

Dear Allan

It is Tuesday morning after you left. Not much of a good night's sleep, I awoke suddenly at 12:30 thinking about something you said about Mabe, "I don't know how you got a cab from there."

Quite possibly, in your subtle way, you were doubting that I actually did get a cab from there. Well, I did, a cab coming around the bend that joins the main intersection, if one could call it that, and the cab driver was aggressive on the road and macho in the car. I thought by going all the way up to Mabe you would see that it would be near impossible to visit four different places all over La Uruca and then go up to Mabe all within the space of 2 or 3 hours.

Then I was thinking "why did that idiot at the hotel say I left the hotel at 3:30, when I know I just went in, got my white plastic bag, used the bano and left..?" It occurred to me that maybe the guy said I left at trece y media, which would be about 1:30, not tres y media. Perhaps he passed off his responsibility to one of his hangers on in the lobby, who got it wrong, who confused me with someone else, the way you confused me with someone else at the airport.

Last night I became all the more disturbed by this because I know this will all fall on deaf ears. It is impossible for me to prove that my day went as I say it went, because the receipt from Reimers has the complete wrong time of day on it, because the front desk clerk is a moron, because I sent an e-mail message which I thought would be just a "nice" hello to drop in your mail box and became turned against me as an attempted alibi.

And I can not prove my innocence against your theory that I went out of the hotel room just to send an e-mail alibi (does your front desk clerk know I must have been gone about 45 minutes then?) only to run back into the hotel and meet a man that you claim I had a prearranged liason with for exactly two hours while you were at the dentist, until 3:30, which is ridiculous, since you told me you would be at the dentist until about 4, and why would anyone cut it so close? And I was in La Uruca thinking about how you would get back to the hotel at 4 or 4:30 and I wouldn't be there because I was on a bus on the way up to San Pablo...

I was actually bummed out that you would get back from the dentist in so much pain and I wouldn't be there to rub your head, put a damp towel over your eyes.

None of this matters and it is so unhealthy and I am so distraught and sad I can't stop crying. I cried on the drive home last night. And please don't think I made a u-turn in Laurel to return to the Frontera for gas for any reason other than I wanted gas. Even some of my simplest actions are turned against me. Finding your lost cell phone cord. Sending you a "hey guapo" e mail in San Jose. Packing our belongings... including that damned grabadora de voz... to change hotels by myself while you are at the dentist.

There is no hope for us, I know this. Can I accept it? It doesn't seem so. We are both in so much pain. You think I've done this horrible thing to you, because your logic dictates that I must have. Now I have to go, and give up the man I have loved most in my life. But I can't go just yet, no, I have to drag out this part of the pain a few more weeks to finish the house.

You are in San Jose. Likely you are checking hotel records at the Balmoral, you likely timed your trip to San Pablo, you are likely having coffee with Rolcio, maybe conducting other checks on me, firming up your theories, sickening things.

I love you and I want to see you but this is so much to bear, too much for me to function normally. Now I am forgetting my purchases at the ferreteria, forgetting to gas up, and my head is lost and you probably think I am so together that I am doing all this on purpose to trip you up.

My flight mechanism has kicked into high gear, whose wouldn't? We have stuck this out to the end and here it is.

My actions made you distrustful, and your own paranoia has taken it to an extreme. You have to take responsibility for your own fears and your own actions; you cannot say "she drove me to it". You have to take responsibility for not being in this all the way, enough to forgive my past transgressions and to consider that we would spend the first year learning about each other and ourselves along the way.

You must take responsibility for turning all the things that any "normal" couple might have to have dealt with, that yes might have turned into arguments but ultimately to be resolved, and carving them in stone under the heading Never Forgive Never Forget, and adding a footnote, "This means something much worse."

I have to bear responsibility for the lies I told you to cover up my reunions with Noel, my tryst after the New Year's dinner. That is my cross to bear for the rest of my days. The weight is oppressive.

I gave you all, all of my love, the depths of which I didn't even know until you came into my life

This breakup is like pulling off a bandage slowly. After I am gone I will yearn for you for quite possibly the rest of my life, and I will torture myself with the illusion that we might one day get back together, the kind of hope that ex-lovers hold onto but only rarely comes to bear fruit.

You are suffering from a false humiliation, and a false rejection, and one day you will realize that you were wrong about your theories, but your heart will have hardened against me.

Perhaps we never had a chance, maybe we don't have a chance now either . . . wouldn't it be easier, so much easier, to convince myself that we have absolutely no chance. To push you out of my heart and my memories.

How much easier for you too, to tell yourself "she cheated on me and wouldn't tell me the truth." You were just protecting yourself, taking a firm stand, making the difficult but right decision.

