

Chapter 2

Divorce

Peeping Me

I've always loved the time of day when it's not quite dark. The sky is lighter than indigo but much darker than that light shade of blue. The stars are only beginning to poke into the sky. There is still subtle orange in the west sky showing remnants of the recent sunset.

It doesn't matter the season. Fall, winter, spring or summer. Although admittedly in the summer, I tend to miss out on this time of day as it arrives so late. I'm usually snuggled on the couch by then.

On my many evening walks especially when I lived alone after my divorce, I would walk in my neighborhood and wonder about the people and families living in those pretty houses. Were they happy? Were they divorced or had they been married for a hundred years? Sometimes, I would hear the off key repetition of piano scales as I walked past. I couldn't see the piano or the child practicing but it always reminded me of the discipline and difficulty of learning an instrument or simply learning anything.

I was new to the neighborhood. I was the 'newly divorced' woman on the street among many families who had lived there for over twenty years. If I thought I would blend in unnoticed, I was mistaken. But I could go unnoticed on my dusk walks. I could peep in as I walked past the light filled homes. It was too early for the inhabitants to think about closing their blinds.

Sometimes what I caught a glimpse of brought tears to my eyes; a daddy helping his children with homework, a whole family finishing their dinner and clearing the table, children scattering in different directions, a dog in the window looking out at me. Sometimes on these walks I felt like the loneliest woman on earth. Everyone else had loved ones to come home to and hug and I had no one some nights. If only I had been happier. Why had things turned out the way they did? I was lonely in my marriage and standing here, on the sidewalk peeping in at someone else's life wasn't even close to that kind of loneliness. I was seeing life from the outside in. It always *looks* better than it really is, doesn't it?

When I returned home from my peeping walk, I could turn on the television and watch what I wanted, eat all the goodies without sharing them, and then climb into my

pink, flowered bed sheets without saying good night to anyone but myself. It wasn't so bad. In fact, in retrospect it was a time for growth and independence. Yes, there were lonely moments but there was the good stuff, too. If you feel lonely and look into other people's lives and wonder why yours didn't turn out the way you planned...just know that it will and it *is*.

Looking in other people's lives for a moment in time isn't seeing the whole story. Everyone struggles. Everyone hurts. If you looked in your own windows at night, what would you see? Knowing that you would like what you see is the beginning of appreciating what you have now. It's okay to peep in at others but remember your life is worth peeping into as well.

Are you an evening peeper? You can confess here at the Great Escape...I won't tell a soul.

Pair with **Red Handed** because you don't want to get caught 'peeping' –by Serendipity Winery—their house red blend. I picked this wine up on our last B.C. Wine tour. Serendipity Wines is located on Naramata Bench. It was opened by a woman who became weary of practicing law.

Temporary Goodbyes

Four years after my separation, the time came to make the hardest decision next to ending my marriage. I decided to move back to the West Coast. I grew up there and it's where my partner, friends and family still resided.

I agonized over this decision. But I knew as I sat in my house alone yet again, anticipating my children's arrival that would not come to pass, that it was time to seriously re-consider what I was trying to accomplish. Things weren't turning out the way I had imagined. The extenuating circumstances led me to only one answer, it was time to move forward and that meant relocating. If I was going to heal and remove myself from the pain I was in, it was time to make that drastic change. After 22 years away it was time to return home. The problem was my children *were* home. Why should they uproot their lives and leave the only home they've ever known?

My daughter was just entering her last year of high school and my son was entering grade 10, not exactly ideal times to move children. I let them make their own choice. Not surprisingly, they chose to stay and this meant residing with their father full time. This arrangement also meant a long distance relationship with me. Mothers don't leave their children, right? Just as women don't leave their marriage, now I was doing something even more outrageous.

But I had a plan and I had thought about the possibilities of this new arrangement for months. Although I wasn't 'leaving' them it appeared that way from the outside. I knew that judgment would be passed over me no matter what my reasons.

