**Case Study 1: MARIA’S STORY**

Consider Maria, a copywriter who is currently being held hostage to some pretty strong emotions. She and her colleague Louis just reviewed the latest draft of a proposal with their boss. During the meeting, they were supposed to be jointly presenting their latest ideas. But when Maria paused to take a breath, Louis took over the presentation, making almost all the points they had come up with together. When the boss turned to Maria for input, there was nothing left for her to say.

Maria has been feeling humiliated and angry throughout this project. First, Louis took their suggestions to the boss and discussed them behind her back. Second, he completely monopolized the presentation. Consequently, Maria believes that Louis is downplaying her contribution because she’s the only woman on the team.

She’s getting fed up with his “boys’ club” mentality. So what does she do? She doesn’t want to appear “oversensitive,” so most of the time she says nothing and just does her job. However, she does manage to assert herself by occasionally getting in sarcastic jabs about the way she’s being treated.

“Sure I can get that printout for you. Should I just get your coffee and whip up a bundt cake while I’m at it?” she mutters, and rolls her eyes as she exits the room.

Louis, in turn, finds Maria’s cheap shots and sarcasm puzzling. He’s not sure what has Maria upset but is beginning to despise her smug attitude and hostile reaction to most everything he does. As a result, when the two work together, you could cut the tension with a knife.

What’s Making Maria Mad?

**Case Study 2: Lighthouse**

“Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported, “Light, bearing on the starboard bow.”

“Is it steady or moving astern?” the captain called out.

Lookout replied, “Steady, captain,” which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, “Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees.”

Back came a signal, “Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees.”

The captain said, “Send, I’m a captain, change course 20 degrees.”

“I’m a seaman second class,” came the reply. “You had better change course 20 degrees.”

By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, “Send, I’m a battleship. Change course 20 degrees.”

Back came the flashing light, “I’m a lighthouse.”

We changed course.”

**Case Study 3:**

For example: I am standing before the executive team, making a presentation. They all seem engaged and alert, except for Larry, at the end of the table, who seems bored out of his mind. He turns his dark, morose eyes away from me and puts his hand to his mouth. He doesn’t ask any questions until I’m almost done, when he breaks in: “I think we should ask for a full report.” In this culture, that typically means, “Let’s move on.” Everyone starts to shuffle their papers and put their notes away. Larry obviously thinks that I’m incompetent—which is a shame, because these ideas are exactly what his department needs. Now that I think of it, he’s never liked my ideas. Clearly, Larry is a power-hungry jerk. By the time I’ve returned to my seat, I’ve made a decision: I’m not going to include anything in my report that Larry can use. He wouldn’t read it, or, worse still, he’d just use it against me. It’s too bad I have an enemy who’s so prominent in the company.