

TOM AND JANICE'S STORIES

I om really tried to be a good husband and father for thirty-three years, as he continually pleaded with God to deliver him from unwanted attractions to men, but he knew he wasn't being honest.

Living A Lie

It's Friday night and once again I'm pacing the hill behind the dorm at Pacific Union College.

Oh God, here I am again, I groan, and You know why – I've sinned again. I just can't stop thinking about that cute guy with the nice body I saw in the shower, or the guy with the dark wavy hair who drives his fancy Mercedes sports car around campus. The more I think of them, the weaker I get. I don't want to lose control and sin against you by masturbating, Lord, but it just happens. I can't seem to stop it. How long must I bear this cross? Please help me love women instead of men! What should I do? Don't you see my tears? Can't you hear me pleading? Help me, Lord, help me!

Let me go back to the beginning. I was the fourth child of six. My father was a military man and my mom was a homemaker. Dad was a mess sergeant and ran a tight ship. His subordinates hopped to when he barked orders. He was pretty choleric in just about everything he did. Mom was more on the meek side and a bit intimidated by the man of the house.

Because of his verbal abuse and his belief that his opinion was the only one that mattered, we children struggled with resentment and low self-esteem. I had a rather phlegmatic nature and it seemed the best way to get along was to lay low and not express any opinion, rather than speak my mind and have him belittle and put me down. It seemed impossible to please him, although I tried my best to do so. As a child, I never heard my Dad say, "I love you, son."

At an early age, I noted that I was attracted to other boys. I found it fascinating to watch them changing their clothes at the swimming pool lockers or gym class or taking baths on a sleepover. As I grew older, fooling around with some of the neighbor boys was quite a turn-on for me. But as they entered puberty and became interested in girls, I found instead that my feelings for boys were still there and growing even stronger.

In junior high school, I was appalled to realize that my attraction to boys had a name – homosexual! Queer! Faggot! This was not what I wanted to be. I was a Christian. I believed in God. I started praying for deliverance from this awful sin in my life. Imagine my panic when there seemed to be no answer and God did not deliver me from this "evil."

Contact sports bored me, and besides, I was not very athletic. I tended to be somewhat of a loner at times, but I was more inclined to hang around with the girls or help the women in the kitchen than be with other boys. I always felt out of place with "real" men, although I tried my best to act as much like a man as I could. I spent my junior and senior

years of high school at an Adventist boarding academy. Working in the cafeteria was right up my alley, as I really enjoyed cooking, baking and serving food.

During my two years in academy, I had several roommates and several “special” friends with whom I was close. Occasional clandestine rendezvous kept my private secret alive and well. No one knew about this except me, God and those few friends.

How could I cover up this sinful inner nature? I must never allow it to be seen! I had to date girls and act like a red-blooded American male! I was a good actor, and I managed to pull it off pretty well. If the girls ever suspected anything, they never let on to me. I had several female “loves” in high school and college, while a few “friends” on the side helped me survive.

In aptitude tests, I scored high in the service occupations like nursing and social work. I had decided while still quite young that I wanted to be a medical missionary. I wasn’t sure I had the brains to be a doctor, so I pursued a career in nursing, with the goal of becoming a nurse anesthetist.

In the middle of my nursing studies, I felt I needed a break from studying, so I moved out west and got a job transporting X-ray patients at a large Adventist hospital. I enjoyed associating with the student nurses at their dorm after work, and before long I found a male nursing student with the same feelings I had.

As time passed, I became special friends with one young woman and began to feel as if I were falling in love with her. Was God finally answering my prayer and making me “straight”? The more time we spent together, the less I felt my need for men. Was it really true what pastors and counselors always told those of us with homosexual feelings, that if you just find the right woman and get married, those feelings will all go away? I was so excited! I was being healed of my sinful feelings!

The love of my life said “Yes” when I asked if she would be my wife forever and ever – Wow! In the next six weeks plans were made and family gathered from all over the country to help us celebrate a memorable and picture-perfect wedding, complete with me singing “Whither Thou Goest, I Will Go” and her grandfather officiating.

We drove to the coast for a honeymoon weekend before packing up our things and traveling back east to finish my nursing course. Unfortunately, I was so phlegmatic I didn’t get around to making a reservation for a motel for our wedding night, and it was nearly midnight before we finally found a vacancy. By then I was exhausted and in no mood for sex. We were both virgins, as far as heterosexual sex is concerned, and I was scared and uncertain about the whole sexual aspect of our relationship. But she was excited and ready to go. One can only imagine how much hurt and damage was done in that one night, and how it followed us the rest of our married lives.

