



[Home](#)

[Fall-Winter 2013-14](#)

[Summer-Fall 2013](#)

[Spring-Summer 2013](#)

[Winter-Spring 2013](#)

[Fall-Winter 2012-2013](#)

[Summer-Fall 2012](#)

[Spring-Summer 2012](#)

[Winter-Spring 2012](#)

[Autumn/Winter 2011-12](#)

[Summer 2011](#)

[Winter/Spring 2011](#)

[Autumn/Winter 2011](#)

[Summer 2010](#)

[Spring 2010](#)

[Winter 2010](#)

[Autumn 2009](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

Kiss and Tell

by Adelaide B. Shaw

*have to tell mark shouldn't have done won't forgive was
overcome strong emotions no no excuses that first touch
phil stop remembering just his hand on my arm too ready
that smile inviting voice don't tell mark won't ever know
maybe not but suppose does anyone know or guess
others have done it marriage survived liz and brad liz
crying how could he how could he she forgave him
women forgive I'd forgive mark or would I yes yes has he
ever no not mark when I would know wanted that sweep
of love those sensations lust oh god lust desire not since
mark and I when young same feelings*

A tall, thin woman in her early forties, wearing shorts and tee shirt, jogged through the quiet streets on a Saturday afternoon in early summer. Her eyes stayed only on the way ahead, ignoring the colorful gardens which she usually paused to admire. She ran with the intensity of a marathon runner in training.

*the warmth phil's shirt the sweetness of clean his after
shave like an april morning once thought about mark that
way stupid stupid 18 years he'll hate*

*me hate myself divorce not married for life love him kids
don't want divorce it'll kill him loss of trust never forgive
maybe never forget skin on skin his*

*phil's weight on me pressing down like spinning falling in
love no not love not with phil his wanting me that's it his
wanting pulled me toward him lost*

*reason won't be the same afterwards a strain cold silence
days weeks months maybe we'll pretend for the kids and
friends won't work why tell guilt*

*that's it no good to tell why did I do it should have stopped
could have stopped mouth against mouth tongue
touching tongue hand on my breast in my*

*blouse stop remembering too quick that tingle the
quivering never again will I ever forget forget forget think*

Editor's Note

Guidelines

Contact

of mark the kids don't tell unbearable

*afterwards punishment mark's hatred disgust
disappointment it's done move on confess to a priest
after all these years confession remember before*

*with mark every week bless me father embarrassed to tell
priest I have sinned say five our fathers and five hail
marys promise never do it again every*

*week broke promise mark and I hurt no one not now hurt
mark that old priest bored yawning all the time different
then married now confess to mark*

*no to priest must tell someone need forgiveness priest will
forgive god will forgive yes tell a priest tell mark I don't
know I don't know*

* * *

In the church vestibule it took her a couple of minutes to adjust her eyes to the dim light. It was a quick decision to break her run and enter the church. She walked down the side aisle to the confessional and stood in line. She sensed the disapproving looks from the other penitents, but if she had gone home to change out of her running clothes, she would not have returned. When she had seen the five other people waiting, she almost did leave, but with two priests hearing confessions they were in and out quickly. Two elderly women in black, a stout middle-aged man and two young boys. What did they have to confess? Gossip about the neighbors, swearing, cheating in school? She would leave . Now.

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," the priest said upon sliding back the small panel.

"Bless me father for I have sinned. It's been..." She couldn't remember how many years exactly. Ten, twelve.

She quickly whispered her words and had to repeat them for the priest hadn't heard her at first. Then the words came in a rush. Their meeting, their attraction their sin. *Her* sin. What was said afterwards was already blurring in her mind, the priest's voice, neutral and non-condemning, her voice, small like a scared child. It was over, out there for the priest and God, but not for Mark. Penance. Yes, penance. Five Our Fathers and Five Hail Marys. Or was it ten each? Kneeling in a pew she said ten.

* * *

Mark was in the patio cleaning the grill when she arrived home. The sounds of a baseball game came from the family room and music from one of the bedrooms telling her the children were home as well. She prepared two gins and tonic and took them outside.

“You were a long time on your run today,” Mark said accepting the drink and her kiss.

Sitting at a table which was already set for dinner she looked down at the bricks as she formed her answer.

“Honey? Anything wrong?”

“Mark, would you mind if I began going to church again?”

“What brought this about?”

“On impulse I went into St. Catherine’s Church on the way home. I sat there and began thinking maybe I would go again. I mean... Life has been good to me. To us. I’m grateful for everything. For you, the kids, our life, Everything.” She looked at Mark looking at her. “I thought...I don’t know. Maybe I should acknowledge all my blessings. Not take them for granted.”

Mark, his bewilderment obvious by the tilt of his head and the questioning in his eyes, stopped cleaning the grill.

“I know your feelings about religion,” she continued, “but you didn’t care if I practiced mine when we first married. After a while I started making excuses. Too busy with kids, with work. Too tired. Then I got out of the habit. I just...I don’t know...I thought...”

“Look,” Mark said, coming to sit next to her at the table and take both her hands into his. “If you want to go to church, go. You don’t need my permission. If it makes you feel better to practice your faith, then do it. I won’t interfere.”

“I’ll get the steaks and make a salad,” she said getting up quickly before she shed the tears she knew would flow if she stayed another minute.

* * *

*will be o.k. think of the future won’t tell where’s the oil
should I make rice or garlic bread kids like that will make*

it up to mark be more attentive more

*loving was so stupid stop thinking get dinner think of the
early days sex every night practically what for desert ice
cream hot fudge yes got enough take time for love
sounds like dear abbey should I no won't write dear
abbey my problem won't tell mark decided thank god for
mark a good man must keep marriage*

“Would you bring out the steaks?” Mark called from
outside.

“Coming. Becky, Steve. Get ready for dinner.”

*too much to lose one mistake a whopper take all life to
forget never forgive myself my life my guilt*

Adelaide B. Shaw lives in Millbrook, NY with her husband. She has three children and six grandchildren. Her stories have been published in several literary journals, including *By-Line*, *The Greensilk Journal*, *The Country and Abroad*, *Bartleby Snopes*, *Loch Raven Review*, *American Literary Review*, *The Writers' Journal*, *SN Review*, *Bewildering Stories*, *Cyclamens and Swords*, and *Storyteller*. Adelaide also writes children's fiction, haiku and other Japanese poetic forms, such as tanka, haibun, and photo haiga and has been published widely. A collection of short stories, *Potpourri, Volume 1*, as well as her award winning collection of haiku, *An Unknown Road*, are available as e-books on Amazon Kindle. Samples of her writings may be found on www.adelaidewritewrite.blogspot.com and on www.adelaide-whitepetals.blogspot.com

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