



Photo by John Anthony

JUNE 2021 NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is usually made up solely of articles written by members. It follows that, if no articles are submitted, none can be published. That is the case with this issue.

No articles whatsoever have been submitted. Just one item makes up this newsletter.

This is a story written jointly by members of the Creative Writing Group.

The first part of this story appeared in the March newsletter, the second and final part begins overleaf.

THE BETRAYAL? (PART 2)

“Please don’t let him recognise me” pleaded Debbie silently but of course he did. As if attached by a silken spider’s web Debbie was pulled towards him. He still had the “charmer’s” trick of clasping the hand of the person he was greeting in both hands, looking deep into their eyes and saying their name, not once, but twice. Debbie’s legs trembled and turned to the proverbial jelly.

“Look” murmured Jeremy in the deep, slightly husky voice she remembered so well. “It is wonderful to see you, but it is not private here. Take my card and ring me to arrange a time when we can meet and talk properly”.

Debbie’s heart hardened. “In your dreams” she thought and deciding not to wait for the end of the reception quietly went out onto the street.

It was in the taxi home that she suddenly realised why Tarquin looked so familiar. “Of course. Oh, Charlotte how could you be such a traitor? Did you think when you asked me to your wedding I wouldn’t realise? Did you really want to hurt me and why?”

She tried not to cry and started thinking only of revenge. “I wasn’t going to meet Jeremy but, do you know what Charlotte, now I am going to and just see how you like that!”

She took her phone out of her pocket along with the card Jeremy had given her, and dialled Jeremy’s number before she lost her resolve. Hoping to be able to leave a message, she was a bit disconcerted that he answered immediately. “Jeremy, I will meet you,” she said “but my time in London is limited. I can meet you at lunchtime tomorrow - say 1pm at Loretta’s”. “Oh, that’s great,” said Jeremy. “I really want a chance to explain, see you then”.

Remembering Carlo’s invitation to take her mother to lunch at Loretta’s two days hence, she then phoned her mother and made the arrangements. That would be a nice relaxing experience after the meeting with Jeremy tomorrow.

Debbie had a restless night, thinking hard about how she should treat their meeting tomorrow. Clearly, he was still interested in her. She was very tempted to make a play for Jeremy again, out of sheer mischief and to get revenge on her friend Charlotte and then to try and break his heart again as he had hers. But was that her style? Wouldn’t that make her as bad as they were?

The next day she headed back to the cafe, keen to be first there, and waited for Jeremy. She ordered some wine, feeling she needed some Dutch courage for what she planned. He made as if to kiss her on the cheek when he arrived, but she dodged that and pushed his glass of wine towards him. Then she began.

“I’m not interested in your explanations, Jeremy, so just listen to me please. I cannot imagine what I ever saw in you. Leaving aside your snobbish family, your privileged upbringing has clearly given you feelings of superiority and entitlement. You rode roughshod over my love and devotion, playing around with Charlotte’s sister. And then you couldn’t even stay loyal to her when I dumped you, moving on yet again to Charlotte and fathering a child with her. At least you have stayed with her and married her now - but then here you are having lunch with me, what kind of loyalty is that, and you just one day married?”

Jeremy opened his mouth to speak “But that’s....”

Debbie leapt straight back in. “No, I don’t want to hear anything from you. What you have done is so wrong, I do NOT want to hear your lame explanations. I was mortified by your betrayal but managed to survive it and live a good life. And this visit, this travesty of a celebration, how can you have had the damn cheek to invite ME to come? No Jeremy, you may think we are set to start again but there is no way at all that I would ...”

“But, I never.....” gasped Jeremy.

“Oh, indeed you did” continued Debbie. “And now I am going back to my happy, lovely life and leaving you to TRY to be loyal to your wife and son. I want nothing more to do with you. Ever.” And with that Debbie swept out of the cafe, leaving Jeremy looking stunned and upset. Good, she thought, he deserved that.

The next day she was back at Loretta’s, hugging her mother and once more pouring some wine

but this time in a far more celebratory mood.

“How was the wedding?” asked her mother, “Did Charlotte like the shoes?” And Debbie told her, sparing nothing, telling her about dropping the shoes and leaving them behind when she left, and ending with a thorough report of her drubbing of Jeremy’s character. When she finished, her mother sat staring at her looking puzzled and a little confused. “What’s the matter?” said Debbie, “He had that coming to him.”

“But you’ve got it all wrong” said her mother. “Oh dear this was supposed to happen very differently”. “What was? What on earth are you talking about?” asked Debbie. Her mother sighed. “I’m sorry now I didn’t just tell you what was happening”. And then she launched into her story. Jeremy had been devastated when Debbie just disappeared. He had contacted her mother to ask for her address, but she had stuck to her promise not to even mention Jeremy. And she had not been willing to listen to his side of the story, also on her daughter’s instructions. So, he had stayed away. And Charlotte had not been in touch much, except to ask her to pass on the message about Tarquin’s birth.

