## **Story 1**

no I don't think I will I said she gave me a strange look what do you mean you

said I'd be here when you got back and you'd tell me everything I explained I won't be here so you can't tell me where

will you be she asked somewhere else I replied she pouted what do you mean

somewhere else none of your business I said you're acting childish she said

grow up it's the 21st century things have changed you've changed I agreed but

I haven't except for a bit of gray in my beard you seem to have changed a lot and not in a good way she looked at herself

still as stunning as ever what do you mean you're meeting someone for dinner and you wouldn't tell me his name that

sounds like change to me it's nothing she said I love you more than ever this

doesn't affect my feelings for you I can't say the same I told her an hour

ago I love you more than ever but now my feelings are more of disgust than love she looked offended that's disappointing

that's life I said I get disappointed all the time yesterday on the golf course I expected to shoot 85 but ended

up with 87 why are you talking about golf it's a frustrating game I said you mentioned

frustration so I shared my own anecdote my attitude irritated her tell Barnes

I'm leaving in 20 minutes she said take me seriously and try to understand I I do take you seriously I said that's the

problem I realized you're not a serious person her Pride was wounded I have no idea why you said that she replied

Barnes I'm leaving you'll see nothing will change between us I'll make you insanely happy you don't realize it yet

but you will you're wrong I said what am I wrong about she asked that nothing

will change everything is changed my attitude towards you has changed what

about Sylvia and Beck what will they think about their parents getting divorced what the hell Barnes we're not

getting a divorce what we do is none of their business I agree not the not

getting divorced part but the none of their business part unfortunately it's about what's happening between you and

some unnamed guy you're complicating things she said Barnes letun sit down

and work these issues out no we won't I said I'm leaving this is more important

than anything you have planned she insisted I'm not sticking around I decided a minute ago I said she looked

ready to argue Collins you're too late the moment you thought I would tolerate your behavior you lost respect for me as

a man and a husband it was too late that's not true she shouted I never lost

respect for you I don't believe you I said everything you've done since you got home proves it's true I'm leaving

you can go on your date I'm done I grabbed my jacket wallet and keys walked to the door and left she ran after me

but didn't make it in time I drove away as she opened the door and stepped outside I decided to visit Beck

she lived about 4 miles away so I messaged her wed Netflix and chill she replied immediately want company I asked

she sent me a heart I'll make popcorn when I arrived she was already on the couch her dog Davey greeted me

enthusiastically nearly knocking me over with affection hey buddy I managed to stay on my feet and gave him a good

scratch as he wriggled around drooling on my pants and snoring with pleasure it

takes about 10 minutes to get to Beck's house by the time I got to the couch Beck had already poured me a glass of

wine and put popcorn on my plate I sipped my wine and looked at her not a word she said I like sweet wine you

don't you're in my house deal with it I laughed hey I tried to raise you right

it's not my fault you lost your way she wiped the lint off my pants threw a plaid over my legs and snuggled in

what's mommy doing she asked I'm not sure I said she gave me a puzzled look

that weird yes I agree what's up Dad what do you mean you're not sure when I

got home from work she said she was going on a date I told her I disagreed she said she would cancel it and we

would talk I decided I was done discussing it and left so I don't know if she's on a date or at home waiting to

talk she stared at me shocked what the hell Daddy what do you mean by date Beck

I'm as shocked as you are she told me she was going on a date with a man but didn't say who and expected me to just

be okay with it Dad is this a joke are you sure you got it right I wish it was a joke I don't know what's going on I

said I'll call her she said Collins answered and the conversation from Beck's side was interesting Beck didn't

mince words where are you Mom with who you just lied to me Dad's sitting right here you lied what the hell is wrong

with you my mother just lied to me don't call me don't come here when and if I want to talk to you I'll do it she ended

the call we sat silently for a few minutes I didn't know what to say I hugged her as she started to shiver and

then sobbed into my chest she lied to me Dad she told me she was with you at the

restaurant she lied I know sweetheart it's going to be okay please don't cry

Beck how is everything going to be okay she sat up her sad tears turning to angry ones my own mother just lied to me

she's on a date Daddy what are you going to do I have no idea I said Beck I'm

floundering here I came to chat with you to get my thoughts in order I should have thought you'd ask me I'm sorry it's

not your fault she grabbed tissues wiped her eyes and blew her nose she looked at

me then lay on top of Davey who snored in objection after a couple of minutes she moved back to me snuggling against

him Davey always calms me down she said hugging you always calms me down I told

her you smell better than Davey she giggled HEK a little stinky talk to me

daddy where did this come from what's going on between you and Mom what are you going to do I I would love to answer

but I don't know I'm shocked for a minute she sat in silence we should call Sylvia she said she pulled out her phone

hey s where are you I need you to come here right now no this is very important

I'll see you soon she's at straps Beck said it's a club nearby she needs to take an Uber we ate popcorn and drank

wine talking softly about what might be going on with Collins Sylvia showed up about 20 minutes later she greeted Davey

and then joined us on the couch Sylvia 3 years older than Beck had always been close to her sister Beck was a tiny

blonde like her mother while Sylvia was taller with her mother's hair and eyes a slightly larger and darker version of

her she hugged us both what happened she asked what's the emergency I was at a

party everything better be okay Beck looked at her incredulously that's not good are you high Sylvia laughed I had

two margaritas and a cocktail okay dad go make some coffee Beck ordered this is

serious s by the time I'd made coffee and Sylvia had her second cup Beck had told her everything Sylvia looked shaken

daddy there's more to this isn't there have you been fighting problems in the bedroom we fight sometimes yes but no

more than when you lived at home mostly we fight about you two I said Beck punched me in the bicep hey I chuckled

