## **Story 1**

life can mess up your plans which is why I don't bother planning anymore I used

to be big on planning before my divorce at work I'd plan for all possible emergencies in my department I had

backup plans ready in case the main ones didn't work today I got a call saying I

needed to see my ex-wife I hadn't seen her in over a year and wasn't keen on it but since my daughter asked I had to go

my daughter Sammy was really persistent so I drove back to town it took me almost an hour to get through the busy

freeways to the city hospital where Sammy had taken her mom I parked and hoped I wouldn't be there long at the

information desk I learned my ex-wife Erica had been in the hospital for 2 days a nurse took me to her room but

said she was still asleep what's wrong with her I asked your wife she started I

interrupted saying ex-wife very ex-wife with a smile the nurse smiled back but

then looked serious dad seriously you aren't flirting with the nurse while Mom's in the hospital are you said my

daughter behind me of course not Sammy I said if I were flirting seriously I

would have at least asked I glanced at the nurse Bonnie she said ooh that name

suits you I said my daughter then pushed me into her mom's room breaking our Smiley moment the room had four beds and

was the most depressing place I'd been in whether in a hospital or anywhere where else this room is terrible huh she

said I Shrugged dad she's here cuz she doesn't have health insurance Darren

can't add her to our plan the only person who could is her voice trailed off Sammy honey I love you more than

anyone i' do almost anything for you but you got to get that your mom and I are divorced I did everything the judge said

but not everything she wanted Sammy said softly we stood by the bed looking at

the sleeping woman she never wanted a divorce you know Sammy said quietly she still loves you

even now people in Hell want ice water I said coldly but they're down there for

what they did your mom and I are divorced because of what she did when we were married I know what she did Sammy

said I was there but I can't help but feel you two still belong together she

loves you so much Dad look at her she's falling apart some people don't age well

I said coldly maybe she needs to take care of herself she needs her husband Sammy spat she

needs love and care that's why she's wasting away you woke me for this I said

mockingly who's her husband do you have any compassion Sammy asked you don't

know compassion I snapped I put up with her for years gave her chances but she couldn't let go Dad don't you want

someone to settle down with and enjoy life for good been there done that I said bitterly thought I had had that

person loved her enough to put my pride aside and try to fix things even after I found out what she was doing but she

couldn't let it go some women can love two men at once Samantha said and some men can handle that I replied but not me

why am I here anyway I've been here since we brought her Samantha said I needed a break to go home shower change

and to see my husband Darren sat with her yesterday but he doesn't like Mom he

used to until I stopped three family is almost destroyed because of two messed up people I said maybe they belong

together don't you have any compassion Samantha asked sometimes I can't find my

heart I snapped she tore it out didn't you already get your revenge Samantha

asked you've crushed her spirit what more do you want I didn't get revenge I

said I walked away I still don't understand Samantha said you're not the

type to walk away there's so much I don't get in these 2 years since the divorce like what I asked we split

everything except the house it just didn't make sense she said mom didn't want any of that stuff she just wanted

you and it just seemed like you guys should have had way more money than you actually did your mom's lawyer went over

all of our finances I Shrugged so dad then why are you driving a customized

Mustang that my husband claims cost at least $50,000 when Mom can't even afford a car she asked maybe my credit is

better I said anyway I'll sit here and play games on my iPad while she sleeps for a few hours I'll give you a break

honey hopefully she won't wake up if she does I'll call you immediately what's wrong with her anyway dad mom has been

diagnosed with severe depression symptoms she's actually on medication for it for some reason she took all of

her pills at once we had to have her stomach pumped she also hasn't been eating the way she should and she's been

drinking too much alcohol she's exhausted and dehydrated and we still don't know whether she took all of the

pills by accident or if she was trying something said Sammy so the chances are she probably

won't even wake up right I asked smiling right said Sammy but Dad if she does

please be nice to her for me okay Sammy I said my daughter kissed me on the

cheek and left the room I sat down in the chair next to the bed and got out my iPad I started out opening the book I

was reading but quickly lost track of the book as my thoughts wandered back to 2 years ago when this had all started Ed

we do strange things for our kids when Sammy was little she liked making odd mixes of candy I love her so much so I'd

eat whatever she made and say it was great once she invited us over for dinner it was nice but Samantha still

couldn't cook the roast was super dry Darren kept refilling my drink probably

knowing the roast wasn't good luckily I don't drink much or I'd have been drunk it was nice spending time with family I

hung out with Samantha's son John named after me he was adorable and could do no wrong in my eyes the Highlight was when

Sam and Darren told us she was pregnant again Darren what are you doing to my daughter I joked we discuss the usual

topics when our kids are expecting we all like the name Elizabeth if it's a girl after Darren's mom I suggested

Peter for a boy after Darren's dad which he liked then things took a turn you

already have a grandkid named after you Erica said let someone else pick this time what do you have in mind I teased

let me guess Erica for a girl Eric for a boy well actually I was thinking Randall

she said we could call him Randy Randall James Dylan sounds nice the mood changed

suddenly Samantha looked at me I'm not sure about that she said I prefer dad's

suggestion don't you Darren Darren hadn't looked at me yet he was still smiling thinking about his dad being

happy with a grandkid named after him he just nodded Erica reached for my hand but I pulled away sharply Samantha

hadn't know noticed my reaction what do you think Dad she asked in a cold tone I

replied I think naming him that would be as big a mistake as the one your mother just made have you ever seen one of

those scenes in the movies or on TV where everyone is at a party having a good time there are people dancing music

playing people are eating and drinking and laughing everywhere then someone does something really stupid and

everything just stops and every head turns towards them usually the Music Stops and you hear a sound like the

needle scratching on an old record at the same time well it was that kind of moment for what seemed like an hour but

was probably no more than a few seconds no one said anything then Darren broke the silence in a diplomatic way he

looked at his watch and said wow I really have to get to bed I've got an early meeting tomorrow thanks for a

great evening Darren I said I love you Sammy then I got up and headed for the door as I was opening the door Samantha

called me dad what is wrong with you she asked aren't you forgetting something

well come on over here and hug me Sammy I said I have to get out of here I can't even breathe I was talking about mom she

smirked I thought you didn't drink Darren just what have you been filling my father's glass with all night it's

