# Chapter Two

# The Devil Wears LuLu Lemon

I had to quit my job because I was being ass-raped on a daily basis by a big blonde bully. Verbally only, but it still hurt. Yes, I was run right out of the Valley by a fifty-something-year-old plastic surgery addict who was so overcome with her jealousy of me that she went mental, and then she tried to take me down the rabbit hole with her. It happened slowly, creeping up on me like a cancer over the course of seven years. And while I didn’t lose my hair, I did get some lovely and very expensive parting gifts.

I remember the very carefully chosen words of advice my friend gave me on my first day at work with the soul-crusher: “Don’t talk to her. Do not engage. In fact, try not to look her in the eye at all.” (Yes, people really do say that in Hollywood.)This is not an easy assignment when you work on a television show run by a peroxide-blonde dictator who expects people to quit their lives when they start working for her but hey – I was willing to give it the old college try. I had incentive. I was broke and was starting to get really scared I’d be living in a box next to my friend John, who is homeless and has no teeth, but a lovely smile.

The first thing I did was completely ignore my friend’s advice. This whirling dervish was intriguing to me – like a wild animal roaming the halls of an office. I wanted to get close enough to pet it and see what would happen. I couldn’t resist. I did a bad thing. I engaged – and then I tickled the tiger – just for fun.

Every day at work was an adventure in insanity. If a celebrity news story broke, she went into happy overdrive, and if that story was something horrible happening to that certain celebrity – her glee was mind numbing. We’d all look at each other wondering, *“Is this really happening? Did she just say that?”* I’m not sure – but I think I once saw foam come out of her mouth. The second a star story would cross the wires we’d all cringe, knowing what was about to happen. As if an air raid siren was going off, our first instincts were to duck under our desks – but we had to spring to action. If you didn’t follow orders, you’d be singled out – and the wrath was terrifying. Her favorite word was “chaos,” and if there wasn’t any happening around her, she would create it. She loved this. If it was a nice quiet day in the newsroom, then something was terribly wrong. She adored watching people spin themselves out of control to get whatever she wanted – and the request could be anything from a helicopter to fried chicken. Though she usually wanted fried chicken. I eventually changed her ring tone on my phone to an air raid siren so I knew when she was calling. It was both hilarious and cold sweat inducing.

She actually loved to scream and yell at people, and the bigger the crowd that was watching – the better. You could see how the anger fueled her, her decibel level growing louder the more terrified the employee became. She thrived on the sound of her own voice, and once she started blasting, she couldn’t stop and would whip herself into such a frenzy that her face would turn bright red and her eyes would widen. You knew you were staring into the face of the devil, and her pitchfork was her tongue jabbing you until you bled. Emotionally. The only weird part was, she was always smiling during these moments – grinning from ear to ear like the Joker. I’m pretty sure this was the result of a shit-ton of plastic surgery and Botox needles, because her face was frozen into some kind of twisted smile that made it hard to tell if she was truly angry. But she was. Angry was her favorite place to be. I would stare at her while she was screaming at me and think – “*Why is she smiling?”*

But like I said – there was a price for being on the end of her ear-splitting rants – gifts. Very expensive gifts. I got two Chanel handbags and a Louis Vuitton suitcase. Blood luggage, I call it. But I use it. I earned it. Everyone knew that if she went off on you – you got a gift. Like the white angry Oprah, she should have raced through the office yelling, “You get Chanel! You get Chanel!”

She liked to think she was a free-spirited thinker who nurtured her employees with her warm and fuzzy style. She was, in fact, about as warm and fuzzy as a porcupine popsicle, and if the words “you’re an idiot” are nurturing, well then, she was indeed an ego-builder. She loved when employees called her “Mommy.” But if you made “Mommy” mad – you got a lot more than a time out. If she was $1 over budget, she would fire anyone in sight – well, not her sight, because she made sure to be on vacation when the hammer came down. That was someone else’s job. I’ll call him Henry. And he eventually saved my ass.

I remember the first time she decided I should be the one to fire someone. She actually gave me two names and made me pick between them. I think she even referred to it as my “Sophie’s Choice.” Now, no one was going to a death camp, but she was certainly killing their chances of providing for their wives and children. This did not faze her. She would have gladly bought them some train tickets and threw in a few pairs of striped pajamas if it meant her precious budget would be back on track.

She would never explain what had happened to fired employees – they would just disappear – perhaps picked up and taken in for anal probes on the Alien Mother Ship. I have no problem with people losing their jobs because they aren’t good at them – but our people were fired because she had spent too much money buying videotapes of stars doing bad things – except our star – who was caught making some very dirty and very funny audiotapes. He got a one-hour special on a talk show and a stint or two in rehab.

