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‘Hey, Emm, where did the knickers go? They were in knickers just now,’ yelled Ben over the music, keeping his eyes on the girls.

‘Stuffed ‘em down the boots,’ Emma bellowed back.

‘I must’ve blinked!’ he hissed. ‘And now they’re all in their birthday suits.’

In the Bangkok go-go bar, a dozen or so Thai girls were gyrating mindlessly around chromium poles. Sitting a few feet away on pink plastic seats, Emma and Ben stared in disbelief. They were typical backpackers in tee shirts and loose trousers with leg pockets, Ben tall, fair and blue-eyed, Emma carefully made up, her dark hair tied in a neat bunch at the back. As new arrivals in Thailand their pallor contrasted with the golden skin of the dancers who now wore nothing more than thigh boots and glazed expressions.

‘Must be weird for a nice lad like you, Ben... all this flesh on display,’ said Emma.

‘Think I can get used to it, thanks,’ he replied with a broad grin.

‘Maybe that says something about you then. *You* wanted to come in here, not me. And now you’ve seen it all... bums and tits to last a lifetime.’

‘Well, it’s certainly livelier than the bars on campus!’ he said, his eyes out on stalks.

Emma’s head was still spinning from twenty four hours of travel, from jetlag, a day of culture shock in a hot, steamy city, and now the deafening noise of the go-go bar.

After they were hustled inside by the touts at the door, a waitress dressed as a schoolgirl brought them cold beers and a bill that came as an unpleasant shock. To Emma’s embarrassment, Ben refused to let it pass.

‘The touts said there’s no cover charge... no wonder with beers at this price!’ he shouted at the girl. ‘What a rip-off.’

Looking hurt, she took his money and stalked off without a word.

‘Rip-off or not, Ben, it’s still cheaper than your snobby pubs back home. And you’re getting loads to gawp at!’ said Emma, glaring at him in disgust.

‘Easy Emm, this is what everyone comes to see. Don’t take it so seriously.’

‘Not serious? Women for sale!’ she retorted.

‘But they look happy enough to me... it’s them chooses to be dancers.’

‘Get real! Nobody does this unless they have to. And I tell you Ben, I just can’t believe I’m in here!’ she said, shifting uncomfortably on her seat.

‘Well, I didn’t force you, did I,’ said Ben.

‘You damn well did! You made me come with you to Thailand and now you drag me into this dreadful place.’ She gave him a long, withering look.



Later that night in their grubby guesthouse room, Emma lay sobbing silently into the pillow, trying hard not to let her convulsions shake the bed. Beside her, Ben was sleeping soundly, oblivious to her distress. She lay awake for hours contemplating the rest of the holiday in Thailand with dread.

It was now a mystery to her why she had let herself be talked into travelling with him, though it was probably the romantic dream of Thailand that tipped the balance. She recalled her preconceptions of old Siam, of Anna and the King in soft focus, jumbled up with images of temples and mountains, tropical beaches, buffalo carts and rice farmers in conical hats. But she had quickly discovered that the reality was very different. Bangkok was modern and materialistic, and nothing could warn of the oppressive heat that made walking the crowded streets arduous and debilitating.

She remembered the arguments about going to Thailand together that started a few months earlier when she and Ben graduated from Sussex University on the English south coast and student life came to a sudden end. Ben was staying at his family home in Haywards Heath and she was living with her parents in Swindon, both of them working all hours to clear their student debts and save enough to go travelling. After three years in each others’ pockets at university, she had quickly adapted to a more distant relationship by email and telephone; at least on the phone she

could have a smoke without getting told off.

It was often Ben who picked up the phone and made the call.

‘Hi Emm, how’s it going?’ he began, his telephone voice upbeat as always.

‘Grim. Crappy work and hell with the wrinklies. What about you?’

‘Friend of Dad’s just got me a great job doing questionnaires in the high street.’

‘Daddy would have a friend! I’m still stuck in Tescos all day, and night times pulling pints in a grotty pub round the corner,’ she grumbled.

‘So what’s wrong at home then?’

‘Well, everything. Soon as I get back from work Mum just starts. If plates are still dirty from breakfast, she goes ballistic... and when I spend too long on the phone or in the shower. It’s that sort of stupid stuff.’

‘Is that all?’

‘No, they make me feel I’ve let them down because I can’t find a proper job,’ she said miserably.

