

Manufactured in France, improved in England,
quintessentially international minded!

Born in Paris, Stéphanie Tumba moved in London 7 years ago. After a Baccalaureate in French Literature, Stéphanie initially studied English Literature and Civilisations at Paris University, but after two years switched to Business Management degree in renowned International Business School.

Stéphanie worked for companies such as L'Oréal and LVMH before turning to an entrepreneurial career. Since she's been a kid, she always had an overflowing Imagination with a slight tendency to hyperactivity. Business lady by day and writer by night, she has always read and written songs, poems, or stories sometimes short, sometimes long, sometimes comical, occasionally sarcastic and sometimes dark & suicidal, depending on her mood, the music she has in her mind, the people she met and the amount of alcohol drunk on the day.

Well, now Stephanie who loves challenges is currently working on her second novel and working on a variety of creative projects.

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This book is dedicated to all the singles ladies on earth but
more importantly to:
Sabrina Ortega, my *partner* in crime in my singlehood life, and
all the acquaintances I lost touch with but made the dating
ride so much fun!

Thanks to

Should I start with my former husband? Allez... Merci, I am so grateful I made the mistake to marry you and made the best decision of my life to divorce you. I am grateful you made me live the most amazing human adventure on earth: Dating. It was fun, it was a learning experience and I met a lot of friends down the road. Thank you ever so much!

Thank you for all my lovely dates, LMAO.

Thank you to all the singles (or not) friends I met all through this adventure, some of them I lost touch with and a very few of them are still amazing friends of mine: Adaya, Akilé, Cecilia, David, Diane, Elana, Eric, Jean-Max, Marco, Mark, Matthias, Marie, and probably so much more people. Thanks for encouraging me sometimes without knowing what I was up to! Thanks for inspiring me and being your true self. Love you soooooo much.

Karin Ramsay for making my book little less Franglish. Thanks to my assistants and my team at Sté Tumba Capital! Your support and your work on this project have been invaluable. Thank you ever so much. Eternally grateful to have you!

Merci to all of my six brothers and sisters and more importantly Asita, Api, and Khali; if I had to pick a family that will be definitely ours! Love you all and thanks again for your support. #Familyalwaysfirst #tumbz

Thank you to my parents Emilie and Joseph, without you, I would not be on this planet to tell about my tribulations and sorry for the sexual parts!

Finally, my dear Cassius thank you so much for your love, your patience, and your passion. I will always love you. You're definitely the love of my life! #Unitedsouls

Steph XoXo

DISCLAIMER

This book (sorry my secret journal) may content horrendous spelling and eye sickening mistakes

WHY?

Because it's a journal written in Frenghish.
YOU'VE BEEN WARNED! ;-)

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

WAKE UP CALL - C'EST LA VIE!

PART 1

WELCOME TO THE DATING JUNGLE

Chapter One	THE DREAMS' SELLER
Chapter Two	DATE À L'AMÉRICAINNE
Chapter Three	THE VAGABOND
Chapter Four	THE LIGHT OF LOVE
Chapter Five	THE ELUSIVE PANDA
Chapter Six	HOT CHAT
Chapter Seven	FIFTY SHADES OF LIES
Chapter Eight	FAT AND FURIOUS
Chapter Nine	THE RABBIT
Chapter Ten	THE FAULTY ROBOT
Chapter Eleven	ROMANCING THE STONED
Chapter Twelve	THE MUMBLER
Chapter Thirteen	LE WOODPECKER
Chapter Fourteen	CASSE-TOI, PAUV' CON !
Chapter Fifteen	THE DEVIL WEARS PRIMARK
Chapter Sixteen	A CHAVTASTIC EXPERIENCE
Chapter Seventeen	THE CAD AND THE LADY
Chapter Eighteen	MY HEART'S A WHORE
Chapter Nineteen	I'M F*CKED UP!

