

Harassment, Worship, Admiration or Imagination?

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Dr. Ravissant is thrilled. Dr. Ravissant has just been given a postdoctoral appointment in the Very Renowned Institute. Dr. Ravissant will be working in the Limnology Department under the mentorship of Dr. Naif, a very well respected limnologist.

Although Dr. Ravissant is a very bright and hard working researcher, Dr. Naif is starting to become uncomfortable working with Dr. Ravissant. With increasing frequency, Dr. Ravissant always seems to need Dr. Naif's assistance in the lab in the evening after everyone has gone home. At staff meetings Dr. Ravissant always sits next to Dr. Naif. When attending conferences, Dr. Ravissant always managed to be on the same flight as Dr. Naif, stay in rooms that were in close proximity to Dr. Naif's, attend the same workshop sessions, and be included in dinner plans. Dr. Ravissant was in charge of the fieldwork crew for Dr. Naif's lab, and while in the field Dr. Ravissant was always paired with Dr. Naif. Dr. Ravissant seemed to have many reasons to stop by Dr. Naif's home on weekends and often managed to get dinner invitations from Dr. Naif's significant partner.

Dr. Naif's colleagues began acting "differently" around Dr. Naif. It appeared that they were looking at Dr. Naif in a strange way and when Dr. Naif approached a group of colleagues their whispered conversation abruptly halted. While walking through the halls of the administration building, Dr. Naif heard a couple of research assistants mention the names Dr. Naif and Dr. Ravissant in hushed tones coupled with the word shocking.

Dr. Naif was in a quandary. The more Dr. Naif tried to become distant from Dr. Ravissant, the more persistent and cunning Dr. Ravissant appeared to become in finding ways to spend "alone" time with Dr. Naif. Dr. Naif tried broaching the subject with Dr. Ravissant on several occasions but Dr. Ravissant told Dr. Naif that working with such an esteemed scientist was always a dream of Dr. Ravissant's, and Dr. Ravissant wanted to be a scientist just like Dr. Naif. However, at different times, Dr. Naif's heard from others that members of Dr. Naif's research team had complained to them that Dr. Ravissant had boasted of a "special" relationship with Dr. Naif and that they must do as exactly what Dr. Ravissant wanted. When Dr. Naif spoke to the members of the team, they seemed uncomfortable and claimed ignorance.

1. Does Dr. Naif have a problem? If yes, how should Dr. Naif handle the problem?
2. Is Dr. Ravissant's behavior consistent with that of an admiring student?
3. What is the Dr. Ravissant's behavior a sign of lack of social skills, low self-esteem, a desire to succeed, manipulation, something else?
4. What are the consequences of not handling the situation properly? Could this behavior have a negative effect on Dr. Naif's career? On Dr. Ravissant's career?
5. Could/should Dr. Naif try to get help from other colleagues with the situation?
6. What is the institutional role in this situation?