

Leigh

Drama Queen in Training

*The Trouble With
Co-Workers*

Book Three

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Leigh: Drama Queen in Training
Book Three: The Trouble with Co-Workers
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Dedication:

Sandy:

For Sarah, Dawn, Stephanie, Nikita and Trudy. Thank you so much for all of your help.

Leigh:

Dedicated to anyone who's ever had a really bad day.

*Leigh:
Drama Queen in
Training*

*Book Three: The
Trouble with Co-
Workers*

Diary Entry # 2:

Well, if you ask a silly question, you get a silly answer. Let me give you the latest update.

My friends think that I'm totally wrapped up in Kyle. I think obsession is such an ugly word. I mean, the man rocked my world. Who knew sex could be so good? It certainly never felt like that with the ex. Thankfully, the ass has been quiet. Kyle is actually about as far from that prick as I can get. To my surprise, he actually wants to see me in lingerie. And he seems to like what he sees, despite my slight esteem problem.

And of course, here I need to add a note to myself. Never—~~EVER~~—~~EVER~~ let Bryna know that you want to go lingerie shopping again. The woman will have you packed up and in a store trying things on before you can say "eep". Okay, so no one forced me to actually buy anything...that's not the point. If they weren't my friends, and I didn't love them so much, I'd swear they relished my humiliation. Wait, what am I saying? Bryna and Sally are my best friends—of course they

relish it!

I did also come across the potential problem of Kyle possibly having a girlfriend. I guess I'm going to have to ask him about that. Or just find someone new to play with. Thankfully, there's this new guy, Jim, who just transferred to my department. Let the games begin...

“Nature always sides with the
hidden flaw.”

– Murphy’s Law

Sitting in her cubicle, Leigh allowed her thoughts to wander. Was she as bad as the woman that her ex had cheated with? After all, she'd seen that woman at Kyle's apartment, but it hadn't stopped her when he was in her bedroom. Hell, she hadn't even given the woman a second thought once he was in her bedroom! But then again, neither had he.

Bryna had pointed that fact out to her. She'd also pointed out that since Leigh still technically didn't know which apartment Kyle lived in, the other woman could've just been his neighbor.

She wanted to find out, but couldn't seem to bring herself to approach him and ask. What if she walked up to him and forgot that she was supposed to ask a question? What if she saw him and her legs turned to butter and her body started to instantly drip for him? Shaking her head as she forced herself to get back to work, Leigh corrected herself. She *knew* that would happen. Even thoughts of him betrayed how much she wanted him again. She was completely addicted.

Besides, she didn't want to come off sounding like some kind of obsessed freak.

Which is why I have to find someone else. She sighed.

Standing up, Leigh stretched and headed for the shared printer. It was annoying that there were about five people being forced to share each printer in the office, but it allowed her and Sally to spend a minute here and there chatting. They were set up on the same printer and, when either of them went to the printer, she would make certain to grab the other's work as

well. She'd deliver it and they could get away with a minute or two of goofing off before it was time to get back to work.

Their bosses knew it went on. But so long as their productivity didn't slack off, they were pretty cool about it. Heck, most people in the office did that, or worse. When she got to the printer, Sally was already there.

"Are we somewhere fun?"

"Huh?"

"You printed the same document four times."

Leigh shook her head. "I have got to move on. But," she lowered her voice, "Kyle is so...and he did things to me that...and I..."

"I know, Girlie. He rocked your world." Sally lowered her own voice until it was barely above a whisper. "Okay, don't look now, but that new guy, Jim, is totally checking you out."

Leigh tried to be discreet about glancing over to him. But when she looked over, he seemed absorbed in whatever was on his computer screen.

Whispering to her friend, she said, "Okay, stop. Pick up a book on meditation or a horror or something, because you have got to rejoin the real world. He isn't doing anything but working."

"Oh no. I see him checking you out when you pass him. He totally wants to get to know you better. Why don't you try talking to him? Maybe he can help you forget Loverboy."

"Sally..."

"You never know if you don't try." Sally returned

to her cubicle without looking back.

Gathering her documents, Leigh returned to her own desk and thought about what her friend said.

Leaning slightly to the right, she looked at Jim's cubicle. She couldn't see him, but that didn't mean anything. Maximizing her email program, Leigh bit down on her lower lip and started a new email.

Hey Jim, she typed. How was your weekend? – Leigh

It was lame, but it could start a conversation. She hit send and waited to see if he would respond.

Ten minutes later, she was sure that he wasn't going to answer her question. Her head was nodding in time with her music when the little bubble saying she had new email came up. Clicking the small icon, she read the email.

It wasn't too bad. I did some cycling and worked on my house. How was yours?

With a smile on her face, Leigh responded.

It wasn't bad. I went out with one of my girlfriends and did a little shopping. We had to cut it short, but it's all good. :-)

She hit send, then continued working. Would he respond again?

Within minutes, she had her answer.

Cool. I'm not trying to be rude, but I think you should know that I am seeing someone.

Leigh chuckled.

