

Erin Bladder's hysterical summer filled with love and revenge.

Love and War in La Jolla

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/1750.html?s=pdf>

CHAPTER ONE

I read the letter to myself and I almost delete the last sentence: “Please *do not* hesitate to contact me with questions.” I hate that sentence. Why should I encourage these crazy people to contact me again? I’d like to say, “Please *do* hesitate to contact me. Think really hard about it and try to evaluate in your little head if your stupid complaint is worth your time to call me and bitch at me because the ice was too big in your umbrella drink or you found a cum stain on your sheet”. Okay, I suppose a cum stain is pretty gross and although I would have no idea what to say, (wow, sorry we forgot to clean the sheets after the nasty couple who stayed in that room before you sprayed their love all over the place. How does 10% off sound?) at least I would understand why they’re contacting me.

All I ask for is a valid complaint. I would love to come into work one day and find a sexual harassment complaint on my desk. Something I can investigate and really sink my teeth into! Unfortunately that juicy stuff is saved for Melanie, the Director of Guest Relations. Don’t get me wrong—I’m great at my job. I have been working in guest relations at this hotel for almost two years and I’m good at it. Actually, I’m great at it. I have this uncanny ability to listen to these insane, irrational people and calm them down. I tilt my head to the side and turn on this sympathetic frown while I listen intently. Then I usually say something that makes them think I’m on their side and that I’m as confused as they are. For example, I’d say “Mr. Jones, I cannot believe room service said they would be there in forty minutes and it has already been forty-two minutes. I simply do not understand why that’s happening, but I apologize profusely and I will do my best to have your dinner delivered right away.” I’ve found that if I apologize, take their side and put my tail between my legs, they have a hard time continuing to yell at me.

Jennifer Argent

Anyway, although I'm pretty good at what I do, Melanie deals with the really good complaints, which is mind boggling because Melanie has quite the opposite approach that I do. Melanie thinks she is too good to deal with serving other people and has a tendency to get angry at complaints. Don't ask me how she got her job—she's freaking terrible. I see her talk to guests and I just cringe because I know a fight is about to ensue. She's extremely harsh and sarcastic so people tend to get defensive and the situation escalates. She knows *nothing* about placating people. For example, this morning I heard a woman at the guest relations counter complaining that the phone in her room was broken. This seems to be a valid complaint that's easy to fix. However, Melanie responds with a large, unnecessary sigh followed by, "Well, I can see why you need to make *so* many calls since you're on vacation and clearly you're on your way out to the pool anyway, but I will be sure to replace it *right* away." The woman opened her eyes wide and furled her eyebrows in confusion, almost as if she was thinking, "Wow, is this bitch serious or was that a joke?" and walks away. Usually they don't walk away—they continue to complain, yell some more and then say that she's the problem with this hotel. Melanie just ignores them and eventually gives them what they need so they go away. I'm sure many guests have complained about her to Drew, the General Manager, but he's been working in hotels his entire life and knows how unreasonable people can be. He probably takes the stance that people are irrational and if you listened to everyone's complaints about every employee, you'd have nobody left. Drew is a really smart guy who is a genius at dealing with people, so I have a hard time believing he thinks Melanie is great. Could he be that clueless? Anyway, he's also handsome, kind and fun. I often think he would make an excellent Cruise Director—good looking, enthusiastic, charismatic and charming. More about Drew later.

Love and War in La Jolla

Anyway, Melanie gets by at the Grand Bluffs because the work gets done. Usually I pick up the pieces for her, but either way the work gets done so she rarely gets in trouble. Often, she forgets to deal with a situation and I'll have to take care of it, but I never mind when that happens because I know if she deals with it, it'll most likely explode whereas if I deal with it, it'll probably go away quickly and painlessly. Melanie's problem is her approach to people and when you're working in guest relations and you suck at dealing with people, you basically suck at your job. The worst part is that she treats everyone else like that, too. I've heard her talk that way to the housekeepers, the bellboys, the bartenders, her mother and even some pets that have stayed in the hotel. Once I heard her walk by a plant and tell it to get the hell out of her way. Melanie should be nice to me because she knows that I cover her ass a lot of the time, but she's pretty rude to me and definitely has her nasty sarcastic moments with me as well as the guests. One time last month I was in a particularly chipper mood when I came into work and told her that I was running down to the café to grab a coffee for myself and wanted to know if she would like one too. Her response was something along the lines of, "Yeah, that sounds great. Nothing sounds better than a hot cup of coffee I could spill on this brand new white suit I have on. If I actually have time to drink any of the coffee, I'll have to take three coffee shit breaks this morning when clearly I'm up to my eyeballs in these assholes' complaints. Great idea, Erin."

I also have a huge sarcastic side to my personality and I am usually great at keeping this at bay while I'm at work. I call it Professional Erin. Well, Professional Erin must have been taking a coffee shit break, as Melanie calls it, because Genuine Erin came out and said, "So is that a no? How about a bran muffin maybe?" I thought knives might literally shoot from her eyes, so I quickly left to fetch my coffee.