One of the things my boss really didn’t like was anyone else’s ideas if they were better than hers, which they inevitably were because her ideas stopped popping into her head around 1982. She loved Donny and Marie, Barry Manilow, and the Royal Family. I once told her that the only time we should put Barry on again is when he came out of the closet. I might as well have raped her dog. She was horrified by this suggestion. To her, Barry Manilow was at the peak of his career. He was not.

Over the course of my stint there, I kept getting promoted and eventually landed in the catbird seat as her Number Two – an appropriate title considering how she made me feel on a daily basis. She was constantly threatening to demote me. I remember the day some network bigwigs were coming in for a meeting. She ordered me to get my hair and makeup done. I said I was fine without it. She then screamed at me. I continued to object. She turned to me with that creepy tight-lipped smile and whispered through clenched teeth, “Why do you always have to argue with me?” I got the hair and makeup. The meeting went smoothly, and I tried to be my bubbly self. But moments after the bigwigs left, she turned to me and said, “Please don’t have an opinion that’s different from mine in front of other people.”

I actually thought she was right for about a nanosecond, but I was smack in the midst of my Anne Frank years at this job, where my real personality was trapped in an attic scribbling in dirty notebooks. Most people who came to work there ended up drinking the Kool-Aid and settling in for a nice long bout of Stockholm Syndrome. This bitch was scary. People were terrified of her. I became one of those people.

She was obsessed with the talents’ wardrobes and only wanted our reporters in bright, solid-color dresses. She liked everyone to look like a bag of Skittles or Teletubbies. On the day of the Met Costume Ball in New York City, I found out just how much this meant to her. Our offices were in California, so thanks to the time difference, the people in New York were left up to their own devices for the most part. The only problem was – shooting something the boss hadn’t approved literally became a crapshoot. There we were, watching the footage that had been shot earlier feed in on the satellite. Tons of gorgeous stars in beautiful gowns walked before our cameras, and then boom! Her face turned red. Her voice hit a new level of loud. “What the hell is she wearing?” she screamed at the top of her lungs as our talent appeared before the camera to do her stand-up. We all looked at the monitor and saw that our stunningly beautiful reporter had committed the most heinous of sins – she was wearing BEIGE. “Get her on the phone for me now!” We all watched in fear and horror as she shredded this grown woman over the phone. “Beige? How could you wear beige?! No one will see you in beige! If the golden arches were beige, no one would eat there.” When the reporter answered, “But Gucci made it.” the boss replied, “I don’t care if Jesus made it.”

Over the course of my seven years there, she made some truly standout statements. I wish I’d written more of them down, but I was far too busy being shocked and awed. Some of my favorites were, “Does anyone remember if I took my pills today?” (she took a lot) and (when showing her surgery scars to an employee who winced) “You’ve been through childbirth – buck the fuck up.” She told our African American reporter that he couldn’t be the anchor because America wasn’t ready for a black host. She also asked an employee who had happily announced her pregnancy if she wanted a ride to the abortion clinic. She is not a fan of worker bees having kids. That kind of cuts in to your 24-hour devotion to the all-important culling of negative celebrity news no one needs to hear.

She also did some fairly insane shit… involving shit. She was obsessed with removing it from her body. I think she thought it would make her skinny. I actually told her the only thing it would make her was a colostomy bag wearer when her sphincter stopped working. I said this to her in an airport bathroom when I caught her chugging an entire bottle of Milk of Magnesia – which she would have shipped to herself in various parts of the country or world whenever we had a shoot that involved boarding an airplane. I told her that despite her love of designer logos, Chanel was not making a colostomy bag… yet.

She also liked colonics. A lot. She would get them once a week and would take employees with her to treat them to one as well. This is a fun outing with the boss. Can you say inappropriate? I went three times. The recommended amount of colonics is twice a year. Her colon cleansing place finally banned her from coming. I think they finally realized that the tube shoved up her ass was eventually going to suck out all of her innards and no one in Beverly Hills wants that to happen under their watch.

She liked to hold meetings in the ladies room at the office, where her ass would explode into a bowl and the gaseous farting was louder than anything she was trying to tell us. We would stand around wide-eyed with our mouths and noses covered in disbelief. Someone once very quietly turned to me during an assplosion and said “Oh my God. She’s like a donkey.” So of course I began calling her that whenever possible in my best Shrek voice. Getting called into the bathroom for a meeting was everyone’s worst nightmare, but eventually everyone got shit-nitiated. She would say to you – in the middle of a conversation – “I have to go the bathroom. Come with me,” and that would be it. Faces would turn to stone, and you would follow her into that dark abyss, turning back to look at those who knew – they were about to see THE DONKEY.

There were four stalls in this particular work ladies room, and usually by the end of the day at least three stalls would be “blown out,” so to speak. She’d knock ‘em dead one at a time. You’d walk in to pee, only to fling open that door and find a hot mess of shit and paper clogging up the bowl and the spray reaching to places I didn’t think were possible. At least three times a week, the yellow “Caution” stand would come out, and a poor little old Latino man would go in there – like a shit spelunker – looking to find his way down those dark dirty holes. I actually saw her tip him once. Talk about a hostile work environment.

