

THE SECRET PA

Complete
Series



SecsintheCity

Note from the editor:

Witty and inexcusably honest, the secret PA dives into ventures of the glamorous, the mundane, and the outright mad. Following the daily shenanigans, from poodle priming and high-flying parties, to rescue missions to save your executive's teenage niece from a country lane in Sussex, the secret PA offers a first-hand insight into what it truly means to support multiple bosses.

In the ever-changing landscape of being a personal assistant, our secret insider shares her ways and means of executing a job role with effortless flair – with the aid of G&Ts, behind-the-scenes chaos, and relationship drama.

Dive into the world of Scarlet, Pepper, TieMax and Whiz Girl; get ready for the whirlwind.

01

CHAPTER

01

The Secret PA: Day 1

Ok, so it turns out that the Viva Forever shows open in November but it's probably a good thing because I had a lot of impromptu engagements slip in to my diary thanks to family and friends passing through London, networking events and the avoidance of a law suit by a client.

Plus with less than two weeks to go for Scarlet's holiday (and mine) there's a lot of loose ends to tie up, including approve outstanding invoices for venue hire, lights and catering for our September event, bikini shopping, dinner with Banker Guy, get a haircut and highlights, and the whole pre holiday pamper routine etc.

After last week though, perhaps a pamper routine won't be enough – I might really need a full on spa day! First my laptop decides that it's going to run at snail's pace, then my phone line decides that it's going to push the boundaries of my hearing range – and then Scarlet's dog decides that her iphone is a fun toy to play with.

Just when I thought that I my holiday couldn't come soon enough and that 1 week with the girls was not long enough the very-out-of-the-blue happened. Any guesses? I'll give you a bit of guessing time and finish this later, just running off to collect Pepper's dry cleaning.

The Secret PA: Day 2

Have you ever been to the Maldives? I haven't but guess what? I'm going! I know, I was so not expecting that from Banker Guy but I am swooning right now. So now I'm on holiday for 2 weeks instead of 1. Am I excited? Nervous? Over the moon? *blush* ;) I guess a bit of all those. OMG! I can't believe this is actually happening to me.

Just when I had got to the point where I had started to wonder why everyone's life tends to seem so much more rose tinted and uber perfect than mine – alright, just a little....there's a margin for exaggeration on Facebook since everyone embellishes their life on there...my luck seems to have changed. Just like that. 2 weeks of beach bliss. I really couldn't have wished for more. Away from the chaos of the Olympics.

That said I did have a ride on Emirates' Olympics cable car with Banker Guy which was pretty cool. He has actually got tickets to some of the Games but for the week where I'll be with my Girlfriends in Mykonos – not that I mind hugely though, I'm not too fussed about sport.

What I am feeling kind of deflated about is not being able to go to the Madonna concert tomorrow. We have a client's launch party –

and we've just closed a massive contract with them so it's not optional.

Anyway, I've got to go finish off next month's budget before lunch but if I don't find any blog time before I go away I promise I will at least send post card from my iPad on a sun lounger ;)

Hope it's not too mad here for you during the Olympics.

Toodles my lovelies x

The Secret PA: Day 3

"I love my job. I love my job. I love my job. I love my job.....". Honestly, I do but after having spent 2 weeks between the beach, the pool, the restaurant, swish bar or swanky club, and a comfy hotel bed, and not having to wake up at ungodly o'clock, I didn't feel on top of the world when my alarm went off on my first day back. It was like some crazy sea monster showing up out of no where, reminding me that I was back to the world of manic work days, Scarlet's mood swings, poodle primping and the shebang that constitutes my job.

These long summer evenings and Pepper missing his plane, Scarlet's lost luggage and the holiday hangover, don't particularly help.

You know what the eerie part is?

I had this really strange dream about work the night before I had to come back to work which really freaked me out. Did you ever watch that movie Freak Friday? You know the one where the daughter and the mum wake up in each other's body?

I had a dream where I was Scarlet and she was me!! It was really weird but they say that what you're thinking about before you go to bed often influences the dream you have, so I guess it was no surprise.

I received a call from her about her lost luggage about mid day on my last day of holiday - which was really meant to be my recovery day, to nurse the holiday hangover and get over my jetlag. Of course she was in a real strop because she had arrived at Heathrow sans luggage, aside from her cabin baggage.

They finally traced her luggage but I was still feeling stressed about it just in case they didn't deliver it the following day. I'd then have to cart her suitcase to her house because she was going to Manchester for a meeting.

Anyway, I've got to run, Scarlet's luggage is calling me.

Hopefully it's all in one piece...eeeeek.

The Secret PA: Day 4

The good news is that Scarlet's luggage arrived in as many pieces as it went onto the plane. All of it!

The bad news is that they managed to get an oil stain on one of her soft top suitcases and I had to find a dry cleaner to remove it.

Luckily I mentioned it to another PA at a networking event and she had a similar 'situation' recently, thus ending what may have been a very long and odious search.

Networking with other PAs is a great way to discuss difficulties you're facing at work without divulging confidential information because you'll often meet more experienced PAs who will have advice to share.

If you're feeling stressed, it's a good way to unwind and even find a shoulder to cry on if need.

But we may have the odd day where we feel like we need this Stress reduction kit.

Networking + drinks + canapés is a far better and certainly more delicious option for stress reduction – not that I've used this stress reduction kit before. If there's one thing I've learnt on the job it's that getting stressed never helps the situation.

It's damaging to your health, it wastes time on worrying when you could be getting productive work done, and it wears you out – reducing your stamina.

Most networking events are hosted by venues with meeting spaces so it's a great way to achieve two goals with one evening out – networking and venue scouting.

And then there other events like *Office where you are bound to meet more PAs and suppliers, widening your web of contacts.

Don't forget to carry business cards so you can connect with contacts you make there. If you haven't got a business card, make sure you ask for a business card and connect with contacts after.

When connecting, introduce yourself because 1. It's polite and 2. Everyone you meet is likely to meet as many people as you and they may not place you immediately. To ensure that they connect with you, I always send a personalised message with the request to connect.

And then there other events like *Office where you are bound to meet more PAs and suppliers, widening your web of contacts.

You probably already have it in your calendar but in case you didn't *Office is next week (12th and 13th September). I went last year but I may send Whiz Girl instead, or we may both go depending how the week goes. I have pencilled it in but you never know when some dire emergency will spring up out of nowhere.

The team from SecsintheCity will also be there – they said they're going to be at stand 2033. And they're a really lovely bunch.

Their Editor is always on the lookout for more PA bloggers so if you want to be a blogger like me, do drop by and have a chat with them.

Ooops. Pepper is calling.

The Secret PA: Day 5

What an absolutely manic fortnight it's been. For those of you who didn't make it to office* this year, I empathise because I didn't either....

....Let's just say that a missed train and a stiletto heel were involved, actually it was the other way around. We were on our way back from a meeting and Scarlet got her stiletto (pencil is more like it) wedged in the grate outside the offices where we had gone to meet a client and their PR team in Cardiff.

She hadn't got a spare pair of shoes and decided she wasn't leaving until we got the heel fixed. So off I went to pick up a new pair of shoes – the heel replacement would have to wait until I was back in London so I could go back.

and get her very expensive shoe fixed at a very expensive price.

Finding the perfect shoe for Scarlet in Cardiff was like looking for a Shark in the Thames – I was more likely to be eaten by a Lion in Covent Garden than find something she'd actually like.

Eventually I managed to find a suitable replacement but we ended up missing the train and didn't get back into London until after 8.

I had been hoping to pop over to *Office for a bit, but fate had other plans for me.

I did get some nice goodies though because Whiz Girl had gone on both days.

I love the new SecsintheCity bags. Whiz Girl was quite chuffed to have seen Deborah Meaden in the flesh.....but most definitely not as amused as me to see Anna Wintour – whose doppelganger Scarlet could very nearly have passed off for. I can't believe I actually got to London Fashion Week!

Ooops. Scarlet's calling. Got to dash...tell you about it later x

The Secret PA: Day 6

Sorry for the big blog break peeps but it's been beyond manic here (more so than usual). To begin with, Scarlet took ill while on a business trip to Brussels and was laid up in bed for nearly a week and then Whiz Girl came down with the flu.

As you can imagine I had my hands a little full. I know I haven't always had Whiz Girl but then there wasn't as much to be done as there is now.

When they talk about the 'Changing role of the PA' I now fully understand what they mean – especially when I compare notes with my Great Aunt who was a PA for 30 years when she was younger.

Still, despite the work I doubt I'd ever trade places with anyone – except perhaps with a celebrity PA ;) Speaking of which you'll never guess what happened this weekend.

A client was having a do at a club in Mayfair and I got to go along – since I now also get to manage a certain amount of PR as part of my job. Scarlet was in a good mood so I got Whiz Girl on the guest list too. That's one of the perks of the job – especially when you aren't earning in 6 figures and want a taste of 'posh' and 'Mayfair'.

I also entered their lucky draw at the entrance –

since it was a work do I had business cards but I've started carrying them even at social events because you just never know who you might meet on a night out – it could be a valuable contact if like me you work in the music industry.

As it happens, we did make a valuable contact. Little did I know that I would be in the same room as a pop star/actress who just happens to be my all time favourite.

I heard some girls in the ladies talking about her hair and learned that she wears hair extensions, actually. Whiz Girl and I were hoping to meet her (wishful thinking) so I was gutted that we didn't get an introduction but Scarlet did.

Anyway, Whiz Girl and I got chatting with a group of guys who turned out to be (top fashion brand) models. The bloke we were chatting with lives in Chelsea and his apartment gets paid for and..... apparently so do his parties!

He invited Whiz Girl and myself to The Box! Yes, the Box! But of course we declined since we were there with the bosses, reluctantly though but work is work even if it's a party in Mayfair.

For those of you who don't know, the Box is a really exclusive private members club where a table costs £3,000 and it's open until insane o'clock.

In the music business fun parties can often be part of the job but you have to remember that it isn't a night out – simply a work event masquerading as one....just like our office Halloween party is going to be this week.

Which reminds me, I still have a few bits and bobs to sort out for it with Whiz Girl. Any of you having a party for Halloween at work? I don't know what to wear yet but I have to get something soon.

Better go find Whiz Girl so she can then go and collect Scarlet's costume before 5 today.

The Secret PA: Day 7

Have you ever found something so funny that you actually had to excuse yourself because you couldn't hold the in giggles? It's probably not professional to be having a hysterics in the office when you are strategically positioned in the reception area which I was at the time it happened.

I was heading out to get Scarlet's skinny latte (fuel for what she said was an important and urgent matter she had to discuss with me), when the Curly Scarecrow walked in looking a little frazzled. One of the blokes made a joke about his hair, it was really frizzy compared to the usual.

Fifteen minutes later I was seated across a table from Scarlet and my chai latte sat facing her Skinny latte when Pepper walked in.

That's when they broke the news to me. Apparently TieMax's PA had just resigned after having been there for 6 years.

She's met someone in Poland on her visit home a few months ago. I would never give up my job for a man but each to themselves I suppose.

TieMax is the Finance Director and recently won a Young Director of the Year Award.

He's very suited and speaks in bullet points – he's also very good at firing out orders to get things done.

When I first met Scarlet and Pepper I thought I had never seen any two people who were such opposites of each other. I hadn't come across TieMax at that point.

To cut a long story short, I now have 3 bosses instead of two.

Yes, you heard it. Three! Piece of cake I thought. I mean, if I could win with Scarlet and Pepper how much harder could it be with TieMax, right?

I have a feeling it's going to be a bit more challenging than I expected given his personality and how he likes things done. He can be quite formidable, intimidating even. He is very tall and very straight faced, sort of reminds me of terminator if you can picture terminator in an Armani suit and Alfred Dunhill shoes. And of course a tie. He always wears a tie.

He also apparently can't stand loose ends untied at the end of a work day and if it's month end he is likely to go ballistic, I learned from his soon to be ex-PA, over lunch the next day.

So glad it's Friday! And judging from my rant on Facebook

I'm not the only one looking forward to the weekend. Going to get my nails done and a much needed haircut. I daresay the Curly Scarecrow reminded me that my hair needs a bit of TLC – but somehow it actually suits him,

not everyone can look 'together' with a curly sort of mop.

Oh, there comes TieMax's PA. Next week is her last week so it's going to be a busy one for me, especially since Whiz Girl is in hospital having her tonsils out. I think I might do a lot of sleeping and listening to 'Enya' this weekend.

Only joking, I can't miss this party tomorrow; it's a Downton Abbey ball in the country that my cousins and I are going to with our respective 'chaperones'.

Wish me luck for next week, I think I'm going to need it. Especially with an annual appraisal with Scarlet and Pepper next week too! Eeeeeek.

I think I'll need a double scoop of luck ;)

02

C H A P T E R

02

The Secret PA: Day 8

Do you ever feel like you have to hide behind a façade to hide your inner feelings because that's a sign of professionalism? I do, and I'm sure I'm not alone.

The last week or so has been like that for me and Whiz Girl, and I suspect for Scarlet too. She's had a pretty rough week and now the worry about her sister in New York.

She is a strong person – more than I realised. I also realised she trusts me more than I appreciated.

I'm good at keeping secrets. Sometimes I think I'm almost too good because I so often hide my own feelings behind a cloak of secrecy because I think it's unprofessional to show your emotions on the job.

After all, which wailing banshee ever made it to the top right?

Instead of letting it pinch me though, I've discovered a few tricks to help me feel better. One of them is to always have emergency supplies like chocolate and instant chai lattes in my desk drawer.

So where was I? Oh yes, masks. In the literal sense, Scarlet and I weren't the only ones hiding behind a mask.

Most of the office were and some of them had really scary ones, bought specially for our Office Halloween party yesterday.

The party was a success and a great opportunity for those who work out of London to come and meet the rest of us and a chance for the new interns and graduates to get to know everyone.

My cat suit outfit fitted perfectly and so did Whiz Girl's. The masks were the best part of the outfit though, with silver touches and feathers. Sal decided to come dressed as Casper – bless her, she's the kindest person I know – and the Curly Scarecrow decided to come dressed as Dracula (very original!).

Scarlet – believe it or not – decided to come dressed as the ghost of Anne Boleyn. Creeepy...it was too real for comfort.

And there was a mixed bag of other characters – most with masks. Helper came dressed as an Egyptian Mummy and was unrecognisable at first, and one of the interns came dressed as Amy Winehouse. I wasn't the only one who thought that was distasteful. Clawly's costume was (I thought) in equally poor taste – so ghoulish. She dressed

up as the ghost of Lady Sybil from Downton Abbey. Pepper came as Lord Voldemort. It wasn't a bad outfit.

The punch was a big hit and no one got excessively drunk which was quite impressive. It was a late one too but surprisingly everyone was in on the dot the day after. Now to start thinking about The Christmas Party. Some of my friends are not having an office Christmas Party so I feel quite lucky to be having one.

We've also got a fair few gigs coming up and some Music Events with variety entertainment coming up for some A-List clients which I'm quite excited about but it's going to be manic now in the run up to Christmas.

Oh, there goes my mobile. It's Scarlet, wonder what it could be at this hour – it's almost 10pm. This can't be good.

The Secret PA: Day 9

Despite my concerns last week I actually did make it through the week unscathed as I started to learn the complex and statistical mind of Tie Max.

Then of course there's the Christmas shopping – can't deny the fact that I am a pathological shopper and at least I know the preferences of two of my bosses. Still, there are some rather odd things on Tie Max's list which I am not even sure where to buy.

As a result of taking on the FD Scarlet and Pepper bumped my appraisal to next week – I'm coming up to two years very soon. Can't believe how time flies.

Clawly is going on Maternity leave at Christmas and I have to hire a receptionist whom I will actually have to manage.

It's a maternity cover as Clawly is apparently coming back in the summer.

Not sure how it's going to be with me managing her when she's back. She doesn't know it yet though. We had a few internal applications for the role from interns but I'm using the SecsintheCity CV Database because they've got loads of candidates who will be perfect.

Find a new Clawly is definitely at the top my to-do list. So glad it's the weekend, looking forward to a girl's night on Saturday with some of the girls from work. I will also start Scarlet's Christmas shopping since I've already got her list and I can do some of it online.

Next week I need to check out a few client Christmas lunch venues and I have an appraisal with Scarlet and Pepper....

it got postponed (and taking on the FD wasn't the 'only' reason it did) – Insert *sheepish smile* here – Long story....tell you about it in my next post. Got to run, need to start reviewing some CVs for Clawly's role.

The Secret PA: Day 10

You know I was supposed to have my appraisal with Scarlet and Pepper a while ago.

Then it got pushed back and Scarlet was not amused by the 'situation'. I created that resulted in having to make a change in her diary. I still can't believe I locked myself out of my own desk drawer!

I was to have my appraisal on Thursday so the evening before, I stayed late to complete it. It took a while; after all I had to really think through my short, medium and long term career goals.

Funnily enough, when I was almost done, Scarlet and Pepper came out of Tie Max's office just as I was finishing and said they were just about to sit down and do their version of it.

The next day I was feeling a bit apprehensive because I wasn't sure how Scarlet would react to my goals.

They were a bit far fetched to be fair.

Picture this: Me struggling to find the key to my desk drawer where I had very safely hidden away my appraisal form the night before. A very safe place, so safe that even I couldn't open it.

After a really thorough check of my hand bag, gym bag and the pen stand/organiser on my desk I still hadn't located it. That's when I really began to panic. I had Scarlet hovering around me, Pepper wandering around nonchalantly and here I was unable to open the drawer with my appraisal form. Talk about failing at the first hurdle.....

I went charging off to HR but unfortunately no one had a spare key.

Scarlet has a similar shaped key so I even tried to use hers but it wouldn't open. By this point I am mortified and hoping the floor will open up and swallow me. It doesn't. Finally Scarlet decides to reschedule and goes to tell Pepper. By 3pm, my body has gone into *cringe*. Sadly I have no paper bag to cover my head with.

The anti climax though is when and where it surfaced.....

I came in over the weekend to collect a dress that needed to be delivered to Scarlet. As I hadn't managed to locate the key to my desk drawer, I decided to have another look around the desk where I spend a significant part of my life.

Something told me to empty the desk organiser and voila, there it was. My very special key.

'Feeling ridiculous' doesn't even come close to describing how I felt at that moment. I decided not to tell Scarlet about where it resurfaced, don't want her to think I've suddenly gone a bit 'ditzy'.

Now I have my appraisal in 2 days.

May need even more luck now ;) x

The Secret PA: Day 11

After a manic week, lost keys and other miscellaneous stress inducing events I was looking forward to a weekend of doing absolutely nothing. The bosses and an intern had other plans for me.

We have an intern who has studied opera and is temping until she can find an opportunity to sing. With so many talent shows masquerading as popular telly, it's possible to get a break if you're good.

After months of waiting, Rose was invited to audition in London.

She is very talented and the bosses agree with me. So much so that they decided that I should go along for moral support – they are needless to say working on a plan of their own because they believe she has the potential to be a star and she doesn't have an agent yet. Let's just say we have a fair few big investors looking for 'music talent' that will give them a guaranteed ROI.

