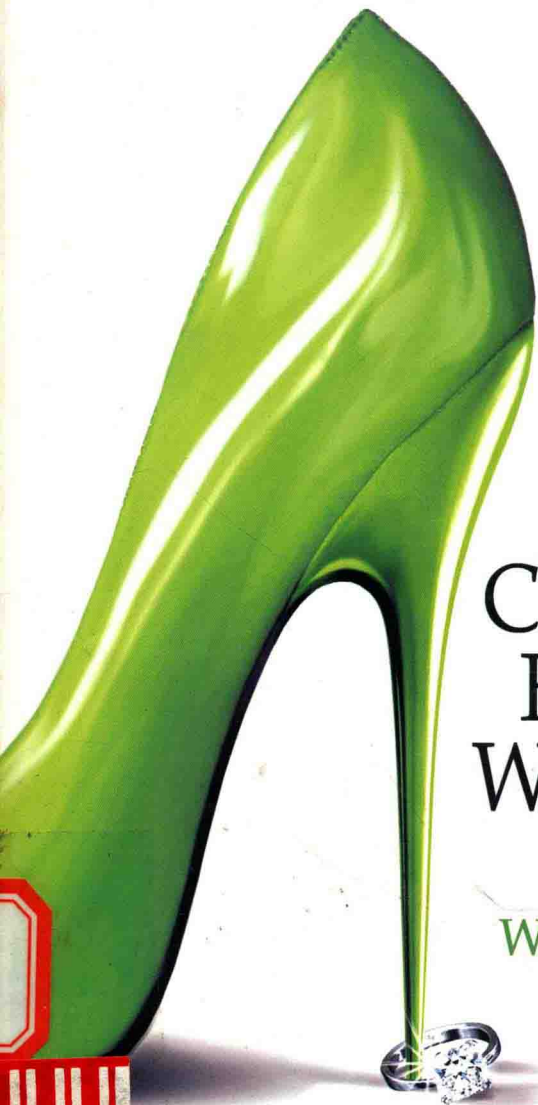


From the bestselling author of  
**THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA**



**CHASING  
HARRY  
WINSTON**  
Lauren  
Weisberger

**THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER**

LAUREN WEISBERGER

*Chasing Harry Winston*

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11

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## CHASING HARRY WINSTON

Lauren Weisberger is the author of *The Devil Wears Prada*, which spent more than a year on the *New York Times* hardcover and paperback bestseller lists. The film version starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway won a Golden Globe Award and grossed over \$300 million worldwide. Her next novels, *Everyone Worth Knowing* and *Chasing Harry Winston* were both bestsellers. She lives in New York City with her husband.

### Acclaim for Lauren Weisberger:

'The perfect gift for girly fashion-lovers' *Sunday Express*

'*Everyone Worth Knowing* is good at lampooning a generation for whom being seen in the right places with the right people in the right clothes is a life-defining occupation' *Metro*

'Mixes *Sex and the City* charm with dry New York wit' *Real*

'A funny tale of trying to make it' *New Woman*

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'Laugh out loud at this fictional fash editor's outrageous shenanigans' *Elle Girl*

By the same author

*Everyone Worth Knowing*

*The Devil Wears Prada*

For Mike, with love

## *panties is a vile word*

When Leigh's doorbell rang unexpectedly at nine on a Monday night, she did not think, *Gee, I wonder who that could be*. She thought, *Shit. Go away*. Were there people who actually welcomed unannounced visitors when they just stopped by to 'say hello' or 'check in'? Recluses, probably. Or those friendly Midwestern folks she'd seen depicted in *Big Love* but had never actually met – yes, they probably didn't mind. But this! This was an affront. Monday nights were sacred and completely off-limits to the rest of the world, a time of No Human Contact when Leigh could veg out in sweats and watch episode after beautiful TiVo'd episode of *Project Runway*. It was her only time alone all week, and after some intensive training on her part, her friends, her family, and her boyfriend, Russell, finally abided by it.

The girls had stopped asking for Monday-night plans at the end of the nineties; Russell, who in the beginning of their relationship had openly balked, now quietly contained his resentment (and in football season relished having his own Monday nights free); her mother struggled through one night a week without picking up the phone to call, finally accepting

after all these years that she wouldn't hear from Leigh until Tuesday morning no matter how many times she hit Redial. Even Leigh's publisher knew better than to assign her Monday-night reading . . . or, god forbid, knew not to log an interrupting phone call. Which is precisely why it was so incredible that her doorbell had just rung – incredible and panic-inducing.

