

My Wife

When I first met my wife she says she wasn't gay. I always thought otherwise and this was before I got to know her as well as I do now. She never had a serious boyfriend, she was always most content when she was barely touching my arm when we sat next to each other, and when I read her diary she wrote about it. She doesn't know about that diary tidbit to this day. She loves the story of how we became Alice and Savannah. She loves how I brought her to the park and told her I liked her. How we kissed for the first time in the moonlight. She thought it was so romantic and brave of me.

I met Savannah in college. I was a junior and she had just started her second semester. We had a finance class together. I was drawn to her because I have never met anyone like her before. She had such a kind face and she presented herself in such a genuine way. She always smiled and was willing to help anyone in the class who needed it. I knew right away that she was one of a kind. My attraction to this beautiful young lady wasn't a new notion to me. I had recently ended a relationship with a woman whom I was with for a year and a half. She just wasn't the one for me.

I lived in a house near campus. I lived brothers, Shawn and Ryan and our other housemate was Rita. Savannah would come over with the intention of studying but we would end up taking in two bottles of tequila and a pack of cigarettes. On the more laid back nights we would leave the tequila in the freezer and turn our attention to marijuana.

My friends instantly loved Savannah. She was funny and pretty. Shawn liked her a lot. I wasn't a fan of that idea so I tried my best to stop that relationship from developing. I may not have been as discreet as I wished. However, nothing did pursue between the two. Instead

Savannah and I got closer. We were nearly inseparable and I was so happy to be by her side as much as I was.

I wondered how she felt about me. I knew she had feelings towards Shawn but they obviously weren't strong enough to preserve through my speed bumps. Also my actions weren't subtle and she still chose to hang out with me; rather the usual I'm-creeped-out-so-I'm-going-to-distance-myself route. I was confused and needed to know how she felt about me. This way I could figure out how I felt about her. I knew I loved being with her and getting to know her. I knew that my favorite nights were the few nights a week she would come over. What if she liked those things as much as I did?

The next time I was at her house I did what any other adult trying to pry a secret from a young girl's room would do; I read her diary. This wasn't an easy thing for me to set up. First I had to plant the reason. A week earlier I had complained that my air conditioner stopped working. This was three days before a serious heat wave. Every broadcast and radio station warned the public of the weather and reminded people to stay cool and hydrated.

The first day of the heat wave was so hot. I was outside cleaning my car out for about twenty minutes before I gave up and called it quits. I entered the air conditioned room and my sticky sweat turned into a cool coat of water. I grabbed my phone and texted Savannah. I mentioned that it was so hot without my air conditioning and that's when she offered me to come stay at her place for the night. She was so sweet; I knew she would offer her company.

When I got to her house I waited for the sun to go down. I wanted her to sleep so I brought over a bottle of wine; cabernets made her so tired. She was asleep by 11 p.m. and I began looking for her diary. I remember when I used to come over her house when we first met I

would see this little pink book. It was sophisticated but looked like a journal. A few weeks ago she said she saves all of her diaries and journals. She also mentioned the other day that she was afraid her sister was going to find her diary and read it.

It wasn't hard to find. If she was trying to hide it, she did an awful job. It was between her mattress and box spring right on the edge. I opened the pink book around the middle. She had wonderful handwriting. It was almost unbelievable. I notice though the beautifully written words were filled with hate. She was so confused. She hated the way she was feeling. At first she hated have feelings for another girl. She soon opened up to the idea. After reading the pages I was still a little confused. It seemed that she liked me but she only liked me if I liked her. If I didn't like her then I was a manipulating psychopath who likes to mess with vulnerable women's heads. That part was hard to read. I never in a million years wanted her to think I was stringing her along. I wanted her to be happy when she was around me. My consensus was that we would have to talk.

The next week I met her at the restaurant she was working at. I was looking forward to talking to her all week. I waited in the parking lot for her to come out. When I saw her I told her to get in the car. She seemed to be a little hesitant. She was tired and wanted to going to bed. I told her it would be worth her while. I brought her to the park where we talked about how close we've gotten over the past two years. I just finished my second senior year and officially graduated this past month. I saw she was getting tired and I didn't want to keep her up later than necessary. I looked at her and I kissed her. I told her I never felt so happy with someone like I do with her. She was nervous. She was speechless.

“I never thought this would happen.” She said after she finally found her words.

“What do you mean?” She asks.

“I’ve wanted to kiss you so bad.” She explained. “And I never get what I want.”

I kissed her again and we spent the night together at my apartment. We tried to take things slow. We agreed on waiting a while before making us officially together. But since that night we spent virtually every night together. Two weeks after our night in the park we were already head-over-heels in love. She was everything to me. Within in a year we were living together near New York City.

