

CASSIE BEATTIE

ELISE



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Hi my name is Elise, I come from the original small town in Texas. My parents are cattle people, my brothers are all cattle people, I am not cattle people.

My parents were both in their 40's when I was born, I think in a lot of ways they thought I didn't fit in. I am everything my parents are not, I am fair haired and fair skinned, I have blue eyes and fine features. My parents are both dark, in both appearance and attitude. They get up with the sun and go to bed with the sun just as they always have. When I was 8 my parents decided to send me off to boarding school, I stayed there until I started college, I would come home for the summer but then I never seemed to fit in, I found it hard to understand why they hated me. I realize now that they didn't hate me it had more to do with they didn't know how to treat me. My parents had 12 children, I am the only girl. I am a real girl, I love to get dressed up for any reason, I was a cheerleader and even won a couple of modeling competitions. When I finished college, I went home, although it didn't feel like home, it was just a place that some people I vaguely knew lived.

I stayed at home for a few months, I got a job at the local store and although it was nice to be busy, it is not what I really wanted. I wanted to be an actress, I wanted to be famous but when I tried to explain this to my parents they thought I had lost my mind. They were always reminding me of how much money they had spent on my education and that I should be doing something that would change the world with there money. So after working at the store I was able to buy a cheap car and I packed my little bomb up with all of my worldly possessions and took off for New York.

I had no plan, nowhere to stay and about \$500 in my purse, but that was ok, I knew I would be ok somehow.

Thankfully my little car made it to new jersey without breaking down, but the cost of the fuel and food had made a serious dent in my budget, I knew if I was going to find somewhere to live I needed to find a job and fast. When I arrived in New

Jersey I called a friend from school, I knew she lived in the area and I hoped I would be able to camp on her floor for a little while at least until I could find a job and a flat. As luck would have it she was at home, I went to see her and I told her what I had done. Her parents thought it was hilarious; they were fabulous they told me I was welcome to stay as long as I needed. They were leaving on a big holiday in a few days and it would save them some money if I could look after the house and their little dog for 6 weeks. I was so relieved; I had somewhere safe to stay for a few weeks. When they left for holidays they made sure there was plenty of food and they even left money in case I needed it for some reason. The little dog and I became good friends, he would sleep on the bed with me and during the day he would come out in the car with me while I looked for a job.

Then one day I took the dog for a walk and got a bit lost, I found a little bakery and went in to ask for directions, the man that was behind the counter drew me a map and gave me and the dog a drink of water. I noticed that he was writing a help wanted sign, I asked him about the job, he used to run the bakery with his friend who had recently passed away and he needed some one to help serve and decorate cakes. I told him I have no experience but I was willing to learn. I walked out of the bakery with a job. Only one problem I had to be at work at 4am the next morning.

The following morning I showed up at the bakery, it was 3.45 am, it was dark and it was scary, even the dog gave me a dirty look when I got up so early. I left the dog asleep on the bed, I made sure he had plenty of water and filled his bowl with food but he wasn't interested.

My baker was already there he seemed really surprised to see me, I don't think he expected me to be on time and ready to work. We got straight to work, he taught me how to mix the icing mix and what colours to add. At about 5 am he walked back into the room I was working in, he seemed impressed by my work. I had iced almost everything he had asked me to ice, only problem was I had

mixed my colours up so half were the right color the other half were something totally different, I hadn't even noticed I was so focused on getting it all done. I wanted to impress my boss. He just laughed, he thought it was funny, then he told me to come and get a fresh bun and coffee and take a break with him.

The bun was a combination of sugar and cinnamon, it was amazing, I had never had anything like it. We sat in silence and ate our buns and drank our coffee, then he finally spoke, he introduced himself, his name was Joseph, he was 50yrs old, he had never married and had no children. I told him about me, that I wanted to be an actress but I had to find a job, a place to live and save some money. I told him I was staying with a school friend and her family for the time being but if he let me keep the job I would be looking for a flat some where in the area. Joseph told me he about his faith and how he didn't work weekends, he was Jewish, I knew nothing apart from what I had learnt at school, he was very patient and offered to answer any questions I might have. Then he gave me all the paper work I needed to work for him, just the basic tax forms. I was so proud I had my first job in New Jersey I was on my way to achieving my dream.

On my first day at work I got to meet most of Joseph's regular customers, I think word spread pretty quick that some one new was working at the bakery and every one wanted to come have a look at the weird southern girl. I don't mind they were all very nice to me and sales went through the roof.

After about a month of working at the bakery I had my own fans, they loved the adventurous new icing colours and some came in every day to see what I had come up with. I asked Joseph if it would be alright if I put a notice up in the bakery that I was looking for a flat, he said it would be fine or I could just clean up the one above the bakery and move in there. I never realized there was a flat up stairs. After we had closed for the day, Joseph grabbed the keys and we went upstairs to have a look. It had a good sized one bedroom flat, I asked him what the rent would be and he said if I kept it clean and swept out the front I could

have it free of charge. It turns out that the previous owner of the store had lived upstairs until he sold the building. No one had lived up there since. It needed a good clean, the bathroom was really dusty and the little kitchen looked like it could use some paint but it was a fabulous offer. So I welcomed a place to live, my friend and her family were due home in a week, so I had a week to clean it up and find some furniture. Easy.

The next day we had almost sold out by about 2 pm, so Joseph told me to go start cleaning up upstairs that he would look after it. So I went upstairs Joseph had left a bucket, vacuum and some rags, I opened up the front windows, plugged in the vacuum and started to get rid of 10 years of dust. It was really very satisfying, I could see I had made real progress by the time Jo had closed the bakery for the day. Jo and I worked until fairly late, and it looked really good. The flat was actually in really good condition the walls cleaned up really well and the carpet was in fabulous condition. Joseph suggested we get some one in to clean the carpet properly to get all the dust out. Even the marks in the kitchen cleaned up really well. I was so proud of my efforts and I think Jo was proud as well.

The next morning when I arrived at work Joseph was working hard, he told me he was going out for a little while in the afternoon so I would be alone in the bakery for a couple of hours. I told him that was fine, the afternoons were rarely busy. He also told me that he had some one coming to clean the carpet that morning, so I should be able to move in the next day. I was so excited finally a place of my own. As people started coming in for their bread and sweet treats every one was asking what was going on upstairs, why the windows were open, so I told them that I was moving in. I told everyone I was going to go shopping for some furniture just as soon as I could make time, and I would be living above the bakery. Every one was so excited, I had one lady offer me her old couch, she

said it was old but if I could arrange some one to pick it up I could have it for free, other people offered me a table and chairs and a bed, they were all so generous. When Joseph got back late in the afternoon, the bakery was closed, we had sold out by about 3pm, so I cleaned everything and locked it up.

I was upstairs admiring the clean carpet and cleaning the last little bits in the kitchen and bathroom. Joseph knocked on the open door, he told me he was back, I told him the takings were in the safe and that everything else was ready for tomorrow. I had even put the warm water on the yeast to get it started for the morning. Jo was very impressed, he told me that his mother was moving into a nursing home and because he was the only child he had to move her things and make sure she had everything she needed.