Jennifer Argent

Anyway, I'm after her job and I can only hope that it's a matter of time before Drew sees how terrible she is. She's only been here six months. When the old Director of Guest Relations left, I was passed over for the job because although I am "an asset to the Grand Bluffs and clearly gifted at my job", they wanted someone there with more experience until I was really ready. Whatever that means. Is experience necessary when this so-called *experienced* Director of Guest Relations sucks? I think not.

So here I am, another day at work and I'm taking some time to respond to a few written complaints. Yes, many people actually take the time after they get home from their vacation to draft a letter to the hotel. I respond to those letters for at least a couple of hours a day. All of my letters follow the same format as the one you just read: First paragraph is the introduction and a quick apology and the last paragraph gives them 10% off. The middle paragraph is the only one that changes depending on the complaint, but even that stays mostly the same. I always do my "I'm also confused why that happened" speech, then I act like I have an ounce of authority and say that the person responsible will be held accountable. That's just not true. I will definitely not spend time investigating why Mrs. Johnson waited for two minutes longer than she expected.

Perhaps you're thinking that this hotel is crap since we receive so many complaints, huh? Well, you're wrong. It's an amazing place. The Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa is one of the top high-end hotels in the San Diego area, constantly receiving five-star ratings. We're a huge, plush (and expensive) hotel with one of the most amazing views in the entire world. Celebrities stay here all the time, along with the rich and fabulous. I think we receive so many complaints because the type of people who can afford to stay here have unrealistic views of the world since they have been pampered their whole lives. They don't always understand that, "No, I'm sorry sir; I am unable to wipe your ass after you poop." They are

Love and War in La Jolla

spoiled people who want everything handed to them and when one tiny thing isn't up to par, they freak out. That's why I'm so desperate for a good, solid complaint. I'm a bit tired of dealing with ridiculous complaints from ridiculous people. Anyway, from what I've been able to see, most of the super rich people who frequent the Grand Bluffs seem pretty unhappy so I think they see a chance to unleash their pent-up anger on a poor unsuspecting young girl and go for it. This isn't exactly fair, but I'm so good at dealing with them, that for the most part, I'm able to laugh about it afterwards and not let any of this crap get under my skin. So although I complain that I need a good cum stain complaint, and that I'm aching for Drew to see Melanie for the Guest Relation Nazi that she is, I'm pretty happy here at the Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa.

I started here about four years ago after I grew tired of my dead end job answering phones and saw an opening for a Front Desk Clerk. I always thought it sounded so romantic, so Love Boatish, to work at a fancy hotel on the ocean. I hated my current job so I decided to apply for the position. After the interview I knew I nailed it because all people are really looking for in that position is proof you have one quarter of a brain and the ability to talk to people and smile....and maybe some attractiveness as well. I hate to admit it, but the Grand Bluffs takes the stance that people would rather deal with attractive people, so the hotel is therefore crawling with good-looking employees. The bartenders, waiters and waitresses, front desk staff, and lifeguards are all pretty people. Well, I have a quarter of a brain, I can talk to people and I am relatively attractive, I suppose, so I got the job. After two years, I was ready for a change and when I heard the Guest Relations Associate position was open, I was pretty much a shoo-in. I don't even think I interviewed for it. I was the just the obvious choice and I've been doing it for two years now. It has its moments but it's great for the most part, and the beautiful Grand Bluffs Resort

Jennifer Argent

and Spa isn't a bad place to come to work every day. The lobby is just how you'd imagine, complete with waterfalls, glass ceilings and tons of amazing smelling flowers. We keep the massive front doors open all the time so it almost feels as if there are no walls and this beautiful seaside lobby is outside. We do the same with the back doors, leading from the lobby out to the veranda overlooking the pool and ocean, so it seems that this lobby just sits out in the open, overlooking the ocean. It's truly breathtaking and I can easily see why we earn those five-star ratings year after year.

Life at the Grand Bluffs is good. I'm happy here and I suppose you could say I'm pretty happy in general. What can I say—life is good. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Bladders were a good old nuclear family: My mom and dad, still happily married, and one older brother, Hank. Mom and Dad still live there, but Hank and I are both in San Diego. There's nothing too exciting to report on my childhood—my mom was a stay-at-home mom and my dad was a doctor specializing in Urology. Yes, I'm aware that our last name is Bladder and that my dad is a Urologist. When I was old enough to figure out what “irony” meant, I remember asking my mom, “Mom, don't you think it's ironic that Dad's last name is Bladder and he works as a Urologist?” She replied with what I'm sure she's said four thousand times since they married, “Well, when I'm ninety-eight and pissing myself and your father can fix it, who'll be laughing at Dr. Bladder then?” My eyes widen and I say, “Ummm...okay. Yeah, uh.....good one, Mom.” She probably heard some drunken friend of my dad's say that thirty years ago and just hung onto it. It probably started as something a lot funnier, but over time my mom morphed it into this gross half-joke. My mom is a delightful woman, but she never really gets a joke. Actually, she can't get a good joke, tell a good joke, or even know what half of them mean after they're explained to her. I remember one Thanksgiving when my family was sitting around the dinner table playing a game that the Bladder's love to play. We

Love and War in La Jolla

try to come up with possible names of businesses that are a play-on-words. For example, a hair salon named “Mane Street” or a Sushi restaurant named “Wok and Roll” and then there’s Hank’s favorite, a portrait studio named “A Dozen Poses”. Mom, desperate to chime in, struggled with the game. Finally, she says, “Okay! I got one! I got it! How about a place that sells Christmas items and we’ll call it “A Christmas Story”. We all laughed, really at her, but she thought we laughed at the name and she couldn’t have been more pleased. We didn’t have the heart to break it to her.

