I'm telling you Louise my best friend Janet said HEK a typical man he'll hear

your proposal and think about what he's going to get I don't like the idea of him being with others I replied Janet I

didn't say he would sleep with anyone Louise he's 40 and past his prime do you

really think he'll be entertaining 20-year-olds every weekend he'll stay home with the kids and you can live your

best life do you think that won't backfire I asked looking at my friends

and co-workers Louise James is desperate to get you into bed Annie replied by asking

for it you'll just have fun with him without feeling guilty Marie added your husband will be busy with working kids

just keep him entertained occasionally and he won't suspect a thing the more we talked the better it sounded I'd been

happily married to Mark for 18 years with two kids a house an annual

vacations we worked hard and were generally happy but as I approached 40 I

felt something was missing I wanted a thrill my husband still loved me and was a romantic but I felt bored that's when

Janet suggested new possibilities my friends at work also talked about modern relationships I wasn't sure if my

husband would agree but my friends kept convincing me that night I decided to talk to him

I'll talk to him tomorrow night after dinner I told them < be fine Janet assured me HEK be grateful and if you

need help one of us can keep him entertained I didn't like the idea of my friends with my husband but if it meant

I could have my own lovers I'd accept it the idea of boyfriend sounded appealing I'd only had three boyfriends before

Mark and none lasted long I never had a one night stand but young men at Work reminded me I was still desirable this

boosted my confidence coming home my husband suspected nothing when he hugged

me he had no idea what was coming I worried about the outcome and shed a few nervous tears the next day was Sunday

and we always did something fun as a family however our teenagers preferred their friends company dinner was

disappointing as the kids were on their phones don't worry honey the only thing distracting me is you my husband said I

felt guilty knowing what I was going to ask him later dinner went as usual Mark

enforced a no phones rule which the kids eventually appreciated after dinner I told the kids I need to talk to your

father it's not for little ears are you having another child our daughter asked

excitedly no nothing like that I said seeing Curiosity on my husband's face

it's important he didn't know what to expect but poured us both a glass of wine and sat across from me silent but attentive

though usually an extrovert he could be quiet and thoughtful living by The Motto be silent and be thought a fool speak

and remove all doubt I gathered my thoughts are you happy I asked with what

he replied with everything our life I have a loving wife two great kids a nice

home we live comfortably and have good careers and friends we're doing well I'm

glad you think so but I'm bored Mark was silent for a minute then said you're

bored yes I love you but I need more excitement am I not enough it's not

about you Mark it's about my needs I tensed sipping my wine I've been talking

to friends and researching traditional relationships are evolving don't give me that new fangled nonsense Mark said just

tell me what you want I want an open marriage Mark I want us to date other people his face changed anger flashing

in his eyes he gripped his wine glass tightly can you repeat that I want an

open marriage so we can date other people think about it you could be with younger women he was silent clearly

upset no way he growled we made vows to renounce all others I take that

seriously have you Mark I still take our vows seriously but things can change we

can still love and honor each other but I need this those words hurt him his jaw

clenched rage in his eyes but he held back he stood up and walked to the back door

where are you going I asked to think he replied my wife just told me she wants

to be with other people I don't want to be around her right now his voice broke as he left calling me a strumpet I

didn't see him for the rest of the night the next morning his side of the bed was untouched I showered and went to work

finding our kids at breakfast but no sign of Mark where's your dad I asked he left

early for work our daughter replied said he might be back late our son added for

the first time in our marriage he left without kissing me goodbye it felt

unpleasant at work I texted him that I loved him avoiding mentioning last night's discussion I tried calling him

at lunch but it went to voicemail so I left a sweet message about loving him and growing old together that evening

his car wasn't home when I arrived I feared he might be at a bar drowning his Sorrows but came home a bit later no

kiss just a brief greeting before disappearing outside our kids didn't seem to notice at dinner he chatted with

them as usual but barely spoke to me after dinner he asked the kids to go to their rooms saying he needed to talk to

me this time there was no wine he sat across from me clearly upset I know you

won't let this go Louise he said your friends are filling your head with nonsense I researched open relationships

today I know if I say no you'll end up cheating on me either way I'll lose he

raised his hands in surrender okay you win but we need rules no men in our

house I wouldn't do that I assured him our bed stays sacred lovers should use

protection until tested for STDs I don't want to date or see your lovers if you've been with someone we'll have less

fun together from now on I'm not responsible for your romantic emotional or physical needs do you understand

distracted by thoughts of potential love I didn't fully grasp what he meant I figured I'd date for a year or two then

return to our normal life he stood up his anger gone but replaced with contempt I saw pain in his eyes and I

knew it was my fault but I remembered my friend's advice to be selfish for once he would eventually get over it he

didn't come to bed that night alone I downloaded dating apps created a profile

and waited for messages then I called Janet so how did it go she asked asked

excitedly he agreed but he's not happy his ego is wounded but he'll deal with it young men today are great or maybe

I'm just lucky I know James at work is eager to be with me for the rest of the week things were

cold at home the kids likely noticed my husband barely speaking to me but they didn't mention it he returned to our bed

but showed no affection only saying good night without hugging or kissing me

Friday morning I told him I was going out with the girls that night he hummed faintly gave me a look I was starting to

recognize then picked up his bag and left without another word I had packed a

bag in case of a major fight I kissed the kids goodbye and told them I might be home late at work my co-workers were

thrilled about my plans I showed them my change of clothes and the excitement

increased I sent a picture to Janet who assured me something would happen that night I spent the afternoon telling

three young men that I now had permission to play away from home are you serious James asked when I invited

him for drinks did your husband agree don't mention him just know that I'll be

at the nearest bar with my girlfriends if you show up you might need to keep me company what bar he asked confidently I

told him and he smiled saying he would meet me there after lunch a coworker whispered are you really going to

entertain James so soon why not my husband agreed so I'm not wasting time

you're on Tinder I laughed I've had so much interest in a day young men love

older women my husband can't compete with that and how does he deal with it we don't talk about it he stays home

with the kids does that seem fair she smiled who says it's fair they agreed to

it if they can't find other women that's their problem I wasn't sure my husband

would even look for another woman he was monogamous so his agreement was was odd

I tried to focus on work but kept texting Janet at 5:00 p.m. I changed

applied more makeup and met Janet and the girls we were soon surrounded by young men and James appeared excited to

see me we found a booth and talked when I suggested we go to my booked hotel room he practically dragged me out to

cheers for my friends we pounced on each other in the hotel room later I showered

dressed and checked out ignoring the receptionist's judgmental look at home I found the bedroom empty and

