

## **A Night in the Office** **by Lisa Beth Darling**



Moon Mistress Publishing USA

*Moon Mistress Publishing*  
*New London, CT 06320*

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Quarterly Financial Reports are a real pain in the ass. I've always hated doing them and this time was no different. But, it's my job and it pays well so I do my best not to complain about having to stay late. What would be the point? My boss, Mr. Daniels wouldn't care and I didn't have anyone waiting for me at home. Divorced for fifteen years, my ex and I never had any children, so night after night it was just me sitting on my couch with a bottle of wine and my cat watching Netflix.

What other choice was there? It's not like there's a whole horde of eligible men beating down the door of a fifty year-old woman like myself. The single men who are my age are out there looking for hot young trophy wives and not for true lifelong companions to share all of life's difficulties, just some pretty young thing to hang off their arm like a cheap suit and brag to their friends about.

In a strange way, over the years of my employment after my divorce, the office had become my retreat from the world. It was a place where I could interact with people and not feel sorry for myself. It was a place where I was respected and even liked whereas outside the office I didn't have a friend in the world. That was my fault, after the divorce I just shut myself off and locked myself away believing that I was a total failure, one whom no one would ever love. Every morning, after dragging myself from my lonely bed, I looked forward to coming into work especially after Robert was hired five months before the night I'm about to relay to you.

He was a long tall cool drink of water in my lonely thirsty world. He was also young enough to be my son so I admired him from a far even though his desk was right across from mine. When he wasn't looking, I often found myself admiring the way the overhead lights caught the highlights in his wavy blonde hair or how his blue eyes sparkled like fireworks on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

So, it was a pleasant surprise when Mr. Daniels picked Robert to help me with the financials. Usually, it was Kate who stayed late with me as we poured over every single nickel the company expended and took in every four months but she was on maternity leave having given birth to a beautiful baby boy not a week before. I tried to tell Mr. Daniels that I could do the task on my own but he didn't like having anyone alone in the office after hours and so he insisted that Robert would be the one to help me.

Sitting at my computer my desk piled high with paperwork, I kicked off my shoes and tossed my glasses aside to rub tired my eyes. "I wish I had a drink," I sighed to myself. "I really need a drink." Knowing I shouldn't have said that out loud I looked around to be sure Robert still wasn't within earshot and he wasn't, in fact, he wasn't anywhere in sight. He'd gotten up to use the bathroom quite a while ago and I started to wonder if he was alright. Knocking on the Mens Room door didn't seem appropriate so I went back to my task of sorting out numbers.

A few moments later, a shadow fell over me and I looked up to see him standing there with a drink tray with two fresh cups of coffee from the local coffee shop in his hand. In the other, he held a brown paper bag. "I thought you were in the bathroom."

"I was, but I thought we could use this so I snuck out," he smiled as he handed me a warm cup, "here, cream and sugar, right?"

"Yes, thank you," I stammered taking the lid off the disposable cup, "how did you know how I like my coffee?"

"We do work together, Annie, we use the same Break Room," his smile grew a little wider revealing perfectly even white teeth. "I got something else, I probably shouldn't do this but it's getting late and I thought we could use another pick-me-up." Putting the drink tray with its lone cup on his desk, he held out the brown paper bag to me. "Here. Take it."

"Is this what I think it is?"

"Well, it ain't donuts," he chuckled and pulled his chair up next to mine.

Feeling the weight and the shape inside the bag I knew it could only be one thing; a bottle of booze. Drinking on the job was definitely against office policy but, he was right, it was getting late and we were alone. Who was going to know if we didn't tell them? I pulled the bottle out of the bag to find a quart of Jameson. "You're a lifesaver," I stammered.

"Oh, phew, good, I was worried you might get upset. Do you want it in the coffee or a separate cup?"

"Both?"

My comment made him laugh and his laughter made my ears tingle. "Good deal," he said as he got up again to wander over to the water cooler and grab two cups from the holder.

With an appraising stare fixed on his firm butt, I watched him go. On his way back, I looked at the computer screen.

"Man, can you believe how much this place spends on toilet paper in a quarter? And it's not even the good stuff."

Opening the bottle, it was my turn to chuckle as I poured some of the whisky into the coffees, "You don't really think they bought ten grand worth of toilet paper, do you? Who spends forty thousand dollars a year on toilet paper? And, as you said, it's not even the good stuff, that crap still has woodchips in it." He just stared at me with wide blue eyes and in that moment, his innocence was charming. I poured a shot into his coffee.

"Ummm, well, yeah, sure, you mean they don't?"

