



# *The Feeling*

**SUBURBAN SECRETS:  
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**



**CAROL-ROSE MARSHALL**

# The Feeling

SUBURBAN SECRETS:

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

A novel by Carol-Rose Marshall

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**Dedicated to all women who follow their feelings!**

**“REACH FOR THE STARS ...  
DREAM A DREAM ...  
AND THEN -- WORK IT!”**

Carol-Rose Marshall

Author

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ABOUT THE BOOK**

The author, Carol Rose Marshall grew up in New York City and relocated to the suburbs of Long Island during her marriage.

She was inspired to tell an untold story and unveil intimate events in this non fiction work called *The Feeling*.

*The Feeling* is a unique book, representing the exposure of a secretive narrative that has been waiting to be told for over thirty years. It tells the story of Rachel and Michael Sanders, a couple living a suburban New York lifestyle in the 1970s who appeared to be as happy as the family on *The Brady Bunch*. Behind closed doors, they were anything but that.

Michael’s remorseless cheating interludes are linked to his unceasing anger and volatile moods.

Rachel unlocks her husband’s illicit affair, but her prime concern is to guard this secret, as she presumes it is her humiliation. It was a time when women’s voices were hushed. Her spot-on “Pearl Harbor” attack directed to his mistress is wildly bold.

Elements intriguing the reader are not limited to anger turning to rage, fear, cheating, sex, family, manipulation, and loss. What appears to be a normal family to others is not that way at all!

The story is an in-depth exploration of how feelings — simple and complex, acted upon or not — can change life’s outcome over the years for those caught in their web.

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## **Chapter Five – Gotcha!**

### **JANUARY 1977**

“What a relief!” said Rachel. “Everyone’s back at work and school or in their own homes.”

Over the years, Rachel and Mike’s home had ALWAYS been the designated house for family gatherings. Although she was always giving in this regard, that year’s turn of events had made it all too much for her, and the strain was beginning to show on her face.

### ***THE IMPORTANT CALL***

Her first order of business had been to call Mary at the office!

“Good morning, Mary. You know, I didn’t send out Christmas cards this year, but we did have the kids’ pictures taken for a New Year’s card. Could you send me the list of employees’ home addresses, so I can include them in my mailing this week?”

Mary said, “Sure, BUT the list has birthdays, phone numbers, and emergency people to call. Do you want me to recopy it? Should I eliminate all that?”

Rachel thought, *How LUCKY could I get?* Trying to sound disinterested in this data, she casually continued, “No Mary, thanks—I don’t want to make extra work for you. Just send it as it is, and I’ll extract the addresses. I can either send it back to you or throw it away—whatever you think.” “Oh, that’s easy Rach. I’ll slip my OLD copy in an envelope today, and you can just throw it out when done. You’ll have it in tomorrow’s mail,” Mary said agreeably.

“Great, I’m already late getting my cards mailed, so I really appreciate this. Let me know how you like the card,” and Rachel hung up quickly.

No sooner had she hung up, the phone rang, and it was Adrienne. “I have good and bad news, Rachel. The good news is that Jake and I are retiring. The bad news is we’re retiring to Florida. We didn’t want to disrupt Christmas, but the fact is that we bought a condo in Miami and plan to move as soon as it’s ready. We haven’t told Shari or Mike yet either. So, it’s our secret, okay? The timing is right for us with my arthritis and Jake’s ailments. We just didn’t expect Shari to be going through a divorce. But if she wants, she can come with us. Do you think she will?”

*Wow, thought Rachel, what timing! Little did Adrienne realize what effect this would have on Rachel. She would be losing an important ally with their move to Florida.* “Tim might not allow his kids to move to Florida and it might lengthen their divorce. Shari will become more dependent on me, it will be more on my plate,” lamented Rachel. Nevertheless, she wished her mother-in-law good luck and assured her that her secret would be safe until their next meeting. *All the chicks are on their own, thought Rachel. Maybe it’s a good thing.* Michael and Shari were still dependent on their parents in many ways. Neither of them had ever fully matured. Shari always went to them for additional funds when her checkbook didn’t balance, and Michael still behaved irresponsibly and was forever chastised by Adrienne and Jake.

