

If you haven't read the book yet, stop! Stop here! There are major spoilers below....

Are you sure you want to proceed?

Just checking....

Ever since *The Ashford Affair* came out, there has been one question that keeps popping up in my inbox: how did Bea get to Arizona?

I'll let you in on a secret: a lot of *The Ashford Affair* hit the cutting room floor while the book was in progress. Initially, Bea's adventures in the 1930s, through World War II, all the way up to 1972, were going to be a separate thread running through the novel, parallel to Addie's and Clemmie's narratives. There was one problem. The book was about to bloat to War and Peace proportions. So Bea's storyline was cut.

Even so, I couldn't resist bringing Bea back to tell her story. In the initial draft of *Ashford* that made its way to my editor, Addie walks through the door of that house in Arizona and we see Addie and Bea together for one last time before switching over to Clemmie for good. We got to see the cousins catching up, recounting their stories.

But the book was still too long. Something had to go. I said farewell to a few scenes in Kenya in the 1930s. And, then, finally, to the Addie and Bea reunion. A large part of the reason was length. But the other reason? Bea is still Bea. Even in her grand reunion scene, she is not—shall we say—entirely sympathetic. So I decided to leave that door closed and the cousins to their private reunion, retaining an air of mystery.

Should I have left that scene in? I'll leave it to you to decide. Here, in its entirety, is the Lost Chapter Twenty-Nine of *The Ashford Affair*.

*Arizona, 1972*

*“Good Lord. Addie.” Bea stared at her, taking her in. “How on earth—Good Lord.”*

*She looked her up and down, and Addie knew, just knew, that she was thinking, good heavens, why that hat! Out of nowhere, a bubble of laughter welled up in Addie's throat. All these years, all this way, and Bea was still Bea.*

*She wasn't sure how it happened, but she was laughing, and Bea was laughing, and they were both embracing as though they were ten instead of seventy.*

*“Oh, darling, the hat!” said Bea, “Why?”*

*Addie hiccupped on a giggle. “I've missed you,” she said. “I've missed you so.”*

*“How on earth did you find me? Why did you find me?”*

*“I’ll tell you, only just let me pay the driver. I should let him know how long I’ll be.”*

*“Tell him he can go,” said Bea imperiously. “I’ll drive you to—?”*

*“Tucson,” Addie said, “I’m staying at a hotel there.”*

*She turned to go down the path to the cab, feeling worlds lighter, as if she were a girl in a garden again, and Bea caught her sleeve. “You didn’t bring anyone else, did you?”*

*“No,” said Addie, “just me.”*

*Bea nodded and stepped back into the shade of the doorway as Addie paid off the cabbie and went back towards the house, taking in all the details this time, all the minutiae of Bea’s world, so different than anything she would have imagined for her cousin. And Bea! Just the fact that she was alive, that she was here, that she was still so very much herself. She’d read the investigator’s reports, of course, but it was one thing to see someone on paper, another in the flesh. She’d half thought he must be mistaken, that this Lizzy Goldsmith might only be a Lizzy and not a Bea, just someone with a passing resemblance.*

*“Why didn’t you say anything?” she demanded, as she joined her cousin in the doorway. “Why didn’t you come find us?”*

*Bea looked back over her shoulder at her. “Rather obvious, I should think.” Her accent had changed. She sounded almost American now, more American than Addie. She had always been an excellent mimic, Bea. “Would you like something? Some iced tea?”*

*“Iced tea would be lovely.” Addie followed Bea into an entry hall that merged seamlessly with a large Great Room, simply by dint of moving up one step from one to the other. The walls were made of a dark wood, cool in the heat of the day, plastered and painted in parts. The furniture, too, was dark and cool and heavy. There were paintings on the walls, and woven rugs, and local pottery, orange and black plates pinned to the wall with brackets. At the far end of the room was a large fireplace with antlers mounted above it. Colored light filtered down from a skylight of patterned glass, creating flickering rainbows on the polished floor.*

*After all this time, Bea still moved with an echo of her old, languid grace. Addie followed her across the room, to an arrangement of sofa and chairs set up beneath the skylight, next to a high wooden bar, with a pitcher of iced tea on the top of it, sweating gently.*

*Belatedly, Addie said, “I do hope I’m not intruding.”*

*“A bit late to ask that now.” She’d forgotten Bea’s way of looking at one, with amused mockery. “You might have phoned.”*

*It all made Addie feel about ten years old again, unsure and off-balance. “I wasn’t sure it would really be you.”*

*“What would you have done had it been someone else?” Bea asked with amusement. “Pretended you were selling cosmetics?”*

*“I’d most likely have turned around and gone back to New York,” said Addie crisply.*

*Bea reached under the bar and retrieved an extra glass. Her own glass, half full, sat next to the pitcher. She dumped the contents in a hidden sink. “How is Frederick?”*