I told him about the wonderful offers I had of furniture. I had even come up with a plan on how I was going to collect them, I could ask one of the delivery men if they would do it for beer. But Joseph just smiled and told me that he had a van and if I wanted we could go and collect things the next afternoon. He also told me that there were some things at his mothers that I might like to make use of. He said if I didn't want them he would give them to charity. So that afternoon we went to his mother's home, it was full of all sorts of stuff. He has already sold the house so he needed to clean it out and tidy it up for the new owners. He only has a couple of weeks to sort it all out. I was grateful for the use of some of the furniture; his mother had some beautiful things. While we were looking we came across some beautiful old curtains in a bag, I asked if I could use them, I don't think Joseph really cared. I packed the van with everything I could, between all of this stuff and the stuff the other people had offered my little flat was going to be home in no time.

When we got back to the Bakery to unload there was a group of people gathered around the back, at first I thought something terrible had happened but then I realized that all of these people had shown up with furniture and house warming gifts I was so touched. By the time we had unloaded everything and put it all up stairs the little flat looked amazing, it was late for me by this time, I had been getting up early for work and although my little flat was ready to live in I still had to go home to my friends place and feed the dog and water the garden. The only problem was I was exhausted, I got in the car and realized I just really wanted a sleep, Joseph seen me and came over. He told me not to drive that he would drive me home and pick me up in the morning, I thought that was so sweet of him. When we got to my friends home there was a car in the driveway, I didn't know the car, so I asked Joseph to come in with me. It turns out that the family had arrived home a couple of days early and a friend had collected them from the airport. I introduced Joseph and told them that I had a job, a flat and that I would be getting out of their way in the next couple of days. They were very happy for me, they were even happier about the house, I had looked after it like my own, it was clean, the fridge had food and even the garden and the pool looked just like they did when they left.

Joseph excused himself and left, he wasn't interested in the big holidays stories he just wanted to go home to bed. I got to bed at about 10pm, I used to think that was early but when you get up at 3 it is really late. Joseph picked me up at 3.30 the next morning, I tried to be as quiet as I could when I left in the morning but it didn't really work, when I left everyone was up drinking milk in the kitchen. That afternoon the shop sold out by about 2pm, so we cleaned up together and closed the shop.

Then I went back to my family, packed up my things and thanked them for everything. Then I moved to my own little place, I sorted out my things, hung the curtains and made the bed. It was amazing, it was my first place of my own, I could do whatever I liked, I could move the furniture, I could hang different

curtains and I could cook whatever I wanted. Only one problem, I looked in the fridge and there was nothing, I hadn't gone to the store yet. I walked down stairs to find Jo, he had ordered a bin for his mothers place but still didn't know where to start. The bin was being delivered Friday night and being collected Monday morning. I ran across the street to the store and I bought some chicken and some vegetables, I got back to the bakery and I offered to cook Jo dinner. He looked a bit shocked but accepted readily. He went down to the basement and came up with a bottle of wine, while I cooked he had a glass of wine and we talked about how to tackle him mothers home.

He told me he didn't expect my help but I know that he wanted some one to help, I cant blame him I would have wanted some one to help even if it was just to talk to me while I was working. We made a plan that the following evening being the Friday that we would work on the house all weekend until it was done. Jo looked so relieved, but also a little scared. The poor man, he had just put his mother into a nursing home, now he had to deal with her house and a pushy woman who wanted to help.

We had a delightful dinner, now I know why it is important to learn to cook in college, I became the master of the one pot meal when I was at college, I only had one pot, so every thing was cooked together I never thought of asking Jo if he liked food cooked like this, but he ate with gusto and cleaned his plate with half of a roll that I split with him. It is really a bit odd that when you work and live in a bakery that you cant get a whole roll. After that Jo went home, I finished cleaning up after dinner, went down stairs to check that everything was locked up then locked my own door, set my alarm and went to bed. It was a bit strange at first but exhaustion eventually did its thing and I went to sleep.

I woke up a little before my alarm, I got up and had a shower, fixed myself some breakfast and was having a coffee when I heard Jo come in, I took him down a cup of coffee and we started work. It was one of those really busy days, we baked extra but everyone seemed to come in and say hello. Everyone was so excited to have a young person in the neighborhood; it was really nice to feel welcomed. Then I discovered that every one wanted a young person for one reason or the other, they all come to me to ask me what they should buy their grandkids and if it is too old fashioned to wear a hat to a wedding. Joseph loved it, every time we baked more we still sold it. The days of left over food were over.

That Friday night we went to his mother's house and we started packing boxes, things that still had life we packed into boxes to go to the local charity shop, everything else went into the bin. It was not an easy task but we had made some real progress by the time we stopped for dinner. Joseph went to a local dinner and come back with food. The food was ok but the company was excellent, we talked about his mother and his childhood, he has such a fun childhood terrorizing the local cats and playing hide and seek with his dad. I told him a bit about my childhood, he seemed sad that I spent most of it at school. But then he spent a lot of his childhood at the bakery with his dad; back then the bakery was about 3 blocks from his family home. I wondered what it would be like to grow up where you could walk to work with your dad, go to school then help out in the bakery after school. I had to admit that I really enjoyed working in the bakery, I got to talk to people all day, I got to eat yummy things and I got paid. It was the perfect arrangement.

We worked on the house until we were both too tired to do any more then we both collapsed in the couch together, we woke up at about 3am, we were on the couch cuddled together. I guess it would have looked pretty cute but we apologized to each other any way, nothing happened we were just both exhausted and went to sleep and some how ended up cuddled together. We guessed that since we were up that we might as well get an early start.

Jo made coffee and promised to go and get breakfast as soon as some one else in the neighborhood was up and at work. We were so used to getting up early and working that we made huge progress before Jo went to get some breakfast at 6am. Jo asked me to do his mothers bedroom, he went out to work on the garage. I felt a bit uncomfortable but also honored that he trusted me. I packed all of her old clothes to go to charity, all of her old shoes and underwear went to the bin and her jewelry and other precious things went in a box for Joseph to sort out.

It didn't take too long, I dragged the vacuum cleaner into the room, the bed was already gone and there was only the built in wardrobe and a couple of boxes in the room, I thought I would vacuum the wardrobe out, it was pretty dusty. After I started vacuuming I noticed that the panel in one end of the wardrobe floor was loose, so I made a note to let Joseph know so he could put a nail in it. I wandered out to the garage to see if Jo had a hammer and nail out there to fix the panel. He grabbed a couple of tools and followed me back inside. He played with the panel for a while and realized that it had never been fixed down, he pushed on one end and it flipped open. Underneath it was a little treasure trove, obviously his mum used to hide things down there. We pulled out a shoebox, and a couple of bags and an old photo album. The shoebox was full of money; obviously she had been saving money in there for a long time. Jo put it aside, he said he would have to count it and take it to the bank in the mean time he would take it back to the bakery and lock it in the safe.

