

Twelve

“Wow,” Kevin said as he helped his wife up the stairs, “that must have been some lunch you two had.” He was, of course, referring to the amount of alcohol his wife had obviously consumed over the last five hours.

“Oh, it was.” Modra said, well aware of her condition. “And that, my love, is why I asked you to come pick me up.” She turned and gave him a grateful kiss on the nose. His eyes twinkled. “You’re my hero...you’re always my hero.” She was gripping the railing tightly as she zigzagged her way up the porch steps. “I had debated walking home, but I wasn’t sure that we should give the neighbors any more to talk about.”

Kevin propped his head back slightly and let out a slight giggle. “Yeah, I think that was wise of you. I’m pretty sure you’ll be dealing with a lot of gossip for the next few weeks, being that Christine is your best friend and you’re so protective of her and Veloria.” He could already see it, the minute she heard anyone whispering anything about Christine or Veloria that was slightly inaccurate, the way spreading gossip always tends to occur, her claws are going to spring right out.” Anyway, you’re weaving so much you just might have walked off the hillside. You would have been one of those missing persons who are found weeks later, a couple of feet off the road.”

She shot her elbow out in a failed attempt to rib him before conceding, “No kidding. I don’t know how I let myself get so bad.” She paused, grateful that his arm was wrapped around her waist holding her up, and closed her eyes for a moment hoping the world around her would sit still. “After the first drink, which admittedly was on the strong side, I realized I was going to be there for a while so I tried to make every drink light on vodka. I even began to alternate between booze and water.” She missed her step and fell back into him. Thankfully, his arms were still there, holding her tight.

“Sweetie, you were there for five hours. I don’t care how much water you say you alternated, you had a whole lot of time to consume a whole lot of liquor. And knowing the two of you, you probably mixed it up a little.”

There was nothing for Modra to rebut, he was absolutely correct. They had toggled between Bloody Mary’s and Gin and Tonic’s. Admittedly, though not publicly, not her smartest move.

As they reached the top of the steps he paused to wipe the sweat off his forehead. Gently, he leaned his grinning wife against the wall and kept her steady with one arm meanwhile he fished for the house keys with the other. A quick glance at his unstable wife’s glossy eyes told him that she was going to be in a world of hurt the minute her drunken stupor passed.

“I just have to ask, did you two have any food for lunch or was it all liquids?” he gave her a sideways glance then pushed

the door open. “You know what, don’t answer that. I have a good idea of what you’re going to say.” He took her by the shoulders and began to march her into the house, steadying her every step of the way.

Modra laughed. If one were judging by her condition alone, it would make sense to presume that she’s had no solid nourishment all day. But in fact, she and Christine had pretty much consumed everything on the table, which was much more than either of them would eat in an entire day combined, let alone as one meal.

“Babe, we did eat. We ate a lot. You should have seen the spread Christine put together. We could have fed the entire town of Healdsburg. I swear, we drank and ate the day away...I don’t think we left any food on the table.” She was pretty sure they had also had enough drinks to use up all her beautifully displayed cocktail garnishments, but she decided to keep that bit of information to herself.

It was hard for him to believe, but he had no reason to doubt her. He shook his head at the state of her and wondered what to do with her until she sobered up. It was only six in the evening, but he didn’t think Modra was fit for anything except going to bed.

“Well I’m glad to hear that.” He said eyeing the stairs wondering if it wouldn’t be faster if he just carried her up. “Let’s get you upstairs to bed so you can sleep it off.”

As he tried to lead her up the steps to their bedroom, Modra froze and shifted her weight back against him. She didn't want to be left alone right then. What she wanted to do was be in the same room with her husband and enjoy his stress free company.

“Wait. I have a better idea.” Her brown glossy eyes were now facing his, “why don't we go into the office and work on our trip? I'll sit on the couch and drink lots water, and you can do your thing on the computer.”

Was she wanting to cry right then or was all that moisture in her eyes an effect of the alcohol, he couldn't decide. His face softened and he pressed his lips onto her forehead and shrugged.

“Okay, we can do that,” he said taking her by the arms once again and guiding her. It really didn't matter to him if she slept in the bedroom or the office couch, so long as she slept *it* off. “So, before you pass out on the couch, tell me about your lunch.” She scowled at him and he gave her a pinch to show her he was kidding.

Once they reached the office he sat her on the couch then sat next to her. His hands were on her lap holding hers as his face went serious. “Was Christine that hard on herself the entire time you were there?”

