**Meltdown**

by FinchAgent

*One Casual Friday, Kate struggles to keep her outfit intact*

At the last minute before heading out of her apartment, Kate remembered that it was Friday. Or more specifically, Casual Friday. Not wanting to stick out in her smart Monday to Thursday attire, she rushed back to her closet and frantically looked for something else she could wear.

There was no time to plan a whole new outfit, and, being in a new job, Kate wasn't quite sure how casual was too casual. A pair of black jeans caught her eye, and she grabbed them from the hanger and quickly pulled off her skirt and stockings.

The jeans were a little tight. Perhaps they'd shrunk in the wash. Still, with a bit of effort, Kate managed to pull them up her legs and fasten the top button. She slid her bare feet back into her smart heels and looked at her outfit in the mirror.

The jeans went nicely with her dark blazer, which she had on over a silky deep maroon button-up blouse. This was a solid smart-casual outfit. Her red hair fell neat about her shoulders, and her makeup brought out the blue of her eyes. The maroon blouse hugged her waist and breasts, showing just the slightest hint of cleavage, and the jeans and heels sculpted her legs pleasingly.

Unfortunately, Kate had spent just enough time squeezing into her jeans to miss the subway train she needed to take to the office, and had to wait ten minutes for the next one.

At two minutes past nine, a slightly frazzled Kate burst into the lobby of her office building, greeted the ladies at the reception desk, and hurried to the elevator, heels clacking. It was a hot day in early summer, and the speed-walk from the station had made her regret wearing black jeans. The office air conditioning was a welcome relief from the heat.

Kate pressed the button for the basement. At this job, she was starting from the bottom.

Once the elevator arrived at her floor, she walked briskly down the dingy, windowless hallway towards her work area. Strange noises emanated from the open-plan office, swishes, grunts, and fast moving footsteps. What in the hell was Steve up to today, she wondered.

On paper, Kate managed the organization's technical support department. She was twenty-six and already in management. In practice, her job was to babysit Steve Bunten, a man-child who was as unpleasant as he was indispensable. She was twenty-six and still a babysitter.

Steve's personal charm was zero, his grooming skills nonexistent, and he would spend much of the workday engaged in strange hobbies. But he knew the organization's systems better than anyone, and had single-handedly rescued them from total meltdown more times than anyone could count, so there was no choice but to keep him on the payroll.

As Kate entered the open-plan desk area from the hallway, the source of the strange noises became clear. Steve's latest hobby, it appeared, was darting around the office, dramatically wielding a mall ninja sword, doing all sorts of spins and stabs at the air. For an extremely sedentary overweight man, he moved with surprising grace, but it was clear from the redness of his face that all this swordplay was really taking it out of him.

"Hah! Haa-yah!" Steve cried, swinging his sword in the air. "Oh! Kate! Yah!"

Kate's eyes went wide as the sword descended right in front of her eyes. With no time to so much as step back, her eyes widened in terror. There was a strong tug against her back as the tip of the sword made contact with the top of her blouse, which jerked her forward.

SCHWING! PING! PING! PING! Steve's sword went all the way down and planted itself in the carpet. Steve grimaced as he pulled the sword free, stumbling back a few steps once it came out of the ground. "Sorry!" he said, a worried and apologetic look on his face. "I didn't mean to... whoa..." Steve's eyes widened as they fixed on Kate.

Kate felt the cool wind from the air conditioner in some unexpected places. Her heart sank as she looked down to survey the damage.

Steve's mall ninja sword had cleanly sliced off every button on Kate's blouse! It now hung, loosely parted, exposing the pearl-white skin of her torso, as well as a hint of cream bra. "EEEP!" Blushing, Kate pulled the sides of her ruined top closed. "Steven!"

"I'm sorry, Kate, I didn't see you," Steve mumbled, looking down at his feet. "It was an accident."

"Why were you swinging that thing around in the office in the first place?!"

"Well, you said I should get more exercise..."

"Not at the office!"

Steve mumbled something unintelligible and slunk off to his desk, sword trailing on the ground.

"You could have hurt me with that thing!" Kate yelled after him, after she'd surreptitiously checked herself for any cuts. "I really liked this top, you know!"

Her admonishments were met with more unintelligible mumbling, Steve's usual response when he did something wrong. He plopped down on his chair and put on his large noise-canceling headphones. Kate knew that if she tried to talk to him now, he'd just ignore her, or worse, tell her she was interrupting critical infrastructure maintenance. With a weary sigh, she walked to her own desk in the corner of the room, hands firmly holding her top in place.

Steve was the only other person who regularly worked in that part of the building. The rest of the tech support staff was only to happy to be permanently on-call, or worked remotely, probably to get away from situations like this one. Kate, being a manager, had to be here, with the only one of her team members who really required managing.

She angled her swivel chair to face the corner and sank into it, releasing her grip on the sides of her top so that she could properly survey the damage. As the top fell open, the breath caught in her throat. Her bra was gone!

Kate clutched the top closed again, not willing to flash even the corner of the wall. How had this happened? It must have been cut by Steve's sword, and fallen off while she was walking. This day just kept getting worse, and it had barely gotten started.

