

Chapter 6

The sun was shining brightly above in a spotless sky, but a light breeze was blowing, hinting that the autumn was close at hand. Kid roamed the streets of Rock Creek aimlessly with a thousand thoughts racing in his mind. He couldn't stop replaying his conversations or rather the fights with Lou in the last two days, which left him completely shattered. Louise had got this crazy idea of wanting a divorce into her head, and knowing her as well as Kid did he was sure that it wouldn't be easy to convince her in another direction. His wife was as stubborn as a donkey, and in her present emotional condition she wouldn't be willing to listen to him.

Kid was sure that she was acting this way because right now she felt miserable and unworthy. There was no doubt that she loved him as strongly as ever; this very morning for a moment she had melted in his arms, but something had made her stop suddenly and push him off her. Again she had insisted on the same story and they had got into a fight once again, ending up with her leaving the bedroom and his presence like a bat out of hell. When Kid had made it downstairs, she wasn't anywhere to be found. Lou had already left for town and he never felt more lonely. He didn't want to feel like this because they had so much, but her stubbornness could ruin everything they had. He had to fight her because he wouldn't let her carry out her crazy idea so easily. Kid cursed himself for ever mentioning his wish to have children. How could he make her understand that as long as they were together nothing else really mattered? He'd be happy knowing that they would grow old together. He just needed her in his life and certainly wouldn't let her go.

Without actually being aware of where he was going Kid found himself heading for the school house. In that moment the children came flocking out of the building, almost knocking him down in their hurry to be free of their daily duties. Kid had to laugh as he climbed the few steps leading to the school. When he stepped inside, Rachel was sitting at her desk, intently scribbling down in a notebook. As the woman heard heavy steps at the end of the room, she looked up and smiled on setting eyes on Kid. She rose to her feet and came closer to him. "If you came to learn, I'm afraid you're a bit late. School was just dismissed."

Kid managed a weak smile which didn't reach his eyes. "Can we talk?" he asked her straightaway.

"Sure," Rachel quickly agreed. She made him sit down on one of the small chairs while she sank down on the floorboards just across from him. "I caught sight of Louise this morning. I'm glad that she's up and about."

"Yeah," he replied bitterly.

The tone didn't go unnoticed by Rachel, who quickly asked, "Something wrong, Kid?"

He let out a deep sigh and tried to explain to the woman how things were between him and Lou lately. The words almost got stuck in his throat as it sounded incredible to his own ears what he was about to tell. "She wants a divorce," he finally managed to say.

"She what?" Rachel asked aghast.

"All this matter is really affecting her," Kid explained. "She says that she can't give me a family and make me happy. It's just crazy, Rachel."

The older woman shook her head in disbelief but somehow she could understand what Lou was going through. It wasn't easy to admit and accept that she was the cause why they would never have children. Louise was very proud and self-demanding, so her attitude didn't really surprise Rachel. "Actually, it is a sweet gesture, showing how much she cares about you," Rachel remarked.

Kid's mouth twitched bitterly and he added, "I know that, but that doesn't matter much if I end up losing her."

Rachel squeezed his hand encouragingly and said, "I'm sure it won't amount to that. She's just upset and I bet she will eventually come round."

"I hope you're right."

"Have you told her how you feel about all this?" Rachel asked.

"Of course," Kid replied a bit rougher than what he had intended. He paused for a moment, looking apologetically at Rachel and then he added, "She just doesn't listen to reason and insists that I should find myself another woman." He snorted at how ridiculous everything sounded. "At this pace she will be selecting the candidates herself."

At his words Rachel couldn't help but let out a peal of laughter, which she immediately regretted at noticing Kid's mortified expression. "Sorry, Kid, but I don't think she's being serious. You're worrying too much." Rachel couldn't believe that Louise was actually encouraging her husband to find another woman. She knew that Lou had always been so jealous of the attraction that other women had felt for Kid. Actually, when Rachel had first come to work for the Pony Express in Sweetwater, her confrontation with Lou back then had been caused by her jealousy. Louise had mentioned how the boys had behaved towards the new housekeeper, but Rachel knew that deep down all that had been in Lou's mind was fear and insecurity. Even though Louise had never been absolutely clear about her first reaction to her, Rachel had later understood that she had felt ridiculously threatened that Kid found other feminine charms in

