

Chapter 5

Ten days had gone by and Louise remained in bed the entire time. Kid was frantic with worry; he knew that there was nothing wrong with her physically, and yet as the days passed she didn't make the slightest attempt to leave their bed. Her attitude hadn't changed since the day they visited the doctor. She hardly spoke and when she did, she was caustic and offensive. Kid was at a loss; he didn't know how to help her. She insisted on staying in bed and the only relief that Kid had was that at least she was eating a bit. Rachel came every day, but she didn't get any more from Louise than what Kid did. She just got the same treatment: monosyllabic answers and her already famous 'leave me alone'. At night when he lay in bed next to her, Kid had the impression that he was sleeping with a cold piece of marble and not his wife. He wanted so much to hug and hold her between his arms but she wouldn't let him. The very first night he had tried to comfort her and feel her warmth she had pushed him away unceremoniously without saying a single word. From that day on when she noticed that he was getting into bed, she moved to the furthest edge of the bed and lay curled up all night long, making sure that he didn't touch her. This attitude pained and confused Kid terribly. It was as if she blamed him for what had happened and wanted to punish him. Kid would be glad to be the target of her frustration and anger if that meant that she'd be snapped of that sulky mood. He wished that she would yell at him, insult him or even hit him, anything that showed that she was alive. At some point it seemed as if his wife had left and this cold and strange woman had occupied her place. Teaspoon and Rachel kept telling him that Louise just needed time to come to terms with the blow they had received, but Kid wasn't sure any longer. He had never seen her act like that before; she was the strongest woman he had ever met and he had admiringly seen her fight everything. But now it seemed as if no spunk or life was left in her, and she looked defeated and forlorn. Kid wished that Teaspoon and Rachel were right and soon he could have the old Lou back.

As he sat at his table, forlornly tasting a steaming cup of coffee, he heard a faint noise coming from upstairs. Louise was awake, he thought, but he didn't make any attempt to rush and see her. He was becoming very wary of his wife's odd mood and he realized that all this was sadly affecting their life as a couple. Kid didn't look forward to beginning the day with one of her acrid remarks or the image of her bleak expression. Once he finished his coffee, he'd bring her some breakfast. She wouldn't eat much like every day, but at least she would nibble something. Lou had never been a big eater, and now that she didn't feel quite herself, she was eating like a bird. Some light steps were heard upstairs and Kid imagine that Lou would be going to the outhouse. It was the only moment when she left the bed. As the steps continued sounding all along the corridor on the second floor and the stairs, Kid knew that he hadn't been wrong. He cast a glimpse, expecting to set eyes on her at any moment, having the same appearance as in the last ten days, her hair tousled and wearing her dressing gown. The steps became louder and when he saw her appear, his mouth

opened in surprise but no sound came. Louise was dressed elegantly and her hair was neatly done in a braid. When her eyes met his, her steps became slower and she descended the last flight of the staircase sluggishly, keeping her eyes downcast.

Kid was on his feet in no time and ran towards her. "Lou!" he called happily and on reaching her he dared to hold her hand and this time she didn't try to move it away. "You're up!" he exclaimed cheerfully.

Louise didn't meet his eyes and simply said, "It's time I went back to work." Kid grinned broadly, quickly forgetting the agony of the last few days. He gladly realized that Lou had only needed some time for herself as his friends had assured him. Hopefully, now they would be back to how they had been before the fateful day of the doctor's visit. They would need to talk things through, he would listen to her but they would eventually be fine. Louise descended the last step of the staircase and let herself be drawn into Kid's hold, but she didn't hug him back, leaving her arms sagging at her side. He took her by the hand and steered her towards the dining room table. Moving a chair for her to sit on, Kid kept babbling on in his excitement. "I'll make you some breakfast. You can't imagine how glad I am to see you up, honey. I knew you'd be fine. Now give me ten minutes and I'll make you a delicious breakfast. Won't be long." His excitement didn't match hers. Louise kept silent and her eyes constantly downcast, in an attempt to avoid meeting his. Kid rushed to the kitchen not noticing her quiet stance at all; his only thought was that his wife was up and ready to go back to life. Nothing else mattered right now.

As he promised, Kid was back in a few minutes with plates brimmed with tasty food. He sat next to her and casting a smile she never saw, he began eating and making small talk while she remained quiet. After a few minutes they both were silent and the only sound heard was the clanking of the forks against the china plates, and in that moment she called his name hesitantly, "Kid?"

Hearing Lou speak surprised him as she had been silent all the time while he had been excitedly babbling on. He turned all his attention to her and said, "Yes, honey?"

Louise kept her eyes fixed on her plate and cleared her throat nervously. She took her time before continuing, not sure how to talk to him. "Uh..." she began hesitatingly, "I know that I've been horrible to you these last days." She paused for a moment and squeezing her hand encouragingly Kid added, "It's all right, Lou. I understand."

