

It Started With a Tweet

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ZAFFRE



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*For Laura Pearse: Despite the weight of the world on your
shoulders, you are one of the kindest and most thoughtful
friends anyone could have. Thank you, you're
an inspiration x*

Chapter One

Time since last Internet usage: 32 seconds

‘If you could just lift it up a little bit more,’ I say, tugging at the poor man’s shirt. ‘That’s perfect, just so we can see those pecs better.’

I turn back to my best friend Erica who’s holding my phone ready.

I pout my lips ever so slightly and tilt my head up to minimise the risk of double chins, all the while praying that the lighting is dull enough to hide any traces of the fluorescent cocktails we’ve been supping all afternoon.

I do a last-minute adjustment of my top, causing my cleavage almost to go X-rated. I desperately try and wrangle my boobs back under control, which in turn exposes my midriff.

‘Bloody dress code,’ I mutter under my breath. Only Helen could have friends who would think that ‘slutty’ was a good theme for a hen do. It was very *her* though; when we used to live in a flat share at university she always went out in the skimpiest of outfits, but still, I’m not used to having so much flesh on display.



‘OK, that’s lovely,’ shouts Erica as she snaps away.

I channel my inner model, turning my head multiple ways and pointing my hand at the poor man’s chest, as if I’m advertising him as a prize in a game show.

Content that she must have at least one good photo, Erica hands the phone back to me and I thank the stranger whose chest I’ve been exposing. He skulks back to his friends, unsure of what’s just gone on, but they make as much whooping and hollering as mine do. The poor man’s just been *henned*.

‘Oh my God!’ says Erica. ‘I do not believe you had the shame to do that.’

‘What? It was only his six-pack, it’s not like I asked him to get naked,’ I say, shrugging and reviewing the footage. ‘Ah, bingo.’

I select the one that shows not only his six-pack, but also my provocative pout, and I send it to the chief bridesmaid. I also post it to Twitter for our friend Amelie to see, and within seconds she’s favoured it.

‘I can’t believe Amelie’s missing out on these shenanigans,’ I say, secretly thinking that she lucked out by being on a business trip in New York this week, so that she gets to witness the humiliation of skimpy outfits and ridiculous challenges from the comfort of her hotel room. She’s definitely not facing the constant dilemma of whether or not she’s going to have an involuntarily nip slip or thong flash whenever she moves.

‘I think I’m the first one to complete that challenge,’ I say, looking around at the other members of the party stalking their prey around the bar. ‘Now perhaps we can work on yours, ladies.’ Erica and Tess groan as they peruse the list of acceptable photos in the game:



Sexy six-pack
Separated at birth (celebrity lookalike)
Mutton dressed as lamb
Escaped from captivity
Most likely to vomit first

‘What about him?’ asks Erica, pointing at a man in the far corner. ‘If you squint, he kind of looks like Ryan Gosling.’

‘What, if Ryan Gosling was six-foot-ten and ginger?’ replies Tess.

Erica tilts her head. ‘OK, so perhaps he’s more a ringer for that long jumper – you know, the Olympic one that was on *Strictly*.’

I quickly tap that into my phone. ‘Greg Rutherford,’ I say, thanking Google.

‘That’s him. Be right back,’ she says, tottering off to snap a selfie.

I turn my attention back to Tess but she’s off like a rocket in the other direction.

What is it about hen dos that sends you into a frenzy trying to do things you never would in your right mind? As I take a sip of my cocktail I get my answer: it’s only 3 p.m. and I’ve already lost count of how much alcohol I’ve consumed today.

I look around the bar – which, for a Saturday afternoon, is buzzing – full of the hen-and-stag-do crowd, all high spirits and bravado, vying for the prize for most cackling. While the other girls are off humiliating themselves (and others) in the name of the hen, it’s nice to actually sit down for a minute and have a bit of time to myself – it’s been a full-on day of activities. We started off with a life-drawing class this morning

(#SeeingLotsOfWilliesAtBreakfast), followed by a pole-dancing class (#ChannellingMyInnerStripper), lunch at the OXO Tower (#NomNomNom), and now we're having late-afternoon cocktails (#TroubleWrittenAllOverIt) before we head onto a party boat tonight (#BringOnTheVomit).