The bags had beautiful jewelry in them, some things that looked real, I told Jo that perhaps they should go in the safe until he could have them valued, and the photo album was full of photos of people he didn't know. The photos were very old and they looked vaguely like his parents, he guessed they were old family photos that his mum had never shown to him. There was also a notebook with writing that we didn't understand. Joseph said he would take it with him to the

synagogue that afternoon and see if any one knew what it said. By this stage we had almost cleared the whole house there was still some stuff in the garage and a few things in the kitchen but generally it was ready for a good clean.

It was almost lunchtime, so Jo and I went back to the bakery, we got fish and chips on the way and we sat at the table and had some lunch. We decided to call it a day and that we would go back on the Sunday afternoon and clean it up and get rid of the last few things. We were so proud we had achieved so much in such a short period of time and Jo had found him mum's little hidey-hole. After lunch Joseph went home to have a shower and get ready to go to synagogue and I had a shower and a little sleep before heading out to get some groceries and have a look around my new home. I hated to admit it but I was missing the company of the little dog, but I knew it would be fine. The afternoon went really quickly and after my late night I had an early night in bed.

I woke up late the next day, the sun was already up, I had a shower, grabbed some breakfast and wandered down to find Joseph waiting for me. He had counted the money we found and had a closer look at the jewelry and had looked through the box of things I thought he might like. He was amazed he had never seen the jewelry before. He was going to take an afternoon off the following week and see a friend to see if anything was really worth much.

He told me that he really appreciated my help and that if I didn't want to come today that he was fine with that. But once I start something I like to finish it. We went back to the house and cleaned it so it shone. I was amazed how much dust we chased out of the house, we took the curtains outside and beat them to get the dust out, and I don't think we got it all but we did do our best. We vacuumed, dusted and cleaned and polished until we couldn't do it any more. It looked amazing, Joseph had cleaned out the garage and given it a good sweep and the garden got a tidy up. I am guessing from the comments of the neighbors that it looked better than it had in a very long time.

On the way back to the bakery with the last few bits and pieces we stopped to get food, it was late afternoon, we hadn't thought to stop for lunch we are used to eating late in the bakery. When we got back to the bakery we sat and ate our food, Jo was telling me about what his family home was like when he was little, it sounded so fun. I wished my family were more like that but then I am the only girl so I was always left out. When I was little my brothers all had dogs and cows to look after but as the only girl I got to look after the house cat, then I went away to school and when the cat died, they didn't bother getting another one.

I told Jo that I missed my friends little dog, I would really like to get a dog but living above the bakery it would just have to wait. I would have to take the dog in and out thought the kitchen and I didn't want to be worried about hair and health inspectors. Jo laughed, he told me I was a very odd young lady. He was always so sweet to me nothing was too hard, when my little car broke down a few weeks later, he had a look at it and declared it to be dead. We took it to the mechanic but the mechanic said the same thing, it would cost way more than it is worth to fix it. I was a little sad, she was a good little car, we had come a long way together but I sold her off for scrap.

When I first moved into the bakery I sent my parents a letter, just to let them know that I was alive and well that I had a job and a place to live and that I was hoping to stay here for a while. I got a letter back, that thanked me for the notice, that dad had a heart attack and that my parents were leaving the farm to my brothers and moving closer to town. I was worried about my dad, so I went to the pay phone and called my mom. She said he was fine but the doctor had told him to give up heavy farm work. She told me they had plenty of savings and that they had bought a nice house about a mile out of town. My brothers and their wives all lived on or near the farm so they were going to take over the day to day running of the place and dad would still run the stud books. I felt a lot better after our talk; I gave her the number of the bakery in case she needed to reach me urgently. I

went back to the bakery and told Joseph about my dad. He offered to pay my airfares to go back and see my folks, but as sweet as that was, I knew they didn't really care if I came or not.

Over the next three or four weeks something started to change between Joseph and I, it was a bit strange because it happened so gradually I didn't really notice. We went out for an early dinner a few times, I knew the old ladies in the town were talking about it but I didn't care, we were just friends. It was nice to have some one to talk to, some one to walk arm in arm with down the street. The weather was cooling down fall was almost here. My little flat was proving to be cold during the night; I asked Joseph if he could check the old fireplace, so I could light a fire when it got really cold. He had a good look at it one afternoon and decided that it was too dangerous to use, so he got some people out to install a gas fire that looked like a log fire. I couldn't stop laughing when I seen it, what a terribly extravagant thing to do. I was always taught that Jewish people were tight with their money but Joseph never seemed to worry about it. I was beginning to think that everything my small town had taught me was crap. I don't think any of the people I had met fitted into any of the stereotypes I had been taught. I was actually really happy about that. I knew that the world had more to offer than that little town and I was so right.

The night the fire was installed, I invited Jo upstairs to have dinner with me in front of the new fire, it was hilarious because it was the warmest night we had experienced in a few weeks, but we sat in short sleeved tops eating our dinner in front of the heater. It really was very sweet of him to go to the expense of putting in a heater for me.

After dinner we were sitting on the couch talking about all of the things we wanted in life and I was cuddled into him, he was so soft and warm, then he kissed me on the forehead, I had not expected it, up until then I thought of him as a father figure not as a man. But that one little kiss made me see him as

something else. I kissed his lips, he kissed back, and he was a really good kisser, way better than the guy my parents had hoped I would marry back in Texas. I guess that my parents wanted different things from a son in law, in Texas you want your daughter to marry a good family. Some one with a lot of cattle and good breeding stock, then they wanted you to make like cattle and produce lots of offspring to run the farm one day. Just like my folks were doing with my brothers. After our kiss, Joseph left. I was a little confused, he seemed a bit upset by the whole event, and I thought maybe I had upset him by kissing him. I really didn't understand what was going on.

I had a terrible nights sleep, I tossed and turned all night wondering if I had made a huge mistake and was soon to be jobless and homeless. I got up really early no point staying in bed if you cant sleep, when Jo arrived I had started warming the ovens and had most of the early morning stuff started. There were something's I couldn't do until Jo arrived but for some reason Joseph arriving scared me. I didn't hear him pull up; I was too busy filling little cake pans with mix to go into the oven. He came up along side of me and scared me half to death. But he was smiling, he said he was sorry he had reacted the way he did. That he got scared, he had not been in a relationship in a long time and that kiss was a little too perfect. I kissed him, I didn't even think about it, we both looked at each other afterwards and laughed. We were indeed the odd couple but it all felt so right.