Anyway, Mom is an extraordinary mom—the ultimate June Cleaver. She never worked after she had Hank and I and has spent the last thirty years catering to our every need. We never had to go to day-care or after-school care programs. She would pick us up from school, make us a snack, let us play, make the family dinner and let us play some more. She made my brown bag lunch for me every day, which I’m convinced is why I was so popular in school. It wasn’t my good looks or my athletic ability or the cute boys I dated... I think I was popular in high school because I planted that seed early in grade school with my kick ass lunches. Everyone wanted to sit by me to take my leftovers. While the other kids had to eat healthy lunches, I got a bologna sandwich on white Wonder bread (still my favorite), a can of Coke, a Hostess cupcake and maybe a bag of Doritos or some cookies. I could never finish it but I never told my mom that, so she continued to pack big lunches for me and the lucky ones who sat around me got the goods. My dad knew how we ate and would say things like, “Jesus, Cathy, our children are going to be massive cows with no teeth if you keep feeding them this garbage.” Well, luckily both Hank and I have a super-fast metabolism and we’ve never been a pound overweight our entire lives. I also learned from my parents the importance of brushing and flossing so even though I’m great at shoveling

Jennifer Argent

complete garbage into my mouth, I've never had a single cavity. Ha.

The ironic part of my lunches is that my mom is a gourmet chef. She's the most amazing cook, and now every night as I throw my TV dinner in the microwave I miss her great dinners. I've often thought she should do something with her talent in the kitchen. Mom went to college, where she met my dad and they married and had kids almost immediately after they graduated, so Mom has never had a career. Even though both Hank and I have been out of college for six years, she still doesn't work. She continues to take care of the house her and Dad share and she still takes every opportunity to pamper Hank and I. Of course, I love it and if she's happy and Dad's happy, then I'm happy, but I worry she must be bored and I sometimes hope she finds something to keep her busy.

Then there's Dad...Dr. Bladder. Hank and I both love to call him that, and the weird thing is he likes to call himself that. He's one of those people who refers to himself in the third person.

"Kids, Dr. Bladder wants a glass of milk... Can someone help Dr. Bladder out?" It's rather annoying actually and I'm sure everyone makes fun of him, but he's my dad, and if that's what Dr. Bladder does, then I'm okay with that, too. Dad definitely tries to have a sense of humor about his name...or maybe that's just because he never had a choice with Hank and I around. I think Hank and I have single-handedly uncovered every bladder, pee or poop joke there is. Sometimes we even create new ones.

"Dr. Bladder? What do you call a man with no arms or legs who pees everywhere? Peeeeter." Hey, I never said they were good jokes, but they always kept Dad laughing. Sort of. Dad definitely has a sense of humor, but I think Hank and I are so busy trying to be the funny ones that he just stays quiet and lets us be the family comedians. I bet in college or maybe when he's out with his friends that he's a lot like Hank and I, sarcastic and fun. But as our

Love and War in La Jolla

dad, he just smiles and loves us and loves Mom and lives his life as Dr. Bladder.

Anyway, so Mom is Mom, Dad is Dr. Bladder and Hank is....well, Hank. Hank is thirty-one, which is three years older than me and a royal pain in the ass. I've mentioned above that Hank and I both think we're pretty funny and can spend a lot of time together trying to be funny, making fun of other people or inventing bladder jokes, but those are the good times. I'm pretty sure that Hank thinks his job as older brother is to make my life difficult. As I mentioned, we both live in San Diego, but not on purpose. It's not like we set out to live in the same town. I went to the University of Washington for college and after four years there, I was ready to get out of the dreary weather. I wanted some sun, so I moved to La Jolla along with my three best girlfriends from college, Julie, Sara and Brooke. Hank came to San Diego to attend law school, so I always figured he would head back to San Francisco when he finished. He went to a small private college outside of San Francisco and therefore has most of his high school and college friends in the Bay Area so I assumed he was just in San Diego for three short years and would get out of my hair. That was before Becki.

Becki is my brother's socially inept girlfriend. First of all, she spells her name with an "I" so therefore I instantly hate her. Call me judgmental, but seriously, you need to change that. Anyway, I call her Socially Inept Becki because it's almost as if she were raised by wolves and never really learned how to deal with other people. She went to law school because it was the best way for her to hide from the real world, I think. She lives her life with her head stuck in a book and likes it that way. Now that she's done law school, she works with contracts or some other dreadfully boring form of law that allows her to be at her desk researching most of every day with little contact to the outside world.

