

~FOREWORD~

Secrets can be dangerous, especially when they jeopardize the lives of others. I have seen the pain. I have seen the confusion. I have seen the broken hearted women who loved enough to give their hearts, their bodies and their very lives to men who have lived with secrets.

Secrets that only affect one's own life are often expressions of denial. Secrets that hurt others are most often expressions of deception. Such is the case with the numerous women whose lives have been shaken and whose worlds have been rocked by loving men with secrets, more specifically, men with a secret: double life, bisexual, in the closet, down low men who find themselves sometimes loving both men and women, men who often fake love for women to mask their love for men.

One of the most painful experiences of my life was to bury a beautiful woman by the name of Carol (not her real name). Carol died of AIDS. She was a classy, well-educated, unusually intelligent woman whose life was snatched from her because she loved the wrong man, a man who was also in love with – or at least having sex with – a man. Carol traveled around the country on a quest to inform women about the devastation of misplaced love; the love of a man “on the DL.” In many cases, she saved lives.

I took her to South Africa with me and she lectured to the teenagers in that AIDS/HIV ravaged country. She spoke about the dangers of pre-marital, unprotected sex. She spoke about the rising statistics among women of color who are infected with the AIDS/HIV virus. She talked about her quest to diminish the number of women whose lives and hearts were broken when they found out that the love of their lives was also the love of a man or men. She talked about the loose definition of “love” and how it is so often misdiagnosed as such when it was in fact the more acceptable word for promiscuity, uncommitted sexual activity, and in far too many cases careless and flagrant bartering of flesh for feelings.

The emotional pain and often physical disease that is transmitted and transferred by the irresponsible selfishness of men who are living on both sides of the sexual fence spans across all socio-economic levels. They are doctors, lawyers, preachers, teachers, public officials, bankers, accountants, bus drivers, real estate agents, insurance salesmen – you name it, they are represented.

In a shallow defense of those struggling with this dual identity, it must be acknowledged that they are members of a subculture that is often the victim of a larger dominant society frequently characterized by glaring homophobia, shifting morality, theological confusion and multi-level rejection of those who step across the line and jump, crawl, creep or are pushed out of the closet of homosexuality. However, without further discussion or attempts at justification, it must also be acknowledged that the in-between brother, the brother on the down low, although experiencing the same internal, psychological, and emotional turmoil of his officially outed

counterpart, makes a conscious decision to play both sides and gamble with hearts of both domains. His male lover is forced to either share in the sham of heterosexuality and constantly lives in the shadows and occasionally joins in to play the same game of duplicitous desires by finding his own woman – a wife or often a girlfriend who agrees to be his front in order to fake off the public. On the other hand, the woman in his life, his wife, girlfriend, frequent or infrequent date, is most often in the dark, blinded by desire for a handsome, sexy “just-what-I’ve-always-wanted” hunk. She is no dummy. She is an intelligent, perceptive, insightful, discerning, successful woman; often a God-loving, Bible-toting, good church girl who figures she is at least safe in the house of God. Little does she know that wolves in sheep’s clothing are sometimes worshippers in designer suits, preachers in ecclesiastic robes, and saints who ain’t what they look like.

“Life After the Down Low,” is the story of a woman. A good woman. A loving woman. A deceived woman. A woman who has been played. A woman who said yes to a relationship with painful consequences to her heart, her family and her spirit. She will survive. She will persevere. Maybe her story will help you avoid the suffering she went through. But maybe that is the real truth of her story. She went *through*. She came out with lessons she now shares. I hope her story helps your story. She is the voice of one woman crying in the wilderness of deceit and betrayal but she comes out of the wilderness with a passion to help someone else change directions before they follow in her footsteps. Prepare to be enlightened.

Bishop Kenneth C. Ulmer, PhD

Faithful Central Bible Church

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

*With his long stern finger, he lovingly pointed at us and asked,
"Do you promise to forsake all others, forsake all others...
forsake ALL others 'til death do you part?"*

We both said, "I do!"

