

White Lies

By Katrina Dawson

In Stephanie's words - Prologue

How did I get here? Over 35 married with 2 kids. That can't be right, can it? Now what do I do? What do I have to look forward to? The kids first kisses, first partners, first wedding, first baby, maybe first divorces. Is this it? Am I having a mid life crisis?

Time seems to have kept going, but left me back in the 80's, dragging this body with stretch marks, forehead wrinkles and tired eyes into the 21st century. In my mind I am still the little girl, dreaming of being Olivia Newton John in Grease, while I swing on my little tyre in the backyard. All the time chanting methodically "Janie's bum is 3 miles wide – doodah, doodah" followed by a round of "Hey bubble butt!" – just another day of loving sibling banter, between my sister and I. Some things never change as I re-enter this aching 21st century body and hear my son lovingly calling my daughter a "Dumbhead".

What happened to the feminist, aspiring journalist, lawyer, editor, teacher from 10 years ago? Where is she? How did she become a housewife? and a very poor one at that. My 20 year old self would be appalled at my selling out to my hormones. God damn those hormones!

I love my kids, don't get me wrong and I know I was in love with my husband Mark once, maybe I still am, who knows? Sometimes I feel like we are brother and sister who share the same space because we

have to. We can often go days without having a proper conversation and don't even get me started on intimacy – what is that? The last 10 years seem like a blur sometimes. A blur of dark clouds, splattered amongst splurts of absolute euphoria?

I know there are people who would kill for my life – it does look great on paper, certainly on a pro's and con's list -and that is where the guilt begins. I mean I have a great family, nice house, nice car, plenty of food and water. How could I possibly want or expect more from life? Like many a famous person has said, you can't always judge a book by it's cover.

All my issues, of which there are many, my husband Mark believes come from my childhood- but whose don't. More specifically he thinks moving around a lot as a child created an attachment problem for me – in that I could not put too much trust in anyone for fear one of us would leave anyway – looking back maybe he is right. He doesn't know everything though, one day he might, but that day is not today. All I know is I am Stephanie and my life changed in so many ways, the day I accepted life is what it is. No more and no less. The best we can hope for in life is contentment. True happiness is like Mickey Mouse, Hollywood made.

Chapter One – The Beginning of It All

Leaving the huge hall where Stephanie had been cooped up for the last two weeks, had felt like a having her first shower in years. Stephanie had just finished her last exams at High School and was a fresh faced 18 year old, ready to make her mark on the world. How, she didn't know, doing what she didn't know, but somehow she would make a difference. Until then though she wanted to party and hang out with her friends. Going home was not an option.

The only thing that marred this day was the absence of a boyfriend, but Stephanie knew there was plenty of time for that later and who knows, the post exam party may be the place she met 'the one', or failing that someone to at least have a great night with. Stephanie had been pining for her ex boyfriend for months now and felt it was time she moved on, god knows he certainly had, and she was determined to show him her life would go on. If he got jealous and begged her back, well that was just a bonus!

Meanwhile on the other side of town, a young Mark was also celebrating the end of exams too. Unlike Stephanie, he had his future all mapped out. First he would get his commerce degree, double majoring in Management and Accounting, then he would eventually become a CEO of a big accounting firm. Once he had accomplished everything in the business world he would marry the luscious Penelope (Penny for short).

He had adored Penny for the last two years and had even made out with her a couple of times. Each time though she had said it was a mistake and quickly moved on to the next boyfriend. That's ok Mark thought – 'all good things come to those who wait, and man have I waited!'

Tonight was not about Penny anyway and all he wanted to do was party, after all he had studied so hard and deserved a rest before University began. Where better to go than 'The Wharf'? A trendy little nightclub on the Auckland waterfront where ID was generally not needed, even though Mark knew he looked not a day over his 18 years. Even that was pushing it abit.

Stephanie drank another glass of wine as quick as she could, before the taxi arrived, so she wouldn't need to buy too many drinks in town and then jumped in the car between her friends Jody and Maxine, while Roxy headed straight for the front seat ('Typical' thought Stephanie and rolled her eyes at Jody- who was obviously sharing the same thought). Stephanie had secretly hoped Roxy would not come tonight, because it was impossible to get even a look in to any guys with her there. Roxy was not a stunner or anything, she just had IT! It meaning copious amounts of sex appeal and was never short of admirers. The worst part was she didn't seem to realise her immense power over men.

