

Ed

is someone speaking?  
or is he imagining?

he actually can't, right?

"It must be Monday. Here comes Carl with his light blue shirt and his dark blue tie with the gold stripes!" Carl could hear them now. He had a rule not to let this get under his skin. It was one of the few times that they actually bothered to noticed him. He knotted and unknotted his Monday tie five times. The day would go well. Wasn't it guaranteed? All the proprieties had been observed. Carl liked order. Carl liked consistency. Carl liked his rules.

He pulled into company parking. Doreen's Kia was now squatting two rows from the main TechnoTool entrance. "She's here for less than six weeks and already she's parking like a supervisor. That has to be breaking a company rule or two," Carl noted. "Yep, she's got it going on with the Boss, for sure," he mourned. "Delightful Doreen is out of my reach." Carl had thought he felt the heat between them. Doreen was always "busy" whenever he worked up the nerve to ask her to lunch or to go to the movies. As he trudged from his seven-year-old Corolla to the distant entrance, Carl repeated his mantra in time with his strides, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me."

In his cubicle, Carl found a Post-It on his computer screen summoning him to Boss Lumberg's office. "What now?" he fussed, but he let it go. Carl had a rule not to borrow trouble.

"Sit, Carl, sit, sit", a broadly beaming Lumberg greeted him cordially. The Boss was one of those people who smile with both rows of teeth. "I have a favor to ask you."

- so, kind of difficult to read, given what's going on.  
- it would be interesting to see the new rules that Carl generates for him self. like "Rule #451: Don't let comments bother me."

office space?

**SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard**

"All those big white teeth," Carl mused as his mind dived into a vision of a huge, smooth, sinuous shark shaking a naked Doreen in his powerful jaws. Her red hair undulated in the clear, green sea water like a beautiful blood stain.

"Carl, Carl, are you with me here?" Lumberg's voice was sharp with impatience.

Carl surfaced from his marine reverie. "A favor, now he's friendly. Could this day be getting worse?" Aloud Carl responded, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, what do you need?"

"You know the new girl, Doreen? She seems to be having a little trouble keeping up with her paper work. Carl, I wonder if you would be the good doobie that we all know you are and help her out, you know, take up some of her slack?" the Boss cajoled, his shark grin widening, his shark teeth glinting. "I would consider it a personal favor, Carl."

"Sure, Mr. Lumberg, sure, glad to help out. When would you like Doreen and me to get together about this?" Carl asked maybe too quickly, maybe too eagerly. Maybe, Carl hoped, all was not lost, after all.

"No need for that, Carl. I have all of her paper work right here. You can just take it right out to your desk and work on it after you get your own work done. I consider this a personal favor, I really do, Darryl, I mean Carl."

"I just bet you do, you son of a bitch. Maybe she could get her work done if she didn't spend so much time in your office doing God only knows what. All that must be breaking rules! She is so pretty and so out of reach except for jerks like Lumberg who make the big bucks. This day did get much worse." ~~seethed~~ Carl to himself. "What can Carl do? It is Carl's rule to be a good employee. It is Carl's rule to do what he is told. It's been like this from the time Carl was a little boy. It's Carl's rule not to let things like this bother him. Carl will just have to do it."

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Carl forced a thin smile onto his reddening face and replied, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, just hand over those papers and I'll get right on it this afternoon." He spun to go while he could still hold that smile frozen on his lips. From the time he was a little boy, it was Carl's most important rule to not let anyone else see exactly how Carl felt. He had learned not to bother. After all, who really cared?

"Carl, would you ask Doreen to step in here, please? I have a few things I need to discuss with her."

Doreen was waiting just outside the door as Carl left. She swept by him on a cloud of jasmine and roses. A bump of her buttocks shut the door firmly behind her. There was silence then Carl could hear them laughing as he slunk away.

Late that afternoon, Carl hissed under his breath, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me," as he finished his own work and began to tackle the pile of Doreen's undone assignments. He was still buried at five o'clock when Lumberg and Doreen left. Carl watched out of the office window as Lumberg shoveled Doreen into his BMer Boxster and put the top down. He felt physical pain when he saw her slim, pale fingers entangled in the tight gray-brown curls at the back of

"Why so late?" both Phil and Gary inquired on their separate ways out past his desk piled with paperwork. Only Gary took the time to stop and commiserate.

"That looks like newbie work to me, Carl. What's up?" Gary asked with sympathy.

"You're kidding me! Doreen's work? What a nerve, he gets all the fun and you do all the work. I don't believe he's screwing you like this. For that matter, I don't believe he's doing the same thing to the Delicious Doreen, either. What a waste! It's amazing how much handsomer and

more charming a big wallet makes a man, eh?

