I knew that if I wanted us to do things, I’d have to pay,” she says. She didn’t mind—but she does resent paying for things when they go out with his family. “They never reciprocate!” she says. “We fly to see them, and we’ll buy them dinner. I keep thinking it’s because they don’t have anything, but it bothers me.” Does she say anything to her husband about her feelings? “Absolutely not!” she says. “We just come from different cultures, and he’s not going to change his parents at this point. I have to pick my battles.”

Just as every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way, every financially unequal partnership has its own special set of problems—and solutions. And just as it tends to be easier to date someone from a similar cultural, religious, and educational background, it’s often easier to be with someone who has similar attitudes about money.

“Wealth-management people call it financial incompatibility, and it’s a very real issue,” says Helga Hayse. “Money is the one remaining taboo in marriage. It used to be sex, but no more.

Everyone goes into marriage expecting a good sex life. But they don’t talk about money.” (Nearly two-thirds of married couples who responded to a 2006 USA Today poll said they had talked “a little bit or “not at all” about finances before committing to one another).

So, is your relationship doomed if you come from different financial backgrounds? Or if you can’t discuss your feelings about money? Mine clearly was (perhaps because, as financial guru Suze Orman puts it, “Opposites may attract, but I wouldn’t put my money on a relationship between financial opposites.”)

Ultimately, a successful union is about more than the size of one’s wallet. But here’s a tip: next time your partner despairs about the size of his billfold, tell him you’ve never seen anything so big in your life.

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BY NICOLE WILLIAMS