When we arrived there was already an extremely long queue and it hadn't started moving yet. There were families with kids, Mums and daughters, friends obviously doing a double act, people with their dog, instrument or other such accessory. Then all of a sudden.....

....we started being instructed to 'bunch up'.

After registering, each contestant was given a sticker and a number and we had to wave to camera as we filed up the escalators. This was followed by loud cheering activities outside the main hall where we all had to wait. It was quite entertaining to see others practice their acts, some were clearly very talented.

It was a medley of shimmery shiny showstoppers and less enthusiastic I-don't-want-to-be-here and I'm-terrified contestants who looked like their parents had decided this was their calling.

We finally finished late evening but her audition went well, we'll just have to wait and see.

In other news, Tie max has decided to tighten the purse strings this year so I am now organising an unextravagant Christmas party – It's next week and the theme is candy striped gilded minimalism.

I also have to start the search for a new receptionist, must go ring the girls at SecsintheCity. I can't believe it's almost Christmas! Wait until you see the boss's shopping lists ;) I'll give you a sneak preview when I get a few minutes.

The Secret PA: Day 12

So I managed to sort out my work Pension scheme this week –don't know why I didn't do it sooner. I also made it through the week – which was spent juggling more of Tie Max's lists than Scarlet and Pepper's – and with a greater understanding of the finance function and lesser spend on Chai Lattes (Green Tea almost all the way!).

I also ordered my copy of 'Accounting for Dummies' and have shortlisted a few potential online courses in Accounting. I'll wait until end Feb to start that though as we have a lot going on at the moment with a tour we're involved with just round the corner.

The holidays are already a distant memory and life is back on the high road at break neck speed.

Clawly has left the building but her Facebook updates haven't.

As for the Curly Scarecrow, there's not been much drama since he accidentally married his high school sweetheart in Vegas and has now filed for a divorce.

Aside from that it's been pretty uneventful to be honest, so much so that I have actually begun to have drama withdrawal symptoms exacerbated by the fact that there is a wait for the new series of Downton Abbey.

I have actually on occasion been compelled to watch Coronation Street and Made in Chelsea every now and then.

I have also secretly been tempted to look at the Private PA jobs on SecsintheCity every now and then...

I have to say when I see the salaries it does make my jaw drop.

And cool as my job is – very chuffed with a sizzling new desktop calendar from an Artist we are working with together with a record label – I can't help but wonder what it would be like to work in a non-office environment. As someone creative I always thought I'd find working in Finance would be a struggle but I'm beginning to actually like the variety it brings to my job. Of course me working for an FD is very different to actually working as a PA in Banking like some of my mates from Uni here. They have a regular 8-5 job and the Blackberry goes off at 5pm sharp. Mine doesn't.

Either way, I think whichever sector you work in, being a PA is pretty awesome. What is not looking so awesome is the travel disruptions :(

Anyway, got to run to the bank and pick up a prescription for Pepper and then collect some props for a Snow themed Jazz concert. Fill you in on our Travel Troubles if we have any. Scarlet was supposed to be getting the Eurostar to Paris and it's looking a bit 50/50 at the mo. Oh well, we'll see.

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow ;)

The Secret PA: Day 13

As someone who loves the race....not just the running but also breaking through the ribbon at the finish line I don't think I have a very well developed coping mechanism for being mired which can happen to the best of us. You just feel like you've hit a wall or got stuck in a quagmire ...the clock ticking away all the while.

Have you ever felt like one minute you've got it all under control and suddenly there's one loose end that gets snagged in the tail of a rocket to the centre of the universe and all of a sudden you feel like you're being dragged out to Jupiter or some such place of ostracism. As a perfectionist it annoys 'Me' when 'Me' doesn't meet 'My Expectations'. I tend to take it quite hard when things don't go quite right.

So much so that I can be expected to have a sleepless night over it. If you're back in the office mentally after going to bed it's probably a sign you need to press pause and get off. All you workaholics out there will know what I mean. If you're brain is on overdrive fuelled by stress it will actually lower your productivity in the long run so stress is actually counter productive. I am usually quite good at it and in fact have become Whiz Girl's anti stress coach – the role that Nancy played in my professional life when I joined. Still, I have been quite wired and Mired this week – the combination is lethal.

On the bright side, I have found a replacement for Clawly who is away on maternity leave. I used the SecsintheCity talent pool and I have to say that being able to pick the candidates as well as getting applications saved me time and effort.

I was speaking to Gemma, the Head of Sales at SecsintheCity and apparently 70% of jobs are not actually advertised! Seeing how many jobs are on SecsintheCity only makes one wonder how very many jobs there are out there. If you aren't on SecsintheCity I'd say that's definitely the place to be discovered.

I have certainly discovered a few good candidates on there myself as that's how I found Whiz Girl and Clawly's replacement – our new receptionist. The job title is where the similarity ends. She started off as a receptionist in a hotel in Hampshire and then worked as a hostess for a VIP lounge at an airport. She's working to pay for her vocal coaching and is also taking up a course to train for the theatre – she wants to be a singer in Musicals one day she says.

There were a few candidates with similar experience and in fact one who had a fair bit of receptionist experience in The City but she wasn't really very well 'acquainted' with the big players in our industry and she seemed a bit 'over-keen' about meeting celebs. I was afraid if she even met someone semi famous she might go in to star struck mode and behave like a groupie which isn't a good thing.

The other candidate I interviewed was from a Cruise Liner background. It was a tough choice between her and 'Rose' (the new hire).

Anyway, I'm back in the office now – had to go check out a venue for a client lunch with bosses next week – and I must finish this presentation which I have been having sleepless nights over.

Today home time is definitely going to be G & T Time!

The Secret PA: Day 14

Thank goodness for work and weekends without work responsibilities. I now have sympathy for celebrity agents, after this weekend's debacle with Scarlet's rising starlet. For those who missed my last post this is the intern who got a call for a singing audition. I was the one entrusted with the responsibility of chaperoning her to the audition.

We got there, queued up and then found seats in the main hall to wait; but when we got flung into the "panic room" the floodgates opened. First she started freaking out about performing in front of the judges and started hyperventilating. Then she came out with 'my partner dumped me' so near Valentine's Day. There's mascara running down her face and her perfectly applied makeup is all blotchy.

Poor thing now has a makeup job that looks like something halfway between a Damien Hirst painting and Miss Havisham's face paint.

I did feel sorry for her but I was fighting my own turmoil on the man front with Banker Guy having broken it to me the day before V-Day that he was moving to another continent. Not another city. Not another country. Another continent!

It's not permanent but he doesn't know how long for at this point. How was V-Day? For once I thought it would be a nice day but despite the effort on his part let's just say it was bitter sweet with more bitter than sweet. For someone who can talk a lot I had actually run out of words, lines, even emotions to an extent I think. It's time like these I'm glad my job is manic so I can drown myself in it and escape from the other life, if you know what I mean.

Anyway, after a lot of cajoling, consoling and several cups of tea I managed to get the intern to pull herself together and just in the nick of time. Whew! That was close. For someone who thought her luck had run out because her man walked out, she actually did pretty well and her luck hadn't run out after all.

Back in the office we had other shortages. I had to print off some mood boards for which I needed A3 paper and after 15 minutes of checking all the stationary cupboards, all the printers, Helper checking the storage room, someone else telling me to stick two pieces of A4 paper together I finally managed to locate some in a place I used to hide a secret stash.

Whiz Girl is usually on the ball with the stationery and I've never really had to 'have a word' with her about anything but this was a no no.

It may seem trivial but it was something I entrusted to her because she had proved capable of doing a good job and human as we all are I couldn't have this happen again. I always keep a secret back up for emergencies, something I did even before I had Whiz Girl and am I glad I did.

Other than that work's been good and it's helped take my mind off stuff. We have a few events coming up that I'm working on so it's a busy few weeks ahead but that's what I like about my job. I am looking forward to a lie in and a movie night in with the girls on Saturday though.

Anyway, I need to run off to pick up something from dry cleaner's for Scarlet, she has some posh dinner to go to with some clients and I don't think she'll take it kindly if I'm not back in time but have a lovely weekend and speak soon.

03

C H A P T E R

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The Secret PA: Day 15

When your week starts off with the arrival of 4 boxes of A3 paper, an invite to dinner with the bosses at a posh restaurant and positive feedback on a project you've just delivered you really can't complain. I never thought I'd say this but sometimes I actually love Mondays. Especially when the weekend has brought nothing but disappointments including an out-of-stock pair of shoes the boss wants, the hairdresser taking an inch too much off your length, a hurried goodbye and an unfruitful house hunt.

The A3 paper crisis was a bigger deal than you would think, so I was very glad to see the A3 boxes bright and early on Monday morning.

I'm usually very organised but every now and then I feel like I am swimming amidst piles of paper so high that they'd give Renzo Piano a run for his money. Speaking of which, has anyone been on the Shard tour yet? I'm hoping I might get to once the Shangri-La opens; their event space overlooking the city sounds pretty awesome and we have a few biggies coming up over the next few months.

The client event I went to with the bosses earlier this week was great in terms of networking and the food wasn't bad but it was in the evening and we didn't get back from Dublin until late so I was quite knackered the next day.

This evening I am off to another event, without the bosses but with Whiz Girl in tow.

Luckily this weekend is going to be fairly quiet, Scarlet is away in Paris so not much for me to do in the way of sudden emergencies. In other news, the new receptionist is getting on fine so far. No major slips but looks like she has a major crush on someone....take a guess. Must be something to do with the strategic positioning of the reception desk on the floor. Of course no one knows the inside story of this someone's recent divorce. Then again, it was really more of a Ross-Rachel reality spoof than a tragedy and he has bounced back, or so it seems.

In other news, the intern didn't make it through the audition but apparently it wasn't her voice that got her eliminated but her song choice. She's taken it pretty well and decided to start recording some demos and Scarlet has asked me to help with that because then we might be able to get her involved with some of the festivals in the summer.

I have also embarked upon a long-distance relationship as Banker Guy has moved to NYC for an undetermined period of time. Hopefully it won't be long but seeing as he hasn't been brilliant at texting of late I'm not sure what's going to happen. This game of hot and cold and the distance he keeps putting between us when the conversation becomes intense is driving me nuts.

And they say women are complicated. Was it too good to be true or am I just being paranoid? Only time will tell. Thankfully I have so much on at work that I don't have much time to fill with senseless brooding.

After two weeks of research and multiple drafts I finally got a deck that I've been working on signed off so that's a relief and it looks like I might actually sleep again. Only kidding. Jokes aside it's a pretty big deal because it's for a meeting with a client we have been trying to work with for a while and it's just round the corner so I had to nail it this week so I can start putting together the briefing notes.

In fact I'm actually going to get started on that once I've got a green tea refill. I've also got to do a briefing note for Scarlet for Whiz Girl's appraisal next week and get some PO requests from Marketing signed off by Tie Max, get tickets booked for some of the sales team next week before rushing off to the doctor's and then home to get ready for an event I am at this evening.

It sounds like a fun one and I do like a bit of a dance every now and again and Whiz Girl is good company.

The Secret PA: Day 16

With my briefing notes all done I was quite glad for it to be home time on Friday and I have to say the event was more fun than I thought....aside from the initial getting-lost-in-the-cold-on-the-way-there bit. I have an inherently bad sense of direction and my 3G gone AWOL which only exacerbated the problem. We were only attending the event to network....but there may be a deal in the pipeline as I made some good connections which Scarlet feels have deal written all over them.

It's been a bit of an eventful week between various lost and found incidents. To begin with, we got a call from a police station saying that a projector had been found on the tube.

At first I was baffled as we wouldn't transport projectors around town. I then discovered it was actually a display stand that someone had taken to an event and left on the tube. Who left it is still a mystery but at least it has been found.

Other lost (and perhaps not found) items include spatial awareness and general sense of reality of certain persons in the office. Nancy always jokes about my slight lack of spatial awareness but then she told us what happened with one of the marketing manager's at an event the other day.

Apparently they were stood by a table and Lia suddenly turned and said she was going to go and talk to 'that lady in the blue dress'. Nancy couldn't see anyone in a blue dress so was really confused until she realised at the same moment Lia did, that Lia had mistaken a cut out of a person for a real person. Poor Lia, she went red in the face and thought she was losing her marbles. Whiz Girl and I were in hysterics when she relayed the story.

In other news, the girls from work and I have got discounted tickets to see VIVA Forever and we have a few new hires on the Sales Team who I need to book in for a meet and greet with the bosses. That's one thing I find quite nice about the company. We are also going to set up a new office in another city soon so I might have a 'big project' coming up. Is a move on the cards in the next few months? Who knows.

Pepper has been working from home with conjunctivitis this week and the new receptionist was off sick for two day so Whiz Girl was filling in for her.

This fluey bug seems to be doing the rounds by the looks of it. I just bought some Echinacea, Berrocca and throat lozenges in the hope it'll ward off any illness. I don't really take sick days and if I had to I'd struggle to not work from home.

It's hard to decide what to do when you're sick because if you take a sick day you end up stressing about what hasn't got done and will be waiting for you when you get back and if you work from home you feel like you're under performing because you don't get much done, so it's better to rest and get better so you're up and running at full steam quicker.

Speaking of which, I think I need to refuel with a chai latte before this conference call I have to go set up and be on with Scarlet, Pepper (who is working from home) and a client.

Stay well and enjoy your weekend peeps xx

The Secret PA: Day 17

In anticipation of VIVA Forever in a few weeks the Girls from the Office and I have planned a mini pre Viva Party and as there are five of us, we've decided to go all out and actually dress a part each. Whiz Girl and I were invited to a networking event at the Theatre which included tickets to the show and I was gutted that it was a date we couldn't make but as luck had it we got discounted tickets courtesy of the bosses – perks of the job! I really can't complain.

What I could perhaps whinge about is the sniffles that have had me go through several boxes of Kleenex this week and I had to work at home on Monday so as not to spread my germs.

Curly Scarecrow's divorce is case closed but I have a feeling I might be engaged assisting the wedding planner for a certain to-be-groom whose name I cannot disclose at this point in time. I have known of PAs who have helped plan their boss's wedding but in those cases it was the bride. I might have a rather interesting experience in store.

As for setting up a new office, it looks like the plans are going ahead but there is still a debate as to which of two locations it should be. As you may have guessed Scarlet and Pepper are both convinced that their choice of location is ideal. They do always come to a consensus so I'll just have to wait and see.

My fulfilling of my New Year resolutions is going well. I think I have managed to get my head around the complex workings of the mind of Tie Max, my accounting skills are getting better as I get through 'Accounting for Dummies', Exchanged 6 business cards at the last event....speaking of which I did actually make a more valuable contact than expected. Looks like my judgement and commercial prowess is getting better when it comes to choosing who to hobnob with at events.

I even found myself networking at a friend's 30th a few weeks ago (unconsciously!). What can I say, it's become second nature so I don't go anywhere without business cards. Whiz Girl doesn't have her own and I didn't actually for 6 months until I asked and I do think we PAs should all have business cards.

In other news Clawly is back in a few weeks and The Scarecrow and Temporary Clawly were spotted having a drink together at the pub after work when the Girls and I went for a quick one....but they weren't alone - Pink Streak and Raggie were with them. The four have been sighted together a few times over the last few weeks and the latter have been sighted alone over the last few months during lunch hour. Pink Streak is apparently leaving soon and Raggie's time is nearly up. She came as an intern and then was given a short term contract. I think my rule about not mixing up personal and professional life has always stood me in good stead so I don't think I'd ever change that.

We have a concert night coming up before Easter and we did have a situation involving a client and a Mermaid (sorry, his PA dressed as a Mermaid!) at a similar do last year but I haven't had any such scandalous affairs to sort out since I've also started thinking about my holiday but we have a fair few festivals on so it's all hinged on work as I don't think I could go away and relax when it's busy and we have big things on. I can't believe I am in my 3rd year here – Time has gone so quick

And so has my lunch hour! Eeeek. Hope you all had a good week and have something nice planned for the weekend. I'm going to a hen do in York and going to make the most of it as Whiz Girl and I have to work next weekend because we have an event on. The bosses will be there too though and the intern is actually doing a gig. It's the first time she's part of one of our events but I've got a good feeling about it.

The Secret PA: Day 18

Thank god for Kleenex balsam is all I can say – Oh and Scarlet of course! Had it not been for her full box of Kleenex I might have had no skin left on my nose after the sniffles last week which would have been a bit rubbish since I had a meeting with Scarlet and Curly and Curly's divorce lawyer and I had to trial the canapés for this weekend's event (for which I did need my taste buds.

I worked at home on Monday and came in feeling better and then the sniffles crept back up on me. Luckily they came without the cough and fever so I managed to get everything planned for the upcoming Easter concert and this weekend's event.

The event this weekend is for clients and it's a sit down dinner.

I am quite looking forward to it as some clients will be attending with their PAs so it will be a good opportunity to network. The bosses are doing a short presentation and Q&A over aperitifs for which I had to put together the deck. I do love Power point and even more so with the recent spike in spreadsheet usage that has snuck into my list of tasks after taking on the role of PA to the FD.

This 'spreadsheet usage' has now gone beyond the regular call of duty to include 'wedding planning' spreadsheets

Yes, you guessed it. Tie Max is getting hitched to his long term partner and has a stag do that needs planning and he wants my help on the wedding bits. Hen do's I have done. Stag do's? Never. It's going to be an interesting ... project? experience? mission?! I've started looking at destinations but suggestions welcome :)

I've also had a few run throughs with the intern who is performing at the Easter event – her first big gig! I think it's going to be a good break for her.

I'm glad it's the weekend soon but not ecstatic since I can't have a lazy day at home tomorrow because of the event but I do have dinner with the girls tonight and get to drool some more over stag do destinations and hotels tomorrow morning. Yay!

Next week I am going to Stratford upon-Avon next week with Scarlet to meet with a client who wants to do an Opera style event featuring Shakespeare inspired operas next month to tie in with Shakespeare's assumed date of birth 23rd April). They're looking at operas influenced by Othello, Hamlet and Romeo & Juliet, and Sir John in Love .

by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1929). We've never done a Shakespeare themed event so I am quite excited

Anyway, got to run but have a lovely weekend all.

Talk soon xx

The Secret PA: Day 19

When the arrival of a new printer becomes the highlight of your day you know you have well and truly embraced the admin side of your job. When you are surrounded by 5 others as you watch the printouts emerge stapled and hear a cheer it proves efficient admin is the backbone of every office. It needs to be done and it needs to be done right. To be fair it is a pretty cool printer. The staple feature is just one of the 40 features including a confidential document print option so you don't have to dart to the printer before peeping toms get to it – quite important when you are the boss's confidante.

I also had to co ordinate operation house move for Pepper which took most of Wednesday so I was glad to return to the office to find freshly baked cake on my desk, courtesy of Nancy.

She just bought a new mixer and has wasted no time sampling it's features. On Wednesday it was lemon drizzle. On Thursday it was chocolate and banana and there's likely to be a few more to come. So much for my attempt to be healthy this week.