We had a lot to do to get ready for the day ahead, so we both agreed to talk about it later, we both went to work then because I had an early start we were finished really early. We sat down for coffee and a snack while we waited for the ovens to let us know that the last batch of bread was done. We still had about 30 minutes before the bakery opened. So we sat and chatted. He was worried how the local community would see us if we did get into a serious relationship, he had lived in or near the town his whole life, I didn't think it was going to be that big of an issue. I think the local people already knew we were sweet on each other it

just took us a while to figure it out. But we agreed to keep it quiet for a while and see how individuals took the news before it became common knowledge. The first person he wanted me to meet was his mother that very afternoon he took me to the nursing home and we sat and chatted for a while. She was a dear sweet old thing; she seemed more concerned that I was so skinny than that I was dating her son. I promised that I would visit her on the weekend and that I would bring a particular photo album, so she could tell me about her Joseph. It sounded like fun; I don't think Jo was so excited though.

Over the next few months our relationship was the worst kept secret, within a few days every one knew that there was something going on. But for the sake of the appearances we kept it very quiet to the outside world. It was strange because the people who we seen everyday knew that it was more than we were letting on but we wanted to ease into it.

Before I knew it winter was over and spring was making everyone a bit nutty, not just the squirrels. So Jo and I started to spend more time in public together going for picnics on Sunday afternoon with the other young lovers down in the park. By the middle of July we both decided to make it more formal, so he asked me to marry him. It was weird because although we had discussed marriage and everything else, I didn't think he would do it. Apparently he called my parents to ask their permission, he discussed it with his mother and every one else seemed to know what was happening except me. Joseph had given me a signet ring for my birthday that I had resized to fit, when I was baking I always put it up on the shelf so I knew where it was and so I knew it wouldn't end up in someone's sweet snack. Then one day after work I went to get it and it was gone. I looked all over for it thinking maybe in my morning haze I had left it upstairs or put it somewhere else. Jo helped me look for it but I found out later that he had borrowed it to have it sized. He took it to his cousin who worked for a jeweler and had the size checked then that afternoon he came back to the bakery and gave me my ring. He told me he found it in his car, that the previous night when we

went out that I must have dropped it in the car. We both laughed about it. I was so tired the night before that anything is possible. I couldn't remember taking it off or putting it on.

A couple of weeks later we closed early on a Friday, we had a very busy day, we seemed to run all morning but by early afternoon it was sold out. So we cleaned up the shop and locked up for the weekend. I was really looking forward to the weekend, there was a big local dance that Joseph was taking me to and I had borrowed a beautiful old time dress to wear and everything. Joseph suggested I go upstairs and have a nap, I had a few days were I was very tired, I just put it down to working hard and getting up so early. We had also had some late nights recently, so the offer of a nap was one I couldn't resist. I woke up a couple of hours later to find Joseph asleep alongside of me. It was so nice to wake up to some one so close. I looked at the clock and it was almost 5pm, I got out of bed and went to have a shower and get ready to go out. I seen Jo suit hanging next to the door, obviously he was getting changed here, that was fine, it would be nice to play house together.

At about 6pm Jo was still asleep, so I woke him up, he was so cute, he was all sleepy and it took him a few moment to realize where he was. He apologized for falling asleep, we had been dating for almost a year and he was worried about falling asleep along side of me. I started laughing and so did he; I think he realized how silly he sounded. I had an ulterior motive for waking him up; I needed help to do up the dress. It was a beautiful dress, it was on loan from the lady across the road, when the flyers first went up every one asked if Joseph and I would go. I said I would love to but I couldn't afford a dress that would do it justice, so she offered me the use of her dresses. She used to work as a publicist in Los Angeles and she had wardrobes of fabulous dresses that she no longer wore. I found the perfect dress it was so beautiful. When I tried it on it was the perfect fit, I couldn't believe my luck, she also dug out the matching purse and

wrap but the shoes were long gone. I took the bag to the shoe shop and they recovered an old pair of shoes I had to almost match. I only hoped that the light was low so no one would notice the shoes didn't quite match.

After I was in the dress I returned to the bathroom to finish my make up, when I came out Joseph was dressed and ready to leave, the battle of the sexes has never addressed that. Why does it take us hours and men take a few minutes? Ah well that is another story. Joseph was very impressed with the dress, he told me I looked so beautiful and then he went to the fridge and took out a small box, I wondered what he was doing, it looked like a cake slice box. Inside was the most perfect orchid corsage; it was complete with the frill band to go onto my wrist. It was the perfect accompaniment to the dress. I am guessing he peaked at the dress upstairs or the lady across the road picked it out for him, I didn't really care, I knew this was going to be a great night.

When we arrived at the ball, I felt so special I was definitely the bell of the ball; it was so nice to feel so beautiful. Most of the people there only ever see me covered in flour and running around like an idiot. The meal was interesting it was very plain but everyone had plenty and really enjoyed it. After the meal the band really got going and Jo asked me to dance. We were waltzing around the room, every one was smiling and happy, at the end of the first song, Joseph knelt down in front of me, it started out like a bow but he kept going, he asked me to marry him in front of everyone, I said yes of course, it was so romantic, I felt light like a princess. He presented a ring to me, it was similar to his mothers ring but with a slightly modern twist. It was beautiful; he told me if I didn't like it I could choose another one. I thought it was perfect and I told him so. If I was going to pick something it would have been something like this.

After that the night flew past, I was on such a high, everyone was congratulating us, it was so much fun, Joseph took me home fairly late, I fell into bed and was

probably asleep before he even locked the doors. He being the gentleman that he was helped me out of the dress, after the problems I had getting into it, it was surprisingly easy to get out of. Jo said he would come back in the morning and we could talk about everything then. I woke just as the sun rose the next morning, I got up and checked my hand, and the ring was still there, so it wasn't all a dream. I noticed that the lady across the road was moving around, so I carefully put the dress back into its bag and grabbed all of the other stuff she had loaned me. I called in to drop off all the accessories and to drop the dress in to the cleaners. She told me not to worry about having it cleaned, I hadn't got anything on it, and so it didn't need cleaning. She doubted it would ever be worn again anyway. She asked me if we had picked a date for the wedding, I hadn't even thought about it. She pulled out a couple of stunning dresses and offered them to me as a wedding gift. I thanked her for her offer but told her we needed to discuss when the wedding was going to be and what sort of wedding it would be.

I ran back to the Bakery to find Joseph sitting at the table with coffee and the paper. I laughed, I had seen him do this so many times I never really noticed it until that very moment. I told him about the offer of the dress, he said I had better choose a date quickly before all the old ladies started dumping their old wedding dresses on the doorstep. I remembered at that point that I hadn't told my parents yet. I picked up the phone and called, my dad answered the phone, he seemed pleased that his youngest child and only daughter was getting married finally. He updated me on the rest of my family, I have 11 brothers, they are all married and they all have at least 2 children. I could see that it was going to be a big wedding at that was just my family. Then Dad put mom on, she was wandering when they would get to meet Joseph, and I said we would try to plan a trip soon. We also talked about possible wedding dates; even if my brothers and their broods couldn't come I hoped my parents would. We worked out 4 possible dates, I told her I would get back to her within the week about the date we chose.