As they were queuing outside 'The Wharf' Stephanie turned to find a dark haired man (a boy on the verge of being a man anyway) staring

at her. He had the biggest brown eyes she had ever seen with lovely long eyelashes. He looked like he had not finished filling out yet, although the potential was undeniable. Mark was struck at the same time by this intense looking blonde girl, with unfortunately, a cigarette hanging out her mouth. He was not a smoker but he knew he had to meet her. He thought what the hell, it is only for one night I can even pretend I smoke, it's not like I am going to have a relationship with her or anything?. Penny was busy tonight anyway and probably had her next boyfriend already lined up.

Once inside the club the music was so loud, talking was near impossible so Stephanie just smoked and surveyed the room for any talent. The girls were hanging out by the toilets because as they so astutely pointed out, everyone has to pee eventually, so it was the best vantage point to find the hot men. Just as Stephanie was about to light another cigarette she spotted the guy with the beautiful eyes from outside, walking over. Roxy was not next to her and the girls were busy eyeing up another group of guys, so she knew he was coming to her. Surprisingly, Stephanie felt no nerves at all. In fact she almost had a feeling of calm, like she knew this guy somehow, and was merely watching her life unfold.

Mark saw the blonde girl again and decided he would ask her for a cigarette, that way they could start talking. He didn't actually have to smoke it, he could just not inhale, pretend like on TV. By the time he got to her though, he just stood there, until she said "Hi I'm Stephanie, would you like a cigarette?" Mark simply took it and then she started talking. Stephanie was so friendly and easy to talk to,

and they easily drifted into flirtatious innuendo and that weird feeling, like they already knew each other, like this was destiny.

The girls must have smelt the pheromones, because Roxy came over and began her signature moves on Mark, who seemed either oblivious, or actually uninterested. Stephanie could not tell which, but was glad either way. When Roxy finally moved on to her next victim, Mark came back to Stephanie and asked her if she wanted to go for a walk, so they could actually hear each other talk.

All of Stephanie's warnings her mother gave her about not going off with strange men and the danger of being raped or worse murdered, ran through her head, but she pushed those fears down. He seemed so innocent and harmless. After a lot of pushing and shoving, followed by "excuse me's" and "sorries" to random people, they made it outside and walked for a few minutes. Stephanie turned around to say something to Mark and suddenly felt his lips on hers. Who kissed who first is a mystery, but it was the first of many that night.

Mark talked about Penny, Stephanie told him about her ex. Both pondering over if they should really be talking about this with someone they like? They kissed and kissed until their mouths were sore and agreed they never wanted to be apart again. Mark talked of his hopes for his future and Stephanie spoke of her indecision about hers. For the first time in a very long time, Stephanie breathed a sigh of relief because Mark didn't expect anything of her and every

career idea she spoke about he supportively replied “I could see you doing that”.

Stephanie and Mark quickly fell into the routine of seeing each other whenever they could and snatching as much alone time as they could. It wasn't long before they met each other's families and friends and started to become known as “Mark and Steph”, no longer separate entities, but part of a couple. It was exciting, even exhilarating at times, but also a little unnerving. Stephanie was all too aware of the danger of trusting someone too much.

Things seemed too perfect for Stephanie and she did her best to test Mark's loyalty and patience at times. She yelled at him, broke up with him on a weekly basis, even had a brief fling with a guy she wasn't even interested in. Each time Mark would be disappointed and make her promise to try harder, but he still stayed with her. Stephanie did not get it and started to actually believe that Mark was either just enjoying the regular sex, or even telling the truth, maybe he did love her? Despite her doubts, she had to admit, maybe she loved him too. Mark accepted her and seemed to understand her struggles to trust in their relationship, without her having to tell him anything. He never asked more than she wanted to tell and appeared content to just be with her.

Mark and Stephanie spent the first year of their relationship, fighting, loving and then fighting some more, followed by some great loving. Both had never been with anyone this long and a year seemed like an eternity. No matter how much they fought, they

could not bear to be apart and started to make decisions about their future. Stephanie decided to go to University after all and study Journalism, while Mark decided to move closer to Stephanie and University. Mark did not know why, but he had this overwhelming desire to protect and look after Stephanie. Despite how volatile she was he felt deep down, she couldn't help it and he wasn't going to give up on her. He also had to admit things were never boring when Steph was around!

