

LEAH IN LOVE (AND TROUBLE) EXCERPT:

With that, he stalked towards his house, a lovely red brick place with a veranda around its sides, windows beneath its eaves, and a fantastic set of double doors with lead light glass insets. I'd fallen in love with it the moment I set eyes on it. That was when Mrs. Weston, obviously Sean Russel's sister, asked me to call round to give her a quote on some landscaping for the garden I'd presumed was hers. So now it turned out it was this guys.

My business thrived on work in this leafy suburb. I'd been born not far from here, in Mornington, and spent my childhood on a farm in the center of the Mornington Peninsula. I went to high school near Melbourne, when my mother's sister came to Australia from England to care for me after my parent's untimely death when I was eight. Good old Aunt Eliza, she'd taught me everything I know about botany, gardens, and the pleasures to be gained by creating them.

Now what do I do? If the house belonged to him I couldn't go ahead and start digging without his consent, even if his sister had already paid me. Now there was a snag! I didn't fancy giving the loot back, and anyway she'd signed the contract. Another thing Aunt Eliza taught me was to always make sure a contract was signed before I so much as put my spade in the ground on anyone's property.

I sauntered up to the front door, which he'd left open. It was a lovely June day, sunny, with a warm breeze blowing. Unusually warm for this time of year in southern Victoria. I'd been looking forward to transforming this unkempt block of land. Fabulous the house might be, but Sean Russel's sister was right—the garden needed a lot of work.

"What bloody game do you think you're playing at now?" He stood just inside the hallway, blaring down the receiver of the phone that was clenched in his fist. His hair was taking a real bashing from the other hand. Ugh, oh, I guessed he was blasting his poor sister. I did not wish to be a part of a family squabble. I turned about, ready to go back to my truck.

"Wait!"

I stopped. Presumably he was roaring at me. I put a hand to my chest and raised my eyebrows as I faced him again. He was right in front of me—his height slightly intimidating. That is if you were inclined to be intimidated by large men—which I wasn't. Well, not usually. Those lovely chocolate colored eyes were flashing sparks at me and the very sensuous mouth was held in a grim straight line. He rubbed his forehead as if he had a pain there.

"Forgive me, but my sister had no right to order work done on my property." The hands were now on his hips. "I'll have to ask you to leave."

"Sorry, can't do that." I shook my head and my ponytail bounced from side to side. I waved the clipboard at him. "I have a contract here, all signed and sealed. And I've been paid to do this job."

His big sigh was heartfelt. "I don't care a fig. I do not want a female digging up my garden."

“What have you got against female gardeners?” Now I was getting annoyed.

“I have nothing against females doing any job. That is not the point here. This work was ordered without my knowledge or consent and anyway what’s wrong with the garden as it is?” He waggled his fingers as he looked over my shoulder, which wasn’t hard for him to do seeing as I barely reached his chin.

“Pardon me, but if you think your garden doesn’t need work then you must be half blind.” That was rude, I know, but this guy was beginning to rattle me. Why the hell didn’t he just let me get on with the job I’d been paid to do?

“There is nothing wrong with my eyes.” He cast a glance up and down me, making me feel like I did when Patrick, my live-in lover of three years, walked out on me two years ago—on my 33rd birthday. The rat went off to live with a mouse of a woman who had no spunk, no energy, and no boobs. Stupid prat! They made a good pair, a rat and a mouse. Last I heard she was pregnant—perhaps she’d give birth to a chipmunk.

“Look, seeing as I’ve already been paid by your sister, why can’t I just finish this and then I’ll be on my way, out of your beard.” I gave the whiskery chin a sneer. “And you can have it out with Mrs. Weston. This is your problem not mine.”

The beard got a rub or two. The look in his eye said he was tiring of the whole business. “How much did she pay you for God’s sake? My sister is not a sane woman.”

“She paid me the going rate. And I think she’s a very sensible person. At least she appreciates the importance of a neat garden.” I glared at him.

His snort said a thousand words. He now rubbed his nape. He was doing an awful lot of rubbing, drawing my attention to his hands. They were strong, tanned, the fingers long and the nails clean. Obviously hands that weren’t used to hard work. I put my work-soiled mitts behind my back. I really should wear gloves more often to do the hard stuff.

“What’s it to be?” I hoped I sounded as fed up with the whole business as he appeared to be. “I have a signed contract, but it’s against all my principles to leave a job unfinished. My reputation would be at stake.” He sighed as if he held the worries of the world on his wide shoulders.

