

*“Life”*

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This novel is serialized at the Pink Pavilion’s website, [www.brightonpavilion.co.uk](http://www.brightonpavilion.co.uk)  
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## Chapter 1

Tanya looked at the grey screen, it's soft moving shallow reflection of her face. She pondered on the emanation of reflection in her device to bring words of her boss to life. Arrogant yet charming, Kile Boners was a tough man, of rebuke and courage, working tirelessly in the financial markets, daily crunching numbers such as wizards of ancient times would look at astrological charts for kings and princes.

The ineluctable modality of the present, Tanya played with this obscure quote from Joyce. What am I now, what is being in time, where is it all going. Existence had something very delicious about it, like Kile's buns, moving two and fro such as globes above would chase after each other in an endless orbital swimming motion. Or was that Tanya's eyes moving wantonly, peaking like guerilla warriors into ambushing his fine physique and firm, oh yes, firm indeed.

"Wake up you stupid bint," came a voice from her deep, penetrating dream.

"Oh sorry sir," replied Tanya to Kile. She was always treated like this by Kile, always. If only he knew how she felt, how each masculine word plucked from the dictionary would excite a paragraph from her heart. Her mind. Her.

"I was wondering if I could get away early today?" Tanya said, irritated as much by her desire for him as the need to cut her chord to him.

"You can leave as early as you like, as long as you give me a letter!" Replied Kile, with a cunning smile.

"What letter?"

"That you quit!" Smarted Kile in that terribly unfunny way he had of being a nasty, bad, bad boy.

"Well, take it from me that I'd happily look for another job," gasped Tanya, shocked with herself at this gust of strength that she'd never been able to show before, a strength she'd always known was somewhere inside her, yet somehow came to the fore as petulance mixed with a mean, narrow look of indignation at her treatment.

Kile paused for a second, seeming somehow to look at her differently, almost lost for a moment as Tanya had been lost all her life. It pierced her to her spine, tingling, turning her stomach inside out as she waited for what must come next. He looked away and Tanya's demeanour worsened as her lion's courage had turned out to be an empty threat that lead her down that dark alleyway of self-contempt, tempting her lack of confidence about herself, her being, her ineluctable modality. His eyes seemed to gaze out the window as a great general might look at his army, surveying the landscape for a higher ground to bring a strategic victory.

"I tell you what, you can knock off early today, but.." said Kile.

"Oh please don't tell me I'm fired. I'm sorry, I really didn't mean to snap, I'm not sure what's wrong with me to.." Kile came over to her and put a finger on her lips to close them, shooshing her. The finger felt so gentle and kind. Her tempestuous feelings

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became soothed as a magician striking down a storm with his grand wand.

“but, you must accompany me to dinner.” He said with a smile.

“oh.. I really ... really?” bemused a torn and recombined Tanya.

“you may want to change and I need you to run me an errand for a big deal, it is the biggest deal of my life. We need to meet Mr Prospero, yes - him, at the Divey’s tonight. I need him to sign up to the deal or else this whole company is sunk, and you, I think you could be useful there.” Kile gave a little wink. “Now get home, get changed and get to the Divey’s restaurant by 8.”

Tanya was a little confused, one minute he’s shouting at her like she’s some kind of, well, something not very kind anyway, and then next, he’s asking her to dinner. What could this be all about. Tanya had only worked for Kile for about two weeks, yet already she’d heard stories that would make her stomach turn. He was a user, a bastard and a contemptible arsehole. And those were the nice things people would say about him.

Tanya left, being beckoned out of the office by Kile, back to his commanding, nonchalant and derisive ways. As she walked back home there was this memory of his tender look, his tender eyes, melting her like a shooting star coming towards her and deliciously cutting away at her icing on the cake. She looked at a TV screen by the bus stop. A reporter stood by broken houses, mouthing words she could only just make out,

“So, we stand with them, behind them and in front, yet we are still troubled as a brave new world enters into our hearts, we who have supported this tortured people, ravaged by war and atrocity, can find nothing else but to support them with humanitarian aid. The giving out of being. A model, a modality of being.” The rest of the reporter’s conclusive speech was cut short by two children walking past and getting in the way.

