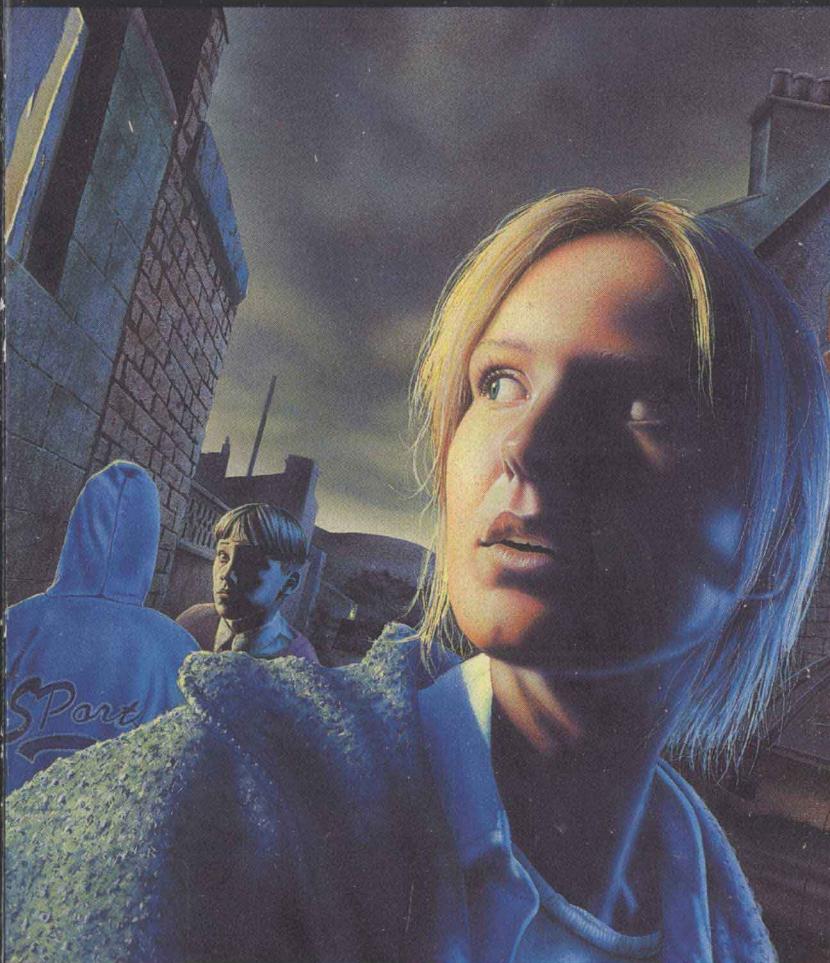


St Jo's Hospital



Lucky Escape

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Lucky Escape

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藏 书 音

Emma raised her head. She suddenly realized that she'd lost all sense of direction. The smoke was so thick that she couldn't see the door out into the corridor or the one to the men's cloakroom.

Even through her terror, Emma shuddered. A sudden blast of oxygen from an open window and the whole building could erupt into a holocaust of flames.

She thought quickly. She had been facing the door to Casualty. That meant that the men's toilet was on the left.

Coughing, choking, she crawled blindly over on her hands and knees. The smoke was getting worse. The gap of air below it was getting thinner. She had to locate Jack quickly or else it would be too late!

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St Jo's Hospital

4

LUCKY ESCAPE

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Sue Welford



MACDONALD YOUNG BOOKS

St Jo's Hospital series

1

Dangerous Obsession

2

Harmful Intent

3

Desperate Measures

4

Lucky Escape

5

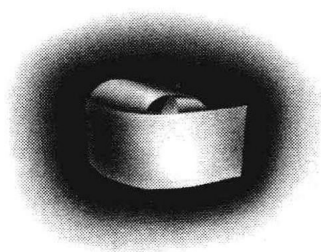
Shattered Dreams

6

High Hopes

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. 1 .



‘Emma? Emma Taylor? It *is* you. I’d know that hair anywhere!’

Emma looked up to see a short girl with a round, pleasant face and wide, brown eyes staring down at her. She frowned. Who on earth...?

The girl was still grinning down at her.

‘Westdown School,’ she said. ‘Surely you remember? It’s not *that* long ago.’

