

Chapter One. Life's choices.

*In life, we arrive at crossroads.
Most refuse to take that step into the unknown.
The way home is the easier option.
A braver soul takes the winding path to adventure.
Which decision is the wisest is a question of timing?*

A warm gentle breeze blew onto the young man's face as he gazed across the reef towards the aqua marine ocean from his mansion perched high on the cliff top. Few settings could be more idyllic. Few lifestyles more envied, and yet that special something was still missing. It had been a high-risk scenario. Michael Eastlake, the third, had understood that from the beginning. There was still time to hone his dream into reality. In a few months, a fresh face might gel with the others and turn this idyllic haven into a real heaven.

The experiment would continue though Michael was getting no younger and the essential ingredient for a guy in this equation was youthful vigor and vitality.

Abject worries for the future went on hold, as the warm gentle hands of a blond partner touched the rippling muscles on Michael's broad shoulders before hot lips stimulated his senses. Life might be a beggar sometimes, though this sure beat the stress in the fast lane.

Thousands of miles, away life was not quite that relaxed. Hannah had been having one of those episodes, in the rich tapestry of life, when nothing had gone right. "If I have to empty just one more bedpan, I'll go ballistic." She screamed above the background echo of a slamming door.

Kim, her flat mate, distracted missed catching a slice of toast from a hyperactive toaster and knocked over a half empty bottle of Pinot Noir. Bright blue eyes opened wide in horror, as the red elixir drained into a sink full of her favorite silk panties. "Shit! Han, you crazy cow, look what you've made me do?"

Hannah watched Kim lift out the delicate silk with a used spatula. The glance turned into a grin. "Like the new shade."

The silly incident had put a smile back on her flat mate's face and that was a plus. Hannah had been suffering from one of those periodic glitches the young must take in their stride.

In all the girlie magazines, a single woman of twenty-three should be sexually fulfilled whatever that means. Hannah's love life hovered between pitiful and dire. Workwise, did have its moments though the nightshifts left her drained. "My life's a mess." She exclaimed with feeling.

"And so are my panties."

"That's brilliant. When I need sympathy, you joke."

"Chill out babe, Han what am I going to do, they are turning purple."

"Let me: you're hopeless. Drudgery I can do without. I get that at work."

Hannah Latham had mapped out a life since childhood and then achieved her ambition by qualifying as a nurse. This single mindedness had steeled her character at some cost.

Kim blamed both the nursing profession and a powerful intellect. Her flat mate was far too clever, self-assured, and insular, to pander to any male.

High Puritan ideals failed to allow Hannah to relax properly in mixed company unless she was pissed. A holiday fling had resulted in the loss of virginity due too little more than alcoholic excess, and a natural curiosity. This sad endeavor had soured the ground for any future budding Romeo. This uphill challenge ended with either a frosty matronly response or a pathological desire to discuss quantum theory, rather than good sex, or football.

Hannah did have attributes. A figure, if a tad overweight, was more than adequate for most indoor sports any lover might envisage. Large emerald eyes were difficult to ignore, if only for those dark looks of disapproval. Brown wavy hair that had no need of a perm; often resembled the King Charles spaniel look after a day in the field. Long legs that should make any straight bloke pay attention, hardly ever saw the light of day.

"You've an attitude problem, being a saint is for nuns. We need a bloke to liven up your life even if it sucks. You're driving me to drink and debauchery." Kim poured a glass of white wine abandoned from a weekend indulgence on the wild side.

"Go on pour me some, I'm the one stressed out." Hannah replied as she wrung out the panties that forever would retain a hint of Pinot.

"The trouble with your upbringing and intellect is you frighten the poor babies to death."

"Is it too much to ask that a bloke could have a conversation without mentioning sport or sex in the first sentence?"

Kim put a hand on her chin and slouched seductively over a soft cushion. She knew her figure looked good and never missed a chance to show it off. "Well perhaps no. I'm not saying blokes are perfect. It's just they satisfy a biological need."

"Not for me they don't." Hannah replied.

Kim had been Hannah's best friend since infant class. They had shared the flat in Chester for almost a year. She was a sexy, beautiful, blond goddess that attracted blokes like bees seeking out honey. None of the little drones had wanted to buzz over to Hannah of late.

"Kim babe all you think of is the sex thing. There's more to life than being a guy's plaything."

"Career this career that. What's wrong with a little lust and desire? I have more excitement pulling, than you get giving enemas."

"Ok! Cool it; perhaps I do take life too seriously?"

"You told me you needed a career makeover. Let's look on the net, with your fine qualifications there must be something constructive you can do."

"If you think I'm getting work on a building site, forget it."

"You could do worse. Imagine those splendid bare navels and rounded butts?"

"I'm a nurse, I've seen enough of bloke's parts to last me a lifetime."

"I understand where you're coming from but there are better places to put one than in a bottle."

Hannah grinned at the thought. "If you think I'm going to find some weirdo with a beer belly lie back and think of England forget it."

"Han if you're ever going to enjoy a shag you need a sense of humor. We know the male anatomy has flaws. You must learn to live with them."

"Why?"

"You must have some hormones needing something?" Kim replied.

Hannah sighed. "I suppose?"

"That's the spirit, don't let the wankers get to you. We could answer one of those ads and try a bit of S and M?"

"I do not have the figure for those skin-tight black things though a whip could come in handy in Men's surgical."

"I detect a flicker of interest. Next time we go to an Ann Summers party we--."

"I've already got the nurse's uniform."

"It's not a sin to experiment Han." Kim's scanned the net and halted on a listing. "Hey babe listen to this."

"Small Island Estate in the Pacific requires a qualified SRN nursing sister or equivalent to take sole charge of the island clinic for a contract period of two years. The Applicant must be capable of handling medical emergencies. For further details, contact Smith, Smith, &

Livingstone, Solicitors, Bayswater, London. Two years shagging in the sun. Brill, this you can do."

"I can't just rush off to the Pacific."

"Why not, you couldn't be more single."

"Thanks for that; my confidence is zilch as it is."

"Han there's nothing wrong with your confidence. You must be tempted to flirt with a patient sometime?"

"Certainly not, encouragement is the last thing they need. I'm trying to make them better not worse. I'm not averse to a little doctoring from a handsome medic."

"Oh I am. You never know where their hands have been before they get onto you. In the South Seas, you'll be the one with the medication. Think of the orgasmic thrill of administering to a naked hunk with a ring in his what's it?"

Kim went into high secretary mode, typed quickly and then added the attachment. "You said you wanted to make it on your own, now's your chance, brill that's sorted."

Hannah remained quiet. It was not an easy option. A nurse enjoyed the last word.