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**Embracing The Late Wife**

**By Julie Donner Andersen**

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EMBRACING THE LATE WIFE

In the beginning of our relationship, my husband actually felt comfortable telling me about his late wife. There was an aura of mystery about her, mostly because I had not known her prior to her death. To sate my curiosity, I just wanted to know the answers to a few basic questions, and my husband was more than willing to oblige me. We were still in that "getting to know you" stage of newfound love, so he had nothing to lose by sharing some basic background information with me about her – the "non-intimate details" of his late wife, such as where she attended school, what job she held prior to her death, the cause of her death, etc.

So, for that time being, I was satisfied with just knowing the basics.

Soon after marrying him, however, knowing more about her became an addiction that needed satisfying and a hunger to be sated.

The Obsession to Know Her

I remember exactly when the obsession took shape. During the first

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week of our marriage, I found a folder in his old filing cabinet, and in it were signed papers for an adoption process. Apparently, unbeknownst to me, he and his late wife had actually attempted to become the adoptive parents of a child. I looked at the date, and was saddened to see that the papers were filed in between the time she discovered she had cancer and her actual death.

Perhaps this meant that she regretted not having any biological children of her own with him, and now wanted to share parenthood with him before she passed away, leaving a legacy of herself behind.

Whatever her reasons, I was taken aback. Previously, my husband's late wife had been, in my naïve mind, just another woman from his past. Prior to this discovery, I had only received a simple biography or factual resume of her life – nothing to substantiate anything more meaningful or intimate. But now, with this new information, she became much more than that.

It was as if I had been in denial – an "ignorance is bliss" sort of reasoning – since the beginning. But now, all at once, I looked upon her with my heart instead of only my mind. And the realization hit me like a ton of bricks – she was, at one time, a living, breathing, valuable human being. She was a woman, with emotions, needs, and desires, just like me. And this real person was one flesh with my husband! In one split second, she went from a sheet of useless data to a real person, and I wanted to know her...intimately.

It's been said that the best way to defeat an enemy is to know him, or in this case, her. And at that time, I suddenly felt more threatened by her than I

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had ever felt by anyone else in my life. She became, in my mind, "the other woman". She had not only shared a past with my husband, but a bed, a home, a life, her dreams, her body, and eventually, her illness and death.

That made her special, beloved, and unique...especially to him.

Ugh! I had never really thought about it that way before! She was so much easier for me to deal with when I thought of her as a one-dimensional non-entity with non-specific details to describe her non-life! Sure, there were enough pictures of her to validate that she did at one time walk this earth and fill space...but now, I had to swallow the painful truth that she did more than that.

So, with my obsession pumping me with energy, I went straight to the source – my husband – armed with enough intimate questions as my arsenal to slay the beast that threatened the security and priority I had always thought I held in my husband's heart. It must have been the fire in my eyes as I pummeled him with my ammo – questions – that made him put up his shield, but he closed up tight, built a wall, and refused to play my game.

He would not share with me her faults! He would not paint a picture for me of their day to day life as man and wife! He would not regale me with amusing anecdotes of her personality! He refused to succumb to my ploy to bleed him dry of information pertaining to what made her special, what made her real, what made her...loved by him.

Oh my God, I anguished...it's worse than I thought! This evasion was

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proof – he loved her more than he loved me! He thinks she was perfect! And he's holding her up on some unattainable pedestal, where she will forever sit, canonized and sainted by him, every day of his life! I will never be Number One in his heart!

### Fighting A Losing Battle With Fear

I thought my marriage was doomed. How could I share his heart with another woman? And how could he want to marry me in the first place if I meant less than she did to him?

For a year, I managed to depressingly drag my way through my marriage, day to day, while still holding onto the anger, and hating his late wife more and more. I used up so much energy doing this that I was exhausted all the time. My self-esteem plummeted. I dreaded his touch, for fear he would think comparisons..."My late wife was much softer"..."My late wife was a much better lover"..."My late wife...." etc., ad nauseum.