Jennifer Argent

It's not just that she's quiet—she honestly doesn't know how to talk to people. I've seen her drunk before and that's when things are especially uncomfortable. The things that fly out of Becki's mouth when she's drunk are completely inappropriate, rude or just plain insane. Last New Years Eve I was at a big party and Hank and Becki asked if they could stop by on their way home from dinner. I think my brother wanted to do something social and fun, but Becki hates that so this was a way to compromise—dinner and then home to watch movies, with just a quick side-trip to a party. Anyway, they stop by and I do my best to be gracious and give them champagne. Hank and I talk briefly about his work as a corporate attorney for a start-up company in San Diego and then I tell them some outrageous stories from my job. Becki, with nothing to contribute, just keeps drinking to have something to do. Eventually it's clear that she's hammered and in the middle of our chat where Hank and I are now quoting lines from the movie *Airplane*, she says quietly, "Sometimes, my butt bleeds when I poo," and then breaks into giggles. I am dumbfounded, as is Hank, and am thanking the Lord above that my friends did not just hear that. We don't really address her butt bleeding problem and decide to change the subject. We're now talking about Hank's friend, Brock, the most gorgeous African American man I've ever laid eyes on. He's telling me how Brock is taking a month off work to travel around Europe when Becki whispers, "Sometimes, black people at night scare me." Wow. Did I really just hear that? Good to know Socially Inept Becki is also a racist.

Anyway, Hank met her in law school and they've been together for almost two years. He still lives in San Diego because she's from here and would never actually leave the comforts of home. You may be asking yourself, what does he see in her? For one, she has a super hot body. I swear she doesn't have an ounce of fat on her. She also adores Hank, for some reason, and most importantly, she lets Hank be Hank. She hates being in public

Love and War in La Jolla

places, so most of the time she stays home and he gets to go out with the boys on his own which is a good deal for him. When she *is* out with him, she lets him take the stage as he makes his jokes, dances around drunk and has a good time. Hank could never date someone with my personality because we'd constantly be fighting for the spotlight. "Hey everyone! Listen to me—I have a funny joke and it's better than Hank's jokes!" You know what I mean? I think they actually complement each other well.

I suppose, now that we're older, Hank and I get along for the most part. I repeat, now that we're older. Growing up he hated me and definitely hurt me all the time, as my mom can attest to. Like the time when I was just a baby and Hank pushed me down a flight of stairs in my walker. Mom said he had been jealous of me since the day I was born because he was the only baby in the house up until then. He even tried to simply get rid of me when I was two years old: Mom found him trying to smother me with a pillow while I slept. Nice.

As I grew older, it didn't change much. Hank was always mean to me and it continued that way until the day we left for college. In high school, Hank and I actually came together once to have a party when Mom and Dad were out of town. The morning after the party though, he took off somewhere and left me to clean the house. When Mom and Dad came home and found some tiny evidence of a party, they confronted us and Hank played dumb. He said he had no idea what happened and, "How could I do this to Mom and Dad, Erin"? I tried to sell him out but Hank said he was away fishing for the weekend with friends, as evidenced by the fishing gear and suitcase he was now carrying. He even got his hands on a fish as proof. What a dick.

Now that we've grown up, we get along much better but he still criticizes my friends, boyfriends, career choices, clothes, haircuts, weight, and anything else you can think of. This doesn't make for a good friend, but at least he's stopped trying to kill me.

Ms. Erin Bladder
Guest Relations
Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa
La Jolla, CA 92037

June 13th, 2004

Mr. Dick Barnaba
128 Sycamore Ave.
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

Mr. Barnaba,

I would like to extend a personal apology to you in regards to your stay here with us at the Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa in La Jolla.

I apologize for the drop of urine you encountered on your toilet seat after you checked into the hotel. I too, do not understand how the urine entered your room. We instruct all our staff to use staff facilities, not guest facilities and the housekeepers we employ are the best in the business. Be assured, the matter is being investigated and the person responsible for the urine will be held accountable.

I would like to offer you 10% off your next visit to the Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa to compensate for your inconvenience. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Best regards,

Erin Bladder
Guest Relations Associate
Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa

CHAPTER TWO

See what I mean? These are the letters that really make my day, because they make for great stories later on when I'm at the bars with my friends. I can't believe this letter—I'd like to show it to Melanie just to have a good laugh with her, but I know better. She'd probably call the guy and tell him he's an unbelievable prick, and how dare he hate defenseless spiders and never come back or she'll tear his head off. Nothing Melanie said would surprise me now.

"Morning, Melanie."

"Hi. Your shirt is wrinkled," she replies, without even looking at me as she heads to her desk.

I see it's another day with Melanie Smiles here at the Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa. Is it just me or is her hostility towards me growing? Anyway, I try to ignore her and get back to responding to some letters, but my mind drifts back to my amazing night last night. I've been dating Brant for two months now and I couldn't be happier. Last night, after dinner, we went back to his apartment and made love for the first time. I planned on waiting longer than two months, but he told me last night that he was in love with me! I can't believe it—Brant Armond Loves Me! I've definitely dated some frogs in my twenty-eight years. Is it possible I've found my prince? He's so amazing. Brant is a thirty-four year old bartender here at the Grand Bluffs. I know, I know, you shouldn't fish out of the company pond, but I told you already how beautiful the people are here. Also, this gorgeous hotel is just so romantic—it's amazing the entire staff isn't sleeping together, really.

