

BLUE MOON SUMMER

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A story about overcoming loss, and re-discovering joy.

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There wasn't a day that went by where Lily didn't think about the baby. Blonde hair that fell in wisps around her delicate elfin face. The way the sun had lit her from behind so that she appeared as if surrounded by a halo of light. Her smile, pulling at Lily's Heart, as little fingers waved hello.

This was the vision Lily Green had had of her child six months before she'd fallen pregnant. Despite this, she and Ben were still surprised and ecstatic when the receptionist from their GP's office had phoned to tell them the blood test was positive. Lily had spent the previous ten years and six months of her life believing that children were just not in the cards for her - the endometriosis had taken its' toll on her body and every medical expert she'd ever seen had ended up saying the same thing - she was infertile. Barren. Unproductive in the re-productive area. She had simply accepted the hand she'd been dealt, not being at all attached to the idea of being a mother anyway. Her girlfriends had concentrated on making their dreams of babies and big houses in the upmarket suburbs of Brisbane come true, but not Lily. Lily had wanted something else. She'd poured her energy into her Social Work career, determined to create a life that was full of professional satisfaction and personal adventure. Settling down and planning a future with someone was definitely not in Lilys' plans. Then she'd met Ben and life had changed in a Heartbeat.

They'd found each other at twenty five and married at twenty six. Ben was the grounding force in her life - tender, loving and there. Always there. The baby had simply been the unexpected icing in their already sweet life. At almost thirty one years old, Lily felt her life shift on its' axis. One month later, the sorrow came.

After she'd lost the baby they'd named Charlotte, Lily went into a tailspin; all at once she was triggered into feeling everything she'd never realised she'd felt around having children. To have experienced such joy and then to have it snatched away...gone as suddenly as it had come. Almost an illusion. She became despondent and furious at her body for letting her down, and at how this part of her life had unfolded. Her health had already forced her to give up full time work in favour of a more gentle part time pace, but now Lily stopped it altogether, feeling unable - and unwilling - to help anyone else sort out their lives, when hers had been flooded with grief and hopelessness. She felt

lost at sea, and didn't know how to find her way back to dry land.

"How are you today?" Ben would ask during the long days and nights as she struggled to find her balance.

"Exhausted" she'd sigh.

He would take her into his embrace and keep her there until her Heart slowed to the rhythm of his and his warmth radiated into every part of her body. She'd hoped that in time, the land would become solid again under her feet, that she'd be certain of where to place them as she walked through her daily life, but, at forty, it still didn't take much to wash the earth out from under her, leaving her floundering in the deep once again. Maggie, her closest friend, understood. From the moment they'd met on the dance floor at "The Move", the pair had been firmly woven together. It was Maggie who had taken her to the doctor to find out why her back was on fire and her insides in such agony once a month. Maggie who had held her hand as she'd waited to go into Theatre for her first operation. Maggie who'd comforted Ben as he'd waited for his wife to wake up from her second surgery.

And today it was Maggie who looked at the deep sorrow within her friends' eyes and said "You need to go somewhere. Somewhere different. Just get away. A Summer adventure". Maggie leaned forward and took her friends' hands in hers. "And I'm going to make it happen".

Lily felt her usual protest to anything that would require her to step out of her comfort zone about to come out of her mouth, but it was held back by another, stronger feeling...something deep inside of her that had moved in response to...Summer. The very word conjured up childhood memories of family holidays with sandy white beaches that stretched for miles and long days of endless sunshine spent relaxing in the shade on balconies with the perfect sea view. No need to rush anywhere or do anything. Perfect. Yes. A holiday. An adventure. Before she turned into a bitter old woman. She looked at her friend and smiled.

"Maggie - I don't know what to say. You are such a good friend. Really, I don't know what I'd do without you". Lily squeezed the older woman's hands and felt tears welling up.

"Oh honey, you'll never have to find out" Maggie replied, her own voice catching. She threw her arms around Lily and they both laughed. "Now, it's my pleasure to help you out of this funk you're in, so let's start planning this trip - Summer's just around the corner!"

Indeed before Lily knew it, Spring had stepped aside gracefully, allowing Summer to enter in with a burst of new energy, filling her with a sense of anticipation and excitement that she had not felt for years. Everything was planned - Maggie had been thorough in her arrangements whilst at the same time allowing space for Lily to explore, and to breathe. The chaos and revelry of Christmas had passed, and Lily was heading on a road trip.