Joseph and I sat down with our list of dates, we decided one would be better than the others for one reason or the other, he took the date to synagogue to check when the rabbi was going to be able to do the ceremony. I also had to be introduced to the rabbi and we decided there was no time like the present. I got dresses in nice clothes and we went to Josephs place and he got changed as well and off we went. It was all very exciting, the rabbi wanted me to learn about the culture and the belief system, I thought that was a great idea, so I joined a group of other women marrying into the faith. It was really fun, it was over 4 weeks, it was only a few hours on the Saturday and on the 5th Saturday we got the results and had a big picnic. I really embraced the classes; some of the other girls thought it was a waste of time. But I guess my love of my husband to be made me really want to understand. On the 4th Saturday we had a 50-question test, I thought it was easy but I know some of the other girls found it hard. I thought it was hilarious; most of the questions were really easy. On the following Saturday we got the results, I was so proud I got 100%, some of the other girls got a lot less. I knew that we were having a shared lunch on the last Saturday so I took a big plate of Jewish cakes and a plate of sandwiches. I thought that is what everyone did, I grew up with a mixed denomination Christian church and that is how things were done, a shared lunch meant that every one bought whatever they could.

After that the ladies of the synagogue really embraced me, I felt so welcome, I was welcomed into the kitchen to help prepare lunch and everyone wanted to help me. If I had any questions they were always there to answer them and if they couldn't the rabbi was more than happy to answer them for me. After that we were able to set a date for our wedding, we decided that an early summer wedding in the park alongside of the synagogue would be really nice, it would also not make my family feel uncomfortable. I called my parents to let them know the date and the basic plan we had for the wedding. There was no answer at the house, it was strange because my parents never went anywhere on a Saturday afternoon, the local shops all shut at midday. So I thought maybe some one was

having a birthday, I called the farm. It turns out that they had been looking for my number, that my parents had both been in a car accident, they had gone out to the farm on the Friday and when they were driving home that afternoon they had rolled the car. They were both in a serious condition in the local hospital. I told Jo and he said I should fly home as soon as possible to be there just in case anything happened. Jo called a friend and booked me a flight for the next day; I would arrive at about 10am on Sunday. I was about to call my brother back to arrange someone to meet the plane when the phone rang to tell me that they had both died. My brother said he would let me know when the funeral was going to be and that I may as well leave it for a couple of days rather than arrive too early and not have anything to do. I agreed it made sense there was nothing I could do. Jo called him friend back and booked 2 flights for the Tuesday, we guessed that the funeral would be middle of the week. We made a sign for the front window of the bakery, to let every one know that I had experiences a tragedy in my family and that the bakery would be closed Tuesday until we got back. Every one was fabulous, on that Monday, everyone offered their condolences and offered to look after the plants out the front. It was so nice to have so many lovely people around us.

My sister in law met us at the airport, I was glad it was someone I knew. I was afraid that it would be one of the wives I hardly met and I wouldn't recognise her. She told us that the funeral was going to be tomorrow, I was glad I wasn't going to have to hang around with a group of people I didn't know. I think Joseph was amazed at how many of there was, on the night we arrived we all went to the steak house for dinner, we took over the whole place, it was sort of like a wake, all of my parents old friends came and said hello, and had to check out my fiancé. They were all really polite and it was nice to see everyone, even if I didn't know any of their names.

The funeral was very simple; it was in the same church my parents had married in. The church was packed to the rafters with people, most of them were family

but there were some other brave souls. After the funeral, my brothers asked me if there was anything I wanted, I never really knew my parents so I told him I didn't really want anything, I would like some photos but they were of us as a family, my eldest brother said he would get me copies and send them to me. That was all I wanted, Joseph and I went home the next day, there was no point staying, the will would leave everything to the boys, I offered to help clean up the house but they said they would deal with that after they sold it, that it would be easier to sell full of furniture. I had to agree, so we got home in time to bake and open the bakery on the Friday. Everyone was really surprised that I had come back; they thought I would stay for longer but to be honest, I don't even know my family and it would have been like staying with complete strangers. At least back at home I had people to talk to that I had something in common with. I also discovered a fabulous Jewish tradition, that when some one dies, everyone cooks and brings food. I think I gained about 5 pound that week.

A few weeks later I received a box from my brothers, inside was some bits and pieces they thought I might like, my mums wedding necklace, a few bits of jewelry some old photos and a letter she was writing to me. It was about marriage and I was glad I got it. There were also some legal papers, about the farm, my parents left each of us an equal share, my brothers all decided to leave the money in the business. They gave me the option of taking my share out of the business, but it would be over a couple of years, selling it to a friend that wanted to buy into the business or taking the lot out at once but they would have to take out a loan to pay me. I was confused, I asked Joseph to look at it, he spoke to a lawyer friend and they decided that there was another option. To stay part of the family business as a silent partner. I called my brother to discuss this option. He thought I would want the money out of the business; it never occurred to him that I would be happy to be part of it. It was agreed over the phone, the farms lawyer drew up the papers and they were sent to me to sign. I never thought I would get anything so I was happy just to be given something. A month or so later I received a large cheque, over a hundred thousand dollars, and I

called my brother, thinking there had been some sort of misunderstanding. He told me that was my share of the half yearly profit, I was astounded, Jo was speechless, and I think he was wondering how I never knew how much my parent's farm made. To me it was just a patch of dirt filled with big smell cattle, but I guess it was a big business.

It didn't feel right to get married right after my parent's death, so Joseph and I put the wedding off, we wanted it to be special not sad. The local people were very disappointed but they all understood how I felt. I think they even respected me for being so honest about it. I was still getting really tired and Joseph didn't think it was just because I was working. He decided that I should go to the doctor and get it checked out. The doctor checked me over, took some blood and did a whole lot of other tests. He didn't come up with anything but assured me that when the blood tests come back he should know more. I went back to the bakery and told Jo. He said it was probably nothing but this will prove it. A few days later I got a call from the doctor who asked me to come back in. the blood tests were all clear, the only thing he found was low iron and lack of some other minerals in my blood. He wanted me to take some supplements and see if that made me feel any better. I was so happy I danced back to the bakery, I dropped the scripts into the chemist on the way, I was feeling great, and it was like a huge weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. I walked in and told Joseph the great news, he was almost as happy as I was, I walked through to the kitchen and there was a pile of boxes, I wondered what was going on.

Joseph seen the confused look and smiled, he told me that he had bought the house a few doors down, the first time I seen the house I thought it was amazing and I must have told Jo because when the lady that owned it mentioned to him in the shop that she was getting it ready to sell it, he made an offer that she accepted. Now I was really excited, Jo hadn't wanted to upset me, so he just kept it to himself but now, he had decided that he would sell his house and move closer and that after the wedding I would move in with him. It was perfect it was

close to the Bakery, it was a good size and I wouldn't have to keep driving the van. But that still didn't explain the boxes in the kitchen; Jo explained that he had spoken to my brothers and they had sent them for our new home. As a sort of early wedding present, I was a little scared to open them, but Jo said I should and then he would move them to the back room until he could move them to the new house. It was mainly thing from my early childhood, blankets I remember and my old dolls. In the last box I opened was my mothers wedding dress, there were also so photos of her in it, I guess she had kept it because she wanted her only daughter to one day wear it. She had the veil and all of the other bits in the box, it was a very beautiful dress but it really was not what I wanted. I told Joseph this and he said it was fine, I didn't have to wear it but perhaps one day one of our children might want to wear it, so we would put it on top of a wardrobe in the new house and see what the future brought to us.