Anyway, after a day at work a few months ago, a bunch of us from the Grand Bluffs went out drinking and dancing. One thing led to another and we ended up at his place. We just fooled around for a bit that night before I passed out, but we've been dating ever since. We've been dating secretly of course because although it's

not stated specifically in my contract, I know it's frowned upon to date other employees. Brant and I have a connection though and last night, he made that clear. I figure it's only a matter of time before our love is out in the open and we're planning our wedding here at the Grand Bluffs. Even if you have enough money, this place isn't the easiest hotel in town to have your wedding at—it's booked years in advance. Since we're both employees though, I know Drew would help us out. Oh, he'll look so handsome in his white tux, and Hank...I wonder if he'll be a groomsman? But that might mean Becki would have to be a bridesmaid and that won't happen over my dead....

"Erin...Erin...*Erin!!!*" Oh God, it's Melanie. "Erin, snap out of it, will you? You look stoned when you daydream and believe me when I say it's not flattering. Your face gets all skewed and you look sort of like a fish that..."

"What do you need, Melanie?" I interrupt her. I was having a great daydream, planning my wedding to Brant and I don't want her negative energy involved in my wedding.

"Geesh, nothing. I just wanted to tell you that you have visitors."

Oh, I almost forgot! I made emergency phone calls this morning to Brooke, Sara and Julie to tell them they *had* to meet me for lunch. I was dying to tell them about my night last night and to let them know that Brant is officially the man of my dreams. I thought the day just started, but I look at the clock and see I've been daydreaming all morning—it's already noon. I grab my sweater and run out to meet the girls. We jump in Brooke's jeep and head to Murphy's Bar and Grill for some burgers.

"Hi guys!" I say excitedly.

"Hi Erin!" Julie replies. "What's going on? What's with the emergency lunch?"

"Yeah, Erin, what's up? You sound happier than Josh after a new *Lord of the Rings* movie is released." Poor Sara. Her

Love and War in La Jolla

boyfriend, Josh, is addicted to everything remotely related to *Lord of the Rings*. Nice guy...but a bit of a dork.

“I had the most amazing night last night, you guys! Ah! I can’t wait to tell you all about it.”

“Oh God, it’s not about Brant *Armond*, is it?” says Brooke. “Erin, his name sounds like an industrial solvent.”

I smile and take Brooke’s comments with a grain of salt. She’s what you call...kind of a bitch. I really love her though and she’s one of my closest friends. You just have to love her for who she is—a tough, stuck-up, smart woman who will tell you like it is. Brooke can be pretty harsh, but she’s a good friend and will always listen to you. She may piss you off because she’s rough and doesn’t sugarcoat anything, but I know she’d lie down in the street for any of us if she had to.

“Yes, Brooke, it *is* about Brant. Things are *wonderful!*”

“I think it’s great, Erin. You seem so happy with him. What happened last night?” asks Julie. Julie is one of those friends you need in your life, because unlike Brooke, she sees the sunny side of everything.

True story—once we drove past a dead dog on the side of the road that had been hit by a car and Julie said, “Oh that’s so sad...but I bet his mother just died of cancer or something and this is God’s way of letting them be together.”

I spend a lot of time rolling my eyes at her, but I’m definitely lucky to have a friend like Julie. She’ll listen to me until she’s blue in the face and she’s patient as the day is long. I think that’s why she makes a great kindergarten teacher, although sometimes I wonder if she’ll crack and just freak out one day and go postal on the school. I don’t know how she does it, actually. Between her family and being a teacher she must have a lot of pent up hostility somewhere in there. Her family is a bit crazy and I think she learned at a young age to play the peacemaker. Her mom and dad are now divorced, but they spent her entire childhood fighting and

Jennifer Argent

she always tried to stop the fighting, mostly to protect her younger brother, Gil. Now that she's grown up and her parents are divorced, she's still close to her dad, but her mom is a freak of nature that Julie chooses not to keep in touch with. One of the many examples of her mom's craziness: Julie was named "Julie" because her mom loved the television show *One Day at a Time* and named her daughter after the ugly sister on the show, Julie, claiming she knew her daughter would be gorgeous and would therefore change the stigma of ugly people in the world. Yeah, I have no clue what that really means either. Anyway, the last Julie heard, her mother was somewhere in Mexico living in a mud hut trying to develop a new treatment for scabies. We feel sorry for Mexico.

"Well, you guys. I'm in love...and so is Brant. It's official! He told me he loved me last night. Ah! Can you believe it!?"

The responses of my friends are typical:

First Brooke. "Yippee, Erin. A guy said 'I love you' and you throw a parade? Come on. Guys will say anything they want to get a girl into bed. You probably slept with him, then?"

Then Sara. "Erin, that's great. Are you guys really in love or was it just an excuse to have sex?"

Then Julie. "Wonderful news! Love is so amazing, Erin. I can almost feel you beaming right now! Congrats!"