When Savannah graduated school life was so much better than we ever imagined. We were finally able to sleep on the same schedule, have similar work stories and most importantly spend the weekends together. For nearly three years our lives were complete opposites. I was living up north working 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and she was living in Central Jersey 5 p.m. to midnight Thursday through Monday evenings. I would be asleep when she would get home. We moved in together which worked out for the most part but Savannah would still feel lonely. I knew what she meant. Most nights I would fall asleep without her but at least I woke up with her in my arms.

We fought the most we ever did in these three years. One Saturday night I had gotten drunk while bingeing on a television series. I wasn’t plastered; I had six beers over the course of an evening. Savannah had gotten home from work around midnight and I was persisting on going out to pick up a salad from the diner. She was angry that I was “so drunk” but I really wasn’t.

“Why are getting so drunk by yourself?” She asked me. Not nicely.

“What are you talking about?” I asked. I was a little drunk but I wasn’t near the point of being inappropriate. “I’m really not that drunk. I’ve had 6 beers since six o clock.”

She didn’t want to hear it. I admittedly had a problem with drinking too fast. I didn’t drink often, probably once a week. Savannah just hated when I did since my family history has noted alcoholics. Plus, I blacked out pretty easily.

“Don’t lie to me!” She cried.

“Babe, what are you talking about?” I was genuinely concerned at this point.

“There was half a bottle of Sambuca on the shelf.” She said. “Where is it?”

“I don’t know.” I said, honestly. “I didn’t even know we had Sambuca.”

She stormed off to the bedroom and cried for an hour about how much I lied to her and I don’t want to see her happy. I hated fighting with her and I knew by the hurt in her voice that she hated it too. When she got emotional like this I tried to be nice to her; make her feel better. Soon we apologized and we would lie with each other.

When Savannah graduated my father helped her get a job in Human Resources. Unlike my five year plan, Savannah transferred universities and took the six year deal. I was working in finance. A year and a half after her graduation we were able to pull in enough money for a wedding. We got married June 22nd and it was more amazing than I ever dreamed it would. I walked down the aisle to my beautiful bride standing at the end.

Over the next couple years we talked about having kids and the many different options non-traditional families have. Savannah wanted to surrogate each other's baby and use the same sperm donor for each. This way we would have a special bond between each of the babies.

Unfortunately that is a very expensive way to have a baby. We did it for our first born, Parker. He is biologically my son but Savannah carried him. I couldn't get pregnant at this time because work was too dependent on my presence. But Savannah wanted to start a family. We used the surrogacy method in case he would be our only child. Three years later I carried my own child and gave birth to another baby boy, Harrison.

We lived in a modest two-story, four-bedroom house. We lounged about with the children on the weekends and tackled projects during the week. Parker and I built a treehouse one summer while mommy and Harrison ran a lemonade stand one summer. Life was going very well for us. Nothing seemed to be gray in our lives.

One day Parker came home from school crying. The kids on the bus were making fun of him for having gay parents.

“Honey, those kids don't even know what 'gay' means.” Savannah told him. “They're just being jerks to see you get upset.”

“They know what it means.” He yelled at his mother. “You two are gay.”

“Parker, I'm sorry the kids were mean to you.” I told him. “But we can't get upset over what other people say.”

“Right, Harrison?” Savannah asked our youngest.

“As long as we happy.” Harrison told his older brother.

I often wondered how our kids would take living in a non-tradition family. A lot of people say it's a shame to put kids through that. We tried to raise him not to care what people think as long as we were all happy. He was on board as much as Harrison until he started school.

Parker was only 6 and this was his first time being bullied about something that is so normal to him. Savannah taught him some innocent straight parents joke like "I bet you have to listen to your parents can't share clothes". They weren't good jokes but they made kids laugh.

My family was my world. I would play in the family room all nights with the boys. There was a vent at the top of the wall above our desk top computer. When we first moved in and we slept in the family room I would hear a cat in there. I've assumed it died and its haunted soul roams the vent. Savannah thinks I'm crazy for believing that. It wasn't meows we heard it was "the draft". Plus, souls don't wander vents. I didn't want to chance it so I stayed away.

Savannah loved her boys so very much. I knew deep down it killed her that neither of them was biologically hers. When she was pregnant with Parker she would so excited to meet my little me. She was hoping Harrison was going to be a girl so she can see me in her more. I finally get what she means. Though, our boys do have qualities from both their mommies. They both got emotional like Savannah but were good at math like me. Harrison had a wide range of foods he liked and Parker was good at math like me. They were both a little emotional and Parker was a wonderful drawer like Savannah. Every day I spent with my family I realized it couldn't be too big. We decided Savannah would carry her own baby.

I was always very clear that I wanted only two children. This was upsetting to Savannah since she always envisioned herself as mother to five. Parker and Harrison were 9 and 6 when Savannah had a baby girl. She was the hardest to name. We settle on Ava.

Ava was such a joy. She was so happy and clever like her mother. I have never met such a sarcastic child until Ava came into my life. She was the spinning image of her mother and she had the kindest heart. She insisted on sleeping with our Jack Russell and our kitten.

“In case something happens at night.” She would say. “I can help them.”