PART 2

Chapter Twenty
Chapter Twenty-one
Chapter Twenty-two
Chapter Twenty-three
Chapter Twenty-four
Chapter Twenty-five
Chapter Twenty-Six
Chapter Twenty-Seven
Chapter Twenty-Eight
Chapter Twenty-Nine
Chapter Thirty
Chapter Thirty-One
Chapter Thirty-Two

THE REAL MOI

CONFUSED DOT COM
THE BEAUTY & THE BEAST
A DATE IN MILAN
EASY BREEZY SILLY (EBS)
THE WEEPING WILLOW
DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE
FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS
KUNG FU LOVING
THE ANIMAL
THE SLEEPING BEAUTY
THE B.U.G
THE VIKING
A GHOST FROM THE PAST

PART 3

Chapter Thirty-Three
Chapter Thirty-Four
Chapter Thirty-Five
Chapter Thirty-Six
Chapter Thirty-Seven
Chapter Thirty-Eight
Chapter Thirty-Nine
Chapter Forty

NOW, WE'RE TALKING...

LET'S MOVE ON
DRUNK IN EMOTIONS
DESPERATELY IN LOVE
BACK IN THE NINETIES
WHAT A SHANE!
CLASSIFIED DATE
HAPPY NEW YEAR 2016!
AGAINST ALL WINDS & TIDES?

PART 4

Chapter One
Chapter Two
Chapter Three
Chapter Four
Chapter Five
Chapter Six

A NEW STORY

MEET COLGATE
U.S.
THE EMOTIONAL CLASH
THE BRIGHT SIDE
THE CHOICE
THE WEDDING

BONUS CHAPTER MEET VALÉRIE DUVAL

PROLOGUE - WAKE UP CALL

C'est la vie!

I AM FUCKING PISSED! First hangover as a single woman. I can officially say it: I am a divorcee, which I think is even worse than being single. Why do I need to remember that I married a mistake? After all, I am single full stop.

Well, officially, I am a divorcee with the worse hangover of my life with a reminder of my situation just in front of me, reminiscence of last night party a sign saying "JUST DIVORCED FREE AT LAST".

This headache is just putting me in a mood to eat a cow, drink an ocean and kill these singing birds outside that seem happier than me. What a night! And what a failure!

I have to explain.

Last night was my divorce party and also my birthday, but it seemed that divorcing in January 2013 was more important than turning 30. I was told that it was trendy now to celebrate the end of a shitty relationship. And for this so called party, we had the weirdest stripper I have ever met, and God knows how many hens' parties I have been to. In fact, as soon as we cheered the man up, he started to dance awkwardly in front of two ladies, one was a beautiful yet puzzled blonde lady, and the other one was an excited, and voluptuous Kim Kardashian look-alike woman. But did this explain his attitude? He felt sooo at ease that he started singing off key on top of one of my favourite tune that I won' be able to listen for the rest of my life without remembering him. My friends looked all amused.

Being the star of the party, he started dancing towards me. He

suddenly stopped to flex his arms in front of me terrifying, sitting uncomfortably on my so comfortable couch, one leg on top of another, and my arms crossed firmly hoping that he'll understand that I was not up to the challenge with raised eyebrows puzzled as he flexed and smirked at me seductively.

Not a slightest discouraged by my reluctant attitude and still feeling (too) comfortable, the stripper shouted to us the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard from a stripper: "Let me show you my 'helicopter' move. All aboard the helicopter! WOO!".

He was clearly oblivious to how ridiculous he sounded, so he continued his routine, swirling his penis around in his underpants, imitating the propeller of a helicopter while my friends giggled and exchanged mocking looks in the background. Camellia, pale-faced looked like she was about to gag. She held one hand to her throat to indicate that she felt sick, and she turned her attention towards the window. Bianca, however, stared at his moves wide-eyed with a genuine look of fascination and interest, and cheered him on and clapped happily.

Bianca leant in and slapped his butt. The stripper automatically got an erection, and stopped dancing. Second slap, he spoke in a high-pitched voice, gesticulating his despair dramatically with his hands in the air. Stripper sniffed and whined, "You slapped my ass, my only weakness!".

Everybody went quiet, and an awkward silence filled the room, with only the music still playing in the background.

Bianca was just so proud; she had proven herself being as powerful and manipulative with men. The scene horrified Camellia, and I looked in misery having the package just in front of me, this couldn't be worse.