No matter how right something is, when you have to give up a regular routine with your children there is no greater sacrifice. But hadn't I already given up my regular routine when I ended my marriage?

In understanding the weight of this predicament, I was once the traditional 'stay at home mom'. I was the go-to parent. I was the party planner, the teacher-meeter, the volunteer, the sports fan. I was the administrator, if you will, of their lives. At that time I couldn't have dreamed I would be faced with this decision. But when the marriage ended by my choice everything changed. Dad suddenly takes 50% of this role and this is usually a good thing. However, if the father is so inclined, your role can be taken over 100% either by monetary power, emotional persuasion or insecurity. It was becoming more and more obvious that the children were under pressure to extend their custody times with their father. It didn't matter what the prearranged plan with me was. My family is in town or a special event was pre-planned? Didn't matter. Simultaneously I was rendered financially powerless by lack of support payments.

The climate of the divorce was very contentious including a filing of an Appeal of our divorce. If your ex suddenly does not want you to continue playing the central role with their children, there are ways for them to get back at you including the courts.

The alienation I was feeling from my children and my feeling of threatened personal safety propelled my move. I have discussed some of these issues in my [book](#). I felt insecure and isolated. Even friends were in short supply. More and more time was spent alone in my house when children failed to show up for their weeks with 'mom'. In retrospect all of these facts forced me to make a tough decision.

The pain of my departure is a moment I won't forget. We stood on the doorstep trying to say goodbye. I broke down sobbing, I'm not going to lie. Suddenly, for the first time ever, my children were consoling me. I was mortified but at the same time grateful for their gentle words. I held them together in my arms and they returned that holding. While tears streamed down my face it was contagious and soon all three of us were openly crying. My daughter told me "It'll be okay Mom. You'll see." This brought a smile to my face as I wiped the tears away.

Although my relocation brought with it logistical and legal challenges, in time those smoothed out. The absence of my children on a daily basis was a sharp loss in spite of our new arrangement. But in time, the children and I eased into a new routine. I tried not to let my guilt steal my joy in being close to my partner and starting a new life with him. Once we all adapted, the move had its pluses. Now, while I wait patiently for them

to come through the arrival doors at the airport I am keenly aware of their place in my heart. Now, we have a quality relationship rather than a rocky one. My move allowed them to settle into one home and stop the back and forth lifestyle of co-parenting. They know they can come out anytime and stay with me and I'll fly there when they need me (or I need them). It's a solid relationship even if it's non-traditional.

If you are faced with making an unpopular choice, realize that what is best for you isn't necessarily going to be viewed in a positive light by other people. But what truly counts is that you do what is right for you and *your* circumstances. If it is right, everything will fall into place in time. You may have to take a little criticism before the big picture successfully unfolds. Only you know what is best for you and your family, and that may mean making a drastic change.

Pair with; B.C.'s Dirty Laundry Vineyards KAY-SYRAH– “The future's not ours to see, Kay-syrah...” -to be enjoyed with or without food (good to know). Fruit forward wine with nice aromas of lavender, pepper anise, cherry and raspberry. A popular Rhone style grape known for its soft tannins and longer linger of red berry fruits and spicy character. I couldn't have made that up if I tried, got that from the website. Enjoy.

Pieces of Me

At times, I have stopped short of spilling my heart here at The Wine Diaries. My fear of vulnerability has held me back. Not only was I afraid of what you would think of me but I was worried about 'who' would think of me. I was worried about what you would see and judge of me and my life. It's not perfect. It's full of flaws and mistakes. Then again, so what. I'm ready to think out loud and let you get to know me a little better.

Today, right this minute is a mere piece of me. Yesterday is an image made up of pieces, some broken and some whole, of my past. Tomorrow will bring new fragments and moments. Put it all together and it's my LIFE. A mosaic life, cracked and broken but lovingly put back together.

Once broken though, we are a little more fragile...but stronger at the same time.

