

FIRST 30 DAYS SURVIVAL KIT

*The scripts, trackers, and sanity-savers
for your first month with a bad boss.*

FOR THE PERSON WHO:

- Just got a new manager and can already tell it's going to be bad.
- Is still in the honeymoon period but seeing the red flags.
- Needs to stay, stay sane, and stay employed.

WELCOME

You are not the problem.

And you're not the first person to need this.

If you're reading this, you probably just got a new manager—or you just realized the manager you have is not going to become someone else. Either way, you're not in crisis yet. You're in **the first 30 days**, and what you do now will shape the next 12 months of your working life.

This kit is the field manual I wish I'd had when I was 25, getting gaslit by a VP, and quietly losing my mind in a job I was actually good at. It's the same framework I've used as an HR leader to coach people through first months with managers who range from disappointing to full-on dangerous. It works because it's built on one idea:

“You can't change your manager. You can change how discoverable you are, how defensible you are, and how durable your reputation is.”

What you'll find inside is not motivational. It's operational. Scripts. Trackers. Templates. The three conversations to have in week two. The documentation habit that protects you in month six. The HR-safe language for when you finally need to escalate.

Use the parts that fit. Ignore the parts that don't. And when the book comes out on June 2, 2026, you'll already be ahead of every reader who's starting from zero.

— Candice

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this kit.

This kit is organized around the first four weeks with a new manager (or a newly-bad one). Each week has a focus, a few scripts, and a tracker or checklist.

The four-week map

WEEK	FOCUS	OUTCOME
1	Observation	You know what kind of boss you have.
2	Three Conversations	They know how you work. You know what they value.
3	Documentation	You have a paper trail if you ever need one.
4	Reputation	Other people know your work, not just your boss.

Three rules before you begin

- **Don't tell anyone at work about this kit yet.** You want to observe from a neutral posture for the first week, not a defensive one.
- **Keep it off work systems.** Save this PDF and your notes to a personal drive, not your work computer. Anything on a work device is the company's property.
- **Resist the urge to vent.** Early venting to coworkers is the single most common way people accidentally become “the difficult one” in their boss's narrative. Vent to people outside work.

If you do nothing else, do week three. That's the one that saves you.

WEEK ONE · DAYS 1-7

Observation.

Don't react. Watch.

Week one is not about proving anything. It is about noticing. You are gathering data about your manager the way a cultural anthropologist would: what they pay attention to, what they avoid, how they treat people when things go wrong. You are not trying to fix them. You are trying to *name* them.

The observation tracker

Print this or open a personal Google Doc. Fill in one row per working day.

DAY	WHAT THEY PRAISED	WHAT THEY AVOIDED	HOW OTHERS ACTED
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			

Red flags by boss type

Most bad-boss behavior in week one is subtle. Here's what each of the seven archetypes leaks before they fully show themselves.

BOSS TYPE	EARLY TELL
The Micromanager	Reschedules your 1:1 into three, wants to "sit in" on small tasks.
The Ghost	Cancels 1:1s. Doesn't respond to your email for 4+ days.
The Bully	First 'joke' at someone's expense in a group meeting.
The Gaslighter	Denies having said something you clearly heard them say last week.
The Credit Thief	Uses "we" when they mean "you"; "I" when they mean "we".

The Incompetent

Asks you to explain basics of your work; avoids deciding anything.

The Bureaucrat

Every answer starts with "the policy is..." — even for small things.

You will not know for sure in week one. You will have a hypothesis. Label it lightly. You're not issuing a diagnosis — you're opening a file.

WEEK TWO · DAYS 8–14

The Three Conversations.

Set the terms on purpose.

Most people let their relationship with a new manager form by accident. You're not most people. In week two, you'll have three short, deliberate conversations that shape how you're managed, how you're measured, and how you can push back. These are low-threat on the surface and load-bearing underneath. Use them word-for-word if you want. Adapt them if you don't.

Conversation 1: What does success look like for you?

Purpose: Get their criteria for success on the record.

OPENER

"I want to make sure I'm set up well with you. Can we spend 10 minutes on what a great first 90 days looks like from your seat? What would make you say 'I'm really glad we hired/have them' by day 90?"

Why it works: You're not asking them to evaluate you. You're asking them to evaluate the role. Their answer tells you what they actually care about, not what the job description says.

Document it within the hour. Email them a recap: *"Thanks for the time — capturing what I heard so I can build against it: (1)... (2)... (3)..."* This becomes the scorecard you quote back in six months.

Conversation 2: Here's how I work best.

Purpose: Preempt the styles of management that will break you.

OPENER

"Can I share a couple of things about how I work that make me most useful to my manager? It's short — three things."