“Come on, lend me a tenner. I’ll give it back, got to get some weed on tick then pay back the other guy I owe,” said one of the teens, dressed in designer lout clothing, expensively underdressed.

“Yeah, later, I ain’t got no money but we can just get it off some poor bird or something”

Tanya started to become aware of their vulture eagle eyed roaming CCTV style looks, looking for the enemy. They were the enemy of surveillance city. She became slightly short of breath as she realised that the next thing would be a knife coming out. Quickly she edged away, pulling her feet out of her very poorly made heels as she turned to run. The two repressed teens quickly gave chase. Stupidly she turned into an alleyway, down, smelly alleyway, dirty, yet she had no time for a critique of urban decay and filth. She fell over a rubbish bin in her flight and tore her tightly fitted dress suit. She could see that they were gaining on her as she looked back. Adrenaline started to pump, pump inside her, as she clamoured up and gave the huntsmen, hooting their horns as she, the red fox leaped forward to a way out.

The huntsmen catch their prey, always. It is a bitter, twisted chase, a run of an anti-Olympics. Yet it is the state of being of all creatures. Evolution. Evolution moves one direction as morality has moved the other, yet it is when these two move together, married in their dreaded path that destruction comes. And suffering.

Later, she is shaken. Tanya, that’s her name. Her home is far away. She is clutching herself, rattled, yet empty. As if all blood had been drained from her, like a

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vampire's toothy grip, only without seduction and sensual soothing. Her wallet was empty, ripped open and broken. Got to get it together.

"Okay you can do this" said a voice. Tanya looked up, crouched as she was her head on her knees, arms wrapped round her legs, as a mother's embrace to a child who'd woken from a nightmare. She saw a ghostly image, an image floating in front of her, a woman, about her age, beautiful yet somehow with charismatic eyes, menacingly powerful, just yet compassionate.

"I'm here to help. You need to get to this dinner. It's your only chance to impress Kile. You know you want to marry him. But you've got a problem. No money, far from home, no friends nearby and frankly darling, you look a mess."

"You sound like a voice from the fifties," snapped Tanya, a tension came apart inside her that allowed her to release rage touched by and from shame, "Why would I want to marry such an obnoxious man like that. If there was a planet of pigs Kile would be their king."

"And you would still want to be his queen," replied this ethereal presence, "Think about all the times you've hoped and wanted and waited. Changed your route home when drunk to coincidentally pass his grand house, oh that lovely house of his. In hope, in fear, in anguish of seeing him. And then when you see him at the office, you just get your head down and quietly work. I've been watching you for sometime and I feel you need some coaxing to get what you know deep down inside you really want."

"What are you some kind of cupid?" Bewildered by this odd being that somehow knew her, yet was obviously wrong. Definitely.

"Well, whatever I am, you're stupid," said the ghost, "And now you need to get to a clothing boutique, we're near enough bond street for you to walk. On your feet girl!"

Tanya took a deep breath, realising that whatever had happened tonight, Kile definitely wouldn't care about any of her excuses, he never did. And where there was a big deal on the line, well she would have to bring her not-so-special career to a permanent end. She'd probably be working cleaning toilets for the rest of her life. And that's if she was lucky. Kile was a powerful man, a man women somehow both look up to and look down upon, like a sculpture that is placed below you, yet whose proportions suggest is above you. A contradiction that is true. The others at the office had told Tanya about his last secretary. She got so angry with him that she poured coffee which he said didn't have enough sugar in it all over him. The reason why she did this was because he always said this in meetings, when he would begin by asking her to make coffee and then criticise her skills. He subjected her to constant embarrassment to get a reaction. She was fired off course and then promptly found that no other firm would let her work. A few phone calls was all it took for Kile to arrange that. Later when her flat was about to be repossessed, she got a call from a lap dancing club in Soho. She works there now, last Tanya heard.

