



The CEO's Little Surprise

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It's a corporate takedown in the boardroom and the bedroom—until a little secret raises the stakes!

Cassandra Claremont's favourite position is CEO—and she's sure as hell not stepping down for Gage Branson, the sexy playboy who once broke her heart. When inside intel threatens her company's success, he's her number one suspect. So why is she still entranced by his sexual spell?

Gage is determined to stoke the fire beneath Cass's icy exterior *and* clear his name. Fortunately, working after hours with the blonde beauty allows him to pursue both goals. But when secrets from Gage's past are exposed, will Cass lose her company, her heart or both?

The CEO's Little Surprise Details

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From Reader Review The CEO's Little Surprise for online ebook

Nicola says

Kat Cantrell is an auto-read author for me and the opener to her *Love and Lipstick* series is another great read. I love a second-chance-love story and Cassandra and Gage provide us with a journey that's inviting from the start.

"Don't think of me as your competition, not tonight."

Together at university, young love didn't end particularly well for Cass and Gage. Years have passed and both are at the helm of successful cosmetics companies, and when Gage is tipped off that Cass' company has developed a formula that he wants, he's prepared to go the extra mile to get it.

Cass was great: smart and driven, she's no pushover and is very much Gage's equal, but it's clear that she's still not over him. Witty, charming and thoughtful, Gage was a perfect blend of driven CEO, attentive lover and dog-loving softie. And when they begin the search for the employee who shared the insider secret that resulted in their reacquaintance, the passion and understanding between them is reignited.

"I want you. And not because you're wearing a sexy outfit. Because you have a brain. Because you challenge me. Because I like being around you."

It was a little disappointing that the whodunnit aspect was never resolved and was pushed aside for other elements of the story towards the end, but on the whole *The CEO's Little Surprise* was an engaging, enjoyable read with a great bunch of characters creating scope for the series. And with Alex and Phillip's story set up nicely, I'm excited to see what their story brings (aside of the obvious) when *A Pregnancy Scandal* releases in June.

Copy received courtesy of the author for an honest and unbiased opinion.

Deborah says

I liked the story but wished there was more background on Gage's brother. I have many unanswered questions about both companies too. Reconnecting with a lover after 10 years is nice to read about but left me a bit flat. This was definitely an HEN and not and HEA.

JoAnne says

Enjoyable read with many stiff characters. Cass, as CEO, was often brittle in her demeanor and outlook on life due to losing out at love 10 years while at college. When he, Gage, also a CEO, reconnected under not the best circumstances things unravel fast.

Some twists and turns along with lots of steam up the sheets moments. Some surprises, lots of business, a

leak to find, friends, family, reconnecting and ultimately love. There was some closure but not enough and there was a happily-ever-after in the offing. I look forward to reading the rest of this series. Cantrell is a new to me author.

Marsha says

Gage Branson is the billionaire CEO of a powerful company. Cassandra Claremont a millionaire CEO of a powerful company. All right, she's not quite on a financial parity with him. But she's definitely in a higher tax bracket! It's a romance wherein the female romantic lead isn't an underling, pauper, lower-class prole or sudden heiress who decides to give up her money just to show how generous, selfless, giving, warm and charitable she is. It's set in contemporary times so she didn't get her wealth by being the daughter of some elite, upper-crust member of society.

She runs the company with three women with whom she's been friends with for years. They have conversations that don't revolve around a man (usually). Therefore, it passes the Bechdel test. So far, it's checking off all of my internal boxes. This looks like a winner!

Not so fast. Cassandra's company is in a spot of difficulty. There's a leak that threatens their financial stability. Uh oh. Also, an old flame (the aforementioned Gage) shows up who wants the formula for his rival company. Gage is determined to seduce Cassandra. Cassandra is equally determined not to be seduced since the man-whore dumped her callously years ago and hasn't seen fit to make himself known until now. **WARNING! DANGER! DANGER!**

Her partners are suspicious that he's has appeared at the same time as the leak, appalled that he wants to buy the formula and furious that she's sleeping with him in order to ferret what he knows. That's right, it's that staple of Harlequin romance: business soiled with pleasure.

