

“First off, Frank was never happy with just one woman. He flirted all the time. He had his first affair when I was pregnant with Gavyn, but I didn’t know about it until later. The first time I discovered his adultery, I was six months pregnant with Lori. When I confronted him, he said I was fat and ugly and he needed ... some relief with someone he could stand to look at.” Ted grunted in disbelief. Shelly smiled. “I ‘forgave’ him because I was trying to be a dutiful Christian wife, but I didn’t really forgive him. I made him pay in a lot of little ways.”

“You?” Ted said in surprise. “I find that hard to believe. You’re so sweet.”

“But I wasn’t back then. I was clueless about how to be a real Christian. I didn’t even know I wasn’t. I had this idea that all Christianity was about was getting your ticket to heaven then doing the best you could in this life. My best didn’t include loving Frank after he betrayed me. I thought bad about him, talked bad about him, burned his food, washed his whites with a new red t-shirt and generally made his life miserable in so many ways. When he cheated again, I got even madder and I started talking bad to him. I cut him off entirely, emotionally and physically. He couldn’t hurt me by having affairs anymore, so he started striking back in the only way I’d left open to him.”

“You don’t mean he –?”

“Yes I do,” she cut him off because she didn’t want to hear it said aloud. Not now. Not here. “When it turned out I was pregnant with Shaelynn he said he wanted a divorce. I said good riddance to bad rubbish and let him go. I haven’t seen him since the judge dropped his gavel three years ago.”

Ted stared at her for a long moment. “How did you get over the bitterness and anger?”

Now Shelly understood why Ted was curious about her divorce.

“I was mad at God, but a friend of mine said I had no right being mad at him since I didn’t even know him. I got mad at her. She got mad back. She asked how many times I’d read the bible. I said something defensive but utterly stupid, like ‘I grew up in church. I know the bible.’ She said I didn’t know squat. She told me to call her back after I’d read, really read the whole bible. I didn’t call her for about two months. When I did call her, she said, ‘You read the whole bible already?’ I said no and she hung up. That’s when I realized that if I wanted to keep my best friend, I was going to have to read the bible. I did and I not only kept my best friend, but I also discovered another.”