### ***ON THEIR OWN?***

Somehow, the phrase “on their own” had taken on a new meaning. *Would SHE be on her own? Was Mike in love? Did he want a divorce? Did she want a divorce? Where did this all go wrong? On my own, OMG!*

Mary's list arrived the following day and Rachel scanned it. Not only did it have addresses and phone numbers, but it also included everyone's tax status, if they were married or single, inclusive of dependent names.

Her heart was pounding as she reviewed the data, and finally, there it was flashing before her eyes, the name *Maria Grant*. Pen and paper in hand, she started to transcribe the information methodically, as though she was compiling a census report.

This person was single, twenty-seven years old, had two dependents, two boys, ages five and six, just like her daughters indicated. It appeared that she did not live far from the office, and there was an apartment number. The phone number shot out at her, and Rachel had started breathing rapidly.

Her emergency contact was a Ted Grant, located at a different phone number and address. It also showed that she had been hired on April 1, 1976, for the job of receptionist.

Scanning the rest of the list, Rachel found nothing of interest. Mary's instructions were to throw this copy away, and just as though Rachel was part of the TV show *Mission Impossible*; she would dispose of the evidence. Rachel lit a match and POOF, the list was eradicated, just like her heart.

Once again, she would store this ammunition away like nothing had happened. Rachel was overloaded with information, and Michael was not aware of all she knew. She had to bite her tongue many times as it would be so easy to let all her anguish pour out.

Although Mike had gotten over the New Year's Eve tiff rather quickly, he constantly wore that necklace. It was an everyday reminder to Rachel. Every time she saw it, bells went off in her head, and she had to walk away to contain herself.

## ***PROTECT THE KIDS***

During the second weekend of January, the winter doldrums were clearly setting in. Connor had winter cabin fever and had started acting up. He kept annoying his sisters, and Mike lost his cool. (That's if he ever had any.)

Rachel's remedy for Connor's bad behavior had been sending him to his room as punishment. After Connor shut the door behind him, she'd proceeded downstairs to do the laundry. Mike's reaction was different. He couldn't let it go at that, and thumped loudly into the boys' room, grabbed Connor by the neck and very convincingly yelled, "I have called the *Society for Bad Boys* and they are coming to pick you up. You can't live here anymore."

Connor had started begging his dad to let him stay, and Mike pulled a screaming Connor down the stairs to the front door and told him to wait there for the new people to take him away. This had caused a chain reaction in the household, and the girls started crying. Cameron had yelled, "Don't worry Connor. He's lying. You're not going anywhere." Not believing his brother, Connor was in a state of terror.

Rachel came out of the laundry room to this sickening scene. Recognizing Connor's fright, she walked swiftly over to her youngest son in an effort to bring him back to his room. Observing his wife's interference, Mike started to wildly scream, "Connor, you move, and I'll tie you to the door." Mike moved in front of Rachel and grabbed Connor and tied one end of a rope around the doorknob and the other around Connor's wrists.

The gloves were off, and Rachel was no longer compliant. She stood up to her husband, fiercely protecting her child, and said, "That's fine, get the hell out of here. You frightened them. You will not bully our children. Go!" She had then removed the rope from Connor's wrists and pulled her young son to her and hugged him.

Mike responded by slamming out of the house, like a bull in an arena. He got in his car and drove away.

It was a relief, and Rachel thought, *I hope you don't come back*. She tried to calm her kids down and, holding back her own tears, said in a singsong voice, "Come on, he's having a bad day; let's all go to McDonald's for lunch." And then to her son, "Connor, there's no such thing as a *Society for Bad Boys*. You are stuck with me until you grow up." She then called to the girls, "Casey and Carrie—he WAS joking, so stop crying!"

However, too old to be placated, Cameron looked her square in the eye and said angrily, "Some joke mom, he's having his crazies just like Nana says."

