

A Toxic Relationship: A Short Story

[B2]

Una vicina che prepara torte deliziose può sembrare perfetta, eppure nasconde un misterioso segreto racchiuso nella sua sospetta identità.



Mmm, these croissants are delicious,” said Tess. “I wish I knew the recipe.” She and her new neighbour, Bethany, were having brunch at a local café. “Well, you know,” said Bethany, a beautiful woman in her early thirties, “I used [to bake](#) all the time for my old neighbours, and I have a fantastic recipe for chocolate croissants. Actually, I’d [been meaning to](#) ask...” “Go on,” said Tess, [encouragingly](#). “Well, would it be okay if I used your kitchen [to bake](#) sometimes? I know it’s a strange request but Kevin doesn’t like it when I make a mess in the kitchen – even if [I clean up](#) afterwards.” “Of course you can use my kitchen, just as long as I get [to sample](#) your bakes,” she joked. “But why doesn’t Kevin want you to use your kitchen? That’s what it’s for!” Tess had never met Kevin, but Bethany’s comments didn’t leave her with a very good impression of him. Bethany [gasped](#) “Oh God! What time is it? I have to go.” She [grabbed](#) her coat and [headed for](#) the door. “It’s just after 1,” said Tess. “Why, what’s so urgent?” “I told Kevin I’d be home by 1 and he’ll probably call our home phone to check. I really do have to go.” Before Tess had a chance to respond, her new friend was gone. “It’s so strange,” she told her husband Daniel that evening. “Kevin is so controlling. He calls to check that she’s home, and he doesn’t even want her [to bake](#) in her own kitchen. And it’s HER kitchen, her house, her money.” Tess didn’t know much about Bethany, but she knew she came from a rich family and that her money had paid for their new home, a luxury flat in Notting Hill. “He probably married her for the money,” she said, “just so he can [pursue](#) his career as an actor, and ‘career’ is being generous. He’s only had small [parts](#) in a few [plays](#). I hope he’s not [taking out his career frustrations on](#) Bethany. What if he [beats](#) her? Men that controlling often do.” “Oh, you don’t know that,” said Daniel. “No, but you could find out. You could [run his name](#), check if he has any [priors](#),” she said, using the police [lingo](#) she’d learned from her husband, a police officer. “A history of domestic violence perhaps.” “I’m not using police time for that,” said Daniel. “You really shouldn’t get involved in other people’s relationships.” Tess continued her friendship with Bethany, and continued to see proof of Kevin’s controlling nature. When they went [grocery shopping](#) together, Bethany asked Tess to pay for the ingredients she’d need [to bake](#) the croissants. “In turn, I’ll pay for some of your groceries,” said Bethany. When she saw Tess’s confusion, she explained. “It’s just that the credit card is in Kevin’s name and he insists I keep receipts for every [purchase](#), and sometimes he checks the receipts. If he sees the ingredients for croissants, he’ll know I’ve been hiding something.” “That you’re baking croissants at a friend’s house?” “That’s the thing, he doesn’t exactly know we’re friends. He didn’t want me becoming friends with the neighbours... It’s a long story.” Tess wanted to ask for more details but decided to let it go, for now. “Those croissants smell delicious,” said Tess, when Bethany had finished baking. “That’s because I added a special ingredient,” she said mysteriously. “Now I have to go, but do enjoy them. Just don’t mention them to Kevin if you see him. Or me. Don’t mention me.” “What?... Erm, ok, aren’t you going to eat any?” “[Nope](#), watching my figure. Kevin likes me to be [slim](#).” “Of course he does.” Tess didn’t even try to hide her disgust. She ate a croissant and then another, before finishing all six of them. The next morning, she woke up with

a terrible stomach [ache](#). “Oh, I ate [way too many](#) of those croissants,” she told Bethany. “My stomach hurts. They were TOO delicious.” “Well, you know, [ginger snap biscuits](#) are great [to settle](#) the stomach. I can use the same ingredients, and I saw you had ginger and [cinnamon](#), so...” “You’ve convinced me,” said Tess, laughing. Tess was about [to bite](#) into a ginger snap biscuit when there was a knock at the door. Outside was a handsome young man. “Is Bethany here?” he asked. “And you are?” “I’m Kevin.” He saw the ginger snap biscuit in her hand. “Did she bake that?” He [grabbed](#) the biscuit and [stormed](#) inside. “I can’t believe you’re doing this again, Bethany.” Bethany emerged from the kitchen, red-faced. “How did you... You tracked my iPhone again.” “And it’s a good thing I did.” Ignoring Tess’s [threats](#) to call her husband, Kevin [grabbed](#) the other biscuits and left with his wife. Tess tried calling Bethany but received no response, and a few days later, she saw [moving vans](#) at her house. She called Daniel to tell him the couple had left. And that evening, her husband arrived home with a [grim](#) expression. “He beat her, didn’t he?” said Tess, interpreting his expression to mean Kevin had a history of domestic violence. “[Nope](#), it’s not him, it’s her. She was suspected of [poisoning](#) three of her neighbours with her bakes at her last address. One of them almost died as a result. They just couldn’t prove anything.”

Glossary

- **gasped** = sussultare
- **grocery shopping** = fare la spesa
- **to settle** = sistemare
- **to bake** = cuocere al forno
- **run his name** = indagare su di lui
- **priors** = antecedenti
- **threats** = minacce
- **beats** = picchiare
- **slim** = snella
- **way too many** = troppi
- **I clean up** = pulire
- **headed for** = dirigersi verso
- **lingo** = gergo
- **purchase** = acquisto
- **ache** = dolore
- **cinnamon** = cannella
- **pursue** = dedicarsi a
- **parts** = parti
- **ginger snap biscuits** = biscottini allo zenzero
- **poisoning** = avvelenare
- **been meaning to** = avere l'intenzione di
- **grabbed** = afferare
- **Nope** = no
- **to bite** = mordere
- **stormed** = entrare tempestivamente
- **encouragingly** = come incoraggiamento
- **to sample** = provare
- **plays** = opere teatrali
- **taking out his career frustrations on** = sfogarsi su
- **moving vans** = furgoni per trasloco
- **grim** = cupa