Finally, after a very unpleasant night, I said to myself, *Give it a try and don’t worry – you can do this.* The rockets, bells, and whistles did go off and it was a wonderful experience for both of us. After this, we continued to enjoy regular sex, but not nearly as often as she desired and seemed to need.

After settling into our new little apartment, she found work as a night operating room nurse and slept all day. I went to school all day and slept at night. Often we passed each other on the freeway in the mornings. It was a very tough year for both of us. Sex was not high on my priority lists, and sleep became a panacea for her.

After graduation I worked in the operating room, preparing for anesthesia school. My wife continued to work and support us. When my classes started I took a job with the county health department, working with male patients who had urinary catheters. I was responsible for changing the catheters weekly and troubleshooting problems in between. This job took me all over the county and I frequently passed adult book stores and video arcades. I realized my secret was still alive and well when the temptation to stop and look overcame me.

Our first son was born just before my graduation and we were both very happy. Two years later, when we had moved back west, our second son was born. We were the perfect little family and did all the right things – attending church, working hard, earning well. I began investing in properties, fixing them up and selling them so I could buy something bigger and better.

Occasionally I had to take on moonlighting jobs to help make ends meet. The rest of the family usually joined me on these weekend jobs, but other times I was on my own. It hurts to admit it, but many times I found other guys whose needs were the same as mine and was unfaithful to my wife and vows. Even at home, this happened sometimes on the way home from work or an emergency call. *Lord, why do I continue to do these things? Why don't you answer my prayer for deliverance?*

Mission service was a wonderful experience for us and a great place to raise our children. I was doing the Lord's work and that was very gratifying to me. But my private needs were not met very often, and our sex life continued to deteriorate. I was unable to feel much desire for sex with her and this led to bitter frustration and anger on her part. I could see that both of us were suffering and at times the flame of love seemed all but extinguished. We survived, but a great deal of stress and denial was involved in putting on our "happy couple" face in public.

The second part of our mission service was in a more Americanized setting. It was here that my need for a man became overwhelming, as my relationship with my wife grew increasingly less able to fulfill me. I took up jogging, was active in church jobs and joined the symphony chorale and other choral groups, trying to keep busy and distract myself from my inner yearnings, but I continued to seek out sexual partners. *God! You still haven't straightened out my desires and longings! I'm beginning to wonder if You ever will!*

When we returned to the States I finished my BS in nursing and we settled in a rural area where I worked as a solo anesthetist for the next nine years. It was very difficult. I was on a 30-minute leash from the hospital and on call 24/7. I felt like a slave to the hospital. In some ways, this was a blessing, as I was now confined to a small community with little or no outlets for my sexual needs. My pent-up frustrations and energies were spent in incessantly working in our yard to make it into the showplace of the neighborhood. But little by little I began to die inside.

It was during this time that our youngest son called to tell us he was gay. I had always wondered about him. For fear of outing myself, I had always kept a tight rein on him, especially when he wanted to pierce his ears or color his hair. I was entirely too hard on my son, and to this day I regret that I didn't allow him a little slack and get along with him better. *God forgive me for not being more understanding, and also for not loving myself at this time in my life. It's still there, God! I'm fifty years old and it's not going away. What am I going to do?*

With our youngest son's coming out, both my wife and I soon became advocates for the gay and lesbian community, especially the alienated Adventist community of Kinship, an organization for current and former Adventist gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. As we attended their annual Kampmeetings three years in a row, their stories brought tears to our eyes. But my stress level escalated. We were there as the loving straight parents of a gay son. *God, how long can I live this lie, knowing that there are some in this group who know I am one of them? I think I am going to explode! Help me, please!*

We attended many marriage encounter seminars and couples retreats and even went to counseling in an effort to renew some spark in our marriage, but the longer we tried to salvage things, the more torn I felt from having to live a dual personality. At the BIG (Brain and Innate Giftedness) Seminar, I learned that I process information through the basal right and left lobes, the centers for caring, peacemaking, systematizing and extroversion.

I also learned about PASS (Prolonged Adaptive Stress Syndrome). When a person is trying to live and think in ways that are not compatible with his innate brain lead, over a period of time he will exhibit signs of mental, physical and psychological breakdown. Only later did we fully understand the magnitude of what PASS was doing to me. I was becoming burned out at work, my body was aching with arthritis and fibromyalgia, and our marriage was teetering on the brink of destruction.