"No, my friend, they do not." I raised my spiked cup to my lips, "Cheers."

He raised his in return, "Yeah, here's to ya."

I looked down at the computer screen to see that it was going on 7 o'clock, "Hungry? We haven't had a dinner break and, I don't know about you, but I could use one."

"Starving, I was going to pick us up something to eat but I didn't know what you'd want."

"But you knew I'd want this?" I tapped the green bottle with my pen, "How's that?"

Robert pursed his full lips and let out a sigh, "I see you go into Daniels' office, I know you two have a few drinks right around quitting time. Word around the office is you're having an affair with him."

His words made me choke on my coffee and I laid my hand against my mouth to keep it from spraying everywhere. "Affair? Me and Daniels? No way. He's married and morbidly obese. Yes, we do have a few shots together now and then but that's it." I didn't know if I should laugh or be mortified at the idea that entire office thought I was sleeping with the Head Honcho. "I am definitely not sleeping with him. You can tell everyone that for me, if you would please."

He smiled, "I'll spread the word. So, do you have a boyfriend?"

"No, it's just me and my cat."

For a reason I didn't yet understand he seemed pleased with the news as his eyes shined a little brighter at me.

"What about you? Is your girlfriend, Sherry, right? Is she upset that you're working so late?"

"Nope," he chimed, "she moved out two weeks ago."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that."

"I'm not, well I was, but not anymore. According to her, I don't make enough money, my car isn't fancy enough, my friends are assholes, I drink too much, blah blah blah. The whole time she just sat on her ass and couldn't even wash a dish while I was at work."

"I'm sorry but, you know, well, you're young you'll find someone new someone better who will love you just because you're you."

"Good to know but right now I'm hungry. How about a pizza?"

We decided on a large pizza with mushrooms, green peppers, and onions. I placed the call and put it on my credit card telling the man on the other end of the line to have the deliveryman call when he arrived as the building was locked up and I would meet him at the front door.

"You might as well get comfortable," I told him, "Take off your tie, kick off your shoes we're going to be here for a while. If we hunker down maybe we can get this done in one night rather than the three it usually takes me and Kate."

"I don't mind if we have to stay another night or two. At least you have a cat to go home to, I don't even have that." Robert kicked off his loafers and stretched out his long legs beside me as he gratefully yanked off the tie and tossed it down on my desk next to the bottle of Jameson. "That's better."

For the next half hour, we poured over the financials as we drank our spiked coffee. When it was gone, we filled the small water cooler cups with the warm amber liquid. Before we knew it, both of us were getting a good buzz going by the time the pizza arrived. It was at that point that we took a break, got up from the computers, and ate at the massive cherry table in the Conference Room sitting in comfortable chairs that were so much easier on the back than the ones in the outer office. I clicked on the 70-inch television and we watched *Forged in Fire* while we chowed down.

"I love this show," Robert said picking up a slice of pizza.

"Me too."

He turned and gave me a quizzical stare, "You do? You like blades? Man, I couldn't get Sherry to watch this with me on a bet."

"Well, that's her loss. Yes, I actually have a sword collection at home."

"You do?" He asked again.

"I see that surprises you," I smiled at him.

"Very much," he agreed. "So, they don't really spend forty grand a year on toilet paper? Where's the money going?"

Wiping cheese from my lips with a napkin, I nodded and took another drink, "Since you told me about everyone thinking I'm sleeping with Daniels I'll clue you in. Golf trips. That's where the money is going to golf courses up and down the eastern seaboard. It's not a legitimate business expense because they never take any clients with them which means they can't write it off, so they fudge the books to cover their playtime."

"But there are receipts for everything, how are they doing it?"

"Ginny, Daniels' secretary, she doctors the receipts. Poor girl, he takes advantage of her."

"Advantage? Like, you know, advantage-advantage?"

"Yes, she's the one the rumor mill should be chatting about. If I were her I'd quit and then I'd sue him." Rethinking my statement, I added, "But that's just between you and me, it doesn't leave this room."

Robert raised his right hand, "I swear, not a word from these lips."

"Good, thank you. I shouldn't have told you that to begin with and she needs this job, that's why she doesn't quit and, instead, she puts up with his fat ass."

That made Robert laugh again, "Yeah, he's pretty plump." Then he let out a little shiver, "Ick, just thinking about it is kind of making me sick."

"Then stop thinking about it," I suggested and poured two more shots. "We should get back to work after this."

"But these chairs are so much more comfortable than ours maybe we should bring the computers in here."

"Anytime you want to start unhooking them and lugging them in here, you let me know. But, we could roll a few of these out there for the rest of the night."