Luckily, Kate had her blazer for some cover. She did up its two buttons, hiding her stomach. But unless she held her blouse closed, she would be showing most of her chest. What a nightmare! She would have to get a new top as soon as possible, but how?

For the moment, Kate had an idea. Keeping her chair angled to the corner, she undid her blazer buttons again. Then she took the corners of either side of her top, brought them together and tied them in a knot, which came to rest against her sternum. This new arrangement of her top was not at all appropriate for work, exposing her midriff and considerable cleavage, but it covered the essentials. With her blazer buttoned up, she was basically decent.

Clothes somewhat in order, Kate swivelled her chair around and got to her feet to look for her missing bra. She retraced her steps, scanning the office floor, but could find no trace of it. One possibility came to mind. Steve.

She glanced at the large unkempt man, who was fully absorbed by his screen. Had he moved since she'd last looked? Yes, he was seated slightly differently. There was no doubt in her mind that he'd seen her bra fall off and taken it. For what purpose, she shuddered to think.

Kate's first impulse was to walk over there, wrench his headphones off, and demand that he return her undergarment. But as she played the situation out in her mind, it seemed like less and less of a good idea. First off, she'd have to get up in his face, and in her current state of dress, that would mean just about letting him put his nose down her cleavage. Second off, he'd just deny it. At the very least, there would be an extended argument before he'd maybe admit it. And finally, even if he did return it, what good would a sliced up bra do her at this point?

She definitely did not want Steve to keep her bra, but she needed a change of clothes before it would be practical to confront him about it. Maybe she could sneak home during her lunch break...

Just then, Kate's ass buzzed. She pulled the phone from the back pocket of her jeans and looked at who was calling. It was Ron Booker, her boss. She answered immediately.

"Hi Ron, how are you today?"

"Just fine, thanks Kate. Listen, are you busy?"

She was, but had learned quickly that when Ron Booker calls, one has to be available. "Not too busy, what do you need?"

"There's some files I urgently need for a meeting this afternoon. Server logs or some such. I don't really know the details, but it's for my boss's boss, so it's extremely important. Issue is, the server's air-gapped, so the files can't be sent over the network," Ron said.

Kate made a vague, affirmative mouth sound.

"Anyway, I spoke to Steve already," Ron continued, "but he's got a lot on his plate, and you know I like to keep him behind that desk. He says he put all the files on a flash drive that's still plugged into the server. You're right by the server room, so I was hoping you could fetch it and bring it to me, soon as you can. I need it by twelve. Ask Steve for help if you need it."

"Got it, sir," said Kate. "I'll have that drive to you ASAP."

"Great stuff, Kate. You're punctual, I like that," Ron said. "The last few people who had your job, they weren't so punctual. But you're different. I know I can count on you." The line went dead.

Reading between the lines, Kate understood that getting this flash drive to Ron before twelve was essential to her continued employment. That made her a little nervous, but how hard could it be? It was a few minutes past nine now, and all she had to do was get something from the server room and take it up to Ron's office on the tenth floor. She wouldn't need the whole morning for that!

The worst part was that it would require her to have a chat with Steve after all. Kate walked over to his desk and lightly tapped him in the shoulder. She had to tap a few more times before he grunted and removed his headphones.

"What is it?" Steve asked, swivelling his chair around. If he harbored any residual guilt for destroying Kate's top, not to mention stealing her bra, it didn't show on his face.

Kate took a moment to compose herself before replying. "Ron just called. He says there's a flash drive in the server room that he needs me to bring him."

"Yeah I know the one," Steve said to Kate's chest. "Gonna be difficult though, door's jammed."

"What?" Kate asked. "Seriously?"

"Come see." Steve lifted his considerable bulk from the office chair and led Kate to the server room entrance on the other side of the room. He grabbed the handle and tugged at it ineffectually. "Got stuck after I shut it last night."

"Let me try," Kate said. Steve stepped aside, and she grabbed the handle with both hands and pulled. The door didn't budge, so she pulled harder, placing one heeled foot against the adjacent wall for leverage. Kate grunted and groaned with effort, but still the door didn't come loose. It was well and truly stuck.

Steve stood watching Kate's efforts. Without a bra to support them, her breasts bounced pleasingly with each successive tug.

"Okay, it's really stuck," Kate said at last, wiping the sweat off her brow. "Have you asked maintenance to come fix this?"

"They're sending someone this afternoon."

"That's too late! Ron needs the flash drive by twelve!"

Steve shrugged. "Earliest they could manage. Lots to do today."

Kate dialled maintenance and quickly confirmed Steve's story. Despite her pleading, the lady on the other end of the phone insisted that they couldn't send someone any earlier.

Shoulders slumping, Kate put her phone back in her jeans pocket. She gave Steve a defeated look, silently begging for a moment of human empathy from him. "Ron's really counting on me for this."

Steve put a hand to his chin. "You know, there is another way to get into the server room..."

Kate's face lit up instantly. "Really? How?"

Steve pointed at a small grate on the wall, near the floor. "The ventilation shafts go all over the building, and I know for a fact that the grate on the one in the server room is missing. Maintenance is going to put a new one in when they fix the door."

Kate looked down at the vent. "You're joking."

"Well, I'm definitely not going to fit," replied Steve, patting his large belly. "But you might."