My phone vibrates in my hand and I look down to see a message from my mum: *Hi, Sweetie, don't forget it's Rosie's birthday today. Speak soon, Mum xx*

Oh crap. How did I forget my sister's birthday?! Surely Facebook should have told me that! She's obviously one of those inconsiderate people who turn off their birthday notification. I mean, what do they expect us to do? Remember on our own? Last year I was working so hard that I would have forgotten mine, if I hadn't had notifications of birthday wishes from eager friends when the clock struck midnight.

I rub my temples as if to chide myself for forgetting. Of course it's her birthday; it was one of the first things I thought when the hen do was announced for today. But in all the military planning that Helen's chief bridesmaid Zoe has done, I'd been reprogrammed to think that nothing else was going on today.

Hey, Sis, hope you're having a great birthday! Did my card arrive in time? I'll try and get up to see you soon – it's been ages. Daisy xx

I send the message before logging into Moonpig and ordering a quick birthday card, picking the first 'Sister' one I find that doesn't require a photo upload. By the time Erica makes it back

to the table, I've written it and had it posted, and can now blame Royal Mail for her not receiving it on time, *cough*.

'Now, I tell you what, if I wasn't with Chris . . .' she says, winking at me. 'You should get yourself over there.'

'What, and incur the wrath of Zoe? Wasn't that against the rules – no diversions from the hen? Plus, he's not my type.'

'What, tall, handsome and here in real life?'

'Very funny. I do meet up with my dates, you know.'

'Uh-huh, then dismiss them for not living up to their online personas.'

'It's not my fault that people deliberately lie on their profiles. If only the men I spoke to on Tinder told the truth.'

Erica howls with laughter. 'Like you do? When was your profile photo taken?'

'It was taken at a temple at Chiang Mai and I use it because it shows I'm cultured.'

'Sure you do. It's not because it was taken four years ago when you had less wrinkles . . .'

'It's actually more about that awesome tan I had, rather than the wrinkles.'

'Ah, I've missed this,' says Erica. 'We haven't been out like this for ages. Hell, I haven't *seen* you for ages.'

'I know, work has been so crazy,' I say, nodding. 'It'll calm down soon.'

For the amount of time I see my best friend, you'd never believe that I was currently living in her spare room.

'Done it,' says Tess as she triumphantly walks back to the table. She shows us a picture on her phone.



‘He definitely wins “Escaped from captivity,” I say, holding my handbag a little closer. ‘He looks like he belongs on one of those photofits on *Crimewatch*.’

‘Oh, he’s harmless. I used to teach him; he’s a gentle giant and an absolute whizz at algebra.’

Erica and I look over in surprise.

‘Right, ladies,’ says Zoe, storming up to the table. She’s Helen’s chief bridesmaid and BFF from home; she takes both roles very seriously. ‘Thank you for your photo contributions, we’ll be judging who won the challenge later on. But in the meantime, I’ve nabbed us a big sofa area so we can play the next game.’

She claps her hands together as if to hurry us along and the three of us plaster fake smiles on our faces.

‘Great,’ I say, feigning enthusiasm. Any actual enthusiasm was lost along with my dignity, which was around the same time as I put on the outfit that makes Julia Roberts’s hooker costume in *Pretty Woman* look conservative.

‘At least with all these games we’re not spending that much money here,’ says Tess as she struts off ahead of us. She’s not wrong, which is good because the hen do practically warranted its own savings plan. Helen and her fiancé are eloping to Las Vegas so this is for all those who can’t afford to attend the real wedding. Only, to be honest, I’m pretty sure that I could have flown to Vegas for less money than today’s activities. I’m just counting my lucky stars that Helen wanted her hen do in London – at least Erica and I don’t need a hotel for the night.



The area that Zoe's found for us sees two sofas facing each other, wedged into the corner of the room. Most of the other people on the hen do have nabbed the comfy bits already, so I find myself perching on a knobbly arm with Erica.

