

MY COWORKER LARRY was hired in 2002. He was also in accounting, so they put him in the empty cubicle next to mine.

At first I thought he was kind of weird. He had all these crazy toys that he kept at his desk, and in our office that's kind of frowned upon. The senior managers may not come around much, but when they do, they expect the place to look, you know, professional. Larry's desk didn't look professional – it looked like an eBay auction.

Gradually, I warmed up to Larry. He seemed very soft-spoken at first, but once you started talking to him you realized he had this terrifically dry sense of humor. I found myself laughing at his jokes so much that I started hanging around his desk more and more.

I guess his humor was infectious because before I knew it, other people started hanging around Larry too. We couldn't help it. He was our comic relief. What was once a stale, boring office environment was suddenly coming to life now that Larry was around.

My favorite was Larry's wonderful impression of our CEO. It was so spot-on that Larry would call people pretending to be the boss, and then ask them to "swing by" his office. From a distance, we'd all watch that person freak out for five minutes before we let them in on the joke.

By his one-year anniversary, Larry had become more than a part of my team, he had become one of my best friends. It wasn't long before I was inviting him over to our house for dinner or out for drinks with my husband, Rob, and I. Rob took an immediate liking to him, especially when he found out that they both shared an affinity for rap.

Last year, Larry was put in charge of the annual office holiday party. We were all excited to see what kind of shindig the self-proclaimed "King of Funk" was capable of throwing. He was very secretive about his plans. Even I didn't know what he had in store for us. The only thing he'd say was that we were hosting it at the Baron's Club downtown.

It wasn't until the night of the party that we finally saw it all with our own eyes. I burst out laughing right when we walked in. Larry had turned the Baron's Club Ballroom into an exact replica of our offices, down to the cubicles. There were circular dining tables inside each cubicle, and at the center of each table was a conference phone and a miniature cardboard cutout of our CEO.

The menus were printed and mounted inside plain manila folders, and orders were placed through "conference calls" to the kitchen. I'm

sure the joke was lost on senior management, but the old guys still managed to force a few smiles as they mingled with us commoners.

Of course Larry had arranged for Rob and me to sit at his table, and with the alcohol flowing freely, the night quickly turned into another episode of "The Larry Show." By the time the party was winding down, my cheeks were sore from laughing so much. With the herd headed for the exits, Rob suggested we take the party elsewhere.

I didn't think Larry had had that much to drink. He seemed fine when we left, but I guess he was a little more buzzed than I was. He was driving down Main when it happened and he just took a turn at his steering wheel. He layed, by the way, on his back, and I took his legs



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