When Kevin had arrived at Bill and Christine home to collect his wife, Christine had been sobbing and blaming herself for everything. It had absolutely broken his heart to see her doing that to herself. The worst part was that he couldn't do anything for her. She was intoxicated and incoherent so that

anything he said, she contradicted; demanding he lay full responsibility for her daughter's pregnancy at her feet.

"Well... not the entire time." Yuck, she thought, absolutely not ready to talk about her lunch with Christine. She still needed time to process everything that was said and would much better do that once she was sober. "But you know what?" she gave him a smile, "I'd rather start with you. Tell me about your day. Bill said he stopped by to see you and, well, what I'm really wondering about is whether he agrees with Veloria's decision to go with adoption?" Now that she knew that Bill strongly favored Veloria having an abortion, she was curious to know whether he was going to try to change Veloria's mind or just accept her decision.

Kevin put his fist out and said, "Fist bump."

She smiled with curiosity, "Sure. But first you must tell me what we are fist-bumping to."

"That's our new secret salute! It's for every time we're privately relieved were childless and, for never having to deal with an unwanted pregnancy."

Only a couple of things she had found herself being grateful for that very afternoon during her lunch with Christine. She raised her fist with gusto and met his. "I like it. But we can never tell my family what it means... they'll be offended."

"Exactly. This way we don't come off as being dead on the inside when it comes to kids. Whenever we're out and a hell-

bent kid crosses out paths, we'll just fist bump and be glad it's not ours."

"Done." She said, with full endorsement. "Let me ask you about the second part, the part about not having to deal with any unwanted pregnancies." She raised an eyebrow and asked, "Did Bill tell you about them?"

Kevin knew exactly what she was alluding to and was relieved that she knew. Now he wouldn't feel like a schmuck talking about it with her. "Yeah, he did." His eyes got serious, "would you have ever guessed?"

"Nope, but it explains a lot about Christine's response on the matter doesn't it?"

Kevin nodded his agreement and got up to sit in front of the computer and said, "Well babe, let's move on. You should try to fall asleep and sleep some of that off." His index finger was being pointed at her and whirling around.

What, she wondered, is he done with the conversation? "Are you kidding? Don't you want to talk about this?"

His finger stopped moving and he hung his head and said, "I'm sorry. I want to talk about it, and at the same time, I'm tired of talking about it." The thought of discussing anything to do with having kids, having an abortion, or adoption made him want to flee from Healdsburg immediately. "I was mostly wondering if you had known about their abortion before today, that's all. I really don't want to spend my afternoon going over their past...sins, for lack of a better word."

She let out a groan. “You’re right. It has been burn-and-churn on the whole baby topic. Besides, I am sort of feeling like a gossip right now.” She thought for a moment then said, “But...I just have one more thing, not about Bill and Christine’s abortion, but about Veloria’s final outcome. I’m finding myself rooting for Bill’s opinion to prevail—is that so bad?” She paused then added, “Of course, I would never, ever, admit as much to Christine.”

“It’s a tough one.” He was shaking his head slowly as he spoke, “I mean, I’m having the same internal conflict where I have to be supportive of adoption, but know in my heart that the best option is for her to just have an abortion. That’s why it’s so painful to watch. I hate being so close to it all and knowing damn well that I cannot and should not interfere.” He glanced out the window trying to get a grasp on his emotions. “I would sincerely love to prod Bill and tell him to be assertive, but since she’s not my daughter, I won’t.” His eyes shot to Modra, “We won’t.”

Sitting idly by would be very difficult, but she knew he was right. “We won’t.” she whispered and raised her fist and he bumped it.

They both went silent and Kevin went back to pecking at the keyboard. After a few minutes he turned to his wife who was now stretched out across the couch with her eyes closed.

“You know how we always have fun ragging on parents who tend toward describing parenting as though it were a walk in the park?”

“Oh, you mean like my sisters?” she said, smiling with her eyes closed, trying to but failing completely at taking a nap.

“Well I wasn’t exactly thinking about your sisters when I said that, but yes, like your sisters.” He tilted his head slightly trying to lose the humor, “what I meant to say was that Bill and Christine never sugar coat anything. They are brutally blunt and they always have been. In fact, I’m pretty sure that Christine is the only woman I have ever known who bluntly said that kids are a lot of work and they take their toll on a marriage. I think her words were, ‘Your marriage is great without, the way we used to be with each other. Don’t do it.’ Do you remember her actually saying that?”

