

DAILY MAIL,
OCTOBER 31,
2013


JAN

SARAH

JACKIE

ALISON

Best friends, all four live in the same cul-de-sac. And they ALL found out their husbands were cheating

THEY met in a quiet Cardiff cul-de-sac as they embarked on married lives, babysat each other's children and laughed together on Friday nights.

But two decades later, Jan, Sarah, Jackie and Alison have more in common than just neighbourly bonds because, incredibly, within a year, all four discovered their

husbands were having affairs. Here, they describe the very different ways they dealt with infidelity, and pay tribute to the friends who proved their salvation.

I FORGAVE MY HUSBAND THREE AFFAIRS

JAN GRIFFITHS, 47, is mother to Aiden, 30, Lucy, 18, and Josh, 13. She married her husband Stephen, 47, an entrepreneur, in

March 1992. Stephen has had three affairs — the last of which was in October 2010 — but they remain married.

AS I opened the letter, my jaw dropped in disbelief. 'Dear Jan,' it started. 'I have to tell you I've been having an affair with your husband for the past 11 months ...'

The woman explained she was a local bar manager and that she was in love with Stephen. She also left her contact details.

Until that moment in 1997 I'd had no

reason to question Stephen's fidelity — in the five years we'd been married he'd always seemed so dependable.

Stunned, I called my friend Sarah for advice. She had been living in the same cul-de-sac for two years and we'd become soul mates. Our great friend Alison had arrived in 1993 and Jackie, like Sarah, came along in 1995. Sarah reassured me that Stephen

TURN TO NEXT PAGE



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LOTS OF WAFFLE

MAKE big family breakfasts as easy as knocking up cereal for one with this electric double waffle maker. It makes two large Belgian waffles at a time which break into five heart-shaped pieces.

Andrew James Double Waffle Maker, £24.99, amazon.co.uk



LIBBY GALVIN

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

would never cheat. But I was determined to discover the truth, so I drove to his office, taking her for support.

Stephen was horrified when I walked in and flung the letter on his desk. He muttered that he'd only seen this woman once or twice. I stormed out, furious. Sarah's rage almost matched my own.

Over the next week, the atmosphere at home was terrible, as Stephen steadfastly refused to talk about what had happened. Desperate, I decided the only way to discover the truth was to meet the woman myself.

I arranged to meet her for coffee. With short blonde hair and an average figure, aged about 37, she wasn't even more attractive than me. By the time we finished our coffee I felt sorry for her. She was infatuated, but Stephen had told her he had no intention of leaving me.

When, days later, Stephen eventually confessed to the affair, he insisted he loved me, and that it had been a harmless flirtation which had led to a situation he couldn't get out of.

I tried to forgive but, as the months went by, I found it impossible to trust him.

While the 'girls' were very supportive and urged me to stick by him, it was hard being the only one with a cheating husband. They all appeared to have marriages that, if not perfect,

were healthier. Eventually, a year later, Stephen and I went for counselling. It emerged he felt that not only had I become engrossed with the children, but I'd dominated our relationship. His affair had been his way of asserting himself.

Slowly I learned to trust him again: I felt the crisis had strengthened our marriage. So I was livid when, in October 2006, I heard him in the conservatory whispering to *another* woman on the phone at 2am.

I snatched the mobile — one I'd never seen before — from his hand. The line went dead and I stormed off, hiding his secret phone in my handbag.

THE next morning, his mistress called and I answered. I learned she'd met Stephen when he was on a golfing weekend in Ireland nine months earlier and had no idea he was married. When I confronted him later, he insisted: 'Nothing happened. We just talked to each other.'

We stayed up all night arguing. He'd betrayed me again!

Despite my rage, by 6am I decided I didn't want to leave. Stephen was still a wonderful father, and I have to be honest about the fact that I didn't want to jeopardise our

comfortable lifestyle. But the damage was done and our physical relationship disappeared overnight.

'I didn't worry that the lack of it would make Stephen stray: after all, he'd proved he could cheat even when we'd had a healthy sex life.'

When the girls from the cul-de-sac got together on Friday nights for cocktails, they were respectful of my decision and careful not to judge.

Then, in November 2010, I found yet another strange mobile phone, tucked in a seat pocket in our car. On it were dozens of flirtatious text messages to yet another woman.

I confronted Stephen immediately. He admitted he'd met her on another golfing trip a month earlier.

'She means nothing... nothing happened,' he insisted. 'I love you.'

I didn't know what to do. He insisted that, like the time before, nothing physical had happened. But should I stand by him or throw him out?

When I asked the girls, Jackie pointed out the positives. Unlike her husband, Stephen was attentive and funny, and she reminded me how happy we'd been.

But in February, unable to bear the betrayal any longer, I snapped and told him: 'I want a divorce.'

Stephen's reaction shocked me. He started to cry and seemed so genuinely sorry that I knew I couldn't leave. But I warned him I would not tolerate any more infidelities.

It's been three years now. I'd be lying if I said I fully trusted Stephen, but when I see him playing with our youngest son, I'm so glad I gave him another chance.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for Jackie, Sarah and Alison, because over the next eight months they would all find themselves alone after their own husbands cheated.