For the first time Lou dared to cast a brief glimpse at him and smiled forcefully. She breathed in deeply, knowing that the next bit wouldn't be easy for neither of them. "I want you to know that it's fine by me if you file for a divorce."

The smile that had been permanent on Kid's face since he had seen her

vanished instantly and his face crease into a frown. "What are you talking about, Lou?"

She didn't answer his question but continued with her own harangue. "You have strong reasons and I guess you could get a divorce quite easily." Her body was shivering, but she tried not to show it, so she managed to sound self-assured, her voice clear and loud.

"I'm not divorcing you, Lou!" he barked, annoyed by the conversation. "I can't believe you're seriously talking about it." He yanked the napkin from around his collar gruffly and threw it on the table carelessly. Suddenly the food didn't appeal to him any more and dumbfounded he glared at his wife, who kept her eyes glued to her plate.

"You should think about it, Kid," she insisted softly. "I won't stay in your way and you have enough reasons to want a divorce."

Kid couldn't believe his ears and unable to keep still any longer, he rose to his feet and stood before her. Placing a finger under her chin Kid tilted her head towards him, forcing her to look at him. "What reasons are those? Because I don't see any," he asked angrily.

"I'm faulty," she stated without any hesitation.

"Faulty?" he repeated bedazzled, not getting what she was implying. Actually, the whole conversation didn't make any sense. "You're not faulty!!! Stop talking crazy."

"I can't have children, so you got yourself a defective wife!" she barked and jumped to her feet angrily, pushing him away and out of her way.

"Oh for goodness' sake, Lou," he tried to protest but she cut him off.

"I married you because I thought I could make you happy, but I was wrong," she reasoned in a softer tone.

"And you do, you really do, Lou," Kid insisted, praying that she could see that he was serious. She made him the happiest man alive since the moment she accepted to become his wife.

"So what about 'nothing could make me happier than this'?" she asked, quoting his words when she had told him that she could possibly be pregnant. Those words had haunted her for the past few days and made her feel utterly miserable.

"Because it was you, Lou."

Louise didn't seem to hear him as she continued, "It pains me terribly to say this, but we need to accept that I'm not what you deserve. You could still find a nice girl and have that family you want."

Her words shocked him so much that for one moment he couldn't find his own voice. He kept staring at her in disbelief and after a while he managed to protest vehemently. "I don't want another woman. I only want a family with you, only with you."

"But I can't give you that," she retorted loudly.

"Then I don't want it," Kid stated without the slightest hesitation. They remained silent in the middle of the room, their eyes boring into each other. It was Kid who first moved away and said in a sarcastic tone, "I got to go to work. Please do us both a favor and stop thinking for me." He turned to leave and she watched him as he disappeared from her sight into the next room. Only when she heard the front door slam shut, did she cover her face with her hands and let sobs rack her frail body.



Kid had a terrible day as the conversation with Lou that morning was constantly on his mind. He had been surly and snappy, and naturally Teaspoon had noticed this change of demeanor in him. The previous days hadn't been easy either, but at least he had been able to keep his problems apart from work, but today he just felt unable. Teaspoon had tried to talk to him, but Kid had refused to answer any of his questions. He really couldn't talk about it; the thought of losing his dear Louise left him on the verge of tears and breaking down. She couldn't be serious and he needed to let her see that nothing had changed between them. He loved her as much as ever and the fact that they'd never be able to become parents didn't change his love for her. He'd be happy as long as they stayed together; he didn't see her in any worse light because of what she couldn't give him. Kid believed that she had already brought so much into his life that sometimes he felt unworthy of her love. If she wanted to have children, they could always adopt a child. There were many children who sadly had nobody in this world. After all, they were orphans themselves and they knew what being alone meant.

As their homestead came into view, Kid slowed Katy to a light trot as they approached the house. It was later than his usual time of getting home, but he was aware that he had delayed the moment to leave town. He feared what he might find at home, how Louise might be and the thought saddened him deeply. For a few moments Kid stayed on Katy, deep in thought. There was a light burning in the lounge and another in the kitchen. Lou was home as he expected. He knew that, as she had told him, she had gone to work today. Unbeknownst to her, he had watched her get to the hotel that morning and leave in the afternoon.

He had wanted to pay her a visit as he usually did when he patrolled the streets of Rock Creek, but today he didn't know what to tell her after the argument that morning.