Rachel was shaking and could only think of collecting her children and leaving the house; they all needed a time-out.

The kids were more than happy to climb into the car, and except for Cameron, the McDonald's Happy Meals seemed to soothe their feelings. She watched them on the McDonald's playground and Rachel thought, *I hope they never remember this*.

When Mike returned, Rachel said, "Listen, I know Connor is trying and difficult at times, and I admit that I sometimes lose it with him, too. When I do, I hate myself because sometimes he can't help himself. It's not easy being the middle child. But Mike, YOUR display was mentally and physically cruel, aggressive, and frightening to all of them. I won't let you behave like that and don't even think about ever doing something like that again! You got all of them upset.

Those days are over!"

She watched Mike as he completely ignored her and turned on the TV. Her frustration was paramount, and she continued, "Oh, okay, right, that's the solution—don't talk to any of us. Some things never change. SCREW YOU MIKE!"



### ***THE CARD SHOP***

A few days after this incident, it was Mike's birthday, and as she browsed through the cards in the Hallmark Card Store, it had become increasingly difficult to find one that fit. It had always been so easy to find a card in the past. The card assortment included funny cards, love cards, pop-up cards, and suggestive cards, but they no longer seemed appropriate. She didn't truly mean the things any of those cards alluded to, and Rachel returned them to the rack, one by one.

*He wasn't the best husband. He wasn't the best father, and to top it off, I DON'T KNOW if I can love him until the end of my days. Don't they have any plain cards here?"* Rachel annoyedly thought. She finally located and settled on a large card that simply read—*"Happy Birthday! Have a fabulous time!"*—and that would have to do.

### ***THE TWENTY-FIRST of JANUARY***

It was a Sunday, and had snowed overnight, insulating the ground with a fluffy white blanket. There had been an unspoken invitation to enjoy a fun-filled day.

Mike was trying his best to make up for his behavior the weekend before. It was an easy task with the younger kids, but Cameron wasn't having it and keeping to himself. Mike tried to talk to Cam, but the boy just shrugged and nodded or shook his head for *Yes* or *No* when his father approached him.

Watching her firstborn's sullen mood, Rachel took Cameron aside quietly and asked him to try to forget last week. "Let's have a good rest of the day," she'd begged.

Cameron was now almost twelve and responded, “It’s not you, mom. Yesterday he was mad at me because my hands were dirty from playing ball outside. In school, I looked in a law book in the library, and in six more years, I’m out of here.”

This had all gone too far, Rachel realized.

Nevertheless, Michael had still been determined to make it a good day. He was in the garage gathering the sleds, teasing the twins, making Connor laugh, and trying to get Cam to talk to him. “Okay Cam, so listen, the whole family is going to go sledding at the park. We’ll get pretzels and hot chocolate with whipped cream at the concession.” Mike happily continued, “Afterwards, we are going to pick up a pizza and a special dessert, and whoever wins the sledding contest gets new skates and tickets to an Islander Hockey game. I’m betting it will be you because you are the biggest. So, you still don’t want to come?”

Cam shrugged; it was an offer he couldn’t refuse. Cam was a huge Islander fan. He finally acquiesced, “Sure, why not.”

As he was loading the car, Michael started yelling to Rachel, “Come on Mrs. Snow Queen, we need your help.”

By noontime, they were all seated in the family Oldsmobile and on their way.

*Of course, they need Mrs. Snow Queen, Rachel thought. Who will keep track of the wet gloves, hats, mufflers, boots, and oh yes, Band-Aids when one of them falls off the sled? Someone has to keep it together.* Rachel wanted her children to have a perfect day, and so she accepted the nomination.

## ***THE PARK***

Looking around, Rachel thought, *this community has never heard of birth control*. The park was full of kids, and the sledding slopes were crowded. They located a quiet corner on the north side, where she spied Eveline and Steve with their kids. Rachel felt better as there would be someone there that *got it*.