“How hard can it be to decide to let me finish what’s started? Your garden looks like a wilderness now, and will look like a showplace when I’ve finished with it.” I hope. Well, I was sure actually. I’d never had a complaint—yet.

Those beautiful eyes assessed me for a long moment. I shifted uneasily. I didn’t like being assessed. When they settled on my breasts I folded my arms so the clipboard was held across my front like a shield, and gave him another glare meant to intimidate him.

He now looked amused. “What possesses a woman like you to do this for a job, anyway?” he stunned me by asking. I felt like flooring him with a swift punch.

“How the bloody hell do you know what sort of woman I am?” My cheeks had reddened I know, and I cursed the fair colouring I’d inherited from my English mother.

“Forgive me.” He looked unrepentant. “Let me rephrase that. You’re not very big are you? And digging and that sort of thing is usually done by big blokes with wide shoulders and not much brains.”

“Does that mean then that you consider I’ve got brains? And my size has nothing to do with anything. I consider that an insult to my mates in the same game. I know some very intelligent landscapers. I love making gardens.” Had loved it since I’d helped Aunt Eliza plan and remodel the first one behind the big rambling house she’d bought when she first came over from England to care for me and two year old Harry.

“OK, go ahead and do your thing, if it makes you happy.” He wagged a finger before my face. I frowned at it. “But let me tell you, Miss—” He looked bewildered. “What’s your handle?” He glanced over to my truck, then down at my left hand, at my ringless fingers still clutching the clipboard in front of me. “Miss Violet Amelia Connor.”

That was printed on the door of my truck. I wasn’t too struck on either of my names but Aunt Eliza and Harry persuaded me that my full name sounded very professional so ought to be emblazoned to show the world I was a really capable worker.

“Call me Leah, everyone else does,” I told him with a touch of defiance. I don’t know why but he brought out the worst in me.

“OK, Lee-ah.” He drew it out so he sounded like a Chinaman. “Get your work over as fast as you can and get out of my hair. Right?”

My nose went up in the air haughtily. “I do not rush my work. I will do exactly what I have been paid to do. And as for keeping out of your way, I will not bother you one little whit.”

I turned to march off. My haughty exit was rather spoiled when I tripped over a crack in the wooden porch floor and almost fell. Immediately he was at my side, his hand on my arm, warm and strong. His touch unsettled me, so I gave him another glare and he removed his hold.

I waved my clipboard at the offending crack. “You ought to get that fixed, mister. Someone is going to sue you before long if they actually fall and do themselves some damage.”

“I have a man coming in tomorrow,” he said with the same air of hauteur. “Just make sure you don’t trip over it again before he has time to fix it.”

A spark of mischief made me think for a moment of coming up here again when he’d gone inside and deliberately tripping over it and faking a cracked skull. But I said instead, “I’ll keep well off your porch, Mr. Russel.”

REVIEWS:

5 stars **Fun and Love** by Violet

"If you want a fun read with a feisty female lead and sensual love scenes then don't miss this one. There is certainly plenty of love and trouble between Leah and her handsome PI. She gets herself into so much hot water and all because she happened to be working in his garden."

Barbara Baldwin 5 stars

Anytime I stay up half the night reading an entire book, it is a winner! Tricia McGill made me lose sleep with "Leah in Love (and Trouble)"! Leah and Sean grabbed my attention from the start, and I couldn't wait to find out what would happen next! Bravo for Leah's determination and strength to fight against the bad guy, and LOVE to Sean for never giving up in tracking her down!! **5 Stars for sure!**

5 ANGELS FROM Linda L at FALLEN ANGEL REVIEWS

"This is one suspenseful, moving read. Just when I thought this book was going to be about a man and a woman bickering about gardening, I soon learned this was far more than landscaping. It is mesmerizing and hard to let go until the end. As soon as Leah and Sean hook up, the intrigue gets faster than a roller coaster out of control. With the blending of car chases, murders, some kidnappings and implausible get-aways this story thrills. Leah is not your ordinary heroine. She is one wise-cracking character who brings life to this story, and she makes sure to let others know that her small frame doesn't keep her from speaking her mind. Bravo! Her antics and dialogue with Sean are wise-cracking, and when they get together, it is spontaneous combustion.