I wasn't particularly good on Tuesday as we were taken to a Thai restaurant in Stratford-upon-Avon by a client and then Scarlet and I had dinner at a 600 year old pub The Old Tavern.

The meeting went well and we were taken round to Shakespeare's birthplace, Anne Hathaway's cottage and the theatre to get a feel for the era and the costumes that the client wants to incorporate into the theme of the event. I have always enjoyed theatre and Shakespeare so I really enjoyed the tour and am very excited about this event and so is Scarlet. So much so that I started putting notes together that evening on the train home as Scarlet gave me a brief of next steps.

The event at the weekend went smoothly, except for one slightly tipsy boss but nothing gossip worthy. I met a few really lovely PAs: a legal secretary, 2 private PAs working for Entrepreneurs and 2 working in Fashion and one working for a Travel company. Networking is really important in the PA world because you never know where you might need a contact; always be helpful because you just might need the favour returned one day.

The intern Raggie's last day is today and Pink Streak leaves next week. Clawly returns in a month so the temporary Clawly will be gone two weeks after the Easter break. She has got a couple of interviews lined up. I also got her to update her CV on SecsintheCity and link her LinkedIn profile to it.

The bosses have decided to set up a new office in Manchester. Next week I have to go up to check out some office spaces and draw up a shortlist for the bosses. I've never had to coordinate setting up a new office so this should be an interesting experience. The bosses will still be based in London but there will be a small set up with a sales and account management team.

Oops, there goes my phone. I have to go for my weekly catch up with the bosses and then it's home time. After working last weekend I am looking forward to a lie in this weekend. I might even have a skype call with Banker Guy. Not much to report on that front. It's been a fairly dormant element of my life but I've just been so busy I haven't had much time to really think about it to be honest.

The Secret PA: Day 20

As much as I love the sequence 4 day week- 4 day weekend – 4 day week it does result in a bit of a squeeze when it comes to fitting 5 days work into 4 days. Goodbye lunch hour, hello lunch bar i.e. 2 x cereal bars acquired via the kitchen vending machine with change collected from my purse, handbag pocket and desk drawer.

I also made two trips to Manchester before Easter to recci for office spaces before drawing up a shortlist to take the bosses to see. It wasn't too hard to get it down to 5 because I had a pretty detailed spec. I won't be spending a lot of time there but the bosses will make trips up and I will sometimes need to go with them so I did choose places that I liked too ;) Let's see what the bosses think. Worst case scenario they won't agree on any so it'll be back to square one. That's not unusual and when you have three to contend with....it's hard to please everyone.

The Easter event went well and the intern's gig was a bigger hit than I expected. It even went on to YouTube before midnight and a few clients are interested. Of course Scarlet wants us to own the relationship so essentially we'll be working as her agent but then intermediaries play a key role in the way businesses develops today which is fine as long as your contract safeguards your spot in the middle. we

The risk is often that A and C will develop a relationship and you'll get eliminated from the equation but that's why it's a key clause in contracts. And after all, we did give her the opportunity to perform and it was a company event funded by sponsors. The bosses are also well connected and have the resource to support her and as they say "it's all about the money honey" #cheesy

The weekend went so quick, then again it always does when you're having a good time. I spent it with family but we also had friends round as friends I grew up with were also back at their folks for the Easter break. Too much eating and too little exercise. I haven't even been for Pilates in at least a month!

We did go shopping one day though which is exercise when it's a marathon shopping day out. The best part was my bargain buy at Kurt Geiger. It doesn't get better than 70% off really and I did need new pumps for work. I did go for a much needed mani pedi with mum after which was nice. A change from going with the boss where it's her having a manicure and me writing notes.

The only non relaxing bit of the weekend was Twitter's April Fool's joke that did cause me momentary panic.

For those of you who didn't have the pleasure of being woken up by a text saying Twitter was going to start charging for vowel usage in tweets and then met by Twitter's articulation of this new rule only to end up at the below, you saved yourself a few extra heart beats.

It was pretty ingenious though I have to admit. It's been a while since someone came up with a good April Fool's Day prank. I have to say that Grumpy Cat didn't go down as well with me....and by the sounds of it with the bosses too...they were discussing it when I walked into work on Tuesday and they weren't impressed. They were impressed with Twitter's April Fool's Day gag.

The Secret PA: Day 21

This post has been long over due, sort of like that credit card bill that had a way of getting over due without even telling you. I moved house and then went on holiday for a few days and then came back to find a note for an overdue credit card bill for a credit card that I don't even use! Not sure what that's about since I am very good at keeping things like that in order so it looks like I'm going to have to make a trip to the bank. I can feel my stress levels starting to rise and it's only Tuesday!

Things have been a bit manic at work lately which explains why I've gone AWOL for a bit. The bosses finally agreed on an office space up in Manchester which is where I've been over the last few weeks just trying to set things up. It should be fully functional in the next 2 weeks but there is still plenty of admin that needs to be sorted for the move but luckily I've got Whiz Girl to help. Tie Max's stag do is pretty much organised and the wedding plans are going relatively well...or shall we say with minimal margins for errors and rounded corners instead of corners being cut.

There's been a fair few changes in the office, with people moving around and coming and going. Pink Streak has left and Raggie's internship finished. Helper has moved back home to Australia so I guess we won't be seeing any more of his post it notes about the office when things are fixed.....or helicopters in the canteen.

The blokes in IT gave him a remote controlled helicopter which had a fair few rounds about the kitchen/lounge area at lunchtime courtesy of the number of blokes wanting to have a go. Whiz Girl and I happened to go there to make a coffee and voila! Boys and their toys.

Clawly is back but seems quite changed and actually seems to like her job and doesn't talk about leaving like she used to. She even seems 'uninterested' in the Curly Scarecrow. There's a new bloke in Finance who decided it was smart to leave an invoice on my desk in my absence and couldn't understand how it went AWOL by the time I returned to the office. I had a nice break for a few days in Brighton with the girls which was lovely but it just went so quickly. Scarlet and Pepper are up in Manchester for a couple of days this week and Tie Max is on Jury duty so in that sense things are a wee bit quieter. Some of the finance, sales and marketing teams are moving up to Manchester and new staff are being taken on so in that sense there's been a bit of a restructure. I might have to look for a team PA for the Manchester office but for now it looks like I'll be managing things from here.

It's so sunny outside today; hopefully it'll stay like this over the weekend. Oh there's Whiz Girl with our doughnuts and frappuccinos. Yum! Got to go get my caffeine shot before tackling some reports and sinking in to a world of spreadsheets.

04

C H A P T E R

04

The Secret PA: Day 22

So much for the Sunshine...gone before it even settled for a cuppa by the feel of it. I'm quite envious of Scarlet.....she's heading off to Cyprus for a week. She'll be lying on a beach while I'm getting the new office set up in not so sunny Manchester. In a way I'm glad work is hectic, it's keeping my mind off things and I made a new friend at an event a few weeks ago.

She's an administrator in retail in Northampton and is looking to move to London. At the moment she's doing shift work so it's four days on and four days off so she spends the days off in London. She says the money is good because the shifts are longer but she really wants to move here and find a Secretarial job in fashion. She's tri lingual (and speaks Russian) so I've told her to look at SecsintheCity and upload her CV there because they do feature multilingual opportunities.

I got the official promotion from PA to Senior PA this week as Whiz Girl passed her probation and is now a Junior PA, so I guess I could start thinking of planning my holiday...but at the moment I've been so busy with work and working on myself. I think we all need to find time for ourselves each day to focus on the things we want to achieve and as Nancy used to say, get the 'Dolphins' going (she meant endorphins) - so I started taking yoga lessons and going for a run twice a week....

and I'm reading this book called 'Empowering Women' and I was so high on the 'Positive Thinking' I was reeking of it when I got in to the office according to Whiz Girl.

The other reason I haven't planned my holiday is that I am sort of on hold. Banker Guy said he was moving back before the summer...but then a week later he said he thinks his contract will be extended and if it is he wants to stay on. He has changed his mind about three times in the last two weeks! Whiz Girl is having her own set of issues with her seemingly perfect partner and I overheard Tie Max talking to Pepper and it sounded like he was getting cold feet. I seriously hope not because if he doesn't it won't be pretty. No one wants to re-enact Carrie Bradshaw's –getting-stood-up-at-the –altar. Maybe Pepper is not really the best person for him to be talking to about this given that he has been round the divorce block twice #justsaying It's like a cloud of anti-relationship has been cast over this office all of a sudden. Speaking of which there they come now and Scarlet seems to be making her way here too! It's the invasion of the Management armada and Whiz is on lunch so I'm the sole defender.

The Secret PA: Day 23

If I didn't know that there wasn't such a day as 'have a go at someone day' I'd have sworn today was it. I would also have insisted that peacemaker and office calmer be included in my job description. Today was one of those days where our usually fairly cool office had turned into an overcharged pressure pot and I felt a bit on the edge.

'What did I ever do to him?' Poor whiz girl. Apparently she passed the Curly Scarecrow in the corridor and he made a face at her and when she asked if he was alright he bluntly said "Yes I'm fine". She was rather upset because she was certain he was pulling a face at her and she couldn't imagine why. I managed to reassure her with a cup of tea and we got back to work....

...or barely had when I heard Scarlet and Pepper in the conference room next door talking in raised voices....."How on earth do people manage to turn something simple into something that is so complex that it's beyond their visibility and comprehension?".....and then I heard the door open and I was summoned to bring some budgets over to them from Tie Max's office. He was on holiday but I had access to the files.

I barely sat down when Tie Max said his phone had packed up and he had no sound but it was still within

the warranty but he needed the receipt faxed to him. He was not happy as you can imagine. Then at lunch I went down to get the watch battery of Scarlet's watch battery changed and they said it would take five weeks. Apparently it was because they had to seal it so it's waterproof up to 200m underwater. You, know, so it's safe for going diving at lunch, as you do!

And then I had to contend with Scarlet's lawyer who bore bad news or in other words had 'stuffed up' again. She's trying to sell a flat she had bought to rent out but they were falling behind schedule and she's have to wait another week which meant having to contact the buyer and change the date for the 3rd time this month.

By this point I was running out of calm but the secret to professional success is good anger management and keeping a lid on your emotions. Luckily things started looking up because the bosses were happy with a presentation I had put together for their meeting up in Manchester and a banner stand we had ordered arrived and was looking good. Whiz Girl had perked up and we went for half price Frappuccinos despite the not so frappe-ish weather.

Despite the ups and downs and the fact that I have not heard from Banker Guy in almost three weeks, I have been great. I went to see Gatsby last week and over the weekend I went for StarTrek with my folks

and yesterday was 'Orange Wednesday' (half price tickets) so I went to watch Hangover III with Whiz Girl. Tomorrow I'm at a networking event and up in Manchester for a few days next week with bosses – hope the weather is a tad kinder than it has been these last few days.

I've also got to sort out invoices and get budgets ready for Tie Max who is back next week so things are pretty hectic at the moment and I'm looking forward to a lazy weekend of doing nothing.

Hope you've all got something nice planned, regardless of the weather.

The Secret PA: Day 24

I'm on my way back to the big smoke after 3 very productive days in the almost as big smoke (Manchester). We are now completely operational and the requisite number of sales and marketing personnel have been installed along with the rest of the technical and non technical backing. We also have a new payroll manager here in London. We hired her from GAAPweb which was recommended to me by the girls at SecsintheCity as it's part of the same network of job sites and I happened to mention to them that our HR manager was looking for a candidate.

Something funny happened when I was heading up to meet the girls at SecsintheCity in Canary Wharf for a quick coffee to discuss a potential project. If it wasn't so early in the day I'd have sworn the train driver was 'happy' in a 'high' sort of way.

Just before we pulled in to Canary Wharf his almost Santa Clause like voice came beaming out at the unsuspecting passengers:

“The next stop will be Canary Wharf but I'm sure you all know that because I can feel how excited you are to go out and start the day at work. It is ten minutes to nine, not like it's 6 am or something like on that apprentice show.....”

By this point everyone was smiling. Nothing like a bit of early morning humour to break the monotony of straight faces.

Banker Guy was always straight faced on the train. Hmmm....speaking of whom.

I am now back in the single girls club. After not having heard from him in almost 4 weeks I get an ice cold text from him saying he 'isn't coming back immediately' and will 'chat with me in a few weeks'. In retrospect sometimes it all seemed to much like something out of a rom com. It was a whirlwind romance...that's ended in cowardice. He's taking the path of least resistance and to be honest I think he's been quite selfish. Someone posted this quote from Bob Marley that read "The biggest coward is a man who awakens a woman's love with no intention of loving her". Another one bites the dust.

But I'm actually doing better than I thought because work is great and Whiz Girl and I get on well. The new girl in HR is also really nice and the bosses are far from horrible so I really can't complain. I guess those are the things that make a job worthwhile at the end of the day – the people, the thank yous. and I do like the perks too! And the fact that I can always leave my personal life at the door when I walk in to the office, which is something I pride myself in having mastered and despite the whole crush on the Scarecrow I would never really date him.

My don't date people at work policy has always worked in my favour so I'm not about to change that...which is why I almost cracked up in the lift the other day when the below conversation occurred with one of the new hires:

New guy: "Nice jacket".

Me: "Thanks".

New guy: "I like that military style coat. Maybe I should get one so we can have matching coats"

Me: thinking to myself #howrandom and smirking I give him the thumbs up.

sign – I am clearly finding this whole thing ludicrous but he hasn't caught on to that yet

New guy: "But in a different colour...maybe a blue of something" (mine is cherry red).

Me: "Well I really wouldn't know where to find one since I don't shop for men clothes" (I can't get rid of the smirk but I think he mistakes it for a smile".

New guy: "I shop for women's clothes. I mean.....(he goes red in the face realising he has put his foot in it)...

Me: (purely accidental and in jest): "Why am I not surprised".

I walked out of the lift chuckling but I turned back and said "I'm only joking".

He was smiling but red in the face. Whiz Girl cracked up when I told her.

Anyway, I'm going to get back to the project plan I'm working on so I can have it ready by the time we pull in to London.

Hope you've all had a good week and have a lovely weekend all xx

The Secret PA: Day 25

The Glastonbury tan is wearing off but I've managed to top up between the Summer Party, BBQ with friends and much needed G&Ts in the luxury of my garden...or 'patio' as the Americans would say (there were a few from LA at the Summer Party on Saturday)...which is really just a small patch of grass outside the kitchen with a folding sun lounge that I got on eBay.

It's been an interesting week with a well attended Summer client bash, a few 'Pepper potentials' in the board room, a Hyde park gig and the Marquee people for Tie Max's wedding going bust. So I've got to find a replacement and it's no easy task with the wedding in three weeks. In addition to rescuing Tie Max's wedding and an upcoming gig in Manchester, I'm also planning Pepper's farewell party and bracing myself for a new Pepper who'll be joining us soon as he'll overlap with Pepper for a few weeks for a proper handover.

The first candidate was a woman in her fifties, very Doris Day and dressed in polka dots but bearing an uncanny resemblance in demeanour to Scarlet even though they didn't look at all alike. She's been a director at a Fashion company and was looking for a change having years of experience with fashion shows etc. Also very well connected in NYC and Milan.

he next contender was a tall, lanky Brazilian in his 40s sporting black Ferracinis, a black suit, a red shirt.....and a tan that looked fresh off the beach. He had been an assistant director at an events company in Spain and before that spent several years organising gigs in Mexico.

Then there was LA Law as I decided to refer to him as because of his resemblance to Jude law with an American accent. He looked surprisingly young and had not yet been a Director but was extremely qualified for the job. He was well connected in LA but he wasn't that well connected in the UK and I don't really think 'international events' is on the blue print for this year, or perhaps the next few given the general status quo.

I'm guessing there will be a fair few going through the doors before they settle because it's a big decision since they did set up the company together. I guess one day the Scarecrow will grow up and step into Scarlet's place but given that there is no heir apparent to Pepper it's a question mark. Speaking of heir's there is much excitement around here about the Prince or Princess of Cambridge and we're actually hosting a royal baby themed event for young mums with infants and toddlers next week. It's the first of its kind that we're doing since it's not really the typical audience we organise events for but we we're diversifying and working with a few local crèches and amateur artists.

As for holiday planning, I'm still undecided. I was invited to Barcelona but definitely unlikely to take up the offer! It was at the Summer Party. Do you remember that Media and Entertainment Lawyer who I went to University with and bumped into at a Networking event? Well we do use the firm he works for which means seeing him every now and then.

Anyway, so he invited me to Barcelona where he and a few University friends have rented a villa for a week. He took my number – so far we've only communicated via work emails, my work phone and Facebook – and asked if I'd go out for a drink sometime. I said I'd think about it, wasn't promising. We didn't speak at length since I had to be on the go as we were hosting the event and I had my own bit of networking to do since a lot of clients come with their PAs. I heard from him earlier this week and surprise surprise...he was bailing on going for 'a drink' because 'he has a partner' but 'it was so hot at the Summer Party he was having trouble concentrating'. I was playing it cool given the fact that his firm is a client and I like to keep my work and personal life separate to the point where I almost being to feel like a super hero with a double life – I like to think of us PAs as super heroes in a way. Still, it was pretty lame.

Anyway, I've got to work through some plans for the retirement bash with my co-party organiser...

The one and only Curly Scarecrow. We're doing it at a café down the road – a valid excuse for a frappuccino run #itswork

Have a lovely weekend all....hopefully we'll have a bit of sunshine later.

More soon xx

The Secret PA: Day 26

Another week of sunshine gone by without a chance to soak it up despite having to run around town meeting suppliers. Luckily the hayfever is under control, as is the Marquee situation. The wedding is next week so the pressure is back on but the groom to be doesn't seem to be getting cold feet- yet! As long as he doesn't spend too much time pre meditating with Pepper. Plans are underway for his farewell and we've decided to run with a Hawaiian theme given the weather...

....and the fact that it's just so him. We've picked a rooftop bar and got Leis (garlands/Hawaiian flower necklace) quite cheap online. I did think grass skirts might be pushing it as it's an office do but when Scarlet suggested it I couldn't really refuse so it's going to be Aloha London!

We had a few more Pepper potentials go through boardroom this week but the search is still on. It seems none of last week's candidates made the cut. We've had the 30 something corporate supermodel, the experienced stalwart in a tailored suit, the slightly arty and stocky younger version of Pepper, the post MBA Ivy League smart kid, and clean shaven pink shirt City silver fox...and oh! There comes the next one....Thin rimmed glasses, white shirt, jeans, black blazer and a lot of confidence minus the arrogance. And there he goes...to the chamber of truth...

To add to my manic week I had to go on a rescue mission to retrieve a teenage girl and her suitcase from a country lane. Scarlet's niece was visiting from France and borrowed her car to go see some friends in Sussex but it packed up on the way there and the insurance people wouldn't come to collect her as the policy was in Scarlet's name. You would think you're paying a premium for the car and not the owner. Anyway, I had to go fetch her and take her back to Scarlet's. Initially said they wouldn't even do that as she wasn't driving the car but my persuasive efforts paid off and they agreed to come pick up the car by the time she got there.