Lights in the city started to flash on, cars in the busy streets, the din and drum of commuters leaving work. The circular motion, tick tock, stock ticker, tick tock. The city, the centre, where wheels moved, grinding up and mincing meat, dancing flashes everywhere, London by night. Gripped by an urgency of self-preservation Tanya made it to Bond street. Closed doors, empty shops, mannequins wearing fabulous dresses.

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Tanya looked into a store window, saw herself in reflection dressed in designer, then peered down to the reality of herself, clothing dirty, ripped and worn. No shoes either. She must have looked like a crazy woman, driven by some demon force as she pushed past the crowded pavements of zombie people all in their own lives, each a story cut from each other, like a cake, a pretty wedding cake, with a king and queen on top.

“Finally you got here. Took your time. So, what are you waiting for. You see the clothes, now get dressed,” said the ghost, who had appeared in Tanya’s reflection in the store window.

“How can I? The shops closed, I don’t have any money . Kile’s going to lose the deal without me or at least be very annoyed with me. He’ll punish me and then I’ll be done for,” strobing words from Tanya as she held her head in her hands, “I don’t have any way. First time any guy has asked me out to dinner and all I get is mugged, fall over, why did I ever think I was going to get out of this mess?”

“Snap out of it girl! You see the clothes in the store. Get that chair from that pub over there and smash it through the window. You shall go to the ball, my dear!”

“I can’t. How?” Tanya looked flustered, embarrassed, listless and lonely.

“You have got to be more like Kile if you want to get into those boxer shorts. Now do it!”

“But I don’t want him, I really don’t. That kinda guy is always bad for me.”

“And why do you know that?”

Tanya looked down pensively, a tear rolling down her cheek.

“Because that’s the kind of guy I always end up with,” Tanya sobbed. Moving thoughts, Kile and her in a country home, with two kids running around, him reading a newspaper, her in the kitchen baking. Or maybe Kile in a thong pumping iron while she relaxed in a Jacuzzi in a wonderful hotel. Or Kile naked, lustfully gripping her body against a wall, a thunderous assault, as magical as it was devastating to her senses.

“Okay, I’ll do it!” And with that Tanya went to the pub next door, pushed someone off a chair and then smashed it through the window of this expensive and exclusive boutique. As if she was a tornado, unforgiving, relentless, energetic and strong, she rushed through the window and grabbed a lovely halter neck dress, matching shoes and a fab belt. The alarms were ringing and they seemed to keep ringing in her head even when she was some distance away. Police sirens bellowed in the distance, the social dynamic of protection of ownership, whilst Tanya sped away, hiding at some distance in a misty park.

One would think that the last place one would like to get changed was a park, a half dressed woman in the dark is something that shocks and thrills a man, yet Tanya had a new courage, a new soul. When she smashed that window, something, something that had held her back over the years, was now open. As air rushed from the city into that clothing boutique Tanya felt a new empowerment, as if the first dawn of hope, the drawing of the needle from the wound. She had had her medicine. And she looked good. She washed her face in the fountain in the park and took a deep breath. Onward to victory! Like an army of little people who become stronger among each other, she no longer needed the ghost, she had to give up the conditioning that had imprisoned her, abducted herself from herself. Now she had paid the ransom.

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## The dinner

The Divey's was a innocuous little restaurant. A haven for the rich, elite, famous and people who liked to disappear. All manner of deceptive and devious plans were discussed there over expensive unpronounceably named food that went down well with devilish spirits and wine. So keen were the clientelle not be found that the owner had bribed Ordinance survey to take the road off any map they produced.