Mark in the study shaking him gently he woke and met my gaze with cold emotionless eyes go back to sleep Louise

he said rolling over and ignoring me are you coming to bed I'm in bed I told you

the rules Louise you think I'm going to share a bed with you after tonight fine then he scoffed back in the bedroom I

changed and got into bed missing his presence beside me if he wanted to sulk and sleep alone that was his problem if

this continued I wouldn't come home for the first couple of months I limited my date nights to Fridays and Saturdays

trying to maintain our relationship but he rarely shared a bed with me now and the kids were noticing

when I asked Mark about it he gave me a scathing look and offered to explain to them what I had asked him to do you

agreed to it I objected under duress he growled you were going to have fun

either way but I wasn't giving you a divorce you weren't taking the kids away

I would never have taken them Louise your behavior is injuring them they know

what's happening I wouldn't touch you now I don't know what STDs you're carrying his words took my breath away I

knew he was upset but his anger and hatred were intense I considered slapping him but knew he'd punch back

harder things grew colder between us we were a marriage and name only we hadn't

had love making since I asked for an open marriage did I miss him yes I

missed being in love with my husband and the way he held me but I wasn't ready to give up my new

lifestyle almost every weekend I had a new date from Tinder Janet and the girls

suggested meeting regularly after work so my outings increased to week nights and weekends sometimes I didn't make it

home staying at janets or a friend's house when too drunk to return safely I started storing clothes at work

or Jam to save time after 6 months there were weeks I barely went home I was

living my best life but didn't realize the damage I was doing to my marriage and family I'll be honest from the start

the night my wife asked for an open marriage my love for her died some may wonder how I could fall out of love

after 20 years but betrayal and disrespect can do that with a few words

she trampled our vows it felt like an excuse to cheat guilt-free as I cooled

off outside I knew I had to handle this calmly it was clear her friends had coached her I needed to talk to someone

I called Emily hi Mark hi Emily okay what's wrong we've been friends for 35

years you can't fool me everything came out all anger and hatred I hated my wife

because she ripped my heart out I don't remember my exact words but it wasn't pleasant are you sitting down Mark no

sit down I'll tell you what to do this won't be like my situation with Adam you have to play it differently rely on me

what should I do part of me wants to walk away but I can't leave the kids and custody battles rarely favor men I'm not

going to be a parttime dad stay married out of convenience turn off your emotions don't be her shoulder to cry on

the thought of making love to her after she's been with someone else is sickening exactly cut yourself off from

her emotionally but keep the house and kids focus on yourself and them go to the gym find Hobbies reconnect with

friends most importantly be there for the kids kids they'll understand what's happening she'll focus on her own needs

and may eventually leave what if she falls in love with someone else then she'll have to choose stay with the

family in name only or leave part of me wants to leave now but I want to stay

with the kids use the gray rock method show complete disinterest in her make

interactions with you unrewarding hide your emotions and keep conversations short and direct will it work probably

her request shows disinterest in you and the Family Focus on the kids if you divorce wait until the youngest is 18

live as neighbors if necessary thanks Emily always here for you mark focus on

your kids and yourself will you forgive her no we'll divorce eventually for now

we'll just be roommates that's a good mindset don't do anything stupid I won't

I'll protect myself where will you sleep tonight not in the marital bed I'll

visit you soon you'll need friends for what's ahead thanks Emily one more thing Mark I know

it's tough but you need to take advantage of this women will love you you're successful trim and handsome

you're a great father go on dates I'm not sure just think about it you deserve

happiness too going gry rock was hard and I'd snapped at Louise more than once

each time I berated myself but she got what she wanted so what did she care the first night she stayed over with someone

else nearly liquidated me she even had the nerve to ask me to join her in bed I barely restrained myself from spewing my

thoughts any residual love for her died that night I'll always care for her as the mother of our children but the

passion was gone I hardened my heart preparing for the inevitable following Emily's advice I focused on myself and

the kids I resumed going to the gym hired a personal trainer and took up cooking for the kids bonding with my

daughter when Louise started disappearing on weekends I sought help from my younger sister she bragged on me

for putting up with it but understood when I explained it was for the kids you should just leave with Emily she said

she's the one you should have married I muttered best not to know when she asked about Louis's

whereabouts when was the last time you did this she asked I'm not in the mood to talk about it Emily suggested finding

a pretty girl for one night my sister laughed at least three of my friends still hold a candle for you the gym

sessions are paying off right I feel more fit than I have in a while when I work the bag I imagine her or her

boyfriends as long as you don't slap her when was the last time you two talked

last week at dinner we only discuss the kids she spends all her time on her phone I saw three dating apps with

dozens of messages I don't care anymore she's my wife in name only an absolute strumpet my sister muttered I agreed but

didn't say it out loud Emily was the one person I relied on most the kids adored

Aunt Emily as their mother faded from their lives they appreciated Emily's presents especially my daughter Emily

and I spent many evenings together sometimes cuddling but not more daddy

why do you put up with this my daughter asked one night at dinner Louise still came home occasionally for dinner but

didn't notice I'd moved most of my stuff out of the marital bed yeah kids at school teased us but we went along with

what they called Mom my son added we're not the only kids with divorced or weirdly married parents I sighed

glancing at Emily who gave me a reproachful look did your mom ever explain what's going on I asked not

really she just said things might change in the future my daughter replied Dad we're not little kids we know everything

from the internet just tell us my son said we won't judge you at least you're

here I can't remember the last time mom said three words to me my daughter wiped her cheeks and Emily hugged her