'OK, so I'm sure that everyone's played Cards Against Humanity before, right?' says Zoe. 'Well, I've made us a hen-do version. I'm going to give each of you six cards that have answers on them, then Helen will select and read a statement card from the deck and you have to put forward the answer card you think will fit best. The lovely Helen will then pick her favourite. OK?'

Before anyone can say anything, Zoe's started to deal the cards. No doubt because she's only allotted us a certain amount of time to play this game, as the whole hen do has been run to a strict time schedule.

I pick up the cards I've been dealt and read them over:

Keeping your toenails clipped

Owning a whip

A good right hook

The missionary position

Not giving a shit

Organisation and planning

I've only ever played the official Cards Against Humanity, and that was when I was pretty drunk, but this looks as if it's going to be less offensive and more risqué. Probably for the best, as I don't know many of Helen's other friends.



I pick up my phone and tap out a quick tweet.

Hang on to your hat @amelieMwah we're playing Cards
Against Humanity Hen Do style – be prepared!!!

'Right, then, first statement,' says Helen, turning over the card with a cheeky glint in her eye that lets me know she's enjoying every minute of this day. 'The secret to good sex is . . .'

There's a tittering amongst the hens as we all start rereading our answer cards, looking at what's most suitable, e.g. the funniest. To be honest, all mine are pretty apt – well, apart from the missionary position one – unless that's what you're into. I'm about to put down 'keeping your toenails clipped' when I change my mind and put 'owning a whip'.

I tweet my response and a couple of the other responses too, all for Amelie's benefit, of course, so that she doesn't feel she's missing out. At university the five of us lived together and it seems strange for her not to be here. With Helen having moved back to her native York after uni, it's usually her that's missing from our quintet.

'I think Erica's is the best,' says Helen, as Erica does a quick fist bump in victory. 'The secret to good sex is being up for anything.'

'Nailed it,' she says, giving me a wink. She can be so competitive but it makes me want to win the next round.

'The key to a good marriage is . . .' reads Helen, as she turns over the next card.

'Damn it,' I say to Erica. 'Surely that should have been owning a whip.'



'Ah, that's always a bugger when you play your trump card too early.'

I throw down my 'a good right hook' card and, of course, I'm not surprised when it's beaten by one of the other hens who has 'always being on top'.

I tweet the updates to Amelie, and to the rest of my one thousand, nine hundred and ninety-seven followers, who, I'm sure, are on the edge of their seats waiting for the next instalment.

'OK, next up: blank is a woman's worse enemy,' says Helen. 'So we're looking for the answer at the beginning of the sentence.'

'Too bad I don't have a card that says hen dos,' says Erica, nudging me.

I look down at my ever-escaping cleavage. 'If only,' I say, thinking that would hands down be a winner.

I scan my cards and select the only appropriate one left.

Helen peruses the answers before settling on mine. 'Here we are – the missionary position is a woman's worst enemy. Good job, Daisy!'

I beam, the cocktails making me feel like I've just won a Nobel Prize rather than a silly hen-do game.

I don't win any of the other rounds, and it doesn't take long for us to finish the game.

'Right, then, hens. We're leaving for the river cruise at sixteen forty, so that gives you fifteen minutes to drink up and go to the loo. We'll rendezvous by the door,' shouts Zoe.

I give her an *X-Factor* Cheryl salute and turn my attention back to my drink.



Erica shimmies off the sofa and joins the mass exodus with the other hens who run to the bar and the loos in equal numbers.

I glance at my Twitter responses before I scan my Twitter work account quickly. There doesn't seem to be anything that can't wait until Monday morning, or at least my hungover stupor tomorrow. I'm currently looking after the social networking for the marketing agency I work for, but I'd much rather tweet late than tweet drunk, I'm not a moron.

My phone buzzes with a text from my sister:

Thanks, Daisy. Having a quiet birthday as Rupert's away on business. Haven't got your card, maybe I'll get it on Monday. Looks like I'm going to be in London next week, do you fancy meeting for lunch or dinner on Wednesday or Thursday?