Everyone warned them about the dangers of not sewing their oats while they were young and how they needed to experience more life apart, before settling down together. They didn't care, they knew they wanted to be together and there was no way they could imagine travelling the world or experiencing life with anyone else. Mark and Stephanie knew the statistics were against them staying together forever, but that did not mean they could not be the exception. Couldn't they?

Anyway there was one crucial thing they agreed on, NO KIDS EVER! Unfortunately Campbell had other plans and two years out of University, Stephanie discovered she was pregnant. That was when the young Stephanie and Mark discovered, what being grown up was really all about. Suddenly they were married, (at Stephanie's parent's insistence!) and were no longer Mark and Steph, but parents. Stephanie began to feel lost, like a spectator of her own life.

Mark took it all in his stride and began adjusting their 5 year plans, but it was not as easy for Stephanie. She was stuck at home and knew her promising journalism career had just come to an abrupt end. Dramatic she knew, but hormones do crazy things to women. She could not see beyond the early years of parenthood and started to feel her own life was second to her kids. Stephanie desperately tried to look at the long term and not be so needy but it was very hard for someone who continually wanted things to happen yesterday. Mark did his best to reassure her that she could still retain her identity and made sure she went out often, but he had his own career to think of and was fast becoming the “go to” guy in his company. This meant longer hours and less time to be “Mark and Steph”, the couple. ‘It’s ok’ Stephanie frequently told herself, our time will come. So she waited, and she waited. She got pregnant again, life got busier again, and she still waited...

Were they right? kept replaying in Stephanie’s head as her time became monopolised by kid’s tv shows and play groups. Should they have dated other people? Mark seemed happy, so why wasn’t she? Mind you Mark’s life had not changed that much, he still went to work, still out to business dinners, while Stephanie sat at home quietly resenting how different her life had become from her dreams.

While Stephanie sat with Maya in her arms and Campbell dancing away happily, to the wiggles she once again tried to push her discontentment down. The visits to meet the new baby had stopped

and it was just her and the kids. At times she couldn't have been happier. Other times she felt so young and unable to reconcile her life as a mother and a wife. If anyone had of asked her a few years ago where she saw herself now, it would certainly not have been changing nappies or organising outings based on daytime naps. There was no-one to talk to about these thoughts, because when she tried to communicate people simply politely reminded her of all those poor women who would kill for the opportunity to have her family. Eventually Stephanie learnt to keep it bottled inside.

The weeks passed very quickly and the children grew rapidly. It was on the weekends that Stephanie felt alone. Talking to her friends on the phone, listening to where they went out to on Friday or Saturday nights, the men they met, the dates they enjoyed, as well as the ones they had endured, became Stephanie's voyeuristic past time. Mark appeared oblivious to Stephanie's fascination with all things single and free from responsibility. He appeared completely content with his lot.

Mark loved nothing more than getting home on a Friday and playing with Maya and Campbell. He was revelling in his new role as a father and could not understand why Stephanie wasn't showing the same enthusiasm. He knew she loved the kids, so he guessed it was just hormonal. She often made unusual statements about her life passing her by too quickly, but he was careful not to push her into her new role as mother. He hoped it would happen over time naturally. Maybe this whole maternal thing was something that grows over time.

One thing that kept nagging at him, was the concern that maybe she was regretting their relationship. Stephanie and him had been adamant that they did not need to date other people and they were content to settle down together at such a young age, but what if she changed her mind? She was so social and he was aware he was far more introverted than her, so maybe he just needed to encourage her to go out more. 'That was the solution' he thought, he would look after the kids more, so she could be free to be Stephanie. Problem solved!

5 Years Later

Mark had been away for the last week and was so keen to get home to see Stephanie and the kids. He had spoken to them every day on the phone, but it wasn't the same and he knew Maya had especially missed her Daddy. In fact Steph had rung him more than once, to tell him Maya was very distressed at being put to bed by her and not him. It had always been their special time, and she claimed Mummy never did it right, or with the same level of enthusiasm.

Chaos ruled at the house when he arrived home. He could hear the tantrum from Campbell, all the way down the road. Right then his illusions of the perfect family went up like a case of spontaneous combustion, total disintegration. Maya did run to greet him and told him that Campbell was losing the plot, because Mum had asked him to get his pyjamas on. She also informed Mark that Stephanie was all dressed up ready to go out, and was in a foul mood. Great welcome home, Mark thought as he trudged up the stairs waiting for the inevitable parental handover.