Pepsi sweetheart I said although right now I could use some liquor what is wrong with you John asked Erica coming

over to me she reached out for me again and this time I moved away from her so obviously that everyone saw it we're

going to talk about this when we get home honey she said we aren't doing anything I snapped I'm going back to my

house I have no idea what you're doing or where you're going but it's not with me wait wait a minute dad said Samantha

you're mad at Mom because she didn't like the name you came up with Erica's eyes widened then because she suddenly

knew that I knew no honey I said I'm not mad or angry at all I've just finally

come to my senses there are times when the people who love you do things to hurt you and you just let it go there

are times when you suffer in silence because you think that if you just get past this one little thing you can go on

and things will be better in the end but then something happens that lets you know that you've suffered and made

allowances for nothing Sometimes some things just can't be let go of everyone

in the room was looking at me except Erica she already knew what I was talking about Dad you're not making any

sense said Samantha Sammy your mother wants you to name my grandson after the man she's been in love with for the past

15 years or so the guy she had an affair with she found out a couple of days ago that he recently died she's trying to

let his memory live on in my grandson both Samantha and Darren looked at Erica

who had fallen to the floor and was silently sobbing I'm so sorry John she

said it's over it's been over for more than 5 years I've been trying to be the best wife possible to you why did it end

Erica I asked because I felt so guilty she said I knew that what I was doing was wrong so I

ended it can't we talk about this in the first place it wasn't an affair we only got together once a year and we didn't

even always have Z and after I came home you and I always had the best Z we've ever had it's been over for a long time

I love you John we needed to talk about this you don't understand this it's not as bad as it seems it's worse than you

think it is Erica I snapped maybe when the divorce is is over you'll tell someone the truth but I'm sick of you

lying what do you mean she said I admitted it Erica if it was up to your

lying ass you'd still be seeing him I said I told you I ended it she snapped and you're lying again I said I ended it

you what she asked I went to Boston and met him 5 years ago I said I beat the

crap out of him he was in the hospital before your pitiful cheating witch was off of the plane I took his phone and I

got all of your texts I'll probably be using them as evidence I also told him who I was and let him know that the next

time he came anywhere near you would be his last day on the planet I told him that I'd also let his wife know about

the two of you I told him that if he ever tried to contact you for any reason even just plain friendship I'd be back

so you didn't end anything Erica I did John I'm sorry she said I was wrong I

was confused it was a mistake I'm sorry too Erica I said I was wrong too I was

confused too I made a mistake too I was wrong to try to save this messed up marriage I did it for Sammy though I

didn't want her to have to deal with us splitting up until she was out on her own I was confused too you see I thought

that maybe in time since I loved you so much that we could get past this I made a mistake instead of ending this sham

then I really tried to make it work but at least you were right honey you did

end something from the first second that you uttered his name tonight you ended our marriage I walked right out of the

house got into my car and drove away I spent a long time that night just

driving around the Roar of my Mustang's engine and the thrill of speeding through the darkness of the moonlit

night took away some of my pain I turned off my phone so I wouldn't be disturbed

I really wasn't as upset as it seemed I'd known about what she'd done for over 5 years and for that whole time I'd been

preparing for the divorce in more ways than one Erica was probably more shocked by tonight than I was first because she

had no idea that I knew about her Affair and secondly because she really only found out that night why it had ended

she'd flown to Boston for a conference the same one she went to every year she got a room in the hotel she always

stayed in the conference was a one-day seminar that she always told me was 2 days long after the conference ended she

had dinner with Randall they sat there in the restaurant talking to each other until the restaurant closed she even

mentioned me a couple of times then when the restaurant closed they exchanged a very nice kiss and she went back to her

room Randall went out to the parking lot and his car to drive home as Randy got to his car I was sitting on the hood hey

that's my car he said I'm sorry I said it's wrong for people to bother things

that don't belong to them isn't it Randy I agree totally he said letun not talk

about hubcaps Randy letun talk about Mary your wife who right now is waiting for you at your house on Sycamore Street

it's probably too late for me to go over there to talk to her right now I should probably wait until tomorrow to visit her I'm calling the police said Randy I

pulled out my phone and tried to hand it to him Randy you can call the police anytime you want it'll be my word

against yours and either way you'll lose because somehow in all of it the fact that you've been spending time with my wife Erica while your own faithful

little wife was waiting at home for you we'll come out ry's whole face went pale I'm not the sharing type of guy Randy I

said I think you've made a mistake he said I do know Erica but we haven't spent any time together he looked at me

and saw how serious my face was okay we had dinner together tonight some of the

things we learned at the conference were interesting and we both wanted someone to talk about them with but that's it

nothing happened we just lost track of time W I said you had me worried he

smiled at me like he was glad we cleared everything up I punched him in the face as hard as I could he went down like a

bowling pin then he got on his feet and started running I threw his hubc cap and caught him in the legs he tripped over

it and fell heavily again I pounced on him and started beating him mercilessly when I was done his face became a pulp