I finally decided that it was time to resign from the hospital and make a change in my life. We would sell our house, move closer to my wife's parents, and start a new life. Our youngest son, now 27, also lived in the same city, and it would be good to spend more time with him and his partner, who had had a commitment ceremony a couple of years earlier. They were so happy together and planned to stay together for the rest of their lives. It was an education for both of us to see their genuine love for each other, to realize that it was true love just as much as that between a heterosexual couple.

Oh, God! Why can't I be happy like them? It is so hard to see them so happy and loving, while I am so miserable. But I can't leave my wife. I do love her still and don't want to hurt her. This is so hard, God! Maybe it would be better for all of us if I just had a fatal accident on the freeway and gave my wife the freedom to be happy with a "real" man. Why does this have to be so painful?

When we went to our third Kampmeeting we already knew many of the members and enjoyed meeting all the new folks, too. What a wonderful family Kinship is! I was managing okay and we were both enjoying ourselves very much. On Wednesday we took a carload on a sightseeing trip that included a visit to William Miller's farm and

Ascension Rock. Someone took a picture of all of us, gays and lesbians, standing on the rock with our hands raised to the sky.

God, there was a time long ago when your faithful children stood in this very spot with their families, waiting for your return. What a great disappointment that was! As I stand here with my "family" I, too, am sorely disappointed. You have never seen fit to deliver me from my pain and "sin." Will I someday die, a broken, disappointed and unhappy man, whose prayers were never answered?

On Thursday afternoon two wonderful speakers ministered to our group. During their program, they asked us to fill out an affirmation survey and then break into small groups to discuss our answers. As I answered the last question my hand was trembling. I had answered only two questions with "Yes, this is true for me right now." The other 18 I had answered with "No, this is not true for me, but I want it to be." It was a devastating moment of truth for me.

I knew with absolute certainty that I must talk with these presenters after the session, and I asked my wife to come with me. Sitting in the small room with these three people and sharing the results of my survey nearly tore me apart. I could hardly breathe, as my heart was about to jump out of my throat. Finally, I turned to my wife (it was just two days before our 33rd wedding anniversary) and told her that I could not live a lie any longer, that I loved her but I was gay and could no longer deny it. Then I collapsed in wrenching sobs, while at the same time, strangely, I felt as if a huge weight had just been lifted from my shoulders.

I will never forget what happened next. With tears streaming down her cheeks she said, "It's okay! I love you, too. How were you able to live with that burden for so long? I know now it's not about me. When your Mr. Right comes along I want to be friends with him, too."

Wow! If it had not been for the enlightening journey we had been traveling since our son came out, she would never have been blessed with such unconditional love. *God, thank you for a loving wife who understands my grief and pain, even in the midst of her own collapsing world. With your love and guiding hand please help her transition through the tough times ahead. The dissolution of our marriage is not going to be easy!*

It's true that some gay/straight marriages seem to be able to continue. If staying together is workable for them, that is their decision. Some people have said to me, "You have been together for 33 years and you made a commitment to stay together for ever, remember? How can you just break it off and go your own way?"

My answer is, "How can I not?" For the physical and psychological health of both of us, I *must* make the break! This is difficult to explain to someone who has not lived through a similar experience, but we both need to be free to thrive and grow in the context of who we really are – gay and straight. We tried marriage and failed, but we will remain best friends forever. Please respect our decision and avoid judging us.

As I write, it is one week since I moved out of our home. Nine months ago I began my transition. It has been difficult. But I have vowed to take care of my wife financially until her death or remarriage, a vow that I solemnly made when we were married.

Just find the right woman and get married and these feelings will disappear? NOT! God, why did You allow this to happen? My wife now finds it very difficult to love you. I, too, have had my bouts of anger with You. But deep in my heart, I know that You are too big to be shaken by our anger and hurt; You still love us and always will.

My pastor encouraged me to read *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren who founded the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. The first paragraph on the flyleaf states, "You are not an accident. Even before the universe was created, God had you in mind and He planned you for His purposes."

Reading that book made it very clear to me, God, that You knew, long before I was born, who and what I would be. You knew I'd be gay and that my sexual orientation was hardwired into my brain as I was being formed in the womb. Why didn't You tell me this, so I wouldn't have had to live a life of pain and lies? Why didn't You tell me it was okay for me to be gay and be who I am instead of hiding my real self all these years while I waited for You to change me. Why did my family have to suffer so much pain?

