A NEW CHAPTER

WHEN HER MARRIAGE ENDED SUE ERASMUS FELT BROKEN, BUT SHE FOUND HER VOICE AGAIN AND HAS DISCOVERED HER PURPOSE

BY **JOY JANUARY**

DRESSED head to toe in denim, with bright silver sneakers on her feet and her hair falling loosely over her shoulders, she radiates the calm of a woman who's completely comfortable in her skin.

Three years ago Sue Erasmus was in a very different place, crying at the drop of a hat. But today she isn't just smiling again. She's beaming. This is clearly what it looks like when you've walked a difficult path and found a place of peace.

"From your greatest pain comes your greatest purpose," Sue says. "And I feel my purpose in life is to better prepare young couples for marriage."

When she wed cricket star JP Duminy in 2011 they were one of the country's most glamorous couples, and for more than a decade they looked like the picture of marital bliss.

They had two adorable daughters and when the family wasn't travelling around the world to support him while on tour, she held the fort at home. Then at the beginning of last year JP and Sue announced their divorce after 13 years of marriage.

Their fans didn't see it coming. Sue herself, as a young bride, certainly never imagined their love story would end in the divorce court.

"No one gets married to get divorced," Sue (41) tells us today at the luxurious Sea Point home in Cape Town that she shares with her fiancé, businessman Roberto Franco.

"I always thought JP and I would grow old together," recalls Sue, who now goes by her maiden name again.

But somewhere along the way she and JP (42) grew apart, and she felt like she'd lost herself too. After his retirement from professional cricket their life as an ordinary family didn't pan out the way she'd imagined during the years when he focused on his career and she shouldered all the other responsibilities.

The decision to divorce came after many sessions with marriage counsellors and was incredibly difficult. Having to tell their daughters Isabella (now 11) and Lexi (now 8) that she and their dad were getting divorced broke her "into a million pieces", she says.

"It's this incredible sadness. You mourn the life that was supposed to happen but didn't happen.

"I'd go to sleep and cry, wake up and cry. Then you quickly fix your makeup, put on a smile and see your friends. And the moment you get back in your car, the tears come," Sue recalls.

But she worked through the pain, came out the other side and in the process found herself again. She's also found a new purpose in life – she wants to help young people be more prepared before they tie the knot.

"People spend weeks, months, even years planning a wedding, but they don't plan for the marriage."

Drawing from her own experience, she's put together a digital pre-marriage workbook, Before You Say "I Do", which has just been released.

It takes couples through all the questions Sue wishes she'd been asked before getting married – about identity, money, marriage contracts, faith, children, family, boundaries, conflict, careers and the future.

She remembers how intimidated she felt when she had to sign documents such as a prenuptial agreement back then. "JP had professional people around him – lawyers, agents, people who looked after him. And here was Sue. I was too scared to open my mouth."

That Sue is gone today.

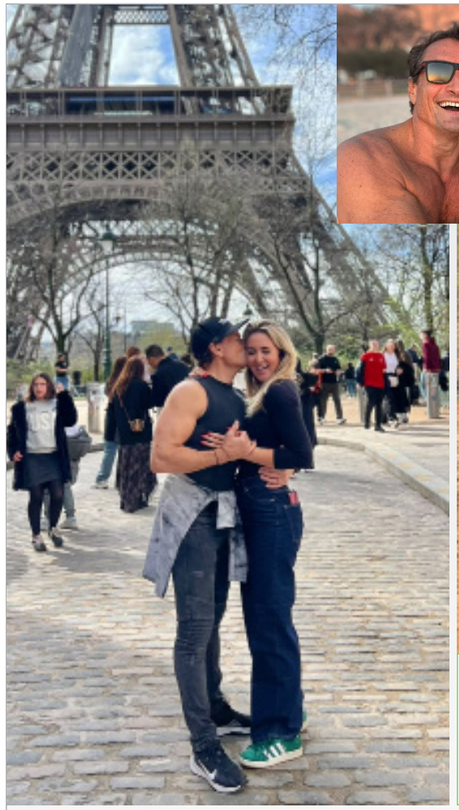
"Divorce taught me to stand up for myself. If I'm not happy with something, I say it. And if people don't agree, they can walk away."