different women more appealing than her. Along her rocky relationship with her now husband, Rachel remembered, Louise had shown a jealous streak that she often hadn't been able to hide. There were two memorable moments that Louise had been out of herself with jealousy of Kid. The first one had been just after she and Kid had broken up. He had shown a keen interest in the new school teacher and understandably Lou had been very upset. Even Rachel had felt a tinge of melancholy at seeing her two friends drift apart, but fortunately, the story hadn't gone much further. However, Rachel knew that the episode had left a mark in Lou. Somehow it had made her realize what she had lost when she had decided to break things off with Kid and that he wouldn't pine over her for ever. Rachel believed that because of that brief episode Louise's jealousy had strengthened even though she and Kid weren't together at the moment. Something similar had happened when an old friend of Kid's, Doritha, had unexpectedly appeared in Rock Creek. Even though she was a married woman, Lou's insecurities had been stirred once more and in a way Rachel admitted that her fears hadn't been ungrounded as the lady wanted something more than mere friendship from Kid. Now all that was far away, but still Rachel knew that Lou wouldn't let her husband go willingly. She was just upset and only her pain was talking through her.

"I hope you're right," Kid said, snapping Rachel out of her reverie.

The woman smiled and noticing his worried countenance she asked, "Do you want me to talk to her?"

"I'd appreciate that," Kid replied. "She always listens to you and maybe talking to another woman..." his voice trailed and letting out a deep sigh he added, "I just don't know what to do any more." He really felt at a loss how to talk to or treat his wife right now.

"Don't worry, Kid," Rachel tried to assure him. "I'll talk to her today."

"Thanks, Rachel," he said sincerely, praying that the woman could manage to get through the wall that Lou had built between her and the rest of the world. So far he had been unable to reach her in any way and like in his haunting dreams she seemed to slip through his fingers and he couldn't do anything to grasp her.



Rachel pushed the door open and decidedly stepped in the building. As soon as she was inside the hotel lobby, Lou's angry voice reached her ears. Seemingly she was having a very heated argument with a customer. The man's face was red with anger and Lou had that cocky attitude that Rachel was so familiar with.

“Are you deaf or just plain stupid?” Louise growled; her voice boomed in the quiet lobby, which attracted the looks of the few people around.

“What an insolence!!!” the man exclaimed, visibly annoyed. “Your superiors will certainly hear about this shameless treatment to my person, Miss!!! Never in my life had I witnessed such rudeness!!!”

“See if I care,” Louise spat disdainfully. “And it’s Mrs, you idiot.”

The man stalked towards the stairs grunting and huffing furiously and only then Rachel approached the counter behind which Lou was watching her silently. Rachel smiled at her, but her friend didn’t return the gesture. “Don’t you think you were a bit too hard with that poor man? What the heck has he done?” she asked softly.

“What do you want, Rachel?” Lou said, instead of answering her question. She felt so angry all the time lately and the simplest thing managed to irritate her intensely like never before.

“I came to see how you are doing,” the woman said in a soft voice.

“I’m very well, thank you,” Lou answered curtly. “Anything else?”

Rachel breathed in, trying not to lash out at Lou in her obvious bitter mood. She realized that it wouldn’t be easy to talk to her friend. Rachel knew that Lou could be terrible when she was in a bad temper. “And your husband?” she asked again, choosing her words carefully.

“Kid’s fine as far as I know,” Lou replied without much enthusiasm.

“He didn’t look so fine to me this afternoon when he came to see me,” Rachel said, risking to spark Lou’s anger towards her. The younger woman just glared at her friend silently and Rachel continued, “Why are you acting like this, Louise?”

“That’s my business,” Lou barked scornfully.

“I thought we were family and families care about each other,” Rachel said, but watching no reaction from her younger friend she continued, “Kid’s so miserable and glum, honey.”

“Well, that makes two of us,” Lou retorted. “He knows what he can do to get out of his misery.”

Rachel shook her head at her friend’s stubbornness. “You aren’t serious about that crazy idea of a divorce, are you?”

"It's not crazy; it's just the sensible thing to do," Lou replied without the slightest hesitation in her voice.

"He'd never consent to divorce you, you know that; he loves you," Rachel insisted and Louise just shrugged her shoulders. "So that's it? You've made up your mind and what now?" She talked quickly, running out of patience at her friends' attitude. "Please Lou, think things through before doing anything drastic."