Did she remember? Hell, yes! That was the reason they’d become fast friends. Bill’s receptionist had taken ill and Christine had taken over as the temporary replacement. Kevin had gone in to meet Bill for the first time as his new general physician. Modra had been patiently waiting in the lobby for him when Christine, the “receptionist”, asked her if they had children at the local elementary school. It had been an obvious attempt at sparking a conversation with the only other person in the lobby on a lazy Saturday morning. Modra remembered smiling at the pretty brunette with big blue eyes but not responding; it was none of her business, she’d thought.

Modra humorously recalled having surmised Christine as one of those receptionists who took their job way too seriously. Later that evening, Modra had received an apologetic phone call from Christine, who introduced herself as Bill's wife and temporary receptionist. She apologized for having asked her about children and swore she would never make that assumption again. Apparently, her husband had filled her in on their infertility problem, probably after she'd complained to her husband about the self-absorbed, obnoxious, woman his patient was married to. It was over dinner at Bill and Christine's home a few weeks later that Christine made the statement about remaining childless and Kevin had raised his glass in appreciation and toasted her. The four of them have been best friends since.

"Today over lunch Christine actually said that for the first time in her life, she felt like she had given up her career and her identity in exchange for getting cheated so close to the finish line." Tippy but still coherent, Modra explained, "I think that Veloria will bounce back and pick up where she left off if she follows through with the adoption. If for some reason, though, Veloria changes her mind and chooses to keep the baby, I don't think there is any way she would be able to pick up where she left off. Christine actually agreed with me on that point."

"I don't get Christine right now. Why take that risk? I get it, everything will be fine. Veloria will probably have a good life, but never to her potential."

“Trust me. It’s hard for me to see it from her side as well. She’s really complicating the situation. Both Bill and Diego want Veloria to have an abortion, Christine is insisting she give it up for adoption, and no one has actually asked Veloria about what she really wants to do. Christine actually thinks that Veloria may have chosen to go with adoption to appease her, but she’s not sure because she really would rather not know if Veloria actually prefers the other. So the problem is that with Christine pushing her to carry this baby to full term, Veloria could honestly end up falling in love with it and keeping the baby and . . .” Modra threw her hands into the air to say anything could happen. “Sweetie, would you please close that?” Modra asked, pointing at the open window shade that was allowing extremely bright sunrays into her intoxicated and sensitive eyes.

“Sure,” Kevin said standing up to close the shade and noticing it had become windy outside. The sky was a powder blue with the sporadic white puff being pushed along by the wind at a pretty swift pace.

“Thanks,” Modra said appreciatively.

“You’re welcome. You know I’m not a fan of using abortion as a form of birth control, but in situations like this, Bill’s right. He feels that Veloria shouldn’t go through the emotional landmine of having a baby only to give it up; he doesn’t think she can give it up once it’s here. He actually admitted that he didn’t know if he and Christine could allow her to hand the baby off, either.” Kevin scratched his beard. “I’ll be

honest, I think Christine is imposing her demons on Veloria and Bill, and she's doing them a disservice."

Modra couldn't agree more, but the anxiety had piled up and suddenly felt that she had had enough of the conversation. "So tell me about the trip and what you have so far," she sat up and reached for the paperwork in his hands.

"Gladly." Kevin swiveled his chair around to the computer. "We will have to fly into B.A., better known as Buenos Aires to you foreigners," He had a heavy American accent.

"Oooh," Modra said, impressed with her husband for his attempt at pronouncing Buenos Aires in Spanish.

"I was thinking that from there we could go to Mendoza, the Argentine wine country." He pulled up a picture of wine grapes and wineglasses with "Experience Mendoza, the Argentine Wine Country." Kevin paused and turned to Modra. "You'll find more information on page two of your packet," he said professionally.

"Aren't we just going to fly into B.A. and move around randomly from there?" Modra asked, not interested in reading about the Argentine wine country. She would pretty much bet that it wouldn't be much different than the Barossa Valley in Australia or Wiahiki off New Zealand or the Tuscany region in Italy, for that matter. From the Americas to Europe to Africa, wine regions were wine regions, they deserved a day or two maximum. As far as she was concerned, she would prefer to taste the wine as they discover the local culture in a small village or town where they could ask locals for their recommendations.

“Yeah, but I think we should cover the southern cities we want to see for sure and then ping-pong around from there.” He opened the map of Argentina for Modra to better understand the geographic location of the cities and towns he felt were a must. “I’ve put a dot next to the places I think we have to see.”