That's cool. I was just trying to make small talk, she typed. Just trying to be friendly. :-)

And there it was. She wasn't offended that he'd turned her down like he had. She would probably be suspicious too if someone started emailing her out of

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

the blue. And it's not like her motives were quite as pure as she'd claimed. But there was no need for him to know that.

The now familiar bubble popped up.

Oh, Okay. I just wanted to make sure. I didn't want you to think that I was leading you on or anything.

Leigh laughed. *Nope, like I said, I was just trying to be friendly. But I appreciate your honesty.*

Stretching, she looked at the clock. Thank goodness it was lunchtime. She wasn't sure how much more she could stand. Locking her computer, she admitted that her mind was most definitely not on her work. And now she needed to figure out what she was going to do about finding a replacement for Kyle. And she really did have to do that soon before she grew any more addicted than she already was.

Heck, already the thought of his dick made her mouth water and several parts of her anatomy tingle.

Approaching Sally, Leigh was shaking her head. "I can't do this anymore."

"And you say I'm the overdramatic one?" Sally stood up. "Let's go get some lunch. And if I have to listen to another 'I have to find a replacement for Kyle' speech, you are buying me dessert."



When Leigh got back to her desk, she fought the urge to bang her head on it. Sally and Bryna were right. She did need to stop obsessing over that man. It was not her fault if she didn't know he had a girlfriend. If

he did have one and still waltzed into her bedroom and practically climbed on top of her, then that was his bad karma, not hers. Not that she put up much of a fight. Or any fight. Hell, who would fight with a man like that, kissing and licking...and nibbling...

Shaking her head, she tried to push the thoughts to the back of her mind as she unlocked her computer. When everything was once again up on her screen, she noticed a small new mail icon.

Opening her mailbox, she chuckled slightly.

Well, I appreciate that. I see you listening to music all the time-at least I think that's what you're doing. I see you wearing headphones. What are you listening to? If you don't mind me asking, that is.

Leigh was still smiling when she typed her response.



Leigh was staring at her phone. She was debating on whether or not she should open the text she'd just received. It was from her ex, and the last time she'd opened something from him, she gotten an eyeful of his girlfriend's ass. That was not an experience she would care to repeat again. Ever.

She could probably get Sally to read it for her. But if it was bad, the woman would just make a face and have a response typed out and sent before Leigh could stop her. She could just delete it. But what if it was important? Something she *needed* to know about?

An email came up on her screen.

What's wrong? You haven't been laughing all day. :-)

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

It had been just over a week since she'd taken the chance and emailed Jim. Once he realized she was just being friendly and not just trying to pump him for info about himself, he'd opened up.

Just not having a very good day today, she responded.

Picking up her phone, she flipped it open to see the message saying she had a text waiting to be read. She put it back down, still open, on her desk. Should she or shouldn't she? Damn him! He knew her curiosity would kill her—that she'd have to see what he wrote.

She attempted to work on a file, but her eyes kept darting over to the phone. She didn't want them to. They developed a mind of their own. With a sigh, she opened the text message.

I think you left some clothes at the house. Would you like them back?

Leigh's jaw fell open. Wow. That was almost nice of him. Had he hit his head on something and developed a decent personality as a result?

No, I didn't leave anything, but thank you for asking. She hit send, certain that her text was equally polite.

A minute later there was a beep from her phone. Another text from her ex. What could he want to say this time? It couldn't be bad, right? After all, he'd shown her just a few minutes earlier that he knew what manners were. With almost no hesitation, she opened his text.

No, I'm quite certain they're yours. Judy doesn't wear that size. She's much smaller. So they can't be hers.

Leigh gave up. She was tired of controlling herself. She started to bang her head on the desk. She

should – *bang* – have known – *bang* – that he would pull – *bang* – something like that – *bang*.

She made the mistake of looking up before she allowed her head to fall to the desk again. Jim was standing at the edge of her cubicle, staring at her.

Perfect. Just what she needed, more humiliation.

“Is something wrong?”

“Um, no.” She tried to bluff.

“Are you sure? Cause if nothing’s wrong, you have to be the only person I know that bangs her head against the desk purely for entertainment purposes.”

Leigh sighed. “It’s my ex. He’s being a di...butt. I don’t know why I fell for his trick.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. Is there anything I can do?”

She lowered her head to the desk, more gently this time. What could she say? *Was* there anything he could do? There was something Kyle could do to help her right now, but she still felt so guilty about the last time they’d had sex. She couldn’t fuck him again until she knew if he had a girlfriend or not. *No. I really could. But I won’t.*

“I don’t know,” she finally answered.

“Would you like to come to my place to hang out later? We can talk and maybe I can help you feel better.”

Leigh looked at him. Just hanging out shouldn’t be too bad. It sounded pleasant. And she really didn’t want to spend the night alone and she knew Sally had plans with her boyfriend—or was it a promo chat? No, she didn’t need to be alone. Especially not with Kyle right upstairs. Who knew what kind of twisted temptation she’d allow herself to be talked into?

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

Plus, Jim has a girlfriend. So it's not like it's a date. "Sure."

