

ON THE WAY TO THE OFFICE

“**M**an, I am so fed up with my boss!”

It’s Tuesday morning and I’m sitting on the train, on my way to work. My music playlist has finished, so I’m eavesdropping on the two guys sitting opposite me. They’re both rather cute, particularly the one dressed in a grey suit.

“I really wanted to call in sick today,” the guy in the grey suit continues.

The guy in the navy suit nods sympathetically. “Yeah, I hear you. I had a team meeting the other day and my boss totally slammed my power point presentation! I was up all night generating those freaking pie charts!”

“Well, *my* boss keeps delaying my promotion. He’s totally screwing me! He might as well just whip it out and fuck me over his mahogany conference table. *Prick.*”

“My boss needs a good fuck,” says Mr Navy Suit sadly. “He hasn’t smiled in, like, five years. Maybe if I blow him he’ll cheer up and I can finally get that pay rise.”

“Yeah, maybe I should suck my boss off in the stationery cupboard. He makes me feel like a hooker, so I might as well act like one.”

I can’t help snickering. These guys have no idea about what it’s like to *really* get screwed at work.

Mr Grey Suit suddenly leans forward, his eyes narrowing behind stylish blue-framed glasses. “What’s so funny, eh?”

He casts a disparaging eye over me. I’m dressed in jeans and a faded old hoodie, my battered backpack that contains a spare set of clothing nestled between my legs. It’s a cool and crisp autumn morning, so I have my hood pulled up, overhanging my face.

Mr Grey Suit’s lip curls up in disdain. “Like you’d know anything about hard work,” he says in a biting tone. “You’ve probably got a hot date with the dole queue.”

“Hey, don’t be so rude,” Mr Navy Suit chides.

“Well, *he’s* rude. He shouldn’t be laughing at us. Or eavesdropping.” He glares at me.

I remove my earbuds. “I didn’t mean to be rude,” I say apologetically. “It’s just that I know all about hard work.”

Mr Grey Suit looks sceptical. “Oh yeah, whereabouts do you work?”

Now, normally, I don’t tell strangers exactly what it is that I do for a living. I’m usually deliberately vague and say that I’m in customer service, or retail, or even massage therapy. Today I decide to be a little more specific.

“I work in a stable,” I reply with a cocky grin. I’m technically telling the truth, after all. There’s no way that these two are going to guess what my actual job is.

Mr Navy Suit raises his eyebrows. “Oh, do you do agistment or something? Yeah, I guess working with horses would be pretty tiring.”

Mr Grey Suit shakes his head at Mr Navy Suit. “I think he means a male brothel,” he hisses,

calling my bluff.

Now Mr Navy Suit leans forward, his eyes wide. "Are you a *prostitute*?"

"Are your clientele female?" Mr Grey Suit asks quickly. "Or are they..." here his voice drops, "male?"

I start to feel nervous. This conversation could always turn ugly and I've still got at least twenty minutes until my train stop. I probably should have just kept my mouth shut. Why do I care what some arrogant stranger thinks of me? *Shit*.

I look away, only to notice the graffiti scrawled under the train window. *Homos suck balls*. I wince and start to reach down for my backpack, ready to change seats, or even leave the train if necessary.

A flash of understanding moves across Mr Grey Suit's face. "Hey, it's okay," he says, his tone now completely different. "We're not homophobic, right, Evan?"

Mr Navy Suit nods his head. "We like men," he whispers. "Well, Rajeev likes men. I like men *and* women." He winks at me.

Mr Grey Suit lightly taps me on the knee with his finger. "So, was I right about the stable?"

I let out the breath I've been holding. "Yeah, I'm a sex worker," I admit, keeping my voice low. "And we cater to male clients." I give them a little smile.

They both stare at me and I jiggle one leg, trying to work off the tension. We're now at Oakleigh station. Still quite a few stops to go.

"What's the money like?" Mr Navy Suit asks suddenly.

"Pretty good," I reply, relaxing back in my seat. "I put myself through Uni and now I'm paying off a townhouse."

Mr Navy Suit shakes his head at Mr Grey Suit and laughs. "We're in the wrong industry, Rajeev!"

Mr Grey Suit doesn't smile. He studies me intently and then gestures towards my hoodie. "Can you, um...?"

Oh.

"Yeah, sure." I push back my hood, so that he can get a good look at my face.

Mr Grey Suit inhales sharply, and then leans forward even further, so that our knees are touching. Deciding that I might as well keep going, I slowly unzip my hoodie and shrug it off my shoulders, revealing my torso.

Mr Grey Suit swallows and I watch his Adam's apple move up and down his throat. After a few moments, I zip my hoodie back up again.

Mr Grey Suit suddenly places his entire hand on my knee. I can feel his body heat through my jeans. "Can I have a business card?" he asks softly.

Mr Navy Suit looks scandalised. "What the hell are you doing?" he hisses. "You're not actually going to visit a brothel, are you?"

Mr Grey Suit turns to him and grins. "But I'm horny."

Mr Navy Suit screws up his nose. “Well, why don’t you go out clubbing this weekend or something? You might meet someone nice.”

Mr Grey Suit shakes his head. “A club has beer on tap, not sex. Besides, just look at him! He’s really hot.”

“Well, of course he’s hot,” Mr Navy Suit rejoins, his tone acerbic. “He’s probably genetically engineered to separate you from your wallet!”

“I promise I’m human,” I say, both amused and offended at the direction this conversation has taken.

Mr Grey Suit turns back towards me. He still has his hand on my knee. “I don’t care if you’re totally synthetic. I’d *really* like that business card. Or a web address?”

I shake my head. “I’m not allowed to solicit.” If word gets out, my workplace could get into trouble.

Mr Navy Suit suddenly glances around, then stands up. “Rajeev, it’s our stop.” He tugs on Mr Grey Suit’s arm.

“Oh, sure!” Mr Grey Suit leaps to his feet and then stares at my mouth. “Ah, it was nice talking to you,” he says, now all formal politeness. “I’m sorry for my earlier rudeness.”

I smile at him. “No worries, Rajeev. Don’t work too hard today!” I wink at him.

He stares back at me as Mr Navy Suit leads him off the train and onto the platform of Caulfield Station.

I pull my hood back up and laugh quietly to myself.