no problems in the bedroom that I know of if there are your mom hasn't said anything I need to talk to her Sylvia

said Beck you too you need to talk to to her daddy why didn't you stay and talk to her maybe I should have I admitted I

was too angry she announced it so cooly Beck squeezed me I know Dad but we all need to talk to her when can you talk to

her without losing it I don't know I said I hope it's soon I can't take it much longer I'll go to the lake try to

relax and get a grip I'll come with you Beck said let me get my bag and a blanket for Davey she paused give daddy

a cigarette she told Sylvia Sylvia looked at me questioningly I nodded and she handed me a case I wasn't a regular

smoker but it helped with anxiety and I felt I needed it Beck came out with her bag took Davy's dishes and we headed to

the truck Sylvia walked us out I'm going to talk to Mom in the morning she said Beck let me know what happens daddy

don't do anything stupid okay maybe I said I'll try not to do anything super

stupid Sylvia hugged us Davey climbed into the car and we drove off on the way

Beck asked a million questions some I could answer some I couldn't we got to the Lakehouse took Davey to the lake and

walked beside me Beck holding my hand some things hadn't changed Davey swam

chased frogs and squirrels and we walked back it was getting dark I looked at the booze Supply want a Mojito I asked Beck

yummy she said I want some I made two large portions Beck lit the fireplace

and we sipped our drinks and talked we lit a cigarette and I felt relaxed what do you think Daddy she asked I have a

few options but it all depends on your mom I said it's pretty messed up she might say she's lost her mind and take

everything back where in therapy Beck said I laughed maybe I'd try it what if

she's determined she asked in court I guess I said but I can't see why she

would want that I have no idea Beck saidou smarter than me Beck Youk be a

psychologist soon why would she do this I have no idea she said people cheat for

Revenge commitment issues carnal attraction or lack of fulfillment but I don't think any of those apply to Mom if

she has complaints she should talk to me and let me fix what's wrong yeah you'd think so she said we'll find out I'll

talk to her tomorrow dad you'll have to drive me back to get my car surprisingly

I slept well I watched videos until I fell asleep I got up got dressed took

Davey outside and he wandered around for about an hour when we got back Beck was already up do we have anything to eat

daddy she asked not really honey we had to stop on the way here it's all right

she said you can take me out to breakfast I want french toast at Gay's

deal we left Davey at the house mostly asleep after a big breakfast we talked about hypothetical situations School my

job Davey's Antics and her internship after getting her stuff and Davey I drove her back home I walked back to the

lake sat on the porch and watched the boats it felt lonely I missed Collins

and the times we sat together doing nothing I missed Beck and even Davey I decided to go fishing I took the boat

out and caught six nice crappies I cleaned them and found some frozen fries to eat with them they were delicious

when I turned my phone back on I had texts from both girls asking me to come over to Beck's I got there and they were

eating pizza Beck brought me a beer and we sat at the kitchen bar while they ate well I talked to her Beck began me too

Sylvia said and I prompted you're not going to like it Beck said she told me

she wasn't happy not with you but with her life she thinks it lacks excitement

and challenge some guy she works with is hitting on her and she likes the attention she wants to go on dates she

says she loves you and you can date too I sat digesting her words syvia did she

tell you the same thing pretty much she said Daddy I don't think it will last she'll figure it out damn s you mind

this Beck burst out I didn't say I was fine with it I think it won't last long shek get over it and things will go back

to normal I was dumbfounded what should I do while she comes to her senses love

her be patient let her calm down Sylvia said she loves you she's just having midlife issues or maybe not Beck said

these are mid-life issues not fun with other guys what other options do you have divorce her put her in a cage

Sylvia asked I have no idea I said said divorcing her is an option no it isn't

Sylvia insisted Jesus daddy don't go crazy you two are meant to be together shouldn't you talk to Mom Beck asked

tell her not to freak out this is some crap Sylvia you're taking her side and dad hasn't done a thing I'm not taking

sides Sylvia replied well that's a problem Beck said getting heated you're

supposed to take sides not this be patient crap she went on a date with some creep you know he's an idiot for

hitting on a married woman and she's wrong for letting him let's take a break I tried to tone it down but they weren't

interested so what do you want Beck our parents to get divorced it's not about what I want it's

about what daddy wants Daddy didn't want this mom did and she has to fix it she

can have what she wants but until she gets her head straight my relationship with her will depend on what I want and

what will that be Sylvia asked I want to see her as little as possible and not hear her at all so you're going to

dictate our relationship with Mom I'm not dictating anything if you can't see this is mom's fault then you have the

same problem she does whoa let's not let this get out of hand I tried to hug them

Beck let me but Sylvia grabbed her bag and ran out the door Beck and I watched her get into the car turn the headlights

on then off get out and finally drive away I'm so mad at her right now Beck

said Furious I'm sorry Dad but that was crap she pressed against me and I side

yes it is but it's not Sylvia's fault Beck it's your mother's kids shouldn't be in this position we had a special

family our lives revolved around each other I'm closer to you girls than any

father I know you always had a great relationship with your mother you and Sylvia shouldn't be in the middle of

this it's not your fault dad Beck said it's Mom's Mess but Sylvia acting like

it's no big deal is frustrating too don't burn any Bridges I advised let me

talk to her I love you Beck I don't want you hurt more than you already are she hugged me tightly I trust you Daddy I'll

wait and see what happens keep me close Okay always I assured her it was time to

confront Collins her car was in the garage when I pulled up I took a moment to find my calm then went inside I felt

a knot in my stomach and got a glass of milk to calm it Collins came out of her office looking as bad as I felt hi I

said I'm glad you're back I'm far from okay I told her I know I wanted to keep

myself safe do you want to talk I nodded here or in the living room letun be

comfortable I said she poured herself some juice and I grabbed some wheat cakes we sat on the couch a foot apart

unusual for us there was a hostile Vibe I want to apologize Barnes she said I

did everything wrong if you think it's just about mismanagement we're wasting our time I said I don't understand she

said there's no way you could have mitigated telling me you were going on a date do you get that I understand what

you mean but you don't understand me she said I should have explained what I was doing to make it tolerable you'd need to

be a wizard for that I said do you have magical powers she smiled not quite

magic but almost go ahead Miss Lefay I said think about it Barnes how old are

we I'm 48 and I'm 49 she said I feel each of those years not physically but

emotionally remember when we were 25 yes I remember remember everything we felt

alive like life was full of possibilities love was new every day do you remember yes think about our lives

now we do the same things over and over I love our routine but I want to add something new bring back some excitement

