

LYLA

Phil and I were married now for 13 years. We knew each other from High School, we were in the same class. He was not the cutest or the funniest guy in the class but I wasn't the girl everybody was staring at neither. Still he was quite smart, did major studies, became an engineer in aeronautics working at Arthur's, a company which manufacture engines for planes. My education was not as impressive, I tried law studies but I gave up after the first year, not a big fan I guess. Now I was close to my forties and I earn my living by running an organic shop in Derry, Maine.

It's not like the two of us were an amazing couple. We have never done anything amazing that others couples have not done. Just normal stuff all couples do. We met in High School, fell in love, both of us got a job, bought a house together. Then the wedding, small ceremony at Derry's Church, friends and family, honeymoon at Bali.

There was one thing left that kept us out of the typical scheme, we had no kids. It's not like we have never tried, we did try. But it never worked. And one day I went to see a doctor who told me I had a disease and I could never have a child. End of story. We have never talked about having kids anymore.

Since a kind of routine took over in our lives. We go to work at 8am, come back at 7pm, grab something to eat together, watch a TV show until 10pm, go to bed. All over again. It was the same old thing for years. But those last days, it wasn't the routine. Phil was acting weird and I couldn't explain why.

"Half past nine. And Phil's not back yet." I was thinking nervously out loud. Maybe he had extra work to do tonight, sure he was a hard worker, his boss even gave him an increase for his accomplishments those last two months. And it's not like he has never come back late from Arthur's, some times he could finish after 10pm. Still it was extraordinary, it happened, I don't know, maybe like once in a month.

But it was the fourth time he came back from work after 9pm in ten days always with the same excuse " Sorry darling, some extra work to finish again, I thought I would never see the end of it.", whereas he used to quit the office at 7pm. And Jesus, today was Friday. You don't quit the office at 9pm on Fridays. I was not even sure Arthur's was still open after 9pm today, so I checked on it, and indeed Arthur's closes at 8pm on Fridays.

I gave Phil several calls on his cellphone, he didn't answer. There was something on, I was sure about it, I could feel it. I didn't know what exactly, maybe something serious happened to him ? Maybe not. Maybe I didn't want to know what all of this was about.

Then the phone rang. I picked it up. It was Alan, Phil's best friend.

"Hi Sweetie ! How you doing ?" He asked me.

"Hi Alan, Well you know, like a friday night." I answered, trying to make a joke.

"Sure, sure ! By the way, Phil's here ?" He said.

"He hasn't come back from work yet."

"Jesus ! Can you believe this guy ? His work will kill him one day ! Okay I will give him a call later, he doesn't answer on his cellphone right now, must be driving. " He told me.

"Sure, Must be. " I answered mechanically.

"All right, take care Sweetie ! bye. " He said.

"You too Alan, bye".

I didn't like that at all, even Alan couldn't reach him. Phil wasn't the kind of person to hide secrets from me.

Suddenly I was taken out from my thoughts by the flashlights of a car which was parking in our courtyard. That was Phil. I should had been reassured because he had not been involved in a car accident, still I hadn't. I was decided to make him tell the truth. He opened the door.

"Hi Darling, how you doing ?" Phil asked me. He left his suitcase on the couch, walked through the living-room straight to the kitchen, barely noticed that I didn't answer him. I joined him.

"So what's for dinner tonight ? I'm starving !". He asked me. I looked at him for a while before answering.

"Arthur's closed at 8pm today Phil, where were you ?". I asked him. Apparently, he didn't expect me to ask him that according to his face.

"I... Yeah I was at Alan's, he asked me to come by." He answered.

Okay so now I was definitely sure Phil was lying to me, I talked to Alan like 5 minutes ago, but he didn't say anything about Phil coming at his place. I asked Phil to dress up the table for dinner, I came back in the living room. His wallet was on the little table. I hesitated but since he was executing himself in the kitchen, it gave me some time to search for some clues that could answer my questions. I glanced a last look to Phil who was still busy in the kitchen, I took his wallet and I looked into it. Some 20\$ and 50\$ notes, receipts from some shops, bank card, ID, driver licence, some loyalty cards... And then I found a small folded yellow paper. I unfolded it. Someone wrote something on it, it wasn't Phil's handwriting I would have recognized it. The author wrote : « You're a part of me now, thank you for everything. I love you Phil, Lyla. ».

I didn't want to believe at what I've just read, I even read it twice, but there was no doubt about it. Phil had an affair. Who was this Lyla ? I had never heard about her, he has never mentioned a friend or a colleague called Lyla, actually I knew nobody who was called like that.

I couldn't believe it. For how many times did this last ? Whatever it was, he would no longer live with his secret, it was going to change now. I came back to the kitchen, holding the yellow paper in my closed fist. I was standing in front of him, looking into his blue lying eyes looking for the truth.

"Where were you tonight Phil ?" I asked him.

"What ? I told you honey, I was at Alan's he asked me to..."

"Cut the crap, Phil. I know you went to see someone, you cheating on me, don't you ? Who is Lyla ?" I barged in throwing up the yellow paper to him.

Phil was stunned. He stood immobile, speechless, he barely knew what to say. He tried to say something but he only managed to stutter.

"You piece of shit ! Since when you had an affair ? Do you love her ? Tell me Phil !" I was yelling at him, holding back my tears.

"No listen, darling... That's not what you think it is." He answered me.

"Oh really ? And may I know what is it all about if it is not what I think, uh ? May I have the privilege to know my dear husband ?"

"It is so stupid, I should have told you... I don't know why, I thought you would be sad about what I've done, so I have never dared to tell you." He said looking at the ground.

"What are you talking about Phil ? Tell me, you are freaking me out !" I said.

He took a while to catch his breath.

"Well, you remember my stay at the hospital two months ago ?" He asked me.

"Yes of course, your kidney operation." I answered.

"Yes. Actually, I did have a kidney operation, but it wasn't about me. My kidney wasn't dying. I had met a fourteen years old girl who was suffering from a dying kidney. And, I gave one of my kidney to this girl, her name was Lyla." He admitted.

"So, you are not cheating on me ?" I asked him, completely stunned about what I've just heard.

"No, of course not Honey." He answered.

"But I don't understand, why did you never tell me about this ? Why would you hide it from me ?" I asked him.

"I didn't tell you because I didn't want to hurt you... Actually when I realized I could help

this girl, I saw her as the child I have never had. And since the operation I consider her as my own daughter. You should have seen the smile in her face when she was told that she would be cured... I almost cried. I regularly kept visiting her since the operation, just to check on her, but also because I liked seeing her. And... I have never told you because I believed you would feel guilty about this situation, you know... since we could never have a kid... I am truly sorry for hiding this from you."

I was flabbergasted about what Phil just told me I could barely find my words to express what I was feeling right now.