

Julie: Part Two

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Beth lay in bed in her mother's spare room, a dull pink flowery duvet weighing heavily on her body.

'Morning darling, you're going to have to get up sooner or later,' Sandra chirped loudly, handing her a hot cup of tea.

'Well it won't be today,' Beth snapped.

'I'll take your daughter to school then shall I?'

Beth blushed, 'Sorry mum, yes please.'

'You can't mope around for the rest of your life, especially over a man. When your father and I split up I threw his suitcase out of the window and locked the door. As far as I was concerned, that was it.'

'Yes mum, but I'm not like you. I still love him, even though he made the mistake of going off with another woman.'

'I understand that you love him, but he also broke his wedding vows and then lied about it for the last ten years.'

'I know, but I've also got Poppy to think about.'

'But she can still see her dad, their relationship will be what it will be,' Beth's mother continued. 'Trust me, you have to put yourself first. Anyway, I need to go or Poppy will be late for school. I'll go straight on to work and I'll be back around four. Will you be okay to pick her up from school?'

'Yeah of course, thanks mum,' Beth said as she pulled the duvet over her shoulders, sinking deeper into her mattress.

Rolling her eyes, Sandra closed the bedroom door.

Later that morning, Beth lay on the sofa watching daytime television, the boredom setting in. Her friend had kindly sent her a copy of 'What to do When Your Husband Cheats on You.' Picking it up she flicked through the pages, before tossing it onto the coffee table. *I don't think that's my kind of thing*, she thought to herself. Beth sulked around the house, the silence lingering in the air. In the kitchen Beth clicked the kettle on, picking her favourite mug she noticed a handwritten envelope addressed to her lying on the kitchen table. She reached over, opened the envelope and began to read the letter inside.

Later that day, Sandra returned home to see Beth dancing around the kitchen, 'You okay?'

'Yeah, why?'

'Because for the last two weeks you have been moping around because of your husband's lies and deceit, and now you are singing in the kitchen.'

'Yeah well, I've decided to take your advice and pull myself back together and get on with life.'

'Ok... well, I'm pleased to hear that. What do you have in mind?'

'I'm going to give him another chance.'

Sandra's jaw fell open, 'What? How can you ever trust him again?'

'We all make mistakes mum. He loves me and I think we can work things out between us.'

'If he loved you he wouldn't have slept with someone else and then hidden the fact from you for years. He only told you because of what those psycho sisters did to him.'

'Mum it was years ago. Please don't keep going on at me. I appreciate you allowing me and Poppy to stay with you, but Tom misses me, and I miss him too.'

Sandra threw her hands up in the air, turning on her heels she called out, 'I'm going to have a long soak in the bath.'

Beth turned the key in the lock and pushed open the door with her foot. She looked up to see Tom standing in the hallway. 'Beth, I am so pleased you've come home. Here, you come in and I'll get your bags.' Tom leaned over and kissed her cheek.

Beth held his face between her hands and pushed her lips firmly onto his. 'I've missed you.'

'I've made us some brunch. Go through to the kitchen, I'll put your bags upstairs and then I'll dish up the grub.'

'Thank you, you didn't have to do all that.'

Tom looked up, locking eyes with hers he whispered, 'I did.'

The next morning, as Beth was scrambling eggs, she didn't hear Tom creep up behind her. 'Morning beautiful,' he whispered into her ear. Planting a kiss on her cheek he sat at the breakfast bar.

'Did you sleep well?' Beth said cheerily.

'Like a baby' Tom smiled.

She turned around and placed his breakfast in front of him, 'Good, get this down you.'

'You not eating?' he asked.

'I'll grab something at work, you know what I'm like, I'm never hungry first thing.'

'Okay, well thank you. I'll enjoy this.'

Beth blew Tom a kiss before disappearing upstairs to prepare for work.

Later that evening, Beth walked through the front door throwing her keys in the glass bowl on the hallway table. Tom welcomed the familiar sound of the clink that the keys made as they hit the glass. Getting up, he greeted his wife, 'Hi honey, I've missed you. I've put the dinner on, it should be ready soon.'

‘Thank you that’s great, I really didn’t fancy cooking tonight’ Beth said, gently touching his arm.

‘Well it’s the least I can do after that wonderful breakfast this morning.’

Beth smiled, ‘I’m glad you enjoyed it. Oh by the way, I can’t remember if I mentioned it, but I’ll be going out later tonight with some friends, just for a couple of drinks.’

‘Oh I didn’t know. I’d hoped we could relax in front of the TV tonight.’

‘Perhaps we could do that tomorrow? Sorry, I arranged it a couple of weeks ago and I don’t want to let the girls down.’

Tom shrugged whilst trying to hide his disappointment, ‘Sure.’

‘We can eat together and then you can enjoy some father and daughter time while I’m gone,’ said Beth, while she bent down to greet Poppy with a smile.

A couple of weeks later Tom paced up and down the hallway as he kept glancing at his watch, ‘Beth are you ready yet?’ he yelled up the stairs.

Sandra pursed her lips together, ‘You should know by now that telling Beth to hurry up only makes her slow down.’