Then pick **three** of these, tailored to your actual preferences:

- "I do my best thinking when I have the problem overnight before we talk. If you can send me the thing the day before, I'll come with a better answer."
- "I prefer async for status. I'll send you a written update every Friday — that way 1:1s can be for the harder conversations."
- "I respond badly to surprise meetings on calendar. If something urgent comes up, text me first and I'll clear the time."

Conversation 3: What does the org value in this role?

Purpose: Get a sightline past your manager to the org.

OPENER

“Outside of what you need from this role, what does the company value? What does a great person in this seat do that makes the VP/department/team better?”

Why it works: Even a bad boss will rarely lie about what the **org** values — they want to look smart in front of you. Their answer tells you what will matter when your boss is out sick, reorged, or replaced. It also tells you what to highlight in skip-levels and cross-functional meetings.

After all three conversations

- You should have a one-page doc called *My Scorecard for [Boss Name]*.
- You should have an email to yourself called *What I asked for, what I got* with their answers pasted in.
- You should know **what they avoided answering**. That's the more important data than what they said.

Write down the exact words they used to describe success. Those words are your shield in every future performance conversation.

WEEK THREE · DAYS 15–21

The documentation habit.

Quiet. Dated. Boring. Priceless.

Here is the week that saves your career six months from now: the week you started writing things down. Good documentation is not angry. It's not accusatory. It doesn't read like a case file. It reads like a competent professional doing their job with a slightly better memory than average. That's it.

What to document

- **Decisions.** Who decided, when, and what was the reasoning. Especially when the reasoning is “because I said so”.
- **Requests that shift scope.** “Can you also take on X” — every single time. Dated.
- **Moments of “wait, that's not what we agreed to.”** Especially when they later deny it.
- **Public praise.** Screenshots. Wins other people notice.
- **Your own fuckups.** Seriously. Write them down too with what you learned. A documentation practice that only catches them is paranoid. One that catches you too is *a record*.

Template: The “just making sure I heard you right” email

Use this after any conversation where your boss assigned you something, moved a deadline, changed a priority, or — most importantly — told you to deprioritize something they'll later ask why you didn't do.

TEMPLATE

Subject: Quick recap from our conversation

Hi [Name],

Thanks for the time. Just capturing what I heard so I can build against it:

- 1. [Thing you assigned me]*
- 2. [Thing we decided to deprioritize, with your reasoning]*
- 3. [Deadline we discussed]*

If I misheard any of this, just reply and let me know. Otherwise I'll proceed with this understanding.

*Thanks,
[You]*

Silence is consent. If they don't reply, you have a written record they didn't correct. If they reply with a change, you have evidence of the change. You cannot lose.

Template: The weekly decision log

A personal document. Not shared. Takes ~3 minutes a week.

DATE	DECISION / EVENT	WHO	WHY IT MATTERS

Documentation rules of the road

- **Not on work devices.** Personal drive or personal notes app. Anything on a work laptop can be taken when you leave — or used to accuse you of creating a hostile record.
- **Descriptive, not emotional.** “Sarah said X. I asked Y. She said Z.” — not “Sarah was being a psycho today.” Future-you will need the first kind. Future-you will regret the second.
- **No conclusions, just facts.** The narrative is built later, out of the facts. Don't pre-build it.
- **Date everything.** An undated note is a story. A dated note is evidence.

*The boss who can't be trusted has no idea you've started writing things down.
Keep it that way. Documentation is armor, not a weapon.*

WEEK FOUR · DAYS 22–30

The reputation layer.

Stop being your boss's best-kept secret.

Bad bosses love private talent. They get credit for your work, buffer you from visibility, and quietly keep you stuck. You will not fix this by being better at your job. You fix this by becoming **visible to people other than your boss**.

Who needs to know your work

- Your skip-level (your boss's boss).
- The cross-functional partners who depend on your team.
- One or two executives two levels up who are influential — not to flatter, to *inform*.
- Your peers on other teams. Peer respect is career currency.

Template: The “just making sure you saw” email

Used to quietly make sure a decision-maker saw your work, without going around your boss.

TEMPLATE

Subject: FYI — [Project] update

Hi [Skip-level / Partner],

Not urgent, just wanted to make sure you saw this — we wrapped [thing] this week and it came in [specific result]. Happy to walk you through how we got there if useful.

*Thanks,
[You]*

Three rules for this email: (1) never send it about your boss's work, only your own. (2) never send it more than once a month to the same person. (3) always have a specific result in it — vague updates feel like self-promotion, specific ones feel like information.

The visibility routine

- Post a short wrap-up in your team's public Slack channel every Friday. One line about what got shipped, with credit to anyone who helped.
- Volunteer for one cross-team presentation this month — even a small one. Exposure is multiplicative.