The original date for our wedding came and went, I became a regular visitor at the synagogue, and then fall and winter came. When spring started I told Jo I wanted to get married soon. He told me I only had to set the date, so I did, not this weekend but the next one, I rang my family and told them the date and explained that I didn't expect them to rush to be there. I knew the farm was a busy place and I didn't expect them to rush away and leave everything to itself. I went across the road and asked if I could still borrow the dress, I wrote an open invitation to all of our customers and posted it in the window, I called the rabbi and asked if he was available. In about 2 hours I had everything in place for the wedding, I had a smile on my face that was so big I bet you could see it from the moon.

The next week and a half flew past, Jo went out and bought himself a new suit, the rings were picked out, and everything was set. Then the day before the wedding the local florist came in to see what I wanted in my bouquet. I hadn't even thought about it or flowers for the wedding but it seems that the local people had all decided to pay for our wedding, they had arranged carpet and chairs and flowers, I hadn't even thought about it. The florist bought me in a book and

showed me what I could have, I told him he could chose I just wanted something simple that the dress was very detailed. He told me he would see me in the morning with the bouquet and the buttonholes. The local people were so kind and so much fun.

I was closing the bakery and thinking about getting ready for the wedding when a huge big coach pulled up out the front, I wondered what was going on, we never got coaches, then as people started to pile out of it I realized that it was my family. Everyone had come, my brothers their wives and all of their kids. I was actually a bit scared; I wondered where they were going to stay. Luckily everyone was more organized than I was and they had all made arrangements to stay at the local motel. They decided to bring a coach it was cheaper than driving and they didn't have to drive it. They told me they were only staying for the two nights then they had to go home, but they wanted to be there for their little sisters wedding. Joseph came to say hello, then we decided to do the traditional thing and not see each other the night before the wedding, he went to his place and I went up to my little flat, I was having dinner with a group of local ladies and Jo was having dinner with my family. Well I guess that if he had any doubts this would bring them out.

I went upstairs and had a long hot shower, and then I grabbed a snack and got dresses to go out. The lady that had loaned me the dress had decided that we were going to the steak house for dinner, I didn't mind it would be nice to have a big meal, when I arrived at the steak house every woman in the neighborhood was there. It was a hen's party; there were games set up, silly placemats and even sillier menus. I was really flattered that they liked me enough to go to all of this trouble. We had a great night, there was lots of food and even more laughs, at about 10 pm I decided that I had to go and get some sleep it was going to be a big day tomorrow. Every one agreed, when I got back to the bakery the lights out the back were on, I was sure I had turned them off, so I did a lap around the bakery to check the doors weren't broken and peeked in the back window. There

was Joseph; he was baking a really big cake. Although I knew we weren't suppose to see each other, I ran in the back door, I was so happy it was him not a robber.

Joseph had decided that the cake he had baked was not going to be big enough, so he came to the bakery to make a bigger one to go under the one he had baked already. He had called the bakery to let me know but I was already out, I told him how I had come home to find a light on and that is why I was sneaking around to see if there was a robber in the bakery. We both had a bit of a laugh, and then I wished my future husband a good night and went upstairs to bed. I set my alarm for 5.30am, a bit later than my usual 5 am start; the wedding was at 11.30 the next morning and that would be followed by a reception at a local restaurant. I fell into bed, excited but tired; it had been a long couple of days.

The next morning I woke with the alarm, I had slept really well a lot better than I though I would have. I grabbed some cereal and a coffee, I opened the window and sat on the edge to eat my breakfast, the sun was just starting to come up. After my breakfast I rinsed my dishes and put them in the sink, I took out the dress and laid it on the bed. The dress was beautiful, it was not a traditional dress, it was pale pink, had beaded detailing all over it and was light and fluffy, it was sleeveless and it was the epitome of feminine. I had a shower, and then walked around wearing a towel for a while.

I made myself another cup of coffee and went back to my windowsill to relax before the madness started. I could see the little park from my vantage point I could also see people out there decorating, there were trays of flowers, a huge arch and rolls of carpet all being carried across the park. There were also plastic chairs in big stacks being carried across the lawn. I wish I could see more of what was going on, I had not made any arrangements for decorating, a few of the local ladies had asked if it would be ok if they did a few things for the park. I

couldn't see the harm in it so I said yes but I was starting to wonder if that was such a good idea.

I was leaning forward out of the window trying to see what was going on when the local hairdresser called up and startled me. He had come to do my hair and for the first time in his life he was early. I went down still wearing only a towel to let him in. I opened the big fridge to see if the wedding cake was in there and was blown away by what I seen. It was beautiful, I almost wanted to cry but the hairdresser was waiting for me to get my act together. After that point it was just one huge mess, there were people coming and going, there were people who came and got the cake, people that were guests, my sisters in law all came to see me, I think they were wondering who was going to be the maid of honor. They were all really disappointed when my maid arrived and it was my best friend from school and the fabulous people that trusted me to look after their house while they went away. The way I looked at it if not for those people and their little dog, I would never have found the bakery and Joseph. I had asked my eldest brother to give me away, he showed up in a black suit, it didn't quite fit but I knew it was a huge effort. It is funny when I think about it I had never seen any of my brothers dressed up for more than church on a Sunday. But when I seen them all getting off the coach, they were all dressed up, they were wearing their boots and hats with dinner suits. It was so cute.

At about 11am I chased every one but my best friend out, I got into the dress and she helped me to do the dress up. It looked amazing, it was an older style dress but it fit really well, I slipped on the shoes and checked my hair and makeup. It looked just as I wanted it to. I went down stairs to wait for the cue to walk across the road, my best friend was more nervous than I was. Then there was a knock on the back door; it was my mother in law to be. She had come to wish me well; she gave me a little package, then she left to take her seat. I could hear the music and the laughter it was so nice. I opened the little package my mother in

law had given me, inside was a pink pearl necklace, it was the same vintage as the dress and I decided to wear it. It was so beautiful and it looked as if it belonged with the dress.

Then a lady from the synagogue came over to let me know it was time, all of a sudden my throat was dry, so I grabbed a quick drink of water and walked out of the bakery. We let the lady from the synagogue go ahead of us, then my best friend and I walked across the road what I was greeted with almost made me cry, it was so amazing, there were neat rows of chairs the ran either side of a red carpet, at the bottom of the carpet was a large arch that was covered with roses. The florist was standing about half way down the aisle with a bouquet, it was made out of Texas roses, and I remember my mum buying Texas roses. It bought a tear to my eye, it had been such a big day already and it was only going to get bigger.