The two of them are hot for one another, even after all these years. A professional meal is interrupted by the pair sticking their tongues down each other's throat; a moonlit walk turns into a wild fingerbang against a wooden post; another meeting starts off with him screwing her up against the nearest upright surface and ends with them rolling together in the sheets. He asks her to play hooky and she goes running out of her office at 3 p.m. He crooks his finger and she comes...running.

So much for keeping your feelings and enterprise separate. Her friends don't like the path she's taking and I fully concur with them. If he's guilty of being behind the leak, he's playing her for a fool. If he's innocent, she's using him to find out what he knows and acting the slut. Either way, she's not behaving like a cool-headed authority figure but like the starry-eyed college sap she was when he was her mentor and bed partner all those years ago.

This is not the way professionals behave. If she's being an idiot, Gage is no better. Gage's tactics aren't acceptable no matter how sexy and muscular he is or how talented he is beneath the covers. A man who decides to start off a venture meeting by pushing a woman against the wall isn't someone you want as a boyfriend or partner. Harvey Weinstein is being brought up on charges about this type of sleazy behavior; why the hell should it be laudable in fiction?!

Get your heads in the game, you morons. Spreading your legs as a business maneuver isn't business. It's the world's oldest profession and it doesn't score any points with this reader.

Monica says

I had read the 3rd book in this series and loved it. This 1st in the series was every bit as good. I laughed, I cried, I couldn't put it down!

Cassandra Clairmont's only interest is being CEO of Fyra Cosmetics, the company she and her three best friends founded together. She seldom dates and she has only been in love once, and that man left her shattered when he left. Now her biggest concern is finding the leak in their company before any further damage is done. As CEO she knows it is her responsibility to plug the leak, and when the one man she never thought to see again shows up wanting the rights to their newest and best product to date she has to wonder at his unusual timing.

Gage and Cass had a great fling in college and he's mentoring her through several of her projects. Now her company is on the cutting edge of a breakthrough new product that should be his and he's come to collect what she owes him, and he isn't leaving without it.

When a shocking surprise from Gage's past is thrown into the mix Gage will fight to clear his name, while working to defrost the icy walls Cass has built up all while coming to grips with a future he never expected or thought he wanted.

I can't wait to start the next book! All are stand alone but do have some sequential elements that make more sense if read in order. I can't recommend this series enough. GET THEM ALL!

Russty says

A GoodReads winner... autographed copy!!! Thank you, Kat...

Interesting little tome, bit of corporate espionage, board room drama, and some "hot" action as well. And a "little" surprise along the way!!! Fun read, but, who was the leak? It was a recurring theme, and a large set-up for the whole book, but was just swept over at the end...

Whodunnit???

That aside, love to read more by this author!!!

Claire Robinson says

3.5 - **"I fully intend to use every scrap of information I learn to seduce you..."** Stars!

The CEO's Little Surprise is the first book in Kat Cantrell's new *Love and Lipstick* series, set in the world of *Fyra Cosmetics* run by four female friends, each of them dealing with their own separate issues.

In this book we are given CEO Cass Claremont's story, and there is nothing I enjoy more than a second-chance reconnection.

I found the first half of the book pretty easy to read, you are given a bit of an introduction to the women involved with FYRA, and whose books will follow on from this one, in Trinity, Harper and Alex. All of them have pivotal roles within the company and when faced with an in-house leak of extremely valuable and potentially world changing information all four women find their friendship tested to the limits in trying to find the source.

Best Face Forward.

In walks Gage Branson, CEO of rival company *GB Skin*, after hearing of the new formula his competitors have potentially got in the works, his one goal is to buy it, and keep his products at the top of the pile. The one major problem is that Cass and he go back, waaaaay back, and the parting between them that he thought was amicable, left more of a lasting impression on our starchy CEO.

"Business... then pleasure."

I liked the push and pull between Gage and Cass, their mutual pasts and current professions allowed for plenty of verbal sparring, and Cass, still nursing her hurt from their time together ten years previously, had him blowing hot and cold with her mood-swings from the get-go.