I just couldn't take it any more, and seriously considered divorce as the only alternative, since there was no way I was going to spend the rest of my life with a man who split his love between me and a ghost. But leaving him would mean she had WON, and I wasn't about to let her take him from me completely! There had to be a better way! I wanted validation of my fears and feelings.

Finally, I arranged for a session with a psychologist who was also a grief counselor. After sobbing my story to him, he asked me if I would do a

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simple exercise...write a letter to the late wife as if she could read it herself.

I came very close to quitting therapy before I finally gave this idea a chance.

"Dear Late Wife..."

But a week later, with pen and paper in hand, I drove to the cemetery and sat by the late wife's marker while I poured out my heart. Amazingly, though, once I started writing to her as if she were sitting right next to me, a funny thing happened. My anger faded away, and was replaced by sorrowful compassion. This is what I wrote:

"...I wish I could meet you. I would have liked to have known the kind of woman my husband chose the first time around. I'd like to think that because of our mutual love for him, we might have been good friends.

And oh, I would have had so many questions to ask you! What strengths do we have in common? What fears do we share? What was it about our husband that first attracted you? What was it about him that you loved so much? How did he propose to you? How was your sex life? Too personal? OK, sorry....but it DOES cross my mind from time to time!

Do you know how guilty I feel sometimes, just knowing that I am here only because you are not – that I am living the life that you could have, had you not died? Your death also left so many fears for me...will I ever be #1 in my husband's heart? Will I always live in your shadow? Will your memory and the ghost of you always be in the back of his heart, overshadowing anything good he may feel for me? Will he always hold you

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up so high on that damned pedestal that I can't get near it? Do you know how much I envy you? You were the "first", and nothing will ever change that. I will always be just the "second".

I know it all sounds selfish. You didn't ASK to die, and you didn't want to, either. I know our husband wishes he could have spared you the excruciating pain you endured with cancer. I'm so sorry that you were too young to die. You had so much more life ahead of you, so much more love to share. He loved you so. But since you did die, he had to move on. I hope you don't hold that against him. I'm sure that if you loved him as you did, you would want him to be happy.

And he is happy, really. We have a baby now. Did you get to hold her in Heaven before she was born? Did you feel a part of our husband when you kissed her sweet face? I want that to be a nice memory for you. I'm sorry you didn't have children. Our husband is such a great daddy, and for him, the sun rises and sets on his daughter. I know you would want that for him.

Thank you for helping to make him who he is today, the man I love and adore. I know you had something to do with that in the short time you had together."

## Cleansing My Soul

When I had finished, I felt relieved. The burden of all the rage I had felt was instantaneously lifted from my shoulders. I cried for hours. It was as if I had been grieving her loss myself. I felt almost a sisterhood with her, and

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started to feel guilty about having hated her. I didn't hate her. I hated me.

But now, I loved us both.

When my next session with the psychologist came, I gave the letter to him to read. This wise, wonderful advisor looked at me with sympathetic eyes, and asked, "So, how does it feel to have forgiven...yourself?"

Myself? Hmm...I hadn't thought of it that way. But he was right.

Instead of forgiving the late wife for all the things I had accused her of and all the things I had conjured up in my insecure mind, I came to accept that since she was the innocent party, it was me who needed forgiveness, and only me who could grant it.

Consciously, I knew that the insecurities I had plagued myself with were based on hypothetical and illogical reasoning. But subconsciously, I couldn't help it. I wanted someone to blame for making me feel so insecure. I blamed her, when I really should have taken more responsibility for my negative feelings in the first place.

I suppose I will always wonder about the life my husband shared with his late wife, and I'm sure I will always be curious about the person she was.

It's no longer an obsession that lives to spite her, but more of a quiet reflection of a woman who shares my husband's heart. It has taken time, but since I have become the master of my own feelings about the past and made my peace with it (AND with the late wife), my life with and marriage to a widower has become much easier.