I get that I said but you think we can't do new things together I think we can she said I told you I'd go on a date and

share the experience with you you could do the same Collins your idea of together and mine are different I said

what do you mean when I say together I mean just you and me introducing someone else fails the together test she thought

for a moment how long since youve spent time alone with another woman besides family about 6 months remember Kansas

City with Amber we met with Telecom reps she nodded I know Amber well tell me

Barnes is there any tension between you two not that I know of I said she's

gorgeous but I'm married and 10 years older we don't don't flirt we have a good working relationship and friendship

nothing more well you said it yourself she's gorgeous and single what if you

took her out to dinner hit the NTI and dance together wouldn't that be exciting holding all that beauty in your arms

wouldn't that get your motor running maybe that's why I don't I said why not

she asked because I'm married to you I told her I don't put myself in situations where I'm tempted by anyone

but you and if I was okay with it she asked it doesn't matter I said it

wouldn't suit me she sighed I'd be okay with it now I'm more mature I'd put up

with it and I think you should put up with me doing the same no that's not what I signed up for you promised me and

I promised you if you want to leave that's your choice if you're determined I can't stop you I only control myself I

don't want to leave she said I want to be more free and spontaneous but stay married you'll do what you want

regardless of how I feel I can't accept that you've been hiding this from me for a while what else have you been hiding

and then there's your stunt on Friday night I'm sorry I shouldn't have done that I was mad when you left that's a

lie you planned this long before Friday you lied to Beck too you're good at that I spat out my anger you had your chance

to manage this my position hasn't changed it's not about how you go about it it's that you did it you plan to do

more and want to do it I control myself so I'll just get my stuff and leave you to it

Barnes that's not what I want she protested I'm not doing it but you want

to I said right now I have zero trust in you you think I'm boring and need

excitement even if you don't act on it I'll always know you think that we want different things so let's move on I went

to the basement grabbed my luggage and started packing I took what I needed for a week planning to return later for more

she followed me saying we could work it out but I didn't listen I loaded everything into the truck she tried to

get in but the door was locked she stood in the driveway as I drove away it was depressing I loved her and felt like I

lost half of my heart I couldn't see a Way Forward I stopped at the grocery store to distract myself but the trip to

the lake brought it all back I turned on a podcast but didn't register a word when I arrived I took my stuff inside in

a days I considered talking to the girls but was too exhausted an hour later my phone rang it was Sylvia hi honey I said

where are you daddy she asked I'm at the lake where are you I'm at your house mom

called and asked me to come over I got a call from Beck hold on it's Beck I'll call you back I answered Beck and told

her I'd call her back then I called Sylvia back I'm glad you're with your mom she's in total distress dad you

should be here with her not me I know Sylvia this is difficult do you want to talk about it over the phone she was

quiet for a minute no I guess not are you are you coming back no I'm not I'll

explain when I see you it's not good but I guess it is what it is she said I have

to work I can't stay here long I'll stay tonight but I'm really busy at work I don't know about tomorrow your mom works

too that's not your concern you do what you need to do your mom and I are adults she snorted clearly very upset I'm so

sorry Sylvia I know this is hard for you I love you you're my first child and you'll always be special to me she

gasped I love you too daddy bye I composed myself and called back hi honey

are you okay Daddy she asked I will be are you okay same here she said I guess

you're at the lake yes want to come outside I'll tell you what happened I'm

packed she said all my classes this week are online but I have to work on Wednesday and Thursday can I stay the

week you don't have to ask I'll spend every second with you I told her I know

I'll be there in an hour I've got ready I said while putting food out I heard

the sliding door open and Davey's claws clicking he was sniffing the food so I gave him some love and the fat I trimmed

off the pork chops as I washed my hands Beck hugged me from behind I hugged her back it smells good she said no Davey

she wiped his mouth and settled him down we started eating I think it didn't go well she said no she had lots of

explanations it boiled down to her being bored and wanting to feel young again fine she rolled her eyes if you were

seeing mom as a client what would you say is wrong with her I wouldn't consider her a client but if someone

came to me with her story I'd say they're depressed facing a transition there's no such thing as a midlife

crisis I thought it was real it's not a diagnosis it's a transitional period

some people feel their mortality and start doing stupid things to maintain the illusion they Immortal wow who would

have thought my baby is so smart she smiled yes I am don't forget it do you

think she should see a therapist I'll tell her but I won't get involved I understand I'm sorry you're caught up in

this it's not your fault she said I feel bad for you too we'll get through this

yeah we have no other choice Sylvia arrived Tuesday night Beck made potato salad and I grilled hamburgers we ate on

the porch Dad mom's a mess Sylvia said yeah pretty much what are you going to

do she asked she wants you to come home she promised to forget about all this she sees the damage she's done and is

sorry I'm sure she is in a way what do you mean in a way it's hard to explain I

need a minute girls want a drink what do you have Sylvia asked I've got stuff for

palus yum Beck said I want some Sylvia did too so I mixed the drinks and

gathered my thoughts we got comfortable and I was as ready as I could be Sylvia

are you still dating that guy dickweed Beck teased Sylvia laughed no I realized

heun's an idiot I have a new boyfriend named Richard oh my God they laughed hysterically I tried again well suppose