"Me?" Lou asked, taken aback by her friend's intensity. "I'm not doing anything. It's Kid's decision now. I just don't care about anything." Louise tried to convince herself that was the truth behind her actions but actually the reality was that she did care, more than she would let on. All she wanted was the best for her husband because he was a good and honest person and deserved something better. Right now she didn't feel that she could offer him anything worthy. Honestly Lou thought that it wasn't fair for him to be condemned to share her same destiny and he really should be up for some happiness. However, the thought of actually doing something to expel him from her life left her numb with pain; no, she wouldn't have the strength but she would accept it if Kid decided to assume that they would have to go different ways.

"Louise, you're just scared," Rachel exclaimed. "Things will look better if you just give yourself some time."

Lou's anger came back in full force. "Stop that patronizing attitude with me, Rachel Dunne!!!" she roared furiously. "I can't have children and that isn't gonna change!"

"Lou, that's not what makes a marriage," Rachel said. "There are many couples in your same situation. You can always adopt a child."

"I don't want a quick fix," Lou growled, becoming tired of going over the same thing again and again, "and I can't let Kid resign himself to that."

"Louise..." Rachel tried again but her friend cut her off in mid-sentence.

"Will you stop hassling me and stick your nose into your own damn business?" she roared at the top of voice, not caring who could hear her. Both women kept glaring at each other; neither talked or tried to move. In that moment the front door opened and Sally's voice reached their ears.

"Afternoon!" she greeted in a sing-song voice. "I..." she tried to continue but was brusquely cut off by Lou's gruff manner.

"You're late!!" she lashed out as she grabbed her jacket roughly and rounded the counter. "Don't let that happen again!"

Both women stared at Louise as she left the hotel quickly and disappeared from their sight. Sally wasn't surprised at Lou's words to her because since she had been back to work after being off sick, she had been impossible to talk to, always in a snappy mood. Sally was aware of what had happened to Louise and she couldn't begin to imagine what she was going through but that didn't justify her attitude, especially with the hotel's customers. Sally had tried to talk to her and offer her encouragement, but Lou hadn't wanted any of that. Her attitude had been cold and harsh towards her and Sally just hoped that she'd get over her present condition soon. She really missed her friend; Lou had always been so agreeable and kind that she hardly recognized this new side of hers. Sally looked at Rachel and the older woman met her eyes. There was no need for words as both women understood what the other was thinking. Rachel shook her head ruefully and smiling faintly at the young lady, she left the hotel without uttering a single word.



Louise walked along Rock Creek's main street quickly and grunting under her breath. Right now she felt so furious with Rachel and Kid that her head was beginning to ache from the pressure. How could they dare to talk about her behind her back? Rachel didn't have any right to judge her as she couldn't understand her feelings. She came with that know-it-all attitude of hers and trying to meddle in her affairs. That was something that Lou just couldn't stand. Rachel had been her confidante for years now; Lou had found an invaluable support in her and she was really grateful for her friendship. But her unasked words and advice were completely infuriating and she didn't need any of that. Deep down Louise knew that basically her friend had told her a couple of truths and that was what had sparked her fury. She inwardly admitted that she was being horrible to Kid and he didn't deserve that treatment when it wasn't his fault. She wished that she could forget what had happened and that everything could be just the same, but she felt unable to do just that.

Louise was so wrapped in her own thoughts that she wasn't really paying attention where she was going. Her head was in turmoil and her only concern was to get home as soon and quick as possible and be on her own. Tears pricked her eyes but she stubbornly held them back. Louise couldn't understand why she was on the verge of tears all the time now and she seemed not to have any control over her outbursts any longer. The thought infuriated her deeply and frustration coursed over all of her. She should be able to come to terms with the fact that she was unable to have children; it shouldn't be so painful but indeed it was. Actually, the idea of having children of her own had scared her a few years ago. So why was it so difficult now to accept the reality? Maybe it was because she wasn't a young girl any more or just because Kid was in her life now. Anyway, the fact was that knowing her reality was ripping her inside and she didn't know how to stop the searing pain she was feeling. Lou desired something she could never have with all her heart and the thought that the wish

was as strong in Kid just broke her. He could have other options and she swore to herself that she wouldn't stand in his way if he decided to set out for a new life without her, however painful it was. Maybe now he didn't see what lay before them, but one day Lou feared that he'd be bitter and regretful to be tied to her all his life. Rachel was right; she was scared of the day he'd realize his mistake and she'd be shattered. So she'd rather finish things now instead of fooling herself into thinking that his love would last forever under the present circumstances.