No broken hearts this time.

Things got a little too busy in the second half, although seeing as the title has surprise in it, I shouldn't have been as *surprised* as I was, and although I was expecting their to be resolution to the whole leak aspect of the story, that was also left up in the air, I am assuming it will be a trope that is played out over the course of the rest of the books in the series.

"Together. Like old times."

An easy, uncomplicated read. As you would expect with a book released under the *Harlequin* umbrella, *The CEO's Little Surprise* offers up a little stress-free romantic escapism.

ARC generously provided by the author, and it was my pleasure to provide the above honest review.

Dj says

It's a corporate takedown in the boardroom and the bedroom—until a little secret raises the stakes! Cassandra Claremont's favorite position is(CEO)—and she's sure as hell not stepping down for Gage Branson, the sexy playboy who once broke her heart. When inside intel threatens her company's success, he's her number one suspect. So why is she still entranced by his sexual spell? Gage is determined to stoke the fire beneath Cass's icy exterior and clear his name. Fortunately, working after hours with the blonde beauty allows him to pursue both goals. But when secrets from Gage's past are exposed (a son he never knew existed), will Cass lose her company, her heart or both?

bit of repetition

Harlequin Books says

Miniseries: Love and Lipstick

Amanda says

Kat Cantrell has a unique voice that takes her characters through journeys from light to dark and vice versa. In The CEO's Little Surprise, the first book in her new series: Love and Lipstick, we find that unique writing style present between the pages. We are taken on a turbulent voyage where two people, polar opposites yet fiercely attracted to each other battle it out in the boardroom and the bedroom...? The sizzle and fire between Cass Claremont and Gage Branson had never been put out. They soon discover this when they must face each other at work on a deal regarding a new product. But when her new product is leaked could Cass trust Gage? And was she strong enough to fend off her undying attraction towards him? Overall, The CEO's Little Surprise by Kat Cantrell is a fast-paced story with sexual tension burning up the pages!

Recommended

4 Stars

Sandy Caltagirone says

Man-oh-man! What a great second-chance romance! Second-chance is my absolute favorite theme for romance books and Kat definitely delivered! I should have seen the surprise coming but like some of the other reviews, I was so into what was happening that I didn't even take time to speculate about what the surprise was, let alone remember that there even was a surprise in the book. (When I start reading one of Kat's books, I completely immerse myself in the story and completely forget what I read in the teaser and I also often forget what the title of the story is.) Every single one of her stories have been so easy to immerse yourself in the story and you are always hanging on the edge of your seat. I don't want to give any spoilers away so I will just end this with my absolutely honest opinion of this story: PLEASE PLEASE read this! I was absolutely enthralled with every single book that I have read of Kat's and I know that will not change anytime in the future. If you want to read a book that you could relate to, then try any one of Kat's book and I promise, you won't be disappointed!

I was given an ARC in return for my honest review

Judyrudy says

The CEO's Little Surprise is Kat Cantrell's first book in her Love and Lipstick series. I'm a sucker for second chance stories and this definitely did not disappoint. I thoroughly enjoyed these characters. Cass

Claremont and Gage Branson are competitors. In college they were seriously involved but then Gage walked away. He has difficulties committing. Cass has never forgot their relationship and when he offers to buy her company, Fyra's, latest creation she questions whether he honestly is wanting to purchase this or if he is behind a corporate leak regarding the new product.

Gage commits to helping Cass find who leaked the valuable information about her new product. Of course, trust plays a major role in this story. Can Cass learn to trust Gage? Can she overcome her past feelings for him? Enter Gage's little surprise and all bets are off.

The CEO's Little Surprise was a quick read. I loved it from start to finish. I can't wait to read the next book in the series. I'd like to disclose that I received a copy of The CEO's Little Surprise in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Lynn Lim says

I loved this book. I was introduced to this phenomenal author earlier this year by the one and only Zoe York, and I cannot thank her enough. I fell in love with Ms. Cantrell's writing while reading Claiming her SEAL, a series she is writing with Ms. York and Anne Marsh. Now I cannot get enough of her wonderful books.