Figuring it was her super, there to change the air-conditioning filter; or one of the delivery guys from Hot Enchiladas, leaving a menu; or, most likely of all, someone just confusing her door with one of her neighbors', she hit Mute on the TV remote and did not move a muscle. She cocked her head to the side like a Labrador, straining for any confirmation that the intruder had left, but the only thing she heard was the dull, constant thudding from above. Suffering from what her old shrink called 'noise sensitivity' and everyone else described as 'fucking neurotic,' Leigh had, of course, thoroughly scoped out her upstairs neighbor before signing over her life savings: The apartment might have been the most perfect she'd seen in a year and a half of looking, but she hadn't wanted to take any chances.

Leigh had asked Adriana for the scoop on the woman above her, in apartment 17D, but her friend had just pursed her pouty lips and shrugged. No matter that Adriana had lived in the building's full-floor penthouse apartment from the day her parents had moved from São Paulo to New York nearly two decades before; she had completely embraced the New Yorker's I-Promise-Not-to-Acknowledge-You-If-You-Extend-Me-the-Same-Courtesy attitude toward her neighbors and could offer Leigh no info on her neighbor. And so, on a blustery December Saturday right before Christmas, Leigh had slipped the building's doorman twenty bucks, Bond-style, and waited in the lobby, pretending to read a manuscript. After Leigh spent three hours scanning the same anecdote, the doorman coughed loudly and looked at her over the top of his glasses *with meaning*. Glancing up, Leigh felt an immediate wave of relief. Before her, removing a QVC catalog from an



unlocked mailbox, stood an overweight woman in a polka-dot housedress. *Not a day younger than eighty*, thought Leigh, and she breathed a sigh of relief; there would be no stilettos clacking against the hardwood floors, no late-night parties, no parade of visitors stomping around.

The very next day Leigh wrote a check for the down payment, and two months later she excitedly moved into her mint-condition one-bedroom dream apartment. It had a renovated kitchen, an oversized bathtub, and a more than decent northern view of the Empire State Building. It might have been one of the smallest units in the building – okay, *the* smallest – but it was still a dream, a beautiful, lucky dream in a building Leigh never thought she could afford, each and every obscenely priced square foot paid for with her own hard work and savings.

How could she possibly have predicted that the seemingly innocuous upstairs neighbor was a dedicated wearer of massive wooden orthopedic clogs? Still, Leigh berated herself regularly for thinking high heels were the only potential noise risk: it had been an amateur's mistake. Before she'd spotted her neighbor wearing the offending shoes, Leigh had created an elaborate explanation for the relentless upstairs racket. She decided that the woman had to be Dutch (since everyone knew Dutch people wore clogs), and the matriarch of a huge, proudly Dutch family who received constant visits from countless children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, cousins, and general advice-seekers . . . all, most likely, Dutch clog-wearers. After spotting her neighbor wearing an air cast and feigning interest in the woman's disgusting-sounding foot ailments including (but not limited to) plantar fasciitis, ingrown toenails, neuromas, and bunions, Leigh had clucked as sympathetically as she could manage and then raced upstairs to check her copy of the co-op rules. Sure enough, they dictated that owners were required to cover eighty percent of their hardwood floors with carpet – which she realized was an entirely moot point when the very next page revealed that her upstairs neighbor was president of the board.

Leigh had already endured nearly four months of round-the-clock clogging, something that might have been funny if it was happening to someone else. Her nerves were directly tied to the volume and frequency of the steady *thump-thump-thump* that segued into a *thumpety-thump-thumpety-thump-thump* pattern when Leigh's heart began to pound right along with it. She tried to breathe slowly, but her exhales were short and raspy, punctuated by little guppy gasps. As she examined her pale complexion (which on good days she thought of as 'ethereal' and all other times accepted as 'sickly') in the mirrored hallway closet door, a thin sheen of perspiration dampened her forehead.