"Not through the gaps in that grate."

Steve produced a small screwdriver from his shirt pocket and spun it around in his fingers, waggling his eyebrows.

Kate looked at the grate again. She hated to admit it, but Steve was right. It was definitely big enough for her to crawl through. It might be a bit uncomfortable, but she wouldn't have to be in it for long. Just go in, grab the flash drive and get out again. Then she could take it up to Ron with hours to spare. It would certainly be a point in her favor come promotion time. Hell, it might be her ticket out of this basement!

"Fine," said Kate. "Please open the grate for me, Steve."

Steve grinned and crouched down, setting to work at once. Four loosened screws later, the grate came away from the wall and Kate found herself staring into a long, dark tunnel, just big enough for her to crawl through on her elbows and knees.

Her blazer was very stiff about the shoulders, and crawling through the shaft with it would only make it dirty. She'd also have to lose her high heels.

Steve stood to one side, watching her expectantly.

"Turn around, please," Kate said, slowly undoing the top button of her blazer.

With a sigh of disappointment, Steve turned around. Kate also turned her back to him. That way, if he peeked over his shoulder, he'd only see some of the skin of her lower back.

Kate undid the buttons on her blazer and pulled it off, laying it carefully down on the carpet just next to the open entrance of the vent—she needed to be able to put it back on as soon as she returned. Then she stepped out of her shoes and bent down to peer into the tunnel.

"Here goes nothing," she said, clambering into the vent on her elbows and knees, which clanged against the metal surface.

"Good luck!" shouted Steve, who was definitely standing right behind her, intently watching her ass. Just then, Kate was extremely grateful that she'd swapped her skirt for this pair of jeans, tight as they were.

"It's just a left, right and another left!" Steve continued.

"Thanks," said Kate. "How do you even know that?"

"I know all things, Miss Kate," Steve chuckled.

Kate rolled her eyes and shuffled forward, feeling her way through the dark ventilation shaft. She'd never been claustrophobic, or afraid of the dark, but that didn't make it a pleasant experience. Feeling her way according to Steve's directions, she focused on the mission, and on how pleased Ron would be to get his flash drive.

The grate in the server room was indeed missing, as Kate confirmed by the sudden appearance of light around the final left turn. Quickening her pace, she clambered towards the light and poked her head into the server room.

Rows upon rows of tall server racks filled the room, and the air was full of the sound of whirring fans. The air felt cold against Kate's midriff as she climbed out of the vent and pulled herself up to a standing position. This room was kept at a much lower temperature than the rest of the office, which was already a bit nippy for someone not formally dressed.

Kate's nipples poked through the fabric of her blouse. Luckily, the server room had no windows for Steve to look through.

The flash drive was stuck in the USB port of a server in a central rack. Kate reached to pull it out, but stopped herself. The contents of this drive were very important to Ron, so it was probably worth making sure she wouldn't corrupt them by yanking it out.

Taking out her phone, Kate dialled Steve. "I've found the flash drive, is it safe to remove?"

Steve ummed and ahhed for a moment. "Probably best to safely remove. There's a screen and keyboard in the corner, I left them connected to that server."

Kate walked over to the screen and keyboard, shook the mouse to life, and safely removed the flash drive. Back at the server, she pulled it out slipped it down the front of her blouse.

As she was walking back to the grate, there was a barely audible click, and the air changed. A constant low hum that Kate had tuned out now became conspicuous by its sudden absence. All the fans in the room roared into overdrive.

Kate's ass was vibrating again. She pulled out her phone and saw it was from Steve. "Hello?"

"The aircon just shut off," said Steve. "Is it running in the server room?" There was an edge of panic in his voice.

"Uh... no..." Kate replied, shouting over the din of the fans.

Steve cursed. "They told me it was a separate system! Damn contractors."

"I've got the flash drive and I'm coming back now," said Kate.

"No!" Steve shouted aggressively.

Kate was speechless. Her mind raced, jumping at once to all the worst conclusions. Sweat was beginning to form on her forehead.

"Uh, sorry, didn't mean to yell at you, but this is an emergency. The fans on those servers are not enough to keep them cool, not with the kinds of loads we're running. I'm already getting serious lag on my remote sessions. We need to shut everything down ASAP."

Despite the many loud, whirring fans, the room was definitely heating up. The plastic cover of Kate's phone was already slick with sweat. "Can't you do that?" she asked Steve.

"Not with this lag. And not for the air-gapped machines. Listen, I need you to go back to the workstation and help me shut these servers down. I've sent an urgent message to maintenance, but they might not get here in time. There's going to be a lot of very expensive damage if we don't work quickly."

Kate sprinted back to the workstation and set her phone down next to the keyboard, switching it to speaker. "Okay, I'm there," she shouted over the roar of the fans. "Tell me what to do next!"

Over the next five minutes, Steve walked Kate through the process of safely stopping and shutting down all the most critical servers. There was a lot of back and forth shouting as Steve told Kate what to click and what to type, and she shouted back descriptions of the screen. As they shut down each server, the fan sound grew quieter. But this only made the room hotter.

Kate's whole body was coated in sweat. She took her hand from the mouse to wipe the moisture from her face when the screen became blurry. In the intense heat, she was grateful for her exposed midriff and bare feet.

