

The Story of Our Affair

A short story

Approximately 3350 words

Lisa

I knew he was married when we started the affair. I know I should pretend I didn't know, and act as though I am also a victim in this scene. I could tell the lie that might make me look better, but there have been enough lies already. I know what I did was wrong, but I honestly thought we were acting out of love. It wouldn't have been the first time true love came along when someone wasn't ready for it. I knew someone would get hurt, but I thought the reward was worth the risk.

Working as an assistant at a law firm was only a consolation prize. My mother's death had accrued debts that needed to be taken care of before I could attend law school. I had carefully planned my expenses; with the salary they paid I would be able to pay off the funeral and hospital bills within a year and a half. Two years of work would have me debt free, and give me a decent savings to take with me to law school. William had seemed happy to have an assistant who was interested in law instead of one who just wanted to get off work in time for their hair appointment.

I met his wife on my first day of work. She didn't come into the office often, but she had had an appointment in the area and came to have lunch with her husband. Her smile was sincere as she shook my hand. There was no suspicion or distrust. She asked where I had bought my sweater, and wished me luck on my first day.

When William came out and saw her standing there, his whole face changed. His eyes shone, his face softened, his smile was a little brighter. He was no longer the corporate lawyer

bogged down by paperwork; he was a man who was happy to see a woman. You could tell he felt his life was better with her in it.

That was when I first fell for William. I didn't fall in love with the man; I fell in love with the way he looked at her.

Amanda

William was the most romantic man I ever dated.

We met at a graduation party, two weeks after I received my degree. My roommate's ex-boyfriend was having a barbeque at his country club. Refusing to attend would have been the same as admitting that she still loved him, but she couldn't make herself arrive alone either. I hadn't known anyone else there; I wouldn't have gone if not for the nostalgia of graduation. Soon we would be moving away from each other. There was a good chance we would lose touch. I didn't want to leave our four years of rooming together feeling as though I had let her down.

I stood in the corner, sipping a glass of cheap wine, wondering how long I needed to stay in order to fulfill my duty as a friend before I could be allowed to leave. William brought me a refill. I thought he was a waiter, and tried to give him a tip. He laughed and promised next time he would remember to bring a rose for a beautiful woman instead. I was completely embarrassed. I knew my skin must have been flushed and blotchy. He said hadn't met a girl who blushed in years; he found it charming that there were still girls who could blush. We talked for an hour. I had thought he might ask me out before I left; he didn't even ask for my number. It was a little disappointing. I thought there had been something there, but left feeling as though it was one sided.

In the morning, a dozen multi colored roses were delivered to my door. The note read, "I couldn't leave you with nothing but a glass of cheap wine." He didn't sign his name, but I knew

it must have been from William. My roommate admitted to giving him our address; as we were moving out in a week there was little potential for lasting damage.

For the next week every morning I awoke to a small present delivered to my door. First it was a box of chocolates, then a potted orchid, a leather bound journal, a pair of silver hoop earrings, a silky blue scarf, and finally a decent bottle of wine.

The day I moved, he arrived driving a large van. I had hired a company, not wanting to bother my friends who were all also in the process of moving. William had convinced my roommate to cancel the movers, allowing him and his friend to take their place. He said he had to help me move, it was the only way to make sure he didn't lose me. We spent the day laughing. After the last box was moved into my new apartment, his friend returned the truck; William stayed behind. We talked late into the night. He didn't leave until dawn.

I thought he might ask me out, but no. He would stop by to talk, bringing dinner, or a movie with him. Occasionally a small gift or flowers would arrive. He never signed the card, just a small message I knew could only be from him.

After three months of random visits and gifts, I finally asked what was happening. I knew he liked me; I could tell there was attraction and it was not all one sided. In spite of the obvious chemistry, he always kept a respectful distance. We weren't dating, but it felt like we were. He said he knew I was special, and he didn't want to rush knowing he might miss out on something big.

William kissed me that night. It was the happiest I had ever been.

Over time the romance faded a little. It's not to be unexpected. There is something about the chase that brings out the romance. The effort is put in acquiring something you desire, and not as much in keeping it. Eventually, real life sets in. Marriage, work, children. The everyday events take over. You don't mean to let the romance die; you just forget to feed it.

I could pretend he was the only one who quit trying. The truth is we both stopped. I no longer worried about how he liked my hair, or if I was wearing his favorite color. The lace nightgowns I had once worn were replaced with flannel. The love was still there, but it no longer burned as bright as it once had. It was as though we had been set on a simmer to keep warm.

