

Chapter One

The beginning

Erin so wished she could die; how had she gotten into this mess? How could she get out of it? All was beyond her. Confusion rested in her heart. She thought James loved her; she believed his confession of love, but he was only using her for his own means, and this reality was now very apparent.

It wasn't until two days ago that Erin accidentally discovered the truth. James was a married man who'd kept his marriage secret from the staff. No one at the Royal Melbourne Hospital knew the truth, but how could anyone know anything in such a massive place?

Her heart shattered, breaking into numerous pieces. How could she have been so gullible? She felt sick to her stomach at how other professionals would react and surely judge her conduct.

At twenty-six years old, Erin believed herself to be mature and a good judge of character, or perhaps she was just more naïve than most. Looking back in retrospect, she certainly knew nothing regarding a complex nature.

They met on her first day on duty in the cardiac ward, which differed from her previous time with cranial trauma. She looked forward to furthering her knowledge regarding the unique life-giving pump called a heart.

At seven that morning, staff hand-over introduced her to the other male and female registered nurses. David was in charge for the day, a handsome man of average height with dark blond hair and brown eyes that smiled with his mouth as he spoke.

"Let's all welcome Erin while remembering our feelings of being a fish out of water on our first day in a new department."

His smile showed white, slightly uneven teeth as he added. "We will be kind to you, Erin, and if you want any help, please ask. I'll show you the telemetry system as soon as we are through here. Like everything, it's easy once you know how."

True to his word, as they withdrew from the hand-over room, David steered Erin to the nurses' station, where a sizeable Telemetry monitor sat.

"Currently, we have seven patients listed on here, so if it belongs to one of yours, you print out the reading, check it, then place it into their clinical notes. The doctors check the monitor but also like to see the previous readings."

Erin nodded her understanding and looked intensely at the screen.

“Right,” he continued. “You have ward beds sixteen to twenty, and none of your patients are currently on the monitor, but I believe patient seventeen is for discharge today, so whoever replaces her may be required supervision on here.”

David continued orienting her to the ward before finishing and rushing off to attend to his duties.

Erin felt happy, and her morning routine was not unlike that of previous departments. A quick learner, she would soon catch on to the variation.

The shift ran well, with that one patient discharged and another admitted. The admitting doctor walked in as Erin finished the last of her patient’s admission forms. Ignoring Erin seated at the side of the bed, he introduced himself to the patient before glancing Erin’s way.

His blue eyes contacted hers and stared before looking away and then again for a second glance. Erin’s breath quickened. Standing hurriedly, she almost dropped her clipboard before excusing herself and heading for the door.

Why was her heart pounding so hard? Who was that hunk, and how embarrassing to react like a fumbling idiot in front of him? What would the new patient think?

Erin hurried off down the hall while noticing the smirk on the face of a female colleague.

“We all get shocked at first sight of Dr. Brennan, Erin. But he is a Romeo, so be careful. “Had a warning been given?”

Erin rushed to complete the Care Plan related to her new admission information. Her cheeks flamed. *If he is a womanizer, he won’t get anywhere with me.*

She meant this with all of her heart. She had seen enough of those men without being caught in this one’s web.

Filling out her computer work Erin became aware when he walked to stand at the desk telemetry monitor.

“Have you entered Mrs. Abraham’s information here yet, Nurse?” He questioned.

He stared at her, taking in Erin’s thick blond hair Platt, green almond-shaped eyes, and beautiful face. Her skin was a natural light olive after her father’s French side of the family, contrasted intriguingly with her hair and eye color presenting an arresting female.

Aware of his stare, Erin answered, “yes, it’s all there, doctor, bed number seventeen.” Her finger pointed to the screen.

“Oh yes, I see now. Well, thank you, nurse. You’re new, aren’t you? I haven’t seen you here before.”

‘Yes, I am new to this unit, but not to this hospital. Sister Erin Thibaut is the name,’ and she held out her hand. She was being cheeky, and he knew it but took her offering and shook it seriously.

No. He wasn’t going to get one better on her now that she knew of his reputation.

Erin was soon lost in her report writing and forgot his presence. He stood watching her for a few minutes before sitting to initiate blood test orders. He kept watching her from the corner of his eye, hoping to distract her concentration. Finally, he gave up and strolled away.

Erin walked out of the hospital and over to the staff car park. She had enjoyed her first day and looked forward to the next, but for now, it was off to meet her friend Lucy and enjoy some peaceful afternoon tea at the local coffee shop.

First in the door, Erin looked around for a quiet spot. A table for four sat at the far wall beside one of the large picture windows; she would be able to see her friend arriving.

“Hi Erin,” Helen, one of the waitresses, lifted her hand in recognition as Erin passed the counter.

“I’ll be over for your order as soon as Lucy arrives.”

Erin nodded, suddenly tired and glad to sit, look and listen instead of getting up to race off on demand.

Hearing the front door swing, she looked up as her sweet friend Lucy strode in. Looking around and seeing Erin’s wave, she headed over.

“Hi Mate, how was your first day among all the fluttering hearts,” Lucy smiled. Her short dark hair curled in a natural mess around her head while her hazel eyes sparkled with good health and happiness.

Erin was slightly taller than her friend, but they were on the same level when seated.

“I enjoyed it very much, Lucy. No matter where I go, I always think it’s the right place for me.”

“How many rotations have you had so far? I’ve been with you on two, I think?”

Erin nodded, “ Yes, you have, and would you believe this is my seventh? I think that I will try one more before deciding where I want to specialize.”

“You are so fussy. Paeds is for me and the only place I want to be. I love the kiddies. In fact, I believe that my vocation is to be a mother and have plenty of my own. “

“You will be a wonderful mother, Lucy, but get married first.”

Then something struck Erin as she stared at her friend.

“He didn’t ?” Erin's face lit up with wonder.

Lucy's beaming face and broad smile suggested that he had.

"Darren popped the question?"

At Lucy's nod, Erin jumped up to hug her.

"When did he propose? Why didn't you phone me? When is your big day?"

Lucy pulled a gold chain from within her uniform. Proudly displaying her engagement ring.

"Oh, it's beautiful," her friend lifted it towards the window light. "I am thrilled for you both."

Helen arrived to take their order and, seeing the ring, congratulated her.

"Okay, you two, what will it be, the usual?"

"I think an engagement deserves a celebration. Let's have something naughty to eat with our coffee, Lucy. I'm paying."

Nodding with a happy smile, Lucy ordered an apple pie with ice cream while Erin asked for a vanilla slice.

While they sat together waiting, Lucy told her friend how Darren took her to dinner and then surprised her with the ring.

"You know I hoped, Erin, but I didn't expect it last night. I thought he would surprise me on Valentine's Day, and he knew he shocked me. Oh, how I love that man."

"You have chosen well and are perfect together."

After sharing and laughing for another hour, both young women separated to go different ways.

Lucy turned her head back to call, "Remember, I'm on two days off and won't be here tomorrow."

