

IF SHE'S ALREADY THERE



DEDE OKEKE

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Read This Page Before Anything Else

You have probably opened this guide at a bad hour, with your heart going, holding something you wish you had not found.

So before anything else, four sentences.

You are not going mad. Whatever you have noticed, you noticed it for a reason. Women in this situation are told constantly that they are imagining things, and they very rarely are.

You do not have to decide tonight. Nothing about your marriage will be settled in the next six hours, and everything you do in those six hours you will be living with for years.

You are allowed to not know yet. Not knowing is unbearable and it is also survivable, and there is no prize for reaching certainty by morning.

Whatever he has done, it is not a verdict on your worth. Read that one twice. It will not feel true for some time. It is true anyway.

THE RULE OF THE FIRST HOUR

Do not confront tonight. Nothing said between eleven at night and one in the morning has ever helped a marriage.

Do not contact her. Not a message, not a call, not a look at her page. Nothing you find there will help you and some of it will live in your head for years.

Do not tell his family. Do not post anything anywhere. Both feel like action. Both cost you your position and cannot be taken back.

Write down what you found, exactly, with the date. Not to build a case — to stop your mind rewriting it in a week when you are tempted to talk yourself out of it.

Then wait three days before you decide anything. Three days will not change the facts. It will completely change the quality of your thinking about them.

If there is any violence in your home, or you are frightened of what he might do, this guide is not the right help. Please speak to someone you trust or a domestic violence support service in your country today.

What You Know And What You Fear

Most women in this position are carrying two things at once and cannot tell them apart. Separate them before you speak to anybody.

Take a page. Two columns. On the left, **what I actually know** — only things you saw or heard, written as a camera would record them. On the right, **what I have decided it means.**

Do it properly. Most women find the left column is four or five thin lines and the right column is a full and detailed catastrophe they have been living inside for weeks.

This is not to talk you out of anything. Your instinct may well be right. It is so that when you finally speak to him, you are standing on the left column, which is solid, rather than the right, which he can dismantle in one sentence — and he will, because the right column contains things you cannot support.

Why you must not become an investigator

I know exactly what the pull feels like. Certainty seems like it would end the pain, so you check the phone at three in the morning, then the car, then the receipts, then her page, then the location, then the phone again.

Here is what actually happens to women who go down that road. They do not arrive at certainty. They arrive somewhere much worse: they become a security officer inside their own marriage, sleeping four hours, hiding what they are doing, with their entire inner life handed over to a man who does not even know he is holding it.

And the checking never ends, because certainty is not an information problem. You could read everything on his phone tonight and by Thursday you would need to check again, because what you actually want to know is not *what did he do* but *am I still wanted* — and no phone has ever answered that.

You already know enough to act. What you do not have is proof, and proof was never what you needed.

You are allowed to act on what you believe. You do not need a confession to draw a line, to protect yourself, or to decide what you will and will not live with. Wives are not prosecutors and marriage is not a court.

Asking Him

Once. Cleanly. Without a case file.

Choose daylight. A day off, children occupied, neither of you tired or drinking. Do not build up to it for twenty minutes.

THE QUESTION

"I need to ask you something, and I want the truth, whatever it is.
Is there someone else?"

Then stop talking. Completely.

Do not open with your evidence. The moment you produce a receipt or a screenshot, the conversation becomes a trial about that item, and you will spend two hours being told what a restaurant bill does and does not prove while the actual question quietly disappears.

If he says yes

Say very little. *"Thank you for telling me the truth. I need some days before I know what I think."*

Then take them. Do not decide, do not threaten, do not forgive, do not pack anything. The woman who speaks in the first hour is the most frightened version of you, and she should

not be the one making decisions this size.

What you may want, in a few days when you are steadier, are three factual things: is it finished, is he willing to end all contact, and is he willing to be honest with you going forward. Not the details. **Do not ask for the details.** Women ask because they believe knowing will help. It does not. It gives you images you will carry for a decade and it changes nothing about what you decide.

If he says no

Then you are in the hardest position of all, because you must now decide what you believe without proof.

Do not ask twice in the same conversation. Do not demand he swear on anything — a man who will lie about a woman will lie about a swearing.

Say: *“Alright. I have asked and I will leave it there. But something is wrong between us, and that is true whether or not there is anyone else.”*

That last sentence is the important one, and it is the thing most women miss entirely. The distance in your marriage is real regardless of the answer. You do not need to prove an affair in order to be entitled to a warm marriage or to leave a cold one.

If he refuses to answer, or turns it on you

"I notice you have not said no." Then be quiet.

If he becomes furious — how dare you, after everything, you are mad — do not escalate and do not apologise. Anger proves nothing either way. Say: *"I have asked. I will leave it there."* and let the following weeks tell you what tonight could not.

AFTER

Deciding What You Will Live With

*Not whether to forgive. That comes much later, if at all.
What you will and will not live inside, starting now.*

Whatever he said, you now have to answer a question that belongs entirely to you: *what are my terms?*

This is not about controlling him. It is about naming what you will participate in, which requires nobody's agreement.

LINES WOMEN ACTUALLY DRAW

"I am not sharing a bed with you while there is someone else. I will move to the other room until that is finished."

"I am not going to pretend in front of your family or mine."

"I will not be told I am imagining things. If that is your answer, I will stop raising it and start deciding on my own."