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

Carl <sup>wasn't talking</sup> would remember that Gary took the time to sympathize. He made it a rule to remember people who were nice to him. There was nothing nice to remember for Doreen and the rest in the office, including Phil and especially, Mr. Lumberg. As he inputted Doreen's work, Carl became angrier and more resentful in an overwhelming and global way. All the years of feeling ignored, of never getting what he wanted or what he thought he deserved, of his feeling put upon, of his not letting things bother him, of his swallowing the sharp metal shards of hurt and anger, of, most importantly, never allowing himself to show how he really felt----all these swelled up into a hot, red, acid ball of molten misery in his stomach. Carl had to vomit it out. Carl knew what Carl had to do. He had to show them how he really felt.

\*\*\*\*\*

"We're speaking with Gary Spivak, one of the few survivors of the office shooting rampage at TechnoTool Industries here in Suburban Industrial Park outside of Dayton, Ohio. What can you tell us about Carl Bellman, the alleged shooter who ended the slaughter by taking his own life?" The reporter had ignored Gary's state of emotional shock. He had sequestered Gary from paramedical personnel. Now he jabbed his microphone close to Gary's ashy, blood-spattered face and hoped the man would speak loudly enough for him to get a killer sound bite that the Network in New York would pick up.

"Carl was always such a quiet <sup>guy</sup> man. He kept to himself. I never saw him get angry at anything or anybody. I don't understand why he did this. I don't understand any of it. Why am I still alive? He just walked right by me, gave me the sweetest smile. Then he went into Mr. Lumberg's office and shot him and Doreen. Then he came out onto the floor and killed Phil and so many others. Dead. Dead. I don't understand. What kind of rules does a man like that live by????

JULIE

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

In its entirety?  
Too short.

SUMMARY?

Too much internal dialogue.  
Too much third person.

Disgruntled worker and office shooting seems cliché.

"It must be Monday. Here comes Carl with his light blue shirt and his dark blue tie with the gold stripes!" Carl could hear them now. He had a rule not to let this get under his skin. It was one of the few times that they actually bothered to noticed him. He knotted and unknotted his Monday tie five times. The day would go well. Wasn't it guaranteed? All the proprieties had been observed. Carl liked order. Carl liked consistency. Carl liked his rules.

Be specific!  
"that's mocking"

Why 3rd person?

He pulled into company parking. Doreen's Kia was now squatting two rows from the main TechnoTool entrance. "She's here for less than six weeks and already she's parking like a supervisor. That has to be breaking a company rule or two," Carl noted. "Yep, she's got it going on with the Boss, for sure," he mourned. "Delightful Doreen is out of my reach." Carl had thought he felt the heat between them. Doreen was always "busy" whenever he worked up the nerve to ask her to lunch or to go to the movies. As he trudged from his seven-year-old Corolla to the distant entrance, Carl repeated his mantra in time with his strides, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me."

word choice

or "held"

In his cubicle, Carl found a Post-It on his computer screen summoning him to Boss Lumberg's office. "What now," he fussed, but he let it go. Carl had a rule not to borrow trouble.

"Sit, Carl, sit, sit", a broadly beaming Lumberg greeted him cordially. The Boss was one of those people who smile with both rows of teeth. "I have a favor to ask you."

Describe the walk to the boss's office. Long? Was the door open?  
Did he have to knock? Go through a secretary?

JULIE

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

*Italics for thoughts*

"All those big white teeth," Carl mused as his mind dived into a vision of a huge, smooth, sinuous shark shaking a naked Doreen in his powerful jaws. Her red hair undulated in the clear, green sea water like a beautiful blood stain.

*Delete.*

"Carl, Carl, are you with me here?" Lumberg's voice was sharp with impatience.

Carl surfaced from his marine reverie. "A favor, now he's friendly. Could this day be getting worse?" Aloud Carl responded, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, what do you need?"

*Have this wake him from reverie.*

"You know the new girl, Doreen? She seems to be having a little trouble keeping up with her paper work. Carl, I wonder if you would be the good doobie that we all know you are and help her out, you know, take up some of her slack?" the Boss cajoled, his shark grin widening, his shark teeth glinting. "I *would consider it a personal favor, Carl.*"

*= # top of this page*

"Sure, Mr. Lumberg, sure, glad to help out. When would you like Doreen and me to get together about this?" Carl asked maybe too quickly, maybe too eagerly. Maybe, Carl hoped, all was not lost, after all.