"Great, I'll email you the directions." Jim walked away from her cubicle, and Leigh sighed.

Now she just needed to make it through the rest of the day.



She looked at the directions Jim had given her. She had printed them out and checked to make sure she was going in the right direction while her mind replayed the conversation she'd had with Sally as they left work. She wasn't sure why Sally insisted that Jim had asked her out on a date, and told her friend that. She told her that he had a girlfriend and that they were just going to hang out. Sally laughed at her and said she would see. That it was a date.

Turning onto the street Jim had told her his house was, Leigh slowed down and looked for his number. Six hundred three...six hundred five...six hundred nine...there it was, number six hundred fifteen. It looked like a nice, cozy place.

She turned into the driveway. By the time she climbed out of the car, he was coming to meet her.

"It's not very big, but..."

"It looks nice," she smiled. She'd made a quick trip to her apartment to change into more casual clothes. Looking at him, she was glad she had. And even more so that she'd decided against anything too revealing. The last thing she wanted was for him to

think that she thought it was a date.

"Would you like to come inside?"

Leigh nodded and followed him in. Jim gave a quick tour, but there wasn't much to see in the two-bedroom house. Still, it was clean and very clear that he took good care of his place. As they strolled from room to room, he told her about various renovations that he'd made, or was planning to make.

She was a little bit uncomfortable when he showed her his bedroom, but since they were just friends—and this was not a date—she figured that was okay.

"Would you like to sit down and talk?"

"Sure." She wished she could think of something better to say, but it seemed her social skills were rustier than she'd thought. But she was sure that could happen to anyone when they were restricted from going out socially. Oh, Rampant Bastard had never come straight out and said that she couldn't have friends. But he did make snide little comments when she did try to have a life outside of work and him. Soon it had become easier just to give in than deal with his little remarks and attitude.

As Leigh and Jim sat on the couch, they made small talk about work. The topic soon evolved into hobbies and eventually, relationships.

"Yeah, the woman I'm dating, I'm not sure how much longer that's going to last. She says she wants things to get more serious, but whenever I try to take it to the next level, she pulls back and says I'm smothering her." Jim shook his head. "I think she just wants to do whatever she feels like, but have the security of knowing I'm always going to be waiting

around for her.”

“Wow, that sucks. I couldn’t do that.” Not anymore, she added silently. “I’d rather have a give and take relationship. I don’t understand how some people can just take and never expect the other person to get tired of it. Even if you’d think I’d be familiar with it after dealing with my ex.”

When Jim didn’t respond, she allowed the silence to drag out, caught up in memories of her ex. If she’d asked him to stay home, he claimed she didn’t want him to have a life. But if she encouraged him to do something he wanted to do, he claimed she didn’t want him around. She couldn’t win with him. She’d never known what answer he wanted from her. How she was supposed to react. She never wanted to play those kinds of games with a man again.

“Those are really nice boots,” Jim said, bringing her back to the present.

“Thanks. I like them.” Leigh turned her foot from side to side, looking down at the black leather boot. The top of it ended about halfway up her calf, and though simple, she thought they looked very elegant.

Jim lifted her feet to his lap. “How far do they go up?” he asked, lifting the bottom of her jeans slightly. Before she could answer, he was feeling up her leg until he felt the top. “Why don’t you take these off?” He tugged on the boot.

Leigh narrowed her eyes slightly, but didn’t say anything. She did, after all, take her boots off when she was at Sally’s or Bryna’s. What did it hurt if she took them off here?

When he was done removing her shoes, Jim started stroking her leg slightly.

Okay, now this is getting a little strange...

"Are you ticklish?"

When his hands neared her feet, Leigh stopped him. "You tickle my feet, and I will not be held responsible for what I do."

"What would you do?" He smiled.

"Probably kick you. I accidentally gave my ex a black eye one time because he tickled me. He came up behind me and startled me. I reacted before I realized it was him. Another time, he tickled my foot and when I tried to pull it away from him, he got kicked in the...well, a very sensitive area."

She was happy to see that Jim's hands had frozen, no longer inching toward the sensitive arch of her foot.

"I think I'll leave your feet alone. What about your waist?" He did something to her waist that Leigh assumed was his version of tickling. But it had no effect on her. "No? Your neck?" As he lifted his hand, raising it to her neck, it brushed against her breast.

While the accidental caress didn't have her smacking him across the face, she didn't want to just yank him over to her either. If it had been Kyle, she'd have pulled him on top of her within seconds of the simple caress and rammed her tongue into his mouth. Taking a deep breath, she tried to calm the hormones suddenly surging through her at the thought.

Jim took her complacency as she was lost in thought as an invitation. After stroking her neck, his hand returned to her breast.

“What about the girl you’re dating?” Leigh asked. She refused to be caught up in another situation with a man that was taken. Or potentially taken. Why would Kyle fuck her if he had such a beautiful girlfriend?

Jim didn’t stop his fondling as he answered. “We aren’t exclusive...”

