

A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO LIVING A LIFE OF CHOICE

Now What?!

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bestselling author featuring:

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Natasha Manchester * Chloe DeVito de Concha * Nichole Cornacchia

I'm 30, Now What?!: A Woman's Guide To Living A Life Of Choice

2017 Golden Brick Road Publishing House Inc.

Trade Paperback Edition

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Published in Canada, for Global Distribution by Golden Brick Road Publishing House Inc.
www.goldenbrickroad.pub

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ISBN: trade paperback 978-1-988736-15-0

ebook 978-1-988736-19-8

kindle 978-1-988736-16-7

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SECTION 1

**My Purpose Isn't "Just" A Man,
Nor "Only" Two Feet Tall**

Featuring

Boryana Hristova, Sherri Marie Gaudet,
Erin Filtness, Chloe DeVito de Concha

OPENING COMMENTARY BY KY-LEE HANSON

Section 1 Opening Commentary

BY KY-LEE HANSON

CAN YOU HAVE A PURPOSEFUL LIFE with, or without a family? Many people, both men and women, view having children as the purpose of life, which is okay, but for some of my authors and myself, we disagree. Society has also led us to believe happy kids and functioning adults only come from marriage (be that from a happy marriage or not, as long as it is just not a broken home). For some bizarre reason, women are led to believe that they are incomplete without children, and a man. The purpose of life, to me, is to share life with others.

Can we achieve this “purpose” outside of sharing life with our children and spouse? I know the answer to be, yes.

I see “life” as an exploration. Why am I human? And what can I learn while here? What can I teach and share with others? What can I learn from them? What can I learn from this earth and all the experiences it can and is willing to present to me? I think that is bigger than simply having children; having children is one part - one option - of this exploration. There are many ways to venture, many experiences to be had. There is just not only one. So, this brings us to the title of this section *My Purpose Isn't “Just” A Man, Nor “Only” Two Feet Tall*. FIRST, let me address, this section is not anti-kids nor full of Hansel-and-Gretel-like witches and furthermore, it is not full of man-hating, self-righteous feminists. *Side note - that is not what a feminist actually is, but I am using the description for stereotypical emphasis. I am obviously a feminist, just not what we have been stereotyped as.* There are both mommies and not mommies, independents and married alike in this section, and ALL are addressing the topic of how important YOU are, and that YOU DO HAVE CHOICE around these social conventions.

What we want to help women realize is, you only get one shot at YOUR life, *but* you can live many ways within this life. Here is the key though, those many ways do not have to be one after the other, you can be *many* all at once! If you do have kids, your child has you involved in their life and they live their own life, you need to live yours also and not just theirs. What happens to you when they leave the nest? Did you develop your life alongside theirs or INSIDE theirs. What have you done lately for YOURself and YOUR future? For some of us, we have an empty nest, it has always been empty, but we like it that way. Some of us want it filled one day, and some of us have it filled already with kids, or in other ways. There is nothing wrong with a childless woman, it does not stem from fear or having lack of purpose, nor does it mean they have more purpose. Each story is different.

How can we achieve “purpose” in other OR multiple ways? As women, most think children first. Does family *need* to be blood? Or can you *choose* family? Can purpose be found through mentoring, adoption, opening your doors to neighbors, starting a business and helping people achieve their goals, being a role model, nurturing animals and the earth, sharing and educating - how about listening? How about sharing happiness and gratitude? I feel there is potential for purpose all around us, not only coming from our

uterus... Not ONLY what we physically create, but also from what we can influence.

Moms seem to live in a type of organized chaos. They are strong! Stronger than a childless woman - no - just a different kind of strong. There is no way I am getting up at 4am to deal with a crying baby. It just isn't happening. My chaos is keeping myself sane, happy, and influential to a world of people while growing many businesses. That is enough for me. I am trapped inside 4 walls all day long nurturing a career, clients, an image, and a big purpose in life. Just as a mom is, but her attention is focused on one (or multiple) little fireball(s) of energy. Do some women do both, yes. Could I do both? Sure. Would I enjoy it? No. That is okay to say. This book is about sharing perspectives honestly and helping each other see things in multiple ways. With this, we have a greater understanding of the human condition and in turn, a greater understanding of ourselves. Could I run my company as well as I do if I had kids? Maybe... if it were up and running, and planned out strategically already. But it feels like it is a baby to me... it cannot take care of itself. It requires undivided attention, long hours, and sometimes I have to do things I do not want to do. However, if I were to be raising children while building this company, since I do work almost 100% with women, my position would never be jeopardized due to having kids as it could be in a man's world, instead it would be understood. This is why my passion in life is to create female leaders in business. They have what it takes and what our society needs from leaders. I feel a business [just as kids] is a huge priority. Both require constant attention and some self sacrifice. Some of my authors will help you find balance in the organized chaos of having both kids and a career, and some of us will nurture just one side. And for those that do not believe in the theory of balance, you CAN still thrive in many areas even if it's going back and forth between things - dropping one task or responsibility to pick another up unequally, and sometimes flying by the seat of your pants in a very imbalanced way. Yes, you can still get done what needs to get done without losing yourself.

