

## Surely, You Knew He Was Already Married

***How could you be so stupid?*** Bobble headed folks seated in rows to my left; some old curmudgeon on a pedestal sporting a black choir robe directly front. Church or court? I couldn't tell down from up. The single blue lightbulb in the ceiling center called up memories of steamy basement-house-parties—couples mashed together, grinding, and grunting. Those days. Strains of the Temptations' *Who You Going to Run To* wafted into the room.

***Did you really think you would get away with it?*** The short pinstripe suit yelled and waved the same papers I had discovered. The document I'd pulled out of the bottom desk drawer—the desk I shared with my husband—who was away on business. Always, he was away. The words<sup>1</sup> had jumped up from the page like a blizzard of angry bees, swirling around the study, around the desk, around my head—seeking something to sting. I froze, paralyzed by the possibility of piercing pain. I would have run at the outset; longed to run now, but my legs were rubbery stilts.

***Surely, you knew. What were you thinking?*** Then a red glow enveloped the room, ushering in a raging, fiery madness and clouds of rebuke and scorn. And questions, so many questions—hurtling and urgent next to the still-buzzing words. My hands trembled and the papers<sup>2</sup> fluttered to the floor. A court summons in French. His *real* wife charging *me* with adultery with him, my own husband. Lies—yay or nay? Outside the house, the world plodded along, unbothered. The sunset commenced its descent on schedule, into placid horizon. Daytime noises wound down to a thrum. A lonely honking. Car doors slammed. Wrought iron gates, ground open and close throughout the residential enclave. Women began making dinner; children prepared to launch objections to the homework ritual, other women's husbands headed home to their rightful families.

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### Checklist: Things to Do After Discovering That Your Husband is a Bigamist

1. Cry
2. Cry some more
3. Call children and tell them to spend the night at friends' houses so your evening is freed up for crying
4. Dry tears long enough to change locks on front door and front gate
5. Get name of good lawyer
6. Take His name off your State Department dependents list
7. Keep busy
8. Use downtime to cry

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<sup>1</sup> In the Court of Law in \_\_, the PLAINTIFF, wife of XXX charges the DEFENDANT with adultery with her husband.

<sup>2</sup> The PLAINTIFF married her husband, XXX, in a civil ceremony ten years ago and he has returned to \_\_ with the DEFENDANT to whom he alleges to be married. Under civil law, the first union is the only legal one and he is required to denounce his relationship with the DEFENDANT and the DEFENDANT must pay the PLAINTIFF a fine of \_\_cent francs.