you really had me worried Randy I said for a moment there I really thought that I wasn't going to get to beat the crap

out of you I know that all you had was dinner tonight I was there what about

last year or the year before how long has this been going on maybe 15 or 20

years he sputtered through his busted lips it's over Randy I said he nodded

quickly if you so much as say her name ever again I'll end your marriage and your life are we clear he nodded again

don't visit her I said don't write her or even call her there will be no further warnings I got it he said Randy

the next time we talk won't be this Pleasant I said apparently it worked when I got back home Erica was her usual

after the conference self she tried to kill me with love making but I just didn't go for it usually after she came

back from the conference we'd go off on vacation somewhere together that year I pretended to be too busy to get away as

hard as I tried to put the whole thing behind me I couldn't a big part of my brain was in Judas Priest mode okay most

of you don't know what I'm talking about there's a heavy metal band called Judas Priest arguably their best album was the

one called screaming for vengeance and that was how I felt try as I might I couldn't calm down I wanted blood I

wanted someone to pay for my pain if misery loves company I wanted someone to be miserable with me and I picked Randy

through some business connections I had I got Randy fired I didn't go all Snidely Whiplash and let him know that

it was me who did it it was enough that I knew I felt great about it I had no

regrets about it at all it gave me the same Warm Glow that I once got when I did something nice for Erica to do

something evil to Randy I've spent the last 5 years of my life ruining his at

the same time I was sure that divorce for Erica and me was was inevitable why

didn't I confront her and file because despite what she'd done I still loved her in my heart I really wanted to

believe her and give her another chance but my head just as in my job told me to be prepared for anything I told Erica

that we were under a raise freeze at work when I actually got a raise a few months later the promotion I'd been

working for the past 10 years was finally mine I didn't tell Erica my salary nearly doubled I diverted most of

the new income into accounts that she knew nothing about 2 years later I got another promotion and another raise

again I told Erica nothing about what was going on the reason behind all of this deception was that in the case of

our divorce she'd have no idea about my actual income she'd really believe that I was still making 40 Grand a year so

that's what our divorce would be based on my boss had been absolutely raped in his divorce so he saw no problems in

helping me officially on the books I was listed as a mid-level manager no one outside of the company ever even asked

why all the other managers deferred and reported to me it just seemed like the way our company ran 3/4 of my actual

salary was regularly paid to another company that on the surface looked like one of our vendors I was not one of that

company's officers nor did I own it all of the officers of that company were fishing buddies of mine in exchange for

the usage of their names I took them fishing once or twice a year they were all listed as volunteers so there were

no salary or tax implications for them the money from that company went directly into my offshore account so

there was no tracing it after that there were a couple of times that I did withdraw some of the money once was

after Samantha and Darren got married I put a large down payment on their house to start them out in their marriage

without a lot of financial stress I didn't buy the house for them outright but I put enough down that their regular

mortgage payments were under $100 a month the other time was to buy Sam and Darren a second car since they both

worked and their jobs weren't in the same part of town it just made things easier for them

again even in giving the kids their gifts I had to be careful the way I managed to give them their house and the

second car actually worked in my favor and allowed me to give Erica even less money the money for their house

supposedly came from me pulling it out of my retirement package that meant that in the case of a divorce I'd have next

to nothing in my retirement account for Erica to get her greedy cheating hands on to get the money for the car I

ostensibly took out a loan which even further lowered my disposable income so I'd be able to give Erica even less one

of the great things about my situation was that Randall worked in manufacturing he specialized in inspecting castings my

company was also manufacturing based we owned a lot of direct to factory manufacturing concerns all across the

country I had a pi friend who lived in Boston I had him regularly check on

Randy every time he got a job I'd talk to one of our account execs if we had an account with the company Randy worked

for one of my friends had lunch with someone who worked there and Randy got fired if we didn't have an account with

ry's new company we got one then Randy got fired I kept a spread sheeet on my computer that was dedicated to keeping

track of Randy and all of his misfortunes some of them I didn't even cause after a while Randy's reputation

in the manufacturing Community was so bad that he couldn't even interview for a job just before Randy passed his last

jobs were in landscaping or day labor his Misfortune had also taken its toll on ry's marriage his wife and gone back

to work to help support the family I never touched her or her career because I had nothing against her I also did my

best to make sure that Randy's kids got everything they deserved I single-handedly got his daughter into

law school I invented a scholarship just for her and gave it to her of course the

scholarship ended the year that she got her degree the scholarship also deposited the full amount into an

account she was also never able to find out where the money came from her grades were excellent and she received a few

bonuses during her time in school from her mysterious benefactors the fact that he wasn't able to support his family and

barely contributed to their upkeep was rough on Randy he was a proud man and wanted to be both self-sufficient and a

provider finding that he was neither hurt his pride he started drinking and over time became obsessive with it to

his credit he never became violent or abusive towards his wife or his daughter but towards the end he was only a shadow

of the man he once was I also looked at the changes my actions brought about in me I too was no longer longer the man

I'd been when I first discovered my wife's cheating I had always been a softspoken easygoing guy I'd been open

and honest for most of my life but the trauma of discovering that the woman I loved had betrayed me on a regular and

continuing basis had unhinged me when I looked in the mirror I didn't see a

psychopath who could calmly and with relish plan and oversee the systematic

destruction of a man whose only mistake had been to have Zex with the wrong woman I still saw myself I still saw

