



# *The Feeling*

**SUBURBAN SECRETS:  
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**



**CAROL-ROSE MARSHALL**

# The Feeling

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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 Two – ROZ & the KIDS

OCTOBER 1976

The fall season brings many changes. First and foremost, the changing color of the leaves. They stiffen, gracefully fall, and leave only bare branches. There was something majestic about the strong trunk and dormant branches, which remained.

The word, “*dormie*” in Latin means “*to sleep.*” In the spring after their long sleep, they revive and sprout beautiful, green, healthy leaves.

It’s a STRATEGY of nature, a protection to SURVIVE!

Rachel looked outside and thought, *I wish I was a leaf on a tree. After my rejuvenating sleep, my hormones (which I liken to chlorophyll in a tree) will be replaced. I’ll grow back again, young, and beautiful, as though no aging occurred, just like the leaves. I just need to keep that strong trunk!*

*IF ONLY IT WAS THAT EASY.*

As usual, Rachel was being too hard on herself; she was only thirty-eight years old and considered very attractive. She was five feet, six inches, 120 pounds, with dark eyes and

fashionably streaked blonde hair. It was not an easy feat to stay trim and thin after having four children. She'd always wanted to be blonde and started changing her hair color during her pre-baby days. She was convinced that it matched her fair skin and was always methodical in her hair coiffure routine. The mirror returned a verdict of *pretty*, but Rachel's confidence had been consistently tarnished.

Rachel always felt underappreciated by her husband, constantly attacked, and imprisoned by his unwarranted fluctuating moods. When Michael was happy, their life was perfect. When he was unhappy, it was perfectly awful and stressful. The problem was that she never knew what the day would bring.

She tried to protect the children from his mood swings and divert their attention to other things. This camouflage would shield their awareness of Michael's poor treatment of Rachel. She canceled many dates with other couples, rather than be embarrassed. She did her best to keep her mother from noticing but knew in her heart that Roz was too smart not to recognize the obvious. All in all, it was a full-time job maintaining the peace. She was clearly TIRED.

The kids were back in school, and it was the season for purchasing new clothing. They grew so fast. She did her best to be economical and practice hand-me-downs with the boys, but they made her feel guilty about it. Of course, having twin girls as her third and fourth children eliminated that possibility for the "*Pink Team*," as she called her daughters. There was two of everything at the same time for the girls. They were all a handful.

Each child demanded their due, and the quantity for each had to be equal. They counted and compared each item to uncover any favorite status that might exist.

It was the last Friday in October, and her mom, Roz, would be arriving shortly. Rachel couldn't wait. Roz's weekend arrival was akin to *time off* from her parenting position.

Roz would swoop in, look around the house, and declare, “It’s a good thing I’m here. Don’t these kids put anything away? You have to teach them!” Every weekend was the same routine. She’d unpack her bags, which were full of cakes, candy, and storybooks, and let everyone know what a hard job her daughter had. She would tell the next-door neighbor, “She was an only child and I raised her like a princess. Who would have ever thought she would have four children and all within five years? I just couldn’t believe it! It is AMA-a-a-a-z-ING!” she’d boast, shaking her head.

The children got home from school on Fridays eagerly looking for their Nana, excited to find the special “yummies” she brought. First, the twin’s school bus would arrive, and the girls would run in tandem, racing toward the awaiting prizes.

Casey Anne and Carrie Anne were seven years old now, going on thirty. (Their middle name was after Rachel’s.) After hugs and kisses, they eagerly rummaged through the treasures their grandmother brought with the speed of a locomotive and almost as loud as one.

That day, they were pulling out new hair ribbons, puzzles, yo-yos, chocolate chip cookies, miniature dolls, and as always, some sort of skin-softening lotion. Roz was a fanatic when it came to skin lotions. Naturally, there was two of everything.