I am used to blowing off Brooke's comments, and Julie would never voice any negative thoughts she had (if she ever has any, that is) but I have Sara's comment in my head now. Sara has been my very best friend since kindergarten. We grew up as next-door neighbors in the Bay Area, went to high school together and decided to go to the University of Washington together. We even lived together freshman year in the dorms and joined the same sorority. She obviously moved to San Diego with me and we live together now too, in a crappy little apartment near La Jolla. Anyway, Sara's a little more real than Julie but not bitchy like

Brooke. I like to think that she's a lot like me, actually; Fun, smart, sarcastic, loving, and a little bit insecure at times. We both want careers, but are really looking forward to the day we can have families and walk our kids in the park together. She's extremely happy with Josh, happier than I have ever seen her actually, but I'm not sure yet whether they'll get married and have *Lord of the Rings* babies. I love to poke fun at her and tell Sara her kids are going to be named "Frodo" or something else that sounds like a name out of a *Dungeons & Dragons* game. Like I said, he's great, but a little dorky. Sara is very pretty, sweet and smart and definitely attracts men—she just seems to like these dork-types.

Anyway, I love her and trust her judgment implicitly and I think I know what she's getting at with her comment. I don't sleep with boys casually. Ever. I have never had a one-night stand in my entire life. I've had drunken moments in college when I've kissed a random boy at a party, but I have never slept with anyone casually. I have to be in love with a guy before I sleep with him. When I start dating someone new, my friends ask how long it will be until I sleep with him and I always say, until we're in love. With Brant this only took two months, but we did fall in love and last night just felt right.

"I know what you guys are getting at. You know I don't sleep with guys after only two months, but we're in love." I'm desperately trying to convince myself now that I'm not a total whore.

"So you *did* sleep with him?!" says Sara.

"Duh, that's why he said he loved you, Erin." Thanks to Brooke for keeping it real.

"Okay, okay. I did sleep with him, you guys, and yes it happened to be the same night he told me he loved me, but there is a small chance, Brooke, that we are actually in love. Don't be such a pessimist. You're just bitter since things with you and Chris didn't work out."

Jennifer Argent

Chris is Brooke's latest victim. Brooke is a complete Man Eater. She devours men. She's absolutely stunning, and the girl gets more men than any woman I've ever known. It's like she has this creepy power over men—they fall at her knees, she dates them for awhile, she lets them buy her things and then she gets tired of them and lets them go. Since I met her in college, she's broken more hearts than I can count. Usually she dumps her men for no good reason at all, and Chris turned out to be a pretty good example of how easy it is to piss off Brooke. She was sleeping at his place a few weeks ago when she woke up in the middle of the night and he wasn't in bed. Sometimes Chris suffered from insomnia so she assumed he was in the family room reading or something. Normally, she would've gone right back to bed, but that night she had a strange feeling about something so she got up to investigate. She found him at the kitchen table with a jar of pickles in front of him. He was stabbing them with a fork and shoving them into his mouth one by one. When she was telling us this story, I couldn't wait for the punch line. What could possibly be so bad about eating pickles that you have to dump the guy?

"Not only was he forking pickles and putting them into his mouth.....but..." Brooke loves to drag out her stories.

"What? What was it!?" We could barely contain ourselves.

"He was picking his nose, putting boogers on top of the pickles, and then eating them."

Silence.

"Oh my." Even Julie sounded grossed out.

"That's the f'ing grossest thing I've ever heard." Sara adds.

"Okay, yeah that's pretty gross, Brooke, but honestly, do you have any clue how gross guys are? I mean they fart in their hands and try to smell it." I fondly remember Hank farting into his hand, shouting "Palm bomb!" and shoving his hand into my face.

I continue. "All guys, and most girls probably, pick their noses and eat it. He was just spicing it up with some pickles!"

Love and War in La Jolla

Brooke didn't buy my excuses and told us she dumped Chris on the spot. For once, I might actually agree with Brooke. I'm not sure if I could ever get the idea of pickle booger-eating Chris out of my head either. Brooke is human though, and has had her heart broken once she claims, by the childhood love of her life in high school. He cheated on her and sometimes we wonder just how in love with this guy she was—maybe that's the reason she never gets close to men and goes through them faster than I can down a Taco Bell bean burrito. Maybe that's why she's so unsupportive of Brant and I...because she thinks all men are scum.

"I'm not bitter that the booger eater and I aren't dating anymore. I'm okay with it, really. I just know what guys are like, Erin. I have more experience with men than all of you put together and I know that men will say just about anything to get you into bed." This is just Brooke, telling me like it is, but definitely taking away a bit of my excitement.

"Brooke, pipe down. Erin, that's great. I can tell you're really excited about him. Tell us all about it. How did it happen, were you surprised?" Thank you to Sara for allowing me to be happy for a moment and tell my story.

"Well, first we had dinner at Le Bouche Enorme."

"Doesn't that mean 'huge mouth' in French?" I ignore Brooke.

"Dinner was fun. We talked about work, our families and places we want to travel to together. Then we went back to his place and since his roommate was gone for the night, we had the entire house to ourselves. We turned down the lights, drank some wine, played some Dave Matthews and danced in the living room."

"Oh, puke." This is Brooke. Shocking, I know.

"Anyway, then we kissed a bit and he told me he loved me. I told him that I loved him too and he said he was happy to hear that. Then he asked if he could show me how much he loved me by making love to me and of course I said yes."

Jennifer Argent

“Are you freaking kidding me, Erin?” Brooke looks dumbfounded. “Erin, that’s like the oldest line in the book. ‘Can I show you how much I love you?’ I don’t know about this guy. He sounds way too slick for me.”

“Oh Brooke, please. Erin is trying to bond with us. Let’s let her talk. Go ahead, Erin.” Julie, always the peacemaker.