But her legs were burning up in her too-tight black jeans. She tried to ignore it and focus on the job, but by the tenth server, she was panting with fatigue. Fanning herself with her hands was ineffectual, she had to do something more to cool down.

"Hold on a second," she said to Steve, finally making up her mind. Taking her hands from the keyboard, she brought them to her waist.

After a bit of trying, the top button of her jeans popped open. Down went the zip of her fly. Already the relief was palpable. But here she was, taking off her pants in the office server room. Kate bit her lip as she gripped the sides of her waistband and forcefully yanked the tight denim down her thighs. She sighed at the feeling of hot air against her bare skin.

Kate peeled her jeans all the way off and kicked them into a corner. "Okay, let's continue," she said to her phone, leaning over the workstation again. It was still unbearably hot, but she could think again. And one of the thoughts that came to mind was how inappropriate it was to be at work wearing only a tied up shirt and a pair of cream cotton panties.

It must have been a funny sight, she thought, this crazy woman, dressed for the beach, red-faced and dripping with sweat, standing hunched over a computer and madly typing commands to shut down servers.

"That was the last one," said Steve, after another ten minutes of frantic clicking and typing. "Good job, Kate." His voice sounded just as worn out as Kate felt.

"Thank you," Kate replied, dropping down into a sprawl on the carpet.

A moment of tired but triumphant silence elapsed before Steve's voice came through the phone speaker again. "Good news. I just saw a couple guys from maintenance come in, they're going to get that door fixed."

Right as Steve spoke, there was a loud THUD from the other side of the server room. Kate looked to see the stuck door shake on its hinges.

Without any of the servers running, the room was a little cooler, and Kate's head cleared enough to allow her to take stock of the situation. Here she was, scantily clad and dripping with sweat. Her blouse and panties stuck to her skin, leaving little to the imagination. And a couple of guys from maintenance were about to bust open the door and see it all, probably with Steve close behind.

The door shook again, and Kate was certain she heard something crack. She glanced at the sweat-soaked denim heap that was her jeans, and remembered how long it had taken to get them on in the morning. There definitely wouldn't be time for that. If she tried to get them on now, that would just mean wiggling her panty-clad ass for Steve and the maintenance workers. The thought was mortifying.

But wait! There was still the way she came in! She could, at the very least, hide in the vents until the workmen left. Then she would be able to safely retrieve her jeans and ultimately return to her blazer and shoes in the main office.

Within seconds, Kate was clambering back through the vents. Just hiding near the entrance to the server room wasn't enough, as anyone who looked through the vent would get an eyeful of her panties, so she clambered some distance, putting couple of corners between herself and the server room.

There was another faint click in the distance, followed by a sudden rush of cold air. Kate let out an involuntary sigh of pleasure as the air made contact with her sweaty limbs. The aircon had returned. She basked in it and let her body slump down.

Some time later, Kate opened her eyes. She was lying on her stomach in an enclosed space, and her arms and legs felt stiff. Cool air blew all around her mostly naked body. For a moment, she panicked, and then she remembered where she was and what had happened.

She must have fallen asleep in the vent, worn out by the heat and the stress of getting the whole server room shut down safely. How long had she been out? There was no way to tell, as she didn't wear a watch and had left her phone next to the workstation keyboard in the server room.

It couldn't have been too long, she reasoned. There was no way she'd be able to sleep for very long in such a cold and uncomfortable place.

There was no space to turn around in the vent, and no light to see. To get back to the server room, Kate would have to crawl backwards and retrace her steps. What turns had she taken? She couldn't remember.

It suddenly dawned on her that crawling back into the vents had been a pretty bad idea. Kate found herself wishing she'd let the maintenance men walk in on her in the server room. It would have been embarrassing, but not horribly so. She was dressed for the beach, not the office, but she was still dressed. And with the heat in the server room, it was only natural. Why did she have to be so shy about people seeing her panties?

But there was no sense in dwelling on her mistakes now, or in panicking. Kate needed to keep calm and find her way back to the office. Crawling forward would be a lot easier than crawling backward, and she would be able to put her blazer on once she got there. Steve could fetch her jeans for her, while she hid her lower body in the vent. Yes, that would work.

With a firm plan in her head, Kate clambered forward. She took a right turn, and then a left, and then another right. In a few places, she had to move up and down, which she didn't remember needing to do before. She must have taken a wrong turn at some point, but all she could do now was press forward. Hopes of seeing her blazer became slimmer, and now she hoped merely for a light.

Finally, after a left turn, she saw light up ahead. Her eyes took some time to adjust after being in the dark for so long, but she couldn't see much, apart from the white paint on the opposite wall of whatever room she had come to. Overjoyed to finally be escaping from the vent, she hurried forward, motoring on her elbows and knees.

The vent creaked behind her, and she noticed a difference in the sensations below her. There seemed to be a lack of support from below.

Before Kate could react, the vent creaked again, loudly, and the world around her began to bend. The floor was turning into a slide, sloping toward the light. Kate's eyes widened as gravity took hold of her, sliding her down the bending ventilation shaft.