Kid finally eased off his horse but didn't go into the house straightway. He decided to see to his horse first. Usually he always let Lou know that he was home with a kiss, but today he didn't think the occasion was suitable for that. He took his time with his faithful mare, so it was an hour later that he plodded towards his house with a heavy heart. Opening the door slowly he let himself in and found Lou on her knees, trying to get the fire in the hearth going. She stopped the task as soon as she heard his steps and stared at him silently. Louise had heard him pull up to the house an hour ago and she knew that he was delaying the moment to meet her. Kid took a few hesitant steps into the room but stopped at a certain distance from her. "Hey," he greeted, but she never said a word, just kept looking at him with big eyes. Kid felt self-conscious and strangely uncomfortable, and said the only thing he could think of, "How was your day?"

Louise lowered her eyes and just shrugged her shoulders in indifference. Rising to her feet she cleaned the soot from her hands on the apron she was wearing. "I'll make you some dinner," she muttered as she headed for the kitchen but stopped and turned around as she heard Kid's voice behind her.

"I love you, Louise, you know that," he said, looking intently at her. Lou didn't say a word and he continued, "I told you that nothing on this earth would drive me away from you, nothing, not even you, and I'm not planning on changing that."

In that moment Louise wanted to run to him, wrap her arms around his neck and feel his kisses on her lips but instead she just stood motionless. She knew that she loved him, but somehow right now she felt unable to let her heart talk. Thousands of sensations filled her, and she really couldn't understand what was happening to her, why she felt so empty. Kid's presence strangely angered her, but the thought of him leaving her filled her with absolute anguish and pain. All in all, she had been serious when she had mentioned the divorce issue that morning. She had been pondering their situation for days and she had reached the conclusion that she could never make Kid completely happy, at least not in the way he deserved. It would break her inside, but he needed to understand that it would be for his own good in the long run. She didn't really care what happened to her; she didn't see how she could expect anything from life if all her dreams disappeared, but it wouldn't be fair to force Kid to share her same pitiful destiny. Lou had expected him to react in the way he had that morning. She was well aware that Kid loved her deeply and he had wanted to marry her almost since the beginning of their courtship. It was no wonder that he had refused her idea about a divorce flatly. Admittedly, she didn't want a divorce either, but she couldn't erase from her mind his bright eyes, his broad smile when he thought that they were gonna be parents. How could she carry on knowing that she

would never be able to give him that ever? She couldn't pretend that everything was fine because it wasn't.

"Sometimes loving's not enough, Kid," she finally said calmly.

"It is enough for me, it was for us when we decided to get married," he reminded her. "You know, for better or for worse."

Talking about their wedding was painful as it had been one of the happiest days in her life despite the imminent war, the tension between her friends and that boy dying just after the ceremony. All in all, she had felt strangely happy to finally become Kid's wife. Like usual, he had been worried that she hadn't had the ideal wedding he had wanted to give her, and she had to assure him that she had loved the wedding despite everything. All she had cared about was Kid and the rest of the world wasn't important. That moment seemed so far away that she sometimes wondered if it hadn't been a dream; it just didn't seem real to her right now. Kid talking about their wedding made her anger surface. "I relieve you from the worse," she snapped angrily.

"I don't want to be relieved," he answered back in the same tone. "I meant every vow we took."

She walked the few steps separating them angrily till they were face to face. "Are you implying I didn't mean them?" she growled furiously, irritated that he would hint that she had made light of their marriage.

"I'm not the one eager to jump out of this marriage," he spat.

Louise glared at him silently as she realized that she didn't have anything to say. "Go to hell!" she finally shouted and swirling around she plodded towards the kitchen where out of sight she dropped onto a chair heavily and began weeping silently. Faintly she heard Kid's voice on the other side of the room. "I'm not going anywhere, Louise McCloud. You're stuck with me whether you like it or not."

Kid remained rooted to the spot for a few minutes, watching intently at the kitchen door through which his wife had disappeared. For one moment he had the impulse of going after her, but on second thought he believed that words in their present moods wouldn't do them any good. So he turned around and got out of the house. He urgently needed to breathe some fresh air, as fighting with her had left him drained and empty. Lou could be very stubborn and many times he had let her have her way, but this time it would be different. Now she wouldn't win over him because he wouldn't accept to lose her, not when she loved him as he knew she did. No, this time he needed to be strong and show her that all he cared about was only her. Yeah, he would show her.



That night Louise was already in bed when Kid re-entered the house. On the table she had left him some stew that she had apparently fixed that evening. Kid didn't feel like eating, but something inside stirred as he watched the care in which she had disposed the plate and the cutlery on the table. There was nothing amiss, the plate perfectly centred, the cutlery brightly clean, the glass spotless, a napkin folded neatly on a side; everything was impeccable. She might be hurting and mad at him right now, but it moved him to think that she went through the trouble to set the table for him. It really surprised him the way Lou took care of the house and him and how she took pride in it. It was a new side of her that Kid had known just when they got married. When they had worked together in the Pony Express, Louise had always refused to do anything traditionally considered feminine, stating that she was a disaster in housekeeping or cooking. When Rachel or Emma had been away, it was Jimmy or Teaspoon who had taken the challenge to cook for the hungry bunch, but never Lou. Kid guessed that in those days when she had tried to assert some respect among the riders, she had avoided to be linked to any activities normally performed by women. However, when they had married, Louise had really adapted to her role as a wife and surprisingly she seemed to like it.