It seemed to be happening more frequently, this sweating/breathing issue – and not just when she heard the wood-on-wood banging. Sometimes Leigh would awaken from a sleep so deep it almost hurt, only to find her heart racing and her sheets drenched. Last week in the middle of an otherwise completely relaxing *shavasna* – albeit one where the instructor felt compelled to play an a capella version of 'Amazing Grace' over the speakers – a sharp pain shot through Leigh's chest on each measured inhale. And just this morning as she watched the human tidal wave of commuters cram onto the N train – she forced herself to take the subway, but hated every second of it – Leigh's throat constricted and her pulse inexplicably quickened. There seemed to be only two plausible explanations, and although she could be a bit of a hypochondriac, even Leigh didn't think she was a likely candidate for a coronary: It was a panic attack, plain and simple.

In an ineffective attempt to dispel the panic, Leigh pressed her fingertips into her temples and stretched her neck from side to side, neither of which did a damn thing. It felt like her lungs could reach only ten percent capacity, and just as she considered who would find her body – and when – she heard a choked sobbing and yet another ring of her doorbell.

She tiptoed over to the door and looked through the peephole but saw only empty hallway. This was exactly how people ended up robbed and raped in New York City – getting duped

by some criminal mastermind into opening their doors. *I'm not falling for this*, she thought as she stealthily dialed her doorman. Never mind that her building's security rivaled the UN's, or that in eight years of city living she didn't personally know anyone who'd been so much as pickpocketed, or that the chances of a psychopathic murderer choosing her apartment from more than two hundred other units in her building was unlikely . . . This was how it all started.

The doorman answered after four eternally long rings.

'Gerard, it's Leigh Eisner in 16D. There's someone outside my door. I think they're trying to break in. Can you come up here right away? Should I call 911?' The words came out in a frantic jumble as Leigh paced the small foyer and popped Nicorette squares into her mouth directly from the foil wrapper.

'Miss Eisner, of course I'll send someone up immediately, but perhaps you're mistaking Miss Solomon for someone else? She arrived a few minutes ago and proceeded directly to your apartment . . . which is permissible for someone on your permanent clearance list.'

'Emmy's here?' Leigh asked. She forgot all about her imminent death by disease or homicide and pulled open her door to find Emmy rocking back and forth on the hallway floor, knees pulled tight against her chest, cheeks slick with tears.

'Miss, may I be of further assistance? Shall I still—'

'Thanks for your help, Gerard. We're fine now,' Leigh said, snapping shut her cell phone and shoving it into the kangaroo pocket of her sweatshirt. She dropped to her knees without thinking and wrapped her arms around Emmy.

'Honey, what's wrong?' she crooned, gathering Emmy's tear-dampened hair from her face into a ponytail. 'What happened?'

The show of concern brought with it a fresh stream of tears; Emmy was sobbing so hard her tiny body trembled. Leigh ran through the possibilities of what could cause such pain, and came up with only three: a death in the family, a pending death in the family, or a man.

'Sweetie, is it your parents? Did something happen to them? To Izzie?'

Emmy shook her head.

'Talk to me, Emmy. Is everything okay with Duncan?'

This elicited a wail so plaintive it hurt Leigh to hear it. Bingo.

'Over,' Emmy cried, her voice catching in her throat. 'It's over for good.'

Emmy had made this pronouncement no fewer than eight times in the five years she and Duncan had been dating, but something about tonight seemed different.

'Honey, I'm sure it's all just—'

'He met someone.'

'He *what*?' Leigh dropped her arms and sat back on her ankles.

'I'm sorry, let me rephrase: I bought him someone.'

'What on earth are you talking about?'

'Remember when I got him a membership at Clay for his thirty-first birthday because he was desperate to get back in shape? And then he never went – not one fucking time in two whole years – because, according to him, it wasn't "an efficient use of his time" to just go and stand on the treadmill? So rather than just cancel the whole damn thing and forget about it, I, genius extraordinaire, decide to buy him a series of sessions with a personal trainer so he wouldn't have to waste one precious second exercising like everyone else.'

'I think I can see where this is going.'

'What? You think he fucked her?' Emmy laughed mirthlessly. It sometimes surprised people to hear Emmy trash-talk with such ferocity – she was, after all, only five-one and looked no older than a teenager – but Leigh barely even noticed anymore. 'I thought so, too. It's so much worse than that.'

'That sounds bad enough, sweetheart.' All-out loving sympathy and support were the best she could offer, but Emmy didn't appear comforted.