I also once witnessed her take out an entire Winnebago in Cairo during a trip that also exposed her other weight loss method… pissing. She drank a lot of water and took those crazy cancer-causing “star” caps that were pulled off every shelf in every corner of the world. She believed that peeing made you lose weight. She had to piss constantly, and it didn’t matter where we were. She forced our driver to pull over in Egypt so that she could pee in what turned out to be a sacred burial ground. Yes, this fifty-something-year-old woman yanked her elastic travel pants down to her ankles and pissed on the side of the road in Cairo and she made another employee stand there and guard her while she did it. It was White Trash Ugly American at its best, and I have never been so horrified.

Some of her employee speeches were also truly inspirational – that is, if you were hoping to be inspired to become The Queen or a dictator. She once told a room full of people, “I have all the money and power, and I don’t need any of you to do this job.” Unless, of course, she actually wanted the job to get “done,” because she sure as hell didn’t get her nails dirty. In fact, she got her nails done at the office.

Every morning started with a news meeting and a beauty session in our conference room – which was all glass – forcing everyone to watch the dead skin being pumice-stoned from her feet. (It was bad enough being in these meetings but from the outside it was like watching a really weird TV show.) The blinding stench of nail polish remover wafted through the room and she yelled above the sound of the nail drill as it filed her acrylic nails to perfection. Like characters in a scene from the movie “Marathon Man,” we’d all sit around staring and wondering, “Is it safe yet?” She also frequently had her hair colored in this same glass box. It was not unusual to sit through a meeting led by a foiled filled head with dye dripping down her face. Very business-like. In fact, if a man ever did what my female boss did at work and he wasn’t a tranny, he’d be fired.

She also delivered her best one on one “pep talks” in that glass box for everyone’s viewing pleasure. And by pep talk I mean bitch slap. There’s something wonderfully private about being verbally assaulted while the entire staff is watching from their desks. I was fired a total of three times. One of these times, the glass actually rattled. I made the mistake of smiling during this firing, and that was a very bad thing.

The first time I was fired was because I’d put an “ugly picture” of her on the television show we worked for. Her family had called to tell her she looked fat in the shot we used. This became my fault. The real problem was that she had been shoving massive amounts of baguettes down her gullet while pretending to work in Cannes and was actually – fat. She told me to go home and think about what I’d done. I left. She called me 20 minutes later and said, “Isn’t this silly? You should come back.” I said, “I’m busy now. I made plans for my free afternoon” and hung up.

That was the beginning of the end. After a while, I realized she was actually obsessed with me – and eventually she became the abusive boyfriend I was afraid to break up with. I was working with the enemy, and I was afraid to leave. When I got hair extensions, she got hair extensions. I would dress up for work – she started dressing up for work. Only she couldn’t last more than one hour in her outfit, so she would immediately change into her uniform – LuLu Lemon stretch pants, a clingy T-shirt, and some sort of warmup-type jacket. She looked like a bad white rapper – one who refused to wear underpants and a normal bra. She would only wear those paste-ons that went over her nipples – and were clearly visible through her shirts.

The second time I was fired was pretty damn dramatic. She had just had a facelift – her second. She had already had pretty much everything else done to her. In fact, she looked like the meat chart at a butcher shop… or a quilt. This time, however, she had had fat taken from her cheeks and injected into her lips, so she couldn’t pronounce any words that began with “p,” and the “pl” combo was even more ploblamatic. I picked her up on the side of the road in Beverly Hills. Her face seemed to be smeared with some kind of anti-combustion grease, and she did in fact look as if she might blow up at any given second. She appeared to be high on at least three different medications and was slurring like a drunk. She was very unhappy that I had not supported her with the Big Bosses about a particular promo she had personally written – as a good Number Two was “supposed” to do. It was true – I had not supported her. That was because the promo was also like a Number Two – the kind that comes out of your ass. You know how kidnappers use the expression “proof of life”? Well, this was “proof of crazy,” and I was being held hostage and expected to say it was awesome when it was a pile of insane. So I did what no one else in our entire company would do – I told the truth.

I don’t even really know how to explain what happened next, but there was convulsing, tears, screaming, and a Beverly Hills door slam exit from my car in the middle of traffic that made “Frankly, Scarlett, I don’t give a damn” seem like a pitiful little line. Her last words, screamed through tears, were, “Can you please try and hold it together until I come back from my surgery?” I didn’t think I was the one not holding it together. In fact, I wasn’t sure if she’d even remember firing me. Sure enough, that night I got a text from her. “The show was great tonight!!!” *Three exclamation points? Wow. It wasn’t that great.* Was this her way of saying, “I had a little oopsie in your car, and all is well, and we’ll forget it ever happened?” I went back to work the next day, and she continued to email and text random thoughts that seemed as if all *was*okay.