Tricia McGill has developed a winner of a character with Leah. With well-rounded characters, a well-crafted plot and superb, witty dialogue, she pens a book that screams read me. She gives Leah character, a strong personality and the wisdom to not be anyone's punching bag. I love how she stands up to Sean, and when face-to-face, they really give credibility to this action-packed, engaging read that left this reader breathless. I clapped, I cheered, and I fell in love with the characters, and this remarkable book."

4 stars JP Wright

This story hooked me from page one. An enjoyable and fun read, with credible characters, a touch of humor, and plenty of romance, suspense and mayhem thrown in. Tricia McGill knows how to weave all these elements into a page-turner.

Audrey Lawrence The Romance Studio 4 HEARTS

"Short and sassy Leah is anything but a shrinking violet despite the primness of her name "Miss Violet Amelia Connor" as proudly written on her truck. With the knowledge and love of plants she gained from her sexy and eccentric Aunt Eliza who raised her and her brother since childhood, the 35 year old fearless Leah has steadily developed an excellent reputation, not only for her flare in the male dominated landscaping design business, but also for her inability to mind her own business, or to stop from giving a quick retort. Set in the gorgeous Mornington Peninsula of Australia, this suspenseful romance has it all - kidnappings, movie stars, car chases, past crimes, murders and improbable escapes! Yet, Trish McGill's witty dialogue and writing it from Leah's viewpoint with her quick caustic remarks carries it off very well. Eleanor Roosevelt once noted that women, like tea, only

become stronger when placed in hot water and that certainly is the case for Leah! So, make up a brew, sit back and enjoy the ride!"

Pam at A Romance Review---4 and a half roses

This book is not about a shrinking violet at all but about a woman with a tendency to bounce back from whatever is thrown at her. And let me tell you, Violet had a lot thrown at her. The story involves a stalker and kidnappers and a surprise near the end that I did not see coming at all. I didn't realize until the very end when I read the authors comments that it was in first person. With the action going on I didn't realize this at all there was so much happening that you don't realize you are only reading about Violet and what she is thinking and feeling. If you are looking for a fast paced read that will have you turning the pages to see what will happen next then pick up this book you will not be disappointed."

Nadine St. Denis at Romance Junkies.

This book by Tricia McGill is a delightfully funny, romantic story. The constant escapades that poor Violet and Sean end up in, will entertain you and the evocative love that flows between them will delight you. I strongly recommend this engaging novel to all romance lovers."

Michelle at Fallen Angels Reviews (3 angels)

"This is a fast-paced, action-packed story with a punch. I enjoyed Leah and Sean, and their obvious aversion to entanglements provided an interesting twist to this tale. There was not a dull moment to be found as Ms. McGill's story unfolded. Shrinking Violet is full of plot surprises, twisting and turning back and in on itself. I especially loved Leah constantly reminding Sean that she is a "landscape designer" not a gardener."

Jeanette Cottrell, eBook Reviews Weekly

"This is a light-hearted book with an element of farce, and some well-paced action scenes. Leah herself is a wide-awake and genuine person. This is an entertaining read."

Ronda (reader & reviewer)

"This book by Tricia McGill is as exciting and fast moving as the Indianapolis 500, moving from 0 to 100 mph in less than 3 pages! The 'pit stops' are few and far between... no dilly dallying around for this author, no endless pages of boring space fillers. She writes a wonderful combination of humor, thrills, adventure, and hot romance. The story 'talks' just like real people. There are fabulous, meaningful 'sayings' that add a 'real people' feel to it. There is never a dull moment. It's a page turner, forget about sleeping, eating, or taking a break from the start to the surprise ending. Wave that checkered championship flag to the winner Tricia McGill.

Leah © Love Romances

"This is the intriguing tale of Leah Connor and Sean Russel, told in first person by Leah and set in Australia. Ms. McGill has penned a very entertaining heroine in Leah. Leah's feelings of wanting independence and being unwilling to rush into romance for fear of heartbreak resonate truly with the reader. Ms. McGill also did an excellent job with portraying Sean as the strong, yet gentle male who could engender trust from any female. The love scenes are well written as well, with enough details to fuel the imagination without being overly explicit. This reviewer found the descriptions of the fauna and flora of Australia to be

enchanting and was amused by the adventures of Leah and Sean. Any reader who enjoys stories set in another country, strong heroines and mild suspense would enjoy this book."