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Sexual Harassment

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment either as an abuse of office or interpersonal abuse does occur in the work place. *Sex or Famine is* the case of an audit manager, married and with two children, who will not put a female audit assistant on jobs which were challenging and "juicy". To be put on interesting jobs, the audit manager demanded only one thing from the female audit assistant: sex.

6.1 Sex or Famine

About five years ago (in 1990 to be precise), I was an audit assistant with an auditing firm which audited and prepared the accounts of both private and public organisations. The personnel who actually carried out auditing within the firm consisted of three managing partners, six audit managers and thirty-two audit assistants of which I was one. Jobs of the firm were shared out among the managers. The audit assistants were grouped into six. Each group was placed under a manager.

The firm's policy with respect to task assignment was that it was a manager's responsibility to decide who in his group would be put on a particular job. The manager could decide to put one on challenging jobs or make one stay in the office to do odd jobs like costing, re-calling and corrections.

I happened to work under a handsome, young manager who, according to sources, had a wife and two children.

At a point in time, this manager started making "advances" to me. He started by putting me on jobs which were considered "juicy" because one could get "something extra" from such jobs. He then resorted to inviting me to lunch any time he came round during lunch time. At one of such meetings he made his intentions clear to me: He told me he was in love with me and wanted me to become his mistress. I was shocked and confused when I heard him say those things to me. I was shocked because he was

the last person I expected to hear such a thing from. The confusion stemmed from a dilemma: On the one hand, if I gave in to his request, he would make my stay in the firm a very profitable one; on the other hand, my conscience would not allow me to say "yes" to him because I had vowed never to have any affair with a married man. He kept pestering me with his request: He would call me to his office, asking me to "consider" him and so on.

After some reflection, I told him I was not interested in his offer of love. He became angry and decided to keep me in the office for more than three weeks. This was his way of punishing me because apart from losing the opportunity of learning on the job, I also missed the "side issues" of working in the field. In short, he had put me on a desert — on a schedule which was dry and dreary.

After about three weeks in the office with no sign that I would be sent into the field, and convinced that the manager was not prepared to change his mind, I went to his office to give him the reasons why I could not accept his "advances", pleading with him to understand my situation. He accepted my explanation and from then on he started sending me to the field and we became the best of friends — platonic, that is!

Questions which may be useful for discussion

1. Place your daughter/wife/sister in the situation of the woman in the case; what might be the significance of this reading and discussion for you?
2. If you were to write the Ten Commandments for the behav iour of supervisors, what would be the key points?
3. How might a commitment to a value see you through a dif ficult test/temptation? Contrast the ethics of the audit assistant with that of her supervisor.
4. What title would you give to this reading?