immediately I won't go into details kids your mom changed our relationship and I

agreed because otherwise we would have lost the house and you do you still love her my daughter asked no I answered

bluntly my love for her died when she made the request and completely when she came home late after her first date does

she even love us anymore my daughter asked holding back tears Emily hugged her Tighter and looked at me of course

she loves you I replied but I felt like I was lying funny way to show it Dad my

son remarked I realize it's partly my fault look kids all I can do is continue to be the father I've always been I'll

always be there for you you can count on me my sister is helping too Emily added

I'm here for you as well my daughter hugged her tightly Emily's eyes sparkled she had wanted children but never had

any we like you Emily my son said with a smirk you make Dad happy he's smiling

again my son made me blush Emily smiled at me a knowing smile a few months

passed quickly and our lives changed I built an addition to the house as my private space a bedroom office and

living area the kids loved it and we could all play together when I worked from home they kept me company when

Emily visited we had our own space I avoided my wife when she was home and we only communicated through texts I didn't

care what she did for a living her paycheck still went into a joint account so bills were covered I slowly removed

her from my life including as a beneficiary on life insurance this was for my children's benefit Emily stayed

over often but we weren't carnal we slept in the the same bed but she understood I wasn't ready I still wore

my ring feeling like I was still a husband Emily didn't pressure me she just held me and whispered that she

loved me and would wait as long as I needed shek a fool Emily whispered one

night she has no idea what she's thrown away and you still have to go on dates

I'm a patient woman Mark she added smiling I confess once given the freedom

I went a little wild I had always been a faithful wife and mother dedicating nearly 20 years to my family it was time

to live a bit for myself yes my husband did the same and he could take advantage of our open relationship too he agreed

to it he could have said no And while we might have argued I would have understood deep down I know I would

never have cheated on him but I did go a little crazy with Tinder dates not all were successful but many young men were

eager to take me to a hotel time flew as I lived life to the fullest while still

keeping up with bills and staying in touch with the kids my husband avoided me at home and we barely spoke realizing

how much I missed out on my family hit me when I tried to spend a weekend at home conversations with my husband were

like talking to a brick wall only discussing the kids I missed him and the kids but was also having too much fun to

stop hi I exclaimed as I walked through the front door I'm home the lights were

on but no one responded in the kitchen my husband and two kids were having dinner with Emily there too I knew she

had been friends with my husband since childhood approaching them I stopped meeting my husband's gaze realizing he

still looked at me with disdain what are you doing here our daughter asked her

tone harsh I am here to spend time with my family she scoffed meeting my eyes

and smirking our son grinned and turned to Emily is there room for me I asked my

husband no he replied emotionless I noticed changes in the house the living

room looked like a museum the kitchen was painted and photos of us were missing in the bedroom it was clear my

husband hadn't used it in a while opening double doors I saw a large living space with a sleeping area an

entertainment center what is this I asked my part of

the house Mark replied flatly and why did you build it why didn't you tell me

he remained silent but his eyes said it all my kids smirked and Emily held his

hand under the table why are you here Mom our daughter asked aren't you

supposed to be on a date with one of your boyfriends I turned to my husband do

they know did you tell the kids about our Arrangement they've been asking where

you've been I told them I won't lie to our kids for you it was your

decision you've hardly been home for months our son added I'm surprised

you're even here why are you here our daughter repeated we were having a nice

dinner until you made it awkward I looked at my husband are you going to fix our kids attitudes Mark no he said

not looking at me but at Emily our kids are teenagers and entitled to their

opinions do you even know how old they are you missed my birthday our daughter

declared and you missed my team winning the Grand Final our son added they

finished eating and Emily without a word motioned for them to go to the other room so I could talk to my husband I'm

pretty sure I stood there opening and closing my mouth as Mark got up pulled a beer from the fridge and leaned against

the counter sipping for a minute or two before asking why are you here

Louise I wanted to spend time with my family this weekend he looked away then

nodded good luck with that I'm busy tonight and this weekend as for the kids

you can always ask them he turned to face me remember the agreements Louise I

don't care what you're doing now but you can try to talk to the kids if you want just don't hold your

breath after 5 minutes of talking to them I realized neither wanted anything to do with me sighing I went back to the

bedroom feeling alone in my own house okay I muttered if that's the way

it is I'll just leave see you later probably not our daughter replied

sarcastically I grabbed my bag hurried out and slammed the car door hitting the

steering wheel in frustration tears flowed as I blamed everything on my husband until I

remembered his look when I first made the request and the night I came back from my first date that look of

indifference chilled me I wondered if I had ruined everything that mattered had

he been right had my friends led me astray maybe their husbands would have

tolerated it but Mark was always proud realizing the truth of our agreement I

cried harder he had completely disconnected from me we were married only out of convenience and I doubted

we'd ever go back to the way things were I couldn't turn to my friends they'd be to blame for my marriage's collapse

driving aimlessly I eventually parked at a bar inside I ordered a drink which soon became two and three is this seat

taken a kind voice asked a man looked at me no it's not taken I

replied sniffling but I'm not sure I'd be good company maybe you need some company it's not nice to see a woman

sitting alone looking lonely and frustrated he sat down bought himself a drink and offered to buy me one need

someone to talk to I'm not sure you'd want to hear my story is it that bad the

more I think about it the more I wonder if I've ruined everything he held out his hand I'm Tom and you are I took his

hand i'm Louise now we're no longer strangers someone or something has

broken your heart are you sure you want to hear about this I'm in no hurry I

told him the general story and he listened nodding and understanding when I finished he ordered another drink for

us do you want to maintain your relationship Louise honestly I don't know if my husband will ever get our

relationship back on track he's just angry with me how can you fix anything if you won't

talk to you I just want my husband to love me again I whispered these other

men don't love me it's just a distraction after more drinks I couldn't drive Tom suggested I get a hotel or I