Lisa

I had been working with William for a year when he forgot her birthday. He had been preparing a large case for trial, and working longer hours. I saw the notation on his calendar and expected to the request to send her flowers. The day before he still hadn't said anything; I ordered a dozen red roses to be delivered in the morning.

The day after William thanked me. He had never forgotten before; it meant a lot to her to know she wasn't forgotten in spite of the long hours he had been working.

I think that was the first moment he saw me as more than just an assistant. I had done something for him beyond what he had expected, something personal instead of professional. It may have been something for his wife, but when he looked at me that day, he saw someone who could be important outside of the office as well.

Amanda

I used to have lunch with William every Wednesday. One of the perks of my former job was the location near his office. We kept the weekly date, as well as occasional surprise visits. It was nice to be so close during the day, knowing he was only three blocks away when I wanted to see him.

After I became pregnant, and the morning sickness lasted from sunrise until deep into the night, it seemed to make sense to stay home. My work wasn't what I had thought it would be when I took the job. We didn't need the money, and I had hoped to spend the first year at home anyway.

One baby turned into two, and our intimate lunches faded away. It wasn't anything we planned. Life changed. It didn't feel as though we were drifting apart and yet somehow we had diverged onto two separate paths. We were living different lives, barely connected to each other, neither of us noticing the chasm between us.

Lisa

We had been working late every night that week. I could have gone home, but I wanted to be there if he needed me. I was already head over heels for him, even though I knew he was out of reach. If he was working, I would stay also.

It was clear we were going to be working a while longer, and he hadn't taken a break for dinner. I brought him a cup of coffee and a sandwich. It wasn't anything special, just something from the machine. William rubbed his eyes, and ran his hands through his hair. As he thanked me, our eyes held just a moment longer than normal. We watched each other as though we were seeing each other for the first time. He reached for me, pulling me to him. He brought his hands to my face, lightly brushing my lips with his.

There was no urgency in his kiss. He was not seeking to show his desire, or demanding to feel mine. He kissed me gently, showing me his gratitude for a small act of kindness. He held me close to feel the comfort of another person. I gave him what he needed that night, allowed him to take the love I had to give him.

It wasn't something I had planned. I cared for him but I knew he was not mine. I only meant to bring him something to eat, to give him what little I could.

Amanda

The first night he worked late I was surprised. I wasn't angry, just a little disappointed. It was the biggest case he had worked. Cases like this didn't come along often; this case had the potential to make or break his career. I understood the importance. He was working hard, making sacrifices for our family; supporting him meant we all made sacrifices.

As the occasional late night turned into every night it became harder to be understanding. I began to feel alone in our marriage. He left shortly after we awoke in the morning, and wouldn't come home until after the children were in bed. I knew it was temporary, but that didn't make it easier to accept.

Eventually I got used to being alone; having him come home almost felt like an intrusion. He became a guest in our house, visiting only for a short time. It was more than being disconnected from each other. We had become strangers.

I did wonder if work was the only way he spent his nights. I was not so blind as to miss the signs in front of me. I saw the changes in him, the changes in us. The opportunity was there, and a part of me knew he took it.

I could have confronted him, asked him for the truth. Instead I wrote it off as my own insecurity. I was no longer the same person I was when we married. I did not look the same after two children. At times I didn't even think the same as I used to. We had changed, grown as people, and grown apart as well. I suppose I just didn't want the truth. I didn't want to know

that he could no longer understand what I wanted from life. I didn't want to know that he found someone else desirable.

Lisa

The affair did not last long, only a few months. We never planned our time together; it was simply something that happened. I could see the guilt in William's eyes, casting a shadow as the pleasure faded.

His wife never caught us. In the end, she learned the truth because I told her. I had no desire to be cruel. I didn't want to hurt her. I thought only of William, of erasing the pain I saw in his face. Our life could not begin together as long as he was still with her. He needed to be released, to move onto the next phase of his life. I wanted to set him free, to let the love we shared out into the open.

Amanda

I had known, deep within my heart that William had found someone else. I had felt her in his touch, heard her in his voice, saw her in his smile. And yet, when she came to see me, I did not want to believe her words. Before she came to me, I had my fears; after that day they were confirmed.

I listened as she spoke, telling me she was sorry for my pain. She told me how she felt, how she never meant for anything to happen, but she had fallen in love with William. She gave me details no one else would know; the birthmark on his hip, the scar from his removed appendix that curved slightly upwards.