The number of dots on the map took Modra by surprise. Kevin had never gone into such detail. He placed dots next to pretty much every town parallel to Buenos Aires and then had moved south.

“What’s the number next to the dots?” She asked noticing that the majority had a 3 or a 4 except for San Carlos de Bariloche, which had the number 14 next to the dot; El Calafate had the number 7, Rio Gallegos the number 6, and Ushuaia the number 21.

“Those are the minimum number of days I thought we should spend in those towns or cities.” He smiled proudly as he spoke. It was apparent by his work that he had put a lot of thought into this trip and had spent months researching this privately behind Modra’s back. It was also suddenly obvious that he had been rooting for NO KIDS all along.

There was a surprised look on Modra’s face.

Sheepishly he admitted, “I’ve been reading blogs on Argentina for a little while now.” He gave her a big grin. “You are also holding every article about Argentina from the *Chronicle*’s travel writers and *Conde Nast* going back a decade,” he was pointing to the stack of papers Modra was holding in the

manila folder. “I’ve actually received some emails from people who’ve been there and some were nice enough to provide pictures. Look through the stack,” he said, encouraging her to do it now. “I’m sure it will only make you more excited about the many quaint towns and different excursions, and it sounds as though sightseeing in Patagonia and south of that is what we need to focus on. Of course, we can always modify the time we spend in a town or city. Once we’re there we can judge for ourselves.”

Modra flipped through the pages, noticing that some people sent pictures with snow-covered slopes. Others were trekking through a forested mountainous area wearing full hardcore packs and gear. In one email, there was a picture of a couple standing on a mountain with their hands held out. Behind the couple, way down below them was a small city surrounded by what seemed like the bluest ocean in the world. The caption at the bottom of the picture read: Summer Snow Showers in Ushuaia.

“Wow! That is awesome.” She bit her lip and wondered loud enough for Kevin to hear, “Should we book hotels upfront or should we just stumble our way through it?” She turned the page sideways to get a better look at a picture of what must have been hundreds of thousands of penguins hanging out on a pristine cream colored beach. She looked at the email for the location and found it to be Rio Gallegos. “I want to go here,” she said, pointing to the picture with excitement.

He pointed on the map with a smile. It was already flagged as a *must* visit city. “I think we should book hotels in Buenos Aires, Bariloche, Rio Gallegos, a week before we expect to be there because most of the email’s said they get pretty busy. But Ushuaia it seems is booked all the time except for winter because... well... let’s face it, it’s as far south as you can go before you get to Antarctica. I think we can wing it with the rest of them as we go.”

“You’re in charge.”

“Thank you.” He said, fist bumping her. “Once we know where we want to go next, we’ll just log onto the Internet at our hotel and book a day or two ahead for the next place.”

“Okay! I am so game!” Kevin’s grin expanded from ear to ear as he caught the genuine excitement in her voice.

“Cool.”

“So, how long should we go for?” Modra asked. It had now been almost a full year since their last extended vacation.

Kevin leaned back in the swivel chair and placed his big, size thirteen feet on her lap, and then he casually placed his hands behind his head. “Hey, we don’t have kids; we can go for as long as you want. Why don’t you call it?” he asked, genuinely thrilled to have that freedom.

Her eyes became as big as saucers. “Well, I have been thinking about this for a long time you know.” She was warning him. “What if we go with the intention of seeing everything we

want to see, let's not think about coming home until we are fed up with living out of a suitcase?"

He jerked his head back and grinned. He had never known his wife to be such an adventurist. "That's better than what I had in mind." He gave a resolute nod and said, "We have a game plan."

Normally she preferred travelling with concrete reservations because of an experience they once had in Australia. During that trip, they had decided to visit friends in Perth and travel around with them at their leisure, and then they had planned to take the train across the country to Melbourne, where they were to find a hotel once they had arrived. The problem with their plan was that they had failed to account for the World Cup event that was taking place when they arrived. Every hotel they called was booked. In the end, they found a hotel that had a sudden vacancy, but only after they were in a complete panic and had resigned to sleeping in their rental car which they had lovingly branded "hotel Honda". But this time, they would be wiser and more flexible. If one city had no vacancies, then they would stay put or go on to a different city instead. The fact that they had nowhere to be at any specific time mitigated the risk of them having to sleep in their car, not to mention the fact that it made it all so much more exciting for the both of them.