“Okay, so we went into his room and made love for a good hour.”

“Only once?” asks Sara.

“Ummm, no we did it once more in the morning.”

“Oh! See Brooke? Morning sex is the true sign of a guy who really likes you. When you smell and he still wants to kiss you and have sex!” Thank you, Sara.

“How was making love to him? Tender and wonderful?” Good old Julie. Sex is never dirty to her. It’s always “making love”.

“The sex was incredible.” Truth be told, I’ve had much better sex, but it was only the first time and sometimes it takes awhile to make everything work smoothly. My friends are all now looking at me expectantly like they want to hear more, but I don’t know what.

“What?”

“Anything weird happen? Weird noises? Weird movements? Give us the embarrassing details!”

Okay, so there was one weird thing, but I hesitate to tell my friends. I mean, this is the man I love and I want to respect our privacy. On the other hand, these are my best friends and these moments of bonding are what friendship is all about. Okay, I’ll spill.

“Well, there was one thing that was kind of funny. As we were getting into the groove of things, he started breathing harder, which is normal, but as he was getting....closer.....he started to... hum the theme to *Hawaii 5-0*.” As I look around to my friends, for once, none of them have anything to say.

“I know. I thought it was weird too.” I admit.

“Uh, yeah it’s a little weird. Does he do it every time, you think?”

“Actually, yes. He did it in the morning when we had sex too. And come to think of it, I think he’s done it in the past when he, you know, has an orgasm.”

“I thought this was your first time?” Julie asks innocently.

Is she going to make me spell it out for her? “Well, yes this is the first time we’ve had sex, but I’ve been with him when he’s had an orgasm before. You know.”

“Ohhh.”

“Well, it’s not half as messed up as eating your own boogers on pickles.”

Good point. All of a sudden I feel terrible I told everyone what Brant does in the privacy of the bedroom. I mean, what if I did something weird and he told all his friends all about it? I would hate that. I could kick myself.

“You guys, please don’t say anything to anyone, okay? I feel really bad now that I told you.” “We won’t. Don’t worry.”

“Okay, kids, thank you so much for listening and being the best friends ever. I better get back to the hotel. Don’t you guys have to get going too?”

As they all start singing “Back to the Hotel” by N2Deep, I realize that I am the only one who has somewhere to be. Julie’s kindergarten class is out of school for the summer so she isn’t doing much besides working on her tan, Brooke works at a PR agency but seems to have risen the ranks high enough not to care when she takes long lunches, and Sara is in graduate school studying for her Masters degree in physical therapy and doesn’t have any work to do today, I guess. She’s not taking many classes this summer. Apparently nobody is in a rush but me.

“Hey you guys! Why don’t we all go out tonight to celebrate?” I ask.

“Celebrate what?” says Brooke.

Jennifer Argent

“You know. My love.” I respond, half trying to annoy her. “Come on, it’s Friday! We’ll meet for drinks at The Shadow Lounge and have a girls’ night! Please?!”

For once, it’s unanimous. Julie’s free, Sara said Josh is away for the weekend camping with the guys, I guess Brooke hasn’t found another poor soul to replace Booger Chris yet, and Brant is working late tonight. So we’re all in.

“Great. Sara, I’ll meet you at home after work and then we’ll meet up with the rest of you guys around eight o’clock.”

I get back to work a little after one in the afternoon and Melanie is nowhere to be found. Thank God. I want to take some time to finish some letters and then continue my daydream about my wedding to Brant. So what if he hums the *Hawaii 5-0* theme when he gets excited. There are definitely worse things in life. He could beat me, eat his own boogers, fart in his hand; the list goes on and on. *Hawaii 5-0* is kind of endearing actually.

I finish a few letters, daydream a bit more and there’s still no sign of Melanie. I kind of like having this office to myself. Drew even called a few minutes ago asking me to deal with an actual “issue” and I was able to meet with the guests and work through it. I think Drew was impressed with me and seemed annoyed that he couldn’t find Melanie. How irresponsible of her, but her loss is my gain. If this month continues as fabulously as it’s going now, I’ll have my future husband and Melanie’s job.

Feeling especially cheery, I decide to take a quick stroll around the hotel, find Brant and say hello. I just saw him this morning as I was leaving his place, but I haven’t talked to him all day, so I figure I’ll drop in on him. That’s what girlfriends do, right? They call whenever they want, without looking needy and they drop by whenever they want, because that’s their right. Right? I think so. It’s only three so even though he’s working the late shift tonight, he’s definitely been here awhile now.

Love and War in La Jolla

I step into the Lagoon Lounge, where he's tending bar and I see one couple sitting at a table nearby, but no sign of Brant. I call his name, but no answer. I walk a few more steps and round the corner by the end of the bar and there he is. He's just standing by himself behind the bar with both his hands on the counter. He almost looks white and is looking at me like he just saw a ghost.

"Brant? Hey, what's up? Didn't you hear me call your name?"

"Uh, yeah. Hi there. How are you today?" he replies.

Okay, that's weird. He's acting like I'm a customer. Maybe he thinks Drew is nearby and he doesn't want to give anything away about us.