"A road trip?" she'd asked nervously.

"A road trip" Maggie had answered firmly. "Just what you need."

Lily had squirmed in Maggie's comfortable lounge chair and begun to make a mental list of all of the reasons why this was a bad idea, but Maggie had simply said "Trust me", and Lily had let out a deep breath and nodded.

"Your own Spiritual odyssey" Maggie had declared. "Well, at least a chance to do some Soul searching" she'd added as she observed the sceptical look on Lily's face.

"Hmmm..." Lily had replied, raising her eyebrows. "I'll see what I can do".

She'd smiled at her friend - Maggie was deeply Spiritual, and often said that her beliefs were the glue that held her poor tired mind and body together. Lily didn't know what she believed anymore.

Now, the day of leaving was here. Ben had held her tightly that morning before he'd left for his teaching job, and murmured loving words as he stroked her hair.

"I'm going to miss you so much, my beautiful woman" he'd said.

"I'm going to miss you too" she'd replied, burying her face in his chest.

Now, there was nothing left to do but go. As she sat in her car adjusting the rear view mirror and fiddling with the car radio, Maggie leaned in the window to give her friend a goodbye kiss."

"All set?" Maggie asked.

"Yep" Lily answered.

"It's a good date - the thirteenth. The Death card. Remember? Very supportive of great personal change" Maggie, a Tarot devotee, said.

"A good omen" Lily smiled.

"There you go - you're changing already!" Maggie laughed. "Go find yourself" she said softly, and pulled back, letting Lily put on her seatbelt, start the engine and ease down the concrete drive.

As she navigated the south bound highway traffic, Lily felt the fear she'd been carrying in her bones start to fall away, and the stress that had been weighing her down seemed to fly out of the open window. Maybe there was life in the old girl yet she thought, enjoying the feeling of the wind whipping through her hair, and loving the way the little green car seemed to be as happy as she was to be hurtling along the black bitumen. Two hours later Lily was sitting on the balcony of her Golden Sands Apartments room, completely entranced by the panoramic ocean view. She'd cried when she'd walked through the front door; the blue water filled the whole apartment, and the sound of the waves,

the gulls calling, and the salty air had all filled her senses to the brim. She couldn't believe she was here!!! The Main Beach building had a four and a half star rating, and Lily's room on the seventeenth floor was luxurious and welcoming. She was booked in for three nights, and wondered if she could even consider leaving this space to explore the areas' shops and cafes. Stretching on the soft outdoor couch, Lily sipped her tea and decided that, at least for the first day and night, she was staying put.

The next day Lily woke early. Although she and Ben had agreed to not phone each other whilst she was away, she knew he would have broken the agreement to send her a Valentines text and, checking her phone, she saw that there was indeed a new message from him. She read it, felt her Heart expand and sent off her own message to this man she loved so deeply. Then, finding herself unable to resist the pull of the water, she dressed quickly, slipped quietly out of the apartment and made her way to the lifts in the hallway. Stepping into the lobby, she nodded to the man behind the reception desk as she walked through the big glass side entrance doors into the brand new day. The building was right on the waterfront, so all she had to do was follow the path that led up the side of the building, winding its way through beautiful landscaped gardens until ending suddenly at a discreet iron gate. Lily opened it, passed through and found herself standing on the beach. She paused to take it all in - the early morning sun on the water, the surfers bobbing about on the waves and the scattering of people walking and jogging along the shoreline. She realised she was grinning and, laughing at herself and feeling like she could go for miles, she took off her shoes, chose a direction and started walking.

Lying in bed later that night with the balcony door open to the night breezes, Lily felt the sound of the constantly moving ocean lull her, and as she snuggled further into the warm folds of the doonah she was like a child again, on holidays and safe in the knowledge that mum and dad were in the next room and her sister was in the bed next to hers. There was no pain, no need to worry about the future; all was well.

