

RAINBOWS END IN FERRY LANE MARKET

Nicola May



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Chapter 1

‘To be honest, I’d rather celebrate with a mariachi band and burgers down the front at Frank’s Café.’

‘What – you’d prefer that over a marquee in my beautiful grounds with caterers and a four-piece string quartet? Glanna, *really?*’ Penelope Pascoe tapped her freshly manicured nails on the handset.

‘Yes, *really*, Mum.’

‘Well, you’re only 40 once, dear, that’s all I’m saying, and the Penhaligons at Crowsbridge Hall are expecting to attend a big event.’

‘Good to know that your posh neighbours are on the guest list for *my* party. Thanks for that.’ Glanna Pascoe blew out an exaggerated breath then, checking herself in her hall mirror, ran her hands through her expensively highlighted blonde crop and wiped a smudge of mascara from her eyelid.

Penelope Pascoe tutted down the line. Then she said wistfully, ‘It would be lovely to have you back home for your birthday. Plus, if the predicted Indian summer bestows itself upon us, the pool should still be warm too.’

Glanna didn’t allow the familiar manipulation to get to her. ‘My home is here in Hartmouth, not at Riversway

with you, Mum.’ She glanced at her watch. ‘I’ve got to go; I’m meeting someone at six.’

‘Ooh, a date?’ Penny asked excitedly. ‘I always hoped that when you hit the big four zero, you’d grow up, find love, have a family and live happily ever after.’

‘Bingo! All your dreams coming true, just like that.’ Glanna couldn’t help but smile through her sarcasm. ‘I can see it now. Middle-class utopia.’ She became staccato in her delivery. ‘Two children – a boy and a girl, of course – *Mindless* Chef deliveries four times a week, and a couple pretending that monogamy is what they both want and should abide to.’

Her mother sniffed. ‘You’re a stropmy madam today, aren’t you?’

‘You’ve wound me up, that’s why. Anyway, I don’t think even you can class my very married therapist as a date.’ Glanna pushed her chunky brown tortoiseshell glasses back on to the bridge of her prominent nose. ‘And how many times do I have to tell you that I’m happy as I am?’

‘Well, I’ll bet that shrink of yours will tell you the same as me. Nobody can be happy single, darling. We all need somebody.’

‘Says the woman who’s exhausted every dating app in Cornwall.’

‘Exactly! I’m not denying that I’m sick of rattling around this mansion with a sex drive that’s off the scale for a woman of my age.’

Glanna grimaced. ‘Anyway, I have Banksy. Far less

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trouble than any partner.’ The sleeping black whippet let out a little snore from his kitchen-based basket as if acknowledging his important role.

‘You’ll be a sad, lonely old spinster at this rate,’ Penelope Pascoe muttered, then more loudly: ‘Not everyone will hurt you like Oliver did, you know.’

‘Mother! Enough! I’ve got to go.’

‘I was thinking maybe you could pop over to Riversway for dinner this Saturday, if you fancy it?’ the indomitable woman continued.

‘I can’t, sorry. I’m taking photos at Kara Moon’s wedding.’

‘Oh. That’s the ferryman’s daughter, isn’t it? I do hope they’re paying you enough.’ The woman didn’t stop to take a breath or to give time for Glanna to admit that she was doing it in exchange for two months’ worth of fresh flower displays for the reception desk of the *Hartmouth* Gallery, her much-loved business where she exhibited and sold not only the works of some well-known local artists but also various pieces of her own.

‘And, darling,’ Penelope went on, ‘if you hear from your father, I want to talk to him. He hasn’t been in touch for over a week and that’s so not like him.’

‘OK. I’ll tell him. Goodb—’ Desperate to finish the call, Glanna began fidgeting.

But Penelope Pascoe always had to have the last word. ‘Think about a nice grown-up party please, darling, for all our sakes,’ she trilled, and hung up.

Chapter 2

‘It annoys me that you never start the conversation.’

After she’d got that off her chest, Glanna wrinkled her nose at the soft-bellied bald man opposite her and wondered if it was a prerequisite to being a counsellor that you had to have kind eyes and an expressionless face. She also wondered if Myles Armstrong put a hint of mascara on his lashes – surely no one could flaunt such beauties without make-up.

‘You know that’s not the drill,’ Myles said, suppressing a smile.

Glanna reached down to stroke Banksy who, having managed to stealthily poke his long snout into her handbag and finish all his treats, was now lying innocently next to her feet, eyes closed, his jewel-encrusted collar sparkling.

‘Mum’s pissing me off again. She’s such a bloody snob.’