I could choose to hate You and have nothing more to do with You, God, but I have chosen to love You and bask in the sunshine of Your love for me. Because of this, I can now live my life free to be me, free to be who I am!

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In this story, Janice openly shares the raw emotions she experienced and the sickening emotional roller-coaster of the first two months after she learned Tom was gay.

The First Two Months

Janice grew up in a three-generation missionary family. As a girl she suffered an accident that left her crippled; thereafter she had to wear a leg brace and walked with a pronounced limp. At the boarding school for missionary kids, she always felt different from the others, but she put on a brave front and became a high achiever scholastically. Although she had good friends of both sexes, her self-confidence was especially vulnerable because she didn't have dates like the other girls.

Returning to the States for college, Janice met Tom, a tall, good-looking fellow nursing student, and they began dating. She felt so happy, so feminine! Tom was her best friend, to whom she could talk about everything. When he asked her to marry him, she was thrilled. At last, she wasn't "on the outside, looking in."

Jan helped put Tom through the Physician Assistant course before Alexa was born. Pregnancy was the ultimate proof of her womanhood! Soon their family was complete

with Andrew. Looking tenderly at Andy's perfect little face as he nursed, she glowed with fulfillment and imagined the satisfaction of telling her academy friends about her wonderful husband and darling children.

Tom had come to share Jan's dream of returning to the mission field, and before long a call came to serve in the very hospital Jan's grandfather had started 52 years earlier. Lexie and Andy would grow up as MK's too. Twelve years passed quickly, with furloughs back home, where Jan's parents now lived since her dad's heart attack.

What more could Jan ask for? She had a fine husband, two talented children, the chance to serve God in her beloved mission field. But deep inside, she knew something wasn't quite right; something kept gnawing away at the assurance she craved and needed – assurance that, in spite of her handicap, she was a real woman.

It had started on their wedding night when Tom was unable to consummate their marriage. Just fatigue, he said in excuse, and it was better the next night. But while she had looked forward eagerly to the romantic part of their honeymoon, Tom was anxious to see all the sights in the few days they had. Burying her disappointment, she played the role of happy tourist with him.

As the days and years went by, Tom was gentle, considerate, and always happy to be her confidant, but he never seemed to have a need for marital intimacy. Jan sensed a feeling of reserve, a feeling that part of him was closed to her. No matter how many layers she peeled away, there was always a core she could never reach.

But life went on. They had returned to the States and Lexie was finishing her last year of college. Andy was a freshman and having some problems. He had filled his schedule with art classes and didn't want to listen when Tom urged him to be practical. More troubling, when he came home on weekends he usually slept in on Sabbath morning, pleading exhaustion. And then one Friday he came home wearing an earring. Tom blew his stack.

"What's gotten into you, Andy? What are you trying to prove? You know better than this!"

But Andy stubbornly refused to remove the earring, and the weekend passed very unpleasantly. As the end of the school year drew near, Andy began making critical remarks about the church and voicing doubts about God. Tom and Jan tried listening, dialoguing and scolding, but Andy's attitude only grew worse.

When school was out he announced his decision to move to a university town in the neighboring state and get a job. Jan and Tom kept in touch with him, praying that he would find his way back to God. He seemed so unfocused – so immature. Then one day Andy called and in a trembling voice told them he was gay. They were both in shock! But they assured him they still loved him anyway.

Over the next months, Tom and Jan learned all they could about homosexuality and joined a support group for parents. Although Andy didn't want to have anything to do with the church, they decided to attend Kinship Kampmeeting, hoping they could at least interest him in this contact with the church.

When Andy told them he had a partner and that they wanted to have a wedding, Tom and Jan gulped, then said they would like to meet his friend. Jan was able to get away and meet Andy, Jason and two friends for dinner at a restaurant. Jason, a hair stylist, had spiky, electric-blue hair and an eager-to-please look on his face that appealed to Jan's heart immediately. From a Mormon family, Jason had not yet had the courage to tell his parents, so he watched eagerly to see how Jan reacted.

Tom and Jan decided to show their love and support by attending Andy and Jason's ceremony. It was held by a forest waterfall, and they were touched by the sincere love and commitment of the carefully planned event. They were also pleased to see how Andy settled down after the wedding.

Several years went by and they became acquainted with many gay and lesbian Adventists and former Adventists as they attended Kampmeeting each summer. Some four years after Andy had first revealed his homosexuality to them, they attended a Kampmeeting held on the east coast. Midway through the week, Tom asked Jan to go with him to talk to Ruth, one of the presenters, and her husband Steve. Jan thought he wanted to discuss Andy and Jason.

