

AMAZON ORIGINAL STORIES

*evidence
of the affair*

A SHORT STORY

TAYLOR JENKINS REID



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*December 10, 1976
Encino, California*

Dear Mr. David Mayer,

My name is Carrie Allsop. Please accept my apologies for contacting you out of the blue. I am writing to ask a quite humbling favor.

I recently found some love letters in my husband's briefcase that I believe to be from your wife, Janet. I suspect my husband, Ken Allsop, met your wife while he was at a medical conference in Coronado three months ago. It seems as if they have been sleeping together since then. I have come to this conclusion because the letters from your wife to my husband include references to a relationship of a sexual nature.

I am so sorry, David. I do not know your marriage, and I obviously do not know you at all. But if this brings you any heartbreak, I am sorry to be the bearer.

I also want to apologize for telling you this if, in fact, you do not wish to know it. This feels like an impossible situation. I have made the best decision I know how.

And now I come to the favor mentioned above.

As my husband has letters from your wife, I assume she must have letters from him. As I try to decide what to do about my husband's betrayal, I find myself desperate to know why he would do this. So if you find any letters in your home from Dr. Kenneth Allsop of Encino, California, or his office at the Dermatology Center of Los Angeles, I would truly appreciate you forwarding me copies. Please do not worry that they will be intercepted. I am the only one who picks up the mail at home.

I have not included your wife's letters here as that seems callous. But if you do wish to see them, I will, of course, do you the same favor I am requesting of you.

Lastly, I realize I have appeared out of thin air with nothing to offer but bad news, but it must be said that my heart goes out to you,

David. Even though I do not know you.

Sincerely,

Carrie Allsop

January 20, 1977
Encino, California

Dear Mr. David Mayer,
I must apologize for my previous letter. I sent out that missive in a
flush of emotion and—seeing as how I have not heard back from you
—I fear I made the wrong decision.

Please accept my apologies. I did not mean to interfere with
your life in any way.

Sincerely,
Carrie Allsop

February 2, 1977
Carlsbad, California

Dear Carrie,
Please do not apologize.

Your letter took me by surprise. I did not write back initially because I prayed you were mistaken.

While I did look for your husband's letters, I found nothing. I checked my wife's nightstand and her car, as well as her jewelry box and the back of her dresser drawers. I even went looking through the Hanukkah decorations. Not a single letter. I figured that there must be plenty of Janet Mayers in the San Diego area, and it had to have been one of them.

It wasn't until a few days ago that I realized you had it right after all.

I was in the family room with Janet and our four boys watching TV when the phone rang. Janet took the call, and I noticed she picked it up in the bedroom.

I did not mean to spy, but that's exactly what I did.

I heard her talking in a whisper to someone. I distinctly heard her say, "I'll see you soon, Ken."

I ran back into the living room and tried to pretend I'd heard nothing.

When she came around the corner, I said, "Who was that?" and Janet said it was Tricia Mason, the woman who lives two doors down.

It was clear to me at that moment she was cheating.

But I was surprised to find out that my gut told me to keep a straight face. I immediately hid from her what I knew. Why did I do that? Why didn't I confront her? I'm not quite sure. But I take some solace in knowing that you are doing the same thing.

How do you hold it inside and not let it show on your face?

When I got your letter, I worked so hard to convince myself

you were crazy because finding out my wife was cheating on me was more than I thought I could bear. But I suppose I am writing to you now because I am bearing it.

You are not crazy, and you are not mistaken, and you are, at this point, perhaps the only person telling me the truth.

I do not have any letters from your husband here. If I find any, I promise to send them on to you. But in the meantime, would you send me the letters from my wife? Like you, I need to know what is going on in my home.

I'm sorry for what you are going through. You are correct when you say that we don't know each other, but right now it feels like you're the only one who understands.

Yours truly,
David Mayer

February 9, 1977
Encino, California

Dear David,

I am sorry to hear that I am correct about your wife. I had some small hope that there might be a misunderstanding that would explain my husband's involvement as well. It is funny the crazy things our brains make up to save us from the truth.

I have had fantasies that Ken is writing a screenplay and that he had the letters for research. Isn't that wild? You don't know him, but I assure you, the man doesn't have a creative bone in his body. My mother said when I married him that I was committing myself to a "bland life of boring."

To be honest, that is part of what I have always loved about him. He was a safe choice. What you see is what you get with Ken, or so I thought. He is methodical and logical and conscientious. I mean, we are talking about a dermatologist who eats a turkey sandwich for lunch every day and only listens to old Simon & Garfunkel and Mick Riva albums. I once put on a David Bowie record, and he said it sounded like "screeching cats crying for more drugs." My point is that it is absurd to think that Ken was writing a screenplay.

It was just easier to consider the possibility that he'd changed his entire personality overnight than it was to believe that he would cheat. But he's the same Ken I've always known and loved and still eats a turkey sandwich every day. It's just that he's capable of things I never knew.

I now have six letters from your wife to my husband. I have included copies of them here.

Ken keeps them in the innermost compartment of his briefcase. Every morning when he takes a shower, I check that pocket. For curiosity's sake, I'm almost happy when I find one. I always want more information.

And yet I'm always miserable after I've read them.
I seem to be a glutton for punishment.

David, if, after you've read these, you want to talk, know that I am here. I wish I'd had someone to talk to after I read them. You're the only person I've ever mentioned any of this to. I'm too ashamed to confide in anyone I know. Instead, I go about my day—to the supermarket, to the salon, to bridge night, to dinner parties—as if nothing is happening.

You asked how I hide it all. I don't know. I guess I find it pretty easy to look like nothing is happening when everything has changed.

In the evenings when Ken is home, I make sure he has an elaborate dinner, and then I often stick my nose in a book. I suggest things for us to do that don't require us to talk to each other very much, like going to the movies or a play or dinner with another couple.

I'm hoping this entire thing just goes away on its own.

Does it sound like I'm burying my head in the sand? I don't know. Perhaps I am, for now. But Ken and I have a life that works, however imperfect. And I believe he will remember that soon, and everything can go back to normal.

I hope the same for you, David. I'm hoping it for the both of us with my whole heart.

Sincerely,
Carrie