‘You’re right, we’ll be late though if she’s too much longer. You’ll be okay looking after Poppy won’t you?’

‘Yes I think I can manage my five-year-old granddaughter. I’ll make the bed up in the spare room so don’t rush back.’

‘Thank you.’ Tom blushed, and lifted his hands as though to apologise.

Before any more could be said, Tom watched Beth walk down the stairs feeling his heart beating in his chest. He drew a deep breath. ‘You look amazing, I’m so proud to have you on my arm tonight.’

‘Thank you, I love the dress, you must have spent a lot of money on it. I hope it wasn’t too much.’

‘You deserve it. Right, we better be off, the taxi is here and I’ve talked through Poppy’s bedtime schedule with your mum.’

‘I think she knows what to do.’

Tom blushed again.

Sandra popped her head back around the door, ‘Honey you look amazing, let me take a photo to show Auntie Jane.’

Beth stood placing her hands on her hips, then in front of her, and then back onto her hips.

‘Hurry up mum, you know I don’t like my photo being taken.’

‘Sorry love, all done.’

Beth smiled as she turned to face Tom, ‘Come on then, let’s go and have some fun.’

‘Hi Tom, hi Beth, how are you? You look amazing,’ Jennifer said as she took in the detail of Beth’s dress.

Beth lent over to kiss Jennifer on the cheek, ‘Hi, thank you, you look great too.’

‘Right, sorry to steal him away but I need to go over some business with Tom before he makes his presentation, do you mind? Please order anything you like from the bar, it’s on us.’

‘No problem, take your time. I know how important tonight is.’ Kissing Tom on the forehead she whispered, ‘Good luck.’

‘Thank you, I’ll come and find you once I’ve prepared everything.’

Beth nodded and headed towards the bar, weaving her way through a mass of black ties and cocktail dresses.

It was eight o’clock, empty dinner plates had been cleared away and Tom was at the front of the room standing on a huge platform. Beth watched his hands twitching, she knew it was a

sign of Tom being nervous and wondered if anyone else had spotted it. She smiled, it was as though it was a secret code between them. As Tom stood to speak it seemed that the room came to a respectful standstill, he certainly had everyone's attention.

Clearing his throat, Tom asked for the presentation to begin. The captivated audience watched slide after slide of the latest clothing designs followed by a mass of facts and figures. Beth noticed that Tom had found his stride and appeared to be enjoying himself.

Five minutes into the presentation people began to shift in their seats, gasps could be heard around the room. Beth looked at Tom as he continued to reel off a bunch of statistics and appeared to not have noticed the rumble in the audience. A few of Tom's colleagues flapped their hands to try and get his attention and, as they were doing so, Jennifer stood to her feet, 'Sorry ladies and gentleman, we appear to be having a problem with the presentation.'

Tom lifted his head to see his audience looking wide-eyed and shocked, with an awkwardness growing through the room. Turning his eyes and focusing on the screen, his jaw dropped. Tom went to speak but no words came out.

'Turn it off!' Jennifer shouted.

Tom could feel the sweat clinging to him. Wiping his forehead, he looked over to Beth but she had left her seat. Tom's eyes darted around the room, 'Where's she gone?' Tom said quietly to himself. Before anymore could be said or done, the doors to the conference room flew open with a bang. Heads turned sharply and Tom's eyeline followed. *Please let this be a dream*, Tom thought.

The four of them walked in unison. Beth's luxurious tangle of blonde curls bouncing as she walked between three fiery redheads. Beth caught Tom's expression, seeing the sadness in his eyes she wondered for a split second whether she had done the right thing. Clenching her hands together she continued to walk forward.

Looking horrified, Tom focused on Beth, 'What are you doing with the...Julies?'

Julie One smoothed her hands down her emerald dress, 'That's no way to greet your guests Tom.'

'What are you doing, Beth? You do know these women are mad?'

Beth cleared the lump from her throat, 'Tom, these women have supported me through the last few weeks, helping me to find the strength to pull myself back together.'

'How could you do this to me Beth?'

'How could I do this to *you*? How could you sleep with another woman and not tell me?'

The gasps around the room grew louder.

'You said you had forgiven me? You came back to me.'

'Tom the only reason you told me about your "fling" with Julie was because her sisters forced you to. I'd have gone on thinking that everything was great between us. I couldn't have been more wrong.'

'Beth, you're overreacting.'

Jennifer winced as Tom's words left his mouth, this PR event was not going to plan. Hoping that Tom, Beth and the Julies would hear her, Jennifer spoke into the microphone. 'Perhaps we could take this conversation to the other room. Somewhere more private please.'

A guy in black trousers and a burgundy-coloured waistcoat stood to the side of the stage and held out his hand to signal that they should follow him. Jennifer read his name badge, 'Thank you Jim, I'm not sure how long we will need this room for?'

'Take your time, I'll ask the guests to leave shall I?'

'Yes please, the sooner everyone is gone the better.'

Once inside the conference room Jennifer turned to everyone and shouted, 'What's going on?'

'Stay out of this please,' Julie Two said.