After they were seated in comfortable chairs in a small private lounge, Jan was dumbfounded to see Tom begin shaking and sobbing, as tears streamed down his face. Gasping for breath, he finally managed to get out the words, "I'm gay." A merciful numbness settled over Jan and she felt as if she were watching this happen from a great distance.

Maybe he's been around so many gay men here that he's feeling unsure of his orientation, was her first thought. Then she heard Tom telling about having known since childhood that he was different, about wandering his college campus late at night, weeping and asking God to change him, about finally admitting to himself that he was gay just before their wedding, and about his hope that getting married would help him overcome it.

So that's what has been wrong with our marriage all these years, was her next thought, along with a profound sense of relief that their problems hadn't been because she didn't measure up as a woman. The rest of the hour passed in a blur. Just before they left, Tom turned to Jan and promised earnestly, "Don't worry; I'll always take care of you financially."

They ate supper with the rest as if nothing had happened. Jan was still reeling and everything seemed a little unreal. Tom asked several of the Kinship officers who were close friends to meet with them that evening and he came out to them. All but one of the officers had been through similar situations, although considerably earlier in their marriages, and they were all in tears, especially after Jan shared her shock and feelings of grief. After lots of hugs, prayers, and words of sympathy, the painful news was given to the larger group, who also reacted with warmth, sympathy, and understanding. Jan found herself thinking that if she had to hear this shattering news, Kampmeeting was the best place for it to happen.

Late that night, unable to sleep, Jan pulled on her robe and slipped out to the lounge with her journal. Following are excerpts from her journal entries over the next two months.

Thursday night – Realize there are huge losses to come but feel we are still together to solve things. My grief is beyond measure. My life is blown to bits. Asked Tom if he'd had any male encounters during our marriage. He was very defensive, but I dragged some names and details out of him going back to his teenage years. Confirmed his gayness is real and here to stay. Said he wants to keep living together for a while but has a real need to find a male partner who can be a true soul mate. Then he went to sleep and left me crying most of the night.

Friday night – Went through the motions of foot washing with Tom at communion service tonight, but felt no emotional connection. Ate supper with Greg and Laura (Greg, a retired church worker is one of the presenters). He remembered when he was an academy student and a senior church official talked to the boys at worship – said if they were attracted to boys it would go away when they got married – WRONG!

My mind is constantly flitting from one thought to another like corn popping in a kettle, but at least it's not like last night when I felt like a strobe light flashing "he's straight/he's gay/he's straight/he's gay." My brain is just reeling with rapid-fire disconnected thoughts – people and situations we'll have to face – I'm going to be shunned for something I didn't do. This is the very worst grief I've ever had and I can't reach out to family and friends. Now I'm the one who is living a lie and making excuses. I have no control over my life.

Saturday night – Can't sleep. I'm so angry and alone, I feel like I'm going to explode. Tom can't make me a high enough priority to stay awake. He's more committed to not outing his gay contacts than going the extra mile to stay awake and listen to me. I feel very unsure of my health risks and he doesn't want to talk about it. Said glibly that he practiced safe sex, but I'm not really convinced. Today was our 33rd wedding anniversary – unreal. Didn't give each other cards or mention it at all.

I feel suffocated in this closet. Tom won't make time to talk during the day and at night he falls asleep. It is such intense pain – feels like Tom and I are on different planets. My mind and heart are in a million pieces. I'm agitated, hyperventilating, pacing. Tonight Tom talked about me getting my own credit card – feels like he suddenly doesn't trust me. Said he'll give me enough financial support to live on, but it might not be as much as I think it should be – I feel just petrified about my future – I could apply for disability, but that's just a drop in the bucket.

Talked to David tonight. He told me I'm a beautiful woman and deserve someone wonderful. Said I will find someone who will be able to give me the love I need. Felt warm and affirming to hear it, but can I really believe it? With my medical and marital baggage? Told him I'm afraid I'll fall for another gay guy. David said Kinship would unite to make sure that didn't happen – said they'd turn their gaydar on any prospective man and keep me safe. Made me smile for a minute.

I've avoided going to our room tonight. When I see and hear Tom, it's like he really isn't there, but has moved on and I can't follow. Has he walked out of my life and left me standing all alone? What have I done to deserve this? I just loved someone. I feel like life is not a very good option if it weren't for Lexie and Andy.