Stephanie barely acknowledged him before handing Campbell over to him and picking up her handbag. "Mark I have had enough, I am going out". He felt absolutely gutted. He had been away all week, it was a Friday night and she was going out again. Not wanting to fight, Mark simply nodded and said "Guess I will see you tomorrow then". Mark couldn't imagine what it was like being home with the kids all week, and accepted she needed time out, but what about me? He

felt like a flatmate or worse a nanny. He never wanted to be one of those husbands who looked after their own kids, and called it babysitting, but he never wanted to be left alone all the time either. This was getting ridiculous and Mark knew he would have to talk to Steph about this.

Stephanie continually complained that he never organised dates with her, and he knew he was guilty of neglecting her needs too, but when would he come first? When would he get regular sex again? He would happily organise a night out for them, but why bother when he knew it would end in her rejecting him again. It wasn't so much the sex he missed (although that would be nice too). It was the closeness, that feeling of being one together. Hell at this point he would just settle for a conversation, not even a guaranteed kiss.

Closing the front door behind her Stephanie sighed to herself. She should stay home and spend some time with Mark. Almost turning around to go back inside, Stephanie reminded herself of last Friday night and the one before that too. Mark had spent the evening on his computer and then went to bed before 9pm. As exciting as that was, Stephanie thought she could cope without another one of those nights tonight. Admittedly she did not make a huge effort either, but it was as if he had just given up on them as a couple. His priority rightly or wrongly, she knew was to the kids happiness first.

Mark and Stephanie were well aware they had issues in their relationship and had even sought marriage guidance from two different counsellors. Each time Stephanie had become withdrawn

and quiet, and the car ride home ended in an argument. Stephanie felt Mark blamed her for everything and put on an act for the counsellor, therefore making her feel she looked like the bad guy. Just another whinging wife! Mark saw little point in the counselling too. He felt they just needed to talk more and airing their dirty laundry, was unnecessary. Truth be told, Stephanie knew he was just embarrassed. Mark was used to being good at everything he tried. Having to get outside help for their marriage, felt to him like he had failed. He would never quit, once you made a commitment, you stuck to it, no matter what. Loyalty was one of Mark's many traits she had loved in the beginning, but now she felt as if she was simply a commitment he made that he must endure and see it through to the bitter end. Stephanie, however, did quit things. Mark could never hide his displeasure at the amount of activities Steph had started and eventually lost interest in over time.

After years of living like brother and sister (or as Stephanie often said in anger, parent and child!), both Mark and Stephanie seemed to settle for being parents to Maya and Campbell, or at least it appeared they had to one another. Inside both were screaming for attention, love and intimacy. Besides Oprah did say you could be more than a parent after having children, your love life doesn't have to die as a result. Despite what children wanted to believe, their parents could still be sexually active after they appeared.

Deep down Mark and Stephanie often asked themselves, where to from here??? Was this the eventual outcome for all couples after having a family? Could they put their relationship on hold till the kids left home? Would there still be a relationship by then?

Chapter Two - 9 years since having their first Baby and Fiji here we come!

Stephanie woke up with the excitement almost threatening to consume her completely. This was the day she had been looking forward to for months (even years), it was the day her and her family were going to Fiji. The long awaited family trip she had been dreaming of and she couldn't think how she was going to contain her excitement long enough to get the kids and Mark ready to get on the plane.

Mark had been so consumed by work lately that, Stephanie wondered whether they would find anything to talk about on the plane trip. Their life for years had become filled with discussing kid's timetables, Mark's work schedule and the logistics of daily life, so much so, that they had become more like ships passing in the night rather than friends and lovers. Stephanie knew it was not uncommon for couples to feel this way after being together so long and then adding children to the mix, but had high hopes that this next week may help them reconnect in some way.

The trip to the airport was pretty uneventful and predictable. Mark gave Stephanie the same pre-holiday speech he had given her for over 16 years. "Don't get your hopes up too high Steph, you know you always get disappointed etc, etc". Stephanie had switched off early on in the lecture to avoid the inevitable argument about her over the top enthusiasm (as Mark constantly told her) and his lack of

enthusiasm (as Stephanie often told him). After years together it was simply easier to let it go for the sake of peace. Something that Stephanie had always found very hard to do. She did know he was right and she needed to take it down a level or she would emotionally crash and burn, but when he said it, it made the hair on the back of her neck stand up. Stephanie resented being told to calm down like she was a child. Suddenly it felt like everything was riding on this trip and Stephanie grimaced at the thought of it not meeting her high expectations.