It seemed to Lily that she'd only just closed her eyes, but daylight was already peeping through the crack in the bedroom curtains. She lay in the soft white sheets, wriggled her toes and contemplated the day. She decided that she would venture downstairs for breakfast in the buildings' cafe-restaurant, and then head out to wander around the nearby Marina. She showered, put on her new favourite purple dress and admired how it flowed around her body as she moved. With a start she realised that it had been a long time since she'd liked what a mirror reflected back to her, and feeling a lightness in her step, she headed downstairs. The rich scent of freshly ground coffee greeted her as she walked into the main dining area, and Lily breathed it in with appreciation as she took a seat on the outside deck. Suddenly ravenous, she gave her order of a cappuccino and scrambled eggs with tomato, avocado and ricotta on organic toast to the cheery waitress and sat back to take in the view. The food and beverage arrived, and after polishing up every scrap, Lily nursed her coffee and returned her attention to the water. So intent was she on watching the ocean that Lily didn't notice the

woman standing to her left until she spoke.

"Excuse me, but I saw you drop this before, upstairs in the hallway" she said.

Lily snapped out of her reverie and regarded the woman and the green leather wallet she was proffering. She gasped and took it gratefully from the woman's hands, looking up at her with a shocked expression.

"Oh my god! Thankyou so much. I Can't believe I was so careless!" she said, flustered.

"Don't be so hard on yourself" the woman smiled. "We've all done it. Alls well that ends well, as they say".

"Yes, I suppose you're right" Lily said. "But thanks again...I would have been cactus without it".

The woman threw back her head and laughed. Lily liked the sound of it - it was exuberant. Not loud, but uncensored, contagious. She found herself doing something that she never did - reaching out her hand to introduce herself to a stranger.

"Hi, I'm Lily".

"Hi Lily, I'm Grace" the woman said, extending her own hand to clasp Lily's.

Then Lily surprised herself even further by inviting Grace to join her, "...so I can buy you a cup of coffee or something, to repay you".

"Well I'd like that" Grace said. "But you don't owe me anything - I was just doing what I'd hope someone would do for me. How about you pay for this one, and perhaps I can pay for the next one some other time?"

Lily smiled. "Deal!"

The two women sat and chatted about the building, the rooms and the view, pleasantly passing away an hour or so before Lily started to gather herself together to go and see the Marina. On impulse, she invited Grace to come along, and was pleased when her new acquaintance accepted. They spent the rest of the morning and much of the afternoon exclaiming at the variety of enormous yachts and other boats of all shapes and sizes that were moored in the sheltered waters of the Marina, and having fun visiting the expensive boutiques and touristy shops that lined the boardwalk. Along the way, Lily learned that Grace was taking a year off from her job as a librarian on Bribie Island to travel around Australia. Grace had no fixed plans; she just went where she felt like going and stayed until it was time to move on. This way of living was so strange to Lily - true, she was a bit aimless in her own life, but it wasn't by choice. She longed for a definite direction - for purpose. Grace, however, seemed to be thriving on her chosen lifestyle. And there was something about her - some kind of energy she exuded. Lily felt peaceful in her company - and more. There was a familiarity to her - Lily found it hard to describe. She just somehow felt connected to this woman.

Their conversation continued all the way back to Golden Sands and into the night, until Lily proclaimed that if she didn't get some sleep, she'd be a danger on the road tomorrow.

"Where are you off to next?" Grace asked.

"Brunswick Heads in Northern NSW. Staying at a place called Broadview Apartments" Lily answered. How about you?"

"Well as a matter of fact, I'm heading south myself. I've heard that that part of the world is beautiful, and I want to check it out".

"You could stay with me. I've got the Penthouse room - heaps of space, spa bath - unless you've already got somewhere else lined up". The words were out of Lily's mouth before she could stop them.

Grace turned to look at her. "That's very kind of you. I haven't got anywhere to stay as yet, but I don't want to interfere with any plans you may have..."

"No - you're not interfering" Lily said, and the funny thing was that she actually meant it. Once upon a time making such an offer would have been no problem at all, but life's experiences had left Lily guarded and defensive, with little trust in herself or the rest of the world. But inviting Grace to stay was easy and natural.

"Well ok then" Grace said, "I accept. But like you, I need to get some sleep or I'll be no good to anyone".

They arranged to meet in the basement carpark the next morning and said good night, and when Lily asked Grace where her room was, she was surprised to hear that it was in fact right next to hers. As she sat on her balcony having one last cup of tea, she found herself thinking how funny life was, and wondered if it was possible to miss your destiny, or if you would always end up in the right place, at the right time. Staring out at the endless ocean, Lily sensed that, for now at least, she was where she was meant to be.

