

GOODBYE WATERMELONS...

HELLO, BALI

BY KIKI WALTER





Our marriage was dead.

Deader than a Donna Summer
album at Disco Demolition Night.

I barely ever spoke to him. I lived
inside my personal cocoon, silently
weeping and screeching obscenities
at him. Desperate to get out, but
not knowing how.

How would I ever survive
financially?

How could I fail yet again?

Also, if he was supposed to be my
Prince Charming, what the hell
would I do now?

We knew each other completely.
Indeed, as the tired Jerry Maguire
clichéd line goes, we completed
each other. But as time ticked on it
became crystal clear that
something was very wrong. Very
wrong.

In hindsight, something was always
wrong and I was completely blind
to it.

Whether I chose not to see it or it
was my lack of insight that crippled
my vision, I'm not sure. All I know
is I stepped foot in Los Angeles
starry-eyed, in love, and ready to
begin the rest of my life.

I was Dorothy landing in a technicolor Oz, realizing quickly that while this beautiful new world felt recognizable, I'd discover jealous witches, brainy scarecrows, silver men longing for a heart, and those damn flying monkeys along the way.

But what did it all mean?

It didn't take long into our marriage for the shadows to begin lurking. I didn't know how he felt. I wasn't sure how he felt. And at the time, I didn't care. It was a lot more complicated than this. It took a lot for me to get there and it hurt. It hurt me deeply so I did what I knew best...I buried it. Behind closed doors, we'd become distant strangers. Roommates at best.

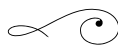
To the world, we presented the perfect portrait of a young couple living on the edge of Beverly Hills, going to the finest restaurants and parties. Wine flowed like a jungle waterfall — and there I am, lost in the spray, my arms outstretched and my body naked, the wine waterfall cascading down and splashing over me.

We did share a few passions and one of them was wine.

Another was travel.

We were lucky in that he had a great job with a luxury hotel chain enabling us to travel the world in a way that we never would have been able otherwise. The one thing we still managed to do together — aside from drinking a few bottles of wine — was to get on a plane and see the world. In style.

"Behind closed doors, we'd become distant strangers. Roommates at best."



My feet...swollen like two tiny watermelons.

It was an eighteen-hour trip from California to Bali, Indonesia. Maybe twenty. Maybe longer with our layover in Thailand. I don't know. It was God-awful and long. I'd never been on a plane that long before.

We flew Singapore Airlines business class and it was amazing, to say the least. Just as amazing as Singapore itself. The food. The space. The attention. The drinks. It was as comfortable as you could get on a flight that lasted a lifetime I suppose.

I woke up after a long non-restful nap with a sexy string of drool on my chin. I'm *always* cranky after a nap, but plane naps take it to another level. My butt hurt from sitting so long. My legs ached. My feet felt strange.

I looked down and gasped. To *gasp* is a funny thing. Reading it, it seems overdramatic. Exaggerated. But it was a literal gasp.

Like this—**gasp!**

Sitting above a super cute pair of platform flip-flops (*thongs* to some) were my bloated melon feet. I nudged Jason and he grimaced at the sight. It felt watery yet hard to the touch at the same time. He told me I should walk the aisles, that it was probably from sitting so long. We would be landing soon

but I was a little freaked out. I ended up trying not to think about it and figured it would go away once we were out of the air and I was able to walk around a bit somewhere with more space than a tiny aisle.



Bali is the most amazing place I've been to so far.

After our year-long plane ride, we found ourselves in the middle of a tiny airport like nothing we'd ever experienced. For as well-traveled as we were, we had a few moments of overwhelm until a very well-dressed Indonesian man stepped in front of us with a huge smile and a sign with our last name.





Even though the vehicle was sent by the hotel, it was not a limo or Towncar or anything like that. It was an open-air bus-van thing that we would take to travel from the airport to the resort, about a twenty-minute drive. Jason, me, our suitcases, and my new watermelon feet on our open-air bus to a new adventure, bouncing along the way like a kindergartner singing bingo in the back of the school bus.

I quickly forgot about my melon ankles and impending heart failure as I took in the surroundings. The drive along a rocky dirt road was beautiful yet so impoverished at the same time. My soul filled with love and peace in a way that I never expected. Watching skinny dogs and chickens run alongside the small windowless bus, I realized that Bali would be a special place for me for the rest of my life. It was transcendental from the get-go.

In all my travels, I've never met such kind, open people or experienced such a peaceful environment. Traveling there, I was lost in thought at the lack of marriage before me. Upon arrival, nothing mattered. My mind was free. I was free.

Of course, it could have been a fever.

Entering the resort felt shameful. Truly and ridiculously shameful. It was the epitome of privilege, yet it was beyond expectations. We were taken to our villa which was like a dream inside a dream inside another dream. I didn't think I'd ever want to leave my private infinity pool, outdoor shower, and private garden dining pavilion.

I cannot even begin to describe the smells and extravagance. Extravagance well above what we should have been experiencing.

If I could live my life out in one of those thatch-roofed villas, I would in a heartbeat. My trip to Bali was over twenty years ago, but it still gives me chills.

Oh, but those melon feet.

We didn't have much time to rest or worry about my feet as we were invited to a cocktail hour by the general manager.

As an employee of the company, Jason did not want to miss it. I quickly changed my clothes despite my lightheadedness — attributed to the heat and jetlag...and probably the feet. I dressed in a



long skirt in hopes that it would cover my temporary colossal cankles.

As we walked up the short uphill path toward the cocktail party, everything began to spin. Flashes of blackness impinged my eyesight. Sweat quickly dripped down my face.

I grabbed Jason's arm and as I told him I felt like I was about to faint projectile vomit flew out of my delicately lip-stained mouth and onto the path before us. The cocktail hour was happening right above us as Jason brought me over to the flowers to continue doing what I had to do. Way to christen Jimbaran Bay!

"Are you okay to go?"

I wiped the airplane juice from my lips. "Yeah. Yeah. I'm okay."

"Let's just get up there and get you some juice."

"Okay," I weakly muttered.

As we walked onto the party patio, we were greeted by the general manager and others. I

smiled my practiced smile and held onto Jason's arm for dear life. When the cocktail waiter came around, Jason ordered me an orange juice in hopes that it would keep me from fainting.

"Do you still feel like you're going to throw up?" Jason asked.

"No. I'm good. I think it's all out. But...I'm spinning."

"We don't have to stay long. Just make an appearance. They upgraded our villa, so we need to be here for a bit."

I dressed in a long skirt in hopes that it would cover my temporary colossal cankles.

He went on to mingle and I sat at a small table. After a few minutes, he looked over from where he was chatting and motioned for me to stand up. Well, ok, but I'm not feeling like this is going to go well. I walked over to where Jason was and tried to pay attention to the chatter. The longer I stood there, the more everything spun. As I later described it to him, it was as if all I could see

were lips moving and sounds playing over one another. I was experiencing triple vision in psychedelic colors. Sounds fun. But it wasn't.

Finally, he leaned in and said, "You're white as a ghost. Green. We need to get you out of here. Let's sneak out when there is a good breaking point."

I'm not sure why he didn't want people to know I was travel-sick, but I did my best.

As we walked into our beautiful villa, he said, "It's just jet lag. You'll be okay." I told him he could go back to the cocktail party, but he wanted to stay.

I was sad that on our first night I felt so terrible, but we had more than a week to enjoy all Bali had to offer...and our adventures did not disappoint.

As I climbed into bed, I noticed that my cankle swelling was disappearing.

*Goodbye watermelons...hello, Bali. ****