My wedding day couldn't have been more perfect. It was the weekend of falls time change in 1995 and the weather was impeccable – not too hot, not too cold. It felt very tropical; which was apropos for our intended honeymoon excursion to the Bahamas. My parents had gone all out for this day, saving through 401k plans to pay cash for everything just to make sure that there was no want or need left unmet for their only daughter.

As I should have been, I was radiant. Who wouldn't be? I had been found by the man of my dreams and my life appeared a fairytale. Grant it, he wasn't perfect and as most people do, we both struggled in our lives with a variety of colorful experiences, but being able to walk in the power of deliverance was the pride of our existence. That's what felt ideal - the fact that we would have wonderful stories to share with our children and theirs with the foresight we had, in order to help them battle those things to come.

As the black Rolls Royce pulled up to my parents' home, I could do nothing but giggle. 'I'm getting married,' I thought. I couldn't believe it. It hadn't been something that I belabored as a constant thought over the years, but it was nice that it was a reality. I wasn't the kind of girl that constantly thought about whom I would marry, what I'd wear or any of those things. But on this day, I pranced out of the house with all of my essentials, bearing in mind that I was leaving the nest forever. Bitter sweet!

My hair was whipped. Not a strand of it was out of place. I had visited my hairdresser for weeks preparing the perfect style for my veil and personality. We settled on the up do with curls. It suited the occasion just fine. I thought it was just right for my off the shoulder beaded Vera Wang replica.

My mother was stunning. She looked like Dorothy Dandridge on the red carpet. I had never seen her look more beautiful. My seven attendants mixed with bridesmaids, matrons and maids of honor were incredible as they waited patiently to stand beside me and agree with us before God and men that they would be a support to us. The forest green dresses and accessories they wore were better than the Vogue magazine pictures. Every hand beaded brooch that accentuated their gowns was well worth my fatigued hands. There were seven dapper men waiting to

witness the union of their brother (fraternal and natural) and the wife of his youth. The greeters were in place with simple A-lined dresses and well accentuated jewelry and the flower girls' parents were doing everything in their power to keep them clean. It couldn't have gotten much better than that day.

I walked down the aisle nervously, being held on either arm by my oldest younger brother and my step-father. My eyes locked on the man that would be my husband for what I thought would be the rest of my natural born life. I had only planned to do this thing called marriage once. I couldn't see anyone else in the sanctuary. I was smitten. When I reached him at the base of the steps, he draped my arm over his and we met the two Pastors at the top of the altar. The ceremony ensued. As soon as we reached the Officiates, he began to cry – I mean hard, gut wrenching sounds – a little doubled over even. I thought they were tears of joy, so I patted his hand to comfort him as it shone through my bended elbow. I can remember a plastered smile across my face, wishing he would stop. I peeked out of the corner of my eye to notice the bridesmaids, matrons and some of the groomsmen joining the weeping chorale. I made sure to refocus my attention on the nuptials. After all, I was the bride and even I wasn't crying in that fashion. Over the years, watching the video made for great laughs and walks down memory lane.

It wasn't until a dozen years later that the spirit of understanding literally awakened me. Those tears weren't tears of joy. They weren't droplets of excitement to spend the rest of his life with **me**. Actually, they may have had nothing to do with me. Knowing what I know now, I believe they were tears of pain, anguish, guilt and confusion - cries from the depth of his soul as he bargained with his spirit-man of the magnitude of deception that would forever be the backdrop of our covenant. Those boisterous cries may very well have been pleas for help from God – the same God who said, *“If you confess your sins, I am faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you from all righteousness,”* the same Lord who provided a ram in the bush – a way of escape for Abraham and would have done no less for Bobby. You see, I learned that the night before we married, the evening before I was to consummate my lifelong partnership after battling my loins for years, the man of my dreams, my “Prince charming”, had propositioned a male minor for sex after our rehearsal dinner. So those tears were valid. They just weren't applicable for the occasion and nobody knew but him and the seventeen year old confused kid to whom he is said to have exposed himself while driving him home. So, I had no idea that the day we said, “I do,” was actually the beginning of the end. The window of destruction was wide open from the moment we agreed to be married. Our union was never protected from the wiles of the enemy. It was susceptible to any and everything – no filter. It was one that the adversary would later have free reign for target practice. We never stood a chance.