*“He’s dead. Last spring.” She’d repeated it often enough now that she could say it without flinching. Almost.*

*Bea paused, the pitcher suspended in one hand. “I am sorry.”*

*“So am I.” Sorry didn’t even begin to describe it. There was a vast, hollow crater in her life where Frederick used to sit. The world wasn’t whole without him. “It was for the best. He was in terrible pain at the end. It was cancer—all those years of smoking. But it hasn’t been all bad. Marjorie has been a great help.”*

*She looked at Bea, but Bea was busy pouring iced tea. If she felt anything at the mention of her daughter’s name, she didn’t show it.*

*“Lemon?” she said blandly.*

*“Yes, please.” Addie drew off her gloves, finger by finger. “She’s back in New York now, Marjorie, with her little girl, Clementine. We call her Clemmie.”*

*Bea rattled a long spoon against the sides of the glass. “Sugar?”*

*“No, thank you.” Addie set her gloves down on a table made from a very, very old tree, lacquered to show off the concentric circles of its rings. “Anna never had any children—none of her own—but Marjorie has three: the two boys and her little girl. You’re a grandmother,” she added, just in case Bea had somehow missed the point.*

*“No, I’m not.” Bea handed her the glass of ice tea, a long silver spoon poised artistically between the ice cubes. “Beatrice Desborough is dead, remember? I’m Lizzy Goldsmith now.”*

*Addie’s hand closed instinctively around the glass. The sides were already wet, slick with condensation. “But they’re yours, whatever you call yourself. Not the boys, so much, they took after Marjorie’s husband—her former husband—but Clemmie looks so very like you.”*

*“I don’t know whether to congratulate or condole with her,” said Bea dryly. “With any luck she takes more after you than me.”*

*“She does,” said Addie, stung. “In character, if not in looks.”*

*“Good,” said Bea. Retrieving her own glass, she said, more gently, “I left that all behind a long time ago. There’s no going back.”*

*“It’s not a that, it’s a them. Your daughters. Your grandchildren. Don’t you want to see them?”*

*“No,” said Bea flatly, and then, sounding eerily like her old self, “Oh, darling, don’t look like that! It’s kinder all around. I’d rather remember them as they were—and I’d far rather they remember me as I was.” She pinched a lemon and dropped it into her tea. “I’ve got used to being dead. I’d far rather stay that way.”*

*Addie sat down, very carefully, on a chair covered with what looked to be cow hide. “Why? Why did you do it? Why did you go?”*

*Bea lowered herself onto the chaise, moving carefully, joint by joint, her only concession to age. “It was so long ago, I hardly remember. I was half out of my mind at the time.”*

*How did one forget something like that? The decision to leave husband, daughters, family? Addie would think it would be indelibly branded on the brain, played out over and over again.*

*“Did you plan it?”*

*Bea nodded. “It was Val Vaughn helped me do it. We arranged that whole scene by the side of the camp, then he flew me off in his aeroplane.”*

*“And came back in time for breakfast,” said Addie, remembering. “He played his part well.”*

*“He always did,” said Bea. “I was frightfully in love with him. I think I thought he’d marry me. Or we’d live in marvelous sin, swooping around the world together in our aeroplane, forever free and forever young. It didn’t quite work that way,” she added.*

*“He died,” Addie said. “I remember. At the airfield—Darogetti.” The name came from a very long way away. “I wasn’t there, but everyone was talking about it.”*

*“I didn’t find out for ages,” said Bea. “All I knew was that he hadn’t come back, and I daren’t ask anyone. He’d set me up in a flat in Cairo,” she added, as an aside. “I had a new name and papers. I was Canadian. Eliza Cannadine. I grew my hair out and dyed it red. But I didn’t dare go back to Nairobi. There were too many people who might have realized that Eliza Cannadine was Beatrice Desborough.”*

*“What did you do?” Addie set her slippery iced tea carefully down on a cork coaster.*

*Bea made a face. “I waited. I’d thought he’d come back, you see. And when he didn’t—” She shrugged. “It was what it was.”*

*“Weren’t you scared, alone?” Dimly, Addie remembered her own terror at being cast off by Aunt Vera and Uncle Charles, all those many years ago, and she had been at home, in England, with a bracing sense of moral outrage and kind friends like Fernie to help her.*

*“At first.” Bea waved a hand. A diamond wedding band sparkled on one finger. “It was rather freeing, really. Terrifying, but freeing. No one had any idea of who I was or what I was meant to be, there was no reputation to which I had to live up or down. All they cared about was that I could fly an aeroplane. So I flew.”*

*She made it sound as simple as that, although Addie suspected there had been rather more to it than that. But that was Bea for you, never one to show weakness.*

