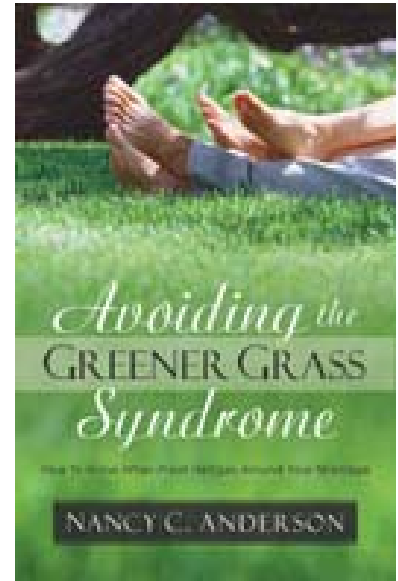


Avoiding the Greener Grass Syndrome: How to Grow Affair Proof Hedges Around Your Marriage

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Trade Paperback
Dec 2004
Kregel Publications
112 pages



Excerpt:

Part 1

The Ecstasy--and the Agony--of My Affair

One

Betrayal

I was in love. I couldn't eat or sleep—I could barely breathe. As I sat near my desk at work, daydreaming about his kiss, he walked up behind me. I knew it was Jake before I saw him . . . his cologne. Polo.

He leaned over my shoulder and quickly whispered, "I made lunch for us. It's in a picnic basket in my car. I'll meet you at the Oak Street Park at noon." He hurried into his office.

I can't wait, I thought. Oh no, I can't go! I'm supposed to have lunch with my husband!

I called Ron and challenged him, "You don't still want to go to lunch do you?"

"What are you talking about?" he asked. "I thought we decided to meet at the deli? Don't you want to

go?”

“It doesn’t matter,” I mumbled.

“What do you mean, it doesn’t matter? If it doesn’t matter to you, it doesn’t matter to me. Just forget it!”

I heard a click and a dial tone, and I thought, Oak Street Park, here I come!

I left the office at ten minutes to twelve, driving with the windows down and the radio up. On the FM station, Barbra Streisand was singing “I Am a Woman in Love,” and I knew just how she felt.

When I pulled into the parking lot, Jake was waiting for me. He had set a secluded picnic table, complete with crystal champagne glasses and white roses. He walked out to the car to greet me, and after a sweeping glance around the park, he kissed my cheek and playfully bit my neck as he whispered, “I’m hungry.”

We sat side by side as we ate our fruit salad and drank the champagne.

“Have you told your wife about us yet?” I asked.

He nodded. “Last night, after the kids went to bed. It was awful. I felt so sorry for her. She couldn’t stop crying.”

“What did you tell her?”

“That I didn’t love her anymore. That I was in love with you.”

“Did you tell her my name?”

“Yes, and I told her that she’d met you at the company Christmas party. I said that you were wonderful, beautiful, and very smart. When I told her that you were very religious, she punched my arm, and said, ‘If she’s so religious, how come she’s stealing my husband?’”

I winced. “Am I stealing you?”

“No, I’m stealing you,” he said. “Well . . . I guess we’re stealing each other. I’m relieved that I told her. She wants me to move out. I guess I’ll stay with my parents. Are you going to tell Ron tonight?”

“I suppose I’ll have to. He’s gonna freak out. He knows that I’m not happy with our marriage, but I don’t think he suspects that I have a boyfriend.”

Jake teased me as he sang, “Nancy’s got a boyfriend; Nancy’s got a boyfriend.”

I laughed as I grabbed his tie, pulled him close. “I think you’re flirting with me,” I said, “and I’ll give you forty-five minutes to stop it!”

He scrunched up his handsome face, squinted his bright blue eyes, and mischievously growled, “Set

the timer.”

Then he kissed me.

I left the park a few minutes before he did, and as I drove back to the office I pushed the radio buttons looking for a happy love song. I froze as I heard the voice of Reverend J. Vernon McGee say, “If you stop your sinful behavior, God will forgive you.” I quickly turned off the radio and said, “But I don’t want to stop!”

I went back to the office and called Ron.

“We need to talk,” I said.

“I know. Where and when?” he asked.

“I’ll be working late, but I’ll be home at seven. See you then?”