Saying nothing, Myles flicked a piece of fluff from his jeans and cocked his head to the side in anticipation of his feisty client’s next comment.

He had liked Glanna Pascoe the minute he had met her, just under a year ago. On their first meeting, the tall willowy woman, dressed like she’d walked straight off the

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Green Fields at Glastonbury, had breezed in and, without requesting whether it was OK for the black whippet trotting at her heels to stay with her, sat down and announced drolly, ‘Hi. My name’s Glanna, which my mother tells me means “pure” in Cornish.’ The corners of her mouth had then fleetingly upturned, and she had given him the cool look he had by now become accustomed to from her huge, doe-like brown eyes.

It had taken Glanna a while to trust the 40 something professional. However, in time, the mild-mannered therapist had succeeded in gently coaxing out the information he required to start working with his new client.

Where mental health was concerned, everybody was different, but due to Glanna’s brief stint in rehab and ongoing support, Myles Armstrong could tell that she had already put a lot of work into herself and was well on the way to being sorted. The truth was, she was his favourite kind of client. Troubled but intelligent. She challenged him in a good way. In fact, she reminded him of a thoroughbred racehorse, sleek and beautiful but with the ability to turn and buck him off at any second.

He was pleased with her progress and hoped that the time she had spent in therapy with him had brought her close to the stage where she would be able to form healthy relationships and make the decisions that were right for her. Plus, of course, keeping herself sober along the way.



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It had been an exciting but also toxic journey that had led Glanna to be sitting here mending her mind at the age of 39 and three-quarters.

Cornish born and bred, as soon as she'd left school after her A levels, her life had consisted of travelling to far-flung places with her friend Carmel from Crowsbridge. Like Glanna, Carmel too had been bankrolled by her family, until she met and married the Earl of Newham after getting pregnant by him during his yacht party in Ibiza. She subsequently went off to live in her new husband's huge pile in Dorset, popped out two more kids and was regularly seen in four-page features in *Country Lives* magazine and the like.

Throughout her twenties, when not travelling, Glanna intermittently returned to the family home, Riversway, nestled along the banks of the River Hart and across the estuary from Hartmouth, where her gallery business was located. At Riversway, she would spend her time sketching in the wooden art studio right at the edge of the water that her dear dad had built specially for her. For pocket money she'd do the occasional shift at the cafe in the grounds of Crowsbridge Hall, the local Cornwall Trust property.

It was only after her mother's constant nagging for Glanna to do something constructive with her life that, at the age of 25, she had headed to London where she became a mature student and obtained a first-class degree in Fine Art at University College in Bloomsbury. Aided financially by Penelope Pascoe, of course.

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But even with a distinct proof of education under her belt, Glanna had chosen to remain in the city and continue to live a student lifestyle, but without any of the former self-discipline that had got her the excellent degree. Let loose from the constraints of university, vodka binges, drug-taking, and a constant flow of partners of both sexes became her norm. This, combined with her irascible, unreliable personality had caused her to neglect her artistic talent and instead get hired, then fired from various jobs, including working in an exclusive boutique and as a receptionist of a casting agency.

Back in Cornwall Penelope Pascoe, who was busy focusing on her role as society hostess at Riversway, would blindly fund her troubled offspring's chaotic life, ignoring the danger that Glanna was in and prolonging the situation by bailing her out every time. Thus, through the first three years of her thirties, still supported purely by the ugly currency of money instead of love, Glanna Pascoe's cycle of addiction and indulgence began to spiral out of control.

Now, in Myles's pleasant treatment room, Glanna glanced through the open double doors to view the estuary twinkling below. It was a hot June day and its still waters reflected the deep blue of the cloud-free sky. She could just make out the yellow and red outline of the *Happy Hart* ferry landing across the quay at Crowsbridge. A few boats were making their leisurely way out of the harbour towards the ocean. This serene scenario was, Glanna knew, the relative calm before the

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storm. For once the kids broke up from school near the end of July, and the ‘haves and have yachts’ descended on Hartmouth, it would turn into a bustling hive of activity for young and old alike. Great for her gallery, not so great for getting around the town or finding a seat in one of her favourite eateries.

‘Glanna, are you with us today?’

‘Sorry, Myles. It’s just that now I’m coming up to 40, it’s making me think about my life.’

‘Go on.’

‘Mostly, where have my thirties gone?’ She looked to the outside again and sighed. ‘I’ve wasted so much time.’

‘Time is never wasted if you’ve learned from it. We are all a work in progress, Glanna, whatever age.’

