

# The Things I've Lost

by Dan Tricarico

I might have avoided all of this trouble if I had remembered to hide or destroy Linda's letter, instead of leaving it in my sport coat and hanging it in the closet where Carolyn could find it. Naturally, she put two and two together and, in retrospect, it was a pretty careless way to ruin twenty-two years of marriage. It had been awhile, though, since I'd felt the old spark with Carolyn, what with the boys, the mortgage, my bout with prostate cancer, and the time the house flooded. There always seemed to be too many obligations to ever work on us.

So toward the end, I was going through the motions and, about the time I met Linda in my job as a financial consultant, I was poised for change, ready for adventure. She was young, pretty, and she made me feel vibrant and alive in the way she hung on every word and told me how wise I was. Most of all, she listened; she cared what I had to say. That was what I'd been missing with Carolyn who, the moment I got home from work, began reciting the litany of our responsibilities and rarely allowed me to finish a story from my own day.

Once, during a meeting, Linda had to straighten my desk to find a place to put her files, and I apologized for the mess.

"That's okay," she said. "I'm always cleaning up after the men in my life."

That's when I knew it would happen.

Five months ago, my wife went for the raincoat to have it cleaned, found the letter, and everything hit the fan. She read from "Dear Lover," all the way to "Waiting until the next time our lips meet. Love, Linda."

Next came the crying, the accusations, the lawyers, and finally the silence. That's what hurt the most. But a shrink would say that maybe I let her find the letter on purpose. Maybe I wanted to get caught.

Who knows?

Our two boys, Derek and Joel, are nearly in college , but I know they're still pretty disappointed in their old man. But they don't understand what it's like to be fifty and locked into your life by the choices you made when you were young and starting out, sitting there wondering where all the fire in your life has gone. They have no idea what it means to live a life of monotonous ritual and mind-numbing predictability. I'm visiting NYU with Joel next month and Derek and I still have season tickets to the Lakers, but it's not the same. And during those twenty-two years, it must be said, Linda was my only infidelity. A few weeks ago, though, she called it off, saying that when she met me she was searching for something and now she knew I was not that thing.

So tonight I'm pushing microwave pasta around my plate on the card table in my studio apartment, watching Wheel of Fortune and nursing a Miller Lite. The streetlight outside my window sends a yellow glare into my living room, sullyng everything. I sit here most nights, thinking about the things I've lost and wondering where the fire in my life has gone.

This isolation is my penance.

It's what I deserve.