Richard told you that you were boring how would you feel not good I'm not boring no you're not but if he feels

that way can you argue with his feelings I see what you mean she said Beck you don't like raisins Sylvia you don't like

coconut that's how you feel would you feel differently if I told you you did no Beck said did mom really say you're

boring not in those words she said a lot about how exciting life used to be how we're stuck in a rut and she wants to

bring that excitement back can you feel it Dad Beck asked maybe a little I said

I know I'm not 25 anymore but I like what we do otherwise I'd be doing other things I don't see anything wrong with

that Sylvia said what did Mom say she wants to do different things but not

with me she likes being pursued by other men and wants to date them oh my God Beck said how do I handle this

can I tell her she's wrong feelings can't be argued away will excitement magically appear no it won't Beck said

honey do you really believe this hit her suddenly on Friday she's been thinking about this for a long time and didn't

say a word to me I know Beck said me too Sylvia added Dad if she gets therapy and

changes her mind can you work it out I shook my head she thought she could just tell me she was going going on a date

and I'd be fine with it that's very disrespectful Sylvia sank into the chair

I know Dad what if she's truly sorry she said she's sorry she didn't tell me better not for doing it I'll talk to her

Sylvia said Beck can you help if she agrees to see a therapist I will if she

asks for help Beck said but she has to want it herself Sylvia left unhappy Beck

and I stayed in touch with her but Collins dismissed therapy and only mentioned couples counseling Beck thought would be feudal unless Collins's

dissatisfaction was addressed are you ready for this Beck asked no I'm not interested in other women or sharing her

with other men I said Sylvia asked what if you thought of it as a break and got involved with other women then once mom

sorts herself out you can get back to normal may I I asked what if in a few years she feels bored again besides I

don't know any hot chicks even if I wanted to and none are waiting outside they both laughed you look good for your

age Sylvia said if you were looking you'd have no trouble I'm not interested

I said no Sylvia I just can't are you disappointed in a way yes she said I

hate it when you and Mom aren't together but I respect you for knowing yourself and sticking to your morals thank you

after two months with no change I filed for divorce Collins called immediately this has gone too far Barnes are you

divorcing me you have no reason to what are you going to tell the judge I don't have to tell him anything that's the the

definition of a no fault divorce what will you tell others we had a disagreement and you divorced me I won't

tell them anything it's none of their business I'll be there we need to talk before it's too late do you want me to

make dinner Friday night yes that would be perfect I was finishing dinner when I

heard the door open it bothered me that she just walked in we both owned the lake housee but I didn't go to our house

in town when she was there I only got my stuff when she was at work she looked as good as ever still making my pulse race

despite my weariness she tossed her purse on the chair and walked over she wanted to hug and kiss me I managed the

hug but the kiss was too much she looked hurt but so was I for good reason what

can I do for you she asked everything's ready if you want you can set the table while I get the dishes we laid out the

food poured the wine and she started I don't want to divorce Barnes why not I

asked because I love you and want to spend our lives together she said said but why you've been unhappy remember I

never said I wasn't happy she said you expressed your displeasure clearly enough you misunderstand me I'm quite

satisfied I just wanted to add to our Satisfaction by dating other men that

made me uncomfortable the simple answer is divorce you can have fun with other men and I won't be displeased I don't

understand I want to stay married and have fun with other men that's not what I want I don't want to be married to

someone who wants to date other men we finished dinner and moved to the couch so that's it she asked even though I

love you and chose you you don't want to be married to me yes Collins that's

right look at me Barnes she said she climbed into my lap kissing me passionately for a moment I was lost in

the sensations but then I stopped responding she slowed and stopped what

happened she asked have you met anyone I asked I already knew the answeres Barnes

are you going on a date probably I said I like being married I don't think it's

boring could I be one of those women you're dating maybe but I don't feel the

same way about you maybe I'll stop being angry but I wouldn't hold my breath she got up picked up her purse let me know

if you change your mind she said and left the divorce was in court and her

attorney asked for counseling the judge explained he had to schedule it if one party requested it I'm not doing this I

told my lawyer figure it out I can't it's the law what if we withdraw the

divorce petition will he still order it he was stunned no I don't think he could

is that what you want yes do it I said this surprised everyone and Collins

looked smug after the proceedings I told her I won't be forced to do anything until you're done with this don't

contact me I'll never speak to you again if that's what you want her jaw dropped and I walked away she tried to talk to

me for 2 months even through Sylvia Beck's relationship with her mother deteriorated causing tension between

Beck and Sylvia Collins tried to come to the lakeh house but I changed the locks she even came to my work and I had to

kick her out after 2 months she gave up and told silia she would no longer seek counseling if I wanted to sue we did

went to the same judge and the divorce was uncontested she kept the house in town and I got the lake house the

property was equitably distributed she kept her business and I kept mine no spousal support and we both kept our

pensions the usual divorce proceedings boring tedious and annoying I started buying businesses and quickly retired I

fished learned to water ski and spent all summer on the boat with the girls by October I applied for a visa to become a

resident of Mexico as a tourist I could stay for 180 days which gave me time to

decide my future I winterized the house traded my Chevy for a diesel powered F350 bought a luxury camper hooked up

the boat and headed to Lake bakara in caloa Mexico the girls were a bit upset but I bought them plane tickets to

guadalahara promising Beach time they were thrilled I bought a 5 acre piece of land near the lake got utilities and