“Fine.”

After I arrived at our little condo, I hurried into the shower to wash off Jake’s cologne, then changed clothes. Ron came in at about 7:30.

“You’re late,” I scolded.

He ignored my comment and asked, “What do you want to talk about?”

“I want to talk about us. We aren’t getting along. We fight all the time, and you even hung up on me today. I think we need some time apart . . . to sort things out.”

“What things?” he demanded. “Why can’t we sort them out while we’re together? You’re so melodramatic. You always overreact. Why can’t you just be normal?”

“Normal?” I yelled. “Do you think you’re normal? You’re the weirdest person I know. That’s why I want to get away from you. You’re too controlling and selfish. You never encourage me or compliment me.”

“What’s to compliment? You act like a crazy woman.”

I shook my head. “You just don’t see me, do you? There are other men who think I’m funny . . . smart . . . pretty, but you just insult me and try to control my life. Well, I’m sick of it, and that’s why I’m leaving!”

He pointed his finger at me. “You are not going anywhere. Your parents will tell you to stay with me. We’ve only been married a few years. What about your wedding vows? What about the people at church?”

“Oh . . . so now you want to talk about church? We haven’t been going for months, and you know why . . . because you didn’t want to get your butt out of bed! So don’t start being Joe Christian now. It’s too late! Don’t tell my parents anything yet . . . until we decide what we’re going to do.”

He softened and asked, "What are we going to do?"

"I don't know yet . . . but I know I need some space and time to think on my own. I found a little hotel near the office that rents rooms by the month. I want one month to sort out my feelings."

I escaped into the bedroom, shut the door, packed two suitcases, and walked back into the living room. Ron was sitting on the couch, crying. He begged me not to go. I stopped and stared at him. Showing no emotion, I walked out the front door.

After checking into the hotel, I went to my tiny room on the second floor. I knew I couldn't call Jake at his parents' house, so I cried myself to sleep, my tears an odd cocktail of guilt, loneliness, and exhilaration.

The next morning I put on a new red dress. Prancing into Jake's office, I closed the door. He looked up from his desk and said, "Wow, you look like a model. Spin around and let me look at you."

I turned slowly as I said, "I told him."

"Everything? Did you tell him about me?"

I continued, ignoring his question. "I moved out of the house and into a hotel. We can finally be together."

Later that afternoon, I told one of my divorced coworkers, "Hey, Carmen, I left my husband yesterday."

She said, "Good for you! I'm so proud of you! Life is too short to be unhappy. I love being single. Hey, I've got a great idea! Why don't you go dancing with me tonight?"

"I already have plans for tonight," I said, "but I'd love to go out with you on Friday."

"Great!" she replied. She touched my sleeve and said, "You should wear that dress . . . you'll get lots of attention."

I was tempted to call Ron to see if he was okay, but I didn't. He didn't call me, either.

Jake and I took separate cars to my hotel. As I drove past a church, I read their sign: "God wants you to make a U-turn." Anger and fear rushed through me as I hit the steering wheel and yelled, "Leave me alone, God!" But He didn't. I could still feel Him watching me—from a distance.

I met Jake in the parking lot, and he held my hand as we walked up the stairs. "Are you okay?" he asked. "You seem upset."

"I'm great," I lied. "Tell me how wonderful I am."

He cradled my face in his hands and said, "You are spectacular . . . glorious . . . magnificent, and I adore you! Now kiss me!" I melted into his arms, and we danced into the room.

He quickly hung the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door knob. Then he locked the door.

Things to Think About

Several signs may indicate that your spouse is having an affair. Which ones were evident in this chapter? The cheating spouse often

1. changes eating and sleeping patterns;
2. wears a different style of clothes;
3. starts arguments;
4. works longer or different hours;
5. pulls away from church and extended family;
6. takes more showers than usual;
7. compares his or her spouse to other people;
8. shows cold, emotionless behavior;
9. takes off his or her wedding ring.

Things to Do

Ron and I should have done a number of things to improve our marriage. You can start doing some of them now.

1. Compliment each other.
2. Attend church together regularly.
3. Be honest about your feelings and disappointments.
4. If you're having problems, ask a trusted, mature Christian couple for help.

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