"Sounds good," Robert downed his shot, "You clean this up and I'll bring them out."

"Deal," I replied and set about the task as he wheeled the chairs out of the Conference Room. "And my back thanks you." I called after him and heard him snicker as he called back;

"Mine too!"

There we were again pouring over receipts and entering figures into the computer, double checking every penny that had gone out over the last four months and triple checking every one that came in. He was sitting so close to me that the scent of his cologne filled my tired head with wanton thoughts. In an attempt to clear them away, I sat back in my chair and let out a groan as I rubbed my neck only to suffer a moment of double vision. I glanced down at the bottle of Jameson on my desk to see it was past half empty and realized I had a good buzz going.

"Are you ok?"

"Fine, these chairs are definitely better but all this sitting here is killing my back."

"Let me help," Robert got up to stand behind me and the next thing I knew his strong hands were on my shoulders kneading the knotted muscles. "Better?"

"That's wonderful," I murmured as my eyes closed on their own blocking out the glare of the computer screen and bring back those heady thoughts. As he soothed my sore shoulders and neck, I watched those thoughts come to life to dance behind my closed lids. Patting one of his hands, I opened my eyes, "You can stop now, thank you. This isn't fair to you do you want to go home? It's very late."

"I'm fine right where I am."

"Yes, but you're my underling and I should let you go home to get some rest."

That's when he said it: "I wouldn't mind being under you."

I was taken aback for a moment so I asked him to repeat his words and he did so with utmost sincerity. Then he tried to back peddle even as he continued massaging between my shoulder blades, "Is that sexual harassment? Are you going to fire me?"

"I think it's only sexual harassment if I come on to you and no I'm not going to fire you."

Standing behind me with a hungry grin, he leaned down and kissed me. I hadn't been kissed in years, at first the sensation of his warm lips on mine was so foreign it made me cringe but as the tip of his moist tongue parted my lips the cringe turned into a quiver as heat raced through my lonely body. Fighting off the urge to wrap my arms around his head and bring him closer, I turned my head away and felt my face flush with color. Licking my lips, I let out a heavy sigh and tried to hold on to my composure. "We probably shouldn't do that again."

"Didn't you like it? I did."

"That's not the point."

"Then what is? Because I gotta tell you, Annie, I've been looking forward to this night since Daniels tagged me for this job last week."

Clearing my throat to get a gulp of air as I stared into his blue eyes I felt myself blush again and tried so hard to steer the night in another direction. "Technically, I'm your boss and secondly you're young enough to be my son."

"Just barely, how old do you think I am? You'd have to have been like fourteen or something for that to have happened." Coming out from behind me, he sat in his chair again, pulled it up closer to mine and against my cheek, he whispered, "but so what?"

I quivered again understanding the possibility just got a little closer. Up until this point I thought Robert was in his late twenties but, by my math, he was actually more like 35 or 36. Still that was on the young side. I waved a dismissive hand in that air, "That's just the booze talking."

"No it isn't but why do you think I bought it? I've had my eye on you since I started working here and I couldn't wait to get you all to myself tonight."

"Is this some sort of joke? Who put you up to this?" Suddenly suspicious, my eyes scanned the room for any unfamiliar objects. "Is this going to be on YouTube or something?"

Robert huffed, "It's not a joke, no one put me up this, and I would never do anything like to anyone. What kind of a guy do you think I am? Some type of creep? A perv? I think you know me better than that."

"So you're serious then. Me? Why me?" Yes. Why me? When there were so many younger more attractive women in this office what could this young stallion possibly want with me?

"Well," he licked his bottom lip as he reached out with two fingers to touch the strands of graying dark hair hanging about my face, "In case no one's told you lately and I'm guessing they haven't, you're a very sexy woman."

Trying to ignore the seriousness in his voice I chimed, "Flattery will get you nowhere, my friend."

"I'm not flattering you I'm telling you the truth. You're warm. You're funny. You're genuine and down to Earth. With you, what you see is what you get, and I like what I see."

"Oh, God," I rolled my eyes and turned away to cap the bottle of whisky. "Yeah, you've really had enough. What you see is a fat fifty year-old woman whose only friend is a cat. You should go for, I don't know, maybe Dawn or Julie or Amy. They're closer to your age."

"That again, what does age have to do with anything? If it makes you feel better, I'm going to be thirty-five next month. I'm not some child. Besides, I don't want any of them," he protested quietly. "They're all as phony as a three dollar bill from their acrylic nails to their knockoff designer shoes. Dawn changes boyfriends more often than she changes her underwear—um, not that I'd have any direct knowledge of that, you understand." He laughed a little as he stroked my hair. "But not you, you're not like them. What can I say? I'm a full grown man and I know what I want. You turn me on."