The Curly Scarecrow got a promotion and I just got a pay rise – albeit small – and today is payday! I really need a haircut and I could use a few new work summer dresses. I've set up a frappuccino fund for me and whiz girl where we allow ourselves a weekly treat. I've started running in the mornings as I find it really helps me hold off on the caffeine until mid morning and still be functioning 120%.

I'm looking forward to a lie in this weekend and planning my holiday. Barcelona isn't on the list but a few other places are and it's going to be a girl's holiday...and Cuba is a strong contender at the moment.

Anyway, got to run – it's Frappuccino Friday so I'm off to grab a quick one.

The Secret PA: Day 27

Here comes the Groom, there goes my weekend...but Nouveau Poivre is here to stay.

As you will have gathered from my manic scribbles last week, the big day has finally arrived for Tie Max which for me means the end of Project Wedding. How this will end, I have no idea but I'm hoping for the best. It's this weekend so whilst I do get to put on a posh frock and fascinator to sip champagne and eat wedding cake, I will technically be 'working'. It's out in the country but in the afternoon so I'll be heading back with a few of the others after and since Whiz Girl is training for a half marathon she will be the designated driver.

It's been a bit stressful but yet fun in its own way....and on the plus side, in the unlikely event that I chance upon meeting Mr. Right I've already done a test run of the planning and I've got the contacts.

This week has been a bit of a tedious one in some ways between the insurance claim for Scarlet's car, the stress of the wedding bits and bobs and the printer that botched up a banner stand so my fuse has been a bit short and I've had to bite my tongue more than once. You've really got to sometimes; it's just not professional to charge around barking but I managed to let off steam with a long run post work followed by a large G&T.

It worked so well that I might add this run and G&T combo to my list of stress busters. Something tells me I'm going to need it next week. Just a feeling...but not sure why. Maybe it has something to do with having 4 bosses even though numero 4, the new Pepper is really going to be working in Pepper's shadow and I guess his PA will work in mine? White shirt, Jeans, Blazer, rectangular rimmed glasses, clean shaven, sandy blonde hair and an American passport. Mr T – the New Pepper – is a classic case of surfer boy in a suit. He is also married and has his own PA, who has about half my experience and has worked with him for a while. She was an Administrator at the Media company he worked for in LA when he was still an Assistant Director and became his PA when he joined the board. I haven't met her yet but I did meet him and he seems very process driven and slightly intimidating. Charismatic like Pepper but in a completely different way yet they both seemed to get on so well that I think Scarlet was well jel ;)

Anyway, I've got to go get my wedding planner head back on.

The Secret PA: Day 28

Mission accomplished, covert competition and a holiday over the hill.

Me: "I have a doctor's appointment at 6 so I'm going to leave 20 minutes early but I'll be back in to tie up a few things before I wind up for the day".

Scarlet: "You can leave at half 5.30 you know, so why are you coming back? (with a grin). When the boss tells you to go home then maybe it's ok to call it a day, right?"

I guess that's what happens when you work a few late ones. You forget what time you can actually declare it G&T o'clock in your world. With the wedding I had forgotten that I ever worked a regular-ish 9 – 5 job. It all went as planned even though I had Groomzilla to appease in the final hours. Luckily for me Bridezilla wasn't my responsibility – wouldn't have been so bad though given that she didn't have a shred of Bridezilla in her!

Aside from the light shower in the late afternoon which caused momentary panic for the ladies in lavender, which included Tie Max's mother and her two sisters: they looked like they had walked out of Downton Abbey and into the wedding marquee.

Quite a contrast to 20 something LA Liz who walked in after Mr T last week who's the sole PA to Mr T. Am I worried? Not really but it is a bit unsettling given that I was PA to Scarlet, Pepper and Tie Max which effectively means that I am down one boss and we are up one PA. I am a senior PA and I had thought she'd sort of be my direct responsibility like Whiz Girl but I feel like I'm in the dark. She is ambitious and has been working with Mr T for a while which was why he negotiated her into his acceptance of joining the position. I wasn't actually made aware of that until the Friday before she started, when the bosses called me in to a meeting.

I'm sure I have nothing to worry about...right?

To make things worse and better at the same time I just booked my holiday. Good because I could use a break. Worse because I hope the covert competitor doesn't try to fill my shoes in my absence. Reminds me of that episode in Friends when Rachel goes on maternity leave and returns to find that her replacement has filled her shoes. Of course I'm only away for 2 weeks, and I am still Scarlet and Tie Max's PA and the Senior PA. I should just enjoy my holiday right?

Sigh....

I'm quite excited about my holiday as I've never been to Canada. I'm heading there with a few of my friends from University.

One of them moved over to Canada last year so there's a few of us heading out from here. I'll send you a post card ;) or two perhaps!

So glad it's Friday but I've got so much to get through before I go away and Pepper's send off is next week so it's going to be manic. I think I might just lie in this weekend and do a bit of work from home just to make sure I have everything done before my holiday. I can't believe last year this time I thought I had the perfect partner and I went on the perfect summer holiday (2 actually, back to back!) and now I'm back in the Single Girls Club. How time flies! Hope you've all got more exciting plans than me this weekend Xx

05

C H A P T E R

05

The Secret PA: Day 29

Hello lovelies!

Sorry I've been all over the shop between wrapping things up pre holiday, then going on holiday.....and of course the post break work mountain. It's even more stressful when you feel the undercurrents of the cat next door, deviously eyeing your desk, waiting to pounce the minute you leave.

Ok, I admit, I'm being a bit melodramatic here and I know I shouldn't be worried but it's like Mr T's PA LA Liz is trying to conquer my space one Director at a time. She looked really frazzled when I came back from holiday though, so maybe she is finding it harder than expected. You reckon?

Tie Max's send off was a bit emotional for everyone, even him. It was a great party though and it was nice to get a mention at the end from Pepper for the effort I put in. It felt really strange to return from holiday to a different set of bosses – somewhat. Tie Max seems to be in an unusually good mood these days but I'm not sure if that's his new cover for super stressed or the lingering's of a honeymoon high.

I've been on a bit of high despite the stress and the holiday did feel good.

Nothing like a nice long girls holiday with plenty of wine and chocolate thrown in. Of course now there's the post holiday pounds to knock off before Christmas so they can be topped up again ;)

Speaking of which, I've already got the ball rolling on Christmas Party plans but they're on the back burner for now as we have quite a few events in the diary for October and November including the office bonfire night party. Did anyone read about the 'Creepy Clown in Northampton?' He made it into the national press which is what I found interesting. Maybe I should get him to come along to our bonfire night party?

Mr T has introduced some changes which involved moving people around the floor. Fortunately that did not include me, but unfortunately it did include the Curly Scarecrow who is now in my direct line of vision. But I'm totally cool with that. It's purely professional.

Oh, there comes LA Liz, she looks harrowed....I wonder what this is about. Looks like she wants my help... which has happened a fair few times since I returned – I can't say I'm not pleased that she is asking for help. Got to run but have a lovely weekend all! We're supposed to be having better weather this weekend – at least in London.

The Secret PA: Day 30

I was right. Liz is finding this job harder than she's expected. She finally fessed up (after 2 glasses of wine with Whiz Girl and myself at the pub) to struggling and not being quite so sure how to please Scarlet.

She seemed quite breezy when she first joined but now she just looks stressed. She's not had that much experience as a PA and having to look after three Directors while I was on holiday was clearly not something she was prepared for. Before I went she seemed so confident that I was actually worried she was trying to oust me from my seat here.

That said, Scarlet and Tie Max were clearly impressed with her efforts and said I'd prepped her well.

Did I only train her on things I was comfortable with sharing responsibility for but without missing anything requested by the bosses? Guilty as charged.

Am I worried? Perhaps a little. She seems to be slowly eating into my repertoire one task at a time and is now assisting Scarlet and Mr. T. It's like the boss to PA ratio has gone from 2:1 to 1.5:1.5 and I can't say I like it.

But that's not the only thing that's changed around here. Tech has advanced while I was away, everyone

and everything seems a bit more techie around here than it was in Pepper's time. We've also been working longer hours. I don't know if it's holiday withdrawal symptoms or the smell of change but the atmosphere has become more charged with people moving faster, typing faster, and working though lunch which is something that for the most part only applied to the bosses and myself now and again. But something is amiss and I can't put a finger on it.

I think I'll find out soon as we've all been called into a company meeting with the Directors tomorrow morning. In all the time I've been here the only time that has happened is when Pepper announced his retirement. Given that it didn't seem like any of the three Directors is retiring, I can't think what it could be. I'm feeling a bit uneasy, confused and anxious about tomorrow's meeting. I keep telling myself it'll be fine but the hushed voices of the bosses behind closed doors tells me something is up....

Will keep you posted.

The Secret PA: Day 31

So, as it turns out LA Liz wasn't trying to slip into my shoes one foot at a time but is actually being handed a new pair. Let me rewind to the week before.....

"I wonder what this meeting is about..."

"No idea"

"Do you think they're moving more of us to Manchester?"

"My guess is as good as yours, even though I can see you're not convinced"

"Should I be worried?"

"I wouldn't know (phone starts buzzing) Sorry, I have to get that. (In my head I'm thinking 'saved by the bell')"

I really was as clueless as everyone else, which was what I suddenly realised was slightly alarming for me as I'm also the official confidante of the bosses so I'm surprised that Scarlet hasn't trusted me with this. It had to be something big. I spent the rest of the day feeling on edge and it felt like the longest day I've had in this office.....and I certainly wasn't prepared for what was to come.....

The next day....

We're all on the main floor. It's so quiet I can hear the traffic outside and the sound of someone breathing. My mind wanders about until it stumbled on the panic button! Which is actually Scarlet in a red dress walking in with Tie Max and Mr T in Tow.

And then it came....the announcement of the acquisition. Scarlet and Pepper had decided to sell the company to Mr. T but retain a small share but would no longer be involved in the running of it. To be fair there really was no heir apparent as Scarecrow really isn't even half a chip off the Scarlet block. Of course when they broke the news some floodgates did too. For some it was the financial worry, for others I think it was just the shock, thinking what it meant for them.

Some will be retained but many will be moving on....where does that leave me? I'm not sure yet....negotiations are underway and everyone has been quite mature and professional about everythingbut I'll keep you posted.

#stressed #anxiety

The Secret PA: Day 32

Hello everyone,

Hope you're having a good week. Mine's been alright if you put clarity in the 'alright' box.

After numerous discussions it's been decided who will stay with the company under the leadership of Mr.T and who will shake hands over a pay out and move on. You're probably wondering where that leaves Whiz Girl and myself. Well there's really only 1 PA needed but I've been here for 3 years so I'm actually ok with moving on. I do have to stick around until Christmas for the transition period and proper handover and training. And I'm organising the Christmas Party.

I'm gutted and it's totally the end of an era (SexandtheCity movie flashback!) but who knows what's next. And according to things I've been reading lately the job market isn't looking too bad.

Whiz Girl is really upset because this was her first real PA job and I can see she was hoping to be here a couple of years but Scarlet has said she'll give her a good reference). The same goes for me and Pepper has also said he'll recommend me to his network of contacts.

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I've been reasonably diligent with keeping my CV up to date but probably not as diligent as I should have been so I need to update my CV and get it on SecsintheCity this weekend, to put myself back on the market. You have to these days, just applying for a job is not enough and several of my friends who've changed jobs recently have been head hunted.

Anyway, got to run, have a meeting with HR to go through my agreement and then heading off to tie up some last minute strings for a themed gig we've got planned.

Enjoy your week.

More soon x

The Secret PA: Day 33

Trimnings – in and out of the office

I mean that literally but let's say some of the trimmings aren't festive and sparkly but rather more representative of the chill on the air reminding us that the time for gingerbread lattes, ear muffs and present buying panic is upon us.

My resolve to wait until December to put up the tree, buy mince pies and update my Christmas playlist has been weakened by the stress at work which has compelled me to be kinder to myself, a sort of reward if you like for getting myself well and truly back on the market!

It's easy to update a CV but a bit more challenging to refresh and refine it. When you're tailoring it for different jobs you're applying for it's not a ten minute task. I've also uploaded my CV to SecsintheCity and I've already had three calls from recruiters that I'm meeting this week. I've also helped Whiz Girl with her CV but she leaves sooner than me, 2 weeks today. I finish the week of the 20th and then it's gardening leave/Christmas holidays so I need to find something soonish so I have a job in the New Year.

I've got two more gigs, the office Christmas party and a fair bit of admin briefing and processes to handover. I've also got my final Christmas shop to do for Scarlet and Tie Max.

I've also got Christmas e-cards to send out and a few other meetings and conference calls with the bosses and key clients as well as a client Christmas party as the PAs are invited along with their bosses. Suddenly it does seem like a lot I've got to fit in to less than four weeks. Eeeek!

Whiz Girl and I did the office tree last week and I even did my home one to cheer me up. I've grown really fond of this place and Whiz Girl and she's done a brilliant job so it's a shame it's coming to an end but that's life so I can't get emotional about work stuff.

Anyway, I've got to dash. Got my annual (and final) appraisal with Scarlet in 20 minutes so going to grab a gingerbread latte and print off required paperwork etc.

Wish me luck!

The Secret PA: Day 34

So I'm officially on gardening leave but definitely not doing any gardening in this weather! Does putting up a tree count? I didn't think so.

I finished the boss's Christmas shopping but I've still not finished my own! The office Christmas Party was last week. It was a rocking jazz themed party with a bit of chart topping pop thrown in to mix it up a little. It was great but also a bit nostalgic for me knowing that it would be the last one I organised at the company.

Whiz Girl is already temping at a new PR agency. I've had a couple of interviews including some interim ones which are quite well paid and I might take on an interim role until I find the right next job. Taking on temp roles doesn't make you a job hopper and that interim role could actually turn into a permanent one.

I was following the SecsintheCity tweet up #sitccareerqa last week. Even though we know what to do when job hunting we need a reminder, especially if it's been a while since you were looking as it has been in my case. I do have 2 potential interim offers in the pipeline in two different sectors. One is in Media and the other is actually in Banking. Hmmmm....not sure if Finance is my gig but then again, I have been supporting the FD here and I have the right skills and experience and the pay is quite tempting.

I guess I'll have to wait and see what happens....neither need me to start until the New Year which is good in a way, I could use a bit of downtime. Anyway, I'm off to get some shopping done.

The Secret PA: Day 35

Happy New Year! Christmas was the usual traditional family do (and once again I was the only one among the cousins without a partner, and I'm among the older lot). New Year was more eventful and brought in with friends in Lanzarote. How was yours? What did you get up to? On the job front, things are new and a little bit queer. Let me start by telling you about the CEO in my interim role.....

He's like an older, unfunny and cigarette smoking version of Benedict Cumberpatch. He's also got a massive chip on his shoulder following a recent divorce that worked out better for his other half than it did for him. He drinks his coffee black, extra hot with half a sachet of brown sugar, does not like cheese and never leaves the office before 8pm.

My role is similar to my last job but it's a temp role and I assist a more Senior PA in supporting the CEO and other Directors. What I hadn't expected was to be taken less seriously than my co-PA. Not sure if it's because she's older and has been there longer or because I'm not permanent so they assume I'm not that into the job.

To add to that it's year end so there's been a lot of admin work which in my previous job was shared with Whiz Girl. It's not even been two full weeks.....Not sure this dry January is working well for me.

06



C H A P T E R

06

The Secret PA: Day 36

Sorry it's been a while, it's been a bit hectic at this new job, what with the other PA being off sick for several days and then the boss. The auditors have descended and it's tense.

It's also been weird seeing Slick after our initial encounter. Even weirder when he came to chat while I was on lunch and we ended up playing a round of tic-tac-toe while he was waiting for the boss to get off a call. He has asked me out for a coffee but so far I haven't accepted. After the last debacle with Banker guy gut feeling says bankers aren't my type. And then of course there's the fact that we work in the same office. It could get awkward, if you know what I mean.

I was out for my first official work drinks – mid week pub o'clock. I abandoned 'dry January' over a week ago and then when the boss is buying you don't really say no, even if it means being hit in the head thrice with a B52. I did make it in despite getting home at silly o'clock.

I don't think this is the right place for me though...I feel like my creativity has no outlet and I might start mood boarding the wall behind my desk and sprinkling glitter on the floors very soon...Just between you and me I have been looking around. I have my CV on SecsintheCity and set to searchable and I've set up job alerts but nothing quite right has

made it's way to me, yet. Then again, what is right? I'm torn between staying in 'The City' or heading back to the West End. I also like the idea of working as a Private PA, I saw a really cool job on SecsintheCity for a travelling PA. Maybe that's the kind of job for me... We'll see.

Oops, the boss is heading my way. Got to run!

Have a lovely weekend xx

The Secret PA: Day 37

I always envisioned stepping into the inner world of banking as swimming with sharks, and after a few weeks of being immersed in this somewhat cold sea watching the Wolf of Wall Street only drove that home even further. The difference is it's all legit here, no dodgy dealings. The film was really good though, Leonardo Di Caprio did a pretty brill job I have to admit. Anyway, back to the shark pool, it's sort of as I imagined with an upstairs and downstairs by which I mean asset management and hedge funds.

Occasionally sparks fly and it brings people together at the pub and at other times it does the reverse. It's amazing how much you can learn by keeping your ears open in the ladies room, especially if it's at the pub downstairs. I know I make it sound a bit sinister but it's really just a slightly heightened level of office politics. It's a bit like the upstairs and downstairs in Downton Abbey but then every office has a Thomas – for those of you who don't watch Downton you may be a bit confused but I think you get my drift.

It's very different from my previous office, but the best thing to do is not comment and not divulge your views if you want to stay out of it. If there's one thing I learnt from Scarlet it was to never make things personal at work, and always stick to the party line. If you feel someone is getting personal at work give them the option to discuss it with you outside the office.

When we were out at work drinks the other night I was in the ladies and one of the girls was rather upset because she overheard two other girls saying something about her dress not doing anything for her and she was still stewing over it several hours and 2 glasses of wine later. To be honest I think life is a game of politics and it begins the minute you step into the playground at the age of 4. Don't you think?

Sorry I'm having a bit of a rant. It's been a stressful week with the tube strike adding to everything. The boss was late too and I was stranded at the tube trying to cancel his meetings and reschedule them while packed into the crowd on the platform. It took 2 large G&Ts after work to get myself back to a normal level of existence. I was supposed to be interviewing for a new job at a Media agency but it was rescheduled after the tube strike. I may not get the job but every interview is a learning experience and it's not just about the interviewer finding you a suitable fit but you finding the company a place where you feel you fit. We'll see what happens. The interview is next Friday. It's a relatively small company but we'll see.

I'm so glad it's the weekend. I'm actually catching up with Whiz Girl to see how she's getting on at her new job. She seems to be enjoying it. I do like the office here and the coffee machine and now that people are getting to know me it's definitely getting better but maybe a tad dry for my creative palate.

