

Transgression

by John Wentworth Chapin

“Something's got to give,” she croaks, slouching on the other chair in my small office. “I can't take on any more work.” She is my boss.

I glance at my computer screen as email notifications pop up. They are too small to read before they fade.

“Yeah, it's crazy,” I commiserate. I put my hand on the mouse, gently.

“I can see you're busy. I'll go,” she sighs. She looks at the mouse and then back at me, slowly.

I keep my hand on the mouse. It feels brave. “No, no, it's fine. I'm just expecting word back from a client.”

“I'm so busy I can't even *do* my work,” she moans. “What am I supposed to do?”

I look as sympathetic as I can, under the circumstance, which is entirely unsympathetic. The mouse begs me to click.

See, I actually *have* lots of work, much of it hers. She is master of the gambit of pre-emptive complaint, a forcefield of misery that effectively shields her from all work. If my dog breaks a leg, her daughter gets cancer. If I need to leave at 5, she needs to take off a bit early.

That finger on the mouse button, threatening to click, threatening transgression... she'd be able to hear it. She catches my eye: stalemate. I haven't answered her question. I feel sweat on my cheeks.

“Is there anything I can do?” I ask, hating myself more than I hate her.