And then recently Charlotte and Jeremy had asked to see her, together, and they told her the story of what had happened. They felt too much time had gone by and they wanted to make things right with Debbie. They asked her mother to be the go-between and convince Debbie to come to the wedding.

“Right?” snapped Debbie. “Right? What could have made them think I would want to be at their wedding?”

“Not THEIR wedding,’ explained her mother, “Charlotte has married John. John is Tarquin’s father.”

“But Tarquin looks so familiar, he looks just like.....”. Debbie’s voice tailed off. “Oh. He looks like Charlotte doesn’t he”. A pause. “So, where does Jeremy come in to all this?”

“Well, he and Charlotte stayed in touch and he is Tarquin’s godfather. They were both so upset that you vanished so suddenly. They thought maybe if you came to the wedding, Jeremy could manage to convince you that he never betrayed you. He’s still in love with you Debbie. He has never had another serious relationship since you. Oh, I wish you would see that he is genuine. I do so want my only daughter to be happy, and you could, I know you could”.

Once again Debbie’s heart faltered, and her blood turned to ice. What had she done? Yesterday she had never let him utter a word and had been unprepared to listen. Of course, she had been anxious about attending the wedding, it was like stepping back in time. But she now realised she had seen what she was frightened she might see, not what was real. And more, she realised that she did still care for Jeremy despite everything. Why else would her heart flutter and her legs turn to jelly?

What should she do now? What COULD she do now? Did she want to make things right? Could she make it right? What, in point of fact, WAS ‘right’?

So, her friend had not betrayed her, what an idiot she had been. And nor had Jeremy. But wait a minute.....

“Wait a minute, Mum. So, what about that woman he kissed, the one that started it all. What about Charlotte’s sister?”

Debbie slept fitfully that night and was wide awake and ready to get up by 5am the next morning, she felt absolutely drained. Over a very strong cup of coffee, she started to plan what she would do to start to put things right between Jeremy, Charlotte and herself. She was due to fly home at the weekend, she would have to work quickly, no she needed more time, so the first thing she did was phone her neighbour to check on the kittens and to ask if it would be alright if she stayed away for an extra week. The neighbour was more than happy to look after the kittens and told her that her vegetables were doing well and would be ready to harvest when she got back. Debbie made a mental note to buy her neighbour a special thank you present to take home with her. Her next call was to the airport to change her flight, the earliest she was able to get was in nine days’ time; that would have to do she thought.

Almost as an afterthought she phoned her boss, who was not very happy about her extended

leave since her report on Mount Etna was already overdue. Debbie promised that she would visit the crater as soon as she arrived home and her report would be on his desk as soon as possible after that.

She was suddenly starving, and her head ached from lack of sleep and the constant thoughts rushing through her mind. It was too early to go to the dining room to eat, but her hotel room had a mini bar with a selection of snacks, and she munched her way through two packs and finished off with a chocolate bar before taking a shower and getting dressed, she dried her hair, checked the clock and lay back down on her bed. She closed her eyes and made a plan of action, she needed to find out about Charlotte's sister before she could make any decisions.

Charlotte and her husband John were away on their honeymoon, there was nothing for it she would have to get in touch with Jeremy and hope that he would be prepared to meet with her again and that his explanation about the kiss that she witnessed all those years ago would satisfy her.

Debbie lay there for longer than she intended, mulling over what she wanted. Did she really want to rekindle her relationship with Jeremy, or would it be better just to return home and get on with her lovely but single Sicilian life?

She certainly wanted to get to the truth of what had changed the direction of her life so dramatically all those years ago. She felt sad that it could all have been a dreadful misunderstanding and that she had misjudged both Jeremy and now Charlotte.

Debbie picked up her phone and dialled Jeremy's number, no answer. She felt the tears welling up and tried again, still no answer. Debbie sighed, had she missed her chance?

At that moment the chambermaid tapped on the door and asked if she could make up the room, "Of course" Debbie replied, "I am just going down to breakfast and then I will be going out for the day." She wasn't sure where she would go but she put on her shoes, collected her coat, bag and phone and went down to the dining room. Her appetite had gone but she managed more coffee and a small continental breakfast, she felt so alone and had picked up her phone to call her mother when she spotted him walking through the foyer. Jeremy had come to find her. Her heart was in her mouth as he approached her table and sat down opposite her, they both spoke at the same time, both said "You first," then they both laughed. "You first," she said, "how did you know where to find me?"

"Your mother called me last night and told me that you thought that I was involved with Charlotte's sister while we were engaged and that you thought I was Tarquin's father and that I was marrying Charlotte. I can understand your anger yesterday, I honestly would not have done that to you. Debbie I still love you and was hoping that we could start again."