Oh, by the way, there's this guy who I met when we were out for work drinks last week and we got chatting. He likes going to gigs and is fit without being slick in a sleazy way and has subtly tried to ask me out for a drink....but I'm feigning ignorance for the moment. Something tells me it's not a good idea.

Oh no, here comes slick, what does he want now.....he's talking to the other PA as I clack away at my keyboard finishing this.

I must look possessed and I can see them giving me odd glances from the corner of my eye. Now they're heading off to the boss's office with a file. That reminds me I have some admin to do which I better get on with now that my eggs and cress S/W has been successfully demolished.

Have a good one, and enjoy your weekend xx

The Secret PA: Day 38

My French is really a lot rustier than I thought as I realised last week. Being on a date with a Frenchman is one thing. Being at a job interview in front of one is a totally different ball game. So I went for a job interview this week that didn't mention 'French Speaking' in the job description and the boss spoke perfect English so it wasn't really an issue but it did get in the way of the 'professional bonding exercise'. I also didn't get his humor which I never thought was an issue – If you could get Pepper's abstract and somewhat strange sense of humour I assumed anyone else's would be a piece of cake. It turned out to be more of a piece of burnt toast. So that was that. They did offer me the job because they needed someone soon but I knew I wasn't the right person for it.

Anyway, I've applied for a two more jobs including one in the West End which is walking distance from where Whiz Girl is working and not too far from my old office. They're both in Media/Entertainment which is where I have experience so I'm hopeful they'll call me for an interview.

Speaking of hopeful, there's definitely one hopeful person on this floor, who fessed up to the flowers and chocolates from Friday that appeared on my desk from an anonymous Valentine. He caught me off guard in the kitchen and asked if I liked the flowers.

We have chatted at office drinks but I never thought he was into me. It's sort of like the scarecrow situation turned upside down. He seems really nice and he isn't the boss's son, but he is a bloke in banking with a sports car which is a combination that left me with a pretty bad dating hangover last year. And of course there's the fact that we work together and I could still be here a while and it could get weird if things don't work out.

Not sure what to do and I don't want to be the talk of the office. As with every office, gossip is something of an addiction that is often only shared with peers in the confines of the kitchen over coffee, or the ladies... and I don't want it to be me. Most importantly though I still haven't broken my 'don't date anyone from work' rule and something tells me now isn't a good time to break it.

In other news, I went to London Fashion Week with Whiz Girl – she bagged tickets through a journalist friend. She's enjoying her job but says she's struggling with the office politics. It's only her second job but she's a smart girl so I'm sure she'll find a way to manage it. Do you find that at work too?

I'm sure many of you reading my posts have probably had way more experience with this sort of thing so definitely interested in any tips you can give me to pass on to Whiz Girl..

Anyway, I've got to run. Heading over to a client's office with the boss for a meeting. Thank goodness the sun is out. Getting drenched while taking over some files last week was not fun.

Have a good rest of the week, speak soon xx

P.S. Should I go on a date with Mr. Valentine?

The Secret PA: Day 39

So, I've ...wait for it....got an interview next week, and it's right up my street, literally. It's in Media and it's near my old office. It's been hard to fit in with the corporate look and the satire that streams through the cubicles of this banking corp. Of course I have met many nice people and I made friends with one of the newer traders on the floor and she gave me a few insights. Never really thought of investing in stocks but I suppose as I have finally managed to start saving the next move would be to invest it, and I hadn't a clue. So I've definitely learnt a few things on this job.

As for Mr. Valentine, I declined a date but I did agree to 'grab a quick s/w and chai latte' at lunch – I wouldn't call that a date but as it turns out there are some who would. And boy does the word get around. Oh well, I suppose people will move onto something more interesting when they realise there's nothing there and today's gossip is tomorrow's history. I've been doing a bit of reading up on 'leadership skills', found some books in the bosses office which he said I was welcome to borrow. I may not be a boss but if I have to manage others I think it's a valuable skill set. Even if you don't though it's definitely a good way to do your job better.

By the way, has anyone managed to glimpse the Northern lights or Aurora Borealis as they called it on the news this morning? 96

If you live in London like me you're probably among the unlucky lot who didn't. I have a friend up in Northumberland who whatsapped me some pics. It's one of the things on my bucket list.

As for my to-do list for the weekend, well the first is to prep for my interview next week. I think it's important to have a look at what they're talking about on Social Media. I haven't followed them though, on my personal or SecretPA avatar account though as I don't want to influence their decision before the interview. Of course a lot of employers do check out your profile online so they may well have seen my tweets. I have been keeping an eye on their channels though, and I think it's definitely a good fit and a job I'd enjoy. It's a professional PA role but there will be a few Private PA duties as well, so similar to my last job.

Anyway, we'll see. Going to pick out my outfit beforehand.

Oh, there's the boss. Got to run.

Have a lovely weekend peeps and wish me luck for Monday!

The Secret PA: Day 40

I got the job!! Just when I was starting to feel like Hotel California was on repeat in my head for 5.30pm every weekday. Today it's been ousted by Go West, which probably has something to do with the new job back in the West End. Guess I'm really having a blast from the past: 80s tunes in my head, relocating to my old neighbourhood...and an email from...ahem! Banker Guy. And I posted something about the new job on my LinkedIn and he liked it. Weird.

Did I mention this new job is with a Fashion company? Pretty cool huh? ;) I'm glad I went to London Fashion Week, because they did ask about it, and as it turns out the person interviewing me had was there too and tweeting, and had seen some of my tweets, and me! Just goes to show that employers really do check you out on social media; and it's not just clever marketers who are using it. I've always found it great work wise too for networking and finding stuff that is a bit out-of-the-ordinary.

I'm so glad it's Friday. It's been a pretty hectic week but as I'm a temp I only have to give a week's notice. On the plus side I get to start a great job sooner, on the downside I have a week to strike stuff off my to-do list and write my handover notes. My workload did increase considerably over the last month, especially when the other PA was off sick, so to clear the

misconceptions about being a temp, it doesn't necessitate less responsibility. It just takes a while to gain credibility and build a rapport, but then that's the case with any new job.

I handed in my notice as soon as I got the contract, and the news somehow managed to reach the far end of the office to the ears of Mr. Valentine....who came round to ask me about it. I haven't really spoken to him since that non-date as there were murmurs and I didn't want them to turn into rumours. Now that I'm leaving though, he did deem it appropriate to ask if I'd go out to celebrate my new job, at the weekend. I suppose if I agreed for the following weekend it wouldn't be breaking my rule, even if it is a date as after next Friday we won't be co-workers anymore....hmmm. there's a thought. I bought myself time by saying I may have to work the odd weekend so I'll let him know.

I've got to catch up with the boss to run through a few things I need to tie up next week before I leave but have a lovely weekend all.

Wish me luck for my final week! I'm normally good at focusing but I have to say I am a wee bit ecstatic about my new job. Catching up with Whiz Girl after work, to reacquaint myself with my old neighbourhood and get the lowdown on her office gossip! ;)

The Secret PA: Day 41

Finally! I really thought this week would never end but it's almost time to get my happy feet out the door to greener and certainly more chic pastures. More imminently though they are heading for hotter pastures where G&Ts are abundant. I don't really think I'm the draw to the drinks though as really it's just an excuse to unwind en masse on a Friday evening.

I have to say I was pleasantly surprised to find a card and box of chocolates on my desk from the office which was a thoughtful gesture. So if you think you're less valued and noticed as a temp, you're wrong. I even had several come by my desk to say they'd see me later for my leaving drinks. And we've got sunshine, I don't think Friday get's any better.

It was a crazy week though as I had a lot of loose ends to tie up and write a handover brief. The new temp started mid week so I could train her and give her the low down on the general workings (and musings) of the floor. The boss said he was really impressed and sad to see me go, and....he said he would consider me for a permanent position which was something I wasn't expecting. It reassuring to know that I'd get a good reference. It's always important to leave on good terms not just because you want a glowing reference but who knows when you might be working for that company, or boss elsewhere.

I've been refuelling on a frappuccino and a ham sandwich while typing this, out in the sun but I've got to rush back and help out the new temp with a few last minute things at the office.

07

CHAPTER

07

The Secret PA: Day 42

For those of you who missed my last post, Pixie Geldof's new fringe, Miranda Kerr's new sprinkler video and Kate Hudson's new LBD collection aren't the only new things this week. I started a new job this week in Fashion, and it's in the West End only minutes from my old job and Whiz Girl's new job. The best part is, I love it. I'm glad I temped in a different industry though as while it gave me an insight into working as a PA in Finance it also made me realise what I really wanted out of my career and that it just wasn't the right fit for me, even if the pay incrementally increased the investment in my 'Fun Fund' (for shoes, shows and seaside holidays).

The first day at this new job was in stark contrast to my first day working with Scarlet and Pepper. Instead of feeling like I'd fallen down a rabbit hole after several tequila shots I felt like I'd had a mimosa followed by an espresso shot and was surfing into paradise. Ok, that's a bit over the top but I was definitely happy and nervous in a good way, with far more composure than I had three years ago. And I was anxious about making a good impression and fitting in, instead of worrying about a ladder in my tights, a potential lunchbox spill in my handbag and good locks gone wild.

Anyway, coming back to this job, it's been hectic for a first week

(HR pretty much sprinted me through the induction!) but they had a post work Pimm's party as it was sunny, which was nice as it gave me a chance to meet others on the floor which wasn't really possible at work given the pace of things. It's kind of like working for Scarlet and Pepper in some ways, with the constant flurry of activity. I'm back to the Buzz I've returned from the world of Suits and Sarcasm and it's great.

What are the new bosses like? That's another post in itself but I'll save that for next week.

Have a fab weekend xx

P.s. I can't believe I'm going to a VIP event with the boss. It's like I'm living a piece of the script from The Devil wears Prada. Not that I'm uber excited or anything..I'm wearing my blasé face to it ;)

The Secret PA: Day 43

When they say history repeats itself they weren't kidding. Not only am I back in the West End but once again have the word 'Boss' in triplicate in my job description.

It's only been a week, so I'm still feeling my way through the wardrobes and dreams of the three new Directors I'm working for, and something tells me it could take a while. Especially given the succinct style of instruction from the Spacey lookalike who's running the show. I wouldn't have thought a London silver fox, with a Maseratti, a penchant for Italian footwear; and an unmistakeable doppelganger of Frank Underwood, as being a boss I'd actually be intimidated by. But I am. He's a man of few words....but clearly many cards in this house. MD Underwood... hmm. I think that's got the right ring to it. He drinks black coffee, eats sushi for lunch, only smokes cigars and used to be a radio DJ in his heyday (apparently).

And then there's Maverick. He's stunning, camp, tall and immaculately dressed. In stark contrast is the Miranda Priestly of the board, who bears no resemblance to her whatsoever. About 5 foot 9 in her 4 inch heels, thin framed glasses, blue eyes that have something fierce yet approachable about them, a firm hand shake and looks at least a decade younger.

Something tells me she'd be a good mentor, especially since she started out her career as a PA and then 30 years later, Voila!

As with any new job it's been a bit of a walk on eggshells, with everything being unfamiliar. My desk is outside the Directors' offices and gives me a good view of the floor, which is good. I also have a direct line of vision to the receptionist desk, which I think she feels a bit uncomfortable about as every time I look up she sort of swivels her chair so she's half hidden behind the sculpture. She's new too; I think she's been here about 3 months. The company itself is still relatively young, so comes with its own set of challenges, such as mood boards with big red circles and question marks, and searches for swatches in the summer rain. Oh and you're not going to believe this. Maverick has a cat, who much like him is a bit of a diva.

At first feel, I've classified colleagues into three boxes. The potential friends to fill me in on the more intricate dynamics of the office, those I should keep at arms length arms with a smile on my face, and those that I should avoid at all costs. That's just the first sifting, I think there is likely to be a reshuffle once I get to know people better...and I'm hoping

that there are more in the first box than the third box at the end. Still, I have to say it's been an interesting and exciting week and something tells me that I'm going to like it here...

I've got to finish up a few emails and catch up with the big boss before wrapping up. I'm going to get a drink with Whiz Girl to see how she's faring in her job but have a fab weekend all!

The Secret PA: Day 44

“Oh my dayz! I’m going to need a facial and a detox now and I’m never going to get one at such short notice”. Sound of crisp steps on the smooth shiny black floor. I look up to find Maverick walking towards me. He doesn’t look up until he’s towering above me, as I’m sat behind my screen. “I need you to sweet talk Maxine into squeezing me in this weekend. It’s an emergency, as you can see. This smog has made me age ten years in two days, I’m a shambles (he’s actually not, the only difference I can see is someone who’s stressed and tired). I’m going to be pretty hacked off if she can’t with this event round the corner”. I agree to get on it right away, even though I’m still trying to come to terms with the fact that I work for a Director who spends more time reading beauty and fashion magazines than me and seems to take better care of his skin than I do. “Ta”. He walks off.

I finally manage to get him an appointment after a lot of persuasion and pulling the trump card (a pass for an upcoming launch that Maverick said I could use to sweeten the spa therapist if it got desperate. That’s not bribery though; it would be if we were trying to make money from them. Sorry, just had a nerdy déjà vous moment. We had to do this Bribery Act training when I was with Scarlet and Pepper and I was just reminded of it.

Divadom is not limited to the confines of Maverick's office though. I passed the reception desk to hear the two receptionist's whinging about bad hair, hello!? They clearly don't know what a bad hair day is....and if she thinks that's a bad hair day then I should be kicking up daisies. As I head towards the exit to go get lunch, passing the art department on my way where one of the girls is waving her perfectly manicured nails in front of a small desk to dry the fresh coat of polish, deeply engaged in a conversation with two others about whether or not that is the right shade for her.

I finally manage to get out the door, grab a sandwich and make it back relatively sane but not feeling so good. I can really feel the pollution today and it's really irritating my throat. Anyway, I'm sat there sorting out some props for an upcoming event (the first at this job) when Maverick shows up in 'dire need of' a skinny soya caramel macchiato, and a request to feed his cat while he is at a launch party this evening.

Still, I like the place, some of the people seem nice enough and I have a few exciting projects to work on so I can't complain. I have to say this job, though t's longer hours and sometimes more stressful than the last one, it's the right one for me.

Oh, there's Miranda. Not sure what she wants but she looks like she's in a bit of a flap. Did I say she's also heading towards me.

The Secret PA: Day 45

Two four day weeks, two Easter eggs and even two invitations to an Easter egg hunt; not the sort you had as a child, this is the kind where pub crawl meets shots in egg cups and the donning of bunny ears isn't optional.

A boozy bunny hop?

Downside of a four day week: your day is pretty much bursting at the seams

Downside of two Easter eggs: a chocolate overdose.

Downside of two parties back to back : the potential two day hangover and inevitable (albeit resentful) gratitude to the person who got you milk thistle for Secret Santa.

I am quite looking forward to the break though and seeing my folks. It's been a while since I saw them, or my mates back home for that matter. And of course there's mum's home made hot cross buns.

On the work front aside from loving the new job and learning loads about the inner workings of Fashion PR it's been relatively uneventful. Oh wait, I take that back. How could I forget the calamari calamity! We had a crisis situation when one of the models for the PR shoot we were doing

(whom we did not know was so severely allergic to seafood!) broke out in hives after the whiff of someone's lunch wafted across the floor.

After that, the sight of two Easter eggs on my desk, one for me and one courtesy of one of the girls who's allergic to chocolate and I happened to have coincidentally befriended. I swear, I did not pre-empt the extra chocolate Easter egg. When I was at the City finance firm I missed the freebies which were often the day's highlight when I was working for Scarlet and Pepper. Working in PR isn't what I thought it was. It's more and even better! It's a lot of hard work though and events means a lot of late nights and weekends, which will be more frequent come May.

I've got a white fence prop to collect before noon for a shoot this afternoon so I've got to leg it!

Have a lovely weekend and Happy Easter all xx

The Secret PA: Day 46

Lepidopterologist...or a biologist with expertise in Butterflies to us non biologists. Who'd have thought that would be one of the instigators of the butterfly effect in my life this week.

The first was the unfolding (or rather folding up) of events at the office as a result of last week's episode. A photo shoot had to be folded because the Model who broke out in hives refused to shoot here but only said so at the last minute. This had a ripple effect which sent me into a frenzy of calling, booking, rescheduling because I had to find a studio, a slot when it was available, reschedule the photographer and Miranda's diary; and of course the model's; re-book the props and lighting, makeup artist and other essentials. Eventually I managed to sort it in time (or well in advance of Miranda reaching egg. When I was at the City finance firm I missed the freebies which were often the day's highlight when I was working for Scarlet and Pepper. Working in PR isn't what I thought it was. It's more and even better! It's a lot of hard work though and events means a lot of late nights and weekends, which will be more frequent come May.

Next was the Easter egg overdose (not the chocolate but the alcohol type – Shots in egg cups!) as a result of which I was feeling rough on Monday. So a call from the boss (on my day off) to speak to the client and then organise a mailer to everyone who registered for this week's event to say it was being bumped. Fortunately I had my work laptop with me though not my work head. Being stressed and hungover is a lethal mix and the train back to London that evening was painful to say the least.

And now for the main event....I was at Easter Party number 2 and who should walk in but my sixth form crush. Recently back from Luxembourg and bearer of the title Lepidopterologist. All of a sudden he had fast forwarded into present day crush and my stomach had butterflies, dolphins and even a few kangaroos jumping around in side when he started walking towards me. I didn't even think he'd remember me but much to my horror he did (even my clumsy episode where I fell over and scratched my glasses! *mega cringe*). Things just spiralled over the next few hours and by the time I left the party I was high on more than just the booze....and I also committed to a visit to his lab to see his work and a day out in the country, camping! I don't really do camping. I'm just not a camping kind of girl. Why did I agree? I'm not entirely sure. I'm having a flashback of that episode of Sex and the City with Carrie in dungarees and wellies, covered in mud. Of course it won't be as bad, right? This weekend is going to be an interesting one....Wish me luck..

The Secret PA: Day 47

When he said something about mud pie I swear I was thinking 'Mississippi Mud Pie' and a rich Ruby port. I couldn't have been further off the page. When I signed up to a walk in the peak district with Dante (the mud loving chocolate brown Labrador belonging to Dr.L) I hadn't anticipated a mud bath. It had rained a lot and by the time we decided to make tracks for the pub I had muddy paw prints down the front of my black skinny jeans, leaves stuck in my hair and my yellow walking boots looked like they'd been through Muddicane Marilyn. I do like nature but I'm a city girl whose threshold for bonding with the outdoors ends at Glastonbury!

Of course I put on a brave face but I think he saw through it...at least he said I was a sport. Hopefully this will be the last of this type of misadventure with him...

Anyway, after that mud fest was a bit off mud but as luck would have it mud wasn't off me. I returned to work after the weekend to find myself in a different sort of Green...with a different sort of mud. We were doing a promotional shoot for a new range made from natural handmade fabrics in earthy hues and the models had to have splashes of mud packs for effect. There I was, in the greenroom surrounded by mud!