If they weren’t exclusive, did that count as cheating? Was it just a convenient excuse he’d thrown in the air because he was horny and she was a warm body?

“Maybe we should —” She’d started to say ‘Maybe we should stop.’ But he wasn’t giving her the chance. His hand was on her breast, rubbing it. It was a weird movement, but it was keeping her already sexually-charged body—sensitive thanks to thoughts of her sexy upstairs neighbor—aroused.

Her mouth was still partially open, as though just waiting for her to finish the sentence when Jim leaned closer. Her eyes drifted shut and when she felt him press his lips against hers, she was jerked back into reality. He thought this was a date!

All arousal fled at lightning speed, as Jim’s lips were hard and pressing against hers in an ‘O’ shape. When she tried to open her mouth slightly, to try to guide him gently into a more acceptable kiss, he just thrust his tongue in her mouth. Now instead of a bad kiss, she was caught up in a sloppy bad kiss. When it finally ended, Leigh was more grateful than she’d ever been before that a kiss was over. It was a struggle, but she managed to control the

overwhelming impulse to wipe her mouth off.

Jim, however, seemed ready, willing and able to dive in for more. He caught her by surprise, swooping in for another kiss as he began to do some plucking thing to her nipple. Was any of this supposed to arouse her? After about two seconds of a kiss that was, if anything, sloppier than the first with his lips pursed in that hard “O” that reminded her of a fish, Leigh pulled away.

This time, she didn’t hesitate. She slid a little bit away from Jim and looked down. He placed his hand on her neck again, as though to pull her closer. Now that she was no longer caught up in some half fantasy, she wanted to shiver from his touch. His hands had to be softer than hers!

“Jim, I can’t do this. We work together. And I’m not just jumping into someone’s bed and I... My divorce hasn’t been the easiest thing I’ve had to go through, and I don’t want to...” What could she say?

Thankfully, Jim filled in the gap for her. “I understand. The last thing I want to do is put pressure on you.”

Leigh pulled on her boots and stood up. “I really enjoyed talking to you tonight.” And she had. It was the kissing and making out that she’d found troubling. She tried not to be rude, but started to make her way to the door. She really needed to get out of there before he tried to kiss her again.

“I enjoyed spending the evening with you as well. I’d really like to do this again sometime. Just hang out and chat, and...” He shrugged, leaving the invitation open-ended. It was as though he wanted to let her

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

know that he was okay with the idea if she wanted more to happen next time.

She wasn't. "We'll see. I don't want to lead you on. Honestly, I don't know what I want right now, what I'm ready for." It was a half-truth, but he didn't need to know that. One thing she was positive of was that she never wanted Jim to touch her again. She was also trying not to be rude and just blurt it out.

"I understand. You're going through a divorce and it's a rough time for you. I hope you know you can call me anytime you need to talk or just want to hang out."

"Thank you." They were out of the house now, and Leigh was trying to get to her car without seeming too anxious.

"Can I at least get a hug goodbye?"

She'd just managed to get her car door open. *No! Get your girl hands away from me!* "Sure." She gave him a brief hug, then climbed into her car and shut the door with a little more force than absolutely necessary. With a smile and a wave, she backed out of his driveway. Once she was on the street, Leigh put her car into first gear and drove off.

Gritting her teeth, she forced herself to wait until she was completely out of his neighborhood before opening her cell phone and calling Bryna.

"What happened?"

"Why does something have to have happened for me to call one of my best friends?"

"Because it's midnight and I know you. Spill, or I'm hanging up."

"Fine. Apparently when Jim asked me to hang out at his house, he actually asked me out on a date."

"Duh," Bryna interrupted.

"He said hanging out! Hanging out, Bryna. We're friends. Friends hang out."

"Sweetie, when did you go back to high school? If a guy says 'hang out', unless he's like, thirteen or gay, it means a date."

"I didn't know that! I've been married for the last eight years! If someone asked me to hang out, I assume they meant just hang out."

"Now you know better."

"There are too many rules I have to relearn," Leigh whined.

"Deal with it. So, what was so bad about this guy thinking it was a date? I thought you were interested in him?"

"I was." She sulked, a shiver running down her as she remembered his touch and kiss. "But that is so over."

"What happened?"

"He's a bad kisser."

"That's it? Hell, I had to teach Tyler how to kiss. He did this weird thing with his tongue..." There was a pause, then Bryna continued. "The point is, that is fixable."

"He kissed like a..." An image popped into her head and Leigh blurted it out. "Like a fish!"

"What?" There was laughter in Bryna's voice.

"He made this funny 'O' shape with his mouth and then slobbered all over me..."

"Okay, that's gross. There is nothing worse than a

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

bad sloppy kiss. But still, with a little practice and patience..."

"Oh no, it gets worse. His hands were softer than mine, Bryn."

"Girl-hands? Oh, hell no! Run! Run far from him!"

"I did. I'm completely grossed out and he extended me an open invitation to 'hang out' whenever I want. It was so nasty."

"Sweetie, I am so sorry."

"I'm jinxed. I don't know what that asshole did to me, but I'm jinxed. It has to be that. What, do I have some sign over my head that says old guys and, and...fish-kissers wanted?"