It came to Emma in a flash. Tracey Appleby! One of her best friends at junior

school. They hadn't seen one another for years.

Emma's face split into a broad grin.

'Tracey! I can't believe it.'

Tracey pulled up a chair and sat down beside her. Soon they were chattering nineteen to the dozen.

Emma had been snatching a quick cup of coffee and a bun in the supermarket cafe before going back to her flat to get ready for night duty. She was a nurse in the Accident and Emergency department of St Josephine's Hospital Trust in the town of Ashton. The hospital was known as St Jo's for short. Emma shared a flat in the nurses' home with Penny Brown and Sue Jenkins. They had all been at nursing college together and had stayed friends ever since.

Penny worked on Primrose, one of St Jo's surgical wards and Sue was a nurse on Buttercup, the children's ward.

'What happened to you after Westdown?' Emma remembered Tracey hadn't gone on to the same secondary school as she had.

'We moved to the other side of Malcaster,' Tracey told her. Malcaster was a town about ten miles from Ashton. 'Dad got a

new job there, remember?"

'I *do* remember!' Emma chuckled. 'And your little brother... David. How is he?'

Tracey pulled a face. 'Not little any more, I'm afraid. He's thirteen now and a right pain in the neck.'

Emma had a brother, Tom. He'd been a real pain at that age too. He was nineteen now and had grown out of his awkward, moody stage a long time ago. He worked in Malcaster and still lived at home with their parents on the outskirts of town.

'You went on to that big comprehensive in Malcaster, didn't you?' Emma said.

'That's right. I went to college afterwards and now we're back in good old Ashton.'

'Why did you move back?' Emma asked.

The smile left Tracey's face.

'My dad died,' she said. 'Mum and David had never really settled in Malcaster so she sold the house and came back here.'

For a minute Emma didn't know what to say. Then she said, 'I'm really sorry, Tracey. That must have been terrible for you.'

Tracey sighed. 'I'm getting over it,' she said. 'And Mum's much better since we got back here. It's David who's taken it the worst.'

‘Poor kid, it’s really tough for someone his age.’

‘Tough for us all,’ Tracey said.

They talked some more, catching up on old times, telling one another about their lives.

‘Have you got a boyfriend?’ Tracey asked. ‘All those gorgeous doctors...’

‘Well,’ Emma said. ‘I’m very friendly with one of them. Simon’s his name. I’m not really sure you could call him my boyfriend though.’

Tall, fair-haired Simon Young was one of the senior house officers doing a stint in Accident and Emergency. He had been really good to Emma during her first weeks there when she couldn’t seem to do anything right. They’d been out on a few dates, shared a few kisses and she was very fond of him. She didn’t think it was really any more than that although she couldn’t imagine life at St Jo’s without him.

‘How about you?’ Emma asked Tracey. ‘Are you with anyone?’

‘Not at the moment,’ Tracey told her. ‘I’m afraid my job doesn’t give me much time for boyfriends.’

‘What do you do?’ Emma asked.

Tracey told Emma she was a veterinary nurse.

‘We’re kind of in the same business,’ she said.

‘Kind of,’ Emma chuckled. ‘Except my patients don’t try and bite me!’

The two girls burst out laughing.

Emma glanced at the clock. Almost seven o’clock. She had to be on duty at eight.

‘Wow, is that the time?’ She drained her mug of coffee. ‘Got to go, sorry.’ She quickly gathered up her shopping bags. ‘I’d love to stay longer but I’m on night duty. Look, let’s get together some time soon, shall we?’

‘That would be great.’ Tracey rummaged around in her bag and came up with an old envelope. She hurriedly scribbled down her address and phone number and handed it to Emma. ‘Why don’t you pop round? I’m sure Mum would love to see you again.’

‘OK.’ Emma stuck the note in the back pocket of her jeans. ‘We haven’t got our own phone in the flat,’ she told Tracey. ‘There’s one out in the corridor but you’re

lucky if you get an answer. You can get me in Casualty, though. They'll give me a message if I'm busy.' She pulled a face. 'Which, needless to say, I always am!'