‘What’s the hurry to get a job anyway? Come to Thailand with me instead... you always said you would.’

‘I’m not sure I can, Ben. Jobs are so difficult to find and if I drift off, I won’t get anything worth having.’

‘Stuff careers! Live life first.’

‘You mean run away?’ Emma hugged the phone and chewed her lip.

‘Remember us in third year, Emm?... Thinking about the beaches was the only thing that kept us going. But anyway, if you don’t come with me, what are you going to do with yourself?’

Emma had no answer which made her even more irritated by Ben’s casual failure to look for a career. With his solid middle class background, his self-confidence and family contacts, he gave her the impression that the world owed him a living. As she lay on the bed in Bangkok unable to sleep, her smouldering resentment came back to her, the phone conversation always predictable.

‘Emm, why did you want to work for M & S anyway? One step up from stacking shelves if you ask me. And that biscuit factory thing in Swindon was rubbish.’

‘Well, I was going for something secure.’

‘But why get a job you don’t really like?’

‘Got to do something.’

‘And if you weren’t that keen, why worry when you didn’t get it?’

‘Because Dad sees me as a failure... even worse if I bugger off to Thailand with you,’ she complained.

‘Travel first, and when you get back there’s always law, accounting, investment banking.’

‘Maybe for you ... with your family opening doors.’

‘That’s crap, Emm and you know it!’

Feeling insecure and sorry for herself, Emma tried not to sound too feeble. ‘Life’s been on rails so far,’ she said, ‘but they don’t help you any more... after graduating you’re on your own. And they keep on saying, “Well, what sort of career d’you want, Emma?” But how do I know what I want to do with the rest of my life?’

‘Keep working at it and the right thing’ll turn up,’ said Ben.

‘Me with a Lower Second in Sociology? Awesome or what!’

‘You’ve got to believe in yourself, Emm, you’re not that useless.’

‘Ben, I really hate you sometimes.’

‘And I hate your moods and sulks.’

As she lay sweltering in the damp heat of the tropical night, Emma thought of the time Ben rang to tell her about taking his little sister into the local pub for the first time. There was something about Ben’s cosiness with Megan that really infuriated her.

‘Emm, she’s still only sixteen,’ said Ben, ‘but the barman didn’t even ask her age.’

‘That’s fine for you, isn’t it... playing the big brother,’ she said frowning into the phone. ‘But me being a younger sister isn’t that great, I can tell you. Now Kate’s married and gone, it all falls on me.’

‘What does?’

‘Like mealtimes. Mum says, “When’ll you be back for supper tonight?” Or, “What would you like to have?” And it drives me mad.’

‘What’s so wrong with that?’

‘She does it to provoke me... control freak, sort of.’

‘I don’t get you,’ he said, sounding surprised.

‘She makes a fuss over every little job and expects me to fit in with her routine. It does my head in. Then she says, “Emma, when did you last cook or shop? You never put the rubbish out, Emma.” And “What about the cat litter?”’

‘Parents say stuff like that,’ said Ben.

Emma ignored him and kept talking.

‘It’s what she doesn’t say as well. My room’s a mess, but she doesn’t

dare tell me to tidy up... just comes in and noses around, violating my personal space.'

'Come on Emm, it's not that bad being at home.'

'I hate it. I feel trapped.'

'Better come to Thailand with me then,' he said triumphantly.

'Shut up Ben and listen. Why aren't you shit-scared about what you're going to do when you get back?'

'Well, I'm going to enjoy travelling and think about a career after. One thing at a time.'

His glib answers annoyed her, especially as he was refusing to see that their relationship was at a crossroads.

'Look Ben,' she said, 'the problem with me coming to Thailand's not just about careers... it's about us as well.'

'Why's it about us?'

'Now we've finished uni, what are we going to do? Travel together or call it a day?'

'Hadn't really thought about it like that,' he said vaguely.

'Why ever not you wolly?' She flicked her lighter and lit a cigarette.

'Dunno, Emm. All I know's we promised ourselves a trip. You were as keen as me.'

'But it's more complicated now. You're no help... and I get so much pressure from Mum and Dad not to go.'

'My folks are okay... they think me travelling's a great idea.'

'They would! Mummie's blue-eyed boy!' She drew angrily on the cigarette.

'Oh sod off! Don't start that again,' said Ben.

'No, I'm just not sure I still want to go with you.'

'Why not?' he said, sounding hurt.