The stripper left upset with his tail between his legs and muttering that we were the worst guests of his life. Voilà! My surprise striptease session had turned out sour because of a spanking, but what kind of stripper can't tolerate a good spanking?? It's part of the game, isn't it? I would have been very amused by the whole scene in a standard time, but well, let's pause here and let me explain.

I am Valérie Duval, just turned 30-year-old yesterday, and just so you know, as I don't think you can sense it through this book: I'm French. Very! I have been living in London for the past three years, in a relation for 7, married for 4, and officially divorced for 18 hours. Hopefully, my ex-husband and I didn't charge our suitcases with kids but solely with emotions.

That 'party' was an attempt to divert my thoughts. I have to admit, though, it has been 'interesting', to say the least! My two best friends Bianca and Camellia splendidly dressed for the occasion and myself the divorcee on my pyjamas were celebrating.

Camellia a sensitive, blond Venetian aged 39 will probably get over this trauma in another life or two. She is a sensitive, intelligent, romantic and a loyal person. Oh, and Catholic. Very. Her mobile number is the first on my speed-dial list plainly because she is the most reliable, affectionate, and discrete friend that anybody can ask for.

Oh, the Kim Kardarsh' look alike is Bianca, a creature out of this world. How would I even begin to describe her? Bianca is a 43- year-old Spanish Huntress and temptress. She's super rich; she could buy Camellia and I a few flats in Chelsea. Like Camellia and I, Bianca has also had quite a troubled past, but unlike us, she seems to be built out of iron. Everything about Bianca is sexy. She is a social butterfly, a committed rebel, naughty, confident and direct woman. I am so grateful I have her as a friend.

Bianca and Camellia are complete opposites, but in a strange and spiritual way, their differences balance our trio clan to perfection.

Poor stripper guy, he was probably the most traumatised after last night show. We may all need therapy except Bianca! I know for sure, I do. I'll explain.

London has been my home for the past three years, yet I now realise that we haven't been properly acquainted. My husband... Well, ex-husband and I lived in our very own 'French bubble' that had nothing to do with the dynamic, multi-personality of London. That bubble had now burst, due to a 'little flaw' in our otherwise perfect marriage.

I think I loved Pierre. He was my husband. Or maybe, I was more in love with the way he treated me. I was his Queen; he would cherish me, take care of me in that old fashioned romantic French way: doors opening, umbrella opening, love notes and love letters... Will I ever find a man like this? In fact, I would like an upgraded version of him: all the good stuff without the dark side of him.

When Pierre and I were introduced to London, it was an anonymous and glacial city. Pierre and I quickly became aware of its rudeness and its impatience. We were new to all its mood swings: its gloomy skies and unpredictable showers of rain that always seemed to catch me in my very best outfits. The pale-faced strangers lost in thought and trapped in routine in the crowded morning tubes.

Making friends in London and planning to go out felt like jotting down business appointments in the few tiny spaces remaining in our busy agendas. Rush, Rush, Rush.

Pierre and I juggled too much, and once one piece falls, the

rest fall with it. The occasional hug at the end of the night, and a soft “Je t'aime” would be the enough amount of compassion to get us through the night, and up the next day. Often, I would have to do without the compassion.

With Pierre unable to find work yet again, I would arrive from my daily 12-hour slave work, hoping for a hot bubble bath, only to come to terms with the fact that I now had to comfort his increasing restlessness and frustration which were brewing within him as every jobless day passed.

C'est la vie. Life knocks you down, and that very moment when you realise that you have hit rock bottom, you stop and smile, because there is only one way to go from there. Up. Get back in the rink, numb from all the previous hits. Fearlessly embracing the challenge.

And so, we did.

London had awakened our senses for the past years. We no longer minded or even noticed the occasional rudeness, the pushing and the shoving that was hardly ever followed by an apology. If London couldn't break us, nothing could. We took the good with the bad. The happy with the sad. We discovered the places that gave us a short but sweet reminder of Paris. We were quite happy.

Pierre had finally found a job, which meant that we now no longer had time for tantrums, frustration and worrying. We had filled that time going out and meeting people. We danced, and dined and nearly every night was concluded over laughs, red wine and background rhythm and blues.