John Forest an allaround nice guy and family man shouldn't a villain have some kind of recognizable traits in the old

days all of the bad guys wore black hats maybe I should trade my Mustang in for a black one but even as I'd wondered about

those things I continued I couldn't stop myself my shattered heart needed Revenge

more than healing my soul screamed for vengeance far more than forgiveness even

as I watched ry's life fall apart I watched Erica I found that I simply didn't trust her anymore it's a terrible

thing not to have faith in the woman you've pledged to love and cherish forever but that was one of the things

that her affair with Randy did to me it destroyed not only our marriage but my ability to trust anyone completely so

for a full 5 years while I crushed Randy under my heel I also watched Erica and

prepared for my divorce unlike most men who have a few days or maybe a few weeks to try to protect their assets I had 5

years to prepare i' originally planned for more than that Erica had been though fading still relatively decent looking

when we divorced I'd intended to wait until she was on the full downswing but Randy hadn't been able to keep going for

as long as I thought for 5 years I'd hidden and squirrel away as much money as I could I didn't need to worry about

the house that we lived in because it wasn't ours the home had been in my family for Generations we lived in it

because my parents who were still alive didn't need a place that big when I went through the divorce I made sure the

lawyers knew my parents owned the house and simply allowed me to live there rentree when Erica came back from the

conference she texted Randy about how much she'd enjoyed their dinner together and how wonderful the kiss had been she

had also told him that she missed the times when they'd made love but she was glad that it hadn't happened this year

she'd always felt guilty about being unfaithful to me as she was sure that Randy felt the same way about his wife

she told him that what they had now their Zess romance was actually better because they could enjoy their

relationship that way until they both died with no guilt on either side maybe

they were growing older and their love didn't need to be expressed physically just being together was enough that way

they'd be together forever and she ended the text with until next year my love I

read that text as I was waiting for my luggage at the airport I wanted to strangle Erica and though I still loved

her in some ways my feelings for her changed drastically sometimes it was hard for me to hold it all together when Erica got

home I was sitting in the den watching a football game she came in and wrapped her arms around me and tried to kiss me

I moved away from her and told her I had a cold and didn't want to make her sick just make sure we're better by this

weekend she said smiling why what happens this weekend I asked you and I

are going off on vacation together remember she said we always go after my boring conference well maybe you could

do a motherdaughter vacation and take Sam this year I said I really can't get away from work this week

but honey it's the weekend she whined you'd really only miss two days of work

think about it four nights and 3 days in Hawaii it would be just the two of us thinking about it gets me hot we might

never leave the hotel room I bought all kinds of nasty new things to wear for you I wondered how many of those things

that Randy would have seen if they'd gotten together earlier Erica we're under a wage freeze

and the company is trying to cut costs every way they can I have to make sure that they never get the idea that I'm

one of the costs they could cut I said I understand honey she said I'll go call

Sam I want you in the bedroom 10 minutes after I get upstairs though she went up

the stairs and I heard her talking to my daughter Samantha on the phone at the same time she texted Randy again

wondering whether or not he'd received her previous text it just disgusted me when I didn't come to bed she came

looking for me I dove on the couch and pretended to be asleep over the next few weeks I came to terms with things it was

it was a big adjustment I became a far better actor than I ever thought I could be we still had zeex more or less as

regularly as we had before I don't know whether or not Erica enjoyed it as much but I sure did I didn't have to

concentrate on pleasing her anymore because I just didn't give a damn whether she got off or not I had to look

at things from a totally different Viewpoint instead of thinking about Erica as my wife that I loved I just

looked at her as some woman I was sleeping with our ZX was raw and less loving but at the same time it was more

adventurous Erica had always been kind of vanilla when it came to Zex during the guilt period just after the

conference when she needed to assure me that she was mine she rarely refused me anything I started sleeping with her

like that it was the first time for us even after all of those years of marriage before Erica could protest and

tell me that she wasn't the kind of woman who did that she was the next year

when conference time came around I watched her intently looking for a sign that she was in contact with Randy I

checked her phone account online to make sure that she hadn't received any calls from the Boston area she hadn't received

any but she'd sent several texts to ry's phone she'd become more and more frustrated that Randy never answered her

she tried calling a few of her friends who also knew Randy and found out that he'd had a run of bad luck she found out

for the first time that he'd been brutally beaten and robbed following the conference the previous year he'd also

been fired and no one knew where exactly he was working she'd sent him several texts asking him to Simply meet her for

dinner at her hotel none of them were answered her final attempt came when she'd got one of her friends who knew

Randy to go to his house and tell him that she wanted to hear from him Randy had told the friend that he didn't

remember her and since he no longer worked in the industry saw no reason to contact her especially since he wasn't

attending the conference Erica was heartbroken she told me that she didn't feel up to attending the conference this

year after that I told her that she needed to go she went every year and suffered through it this year shouldn't

be any different than last year what's different I asked her Point Blank even

though I already knew my flight landed 2 hours after hers did I watched her the

whole day and almost blew it Erica didn't even stay the night she flew back home at the end of the day while she was

heading for the airport I called her and told her how much I missed her I told her that I had to go out of town for the

evening but it didn't really matter since she'd be at her conference she told me that she couldn't stand us being a part and she was flying home early I

guess I'd expected her to try to hook up with another guy but she didn't she just went to the lectures and the Expo and as

soon as it was over she flew home the following year she tried to get me to go to the conference with her so she could

show me how boring it was after that she simply stopped going for the last 2

years Erica has been totally faithful to me I have from time to time either watched her myself or even hired a pi

for a few days she hasn't done a thing to arouse any suspicion if I didn't know any better I'd have

thought that she was the perfect wife at least she tried to be the problem was that once trust is gone things will

never be the way they were before so when we sat out on our deck and relaxed in our big swing together I always

wondered if she was thinking about Randy and how their love would last until one of them died when she woke me up on a