'Because I'm not sure about you any more... sorry, but I had to say it.'

'Emm, please don't let me down now,' he begged. 'Maybe it'll bring us back together.'

'No, I've got to make a go of things here,' she said. 'Though if I can't find a decent job... suppose I'll have to come with you to Thailand.'

Sleepless on Khao San Road listening to the sounds of the city, Emma knew that this had been decision-making by default; it was no decision at all. And the dream of Thailand that had finally persuaded her to travel with him was so far totally failing to materialise.



Emma had never liked flying, but she tried to be fatalistic. Once Ben had booked the flights, she was destined to converge at the airport with several hundred others, to present her ticket and passport and be herded onto the plane. She could be fated to die in a ghastly inferno or be seated next to someone who snores. She was to be catapulted across the globe to a world she had never before experienced, her ordered existence ending at Bangkok airport where another very different culture begins.

The long but comfortable Qantas flight passed surprisingly quickly as she and Ben were able to snatch some sleep before landing in Bangkok. The airport was still part of their own familiar world but, tired and bleary from more than twenty hours of travelling, both were subdued and anxious. They queued before a silent immigration officer who stamped visas into their passports; this was not yet the land of smiles. They waited by the carousel for their backpacks, then passed through customs and walked down the long arrivals hall. Confronting a dark sea of Thais, many holding up the names of arriving passengers, Emma longed to be met or to have a comfortable hotel already booked.

Walking out through the glass doors into the roar of the traffic, they were hit by the smell of diesel fumes and drains and by a blanket of hot, humid air. There were taxis parked in lines and Thai faces everywhere, the taxi touts milling about and talking loudly. Emma was feeling overwhelmed and disorientated. But everything happened fast and she soon found herself sitting in the back of a small green and red Nissan taxi, their rucksacks stowed safely in the boot. The driver was smiley and communicative.

‘Okay, you go Khao San Road? First time in Thailand?’

‘Yes,’ said Ben, doing the talking.

‘You married already?’

‘No, we’re students.’

‘*Farang* have money, so why you not married?’

‘What’s *farang*?’ asked Ben, ducking the question.

‘*Farang* means European. *Farang* good for business... so welcome to Thailand.’ The cheerful taxi driver, their first Thai, was making a good impression.

The Bangkok traffic was a crazy roller-coaster ride, the taxi sitting gridlocked for ages, then surging forward aggressively before hitting the

next blockage.

'*Rot dtit*,' said the taxi driver. 'Traffic jam every day.' Emma marvelled that it was possible to be a Bangkok taxi driver and stay sane.

Staring out as the urban landscape unfolded, she was struck by the sheer scale of the city, its high-rise tower blocks crowding on all sides, concrete grey as far as the eye could see. Speeding along the overhead expressway, she could look down on flat roofs cluttered with pot plants, washing lines and television aerials, human details in a harsh environment.

Massive hoardings stood next to the road: Mitsubishi Motors, Quality in Motion; Cathay Pacific, the Heart of Asia; Bridgestone, a Grip on the Future; Volkswagen, Panasonic, Canon, Pepsi and Nissan, all familiar names in a globalised world. From the next hoardings they passed the glossy haired Sunilk girls gazing serenely down on the traffic jams with global eyes, eyes that to Emma looked hardly Asian.

As they rushed towards the city centre, she silently admired the towers of Thai Airways, clad in gleaming blue glass and, to her surprise, lavish showrooms for Porsche and Jaguar cars. In front of her stood the tallest building she had ever seen, the seventy eight storeys of the Bayoke tower, on her right the roofs of a traditional Thai temple a bizarre contrast to the stark commercial phalluses of the city.

This seemed to be a city of extremes, the sleek modern buildings dwarfing older ones which were grimy and unmaintained. Its quiriness was brought home to her when the taxi driver, passing a Buddhist shrine outside a luxury hotel, took both his hands off the wheel, held them together in prayer and bowed his head down low.

Exciting though it all seemed, Emma was already finding Bangkok to be more than a little scary. This ugly place in which she would have to survive on a shoe-string budget was alien and threatening. Though cocooned in the taxi and about to start the holiday of a lifetime, her butterflies were rampant; it was like teetering at the top of the high diving board, staring down at the water.

