

TWO SIDES

by
Mikey Jackson

(Short audio play)

www.mikeyjackson.com

SCENE 1: INT. PUB

ATMOS: A BUSY BACKDROP OF ENDLESS CHITTER-CHATTER
AMID THE CHINKING OF GLASSWARE.

NICK: At first, I didn't like Alison. Too standoffish and up herself, the way she'd swan past us minions in the office, acting more like the Company CEO than a PA to the Department Head. I'd often recite tales of woe about the "office dragon" when I arrived home to Gemma – that's the wife, by the way – which I guess explains Gemma's surprise when we bumped into the dragon in question one evening at our local pub.

SCENE 2: INT. CAFÉ

ATMOS: CHINKING OF CROCKERY, LIGHT CHITTER-CHATTER,
MAYBE EVEN THE DISTANT BRRRM OF THE OCCASIONAL
CAR SAILING PAST ALONG THE HIGH STREET OUTSIDE.

GEMMA: At first, I liked Alison. Friendly. Bubbly. Nothing like the dismal picture Nick had so crudely painted. She was with her boyfriend Nathan. Hotshot lawyer apparently. They'd been together on and off for ages, but with no plans anytime soon to tie the knot. Anyway, we got chatting and within five minutes I'd discovered that we actually lived on opposite ends of the same street. Nick and Alison had no idea. They'd worked for the same firm for years, yet they knew absolutely nothing about each other.

SCENE 3: INT. PUB

NICK: At the time, we'd been trying for a baby. I had my heart set on a son – a little boy I could play football with in the park – but no matter how hard we tried, Gemma couldn't fall pregnant.

NICK: (CONTD.) Heh, most blokes would love that. Bedding their woman every night, guaranteed. But believe me, it's bloody hard work. Oh, and the shine is totally taken off sex when it goes all clinical with ovulation cycles and optimum temperatures. I was depressed... but it was hardly fair to talk to Gemma about how I felt. She was going through the same nightmare. Therefore, what I needed was a listener. Somebody neutral. Somebody trustworthy. I guess that was the catalyst which brought me and Alison way too close for comfort.

SCENE 4: INT. CAFÉ

GEMMA: At the time, we'd been trying for a baby. Well, correction. He was. I suppose, in hindsight, it was heartless of me to bang on about ovulation cycles and optimum temperatures when secretly I continued to take the pill. Oh, come on, I wasn't ready to have kids. I was way too young. I wanted a career. Poor Nick was increasingly falling into a depressive state, but I could hardly tell him the truth, could I? It was far too late to come clean. I guess that was the catalyst which brought Nick and Alison way too close for comfort.

SCENE 5: INT. PUB

NICK: For a few days, Alison's car was out of action. And so, as we lived in the same street, we arranged to share my car to work. It's funny how trapping the two of us inside a four-wheeled metal cage for twenty minutes there and twenty minutes back each day took us from being total strangers to knowing each other inside out. I told her about my problems, she told me about hers. Alison and Nathan hadn't been getting along too well lately, and were now going through a "trial separation."

NICK: (CONTD.) Looking back, I remember seeing the warning signs... but I chose to dismiss them.

SCENE 6: INT. CAFÉ

GEMMA: The car share was a great idea. Nick and Alison were finally getting along, and he no longer referred to her as the office dragon. Nick admitted that he'd confided in the woman about our baby problem... which didn't exactly ease my escalating guilt. Oh, and he also told me that Alison and Nathan had split up. Trial separation apparently. Looking back, I remember seeing the warning signs... but I chose to dismiss them.

SCENE 7: INT. PUB

NICK: I honestly don't know how it happened. Sure, the line "one thing led to another" is the mother of all clichés, but that's the only way I can describe it. The first time was in the office. Everybody else had gone home. Yes, I know, hands up, I cheated on my wife. But at the time, me and Alison were two lost souls in need of something else, something more.

The second and final time took place in Alison's home. Much more comfortable. Both times, I gave Gemma the old excuse that I'd been working late. I'm crap at lying, and I didn't think I'd get away with it... but somehow, miraculously, I did.

SCENE 8: INT. CAFÉ

GEMMA: On two occasions, Nick told me he'd been working late. But I knew he was lying. He reeked of Alison's perfume and the scent of dirty, sordid sex. God, the very thought of Nick cheating was killing me inside, but I could see how my selfish actions had pushed him right into her arms. Karma's way, I guess, of punishing me for my own deceit.

GEMMA: (CONTD.) Both times, I made it look as though I didn't suspect a thing. I'm crap at acting, and I didn't think I'd get away with it... but somehow, miraculously, I did.

SCENE 9: INT. PUB

NICK: A week later, Alison and Nathan got back together. Two months after that, she quit work and they moved house. And so, our brief fling came to an end. I never told Gemma about it. I figured it was best to let sleeping dogs lie. In a way, the affair put our home life into perspective. And so, we continued trying for a baby. It never happened though. I was gutted. Gemma never made me a dad.

SCENE 10: INT. CAFÉ

GEMMA: I never told Nick that I knew about the affair. Nor did I tell him about my birth control secret. I figured it was best to let sleeping dogs lie. In a way, the affair put our home life into perspective. And so, I came off the pill and properly tried for a baby. It never happened though. Again, good old karma made sure of that. I was gutted. I never made Nick a dad.

SCENE 11: INT. PUB

NICK: We hadn't seen anything of Alison for... (TRIES TO CALCULATE) ...ooh, must be four and a half years, maybe a bit more. But last week, me and Gemma bumped into Alison and Nathan in the park... accompanied by a little boy. At that moment, I had a weird thought. Could that child be mine? The dates certainly added up. And so, trying my hardest to mask my emotions, I scanned the lad's face, searching for any tell-tale signs.

NICK: (CONTD.) No joy, I'm afraid. The boy looked nothing like me.
Maybe it's best that way... for everybody's sake.

SCENE 12: INT. CAFÉ

GEMMA: Oh, you'll never guess who we bumped into in the park last week. Alison and Nathan... accompanied by a little boy. At that moment, I had a weird thought. Could that child be Nick's? The dates certainly added up. It was obvious that my husband was thinking the same thing, even though he was trying his hardest to mask it. I scanned the lad's face, searching for any tell-tale signs. Oh. My. God. All I could see in that boy was Nick; his eyes, his smile, his mannerisms, everything. Oh, yes, that child is definitely his. However, judging by the flicker of disappointment in Nick's face, he couldn't see what I saw. Maybe it's best that way... for everybody's sake.

THE END