lazy Sunday Morning by doing my Johnson I always wondered if she was imagining doing it to Randy as a result I was

never able to give Erica my heart totally again no matter how romantic she tried to make things I always looked for

an ulterior motive for the past 5 years Erica has been simply a maid with benefits and a very expensive one in the

two years before the divorce I looked at her body often sometimes I felt like a farmer inspecting his crops yep her tits

are starting to Sag I'd notice it won't be long now or I'd see a few more lines on her face we're getting there I'd

think Erica honey I'd say have another piece of cake crap eat a big one I don't

want me to get any fatter she'd say I love your I'd tell her so it doesn't matter she'd smile and hug me or give me

a peck on the cheek which was all I'd allow she was sure that I meant that no matter how fat she got that I'd still

love her but I meant that it didn't matter because I was sure that our marriage would be over soon so she could

eat a cow or look like one and it wouldn't matter to me our life was good on the surface we had friends that we

did things with and we spent a lot of time with our daughter and her husband things were good for years I actually

believed that Erica had almost forgotten about her Affair or she'd thought that she'd gotten away with it after all 5

years is a long time if nothing had been discovered after all of that time did it still matter a couple of days before the

ill- fated dinner one of my Pi friends in Boston had given me the news Randy had been fired from his latest job he

was working in the fast food industry because of his drinking the manager wouldn't let Randy work inside the

restaurant he was taking care of the landscaping around the restaurant for minimum wage he shoveled snow and cut

grass on other days he had to wear a costume that made him look like the restaurant's clown mascot and spin a

sign that invited passing drivers to eat in the restaurant Randy had fallen pretty far over the five years he was

now in his late 40s a college graduate who worked for minimum wage dressed like a clown Hawking Burgers all of his

co-workers except for the store manager were 18 years old or younger they used Randy as an example of why going to

college was a was of time one kid told his mother right in front of Randy she'd come to make the kid quit working at the

restaurant because his grades in high school had been slipping what's the point ma he asked her even if I graduate

and you and pop spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on me going to college like ry's parents probably did

back in the last century how do we know that I won't end up back here in that clown suit crap Ma I'm better off than

he is right now and I haven't even been to college at least I work inside the restaurant and I make more than minimum

wage if I go to college I might make even less as I've said before Randy had

once been a proud man hearing the kid's sermon on the state of his life drove Randy further into depression Randy was

so distraught that he didn't pay attention to where he was flinging his sign some of the observers said it was

on purpose others swear it was a freak accident Randy threw the sign up in the air and it came down on a customer

shocking her and knocking her bag of food out of her hands she started yelling at Randy and he went berserk

when the police arrived he was still kicking one of her hamburgers down the street as if it was a street hockey puck

and calling her names Randy was fired on the spot he got his last check and used it to buy himself a bottle and a rope he

went home and before he started drinking he used his college degree One Last Time his degree was in manufacturing

technology he manufactured the best noose he could and climbed up onto the edge of a chair and started drinking

with the Noose around his neck as he drank he thought about all of the joys and mistakes in his life

he thought about his career and its downward spiral he thought about his daughter and how she no longer respected

him he thought about his wife and how they had once been a couple that everyone they knew envied now she barely

tolerated him and they slept in separate bedrooms it hadn't been the changes in ry's career that had doomed his marriage

it had been the way he handled each successive failure they'd just been pulling further and further apart over

the years part of it was that Randy was always waiting for the other shoe to drop Randy died never knowing that it

had been me all along ruining him he thought that it was just bad luck I'd

always intended to tell him some day it would have been my final stroke of Vengeance but I never got the

chance the last thing that Randy thought about before drinking himself into a stuper losing his balance and dying was

Erica he traced the beginnings of his bad luck to his friendship with her he was never honest enough to admit that

he'd had an affair and slept with a married woman he blam all of his bad luck on Erica after all the start of his

bad luck had been when Erica's husband had discovered them and beaten Randy so bad he was hospitalized everything had

gone downhill from there and simply never stopped going his last thoughts were a wish that he'd never met her his

last words were about her too ducking witch he thought as the alcohol in his system caused his brain to shut down his

Consciousness when I wake up I'll figure out some way to get back at her ry's wife came home and discovered the body

it was sad that she couldn't even come up with enough emotion to cry in a way she felt glad for him because her

husband had really suffered in recent years and at least this way he could move on he was beyond his pain and

suffering one of Erica's former colleagues who knew her and Randy had emailed her and told her about his death

and how it had come about she'd called her and got all of the details about the last few years of ry's life Erica was

shocked I'd heard from my Pi before Erica was notified so I knew to expect something she was definitely off of her

game I watched her and couldn't tell if it was because she'd lost someone that she loved or if she was just thinking

about how fleeting life is that night she tried to sleep with me to death she

held on to me like she was worried about losing me she even cried a little when I asked her why I didn't know what to

expect I guess I was expecting her to tell me that she'd lost a friend from her past but what she told me was

anything but that I just love you so much she said and I'm so glad to have

you I don't know what i' do if anything ever happened to take you away from me yeah I know it I'm a sucker and the

woman got to me one last time that night the second round was different we made

love like we always used to I did things to her that I hadn't done in years instead of pounding Her Like A Drum and

then going to watch the news I spent a long time just kissing her holding her and letting her know that I loved her

too I stupidly believed that I was healing and I could trust her again it was as if over the past 5 years a scab

had finally formed over my Wounded Heart the next night as we had dinner with Sammy and Darren I held her hand as we

ate and we gave each other longing glances Samantha had even asked us why we were still so much in love after all

of the years we'd been together then Erica had to go and open up her big mouth and ruin it all by trying to get