As she tumbled out of the mouth of the shaft, she saw a mountain of discarded office junk below her. This exit was near the ceiling rather than the floor of a room, and that room was piled high with broken office chairs, old printers, cracked water coolers and ancient CRT screens, all closely packed together. She slipped from the shaft and dove into the pile of junk like it was a swimming pool.

Kate fought her way through the heaps of endless garbage, pushing against jutting plastic chair backs and broken wooden desk legs. There was a closed door some way ahead, and it became the only thing she cared about as she shoved and contorted her way through all the junk.

At last, Kate's hand closed around the door handle, and she twisted and pushed it open. Some of the junk followed as she staggered forward out of the room.

She found herself in another part of the basement, a hallway she recognized. There was a break room slightly ahead, and a clock on the wall. It was eleven o'clock in the morning.

Looking at the clock, Kate became conscious of the flash drive that pressed against her right breast. She still had to get it to Ron, and she had an hour to do so. That would give her plenty of time to get back to her office and find some clothes before delivering it. She would just have to walk quickly and hope no one got a good look at her in her beach outfit.

But something felt different. There was a breeze where there hadn't been one before. Oh no. No. It couldn't be! Kate bit her lip and forced her eyes down.

It was. At some point in her scramble through the junk room, Kate's panties must have gotten caught on something and come completely off, without her noticing. She glanced desperately back through the door, but could see no trace of them among all the broken furniture. Finding a scrap of cotton among that mess would be impossible.

Kate was now standing in the middle of an office hallway wearing only a tied up shirt, naked from the sternum down, and with serious cleavage to boot. Her round butt and cute tuft of ginger pubic hair were on full display.

To make matters worse, she could hear footsteps approaching. One of her colleagues was moments away from getting visual confirmation that the carpet did in fact match the drapes.

Could she go back into the junk room? No, there was no way she was going to squeeze back into that hellhole again! What if it claimed her top as well?

The hallway ended at a blank wall not far up ahead, and the only other place she could go without walking towards the oncoming footsteps was the break room. Kate darted inside, hoping there would be somewhere to hide, though she was doubtful.

The break room was home to exactly zero full-length cabinets, opaque privacy closets, or broom closets. There were a few tables and plastic chairs, a water cooler, a couple of booths against the far wall, and a kitchen island with a coffee machine on top.

Kate darted behind the kitchen island. Before she had time to duck out of sight, she heard a familiar voice.

"Hey Kate, happy Friday!"

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Gus, a man she knew from the only other department that worked in the basement—customer support. He was wearing a black t-shirt with the name of a metal band on it over plain blue jeans and sneakers.

"Hi Gus," Kate replied, not knowing what else to do. She tried to keep her voice as normal as possible, but the greeting came out a little squeaky.

For his part, Gus appeared to not notice, or at least not want to say, anything about Kate's outfit. As she turned to face him, she caught his eyes looking at her cleavage for all of a split second before they refocused on her face. The island stood between them, so he couldn't see her lower body. Realizing this, Kate stepped as far forward as she could go, feeling the edge of the island press into the skin of her stomach.

"Hot day today, eh?" said Gus, making an exaggerated fanning movement with his hand. "Especially with this aircon going on and off."

"Y—yeah, very hot," Kate replied, fully conscious that she in the office, having a casual conversation about the weather with a colleague, while not wearing pants or panties. If Gus just walked to the other side of the island, he'd get an idea of just how hot things really were.

"It's supposed to be Casual Friday, but they won't let us wear shorts," Gus continued. "Not very casual if you ask me. You're looking good by the way. Want some coffee?" Gus took a dangerous step to the right.

"I—it's okay, I'll make it," Kate said quickly, catching his gaze with hers and attempting to subtly lead him back to the center of the island. "You just stay right there."

"Thanks Kate," said Gus, retracting his foot.

"How do you like it?" Kate asked.

"White and sweet," Gus replied, the vaguest hint of a wink about his eyes.

Kate pressed the appropriate buttons on the coffee machine, but Gus stopped her before she could press Start. She looked at him quizzically.

"Sorry Kate, it's just a little thing... I like to use my own mug, the blue one with the black stripes. It's just over there, on the shelf behind you."

Kate glanced behind her, and then followed the direction of Gus's finger, which was pointing up to the top wall shelf. A blue mug with black stripes sat alone, far above the shelves with the standard white mugs. Kate's heart skipped a beat.

"It's a little high, sorry, I'll come around and grab it for you."

Kate put a frantic hand on Gus's forearm to stop him. "Don't worry, I'll get it!"

"Are you sure you can reach? It might be a bit of a stretch."

It would be a bit of a stretch, Kate knew. She'd have to walk back from the island, turn around, and get up on the tips of her toes to grab the mug. Gus would see her rump for sure! He'd been nice and polite about her work-inappropriate top, and had probably genuinely thought it was just down to the weather, but there was no way he'd shrug off her bare ass! He would think she was some kind of pervert.

Kate's mind raced. She couldn't hesitate too long, or he'd come around and get his mug himself, and that would be even worse. She also couldn't refuse to use his mug, because that would be weird and hostile. What she needed was a distraction. Some way to get Gus to look away while she fetched his mug. But what? She didn't have much to work with—all she had was the shirt on her back.