could go home with him I live alone and have spare bedrooms he said I don't

expect anything Louise I agreed Tom called a cab and I grabbed my overnight

bag from the car he lived on the other side of town once inside died he showed

me the house including the bedroom I would use we had a night cap on the couch sitting next to each other you're

a beautiful woman Louise he said softly putting his hand on my

thigh ever think about finding one or two lovers who make you feel special I don't want to fall in love

with someone else I replied you can love more than one person he said I smiled

finding him very handsome and different from my husband I'm not here to tell you how to live your life Louise you know almost nothing

about me the next morning I put on spare clothes and met him in the kitchen after

greeting me with a kiss on the cheek we ate breakfast and got to know each other

surprisingly he was in an open relationship too I'm always honest with any woman I

meet I don't wear my wedding ring when my wife isn't around because it's annoying but I always tell the truth

before we sleep together my wife and I only see each other once a month do you have children they're grown

and live with my wife most of the time do you have many Mistresses in the early days I slept with any woman interested

now I prefer real relationships sipping his coffee he asked what are your plans for the

weekend Louise I don't have any would you like to spend it with me he took my hand I

saw a beautiful upset woman last night and wanted to comfort her I also hoped she'd take an interest in me I

smiled I'd love to spend the weekend with you Tom Tom was well off his house

was luxurious his car something my husband and I could never afford after a

day together he took me to a top restaurant we danced until late and I kissed him first making him

smile in the back of the cab I snuggled against him at home after midnight we

sipped drinks and talked quietly before ending up in his bedroom Sunday at breakfast Tom gave me

advice he explained that his open marriage worked because he and his wife lived apart and agreed on it I had

surprised my husband and forced him to agree Tom insisted I repair my relationship with my children he advised

me to figure out how to make it work he also suggested mending things with Mark who seemed like a good man HEK a

wonderful man almost as wonderful as your wife I love my wife and plan to

retire with her soon when I'm home this all ends what does she think she misses

me but has two lovers when I'm away when I'm home all her attention is on me

things seem to be working out for you to not without problems but we avoid jealousy and

resentment after spending the afternoon together he drove me back to the bar where my car was parked with his arm

around me I realized I might have been approaching things wrong one night stands were fun but left an emotional

void Tom a decent man gave me solid advice on how to make things work in my

own marriage keep in touch with your husband the most important thing is your children rebuild that

relationship I'll do my best when can we see each other again as soon as you want

I'm not seeing anyone else but promise you won't be jealous if I meet someone else I might get another semi-permanent

boyfriend he laughed and I realized how much I like sound now you're thinking

right Louise you've had your fun and that's fine but now you realize you need something more serious and Lasting maybe

lovers who truly care about you I hugged him tightly I'll call you soon I said I'm

looking forward to it Louise I watched him drive away then got into my car taking a deep breath I drove

home thinking about what to say to my family I stopped by my friend's place to pick up my thing

Janet seemed ready to argue but I told her I was done with meaningless fun and needed a real relationship she wished me

luck as I left when I got home it was late I gathered my clothes and headed to the kitchen I heard noise from my

husband's room I had to hold back sobs realizing he had separated our lives

without finalizing the divorce our son Matthew was playing a video game on a new TV and our daughter Zara was

studying nearby outside I saw my husband on the new Terrace hugging a Woman Who Wasn't

Emily Matthew noticed me and gestured to Zara who pulled out her headphones I

knelt between them taking their hands and tears rolled down my cheeks please

don't doubt that I love you I said I'm sorry I missed things I promise to be

better Matthew's lip quivered and I hugged him tightly why are you gone all

the time Mom he asked breaking my heart I'm sorry baby I miss you I'll try to be

better are you really with other men letun not talk about that Matthew that's

for your father and me to deal with I kissed his cheeks and ruffled his hair

I'll try to attend all your games next season turning to Zara I saw she was

unconvinced you broke Daddy's heart mom she declared what a wife you're too

young to understand I'm not too young she shouted I'm 16 almost 17 I you know

what's going on what happens in my marriage stays between your father and me but your behavior affects us she

burst into tears and ran away I didn't hear Mark until I felt his presence are

you staying for dinner Louise he asked coldly I'll try to be here more often

Mark is this your wife a young woman asked she was stunning and no older than

25 I'm Cindy what about no visitors Mark I asked she's here to keep me company

not that you have the right to tell me what to do we have a free relationship remember I'm just exercising my rights I

felt annoyed and jealous watching Mark and Zara prepare dinner Cindy sipped wine smiling at mark my daughter had

always been close to her father but they seemed even closer now Mark graciously

seated me at the table but I was ignored he continued his conversation with Cindy

and Zara after dinner Mark walked Cindy to her car he waved as she drove away

and then walked back into the house Mark I said quietly he stopped and looked at

me without anger or coldness he wasn't smiling but he seemed happy can we talk

Mark he sighed looking tired about what Louise about us I'm still your wife

you're still my husband I still love you I never wanted this to happen I thought

he might explode with with rage but he clenched his fists and sat down you wanted an open relationship Louise I

accepted when was the last time we slept in the same bed I won't share a bed with my wife after she's dated other men

remember what I said no emotional support no physical support if you want

love and affection find someone else this is what you wanted I was happily

married now I'm married in name only who is she I asked you brought another woman

into our home we never did anything here he said bluntly and who she is is none

of your business I don't care who you're with and who I'm with is none of your business he stood and looked at me with

pity everything that happened is a consequence of your decisions Louise I warned you be careful what you wish for

you got what you wanted but didn't care about the impact on our family later I was watching TV in the

living room when my son appeared I patted the seat next to me and he sat down do you miss your mom I

asked yeah he said knowing I wouldn't sleep with my husband that night I

turned off the lights and went to Mark's part of the house one door was closed the other a jar he was on the couch with

our daughter who was trembling and crying I knew I was the cause if I walked in things would get ugly sighing