My best friend started walking down the aisle, my brother and I waited until she was a few feet in front of us and I started walking, I am glad she was there, I wanted to run down the aisle but I knew if we kept the space we would get there soon enough. When I reached the florist I stopped and admired the bouquet before he handed it to me. It was even more amazing up close, he was so talented and I could never have though up something so beautiful and fitting. When I got to the arch, I could see Joseph a few steps ahead, he looks so distinguished in a charcoal suit, and my brother shook his hand and passed him my hand. I kissed my brother and he went to sit down with his wife. The rabbi said some words I vaguely recognized, before I knew it the ceremony was over. We broke the glass and we jumped a broomstick and it was all over, everyone was rushing to congratulate us. I couldn't believe that we had put it off for so long. It didn't seem to take very long and now we were married. It was amazing, in that moment I felt so light headed, I was a married woman, and I could live with the man I loved and not fear the community. I turned to Joseph and told him how much I loved him in front of everyone and we had a long kiss and cuddle

before people started to comment that they were hungry. I know it was a hint to get a move on, so everyone could get some lunch but I wanted to make the moment last as long as possible.

I think I realized that I would only get this moment once, so I wanted to make it last. Eventually we all walked together to the reception, my decorating fairies had been here too, I really didn't mind and I was really hoping the owners didn't mind too much either. Once we had all been seated, the menus and the nibbles were passed around. I have to admit that I was hungry but also excited. We had a great party, there was lots of food and laughs and the cake was a huge hit. Then people started wandering away, it was now almost dinnertime for most of the people that were there. The reception venue wanted to clean up and get organized for dinner, so we all wandered down to Josephs place, it was just around the corner, he did the romantic thing and picked me up and carried me over the threshold, the house had been decorated too, there were flowers every where. We both looked around then started laughing, it was hilarious and the worst thing is we have no idea who did it or how they got in!

There was confetti and streamers everywhere; some one had even wrapped the loo in wrapping paper. It was the funniest thing I had ever seen. Eventually everyone drifted away, people went off to find dinner, other people had to get home to their children, it was nice to have everyone around but better to be alone with my husband for the first time. We were both exhausted from the day and from the laughter, we decided to get changed and grab some fish and chips for dinner, walking back from getting dinner I started to reflect on what an amazing year it had been, how much I had changed and how amazing my life had become.

I looked at Jo and was blown away that he was my husband now; we had just stood in front of the people that we care about and declared our love. Despite what every one thought we were married and this was forever, this was the man I

was going to grow old with, we were going to run the bakery and maybe one day our children would run the bakery. Jo looked at me and obviously seen that I was deep in thought, I was so deep in thought I almost walked in front of a car reversing out of a driveway, Jo looked at me and asked if I was ok, I smiled and said I was just tired. It had been a really long day! It had also been the most amazing day ever. I started out this day as a free single woman, now I was a wife...I had a husband and we were going to spend the rest of our life together.

When we got home I started to clean up the decorations, they seemed to be everywhere, it was really sweet that people wanted to do this for us but I was just too tired to appreciate it. Jo told me to leave it that we could do it together tomorrow, we cuddled on the couch for a while then I fell asleep, when I woke up I was in our bed and Joseph was asleep alongside of me, I was still almost fully dressed, Jo must have taken off my shoes but otherwise I was dressed like I was. I got up and went to the bathroom, I got changed into my pajamas I had bought a special night dress for our wedding night but didn't see much point in putting it on now. Jo must have woken up because he was looking for me to see if I was ok.

I appeared in the bathroom door wearing my yellow ducky pajamas, Jo started laughing, he was half asleep but still seen the pajamas. I had to laugh too, it was so funny, this is our wedding night, it is suppose to be about passion but here we are in the middle of the night both wearing our favorite ugly jammies and laughing like idiots.

After we were done laughing we both went to the kitchen for a glass of water, there were a lot less decoration but there were still decorations, Jo had started taking them down and reached the same point I did and gave up. We looked at the clock and realized it was just after 3am, we would normally be getting ready to get up at about now, so we decided to stay up and start cleaning up the house. More than once we had to stop for kisses and cuddles and to have a laugh at

some of the things the people we love did to our house. After the house was almost back to normal we started opening our wedding presents, I think my family were hinting that it was time for us to start a family, I think they gave me everything that I would ever need for a nursery. Jo thought it was hilarious, we had discussed a family and both agreed that we would like a couple of children but that they would happen in their own time. Although Jo was a lot older than me I was not worried about raising them I knew that he would be around for a very long time to come.

As Jo was opening the presents I was writing the thank you notes, we were having lunch with every one that afternoon and I planned to hand out as many of the thank you notes at lunch as I could. We were leaving our honeymoon until later in the year, but we had closed the shop for a few days just so we had some time to enjoy married life and sort out the house. I still had to move a lot of my things over to the house and because we had never lived together we had a lot of things to arrange.

The afternoon went quickly before I knew it the evening was sweeping in, we received so many presents and I was feeling very fortunate and really amazed at all that has happened. The past few weeks had been so much fun but suddenly I felt exhausted. Jo looked at me and must have seen the look on my face, he suggested that we go out for dinner and have an early night in bed. It sounded like a plan to me, I got up and went to the bathroom to wash my hands and face, and then I went into our bedroom to change into another sweater. Jo was sitting on the bed, he looked so tired and a little sad. I asked what was wrong and his response was he had wished his parents had been there for this happy time. In a way so did I, it seemed like such a long journey. From the time we first met to when we got married and so much had happened but I had to keep reminding myself that it was all happening for a reason and that it would all be ok in the end.

After having a cuddle on the bed we were both a bit wrinkled so we decided that rather than going to the restaurant we were going to that perhaps we would just grab some fish and chips and bring it home. We were both sitting on the floor in our pajamas looking at some of the wedding photos some people had already given us when the door bell rang, Jo went to answer the door, I guessed it was some one who was lost or trying to sell us something, but when he come back in he was carrying a box. The box had hearts all over, I cringed I thought another wedding present, what more could people give us. Our house was already overflowing with things, but Jo put the box down in front of me and told me that this was his present to me. I started to tell him off, we decided that we were not going to give each other presents, but he just smiled. The box was not wrapped; it was a very plain box with just crude hearts on the outside, I opened the top of the box because it was not sealed and the box contained the cutest little dog. It was a Maltese poodle mix, she was white and she immediately won my heart. Jo told me she was about 12 months old, house trained and the lady that owned her was going into a home and couldn't keep her. I knew the lady from the bakery and made a mental note to take the dog to visit. There was only one problem, the dogs name was popple, I wondered if the dog would mind if we called her poppy. I called her and she came so I guess she was ok with it. So just a few days into our marriage we had already become a family.

