

The Lure of Sycophancy

We are all, Carl believed, sycophants. What we personally believed meant little in real life because to please colleagues, friends and family we normally agree, rarely argue. In his early twenties, Carl decided that greasing the wheels worked as an amateur—why not go professional?

Sycophancy offered many careers everywhere. Getting into corporations was difficult so Carl began by volunteering for a local ambitious politician. Carl agreed with everything the politician said, became invaluable, then quickly progressed to work for an ambitious federal politician. He created attacks on the politician's enemies and everything was on the table: personal history, racism, sexism, classism—plenty of isms.

Carl soon had power and money. He ordered people deported, stopped funding for health and environmental research, all to please his boss. He was now a professional sycophant.

His work did change him—he grew horns. And a dark mustache and trim goatee. And fangs. He found it difficult to brush the fangs without damaging his toothbrush, and he had to brush after kissing a political enemy's butt, then sinking his teeth in deep and drinking. Eventually he even sucked his boss' butt while kissing it.

Amateur sycophancy rarely runs deep. Professional sycophancy? A way of life. Carl retired a success. The moral? It is not reassuring, but Carl's success is the way life often is. In this age especially, sycophants prosper.

Another moral is watch your butt.