Mike and the kids had finally coaxed her to sit on the sled with the girls. Their squeals of laughter made Rachel smile as she thought, *I have to pull this together for their sake. We COULD be that family—maybe not the Brady Bunch, but pretty darn close*. A fun day had evolved. Eveline told her that she was glad to see everything was okay again. Rachel smiled and thought, *I HAVE to make it that*.

Mike was having the best time of all. No one felt the cold, just sleds and snowball forts, and the best part, they were a family. She must have been wrong and allowed her imagination to get the best of her. There was NO proof of anything. Maybe Mike didn't want to tell her that he'd bought a necklace for himself, and maybe Mary didn't see Mike at the party because there had been so MANY people.

And, so BIG DEAL, he took someone to lunch with the girls. He probably needed the help with them. Certainly, he would be kinder to the children. It MUST have been a mistake! They had been very convincing arguments, and she'd started to feel better.

Connor was so happy and unselfishly trying his best to help the girls win. Cam was serious as he tried to get that prize.

Rachel thought, *I'm glad I didn't tell anyone. It would have been soooo embarrassing. There's probably nothing to tell. I'll help him work on his moodiness. After all he IS my husband, and we ARE a family, just like I wanted.*" She'd then had started to think, *Today will be the start of calmer days*.

At about 4 p.m., the sun started going down and they began to feel the cold. It had been time to get everyone cleaned and packed up to go home. That was a feat and a job for Superman, or perhaps a job for Mrs. Snow Queen.

### ***THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT***

The kids were all laughing, and Mike was in a good mood, and Rachel happily thought, *I think we're going to be alright.*

She had ordered pizza pies for 5:00 p.m. and bought a Carvel ice cream cake for dessert earlier. Mike said, "Let's pick up the pizza on the way home so I don't have to go out again. Also, I noticed the front right tire is low, so we'll stop at the gas station next to Mario's Pizza Store and use their air pump. The ground is full of ice, and who needs a flat?"

As he carefully parked in front of the air pump, Rachel had watched as Mike got out of the car. He'd shrugged as he inspected the tire that was clearly *gasping for air*. He'd shivered while putting on his gloves and pointed to the steam escaping his mouth and pantomiming the cold temperature. He could be funny if he wanted.

As he approached the pump, he raised his arms in the air while waving in an effort to get Rachel's attention and called to her, "Ra-chel, I forgot the tire gauge." He went to the car and said, "It's in the glove compartment, could you please hand it to me?"

Rachel had reached forward and started to open the glove compartment.

Then, suddenly, with a quick, near maniacal swoop of his hand, Mike opened the car door, simultaneously yelling, "STOP, I'll GET IT, YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE IT IS—STOP, STOP!"

With a rapid move worthy of a karate champion, he slammed her hand away, defending the glove compartment. He held the small envelope-sized door with one hand and carefully removed the tire gauge with his other. The opening he'd engineered was only wide enough to retrieve the little tool before he closed it.

Rachel watched in disbelief as he then ran back around to the driver's side, took the keys out of the ignition, and from the driver's side, proceeded to lock the glove compartment as he kept his arm in front of Rachel who was seated in the passenger front seat. She observed that his face was as white as the snow.

Rachel said in amazement, "My God, you almost took my hand off. What's wrong with you? I was getting it!"

Still in the driver's seat, Mike answered calmly, "Sorry honey, it was cold out, and I didn't want you to cut yourself."

Rachel didn't have a single word to say. SHE KNEW. The ride home was quiet and soulful.

Rachel stressed; *this is not the end of this little dance that just took place.*

And now, there it was again, THAT FEELING—that awful, unmanageable FEELING.

### ***GOTCHA***

She entered her home, and almost stumbled over the kid's boots that were carelessly left on the hallway floor. She didn't care. All she could think about was Michael's behavior. *What is behind the glove compartment? Oh no, PLEASE, no,* she begged in her HEART, but her MIND knew it wasn't good.

She'd had one bite of pizza at the kitchen table and couldn't wait until the kids were through eating. They finally finished off the pies with gusto and were now devouring the Carvel ice cream cake. They were all so happy—they'd had a good day.