Samantha to name my grandson after Randy things were never the same I'd spent

years preparing for the moment when all of this came to pass and I knew then why everything everything I did to Randy had

just never been enough it wasn't as if I hadn't done enough to Randy what I'd done to Randy over the years had been

the equivalent of unloading a full clip into him and then reloading the clip and emptying it into him again the problem

was that Randy alone hadn't been responsible for my pain in fact he'd been the lesser of the two evils Randy

hadn't promised before God and all of our friends to love honor and cherish me all the days of his life that had been

Erica in fact before I'd confronted him in Boston and whipped his ass I hadn't known Randy at all what I had done for

the past 5 years had been bad it had been shameful and more than anything else it had been cowardly it was as if

I'd been a normal-sized high school student and one of the big hulking guys on the football team had pushed me down

so to get revenge I ran across campus and beat the crap out of one of the Nerds on the chess team most of my

revenge had been misdirected while Randy did deserve a bit of it Erica deserved more in the days following the dinner

Erica tried to come home only to have me give her all of her clothing and personal items that I'd packed for her

the first night she called me and I wouldn't speak to her other than to tell her that I thought that this coming

Saturday would be a good day for her to come over to the house and take any furniture or appliances that she thought

she deserved I suggested that she bring our daughter and son-in-law along one of

them could call me to verify that the items that she took were not against my wishes I told her that I'd arrang to be

gone all day Saturday and I'd come back Saturday evening when she called and told me that she was done it didn't

quite turn out that way when I pulled into my driveway Saturday evening and went into the house arica was still

there Samantha was there too and they wanted for us to sit down and have a talk John I love you she said I love you

with all of my heart I'd never do anything to purposefully hurt you I'm sorry I'm so much sorrier than you'd

ever believe oh I believe you're pretty sorry I said you may be about the

sorriest excuse for a wife that I've ever seen can't we talk about this she asked we've been together for almost 30

years we can't throw all of that away over something that happened and ended a long time ago John why didn't you

confront me about this when you found out I can't imagine how much pain you've been carrying around with you for the

past 5 years I'm beginning to understand a lot of things now I understand why there's been a wall between us for the

past few years this is the reason isn't it I sighed and nodded and that last

night was so wonderful she said it was the best zeex we've ever had you must have found out that Randy had died and

you thought that this was all behind us until I opened my mouth I nodded again

John can you let me talk she asked I really need to get this out of my system I know that what I did was wrong but

it's been over for years and yes I know that you ended it and I have some questions I'd like you to answer when

I'm done okay Erica I don't have to listen to anything I said I could throw

you out of here right now I am going to let you have your say but only for one reason I want to get this divorce over

with and wrapped up as quickly as possible so I can move on with my life if I listen to you now you'll have had

your say so you won't be able to go to the courts and tell them that I never gave you a chance to talk about things

so start talking but first there are a couple of things I'd like you to explain while you talk when did this start with

Randy and why okay John this is 2010 we got married in 1980 so I guess it

started in 1982 she said so this has been going on for 28 years I screamed I

had no idea it had been that long I guess you and Randy looked at it differently maybe he only counted it

from when you guys started sleeping together I looked at Samantha and she looked at her mother John there's no

chance possible that Samantha is anyone's child except yours she said the conference is in July Samantha was born

in January it's just not possible but you kind of hoped didn't you I spat

don't tell me that the possibility of it never crossed your mind Samantha looked at her mother and the expression on her

face wasn't good Sammy angel I love you more than life itself for the past 5

years you've been the only person I could trust completely most of my heart is yours baby but could we do a DNA test

it doesn't matter now in the least I'll never treat you or my grandkids any different I just need to verify this I

said John I already told you she began why should I believe anything you've

ever said I asked calmly from the very start of our marriage you've been lying

to me the whole time since our marriage is over with it means you did lie to me for the entire marriage no John it's not

like that I love you she said I've always loved you you just don't

understand well start talking I told her I'm giving you time to make me

understand but you need to give it everything you've got this is the last time we'll be speaking without going

through lawyers John you're not serious she said I only cheated on you once and

that was years ago it isn't worth throwing away 30 years together on for the past 5 years I haven't seen or heard

from Randy you're punishing me for something that ended a long time ago I think that's unfair you're not thinking

straight I know you haven't I said you know I haven't what she asked I know you

haven't seen or heard from Randy in 5 years you did try to contact him four years ago though the year after the last

conference you spent together you tried to find out when he'd be arriving at the conference for your yearly get together

but he didn't answer any of your texts you tried to get in touch with him through friends the friends told you

that he didn't remember you he did but he was afraid he knew that if he answered you I'd either beat him

completely to death this time or worst tell his wife and ruin his marriage so

you know that it's over she said smiling how do I know that I asked the last

thing you sent to him 5 years ago was a text message where you told him that your love would last until one of you

died it's barely been 5 years but oh wait he is dead now isn't he but then

again maybe you weren't lying after all you did love him enough to try to get Sam to name my grandson after him even

though it cost you our marriage no John you don't understand she said you and I

had only been married for 2 years when I went to that first conference I met Randy there and he was the nicest guy I

missed you a lot it was the first time I'd ever been away from you I kept leaving the lectures to try to call you

but you were working Randy and I started talking and he just made me feel comfortable he was so much like you the

next year we met again and we got even closer we even had dinner together we talked and we kept talking until they

threw us out of the restaurant I never wanted to stop talking to him but you have to understand a lot of it was

because he was so much like you we hadn't been together for that long and sometimes I needed to run things by

someone to see how you'd react to them it wasn't until the fourth year that we slept together and then it was an

accident we'd both gotten really drunk and we just ended up in bed we woke up the next morning and we were both

consumed with guilt we could barely even look at each other we didn't even say goodbye the next year was the fifth year

we kind of avoided each other but truthfully I missed my friend I was of course pregnant with Sam that year so

unless Samantha took over a year to come to term there's no way that he was her father we didn't even have dinner or

talk that year the next year he came over and told me how sorry he'd been about everything that had happened 2

years prior he blamed it on himself and told me that he thought it was stupid for us to avoid each other because of a

mistake so we had dinner and to tell you the truth for over two years I'd been avoiding him and fantasizing about what

