

DRESSING UP

So far, Sophie thought she had made the right decision in taking up a traineeship instead of going off to Uni. Of course, it was only her first week, but she felt everything was going well. Up until now all she had done was personalize the follow-up letters which were sent out after every enquiry, there seemed to be hundreds of them every day. Her boss, Tina, said that Greg liked to have them on his desk ready for his signature first thing in the morning and so far she had managed to get it done. She had even stayed late to make sure all of them were finished on Tuesday and had earned a 'well done, we'll soon be able to get you involved in the actual marketing at this rate' from Tina.

Of course, Tina didn't know that she had left some yesterday because she was meeting Peter after work. They were going to a movie so she wanted to go home and change first but she had come in early this morning and up-dated the remaining letters before the other staff came in. She smiled to herself as she typed away, thinking about last night. Peter had put his arm round her and pulled her close as they were walking home. 'I'm so glad you decided not to go away Soph. I didn't want to say anything to influence you but I would have really missed you if you'd gone.'

Yes, she had definitely made the right decision and life was wonderful, she thought. Then the blow fell. Just as everyone was leaving at the end of the day, Tina called out,

‘by the way, it’s dressing down day tomorrow, Sophie. Have a good evening now.’

‘Have a good evening, how could she possibly have a good evening now?’ Tina must have been warning her that she had done something wrong, but what? Standing in the tube she went over the day, trying to remember every detail. Maybe Greg knew that she had left some of the letters unfinished on Wednesday, but how could he have found out?

Sophie was very quiet that evening, prompting mum to ask if everything was all right. ‘I’m fine, Mum, I just feel a bit tired. I think I’ll go to bed early’. But she couldn’t sleep. She tossed and turned, wondering who was going to give her the dressing down. She hoped it wouldn’t be Greg. Although he had been very kind on her first day, welcoming her into the firm, she could tell there was another side to him when things weren’t done properly. Well, all she could do was take it on the chin, but she would do it in a professional manner. Next morning she took out the suit Mum had bought her for interviews and laid it on the bed. She took extra care with her hair and make-up then put on the silk shirt she had worn to her cousins wedding, followed by the suit, then looked at herself in the mirror. Yes, she looked like a fully- fledged marketing executive. ‘OK Greg, I can take it, bring it on’ she thought as she admired her reflection.

But her confidence wobbled when she arrived at the office. ‘Oh, you look nice, Sophie’ but Tina looked surprised,

perhaps she thought she wouldn't show up after her warning. For the rest of the day she kept her head down, not joining in the occasional conversation between the other staff, waiting to be summoned. She was aware that they were giving her funny looks and 'what's wrong with her' shrugs, they obviously felt sorry for her. The clock ticked on and still she hadn't been called into Greg's office, until at four everyone began to pack up their things and put their coats on. 'We usually all go down the pub on Fridays, Sophie, that's why we dress down. You're welcome to join us if you're not going anywhere special in that lovely outfit'. As Sophie looked directly at her colleagues for the first time that day realization dawned. They were all dressed in jeans or casual trousers and polo shirts.

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