She didn't want to upset their euphoric mood. However, Rachel, was feeling sicker by the moment, and she firmly said to the children, "Kids, let's scramble! Get undressed and into bed. Tomorrow is school!"

Michael had been tired, and she allowed him to beg off and go sit in his recliner. "Go rest," she'd said, "I'll put them to bed. Tomorrow is a workday."

She did her due diligence, as she did every night. The kids said goodnight, still excited, and asked if they could go again next Sunday. Connor said he was going to write about his day in an essay for his English class tomorrow. Cameron had peacefully read his book, and the girls who had been overtired, jumped up-and-down on their beds. "Lights out—see you in the a.m.," Rachel lovingly demanded.

Rachel had waited impatiently as each child fell off to sleep. When she was sure they were all secure in their childlike dreamlands, she tiptoed down the staircase. Just as she thought, Mike had fallen asleep too, in the recliner.

She'd then been energized, as she started on a hunt, a quest, and felt tremors traveling throughout her body. *Stay strong*, she thought, *deep breaths—YOU have got to do this*. She'd looked through her purse, seeking her car keys. She was distraught and could not locate them. She'd angrily picked up Mike's jacket which was thrown over the kitchen chair. She prudently reached into the pocket and retrieved his car keys, holding them tight to keep them from jingling.

Then carefully, she'd opened the inner door to the garage, and barefooted, she'd gingerly crept into the garage. The floor was cold, and she thought, *I hope I don't get sick.*

Black-laced snow was firmly entrenched in the tires and wheels of the car. The melting process had made the garage floor a mess, and now her feet were wet. Almost slipping, she grabbed onto the Oldsmobile's driver's side door with an acrobatic move.

She successfully opened the door and slipped into the front seat. Mike had taken the car to work last week as the two-seater sports car was good for nothing in this weather. She had not driven the Oldsmobile since.

Rachel prayed, *please, please, don't wake up now.* She'd taken a deep breath, feeling like a cat burglar on her own property. Key in hand, she'd opened the glove compartment, and the door fell open. Rachel spied two large, crushed envelopes and several loose receipts, which were stuffed into the small opening. She removed them, quickly locked the glove compartment, and breathlessly went back into the house. Her feet were freezing, but thankfully Mike was still asleep, and the house was quiet.

She marched up the stairs into her bedroom and subsequently to her bathroom and locked the door. Wrapping her feet in a towel, and fighting back tears, she opened the envelopes. The first was a large birthday card with hearts on the front declaring *Happy Birthday to the One I Love.* She'd thought, *well, it isn't from me. I couldn't even pick one out for him.* The inside of the card revealed scratchy handwriting in script that read: *To my Sexy Michael, My one and only . . .*

The printed saying was ordinary, but the bottom of the card held another personal message:

*Can't wait for our night together—I promise you a fantastic birthday.*

*It's going to be better than last time.*

*All my love, Maria*

Rachel couldn't breathe, and felt palpitations in her chest, but nevertheless she'd forged ahead and opened the second envelope. That had been a Christmas card with the following imprint:

*To my Husband-to-be, Merry Christmas!*

Inside, in infantile-like handwriting addressed the "potential wannabe position with a personal sentiment:

*I can't wait for our families to be combined.*

*I always wanted daughters.*

*Looking forward to a New Year and life together.*

*Love always,*

*Your soulmate, Maria*

**WHAT? WHAT? WHAT?**

Rachel's world had just ended—a painful heart, sweating brow, trembling hands, tears flowing were all symptoms of a sudden and unusual virus OVERTAKING her. It was an illness that only SHE had been subjected to. Her mind was like a Scrabble set, with dislocated letters. On the one hand, the birthday card indicated a sexual affair. On the other hand, the Christmas card indicated a full-time relationship—a relationship that involved feelings and emotions. She'd read somewhere that, "60 percent of affairs began at work, and eventually turned friendships to physical relationships." *Was that what had happened?* She was FEELING sicker and sicker!