Zex with him had been like we'd both been drunk and I wanted to remember what it had been like so at that point it had

been 6 years and we'd only slept together once once and then it had been a drunken thing that year dinner was all

that happened the following year again nothing happened but there was this weird tension between us it had started

to seem like we only went to the conferences to see each other year eight just to break that tension we had zeex I

feel the most guilt about that one for the past 3 years I'd been avoiding him and fantasizing about what Zex with

Randy would be like it was awful it was worse than awful and it was boring

you already know that Zex isn't really about size but ry's equipment was not really your equal in terms of dimensions

and worse than that I guess Randy had been with his wife for a very long time and he knew exactly the kinds of things

she liked however they weren't the same things that I like I realized then that

I'd made a terrible mistake the next year I avoided Randy again I don't mean that I didn't have

dinner with him or just didn't have sex with him I didn't even speak to him I basically hid I did go over to him

towards the end and pretend that I'd just run into him after looking for him for a long time I asked him a lot of

questions about his wife and then left the year after that John we'd been going to that conference for 10 years Randy

was waiting for me at the airport he kept telling me about how special that year was we'd been friends as he called

it for 10 years it was like our anniversary or something I ended up giving him a mercy sleep and suffering

through it because I didn't want to hurt his feelings he really was a nice guy yeah I said said so nice that sleeping

with him was worth more than your own marriage John you have to understand he

really was a lot like you and I didn't want to hurt his feelings plus it only happened once a year there was nothing

wild or strange about it it was like old people's EX on the other hand look at what you and I do there was no comparison Randy wasn't experimental it

was like romantic Zex without the romance I've never given him a BJ and he's only been in one place if you know

what I mean Erica you don't understand this either I said you and I started

getting experimental after I found out about you think about it I let you give me BJ but I don't do you anymore I'm not

sticking my mouth anywhere that ry's been and I started sleeping with you because I wanted to have something that Randy hadn't had but also because in a

way I wanted to hurt you and make you do something that you didn't want to do until a few nights ago the time that you

just said was the best ZX we ever had you and I haven't made love either there

hasn't been any romance because on my part I was just sleeping with you like i' do a hoe you were just there and you

were available her face fell a little bit then so for the next few years I just survived it I knew that every year

I'd look forward to being with Randy at the conference he was a great friend and though I dreaded it I knew that I'd have

to endure having Zex with him at the end a few years after that I started making up excuses one year I was on my period

the next year I put up with it the following year I claimed that I had a yeast infection the year after that I

was on the rag again so I went about three years without having to sleep with him then we'd do it and I'd skip a few

years the year that had ended we hadn't slept together in four or 5 years he always talked about it like he really

loved having ZX with me but it was like pulling teeth for me but he was my friend he liked hearing how much I cared

for him we often told each other we loved each other I never really felt or meant any of that I just didn't want to

hurt him so you chose to hurt me instead I snapped John how were you hurt she

asked it had gone on for over 20 years years when you found out in that same 20 years you and I probably had Zex

literally over 2,000 times and I loved them all in total I had Zex with Randy

maybe eight times at the very Max and hated every time that I can even remember if it had been a case where I

put Randy ahead of you I could understand it but that never happened if it had been a case where I gave you

sloppy seconds or did something to embarrass you I could understand it but that never happened I love you too much

for that this was a once a year thing that happened so far away from where we lived live that no one who knows us

would have been in the vicinity so there's no way that you've been embarrassed by this and even the year that you beat poor Randy up and ended it

it was already ending on its own since you know about my texts to him you probably also know that we had spoken at

dinner about how much better things were that we weren't having Zex just enjoying each other's company that relationship

would have ended on its own soon anyway I was never going to have zeex with him again that was what I meant by we were

better without the guilt I was just trying to let him down easily I figured that the relationship would naturally

drift apart without me having to hurt his feelings John you have to believe me I love you I love only you whatever I

did with Randy was just a stupid mistake that I made a long time ago and I didn't know how to get out of it you and I have

so much more history love and life together please don't throw it all away

I sat back and looked at her trying to process everything she'd said the anger inside me was still boiling but I could

see the pain and sincerity in her eyes this this was the woman I'd loved for decades the mother of my child my

partner in life but the Betrayal cut so deep I understand Erica I said

slowly I understand that you made a mistake and that you regret it but the fact remains that you betrayed me you

betrayed us every time you met with him every time you said you loved him you

took something away from us you destroyed my trust my faith in you in our marriage and while I can see that

you're sorry and maybe even understand why you did what you did I don't think I can ever get past it tears streamed down

her face as she listened John please she whispered I will do anything to make

this right anything just give us another chance we can go to counseling we can

work through this please don't end our marriage over something that's been over for so long I shook my head it's not

just the affair Erica it's the lies the deception for 28 years you've kept this

from me for 28 years you've allowed me to believe that our marriage was something it wasn't you took away my

ability to make an informed decision about my own life about whether or not I wanted to stay with someone who could do

that to me you robbed me of that choice she sobbed uncontrollably and Samantha

reached out to comfort her dad please Samantha said Mom has made mistakes but

she's trying to make it right can't you at least try to work through this for me for the grandkids I looked at my

daughter the pain in her eyes mirroring my own Samy I love you I love you more

than anything but this isn't something I can just forgive and forget it's been eating away at me for years and I can't

live like this anymore I can't keep pretending that everything is okay when it's not Erica tried to speak again but