Sunday on plane – Tom kissed me goodbye. (He's going to his convention from here.) Felt weird to think that this passionate kiss is from a gay man. Woke up early this morning and talked to him about not acting sexually while he's gone, but can't help wondering if he has already made plans to meet someone while he's in Boston. Who will he be when we meet again?

Felt like I was losing my lifeline when I said goodbye to everyone. Are all the wonderful, caring, gentle, fun guys gay? Strange to see couples waiting at the airport – they have a heterosexual relationship and I don't know what that is. Found myself looking at men who were alone as potential marriage partners. The attractive ones are all younger than me. Someone older would be pushing 60 – perish the thought!

My mind feels like a room full of balloons, each with an important thought written on it. They've all been blown up, but not tied shut and they are spinning around me in dizzying chaos. I can't catch any of the messages, but they are so important. If I start writing the thoughts down, the balloons start deflating and end up on the floor. Writing my thoughts down helps give me a measure of peace and quiet in my mind.

I dread getting off the plane. I'm walking into a foreign world. Now is when I go into the closet when I start lying.

I'm home and Andy just phoned. When we called him from Kampmeeting he cried but seemed proud that Tom was "like him" and couldn't wait to introduce Tom to his friends. But tonight it has finally hit him how much this is costing me. He's sobbing and angry and in shock, as he thinks about Tom's double life and lying.

I don't want to phone Tom; I want him to phone me if he needs me. When we left Kampmeeting I felt like he wants a break from me. I think he felt I was trying to quiz and control him. I feel there is a huge distance between us and that is what he wants. Maybe this is already the complete and final break between us.

I don't want my parents to know about this because their health is so fragile now. Maybe I can give Dad a gentle hint that there are problems in our marriage.

Monday – My suspicions that Tom had made plans to meet someone at the convention have been growing stronger, and I feel that phoning him would be invading his privacy boundaries. I feel I have become a symbol of his previous bondage.

Well, he phoned, but it was a mixed bag. I felt it was just a "duty" call. A perfunctory "how are you" and then empty chatting. I got the feeling he didn't want to share any of himself with me. There's no real connection anymore. I felt terribly guarded and covered it with anger and defensiveness. He now represents pain to me.

I told him “I love you” but wonder if I do. What is the balance between the comfort, security, shared memories and the years of pushing aside the nagging sexual rejection? I can’t even read my own feelings.

The nights are the worst. My endurance and emotional reserves wear down over the day and as I look back my accomplishments seem fractured and inadequate. My losses loom bigger and my feelings of aloneness are overwhelming, almost like a panic attack. I feel overwhelmed thinking of my aloneness – for the rest of my life?

Tuesday – I keep wanting to avoid Dad. It is so hard to be around him. There is no part of me I can share, no basis for conversation. He can only focus on Mom’s health problems (she had a stroke earlier this year) and expects me to help him, but I don’t have any energy to do it. I know he senses my emotional distance.

I found a listserve for wives of bi/gay husbands and filled out personal info to join.

Wednesday – I wish Tom and I could have taken our trays and eaten by ourselves after he came out in our meeting with Ruth and Steve. We needed a chance to find out what each other was feeling and debrief a little.

When he indicated he had been sexually active with men through the years, it suddenly threw me into the position of being surrounded by gay men and feeling threatened, cheated or competing with them. How do I relate to people who could be sexual partners for Tom sometime in the future, while we are still married? Were they all looking at me and thinking, “There’s the poor straight wife. If she were out of the picture, I could pursue being in a relationship with Tom.”? It was overwhelming.

We just had a two-hour phone conversation and I feel he is finally making time for an open, sane, respectful discussion – asked about my reactions and willing to share his. I feel affirmed and that he does care and that we have options we can yet explore. I no longer feel I should push him out of my life and close the door. Wish this could have happened at Kampmeeting.

Kinship friends were there for me unconditionally. I had the need to do a huge amount of verbal processing – almost makes me embarrassed now – but it’s what I needed to do in order to make it through until Tom could take up the role of listening. His lack of emotional support made my need greater. Were they embarrassed for me?

Why do I feel so much sexual passion since Tom came out?

Sabbath – The worst part of being closeted is half believing that he is straight and everything is just like it was. I keep imagining he is straight instead of being an actor who was uninvested emotionally. One minute I’m in one role – together in our own little nest – and the next minute I’m in another – separated and alone. Back and forth, back and forth. Fears of people knowing and condemning, fears of loneliness and helplessness. Part of me wants to move to some obscure place and leave all our friends behind. I don’t want to hear them sympathize by telling me how wrong Tom is, or what a jerk he is, or how I deserve someone better.

