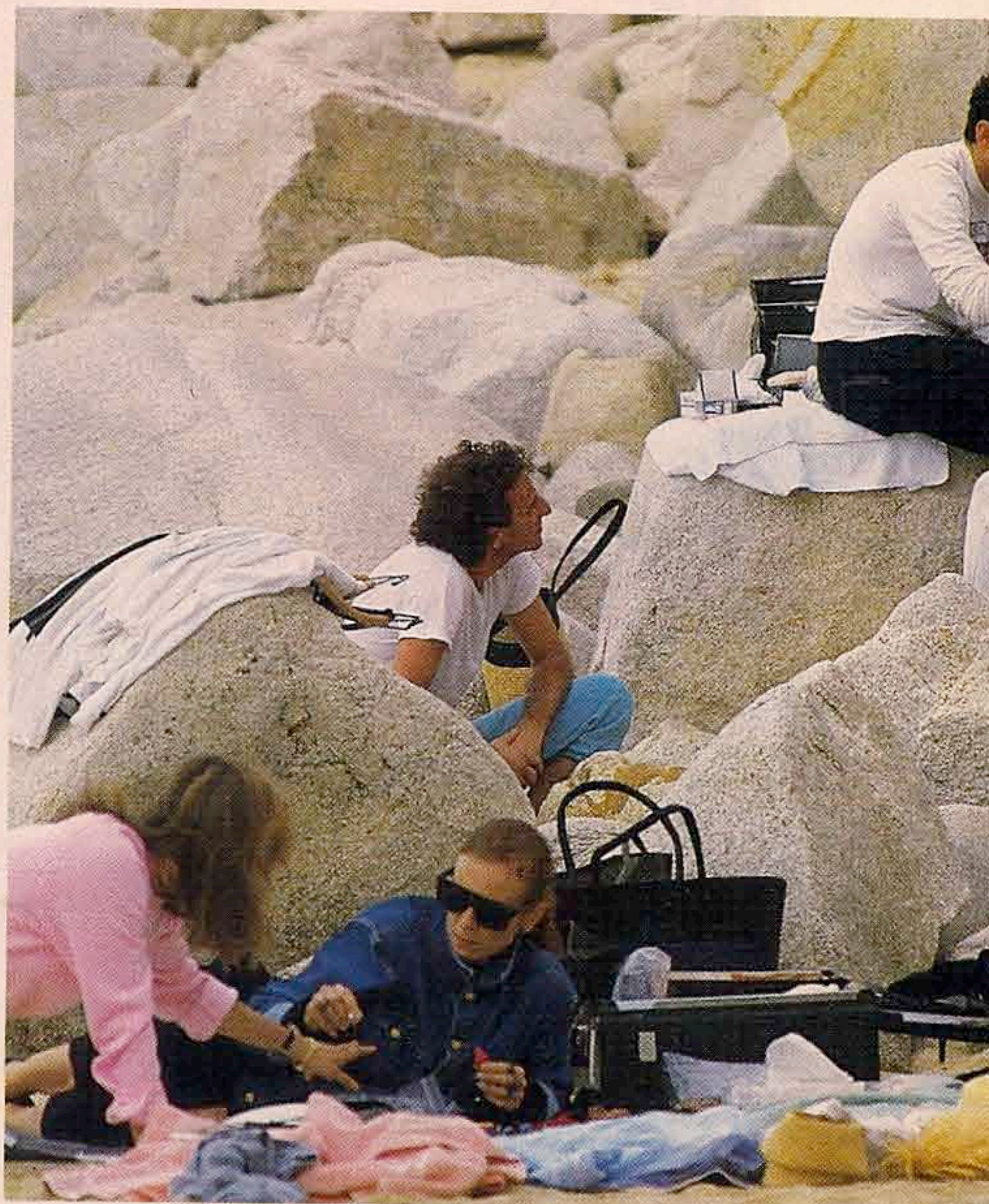


**i**t is early Friday evening of a day in spring, a time when young women are putting punctuation on a workweek, gearing up for a date or a gathering of friends. Kathy Calnen is not one of them. The 25-year-old reporter and anchorwoman at WTWS-TV in New London, Connecticut, is sitting in a windowless, airless courtroom, following the case of an Eastern Airlines pilot accused of murdering his wife, chopping up her body with a chain saw and storing the parts in a frost-free refrigerator before disposing of them in a wood chipper. When the jury is dismissed for the day, Calnen hangs around the halls of