I feel a little guilty that not only did I forget her birthday, but also her husband isn't even there to take her to some fancy Michelin star restaurant or luxury spa, or whatever it is he usually does that involves spending copious amounts of money. But it sounds as if she's doing OK. And it's a bonus that I get to see her for lunch one day next week, which means I don't have to make the effort to go up to see her. We're not mega close sisters; we're more the type that catch up at Mum's at Christmas.

I know I should visit her more often, but I'm always slightly nervous that I'd get all the way there and we'd have nothing to talk about. When we were growing up, the three years between us seemed cavernous, and while the years between us don't



matter so much anymore, our lives are still so different. She's a kept woman who's married and living happily ever after, whereas I'm more working girl and unlucky in love.

It's really busy at work at the moment so lunch would probably be best. Shall we try for Wednesday? xx

'Man alive, the queue for the bar was crazy. Here, get this down your grid before we go.'

I eye the glass suspiciously.

'Shots? Are we there yet, really? It's not even five o'clock.'

'Somewhere in the world it is, and, believe me, we're that desperate. I overheard the game that Zoe's got in mind for on the way to the boat. You're going to want this.'

Reluctantly, I take the glass from Erica and shudder as I sniff it. Tequila. I try and think of a time when something good happened after tequila, but most things that follow it are hazy. If the game that Zoe's going to have us play is as bad as Erica is making out, then maybe that's no bad thing.

Erica shakes a little sachet of salt onto her wrist before she pours some on mine.

'Three, two, one!' shouts Erica, before we both throw the shot back. And as I recoil at the putrid taste she thrusts a wedge of lime at me.

'Hold that pose,' says Erica as she snaps a photo of me. 'Adorable.'

'I bet that's my new Facebook profile picture right there,' I say laughing as I snatch her phone and see my gurning face.

‘One more selfie for the road?’ she asks and we both pick up our phones.

‘Pose slutty,’ I say, mocking the theme, and we both pout and push up our cleavage.

I hastily snap, then wince at how drunk we look when I see it. We’ve got hours to go yet; I dread to think what treasures I’ll find on my phone tomorrow morning.

Chapter Two

Time since last Internet usage: 7 minutes and 13 seconds

I hear the ping of my phone and my ears turn towards it like a finely tuned sonar as my brain processes the noise. Instantly I know it's a Tinder message. I feel my stomach lurch slightly and my heart beat a little quicker in anticipation. Not that I can dive for my phone. I'm far too busy listening to one of my boring work colleagues rattle on about a pitch he's got next week. I'm feeling sluggish from the weekend and chronically overworked, so the melodic tones of his Scottish accent were almost sending me off to sleep. Luckily, the phone beep has re-energised me.

If I just lean a little more onto my elbow, I might be able to peek behind where he's perched on my desk, and be able to see my screen.

'So, you'll send it over to me, then?' he asks.

'Uh-huh,' I say, tearing my gaze away from his back and looking him firmly in the eye. 'Absolutely.'

I have no idea what I'm sending over to him, but I'm sure he'll remind me, he's not known as Marvellous Marcus in our office for nothing.

‘Great. The Henderson report visuals, the FirstGroupFirst webmail campaign and the Honeybee report, all into the presentation file by tomorrow morning, OK?’

While relieved that at least I know what I’ve agreed to, I’m not particularly impressed by the timescale. My to-do list is already as long as my arm – and at five-foot-ten, I’ve got pretty long arms.

I stifle a yawn. I’m exhausted, but there’s far too much to do before I leave for the night.

I look at the clock on my computer; it’s already 6.30 p.m., and I’m supposed to finish at six. So much for me making it out of work on time tonight. Not that I’m particularly surprised. I rarely leave the office before seven on a good night, but right now, at our marketing agency, we’re at our busiest time and I might as well work down a mine for all the daylight I see.

Any thoughts of me climbing into my snuggly bed and having a nice early night where I gently fall asleep are replaced by an image of me barely managing to take off my clothes before I pass out on top of the covers with exhaustion in the early hours.