became a local on my second fishing trip I caught a 14lb bass and was hooked

Sylvia visited in January and we had a great time at a hotel in Puerto valarta on the last day she asked you're not

coming back are you daddy I'm leaning towards staying you girls are the only reason I'd come back and I'll visit you

often what about mom she asked I guess she's mostly working she seems sad not

as energetic as before I don't think she found dating as wonderful as she thought I'd rather not talk about her I said

okay she gave me a sad smile we Shrugged off the bad vibes and had fun I drove

her to the airport and she left with hugs and tears Beck visited in February and stayed with me in the camper we

spent 3 days at the Beach then she wanted to see where I lived we drove to my place and she loved it I can't

believe you have such a beautiful place she said it would be better if you lived here I said she looked thoughtful I have

no idea how I'll make a living I'd like to use my degree it's aggra business I said she laughed farming what does that

have to do with looms I got into Machine Tools from working at a farm implement dealership it started with making harder

pins for combines I had no idea she said well there are ways to use your degree

explain she said you're a psychologist you mainly listen to people's concerns bartenders do that too she laughed she

stayed for 2 weeks then flew back I missed her but soon returned to my relaxed lifestyle 6 months later she

called I need a favor if I can do it I will I need a loan a big loan or just

short on cash a big loan she said I want to buy a cabin is it an existing Lodge

does it generate income can I see it online I hoped you'd go see it it's 10 Mi away on Lake bakara really you've

checked the books yes it makes good money they have a bar so I could listen to people's problems I laughed how much

do you need she showed me a staggering figure wow Beck you went big go big or

stay home she said I'll prepare a payment plan I said she said it should be pretty short term once I own the

business and show a profit I'll get Bank financing right now I'm like someone with no credit rating I understand I

said that's so cool Beck it'll be great to have you here I'll take a look and let you know what I think but you need

to see it for yourself 3 weeks later she arrived and we checked out the place it catered to fisherman mostly from the US

and seemed like a great investment 6 months later Beck owned the business and ran it well Davey became a local

celebrity and we spent a lot of time together Beck sometimes worked at the bar and it was fun to watch her use her

psychology skills the restaurant was first class and always crowded but there was always a seat for me in the kitchen

one Friday night the chef asked if I minded if another guest sat with me I agreed when he returned with the guest

my jaw dropped she was gorgeous elegantly dressed in a yellow outfit that highlighted her complexion she had

a Mane of glossy black curls with some gray high cheekbones and dark eyes the chef introduced us miss Valiente this is

Mr Barton he's the father of the lady of the house I stood as she sat down and introduced myself Barnes please no

Mister during dinner she laughed a low musical sound that captivated me you can

call me Nita she said her English was accented but flawless her voice low and

smooth she had already ordered a glass of sangria I struggled to find something to say to this stunning woman it's

pretty crowded I said lucky they have this table I didn't make a reservation she said usually Tomas finds me a seat

but tonight I didn't want to sit at the bar to avoid someone I well you're safe with me my mission is

to keep obnoxious guests away from beautiful ladies she blushed I'm pleased to have a gallant protector she laughed

again sending Goosebumps down my skin do you dine here often yes like Thomas said

my daughter owns this place and even though I can cook I prefer coming here ah sweet Beck she said I like her a lot

we're becoming friends that's good to hear do you live nearby I have a house on the caloa river and also in mocus I'm

pretty mobile Nita I have 5 Acres nearby with a couple of buildings a truck and a camper I like that I can go anywhere you

recently moved here from the US like Beck I've been here about a year Beck visited fell in love with the place and

bought this cabin what brings you here fishing at first I explained I sold my

business in the states and wanted to travel what kind of business did you have she asked then she hesitated I

apologize it's none of my business I laughed no no need to apologize I made

parts for companies like Caterpillar and John Deere ah the industrial Tycoon she said

with a brilliant smile not likely but I've been retired for a long time but

you are so young I was lucky if retiring at 49 is considered lucky I'm not

retired she said I could be but I feel like I have things to do like what I

asked if you don't mind me asking I'm a Smuggler she said softly seeing my

reaction she laughed I'm joking I own a pharmaceutical company that supplies prescription medications to the Mexican

Social Security Institute wow that's impressive I said that's why I live in

Los mokas too she said maybe I should retire and become a slacker and dreamer like you I laughed you speak excellent

English thank youi she asked we switched to Spanish

yes tell me about Nita she smiled I have many acres along the river some horses and lots of Gelb via cattle I don't know

them personally I said making her laugh I'll have to introduce you to some she said I laughed you're very funny can I

ask if Mr Valiente exists no he used to he died in a petrochemical plant

explosion I'm sorry Nita it's okay it's been 11 years I remember the good times

what about Barnes she asked Beck has a mother yes and another daughter Sylvia

she's 3 years older than Beck I showed her a picture of Sylvia she's very pretty she doesn't live here no she

lives in the states with her mother my wife and I divorced 2 years ago is that a sore subject it was but less so now we

wanted different things she wanted an open marriage and I didn't I'm sorry to hear that that's life say can I take you

to dinner next weekend I'd love to but I have to be in Las mogas until next Tuesday how about the Friday after

sounds great can I get your number sure she said entering her number in my phone

maybe when you pick me up I'll introduce you to some cattle she giggled I walked her to her car A new silver bmwz4 she

kissed me on the cheek and it felt electric you were a Charming dinner companion Barnes she said thank you for

letting me join you the pleasure was all mine I can't wait for our dinner you have my number call me in the late

afternoon I will I promised I closed her door and watched her drive away she was

Exquisite and she was going out with me I felt high when I went to say good night to Beck she was excited did you