The excitement took over Kevin's body as he rolled his chair close to Modra and brought her onto his lap. He slowly found his way up her Polo shirt, and with the experience of a

forty-four-year-old, he pushed her bra and top up above her head and gently grazed his thumbs over her erect nipples. She giggled as she felt his erection grow under her and pressed herself down into him. They suddenly found themselves on the bare, hardwood floor, laughing and admitting that they were too old to go at it on the floor like teenagers. They decided to pull themselves apart long enough to make it upstairs to their big, fluffy, soft bed.

That night Kevin and Modra sat in their living room enjoying a nice cup of jasmine tea and their first night of peaceful relaxation in over a week. When the phone rang Kevin didn't want to answer it, he wanted to let it go to voicemail, but Modra wouldn't think of it. She had to answer in case it was Christine, who was supposed to be at a sit-down meeting with Diego's mother right about now. She looked at her watch and wondered if maybe it was over. She took her tea off the table and took it into the office with her.

"We should really think about getting caller ID," Modra said as she went down the hall.

Kevin grinned; they had that very conversation every time Modra's family was on the fritz of some sort. When they couldn't get her on the cell phone they would instantly try the home phone. He decided to forgo a response and instead turned back to his four-star Sudoku puzzle.

About twenty minutes passed before he realized he had been so consumed by his puzzle that he hadn't heard a word

from Modra except "Hello" when she had first answered the phone. He put the puzzle down and decided to go check on her. Quietly, he made his way over the dark-oak wood floor to the office. He poked his head in the door and saw Modra sitting on the same couch she'd sat in earlier. Her feet were up on Kevin's chair as she quietly listened to whoever was on the other end of the line. It must have been an intense conversation. Modra would only nod or shake her head in response to the person speaking and not once did she notice Kevin hanging on to the door to her left.

He stood there for a full minute filled with curiosity and hoping that whoever it was wouldn't ruin their peaceful evening. Satisfied that it couldn't possibly be her family, since she wasn't screaming or crying, he left her to her conversation and went back to his Sudoku. *Life sure hurls a lot at you when you least expect it*, he thought.

Taking his seat again, he thought about Christine and the way she had beaten herself up that afternoon, putting Bill's earlier comments into context. It had been just before noon, Modra had left to meet Christine and he was getting ready to leave for his 12:30 Tee time when Bill happened to stop by. He looked heavy with worry, so Kevin called his friend Connor and bowed out of their game.

There was no *hello* or *how are you* from Bill. From the minute he saw Kevin he began their conversation with a serious concern. He was pretty damn sure that his wife was spiraling

into a deep depression. Kevin remembered sitting in the exact same spot earlier and swirling his brandy in the snifter as Bill described Christine's recent erratic behavior.

“One minute she'll be reading a book and the next she'll be weeping. Last night she stayed up half the night cooking and cleaning. And, this morning, I saw her sitting fully clothed by the bathtub as the shower ran. She was just sitting amidst all the steam, sobbing her eyes out. But then when I get home, she's the perfect wife and she looks perfectly put together as if everything is fine.” His big blue eyes had looked at him with a heavy dose of concern as he admitted, “I'm afraid she's going into a depression again. She's done this once before and it got really scary, to the point where I was afraid to leave her alone.”

That was the moment Bill had chosen to tell him about their own experience with an unplanned pregnancy. Their situation was very similar to Veloria's. Bill and Christine were just in college, not married, with a plan. They were young and were trying to be responsible, so when they found out they were pregnant, they had a decision to make, a “life choice” as Bill had referred to it. There was no shame or regret for their choice, there was honesty and forethought. It had been two mature and responsible young adults making a decision that would impact the rest of their lives—from their livelihood to their potential.

Bill had sat on the couch facing the kitchen, his left leg crossed over his right. A brief smile protruded from Kevin's mouth as he thought of Bill's ultra-white tube socks and the way

they had so stubbornly conflicted with his old brown Birkenstock's, beige khaki shorts, and, Hawaiian button down shirt. Just as quickly as the smile appeared, it dissolved as the image of a hysterical Christine crossed his mind. *God, I hope Bill's wrong.*

The wind had been knocked out of Bill and rightly so. He had a pregnant teenage daughter and a wife who was falling apart at the seams. The successful, self-made man had hung his head as he left their home today. He had patted Kevin's shoulder and commended him and Modra for *making the right choice*. Kevin hadn't responded; he knew full well that Bill only uttered those words because of what he was going through. Bill loved his daughter more than the world itself and he would never trade being her father, for anything. All they needed was a little time to pass.