I asked her to leave my house. I could not have her sitting in my house, drinking my coffee and eating my cookies. She had taken enough. I would not let her take any more from my family that day.

Lisa

It broke my heart when he said it was over.

William was angry when he learned I had spoken to his wife. I wasn't surprised. It wasn't something we had discussed. I took the liberty of making the decision for both of us. We couldn't plan a future while he was still living in the past. I knew there would be heartbreak; I just didn't think it would be mine.

I thought he loved me. I thought the first night, when he reached for me, I thought he had made a choice, and he had chosen me.

I thought wrong.

Amanda

It broke my heart to tell him it was over.

I couldn't stop thinking about them together. Every time I closed my eyes I saw them; naked, writhing, touching. I couldn't begin to forgive him, because I couldn't forget.

As hard as it was, having the movie of the affair playing in my mind, it was just as hard to say goodbye. I hated him for what he had done, for betraying me, for throwing away what we had built. I was so angry with him, and in truth, I wanted to be. I thought that if I stayed angry, I wouldn't still love him.

I thought wrong.

Lisa

I left my job. William didn't fire me, but he didn't ask me to stay either. It didn't matter. There wasn't anything in the world that would have kept me.

I thought I was in love. I thought there was someone there with me. Instead I was left, standing in the cold, alone. Staying would have been torture; so close to what I once had, but never being able to have it again. I took a risk on love and lost. Moving on was my only choice. It would go easier if I didn't have to see him every day.

I had entered into a life that wasn't mine. I needed to walk away completely.

Amanda

William left when I asked, but he didn't stay away. He knew he had messed up. We were broken, and I didn't think we could be fixed. But he saw something I thought was gone. William saw who we used to be, and he saw who we could be again.

The first day he came I didn't talk to him. He played with the children for a while before going back to the hotel. When he left, he placed a single red rose on the bed with a note saying, 'I will find my way back to you.' It was so similar to the man I met years ago, the man who tried so hard before he even asked for a date. I missed him.

Every time he came, he brought me something. It was always small, but it always meant something. One day he brought me a copy of a movie we had seen on our first date. The next day he brought me a small plastic ring, just like the one he bought the first night we talked about marriage. After a week I couldn't ignore him anymore. We had both stopped trying before; if he was making an effort, I could also. I wasn't ready to let him back in, but I was ready to admit there was still something there.

I wouldn't have agreed to counseling if she had still worked with him. Maybe it was petty of me, but we were talking about rebuilding what we had. There was no way to tell if we would ever be what we once were. I couldn't even consider trusting him again while she was still there.

Lisa

I met someone new during my first week of law school. I wasn't ready to have a relationship. Everything was still so fresh. He wasn't deterred when I told him I wasn't interested. He said he wasn't going anywhere; he wasn't willing to risk missing out on something that could be great.

We started as friends. He would bring over dinner after classes, and we would stay up studying. On the weekend he would arrive at my door with microwave popcorn and a cheesy horror movie. It was nice to have someone who could make me laugh.

Three months later, I couldn't deny that there was something there. We weren't dating but it felt like we were. One night he brought a new movie, something with sorority girls being hunted in their underwear. I needed to know what was there.

We kissed him that night. It was the first time since William I had truly felt happy.

I'm not sure if this will last forever; things are still too new to know. Right now it's enough to know that I can move on.

Someday I will love again.

Amanda

Counseling did a lot for us. We had started out like a fairytale and ended up living a cliché. There were things we both needed to get off our chests, things we both wanted to change. I would have been easy to give up; my friends were all certain I should leave him. ‘Once a cheater, always a cheater’ they would say. But I didn’t get married only for the good times. I promised for better or for worse and I needed to at least try to keep that promise.

We were working on our problems, but we still needed space. He lived in a hotel for a few months. When he moved back in, we kept separate bedrooms. It was still so hard to forget what he had done. Every time he touched me, I wondered if he had touched her in the same way.

Three months after he came home my old roommate was in a car accident. She had a few broken bones, and internal bleeding. William took the day off work, and sat with me in the hospital. That night he stayed in my room, just holding me. It was the first time in a long time he had been there for me when I needed him. It was the first time I hadn’t thought of her when we were together.

I’m not sure I have really forgiven him. There are times when we are sitting together and she is still there. I once thought he was my forever; now I worry that we will never move on.

My only hope is that one day we will find the love again.