like her isn't she amazing did you ask her out you set me up I said yes I did

she's perfect for you did she agree yes next Friday but I need Transportation

other than the truck you can use my car thanks Beck I'll need my own soon the

next day I texted Nita two evil women are conspiring against me she sent smiley faces with hearts resistance is

feudal Beck has confessed I said I can't wait for our dinner date she sent more

emojis the days felt like an eternity I hadn't felt this way since high school I

wrote to Nita daily and she replied two or three times sometimes skipping a day twice we talked on the phone talking to

her was a new experience she switched between Spanish and English telling me about her day it felt like we'd been

friends forever when she got back she called and the excitement grew I drove

Beck's car instead of the truck for our first date following the directions I reached a gated path with no house in

sight but found a call Button hola S Barnes I said Nita voice replied

laughing L A the gate opened and I drove down a

long driveway to a huge mansion on a cliff with a stunning River View a young girl opened the door she was gorgeous

about 12 or 13 and introduced herself as piaia nun's daughter pleased to meet you

Pia I said in Spanish you look a lot like your mother do you speak English

yes I speak English Spanish and French she said blushing I know English better

than French I'm sure you're good at all of them I want to take your mom out to dinner is that okay with you she gave me

a critical look yes you are very Charming for an older man I laughed

you're a flatterer and I'm not old she giggled you must love Beck a lot same

here I said taking her hand she led me into a large open space this is zanetta

she introduced the older woman she takes care of me in the house when Mom's not here would you like a drink while we

wait what do you suggest I asked I drink lemonade we also have juices and adult

beverages lemonade sounds delicious and just call me Barnes okay just Barnes she

said eyes flashing with laughter she poured lemonade and we carried the glasses to the living room with its

sliding glass doors opening to a porch and a mahogany deck overlooking the river and Valley I like it here Pia said

letun sit and talk your mom never mentioned you I said maybe she's

embarrassed to have such an impressive daughter she doesn't tell anyone about me for fear they'll like me more than

her Pia joked we laughed as zanetta brought more lemonade thank you zanetta

we said together making Pia giggle again you steal other people's thoughts she

said everyone around me wears tinfoil hats I joked we might have some should I

warn my mom no I need to know what she's thinking to make her happy it's a good

plan she said this is my first date in years I said I need any advantage I can

get will your mom be ready soon she likes to make an entrance she'll be down soon thank you P I heard n's Voice Low

and Husky and turned to see her descending the stairs she was breathtaking in a simple elegant white

linen dress with a lace at the neckline sleeveless and tan platform sandals she wore a wide brimmed white hat and posed

to impress see Pia brought me out of my stuper you're very pretty mom don't you agree

Barnes I cleared my throat yes Nita you're gorgeous she smiled I see you've

met the preall yes and it was a pleasure Pia I hope to see you often you are a

Charming lady I finished my lemonade and walked over to Nita you never mentioned this little beauty I wanted her to be a

surprise I know you love your daughters and I wanted you to love mine she's my life Barnes yes I can see that we went

to a nearby restaurant with a lively atmosphere the food and music were great and I danced with Nita who was an

amazing dancer holding her during a slow dance was Unforgettable the drive back to her place was a blur of happiness at

her door she kissed me and it was electrifying before I left she invited me to bring Beck and spend a day with

her and Pia the following Saturday Sylvia called me Tuesday afternoon Dad when can I hang out with you and Beck

how about 8 tonight we're having dinner at Beck's great could you ask her and send me a snap

sure is something wrong no I just need to talk to you I always need to talk to you too love you Sylvia love you Daddy

Beck was fine with it and we were in her living room when Sylvia called after the usual conversation she said Dad Beck I

hate living here without you I'm tired of dating idiots hate my job and mom makes me miserable I want to move there

really Beck was excited that would be amazing Sylvia can you get a job I think

I've already found one I'm buying the travel agency that books cabins on the lake including yours Beck

wow you've really planned this I said Sylvia we'd love to have you here are you sure positive I wanted to talk to

you first in case you didn't want me she sobbed breaking my heart Sylvia I'm sorry I made you doubt that I love you

and I'll always want you in my life me too Sil you're my big sister remember

when you spanked Jamie Myers for picking on me she giggled yes I did was a creep

when do you think you'll move it might take a month or two but I've already started it's exciting I can't wait Beck

said we talked for another hour that night in the camper I reflected on how great my life was Beck had moved in I

met Nita and now Sylvia was moving in too things couldn't be better on Friday

I asked Nita if I should bring anything Beck says you make great Pico bring that

I bought fresh ingredients and made a big bowl on Saturday we took the truck to Nita's I wondered what Nita and Pia

would think of it they clearly weren't poor and I wasn't either but I liked my choice of living simply would they think

I was a [ \_\_ ] we'd find out Pia ran out as we arrived and hugged Beck then hugged me we're going to the river mommy

made everything for the taco feast yum Beck said come inside Pia said Mama and

zanetta are packing she took us inside to the kitchen where they were packing coolers and baskets we helped and soon

everything was ready Barnes brought his truck it'll be perfect for transporting us her phrasing made me laugh what a

delightful girl we loaded into the car with Beck and Pia in the back seat and Nita in the front with me as we drove

Nita pointed out various buildings it's good to have you with us I said I would never have found my way out of here she

laughed there are several places you can go she said there are barns for different functions what kind of

buildings Beck asked horse barns equipment barns storage barns livestock Barns and paddocks

replied we arrived at the river where there was a gazebo a dock three jet skis picnic tables and a

grill I plan to heat everything up on the grill Nita said but we can use your stove right of course I said all the