I quietly closed the door and headed to my bedroom it was no longer our bedroom and I wasn't sure my husband would ever

return to it I took Emily's advice and decided if my wife could have fun so could I I quickly found many young women

interested in a successful 40-year-old man friends and co-workers set me up with women they knew I didn't want to

date anyone too young but Cindy 25 was too cute to resist Charlotte 28 was a

career woman seeking love on her own terms Melissa in her early 30s was a lawyer and an amazing lover and then

there was Jessica 21 the daughter of a cooworker who was very honest about her interest in me I'm partial to handsome

older men she said on her first date Mark can I be honest sure your wife is

an idiot the only surprise is that this Arrangement works I'm jealous sometimes but I knew it wasn't forever I wanted

someone to make me feel special and we all know about Emily I heard she extended her deadline yes I now have a

year to have fun do you think she's afraid to commit to you maybe we've always been in love but it's been

platonic then you need to show her how you feel how can you be so young and wise all your girlfriends think it's a

good idea we all love Emily and agree you two are perfect for each other Jessica clung to me don't feel guilty

sometimes a woman needs to show she wants you the next morning we had breakfast together then I drove her home

after a long kiss she went inside with a dreamy smile I knew I'd hear about it at work back home Matthew was yelling into

his gaming headset Zara was at the table busy with her own things I kissed her head and cheek have you two been okay

the last two nights I'm 16 Daddy I can take care of myself and your brother he

hasn't been too intrusive any sign of your mother not since Wednesday fair

enough what do you want for dinner we had dinner together Matthew ate quickly and returned to his game Zara grinned at

me as we cleaned up I grabbed a beer and went to the deck Zara joined me settling on my lap daddyy are you happy hm

depends am I happy with you yes I love my children am I happy with my current situation no am I happy with my personal

life besides your mother yes quite content I think Mom has a boyfriend now

good for her you really don't care do you no honey we live Separate Lives the

only things we share are you two some finances this house and a piece of paper

you two were never meant to be in involved I assumed your mom's disappearances would be noticed but I wouldn't lie for her I tried not to do

the same but she flaunted it almost like I couldn't do the same you've met some beautiful women Dad yes I have four

beautiful women who know I'm married they know it's not forever they know I'm not leaving my marriage because of Emily

Daddy are you in love with her Zara whispered she rarely called me Daddy now only when she wanted to say something

important I pulled her closer pondering her question Emily is my best friend

Zara she's been by my side longer than anyone I've helped her through breakups and even fought guys who mistreated her

sounds like love daddy your mother took my love for granted Emily never did that

we've never been in a relationship but I can rely on her more than anyone your mother knew that Emily warned her that

if she broke my heart she might end up wanting to be with me but are you having fun in the meantime Emily knows

everything I do and even encourages me that's what friends are for Dad but I'll

be thrilled when you marry her wait what did she say something no but you deserve

to be happy and mom hasn't made you happy since she made that request are you going to divorce her soon no she

lives her life and I live mine when you and your brother leave home we'll divorce Emily arrived Tuesday night and

my daughter seemed to play matchmaker the whole time my son was oblivious but I cast reproachful glances at my

daughter after they went to bed Emily snuggled up to me wrapping her arm around my waist she started giggling

your daughter wasn't subtle today Mark she whispered no she's been talking about us getting married Emily pressed

closer and what do you think of that idea we need to get a divorce first do

you love me Mark the only people I love more are my children and Louise I don't love her anymore Emily so apart from

your children you love me the most yes I loved Louise more once we dated married

had kids and built a life together but now I think about you a lot I'm grateful

to Louise for giving me two wonderful children that night Emily stayed with me

nothing physical happened we weren't ready my daughter was thrilled to have Emily with us at breakfast my son wasn't

bothered and told me about his mother's apology and promised to be more present she had been showing up more often He

also mentioned his mother's standing dinner invitation which his sister never accepted walking Emily to her car she

said I'd like to stay the night again it's fine because we don't have love making that's one of the rules right yes

and I'm sticking to it too Louise came home on Wednesday hoping for a family dinner but I had a date with Cindy she

begged me to stay as I walked to the door I gave her a neutral look please stay Mark it's not my fault Louise but

we can I have plans our children knew I wouldn't be here tonight I'll see them tomorrow can't you stay please for me I

glared at her then walked out the door Cindy was waiting for me at the pub Louise didn't need to know about it it

was none of her business he hates me I muttered snuggling up to Tom I slept at

home alone but enjoyed these moments with Tom usually three times a week I hadn't found a second steady lover yet

and wasn't sleeping around as much I think it's over Tom do you know what he's doing I chuckled my daughter loves

telling me about all the women he dates she hopes he divorces me and marries Emily his best friend

and these other women they visit the house Mark cooks for them he used to

cook for me and your daughter she's not happy with you she takes pleasure in our

marriage collapsing she blames me for everything daddy's little girl I took a

moment to control my emotions I broke his heart Tom he shut me out but our

daughter knows what he's thinking what are you going to do I think my daughter

is right I don't know how to save our marriage because Mark won't talk to me we only discuss the kids or finances I

text him about how much I miss him but he never responds I don't call because I know he won't

answer Tom made me feel better by making love to me if I couldn't get my husband back Tom was someone I enjoyed spending

time with another man Daniel was interested but unsure about dating a

married woman despite my assurances that my marriage was failing I loved spending

time with Tom he took me on day we spent weekends together and had deep

conversations we tried not to talk about our other partners but sometimes they came up a few months later we were lying

in bed I have a question Tom said anything Tom how would you feel about

going on trips with me I travel a lot for business in the states in Europe I won't be so lonely with a beautiful

woman by my side what about your wife she's too busy to join me I want you to

come Lou really I love spending time with you and want you to keep me company while I'm

gone how long would I be gone a couple of weeks to a month depending on my

deals I'll need to tell the kids of course I know your daughter is 17 and

your son is 15 how was her birthday awkward both families are aware

of the situation I thought she didn't want me there but I think Mark insisted on my presence maybe there's still some

love left he knows my relationship with our daughter is broken but our son still

loves me I hear from him almost every day and try to call him every night when

do you need to know as soon as possible I'm leaving for the states on

Thursday on Monday I came home to no guests Mark Was preparing dinner with

Zara and they both looked at me when I entered are you here for dinner Mark

asked yes do you mind it's still your house Louise I almost cried it was the

nicest thing he'd said since I made the request Matthew noticed me came over and hugged me he was still growing taller