Jo and I went off to bed a little while later, we didn't have a bed for poppy yet but she seemed happy to sleep on the old rug on the couch so we decided that the rug was her first possession. Her previous owner had also sent her collar leash and brush, but I wanted her to have other things and vowed that I would be going shopping first thing in the morning for cute bowls, toys and food. She was going to be so happy with us. The next morning we woke early as usual, I got up and made breakfast, poppy decided to sleep in until the smell of toast reached her cute little nose. Jo cut her up a slice of toast and served it with some scrambled egg, she ate her breakfast and went back to bed until the sun was properly up. Jo and I went to the pet store just after they opened, we bought poppy a

collection of things that would overwhelm any dog. I wanted her to be happy and I was sure she was going to be fine, Jo bought her an inside dog house it was soft and we had to put the bits together the box said we could take it apart to machine wash it, after it took us about an hour to put it together we decided we were never taking it apart.

Poppy looked at it but didn't seem all that impressed, she liked the old rug better, and we put the rug and some of her new toys in the little house. Poppy carefully moved all of the toys out of the house and re arranged the rug until it was just in the right spot. Once she was happy, she proceeded to sleep very peacefully. We had the farewell lunch with every one that day so I left some food and water for poppy in the kitchen and we went out to lunch. The lunch sort of went all afternoon and I was getting worried about poppy. When we got home she rushed to meet us at the door, probably because we hadn't taken her outside before we left and she really needed a wee. I looked around the house and she hadn't wet or dirtied in the house, I was so proud of her. Her little house was another matter, she seemed to realize that it was only put together with Velcro and she had pulled the roof and the sides off, so she and her rug were on the top of the thick pad at the bottom, I guess she was just letting us know that she has all the walls she needs with out new ones. We picked up the roof and the walls and put them in the spare room, maybe later the walls would be used for something.

After that life just seemed to go back to normal, well as normal as it could. We got up early went off to the bakery worked all day and come home in the afternoon to take the dog for her walk and spend some time with her. On weekend we would spend time together doing all sorts of things. Eventually we decided that the house was too small for everything we had in it and decided to look for a new house, when we couldn't find what we were looking for we had a garage sale and sold off some things to make some space. Some one offered us money for the walls and roof of Poppy's doghouse, so we sold that off. Not long after that I went to the doctor with what I thought was a tummy upset, working

with food I didn't go to work and went to see the doctor to make sure I would have made any one else sick. I wasn't sick I was pregnant! When I got home I told Poppy and she took the news well so I decided to walk poppy down to the bakery, I tied poppy up by the back door and walked into the kitchen. Jo was sitting at the table doing the book keeping. He looked worried when he seen me, I was going to tease him about the news but my nerves got the better of me and I just blurted it out and started crying. Poppy heard me crying and started barking at the back door, Jo was so surprised he started laughing. It was a moment you had to be in to understand. He was so happy, I was happy as well but I was also scared and shocked, how could this happen so soon? My sisters in law all took ages of trying to get pregnant we weren't even trying. We had discussed it and decided that some time in the future we would start trying but we didn't have a time line. I sort of hope that it would happen before Jo got too old to enjoy our child, we were not greedy, we hoped we would have two children but would have been really happy with one.

Jo closed the shop up after that and we all walked home together, we were talking on the way home when we seen a regular customer, we stopped and Jo told her our news. I knew that it was a bad idea, but he was excited and he needed to tell some one. We went home spent some time with Poppy and started to look at our home in a whole different way. We both looked at the spare room and knew that we needed to move. Our little 2-bedroom cottage was fine for us but we knew that a baby would need space and we really didn't have it.

We both loved the house and wanted to stay close to the bakery but were not sure what to do. Jo called a friend who suggested that we put up a sign in the bakery looking for some one in the area that might be thinking about selling. We had the money to buy another house without selling the cottage so we decided to take his advise and wrote a sign to put up. It simply said that we were looking for a bigger house with walking distance of the bakery, at least 3-bed room and small yard, but everything else negotiable. Within the week the lady from across

the road come to talk to us, she had been thinking about selling her house because it was just too big for her since her husband died and her kids all had their own homes. The only problem she had is that she had lived in the house for over 40 years and did not want to leave the area.

Jo came up with a solution that suited us both, we move into her house and she move into the cottage. It was perfect, we got the bigger home close to the bakery and she got to stay close to her family and friends. Jo asked a friend to draw up the papers, we bought the house for a fair price but the cottage was hers to use for her lifetime but would return to us after her passing. Every one was happy with the deal, well except her grandchildren, because she got the proceeds from the house before she died it gave her more money to live on and enjoy for her last years, but her grandchildren knew they would not get as much. But after the move she was so happy, she didn't have the big garden to look after or the big house to keep clean.

When we moved into the bigger house it was hard for the first few weeks, we didn't have a huge amount of furniture, certainly not enough to fill this house but once we ordered the nursery furniture and finished moving everything around it was home. I finally felt ready to bring our child home to a home. Poppy loved the new house it had a large fenced yard and a doggie door so she could come and go as she wanted. I was also excited that our baby would have a yard to play in, that some day I would look out of the kitchen window and see our child terrorizing the dog on the lawn.

When I went for my first sonogram they happily informed me that we were having twins, when they told me I almost passed out. Jo was at the bakery and couldn't come to the appointment with me, so I waited at the clinic until my breathing was normal again and took my photos home. I went home and got changed, then walked over to the Bakery with the photo in my pocket. The lady at the clinic had carefully marked out both babies so I could tell them apart. When I walked in I

helped myself to a cream bun from the cabinet, something I rarely do. I walked into the kitchen to find Jo; he was sitting at the table with a cup of coffee and the paper. He asked how the appointment went and I burst into tears. It was not a pretty site tears and cream buns do not mix! He thought that there was something terrible that I had lost the baby or something was seriously wrong with the baby or with me. He kept asking the questions but I just couldn't answer him. I took the photo out of my pocket and gave it to him, he looked but didn't understand. I tried to calm down but all I could say was 2. Eventually I calmed down enough to tell him that we needed more furniture that there were two babies not one. He broke into the biggest smile, and then started to laugh.....I felt like hitting him!!!! He thought that some thing terrible had happened and it was just twins all along. He looked at the photo again and really started to study it, and then he looked up at me and with the sweetest look on his face asked if either was a son.

I had to break the news that we wouldn't be able to tell the sex for another few weeks, but both the twins and I were healthy so we should really start to make arrangements for me to turn into a blimp.

That night in bed, Jo turned to me and said "blimp or not I think you are the most beautiful woman in the world, I love you"

I started crying again, I was so touched and so happy.

Five years later.

Today is the big day, our beautiful sons start school today, and I don't know who is going to cry more, Jo or me. The past five years have just flown past; the Bakery business is still going strong although now we have another Baker and another store on the other side of town, we are still living in the house opposite the bakery, our old neighbor is still living happily in our cottage. Jo and I have the

two most beautiful sons ever, Sean and Nick are the lights of my life and make everything worthwhile. Jo and I decided not to have any more children the two boys are a handful and I guess as they get older that is only going to get worse. We are about to leave for school for the first day, it will be their first full day away from us, I know that this is an important part of their growing up but I wish I could keep them all to myself for just a little bit longer.



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