*x3*

"No need for that, Carl. I have all of her paper work right here. You can just take it right out to your desk and work on it after you get your own work done. I consider this a personal favor, I really do, Darryl, I mean Carl."

*Who's Darryl?*

"I just bet you do, you son of a bitch. Maybe she could get her work done if she didn't spend so much time in your office doing God only knows what. All that must be breaking rules! She is so pretty and so out of reach except for jerks like Lumberg who make the big bucks. This day did get much worse," seethed Carl to himself. "What can Carl do? It is Carl's rule to be a good employee. It is Carl's rule to do what he is told. It's been like this from the time Carl was a little boy. It's Carl's rule not to let things like this bother him. Carl will just have to do it."

*Italics*

JULIE

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Carl forced a thin smile onto his reddening face and replied, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, just hand over those papers and I'll get right on it this afternoon." He spun to go while he could still hold that smile frozen on his lips. From the time he was a little boy, it was Carl's most important rule to not let anyone else see exactly how Carl felt. He had learned not to bother. After all, who really cared?

"Carl, would you ask Doreen to step in here, please? I have a few things I need to discuss with her."

So, he didn't need to.

Doreen was waiting just outside the door as Carl left. She swept by him on a cloud of jasmine and roses. A bump of her buttocks shut the door firmly behind her. There was silence, then Carl could hear them laughing as he slunk away.

Late that afternoon, Carl hissed under his breath, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me," as he finished his own work and began to tackle the pile of Doreen's undone assignments. He was still buried at five o'clock when Lumberg and Doreen left. Carl watched out of the office window as Lumberg shoveled Doreen into his BMer Boxster and put the top down. He felt physical pain when he saw her slim, pale fingers entangled in the tight gray-brown curls at the back of the Boss's neck. Where else? Where else? The thought tortured him.

5:00

word choice

"Why so late?" both Phil and Gary inquired on their separate ways out past his desk piled with paperwork. Only Gary took the time to stop and commiserate.

"That looks like newbie work to me, Carl. What's up?" Gary asked with sympathy. "You're kidding me! Doreen's work! What a nerve, he gets all the fun and you do all the work. I don't believe he's screwing you like this. For that matter, I don't believe he's doing the same thing to the Delicious Doreen, either. What a waste! It's amazing how much handsomer and charming a big wallet makes a man, eh?"

JULIE

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

Carl would remember that Gary took the time to sympathize. He made it a rule to remember people who were nice to him. There was nothing nice to remember for Doreen and the rest in the office including Phil and especially, Mr. Lumberg. As he inputed Doreen's work, Carl became angrier and more resentful in an overwhelming and global way. All the years of feeling ignored, of never getting what he wanted or what he thought he deserved, of his feeling put upon, of his not letting things bother him, of his swallowing the sharp metal shards of hurt and anger, of, most importantly, never allowing himself to show how he really felt----all these swelled up into a hot, red, acid ball of molten misery in his stomach. Carl had to vomit it out. Carl knew what Carl had to do. He had to show them how he really felt.

Choose one.

too strong!

wow! Angry!

3rd person again?

\*\*\*\*\* Will there be more here? Or does this indicate time change?

"We're speaking with Gary Spivak, one of the few survivors of the office shooting rampage at TechnoTool Industries here in Suburban Industrial Park outside of Dayton, Ohio. What can you tell us about Carl Bellman, the alleged shooter who ended the slaughter by taking his own life?" The reporter had ignored Gary's state of emotional shock. He had sequestered Gary from para-medical personnel. Now he jabbed his microphone close to Gary's ashy, blood spattered face and hoped the man would speak loudly enough for him to get a killer sound bite that the Network in New York would pick up.

interesting word choice

"Carl was always such a quiet man. He kept to himself. I never saw him get angry at anything or anybody. I don't understand why he did this. I don't understand any of it. Why am I still alive? He just walked right by me, gave me the sweetest smile. Then he went into Mr. Lumberg's office and shot him and Doreen. Then he came out onto the floor and killed Phil and so many others. Dead. Dead. I don't understand. What kind of rules does a man like that live by????

IS THAT IT? NEEDS MORE DETAIL

(IN LIGHT OF THE LAS VEGAS TRAGIC MASS SHOOTING, I WOULDN'T WRITE THIS NOW.)

**SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard**

*This is a revenge story meant to highlight a person who holds in too much rage. I guess we've seen this before on the news or the newspaper-with similar results.*

*I wonder if this plot line is a bit too direct to be a completed story. In writing, there needs to be a sense of tension. Up until the shooting on the final page, we're involved with Carl and his emotional insecurities at work. We're given some reasons to believe he's angry with no way to vent it. We'd have to suspect that he was going to blow at some point in the story. You've cut your story short. There might be some kind of frustration outside work, or the lack of a special-other in his life.*

*I feel the story has lots of potential, but it needs other details that would give us a sense of psychological tension.*

*Good luck with this story.*

*Dave*

→ "It must be Monday. Here comes Carl with his light blue shirt and his dark blue tie with the gold stripes!" *(Who is speaking?) (New paragraph)* Carl could <sup>good change</sup> hear them now. He had a rule not to let this get under his skin. It was one of the few times that they actually bothered to noticed him. He knotted and unknotted his Monday tie five times. The day would go well. Wasn't it guaranteed? All the proprieties had been observed. Carl liked order. Carl liked consistency. Carl liked his rules. *(Sounds autistic. If not, filter in some moderation in his quirkeyness.)*

He pulled into company parking. *(After reading the first para, I thought he was in the office and not driving.)* Doreen's Kia was now squatting two rows from the main TechnoTool entrance. *(New paragraph.)* "She's here for less than six weeks and already she's parking like a supervisor. That has to be breaking a company rule or two," Carl noted. "Yep, she's got it going on with the Boss, for sure," he mourned, (.) "Delightful Doreen is out of my reach." ~~Carl had thought he felt the heat between them. Doreen was always "busy" whenever he worked up the nerve to ask her to lunch or to go to the movies.~~ As he trudged from his seven year old Corolla

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to the distant entrance, Carl repeated his mantra in time with his strides, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me."

In his cubicle, Carl found a Post-It on his computer screen summoning him to Boss Lumberg's office. "What now," he fussed, but he let it go. Carl had a rule not to borrow trouble.

*(Need a transition from the sticky-note to the boss's office.)* "Sit, Carl, sit, sit", a broadly beaming Lumberg greeted him cordially. The Boss was one of those people who smile(d) with both rows of teeth. "I have a favor to ask you."

*Good thing* "All those big white teeth," Carl mused as his mind ~~dived~~ *dove* into a vision of a huge, smooth, sinuous shark shaking a naked Doreen in his powerful jaws. Her red hair undulated in the clear, green sea water like a beautiful blood stain.

"Carl, Carl, are you with me here?" Lumberg's voice was sharp with impatience.

Carl surfaced from his marine reverie. *"A favor, now he's friendly. Could this day be getting worse?"* *(If this isn't a quote, don't use quotation marks.)* Aloud Carl responded, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, what do you need?"

"You know the new girl, Doreen? She seems to be having a little trouble keeping up with her paper work. Carl, I wonder if you would be the good doobie that we all know you are and help her out, you know, take up some of her slack?" the Boss ~~eajoted~~ *said*, his shark grin widening, his shark teeth glinting. "I \_\_\_\_\_ *MISSING*"

"Sure, Mr. Lumberg, sure, glad to help out. When would you like Doreen and me to get together about this?" Carl asked maybe too quickly, maybe too eagerly. Maybe, Carl hoped, all was not lost, after all.

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

"No need for that, Carl. I have all of her paper work right here. You can just take it right out to your desk and work on it after you get your own work done. I consider this a personal favor, I really do, Darryl, I mean Carl." *change*

*"I just bet you do, you son of a bitch. Maybe she could get her work done if she didn't spend so much time in your office doing God only knows what. All that must be breaking rules! She is so pretty and so out of reach except for jerks like Lumberg who make the big bucks. This day did get much worse." (If this isn't a quotation, don't use quotation marks.)* seethed Carl to himself. *"What can Carl do? It is Carl's rule to be a good employee. It is Carl's rule to do what he is told. It's been like this from the time Carl was a little boy. It's Carl's rule not to let things like this bother him. Carl will just have to do it." (Again, quotation marks.)*

*lots of work*  
Carl forced a thin smile onto his reddening face and replied, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, just hand over those papers and I'll get right on it this afternoon." He spun to go (*Leave?*) while he could still hold that smile frozen on his lips. From the time he was a little boy, it was Carl's most important rule to not let anyone else see exactly how Carl *he* felt. He had learned not to bother. After all, who really cared?

"Carl, would you ask Doreen to step in here, please? I have a few things I need to discuss with her."

Doreen was waiting just outside the door as Carl left. She swept by him on a cloud of jasmine and roses. A bump of her buttocks shut the door firmly behind her. There was silence then Carl could hear them laughing as he slunk away.