The woman in front of him smiled weakly. ‘I keep thinking of my years at university, with everything that came after that, then meeting and living with Oliver before coming back here on my own . . . In the autumn, it will be two years that I’ve lived in Hartmouth and run my own business. The time’s just flown by in a haze.’ She reached down to stroke the whippet and made a funny little noise. Myles heard her gulp. ‘And Mum’s getting on my nerves too. Going on again about me settling down.’ Glanna’s voice turned into a whine. ‘What if I don’t want to settle down? What if I am happy being single and childless?’

‘Well, are you happy?’

There was a lengthy pause. ‘Yes! Yes, I am.’

‘You took your time there, Ms Pascoe.’

‘Don’t go all therapist on me, please, Myles.’ The sage man remained silent. ‘Anyway, I don’t want to talk about it now.’

‘That’s fine.’ Myles waited.

‘Oliver encouraged me to freeze those eggs,’ Glanna went on in a rush. ‘I wish he hadn’t, it makes me feel guilty.’

““Those eggs”?”

‘OK, OK. *My* eggs.’

Myles nodded slowly. ‘But guilty, for what? For whom?’ This was only the second time she had mentioned this, and his trained ears homed in attentively.

‘It’s like there’s little pieces of me sat in a fridge somewhere waiting for something to happen, which isn’t *going* to happen, and I don’t like that. I’m angry. Angry that I’ve started something that’s not going to be finished. Angry that Oliver managed to persuade me so readily.’

‘And the feelings of guilt?’ Myles pushed.

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ Glanna said impatiently. ‘For what could have been, I guess. And for today’s society making women feel guilty for not wanting to be breeders. As though if we dare to not follow the sacred path to fertility, we should be banished to a life of living with twenty cats and have the word “odd” tattooed on our foreheads.’

‘No one can *make* you feel anything, Glanna. You do that all by yourself.’

‘Yeah, right, but when someone fires off the loaded question, “So, do you have children?” I just want to reply, “No, I bloody don’t. I like my freedom. I like my peace

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and quiet. I like to have money. I DO NOT WANT children.” Instead, I smile sweetly and just say, “No, not yet.” She scratched her head manically. ‘It’s not that I don’t like kids. I just don’t want to have the responsibility of having my own, I guess. Oh, I don’t know.’

She started to fiddle with Banksy’s lead, causing the sleepy whippet to let out an agitated sigh. ‘I really did love Oliver, you know.’ Her voice cracked. ‘I get it, that he wanted a family. And who was I to stand in the way of his dream?’

‘Tough stuff.’ Myles nodded.

‘What – to realise that me on my own wasn’t enough for him, you mean?’ Glanna checked her watch and stood up abruptly, causing Banksy to give a little whimper of dismay for being so rudely awoken. ‘I need to go.’

‘You’ve only been here twenty minutes.’ Myles noticed the rare glisten of tears catch the light from behind his client’s glasses.

‘I’ll pay you for the hour.’

‘I didn’t say it because of that.’ His voice was kind. ‘It’s your session to do what you want with, but I’ve got a free slot next Wednesday at seven if you did want to come back and finish this one off.’

With an agitated bark from Banksy at the unexpected jerk on his glitzy collar, Glanna rushed for the door and without turning around, said, ‘I’ll let you know.’

Chapter 3

‘Get your summer strawberries, ripe and juicy, just the way I like ’em, two quid a punnet, three quid for two,’ Charlie Dillon bawled, his family’s fruit and veg stall already in full market-day swing as Glanna walked down the hill from Monique’s Café with one of her favourite takeaway coffees in hand.

A heavily pregnant Kara put down the bunches of sunflowers that she had just carried out from inside her shop then, on seeing Glanna, she beckoned her over to her bloom-filled market stall.

‘Hey, Glanna. How’s it going?’

‘Good, good, thanks. Just grabbed one of Monique’s Morning Macchiatos. They’re potent enough to perk a sloth up, I reckon.’

‘Tell me about it. God knows what Enrico and Breda put in them. My Billy has one and tells me he could ditch his tug and just push the ferry right across to the other side of the estuary all on his own.’

‘I see how you got in that state now,’ Glanna said directly, causing the pregnant woman to laugh loudly and her full breasts to shake to the happy beat.

‘He’s on a complete sex ban at the moment.’ Kara

pointed to her stomach. ‘Last thing I want to happen is for these two little bundles to be prodded out before the wedding – not that I feel in the mood anyway.’

‘Twins? I didn’t realise.’

‘Yes, we thought it might skip a generation but alas, we have been blessed with double trouble. At least I shall only have to do this once, hopefully.’

‘The wedding or the babies?’ Glanna joked, taking a tiny sip of her scalding coffee.