Of the two girls, Casey, who was two minutes older, was the more adventurous child. She’d answer first and usually respond for her sister as well. She was the one that followed their brothers, curious about what the boys were doing and ultimately winding up with scraped knees. Carrie was the quieter twin, clinging to her sister and mother and certainly better behaved. She rarely had to be disciplined, simply because she didn’t do anything wrong. When her mom said, “Listen, girls . . .” Carrie would cup her little hand over her ear and respond, “I’m ready.” She also loved hugs and kisses and was a cuddler.

The girls were identical, with blonde hair and blue eyes, but had very different personalities. Michael claimed their blue eyes as his contribution to their genetic makeup. But it was their grandmother, Roz, who claimed their hair color.

Rachel always believed that they should learn to be individuals and every so often would dress them differently. However, when they went visiting, she couldn't resist how cute they were when wearing like-outfits.

Their entrance into the world had been filled with worry and fright. They were premature, and it was a long time before they were finally released from the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit). They each wore a monitor, as they would forget to breathe. Rachel had been terrified whenever one of the monitors went off and she thought she was losing one of them. Casey had been 3 lbs. 6 oz, and Carrie, 3 lbs. 1 oz, and their health was precarious, to say the least.

Rachel always blessed the NICU for bringing them through that tremulous time and showed her appreciation by contributing generously to their fund every year. As she looked at them today, the girls were thriving, and no one would ever know that they'd had such a rough start. However, Rachel's heart decried they needed special watching over all the time.

At approximately 4 p.m., the phone rang, and Casey ran to the kitchen and answered, "Hello Daddy." She was right, it was Michael. Rachel took the phone from her as Roz watched her daughter's face change from anticipation to anger. She heard her daughter say, "But did you forget it's the boys' hockey night and my mom is here? Why is this always last minute on a Friday night?"

The rest of the conversation was in hushed tones, and Roz went to the front door, as the boys' bus was arriving. "Here come the troops, it's the blue team!" she yelled.

The two boys pushed through the door, with Roz warning, “Don’t touch the walls . . . fingerprints, fingerprints. Handsome boys need clean hands.” The weekend sergeant-at-arms was clearly there, and the boys quieted down.

Cameron who was eleven-and-a-half and the oldest, had sandy-colored hair and big brown eyes. He was a studious child and did very well in school. He loved reading as well as his own private time. He had a gifted talent for playing the piano. He didn’t always get along with his dad, and Rachel tried to protect his sensitive side when these altercations occurred.

Connor was ten years old, dark-haired like Michael, and had dark eyes like Rachel. He was a combo of both parents. He loved sports and played to win. He drove both his parents crazy with his mischievous side but at the same time was the most caring child. He was the one that wanted to buy gifts and worried if someone was sick.

One thing was certain: all four kids loved their Nana and the same routine ensued, with the boys retrieving their fun gifts for the weekend. There were Tootsie Rolls, gumballs, chocolate brownies, and two miniature cars for their collection. And, oh yes, this weekend, Roz brought new toothbrushes for them all. She always said, “Good teeth are important because dentists cost money.”

Certainly, this occupied the kids until it was time for hockey practice. Rachel had ordered a pizza pie for supper, as it was apparent that Michael was not coming home for dinner. As for Rachel, she just wasn’t hungry anymore. She took the boys to the park for hockey, and Roz stayed home with the girls.

The weather was brisk, but still tolerable, and after spending time chatting with the other parents, Rachel was happy when 9 p.m. rolled around, and it was time to go home. She was



grateful to see that Roz had gone to bed, and so had the girls. Tired after hockey, the boys too, willingly went to bed without a word.

The house was quiet, and suddenly, that feeling that Rachel hated started to envelop her psyche.

There was an inner battle taking place, and the voice in her head was saying,

*I will NOT call him . . . I WILL call him . . . I WON'T call him . . . I WILL call him,*

as though she was pulling petals off a daisy. Her angry side took hold, and she lifted the phone, dialed Mike's office number, poised to attack.