“Oh, what needless pain we bear” – pain put on us by society, church, friends; pain that God never intended. Gay kids, gay marriages – I don’t think they are issues with God, and He hurts to see us suffer.

I don’t have it in me to go to church and pretend everything is okay and lie about the future and our plans, much less hear religious platitudes. I’m in too much grief.

Sunday – In my early awakening consciousness I wondered if Tom were still asleep in the other half of my bed or had already gotten up. Then I woke up all the way and remembered he’s gay and in Boston.

I think I would feel more shame for Tom if he’d been unfaithful with a woman. Then it wouldn’t be only that he couldn’t control himself, but that he didn’t care about me or that I was junk so he had to go elsewhere. With the gay thing, it’s like animals needing a certain diet and being expected to survive on the wrong diet.

I’m going back and forth between “we’ll stay together” (and avoid all the awkward emotions, questions, judgment of our conservative friends) and “we’ll separate.” The part of me that hopes he could stay and have feelings for me hasn’t died yet, but reality shouts louder most of the time.

It came to me during Lexie’s phone call today that what I feel is very deep sadness and sorrow. I think I have just attended the funeral for the rest of my life and I miss it so much. It doesn’t feel like it is anybody’s fault. Maybe that’s why I feel extreme sadness and loneliness rather than anger.

Tuesday – No wonder Tom never bought me lacy underwear and lingerie. I remember Sally saying Fred was still chasing her around the house and wondering what that would be like. Tom always acted kind of surprised when I was amorous outside the bedroom and gulped and took a deep breath even when I was in the bedroom. He acted like sex sort of got in the way of his plans.

God, I suppose I’m angry at you, but I don’t really feel that. I’m angry at churches and governments. What if Tom could have married a gay? Would I be an old maid? I just feel like a dark, empty hole with nothing inside – or like a cardboard cutout. My heart, mind, soul, feelings have just evaporated. Gay people don’t feel so fun and safe anymore. They just remind me of the pain. Nothing seems to be funny anymore. I can’t get through this fog, this heavy blanket on my heart.

John and Annie (two people at the straight spouses’ support group) were very supportive but don’t hold out much hope for me staying married to Tom.

I can’t even think about doing anything creative yet. Don’t even want to look at gardening or quilting projects.

Why can’t Tom put himself and his emotions on hold long enough to be supportive? He’s acting like a 13-year-old. He seems to have no concept of the magnitude of the bomb he has dropped on us. I’ve spent 33 years being unfulfilled in this marriage and I’m not supposed to go outside to find fulfillment, but he can and it’s excusable. I’m feeling very angry at how he’s dealing with this. Where is there any sorrow for the pain he’s caused,

any measuring of his words and their effects? This is all a sunrise for him, but for me, it's a sunset.

I'm eating my cake dry, dry, without frosting, while everyone around me has delicious, beautiful frosting, and the frosting is advertised at every turn and sold all over the place, but he won't do the simple thing of picking some up for me to have. It's only gay men who have told me that someone will want me. How do they know what straight men want? No straight man has ever been interested in me.

Tuesday night – I was so eager to see Tom again today for the first time since Kampmeeting. When he got into the car tears just welled up. Wasn't sure what they meant – sadness, loss, fear, unknown – a flood of emotion. Here was my person who has always comforted me, the one I could unload my pain with, but it feels so different now. We share a whole life together, but I don't know if he wants to share it anymore. So many things are the same, but neither of us knows how to relate or proceed.

Wednesday – This morning Tom was awake and gone before I woke up. I've always felt empty when we don't wake up together and cuddle and hold each other. I've always wished he needed hugging and holding as much as I do. I think he has always had me only in specific compartments of his life. My next thought after I woke up and sensed the sadness because his side of the bed was empty was, *What will happen to our butterfly collection?*

Thursday – No touch or "Good Morning" – I'm feeling jerked around. We had a nice day yesterday sharing and talking. He tells me he's more emotional since his coming out.