We cannot say all women our age choose not to have children, choose not to buy a home, choose to work equal to men, etc. We cannot say we were the first, or the last to be this way. We can say though, there is not only one way to live. There is no cookie cutter model that works for everyone. We can say, however, that we are the generation to prove that.

CHAPTER 1

I'm 30, Now I Have To Be A Housewife

BY BORYANA HRISTOVA

“History repeats itself. Therefore, the past is the best teacher.”

~ Unknown

BORYANA HRISTOVA



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Boryana Hristova accomplished her master's degree in journalism and mass communication from the University of National and World Economy in 2007. She works for bTV (a Bulgarian national television channel), attends classes at the Bulgarian business leaders forum, and also works with the Sofia Music Enterprises' team, organizing concerts for world renowned artists and musicians.

Her love for travel and adventure led her to become a flight attendant for Bulgarian Airlines, which is how she met her husband. Boryana's life as an expatriate wife challenged her to settle and live away from home in Slovenia, Austria, and later in Turkey. Despite being a mother of two, she spends her time writing articles for different online websites, travels frequently, and always seeks to learn more. Through her travel, Boryana built a global network for herself. This ignited an idea within Boryana – to establish a multi-city digital and real-life business platform for women. Several months later, the platform – iwconnected.com launched in the U.K, Australia, Austria, Turkey, and USA. This platform consists of a community for every city, a business catalogue filtered by location and occupation, separate online magazines – IWL, IWS, IWI, IWV Magazine and access to IWConnected events.

Boryana's passion to support and help those around her propelled her to cofound the company A.B.C Communications Group with her university mate Anna Yaramboykova. Together, they work as life balance and business coaches for corporations, as well as high performing executives.

Boryana currently lives in Istanbul, Turkey. She travels the world expanding her business, meeting incredible people, and building her own future, because “motion creates emotion.”

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I used to spend my summer holidays in the courtyard with my grandparents. There in the small house, surrounded by the fields and other small houses, my grandmother used to give me some domestic work. She believed she should be the female role model to me, and she required me to follow her strict instructions on how to become a good housewife. Every time I accomplished my tasks, she would look

towards the sky and say, “Hey, Prince! Did you see how nicely my granddaughter washed the dishes? She is a hardworking girl. One day, you can make her your wife!” She was telling me that there was the perfect man for me somewhere in a chopper above our village who was searching for his princess. My granny’s imagination was spectacular, I must admit. But this story is not about her, nor is it about me. It is about free choice.

The pressure women face nowadays is extreme. If we decide to have a career, or a family, or both, there is always somebody to point their finger at us and ask why. Having a family especially after thirty, is a common obsession not so much among the women themselves, but society. Not having a family by the time you are thirty is a choice. And everybody has this choice. At the age of thirty and above, we need to realize that everything we do, every single day, is our personal decision, and it is up to us to decide how to structure our lives from now on. Women in this situation should stop playing “the victim of their circumstances,” and organize their minds to work for themselves. Not for others. If we try to satisfy our parents, or friends, and always try to blend in society, we risk losing our identity and freedom. Not settling for less is a choice; not being a 24/7 housewife is also a choice. A woman over the age of thirty, who is not married should feel good enough in her own company, in her own skin. Being a successful professional, or a caring mother is a matter of our free will, which modern women need to understand. This is a conviction that comes from within. It is only when we are comfortable with ourselves inside and out, that we will be able to command the respect and appreciation we deserve from society.

