

DIVORCE

SHORT SHORT STORY NO.42

It was while her second husband, Alastair, was in the Gents that Nicola noticed her first husband, Will, on the opposite side of the bar. She had neither seen nor spoken to him since their bitter divorce almost six years before. Surprising herself, she walked over.

'Will,' she said quietly and he looked up, releasing the hand of the woman sitting opposite him.

'Nicola,' he said. 'This is a surprise.'

'Isn't it?' she said, turning to look at her ex's companion for a moment, who was older than she would have expected, but beautiful all the same.

'Sorry, Grace,' said Will, shaking his head. 'This is my... this is Nicola.'

'His ex-wife,' she added.

'Are you... are you here alone? Would you like to join us?'

Nicola's eyes widened. 'No,' she said irritably. 'No, of course I'm not here alone. I'm with my husband. I don't know if you -'

'I didn't know, no,' he replied, looking in the direction from which she had come, but there was no one over there and he looked back at her with a half-smile.

'He's in the Gents,' she said quickly and then, catching Will glance at her bare ring-finger, she blushed quickly and hid it beneath the palm of her other hand. 'My ring is at the jewellers,' she explained defensively. 'The stone is being reset.'

'You're welcome to join us if you're alone,' said Will and Nicola stared at him, torn between the desire to laugh out loud and punch him. She glared in the direction of her table and wondered where on earth Alastair had got to.

'I'm *married*,' she repeated. 'He's in the *Gents*. Jesus, Will, I can see you haven't -'

'I had mine reset,' said Grace, extending her hand so that it separated the two. 'My engagement ring, I mean. I can give you the name of my jeweller if you want.'

'I just told you that mine is already *at* a jeweller,' cried Nicola, appalled that she could scarcely control her temper around these two. 'Didn't I already say that? And you,' she added, turning to Will. 'You didn't think to let me know you were getting remarried?'

'You didn't think to tell me either,' he said, laughing a little at the absurdity of her offence. 'I mean, that's if you actually are.'

'Oh for pity's sake,' she cried. 'He's in the... you know what, forget it. Six years later and you're still a prick.'

She stormed back to her table and sat there fuming, memories of their failed relationship crucifying her before growing furious and marching towards the Gents. This was ridiculous, she decided, as she stormed in. How long did it take to piss, after all? The men all turned and stared at her, non-plussed, except for Alastair, who saw a look in her eye that he had seen on far too many occasions lately. A look that settled his mind on something he had been thinking about long and hard recently.