I held up my hand enough Erica I don't want to hear anymore you've said your

peace now it's time for me to move on I'm f fing for divorce you can take

whatever you want from the house but I need you out of here by the end of the week Dad please Samantha begged don't do

this I'm sorry Samy I said my voice breaking but this is something I have to

do for myself I can't live with this betrayal any longer Erica collapsed into

a chair her body shaking with sobs Samantha knelt beside her trying to console her I stood up and walked out of

the house the weight of years of betrayal and pain pressing down on me as

I drove away I thought about all the years we'd spent together all the memories we'd made it hurt to think that

it had all been tainted by Erica's Affair by her lies but I knew that staying with her would only prolong the

pain I needed to find a way to heal to move forward with my life I spent the

next few days getting my Affairs in order I filed for divorce and made arrangements for Erica to move out of

the house Samantha tried to talk to me several times but I couldn't bring myself to discuss it further the

decision was made and I needed to focus on the future the day Erica moved out was bittersweet she took only what she

needed leaving behind many of the things we'd accumulated over the years as she walked out the door for the last time

she turned to look at me her eyes filled with sorrow John I'm so sorry she said

her voice barely a whisper I know Erica I said but sorry

isn't enough goodbye with that she left and and I was alone in the house that had once been filled with love and

laughter I knew that the road ahead would be difficult but I also knew that I needed to find a way to rebuild my

life to find peace and happiness once again over the next few months I focused

on myself I threw myself into my work spent time with friends and even started dating again it wasn't easy but slowly I

began to heal I realized that while Erica's betrayal had been devastating it didn't Define me I was Stronger than

that and could find happiness again Samantha eventually came to terms with the divorce she still loved her mother

but she understood why I couldn't stay our relationship grew stronger as we supported each other through the

difficult times in the end I found peace in knowing that I'd done what was best for me I'd reclaimed my life and my

happiness and while the scars of Erica's betrayal would always be there they no longer controlled me I was free to move

forward and build a new future one filled with hope and Poss possibility 5 years have passed since that fateful day

when I finally walked away from Erica I've spent those years rebuilding my life but the pain and betrayal still

echo in my mind especially after the shocking Revelation that Samantha isn't

my biological daughter the truth came out during a heated argument with Erica about the divorce settlement Erica in a

moment of desperation blurted out that Samantha was Randy's daughter a paternity test confirmed it it was

devastating the girl I had loved and raised as my own was not biologically mine the Betrayal cut even deeper and it

was the final straw Samantha despite everything stood by her mother she couldn't understand why I was so adamant

about moving on it was like a knife in my heart when she chose to support Erica after all that had happened in the end I

decided to remove Samantha from my will it wasn't a decision I made lightly but I felt I needed to take control of my

life and my legacy we split our possessions 50/50 with Erica taking half of our savings and some personal items I

kept the house but it felt empty without the family I once thought was mine so I sold it and moved into a modern

apartment in the city the transition was hard but I found solace in my work and slowly began to date again it was during

a business conference that I met Lisa she was a breath of fresh air intelligent kind and genuinely

interested in me Lisa had her own successful career as a marketing executive and her life story was

refreshingly free of the complications that had marred she had been married once before but her

husband passed away in a tragic accident despite her loss she remained optimistic and full of life we started dating and

for the first time in years I felt alive again Lisa had a way of making me forget

the past and focus on the present her presence in my life was like a healing balm slowly mending the wounds that

Erica's betrayal had left while I was finding happiness again Erica's life took a turn for the worse after the

divorce she moved into a small apartment and tried to find a job but her depression and guilt consumed her she

began drinking heavily and her health deteriorated rapidly the weight of her actions and the loss of her family took

a severe toll on her Erica's attempts to reconnect with Samantha were met with limited success Samantha though

supportive of her mother couldn't fully understand the depth of her mother's actions The Strain between them grew and

Erica felt increasingly isolated she tried to find solace in alcohol but it only pushed her further down the spiral

eventually Erica lost her job and ended up on welfare her once vibrant appearance faded as she battled her

demons alone I heard from mutual friends that she had been hospitalized several times due to alcohol poisoning and

severe depression it was heartbreaking to hear but I couldn't bring myself to reach out the woman I once loved had

destroyed too much of my life and I needed to protect my newfound happiness Samantha despite her efforts to help

couldn't save her mother from herself she had her own family to care for and the burden of her mother's decline

weighed heavily on her the rift between us remained but I found peace in knowing that I had done what was best for me

Lisa and I got married last year our wedding was small and intimate attended by close friends and family it was a day

filled with love and hope for the future Lisa's presence in my life has been a constant source of strength and joy

we've built a new life together one free from the Shadows of the past looking back I realized that the years of pain

and betrayal were a necessary journey to bring me to this point I've learned that forgiveness isn't always about the other

person it's about freeing yourself from the chains of the past while I may never fully forgive Erica or forget what she

did I found a way to move forward and embrace the happiness I deserve Erica's

downward spiral is a tragic reminder of the consequences of betrayal and the importance of honesty in relationships

as for Samantha I hope that one day we can rebuild our relationship but for now

I focus on the life I have with Lisa grateful for the second chance at happiness that life has given me