Lily checked her rear view mirror - yep, Grace's white Mazda was right behind her as she turned into the street where the Apartments were. She drove up the quiet road until she found the building - it was white, with well tended gardens surrounding it, and it was right opposite the river. Lily let herself into the Penthouse with the key that had been left under the front door mat and let out a loud exclamation. There were polished wooden floors throughout, the place was lovingly decorated with beautiful antiques, and the balcony had a commanding view of the river. Grace came up behind her and let out a similar noise as she stood in the entranceway. The pair looked at each other, grinning like two teenagers who'd just been released on the world for the first time. Two whole nights in this wonderful accommodation! They explored the rest of the large apartment, claiming bedrooms and oohing and ahing at the deep spa bath, the well appointed kitchen and the thoughtful touches that had been made in every room. After a short rest drinking complementary orange juice on the balcony,

they decided to have a walk around the town.

Grace decided that she wanted to have a massage, and so they wandered along the main street until they found a place that offered all kinds of health treatments. They walked through the front door and Grace made her enquiry at the reception desk, and was told she could be seen immediately.

"You should have a treatment as well" Grace told Lily.

"Hmmm - maybe. Don't know what though - I never go to places like this" Lily said, eyeing the list of services nervously.

"Well you're here now - how about some acupuncture? Just a thought" Grace said before allowing herself to be escorted down the softly lit hallway and into one of the treatment rooms.

Acupuncture! Lily had only the vaguest idea of what that was, and she wasn't sure that she wanted to find out more. Then a man came out of one of the rooms, followed by a waft of the most amazing, smoky smell, and she felt instantly relaxed as the scent seemed to settle around her.

"Excuse me" she asked the man, "what is that smell?"

"Moxa" he answered, fixing her with a friendly look. "It's used in acupuncture. Are you here for an appointment? I have some time free now, if you'd like".

Lily was about to say no thankyou, when she found herself changing her mind. "Yes - I'd like that. Thanks. I'm Lily".

"Pleased to meet you Lily, I'm John. Come on in".

Fifteen minutes later Lily was lying on a table with fine needles sticking out of various parts of her body. John had asked her questions about her health, taken her pulse, and then proceeded to place the needles in her, and though she had expected this to hurt, it hadn't. He had then left the room so that she could 'cook', and Lily felt herself become calm and quiet. After the session had finished forty minutes later, John sat opposite Lily to ask her how she felt, and to discuss his diagnosis. She told him that she felt lighter somehow, and that the almost constant pain in her lower back, a symptom of the endometriosis, had become dull and almost unnoticeable. John nodded, and told her that acupuncture was an excellent treatment option for conditions such as hers, which he said were manifested as a result of stagnant blood, or energy.

"You need to flow like a river Lily" he said, smiling at her as she got up to leave.

She thought about that all day and for most of the night as she sat on the Penthouse balcony and watched the river. Grace had gone to bed early, and Lily, not yet ready to let go of the night, had been sitting in the same spot for a few hours, not noticing the time pass. But eventually she rose, turned out the lounge room light and surrendered to sleep. The following day was sunny and hot, and the

women decided that a swim was in order. It was only a short stroll along the river front to the main beach area, and they were delighted to find a protected bay next to the carpark. The water was warm and clear, and Lily felt as if she were in paradise. They swam and sunned themselves until Grace said that she'd had enough, and as they gathered up their things, Lily looked out over the water and felt her Heart miss a beat. Two dolphins had appeared, as if by magic, and were arcing gracefully through the bay. She grabbed Grace and pointed, and they stood and watched until the creatures made their way out to deeper water. Silently, they exchanged awed looks, and without a word, turned and walked back to their apartment. For the rest of the day, neither woman felt much like talking and Lily planted herself on the balcony again, whilst Grace lay on the lounge room couch and read one of the books that had been placed around the room. When evening came, they ordered home delivery from the local seafood restaurant, and then retired to their respective rooms. Lily lay in her Queen size bed staring at the ceiling, and marveled at how differently she felt compared to just a few days ago. Sighing happily, she closed her eyes.