So, as you can imagine, I was on top of the moon when the boss said I needed to come along with them to an evening event where it was all about Merlot, Margheritas and Ice Cream couture – Topic ‘Henry Holland meets Magnum’ was making it’s way round the room faster than I could say Michael Kors.

And then of course there was the general ‘oh-no-ing’...about the bad luck of Chanel and Dior...and of course everyone had their own conspiracy theory about the robberies because they were only a few days apart.

Aside from that it’s been a week of admin, admin and more admin. Expenses, expenses and more expenses. The joys of month end. Well at least we’ve got a four day week next week. Oh wait, that we doesn’t include me. I’ve got to go to Paris for the day with the bosses for a meeting...and we’ll only be lunching on the Champs-Elysees. As you do. It’s work though so I don’t really think I’ll be gallivanting round my favourite parts of the City...but the Louis Vuitton showroom is not far from where we’re lunching and I think the bosses won’t mind me popping in for ‘Networking’ and ‘Market research...you know ;)

08

CHAPTER

08

The Secret PA: Day 48

I guess you can't really complain about working on a weekend if means lunching on the Champs-Élysées (who said there's no such thing as a free lunch? Ok, maybe not free but it was for me since it was paid by the company), even if it is dainty forkfuls of posh food in between minute-taking and tablet power point slide changing. It was a tense meeting but it went well because they seemed keen to work with us. I actually sent off the proposals for the bosses today and we have a call with them next week, so we'll see.

International expansion plans are underway this month and the bosses are meeting with clients in Madrid and Frankfurt over the next few weeks so I've been busy with travel planning and logistics this week, in addition to everything else including training a new intern on a 3 week placement.

She's nothing like Whiz Girl..... I'm convinced that she hasn't quite grasped the concept of 'get stuck in'...She seems to think it means being absorbed in Fashion magazines and YouTube videos.....and the ladies room! She rang me the other day because the lock had jammed and she couldn't get the door open so I had to find someone to assist in the midst of the coffee run and collecting some promotional merchandise.

Back in the office I was relieved to find the intern back at her desk looking very blasé and filing invoices. I would have said that it was being done without asking but apparently one of the bosses had asked her to. I find it quite astonishing to see the lack of initiative, especially since it's still a tough job market out there. I remember squeezing as much out of my work placements as I could and I have to say it's paid off. Oh well, what can you do?

I'm looking forward to this weekend, and a nice long lie in followed by a friend's wedding and another lie in before it's Monday and I do it all over again. Still, tiring and taxing as it can be, I am really enjoying the job, and I've had the opportunity to help out a fair bit with shoots and promos which is a bit different from the events I did at my Music job. I've settled in reasonably well, and I have to say that there's always interesting pieces of gossip and banter wafting through the office that really do make me do a double take sometimes. I just heard someone saying they spent £75 on getting their nails done the other day... and then there was a full on debate in the art and design department about a certain celebrity and her various divorces and of course

everyone had an opinion. And there's always the trash telly banter – If you miss an episode you pretty much just need to hover a few minutes longer in the ladies at lunch.

Never a dull moment. Oh, there's my phone....and it's....the Curly Scarecrow?!! Blast from the past. What could he possibly want?!

Gtg...

The Secret PA: Day 49

How's everyone's week been? Sorry I've been AWOLit's just been a bit crazy here with the 5 day weeks crammed into 4, the influx of emails from grads looking for a summer placement and some hoping to find a job here once they finish. I'm the chosen one to give the emails and CVs a once a over before forwarding on. They've given me a spec of requirements for interns but I haven't done a lot of recruitment stuff in past jobs. But that's the thing when you join a new company ... you have to get stuck in and that really means sticking your hands into a lot of different pies. Another feather in the hat, so to say.

Speaking of which, we're going to Ascot to do a shoot and as you would guess there are a fair few hats and fascinators involved. What's even better is that the boss has got a few tickets for the Royal Enclosure and if the client drops out at the last minute I might get to go with the boss. It'll be nice to drink posh champagne as opposed to the pre-arrival-at-the-silver-ring-picnic Prosecco and Pimms, which is what I've done with my mates a couple of times.

I started off as a PA in Music, then Finance and now Fashion and I've had various aspects of PR/Marketing, Finance, Project Management and now HR woven into the my job description with a thread that I think is often invisible to those who I don't work with directly.

SecsintheCity's tweet quoting Lucy Brazier at their event yesterday: "Some companies don't really understand what PAs do. Some see it as something halfway between Mad Men and Dolly Parton" was pretty spot on for this place. One of the girls in the Art department seemed taken aback to learn what I actually do, in the pub last week.

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In other news, I think the Butterfly effect's waning..... or the butterflies are simply cocooning (I do feel like things are moving backwards with Dr.L). Oh, I almost forgot. So that call I got from the Curly Scarecrow last week. Well, apparently he has decided to set up a company with two others and they need a part time PA for a few hours a week. Hmmm.... 2 jobs? Not sure I'll be able to swing it but then again, I could use the extra dosh for my holiday which is still TBC. What do you reckon? Should I take it on?

'm going to have a think this weekend and let him know next week. Not sure if it's a good idea or a really bad one. Oh and another thing. He's also back on the.... Market (ahem!) Hmmm...

Anyway, I need to pop out for a bite before my weekly meeting with the bosses but I'll update you all soon.

The Secret PA: Day 50

As you may have suspected I'm still sitting on the fence about working for the Curly Scarecrow, especially after being made quite aware of his newly single status and the fact that he actually seems to have 'grown up'. I don't know if it's the older ex wife and the divorce or the fact that he's now a business owner. That aside I think it would be a good opportunity to earn a few extra bob which would increase my holiday allowance in Monaco with the girls but of course that's not the real reason ;)

To be honest I think it would be good experience on my CV given that it will involve a fair bit of hands on project management and research, and a lot of ad-hoc bits and pieces given that it's a start up. The other advantage is that I know him so it'll be easier to pre-empt his needs. I have a bit more time to think about it but I do need to make a decision. Taking it would mean giving up half a Saturday now and again (so he says but I suspect it'll be more like 'now and again and again').

The other decision is which camp to join at the office. Do I join the 'let's eat cake because it makes me happy' team or the 'let's see who can survive on the fewest calories' brigade. I did sway very heavily towards team 'cake' because of a certain Red Velvet cake. It's my all time favourite but I swear this one

could give hummingbird a run for their money. I kid you not. Meet the Finance team's resident baker, TJ. He's like the London male edition of Betty Crocker bakery goddess of the American Dream meets Delia Smith.

Decisions, decisions, decisions...I was so wrapped up in my thoughts that I didn't even see where I was walking and seconds later there I was....drenched in miso soup, seaweed in my hair and no lunch. Oh and a nice big blister on the peeping toes that got splashed with the soup. Not surprisingly I was in a brand new cream and blue dress which now looked like it has been used to mop the floor. I rushed back to the office, and just as I was skulking towards the ladies who do I run into? Not just one of the bosses but all three! If I wasn't so mortified I'd probably have seen the humour in it. Maverick's face was a picture. He looked stunned and horrified at the same time while the other two just raised an eyebrow, egging me to explain my dishevelled look *cringe*.

This is the point at which I'm thinking 'is it Friday yet?!' but the fact that it is doesn't do much to lift my mood and something tells me it's all going south from here... hopefully I'll survive these next few hours with some trace of dignity. Note to self: Always keep a spare work outfit in desk drawer. I always do it when travelling so I don't know why I didn't think to do the same here. Oh well, I guess you live and learn. I'm going to get a tea and get back to checking some schedules. Hopefully it'll soon be wine o'clock.

The Secret PA: Day 51

So, you know how some Directors work for two companies, one as a Director and others in an advisory capacity as a non-exec director. Well it was while sending out the minutes of a meeting attended by a client and one of their non-execs that got me thinking about the offer in a new light....as a sort of PA equivalent of a non-exec director. Of course I wasn't entirely sure if that was something that would breach the terms of my contract here but figured I might as well ask.

I finally summed up the courage to speak to HR and I was pleasantly surprised to learn that I could actually do it as long as it wasn't a conflict of interest. The fact that it was a very hands on project role in a completely different sector I got the green light so after much deliberation and a number hopefully I'll survive these next few hours with some trace of dignity. Note to self: Always keep a spare work outfit in desk drawer. I always do it when travelling so I don't know why I didn't think to do the same here. Oh well, I guess you live and learn. I'm going to get a tea and get back to checking some schedules. Hopefully it'll soon be wine o'clock.

Speak soon xx

The Secret PA: Day 52

If only there was such a thing as stockpiling sleep. There isn't of course which is why I probably look and feel the way I do. And it's only been a week! I had the weekend before to relax but with Ascot, a hen do and one too many G&Ts I didn't quite manage to have enough sleep to ensure I wouldn't run out of steam by the weekend.

So by the time the next weekend came round and I was done with my first day of work in my newly acquired part-time "non exec" PA role I was practically sleep walking home. For someone who doesn't really drink espressos to shoot back 4 in a 4 hour work day you've got to be desperate. Surprisingly I survived and it went better than I thought.

Being the first day I had expected it to be a relatively easy one work wise. Little did I know I'd be delivering a presentation at the end of it and taking work home with me ahead of the week after (I'm getting paid by the hour of course which is good).

I know you're probably wondering what the new bosses are like. It's like anti-aging meets colonic meets organic something or other. If I felt out of shape 2 weeks ago, now I feel like the protagonist in the out-of-shapers sitcom. Ok, I'm exaggerating, but the lady boss is 40+ but doesn't look a day over 35. As

for the Scarecrow, who knew he was such a health nut! It's like he went travelling and came back a completely different person.

Work has been hectic and the rain the other day didn't make it any easier. A photo shoot cut short, a Prima Donna girl, a frazzled Maverick en route to Dolly Parton, and a conference call gone wrong served up the perfect measure of stress, chaos and mud splatters to make me pinch myself in the hope it was all a very bad nightmare. The client changed their number and didn't let us know (note to self: double check this well in advance of the call even if you have spoken to the client 100 times!), and the model who was hired for the shoot got into a big flap because she got splashed getting into the taxi. I had the photographer and art editor with me but I was kindly handed the task of 'looking after her'.

And then Maverick ended up getting stuck in traffic on the way to Dolly Parton (why would you attempt to drive there in the first place at rush hour!) so I had to go rescue him and drive his car back to his house while he took the tube. Not one for taking the tube under normal circumstances he was having a bit of a ...erm...tantrum!? And then to top it all I had my credit-card nicked from my purse by someone who saw me punch the number in a bar. You know, just your average week. Nothing much. That's all.

Never a dull moment. How's your week been so far?

Speak soon xx

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The Secret PA: Day 53

Sorry I've been a bit off the radar. Between the sunburn, a cross boss and an impromptu beer bath it's not been my favourite couple of weeks. Between all of that and an Italian Fashion exhibition, and an up and coming new fashion business walking through our doors it's a wonder I haven't lost the plot.

What was and still is far more painful and unpleasant is the awful sunburn I've ended up with. I've been out and about a fair bit this week and was a bit lax with topping up on sun block. Still, it's been an interesting week. I really enjoyed the Italian fashion exhibition, which I was sent to for 'research'. Less enjoyable was having half a pint of lager splashed down the side of my dress at the pub where I was watching the World Cup Final with the Scarecrow and Co. Beer on sunburnt skin is NOT cooling at all.....

The all time lowlight though was a very expensive choice of fabric purchased by an intern in the art department (to be fair she was sent off with a fabric spec, not a budget!) but being something that couldn't be returned Maverick was not happy, to say the least. To make matters worse he also got dumped (apparently! – You didn't hear that from me). So let's just say he's been a bit more than a little temperamental. And he was betting on Brazil, while MD Underwood had his money on Germany. He was quite generous though and mid week beers were on

him but that didn't seem to do much to lift Maverick's spirits, or get him to unwind a bit. I think I'm the only one who actually saw the saddish side of him. To everyone else he was just being a bit more ferocious and short fused than usual. I don't think I've ever seen him go through a packs of ultra slims that quick...or look so tired.

And then on the other end of the spectrum is Miranda with her bold bright florals, with nails and lipstick to match. She seems to be warming to me, and was happy with some new suppliers I found on Twitter...and, wait for it, the new client I got on board. It was purely by chance. Still, I'm playing it safe, as I always do. I was quite amazed the other day to discover an email from a new sales person in her inbox that led me to believe she was on a mission to get fired. The boss hadn't read it herself and I conveyed the key bits of information (facts only) to the boss and replied on her behalf. I felt like I had just gone from gatekeeper to peace keeper.

In other news there was a farewell speech made by one of the girls from HR who was moving on to a Fashion Magazine. "Thank you Pete for turning me into a gambler, I've earned a few quid off my world cup bets thanks to him; thank you Shelley for introducing me to bingo, I am now officially addicted; and Lauren, I'm going to miss hearing you ask Chloe at the end of each work day, 'you getting the Piccadilly?' And Chloe saying 'yes' in the same nonchalant tone every day".

It amused some, and there were ripples of laughter making their way across the floor before she left to start early on the leaving drinks with a few of the girls on her team.

I only ended up going for one because I had an early start at my 'Non Exec PA' job. Needless to say I was pleasantly surprised to discover that working this weekend actually meant a few hours of work and more than 'eine klein pint' on the Scarecrow's credit card at a sports bar in the West End. The lady boss is on Magazine. "Thank you Pete for turning me into a gambler, I've earned a few quid off my world cup bets thanks to him; thank you Shelley for introducing me to bingo, I am now officially addicted; and Lauren, I'm going to miss hearing you ask Chloe at the end of each work day, 'you getting the Piccadilly?' And Chloe saying 'yes' in the same nonchalant tone every day". It amused some, and there were ripples of laughter making their way across the floor before she left to start early on the leaving drinks with a few of the girls on her team.

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She's lost a fair bit but I don't think I could survive on 400 calories a day!! My brain would not function.

In other news, I have booked my summer holiday and believe it or not I have this weekend off. It's going to be 30 degrees so I'm going to Brighton with the girls overnight. Wheee! I need it after working 3 weekends straight.

Ooops, got to run. There comes the client for our lunch meeting with the bosses. Enjoy the rest of your week and have a lovely weekend.

Happy BBQing?

The Secret PA: Day 54

I'm sure it's happened to everyone at some point and maybe some of us have done it too! But I really don't get why people pick up their phone when they can't talk.

So let's see... this month alone I've had, I kid you not.

- "I'm at the hairdresser's getting my hair washed, can I ring you back later?"
- "I'm in a meeting with clients"
- "I'm having a bikini wax so really can't chat hun. Laters"
- "Not a good time. Got my hands full (child wailing in the background and sound of things clattering in the background)"
- "I'm having a massage, can I ring you when I'm back in the office tomorrow?" – Why do you even have your phone with you when you're supposed to be switching off? Hmm...maybe she's Scarlet's doppelganger!
- "I'm driving (cars honking) so can't really talk"

And as if that wasn't awkward enough, there was the recent Tinder episode. Apparently one of the photographers went on a date with someone he met on Tinder and was bragging about it when Maverick walked past and it somehow transpired that it was Maverick's ex....

On the more work worthy front it's been a week of technical hurdles, to say the least. The intern's laptop crashed and only some work was saved. Miranda smashed her phone so I was on point to get that sorted. Then we had an issue with the glossy photo printer. And then the email server went down so we had issues with our emails as a result of which a few wires got crossed leading to a few not so happy clients but I managed to complete mission 'damage control' relatively unscathed. It's been a hectic week and we've been working overtime and everyone's looking forward to a lie in. Except me of course. I've got to be out the door at silly o'clock tomorrow for my other job but fortunately it's only for a couple of hours and then I have the rest of the weekend to myself. I think a massage would be well deserved (I'll even have my phone switched off), don't you think?

Anyway, I've got to get back to work – my refuelling mini break is over. Not long before beer o'clock though, thank goodness!

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C H A P T E R

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The Secret PA: Day 55

Not one for superstition and recently self affirmed luck-sceptic I refused to believe that the vending machine was trying to tell me something by way of a triple treats rebuttal when I went over for post meeting stress relief (goodbye diet!).

Let me back track to post meeting stress yesterday...

It all started with MD Underwood who isn't known for blowing steam outside the soundproof glass walls of his office gave a rather public reprimand to one of the Account Execs who walked in 20 minutes late, leaving her with 10 minutes to prep for a marathon 3 hour client meeting. She also looked about 20% below the benchmark for presentable (and given that we don't have an uber corporate dress code, it's not that difficult). So I had to get fire fighting when it really could have been avoided.

Anyway, I managed to do some damage control because I had collated the proposals and the briefs for her when I realised she still wasn't in at ten past. This put the boss somewhat at ease and I had been in the internal meetings taking minutes to know enough about what was happening to be able to assist the boss with the presentation. When I worked for Scarlet and Pepper there were occasions where I had stepped up to take on delivering the

presentation in the absence of the sales rep so I always pre-empt that here. I'm glad I did because I ended up delivering parts of it.

Similarly, was the health and safety office also trying to tell me something? Resigned to my cereal bar and a cuppa I returned back to my desk to find Miranda and the health and safety officer hovering. Turns out all he was trying to convey was that I was now in possession of a wrist rest for my keyboard and mouse. I was then pulled into a meeting with the Directors but was pleasantly surprised to find that MD Underwood's mood had changed and the client meeting had actually gone better than expected, and my presentation skills weren't as rusty as I thought! I was given a brief on what to chase up and send over to the client's PA, which brings me back to the current wait. (ting) Oh, it's finally come through. Whew!

Got to go get that sorted before home time. TGIF! Oh wait. I'm a Non Exec PA who is working this weekend...oh well. At least it's the last weekend until September. Hope you've got a more fun work-free weekend in store.

Have fun for me!

The Secret PA: Day 56

Well the buzz of fashion week has turned into a marathon of write ups and look books.

A 'popsicle' may sound like a summer treat, however in fashion speak this now apparently translates to a tube-like scarf made of fur. Similarly, those little googly-eyed pompoms you pick up at exhibition fairs are one of the most sought after accessories of the season starting around £115...who'd have thought! As the weather begins to nip, oversized fur is a must, though I don't want to raise too many eyebrows at work (where botox is absent.)

Speaking of Winter, Christmas event invites are beginning to flood in, quantifying Christmas' reputation as a 'merry' season. It's a struggle to be glam in the biting cold though I guess rosy cheeks mean we save on blusher...

Although I spy that Benefit are exhibiting at SecsintheCity's Little Purple Book next week; hello makeover!

Are any of you attending next Monday too?

Hope to put a few of your names to faces...

The Secret PA: Day 57

I'll be honest, with the way London's weather has been behaving I was a little concerned I'd be wearing last seasons' Burberry trench coat until it needed to be surgically removed. Instead, I've been faced with a different dilemma this week: I have nothing appropriate to wear in this weather. Nothing. Sure it was a great idea having my usual seasonal clear out last autumn, but now I'm tottering around Mayfair as a walking grey palette - complete with heavy cottons and scuffed brogues.