I sigh out loud. It’s not only my sleep that’s been suffering because of my punishing work schedule, but also my wardrobe. I’m weeks behind on my washing. I was supposed to do it on Sunday, but I was so hungover after the hen do that the thought of the chugging noise of the washing machine was too much to bear. I wish I’d just taken the noise on the chin, as right now I’m sitting in the office wearing a silky top that’s from a pyjama set, a misshapen cardigan with one arm longer than the other and a pair of leggings so threadbare that I’m pretty sure that if



anyone looked at my crotch they'd be able to see the Snoopy that's emblazoned on the front of my knickers. I usually try my best to look reasonable when I leave the house, working hard to create an outfit that warrants a mirror selfie, but the only social media this outfit's destined for is a how-not-to-dress meme.

If I don't do any washing tonight, I'm going to be walking in tomorrow in my leopard-print onesie without underwear. Despite our office subscribing to casual Friday, that would push the acceptable boundaries of casual, and, besides, it's only Wednesday tomorrow.

I groan and turn back to my to-do list, and am about to start on Marvellous Marcus's work when I remember the Tinder ping and my fingers lunge for my phone instead.

Please, oh gods of Tinder, let it be the super-hot guy I swiped right to last week. I unlock my screen and my heart feels a little disappointed that it's not a message from him. It's from Dominic, another guy who I'm going on a date with. Clicking on his photo, I read the message:

Going to be a bit late. Can we make it 7.30?

I have to read the message again. Ugh, he must have sent it to the wrong person as I'm not meeting him until tomorrow. He's obviously playing the field and probably has dates every night of the week and has just got confused. I stare at his photo again and wrinkle my nose as I study him. He's cute, but do I really want to go on a date with a serial Tinder player? Granted, I don't expect declarations of exclusivity before we've even met in real life, but





I do at least want to pretend that I'm not one on a conveyor belt of dates.

I scroll back up through our conversation to remind myself why I'd decided to date him in the first place. Our brief messages are mainly flirty banter – mostly about work and where we live – nothing too deep, but, in scrolling through them, I read the message where we planned our date: Tuesday at seven. Today – in half an hour's time.

'Oh, shit,' I say out loud, having obviously written it down wrong in my diary. I'm supposed to be meeting him on the South Bank; it's going to take me at least half an hour to get there.

'What's up?' asks my desk neighbour, Sara, glancing up from her screen.

'I'd forgotten I've got a date tonight.' I stare again at my to-do list and check what's still outstanding. I wasn't planning to leave my desk for at least another hour, or more likely two. 'I'm going to have to cancel, I've got way too much to do.'

I hate letting people down, but there's no way I can go. And it's not only because of the work. I mean, look at me. As if it wasn't enough that my outfit's a complete shambles, I'm also rocking the panda look on my face with my pale skin and black eyes, and the closest my hair got to shampoo this morning was a can of Batiste. I'm so ridiculously tired that I'm pretty much struggling to remember what my own name is when I sign off emails, so how am I going to dazzle a stranger with witty and sophisticated conversation?

I glance down at the photo of Dominic, his floppy blond hair, and those sparkling green eyes. He *does* look cute. Imagine the



babies we'd have, or, better yet, imagine the Instagram photos we could post: his blond hair polarised in a Valencia filter with his green eyes the colour of emeralds . . .

Plus, I even got Erica to track him down on LinkedIn to snoop at his CV, and he's a trader in the City, which means his credentials look good on paper. Not that that's a deal breaker, but it might mean that he'll at least pay for dinner.

'Is this the same guy you cancelled on last week?'

I hang my head in shame and she frowns at me. I don't dare tell her I cancelled with him two weeks before that too. I was surprised he rebooked after the second cancellation – I doubt I'd be so lucky third time around.

'If anyone can afford to sneak off a little early, it's you,' says Sara, rooting around in her in tray for something. 'You're the most organised person I know, with all your lists. Come on, one night's not going to hurt, Daisy.'