Lily had already asked Grace if she would like to come with her to her final destination, and Grace had said that if she really wasn't imposing, than she would love to accompany her. It didn't take long to reach the turnoff to Broken Head, and Lily became more and more excited as the environment around her turned to thick coastal forest. Pulling up in front of the wooden house that Maggie had booked for her, Lily silently thanked her friend for having made all of this possible. The house was literally five minutes walk from the beach at the end of the road, and there were a few other houses nearby, hidden amongst the trees, and a caravan park next to the beach. She waited for Grace to park her car, and then the two of them entered the house. It was an open plan design, and had a comforting, homely feel. After looking around and settling in, they changed into togs and sarongs and headed for the beach. As they passed the picnic grounds that lay adjacent to the caravan park, Lily saw a brightly coloured banner that was strung between two trees.

BLUE MOON MUSIC FESTIVAL; 19th -21st February.

"We should go!" Grace said excitedly.

"Yeah" Lily agreed, with no resistance at all.

They had the most wonderful day soaking up the sun on the magnificent beach and exploring the gentle bush walks that wound around the coastline. There weren't any cafes or eateries close by but Maggie had arranged to have the house well stocked, so when Lily and Grace returned to the house as dusk took hold, they raided the larder and fridge and then sat on the front verandah with their bounty. As they feasted on fresh fruit and french bread, the women laughed and gossiped, and Lily felt a part of herself that had been dormant for years, begin to wake up. She realised she was looking forward to the festival in the park, and that she didn't care at all that it was a completely new experience.

When the next day dawned, Lily was as excited as a young child waking up on their birthday, and she couldn't wait to go and see what all of the traffic that had passed by the house in the early hours of the morning had produced. She and Grace dressed in skirts and light tops in anticipation of the already warm day, grabbed their bags and left the house, chattering excitedly. Music had already started to fill the atmosphere, and there were all kinds of interesting stalls set up around the grounds.

"Right", said Grace, who was a veteran of such events, "this is how you do a festival. There's no need to rush - plenty of time to see everything. Just enjoy wandering around, stay hydrated, and if we lose each other, we'll just meet back at the house".

"Ok" Lily agreed, eager to be amongst the buzz and movement.

They entered in through the main gate, paying their ten dollars to the man at the ticket counter and receiving a stamp on their wrists as proof of entry. Immediately, Lily went one way and Grace another. Lily felt joy coursing through her body as she sat in first one performance tent, then another, and poked around the stalls which were selling everything from clothes, crystals and oils, to fruit and vegetables, amazed that this world could exist without her ever having known. The next day and night were spent in the same way, and by the time the last night of the festival came, the night when the rare blue moon would rise in all its' fullness, time had become somehow looser. Lily and Grace were sitting talking quietly at a table in a tent where people were invited to come up on stage and sing, when a microphone suddenly appeared in front of Lilys' face. Looking up into the smiling face of the woman who held it, Lily smiled back; she'd always wanted to be a singer and she took the mike from her, feeling bold and free.

"Any requests?" she asked Grace.

"It's A Wonderful World" Grace replied.

Lily nodded and took the stage. She told the band what she wanted to sing, and as the music started, Lily heard this sound coming out of her that was strong and rich, and felt herself letting go of the last of the armour that had bound her Heart for so long. It seemed as if the world was dissolving around her, and she realised that Grace was beside her, whispering in her ear.

"Of course you knew me Lily. I'll always be with you - and Ben. Be happy".

"Lily, honey. Wake up. It's over. The surgery's over. Everything went really well" Bens' voice entered into Lilys' mind, pulling her into consciousness.

Lily opened her eyes and saw Ben and Maggie leaning over her. With a flash she knew that she had been travelling in another place, another realm, and that the woman who'd been with her, Grace, was

her daughter. She started to cry and Ben and Maggies' faces filled with concern, until she started to laugh, when their expressions became instead confused.

"It's alright guys. Truly - I'm fine. More than fine. Have I got a tale to tell you" she exclaimed.

She remembered everything - every detail - and with this remembering came the knowledge that she had been given gifts. She had been shown a whole other way of living, one that could lead to her being healthy again. She had met and touched and laughed with her daughter, and knew with every fibre of her being that Charlotte was safe and happy. And the pain and sorrow that she had carried around for years had left her. Finally, she was free to move on.