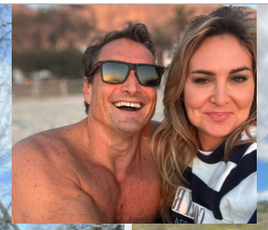
SUE grew up far from the glamour of the international cricket world. She describes herself as "a proper farm girl" whose childhood was spent playing outdoors on a farm near Hartbeespoort Dam. Her dad worked at a bank and her childhood was traditional, Afrikaans and happy.

She met JP in 2008, shortly before he made his Test debut against Australia. Sue, then a final-year consumer science student at the Uni- ➤



Sue Erasmus chats to YOU at her beautiful Sea Point home. ABOVE: With her fiancé, Roberto Franco.









CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Sue and fiancé Roberto in Paris; on the beach in Sea Point; they share a love of cycling and met through Cape Town's triathlon community; Sue with her daughters, Lexi and Isabella; in the Sea Point apartment she moved into after her divorce; Sue and her girls are very close.

ZIYAA DOUGLAS, CORRIE HANSEN, SUPPLIED

versity of Pretoria, was doing part-time modelling and promotional work.

"I was booked for a fashion show where the Proteas' new kit was being launched. That's where we met," she says.

It wasn't a whirlwind romance. For about a year they were just friends before the relationship developed and she moved to Cape Town.

They lived together in a one-bedroom flat behind his parents' house in Ottery in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. Sue worked as a property agent and continued doing part-time modelling and promotional work.

They wed two years later on 25 June 2011 in a lavish wedding with 300 guests that included cricket stars from around the world.

"The marriage started incredibly," she remembers. "We were in sync with each other. But I'd say with the superficial things, not necessarily the deep things," she adds.

And it's exactly those "deep things" that young couples need to talk about more before the wedding day, she says.

Things like: What did love look like in your parents' home? How was conflict handled? What does money mean to you? Who manages it? How much say do in-laws get? What about faith? Children? Careers? And who are you when you're not someone's wife or husband?

These aren't questions Sue asked at the time. She just wanted to support her husband. "Cricket completely ruled the house. And I allowed it," she says. "I told him: 'You just need to be the best player. Focus on your cricket every day'."

Sue took care of the rest. The kids. The house. The food. The cars.

"He wouldn't even know if a geyser burst at home while he was on tour. He didn't know when his cars needed to be serviced. I did everything."

She took on this role with love. But somewhere between the tours, the kids and taking care of everything and everyone, she started to disappear.

"I lost myself in it," she says.

She's not trying to blame any one person or thing for their marriage failing, Sue emphasises. "I can sit here and blame this thing and that thing, but at the end of the day I also have to take responsibility for what my life was like.

"I completely lost my voice in the marriage. I lost my confidence. My self-worth was very low."

It wasn't just the demands of JP's career that caused tension between them, but also disagreements about money and their roles within the marriage.

After his retirement from cricket, she expected JP to take the lead more in their new life. "I grew up with a strong dad and I needed that," Sue says.

It wasn't one dramatic event that caused their marriage to crumble, she says, but rather an accumulation of differences that became harder to bridge over time. "The way we grew up played a massive role," she says.

Faith became another sticking point. Both are Christians, but Sue says JP had a stronger faith experience in 2017 and became more involved in church after that. It felt to her as if she was expected to walk the same path in the same way as him, while she wanted space for her own spiritual development.

'IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE THE PERFORMANCE IS OVER. NOW IT'S JUST ME, SUE ERASMUS'



'I HAVE ZERO REGRETS. BECAUSE I DID MY ABSOLUTE BEST'

A trip to India with a friend was a turning point for her. A visit to Varanasi, the ancient city where Hindu cremation ceremonies are held along the Ganges River, awakened something in her.