There was *NO* answer. The message machine wasn't even on. Her stomach started doing somersaults and there it was, **THAT FAMILIAR FEELING!** It was indescribable but not foreign to her. She didn't know how she would get through the night until Michael got home. Certainly, she needed a diversion, or she would be ill.

Fortunately, last September, her new friend Basha Marcus had taught her the art of bargello. Rachel was busy with canvases that she ultimately turned into pillows. The patterns were complex. It was all about colors and counting stitches until the pattern emerged. Bargello was a great distraction, as she had to concentrate to do it correctly. Her current design comprised yellow tulips, and she started counting stitches. She didn't think of anything else when doing this and used it as a tool to keep her mind clear from distress.

It was about 11:30 p.m., when Michael entered the house. He yelled in a loud and boisterous voice, "HEY RACH—WHERE IS EVERYBODY?"

She sarcastically answered, "Having breakfast! What is wrong with you? Listen, from now on, I would appreciate your making it a rule not to work late on a Friday night. It isn't fair to me or the kids."

Michael answered with equal sarcasm, “Sorreeeeeeey I ruined your fun.” And then, glaring at her, he continued, “Don’t tell me what to do!” He then made a beeline to the bedroom, and as usual, that was that!

### ***SATURDAY MORNING***

Roz was the first one up and was enjoying a cup of coffee in the quiet of the kitchen. Roz didn’t look her age, and she attributed it to staying out of the sun, using face cream, and oh yes, NOT marrying again.

She never ate breakfast unless she was dressed and had applied her makeup, with her hair in place, jewelry carefully chosen, and her bed perfectly made. You could toss a coin on the bed, and it would pop right up, as though in an army barrack during inspection.

Roz was a pretty woman and at just five feet, she made herself heard as though she was the tallest in the room. Her blonde hair had darkened over the years, and weekly trips to the hair salon were a must. No matter what was happening anywhere, her daughter was her priority.

She heard Michael coming down the stairs and cheerfully said to her son-in-law, “Good morning. Missed you last night—how are you?”

Unflinchingly, Michael went to the front door and retrieved the delivered morning newspaper. Mike quietly sat down and started to read the paper at the kitchen table, clearly ignoring his mother-in-law who was seated directly opposite him.

Roz continued, “H-E-L-L-O, DID YOU HEAR ME MIKE?”

In a belligerent manner, Michael got up from the kitchen table, walked over to the counter housing the coffee machine, and poured his coffee without uttering a sound. Posturing a commando type stance, he stared straight ahead, walked back to the table, and again positioned

himself opposite Roz. Without blinking an eye, and unmistakably disregarding Roz, he blatantly pushed his head behind the newspaper and resumed reading.

Roz was used to this type of treatment and knew in an instant that her daughter had probably encountered a difficult night. It was not unusual, for when Mike was mad at Rachel, he would not speak to Roz either.

Roz had mixed feelings. Against her better judgement, she actually wanted to slap his face and tell him off. On second thought, she knew all the havoc that would create and how it would make her daughter's day all the more difficult.

*"Oh well,"* she thought, *"another weekend like this."* It was best to walk away!

In the past, she'd repeatedly told Rachel not to let him get away with this behavior and often reminded her how Aunt CeeCee had been right so many years ago.

She muttered under her breath, "A . . ." and proceeded to go upstairs to the children's bedrooms.

Roz concealed her feelings by immersing herself in planning her grandchildren's activities. *I think I'll take Rachel to lunch with the kids and let him get over his crazies.*

She called to the kids, "WHO WANTS TO GO TO THE RESTAURANT LATER? THE FIRST ONE READY GETS AN EXTRA ICE CREAM."

A barrage of happy chatter filled the atmosphere, with sweet childlike tones chanting, "ME, ME, ME, ME—NANA!"

She'd show the *sulker*. *Stay alone! Brood! We are off and running!*

"Pink Team, Blue Team, be ready at noontime. We're going to have a fun day!"