And the best part was yet to come. I had met the two other loves of my life: Camellia and Bianca.

We had hit it off straight away, and as each day passed, we grew closer and closer together, which gave Pierre and I some

space to breathe, and therefore the chance to miss each other. When we were together, everything else blurred into the distance, and all we could see is each other's eyes. We danced in the middle of the street, slightly buzzed at night, with no music on. Those were fantastic moments.

Or so I thought.

Everybody admired our marriage, and the obvious love we barred for one another.

Having new friends was wonderful, and so was being employed. But hey, what we failed to realise perhaps was that despite our French-bubble illusion, we were still living in London.

London, the restless, agitated and demanding city which sucked the energy and life out of its people, in the same way that a workaholic boss will toss a few dimes at you to keep you fed and alive just enough to keep on working. Pierre couldn't cope. He had turned to alcohol. He came home late, waking me in the too-early morning hours. His breath reeked of liquor and whisky. I would shout at him, scream, and slam doors. He would do the same. Then, when he was too drunk, and I too exhausted to argue, his snoring kept me up.

Pierre had gained weight. A lot of weight. I loved him regardless, but the attraction was gone. Everything was all slipping out of control, and I didn't know how to stop it anymore. I couldn't. We couldn't. We went down fall, Pierre lied to me. He hid a few things. We were not a team anymore. The more lies I discovered, the more I was upset.

7 Years full of history. Love, friendship, sex, endless conversations and walks, sleepless nights, thousands of red roses, our private jokes, our secret connection; and here we are, so much left untold, and yet it all comes down to nothing at all. As if we never were anything. I couldn't trust him

anymore. A few days after our biggest fight ever, I asked Pierre to leave and filled the papers for a quick amiable divorce. I announced my decision to the girls over a coffee in a rainy and windy distraught London. They didn't say anything, didn't give an opinion, they respected my decision. Their hugs meant everything and worth all the comforting words in the world. It felt great to be supported and loved. I was so happy I found the girls years earlier. Pierre had left, and my life felt so empty without my best friend who discovered London with me. I will be all alone now, I thought of going back to Paris but why? London welcomed me and I, now, finally getting acquainted with the city.

Life is full of challenges, but nothing is too big for me, right?

A few weeks later, I received my summons to the court of Paris to officialise my divorce with Pierre.

My heart was breaking into pieces, and a huge emptiness invaded my soul. Pierre had called me almost every day to make me change my mind. I didn't even want to try, why would I? Why would I stick around for a mediocre marriage? I had to let Pierre go.

I was ready; I had to go and keep on going with my new life. So, I went to this divorce, looked at Pierre in the eyes, he signed the papers leaving tears on them. He agreed to not fight over our Parisian duplex. I signed them being stronger than ever leaving a bit of my past on them. It was the end. It was real and impersonal.

I left the Court with a weird feeling. I was adding myself to the long list of singles in a city I barely knew. But I was full of hopes that I would find the man of my life and meet deep, never resting, sexy, uncontrollable and passionate love. Once one chapter of life falls apart, another goes wonderfully well.

C'est la vie!

Introduction

After my divorce, I had a busy life at work. I decided to hoist my new life and change a lot of things. After thinking of moving out, I simply redecorating our apartment in Knightsbridge, started taking care of myself, started electronic cigarettes (it didn't last) and embellished my life with a new wardrobe. It was not a cold winter, but my mood and my heart were freezing. So, I decided to hibernate and get into a TWS: Tube, Work & Sleep.

One sunny afternoon, the girls decided to visit me at home and faced to my unusual unwillingness of going out to one of the trendiest places in London and my incessant therapeutic condescending speeches on Pierre, Bianca interrupted me "You know something? This seems like the perfect opportunity to finally meet Prince Charming. Someone with a six pack of abs, not a 6-pack of beer belly fat. Someone hot, intelligent, and fun. Just like you!"

I was intrigued. Who did Bianca have in mind?

"Someone real? Let me guess, he will come riding on a black horse, and he will carry a large sword." Interrupted Camellia full of doubts.

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