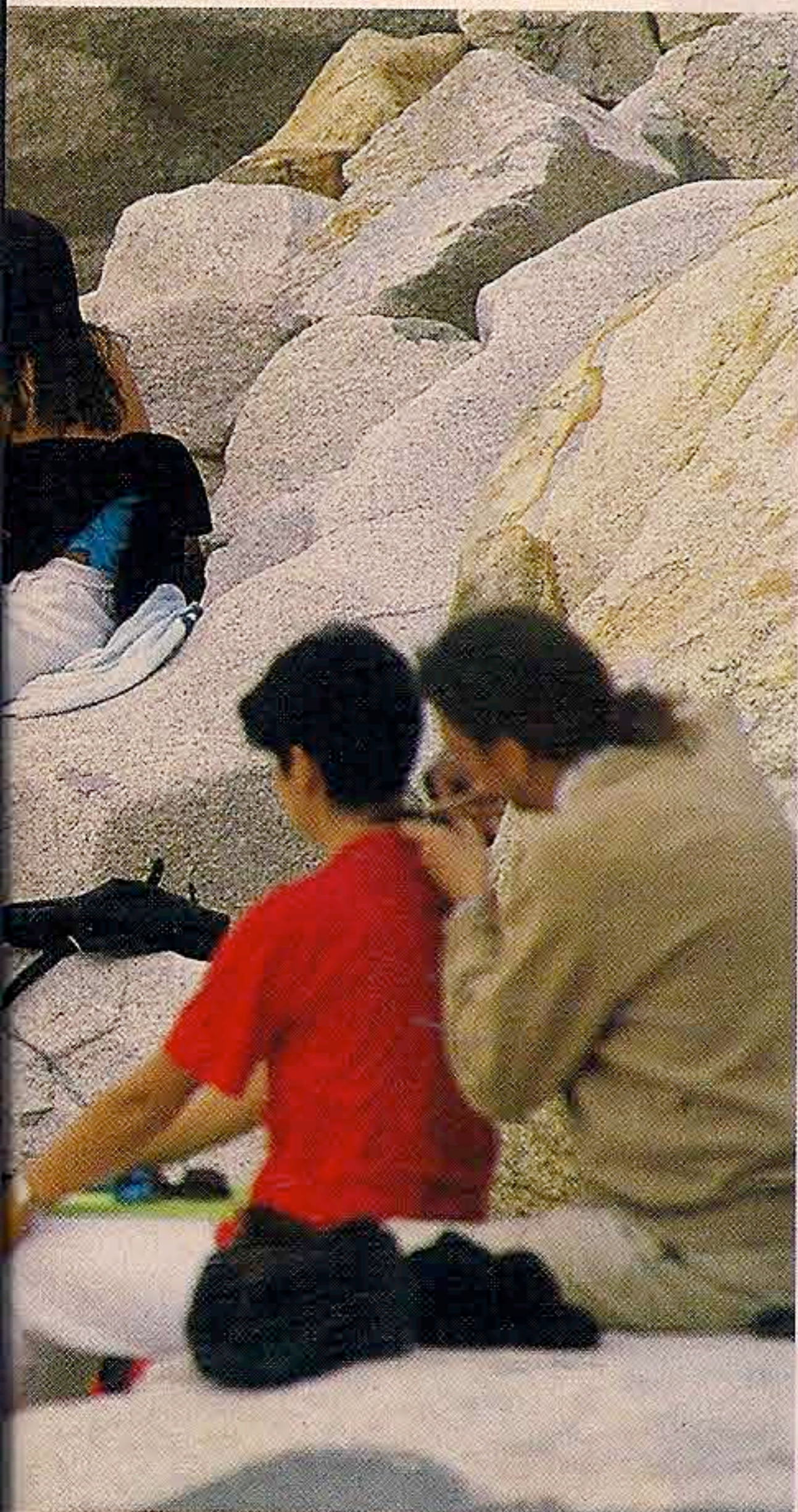
IF  
THIS  
JOB'S  
SO



*G*LAMOROUS.

how come i'm eating takeout?

justice trying to convince an uncooperative attorney to appear on camera, then returns to a windowless, airless studio to piece together a story in which every shot of the defendant is an unobstructed view of the back of his head. Dinner is a “grinder”—a sandwich of oily peppers and coagulated cheese—that she persuaded an officemate to fetch from a deli and that is wolfed down in the “cafeteria,” a closet-sized space with one table, six chairs and a soda machine. Calnen puts on makeup and inserts contact lenses in the ladies’ room, sharing the mirror with a weathergirl who is deeply into eye shadow, and after the broadcast, she drives home around midnight—still airless, rolling up her car window on a friendly wino at a red light.