Late(*r*) that afternoon, Carl hissed under his breath, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me," as he finished his own work and began to tackle the pile of Doreen's undone assignments. *He* was still buried at five o'clock when Lumberg and

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

Doreen left. Carl watched ~~out of~~ *from* the office window as Lumberg shoved Doreen into his BMer Boxster (*Boxter is a Porche.*) and put the top down. He felt physical pain when he saw her slim, pale fingers entangled in the tight gray-brown curls at the back of *her head?*

*Important*

"Why so late?" both Phil and Gary inquired on their separate ways out past his desk piled with

"That looks like newbie work to me, Carl. What's up?" Gary asked with sympathy.

*(You need a response from Carl.)*

"You're kidding me! Doreen's work! What a nerve, he gets all the fun and you do all the work. I don't believe he's screwing you like this. For that matter, I don't believe he's doing the same thing to the Delicious Doreen, either. What a waste! It's amazing how much handsomer and charming a big wallet makes a man, eh?

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"Carl was always such a quiet man. He kept to himself. I never saw him get angry at anything or anybody. I don't understand why he did this. I don't understand any of it. Why am I still alive? He just walked right by me, gave me the sweetest smile. Then he went into Mr. Lumberg's office and shot him and Doreen. Then he came out onto the floor and killed Phil and so many others. Dead. Dead. I don't understand. *What kind of rules does a man like that live by???? (Good last sentence.)*

Susan

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

-RI

"It must be Monday. Here comes Carl with his light blue shirt and his dark blue tie with the gold stripes!"

Comment [s1]: Good start

Carl could hear them now. He had a rule not to let this get under his skin. It was one of the few times that they actually bothered to noticed him. He knotted and unknotted his Monday tie five times. The day would go well. Wasn't it guaranteed? All the proprieties had been observed. Carl liked order. Carl liked consistency. Carl liked his rules.

Comment [s2]: Only 1 space between sentences

He pulled into company parking. Doreen's Kia was now squatting two rows from the main TechnoTool entrance.

changed from what was read

"She's here for less than six weeks and already she's parking like a supervisor. That has to be breaking a company rule or two," Carl noted. "Yep, she's got it going on with the Boss, for sure," he mourned, "Delightful Doreen is out of my reach." Carl had thought he felt the heat between them. Doreen was always "busy" whenever he worked up the nerve to ask her to lunch or to go to the movies. As he trudged from his seven-seven-year-year-old Corolla to the distant entrance, Carl repeated his mantra in time with his strides, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me."

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Comment [s3]: Unclear if "them" is Carl and Doreen or the Boss and Doreen. Had to keep reading to figure that out.

Comment [s4]: I left this in quotes because I could picture him saying this out loud.

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Comment [s5]: Implied by Carl's thought in the next paragraph

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"Carl, Carl, are you with me here?" Lumberg's voice was sharp with impatience.

implied by narrative

Carl surfaced from his marine reverie. "A favor, now he's friendly. Could this day be getting worse?" Aloud Carl responded, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, what do you need?"

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"You know the that new girl, Doreen? She seems to be having a little trouble keeping up with her paper work. Carl, I wonder if you would be the good doobie that we all know you are and help her out ~~the~~, you know, take up some of her slack?" the Boss cajoled, his shark grin widening, his shark teeth glinting. "I would consider it a personal favor, Carl."

said vs other choices

Comment [s6]: Em dash

d. scw

"Sure, Mr. Lumberg, sure, glad to help out. When would you like Doreen and me to get together about this?" Carl asked, maybe too quickly, maybe too eagerly. Maybe, Carl hoped, all was not lost, after all.

"No need for that, Carl. I have all of her paper-work right here. You can just take it right out to your desk and work on it after you get your own work done. I consider this a personal favor, I really do, Darryl, I mean Carl."

"I just bet you do, you son of a bitch. Carl thought. Maybe she could get her work done if she didn't spend so much time in your office, doing God-God-only-only-knows what. All that must be breaking rules! She is so pretty and so out of reach except for jerks like Lumberg who make the big bucks.

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"This day did get much worse." seethed Carl to himself. "What can Carl do? It is Carl's rule to be a good employee. It is Carl's rule to do what he is told. It's been like this from the

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time Carl was a little boy. It's Carl's rule not to let things like this bother him. Carl will just have to do it."

**Comment [s7]:** This is too much for Carl to be thinking while Lumberg is sitting across from him. I would either cut it down (by half) or place the second part after he leaves the office. You'd then have to rework Carl's thinking a bit in the next paragraph ("From the time..who really cared) if you decide to do that so that it flows properly.