A horrible plan formed in Kate's mind. It was risky and potentially embarrassing, but there was no other option. "I'll grab the mug for you now, Gus," she said, holding firm eye contact with him. "It's a nice mug, where did you get it?"

As Gus told the story of his office mug, Kate did her best to look interested and nod appropriately. All the while, her hands were at work, slowly, subtly placing the loose end of the knot that held her top together over a piece of decorative metal filigree on one side of the coffee machine, until it was thoroughly caught. Then she loosened the knot.

Luckily for Kate, Gus was resolutely focused on looking her in the eyes and couldn't see what her hands were doing. At an appropriate point in the story, Kate let out an enthusiastic laugh and pulled to the side. The knot instantly came undone.

"That's so— aaah!" Kate screamed, pretending to only notice now, as her top unravelled. "Gus! Don't look!"

Gus's eyes went wide as the knot fell apart and the sides of Kate's top dropped down, but dutifully slapped his hand in front of his eyes. "Sorry!" he cried.

Kate spun around, her open blouse billowing around her, boobs bouncing freely, and reached up to grab the mug from the top shelf, also taking a white mug for herself. Even with her shirt untied, her ass was fully on display as she reached up her hand. With only an open shirt on her back, she was basically naked in the office break room.

Kate put both mugs down on the counter, then firmly retied her shirt. "You can look now," Kate said to Gus, as she positioned his mug under the coffee machine's spigot.

Gus took his hand away from his eyes and opened them, chuckling nervously. He seemed more determined than ever to maintain eye contact with Kate and quickly changed the subject to work matters while his coffee brewed.

"Here you go," Kate said as she handed over the blue mug, before preparing her own coffee.

They spoke for a few more minutes as Kate's coffee brewed, about work, their colleagues and their weekend plans. The whole time, Kate acted as normal as she could, keeping her body pressed against the side of the island, hoping with all her might that Gus would stay on his side. Finally, Kate's coffee was ready, and she took the white mug in a shaking hand.

After she'd taken a couple of sips, Gus said it was time for him to get back to work. At last! Kate smiled and waved as he took his mug and started back towards the hallway.

Then he stopped. "Oh! I almost forgot my lunch!"

The fridge was behind Kate. "I—I'll get it for you!" she yelped.

"Nah, don't worry," said Gus, swiftly advancing to her side of the island.

Panicking, Kate sidled to the edge of the island and around the corner just in time. Now her whole body was visible in profile from the doorway, but the counter-top still hid her from Gus. She smiled at him and took a sip of her coffee.

The fridge was right near the edge of the island, so there was still a chance she'd be seen where she was standing. As Gus walked towards it, Kate continued to sidle, until she had rounded another corner. Now she was on what had been Gus's side of the island, her bare butt framed by the break room's open doorway.

Gus knelt down to open the fridge and rummaged inside for a few seconds. Kate could feel her heart beat faster and faster. She tried her best to remain calm, even though anyone coming into the break room right now would immediately see she wasn't wearing pants, and then the jig would be up.

"Ah! Found it!" Gus said at last, pulling a bag from the fridge. He stood up, coffee in one hand, lunch in the other, and turned to Kate. There was a puzzled look on his face. "Did you... never mind. Have a good day, Kate!"

"You too, Gus!"

Gus turned and walked back around the island, allowing Kate to sidle back to safety. He looked back once and she was standing in the same spot she'd been when he'd come in, sipping her coffee. Kate waved to him, and he disappeared around the corner.

As soon as Gus's footsteps faded, Kate poured the rest of her coffee in the sink and collapsed into a fetal position on the floor, the tiles cold against her backside. That was way too close! She could still feel the adrenaline in her veins and her heart almost breaking through her ribcage. A few deep breaths calmed her down slightly.

Gus had come within inches of seeing her naked pussy! And he'd probably seen a nipple when her shirt opened. There was something kind of exciting about that, amidst the mortifying embarrassment. He wasn't a bad looking guy, though a little on the short side.

The break room was not safe. Anyone could come in at any time, and sooner or later, someone would notice what Kate wasn't wearing. She needed to get out of here and find some pants.

And then there was the matter of Ron's flash drive. Kate glanced at the clock on the microwave. It was eleven-thirty. She had half an hour to get some proper clothes on and deliver the flash drive.

Kate untied the knot in her blouse and let it fall to her sides. If she held it closed with both hands, it would cover her torso, but it wasn't long enough to reach more than partway down her butt. If anyone saw her for more than briefest instant, they'd know she wasn't wearing any panties.

The flash drive had fallen on the ground when Kate opened her blouse, so she bent down to pick it up. Her blouse didn't have any pockets, so she would have to hold onto it until she got some better clothes.

An idea came to her. The first time she'd visited Ron's office, on her first day on the job, she'd accidentally walked into the room opposite, which was some kind of supply closet. She'd been very confused at the absence of Ron and the presence of many rows of blue workmen's overalls, but had soon figured out her mistake and found the right place. She also remembered Ron saying that his floor was very quiet, as most of the people there were still working remotely.

As Kate saw it, she had two options. The first was to sneak back to her own office, probably bump into Steve, retrieve her sweat-sodden jeans from the server room, and then still be missing a functional top and not have time to deliver Ron's flash drive. The second was to ride the elevator up to Ron's floor, sneak through the empty halls to the supply closet, grab some big, bulky overalls, and then deliver the flash drive right on time.