But about a week later, she returned to work and called me up to some mysterious third-floor conference room we never used. She said these eight little words to me that I would eventually come to fear… “Can I talk to you for a second?” These words would symbolize – “Mommy is mad” – and they were said in the quietest of angry voices. A voice so much louder than her scream. She sat me down to tell me why I was not a good co-executive producer: “You never back me up, and you don’t talk to me the way I need to be talked to. I want you to tell me the truth, but I want you to do it in a way that works for me. So when you want to have an opinion that’s different than mine or tell me you don’t agree with something, just grab my hand and touch it and say ‘Baby, baby, we should rethink this.’ I want you to talk to me like a wounded baby girl – because that’s what I am. I’m a little girl who needs to be talked to in a supportive, gentle way.”

I started looking for the cameras, because clearly I was on some new hidden camera show we were developing. Nope. No cameras. So I looked her straight in the eye and said, “I got it.” I then went back to my desk and emailed and called every connection I ever had and started looking for a new job.

The last time I was fired was more of a demotion. It happened in London during the Royal Wedding of William and Kate. Now this was a pig fuck of epic proportions. We had taken almost all of our staff to London and were running around like ugly Americans, covering the shit out of this impending marriage. We also had a special correspondent with us. She had an English accent. She also hadn’t been popular since about 1982, so I’m not sure what kind of an audience grabber she was, but we paid her $100,000 to smile for the cameras and use as heavy a British accent as she could muster!!!! She was so happy to be standing in front of Buckingham Palace with a camera focused on her that she didn’t care what she was saying, so when the Boss Lady asked her to start screaming like a demented child when William and Kate came out for their classic balcony kiss – she turned it up full blast. I was horrified. The famous wife of a British rock star was also working for us at the time and was the only person not putting up with my boss’s shit. She looked right in the face of evil and laughed at her.

The night before the actual Royal Wedding was my last, “Can I talk to you for a second?” moment. I didn’t really know why she was mad at me this time. I think it was just a culmination of how shitty an employee she thought I was. I was rude. I was mean. I interrupted her too much. I wasn’t in sync with her. I was laughing at someone else’s joke. I wasn’t laughing at her joke. I was always trying to steal the attention away from her. I never told her what I was doing outside of work. I wasn’t her friend. All the other employees were her friends. I needed to share with her. Why couldn’t she get close to me anymore? *Blah. Blah. You’re so fucking crazy, it’s scary.* And then she said something to me I’ll never forget – something that finally woke me up from my long national nightmare of a job. She said, “Do you think you’re the only person who can write this show? I can replace you tomorrow. You’re not that special.”

I found Henry and had a full-on breakdown. I was crying and shaking and told him, “That’s it. I’m done. Nothing is worth feeling like this – not even Hermes.” Well, maybe Hermes, but she never gave me that. I told him I was quitting. He told me to hold on. And then he did the most amazing thing. He put his job on the line and made a call. I listened as he whispered into the phone like a hit man, “We have a problem in London I think you need to know about.” He told the person on the other end of that phone the details of what was going on – and when he hung up, we hatched a plan. I would never, ever have to set foot in that office again. He found a way to get me off the Mother Ship – all future anal probes, cancelled. He snuck out of my hotel room like a thief – and for the first time in seven years, I started to breathe.

Moments after he left my room, she walked in, unannounced, no knock. She looked at me and quietly said, “You’re a good writer, Heidi.” I said, “I know. Now if you don’t mind, I have some work to do.” She awkwardly turned around and left. I almost threw up. I knew I was about to do something no one else had ever done to her. I was about to tell the truth about what kind of monster she really was. This woman had sucked me in with a lie - pretending to be a normal, supportive friend and boss – and then like every bad boyfriend I had, tried to break me.

I worked through the Royal Wedding and pretended that everything was fine. She told me not to come in to work that Monday, and to think about what I had done and what position I wanted at the company since I clearly could no longer be her Number Two. That day, she emailed and called me incessantly: “Hey, wanna go get pancakes?” she yipped into my voicemail. *Uh, no thanks, I’m a little busy bad-mouthing you all over town.* I never returned a call, an email, or a text. After seven years on the job, I simply never went back. I didn’t pack up my office. I didn’t say goodbye. I just erased it from my life like a bad dream. Many people have contacted me since I left. They heard we had a giant blowup in London and that I threw a plate at her head. I wish. She tells people that I was mean to her and yelled at her in front of others. I did. I yelled, “Leave me the fuck alone, you crazy bitch.” (But I really only did it in my head.)

I am well aware of the expression, “If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all,” but remaining silent won’t stop abully. I think this will. There, I feel better now.