Stephanie's chain of thought as usual did not last long, because Campbell and Maya had begun to fight in the backseat. About what Stephanie did not want to know, she knew it would be a, he said, she said situation, that no-one ever wins in. Campbell and Maya were only a two years apart and were pretty much inseparable most of the time. They could not have been more different in personality but both had their own distinctive charms and quirks. Campbell was identical to his father in almost every way, with his dark hair and expressive brown eyes with the delicate framing of exquisite long eyelashes. Why the boys get the lovely lashes, seemed incredibly unfair, but not unusual at all, amongst all the little boys Steph now knew, round Campbell's age. Despite Campbell's physical symmetry with his Dad, his personality was the mirror image of his mother. Campbell loved reading, was extremely sensitive and very intelligent. Maya was a whole different story, she looked like her mother, with her almond shaped eyes, long thick blonde hair and her small mouth. Maya and her father shared similar personality traits, as they were both easy going, very generous to others and were unhappiest when they were bored. Picking up a book to pass the time, would never be

a satisfactory answer to Mark or Maya. They always had to have a project to work on or activity to keep them amused.

Luckily fights between Campbell and Maya never did last long as Campbell realised if he wanted his Nintendo DS on the plane, he would need to behave. As long as the consequences were clear Campbell liked to colour in the lines. Stephanie also was an avid Doctor Phil fan, who continually said to find your child's currency and Mark and Stephanie used his love of computer games as their best behaviour tool. Maya on the other hand was not as easy, she had no one particular focus and would move swiftly to a new activity or toy so, punishment for her was still very much in the trial and error stage. They hoped by her teenage years they would have it sorted, before the hormones kicked in and the inevitable rebellion began.

Walking off the plane at Fiji airport Stephanie felt a strange feeling of foreboding like she was watching herself in some made for TV movie where there is some huge twist or turning point about to happen, with catastrophic consequences. Hopefully this was just the beginning of a new era. It didn't help that Campbell and Maya kept asking on the plane if Mark and her could please not wreck this trip by arguing this time. As much as they both denied this was a regular occurrence, they guiltily looked at each other and without words vowed they would try. Had they really been fighting that much? No-one needed to answer that, they both hung their heads in shame, knowing they really had broken every parenting rule in the book.

After finally making it to their coach transfer with only seconds to spare, and a very frustrated driver, (who had wanted to leave early since he knew the plane had in fact landed 10 minutes earlier than the scheduled time) Stephanie sat down next to Mark and ran her fingers through her now sweaty blonde mane, while Mark put his arm awkwardly round her shoulders in a seemingly romantic attempt at togetherness. Stephanie glanced up and gave him a quick smile, as if to say thanks for trying, but then swiftly repositioned herself so his arm had nowhere to land but on his own lap. Mark was used to being rebuffed by Stephanie, but was getting tired of being kept at a distance. He had done everything he could to prove he wasn't going anywhere, what else could he do? When would she let him in?

The rest of the ride to the resort was filled with "I Spy" to keep the kids from annoying the other passengers and Mark looking out the window longingly and Stephanie couldn't help wondering why had she pushed him away again? Looking at him now, she thought he is still handsome and he has those big brown cow eyes, just the same as the first day she met him. Really he hadn't changed. The worst thing was that he no longer looked hurt or even slightly angry anymore, when he got pushed away. Stephanie couldn't help wondering if he had, had enough. She wouldn't blame him if he had, they were so young when they got together. She had changed so much, had he?

In Fiji

Maya and Campbell could not hold it in any longer, and ran around like lunatics being let out of the asylum in the hotel foyer. Stephanie couldn't blame them either, after hours of travelling she felt like letting off a bit of steam too. Mark however, was not impressed he started with the warning look and then moved onto the elbow grip and the whisper in their ears, warning them of what was to happen if they didn't settle down.

By the time they were up in their room, a good ten minute walk from the reception, Stephanie and Mark wanted to rest, so the kids club seemed like a great plan for the afternoon. Mark offered to take them to the club and Stephanie was grateful for the break. She had to admit that Mark was a great Dad, sometimes he just needed to lighten up a bit though and remember what it was like being a kid.