**Behind the scenes of a fashion shoot:  
A decidedly rocky way to earn a living**

the rich and famous, the attraction of being on the periphery of high-powered action. And, if you actually get a job in one of these fields and go home to visit your high-school friends, they will act as if they would sell their souls and promise their first-born sons to exchange lives with you.

For most mortals, work, however gratifying or well paid, means a job where you sit behind a desk in an office, where foreign travel is limited to two weeks’ vacation and where the most famous person you encounter is the president of the company, once a year at the Christmas party. If you turn on the TV at the end of the day and see a reporter tracking down a story, or you go to a rock concert and see a woman whose jacket boasts a VIP backstage pass, you may be easily persuaded that you are observing privileged people leading enviable lives. Meeting Sting at the airport might sound pretty good—to a biochemist, a

history professor or a sales manager.

But entry-level (and even mid-level) jobs in these fields are usually pathetically unglamorous—you’re supposed to die from the sheer joy of standing at the Xerox machine with pages of Updike’s latest oeuvre or sitting in the greenroom of the *Today* show with a sleepy Cher. The glamour industries survive on the low-paid efforts of hardworking women, and even the ones who make early advancement in position and authority often deal with some fairly outrageous egos and attitudes.

### **Lights, Camera, Glamour?**

Take Deirdre Sullivan, a 28-year-old photographer’s assistant

## Dream jobs can come true, it can happen to you . . . if you long for long hours, slave wages and, yes, something to write home about

Isn’t television glamorous?

There are certain fields of endeavor (mostly media jobs: news, entertainment and publishing) that are generally thought of as incredibly alluring and exciting—until you get to see them up close. It’s easy to understand what makes these industries so seductive: There is proximity to

and fashion stylist. It falls to her to scout for the locations and hunt for the props required for shootings that take place months before the pictures appear, which means that she’s often looking for espadrilles in the middle of a New York snowstorm and calling florists to ask, “Where can I get a poinsettia?” in April. She may be flying off to St. Bart’s for a week, but the night before she leaves she is cantilevered over her bathroom sink, dyeing slippers with tea because she could only find white and the client wants beige.

She also has to deal with models. She has to deal with models who call her in the morning and say, “Pick up six bottles of Evian for me,” and models who call her in the middle of the night and ask her what to do about a yeast infection. She has to deal with models who use her open can of Tab as an ashtray without asking (“—and not a trace of ash around the rim”) and models who jump into fountains wearing borrowed boots that must be resuscitated with a hair dryer and blackened with a felt-tip marker. And once Sullivan had to deal with a model who just couldn’t get ready to go before the camera. The photographer finally said, “Okay, that’s it. I want you out here now.” The model said, “I’ll be there in five minutes—I’m just going to the bathroom.” The photographer said, “No, I’m sorry, you’ve kept us all waiting too long.” And the model walked onto the set and peed on the floor.

Sullivan says she comforts herself by remembering one definition of a model: “a small plastic imitation of the real thing.”

Like Sullivan, most young women who hold these supposedly glamorous jobs are happy not to be selling shoes or slinging hash, and they do appreciate the perks that are part of the deal. Sullivan lists three: “always having your hair cut for free, getting a tan on the job and knowing (continued on page 321)

## GLAMOROUS JOBS

*continued from page 275*

the latest gossip." They aren't complaining. It's just that the work is seldom what it seems. The hours can be brutal—there's no clear distinction between on- and off-duty—and what sounds like a cushy setup can actually be something quite different.

### **The Endless (-Seeming) Vacation**

Until recently, Lauren Cuthbert, 25, was a writer for the travel industry magazines that are part of the publishing empire known as Dun & Bradstreet, and one assignment was a week-long cruise through the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico—to which you might well respond, "For this she gets *paid*?" But here's what the trip was really like: Cuthbert was the youngest passenger by about 20 years and the lightest by about 50 pounds, traveling with a largely elderly, largely sedentary and largely *large* group of Midwesterners. The motion of the ship produced a constant sensation of being on a vibrating bed at the No-Tell Motel, with no chance to get off, and there was a constant assault of bad music, like the steel band playing "Spanish Eyes" on the sun deck (although if they stopped, there was bound to be a fashion show, which was worse).