"Are you still working on the same puzzle?" Modra asked, startling Kevin who had done nothing more than absentmindedly stare at the piece of paper in his hand.

He looked down at his puzzle. He hadn't added a number, not one since he had sat back down. He looked over his shoulder at the clock on the wall and saw that Modra had been on the phone for almost an hour.

"What did Christine say?" Kevin asked, opening the coffee table drawer and tossing his puzzle onto the small stack for another time.

Modra thought for a second. “That was Julie.” She sat next to him without elaborating.

He frowned and gave her a funny look, “Oh. Well, what did she have to say?” he was patting the seat next to him for her to move over closer. “She obviously had a lot to say, I didn’t hear your raise your voice at her... or utter a word for that matter.” He privately hoped they had reconciled.

She took his hand off the couch and held it to her chest as she lay down and put her head on his lap. Her eyes went up to his and a small smile blossomed. “We haven’t exactly reconciled. I’m still angry at her. But I did accept her apology.”

“So you reconciled?” Kevin asked, confused.

Modra shook her head and sat up again. “No . . . we are sisters and love each other so I told her that I accepted her apology and that I am still mad but I can’t hold a grudge so she should give me some time to get over it.” Modra explained the complexities of being angry at a sibling and how it blooms and becomes this bouquet of family opinions, phone calls, and casual gossip. Then the issue implodes and you find that everyone involved had lost interest a long time ago and the only people still talking about it are those who had nothing to do with anything in the first place.

Kevin was so confused by what his wife was trying to tell him, he merely nodded and gave up.

What Modra meant to say was that with such a large family, everyone gets involved any time an issue surfaces, regardless of

the issue. The issue then becomes part of the idle conversation the siblings have at get-togethers, almost as if the issue were some sort of an interesting centerpiece requiring everyone to weigh in with an opinion. In the meantime, the siblings who were actually involved with the conflict usually resolve their disagreement and move on. The rest of the family, however, moves as a whole unit at a much slower pace, masticating the ordeal over and over until it is completely unrecognizable. In the end no one ever remembers what the whole conflict was all about. But, of course, Modra didn't try to explain it anymore, she decided that it was too confusing for words and moved on. Besides, this wasn't her first attempt at explaining the complexities of her large Hispanic family and most likely not her last.

“Anyway,” Modra said, putting her feet on the couch, “it seems that Christine has convinced both Bill and Veloria to put the baby up for adoption because they called Julie and asked her if she was set on surrogacy or if she would be interested in meeting with them about the possibility of her adopting Veloria’s baby.” Modra smiled. “I am always amazed at how things work out.”

“So you’re not against this?” Kevin asked tentatively as Modra shook her head.

“No, why should I be? At this point, I’ve given my opinion, and that’s all I can do.” Modra said, looking directly at Kevin. “I mean, we both know how Christine and Bill feel about this, so if

my sister benefits from their beliefs, then good for her. I need to move on already. They've made their decision." Modra tucked her feet under herself and looked around the coffee table. "Where's my tea?" she asked.

"Oh, I think you left it in the office." He placed a hand on her shoulder to keep her from getting up. "I'll get it in a bit. Just relax for a minute."

She nodded, shrugged, and relaxed.

"So what did Julie say?" Kevin asked. He was surprised because after his conversation with her, right before she'd left. He had been left with the impression that she would only consider adoption as a last resort.

"Julie said absolutely, that she would be thrilled." Then after a little thought, she added, "She seems genuinely excited about the prospect of adopting Veloria's baby." She felt a little cold so she pulled their wool blanket over her legs. "Good God, according to the paper it's about eighty degrees outside and I'm guessing it's about sixty in here."

Kevin laughed at his wife for always being cold. Their home had been built by an eco-friendly architect who did a good job at insulating it, keeping it cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Modra always argued that he did too good of a job and actually kept the house cold all year long.

"I still think it is all super weird the way it's all going down, but I'm happy for Julie. I think it's great that it's all working out for her."

“I think she’s only willing to do it because it’s Veloria’s. Otherwise, I think it’s really not an option.”

“That baby is going to be raised by a loving person who wants nothing more than to have that baby in her life.” Kevin was an admirer of Julie’s parenting abilities and thought no one deserved to be a mother again more than her. She’d had a tough life with her ex-husband, yet she had stood strong and never once failed her son. She was raising a positive, well-adjusted son as a single mother.

Modra nodded, she definitely agreed. Those reasons must be exactly what made the decision palatable for everyone, especially Christine.