'But Marcus has just asked me to do some work for him and I've still got prep to do for tomorrow's meetings. But on the other hand, if I don't meet Dominic tonight, then I'm probably never going to meet him.'

'And what if he's the one?' says Sara, raising her eyebrows.

Sara's on an eternal hunt for *the one*, whereas I'd be content with *a* one right now. Being stuck in our office almost 24/7 for the last few weeks has meant that it's been slim pickings for both of us when it comes to finding a deep and meaningful relationship.

'You're right. I've really got to meet someone soon or else Marvellous Marcus and his quick reminders are going to start

looking pretty attractive. Do you reckon he would give a recap before we had sex?’ I say in a whisper as I lean over to her desk. I try and do my best Scottish accent: ‘Now, I’m going to fondle you, you get down on me, and I’ll do some finger work before we both orgasm, OK?’

Sara’s eyes almost pop out of her head, and I wonder if I’ve crossed some sort of at-work boundary of what’s appropriate to talk about, when I realise that she’s looking over my shoulder.

I turn and see Marvellous Marcus standing there.

Sara pretends to be typing. I know she’s pretending as she’s doing about 600 wpm and not even The Flash could type that quickly.

‘Marcus,’ I say, wondering how I’m going to dig myself out of this hole.

‘Um,’ he looks between Sara and me and his cheeks flush red, ‘I’ll just get the pen I left and I’ll leave you two to whatever you were planning.’

He practically runs off and I try and process what he said.

‘Oh God, he didn’t hear the whole thing, did he? Which, I guess, is good in a way,’ I say, ‘as at least he didn’t know it was about him. But that means he thought I was propositioning you.’

‘No, do you think?’ says Sara, trying to hide her laughter. ‘Surely, your fake accent must have given him a clue.’

‘I don’t know, I think it was pretty terrible. Do you think I sounded Scottish?’ I say trying to recreate it.

‘Actually,’ she says, wincing, ‘it was probably a bit more Irish.’

‘Hmm, great, now Marcus thinks we’re having an affair. Just the reputation I need in the office.’

‘You could do a lot worse than me.’

‘That’s true,’ I say to Sara, who looks as if she’d be more at home on a catwalk rather than a desk. ‘If I was into women, you’d be top of my list.’

She smooths down her hair and smiles at the compliment.

‘So this date of yours, you’re going, then?’

‘I guess so, as now I need to get a boyfriend to prove to Marcus I’m not a lesbian,’ I say laughing.

I tap out a quick reply to Dominic to confirm the change of time, as I curse myself for stupidly agreeing to a date this week in the first place. I’m an account manager at a marketing agency, and the majority of my clients are City-based firms who all, very helpfully, seem to send their financial reports to their investors at the same time – which means that for the next month I’m busy chasing up designers, liaising with the Indian office, where we outsource most of the work to, and pinging drafts of glossy brochures or samples of digital campaigns across to our clients for feedback. Don’t get me wrong, I love my job. It gives me a huge buzz to co-ordinate everything and deliver a successful project to a happy client. I just wish that they didn’t all want to have their reports ready to go at the same time. And if that isn’t enough at the moment, I’m also managing our company’s Twitter feed while our social media exec is on holiday. Not that tweeting and getting paid for it is much of a chore.

I groan as I wonder if I’ve got time to squeeze any more work in before I leave. Maybe if I do my make-up on the train, I could do half an hour more. I scan the list and work out what’s an absolute priority. I can always work late tomorrow night instead.

I'm just about to start finding the pieces Marvellous Marcus wanted when my phone beeps with a WhatsApp message from Erica.

What time are you going to be home tonight? Thinking of making a chilli if you are up to eating again! x

Scratch crawling into bed for an early night after doing the laundry, staying at work *or* going on a date with a super-hot guy. I'd much rather be sitting on the sofa with my bestie dissecting the hen do. Despite living together, we haven't seen each other since she grunted in her hungover state on Sunday morning that she was off to her boyfriend Chris's house.

I'm going on a date with Dominic, the Tinder guy. Maybe I won't be home at all . . .