It was their ordeals that inspired me to set up Women Scorned, a support website for cheated wives who can't afford expensive therapy. As I know all too well, the support of friends is worth any number of counselling sessions.

I HAD A BREAKDOWN

SARAH ROBERTS, 42, married Lloyd, 43, in July 1991. They have three daughters: Jenny, 20, Felicity, 15, and Ruth, six. Lloyd, a manager at an electricity board, left her in July 2011. Sarah still lives in Cardiff, as do Lloyd and his new partner.

WHEN Stephen betrayed Jan, I felt so sorry for her, but never expected in a million years that Lloyd would do the same to me.

My husband and I met at a party in 1986 and had a fairytale wedding in 1991. Four years later we moved into a three-bedroom end-of-terrace in Jan's cul-de-sac.

It was a great place to bring up a young family and as our children grew up, we bonded over play-dates and milestones like their first days at school. Meanwhile, Lloyd was the perfect father and husband. I adored him.

Then, four years ago, he suddenly took up running and bought a motorbike.

I put his odd behaviour down to a mid-life crisis. After all, I thought, we still told each other everything and we had a healthy sex life.

So I was stunned when an anonymous letter arrived in January 2011, claiming Lloyd had been caught in a romantic clinch with a colleague.

'This letter has also been sent to Lloyd's boss and his married colleague's husband,' it stated. 'You need to be aware of what's going on.'

That night Lloyd denied everything, saying it was a cruel prank and he loved me. I believed him.

For the next seven months, we carried on as normal, our sex life remaining as good as ever. We even made love the night before he left me.

It was July 2011, the week before our 20th wedding anniversary.

That morning Lloyd asked me to do a supermarket shop. But when I got back, he announced: 'I don't want to be married to you any more.'

I fell to the floor and just howled.

I could see his belongings in his car: he'd clearly sent me out so he could pack his things. He insisted before driving off that he wasn't seeing another woman.

Where had the devoted man I loved disappeared to? My whole life felt like a lie.

A few days later, I took a razor to my wrists. I wanted to end it all.

My eldest daughter found me and my sister drove me to hospital, where I was diagnosed with an emotional breakdown. For the next six weeks, I stayed at a mental health unit.

The girls from the cul-de-sac were amazing. Jan, recently betrayed herself and doubly supportive, took me for walks and made cakes for my daughters. We spent evenings watching Steel

JAN



JACKIE

We made a morning want to be I fell to the

Magnolias — our favourite film. Here we were, two women whose husbands had abused our trust.

In December 2011, Lloyd and his colleague made their relationship official, though others have since told me they'd been together for around a year.

Later that month, I filed for divorce.

Lloyd's new relationship was a blow, but my girlfriends wouldn't let me crumble again. They listened patiently as I ranted.

I hope one day I will be able to laugh again. If anyone can put a smile on my face, these girls can.

I STARTED DATING

JACKIE POWELL, 52, married Paul, a university lecturer, in April 1992. They have two children: James, 20, and Amelia, 19. In April 2010, Paul, 59, left Jackie for a Mexican woman whom he married in May 2011. They now live in Mexico City. Jackie still lives in Cardiff.

AS MUCH as I love my friends, sometimes I feel our cul-de-sac was cursed.

Paul and I moved into our detached four-bedroom house in 1995 after he took a post at the University of Wales. We'd met in 1991 when I was a mature student and he was my psychology lecturer. By the time we married, I was

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Interview

SARAH



ALISON

de love, then next
he told me: I don't
be married to you.
e floor and howled

Already five weeks pregnant and had abandoned my university place. As a stay-at-home mother, I quickly built a rapport with the other mums in the cul-de-sac. We took it in turns to host New Year's Eve parties and spent many evenings gossiping when the children were in bed. Meanwhile, at home Paul chipped away at my confidence. He'd accuse me of not cleaning our house properly or criticise my hair. Still, when Jan confided about her husband's affairs, while I felt sympathy, part of me was relieved that at least I hadn't had to go through that. Paul, meanwhile, thought my girlfriends were beneath him: 'They're a waste of space,' he said. He never elaborated, but I knew it was because they weren't as educated as him. In 2005 Paul took up Spanish, claiming it would help his career. By 2008 he was going abroad regularly to forge good relations' with other universities. We grew more distant, but I never suspected he was cheating. So I was shocked when, at Easter 2010, Paul announced it wasn't working between us and he was going to Mexico to stay with a lecturer called Alma. When I told my friends, Jan advised me to get myself a good solicitor. I thought it was too soon, but she was

right: two weeks later Paul returned and told me he wanted a divorce. 'Get the rat to move out,' insisted Jan when I called her in tears. But, fearing I'd be judged a failure if he left, I moved into the spare room instead. A month later I was served with divorce papers while Paul was at work. That evening, he admitted he was in a 'growing relationship' with Alma. Our divorce was finalised in January 2011, but he still refused to leave the family home. Then, the following month, I found an invitation to his wedding in his bedside table. It was to be in Mexico City that May. I felt sick as I called Jan. She came straight over and told me I deserved more. Later that week, Sarah took me to a bar to cheer me up. While they couldn't take away my pain, just having my friends, who had been in the same boat, on my side made me feel better. Finally, Paul agreed to let me have our £195,000 home and moved out a month after marrying Alma. Last July, he retired and moved to Mexico. The children have visited once. While I haven't had a serious romance since, for the past two years I have been seeing someone. It's a casual relationship based on friendship: I still find it hard to trust. I'm devastated I couldn't make my marriage last. Having given up my degree and