'You probably wonder how it could get worse, right? Well, let me tell you how. He didn't just fuck her – I could maybe

deal with that. Noooo, not my Duncan. He “fell in love” with her.’ Emmy jabbed out air quotes with the forefingers and middle fingers of both hands and rolled her bloodshot eyes. ‘He’s “waiting for her,” quote-unquote, until she’s “ready.” She’s a VIRGIN, for chrissake! I’ve put up with five years of his cheating and lies and kinky, weird sex so he can FALL IN LOVE WITH A VIRGIN TRAINER I HIRED IN THE GYM I PAID FOR? In *love!* Leigh, what am I going to do?’

Leigh, relieved that she could finally do something tangible, took Emmy’s arm and helped her to her feet. ‘Come in, honey. Let’s go inside. I’ll make us some tea and you can tell me what happened.’

Emmy sniffed. ‘Oh, god, I forgot . . . it’s Monday. I don’t want to interrupt. I’ll be fine . . .’

‘Don’t be ridiculous. I wasn’t even doing anything,’ Leigh lied. ‘Come in this minute.’

Leigh led her to the couch and, after patting the overstuffed arm to indicate where Emmy should rest her head, ducked behind the wall that separated the living room from the kitchen. With its speckled granite countertops and new stainless steel appliances, the kitchen was Leigh’s favorite room in the whole apartment. All of her pots and pans hung from under-cabinet hooks in order of size, and all of her utensils and spices were obsessively organized in matching glass and stainless containers. Crumbs, spills, wrappers, dirty dishes – all nonexistent. The refrigerator looked like someone had Hoovered it clean, and the countertops were entirely smudge-free. If it was possible for a room to personify its owner’s neurotic personality, the kitchen and Leigh could be identical twins.

She filled the kettle (purchased just last week during a Bloomingdale’s Home Sale, because who said you were entitled to new things only when you registered?), piled a tray high with cheese and Wheat Thins, and peeked through the window into the living room to make sure Emmy was resting comfortably. Seeing that she was lying flat on her back with an arm flung over her eyes, Leigh slipped out her cell phone

and selected Adriana's name from her phone book. She typed: *SOS. E & D finished. Get down here ASAP.*

'Do you have Advil?' Emmy called from the couch. And then, more quietly: 'Duncan always carried Advil.'

Leigh opened her mouth to add that Duncan had always carried a lot of things – a business card for his favorite escort service, a wallet-sized picture of himself as a child, and, occasionally, a genital wart or two that he swore were just 'skin tags' – but she controlled herself. In addition to being unnecessary since Emmy was suffering enough, it would be hypocritical: Contrary to everyone's belief, Leigh wasn't exactly in the world's most perfect relationship, either. But she pushed the thought of Russell from her mind.

'Sure, I'll get you some in a minute,' she said, turning off the whistling kettle. 'Tea's ready.'

The girls had just taken their first sips when the doorbell rang. Emmy looked at Leigh, who just said, 'Adriana.'

'It's open!' Leigh called toward the front door, but Adriana had already figured that out. She stormed into the living room and stood with her hands on her hips, surveying the scene.

'What is going on here?' she demanded. Adriana's slight Brazilian accent, little more than a soft, sexy lilt when she was calm, made her almost unintelligible when she felt, in her own words, 'passionate' about someone or something. Which was pretty much always. 'Where are the drinks?'

Leigh motioned to the kitchen. 'Water's still hot. Check the cupboard above the microwave. I have a whole bunch of different flavors in—'

'No tea!' Adriana screeched and pointed to Emmy. 'Can't you see she's miserable? We need *real* drinks. I'll make caipirinhas.'

'I don't have any mint. Or limes. Actually, I'm not even sure I have the right booze,' Leigh said.

'I brought everything.' Adriana lifted a large paper bag over her head and grinned.

Leigh often found Adriana's abruptness irritating, sometimes a little overwhelming, but tonight she was grateful to

her for taking control of the situation. It had been nearly twelve years since Leigh first saw Adriana's smile, and still it left her feeling awestruck and a little anxious. *How could someone possibly be that beautiful?* she wondered for the hundred thousandth time. *What higher power orchestrated such a perfect union of genes? Who decided that one single solitary soul deserved skin like that?* It was so fundamentally unfair.

It was another few minutes before the drinks were mixed and distributed and everyone had settled down; Emmy and Adriana sprawled on the couch; Leigh sat cross-legged on the floor.

'So, tell us what happened,' Leigh said, placing a hand on Emmy's ankle. 'Just take your time and tell us all about it.'