Right after Savannah's 40th birthday she felt discomfort. It was right under her arm where it rested on her breast. I told her for weeks, if not months to see a doctor. When she finally did the diagnosis was fast. She had stage 2 breast cancer. By the time we got all of her appointments together and her chemo set up it had progressed to stage three. Ava was only four so she would come with us during the day to sit with mommy while she got strong. We would go every other Wednesday for 8 weeks. Finally she had her month of radiation and an mastectomy. The cancer had shown to be all gone.

The next month our family was so happy. We celebrated by getting a kitten. Savannah loved cats and having a kitten around always made people happy. We all camped in the living room on the weekends and we planned trips to museums and parks. We weren't wasting any more time. The radiation was still causing my wife to be tired but she didn't want to miss a second of time with the family.

14 months and three weeks after my wife's mastectomy we heard her doctor tell us once again that she had stage three breast cancer. It wasn't easier the second time around. They had to put her back on chemo therapy. Ava was in kindergarten now so I would sit alone with my soul mate while she got strong.

“It’s boring without Ava, huh?” She asked me as she squeezed my hand.

“I’m having a great time, baby What are you talking about?”

“Do you remember how boring our lives were before we had kids?” She asked.

“I never knew it was possible to literally forget to shower before kids.”

She laughed. It was so nice to hear. She was still so beautiful. I wonder how she did it. I often wondered how she was always right as well.

“We should have had more.” She said. “They could be here now getting us some water.”

She got so quick so suddenly. It was only the fall but she was catching bronchitis and pneumonia. Eventually she kept going to the hospital to be treated; her body just wasn't recovering from these viruses. On November 18th, my wife passed away.

She was only 42 years old. I only got to spend 24 years with her. 24 years is only a fraction of a lifetime. We were supposed to have forever. Every day I wait for the phone call that explains what really happened and my wife is still alive.

The worst part was watching my kids suffer from the loss of a parent. They loved their mother so much. Parker took it the hardest. He cried for a month and he didn't sleep for three days. Harrison's little heart broke but he seemed to accept it and move on in few days. It was a little frightening how well he took it. Ava cried for an hour after I told her and then she put it in her head that this didn't mean she wouldn't see her mother again. They all handled it in their own way but they all wanted nothing more than to hear her one last time.

About a year and a half after the funeral Shawn showed up at the house and told me to check the vent in the family room. I refused to but Shawn told me I had to. It would be worth it. I sucked up the fear inside of me and I unscrewed the vent. I was surprised to find three books. They were numbered 1.) with a kitten and a butterfly on the cover journal, 2.) a dark purple velvet diary and 3.) a composition notebook.

On top of the books were a letter.

Baby,

I know this might be difficult but things aren't looking so good. I left behind my secrets and my thoughts. I have a few confessions and a few surprises hidden in these journals. Please read the first page of the journal with the kitty and the butterfly before anything else. I love you so much. And I love the kids. I hope you aren't reading this letter until the 2080s but if you are reading it sooner I am okay. I am happy wherever I am and I am thinking about you and the kids always. I love you, Alice.

I was getting really emotional after the letter. Shawn offered to take the kids bowling while I finished looking through the stuff.

I opened the ridiculous animal themed book. It's 21 year old Savannah.

Hey babe,

So I am keeping a journal and it's kind of hard keeping it from you. I know how much you love snooping. Like that time you found my diary last year. Or should I say "found". I know that's why you talked to me that night outside of Steakhouse Grill. I have to admit I wanted you to read it. I wanted you to know how I felt so bad. So I started bringing up my diary and I thought you would eventually try to find it. And you did. I knew I could trust you to invade my privacy. Now you have full access to my thoughts over the how many years. I love you.

After reading this page I am crying but I have a huge smile across my face. I haven't smiled this hard in nearly 18 months. She still gets to me.

I read the pages. Her handwriting was still as beautiful as ever. It was a little rushed which made it hard to read. She was probably hurrying trying to hide it from me or trying to keep with kids. I didn't mind the illegible words. I can always go back and read them again to figure it out. I came across one story that was funny about the Sambuca that night 20 years ago. It turns out her sister had taken the bottle the night before when she was over. She said she didn't want me to know the truth because I still shouldn't drink and she was in fact saving me.

In nearly two years I finally felt happy. I felt like in the past three hours I had with these journals I felt Savannah was here. I was picking her brain, hearing what she had to say. Well, I was reading what she had to say. She was so funny and she wrote about the kids so much.

Shawn showed up shortly after I had finished reading through everything. He said the boys were fighting over a video game at his house. Ava kept telling them that they need to control their gaming problem. I peeked into the other room and saw the boys already arguing on who gets to choose the channel on the television. Ava was changing the channel manually to what she wanted to watch. I watched as the three tried to settle this themselves. There were my children. The children that me and my wife, Savannah, brought into this world. Into our home. It all started with one finance class. And as I look at my children all I can think about is my wife. She was right; we should have had more kids.