

GOODBYE DARLING

Susan sat at her dressing table examining the bruises on her face. The swelling around the eyes had gone down and the remainder of the bruises could easily be hidden with a bit of makeup. Taking a tablet would probably remove some of the physical pain she was feeling after the attack but only time would heal the emotional pain. Time is something she has plenty of now. Time to leave London and rebuild a new life abroad in France. After ten years of physical and emotional abuse, she had plucked up enough courage to leave her controlling husband Christopher.

Their wedding photograph still had the same place on the dressing table as it had for ten years. It was probably one of the few items in the house that had not been damaged during one of Chris's drunken rages, which led Susan to believe that deep down that he cared enough about them not to destroy the remaining reminder of their special day. He had destroyed her wedding dress. This was because she had gained some extra weight by comfort eating and he claimed that ripping it apart would make it easier for her to squeeze her "disgusting fat frame" into it. A regular insult she had to endure.

Susan reached across the table to pick up the photo and instantly felt the pain shoot up her right side which caused her to swear. Swearing was something she normally didn't do. Chris swore a lot, especially when he had been drinking. His vile language and violence were something she never wanted their eight-year-old son Josh to be exposed to. But despite her best efforts to protect him Josh was starting to do what daddy was doing, leading to regular visits to the school for both parents, which resulted in Susan getting a beating for not being a proper mother to Josh.

Her image in the wedding photograph reflected the last time she was truly happy. Her special day with the man she loved. The man who showered her with gifts during the three years they were courting. The man who told her he loved her and wanted to get married, find a nice home, have children and live a life of bliss and happiness together as they glided into their old age. The ideal fairy tale romance that many girls dream about was starting for her on that very day. Her special day was everything she could have hoped for – until later that evening at the wedding reception.

Susan had always been a light drinker. Two glasses of wine were her usual limit. However, tonight was her wedding reception. She was married to the man she loved and was with her friends and family celebrating the start of a wonderful new life so she allowed herself an extra drink or two. With a little encouragement from her friends, she swayed on the dance floor and let her hair down. Friends cheered as they experienced the usually quiet sensible Susan as a party animal pouncing on any man who was willing to dance with her.

Chris walked onto the dance floor and politely asked Susan to follow him outside. She waved the girls goodbye and asked one to get the drinks in as she'll be back soon. Assuming Chris wanted to spend some quality time alone with his new wife she happily followed him outside into the cool air of the night and leaned against the wall, ready to be embraced into Chris's strong arms.

She suddenly felt his hand connect with her cheek. It wasn't a loving smooth touch but a strong violent slap. She cried out in pain as her hands flew up to the stinging area. She looked confusingly at Chris as if waiting for an explanation when she saw the look of disgust in his eyes. He grabbed her hair and put his face right up close to hers.

"You disgusting whore!" he growled. "Flirting and dancing with all those men in front of me."

"I'm sorry!" Susan cried, "It was the drink. I'm not used to it."

"Go back home and sleep it off." He said. "You're not going back in there tonight."

Susan staggered off for a taxi. She decided he was right. She had made a fool of herself, upset the man she loved and got what she deserved. She would go back to their new home and go to bed. Tomorrow is a new day. Tomorrow she would seek his forgiveness and things will be all right. Soon they will be going on their honeymoon once they get enough money together. They will spend that special time together that she had always dreamed of. No more drinking and making a fool of herself. She would become the perfect wife to him. Cook and clean for him. Have a family together. They will be happy.

How wrong she was. They would never be happy. She had married a monster. The man she thought of as her knight in shining armour was an aggressive controlling bully who would never be pleased with her efforts. Her cooking was never good enough for him and she deserved to be punished for the 'vile tasting disgusting muck' she served him.

Chris enjoyed regular visits to the working men's club and would often come home drunk. He would instruct Susan to have his meal ready for a certain time and then come home at least one hour later which meant his meal had to be warmed up. This of course meant that his food was not up to his standard and Susan deserved to be punished – even though she had it freshly made for the time he specified. It was Susan's fault the meal was no good. Susan would have to clean the food from the wall and pick up the broken plates regularly even though it was Chris who threw them.

Friends would often ask Susan why she didn't leave him. Why would she put up with his bullying? At one time she would have asked the same question. Why do all these stupid women put up with these violent controlling animals when they don't have to? Now she knows it's because of love and commitment. Before they married Chris shared his troubled past with her. He was abused as a child by his father, rejected by his mother and placed into foster care. Growing up not knowing love and care until he met Susan. Marrying her meant he could put his troubled life behind him.

Of course, you can't simply bury a troubled life just like that. People who have never suffered will simply say "Get over it" because they simply can't understand. Therefore, Susan knew Chris needed her love and support and she promised to "honour and obey" on their wedding day. Chris wasn't an animal 24/7, only when the pressure of past events got too much for him. Other times he was still the sweet caring husband she dreamed of. So, she continued to put up with his mood swings in the hope that one day he will finally defeat his inner demons.

Their son Josh was born after two years of marriage. Chris was overjoyed and promised Susan he was going to change. He would get counselling, cut down the drinking and devote himself to his little family. Over the next four years, Chris continued to keep his word although he still had the odd outburst as the demons of his past managed to overpower him and Susan continued to receive the punishment Chris believed she deserved. But he would break down in tears and beg for her forgiveness after and she would always forgive him for the sake of their son.

Placing the wedding photograph back in its place Susan convinced herself she had made the right decision in leaving Chris after ten years of marriage. She had been kind and supportive, she had taken the pain, accepted the apologies and she had forgiven him over and over again. After ten years of physical and emotional pain, she believed she had been fair to him, given him every chance, tried to be more understanding and supportive. But everyone has a limit and Susan had reached hers.

Chris had become more controlling and more violent over the last four years. Josh had been seriously affected by his father's behaviour and his mother's excuses of 'daddy being unwell' were no longer accepted by the once good little boy, who was now regularly getting into trouble due to his own damaged state of mind caused by the events witnessed in his home.

Susan had finally had enough. Her cases were packed. Chris was alone in the kitchen downstairs while Susan was busy getting herself ready to walk out of the house for the final time. She would pick up Josh from school and catch the taxi to the airport to start their new life without Chris. Before she opened the front door she looked into the kitchen and saw the corpse of her late husband slumped over the table with the large kitchen knife embedded in his back.

"Goodbye Darling," she said as she walked through the front door laughing.