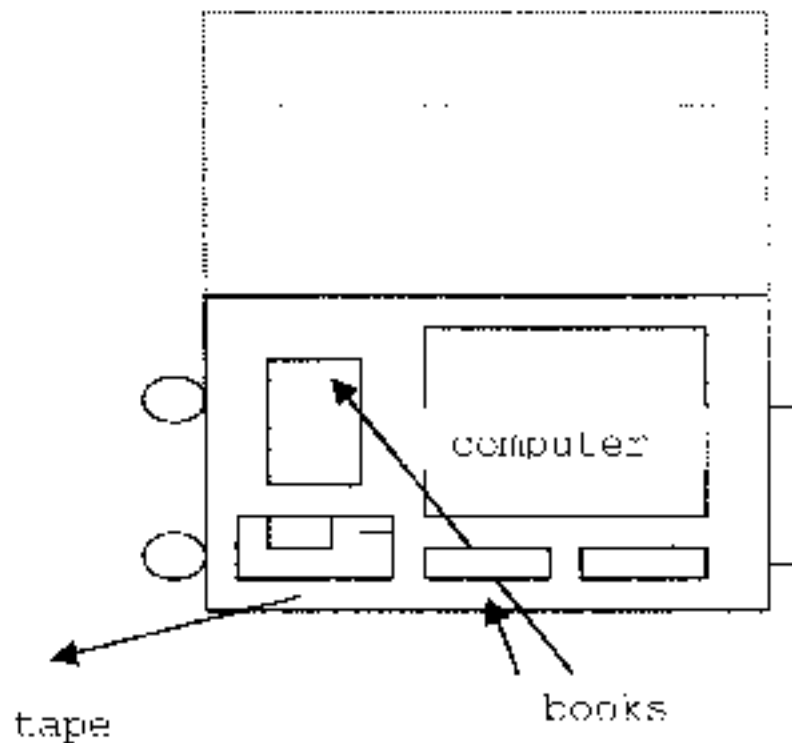
How much worse for you to ever have to admit to yourself, "I took straws and I created a well wrought story, worked out all the logical details, and it was all wrong. And the woman who loved me the best, I drove her away."

I don't know how much longer I can stay here. Every day is painful. I know there is so much to do, but I can't get much done. Yet I don't want to leave, because I am holding onto a chance. Now you have Rolegio looking into hotel records, and might it cast doubt on guilt? I am presumed guilty and now Rolegio has to prove my innocence.

But the way things have going, there will be a million Bob Smith's in the world, or whatever the Spanish equivalent is like Juan Gonzalez or whatnot. The way things are going, if there is no "duplicated name" you will say "well her boyfriend outsmarted me." When in the end you only outsmarted yourself.

And the tape, the infamous tape. You claim it was recorded over and then set back to the same count length. Well, it wasn't. It couldn't have been. Not if you and I were the only people touching it, not if you say you didn't touch it and I only touched it to move it at least once if not twice. Not if your memory is perfectly correct. (Which no one's is, especially not in highly emotional states). The fact is, the only way it could have happened, and I know this because I know I did not purposefully and thoughtfully erase a section of the tape. . . the fact is this:

The tape was in the machine. The bag is on the bed, what I refer to as the bottom, the part with the wheels, is facing to my left. I packed the machine at the bottom corner, close to the wheels, on top of other objects. The corner of the machine was snug in the corner of the luggage, the buttons were facing up, exposed. Like this:



I remember it because you made the tape recorder memorable to me, and I remember the bag being very heavy with books and equipment etc., because the clothes were in the big knapsack.

So the tape recorder was face up, with the buttons to the top right, like I've indicated with the smaller rectangle. To the right of the recorder were books on edge, and to the top of the recorder were books laid flat. And diagonal was the computer.

So I pack the bag and then set it upright, on its wheels, in the room of the Holiday Inn. Then I go downstairs to check out. I might have taken this bag with me on the 1st trip or the second, I can't recall.

It took me 2 trips to get all our bags from the Holiday Inn to the Balmoral. Two trips but it did not take me a long time. I checked in to the Balmoral and a bellhop took my bags off my hands in the lobby. He brought them up to the room, so that by the time I arrived with the second set of bags, the first set was in the closet of the room. I settled in, and set about unpacking everything, including setting up your computer, so it would be easier for you to write. I am thinking of you, in this small gesture, of setting up your computer, of pulling the desk away from the wall to plug it in, and maybe there was even a keyboard packed in, on top of everything else, I can't recall clearly.

So during all of this somehow, and not impossibly, the weight of the computer, or the books, depresses the record button, maybe not all the way but enough to keep it activated. A shift that might have occurred after the bag was packed and zipped and set upright to sit on its wheels in the Holiday Inn, or while the bag was being transported and bounced

off the curbs on the way to the Balmoral. Or when the bellhop stacked the bags in the closet in the room. And then another small shift in weight takes the pressure off the record button.

Now how the recorder gets set back to an earlier spot, as you claim, we don't know. Maybe it wasn't where you thought it was. Maybe you misremembered. Maybe you didn't write it down. Maybe you just got it wrong, so much going through your head. It is possible.