Carl forced a thin smile onto his reddening face and replied, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, just hand over those papers and I'll get right on it this afternoon." He spun-to-go left while he could still hold that smile frozen on his lips. From the time he was a little boy, it was Carl's most important rule to not let anyone else see exactly how Carl felt. He had learned not to bother. After all, who really cared?

"Carl," Lumberg called after him, "would you ask Doreen to step in here, please? I have a few things I need to discuss with her."

Doreen was already waiting just outside the door as Carl left. She swept by him on a cloud of jasmine and roses. A bump of her buttocks shut the door firmly behind her. There was silence, then Carl could hear them laughing as he slunk away.

**Comment [s8]:** Late implies 5PM or close to it

Later that afternoon, Carl hissed under his breath, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me," as he finished his own work and began to tackle the pile of Doreen's undone assignments. He was still buried at five o'clock when Lumberg and Doreen left. Carl watched out of the office window as Lumberg shoveled Doreen into his BMer Boxster and put the top down. He felt physical pain when he saw her slim, pale fingers entangled in the tight gray-brown curls at the back of the Boss's neck. Where else? Where else? The thought tortured him.

**Comment [s9]:** Beamer?

"Why so late?" both Phil and Gary inquired on their separate ways out past his desk piled with paperwork. Only Gary took the time to stop and commiserate.

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"That looks like newbie work to me, Carl. What's up?" Gary asked, with sympathy. "You're kidding me! Doreen's work! What a nerve, he gets all the fun and you do all the work. I

**Comment [s10]:** Throughout, you don't need these descriptors. The reader can usually figure out by the narration how someone is being, whether it's with sympathy or with anger, etc...use physical tags and the narration to project, rather than just telling the reader.

**Comment [s11]:** Carl needs to respond before Gary knows what Carl is doing.

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

~~don't can't~~ believe he's screwing you like this. ~~For that matter, I don't believe he's doing the~~  
~~Which is exactly what he's doing same thing~~ to the Delicious Doreen, ~~either but not the same~~  
~~kind, right?:~~ What a waste! It's amazing how much handsomer and charming a big wallet makes  
a man, eh?"

Carl would remember that Gary took the time to sympathize. He made it a rule to  
remember people who were nice to him. There was nothing nice to remember for Doreen and  
the rest in the office, including Phil, and especially, Mr. Lumberg. As he ~~inputted finished~~  
Doreen's work, Carl became ~~overwhelmed with anger and resentment angrier and more resentful~~  
~~in an overwhelming and global way.~~ All the years of feeling ignored, of never getting what he  
wanted or what he thought he deserved, of his feeling put upon, of his not letting things bother  
him, of his ~~swallowing the sharp metal shards of hurt and anger,~~ of, most importantly, never  
allowing himself to show how he really felt—~~all these swelled up into a hot, red, acid ball of~~  
molten misery in his stomach. Carl had to vomit it out. Carl knew what Carl ~~had to do.~~ He had  
to show them how he really felt.

Comment [s12]: Use em dash (use  
Insert/Symbol)

\*\*\*\*\*

"We're speaking with Gary Spivak, one of the few survivors of the office shooting  
rampage at TechnoTool Industries here in Suburban Industrial Park outside of Dayton, Ohio.  
What can you tell us about Carl Bellman, the alleged shooter who ended the slaughter ~~by taking~~  
his own life?" The reporter had ~~ignored Gary's state of emotional shock! He had sequestered~~  
Gary from para-medical personnel. Now he jabbed his microphone close to Gary's ashy, ~~blood~~  
~~blood-spattered~~ face and hoped the man would speak loudly enough for him to get a killer sound  
bite that the ~~Network-network~~ in New York would pick up.

Comment [s13]: Implied when we find out that  
Gary's face is ashy.

**SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard**

"Carl was always such a quiet man. He kept to himself. I never saw him get angry at anything or anybody. I don't understand why he did this. I don't understand any of it. Why am I still alive? He just walked right by me, gave me the sweetest smile. Then he went into Mr. Lumberg's office and shot him and Doreen. Then he came out onto the floor and killed Phil and so many others. Dead. Dead. I don't understand. What kind of rules does a man like that live by???"

**Comment [s14]:** Gary is in shock. Have him pause and give us physical tags in between jilted sentences

**Comment [s15]:** Clever (don't need all those question marks)

would like to know more about Carl

## SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

### Jenn's comments

"It must be Monday. Here comes Carl with his light-blue shirt and his dark-blue tie with the gold stripes!"

Carl could hear them now. He had a rule not to let this get under his skin. It was one of the few times that they actually bothered to noticed him noticed him.

Carl liked order. -Carl liked consistency. -Carl liked his rules.

