

Difficult Decisions

Jenny Baker

Warning!

This story concerns suicide.

Difficult Decisions

Jenny Baker

What is the perfect underwear to die in? The thought had been bothering Sheila since she had decided definitely, 100%, "no more excuses" that it was time to go. The decision was made weeks ago, but there had always been reasons to put it off. The weather was too gloomy; she wanted to find out who was the murderer on Netflix etc ... Now all reasons were gone. Her library books had been returned, albeit unread. All bills paid, letters to her solicitor, bank manager and other persons of importance, were stacked on her kitchen table.

Arriving at the hotel, she had checked into her room on the 21st floor and tipped the porter generously for carrying her small bag to the room. She couldn't take the money with her so why not spread the love! He thanked her but was unable to meet her eye. This hotel was chosen for a number of reasons. It was the tallest in the area, had balconies that overlooked quiet back streets and was close to the police station and hospital. All these factors ensured that her final swan dive would cause the minimum of inconvenience to those unfortunates that would have to clean up the mess when she hit the asphalt below. She had considered buying a body bag to take her final leap in. Part of her now wished she had. She deplored mess.

She laid her outfits on the bed. The black tracksuit from the op shop would be her "launch wear". No point in ruining good clothes. Next to it was her

beautiful sapphire blue evening dress that she had worn to the fundraising ball last year. She placed the photograph of her wearing it on its beaded bodice. Such a perfect evening, she remembered with a sigh. Ray looked so handsome in his tux standing next to her. She had teased him that he looked like a "slightly older and more uncomfortable, James Bond." He had smiled at her causing her heart to melt and her pulse to quicken. Now he was gone.

What was the point of carrying on? This would be her burial outfit. Her final instructions said "no funeral", so no one would see that the dress didn't do up anymore.

Then there was the underwear, five pairs in all. She picked her favourite pair and laid it on the blue dress. This left four to choose from.

Carefully she opened the bottle of vintage Moet, the popping of the cork making her jump as it always did. Ray had teased her about this. Filling the cutglass champagne flute almost to the brim, she raised the glass in a silent toast. The bubbles tickled her tongue as she swallowed carefully and painfully. Putting the glass down gently, she headed into the bathroom and cleaned her teeth. Her reflection still made her cringe. The scarring was inflamed today; this often occurred on days of high emotion. Part of her was surprised that it had occurred today when she felt so calm. Maybe it was the guilt she felt after all the work that the hospital staff had done after the fire. They had been amazing but even they found it hard to look at her when she was discharged. Her mind started to recall the noise of the flames, the smell of charred wood and melting plastic. The flashing lights and screaming of the sirens... was it the sirens that were screaming? Ray, where are you?

She thumped her hand hard on the sink. It was enough to break the chain of memories and bring her back to the present.

Back in the bedroom the row of underwear confronted her.

"Sod it!" she said loudly and changed into the black tracksuit. The rhythm of

her heart increased as she untucked the collar and walked out on to the balcony. Climbing onto a chair, with spread arms Sheila launched herself forward....

On the bed the four pairs of underwear lay in a row. Some decisions are just too hard.