

About the Author

Kerry Carter used to be an administrator at the University of York, England where she had worked for over thirty years. She took early retirement through ill health when she finally admitted defeat to the debilitating illness, multiple sclerosis. Diagnosed with MS in 2001, she was determined to do a few things before her health got too bad, including scuba diving and swimming with manatees in Florida. After her work life ended, Kerry decided to write a book. She couldn't type any more, so she had to use voice activated software to write what she was speaking. *Decisions* is the result.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

*D*ecisions

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For John and the never-ending supply of love and care.

I'd like to thank all my family, for believing in me. I knew I had a book in me somewhere, but it's only taken forty years to make an appearance!

Chapter 1

*D*ecisions, decisions. What shall I have for lunch? I might get a sandwich from Scoffs, the deli across the road, but what filling? I should pick something really healthy like a turkey salad (boring). Or maybe I'll go for what I really want which is a double cheeseburger and large fries from McDonald's (oh gosh, yes please). That won't help the diet though. God, this is the problem with working in the city centre, just too many choices.

"Sasha, what are you having for lunch?"

"Hmmm, I'm not too sure. I think I might just get a sandwich from M&S," Sasha replied, putting on some lipstick as she spoke.

"OK, I'll come with you."

Sasha had been my best friend since my first day at primary school. At first, I never really spent any time with her, being more interested in hanging upside down on the climbing frame and playing kiss chase with the boys. When we started secondary school, we were both in the same class and we started to spend more time with each other. She lived just round the corner from me so it was easy to walk round to her house and her to mine.

We spent our time listening to music, watching TV and doing an awful lot of laughing. Many a time Sasha had lent me a shoulder to cry on when I'd been dumped by yet another boyfriend. I'd like to say that I offered the same for Sasha, but she was the dumper more often than not, not the dumpee. We grew up together, cried together, laughed together and had a great time together. She's my best friend and I don't know what I'd do without her.

Sasha often came on holiday with us, usually somewhere in the UK, but occasionally we went abroad. We went to Spain one year when we were around seventeen, when Mum and Dad would let us have the odd drink or two (or three or four was more like it). That was the first time that Sasha and me had experienced hangovers. We felt so dreadful the next day after necking a few bottles of sangria, we said we'd never touch alcohol again! Ha! Never again, my arse!

It was just a coincidence that we both started working in the same department at the university. Sasha had already worked there for about three months before I came on the scene. Being best friends at work might make people think we would spend too much time gossiping and laughing and not getting the work done. It couldn't be further from the truth. Don't get me wrong, we had our moments when we had a good laugh, but we were both hard working and committed when we needed to be. We would flog our guts out to get things done on time. As a result, we were appreciated by the

rest of the university work team and we received thanks on many occasions for the hard work we'd done.

On some days it was so quiet, Val (the department manager), would let us have a day off. She wasn't officially supposed to do this, but she believed that if we didn't have anything to do at work, we could be doing something more useful at home. This was much appreciated, but I must say that every time it happened, I ended up just having a lie in and mooching about the house all day pampering myself.

Val stuck her head round the door now. "I'm expecting a delivery of books any time soon, so keep your eye out. Give me a ring when they arrive and I'll come and collect them."

Val was my boss and you couldn't wish for anyone nicer. She was down-to-earth and had the respect from all of us who worked there. Val had been trying for years to have a baby and we had seen her going through the pain of miscarriage on three separate occasions. Now she was trying IVF and was on her second round of trying. We all had our fingers tightly crossed that it would work this time.

I put my coat on. It seemed like a nice day, but lately there had been rain showers that happened so quickly you didn't even have time to put your umbrella up. That is if you even remembered to take your umbrella, which I invariably forgot.

“Are you still up for our night out next Saturday?” asked Sasha, putting on her trendy rain mac from Coach.

“You bet I am, I can’t wait,” I replied, putting on my (not so trendy) coat from Leeds market. Our nights out coincided with getting paid at the end of the month and usually included a meal, drinks and a club. We always managed to drink far too much and get pretty hammered by the end of the night, wobbling back from a taxi in the early hours of the morning. Last month, during our night out, I seem to have lost the heel of one of my shoes. I haven’t the foggiest idea how that came about. All I remember is that we had a brilliant night, even though I had to fork out for a new pair of shoes!

We came out of the door of the main entrance to the office and it had already started raining. Sasha had one of those trendy umbrellas where you just press a button and it goes up. Mine was the less trendy version that you put up by hand and was so cheap that any slight gust of wind blew it inside out.

We made our way through the brightly coloured myriad of umbrellas to Marks and Spencer. As we entered the store, I couldn’t help glancing left and right and seeing all the things that were for sale. I really wanted to spend some time looking at the goods but I couldn’t as my time was limited. I wish they made a pair of glasses, like blinkers for a horse, that made looking left and right impossible, so you couldn’t tease yourself with all the things you could buy. The trip to Marks and

Spencer should have been a quick job, but I was so distracted by all of the tops and T-shirts, shorts and dresses, skirts and cardigans on offer. I found it hard to tear myself away and concentrate on what I had actually come into the store for in the first place, which was to buy a sandwich for lunch. Buying clothes would be bad news from a savings point of view as I was trying to save money for our planned trip to Menorca in June.