## Embracing The Late Wife

Embracing the late wife is relatively easy if you can humbly give credit where credit is due, since the late wife was a perfectly valuable person, worthy of love and compassion. Forgiving yourself is the first step in healing the guilt you may bear for having blamed her for feeling rage or hatred. The next step is to remember that, even if you never hear a disparaging word about her, the late wife was not a saint. The seemingly flawless windmills you tilt at are only those in your mind. Embracing her only means accepting her for who and what she was, faults and all, including what she gave to your husband. But most of all, embracing the late wife means accepting that you two will be forever linked not by jealousy or a sense of competition but by the love you both share(d) with your husband.

From her blockbuster new book, "PAST: Perfect! PRESENT: Tense! Insights From One Woman's Journey As The Wife Of A Widower" ([Amazon.com/WeyantPress.com](https://www.amazon.com/WeyantPress.com)), Julie Donner Andersen tells it like it is from one who has "been there, done that, bought the T-shirt!"

### **Be Thankful for a Faithful Husband**

**By Ruth Houston**

If your husband is faithful, you have much to be thankful for. Faithful husbands are in short supply. While 3 out of 4 wives assume their husbands are faithful, only 1 wife in 4 can truthfully make that claim. According to statistics, 3 out of 4 men cheat on their wives. 2/3 of those wives (approximately 26 million women) have no idea their husbands are having an affair – despite the presence of numerous telltale signs.

### **A Rude Awakening**

Every year countless women who thought they had faithful husbands, are shocked when their husbands ask for a divorce or simply move in with another woman. Others are dumbfounded to discover from empty bank accounts that family funds were used to finance an extramarital affair. Still others are astonished to learn that they've contracted a sexually transmitted disease.

### **Why the Wife is the Last to Know**

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Why is it that the wife is always the last to know? Could all these women be in denial? How could a wife not know her husband is having an affair? If a wife has no reason to suspect her husband it's easy to miss or misinterpret the warning signs. Especially if she's unfamiliar with the 21 categories of telltale signs.

### Reasons to be Thankful

Not every married man is a cheating husband, though the overwhelming majority of them are. Nevertheless, there are still many faithful husbands around. If you're married to one, you have a lot to be thankful for.

- You can be thankful that your marriage and family are intact.
- You can be thankful you don't have to agonize over the decision of whether to leave your husband or stay with him and try to get your marriage back on track.
- You can be thankful the years you've invested in your marriage have not been in vain.
- You can be thankful that you don't have to deal with the devastation and the emotional trauma that infidelity brings.

### Make Sure You're Not An Unsuspecting Wife

Given the rising rate of infidelity, you owe it to yourself and your marriage to make sure you're not one of those 26 million unsuspecting wives. But how can you be sure your husband isn't having an affair? By familiarizing yourself with the early warning signs. For details on the 21 categories of telltale signs

visit [www.IsHeCheatingOnYou.com](http://www.IsHeCheatingOnYou.com)

### Your Marriage May Depend on It

The future of your marriage may one day depend on your ability to spot the warning signs of infidelity. There are numerous things you can do to save your marriage if you spot the telltale signs in time. But if your marriage turns out to be unsalvageable, you can still take steps to protect yourself legally, financially and sexually. You can also prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for the devastation that lies ahead. At least you won't be taken by surprise. But the first step to solving a problem is knowing the problem exists. If a wife has no idea her husband is cheating, by the time she finds out, it may be too late.

So if your husband is faithful, be thankful. Faithful husbands are few and far between. If you're not sure, be thankful you happened upon this article. Make it your business to find out where you stand before it's too late. You'll be thankful you did.

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## Embracing The Late Wife

RUTH HOUSTON is the author of "Is He Cheating on You? - 829 Telltale Signs." Visit her website for detailed information on the 21 categories of telltale signs. Or e-mail to for a FREE infidelity report and list of selected telltale signs.

Be Thankful for a Faithful Husband  
Anatomy of an Online Marketing Failure  
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