"No, it's just a little bad luck. You'll get back in the swing of things."

"I am not doing it again. Nope. I'm giving up on dating. And now—now any man that wants to get with me will have to pass the kiss test. If you can't kiss—or you come at me looking like some kind of puffer-fish—go away!"

Bryna laughed. "The poor little guppy."

"The poor little guppy has scarred me. What did I ever do to deserve girl-hands and a fish kiss? Or a drop-dead sexy man that fucks me and leaves—exactly the way I want him to—but has a girlfriend. Is it so wrong that I just want a man that can fuck me until I can't walk?"

"I don't think it is."

"Well, apparently it is for me. I don't even want to think about what would have happened if I hadn't stopped him. He probably would have tried to reach

under my shirt..."

"Stop thinking about it."

"No. You don't know how gross his hands were. Hell, I don't think I know any girls that have hands as soft as him! I may never be able to look at lotion again!"

"Stop. Go home and take a hot shower. Wash away his touch and if it's not better by tomorrow, you have my permission to go upstairs and molest Loverboy. I will even gladly listen to you whine about him afterwards. But right now, I have something of my own to take care of."

"Fine. Tell Tyler I said hi. At least one of us is getting laid tonight."

"Leigh, if you need me..."

"I'll be fine. Go show your husband how much you appreciate him."

Hanging up the phone, Leigh sighed. A few minutes later, she pulled into the parking lot of her apartment complex. In her opinion, there was nothing worse than a man with smooth hands. They felt wrong somehow. No, men were supposed to have rough hands. Rough hands on a woman's smooth flesh...

Would Kyle mind if she woke him up, pushed him down to the couch or floor and just ravished him?

She doubted that he would. But if he did have a girlfriend, Leigh would bet she'd care. Especially if she were trying to take care of business herself.

Very slowly, Leigh made her way to her own apartment. Did she have a book that could take her mind off of Jim and the lack of chemistry she felt for

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

him? She really didn't want to think about what would happen when they were at work again. Was she ready to face the awkwardness of being around someone who—by his open invitation—clearly felt sparks as they kissed when she did not?

If she'd known that it would be a date, there's no way she would have gone to his house. Could she rewind time? Hmm...perhaps that wouldn't be such a good idea. She doubted that she'd stop just a few hours previous. Nope, she'd probably go back at least eight years.

But if she did that, she'd never have met Bryna or Sally. Of course, she wouldn't have spent so many years with her ex, either...

It was a problem. Which, of course, brought her back to her most recent problem of Jim, and how things would be the next time they were both at the office.

"This is why every woman deserves to have a magic button. In case of emergency, just push it, and poof, chocolate appears." Opening her door as she spoke to herself, Leigh wanted to cry. Taking a deep breath, she locked the door behind her and made her way to the bathroom. Stripping off her clothes, Leigh climbed into the shower and turned the water on. She made the water steadily hotter until it was practically scalding her.

Perhaps she was overreacting. She could admit that detail in the shower as the water sprayed down on her body. But really, wasn't this just the tip of the iceberg? First, the guy that propositioned her who

was older than her father. Then there was the possibility of a girlfriend that her lover could have. Now she finds a guy that could be cool, but he turned out to be... Shivering, Leigh refused to think about it. She couldn't keep doing that to herself. Why was she even bothering at this point?

Forcing herself to leave the warm water, Leigh dried off. She didn't bother with her hair. There would be hell to pay in the morning if she didn't brush it—the price of having long hair. But she really didn't want to mess with it. She just wanted to climb into bed, get comfortable underneath the covers and sleep. Sleep was healing, it was cleansing. Perhaps she would even be able to convince herself that it was all nothing more than a dream.



Leigh was at her desk. So far she'd managed to avoid Sally, but it was only a matter of time. Soon her friend would track her down and corner her, wanting to know the details of the non-date-turned-date that she'd had the night before. She was not looking forward to the woman's I-told-you-so look.

She was pondering eating lunch at her desk to avoid the situation completely, but Sally was at her cubicle before she could.

"Okay, I know you've been avoiding me. Something happened and you are so telling me. I brought my famous spaghetti and some garlic bread—I know it's your favorite. We are going to go heat it up and sit outside in the sun as you tell me

every little detail away from prying ears.”

At no point had Sally asked a question. It was on the tip of Leigh’s tongue to refuse, to say she wasn’t going to talk about her night at all. But if anyone deserved to hear the details of the disaster that was her first date, Sally did. Besides, she didn’t want her best friend to think that she was keeping secrets after she’d helped her so much.

Standing up, Leigh followed her friend as she made her way out of the office and to the small galley. This room was shared by the floor. It had an industrial-looking coffeemaker, a selection of herbal or iced teas and even some diet mixes for the workers to choose from. It was one of the things that the company provided for them. There was also a vending machine and a drink machine. Those weren’t free, but they held a good selection of snacks and the drink machine had saved her ass more than once when Leigh had needed a soda.