Why I began to blog and write... full exposure: You see, I started this blog with an audience in mind. The audience in fact is sometimes NOT who I imagined. My audiences are the pieces of my past visiting, and I wasn't all that comfortable spilling my heart out to be viewed by my past. What would people think? What would he or she say? Would they joke and make fun of my inner most feeling and thoughts? I'm still not comfortable with that notion, but I realize something. It doesn't matter what they think

of me. Why should it? So I'll let myself do some reflecting and share some pieces of me, with YOU.

Life Experience Makes Me Who I am...

It's been ten years since I moved out of my marital home. It's hard to believe. I suppose because of how much I've learned and what I've been through since then, it seems it should be a lifetime of years passed. I feel like a different person. You could say I broke into a bunch of pieces, exposing my true self slowly, gradually. I morphed and shed my skin. I'm still changing and putting those pieces of me back together in a new way. In the process I've become more confident but make no mistake, I lost friends and I incited anger in people. I'm not always the popular kid on the block. I went from 'yes' girl to 'no way' woman.

What I've learned? Being right isn't easy. Doing what's right for you? Even harder...it's going to piss a few people off.

"You've gotta kick at the darkness until it bleeds daylight"-Bruce Cockburn

So, yeah some of my pieces are far from perfect. They don't all fit together without a few cracks and chips.

But I'm putting the pieces back together with love...

My life is far from over (God willing) and I'm still changing everyday and I am with someone who encourages this process. I'm allowed to be 'me' with a few of the pieces out of place. Just to be. It's simple. It's forgiving. It's wonderful. It's like a jug of water after a desert trek. Do I pour it over my head or drink it in one gulp?

Rule of life: people are always changing.

But just because years have gone by does not completely erase the pain of the divorce. For example, I have met so many amazing women here on the internet. They blog too, and many of them are in the thick of their divorce. It's a reminder of how I've moved forward. Interestingly, though just recently someone close to me made a comment inferring that my divorce was so long ago, that it's ancient history. No, it's part of who I am today. It's made me stronger. It's taught me much about the people around me. So, even if it was many years ago, that doesn't make it irrelevant today. It certainly re-shaped my relationship with those closest to me. It changed my relationship with my family, my parents and my children. It's a big chunk of the mosaic.

In fact, my divorce only *began* ten years ago. It officially ended 2012. That puts it into perspective. A Divorce is not simply an event in your life. It's a process—an ongoing, messy process that requires a steady navigator.

Speaking of relationships, let's talk about the kids for moment. I rarely speak of them or my Partner and step son here on my site but they are obviously a huge part of my life. They are the ones that encourage me to continue trying new things and never give up. They're the ones who love me unconditionally. It is not automatic though. Every relationship takes conscious effort to maintain and appreciate. At the same time they are the easiest relationships of my life. My children have gone through plenty of stress yet they are always there for me. They have grown and learned through this experience as well.

When past and present collide...

There's nothing like a death to cause reflection.

Recently an old friend passed away. He was my ex's best friend but he was also my friend for many years while I was married. My ex and I met him and his wife together through a mutual friend. We hit it off and so began a long and winding friendship. Leading up to the divorce though, the friendship hit some rocky patches for me. Suffice it to say that I had to let go after my husband and I separated. As I emphasized in my book, sometimes we have to let go even if the people are wonderful individuals. We had different priorities. I was changing my life. I had to do some pruning to grow healthy and strong.

There goes a piece of me.

My children were very saddened by their Uncle's (they always called him uncle) passing and I happened to be there with them when they found out. We reminisced about our friend who was like family to us. It was a terrible reminder to me that even when you let go of people, the memories remain. Yes, your past and present can intersect in a moment, or a split second. When you least expect it, someone from your past can fill your mind with the detail as if you just saw them yesterday.

"Though I know I'll never lose affection for people and things that went before

I know I'll often stop and think about them...in my life, I've loved you more."-John Lennon, "In My Life"

Here's the thing, years have passed and my life is dramatically different. I am dramatically different. But the memories, pain, lessons and growth are still very real.