“Oooh look, they’ve got the summer stock in. I really need to buy some more T-shirts to go away on holiday but I guess I should look at the weekend when I’ve got more time to do it justice.”

Sasha was equally distracted. “Hey, look at these bags. They would be fantastic for taking to the beach. You could keep all your necessary bits inside it like a book, suncream, sunglasses and a bit of money. And they’re plenty big enough to put a towel in as well.”

“Look at these shorts. They would look fantastic on you with your figure, but I’d look like a beached whale in them. No, even worse, a white beached whale.”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself, you’ve got a gorgeous figure,” Sasha commented while rifling through a clothes rail of teeny tiny shorts.

That’s another thing about us. We’re like chalk and cheese to look at. Sasha is petite, slim and has a figure to die for. Whereas I’m tall, well-built and curvaceous. I suppose my redeeming feature is that I’ve got much bigger boobs, which in their own right attract attention

from the boys, but they do tend to get in the way sometimes.

I'm always on a diet of some kind. Weight Watchers, SlimFast, the Atkins diet, Mindful Chef, I could go on. You name it, I've tried it, sometimes with some success. With others, though, I seem to end up putting more weight on. Let's face it, I'm not cut out to be a glorious, sylph-like, sex goddess. Sasha says I should just learn to love my curves and stop beating myself up about it. Easy for her to say. She's about three stone lighter than me.

I took a quick glance at my watch. "We'd better get a sandwich quick. Lunch time is nearly over. We've got totally absorbed looking at a holiday clothes and not the thing we came to do in the first place." We hung the clothes we were holding back on to the racks. They'll have to wait until Saturday.

We made our way to the sandwich section of the store and quickly made our purchases. Sasha had chosen a chicken salad sandwich and I selected a healthy prawn salad in an effort to lose a bit more weight before the holiday. I chose to ignore the chocolate brownie I bought for my pudding.

When we got to the office, a fair pile of work had accumulated and we set about working steadily through the letters, tables and reports.

At about four o'clock, the reception doorbell rang. "I'll get it," I said, while I took a break from the document I was typing.

I opened the reception door to find Tony, the delivery driver from Archers, the company we use to buy all our stationery from. “Hi Tony.” I smiled as I pushed the hair out of my eyes. “How’s it going?”

“Not too bad darlin’,” he grunted as he lifted a big box out of the back of the van. “Dunno what you’ve got inside this box, but it’s bleedin’ heavy.”

“I think they’re probably books. Val said she was expecting a delivery.”

“Ah, that’ll be it. I thought it might be something a bit more interesting, like bodies for research or something.”

“Nothing as exciting as that I’m afraid.” I chuckled. “But thanks anyway, Tony, you’re a star.”

“I think I’ve got an overactive imagination.” Tony smiled as he jumped back in his van and went on his way.

I tried to lift the box Tony had taken off the back of the van, but it was far too heavy for me to pick up on my own, so I went inside the office and asked for Sasha’s help.

She came out straight away. “Flipping ’eck, how many books are there in here?” Sasha asked when we lifted the box onto a pair of sack wheels. “Val never said, but probably quite a few ‘cos she hasn’t ordered any for ages.”

I picked up the phone. “Val, I think the books you ordered have arrived. Tony has just delivered a great big

box and it's really heavy, so I think it must be the books you ordered. Where do you want them?" I asked.

"Can you take them to the library and I'll unpack them in there and put them on the shelves."

"No problem. Me and Sasha put them onto some sack wheels so we'll take them down there now."

"Thanks a lot, that's really helpful," Val replied and put the phone down.

Sasha and I wheeled the box down to the library where we met Val already inside with her sleeves rolled up, ready for action. We used one side of a pair of scissors to cut open the box and took each book out, one by one, making a neat pile, ready for Val to put on the shelves. Each book had been carefully wrapped in bubble wrap, so we had sheets of the stuff in a pile on the floor once we'd finished unpacking.

"Thanks, girls. I'll take it from here," Val told us.

"We'll get rid of this bubble wrap for you," Sasha said with a sneaky look on her face as she scooped up the sheets ready to take down to our office.

We made our way back to our desks with sheets of bubble wrap in our arms.

"I know exactly what's going on in your head," I grinned as we started to lay out the bubble wrap on the floor. Once each piece was carefully placed over the carpet, we pulled our office chairs to one side and sat down.

"Ready?" grinned Sasha. And off we went. You could tell we'd done this before. We made a series of

satisfying pops as we rolled our chairs this way and that over the carpet of bubble wrap. We continued to roll around until we were satisfied each bubble had been flattened.

I couldn't help but think that this should be offered on corporate away days. All of those bigwig companies that liked to splash their cash (or waste their cash, depending on how you looked at it) could be offered this as an option. A quick roll around the room on wheeled office chairs is so quick and easy and would cost a fraction of the price of a normal corporate activity.

"It's home time," I said. The day had gone so quickly it was hard to believe it was five o'clock already. Not needing much encouragement, we closed our computers down, put on our coats, shouted 'bye' to Val and left the office.

"See you tomorrow, babes," shouted Sasha as she walked the other way to me.

"Yeah, see you tomorrow," I replied to her retreating back. It had started to rain so I put my umbrella up just as a big gust of wind blew the umbrella inside out and ripped a big hole down one side. "I think I need a new broolly," I muttered to myself.