Sally went to one of the refrigerators in the room and pulled out several rather large containers. Knowing better after having been over to Sally’s for several supper invitations, Leigh stood back and let her friend get everything ready.

“I think I might have to get something for Adam. How was the selection at that store you got your new bras from?” There was no one else in the room, but Sally seemed to mean what she’d said about not saying anything about her disaster of a date until they were alone.

“You’d like it,” she replied. “I bet you’d find more

than one inspiring outfit in there.” Leigh was teasing Sally. Sometimes, if the author in Sally was having a hard time with a scene, she’d act it out. Leigh was sure Adam never complained, and some of the things Sally wrote about got rather kinky.

Leigh tried to read her friend’s stories, to show her support. But every now and then it was hard. Mainly because she was behind the scenes and heard about what Sally’d had to do with—or to!—Adam to finally get it right. Those scenes were no more descriptive than other ones her friend wrote, but there were times Leigh just couldn’t get the images of Sally and Adam out of her head long enough to enjoy the scene.

With a chuckle, the other woman pulled the dishes out of the microwave.

“Are you ready yet?” Leigh continued, using the same teasing tone.

“You can’t rush perfection,” Sally responded.

It was a standing joke between them. Whenever one would ask if the other was ready, the response was always the same. Leigh couldn’t remember who had started it, but the tradition had been born.

“Now I’m ready.” Sally gave a mock sigh. “I put in all this hard work for you, and is it appreciated...?”

“And you call me a ham.” Both grabbed up the containers and plates before heading outside. When they found a shady spot on the grass not too close to the building, they sat down.

“I’m just glad I didn’t wear a skirt today,” Leigh teased.

“Okay, I’ll dish the food, you dish the gossip.”

“There really isn’t anything to tell.” Leigh chuckled

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

when Sally shot her an evil glare. "But you were right. He thought it was a date."

"Go on."

"Well, everything went fine most of the night. We just sat around and chatted. It was pretty cool getting to know Jim. But that changed when he started rubbing my leg. He took my boot off and threatened to tickle my feet..."

"Oh no! Did you kick him?" Sally was laughing, fork paused halfway to her mouth.

"No, I warned him. Then he reached up to touch my neck and 'accidentally' brushed against my breast..."

"Accidentally, my ass. If that was an accident, Adam is a professional football star."

Leigh laughed. Though far from being a twig, Sally's boyfriend was not football material. Though if half the scenes the author wrote about were true—and had been tested by the couple—he could probably be one hell of a gymnast.

"May I continue?"

"Please do. This is getting good."

Pausing to take a bite of her spaghetti, Leigh enjoyed watching her friend's anticipation.

"Will you come on already?"

Leigh shook her head. "I'm enjoying perfection. This is even better than usual."

"If you don't finish the story, you're going to be wearing it."

"Fine." After taking one more bite, she continued. "Well, after he brushed against my breast, he kissed

me."

"And?"

"And nothing. The kiss was nothing spectacular."

"If it was so bad, why did you let him kiss you in the first place?"

Leigh's face heated up as she focused her attention on her plate.

"You were thinking about Loverboy, weren't you?"

She nodded.

"Then are you sure it was Jim, and not just the fact that it wasn't Kyle?"

"No, trust me. It was actually really bad."

"It couldn't have been that bad."

"It was. It was without a doubt the worst kiss of my life."

"That's a little mean, don't you think?" Sally had resumed eating now that the story was over.

"No, not at all. Mean would be saying that I'd rather be kissed by Flipper. And that Flipper's kisses are possibly less sloppy."

"That's harsh," Sally laughed. "Are you serious?"

Leigh made a face that felt similar to the way Jim had kissed her and leaned toward her friend. The other woman was laughing hard as she pushed Leigh away. "Gross!"

Both women continued to laugh as they finished their picnic.



Leigh was at her cubicle the next day, listening to

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

music when Jim startled her.

"I'm sorry, what?" She removed the earbuds she'd been wearing.

"Didn't you hear me?"

"No..." She drew the word out. Didn't he just see her remove her headphones? Did he see her moving her head in time with the beat?

"I asked how you were doing."

"Oh. I'm fine, thanks. How are you?" The second the question was out of her mouth, she regretted it. Jim got a huge grin on his face, as though he were a kid who had just been told he could lick the bowl after Mom made brownies.

"I'm doing well. I didn't get much sleep the other night, but it was worth it." The grin increased in size. "How was your night?"

"Fine—fine," she stuttered out. "It was fine."

"I really had fun."

"I really enjoyed chatting with you, too." She didn't have the heart to be mean. After all, they did have to work together, and he was a sweet guy. She just wasn't the slightest bit attracted to him physically. She didn't want to lead him on, so she would stick strictly to the truth.

"So, I was wondering if you would be interested in going to a new Japanese place I heard about?"

"Jim, I'm not really sure... I don't know if I'm quite ready for..."

"I understand. I won't pressure you. Just think about it."

Before she could say anything else, he walked

away.