The dull ache in her stomach was even worse when at last she took the plunge, nervously emerging from the taxi onto the pavement in Khao San Road. Her first glance took in a street packed with guest houses, travel agents and cafés. On both sides were shops and stalls, selling everything backpackers might need. She could see colourful tee shirts and ethnic trinkets, food for sale off barrows, and everywhere busy crowds of cool-looking travellers.

Feeling very much the new girl in school, Emma shouldered her pack and apprehensively set off with Ben to find somewhere to stay. In three or four backstreet places they asked for a room but there were no vacancies. She was becoming overwhelmed by the heat, her back aching from hours on the plane and from carrying her heavy rucksack. Tiredness, dehydration, culture shock and the fear of not finding anywhere showed in her face.

‘Look Emm, sit down with the bags and I’ll go and look on my own,’ said Ben.

‘But what if I don’t like it?’

‘Oh stuff that. We can always move on tomorrow.’

She breathed a sigh of relief when Ben came back, having found a room in a dingy guesthouse. Damp and musty and with communal showers and toilets, at least it was well within their budget. ‘What’s wrong with cockroaches anyway,’ he said as he opened the door.

Feeling thoroughly let down by Thailand, Emma was appalled at what she saw inside, though she dared not complain. Now she somehow had to get through the rest of the day and then face a long evening struggling to stay awake. She did not expect it to be fun, but her first night out with Ben in Bangkok was to be nothing short of a disaster.



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Never one to opt for an early night even after an exhausting journey, it was Ben who suggested they take a look at Bangkok's famous nightlife. Emma had no better ideas and knew he would not be easily dissuaded, so she protested only weakly when he told the taxi driver to take them to the bar area off Sukhumvit Road.

The tropical night was exotic and steamy, just like the nightlife. Emma would have preferred a walk down one of the quieter *sois*, a side street of bars, travel agents and hotels, but Ben seemed to know where he wanted to go.

'So what's this evil-looking place then?' she asked him.

'It's Naga Plaza... like Patpong but not as sleazy. Gotta see it now we're here.'

'Speak for yourself! Looks a hell-hole to me.'

With Emma trailing behind, Ben led the way past stalls selling food from fried insects and bamboo grubs to spicy Thai curries. In the open-air bars on the ground floor, they could see beer-swilling western men being minded by bar girls and beyond in a three-storeyed building, the air-conditioned go-go bars, their names flaunted in garish neon signs; 'Caligulas', 'San Francisco Strip.' 'Big show now on.'

'I wouldn't mind somewhere with aircon,' said Ben. 'And maybe with a show.'

'Aircon's fine but what sort of show?'

'No idea Emm, but we'll only find out if we give it a go.'

'Amazing Thailand, my arse... none of this was in the brochures,' she said bitterly.

She followed Ben up the stairway to the open gallery on the first floor where they crossed to the balustrade and looked down onto the rubbish strewn roofs of the bars below. Rangy cats prowled nearby and stared at

them with wary eyes.

‘Come on Emm, let’s have a look in the bars then,’ said Ben.

‘Do we really have to,’ moaned Emma.

Walking down the gallery they passed a group of girls sitting on tin stools around folding tables, unselfconsciously doing each others’ hair and make-up and eating rice from styrofoam takeaway boxes. At the first bar, the touts tried to stop them going past, throwing back the curtain across the open doorway for them to see inside.

‘Welkaam, sir... take a look, sir. No cover charge.’

Through the curtain they got their first glimpse of a go-go bar. Lit with flickering purple lights and pulsating with music, it was almost empty of customers. Emma’s eye was compelled by the girls in backless thongs, dancing around poles on a raised platform in the middle of the room, some of them flabby and overweight. Detesting the touts who were all over her, she backed away from the door, trying to make her escape.

‘No Ben, I’m not going in there,’ she said.

‘Nor me... the girls look like you since you put on all that weight.’

Emma bit her lip and pretended not to have heard him.

As they went further along the gallery, they were set upon by touts at each doorway, one a dwarf in a Mexican hat.

‘Come inside sir... lovely girls, lesbian fucking show.’

A glance through the curtains confirmed that the bars were much the same, a place to drink and pick a girl.

Outside the last door, several bar girls were spread across the walkway, lounging around on stools. In tight g-strings and flouncey dresses, they were bizarre, almost witch-like. Suddenly Ben twigged and rushed past, afraid to make eye contact. This was the gay bar; these were the fabled ladyboys he had been reading about.