Mark returned with the complimentary bottle of champagne to find Stephanie was fast asleep. Instead of sleeping himself he just lay and watched her, wondering if she would sleep this soundly if she knew the real reason for this holiday. Looking at her beautiful long hair, he was glad she hadn't given into the pressure to cut it once she became a mum and her remarkably well maintained body. He wondered how he could ever hurt her. To stave off the guilt he reminded himself how cold she had been for years and tried to remember the last time they had, had sex. Feeling slightly better he decided he may as well open the champers and start without her.

After all that was the story of their marriage these days. If he wanted anything done, he had to do it himself!

The week seemed to fly by with lots of wine and food and even a few good family stories to tell once they got back to Australia (their home for the last few years). By the last night they were all feeling rather relaxed but definitely ready to go home. Mark suggested the kids spend the evening at the kids club so they could have a nice romantic dinner together. After all Mark said “, who knows when they would get the chance again?”. Even to suggest a romantic dinner impressed Stephanie, and showed Mark was really trying to be the husband she always wanted. Wow she thought this could really be the new start, we both needed. He does still love me.

Stephanie sat and waited while Mark went to the bar and got them a pre-dinner drink and pondered how nice a trip this had been. There had been no fighting and the kids had a wonderful time exploring the island, swimming all day or playing with other kids at the kids club. Stephanie had really enjoyed watching Mark relax and talk about things besides work. She hoped this was a new de-stressed husband she was taking home. What a lovely present to the kids, parents who loved one another and actually enjoyed being together. Stephanie inwardly kicked herself for ever doubting Mark’s love for her and the kid’s. He had simply been trying to get ahead at work and she had been the hindrance when she should have been his biggest cheerleader.

When Mark arrived back with the drinks Stephanie smiled at him and realised it felt natural for the first time in a long time to display emotion to her husband. She was acutely aware she had been holding him at arms length for so long now, that she had forgotten how to let him in. Sometimes she even wondered if she was capable of letting anyone in. After all, the closer others got to her, the more she may tell them about her dark, selfish thoughts. Tonight she decided after some wine, she would apologise and try to let those walls down. After sticking by her for all these years, it was the least he deserved. And then who knows what might happen. Looking at Mark now, she saw his nerves and beads of sweat starting to form on his upper lip and forehead. She smiled a big warm open toothed smile, to try and relax him, but his eyes looked resolutely scared and sad all at once.

Mark nervously smiled back at Steph, and thought what he had to tell her would be so much easier if she had not been so nice the last week. He really felt like they had regained some of that connection they had lost. Mark cleared his throat and began to talk “Steph, there is something I need to tell you. First you need to know I love you and the kids and I am so sorry”. Her face dropped but he knew he had to keep going. “You know Rachel from work and how I told you her husband had the affair and I have been talking to her alot lately to try and help her through it. Well I have been seeing her for a while now, but I told her it’s over and that I was going to tell you on this trip”

Stephanie couldn’t believe she was hearing this. Mark was the last person she thought would do this, she trusted him more than she

trusted herself (mind you she didn't trust herself much!). Before she could gather her thoughts she blurted "Well at least you are predictable Mark, only you would wait till the last night of the holiday to tell me, so you could at least enjoy most of the holiday and get your money's worth, that is typical, but an affair that is not you!". "So how long Mark, tell me how long have you been seeing her?" Stephanie asked in as calm a tone as she could muster in the circumstances. Mark rolled his eyes and that was it for Steph, she lost it "You have a nerve, you tell me you cheated and then have the gall to roll your eyes when I ask for details? Are you fricken insane?" Mark just stared and let a single tear roll down his cheek, what could he say. Nothing. He was a cheater.

With Mark just sitting there unable to speak, Stephanie took control. "Right here is what we are going to do, you are going to quit your job and never see that woman again, we are not going to tell anyone about this, including the kids and we will try to move on and not speak about her or this conversation again. Do you understand me Mark?". Mark looked shocked, he had expected Steph to scream, maybe even hit him and then tell him she wanted him gone. What was happening here? He did a quick calculation in his head, weighing up whether to ask why, or just count his lucky stars. It was an easy call, so he kept his mouth shut, and nodded his agreement.

Stephanie partly blamed herself for the circumstances, she couldn't tell Mark that though. Right now she knew she had the upper hand and at least for once, she had a genuine reason to feel so down. Her husband had cheated. Strangely Stephanie had expected this day to come and was almost relieved that it had finally happened. Surely

this was what they referred to as rock bottom. Maybe the worst has happened and everything would be ok now.