Sunday – We spent hours talking every day this weekend. I don't think my questions to him were too personal – not much who/when – more about thoughts and feelings, about things/times in our 33 years, questions I've had about motives expectations. He says if Andy hadn't come out and we hadn't gotten into advocacy roles he thinks he could have gone his whole life without coming out. By the end of the weekend, I wasn't bothered to be in just a friendship relationship, rather than a sexual one. It felt like we were friends on a level that left the anger and resentment out of the relationship. I'm sorry for the hurt my resentment of his sexual rejection has caused him over the years. Felt so relieved and excited about such a constructive weekend.

Wednesday – Saw my therapist today for the first time. Took the whole hour just to give her the facts. Feel comfortable with her. Forgot to mention how closeted we are, especially with my folks. I feel like I'm moving really fast through this whole thing emotionally. Are there dangers caused by speed or skipping some stages?

Friday – Went to White Rock, where Tom is doing a locums. He was all wound up on his computer and a phone call while I waited in the lobby for almost an hour. The pain and loss came crashing down on me again. Why me – of all the girls the one who had the most strikes against her, the least options for relationships? The pain is overwhelming. My life is too old to start over. I'm absolutely trapped. I shared this with Tom and he scolded me for laying a guilt trip on him. When I reminded him of what he laid on me, he said I was retaliating for his coming out and I'll never let it go. I can't share my heart

with him. I'll have to distance myself, wear a mask with him too. I feel like I'm wearing a mask with everyone.

He complains that for years when he tried to make love I didn't respond quickly enough so he was turned off and fell asleep. I shared that my coping mechanism was to deny, wall off, push aside, make off-limits, never let myself visit or acknowledge my womanhood, sexuality, sensuality – to become a wooden robot. So on those rare occasions when he decided he wanted to make love, it naturally took a long time to revive and connect with those denied identities, to convince myself that it was safe, that I was strong enough to risk the pain of possible sexual rejection again. I never celebrated my sexuality as a married woman because I felt second-rate, unwanted. He says that when I put on sexy lingerie it was a message to him that he'd better perform.

Sabbath – Tom seems to understand me better this morning and doesn't seem to see me so negatively. We feel more like friends on the same page again. I feel like I'm bipolar. Am I mentally unstable to be so low and then so upbeat in rapid succession? Will it damage me emotionally to be forever cycling like this?

Tuesday – A huge wave of sadness and loss washed over me as I drove past the hospital and dorm where we met and remembered my exuberance at finding someone who wanted me – the teenage rush of shy/bold giddiness during our dating and courtship.

Sunday – I'm feeling teary today. Am I just prolonging, worsening this process to be so connected to him? With all we've discussed I see how hard he has tried to be faithful over the years. It doesn't feel so surreal that he has loved me. He has gone for months and even years at times with no gay encounters. There is a comfort level between Tom and me today that could dupe me into thinking we'll stay together.

Thursday – Tom had his first date today. It is the beginning of losing him. We had such a calm weekend. We talked about how the anger is gone, how good it feels, how we are closer than ever before. He always said my anger pushed him away. But even without the anger I still can't hold him. I can't keep the tears back. When did he stop loving me so much that he can just walk away? I was okay today. Why am I now so torn apart?

My feeling as a teenager, that no one would want me with a handicap was true. I thought Tom saw past my handicap, but it was a hoax. He didn't really want me. I was just an experiment between him and God, just a way of passing for normal in society and having a family. How could you let me be convinced by him, God?

I feel like I'm in a vacuum. I can't turn to my parents for emotional support. My knight in shining armor has evaporated. I'm so alone.

Monday – I ate lunch at a restaurant today and looked over some of the guys there. The thought of someone new is nauseating and distasteful. I don't want a new one. I want the one who knows my college friends, who's been to the mission field with me and seen my roots, the house I lived in as a child, who raised a family with me, who shares pet words. It is all such a sad loss. I'm trying to hold back the tears.

Sunday – My emotions are so many and so intense it is too overwhelming to find the strength to journal. A week ago I went to a mini-reunion with six academy friends. Evening started off with one of them impersonating a drag queen – made me so mad. Was very sad all week. Tom is doing another locums in Westport. Wasn't sure if I would go for the weekend or not. He seems very neutral.

All I ever wanted was to be an adoring soul mate and life companion – all I needed was one man to love me, cherish, honor, need me. God, was that too much to ask? I saved myself for him and was a virgin when we married.

Nine months after Tom came out, Janice is beginning to feel some closure and a sense of beginning her new life. The swings between depression/sorrow/fear and hope that a new life is possible are further apart, but anger still frequently overtakes her as she thinks about the societal and religious pressures that push gay men into marrying heterosexual women, the heartaches and wasted lives that result.