and would soon be as tall as his father for the first time in months the four of us sat down to dinner we didn't talk

much but I couldn't stop smiling at my husband I still hoped to save our marriage after dinner Mark served

dessert ice cream with chocolate sauce everyone relaxed but I knew my words

would ruin the mood Mark I know you don't want to hear about my business but Tom asked me to go on a business trip I

won't be around for a couple of weeks to a month if it affects our children I'll listen Louise Tom wants me to accompany

him on trips his wife doesn't want to go so he asked me it means I won't be here as often it's okay Mom Matthew said

where will you go to the United States and Europe Zara said nothing her

expression impassive I looked at Mark who was looking at me with an unreadable expression until he asked a question I

wasn't expecting do you love him I love you Mark I answered quietly I'm still

your wife and you're still my husband I didn't ask that Louise I asked do you

love him I I don't know I enjoy his company I looked away then back at him

and do you love everyone you're with he smirked and started clearing the table Zara got up to help him and I knew the

conversation was over I retired to the living room feeling somewhat relieved when Matthew joined me later that

evening I was already in bed when the door opened a warm body hugged me it

took a few seconds to realize it was my son I'm sorry Mom he whispered turning

away I hugged him tightly and burst into tears he stroked my back and whispered

that he loved me which made me feel better thank you baby I

whispered I spent the next two nights at home before heading out with Tom on our first trip together Mark and Zara were

polite but mostly ignored me Matthew was affectionate sensing my loneliness I

tried to explain things to him dad always said we should keep in touch with you he told me making me smile I

arranged to work remotely while away so Thursday morning I packed for Tom to pick me up when I got downstairs Mark

had left for work the kids were having breakfast Zara barely said two words to

me which I expected as she was leaving I asked if I could hug her she softened a

bit and hugged me briefly I really love you Zara I whispered you're my first

born she murmured that she hoped I had a good time and left Matthew hugged me and

asked me to take pictures if I was sightseeing Tom picked me up a few minutes later over the next few months I

traveled a lot with Tom to North and South America Asia and Europe he paid

for everything and I was introduced as his partner I developed a crush on him

he was romantic and generous one day I was checking social media and saw what I'd been missing Mark didn't block me

and used it to update family and friends seeing pictures of him and the kids in New Zealand I felt hurt neither Mark nor

the kids had mentioned it seeing Emily in many pictures stung the most after

lunch Tom found me crying he hugged me and checked my phone I feel partly to blame he said you're

spending a lot of time with me maybe you want to stop traveling for a while and reconnect with the kids are you sure

about that Louise he smiled at me I love you Louise that made me smile we had

expressed our love on our first trip but I couldn't imagine leaving my wife introducing your children to me would be

I'm not sure after returning home I tried to spend more time at home and with Tom it

was hard to Corner Mark but one evening I did you took the kids to New Zealand I

asked why I wanted to give them a vacation they hadn't had one in years

why exclude me because you were with your boyfriend at the time he replied I

would have cancelled he turned to look at me I'm not going to pretend to be a happy family to fulfill your needs

Louise I wanted to take our children on vacation you're too busy jetting around the world with your boyfriend friend

Emily came with us for company while the kids had fun Emily is my best friend and

has been my support since this Arrangement began I invited her over for company what about Christmas what about

it are you planning anything am I involved that's up to you

Louise Mark if you just talk to me his eyes turned cold we have nothing to talk

about since the night you made your request you've made your thoughts on our marriage clear Mark I miss you I want my

husband back I can't remember the last time we shared a bed and it's your fault Louise I refuse to be carnal with a wife

who wants other men but you agreed to it he chuckled shaking his head you still

don't get it I never wanted this I wanted my wife to stay faithful you pushed for an open marriage so I had to

agree or lose you either way I lost I would never cheat on you mark you were

so eager to be with other men don't take me for a fool Louise you're with other

women too Mark don't make this all about me he stepped closer his anger melting

away your friend Janet put this nonsense in your head do you know her husband finally kicked her out she partied and

brought men home while he took care of the kids I was shocked I hadn't spoken to Janet in months and never expected

her to be so disrespectful to her husband I realized Mark had probably figured everything out from the start I

don't know what they'd say Louise he said emotionless you took advice from

people who destroyed our marriage there's no going back he stepped forward again why did you do it Louise was I a

bad husband or lover did I make you unhappy I was bored not good enough

boredom isn't a reason to tell your husband you want other men I met his gaze my eyes filling with tears

I couldn't explain without further destroying our marriage I'd realized I'd made a selfish request forced him into

something he hated and listened to bad advice my friends made dating seem exciting and I found that attractive

they filled my head with stories of advantages and opportunities in an open marriage and what did they say about the

husband who had to deal with that I lowered my head Janet said it was never

fair I never wanted anyone else Louise he said said sadly until that night I

was a happily married man your request showed complete disrespect for me and

our marriage I sighed we hadn't spoken like this since the night he agreed to the

arrangement I knew this was the end of our marriage his love for me had faded

at least as far as being my husband what do we do Mark keep this Arrangement

until the kids are 18 then we'll decide I burst into tears and to my surprise he

put his arms around me breaking me completely I collapsed against him clinging tightly I knew he didn't love

me but he probably still didn't want to see me cry the love was gone but so was the hate wek spend Christmas together