Before the split: The four neighbours and their former partners

ambitions for Paul, I sacrificed so much. So I hope it works out for him — otherwise, all the hurt will have been for nothing.

I WANTED TO KEEP MY TUNISIAN TOYBOY

ALISON MORRIS, 52, married Aymen, 32, a Tunisian waiter, in May 2010. They divorced in May 2012 after she claimed Aymen had been flirting with other women. Alison lives alone in Cardiff.

THE first friend I made when I moved into the cul-de-sac was Jan. It was 1993 and I'd just bought a two-bedroom semi five doors down from her. We bonded over coffee and I loved her honesty. She was a kindred spirit.

When she confided about her husband's affairs, I admired the way she stuck to her guns when the obvious thing would have been to throw Stephen out. She never minced her words.

While I'd had a partner for 19 years, we broke up in 2009.

When I fell for a gorgeous man 20 years my junior on holiday shortly afterwards, I remember Jan saying: 'Don't give him any money.'

Aymen and I met in the restaurant where he worked on the first evening of my Tunisian break.

With his cheeky smile, I was thrilled when he invited me for coffee. We kissed, we watched the stars from his rooftop and we became inseparable. The day after I flew home, he texted saying he missed me.

Part of me knew a relationship was a ridiculous idea, but I found his attention irresistible.

I visited him in October and again in December. The following month he told me his flatmate had moved out and he couldn't afford the rent on his own. Would I transfer £200?

I agreed, but didn't tell the girls as I knew they would think I was naive.

After that, I was giving him at least £200 every month, even though I couldn't afford it.

I began going to Tunisia regularly and in April 2010 Aymen proposed.

I accepted. My former partner had just got engaged and I wanted to prove I was desirable, too.

THE girls thought I was mad. 'You barely know him,' said Jackie. 'Have you lost your mind?'

But I loved feeling wanted. We married in Tunisia on May 6, 2010.

Aymen didn't want to leave Tunisia and, as my mother's carer, I couldn't leave Cardiff, but I visited him often.

But soon after we married, I found a perfume bottle in his bathroom and a pair of earrings under his bed. He insisted they belonged to his friend's girlfriend and I wanted to believe him.

But by the summer of 2011 I was increasingly suspicious. During a visit that September, I logged onto his email and discovered a string of messages from a German girl. There were other flirtatious emails to Polish and Russian girls.

When I confronted him, he shrugged and said: 'You're always accusing me of being with other women anyway.'

The girls here were so sympathetic, but then they all knew what it was like to be cheated on. Jackie even offered to fly to Tunisia with me to help me sort things out. I felt stupid but didn't want to admit defeat.

Then, the day after I got back from a visit in January 2012, Aymen rang and said he wanted a divorce. I later found out that he had a new Tunisian girlfriend.

I couldn't face going to the divorce hearing, but as far as I'm aware I'm now divorced, although I still haven't received my papers.

Thankfully, I have not been asked to pay him any more money. I wasted thousands of pounds on a man who only ever wanted me for cash and I'm a fool for not realising it sooner.

But the best thing about the girls? They never once said: 'I told you so.' After all, we've all had our hearts broken in different ways.

SOME names have been changed. For the support website for cheated wives that Jan set up, visit women-scorned.co.uk.

PRINTED SHIRT... FOUR WAYS

FLORALS were huge on the catwalk for autumn and this embroidered shirt is the best way to stay on trend. Either dress the blouse up with a leather pencil skirt and sparkly heels for an evening out, or a pair of boyfriend jeans or suede pumps will make it more casual.



Embroidered shirt, £129, hobbs.co.uk

LUNCH



Trousers, £30, topshop.com
Bracelet, £29, stelladot.co.uk
Bag, £19, forever21.com Pumps, £145, russellandbromley.com

DINNER



Leather skirt, £299, jaeger.co.uk
Bracelet, £30, coast-stores.com
Pink drop earrings, £20, talullahtu.co.uk Gold heels, £195, lucychoi.com

WORK



Pencil skirt, £110, hobbs.co.uk
Bangle, £4.55, wallis.co.uk Blue suede court shoes, £55, office.co.uk Leathertote bag, £245, russellandbromley.co.uk

WEEKEND



Boyfriend jeans, £75, jigsaw-online.com Baby blue pumps, £25.99, and bag, £119, zara.com Blue stone bracelet, £29, lolarose.co.uk

Styling: ANTONIA MAGOR

vs: ANTONIA HOYLE