Debbie blushed feeling rather foolish that she had jumped to conclusions. "My mother told me yesterday that Charlotte married John and that he was the long-term partner and is Tarquin's father and you are his godfather". The words rushed out of her mouth. "I am sorry I got it so wrong but when I saw you at the reception, I just put two and two together and got it very wrong." Jeremy smiled; "We have wasted so many years" he said sadly.

"But what about Charlotte's sister?" she asked, "I saw you kissing her, I was heartbroken. Charlotte told me you had been meeting her for some time, I just had to leave, I felt so humiliated."

"Oh Debbie, I wish you had asked me about Rachel at the time, I was devastated when you disappeared, and it took me a long time to make sense of what had happened to make you go. Charlotte eventually told me what you had seen and what she had told you about Rachel and myself meeting for a couple of months."

"We had been meeting but not in the way that you think, Rachel worked for my father and had been helping me to plan a surprise for our wedding day."

"My father's gift to us was to be a pair of horses and Rachel was going to teach you to ride. We had been exercising the horses together in the weeks leading up to the wedding, getting them used to riding out together and as she was the same size as you, she had been helping me select riding gear for you, the day you saw us was the day that we had been for a final ride, before collecting your riding gear."

“It was to be the last time we would meet before she started to teach you to ride after our honeymoon. That day I thanked her for all her help and kissed her goodbye as a friend. I was stunned when she jumped out of the taxi and kissed me again on the lips, she told me that it was a wonderful gift and told me how lucky you were to be marrying me. Then you left me, and the horses remained with my father, your riding clothes were returned to the outfitters and Rachel very soon moved to a new job in the city. I rode my horse sometimes, but my lonely rides always reminded me of what might have been.”

Debbie sat with her mouth gaping open, stunned by what he told her. What a fool she had been jumping to the wrong conclusion, if only she had given him the chance to explain twenty-five years ago.

“Oh Jeremy, I am so sorry but when Charlotte told me that you and Rachel had been meeting for some time, I am afraid I thought the worst of you. Charlotte obviously didn’t know what you were doing together and also assumed the worst. Oh, if only we could turn back the clock.”

Jeremy took her hand across the table, “We could try to make up for lost time” he smiled.

“I am only here for another 9 days” she sighed “but we could try.”

“Let’s start with a visit to our horses, they are old now but still living with my parents, you will love them”

As Jeremy drove them to his parent’s house, Debbie told him about her life on Sicily for the last twenty-five years, about her cottage, the kittens, her vegetable garden, her work and her hobbies. He was very impressed that she could now ride and sail.

“It sounds idyllic” Jeremy enthused “perhaps I can visit?”

Debbie smiled.

The next week flew by in a whirl of gentle horse rides, outings, lunches and dinners, every day full of fun and laughter as they reminisced and wondered about what might have been.

Debbie spent the day before her flight home to Sicily with her mother, they shared an early dinner at Loretta’s before Debbie returned to her hotel room to pack.

Early the next day she paid her bill and took a taxi to the airport, her flight was on time and before she knew it, she was opening the door to her little cottage with the kittens swirling around her ankles.

During their week together Jeremy had asked Debbie to return home to England to be with him, but she knew that she could not leave her life in Sicily not even for Jeremy. Twenty-five years had been too long; she left him for a second time and fled to Sicily.

She sat quietly stroking the kittens as dusk fell and the tears rolled down her face, already she was missing him.

Suddenly lights from a car flickered across the room, Debbie went to the window and gasped as she saw him get out of the taxi, she rushed to the door, ran down the pathway and threw herself into his arm. Jeremy hugged her as he said, “I understand why you can’t leave Sicily to be with me, so I have left England to be with you.” They linked arms and walked up the path to the cottage both grinning like Cheshire cats.

Early the next morning Debbie got ready to carry out her promise to her boss, “Come with me” she said, “we can take the cable car to the top and I will have finished my work by lunchtime, and we can spend the afternoon exploring. I can write the report this evening.”

They embraced as the cable car swung its way up the mountain. “We will be together for ever” Jeremy whispered in her ear.

Charlotte gasped when she heard the shocking news the following day: An unexpected eruption of Mount Etna had brought down the cable car, but the town below had been unaffected. Geologist Miss Deborah Linton and an unknown male companion were missing following the eruption. No other casualties had been reported.

THE END

INTEREST GROUPS

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| 18th Century Social History | Interactive Travel |
| Ancient History | Jazz & Music Appreciation |
| Art Appreciation | Knitting and Crochet |
| Art Painting and Drawing | Local History |
| Bird Watching | M&M Online |
| Book Group 1 | Military Matters |
| Book Group 2 | Mindfulness and Meditation |
| Bridge Group | Petanque |
| Card Making | Play Reading |
| Creative Writing | Poetry |
| Cryptic Crossword | Psychology Today |
| Current Affairs | Rag Rug Group |
| Easy Cycling | Scrabble |
| Exploring Psychology | Visits |
| Garden Appreciation | Walking |
| History | Wine Appreciation |

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