She sat down on the floor, Indian style, crossed her hands over her heart, closed her eyes, and started to meditate. She said her mantra over and over again, but her thoughts kept interrupting,



*what happened? Why would he cheat? Was it a lack of love from me? But God knows I've given him that. She had continued to recite her mantra over and over with more invasive thoughts as her mind wandered. A lack of sex? No, their sex life was still intact. No complaints from him. Did she neglect him? No, I cater to his every whim.*

She finally stopped and stood. It was senseless to try to meditate. Instead, she found the crumpled receipts, straightened them out, and started to scrutinize them.

One was from Gertz Department Store—Lingerie Department: *Black nightgown: \$152.00*

The second was from Fortunoff's:

*14 Kt Bracelet: \$495.00*

*Diamond and Sapphire Ring, 14 Kt: \$1,250.00*

Third, some unknown Flower Shop for this:

*Assorted Christmas Bouquet: \$160.00*

Fourth, a toy store in Queens, for this:

*Children's Train Set: \$349.00*

Last and certainly not least, a receipt from an Italian restaurant called Umberto's in New York City with a tab for \$225.00 plus tip. Actually, that had been the worst of all, because the date was the night of the Employee Christmas Party.

*Okay, Santa Claus—mystery solved! So that's where the rest of the Christmas bonus money went! A FEELING of RAGE filled her being. She thought, YOU PIECE OF CRAP! You had me put our kids' and parents' presents on my credit card, and worst of all, you gave ME nothing.*

***BUSTED***

She'd been enraged, and it was time for action. He wouldn't know what hit him! Shoulders back, head high—she was on a mission!

She found the note paper on which she'd diligently recorded Maria's phone number. She ran down the stairs to see Michael still sleeping. *SHOWTIME!* she said to herself.

She shook Michael in his chair and pushed his legs off the recliner. He awoke, startled, and disoriented.

She took the phone extension with the long wire and dialed the phone number of her designated perpetrator. A squeaky, female voice answered, "Hello?"

Rachel quickly pressed the "Speaker" button, handed the phone to Michael, and said, "It's for you!"

Still in sleep mode and looking confused, Michael said, "Hello," while staring up at the vaulted ceiling in their family room.

The voice on the speaker phone answered back, "Hello darling . . . I've been waiting for your call. I'm wearing the nightgown you gave me."

*(B U S T E D)*

Michael turned white in disbelief!

Rachel said, "It's your girlfriend! Cat got your tongue. SPEAK you moron!" she slapped him across his face, threw his coat at him, and screamed, "Get out!" She was a new Rachel.

Maria, still on speaker, stupidly kept talking, "What's wrong, sexy? Who is that? Are you there?"

Michael couldn't find the speaker button to turn it off, and he finally threw the phone to the floor. Rachel picked it up as Maria continued, "Michael where are you? Are you coming tonight? Hello, hello, hello?"

Finally, Michael wrestled the phone from Rachel's grasp, hung it up, and was totally beside himself.

Rachel screamed, "Busted, Michael—your GIRLFRIEND called! Get out before I call our whole family. And by the way, call a cab—NOTHING here is yours."

Rachel could see he was in a frozen, shocked state. She did a turnabout, quietly walked over to him, and softly said, "Let me fix your collar."

Michael appeared to be grateful for a second of kindness and she quickly unlatched and removed the "famous" necklace.

Rachel said quietly, "I'll take that to pay for the Christmas gifts for our kids that you didn't buy." He had been confused and dared not respond.

Not through yet and on a roll, Rachel quietly dialed the number, which she now knew by heart, and bravely spoke into the phone, "So tell me Maria, do you have a large apartment?"

And densely, Maria answered her agitator, "No, just a small two bedroom."

Rachel continued, "Oh, too bad, because you're going to have to make room in your seedy love nest. Michael will be there tonight and good luck—you won the prize."

Mike screamed, "Are you crazy?" and grabbed the phone, returning it to its cradle. He looked like he was about to have a stroke. First, he turned red, and then white, and said with a gulp that begged acceptance, "Rachel—it was a wrong number? What's gotten into you?"