Emmy sighed and, for the first time since she arrived, appeared cried out. 'There's not that much to tell. She's absolutely adorable – like, nauseatingly cute. And young. Really, really young.'

'What's really, really young?' Leigh asked.

'Twenty-three.'

'That's not *so* young.'

'She has a MySpace profile,' Emmy said.

Leigh grimaced.

'And she's on Facebook.'

'Good lord,' Adriana muttered.

'Yeah, I know. Her favorite color is lavender and her favorite book is *The South Beach Diet* and she just *adores* cookie dough, campfires, and watching Saturday-morning cartoons. Oh, and she simply *must* get nine hours of sleep or else she's really, really cranky.'

'What else?' Leigh asked, although she could predict the answer.

'What else do you want to know?'

Adriana started the quiz show-like round.

'Name?'

'Brianna Sheldon.'

'College?'

'SMU, Comm major, Kappa Kappa Gamma.' Emmy

enunciated these last three words with a perfect Valley Girl inflection.

'Hometown?'

'Born in Richmond, raised in a suburb of Charleston.'

'Music?'

'Like you even have to ask. Kenny Chesney.'

'High school sport?'

'Let's just all say it in unison . . . ' Emmy said.

'Cheerleading,' Adriana and Leigh simultaneously.

'Given.' Emmy sighed, but then she smiled for a second. 'I found some pictures of her from her sister's wedding photographer's Web site – she even manages to look good in teal taffeta. The whole thing is positively nauseating.'

The girls all laughed, each accustomed to this oldest of female-bonding traditions. When your life was in the gutter because your ex-boyfriend suddenly surfaced on weddingchannel.com, nothing offered comfort like trashing the new girlfriend. It was actually how they had become friends in the first place. Leigh and Emmy met each other first in Astronomy 101, a class both were taking to fulfill the dreaded science requirement. Neither realized until it was too late that Astro was actually an aggressive mixture of chemistry, calculus, and physics – not the chance to learn all the constellations and look at the pretty stars, like they had hoped. They were the two least-competent and lowest-scoring members of their lab group, and their TA had strung together enough English words to let them know that they'd better start improving or they would fail the class, which prompted Leigh and Emmy to meet three times a week in the study lounge at Emmy's dorm, a glass-enclosed, fluorescent-lit pod wedged between the kitchen and the coed bathroom. The girls were just beginning to tackle the review notes for the upcoming midterm when they heard banging followed by distinctly female shrieks. Emmy and Leigh looked at each other and smiled as they listened to the angry words being exchanged down the hall, sure it was yet another argument between a scorned sorority girl and the drunken guy who hadn't called



the next day. The yelling shifted, however, and within seconds Emmy and Leigh watched as a gorgeous honey blonde with a sexy accent took a verbal barrage from a hysterical, red-faced, significantly less pretty blonde directly outside the study lounge.

'I can't believe I voted for you!' the red-faced girl screamed. 'I actually stood up in front of the whole chapter to speak on your behalf, and this is how you show your appreciation? By sleeping with my boyfriend?'

The stunner with the accent sighed. When she spoke, it was with quiet resignation. 'Annie, I've said I'm sorry. I never would have done that had I known he was your boyfriend.'

This was not calming to the screamer. 'How could you not have known? We've been together for, like, months!'

'I didn't know, because he accosted *me* last night, flirted with *me*, bought *me* drinks, and asked *me* to his fraternity formal. I'm sorry if it didn't occur to me that he had a girlfriend. If it had, I assure you, I wouldn't have been interested.' The girl held out her hand in a gesture of reconciliation and apology. 'Please. Men aren't that important. Let's forget about it, okay?'

'Forget about it?' the girl hissed, almost snarled, through closed teeth. 'You're nothing more than a little freshman whore, sleeping with the seniors because you think they actually like you. Stay away from me and stay away from him, and keep your stupid freshman trampiness out of my life. Understood?' The girl's voice had gotten louder; by the time she'd asked if Adriana understood, she was shouting again.

Emmy and Leigh watched as Adriana took a long look at the girl, appeared to weigh a response in her mind, and then, deciding against it, simply said, 'Understood perfectly.' Immediately the angry blonde swiveled on one Puma and flounced away. Adriana finally allowed herself to smile before noticing Emmy and Leigh watching from the lounge.

'Did you just see that?' Adriana asked, moving into the doorway.