Let’s start from the beginning. Let’s take a look at the Bible. There, our life is strictly summarized and explained. The values we should follow are very clear. We are supposed to love, appreciate, help, understand, and cherish each other. We should live as brothers and sisters, and must take care of each other, existing as one. We are supposed to establish and accumulate true friendships, and create decent sized families. I believe that at a certain point, maybe people from the past used to do exactly that. Maybe they were more successful in their family bonds than we are today. The fact that divorce rates today have increased exponentially than the past speaks for itself.

The poorer and smaller regions are famous for their stability in family bonds, mostly because there is not so many other things to do there. The word “family” is sacred and no matter what, people must stay together. The idea of divorce does not even exist. I cannot say this is the right way, but nor is it wrong. To be able to feel the stability of your parents staying together is absolutely priceless. Nevertheless, husbands and wives who tend to keep their problems away from their children create an illusion of never-ending perfection. Being a child in such an environment could help in the early years, but definitely as grownups we know there is no such thing as perfect individuals, and we feel as though we were lied to. Conversely, living in an unstable environment without care, love, and support, having parents who constantly fight can bring the worst out of a child. The patriarchal model’s values are very clear and must be followed strictly. The father is dominant - he is the breadwinner, and takes care of the financial aspect, while the mother is the homemaker, the caring one - in many cases, she is not well educated and has no right to work outside. Her job is to give birth, and devote her attention to the new generation. To have a successful marriage, in many cases, means to get married young. When you meet your partner when you are both eighteen to twenty years old, you grow up

together and get used to each other, so no matter what happens, it cannot tear you apart. You unify your expectations from the beginning, and you grow and develop together, as one unit. Additionally, you are both guided by the older families such as your parents - you always have a solicitor to get advice from, and you are never left unattended, more or less like the suitcases at the airport.

As women, we try our best to multitask and achieve the impossible; being at work on time, being at home all the time, so nothing is missed and everything is perfect. In our delusional dream for the glamorous knight on the white horse, we have lost, and still lose so many other opportunities. Especially when we deny ourselves our own rights, which we started to take for granted. We have many examples where women are ready to deny their own skillsets and identity in the name of just being married, and being called "wives." Even if we call ourselves new generation divas, there is nothing much left in terms of freedom and capability outside.

Let us take into consideration what women's rights stand for according to Wikipedia.org:

"Women's Rights - the rights and entitlements claimed for women and girls of many societies worldwide, and formed the basis to the women's rights movement in the XIX century and feminist movement during the XX century. Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right : to bodily integrity and autonomy; to be free from sexual violence; to vote; to hold public office; to enter into legal contracts; to have equal rights in family law; to work; to have reproductive rights; to own property; to education."

Female emancipation is a turning point of the world history. Women achieved the right to live equally as men. They achieved the right to have a life. They were still running their families and doing everything needed in the best interests of their children. They were respected by their partners, which led to dividing the job at home. I must admit that by working outside the home, women are still highly respected and get a better attitude from everybody, not only their closest ones. Nobody said it is easy to take care of your family, raise your children, and go to work - all in one lifetime. Especially when we are aware that we cannot achieve it all at once. No matter how far we have come today, the truth is that it is still a man's world. A report of the EU for 2015 says that working women inside the EU get paid 16% less than men in the same field. Women have still been discriminated against for their desire to have children. Questions such as, "Do you plan to get married and get pregnant in near future?" asked by the employer are very common nowadays. Women, of course, are aware of that and due to a lack of other opportunities, they feel pressured to climb the professional ladder equally with men, bearing in mind, that this is never going to happen. The clock is ticking, we take the burden of all the social pressure - an unmarried woman after thirty is like a dead end. She pushes her hardest at work, and struggles to meet everybody's expectations regarding her personal life as well. The question of getting pregnant anytime soon is even more frustrating when you hear it from your own mother saying, "At your age, I already had two children, and you were both going to high

school!” Being unmarried above the age of thirty is like a curse. No matter where we live, despite our other achievements - this is still an issue. You acknowledge it once you see your former girlfriends swinging their engagement rings under your nose and organizing “wives societies” when you meet for coffee or dinner. A random afternoon tea turns to a baby zoo with screaming children. You find yourself in something akin to Alfred Hitchcock’s movie *The Birds*, but instead of birds, there are kids. You start doubting yourself, and ask yourself if you were not woman enough to not have all these boxes checked off, and the worst is when you feel bad, because you think this is the last piece of the puzzle that you need in your life to feel happy and complete. You are aware that the newest generation of hot twenty year olds are coming out every new year. This brings a bad taste in your mouth and you probably start wondering what is wrong with you. The answer is nothing – it is an illness of the society.

