

## Affirm<sub>press</sub>



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LESBIAN  
FOR A  
YEAR

BROOKE  
HEMPHILL



# PROLOGUE

I KNOW I have a splitting hangover before prying open an eye to glance at the clock: seven-thirty a.m. Of course it is. I always wake up early after a big night. It's my body's evil way of punishing me for the night before. I need to go back to sleep. If I lie completely still and focus, it's probably doable.

'Morning.'

My eyes shoot open. Holy shit. That's right. I'm not alone. I turn toward the voice and get the shock of my life. Less than thirty centimetres away, within arm's length, is a naked woman. A naked blonde woman with very large breasts. A mental image of touching them pops into my head.

'Ah, morning,' I reply. 'How did you, um, sleep?'

'Like a baby.'

Fuck. What is her name?

'You?'

‘So good I forgot where I was for a second.’ Damn. That sounded bad.

She laughs. ‘And you probably woke up and wondered who this girl in your bed was.’

I laugh too. I feel nervous. What am I supposed to do in this situation? I’ve had a one-night stand before, but a girl is new territory. That’s what this is, right? A one-night stand? Will she be offended if I assume that?

Starting to panic, I jump out of bed and pull on a pair of jeans. Underwear and clothing are strewn across the floorboards. Cue sudden flashback of us falling off the bed.

‘So what are you up to for the rest of the weekend?’ I ask, looking for an out.

‘Well, I have to go back to Erica’s in Stanmore for brunch. That’s where I’m staying, remember?’

I’m so hung-over, I still can’t remember her name – it’s Hilary, right? Recalling the names of her friends and the conversations we had before I took her home, that would take a miracle. I vaguely recall getting into a taxi with her. And kissing on the dance floor at The Colombian on Oxford Street.

‘Ah, yeah. Of course. How will you get back there?’

‘I’ll probably catch a bus.’

Excellent. It’s the escape I am after.

‘I can walk you up to the bus stop. I need to go get the newspapers anyway. Do you know which bus you have to

catch?’ I’m fully dressed now. All I need is shoes. There they are – under her enormous white lace bra.

‘Of course. I used to live in Sydney, remember?’

‘That’s right.’ I have no recollection of her telling me that, and now I’m starting to feel like a total idiot. Bonus, though, that she’s from out of town. I’ll probably never see her again. Is it wrong to think that? Regardless, I’m not going to ask any more questions. ‘Do you want to have a shower?’

She gets up and starts looking for her clothes. I haven’t been terribly subtle.

‘Nah. I’ll have one later.’ I’m now standing in the centre of the room, dressed and holding my purse.

‘I might go to the bathroom.’ She walks out into the hall.

‘Of course.’ Lesbian one-night-stand etiquette 101. At least let the lady go to the bathroom before you kick her out.

We walk up the street in silence. There are a few folks off on early-morning outings gathering at the bus stop.

‘Well, this is you,’ I say, stating the obvious. ‘I’m heading over there to get the papers.’ I point at the 7-Eleven.

‘Okay.’

She’s really not helping me here. And let’s be honest, I clearly need help. I lean in and kiss her on the cheek. ‘Right then. Well, ah, safe onward travels,’ I say with a little wave.

‘Sure.’

She’s looking at me funny. What the hell did I say? I’m not

keen to hang around and relive the moment. I leg it across the road to get the Sunday papers. My hand shakes as I pass the cashier five dollars.

Loitering at the shop until she gets on a bus seems kind of lame so I walk home a different way. Is this what guys have done after drunken one-night stands with me? It wasn't like she was unattractive – far from it.

Back home, I peel the sheets from my bed and restore order in my room. I check to see if my flatmates are around. The coast seems to be clear. Sheets in the wash, papers in hand, I sit down on my bed. And then it hits me: I've slept with a woman. What the hell was I thinking?

The first time I had sex with a woman, I was thirty years old. A late bloomer, you might say. But regardless of age, finding a naked female in your bed raises many questions. Questions like, how much red wine did I really drink last night? Did my flatmates hear the part where we fell off the bed and giggled like schoolgirls? If I was the one that did all the work, does it count as having lesbian sex? What's considered standard procedure the morning after? Are we supposed to cuddle? And then the final doozy: am I gay?

That question alone would strike fear into the hearts and minds of many. But I'm not your typical straighty-one-eighty

kind of girl. I've been fascinated with sex for years. I started off reading about it, then I graduated to talking about it, I've written about it and, of course, I've done it. Never with a woman, although to say the thought hadn't crossed my mind would be a blatant lie. Yes, we all have fantasies. Acting on them is another thing entirely.

For more than fifteen years, I've been faffing about looking for love, as the cliché goes, in all the wrong places. So while I didn't wake up, spot the woman in my bed and say, 'Rightio, blokes aren't working, girls must be the answer', I wasn't resistant to the idea of changing teams. Sure there was next-to-no analysis of what taking such a path might mean in the long run, but that wasn't exactly a departure from the haphazard nature of my love life to date. While I might be a little foolish when it comes to relationships, I'm smart enough to know that what I've been doing up to this point isn't working – heck, I'm thirty and single. There must be something more out there.

My response to this and other episodes in my dating past could be read as passivity, but I see it as going with the flow and being willing to explore every possibility, however unexpected and seemingly out of character. I've never been one to worry much about what my friends, family and society might think of my choices in this department so why start now?

Nonetheless, I'd set something in motion that night, conscious or otherwise.

But as I lay in my bed that brisk autumn Sunday morning, all I could think about was getting the poor naked girl the hell out of there. What was the fastest, most polite exit strategy? But other thoughts popped into my head like, should we be going for round two? Do I offer to make her breakfast? I was far too hung-over and shell-shocked to consider the greater ramifications of my actions. That would come in the days, weeks and months that followed.

Little did I know that morning, my cheeky one-night stand would lead me on a journey of sexual discovery. From a lesbian reality show to a year of no men and an illicit affair, I was about to embark on an adventure to discover my sexuality. And I would have to kiss a lot of girls, and boys, along the way. It sounds terrible, I know. But there was only one way to find out if I was gay, straight or perhaps something in between.

And so this is the story of my year in lesbian land, how I got there, and whether I ultimately wanted to stay or return to the hetero fold.