I know that's a lie, I have the ultimate chastity belt on as the leggings are hiding a hairy forest. I can't remember the last time I shaved my legs.

Ooh, hope it goes well! In that case I'll stay at Chris's tonight. Don't forget to keep doing updates so we all know you're safe. I'm out tomorrow night, but catch up on Thursday if you make it back from work early enough? xx

I quickly reply:

Of course xx



It's funny, as I thought that living with Erica, I'd see her more, but in actual fact in the three months that I've been living in her flat I've seen her less. We're like ships that pass in the night. At least when we lived separately we used to make formal arrangements to see each other, now we're lucky if we bump into each other for long enough to gossip over a bowl of cornflakes.

Perhaps it's yet another reason to find my own place again. It's been on my to-do list for the last six months, ever since my previous landlord gave me notice that he was selling the flat I rented. I was so busy at work that I kept missing appointments to view other places and found myself homeless. Luckily for me, Erica has a spare room, or at least an estate agent conned her into thinking it was one. I'm more convinced it's a broom cupboard, but for all the time I've spent in it, I can cope with being Harry Potter. And, despite having to pay for storage of the majority of my belongings, the rent Erica's charging me is so low that I've actually been able to save. Which means that when I finally do get a chance to look for somewhere else, I might be able to afford something a bit better than my last mildew-infested basement flat.

But there's no time to dwell on that now. I put my phone down, turn my attention back to my work, and I soon start to feel the adrenaline pumping round my veins. I desperately try and achieve as much as possible and I'm actually on fire. I'm almost matching Sara's fake typing speed. If only I could keep this sort of a pace up all day, I would probably be able to leave work on time every day.



I email Marvellous Marcus his attachments and hastily shut down my computer. All that stands between me and my departure is a quick tweet from our work account to prove to my big bad boss Andrea that I'm still working, which I do on Tweetdeck on my phone. I quickly tap it out before shoving my phone into my bag and *voila*, Dominic, here I come.

'Are you going home to get changed?' asks Sara, looking me up and down.

'I haven't got time, and besides, nothing's clean. I was going to do my laundry tonight.'

Her eyes almost pop out in horror. Of course they would. She's dressed in a charcoal-grey shift dress and blazer, with neatly polished brogues on her feet. She's one of the few people I know who doesn't have to dress up specially for an Instagram outfit photo.

'You can't go like that,' she says horrified. She roots around in her office drawer and pulls out a scarf.

'Here,' she says, standing up and wrapping it elegantly round my neck. Without asking, she pulls off my cardigan, does up a couple of buttons, then hangs it round my shoulders like a middle-aged man stepping off a yacht.

She stands back to admire her handiwork. I can't be sure, but I think she's just caught sight of the Snoopy knickers situation, and so she pulls the scarf off and ties it round my waist like a belt, before knotting the arms of my cardigan to make it look scarf-like.

'There,' she says, smiling. 'It's not perfect, but I think it's making the best of a bad outfit.'

‘Great, thanks, Sara.’

‘Now all you’ll need to do is hair and make-up.’

‘Yep, going to do that on the tube.’ I see her wincing but I don’t have time for anything else; it’s already ten past seven and I’m going to have to run to catch the train. ‘See you tomorrow.’

‘That’s if you don’t get swept off your feet and never return.’

I laugh sarcastically and give her a wave as I go.

I hurry down the metal staircase and pause briefly at the end that faces a mirror. I might not be able to take a full-length selfie with these clothes, but I can take an arty one of my new suede espadrille boots. I position half a foot down the final step, then take a photo of the reflection. I quickly apply a Mayfair filter and add the caption ‘Hot date tonight’ before posting it to my Instagram. Thank heavens for clean shoes, as there’s no filter out there with the ability to turn the rest of my outfit into one worthy of getting those ego-boosting likes.

I jog out across the reception and make it out onto the street. I can’t help feeling guilty that I’m leaving while it’s still light outside, but I keep my fingers crossed that tonight will go so well with Dominic that we’ll fall madly in love and it’ll totally make my early departure seem worth it.