

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 31 (1963)
Heft: 5

Artikel: The offender
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-569831>

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The Offender

Once upon a time, once in the distant and possible future, in a place called Here, or perhaps the land beyond Beyond, two men of middle years sat alone in a large and splendid office, facing one another across a desk.

«Oh, he's likeable enough,» said one, «and there's no denying he does his job well, but we simply can't have his sort around here. I say terminate his employment, get rid of him.»

«John, you know how much I dislike firing. How can you be sure of what you're saying?»

«Well I don't have definite proof, of course, but it's more than obvious, don't you think? Watch him; see how he walks, how he uses his hands. Watch the way his eyes follow certain workers about. It's obscene, disgusting.»

«Perhaps you're right. In fact, I must confess I suspected slightly when I hired him. There was something a bit queer about the tone of his voice, the way he sat in his chair. And yet we have no proof. I tell you I don't like firing on mere suspicion.»

«But we can't come straight out with it and ask him, and if we wait until he actually does something then it's too late. We have many minors working here. I'll not have him corrupting young people to his perverted way of thinking. It's against the laws of nature, of God. Don't you see, Ben, the only thing we have is suspicion, and it will have to do. Kick him out! His kind isn't fit to roam about free. He's sick; he's a criminal!»

«You feel very strongly about this sort of thing, don't you?»

«Damn right I do! I knew one of the bastards when I was just a boy. So I reported him and he was sent to prison. And that's just where this fellow should be. Lock them all up, I say!»

«Very well, John, I suppose you're right. I'll give him his notice tomorrow. But if I ever find out we were wrong about him I'll never forgive myself—nor you.»

«Ben, we're not wrong, I promise you! He kisses them, sleeps with them—he loves them!» A repulsive, disgusted look pervaded his face. «Can't you just picture it—a man and a *woman* lying there in the darkness together . . .!»

by Marsh Haris

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