Louise he said but I'm living my own life now our marriage is practically over you should realize that by now

you're trying to hold on to something that has withered and died even if I stop everything you're different now and

so am I I don't want to lose you mark you're my husband and I still love you he sighed

but didn't let go gently caressing my back he remained silent knowing the

truth already I knew what he was thinking and what he would eventually do I couldn't hate him for that finally he

let go giving me a chance to wipe my eyes I met his gaze there was no warmth

but he understood my emotions do you want some dinner he asked I almost cried

again it had been too long since we had dinner together we cooked something simple and filling the conversation was

awkward and some topics were off limits but after a couple of beers we started

reminiscing where are the kids I finally asked Zara is out with friends Matthew

is at a sleepover I was just enjoying a night alone it's okay Louise I think we needed

this conversation Zara hates me he shook his head no she

doesn't hate you she's daddy's little girl and doesn't like that her mom has a boyfriend what does she think about

daddy having a girlfriend he chuckled I think she's a little jealous she's felt

neglected do you love Emily Mark you know I love Emily she's been my best

friend most of my life are you with her now no she's been there for support she

won't be with me until we're divorced I couldn't hold back the tears are you serious about this divorce

are you happy in our marriage this is the longest conversation we've had in a year I wish things were like they were

before but you can't turn back time what's done is done he invited me to have a drink in

his cabin it was decorated with love warm and the kids loved spending time

there we shared a bottle of wine talking about the past the next morning morning

I woke up in his arms I realized I'd had too much to drink disappointment set in

when I realized nothing had happened Mark opened his eyes and smiled apparently we had a bit to drink

last night we're still dressed so nothing happened Mark snuggling closer I

asked would you be interested when was the last time you did it over a week ago

he raised his eyebrows I've never stopped finding you attractive Louise you're still a beautiful woman do you

mean that of course I'm not going to lie about that Mark I know you don't

particularly like me but would you entertain your wife we haven't done anything in over a year I miss being

with you he sighed and pulled me tighter Whispering he was sorry I whispered back

that he should never apologize he had closed off a part of himself from me and he couldn't give me that part

anymore thank you for telling me I'm still beautiful I whispered he

disappeared to take a shower then got dressed and had a quick breakfast as he was leaving I asked for a hug he put his

bag down and hugged me tightly for the first time in a year in a way it was a symbol of the end one last hug before he

left but I knew one day we would hug for the last time before our marriage ended

I love you Mark I whispered I've never stopped loving you he didn't respond

I followed him to the driveway watching him get into his SUV I couldn't resist waving and he

honked before driving away you're 18 now Zara and Matthew is 16 I think it's time

are you finally going to divorce her you shouldn't be so excited Zara dad your marriage has been a sham for too long

you deserve to be happy with someone who loves you I'll let Matthew know and when your mom gets back I'll give her the

paperwork I'd prefer a joint application to make it faster your mom knows I want a divorce so this shouldn't be a shock

did you tell Emily yes she wanted to wait until we were divorced but we've waited long enough I'll discuss living

arrangements with your mom Louise hadn't lied to our son about Tom she spent time

with him when he traveled but was home when she wasn't away we spent Christmas together almost like old times my side

of the family was friendly and her side seemed somewhat supportive talking longer than we had in over a year helped

thaw our feelings we became friends again but the love and closeness were gone we could be around

each other and talk easily I knew she still loved me and I hoped I might ReDiscover my love for her but my

feelings weren't the same I couldn't love her like I used

to when she came home a few nights later I gave her a couple of days to settle in I wasn't going to be cruel and file for

divorce immediately the hatred I felt in the first few months had long gone finding my own girlfriends helped me

understand her up to a point Emily helped me stay calm one evening we had

dinner as a family and Zara was affectionate with her mother I felt it was because she knew what was coming

Matthew always loved his mother though he knew what was happening he was upset but understood it was necessary alone

with Louise I asked her to wait at the table while I got the papers and placed them in front of her she immediately

cried realizing what they were without looking I can't apologize for this Louise the only thing that could have

been different was doing it 12 months later but I stayed to be near the kids after I stopped hating you I didn't mind

sharing a house we never brought lovers here and never flaunted our relationships I took her hand read the

papers if you agree we can file them as a joint application Zara is 18 now so

she's not considered a child Matthew is 16 I think he should stay here until he's 18 what do you want to do that's up

to you Louise I made sure she was looking into my eyes as I added I'm going to be with Emily after the divorce

I'll propose to her and likely move in with her as for this house you can buy me out or we can sell it are you going

to stay here I don't plan on leaving yet Louise our children are grown and it's time for us to move on I never wanted

this Mark she whispered wiping her cheeks I know Louise you wanted it to be short term but it lasted I've told the

other women I'm divorcing you and moving on with Emily my words hurt her and she cried harder I continued to hold her

hand if this was a year ago I would have said things that would have broken your heart even more I don't want to do that

now I want to end our marriage on good terms Emily warned me about breaking your heart she always looked out for my

best interests can we stay friends Mark we're already friends aren't we she

smiled we've gotten closer in the last few months than we had in the 12 months after your request but our relationship

isn't what it used to be we have two children and that will always bind us when will you move out I'll coordinate

with Emily if you want me to move out if you want me to stay I'll stay but you'll have to accept Emily visiting in our

relationship I'm not sure I can live with that Louise whispered then I'll leave Emily is happy for me to be with

her all the time she really loves you doesn't she I had no regrets until that

night marrying you was the best day of my life equal to the birth of our children I loved you with all my heart

for so long go through the papers and sign them I'll talk to Emily and arrange

a moving date she didn't cry much I hugged her and stroked her back I knew I

had just broken her heart she hoped we could save our marriage but she knew I had talked about divorce more than once

in the evening after moving to my side of the house I called Emily and told her I had given the papers to Louise Emily

tried to hide her excitement as she asked when I would move in with her I knew I would be moving out since Emily owned her house and was looking forward

for w to me joining her I wasn't bothered by leaving the house to Louise as I knew she would agree to sell it

once Matthew was old enough the decision lifted a weight off my shoulders and the tension eased Louise was upset but kept

her cool Zara overheard Louise Telling Tom she needed some time and had informed him of the situation Louise

disappeared the day I moved in taking Matthew to her parents they knew about everything including our divorce she

signed the papers and all that remained was the Court's final judgment Emily came over while I was packing I greeted

her with a kiss and after loading my car with boxes and suitcases she took a few smaller boxes insisting that her house

would be our home leaving the house for the last time I felt a heavy heart we

had been married for over 20 years and while we didn't celebrate that anniversary the house held many good