"If there is any contact with her again, I will not be asking a second time." — only if you mean it.

Say each line once, flatly, and then live it. Do not repeat it, do not explain it twice, do not attach a warning. A line explained twice has become a negotiation.

Things you are entitled to and may not have realised

- **Your health.** If there has been another woman, please see a doctor and get tested. This is not an accusation, it is basic care, and it is the one practical thing in this guide that cannot wait for your feelings to settle.
- **Your money.** Know what exists, where it is, and in whose name. Not to take anything — to not be helpless. A woman who does not know her own household's finances has fewer real choices, whatever she decides.
- **Your own people.** Tell one person you trust completely. Carrying this entirely alone is what breaks women, and secrecy protects him far more than it protects you.
- **Time.** Nobody — not him, not his mother, not your pastor, not your sister — is entitled to rush your decision.

About the children

They already know something is wrong. Children always do. What they do not need is the content.

Do not make them witnesses, messengers, or confidants. Do not tell them what he did, even when they are old enough, even when you are angry enough that it feels like honesty. A child who is handed their father's failure has to carry it for the rest of their life, and they did not choose any of this.

What you can say, truthfully: *"Daddy and I are having a difficult time. It is not because of you. We both love you and we are handling it."*

Staying, Leaving, And The Third Thing

You do not have to choose today. But you must eventually choose, rather than let the years choose for you.

There are three honest doors, and I have watched women walk through all three and be alright.

Rebuilding

Possible, and more common than people admit, but only under conditions. It requires that the other relationship is genuinely over, that he is the one doing the work of rebuilding trust rather than asking you to hurry up and get over it, and that you are permitted to have bad days for a good while without being accused of dragging it up.

If those three are true, marriages do come back from this, and some come back stronger than they were before, because the drift that made room for her finally got named.

If those three are not true — if he is sorry but unchanged, or wants it forgotten by next month — then what is on offer is not rebuilding. It is you absorbing it quietly, forever, which is a different thing entirely.

Holding, with a date

You are not ready to rebuild and not ready to go. This is legitimate — there are children, there is a life, there is uncertainty — but only if you make it deliberate.

Name a period. Six months. Write down what you need to see. Then review it honestly on that date. The difference between holding and drifting is that holding has a date on it and drifting does not.

Leaving

If you get here, go slowly and get real help — legal, financial, practical. Talk to someone qualified rather than your WhatsApp group. Understand your position before you announce anything.

And know this: choosing to end a marriage after betrayal is not a failure of faith, patience, or womanhood. Sometimes it is the last honest act available to a woman who has already been honest about everything else.

What I want for you either way

I will not tell you which door is yours. Anybody who would tell you that, on the basis of a page in a book, is not being serious with you.

But I will tell you what I have seen in every woman who came out of this well, whichever door she took.

She stopped trying to find out and started deciding. She stopped asking whether she was enough — a question that has never once been answered by a man's behaviour — and started asking what she was willing to live inside. She got one person she could tell the truth to. And she gave herself, at some point, permission to stop bleeding about it every single day.

Another woman can take your husband's attention. She cannot take your standing, your judgement, or your future. Those were never his to give away.

Whatever you decide, decide it standing up.

— Dede Okeke

The First Thirty Days After You Know

Whatever you decide in the end, the next month has to be survived. Here is how to get through it without losing yourself.

Week one — stay upright

Do not make any large decision. Not one. Your job this week is eating, sleeping if you can, and getting through the days.

Tell one person you trust completely. One — not five. Choose someone with judgement rather than someone who will enjoy it.

See a doctor. Get tested. Do this even if you are certain it is unnecessary.

Write down, once, exactly what you know. Then stop looking for more. The searching will not end the pain and it will end your sleep.

Week two — get your feet under you

Find out where you actually stand practically. What money exists and in whose name. What the house situation is. What you would need if you had to stand alone for six months. Not because you are leaving — because a woman who knows her position makes better decisions than a woman who is guessing.

Draw one line and hold it. Just one. Whichever matters most to you.

Start eating properly again. Many women lose a great deal of weight in this month and mistake it for coping.

Week three — look at the evidence of him

Now, and only now, look at what he has actually done since you asked — not what he said in the first emotional conversation.

Has the contact stopped? Is he doing the work of rebuilding trust, or asking you to hurry up? Is he honest about small things now, or still inaccurate? Is he sorry that it happened, or sorry that it is uncomfortable?

Words in week one mean very little. Behaviour in week three means almost everything.

Week four — decide the next six months

Not the rest of your life. The next six months only.

Pick one: rebuilding, holding with a date, or leaving. Write it down with a review date, and write what you need to see by then.

THINGS TO EXPECT, SO THEY DO NOT FRIGHTEN YOU

You will swing. Certain on Monday, unsure on Thursday. That is normal and it does not mean you are weak.

It will ambush you. A song, a road, a restaurant. Months later. This fades, slowly.

You will want the details. The urge is enormous. Do not. Nothing you learn will change your decision and the images stay for years.

People will have opinions. Everybody will know exactly what you should do. None of them will live in the house afterwards.

One thing to hold onto

The women I have watched come through this well were not the ones who forgave fastest or left quickest. They were the ones who refused to spend the next five years in the same month.

Whatever you decide, put a date on the deciding. Then live forward from it.

— *Dede Okeke*