Opening her email, Leigh chewed on her lip. She quickly typed a letter to Bryna and Sally explaining the situation. She didn't want to be rude, but she really didn't want to go out with him again, either.

Now she got to play the waiting game. Sometimes her friends could respond instantly. Sometimes it could be a few hours before she heard back from them.

Leigh gathered her papers and continued with her work. She put the buds back in her ears and tried to once again lose herself in the music. Ten or so songs later, she got her first email.

It was typical Bryna. Hit the man with a two-by-four. Tell him in no uncertain terms that she was not interested. If he didn't accept her answer, tell him off. Bryna may be a marshmallow around the people she cared about, but she had a core of steel too.

Her advice was good—and very tempting. But Leigh wasn't sure that was the particular route she wanted to go. She would have to see this guy every single day at work. Did she really want to get rude? Not if she could help it. She was sure they could keep it all very professional.

Next was Sally's advice. Sally thought she should explain that she was not looking for anything serious. Equally good advice. Advice she'd already tried. As she continued reading, Sally suggested that she remain firm. That she not back down and give solid reasons if needed, though not getting very personal.

Leigh leaned over and looked out of her cubicle. Jim could only barely be seen, folding papers. What

should she do?

Looking back at her computer, she noticed another new email. This one was from Jim. He was making small talk, as usual. But somehow it just didn't feel quite right to joke with him. Especially since his joking had developed a personal undertone. It was as though he believed more had happened than she remembered.

Ignoring his email for the moment, she continued to do her work. A half hour later, Leigh was about to get up to collect some papers that she'd printed when she saw Jim standing at her desk.

"Hey." She hoped her voice sounded steadier than she felt. What was he doing there?

"Here you go." He handed her the papers. "Did you get my message?"

"Yeah. Yes, I did. I'm still trying to figure out how I want to respond."

"Cool." Jim nodded. He stood there for another minute, then left.

Jumping on her email, Leigh quickly updated her friends on what happened. Staring at the screen, she wondered what she could have done in her past to deserve the mess she was in now. Had she angered some higher power and this was divine retribution?

As though her day were not nearly messed up enough, her computer screen froze.

"Great. Now I get to reboot," she mumbled as she worked. As she waited for the computer to restart, Leigh looked at her nails. They were looking a little rough. Should she go get a manicure? But she didn't

want tips put on. She was trying to let them grow out because Bryna swore by having at least semi-long nails. She said there was nothing better than a guy's reaction when a woman ran her nails down his back. It did sound rather appealing.

Glancing up at the screen, she noticed the logon screen. Pushing thoughts of her nails to the back of her mind, Leigh tried to get back into the network. Typing her user ID and password, she waited to be steadily working in no time.

Instead, a box popped up that said she'd given an invalid entry.

"No, I know that's my password," she hissed at the computer, trying again. The computer again told her that she was wrong. "Listen, you—you worthless piece of crap. I just changed my password and I know that's right!"

Yet again, it told her she was wrong.

Picking up the phone she had at her desk, Leigh called for technical support. She didn't like doing it, but sometimes there was no other choice. This was one of those times. She waited, her impatience growing as she waited to speak to an actual person.

"May I have your operator ID, please?"

Leigh gave him all the required information. It was all for security purposes. She understood that. But it didn't help her impatience.

"What seems to be the problem?"

"I can't log in to the network."

"Did you recently change your password?"

"Yes. But I've tried that."

"I'm going to need you to try using that again."

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

Fifteen minutes later, Leigh was tempted to start banging her head against the desk.

"I seem to have found the problem."

"Finally," Leigh mumbled.

"I'm sorry, could you repeat that?"

"You said you found the problem?" She hoped her tactic worked. For once today, luck was on her side.

"Yes, it seems there was a temp in your section that had a name very similar to yours. When her profile was deleted, yours was accidentally deactivated as well. As soon as your manager puts in the proper work orders, we will be able to have you up and running again."

"Oh. Great."

"Is there anything else I can help you with today?"

"No."

"Thank you for calling, and have a good day." There was a click and the call was over.

"That was a colossal waste of my time." Standing up and stretching, she tried to find out if her manager was at his desk. Unable to see, Leigh shook her head and made her way over to his desk.



The end of the workday could not come soon enough for Leigh. With five minutes left on her shift, she began to close down for the day. One of her coworkers was nice enough to allow Leigh to use her operator ID so that she could continue to work. That same coworker would be off tomorrow—lucky

woman to be off on Fridays. She could certainly use a three-day weekend—and on vacation the following week.

So at least she would be able to log on. If it took more than a week to get her back in the system, she wasn't sure what she'd do then. But that was a problem for another day. She just had to get through one more day and she could have a well-deserved meltdown. She wasn't any closer to answers, but then again, she was beginning to wonder if she was asking the right questions.

When Leigh looked up again, Sally was standing at her cubicle. "Someplace nice?"

"Not really. And don't ask any questions, or I'm going to owe you desserts for the next week."

The women started walking toward the exit. "Consider my lips sealed. What are you doing this weekend?"

"It's only Thursday, and you're asking what I'm doing?"

