

JOANNE FURIO
A FRIENDSHIP IN THREE JEWELRY PARTIES

I

The first one was at her house. We were in the honeymoon phase. Both outsiders, new to the area, new to the state. I was from New York. She was also new to the country, French, which gave her accented critiques even more bite. We both came from judgmental cultures and loved to complain—about our husbands, our sons, those Crazy Californians. We poked fun at their silly ways, how saying, “Have a good day” wasn’t enough. They liked to say, “Have a *great* day!” We thought that was over the top.

Soon we were inseparable. She joined my Pilates class and giggled about the nosy woman always trying to determine how wealthy people were. On excursions into the city, we jaywalked with abandon, running across streets with linked arms, dodging confused cars, screeching with laughter. At one point I saw her five days a week. On weekends our husbands and sons took over.

One day an invitation arrived. She was hosting the party for a friend, a woman who was unhappy in her marriage and therefore saving up a little money on the side, “just in case.” It was like mad money from the 1950s, only with higher stakes—divorce rather than a separation after a lover’s spat.

come?” my friend asked. “She could have spent twenty dollars,” I added. This symbolized the height of our friendship.

The party was a big success. The single mother sold so many pieces, I got the faux pearl necklace for free.

III

Almost a decade has passed. We had grown apart—no fights or anything, just a natural progression, the result of differing interests, really. When I went to graduate school I was no longer so much fun. I had studying to do, a budget to adhere to. She, however, went from being an outsider to an insider. She became a tennis lady, doing things tennis ladies do: playing tennis, lunching, shopping, going to museums, shows and dinner parties at each other’s homes. Repeat. I know that because I met them all at my friend’s 50th birthday party.

When I called for directions, she seemed to have forgotten that I was going and sounded startled. She had already mailed out directions and the evening’s itinerary to her coterie. It was just another confirmation that our friendship had entered the sunset stage. Still, I wanted to honor her day, what we once had. Soon I would move away.

It was a destination event. My husband and I had to stay in a hotel. I purchased a gift she could use, a ceramic bowl in her favorite Provencal blue from an artisan we had once admired. At the party, she paid her respects to my husband and I like a bride making the necessary rounds. When the band began playing and guests began dancing, she joined the tennis ladies, who had been drinking. One of them started making horns with her fingers, like a bull, and charged their group of dancers. This she did over and over, the ladies roaring with each *olé!*

During dessert I spotted the jewelry party woman sitting demurely with her husband in a quiet corner. I guess, despite all that extra cash from her jewelry parties she socked away, she never did leave him. My husband and I found him charming, soft spoken, with impeccable manners. I know that doesn’t mean a thing. He could still be a monster at home.

Two years after the birthday party, my doorbell rang. I had just finished graduate school and was trying to create a special meal to make up for the years when I was in class and my husband and younger son had to cook eggs for dinner. When I opened the door my old friend smiled sheepishly, then dove into a stream-of-consciousness rant about her elder son, as she would have done in the old days.

The smell of roasting garlic wafted outside my opened door.

“That smells so good. Oh, you are probably making dinner. I

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know most people are cooking at this time..."

"I haven't seen you in two years," I said.

"I know. I've just been so busy."

"Everybody's busy." I couldn't believe I answered her. I usually say nothing. She apologized. I closed the door.

A few weeks later an invitation arrived. She was holding another party, "just in time for the holidays!" Same jewelry company. Same jewelry party woman. This time I did not go. Like I said, I don't need another thing.