'Tom do you want me to leave?'

‘No, I want you to be here.’

Julie tutted, ‘Fine, but stay quiet, this has got nothing to do with you.’

‘Julie I thought we were friends, I even introduced you to the company, you showed your designs to Tom, we went out for drinks?’ Jennifer cried.

‘We were never friends, I used you to get to him.’

‘But why?’

‘I said be quiet!’ snapped Julie Two.

Jennifer folded her arms, her fists tightly clenched.

Tom wiped his forehead. ‘Beth, please tell me what’s going on?’

‘Are you worried Tom?’ Julie One smirked.

‘Of course I’m worried, you three are all lunatics. Look, I did what you asked me to, I told my wife what a stupid mistake I had made all those years ago and I’ve paid the price. Beth and I were just getting back on track...and now this?!’

‘Tom you are so deluded, we were never getting back on track,’ said Beth. ‘Did you really think that I could forgive you for being unfaithful and then hiding it from me for ten years?’

Tom’s face fell. ‘It’s not my fault Julie and the baby died?’

Julie Three went to lurch forward but Beth caught her arm and pulled her back, ‘You’re missing the point. You played your part and if you hadn’t lied about your name all those years back, perhaps Julie would’ve been able to find you and tell you that she was expecting your baby. Then who would you have chosen Tom, me or her?’ The sound of her own words made Beth’s bottom lip tremble and tears formed loosely in her eyes.

‘Beth, of course I would have chosen you.’

‘Stop it! Of course you are going to say that. The thought of it all makes me feel sick.’

‘Right, fine, I made a huge mistake. I was stupid, I have lied, I have said sorry, so what now Beth?’

Beth's eyes shone through her tears, 'Tom, things will be changing. I want you to move out tomorrow morning. It shouldn't be Poppy and I that have to move out, we are not the ones who have been dishonest.'

'Beth, please don't do this. I love you. Yes I made a stupid mistake, but think about all the happy memories.'

Julie One stepped forward, 'Tom you're not listening, she no longer wants to be with you.'

Tom turned to the Julies, 'I suppose you were all responsible for the presentation slides revealing embarrassing photos of me?'

'We are indeed. Beth wanted revenge, a way to humiliate you like you have humiliated her.'

'Well you've achieved that Beth, I'm humiliated. I've got to go back into work and look my colleagues in the eye, people will be talking about this for years to come. I'm going to have to look for another job.'

Jennifer stepped forward, her hands firmly placed on her hips. 'We can write an email to sort this mess. We will make it clear that if anyone gossips then they will be reprimanded.'

Tom pulled out a chair that sat underneath the table. Sitting down, he ruffled his hair with his hands, 'I can't believe our marriage has come to this.'

'Perhaps you should have thought about that before getting into bed with our sister' Julie Three stated, her words lingering in the air.

Tom banged his fists onto the table, 'Shut up, shut up! Get out! I want to talk to Beth alone. Go on the lot of you, get out!'

Jennifer reluctantly opened the door and walked out, followed by the three Julies.

Tom could feel tears stinging his eyes. 'Beth I love you, not having you around those weeks had been hell. I didn't know what to do with myself. I was so happy when you walked back through the door.'

Beth drew out a chair and sat down opposite Tom. 'I love you too, or at least I did. I don't know how I feel. All I know is that the last ten years of our marriage has been based around

a lie. I feel as though I don't know you and if you could've hidden that from me then what else have you been hiding? How can I ever trust you again?'

Tom clasped Beth's hands. 'I promise I am not hiding anything else. I'll do anything to win you back.'

Beth wriggled her hands free from Tom's. 'I'm sorry but I want a divorce, I can't forgive or forget the lies, I deserve better. Of course, you can see Poppy and there is no need for her to know why we have split up while she is so young.'

'Why bring the Julies' here and publicly humiliate me, we could've talked about this at home?'

'I wanted you to feel how I do...humiliated.'

'Well you've certainly achieved that.'

Beth's head fell forward, her chin touching her chest. 'I'm sorry Tom, I don't think there is anything more to say.' Pushing her chair back, Beth walked out of the room leaving Tom on his own.

Beth woke the next morning to Sandra standing over her with a steaming cup of tea.

'Morning love, I hear that last night was eventful?'

Beth sat up while slowly remembering the night's events. 'My head is pounding mum.'

'I'm not surprised, stress will do that to you.'

'Did Tom tell you?'

'Yes, he was up early, I caught him hauling a suitcase into the car.'

Beth's eyes filled with tears.

'Oh honey, what's going on? I thought you wanted to give him another chance?'

'No mum, I wanted to hurt him as much as he had hurt me. It was all an act.'

'I don't understand?'

‘The day you came home and I was dancing around the kitchen, well I’d had a letter from the Julies, they’d asked me if I wanted to get revenge on Tom. I did mum, for the first time I felt back in control, I could punish him.’

‘I see, well that’s understandable, but how do you feel now you’ve got your revenge?’

‘Honestly mum? I don’t feel any better.’ Beth blurted out, upset, she buried her head into her mum’s chest.

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