"Yes. There's a method to my madness."

"I'm throwing a party."

"That sounds like fun."

"It's a party for one. Total pity party. I'm going to the grocery store, stocking up on the junk food, changing into my pajamas and sulking for three days."

"Chickie, you can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because that's giving up. And if you just give up, the ass wins."

"Yeah, well, he only wins if I'm playing the game."

Three: The Trouble with Co-workers

And I'm not. Besides, if I leave my apartment, I might run into Kyle..."

"And then you might have to ask some questions you don't really want the answers to."

"Exactly! See, I knew you'd understand."

"Nope. You have to ask them sooner or later."

"Later. I choose later. Much, much later. Like next year later."

"So you just plan on beating yourself up whenever you fuck him? Cause I know if he showed up at your door tonight, you so wouldn't turn him away."

"I might..." Leigh darted a glance over at Sally, who had by now frozen in place and was staring at her as though she'd grown a second—and possibly third—head. "Okay, so I wouldn't. Can't you at least let me pretend like I could turn him down for a minute or two?"

"No. That would be lying."

"Fine, I'd be all over him like jam on toast."

"And that is exactly why you need to ask those questions sooner."

"I know." Leigh sighed. "What if he has a girlfriend? I can't be with him if I know without a doubt that he does. And I'm not sure I'm ready to give him up."

"Better for you to know now. Besides, so what if he has a girlfriend? It's not like he is the only fish in the sea. Don't worry so much about being with someone. It'll happen when it's supposed to happen."

"I know. I'll ask. The next time I see him, I'll ask him. I'll probably turn as red as your shirt, but I'll

ask."

"Good. And I want to know what he says."

"Of course."

In the parking lot, the women parted ways as each went to her car. Heaving another sigh, Leigh climbed into her car. She stared at the reflection in her rear-view mirror. "I will ask him. I don't want to, but I will. Sally's right. I need to ask. I need to know if he's with that chick."

Filled with a sense of dread, she started the engine. A moment later she pulled out of her parking space and was on her way home. Deciding to think of more positive things as she drove, Leigh tried to figure out if there was anything else she wanted to do over the weekend. Maybe she'd go to the movies. Or perhaps she'd take Bryna's advice and go to a bar. What were the odds that another old man would hit on her?

On the way home, she decided to stop and pick up something to eat. She wasn't in the mood to cook on top of everything else.

In next to no time, she pulled into the parking lot of her complex. Bags firmly in hand, she climbed out of the car and made sure it was locked. With every step she took toward her apartment, she expected to see Kyle. It was just her luck that it would happen now, while she had fast food in her hands.

Why that would be embarrassing, she wasn't sure. Maybe it was because he went jogging every day and had a mouthwatering body. Or maybe it was because she had some pudge that she wanted to get rid of, yet here she was, eating fast food. Perhaps it was just her luck and she was simply waiting for it to finish

running out.

At her door—with no Kyle in sight—Leigh wondered if perhaps she was overreacting. Was she the one with the over-active imagination she was constantly accusing Sally of having. Maybe the universe *wasn't* out to get her.

Entering her apartment, she put her food on the dining room table. She took a moment to unpack everything. It smelled delicious, and she couldn't wait to dig into it. But first, she needed to get her mail.

Exiting through the other door, Leigh walked up the three steps that would bring her to her mailbox. Using her key, she unlocked the small metal container and grabbed her mail out. She was so busy looking at what she had in her hands instead of paying attention to what she was doing that she ran into someone.

"I am so so—" Her voice failed her when she looked up into Kyle's blue eyes. She should've known her day was going too good. At least she hadn't started eating and dropped food on her shirt. But now she had to follow through with her promise. How does one ask about a girlfriend in a casual conversation? Especially when said conversation involved your lover. "I'm so sorry. I wasn't watching where I was going."

"Don't worry about it." He smiled, and Leigh could feel her resolve weakening.

"So, um, how have you been?" She wanted to slap her forehead. She sounded so lame. Could she act more like a high school girl?

"I've been good. And you?"

He was humoring her. That was good. But did it mean that he was really interested, or that he was just being polite? "Good."

"Cool. Did you need help with anything?"

"Not at the moment," she answered automatically. This time when she realized what she said, she wanted to bang her head into the mailboxes. "But I, um, was wondering if you would answer a question for me..."

"Sure."

Leigh could feel her face heating up. She couldn't believe she was going to do this, but it was as the cliché went, now or never. "I know this is a little late in the game to be asking this, but uh, do you by any chance have a girlfriend?"

Next...

Leigh: Drama Queen in Training

Four: Alpha Wanted

Things that make you go Grrrrr.

Have you ever just wanted a man who would grab you and fuck you against the wall? Leigh does. And after a few mishaps, she isn't afraid to admit it.

But where does one go to find the kind of guy she's looking for?

Sandy Lynn

With a love for the quirky and different, Sandy Lynn tries to bring her own sense of humor and style to writing. She loves putting her own twist on old stories.

With a love of Contemporary and Paranormal Romances, she writes books that she enjoys reading.