Gently pushing him away, I chuckled and stood up. "I think we're done here for tonight."

"Done?" Robert stood up as well and blocked my path, "I'm just getting started. Don't be scared, Annie, I see it in your eyes; the fear and the longing. I'm not bullshitting you and I'm not looking for some late night office hook-up. And, before you say it, I do not have some type of Mommy Complex. I see you looking at me when you think I'm not looking at you." His hands landed gently on my shoulders before they slid up the nape of my neck to cup my face. "I know you want this. I know you want me. Give in."

Without even thinking about it, my cheek nuzzled to the soft warmth of his hand, it felt wonderful just to be touched again after so many long years. "No," I whispered and found the strength to take his hands from my face. "We should, we should. . ."

"We should make love," he finished my sentence in the way I wanted to but not in the way I intended to. "Right here. Right now."

He kissed me again but this time so hard my knees went weak. His arm slipped around my waist to hold me steady and upright. I tried to push him away again but I must admit my attempt was less than half-hearted. When my hand landed on his shoulder, he took it in his own to press it against his chest.

The ripples below the white cotton dress shirt caused my fingers to turn into talons as they gripped him tightly. With my head spinning and every fiber of my aging body prickling to life in places that had been dead for far too long I tried once again to push him away. "No," I whispered again.

"Yes," he whispered back, "Say, 'yes', Annie, you know you want to. I know you want to." Taking a step back, he looked at me closely and ran his fingers through my hair, "But I'm not a masher or a molester, I don't want to make you uncomfortable or do something you really don't want to. So, if you tell me no one more time, I'll stop and leave it at that. I'll never try again and I hope you'll forgive me for trying now."

Again, the sincerity in his voice and his eyes struck me but this time with a tinge of fear. The idea of saying 'no' to him again and having this wonderful moment end before it really began was altogether unappealing. "It's been so long I don't even know if I'd know what to do anymore."

"I'm sure it will come back to you and that whatever you do I will enjoy it immensely. Have a little faith in yourself because I have tons of it in you. C'mon, Annie, take a chance you are more desirable than you give yourself credit for."

His words brought tears to my eyes they washed away the last of my protests and doubts. Snuggling my face to the soft cotton cloth covering his rippled chest I wrapped my arms around him and held on tight. "Just for now. Just for tonight."

"It's a start," he whispered back as his hand cradled the back of my head holding me closer to him. "I'll take it."

What a start it was!

One moment we were holding onto each other in the big outer office and the next we were back in the Conference Room stripping each other bare. At first I was ashamed and uncertain, I didn't want to see my aging frame but when I tried to turn off the lights he stopped me.

"Don't do that, Annie, don't. I want to see you. All of you."

I opened my mouth to protest but he beat me to it.

"Shut up, just shut up." With that, he laid another passionate kiss on my lips as he slipped my skirt past my hips until it fell onto the floor. My blouse met the same fate before he broke the embrace and stepped back to look at me standing there nervously in nothing more than my bra and panties. "You're beautiful just as I knew you would be even more so."

Doubt slipped away along with all of my feelings of inadequacy in their place confidence began to grow at the same pace as the space between his long lean legs, "If you say so."

"I say so," Robert picked me and settled me on the large cherry table. The wood was cold under my butt and it made me shiver but that didn't last long. Soon there was nothing but heat in the big empty room I began feeling as though I were standing too close to the sun. I felt young again. Renewed. Reborn in ways I'd never imagined possible. Desires I'd long given up hope of ever feeling again rushed back to me in a tidal wave of lust that carried me away and threatened to drown me in ecstasy.

When our co-workers arrived at 8 o'clock the next morning, Robert and I were in the Conference Room snickering quietly as we hurriedly jumped back into our clothes hoping no one noticed they were the same ones we'd been wearing when they left the evening before.

That was ten years ago. Today we're celebrating our 9<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. At the age of sixty, I feel like a schoolgirl again every time I look at him and like a queen every time he looks at me. The gleam in his blue eyes has never faded, even as my hair has grayed, my wrinkles have deepened, and my middle has gotten a tad bit thicker, that gleam is always there. If anything, it has grown brighter just as our love has done.

I never thought anything this wonderful could happen to me so late in my life but it did. Every night that we make love and I lay breathless in his arms, I thank the Gods above that I took that chance on him and myself.

The End  
Lisa Beth Darling  
May 25, 2017

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