*“Where did you go?”*

*“Since I was meant to be Canadian, it seemed to make the most sense to go to Canada,” said Bea blandly. “It’s amazing how little one’s worlds overlap. Had I gone to Ottawa as Lady Beatrice, there would have been half a dozen men at the embassy would have known me—or known of me. But Eliza Cannadine moved in very different circles. No one found me out.”*

*“How did you support yourself?”*

*“I flew charter flights. It was the most ramshackle operation imaginable, you can’t even begin to imagine.” As Bea spoke, her voice changed, her accent shifted. It might have been the Bea of long ago. “I’m amazed any of us survived the experience. We had two Moths, both held together with tape and luck.”*

*Addie struggled with a wave of guilt. There she was, sleeping in Bea’s bed, raising Bea’s children, enjoying the success of Bea’s plantation, while Bea was off scraping a living flying rattling death traps across the Canadian wilds. “Were you very unhappy?”*

*“Unhappy?” Bea looked at her in surprise. Her laughter shivered off the stained glass in the ceiling. “Darling, I adored it! Then the war came and I joined up. Can you picture it? Me, in uniform?”*

*“I didn’t even know they had female pilots,” Addie admitted. She had spent the war safely in New York, shamefully grateful that Frederick was far too old to join up, either for the old country or the new. The closest she had come to danger was taking the steamer over to England to make sure the girls got safely back from their boarding school in Bath.*

*That hadn’t worked out quite as planned. Anna had come back, kicking and screaming, but Marjorie, usually so obedient, had insisted on staying behind and training as a nurse. That was how she had met Bill, an American GI from California.*

*“They didn’t,” said Bea cockily. “Not until ’41. I was one of the first. They sent me off to Yorkshire with the Number 6—they were a Bomber corps.” Her face softened. “And that’s where I met Carl.”*

*“Carl is your husband?” There were pictures on the various side tables, pictures of Bea with a solid-looking man with the mottled skin of someone who had spent far too much time in the sun, in a string tie and well-worn jeans. He wasn’t at all what Addie would have imagined Bea with, those many years ago. She couldn’t imagine anyone farther from Val Vaughn, with his polished, sinuous charm. But he looked kind. Steady.*

*“Was.” Bea touched her fingers to her wedding band. “He died five years ago.”*

*“I’m so sorry,” said Addie, and then, even though she knew she shouldn’t, “Did you love him?”*

*“Yes,” said Bea, and nothing more.*

*“I’m glad,” said Addie, and meant it.*

*Bea stretched and laughed, looking like a cat in the flecks of colored light from the ceiling. “It’s like one of your Shakespeare comedies: alarm and confusion and everyone ends up with the right partner in the end.”*

*“In the Shakespeare comedies,” said Addie hopefully, “you also have characters triumphantly returning from the dead. Hero in Much Ado About Nothing, Paulina in The Winter’s Tale....”*

*“The Winter’s Tale isn’t a comedy, it’s a problem play,” said Bea. At Addie’s look of surprise, she said, as an aside, “Carl was an English professor. Elizabethans and Jacobeans and people in ruffs and doublets. I’m not coming back from the dead, darling, not even for you. I have my life here and I like it. I’m happy. Happy.” She shook her head at the banality of it. “Such a drab word, happy, but I wouldn’t trade my little patch of desert for a dozen marquises and all their family plate. Nor, I imagine,” she added shrewdly, “would you change yours.”*

*“It’s a patch of apartment rather than a patch of desert,” said Addie, “but, no, I wouldn’t.”*

*They sat in silence for a few moments, nursing their tea and their own private memories.*

*Bea said, suddenly, “I did try to come back once, you know. Not long after Val died.”*

*It took Addie a moment to place what she was saying. It came back to her in bits, the heat of that summer, Anna crying, the fear she couldn’t quite put into words. “Anna saw you—in the bazaar.”*

*Bea lowered her head over her glass, using the long silver spoon to stir the tea round and round and round. “Yes.”*

*It was hard to remember now, the panic she had felt, the fear that Bea would come back and she would lose it all—and the guilt she had felt for that fear. “What made you go away again?”*

*Bea looked up at her, and her lips twisted in a wry smile. “I saw you through the window of the nursery, with your son—and Frederick. The baby was in Frederick’s lap and you were standing by him, his arm around your waist. You looked so happy together.”*

*Through all the blur of all the years, she remembered that day, the feel of Frederick’s hair against her lips as she kissed the top of his head; the new baby smell of Teddy, talcum powder and sour milk.*

*Addie swallowed against the lump in her throat. “We were.”*

*Bea allowed her a moment, and then she reached over and squeezed her hand. “Addie?”*

*“Yes?”*

*“I’m glad you found me.”*

*For a moment, they might have been little girls again, in matching white cotton nightdresses, watching for Nanny to remind them it was lights out.*

*Addie smiled at Bea through a sudden film of tears. “We’re sisters, remember?”*