And when I found the tape I asked you to listen to it, because I know how your mind works, I said "let's listen to it". And you said you didn't want to, because you wanted to demonstrate that you trusted me, which was kind of a lie, because you didn't trust me, you had for the past two weeks been stewing in Tobago, absolutely convinced that I had a boyfriend in San Jose, so much invested in your fears, which is all they are, is fears, you almost paid for a second hotel room at another hundred dollars a night.

And again the next day I asked if you had listened to it, because I knew that even if, the night before, you claimed you didn't want to listen to it, that you wouldn't be able to help yourself. And you said you listened to it. You said that you added, "to part of it." And I thought that was the end of it. But it wasn't to be. This thing took on a life of its own.

To what purpose do I go on and on and on about this? Because for you everything depends on this tape, this ugly thing you did to convince yourself that your fears were true or false.

Didn't the author you admired in your recent DSP write "nothing like a death threat to induce paranoia..."? And I should have been with you in Tobago, it was that vile man Ron who convinced us that your life was in danger. It was with him and his lies, his greed, that we became scared, that you began to question everything about us. And now he is a thousand dollars richer and our lives are forever poorer.

And is there another possible explanation? There may be. Could the tape have been had to begin with? Yes. Could you have listened to part of the tape and then put it away incorrectly, somehow depressing the record button? Yes, because you didn't leave that embarrassing machine in plain sight.

In your handling of the machine could something like this have happened? Of course, because you did not cut out the tab in the tape which prohibits re-recording, because you had not listened to the tape when I first suggested it, because you only gave a partial hearing to the tape the next day, because the tape was unlistened to for several days of handling and moving around and packing and unpacking, then repacking for Golfito and unpacking here, all the while with the cassette in the machine.

Couldn't you have just listened to the damned thing when I suggested it, and put it back in its case? And please explain to me why in the world I would ask you to listen to the tape if you think I purposefully tampered with it?

Isn't it just quite possible that something less innocuous happened to the tape other than your theory that I purposefully tampered with it to cover up a phone call to a boyfriend you claim I wanted to meet, or call off a meeting with, while you and I were having an emotional and, to me, eagerly awaited reunion in the Holiday Inn?

Isn't it possible that there is no boyfriend, that you were afraid, your fears heightened by these all-too-real death threats, real enough that you would leave the country, real enough that we would change hotels frequently, real enough that we paid real money to get information?

Isn't it possible that I have been with you only, while I've been here?

That, for all my faults, I am just living a monogamous life with you?

That I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you? That you were the "one"? Not one of many?

That I changed my entire life to give us a chance, that I wanted it to work, that even when I screwed up and said the wrong thing or did the wrong thing, or intended to do a wrong thing, that it was just me working out living with you, me doing some emotional growing up (which is endless), me just making innocent mistakes or speaking carelessly?

Isn't it possible that there is no stirring subplot to my life here with you?

We could have worked out our problems like every other couple who has to deal with living with someone new, committing to someone new, and learning about how to make this new creation of theirs, their life together, work. We could have sorted out the *inevitable* kinks that every couple has.

I am doing it again. Talking to myself. Talking at you. I know all these words are falling on deaf ears. I am so pointless. Trying so hard, but it will be to no avail. You are wedded to the story you have woven, married to your fears, and any effort on my part to demonstrate my innocence is viewed by you as one big lie.

You want me to listen to your side of things. I understand your side of things. But you have taken it too far, your logic is based on fear and nightmares. If you are wrong, if you consider that your conclusions might be incorrect, consider also that I can be the only one of us who actually knows this today. Consider that I understand your fears, but I can not support your conclusion, which is the biggest lie of all.

So I have come full circle, made some peace with this frustration. There is nothing to be done now. I am assumed guilty. Can not prove my innocence. Doomed to guilt always, because how can I defend myself, it is impossible. When I do have proof, a receipt, a phone bill, you are placated. But when I do not, you will never believe in me, and I don't think you want to believe in me. You believe too much in your own fears.

Thank you for listening. After three hours of typing and crying into the sleeve of my robe, I am spent and, somehow, drained of emotion for the meantime. Now, at least, I can get on with the remainder of the day, after a sleepless night, vacant but at least not sobbing into the steering wheel, into my shirt.

The only words that seem fitting at this time are I love you Allan. I want good things for you, and in your life, that doesn't include me. How deeply I do love you, how sad I am to leave.

I will try to tough it out and stay here, as we agreed, until the end of this month.

I know you are on your way to Puerto Viejo, to try to get some work done, to get away from me, and here I am, shadowing you with this e mail, not giving you any peace you think. But I something in me is still fighting for you. When I am wallowing in self pity somehow I come around and my love for you, and I know your love for me, somehow gives me some strength to reach out one more time, another last effort

Lisa