memories before leaving I wrote Louise a short letter to make her smile I no longer felt hate or bitterness it was

time for both of us to live our lives when we arrived at my new home we dropped off our things and placed most

of my clothes in our bedroom I've had several tests Mark she whispered I'm

still capable of having children I smiled we can definitely discuss it I

love you mark over the past few months I've fallen in love with you you've been my best friend for most of my life

believe me I feel the same way now when was the last time you were with someone

a couple of months ago I got tested after my last time with Cindy I'm fine

when was your last time she blushed I was waiting for you to start the divorce I knew I couldn't wait until it was

official she made dinner that night and we sat at a candle lit table sharing wine and easy conversation after dinner

we loaded the dishwasher and she led me to her bedroom Emily was different from Louise shorter and Slimmer 2 months

later a month after our divorce was finalized I proposed to Emily after a lovely dinner at the harbor she rushed

to me when I put the ring on her finger at home she thanked me for making her so happy I told the kids about the

engagement Zara was thrilled as she adored Emily Matthew was happy but had

hoped his parents would reconcile I didn't tell Louise during the divorce proceedings we kept our distance

settling everything without seeing each other Emily didn't want a lavish wedding just an engagement ring a white dress

and vows to make us husband and wife our second wedding was small with only close family and friends both my children

attended Matthew was surprised but accepted the invitation showing loyalty to his mother I didn't invite Louise

knowing it would hurt her by then we were socializing again and she had visited my house more than once Emily

didn't mind Louise but she suggested that my ex-wife lived with many regrets on our wedding day Emily was 5 months

pregnant she was radiant looking forward to becoming a mother and I couldn't wait to be a father again Mark found his

happiness the day he married Emily I wasn't invited and probably wouldn't have gone if I had been despite

everything I was happy for them Emily looked beautiful in the pictures I had

hated her for a while after Mark moved out but those feelings faded after she invited me over and we talked about

everything marrying Mark had been the best day of my life matched only by the birth of our children I regret asking

for an open marriage and acting on it the next day that day my husband stopped loving and trusting me marking the

beginning of the end my relationship with Tom slowed down after the divorce I

loved him but he would never leave his wife we eventually ended things

amicably alone in the big house with just my son as Zara had moved out for University I felt the weight of my

decisions Zara blamed me for everything but still visited on weekends it would

take time to fully mend our relationship Finding Love Again was hard men like

Mark and Tom were rare with Mark I ruined a beautiful marriage and Tom was a good-hearted man who never

wanted a full commitment I dated occasionally but found most men insincere I was honest about my divorce

which led to harsh judgments and names years later I met JN who seemed like a good match we dated and though he was a

decent lover there were no sparks like with Mark or Tom I decided to settle for

companionship over passion on Christmas day I went to John's Apartment apartment finding it empty I discovered an address

and drove there finding his car and another unfamiliar one at the house a woman answered the door hello can I help

you I'm looking for John and who are you I'm his mistress I'm sorry but I didn't

know he was married her eyes darkened you didn't know he never wore a

ring or mentioned you I was in an open marriage and never would have gotten involved if I'd known she sighed

thanking me as Jon appeared oh crap he whispered you're an idiot JN I said I

never would have been involved if I'd known you were married Diane his wife apologized to me I'm sorry Diana I've

been through this before and had no idea I looked at Jon again you're such an

idiot and by the way it's over between us I never lied about my past or why I

got divorced I know I screwed up but you're just a cheating piece of crap

getting back in the car I refused to cry over him I felt sorry for Diana and hoped they didn't have kids or if they

did that they were grown so the divorce wouldn't affect them he'd probably claim I was crazy or lying but I knew carnal

details about him that only a wife would know driving aimlessly around town I

didn't know where to go the kids were with Emily Mark and their families and I didn't want to intrude even even though

I had a standing invitation I stopped at the house I'd kept after the divorce but couldn't

bring myself to go inside and spend Christmas alone sighing I drove to my ex-husband's home mark opened the door

saw me and hugged me as I cried I keep ruining everything I sobbed into his

chest unexpectedly I felt another person hug me stay with us Emily saidou still

family Louise Mark you were always welcome to join us Louise our children

are here and you can spend time with our daughter I'll introduce you as Aunt Louise I looked at Mark's face he hadn't

changed much since our divorce and still looked as happy as he did in the early years of our marriage are you sure you're okay both

of them held my hands we're sure Mark replied it's Christmas a time for family

gratitude and forgiveness I've already forgiven you Louise it's time you forgive yourself my daughter smiled and

hugged me as I held my grandson Mark's parents were friendly as always and Emily's parents were polite and

welcoming Matthew hugged me for what felt like hours spending the day with such a loving family made me smile again

Zara her husband and child left in the afternoon and Matthew left shortly after to see his girlfriend both sets of

parents left early leaving me with Mark Emily and their three-year-old daughter

I explained what had happened while we sipped wine they were sympathetic and understanding

Mark even offered to confront JN which made me smile I couldn't stay all night but Emily suggested a place for me to

stay I'm going to sell the house I told them it's too big for me now I'll find

an apartment or something please stay tonight Louise Mark added we managed to

live together for almost 2 years when things were tough now that we're friends you don't have to leave are you sure I

noticed them glance at each other and smile pack your things Louise Youk always be welcome here Emily replied

after a long shower I watched from the doorway as Mark read a story to their daughter holding back tears remembering

how he had done the same for our daughter long ago heading to the guest room that Emily had prepared Mark gave

me a hug before Emily did the same I hope we can be good friends in the future she said quietly it means I

get to see him more often do you still love him I nodded barely holding back

tears I'm so sorry Louise I hope you understand I'm sorry too I heard their

bedroom door close and shut my own door lying in bed I hated being alone but it

was better than any other option but being with Mark I pondered my life and future maybe I should focus on my career

and grandchildren and give up dating there was no jealousy in Emily she had the man she wanted and I wasn't a threat

maybe I could just be her friend tomorrow was another day eventually I would figure it out