

## Second Chance / Lisa J. Kuruvilla

My gut wrenched with fear of the unknown when I first began to suspect betrayal. I began to question the things that I once took for granted. Denial beckoned with the familiarity of an old coat, but my eyes would no longer see blindly, nor would my ears remain deaf to the unspoken thoughts that had always been there. At first it was just a suspicion, but then all the evidence led me to an inevitable conclusion. The news landed in my core like a time released visceral explosion.

“What should I do?” was all I could think of again and again. As if the betrayal by him wasn’t enough action already. I felt like a powerless victim, and the betrayer was demanding even more from me than the trust that had been stripped away in an instant. Like a peninsula that suddenly and unexpectedly breaks off the mainland, I struggled to stay afloat, and was suspended momentarily in time. There was a small voice urging restraint, trying to keep life in perfect order, voting for the “do nothing option.” That small part of me, that had hoped and prayed that it wasn’t true, was losing ground fast as I looked through the mounting debris, of what only seconds before, had been my personal life.

Like a wounded animal I could feel myself curling up inside, becoming vulnerable as I lay in wait for what would come next, hoping to go unobserved as I contemplated my next move. The questions just kept coming at me. “Who was going to save me and make all this unpleasantness go away? Why wasn’t I good enough? Why did he need other women? How much sacrifice is enough in a relationship? Could I ever trust him again? Should I tell him that I figured it out, or better yet, how should I tell him? Would he deny it? Did he deserve a second chance? What did I deserve, and when would that matter to me again? And why at this point in my life did I look outside myself for aid?”

Suddenly, with surprising ease my mind disassociated from the painful emotional and physical aspects, and finally came to the conclusion that seemed most obvious. This insight was strengthened by another voice that came with quiet dignity. "Find the truth and then act upon it."

And that is what I did. It is hard to know the truth when it disquiets the soul. It makes you think twice about everything you thought you knew and understood. With little sleep over the next few days, and a keen eye, I set about finding the truth. It had been right there in front of me for quite some time, and was easy enough to gather.

Find the truth and then go into action, isn't that what my mind had said? "But what if during the process of action, my life as I know it is changed forever? Then what will I do?" The whimpering part of me, which had always relied on partners for shoring up, was having the most difficulty of all the selves. The rest of me was stronger than I remembered feeling in a long time, even if completely unsettled.

"So what?" was my mind's response. "Hasn't it all been changed already? Hasn't it all been taken away simply by knowing the truth? Can you actually return to your illusion of thinking that everything is fine?" And I knew at that moment that I could not. Of course I couldn't. To do so would be to betray myself.

In the quiet hours of the night, when I couldn't sleep, it became obvious that he too, lay awake, and restless. "I know," was all that I said to him at first.

"What do you mean 'you know?' About what?" he said trying to sound casual.

"You mean 'about who' don't you? Please do not even think about denying it. How could you possibly have thought that it wouldn't get back to me, and that I wouldn't find out at some point? What were you thinking? If it is freedom you want, then you've got it." Quietly, resolutely I went over the details of what had come to light. And then it was over. The burden I had carried in knowing was lifted and put squarely onto his shoulders to do with as he pleased. There was nothing more to say to him.