So the question is, when does an incredibly busy PA – with two highly demanding bosses – find the time to shop? Seriously, at the moment if I'm not booking 'Sweethearts Retreats' (yuck), I'm organising my two interns (who, by the way, have apparently found just the right amount of time to get their summer wardrobes up together and are doing a great job of showing me up in the outfit stakes) and dealing with an irate M.D Underwood.

Any good online retailers guys? Not sure I can work Khaki colours and 'Hippie-Chic' in the office, but I'm definitely willing to work the nautical and denim looks currently in season. Saying that, who am I trying to fool? I'm usually so rushed running around after my bosses, that I'll bet I end up throwing whatever I can find on and claiming I'm rocking Gaultier and Versace's Spring/Summer '15 'mix and match' trend.

Anyway, I must go. I need to get the boardroom prepared for Underwood's 3 'o clock appointment and last time I had the intern do it she forgot the coffee (of all the things to forget..).

I'm finalising Scarecrow and Whizz Girl's romantic getaway as we speak.

The Secret PA: Day 58

he Secret PA is a PA to a Managing Director at a high profile fashion company. She also works in a Non-Exec PA role. We caught up with the Secret PA to ask her for her top tips and advice.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Those moments when my two very busy and very serious bosses go out of their way to thank me for a good job, recognise my efforts and fully support me when I approach them crazy career-progression ideas. Feeling that my work is worthwhile and appreciated – whether it's as simple as making sure that the boss gets a full cafeteria of coffee on his desk each morning, or as difficult as booking a hotel room last minute for a Director stuck in an airport due to a delayed flight – is the most enjoyable part of being a PA for me.

What are the most challenging parts about your job? Working in the fashion industry, everything is very fast-paced and artistic decisions can change at the very last minute. Our company work with a number of different designers who all have their own demands and needs, so learning their needs in addition to my boss' needs and always keeping one step ahead of events and designers is a big part of my job. Sometimes the opinions from clients and my boss will clash also, which involves a lot of mediating and perseverance to reach the point where all parties concerned are happy.

What do you do to relax in your spare time?

I love fashion, which is the main reason I work in the industry, and I find lazy Sundays exploring fashion exhibitions and retail therapy with my sister and

friends the best cure for a busy week in the office. I also love catching up on the fashion and lifestyle blogs that I follow – and, of course, blogging myself when I can find the time!

What social media networks do you use regularly?

In my job I use Twitter and Facebook daily to promote new lines, events and partnerships. In my personal life, I use them to keep in the loop with friends and colleagues – and I follow lots of PA associations and Assistants on Twitter to keep up-to-date with the PA industry. I also use LinkedIn regularly for connecting with clients.

What are the perks of your job?

I often get first dibs on the sample pieces that come in – mainly because I deal with all the couriers and post! I'm also always involved in the big fashion events – including LFW – and usually have complimentary tickets for the biggest shows of the season (all work of course, but I absolutely love it). My bosses will often pass on tickets or freebies that they receive too – this year I got to go to the men's semi-final at Wimbledon, all because my boss couldn't get out of his Mother-in-Law's birthday party!

What are your top tips for other PAs?

Network as much as possible with other PAs and always have an up-to-date book of contacts that you can share with your PA friends. You never know what your boss will ask you to do, or what you'll need to be organising, so having as many contacts as possible for every eventuality is essential.

The Secret PA: Day 59

So this week, something crazy happened...

Curly and Whizz got engaged.

Yup. He got down on one knee, in Venice, on the very gondola that I had booked for them. Oh, the irony.

I nearly choked on my Pret sandwich when Whizz rang me screaming and crying at the start of the week. 6 months and they're engaged. 6 months!

I guess it explains his erratic behaviour last week; the 3 hour-long disappearances, the demanding emails and the mood swings. I should have known!

If I wasn't already thinking about packing this non-exec role in, I am definitely doing so now. For a start, I can't get my head around working for my friend's fiancée / husband. I've already been informed by Curly that I have an engagement party to organise for them. What comes after that? Picking up their dry-cleaning? Doing the school run for them? I'm going to become my best friend's PA, as well as her husband's.

Of course, it would be unfair of me to hand my notice in now – the love birds are positively glowing, and who am I to ruin that? I'll have to hang fire until after the engagement party and then make my final decision.

The Secret PA: Day 60

Since M.D Underwood has been safely in New York on business for 5 days, I thought I'd have a few days to catch up on emails and work from the comfort of my own home. However, with Curly and Whizz's romantic trip to Venice ever-approaching, Curly has proved an absolute nightmare with last minute requests/demands – throwing more work at me left, right and centre. Honestly, I don't know what's gotten in to him. He used to be the calmer boss of the two I work for, but this week if he hasn't been forwarding me every email under the sun to deal with, he's been AWOL from the office (and uncontactable) for hours on end. Very odd behaviour.

Against my better judgement, I met for a drink with Whizz on Monday. I must admit, I came away wondering why I had been distancing myself from her for so long. She and Curly are obviously incredibly in love and I had forgotten what a great friend she is. As such, I have set myself a 'mid-year's resolution' to treat the Curly/Whizz situation with more maturity and try harder with accepting it. I'm off to a good start on this, as Whizz and I already have a dinner date in the diary and I have been sure to send at least one 'Bet your excited for Venice – not long now!' text a day to her. Easy.

They're off to Venice tomorrow, by which point Underwood will be back and I'll be switching my

attention from one demanding boss to the other. Spending time with my family the other weekend did make me realise just how much time I spend working and how little time I spend with friends and family. Perhaps I need to have a think about cutting back on my non-exec PA role for Curly, which would - in theory - also help with accepting Curly and Whizz' relationship ...

Lots to think about but, for now, I must sign off. Have a lovely weekend everyone!

The Secret PA: Day 61

Have you ever had one of those moments where you offer to do something and then immediately regret your decision? This morning, I did just that.

I called my Mum for our weekly catch-up; 'how's it going in London', 'What have you been up to this week?', 'Is M.D Underwood treating you with a bit more respect yet?' – you know, the usual mother/daughter chat. Except this week, Mum has been frantic with preparing for my sister's birthday celebrations this weekend.

My parents are going all out for her 21st and have sent invitations to family and friends I haven't seen since I was at school. Everything has been organised to precision (if you wonder where I get it from...), except she forgot one tiny detail – the cake.

So guess who, in the spare of the moment with the intention to stop her poor Mum from worrying any further, offered to bake the cake at last minute? Me.

So here I am, flour-covered, flustered and on my second attempt at baking Mary Berry's Strawberry Cake (I opened the oven door on the first attempt and watched my glorious creation drop in the centre like a sinkhole). I am eating the remnants of said cake to try and calm my nerves, so the new diet, along with my patience, is ruined. Every time I look over at the

brand new piping bag and nozzle that I am yet to use, I am filled with dread. I can only hope that my many years of binge-watching The Great British Bake Off will finally pay off.

Anyway, I must sign off so I can prepare the buttercream.

It's already 10pm and the last thing I want to be doing is piping flowers onto a cake. I've also just received an interesting text from Whizz (whom, I'll admit, I've been avoiding since her relationship with Curly was announced):

,

Long time no speak. I miss you! Can we catch up next week over cocktails?'

Oh no...

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C H A P T E R

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The Secret PA: Day 62

Hello everyone,

How's the Christmas prep going? I finally managed to get my shopping done this week – gardening leave has its uses! I even managed to get all my cards off before the last post rush. Just FYI, the last post for Christmas if you're aiming to get your cards and pressies over in time is tomorrow for 2nd class and Friday for signed first class.

The job hunt is going ok, good actually. I've decided to take on an interim role in Banking which is a big change! But hey, sometimes it's a good thing to mix it up a little and I have been supporting the FD here.

Still, I did get him to loosen the purse strings slightly as the voice of the floor when it came to the Christmas Party but it wasn't that hard since it was going to be a bit of a send off for many like myself who would be moving on. Speaking of which, I have some gossip!

Aside from a few people getting tipsy and falling over, there were no major incidents. We did have some eventful occurrences though that caused murmurs in the office the next morning. I was in starbucks the next morning and one of the guys from the office was in front of me in the queue and actually had a blank when the barista asked him his name! And then there

was Whiz Girl who woke up the next morning and found that the last thing on her phone was a Google search for 'how to get glitter off your face'. Oh and then LA Liz accidentally went home in the Scarecrow's coat and left hers at the club and had to go back the next day.

It was a really fun party overall, and we even had Tie Max and Mr T dancing to the 70s music that themed the night.

It was a good way to end the era at the company but now it's time to look ahead. Onwards and upwards.

I wonder what the new job will bring!

Have a lovely holiday season all.

See you in 2014 if not sooner

Xx

The Secret PA: Day 63

It's been a hectic week, but I'll pick up where I left off. If you remember, Shaz had just broken up with Patty...

Now, many things went through my head – WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT NOT NOW WHY WHY OH GOD (amongst other things, not suitable for publication) – but after careful consideration, I simply asked 'How is she?'

'As you'd imagine,' came the reply.

I called Patty. She was crying. No, not crying, SOBBING. WAILING. It was heart-wrenching just being on the other side of the phone, if I'm honest. After trying to get something out of her for at least a solid minute of phone time, I told her I'd be at her house in 15 with Haagen-Dazs and a big box of Kleenex.

These are the times people don't tell you about when you're starting out as a PA. It's all DTE. Diary, Travel, Emails. As I'm sure you'll all agree, whilst these may be the fundamentals, they barely scratch the surface of what the job truly entails. Tuesday evening trips to your boss's place with ice-cream and a man-size box of tissues doesn't exactly scream 'put me in a job description!'

Of a usual Tuesday evening in my new normal life, this wouldn't be an issue – I'd have to skip Legs, Bums and Tums, but that's hell anyway. But this week! This one week I'd finally decided to get myself together! I had three (THREE) interviews to prepare for, and I could hardly tell Patty that, especially now!

As much as I want to tell you more (read: rant), I fear I'm running out of both space and time (again). So, in summary:

- Patty cried solidly for 48 hours, then pulled herself together, after some firm but fair words from her favourite PA, and only spent the evenings with the ice-cream tub
- My new potential employers are very understanding – I explained there had been a 'professional emergency' which meant I would have to delay to next week, which they responded to excellently (bodes well..!)
- I spent every evening on Patty's sofa with her and the ice cream, watching a LOT of Kirsty and Phil (no plot line = no love to get sad over)

So I have three interviews next week, and I am determined not to let the events of this week affect them. Oh, but I do feel torn. The role of a PA is, of course, professional, but it does transcend into the personal, and I feel like Patty needs me more than ever; my

own experience is fresh enough in my mind to know that.

I still have to go. I'll just see how they play out. I might not even get a second interview! You just don't know.

Until next week my hunns,
Xx

The Secret PA: Day 64

Do I have news for you!

I've received two job offers; one from the second interview (scary alleyway and HR person), and one from the third (Private PA role). Obviously, I am over the moon! However, I was a little taken aback not to receive one from the first, only because I was convinced it had gone so well. It's cases like these where it's most useful to ask for feedback, both to see where you could improve in the future and for your own piece of mind. So, I sent an email.

The feedback was wholly positive, and they said the role had been offered to another candidate simply because they had foreign language skills that I didn't possess. Perhaps worth investing in those evening classes after all!

Now it's decision time. I won't lie – I've been struggling to make the decision without my ex-partner's advice. For the last 4 years, we've made all major decisions together, and this is the first one I've come up against without him. I'm treating it as a self-growth challenge though!.

I've been chatting with my recruiter, weighing up the pros and cons of each.

On the one hand, scary alley job has a much higher

salary and a more obvious progression route. On the other, I also hated the interview technique, and am wary of committing myself to a position in a company about which I am unsure.

Whilst I clicked instantly with the man who'll be my direct manager in my third interview, the position itself is unlike anything I've done before. Am I ready to sacrifice even more of my personal life to fully takeover someone else's? I've never travelled with a role before, and the prospect is slightly daunting right now in this tumultuous time of my life. However, that's just why it's exciting. So much has changed in my life that I'm feeling like it's time for a full overhaul – completely get out of my comfort zone, really push myself out there.

I feel like you and I both know which one I'm going to go with. Although the progression opportunities may not be as obvious, and the pay packet will be that bit smaller, I just have to go with my gut. If you're at a stage of your life where you're ready to make a change, try to focus on aspects other than just the money, if you're in a position to do so. Experience pays threefold in the future.

So that's my mind made up! Job 3 it is. Now the small matter of breaking it to Patty...

The Secret PA: Day 65

Promised, an outside of work update for you all.

Most excitingly, in my opinion, is that I am now practically an Olympic roller skater! I mentioned a few weeks ago that I'd recently purchased a pair of skates, and at that stage had only been tentatively skating up and down the side street by my apartment. Well, each afternoon once I close my laptop, instead of walking to the park for my HIIT workout, I've been skating there! I can't sit here and say it's been without its difficulties; I did almost mow down an elderly woman who was coming towards me on the pavement, and may have accidentally knocked a child off a bike at one stage (both were fine!), but I am now a very confident skate driver. I can stop easily, turn sharp corners – heck, I even attempted a little twirl jump that went quite well! When I've told my friends about it, they've insisted I bring them along to our socially-distanced walks, and seem to find it endlessly amusing when I slip them on and start showing off. I love it! Perhaps when we return to the office I can use them as a replacement for TfL...
hmm...

I have also been absolutely engrossed in the books I've been reading. As I'm sure is a common feeling, once the evening comes and the laptop closes, I just can't bring myself to look at a screen anymore. Now the flurry of the initial Zoom quizzes and murder

mysteries etc. has slowed, I tend to reserve my evenings for complete and utter separation from screens, and it's fabulous! Not only am I racing through the pile of books that's been sat on my bedside table for as long as I can remember, but I'm finding it so much easier to switch off and sleep soundly.

This is one lockdown adjustment I can fully recommend.

Now, as fun as this wholegrain lifestyle has been, I must admit one aspect of pre-COVID life I'm missing the most is being a little naughty from time to time. As being naughty and breaking the rules right now really could be a matter of life and death, I've arranged for the next best thing – I've been on the old dating apps, and have arranged myself a socially distanced date! It's happening this Thursday evening, so I'll update you next time we talk. It's been so long, I'm not sure I remember how to socialise with a stranger! Exciting.

Stay safe,
xx

The Secret PA: Day 66

What can I say aside from perfect? 1 week with my girlfriends and 1 week with Banker Guy. I couldn't have asked for more. I have to say I was very surprised. Banker guy planned the whole week there and I didn't know until I had booked my week off but luckily I had enough time to get my holiday signed off – and the trick is to find the boss in a good mood when asking for something you aren't sure how they're going to react to.

Mykonos was great. There was lots of eye candy but for the first time in years I wasn't the only single one in the group in a sense. We used to joke about me being 'the last single girl', except I'm not 40, haven't been stood up at the altar and I'm no Carrie Bradshaw. We did have a strange set of coincidences revealed over the holiday though....My friend Jess just got engaged and she wants us all to be bridesmaids. We were really happy for her.... But we did also say "Finally" because she has been with her partner for 5 years so that wasn't a surprise. The real shocker was the rock. It really was massive without being ugly, it was wow.

And then there was Mia, PA to a Lawyer and she's organising her boss's second wedding – she does have the help of a wedding planner though. Nonetheless I know she will be getting a bit stressed. We had a no work talk rule as we always do on

holiday so we did all really unwind.

Phase two of the holiday was just as brilliant. I had a day's break and then the morning we were flying to the Maldives Banker Guy came to pick me up to go to the airport and he brought me a pink rose that perfectly matched my nail varnish. The flight felt too long though, barely 24 hours since I'd left a beach and I was already having withdrawal symptoms but it was one of the easiest flights I've had because Banker Guy is really funny.

The Maldives was even prettier than in the pictures – I fell in love with it as soon as we touched down at Male airport. Mia is planning to talk to her boss's fiancée about picking it as the honeymoon spot. Her boss is quite like Scarlet, pretty high strung but then I've heard that working as a Lawyer in a Private Practice is quite stressful and the hours can be insane, even inhuman at times because it's so competitive and it's still rather heavily male dominated.

We did a lot of water sports in the Maldives: diving; sea kayaking and we even took a course in catamaran sailing. We even went diving to this old ship wreck which was pretty cool. The hotel was lovely and we had a villa out in the lagoon so we could snorkel just below it. We also went on a dolphin watching trip and then there were the coupley bits like the sunset champagne cruise, the candlelight dinner on the beach, private candlelight dining on our patio and a private island picnic.

The Secret PA: Day 67

Sorry for my absence, what a couple of weeks I've had! First off, let me fill you in on my interviews.

Despite being spectacularly nervous for what felt like my first interview in forever, I thought it went very well. The position was a Private PA for the CEO of a global fashion brand, which I felt qualified for (not to mention super interested in), due to my previous experience. When I arrived at their stunning offices in Mayfair, I was introduced to their lovely HR Manager who was to conduct my interview. As cliché as it is, she really put me at ease straight away, and I found it easy to answer her questions, relating my experiences to what she foresaw for the role. I left the interview feeling, and I don't mind admitting, like I'd absolutely smashed it.

So that was on Monday, and I had an interview to be the EA to the directors of a global consultancy the next day. Geed up from my experience the day before, I perhaps anticipated my own downfall. First of all, I had to go down the most horrible, scary alleyway to get to the office. I was truly fearing for my life, but when I actually entered the building, I was greeted by a friendly receptionist who led me through to one of their plush meeting rooms. This, however, is where the good experience ended. I received a grilling from the EA Manager, who tried to insinuate I was in no way qualified for the position,

dredging up past experience that I have long since improved upon, all the while not allowing me to get a word in edgeways. After she left, the HR Manager came and tried to turn things around, saying I'd done really well coping with the bad introduction – apparently it was a test that I'd past with flying colours?! I'm truly not about this kind of interview technique. It definitely didn't seem like the kind of culture I want to work in.

Whilst job searching can be tiring and demoralising at times, you have to remember to look out for yourself in the process, and remember that employers are just as desperate to hire as you are desperate for a job (if not more in many cases!). You definitely hold the cards – if not all of them, at least half of the deck.

Anyway, interview three. This one was just perfect. It was another Private PA position, this time for a UHNWI. I met straight away with the man for whom I'd be working, which was a great sign. He seemed kind, and like he was utterly unaware of the multi-million pound empire upon which he was sitting. He'd just had a child and was finding it hard to manage that and his hectic lifestyle, appearing at various conventions, liaising with the companies in which he had investments etc. We had a really good chat about where I could fit in, what I could offer, and I left feeling positive; like this one was The One.

And so now we wait! I really hope I hear soon. I think if I received offers from all three, I would go with the third interview – it just felt right, you know? Fingers crossed!

Oh also - update on Patty: she's improving as each day goes by, and has even redownloaded Tinder ('for the ego boost') and set up a Hinge account ('to see what all the fuss is about'). She's going to be just fine I reckon...

The Secret PA: Day 68

Hello!