Rachel's manner was determined and uncompromising as she resumed her onslaught, "Stop the lies! It was your girlfriend Maria—you know, the one whose dirty hands touched our daughters, the one who bought you this disgusting necklace, the one YOU bought a bracelet, a ring, and a nightgown, and took to a restaurant! Oh right, that was a mistake because you were supposed to be at the employee Christmas party. The one you've been screwing for months—the one whose

kids you gave a toy train set to instead of your own. No wonder there had been no overtime money, because there was **N O O V E R T I M E!**” Rachel felt like she was beginning to lose it as panic started to overtake her. She had to breathe and find her inner strength.

Mike regained his composure and said, “Stop, this is all a mistake . . . ”

Rachel said resolutely but in a soft tone, “There’s no mistake. You can go, get a divorce, just leave!”

Mike beseeched her, “Why would I want a divorce—you’re crazy! Some lunatic just called and you believe her? I love you . . . ”

Laryngitis had started to set in as Rachel continued, “You love yourself, you selfish jerk. We are **DONE**. I don’t know which of us is the **WINNER** or the **LOSER!**”

Mike begged, “No, Rachel. Please **STOP**, the kids will hear you.”

Rachel straightened her arms and placed her palms flat on the card table, head high and revealed, “Mike, you stop—I know about your affair, so own up to it you weak, sniveling excuse for a husband. **GO SCREW MORONIC MARIA** and then **YOURSELF!**”

Mike covered his eyes with both hands and **FINALLY** realized that he wasn’t getting out of this one. He confessed, “Okay listen, it’s nothing. She’s a little nuts and thinks she’s in love with me. I’m never leaving you. I love you; this is our whole life. I’ll get rid of her. Please Rach, come here, and please forgive me. We’ll work it out.”

Rachel had been wasted as every emotion, every fiber of her being felt as though all her nerves were exposed. It hurt to touch her skin. She had to get into bed, or she would collapse.

All the **FEELINGS** were overwhelming her!

She then said, “**DON’T** follow me, **DON’T** you dare enter our bedroom!”

She thought, *I should say more, I should throw him out, but I can't move—I can't speak—I feel ill and weak.* She left the room and disconnected both phones from their respective stations and hid them. Earlier she'd removed both garage door openers from the cars and had hidden them too. She retreated to her bed, her safe space.

She'd tossed and turned in the black of night, thinking, *I have entered another dimension.* Tears burned her face, as she finally turned into the pillow, grateful for the sleep that finally overtook her.

### ***THE MORNING AFTER***

Rachel woke alone in her bed at 6:30 a.m. She brushed her teeth, combed her hair, and threw on jeans and a sweater.

It was morning and she realized Mike must have gone to work. She'd heard the sports car start up and leave. She went downstairs and looked in the garage. His car was gone, and she closed the garage door with the wall control. "Well, I guess he realized that the garage opener wasn't in his car."

She set the table, made breakfast, and started to get her kids up. One by one, the routine started. They seemed okay and nobody said anything about the night before. She was so thankful. By 8:00 a.m., they had all left on their respective school buses.

She didn't feel any better than last night. She decided to stay home, not answer the phone, and just think about her next option. She had a cup of coffee, but not much more. She couldn't swallow much. Her whole world had collapsed. She thought about her mom so many years ago, and realized, *I finally understand what you went through.*

At about 11 a.m., Rachel retrieved the white gold necklace that she'd removed from Mike's neck. She put it in her purse, started up the Oldsmobile, and drove out of the neighborhood. Stopping in a neighboring development, she put the car in park, got out and walked over to a floor grate covering the sewer in front of the curb. Flicking her wrist, she ceremoniously threw the necklace down the sewer adding, "Have a nice trip."

Michael called at noontime, and she answered.

He said, "Don't hang up Rachel, please listen. I spoke to that woman. She says she didn't call. It must have been a hoax."