As Tanya entered she checked herself in the mirror. Somehow she felt weakened, trembling, perhaps at the past events, perhaps in anticipation. Her mirror image was fragile as the ornate antique French mirror in the restaurant, a tool for aristocrats to indulge and throw fireworks displays at the other that held a relationship to them. The mirror seemed to draw out a chain to her neck that clasped her as she stopped to examine whether she was suitable for others. Her being was for something else. Was De Beauvoir right that this made her the other?

Tanya swam into the smoothies of people, fresh and fair, and was directed to a table where sat there was an old man, with a small, shallow frame, yet eyes like a shark, that hooked hers, as if a man of youthful mighty strength had swept her into the an ocean engulfing. Sitting next to him was Kile, looking typically annoyed at her.

"You're late," said Kile, almost happy that he could still find a justification for snapping at her tail.

"I was a little held up, the traffic was murder," replied Tanya with an elegant, confident and self-amused smile.

"Well, Tanya, this is Mr Prospero of Prosperity properties," Kile gestured to the old man.

"Charmed," said Tanya as Mr Prospero took her hand. The energetic spark as they touched betrayed the many years they were apart in birth, the whole strong fingers wrapped around hers as a baby would clutch innocently a hand outstretched. The division of their rank and age seemed to somehow become compliments, as a circular target is to an arrow, a lock to a key.

"There's something I need you to do Tanya, your presence here is more fortuitous than you understand," began Prospero. Tanya had read about this man, he was a financial wizard of great wealth, charm and had more ex-wives than a clichéd old billionaire.

"really, I don't think she really is up to the task," said Kile dismissively, "she's just a leggy secretary."

"If you'll allow me to finish!" Spat Prospero with a heroic dignity, "Unlike you I know of Tanya. You are unaware of her ancestry? She is a Milanese tycoon's cousin and as such she is the key to our problem."

"Really, well you have hidden depths my dear," as if pound signs were gleaming in Kile's eyes now warmly wrapping their gaze across Tanya's body, making her feel uncomfortable, strangely though since not long ago she would have given anything for even the slightest scratch of romantic intention. Here and now the romance was dead between her and Kile, for it was only the fact that she could have been with him as she was, to be wanted for herself, not her connections of power and money, which she had

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always disdained and sought to run away from.

Then Kile lent over to her eye, whispered a few words, words that rushed into her like a gale, broke something inside her as a hurricane may burst a dam of emotion, guilt, despair and desire. Dramatically getting up from her seat, throwing down the chair with her jilted movement, digging her heels into the plush carpeted floor and grasping for her wine glass the contents of which were emptied over Kile.

“That’s what I think of that idea ..” said Tanya as she stormed to the bathroom.

## The bathroom

Looking again at the image in the mirror. It was somehow different to the person she saw in the mirror, as if there was a woman, there was someone stronger, more thoughtful, yet unabashed, a clear sharp image, a being for itself. The imagination in reality that one is tied to of oneself, the being that is nothing. Me. It was also a stream of history, feminist movements following patriarchal conditioning, mixed up with frothy pop, reality shows where you were a spy on non-existent people chosen for their imperfect perfection. Music, inspirational and uplifting filled this haven of the ladies. She remembered Lacan’s untying of Saussure’s signified and signifier with the two doors of the ladies and gents. The very idea that two signs mean the same thing, yet a thing that filters different beings that are symbiotic and mutually necessary and exclusive at the same time. My being was why I am in here looking at myself in a mirror. Yet the fact that there was a sign on the door of a lady led this to be a place where my being changed, being a woman around women and only that. Safety in a family brought together by a sign. She examined a chain bracelet she had, expensive, given by a horrible ex-boyfriend. The little charms on the bracelet each signified something, a heart, a hoop, a sun, an arrow. The charms held together by a continuous relationship of loops in the chain, uroborosly giving itself a hold on her wrist. Yet it was such a dim and dented bracelet, a mockery of itself in its simple and unconnected discordance with reality. Lacan would definitely have disapproved.