

THE SEEKERS' GARDEN by Isa Pearl

Ritchie

EXCERPT

All the traffic lights were plotting against her. As Iris gave up her last semblance of control and swore loudly into the steering wheel, the words of the door knocker swept through her mind like a breath of fresh air, "...the meaning of life?" She was jolted back to reality by the sound of a car horn. The green light was glaring at her.

After dropping Alex off at school in Wellington peak traffic, Iris was embarrassingly late. Heads turned as she scurried in through the main entrance. She quickly nipped into the bathroom to try to defy the nature of her hair and straighten her skirt. Her heart beat loudly in her chest as she made her way into the boardroom to the reproachful stares of all those who had put in the effort to make it on time.

As she sat down, her smarmy boss Neville smiled toothily.

"Is there something you'd like to say, Iris?"

She was taken aback, having not been asked that very question since she was ten. She opened her mouth to apologise, and instead, some very different words burst out and hung in the air.

"I quit."

Iris slumped forward in her chair. The room was deafeningly silent. She tried to form some kind of miraculous sentence in her mind, the kind that she was well known for in her PR work, that would put everything back in balance, but she surprised herself again. A different internal voice emerged, a voice that said it was time for a change, echoed by feelings of exhaustion. She was tired of rushing around between appointments and meetings, mealtimes and soccer practice. She found herself resolved to her initial words. She plastered on a slightly shocked smile, picked up her handbag and left the room, leaving behind a trail of stunned faces. She dashed outside into the cool breeze and into freedom.