The entertainment included a demonstration on vegetable carving and a comic whose idea of humor was to zero in on a chesty woman in a T-shirt and say, "There are two points about this shirt...." One of the waiters served meals singing under his breath, "Boom, boom, boom, let's go back to my room," and there were frequent opportunities to hear him because the big activity on board was eating, six times a day: breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, midnight buffet. All bad. The food was prepared so far ahead, or in such quantity, or so misguidedly, that it all tasted like corrugated cardboard. Smoked salmon carved in slabs like roast beef. Fake whipped cream on canned-fruit tarts. The only edible alternative was whatever the kitchen staff hadn't touched—mostly bananas and Hershey bars purchased at the ship's store. The store also carried an extensive selection of dental flossers for denture-wearers, and the most popular author on deck was Danielle Steel. The experience was sort of like a bad blind date, if it lasted seven days and took place in Iowa.

"It sounds bitchy to complain," says  
*(continued on page 322)*

## GLAMOROUS JOBS

continued from page 321

Cuthbert, "but believe me: When you're there, you're counting the days. You check into your room, and you want the week to be over, and it hasn't started yet." Even when the experience is first-class, this is no endless vacation. Earlier this year, Cuthbert went to the south of France with a group of food and travel writers who were important to the French tourist office and received the royal treatment. She was appreciative—"The last time I was in Europe, I had a pack on my back, and I had to ask myself: Do I have enough money for this sandwich?" But her every waking moment was spent seeing the stuff that the French wanted to be seen—and opting out wasn't an option. "You can't step on anyone's toes," says Cuthbert. "It's like going to someone's house and saying, 'I know you've just spent six hours on dinner, but I'm not hungry.' Museums, ruins, beaches, convention centers, conference facilities—you have to see them all. And if you oversleep, they come and get you."

### Rap 'n' Roll

But being on the receiving end of such solicitous care and attention is hardly typical of most glamour jobs. More often, it is the lot of the woman with the envy-provoking career to cater to the whims of others, particularly when that career is in public relations. Yes, you are there in the hotel suite with the movie star, and yes, you are backstage with the band. But you're the one calling room service and pouring the celebratory champagne. You're indulging the overly indulged, pleasing the world-weary, soothing the jet-lagged and the jaded. You're part mommy, part maid, part messenger service, with a bit of baby-sitter and a touch of therapist thrown in.

Before Lori Somes, 34, started handling publicity for recording stars, she was unaware that the field even existed. "I thought: Either you make the record or you buy it—I didn't know there was a huge world in between," she says. Somes tried to be a secretary, but her typing was atrocious. "I sat next to a woman doing two-hundred words per minute, and pretended I'd lost a contact lens." Somes made it to the top, nonetheless, and now works for The Howard Bloom Organization, a public-relations firm whose celebrity clients include Bette Midler and Prince, but she says she's really a hostess/diplomat/nurse/big sister/confidante/musicologist/anthropologist/psychologist.

A typical day means overseeing a photography session for the rap music group

Run-D.M.C. Somes confers with the photographer while the guys eat bacon and eggs out of take-out tin plates and drink from communal economy-sized bottles of malt liquor, then guides them to the roof of the building (skirting the landlord, since this is against the rules) where they create pseudomenacing looks for the camera. The two-year-old son of one singer is running around underfoot, wearing a junior version of the rap look—heavy gold chain, laceless sneakers, plus his own addition of a green felt hat, so there is a little green blur at the bottom of every frame. Somes is trying to handle all this chaos—the baby, the breakfasts, the boys in the band—but she is feeling kind of crummy: While visiting the Dominican Republic for the wedding of the band's manager, she picked up a food parasite, and the cure requires both medication and celibacy. (It's got something to do with where the parasites exit the body. Don't ask.)