What am I trying to say? You can change your life. You can shed your skin and improve and 'be' happy. But you cannot erase lessons from the past. Divorce can be devastating but it can also be beautiful. Seeing pieces of me, means seeing what I would do differently. It's, well, as pretty as a mosaic.

I hope your life mosaic is not just pretty to look at but well LIVED.

Okay, I've finished my rambling thoughts. Your turn...what does your mosaic look like? Are there cracks and broken pieces put back together? OR are you relatively intact?

Pair with *Roble Malbec 2013*-by Finca Flichman winery, Argentina-This is a smooth Red and reasonably priced. I think you'll enjoy it.

Lost and Found Friends

The bonds of our childhood friends: How do we maintain and rekindle them? Furthermore, how does divorce change our outlook on our past?

Shortly after my separation from my husband I was holidaying with my children as I did every year at our family's summer cabin close to my hometown. Upon the visit of a close friend of mine, some bad news was received. The kind of news that changes the way you see yourself.

I had the privilege of growing up among the beauty of the ocean in a peaceful, if sometimes restless small town. Many teens dreamed of escaping and still do, to spread their wings in more exciting places. But in this sleepy town I made some of the best friends of my lifetime. I highly doubt that the trust, loyalty and genuine hearts of these women will be replaced or found elsewhere.

We all drifted apart a few years after high school graduation. We all seemed to go our separate ways chasing our dreams, and meandering through our parents' expectations. Many of us moved away from our sleepy playground but we stayed in touch periodically. Nevertheless it became harder to maintain our bonds over the long distance. Although we briefly rekindled our bonds with laughs and hugs at our 20 year high school reunion one of the girls was noticeably absent. We asked after her with the 'local kids' and found out some details. Mainly she didn't feel comfortable attending the reunion. We left it at that.

Three years later as I said, I was holidaying with my children and upon a visit with one of my girlfriends, came a disturbing message. K (we'll refer to her) had taken her own life not even a week ago! At this news my mouth hung open but no words came out. All I could think of was her ominous absence at our last reunion.

Then memories of her raced through my mind; her struggles in high school, her questionable choices following graduation, her dabbling in cocaine, her continuing promiscuous habits. While I was trying to do the 'right' things, her habits and decisions seemed to drive a wedge between us. In spite of all this, though there were great memories of her younger self. She was incredibly energetic (some might say she was

bordering on manic). She was athletic and smart. She was fun and surprisingly supportive if you needed to talk about something serious. She seemed wise beyond her years at times and I think that's what drew me to her to begin with. Sadly, not one of us from the past even knew about her suicide, nor the service to mark her death. We didn't get to say goodbye.

Now in this horrible revelation I realized I had just thought of her the week before for the first time in a long time. In fact, I stopped in my tracks at the thought of her. I was standing in my kitchen when her face randomly popped into my head. But that was little comfort to me today. Now, we grappled with the sadness that was 'K'. We asked each other if we should have reached out. The resounding answer was YES, we should have. And so we did. Unfortunately it was too late for 'K' but we promised to take action and contact the rest of the girls we had missed in our lives. That sparked our reunions that we remain committed to each year. And the crowd seems to be growing as we learn to appreciate each other again. 'K' will be in our hearts and we always think of her at these reunions, lighting a candle in her memory. I treasure my memories of her the way she "was" in happier moments.

The only comfort that can be taken from this story is the value of friendship. Reach out before a tragedy makes you stop and think about your past. Divorce and separation will take you back to your young bonds but valuing and maintaining these bonds during marriage is also important. We can't stop someone from making a fatal decision but we would feel better if we tried. Is there someone you're thinking about lately?

Pair with; a light, fruity Sauvignon Blanc because 'K' liked sweeter wine. New Zealand's *Cloudy Bay* Sauvignon Blanc, something to lighten the mood and make us think of summer days, barefoot on 'K's backyard trampoline.

Excerpt from *The Wine Diaries-Musings on Divorce Paired With Wine*- by Lisa Thomson to be published.