As I'm sure they have been for most people, these past couple of weeks have been quite turbulent – cancelled plans, rearranged lunches and autumnal picnics ft. many layers! Most excitingly for me though, it's been my BIRTHDAY!

I always get very excited for birthdays. I'm a huuuge birthday person, be that my own or literally anyone else's. I've been known to travel cross-continent, bearing balloons and party hats just to surprise a friend on their special day. I love it!

Back in March/April, like many Autumn babies I thought my birthday would be safe from Miss Rona. How wrong we were! I had planned a bottomless brunch with just 5 of my closest friends, If you have a friend or colleague's birthday coming up, I would strongly recommend doing something like this for them!

After that emotion in the afternoon, I went for a walk with my friend who lives close by, and we shared a bottle of bubbly in the park, wrapped up warm in coats and scarves and socks etc.

All in, an absolutely lovely birthday! Glad to have such nice news to share with you all, we'll see how long it lasts...!

As I couldn't do any proper celebrating, I decided to work on my birthday. I like having a purpose and a schedule anyway, so why not? I thought. My boss has scheduled in a Zoom call for a catch up and little birthday chat, so as it was my bday I decided to actually do my make up and hair (for once) and put on some nice clothes. And I'm very glad I did! I joined the call to see my whole office waiting for me, and as soon as my sound was activated they all started singing 'Happy Birthday'! It was ridiculous and wonderful and may have brought a few tears to my eyes. What made it even more special was that they then took it in turns to say one thing I had done for them in the past year that had made their lives easier/made them smile. This not only got my emotions going, but also really made me feel valued and appreciated, which is a feeling I think is often overlooked in work life.

11



C H A P T E R

11

The Secret PA: Day 69

Happy New Year everyone!

Crikey, so much to fill you in on.

I'll start with the fun stuff – Christmas was wonderful. Though it was my first Christmas without my ex for a loooong time, I went back up to Yorkshire to stay with my family, and the long, frosty walks, roaring log fires and mountains and mountains of food soon brought back all my festive cheer.

New Year was also great fun, I came back down to London and had a wild time at a friend's party. She threw the most lavish soiree, much velvet and glitter! Anyway, I'm sure you're all wondering about what happened with Patty when I handed my notice in. I sure was, before it happened. So here goes.

It was a Tuesday evening back in mid-December – cold, dark, damp: classic London. I'd just spent the afternoon going through the photos from the office Christmas party, filtering out the pictures of Finance Joe dancing all over Legal Tess, you know the deal. Everyone had left the office bar myself, Patty and a couple of people in Marketing.

I went over to where Patty was finishing up the evening's work, and asked if she had a moment for a word. She was immediately on her guard, I could tell,

Once in a private room, I told her what was going on, and talked her through my reasons. She said nothing. We sat there for a moment – me, feeling awkward and to be honest pretty confused; Patty – just sitting blankly. For the first time, I couldn't read her. Suddenly, Patty stood up and left the room. I sat there for a while, then when I realised she wasn't coming back, took that as my cue to leave.

At about 9pm that evening, I received a message from Patty telling me not to bother coming into the office tomorrow, despite my 4 week notice. Apparently, if I was going to ditch her, what would 4 weeks' difference make? Of course, I rang her straight away, but was sent straight to voicemail. I left her a message saying I'd be in first thing in the morning, and left it at that.

The rest, I'll have to fill you in on later – duty calls! Sorry to leave you on such a cliff-hanger...

Until next time Xx

The Secret PA: Day 70

Ok, where was I? Patty had just sent me a message telling me not to bother coming into work, the day after I handed in my notice – and I was going to ignore this, obviously.

Admittedly, I was apprehensive heading to the office that Wednesday morning, but I knew it was the right thing to do. I got in early, as I knew it would just be Patty and me in the office for a while, giving us chance to have a chat. I went over to Patty's desk straight away, and though she was frosty at first, she soon broke down the barriers and told me the real reason she'd acted the way she had – she couldn't deal with the idea that she's losing another person that she loves from her life.

I get it, of course I do. I reassured her that she absolutely wasn't losing me – over the course of our working relationship, we had developed a real friendship, and that wasn't about to end. Notice period firmly back in place, I promised Patty I'd help find her a fabulous new me!

Having spoken to the recruitment team, we placed an advert on SecsintheCity and quickly had a flurry of applications. I sat with our Head of Recruitment, Millie, for a full morning, scouring through the CVs. Out of the strong bunch, we chose just 4 for the initial interview, as we didn't want to be overloaded so early on.

Whilst they were all fantastic in their own ways, our fourth interviewee stood out to me the most. Not only did he have strong experience in the fashion industry (crucial to hit the ground running in the way Patty needs), but I knew his quit wit and sharp sense of humour would appeal to Patty in a way that the previous 3 candidates wouldn't quite. Although we interviewed two further candidates (just to make sure), I couldn't shake the thought that we'd already found The One.

His name is Billy. I quickly got him in front of Patty and, sure enough, she loved him! Luckily, he had a reduced notice period down to 2 weeks, and would be able to start with a couple of days overlap so I could guide him through the ropes.

Now this has all been sorted, I'm so very excited to start my own new role! I have a week off in between leaving Patty and starting with my new Principal, and though I'm not yet sure what I'm going to do with it, I can't wait to find out.

Until next time,
xx

The Secret PA: Day 73 | Postcard from Mykonos

I could live here forever – or at least until I am all partied out ;

Morning rituals: wake up late-ish, indulge in tropical fruit breakfasts, lie by the pool wondering why every woman - aside from us – is reading Fifty shades of Grey.

Afternoon: sunbathing, sipping Margherita. Plenty of eye candy – real treat for the single girl

Late afternoon: spa treatments, gossip, detox tea of some form

Night: party at a new club until 4am
#mykonos #beach #clubbing

Thinking of you x

P.S. Hope it's not too crazy there for you with the Olympics. Not thinking of London or work (ok, I did watch a bit of the opening ceremony but only because they were screening it at the hotel bar!)

The Secret PA: Day 71

CHRIIIISTMAAAS!

Well, what a whirlwind couple of months hey?! I'm sure it's been as hectic for all of you as it has been for me. Lockdown 2.0 didn't go by nearly quite as quickly as 1.0, but who cares about that now – it's finally Christmas time!

During the 4-week lockdown, we all worked from home again, but since it lifted a few of us have been back in the office on a part time basis. I have to say I am loving it – it's great to have some company throughout the day, people to bounce off/rant to/gossip with, especially after so many months of being on my own in my flat. It's even better to have people to get in the festive spirit with!

Christmas has always been a hectic time for me in my career as a PA, and this year it's been no different. Although there are just a few of us in the office, I wanted to make it as Christmassy as possible. On the very first of the month, I played Christmas music through the office speaker system, and brought in a big Christmas tree (that I handily picked up on my lunch break). To stick to regulations, each of us in the office took it in turns to decorate, and the result is a beautiful mishmash of all of us! Perhaps not everyone's cup of tea, but it's making us all very happy as it sits there twinkling in the 4pm darkness.

Similarly to the way I told you I feel about birthdays, I looove Christmas, and not just for myself. I love to get everyone else in the Christmas spirit, and I just love treating people to the gifts they'll love. That's one of the reasons I love Christmas as a PA as well – not only do I buy my own loved ones gifts, but I get to choose perfect gifts for the people in my boss's life. And man has the list been long this year! I've done most of the shopping online, just to stay safe. Whilst it has taken some of the fun out of it, getting parcels delivered has been super exciting! And for those extra special gifts I have gone for a little browse, just to see what takes my fancy when I'm out and about.

I have to say, my particular favourite so far has been a Guinness dressing gown for my boss's brother – hopefully he'll take that as a placeholder whilst an actual visit to Dublin is currently off the cards!

Have a wonderful festive season,
Xx

The Secret PA: Day 72

Goodness, the time to start my new job is almost here!

The last few weeks have been an interesting experience. It's been emotional knowing my time with Patty is coming to an end (which I predicted), but it's also been emotional knowing my time with the company and everyone else who comes with it is coming to an end (which I did not predict).

I've come to realise it's true you don't truly appreciate what you have until it's gone. In my case, that feeling's come in advance, which I'm pleased about – hopefully it will have quelled by the time I actually leave!

It's been fantastic having the time to train the new me in his role. Billy's really taken to the position well, instantly earning Patty's trust, and picking up all duties with minimal fuss. This, in turn, has given me chance to complete all the necessary paperwork, including picking up a fabulous goodbye gift for Patty. I know I know, usually it's the other way around, but she's been a fantastic boss, and I can attribute almost all I know to her guidance, so it feels only right.

On my last afternoon, I got a surprise of my own. I was showing Billy how to use our travel booking system, when suddenly the lights our small area of the office went dark.

I thought it was a power cut or something, so got up to go and investigate, but was blocked down the hallway by a gaggle of Patty's team, holding a huge cake with candles. Whilst I was loudly exclaiming that it wasn't my birthday, they bustled me back into the office, ordered me to make a wish and blow out the candles, then presented me with the most enormous bouquet of flowers I'd seen, alongside a beautifully wrapped parcel.

I won't lie, a little tear did slip out at the kindness of those around me. I gave a typical leaving speech, hugged what felt like a million people, then went in for one final goodbye with Patty. Safe to say that was a weepy one, after all we'd been through!

Anyway, it's time to move on and focus on my next role. I have a few days off now before I begin next week, and I'm honestly not too sure what I'm going to do with myself! I may go up and visit my family, take a little R&R in the countryside before it all gets started again – in an even more intense, but undoubtedly exciting, way.

My next update is sure to be a good one... At least I hope so...

The Secret PA: Day 73

I think not – HAPPY NEW YEAR! And what a start to the year it's been! We have much to catch up on.

2020 ended in true 2020 fashion. Strangely. I was one of the people caught in London after the introduction of Tier 4, but as my housemate had earlier left the city, I was a single person household, and able to form a bubble with my best friend's household – all of whom had also been caught by the restriction. We had a wonderful Christmas Day, full of eating, drinking and being merry, but of course I missed my family and the cold countryside air enormously. There's always next year (fingers crossed at least)! I spent New Year's Eve with the same people, who have formed my bubble for the past month whilst my housemate's still away.

Whilst living alone isn't something I ever thought I'd like as such a people-person, I have to say it has had its perks. My productivity has gone through the roof as I've now absolutely no distractions, and every free hour has just been filled with long walks and – you guessed it – roller skating sessions! I've barely been watching much television (except Bridgerton, of course!), and have once again picked up the books.

It's a good thing my productivity has sky-rocketed quite so much, as work has been absolutely ridiculous. As this was my first Christmas as a Private PA, I wasn't sure what exactly to expect. As I wrote about last time, I was responsible for the sourcing of some very special gifts – you'll be pleased to hear (as I was) that the Guinness dressing gown went down a treat! As I wasn't able to get home to be with my family, I only took a few days off, and I'm glad of it. Although I organised various family and friend Zoom calls for my boss's family, largely the quieter hours during the day meant I was able to get admin sorted, like organising various schedules for the new year as well as managing my own files to ensure a clean state for the start of 2021.

I'm glad I had this time, as January left not one second for admin. The new year brought with it new challenges. We've been sending out new working from home equipment to all staff, as around this time there would normally have been an office equipment update. The organisation of this has been intense – gathering everyone's addresses, ensuring everything was delivered and set up accordingly. I've become very chummy with our IT team over this past month! Oh another call coming through, guess that's about all I have time for now...
Speak soon!

The Secret PA: Day 74

Hello my lovelies!

Apologies for my short period of absence after saying I'd be more regular from now on – everything's so unpredictable these days, hey?

I've had to be away from my role for a few weeks due to family issues. My grandmother has been unwell, and my brother (who is able to easily work remotely from anywhere – he spent much of lockdown in the south of France!) was supposed to be coming down to care for her. Unfortunately, he's now back up in the North of England, and so has been subject to quite a serious local lockdown meaning he couldn't risk the trip down to London. As I'm currently the only other family member in the Big Smoke, I asked for some time off to take care of my I organised various family and friend Zoom calls for my boss's family, largely the quieter hours during the day meant I was able to get admin sorted, like organising various schedules for the new year as well as managing my own files to ensure a clean state for the start of 2021.

I'm glad I had this time, as January left not one second for admin. The new year brought with it new challenges. We've been sending out new working from home equipment to all staff, as around this time there would normally have been an office equipment update.

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Oh another call coming through, guess that's about all I have time for now...

Speak soon!

BONUS



C H A P T E R S

BONUS

The Secret PA: Video Call Extravanganza

Hello!

So sorry for my prolonged absence – I know I'd promised more regular updates, but events took a surprising turn and I've been swept up in all manner of online planning commitments I didn't foresee taking up quite as much time as they do.

I'm sure you've all been desperate to hear how Jacob's son, Luke's, birthday party went! Well, after some initial struggle with WiFi connections meaning not all of the children could hear the music for our virtual 'pass the parcel' game, it was a storming success! The cupcakes were delivered successfully, all the kids managed to use the software and upload the fun superhero backgrounds I'd sent through beforehand, and, most importantly, Luke had an absolute blast! Although for me the success of a well-planned event or meeting etc. is reward enough, I received through the post a week or so after the party a thank you note from Luke, complete with a picture of him and the family in their costumes, with the little cakes I had ordered. To say it warmed my socially-distanced heart would be an understatement – I'm not ashamed to say that a few tears slipped out!

Work-wise, it's been hectic. At very short notice, Jacob's cancelled business trip to Florida all got moved online.

What was supposed to be a week-long trip filled with conferences, seminars and networking events, became a series of video calls, conference calls, and online discussions. This involved a tonne of scheduling on my side of things, making sure all the technology was set up for Jacob to be properly involved. He was even scheduled to lead a discussion, which meant I had to send out all the online invitations and preparation documents, make sure the presentation was ready for sharing etc.

As I'm sure half the world has also discovered, I feel like I'm a full expert in absolutely all of the video calling apps! I wonder how much this is going to change how we all work once things begin returning to how they were pre COVID.

Ah my phone's just started buzzing again so I better dash off – will give you a full personal update next time, let you know what else I've been getting up to outside of work!

Speak soon,
Xx

The Secret PA: Working From Home

Hi all, writing from my working from home set up! I have to admit, it was quite difficult to get to grips with initially, but I'm really beginning to fall into a good rhythm now. First of all the desk situation. Now I'm not sure about any of you, but I originally thought I may be ok working on my laptop from the comfort of my sofa, perhaps the dining room table if it really came to it; everything can be managed from the one device, and who was to say how long this was going to last? Well, that fancy was quickly laid to rest – by the end of day 2, my lower back was starting to go, and to be honest I was getting tired of having just the one space as my working and leisure area. I'd luckily kept my old desk from university (an IKEA purchase that handily folded back down flat so hasn't been taking up too much space), so brought that out to create my own home-office, and it's been perfect!

My initial concerns about the ease of transitioning my role into a WFH position have, thankfully, been allayed. As I'm sure many of you have found, the onset of Corona has also brought with it an absolute boom in video chat software and applications, which has been an absolute God-send for me. As someone who really thrives off human interaction, I was so concerned I'd be starved, but the ability to call someone from my laptop and have a face there

straight away has been marvellous – we even managed to have a company wide meeting which was fantastic!

As for me outside of work – I won't lie to you, it's been a struggle. I didn't realise quite how much not only my friends, but the new people I'd constantly meet by being out and about all the time, had impacted my recovery from the whole break-up/best friend moving away situation. Although I'm trying not to dwell on it, my mind does wander back to times gone by, not helped by the sheer amount of couples I see when out on my one form of exercise!

Some positives though! The best thing that has come out of this so far is undoubtedly my bakes – who knew I had it in me? Banana bread, carrot cake, flapjacks, double-layered brownies, the lot. Luckily I know the other people in my block of flats, so have been leaving little care packages for them – if I'd ploughed through the lot myself, I'm not sure I'd fit through the office door come June (or whenever we go back to normality).

Yesterday I also discovered my old roller skates... watch this space to see how that pans out!

The Secret PA: Christmas is disrupted

Hello Luvvies,

As I write this I'm currently the only person left in the office having just spent the last four hours manically looking for a last minute ski chalet in Chamonix for four days over Christmas. No sadly this isn't for me but my boss and it has to have four bedrooms, sauna and a chill out space where the grownups can do their yoga practice. Pray for me!

Maybe I should start at the beginning. I should be at home with my parents right now, indulging in mince pies and classic Christmas telly. Unfortunately last night just as I was packing up the last of my presents, I heard the most dreaded sound in the world – my boss calling out of hours (I've set my ringtone to play the Darth Vader entrance music). It turned out that the Condé Nast Traveller recommended loft apartment I'd already booked for him and Mrs Vader six months ago now wouldn't do. His sister's going through her second divorce at the moment and wants to come with the twins and the nanny.

Anyways after a four hour search I think I might have found a place with a last minute cancellation that will take them. The manager is just confirming whether or not it's all right to bring Portia and Priscilla the Shih Poos (that's Shih Tzu – Poodle mix to you and me)

then we should be good to go. Here's hoping I'll make the last train tonight and will have nothing else to worry about for the next few days except recording the Strictly Christmas Special!

The Secret PA: Party-Planning PA

It's almost time to host our 'office-warming'.

We've had some unusual dietary requests from the fashion crowd in response to our invites so my problem solving and negotiation skills have been put to the test.

We've chosen a healthy theme which includes health conscious cocktails and canapés. I had the pleasure of sampling said canapés and after all of our tea room meetings... I'm in need of a detox. My hips resemble the curvature of the Bon Maman jam jar that accompanies my cream scones!

As an early Christmas present to myself and following my crimsoned attempt at Zumba, I've booked proper grown up dance lessons which should make a fun alternative to pounding the treadmill. Even more entertaining will be the poor faces of the fiancés who have been dragged along by their partners in training for a spectacular first dance.

Amidst the chaos of supporting the event preparations, I'm on the hunt for a show-stopping outfit for the company's Christmas party which, as you can imagine, is a very competitive affair. So far I've managed to resist sneaking off with one of the oodles of sample garments we receive in the post. Instead I'm tempted to ask some of these budding

fashion designers if I could buy one of their designs and who knows, I might set a trend!

I'll let you know how our office-warming goes and if I spot any famous faces in our new surroundings.

The Strictly Secret PA

In a bid to limber up and I admit, in a stroke of Strictly fever, I hit Zumba last week. It's far from ballroom but as my gym offered it I thought I'd give the class a whirl.

People say "dance like nobody else is watching" so I did...until my leggings gave way. I scuttled off like Scott Mills dressed as Sebastian the crab when Strictly went to the movies.

Despite the embarrassment I did enjoy dancing like a diva, but to preserve my modesty I think I need to find a new gym!

My feline alter ego was in full swing on Halloween as my boss bagged the team a place on the guest list at a swanky West End bar. I don't know what was scarier: colleagues in unsightly fancy dress or the awkward "Dear Deidre" conversations which spill out with vino.

Spent most of this week juggling a cold with a hectic schedule, so this weekend I'm having a cosy weekend with family and a Sunday pub lunch...perfect!

Have a good one everyone...



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