Comforts of Home in a small package I'd love to see inside Pia said sure I'll

give you the grand tour I said we put the taco shells in the oven and showed them around Pia explored every corner

lying on the bed sitting on the chairs and checking out the app es she and Beck carried our stuff to the tables giving

me a chance to kiss Nita she responded with a passionate kiss that left us both breathless hello beautiful I said I

couldn't wait to do that me too she whispered Beck and Pia returned and we

made lunch everyone praised my Pico and we chatted for an hour before Pia suggested jet skiing the girls changed

into swimsuits and I put on my swim trunks we quickly launched the jet skis can I come with you Barnes Pia asked I'd

love love that I said you drive then I'll take a turn and Mom can go with you when Nita and Beck appeared in their

bikinis I was momentarily stunned Nita was especially breathtaking she caught

my gaze and blushed ready she asked we all got on the jet skis Nita led the way

and we traveled Upstream for about 5 miles she pointed to a cliff with a rope swing attached to a tree we shut down

the engines do you want to swing on the Rope she asked Pia was excited yes it's

so much fun she said you'll swing high above the river and drop into deep water I decided to give it a try Nita held the

jet ski as we climbed to the top of the cliff who wants to go first I asked Beck

should go Pia decided Beck grabbed the rope and swung across the river falling into the water and resurfacing with a

big smile oh my god daddy that was amazing you have to try piaia went next

flipping through the air and swimming back like an otter Nita followed gracefully then it was my turn the

height was intimidating but I forced myself to jump the swing was exhilarating and I plunged into the cool

water it was fun Nita and I watched as Beck and Pia took three more turns Pia

then decided she wanted to drive we drove back lifted the jet skis out of the water and sat in the sun with cool

drinks as evening approached we packed up and headed back to the house we thanked them for a wonderful day and I

stayed for dinner how are you feeling daddy Beck asked pretty good A little TI

tired sun and water can really wear you out that's not what I meant I mean about Nita and Pia Pia is a little doll it's

impossible not to like her and Nita well I've developed feelings I never knew I had she makes me happy just being around

her she's beautiful warm funny smart a great mom and independent She's

Everything a man could want I know she seems to like you too she told me she thinks you might be the one there can

only be one I said she laughed just don't screw it up I put a lot of effort into this I'll do my best thanks Beck

now you need to focus on finding love too I will I've been busy with work but my eyes are open I hugged Beck and drove

home Nita and I started seeing each other two or three times a week sometimes I took Pia fishing or water

skiing when Nita was away on business I fell in love with Pia as if she were my own daughter after 4 months I was

completely in love with Nita when we were together I was the happiest I had ever been when apart I constantly

thought about her and dreamed of her we texted all the time and she sent me pictures on Snapchat we kissed at the

end of every date and I wanted her in every way I was careful as she was special to me Beck and Sylvia loved her

too the four of them Nita Pia Beck and Sylvia often spent time together with or

without me one Monday I called Nita and asked if she'd like to go to Tulum for the weekend she called back immediately

excited really I've never been there but I've heard it's beautiful and has Mayan ruins she was in Los mokas and I

suggested flying from there what about Pia she asked is it just for us or do

you have a plan for her I was planning on taking her and seeing if Beck and Sylvia could come too a family

celebration she was silent for a moment Barnes I'm very touched that you

consider Pia and me family I'll be glad of that and I hope Sylvia and Beck can come too they feel like my

daughters they love you and Pia very much I said Do You Love Me very much she

asked I paused then said Nita I want to tell you everything in person yes I

understand sorry for asking over the phone we'll talk in Tulum I laughed I

checked the flights one leaves at 3: in the afternoon will you be ready I'll arrange it she said drive carefully with

my daughters Sylvia and Beck could go and Pia was thrilled we set off on the drive with Pia as our DJ we took turns

picking songs teasing each other about our choices we picked up Nita and headed to the airport the flight was smooth and Tulum

was as beautiful as Sylvia had promised our hotel was luxurious and on the beach

on Saturday we enjoyed the beach and the blue water in the evening we went to an open air restaurant Beck and Sylvia took

Pia to a beach party and informed us she'd stay in their room that night Nita and I were left alone we walked back to

the hotel and I pulled her tightly against me well that wasn't suspicious at all I think we were set up Nita she

laughed I think you're right do you mind Barnes not at all I said I love it as

long as you do I'm happy she said I took her to my room made drinks and we sat on

the couch with her snuggled up against me Nita you asked if I love you I want

you to know I love you more than I ever imagined since the moment we met I think of nothing but you you fill my heart

mind and life I love you so much she looked into my eyes her deep almost

black eyes full of emotion that makes me very happy she said I love you Barnes

after ailano died I didn't think I could love again but now I have you and you

own my heart my heart belongs to you I want to give you all of me oh my God

Nita I wanted this since I first saw you I said you're the most gorgeous woman I've ever met I'm not afraid she said

the only thing scary would be if you didn't love or want me I'd have to be crazy not to love and want you don't

ever doubt it you're the most desirable woman I've ever seen she chuckled I don't need thousands of men just one

after that we made love and went to bed I woke to the sun streaming through the curtain and Nita sleeping in my arms she

looked so beautiful calm and peaceful as we dozed there was a knock on the door

come back with a warrant I shouted it was Beck I put on my robe and Nita pulled the blanket over herself Beck