‘Bugger me if I’d go anywhere near that lot,’ he said over his shoulder.

‘But what’s the difference, Ben? It’s just the same... sex for sale.’

They hastily made for the stairs up to the next floor, the air superheated from the air conditioners that vented into the stairwell.

‘Hey, this bar looks livelier,’ said Ben. ‘Let’s have a quick beer.’

‘Suppose I can’t stop you!’ complained Emma.

And so she found herself reluctantly sitting in the G-String bar on their first night in Bangkok, confronting a varied assortment of bare breasts. At first she sat awkwardly upright, while Ben leaned forward, his elbows on the seat backs in front for a better view. He was living out his ultimate

fantasy.

As the girls clung to their poles, sometimes chatting and joking with each other, the music pounded incessantly; “It’s my life... it’s now or never, and I ain’t gonna live forever!” A few danced vigorously, undulating their bodies up and down the pole in a sinuous rhythm, eyeing their reflections in the mirrors that lined the walls, but most looked terminally bored.

The customers were mainly tourists, including a number of couples. Emma guessed that like Ben, they claimed to be there because Bangkok’s nightlife just has to be seen. Though as she glanced round she could also see several single men with girls draped over them who were clearly not there for spectator sport only.

When there was a break in the music, the girls sitting with customers got up and changed places with the dancers on stage, revealing to Ben the mystery of the disappearing knickers.

‘Now I get it,’ he said. ‘They slip a leg out and shove their pants down the top of the other thigh boot! Cunning eh, Emm?’

Emma was not impressed.

As Ben watched in fascination, two girls in blue bikinis who had just finished dancing casually came and sat alongside him. The nearer one whispered something into his ear, took his hand and began to massage it firmly with both of hers. Emma, sitting the other side of him, was appalled.

‘What you name?’ asked the girl.

‘I’m Ben,’ he replied. ‘And what’s yours?’

‘My name Porn.’ Ben tried not to laugh.

As Porn then began to rub his thigh, Emma looked on in anger and disgust; she felt she had become invisible to both of them. Ben was now eye to eye with his temptress who was trying to say something to him about cola. Stirred by the spread of her thighs and the cleft of her bust he broke into a sweat. Porn picked up a drinks menu and started fanning him furiously.

‘You buy lady drink? Cola for my friend,’ she asked him sweetly.

Emma was quick to figure out that as well as selling their bodies, their job was to sell drinks. Seething with barely contained indignation, she turned and dug Ben hard in the ribs. Porn, realising she was onto a loser, gave up on him and moved away.

‘Christ Ben, I’ve had enough of this,’ said Emma.

‘Enough of what?’

‘How could you let her do that right in front of me. You were just

lapping it up.'

'Couldn't stop her,' he said feebly.

'Do you have absolutely no respect for me?'

'Course I have,' he said, with a grin on his face, still staring at the dancers.

'Like hell, you do! I've had it up to here!' Abruptly she jumped up from her seat and stormed off, disappearing into the crowded bar.

Baffled by her recent moodiness and reluctant to miss the show, Ben did not attempt to follow her.

Emma was thinking of dumping him and going straight back to the guesthouse, but first she had to make for the toilet at the far end of the bar. To her dismay she found it packed with men and go-go dancers waiting silently in line for the stalls, as disengaged as office workers queuing for the photocopier. When at last she closed the toilet door behind her there was a moment of relative calm, only spoiled by the sight of the wet seat and the open bucket into which used paper and other horrors were thrown.

As she fought for a washbasin, something snapped inside her; she had taken more than enough for one night. She was damned if she was going to take a taxi home on her own, leaving Ben to his own devices in the bar. Angrily pushing her way out, she found him still sitting engrossed, just as she had left him a few minutes before.

'Say something then,' she demanded, refusing to sit down.

'What's that?' he said half ignoring her.

'Right Ben, you've really done it now... we're going.'

'Hang on Emm, let's give it a bit longer. There's a new load of girls coming on.'

A group of three girls were now dancing directly in front of them. Young and fresh, they seemed to be enjoying themselves, laughing and joking with each other. One of them stood out because although she was topless, she was wearing long blue cargo pants. She kept rolling down the waistband of her trousers to show her bikini bottoms, the suggestion far more erotic for Ben than the full nudity of the others.

Emma was by now becoming more and more enraged.

