

LESBIAN FOR A YEAR

by Brooke Hemphill

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Brooke Hemphill knows hers was not meant to be an ordinary existence, yet by her early twenties she is engaged and planning the perfect wedding – with the wrong guy. She breaks it off and moves in with a married man. He, too, is wrong for her. She works on an island resort and falls for another, but he takes off for Europe. She travels to the United States and works on a cruise ship. Life is a continual bender of booze and drugs, until she falls pregnant and returns to Melbourne.

Circumstance carries her to Sydney where she develops a career in media and television, and after perfecting the art of speed dating she regularly appears on national television as a dating expert. All the while her relationships founder because of her attraction to the wrong people.

The title of the book does not accurately reflect its contents. Hemphill had been snogging girls for almost a decade when she found herself in bed with one – hungover and self-consciously uncomfortable with what had taken place. The book's title is also a misnomer – if anything, it was the year she went through profound self-reflection and started to come to terms with her addiction to distraction and poor relationship choices (*The Year I Started to Get My Shit Together* would be more apt).

Asked to produce a web series about the Sydney lesbian scene, Hemphill encounters a group that is more *The L Word* than Newtown or Northcote – privileged, rich, judgemental. Although that is probably not how Hemphill would describe the women she met. The book reveals Hemphill as unashamedly flawed, but willing to improve, and as someone who is certainly more empathetic and kind to women than to men. It is a great accomplishment to make the details of an ordinary life compelling, and Hemphill has achieved just that.

Crusader Hillis