Kid sank down on the chair and forced himself to eat the food that Lou had prepared for him. It felt odd to be at the big dining room table all by himself. In the last days he hadn't bothered to fix anything for him, rather he had just had some small bite as he hadn't had much of an appetite. Kid sighed as he fondly remembered the meals he and Lou had shared at this table. He especially enjoyed their dinner as it was the moment of the day that they had the time to talk and relax in each other's company. More than once Louise had surprised him with a romantic dinner, dressing the table beautifully with their best glassware and china and preparing his favorite dishes. Now that he was here all alone, the memories made him feel completely desolate. Kid took a few small mouthfuls of stew, but he felt he couldn't eat any more. After picking up the remains of his dinner and washing up the plate and the cutlery, Kid plodded up the stairs, pausing before his bedroom door, and finally he opened it carefully. His eyes fell on Lou's figure lying on the bed; the darkness was completely and he couldn't make out his wife's features, but he had watched her sleep so many times that he could picture her beautiful face peacefully sleeping on his mind. Kid noiselessly took off his boots, but didn't bother to remove his clothes before lying on the bed over the bedding. Throwing a look to Lou he couldn't help but sigh voicelessly. His whole body screamed to touch her; he needed her so much and it felt as if she were light years away from him. An arm over his head, his eyes directed to the ceiling, sleep didn't come easily but finally his eyes felt heavy and Kid drifted to sleep.



The rays filtered through the widow and fell directly on her eyes, but Louise fought the urge to open them. She didn't want to wake up and wished she could sleep on and forget about everything else. In that moment she noticed something touching her head. Her eyes popped open instantly and the blurred image before her finally became clear. Kid lay propped on his elbow and was looking at her while he caressed her hair with the rear of his hand. Louise shivered at the fire she saw in his eyes. She didn't say anything or try to move, but kept staring back at him.

"You're so beautiful, Lou," Kid muttered huskily. He had awoken that morning and seeing her sleeping like an angel, he hadn't been able to control himself. This was the woman he loved and he just needed her terribly.

They kept staring at each other for long minutes, neither saying anything and then Kid lowered his head to meet her lips. Lou wanted to protest and push him away, but as soon as she felt his mouth over hers, she was lost and kissed him back with the same passion. Kid thought that he had touched heaven as he felt her responding heartily. He had missed her so much in these past two weeks.

Lou didn't want to think and just let herself be carried away by her instincts. Suddenly, as she felt his hand roaming up her thigh, the image of his happy face that day she thought she was pregnant popped into her mind at the same time and she knew that she had to stop. Lou tried to pull away but Kid's hold was too strong, so she had to forcefully shove him away. Feeling her rough pushes Kid let go of her and kept staring at her bedazzled. By then she was already out of the bed and his grasp. Her back was to him as she tied her dressing gown tightly round her thin waist. "We can't do this," Lou muttered.

Kid was having a hard time trying to compose himself; he was still trembling from the torrid moment and the hot kisses. He still couldn't understand Lou's attitude, wanting him and at the same time refusing him. When he finally found his own voice, he managed to ask, "Why not?"

Louise swirled around so that she could see his face. "What's the point?" she spat. "I can't get pregnant."

Kid couldn't believe his ears and sighed ruefully. "Because we love each other, that's the point," he said softly, trying to stay calm. He didn't want to get into another fight with her again. He knew that doing just that would lead them further apart from each other. "I love you and you love me, I know as much."

Lou cursed him for making her speechless for a moment, but finally she charged again. "Well, it's not right if you're leaving me."

All his efforts to keep his composure failed miserably as he heard her words. "I'm not leaving you!" he barked irritated. "I'm sick and tired of these

crazy ideas of yours!!!”

“Why can’t you accept that things have changed between us?” she asked loudly. “We can’t even talk without fighting any more.”

“That’s not true, Lou. Please stop doing this,” Kid pleaded and coming closer to her he wrapped his arms around her petite body. “Please,” he repeated, intently looking at her with begging eyes.

Louise tried to pull away, feeling completely affected by his closeness. “Let me go,” she ordered gruffly but he wouldn’t release her.

“Please,” he repeated for the second time, meeting her troubled eyes.

Louise stared at him for a few moments, almost crumbling down but finally she pushed him away from her roughly and as she was leaving the room she said, “Leave me alone, Kid.” He sighed deeply as he heard her light steps become fainter and fainter till he couldn’t hear them any more, just silence.