Somes seems genuinely fond of all her clients—she says she has been adopted as a "kissing cousin"—but she has to please many masters, particularly on the road or in concert. She's got the artists themselves, the wives and girlfriends, the groupies and other hangers-on, the recording company executives, the journalists who want interviews, their magazine and newspaper editors and the fans. It's a toss-up as to who can be most badly behaved. Once she was spat on by a Run-D.M.C. fan. Once she lost a drunken journalist on a press junket in Europe and found him, stark naked, swinging out over the stage in an air-lifted harness. Once a management type at a record company instructed her to "go home with" a client as a favor. That one took her aback for a moment until she recovered her power of speech and told the man to stuff it six ways till Tuesday. But she says she seldom worries about her welfare. With a nod in the direction of the 200-plus-pound men making rap music, she says, "I've got the best bodyguards around."

### Broadcast Blues

TV reporter and anchorwoman Kathy Calnen *has* had occasion to fear for her safety. Once she was out covering a story about a landfill site that used to be a toxic-waste dump. "This was a community where all the cars have gun racks," she says, "and when the man who owned the land saw us, he said, 'Don't go in there or you won't come out alive.'" (Calnen cleverly arranged entry to a neighboring piece of property and filmed the story through a longer lens.) But more often the danger of the job is tedium. "It's blood

drives and city council meetings, snow-plow stories and heat-wave stories—with pictures of the bank thermometer in the background,” she says.

A promotion-minded TV industry would like you to think that no expense is spared in bringing you the news, but the reality is often a shoestring budget. When the staff is shorthanded, Calnen may be asked to write about a story she didn't cover—like a Gerald Ford news conference she didn't attend (and where nothing was said). At WTWS-TV, where the newsroom doubles as a studio for the making of commercials, there are stacks of Michelin tires in the hall outside Calnen's office—presumably the subject of a recent or upcoming ad—and one of the station's cars was previously used by an exterminator. Someone has thoughtfully tacked a warning onto the bulletin board: “Car #2 continues to smell absolutely wonderful. Wear nose plugs.”

Despite the running around, the mundane moments, and workdays that often last well into the night, there is a certain quality of life afforded by some glamour jobs that cannot be sneezed at. Deirdre Sullivan gets to eat very well on a client's budget, and Lauren Cuthbert gets chocolate mints on her pillow at night in luxury hotel rooms, and Kathy Calnen gets recognized in the mall. The people who populate the worlds of these women are often charismatic and intriguing—egomaniacal and troublesome, but stimulating. “At times,” admits Lori Some, “it feels like an exclusive club.” And there are, occasionally, splendid satisfactions in the work that have little to do with glamour and lots to do with labor, as when Some promoted the music written for *The Last Emperor* by client David Byrne of the band Talking Heads—and it won an Oscar. She tries to remember these good times when she's having a hard time such as when she's working a concert—“and one of the band members needs Advil, and one of them broke up with his wife who's threatening to be there, and the union men at Madison Square Garden are giving grief, and some 44D-cup is at the stage door saying, ‘I'm on the list,’ and some silk-scarf monkey”—Some's sobriquet for executive jackasses—“doesn't want to be embarrassed in front of his chiquita.” Such an evening is hard on the body and soul. “I go home to a baby who needs care and nurturing—and the baby is me,” she says.

There is an acknowledgment on the part of some of these women that a glamorous job may not be enough in the long run, that it isn't brain surgery—it's only rock and roll. Lori Some talks about the