Kara laughed and moved her hand to her ample hip. ‘Saying that, if Billy has his way, Penrigan United won’t have to advertise for any future players.’

‘Anyway,’ Glanna brusquely changed the subject, ‘what time do you want me at the reception tomorrow? And still the same brief as our first chat?’

‘Around six, if that’s OK. And please, no formal photos. I hate them. So just some casual shots inside and outside of Frank’s Café with the estuary behind us. I’d quite like some black and white ones too. If there’s just a couple of good ones for me to put up in the flat and a handful for my lot and Billy’s family to choose from, I’ll be happy.’

‘Sure, whatever you like.’ Glanna glanced at the sun. ‘Looks like it’s going to be a scorcher tomorrow, so that’s a bonus.’

Kara grimaced. ‘For whom? I’ll be wearing a kaftan, not the planned dress at this rate. Oh, and just shots of me from the boobs up if you can manage that.’

Glanna laughed, then said, ‘You look stunning, Kara,

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or maybe I should say “glowing”. That’s the right adjective to use for a pregnant woman, isn’t it?’

‘Growling, more like. I’m so bloody tetchy and knackered. We’ll be home and tucked up before this fat lady sings if I have my way.’

‘Best make sure your Billy doesn’t have one of these coffees first, then.’ Glanna put her takeaway cup on Kara’s stall and picked up a long-stemmed red rose from one of the metal buckets on the ground. She pressed it to her nose and inhaled its sweet scent. ‘Can I just ask why you didn’t wait to do it until after the birth?’

‘Why did I want to be a big fat teetotal bride, you mean?’ Kara grinned.

‘Well, since you’ve put it like that . . .’ Glanna smiled back at her.

‘My Billy’s got a bit of an old-fashioned streak, wanted the two bubba Dillons to arrive in wedlock, and we’ll just about manage it with a month to go. God knows why we didn’t get hitched in the spring. The next thing is to try and agree on suitable names to go with the surname. I’m just thankful that we already have a Bob the Dog in the family, as even though it’s not spelled the same, I know how my fiancé’s sense of humour works.’

‘Bob Dillon – ha ha! How about Doris and Dennis?’ interjected the blonde and ethereal Star Murray as she walked around the front of her jewellery stall to tidy a display of necklaces and stood next to her best friend Kara. ‘I can see the pair of them running around now. Two little gingers with *big* personalities.’

As she spoke, the black-haired baby with podgy bare legs hanging down from the blue and white striped papoose she was effortlessly wearing let out a blast of bubbly wind. ‘Matthew Murray, have you no manners in front of the ladies?’

‘Bless him.’ Kara reached out and gently stroked his downy hair with one finger. ‘Doris and Dennis, what’s your mummy on about, eh?’ She turned back to Star. ‘And how do you know it’s not going to be two girls or two boys, Madam Murray? Or that they might not be gingers like me but have their daddy’s dark hair and colouring?’

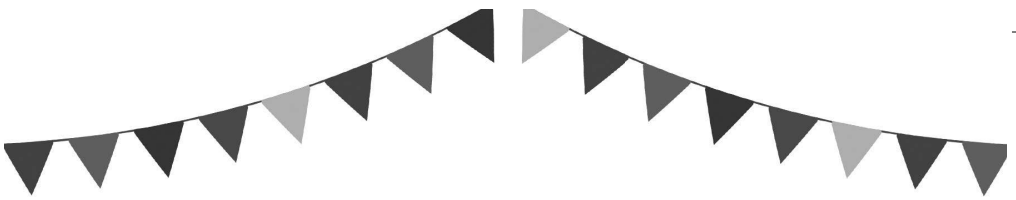
‘Sorry to interrupt you lovely ladies,’ Glanna broke in, ‘but this macchiato is calling and I’d better open up. I’m already late on parade this morning.’ She went to put the red rose she was still holding back in the bucket.

‘Keep it,’ Kara told her. ‘See you tomorrow. I’m having a few days off after the wedding, but I’ll be sure to sort your first flower display for the week after.’

‘That’s kind.’ Glanna looked at her rose. ‘I haven’t been given one of these in a while, and there’s no rush for my flowers – although saying that, I do have my new show called *Seascapes in All Seasons* running from the end of next week so it would be nice to put on a bit of a display.’ She had pinned up posters all around the small town of Hartmouth, and in the surrounding area, as well as advertising the show on her website. Bidding both young women goodbye, she headed off to open her shop.

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Kara watched her go. ‘Oh, to be so tall and willowy.’
‘She always looks a bit sad to me,’ Star said thoughtfully, then screwed up her face. ‘Poo! I’d better get inside and change this one’s nappy!’



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