He had knotted and unknotted his Monday tie five times. The day would go well. Wasn't it guaranteed? All the proprieties had been observed. ~~Carl liked order. -Carl liked consistency.~~

~~Carl liked his rules.~~

He pulled into company parking. Doreen's Kia was now squatting two rows from the main TechnoTool entrance. "She's here for less than six weeks and already she's parking like a supervisor. That has to be breaking a company rule or two," Carl said noted. "Yep, she's got it going on with the Bboss, for sure," he said mourned, "Delightful Doreen is out of my reach."

Carl had thought he felt the heat between them. Doreen was always "busy" whenever he worked up the nerve to ask her to lunch or to go to the movies. As he trudged from his seven-year-old Corolla to the distant entrance, Carl repeated his mantra in time with his strides, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me."

In his cubicle, Carl found a Post-It on his computer screen summoning him to Boss Lumberg's office. "What now," he fussed, but he let it go. ~~Now what?~~ Carl had a rule not to borrow trouble.

**Comment [PHS IS1]:** Why did he think the day was guaranteed to be a good one? Was there a big business deal happening? Or was it that Carl that that if he stuck to his rules that the day was guaranteed to be good?

**Comment [PHS IS2]:** For dialogue, stick with "said"

**Comment [PHS IS3]:** Consider making this internal thought rather than him talking out load to himself. If it's internal thought you don't need quotes or the "he said" tags. Just put his thoughts in italics.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

"Sit, Carl," ~~sSit, sSit~~, ~~a broadly beaming~~ Lumberg ~~beamed as he greeted him, greeted~~ ~~him cordially~~. The Boss was one of those people who smiles with both rows of teeth. "I have a favor to ask you."

**Comment [PHS IS4]:** Use adverbs sparingly. Instead of telling the reader he is cordial. Show him being cordial.

"All those big white teeth," ~~Carl's mind dove, mused as his mind dived~~ into a vision of a huge, smooth, sinuous shark shaking a naked Doreen in his powerful jaws. Her red hair undulated in the ~~clear~~, green sea water like a beautiful blood stain.

**Comment [PHS IS5]:** No quotes. Italicize since it's internal thought.

"Carl, Carl, are you with me here?" Lumberg's voice was sharp with impatience.

Carl surfaced from his marine reverie. ~~"A favor, now he's friendly. Could this day be getting worse?"~~ ~~Aloud Carl responded~~, "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, what do you need?"

**Comment [PHS IS6]:** No quotes. Italicize since it's internal thought.

"You know the new girl, Doreen? She seems to be having a little trouble keeping up with her paper work. Carl, I wonder if you would be the good doobie, that we all know you are, and help her out, ~~y~~You know, take up some of her slack?" ~~the Boss eajoled, his~~ The Boss' shark grin widening, his shark teeth glinting. ~~"I would consider it a personal favor, Carl."~~

**Comment [PHS IS7]:** Stick with "said"

**Comment [PHS IS8]:** Sorry, this was missing from my original version so I'm just adding it back in.

"Sure, Mr. Lumberg, sure, glad to help out. When would you like Doreen and me to get together about this?" Carl asked, ~~maybe too quickly~~, maybe too eagerly. Maybe, ~~Carl hoped~~, all was not lost, after all.

"No need for that, Carl. I have all of her paper work right here. You can just take it right out to your desk and work on it after you get your own work done. ~~I consider this a personal favor, I really do, Darryl, I mean, Carl.~~"

**Comment [PHS IS9]:** Repeat? Sorry, maybe above line was meant to be deleted.

"I ~~just~~ bet you do, you son of a bitch. Maybe she could get her work done if she didn't spend so much time in your office doing God only knows what. All that must be breaking rules! She is so pretty and so out of reach except for jerks like ~~Lumberg who~~ Lumberg who make the big bucks. This day did get much worse." ~~seethed Carl to himself~~

**Comment [PHS IS10]:** No quotes, italicize

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

"What ~~can~~ could Carl do? It's ~~is~~ Carl's rule to be a good employee. It's ~~is~~ Carl's rule to do what he is told. ~~It's been like this from the time Carl was a little boy.~~ It's Carl's rule -not to let things like this bother him. ~~It's been like this from the time Carl was a little boy.~~ Carl ~~would~~ will just have to do it."

Comment [PHS IS11]: If this is the narrator then you don't need this in quotes.

Carl forced a thin smile onto his reddening face, ~~and replied,~~ "Sure, Mr. Lumberg, just hand over those papers, and I'll get right on it this afternoon." He spun to go while he could still hold that smile frozen on his lips. From the time he was a ~~little boy~~ little boy, it was Carl's most important rule to not let anyone else see exactly how Carl felt. ~~He had learned not to bother.~~ After all, who really cared?