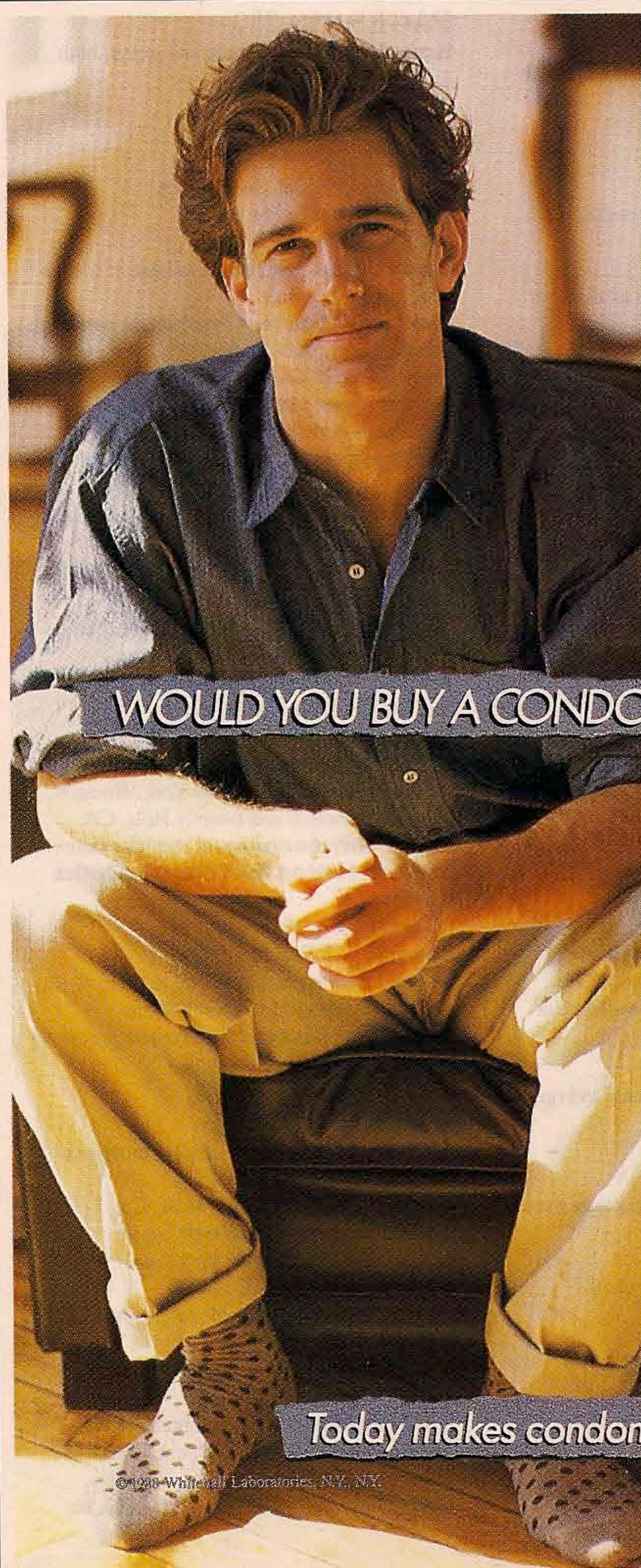
“velvet coffin” of the music business, “where you're working with the upper echelon of artists, and there's a great deal of greed and power, and if you're so inclined, you can use the juice”—the sexiness and gamesmanship of the business that facilitate life in the fast lane.

But life in the fast lane sometimes turns out to be the apron of the road. Deirdre Sullivan thinks of that when she is preparing to leave for Hilton Head—and loading up on “trash magazines” to keep the models occupied in the Winnebago. Kathy Calnen thinks of that when she is waiting to see the Duchess of York

(“Fergie” to her friends)—waiting in the rain to see a woman whom palace etiquette forbids her to address. Lauren Cuthbert thinks of that when she is lounging in the sun on a Jamaican river raft or gazing at the same starry night in Provence that van Gogh painted—with a bunch of strangers instead of her boyfriend.

Glamour? Maybe not. But they'll have great stories to tell their grandchildren. □

*Aimee Lee Ball is a writer who has contributed to many national magazines.*



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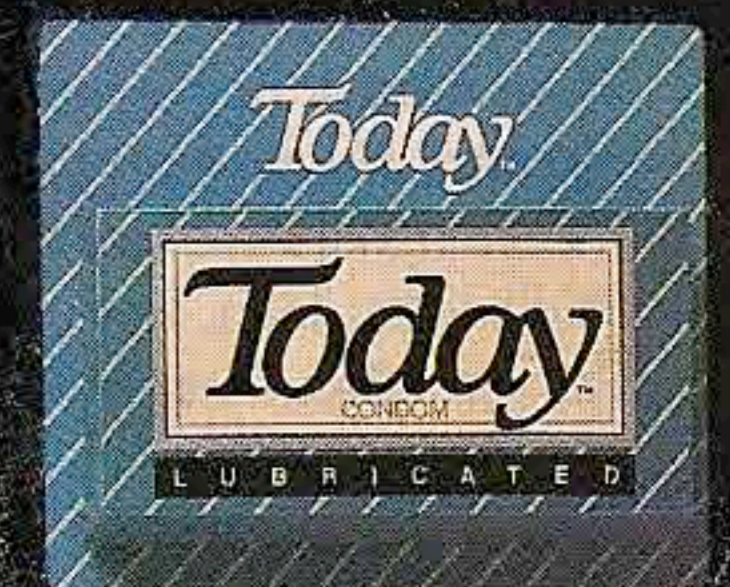
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