Her confused thoughts were blinding her and in her rush along the main street she bumped into a strong body. Louise looked up at the man and was about to apologize when her eyes met the dazzling white smirk of Doctor Logan. He tipped his hat at her in greeting and Lou cringed in disgust. The image of the doctor really turned her stomach as it was inevitably linked to bitter memories of the worst moment of her short existence. Noticing her expression the doctor gently took her by the arm and asked, "Are you all right, Mrs. McCloud?"

Lou roughly yanked her arm free and answered curtly, "Just fine." She averted his eyes, unable to stand the man's presence much longer.

"Maybe you should call on my office later and I can check that everything's fine," he offered but was cut off by Lou's rough words.

"No! I told you I'm fine."

"I see that but..." he tried to insist but he stopped as something caught his attention, forgetting the lady completely. At his sudden stop Louise looked up at him and noticed that the doctor was staring at something behind her intensely; his smile gone. She turned her head and saw the person who Doctor Logan followed with his eyes. It was a tall man in his forties, fair hair, bushy moustache, bowler hat and a cream suit that Lou thought was too thick for this time of the year. 'Another of those stiff city types,' Lou thought as the man seemed to head for the hotel but she knew that today he wouldn't find a free room. The hotel was packed.

The doctor kept staring at the man till he disappeared into the hotel and only then he realized that Louise was still before him. He cleared his throat nervously and muttered clumsily, "Uh... I've just remembered... uh... my wife's waiting for me. I didn't know it was this late. Good day, Mrs. McCloud. My regards to your husband." The doctor tipped his head and Lou just nodded politely before he rushed along the street towards his office. Louise kept looking after him; she shivered as the meeting with the doctor had made her relive that horrible day. She wanted to erase those moments and memories, and averting her gaze she continued her frantic walk towards the stables. The tears she had tried to hold back flowed freely now and silently she cursed Rachel, the doctor and the whole world for making her appear so vulnerable.

Meanwhile, Doctor Logan stormed into his little surgery and seeing no one

around he called out for his wife, alarm in his voice. "Anne! Anne! Where are you?" In a few seconds the woman appeared, coming down the stairs and wiping her wet hands on the apron she was wearing.

"Charles, what's wrong?"

The man came closer to her and grabbing her by the arms he blurted out, "Edwards is here; I've just seen him."

Mrs. Logan's expression turned into one of utter astonishment. "Edwards? Tom Edwards?" she asked and her husband just nodded. "Where?"

"He was just heading for the hotel," he just said and asked angrily. "What the hell is he doing here?"

"I don't know!!!" she retorted in a gruff voice, annoyed that he thought that she could have the answer to his question, implying that there was an ulterior motive and she knew about it. She was as clueless as him and she had only an explanation to give. "He's a traveling salesman, so I guess he's just here on business. Did he see you?"

"No, I was at a safe distance," he replied. "Anyway, even if he had, he'd have no clue who I am. Your refined friends never took much notice of me," he spat bitterly. "I've always been too ordinary for their high standards, never good enough for that selected circle of friends of yours."

"Oh Charles, don't start with that," she exclaimed, letting out an audible sigh, and asked, "What are we going to do?"

He looked at her with a serious countenance and simply said, "We'll have to get rid of him."

The woman stared at him as if he had lost his mind. "You can't be serious, Charles. He's my best friend's husband and they have three small children to raise."

"Any better ideas, dear?" he asked sarcastically. "We can always wait for him to come and pay his respects to Doctor Logan and his lovely wife. He'll sure get the surprise of his life." He guffawed maliciously while the woman kept staring at him with a serious stance. "Are you sure you want to risk that?"

Mrs. Logan glared at him silently and finally averting her gaze she muttered, "Do whatever you have to." The man sniggered and strongly grabbing her by the chin he said, "That's my girl." She shoved his hand away roughly and without uttering a single word, she left the room, cursing under her breath.