

To Be Laughed At

Jenny couldn't quite work out where to put her hands. Everyone was just staring at her and her hands just wouldn't find where they normally went. Where did they normally go? She was sure it was just there, at the end of her arms, somewhere near her hips, or did she put them in her pockets? She started to think about her elbows and shoulders, and then her knees and her feet and the way she was standing! The awareness of her limbs was growing and swirling so she quickly shoved her hands behind her back to put an end to it before she completely lost it.

After she laughed (as they had rehearsed) everyone's eyes moved away and Dan kept talking and walking up and down the room, he was being very dramatic with his hands, flying them this way and that way, using them at the opportune moment to drive home a point he was making about the month's targets. He seemed so at home up there. Dominating the world, one hand gesture at a time. She felt very proud of him.

Dan clocked eyes with Jenny and nodded. That was her cue to turn the lights off. In Jenny's haste and slight panic at the way she was walking her shoe got caught on a chair leg and ended up nearly falling into Dan's whiteboard. The whiteboard that he had spent the first 20 minutes of the meeting filling in with stats about how amazing he was doing! Other than Jenny's tummy doing a flip, no one really saw and she'd had only rubbed off a little of the bottom and a bit of the right side row. She mouthed 'sorry' to Dan who smiled some encouragement and the room went into darkness.

The next 15 minutes was another visual aid into how amazing Dan was doing. Jenny could relax a bit now as it was dark and she was at the back of the room so no one would be looking at where her hands were, which was brilliant as it was getting warm with the projector lights and bodies in the room and she was now getting paranoid about sweat pouring down her brow.

Once that had ended it was Jenny's turn to stand at the front with Dan and hand over any printouts that anyone wanted. Jenny slowly walked to the front, making sure every step was placed carefully, if she tripped she would end up falling onto Dan or worse, Pete from IT. Triumphantly Jenny had made it and gave Dan a broad satisfying smile, but Dan didn't smile back. His eyes were wide and looked a bit taken back. Jenny didn't really notice. Her hands busy, they were holding paperwork, she hadn't tripped over again, it was nearing the end and Jenny felt very pleased with herself.

'If anyone would like a copy of the predictions for next quarter please let me know.'

Faces stared back at her. No one moved. Just stared. Jenny's heart started to pound and Pete from IT started laughing. Soon there were sniggers, chuckles and a little bit of giggling. Jenny turned to Dan in absolute confusion, where were they laughing at her?

Standing in front of the bathroom mirror Jenny was mortified. There were red, blue, green and black smears all over her forehead. These had then melted down in the heat where she had clearly rubbed it with the back of her hand and then had smeared this around her chin, her cheeks and her nose. It was everywhere. She was Dan's walking whiteboard.

It took a while to remove, and along with it came her carefully placed, presentation day, makeup. It wasn't Jenny's best moment.

Back in Dan's office, he was at his desk, Jenny noticed all the beautifully crisp printed predictions that she had carefully created had also been subject to a good smearing, transferred from her hands presumably.

'Well that went well,' she said, avoiding any eye contact with her boss by clearing the room.

'Yes, I think it did.' Dan replied, 'Funny about the pen.'

'Oh Dan, I'm so sorry. I had no idea! I felt like such a tit. I was so nervous and everyone was just staring at me!'

Dan laughed. 'Yeah, but at least they will remember it! A few of them stayed behind to talk potential development, one of them booked in lunch with me AND even Pete from IT asked if I wanted to play golf! Unheard of. Honestly, please don't worry about it. We've made our mark and that's a fantastic thing.'

Jenny's tummy flipped again picturing everyone looking at her which made it hard to swallow the success that Dan felt. 'Did no one want a quarterly prediction?'

'Aw Jenny I did try but everyone asked for them to be emailed. No one wanted to bloody touch them! Thanks again Jenny, and listen, you did a great job today. I couldn't have pulled that off without you.'

Finally turning to her boss of 3 years, and looking at his familiar warm face, she accepted defeated and took the compliment. Maybe today had been a success. They really did work well together and she thought it was best not to mention the red and blue smear over Dans head, the green mark on his cheek and the black dash on his upper lip.