'I told you Ben, we're going... right now. Look, don't get me wrong, I don't care what you do, but first you take me back to our flea-pit,' she shouted, giving his arm an angry pull. Slowly he got up and followed her to the door, conspicuously glancing backwards at the stage.

In the heat of the night, they ran the gauntlet of the touts outside the

bars as they left Naga Plaza. Neither of them spoke, Emma seething silently. Back in the street, they walked in the direction of Sukhumvit Road looking for a taxi.

‘That was exactly what you wanted to see, wasn’t it,’ she challenged him.

‘We had to give it a go, Emm... we are in Bangkok!’

‘Well, *I* didn’t have to see it.’

‘Then next time you’d better stay home. Swindon’s safer,’ said Ben sharply. She gritted her teeth and tried to ignore the provocation.

‘So tell me Ben, did you like it?’ she retaliated.

‘It was okay,’ he said flatly.

‘Okay was it? So what was it you liked? Tell me that.’

‘Oh sod off Emm... get off my back. It’s only dancing girls.’

‘Only dancing girls!’ she shouted. ‘But these girls are for sale, for pity’s sake.’

‘No, they’re not,’ said Ben, looking apprehensive.

‘They damn well are. The men pay the bar to take them out, then screw’em for sixpence.’

‘Maybe some of them do it for the dosh... but you can’t blame them, Emm.’

‘I’m not blaming the girls, idiot, I’m blaming the men! Like the bar owner and the tossers in there ogling their tits, just like you were, Ben,’ she fumed.

‘Yes, but you’re a loser if you pay for sex. I’d never pay for it.’

‘Because it offends your male ego I suppose... not because you’re abusing the girl! Anyway Ben, you never pay because you fuck me for free... but not tonight you won’t!’ She looked daggers as he anxiously watched out for a taxi.

‘Thought you’d like to see Naga Plaza, Emm,’ he said, trying to sound conciliatory.

‘You had it all planned, bringing me here, didn’t you. Bet you wish I wasn’t around... I’m really cramping your style!’ Her fury came to a climax. ‘And how *dare* you tell me I’m fat!’

Ben was beginning to realise that Emma was more angry than he had ever seen her.

‘Easy Emm, cool it. What’ve I done to make you so mad?’ He gave her a look of offended innocence.

‘That’s the point... you just don’t get it, do you,’ she snapped.

‘Yes okay, so I liked the girlies... what normal bloke wouldn’t.’

‘All men are blokes and aren’t answerable, is that it?’ said Emma frostily.

‘Well, some of ‘em were drop-dead gorgeous... but Emm, you can’t be jealous about bar girls.’

She kept her cool but was raging inside.

‘So you tell me this then,’ she said. ‘Which girl did you like the best?’

‘Tricky one,’ he laughed. ‘Spoiled for choice!’

‘Maybe... but tell me which one you’d choose for yourself.’

Standing on the kerbside late at night looking for a taxi, the traffic pounding past, Ben then made his big mistake. He answered her question.

‘I’ll go for the one in long pants with the pert little tits. She’s really something, Emm... you don’t have to be a man to see that.’

‘And you don’t have to be a man to hit someone!’

The sound of the slap and his cry of surprise and pain made the Thais in the street briefly turn their heads, though they had become indifferent to the uncouth foreigners in their scruffy clothes.

After a silent taxi ride back to the guesthouse on Khao San Road, Emma found herself suffocating in their tiny room. She was repelled by the smelly grey bed sheet and the towelling bedspread which she guessed had covered a multitude of bodies since last being laundered. The stagnant air was hot and humid and showering in the washroom down the corridor did not clean the stickiness from her skin. Lying on the bed with Ben at arms length beside her in the semi-darkness, she could contain her feelings no longer.

‘It was you pushed me into coming to Thailand, Ben. And now you do this to me!’

‘Do what to you?’ he said, sitting up in surprise.

‘Walking all over me... treating me like shit.’

‘That’s rubbish, Emm!’

‘No Ben, I still can’t believe you slobbering over those girls right in front of me.’

‘Look, we’ve been through this already... and I’m sorry,’ he said in a low voice.

‘It’s no use saying sorry. You can’t undo it now, you know.’

‘Can’t undo what?’

‘I mean the next time we’re together, I’ll know you’re fucking the Thai girl with the pert little tits... and not making love to me. If there is a next time that is!’ She turned away from him and rolled herself into a ball, holding her knees tightly to her chest.