Sylvia and Pia rushed in with a cart full of breakfast Beck and Sylvia jumped on the bed with Nita laughing and

talking Pia sat on my lap her midnight hair swirling around us you love her

don't you Pia asked I love you and I love her too I said hugging her tightly

I want to be your daughter like Beck and Sylvia she said tears of happiness rolled down my cheeks I'm honored you

feel this way I said I'll try my best to be everything you need are you in mom

she asked so we can be a real family there's nothing I want more I said but I

need to talk to your mom first just the two of us and I'm not ready right now I leaned in and whispered I don't have a

ring uh I understand we had breakfast and then hurried to catch the shuttle to the Mayan ruins the site was awe

inspiring made even more special by having Nita and PE with me we flew back Monday morning tired but happy we

dropped Nita off and I took the girls ring shopping we found a jeweler from the nahal tribe with a large collection

of stones we chose a red orange fire opal surrounded by four small Diamonds

the Jeweler said he could make it in 2 weeks and send it to me I told Nita I wanted to go back to the Gazebo by the

river she seemed to know what it was about but just told me to come Pia was excited and had to retreat to her room

to avoid giving it away in the Gazebo I knelt down and nun's hand went to her mouth Nita I'm not good at speeches but

I love you with all my heart I don't want to live without you and P in my life will you marry me I'll do

everything to make sure you never regret it I opened the box and she held out her hand I put the ring on and she said yes

Barnes I want to be your wife I want to love you always she admired the ring I can't believe you got a fire opal my

favorite Stone a little birdie told me I said I think I know that bird she said

tears of happiness in her eyes when we got back to the house Pia was already waiting and ran between us in excitement

I can't believe it you're going to be my father Barnes she burst into tears I knelt down and hugged her I thought this

would make you happy baby girl she pressed against me yeah I just I was

hoping I thought we'd never find anyone you found me I told her I'll never let

you go Pia she clung to me and sobbed for a few minutes it's such a fire she said I laughed you've been hanging out

with Beck too much you're starting to sound like her she chuckled she's teaching me lots of good words we set

the wedding date for December 5th when Nita walked down the aisle in Gold I was the happiest person in the world she

said she had worn white before and wanted to break tradition I moved in with her but we kept the camper for

vacations I removed it from the truck which we used for its intended purpose I

had never been happier the only hiccup came in our second year when Sylvia said she needed to talk we were sitting on

the deck when she said mom wants to visit I sighed I guess it was bound to happen when is she coming for Christmas

she said Sylvia what do you want dear I asked she

hesitated I wanted to spend Christmas here with you and Beck now I have to spend part of it with Mom Beck doesn't

want to so I'll stay with her I still love Mom Dad I'm sorry if this disappoints you but I remember all the

good things I hugged her I'm not disappointed I'm proud of you it's going

to be okay you can still spend time here tell your mom you already have plans for Christmas dinner she'll have to deal

with it it's her fault not yours it's hard she said I just wanted you to know

what if she wants to talk to you to see you let me talk to N I said she's smarter than me let's see what she says

Sylvia spent the rest of the day with me and Pia and we had dinner together before she left when Nita returned from

Las mokas I told her about Sylvia's visit we sat on the sofa watching the fire and she sipped her wine

thoughtfully what do you think of meeting her Barnes she asked I suppose it was inevitable she's the girl's

mother I don't have any special feelings for her I loved her for years but she ruined it all the good times are

overshadowed by the way it ended she snuggled closer and rested her cheek against my arm I think we should all

have dinner together at the cabin I want to get to know her Barnes really I asked

yes she's been a part of your life and the girls lives I can meet her myself it made me nervous but Nita was independent

and did what she thought was best when Collins arrived she stayed in Beck's cabin I saw the girls less often

assuming they were spending time with her Nita did meet her and if there were any issues she didn't mention them I

asked Nita what she thought I like her Nita said really yes she's changed a lot

Sylvia and Beck agree she's become introspective and friendly with us that's good isn't it I asked I think so

we talked about you God I hope you weren't listening I said she laughed she

only said good things about you I snorted I'll just argue she smiled she didn't admire your stubbornness of

course right I said but you're still here with me absolutely I Adore You

Barnes that's never going to change Pia came in and snuggled with us and I hugged my two girls 2 days before

Christmas it rained heavily causing the river to rise we had to SA the dock carrying it up three times overnight the

water also knocked down two sections of our fence and I fixed it early Christmas morning with the help of a laborer we

planned to eat at 2:00 and I expected Sylvia and Beck to arrive by then after finishing the fence I showered and

changed when I was ready I looked for the girls but couldn't find them although Sylvia's car was there I made

spiced rum punch and cider then heard voices at the entrance Pia ran in and sat next to me Davey lay across our legs

sighing contentedly that smells good Pia said it's rum punch I said she took a

sip and wrinkled her nose e it smells better than it tastes I laughed it's an acquired taste try the spice cider

instead she took a cup and Beck walked in she liked the rum punch Sylvia

followed and then my jaw dropped as Nita walked in holding Collins's hand they saw my reaction and Nita hurried over

don't be angry Barnes Collins didn't have anywhere to go so I invited her I wasn't angry but not thrilled either

Nita pulled me to Collins Collins wants to talk to you she said I offered Collins a cider or punch she chose cider

and we walked to the office I sat in my chair and she took Nas you look good Barnes she said thanks you too I replied

she looked great even a bit thinner I need to apologize Barnes she said I was

selfish and disrespected you I know I caused pain and I don't deserve forgiveness but I hope you can forgive

me I've thought it through I said there were consequences but one of them was

releasing me to find what I have now I was bitter and resentful but now I'm not

I'm sorry I caused you pain I took a deep breath I forgive you I said you

know Nita and P they're dear to me and Sylvia and Beck love them you'll always

be their mother you're welcome here anytime Nita and the girl say you've changed I hope you live a happy life I'm

going to and if you you can accept that I'll think well of you can we be friends

she asked we'll see I said but no nonsense she laughed no I won't you've landed on your feet Barnes I'm still

finding mine Nita knocked we're ready to eat she said we sat at the big table Pia

said Grace and the air filled with laughter and happy voices I looked at Nita who smiled and winked Pia sneaked

bits of food to Davey and my daughters chatted non-stop cins seemed to be enjoying herself it was going to be a