"Hey, babe. It's okay. Nobody is here. I saw Drew about fifteen minutes ago and he was taking off for the day. How was the rest of your morning after I left?" I reach for his hand but he retracts it a bit.

"It was fine, Erin. Look I'm pretty busy, why don't I stop by later and see how you're doing?"

Okay, this is messed up. What's going on here? "Brant, you're just standing here. You're not busy. What's up?"

He closes his eyes and almost looks as if he's about to throw up. I wonder if he's trying to get rid of me because he's about to get sick and doesn't want me to see. Why doesn't he run into the bathroom if that's the case? He seems frozen where he's standing.

Then it happens. As it happens, it's almost as if I'm outside my body looking down as it happens. It doesn't feel real. I'm in shock and am trying to block out what I hear. He starts whispering, murmuring, humming, so softly I can barely make it out. Then all of a sudden, my face gets hot with rage, horror, humiliation, sadness all at once—as I realize what I'm hearing....

Hawaii 5-0.

Jennifer Argent

I know that hum and I know when he hums it. Unless Brant grew a third hand and is doing this himself, there is someone behind the bar making this happen. Brant is still humming, apparently lost in the moment, as I lunge myself over the top of the bar. What is before my eyes is so unbelievably offensive, disgusting and just plain wrong that I want to take the drink umbrellas on the bar and stab them into my eyes so I don't have to see it anymore.

I see Melanie, in her peach suit and navy blue heels bent down giving Brant some....how can I put this....oral stimulation. I can't bring myself to acknowledge what's happening here. I can't bring myself to say the words, even in my head. "The Guest Relations Nazi, and apparently also a total whore, is giving my future husband a blow job."

Oh. My. God.

My head feels full and crazy, like I'm about to either throw up, scream, scratch Brant's eyes out or just slam Melanie's head into the bar. It's like the whole scene isn't happening—I'm numb, I'm scared....No, I'm mad. All of a sudden I am madder than I have ever been in my entire life.

I quickly survey the scene. Melanie is standing up to face me now and as she does this she has a half-smirk on her face and wipes...her...mouth. Did I just really see that? I look at Brant and he quickly glances at Melanie and then me. At this point, he somewhat resembles what you'd imagine your face to look like if you saw a cum stain on your hotel sheet: Scared. My internal negotiator is working like mad—do I punch him in the face, do I punch her in the face, do I yell, do I cry? I'm confused and time seems to be standing still while I make my move. My mouth has been hanging open this whole time but I finally close it and decide to do what's right. I am a mature woman at my place of business. Professional Erin, do not make a scene...I walk away.

Love and War in La Jolla

I am no more than two steps away however, when my internal negotiator turns off and my internal rage turns on. I stop, turn around, look him in the face and say, “Your name *does* sound like an industrial solvent!”

That’ll show him. Wait, what am I talking about? He doesn’t care if I make fun of his name. Damn. I’ve ruined the one moment I had to sound cool and show him what I think of him. No, no, no it’s not too late. I turn around to try again.

“Brant, what I meant to say is that you are a gross little man who has the impressive career of tending bar at age thirty four and doesn’t even do it well. Your ass is too flat, you’re balding, your B.O. always smells like burnt hair and between Melanie and the number of other whores you’ve poked in this hotel, everyone will now know what a small useless penis you have, what a total loser you are and that you are a terrible, horrific lover. I would rather eat a pickle with Melanie’s boogers on it than see you again. Don’t call me. Ever.”

Damn, if I must say so myself, I’m pleased with that. I got in a number of shots at Brant in just ten seconds or so. Mind you they looked utterly confused at the pickle comment, but whatever. I feel better now. I storm out of the bar and back to my office. I stay just long enough to grab my purse and get the hell out of there before I actually have to deal with Melanie. Did she know about Brant and me? Was she actually dating Brant, too? My mind is reeling. Well either way, I don’t get the feeling Melanie’s worried about me and rushing back here to see if I’m okay, but I don’t want to risk it, so I better get out of here quickly. Plus I think I remember referring to her as a whore in my tirade. Oops.

Ms. Erin Bladder
Guest Relations
Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa
La Jolla, CA 92037

June 13th, 2004

Mrs. Claire Doolittle
4812 Ocean Ave. # 4
Tampa, FL 33637

Mrs. Doolittle,

I would like to extend a personal apology to you in regards to your stay here with us at the Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa in La Jolla.

I apologize for the lipstick stain left on one of your bathroom glasses. I too, do not understand how a dirty glass was left in your room, as we instruct all our housekeepers to keep our guest rooms spotless. Let me ask you this: Have you entertained the thought that perhaps while you were in the spa or out shopping, your husband may have been banging hookers in your suite? I know we'd all like to think the best of our significant others, but take it from me, most men say they love you until you catch them getting head from some cheap slut behind a bar. Anyway, be assured, the matter is being investigated and the person responsible for the lipstick stain will be held accountable. Unless of course the culprit is your husband's hooker.

I would like to offer you 10% off your next visit to the Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa to compensate for your inconvenience. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Best regards,

Erin Bladder
Guest Relations Associate
Grand Bluffs Resort and Spa

Erin Bladder's hysterical summer filled with love and revenge.

Love and War in La Jolla

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/1750.html?s=pdf>