Comment [PHS IS12]: Embellish on this? Why had he learned this? This view into his past would clarify his final actions.

"Carl, would you ask Doreen to step in here, please? I have a few things I need to discuss with her."

Doreen was waiting ~~just~~ outside the door as Carl left. She swept by him on a cloud of jasmine and roses. A bump of her buttocks shut the door firmly behind her. There was silence, then Carl ~~could~~ heard them laughing as he slunk away.

Late that afternoon, Carl hissed under his breath, "I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me. I can't let this bother me," as he finished his own work and began to tackle the pile of Doreen's undone assignments. He was still buried ~~at five~~ at five o'clock when Lumberg and Doreen left. Carl watched out of the office window as Lumberg shoveled Doreen into his BMer Boxster and put the top down. He felt physical pain when ~~he saw~~ her slim, pale fingers entangled in the tight gray-brown curls at ~~the back~~ the back of ~~at the back of the Boss's neck.~~ Where else? Where else? The thought tortured him.

Comment [PHS IS13]: Why does he keep saying this to himself? What led to this being one of his more important rules?

Comment [PHS IS14]: Sorry, more text missing so just adding it back in

"Why so late?" both Phil and Gary inquired on their separate ways out past his desk piled with paperwork. Only Gary took the time to stop and commiserate.

Comment [PHS IS15]: Sorry, more text missing

SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard

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"You're kidding me! Doreen's work! What a nerve, he gets all the fun and you do all the work. I don't believe he's screwing you like this. For that matter, I don't ~~believe he's~~ believe he's doing the same thing to the Delicious Doreen, either. What a waste! It's amazing how much handsomer and charming a big wallet makes a man, eh?"

Carl would remember that Gary took the time to sympathize. He made it a rule to remember people who were nice to him. There was nothing nice to remember ~~about~~ for Doreen and the rest in the office, including Phil and especially, Mr. Lumberg. As he ~~inputted~~ Doreen's ~~inputted~~ Doreen's work, Carl became angrier and more resentful in an overwhelming and global way. All the years of feeling ignored, of never getting what he wanted or what he ~~thought~~ he deserved, of his feeling put upon, of his not letting things bother him, of his swallowing the sharp metal shards of hurt and anger, of, most importantly, never allowing himself to show how he really felt — all these swelled up into a hot, red, acid ball of molten misery in his stomach. Carl had to vomit it out. ~~Carl knew what Carl had to do.~~ He had to show them how he really felt.

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"We're speaking with Gary Spivak, one of the few survivors of the office shooting rampage at TechnoTool Industries here in Suburban Industrial Park outside of Dayton, Ohio. What can you tell us about Carl Bellman, the alleged shooter who ended the ~~slaughter~~ by ~~slaughter by~~ taking his own life?" The reporter had ignored Gary's state of emotional shock. He had sequestered Gary from para-medical personnel. ~~Now h~~ He jabbed his microphone close to Gary's ashy, blood spattered face and hoped the man would speak loudly enough for him to get a killer sound bite that the Network in New York would pick up.

Comment [PHS IS16]: Don't tell us he's angry. Show us he's angry.

Comment [PHS IS17]: Awkward wording

Comment [PHS IS18]: Why does this Doreen incident finally push him over the edge? They never had a relationship. He had a crush on her and she treated him poorly, but why would this lead Carl to kill everyone?

**SHORT STORY SUBMISSION: Broken Rules by Lynn Leonard**

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I like the story in general. I did want to keep reading to see what would finally happen. I like how Carl's rules are threaded throughout the story. But it's missing the mark a little. I think if I knew what led Carl to have all of these rules, and if somehow what Doreen and the boss did was related to that – sparked some memory. I can't connect the dots from the rules, to not letting things bother him, to the massacre.

Can you parallel an episode from his past that is similar to what happened with Doreen and the Boss? Maybe he had a sister and the parents doted on her and not Carl. Maybe they only had enough to send one of them to college so they sent the sister, and Carl blames this for him having a mediocre life, always being taken advantage of, and never getting the girl. This example is weak but I'm just using it to illustrate my point that if you can tie his final actions to some other event that explains why he was finally pushed over the edge, then the story ending becomes much more powerful.

The writing is good. The pacing is good. I pointed out a few technical things that are easily fixed.

Also, consider having Carl not kill himself, and maybe he says something to the police at the end that will pack a powerful punch to your ending. You can still have the reporter interview Gary and use the line about 'who lives by those rules?'