"What?" said Rachel. "A hoax is right, a hoax on me and your children. Listen Mike don't come here tonight. Go sleep with Moronic Maria and support her children. And by the way, don't be looking for that necklace. I had a choice to either choke you with it or throw it down the sewer. So, since my children need me to be here, I chose the sewer, which is where all garbage belongs. I only wish I could do the same with you." And, she added, "Mike, I will lock the door to the garage and all the screen doors, so you can't get to the locks. The best thing you could do is sleep in your car in the freezing cold. If you try to get in, I'll call the police, and my whole family will be here."

"Geez, Rachel, I want to come home. We need to talk, and I'll explain it all to you," said a very sorrowful Mike.

"Mike, I wish you could read my lips. But we are on the telephone, so understand this—I am NOT ready to talk. We'll see how you like the silent treatment. You know the treatment, where one person doesn't talk to the other—even if the house is burning down? So go and F--- Maria! In fact, f--- your brains out. It shouldn't take long because you hardly have any brains."

Rachel hung up and then dialed Mike's office, and yes, Maria was at work, and answered.

“Hello, may I help you?”

Rachel thought, *she doesn't even say the company's name!*

Staring into space, Rachel said, “Hello homewrecker. Is it your fault because YOU seduced my husband or is it his fault because HE seduced you? Whichever, it doesn't matter. Your days are numbered at work. And let's see, your kids are Danny and Anthony. And it looks like your ex-husband, who lives near you, is Ted. I'll think about calling him and letting him know what kind of unfit mother you are.”

The other side of the phone was silent, and finally a hushed voice said, “I'm sorry Mrs. Sanders. I need my job, so please don't expose this.”

Rachel raged, “Need your job? No, you don't, Michael can support all of us. You can all fit in your small apartment. By the way, don't ever presume that you can tell ME what to do.”

“Mrs. Sanders, can you hold on? The phones are ringing; I don't want to get in trouble—or can I call you later?” said the FRONT person all in one breath.

“Are you stupid or what? Call ME? I'm not your friend!” and Rachel hung up.

“Mike, you finally got what you deserve. She's not only a slut, but an ignorant one,” Rachel said, addressing the four walls in the house.

The phone started ringing, but Rachel didn't answer it. That had been enough for the day. Mike left a message: “Rachel, don't do anything stupid. I don't want ANYONE to know about this.

There are too many repercussions. We have a mortgage. Look, I'm sorry. I want to come home. I don't want this. I'll do anything to make it up to you.”

Rachel thought, *Yes, a mortgage, car payments, kids who need shoes. You know what; it's time for me to go back to work. I DON'T need you!* Rachel was outraged and started to cry, “OMG, OMG, WHAT DID HE DO?”

Old habits die hard, and as usual Mike didn't listen. He came home and found the outer doors locked, just as she'd said. The kids were told that he was working late all week. Rachel needed the week to consider her options.

Mike had checked into the Holiday Inn down the block, or so he said.

Rachel retreated to her safe bed. She was already lonely. *How would she explain this to Roz and Adrienne and Jake? Oh my God, I'm just like Shari! I can't think about this anymore.* She thought, *Adrienne is getting out of town. Maybe I could go with her.*

The week flew by, and she started constructing her resume. Rachel felt embarrassed that this had happened to her, and she wanted to hide this truth from everyone. She'd been made a fool of.

It was the end of January, so cold outside—and so cold inside.

She told her mom that it was too cold for her to come this weekend.

She called Aunt CeeCee and said, "I need help. Can you take the twins this weekend?"

"Of course—anything else?" asked her devoted aunt.

"No, not right now," Rachel answered.

CeeCee said, "Rachel, we are here for you."

The boys didn't need as much supervision. They could stay home, and she could drop them off at a myriad of activities for the weekend. A multitude of FEELINGS enveloped her. She had endless thoughts about her four children. Her mom only had one. How will they go to college? How will she keep the house?

She picked up her bargello canvas and started counting stitches and separating the yarn. The pattern was intricate, and it kept her mind clear, until she would turn on the TV and hopefully, fall asleep. She should ALWAYS go with her instincts.

Clearly, this time it had NOT been JUST a FEELING!