- Update your LinkedIn headline to match what you actually do. Bad bosses benefit from ambiguity about your scope.
- Ask your skip-level for a 15-minute coffee — “Just want to make sure I'm thinking about the business the way you are.”
- Every time you learn someone's name who's senior to your boss, write it down. You'll need that list later.

Being undiscoverable is a choice your boss is making for you. Every week you don't push back, the choice gets made again. Push back quietly, on Fridays, with a two-line email. It adds up.

BONUS · WHEN YOU NEED TO ESCALATE

The HR-safe escalation script.

From someone who sits in that room.

I want to be honest with you about something. I am an HR leader. I sit in the room when employees raise concerns about their managers. I have watched people handle this conversation in ways that make HR reflexively protect the manager, and I've watched people handle it in ways that make HR take it seriously. The difference is not that one person was right and one was wrong. The difference is **how they opened**.

What does NOT work

- Opening with emotion. ("I can't take this anymore.")
- Opening with vague adjectives. ("My boss is toxic.")
- Asking HR to do something about it. (HR cannot fire your boss for you.)
- Going in without dates, examples, or witnesses.

What DOES work

The opening that makes HR lean in sounds like this:

SCRIPT

"I'd like to raise a concern formally. I'm not asking for anything to happen today — I want to put something on the record and get your advice on the right next step. I've been documenting a pattern with my manager and I want to make sure you have the same information I do."

Why this works

- "I'd like to raise a concern formally" — tells HR this is on the record, which changes their obligations.
- "I'm not asking for anything to happen today" — lowers their defense. They were bracing for a demand.
- "I want to put something on the record" — signals you know how HR works. They respect that.
- "I've been documenting a pattern" — tells them you have evidence. They will listen differently.
- "Get your advice on the right next step" — gives them a role. They want to be useful, not used.

Bring three specific, dated examples. Not twenty. Three. The first one establishes pattern. The second confirms it. The third makes them ask for more.

What to put in writing vs. in person

IN PERSON	IN WRITING
The first concern raise	Follow-up recap email after the meeting
Sensitive descriptions	Dates, names, decisions, outcomes
Your emotional reaction	Never. Keep writing factual.
Any request for retaliation protection	The fact that you requested it

BONUS · QUICK REFERENCE

The 7-boss decoder.

One page. Keep it handy.

BOSS TYPE	THEIR FEAR	WHAT THEY NEED FROM YOU
Micromanager	Being blindsided	More updates than feels natural, shorter than feels natural
Ghost	Being held responsible	Decisions you already made — for them to rubber-stamp
Bully	Being seen as weak	Public deference. Private boundary-setting in writing.
Gaslighter	Being caught	Written recaps. Always. Even for casual conversations.
Credit Thief	Being exposed as empty	Visibility routes that bypass them (skip-level, cross-team)
Incompetent	Being discovered	You to manage up — gently, consistently, in writing
Bureaucrat	Being wrong	A path that is their idea. Let them "find" the answer.

Every bad boss has an underlying fear. Manage the fear, and the behavior softens. Ignore the fear, and the behavior escalates.

The 30-day scorecard

Run through this at day 30. If you can check five of seven, you're in good shape. If you can check fewer than four, start over from week 2 — something didn't land.

- I can name which of the 7 boss types I'm working with.
- I have my boss's *exact words* for what success looks like.
- I have a personal doc where I've logged at least 4 dated items.
- I've sent at least one "just capturing what I heard" email.
- My skip-level has seen at least one piece of my work this month.
- I have at least one ally outside my team.
- I can describe a bad day from this month in 4 factual sentences — without adjectives.

WHAT'S NEXT

Want the rest?

Come with me to launch.

This kit is a fraction of what's in the book. *Great Job, Shit Boss* launches on June 2, 2026 — which is my birthday, for what it's worth. Inside the full book, you'll get:

- A full chapter for each of the 7 boss types, including the internal scripts for when they get inside your head.
- The exit-planning framework — when staying is the right move, when leaving is, and how to not set fire to anything on your way out.
- The HR insider chapter — how HR actually works, what they can and can't do for you, and how to get the most out of them.
- The “your next manager” playbook — how to interview *them* so this doesn't happen again.

Two ways to help me launch it:

1. Join the Launch Team.

I'm picking 150 people to get an advance digital copy, a private launch Slack, and a bonus toolkit that doesn't go in the book. In return, you post about the launch on June 2. One post. That's the ask. Apply at greatjobshitboss.com.

2. Pre-order when it's live.

Pre-orders are how first-time authors get visibility on Amazon. I'll email you the moment the page goes live. You'll be first.

“Your work is excellent. Your boss is not. This is the book for the person who has to survive Monday.”

Thank you for reading this far. Take care of yourself in ways your boss won't.

— Candice Maldonado