"I think I had a spiritual awakening. When I came back, I suddenly looked at life and people completely differently.

"I started asking questions. It was almost like a light switch went on in my head. After that, you can't go back to the old version of yourself," she says.

"People grow and change. You don't necessarily have to grow in the same direction, but you have to be able to understand each other's growth."



Former cricket player JP Duminy and Sue tied the knot in a fairytale ceremony in 2011. The couple travelled the world during his cricket career and seemed blissfully happy, but Sue says they grew apart and the marriage ultimately broke down.

Over a period of about three or four years, she and JP saw different marriage counsellors, Sue says.

"I tried everything I could think of. I had to make a decision about what would be best for myself and the kids. Life wasn't moving forward. I think it was actually going backwards.

"I asked myself: 'Am I going to be better off alone, starting from scratch with nothing? Or should I stay in a marriage where we no longer have the same goals?'"

She didn't take the decision to divorce lightly.

"I went back to JP 23 times. Okay, let's try. And every time it didn't work out. Then I finally realised, okay, I tried.

"It was a very, very, very difficult decision. But I can sit here today and say I have no regrets. Zero regrets. Because I did my absolute best."

By the end of 2024 their divorce was finalised and in February last year she and JP publicly confirmed their split.

Asked what the most difficult part of the divorce was, her answer comes without hesitation. "Hands down, having that conversation with my kids and telling them we're getting divorced."

Then-six-year-old Lexi was still too young to understand everything, but for Bella (then 9) it hit "very, very hard".

The memory brings a lump to her throat. "It broke me. It completely broke me into a million pieces."

At the beginning, there were nights when she cried with her daughters.

"I wanted them to see it's okay to mourn something. I didn't want them to feel they're the only ones grieving our family. Mommy's also sad. Mommy also cries. Mommy also misses the family life we had."

HER fiancé, Roberto, also realised that Sue needed time to mourn her failed marriage when they met early in 2024.

"JP and I had already not been together for quite some time," she says.

She got to know the attractive businessman through Cape Town's triathlon community and they started training together.

When their friendship gradually developed into something more, Sue tried to push back.

"I tried so hard to self-sabotage this relationship," she says. "He just never gave up. He fought for me."

There were moments when Rob held her in his arms when her emotions overwhelmed her. "I was still mourning my marriage. I'm not a robot. I'm human.

"He could give me space in those moments. The love he gives me allows me to be myself. I can do the silliest things and I don't have to think, 'What's he going to think about it?'," she says with a laugh.

"It almost feels like the performance is over. Now it's just me, Sue Erasmus from Hartbeespoort Dam."

Another bonus is that he loves cycling, running, hiking, camping, travelling, music and festivals just as much as she does.

Still, Rob had to ask twice before she said yes. The first time her reaction was a flat refusal. "No, I'm not banging my head twice. Go away!" she says, laughing.

She wasn't ready yet. "I didn't want to go into a relationship without being a whole person. I had to walk my path. I had to finish mourning."

A few months later, on 1 May this year, Rob got down on one knee again – this time amid the music, art and dust of AfrikaBurn in the Tankwa Karoo. And this time Sue said yes.

They're in no rush to get married, though. "This time there's no pressure," she says.

It will be a small, intimate ceremony with only close family and friends on the guest list.

Rob also has children, so it's a new beginning with a newly blended family.

In about two months they're moving from Sea Point to Hout Bay where their new house is still under construction. She's essentially the project manager for the build, but has her sights set on her own career in the business world with Rob as her mentor.

"For the first time I'm really going to work on becoming financially independent," Sue says.

She's heading into a future full of new possibilities with peace in her heart.

"The greatest peace for me is being in a relationship that's calm. Knowing everything's okay. I'm okay. My kids are okay."

And if she could say something today to that Sue who sat crying in her car during the darkest days of her divorce, what it would be?

"The best is still ahead of you." ❑

* YOU approached JP Duminy for comment on the breakdown of the marriage, but he declined to comment.