This is the first book in the Love and Lipstick series that Ms. Cantrell is writing for Harlequin. It is a phenomenal book about the second chance at first love. Cass fell head over heels in love with Gage in college. Unfortunately, Gage, not so much. He was definitely not ready to settle down, and had no intentions of ever doing so. He broke Cass's heart, and she learned her lesson with men. Never let them close!!! Now, ten years later Cass's company had developed a new formula for skin care and Gage wants it and is willing to buy it for his company.

I really love the way writes an emotional story, and is that not the best kind? There are a lot of twists and turn in this wonderful book, and I loved reading about these two learning to trust each other again.

I received a gift ARC copy of this wonderful book for an honest review.

You really need to get this exceptional book.

Thank you for reading my review.

Susan says

Very good second chance story with some mystery added to the mix. I was already somewhat familiar with the mystery, as I have previously read the second book in the series A Pregnancy Scandal. I was very happy to read the first book and get some of the backstory I had missed.

Cass is the CEO of a cosmetics company that she founded and runs with three friends. They have recently discovered that information on their newest product has been leaked to the press, putting their company's success at risk. A short time later, a rival CEO arrives offering to buy the formula for that product. Cass isn't interested in selling, especially to Gage - the college love that broke her heart. Besides, she's not so sure he isn't the one behind the leak.

Gage has his own very successful line of skin care for men, but Cass's new product could put a serious dent

in his business. He was her mentor in college, and plans to use that fact as leverage to get her to sell him the formula. He has fond memories of their time together, and hopes for some replays of those times. He doesn't expect the cold reaction he gets to his appearance.

I really wasn't too sure about these two at the beginning. There is no doubt that the sparks are still there, but both of them have been corporate big-wigs for a long time. Gage knows exactly what he wants, and he is willing to do anything to get it, even use seduction. He remembers Cass well from all those years ago and is intrigued by the changes he sees in her, but still looks at it as a challenge. I was a bit disturbed by his attempts to manipulate her. Cass remembers all too well her devastation at the end of their relationship. She took her pain and channeled it into her business plans. She also hasn't trusted a man since then. She is suspicious of the timing of his appearance and determined to do what it takes to find out if he's playing both sides. She, too, is willing to use whatever means she can to find the truth.

I began to enjoy the back-and-forth between them as each one tried to figure out what the other was thinking and planning. Gage tended to use charm and flirting to get under Cass's skin, while she tried to give the image of someone who was simply humoring him. Both of them were far more affected by the heat between them than either would admit. Cass decided that keeping Gage close was the best way to get the truth, and talked him into helping her find the leak. I was a bit disappointed in Gage when he kept putting off the promised help, until he realized just how important it was to her.

The passion between them wasn't diminishing at all, and Cass quickly realized that she was in serious danger of getting hurt again. She knew that Gage's attitude about commitment hadn't changed in the years apart, and believing in a future together wasn't going to happen. Then Gage is blindsided by a secret from his past, and Cass is the only one he can turn to for support. I loved seeing the huge changes that he experienced, and the effect those changes had on Cass. But trust is still a huge obstacle, and when Cass confronts Gage with some disturbing information he doesn't take it well. I loved seeing him have to take a hard look at his own actions and see that he was equally at blame. I loved his big moment at the end and the epilogue that leads into the next book.

At the heart of this book is the friendship among Cass, Trinity, Alex and Harper, and the business they built together. Each one has her own niche in the company. Unfortunately, the presence of a corporate spy has put a strain on the business and the friendships, as Cass feels the pressure of being unable to find out who it is. There are times when Cass feels very alone, but I wanted to shake her because she wasn't asking for help. Though one name has come up as suspect, there is no resolution at the end of this book. I expect that the truth won't be known until the end of the fourth one, but I can't wait for the journey.

Geraldine Sadiku says

Excellent read, with the 2 main characters being strong willed. Loved the way they could push each others buttons.
