

FRICTION

Jason could sense her behind him . . . hovering.

Through nearly six months of internship and a couple more months on the job, he had developed a sixth sense—his “Tracy-dar.” He could feel her coming a mile away.

He didn’t need to see her face to know she was rolling her eyes. He didn’t need to listen beyond the soft hum of his computer to hear her stifled sigh. He didn’t even need to have his feet on the floor to know she was tapping her foot impatiently.

“Yes, Tracy?” he asked, his eyes never leaving the computer screen.

Tracy now sighed audibly. “Where is that research report on next quarter’s trends?”

Jason barely masked his frustration. He spoke quickly, so as to not give her a chance to interrupt. “It’s coming. I should have it to you by Friday. You asked me to start working on the sales projections yesterday. You said those were urgent. I assumed that meant they went to the top of my stack. So I’ve been working on getting those ready. It’s what you asked me to do.”

“Well, that’s what happens when you assume,” she chided. “When I told you the sales projections were urgent, that didn’t mean I wanted you to stop working on the trend report. I still expected you to get that to me this morning.”

How was I supposed to know that? Is ESP part of my job description now? Jason thought. But what he said was, “Okay. . . .”

“This is why you’re paid a salary now, Jason,” Tracy continued. “You’re supposed to work the hours it takes to get these things done. You may have punched a time clock when you were an intern, but now GreenGarb expects more from you.”

Yeah, that’s why I came here out of college, to get minimum-wage pay for a never-ending workweek. Jason spun in his chair and gave a quick salute. “Okay, boss. I’ll get right on it.”

“So, when can I get the trend report?”

Jason looked around at the papers strewn around his cubicle. “Uh . . . well, I guess if I stop working on the sales projections right now, I could get it to you by the end of the day. Good enough?”

Tracy frowned. “It’ll have to be, I guess.” She paused for a moment as if to say something else to Jason, then turned and walked back toward her office.

Jason clenched his fists in frustration behind Tracy’s back and sighed. “Looks like another long day again. This is not why I went to college,” he muttered to himself. Resigned to his current fate, he turned back to the computer and began pulling up the trend report, again.