When Emma got back to the flat, Penny was in her room. You could always tell what kind of mood Penny was in by the music she was playing. Today it was heavy metal. Ironheads bashing out their latest hit. The whole flat echoed with the twang of guitars and the thump of drums. Emma's heart sank. Ironheads meant Penny was in a bad mood. Maybe she could creep in, shower, grab a bite to eat, change and creep out again without Penny noticing.

No luck, Penny must have seen her through the half-open door.

'Emma, got a minute?' she called.

Penny was sitting in front of the mirror with a frown on her face. She had been messing around with her long dark hair. She had obviously been trying to pin it up because half of it was fixed on top of her head, and the other had fallen down over her eyes.

She got up and turned the music off.

'Ach, I really hate my hair!' Penny came

from Scotland and her accent was even more obvious when she was in a bad temper. 'I'm going to have it all cut off.' She made scissor movements with her fingers. 'Snip, snip...!'

Emma sat down on the end of the bed.

'Don't do that, you'll only be sorry.'

Penny turned, still frowning. 'Not you as well.'

'What do you mean?'

Penny heaved a sigh. 'Pete,' she said. Pete was her motorbike-mad boyfriend. 'He told me not to have it cut. Honestly, why do men always try to tell you what to do?' She tipped her head sideways and pulled a face at herself in the mirror.

'Because they think they always know best,' Emma said.

Penny sighed again. 'True.' She pulled the clips out of her hair and it all fell down round her shoulders. She began brushing it. 'And one of the sisters told me I looked untidy.' She threw the brush down on the dressing-table. 'Then I dropped a bedpan when the consultant was doing his rounds. In fact I've had a really bad day.'

Emma knew better than to grin. 'I'm always getting told off for something or

other,' she said. 'Don't let it get to you.'

Penny gazed at her. 'You're a fine one to talk. You were in tears last week because you said Mark showed you up in front of a patient.'

Mark Hunter was one of the charge nurses in Casualty. He and Emma were always falling out although he'd been more moody than ever lately for some reason.

It was Emma's turn to pull a face. 'Well he did! He made me look a right idiot.'

She still went red at the thought. She had only showed a patient into a cubicle that was already occupied. A mistake anyone could make. She hadn't known the doctor was actually examining the patient. There had been no need to make such a fuss.

'Yes, well you were fed up then,' Penny reminded her. 'In fact, you were in a foul mood all weekend.'

'True,' Emma said. She sighed. 'Maybe we're both in the wrong job?'

Penny threw her a worried glance. 'Do you honestly think so?'

Emma did grin then. She patted Penny's knee. 'No, course not. You finish doing your hair and I'll make you a cup of tea,

that'll make you feel better.'

'Umph,' Penny snorted. 'That's your answer to everything.'

She turned the music on again as Emma went out. Louder this time. It looked as if the whole of the nurses block was going to be entertained by Ironheads and their shrieking guitars.

It was only when there was a slight gap between tracks that Emma realized someone was knocking at the door.

She went to open it. Pete was standing there in his black leathers and crash helmet with its dark visor still pulled down.

'Darth Vader, I presume,' Emma said.

Pete wrenched off his helmet revealing a shock of dark brown hair that promptly fell over his eyes. He shook it back impatiently.

'Where's Pen?'

'In her room.'

'She was supposed to be downstairs to meet me,' Pete said.

Emma grinned. 'I think she's having a bad hair day.'

Pete rolled his dark eyes. 'Could you tell her to get a move on, Emma, we're already late.'

Emma stepped back. 'Come in and tell her yourself. If I don't get my shower soon I'll be late for work then there *will* be trouble.'

The last she heard was Pete shouting above the music for Penny to hurry up. She grinned to herself. Penny was in no mood to be yelled at that was for sure.

When she came out of the shower everything was peaceful. No heavy metal. No Penny and Pete yelling at each other. Sometimes she worried about those two. Both stubborn, both strong-willed, but both crazy about one another. No one ever quite knew if their relationship was on or off.

She heaved a sigh of relief and went to grab a bite to eat.

As usual the kitchen was a mess. Sue had obviously been the last in there. Emma wrote on their memo board. *Last one in kitchen please do the washing up!* She knew it wouldn't do any good. Sue cooked fabulous Caribbean dishes from recipes given to her by her grandmother. The trouble was, she hated washing up afterwards.

Emma left the flat with minutes to spare. She would have been all right if she