Living in a big city with the many opportunities we get does not equal finding a proper husband. Being a modern woman in the capital of any country brings too many fish in your pond. However, none of us women want to marry just any fish. We need to get the big fish. Because the bigger our fish is, the better our future will become. We have maybe learned our lesson to not settle for less, so we settle only for the best. It is not only about wealth and fortune. For example, in the jungle, the female chimp waits to see the strongest male chimp, because she knows if she mates with him, her offspring will be healthy, protected, and survive all attempted attacks from the chimps from the other tribes. We are not so different. Money means security. A smart man means the ability to make money, which means security. It is very simple. But here is the funniest part, what happens with us women when we get the “Big Fish,” and we become a stay at home mom, a.k.a a housewife?

The generator of world’s economics is the hard working man. The one who is always on the run with a clear vision, and devoted to his mission to conquer. Man’s nature is to be hunter. They need to chase in order to feel happy and completed. This could be everything in the spectrum - power, success, respect, a better lifestyle with better assets. Not every man of course has this kind of a profile. This is a profile of a leader, and all too often, women are attracted to this type of individual. They feel secure, just like the female chimp. The problem is that the female chimp has nothing else to do, but reproduce, eat, sleep, and enjoy her life in the jungle.

The modern, well-educated woman can achieve many other missions and worthy activities. However, we observe something very strange which is happening nowadays. Women who have found their “Prince Charming” tend to leave their career and personal life opportunities for the sake of being with such a man. They prefer clinging on to the successful man who gives them the right to not work, to stay at home and take care of the kids. They lose their own character and identify themselves with their husbands. You will mainly find them introducing themselves somewhere as, “Hello, nice to meet you, I am Tasha, Mr. Johnson’s wife.” Then silence. How pathetic is this? The sad truth is that the modern woman is ready to voluntarily go back to the kitchen! She has nothing against being used as an asset, and being outside whenever necessary, and staying inside whenever her presence is not required, just like an object. She is left in her big house with housekeepers and drivers, doing nothing, and caring for nothing; realizing at a certain point that nobody really cares about her either. And after all that, those women are still

considered to be “lucky.”

Aiming at this kind of lifestyle has been common for women above 30. Imagine yourself sitting with your “successfully married” friends, who care for nothing but the latest fashion trends. You spend hours discussing which airlines have the best business class, newest Michelin star restaurants in town, whose babysitter is lazier, gossiping about one another, and whose husband has gifted them the bigger diamond. Endless, empty conversations where you, being 30 + , unmarried, and fully dependent on yourself may feel awkward. Those kinds of surroundings may trigger only one question again - *what is wrong with me?* And again, the truth is - you do not have to blend in with such places or people.

At the age of thirty, we need to admit one thing - we create our own reality, and everything in it must be there because we want it. Individuals who are no longer interesting or can only give you a fake feeling of reality, are not people you should want to spend your time with. People who do not appreciate you because you decided to work hard, and chose not to attach yourself to the so called “Prince Charming” should not be among your closest friends. It is our responsibility to create, educate, integrate, and upgrade ourselves the best version of ourselves. To be inspiring role models and motivators for our own children, to be worthy human beings - this is our moral obligation, as much as our initial right.

Throughout the Bible, it discusses the gift of free will - something which we all have. We need to remember that it is our free will, and our own perceptions that matter the most. There is nothing shameful by being a wife and dedicating your life to your children, watch them grow, educating them, and being there for them anytime they need your help. However, there is nothing wrong with being single, chasing your dreams and finding your passions, and making plans for the future either. We have come a long way, and we have the right to choose who we want to be.

No matter if you are married with children, or are single, a crazy multitasker, a mumpreneur, or an “I don’t want children” type; they are all totally okay, as long as the choices you make resonate with your inner self, and make you feel happy. Our generation is the luckiest, because we can afford to be both at the same time. We decide which values to follow, and how to combine them so that we can achieve success as well as inner peace and satisfaction. Thirty is the new twenty, we are grown ups with a clear vision of the paths we want to take. To walk, talk, and act with confidence is now allowed. And we are here to show it out loud.

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