The choice was obvious. Kate headed for the nearest elevator.

The halls were thankfully mostly empty. A few times, Kate heard voices, or saw people walking in adjacent halls, but she was quick and quiet enough not to attract their attention. When the elevator came in sight, she saw that it was waiting for her, open and empty. But the door had started closing.

She had to take this one. If she hesitated on an empty elevator, she would have to stand around in the lobby until it came back, and it might not be empty the next time.

After quickly ensuring no-one was standing around in the elevator lobby, Kate released her hold on the front of her blouse and sprinted for the closing door, arms pumping. Her blouse billowed behind her like a cape, and she felt the wind whip across the front of her naked body. She got there just in time, squeezed through the elevator door just before it closed, and punched in the number of Ron's floor.

Kate put her arm against the wall and looked down at the floor, panting. She'd done it. The flash drive was still tightly grasped in her right hand.

A few seconds later, the elevator began its ascent. Kate felt a pull at her back, and slammed into the doors, landing on her butt. There was a grinding sound, and Kate's arms were forced back as the ascent of the elevator tore off her blouse. It had been caught between the doors. She turned and watched helplessly as the last of the maroon fabric disappeared beneath the floor.

Kate was in shock. She scooted into the back corner of the elevator and pulled her knees up to her chin. The smooth metal wall of the elevator cab was cold against her back. She was now completely naked, in an elevator at the office, headed for the tenth floor. What if someone else got in? If only she'd taken the stairs!

The floor indicator had reached 3. Ever so slowly, it ticked to 4, and then 5. Kate pressed her back into the smooth steel wall of the elevator cab, willing it to swallow her up. 6... 7...

The elevator paused for a moment on 8. Kate waited in terror for the doors to open.

Nothing happened. The elevator continued its ascent. 9...

10. The elevator stopped, and the doors began to open. It didn't look like anyone was standing in the hallway.

The doors opened fully, and still the hallway looked empty. Kate strained her ears for sounds of footsteps or conversations, but heard nothing. She stared out through the open doorway and into the hall, not willing to move.

Soon, the door would close, and the elevator would go somewhere else. Someone else would definitely get on then. Kate had to avoid that. But the only way to do so would be to run out into the hallway on this floor, where anyone might see her.

Kate had been worried before about how much of her body she could hide with her blouse, but now there was no way to cover anything, besides her arms. All she had on her person was the small flash drive clutched in her right hand.

The elevator door began to close. Adrenaline spiked in Kate's veins, and with an immense effort of willpower, she forced herself up and out, again just managing to squeeze through the doors.

The hallway was as empty as it had looked from inside the elevator, but there was no guarantee that it would stay that way for long. Kate needed more than ever to get to the supply closet with the overalls. Hoping that she remembered the direction correctly, she turned right down the hallway and sprinted.

Kate's bare feet flew across the scratchy office carpet. Her running was awkward and halting, as she held one arm across her breasts and the other down to her crotch. A few of her fingers where all that separated the flash drive she would be delivering to Ron from her naked pussy.

At a junction in the corridors, Kate heard voices. She crouched down and hid behind a potted plant, willing herself not to make a sound, not to even breathe.

"Gotta finish these damn TPS reports, what a great Friday..."

"Tell me about it..."

The voices passed, traveling through the hallway adjacent to Kate's hiding place. One of them, a woman in a light sundress, passed only a few feet in front of her, but was too absorbed in her conversation to look over at the naked woman behind the pot plant. She passed close enough that Kate could read the hands of her watch. It was ten minutes to twelve o'clock.

Kate let out a sigh of relief as the voices disappeared into the distance. Up ahead, she could see the door to the supply closet. Across from it was the door to her boss's office. Both were closed.

Reaching the supply closet, Kate grasped the handle and turned it as quietly as she could. She opened it just enough to fit through and slipped inside.

As the door quietly clicked closed, shielding her body from the eyes of the outside world, Kate felt a sense of pride. She had done it. With a bit of bravery and quick thinking, she had made it all the way here without being seen, and with enough time to deliver the flash drive. She smiled to herself, stood up straight, and turned around.

The closet was empty, save a few dusty hangers. A hastily scrawled sign stood up on one of the shelves read, "MOVED TO FLOOR 8."

Kate felt like screaming. Not a single pair of overalls, nor even so much as a towel or a handkerchief remained for her to cover herself with. There was, however, a clock on the wall, taunting her. Five minutes to twelve.

This closet didn't have any clothes for her, but it was also unlikely that anyone else would come in here. Maybe Kate could spend the rest of the day in here, wait for everyone to go home, and then sneak out and find something to wear. It would be a lot easier to get around in an empty office on a Friday night. While her blouse was probably destroyed, she'd at least be able to find her jeans and blazer again, and her bra was probably in Steve's desk drawer.

There was just one problem with that plan. Kate still had an important job to do for her boss. The flash drive clasped in her right hand was the only thing she'd managed to hold onto today, and his office was only a few feet away.

Moreover, there was only one flash drive, and it was the one she was holding. If she stayed in here for the rest of the day, Ron would have to get Steve to put the important files on another flash drive, and then deliver them. Would that even be possible after they'd had to shut down everything in the server room? At any rate, it wouldn't make Ron very happy with her.

Neither would showing up in his office naked. Well, actually that might make him very happy, but Ron was married, and Kate didn't need people accusing her of sleeping her way to a promotion.

Two minutes remained. Kate really wanted to keep her job, but was it really worth walking into her boss's office naked? Surely that could get her fired as well!

Maybe it would be fine if she just explained everything. Bad luck can happen to anyone. She just had to make it clear that she wasn't naked for any other reason than a string of ridiculous accidents. And, perhaps, some poor judgement. That was the truth.

Knowing her luck, if she stayed in this closet, someone would come in and find her. Then she'd be caught, seen, embarrassed, and neglecting her work to boot. It was better to be embarrassed on her own terms, and get the job done for Ron.

With one minute to go, Kate had made up her mind. She took a deep breath, pulled herself up straight, and draped her arm across her breasts. With her free hand, pulled over the door of the supply closet. Then, before she could convince herself not to, she strode into the hall and knocked on her boss's door.

"Come in," said Ron.

After another deep breath, Kate turned the door handle and stepped into Ron Booker's office.

"Hello K—woah!" Ron's jaw dropped at the sight of totally naked woman entering his office.

Blushing furiously, Kate willed herself to continue walking forward. Legs shaking, she pressed one arm tightly over her breasts and held the hand of her other arm over her crotch, desperate to preserve what little dignity she had left. She was trying to look even more embarrassed than she felt, lest Ron get the idea that she was propositioning him.

"I—I had a few, uh, wardrobe malfunctions on the way over here," she said. "But I've brought the flash drive, just as you requested."

Standing in front of Ron's desk, Kate realized that she would have to remove her arm from her breasts in order to hand the drive over. She bit her lip as she wrenched her arm out of place and held the drive out to Ron, who now had a front-row seat to the view of her full, round breasts and stiff nipples.

A moment passed without either of them daring to move. Kate could feel her blush deepen.

"Thank you, Kate," Ron said, forcing his eyes to her face. He took the flash drive from her, their fingers touching briefly. "Right on time."

Kate returned her arm to its position across her chest and nodded. "I hope your boss's boss is happy with it."

"I'm sure she will be," Ron said. "Listen, why don't you sit down?" He motioned towards the chair Kate was standing next to, and Kate dutifully took her seat, legs crossed. Her bare ass made direct contact with the chair's soft cushion, but Ron didn't seem to mind.

Ron smiled at her and adjusted his glasses. "I've just got off a call from Steve Bunten," he said. "He was debriefing me on the server room incident earlier today. I'm sure you already know, but he managed to get everything started again after maintenance fixed the aircon, and he's impressed on me the importance of having a redundant system in place."

Kate nodded. Ron seemed to have slipped right into work mode, and he clearly expected her to do the same, regardless of her current state of dress.

"He said you were instrumental in getting everything shut down safely," Ron continued. "That you got into the server room when he couldn't and diligently followed his instructions to shut everything down, as temperatures soared to insane levels. It must have been quite uncomfortable in there!"

Kate nodded again, smiling bashfully. Ron appeared to be quite impressed with her, but she found herself wishing he could skip the praise and just offer her something to wear already.

"You're looking quite red, so I imagine the heat must still be affecting you. Steve said you had to take some clothes off to keep cool, which is commendable. You've really gone above and beyond today, Kate. Steve says he couldn't have done it without you. If you hadn't helped, we'd have lost weeks of data, and had to replace thousands of dollars of server equipment!"

Kate really hoped that all this talk would translate into a raise, promotion, or at least a towel or something.

"And if that wasn't enough, you rushed all the way up here to deliver the flash drive to me in time! I take my hat off to you, Kate, I really do."

Kate squirmed in her seat. Ever since she'd started working here, she'd been hoping for a conversation like this with Ron, but she'd never expected to be naked for it.

"I'll admit I was a bit shocked when you showed up at my door like that," Ron said. "I didn't know what to think at first. But I totally get it, after all that heat in the server room. Your clothes must have been ruined with sweat, and obviously you needed to cool down a bit more before you put anything else on."

Kate nodded vigorously. Her boss was proud of her, and also didn't think she was a pervert.

"I wouldn't have expected you to come all the way here to deliver that drive after what you've been through, you know," Ron said, smiling sympathetically. "But you did it anyway, without even taking the time to cool off and get dressed. I knew you were punctual, but this is something else. You're going places, Kate."

"Thank you," Kate said, almost more embarrassed by the fulsome praise then by the way Ron's eyes kept dropping to pass over her body.

"No, thank you." Ron picked up the intercom phone on his desk. "Listen, you probably don't want to walk around the office like that, so I'll have someone bring up your laptop and you can work from here for the rest of the day. My secretary's off today, so you can take her desk." He indicated a separate desk at one side of the room. "I won't even make you put any clothes on. Not until some of that redness dies down."

Kate blushed even redder. She had a slight suspicion that Ron didn't fully believe his own rationalization of her nudity, but it seemed better to play along. She'd probably get to put her clothes back on. Eventually.

The End