

Advice from the Trenches: Poison Control

Dear C and Dr. B,

My wife had reserved some books at our local library for a workshop she was teaching at an after school program. She ran out of time doing prep for the workshop and asked me to pick up the books for her while she continued packing up materials. I drove to the library and found the books waiting on the reserve shelf.

I picked up the pile without looking at them, and if I hadn't had to hit the brakes suddenly for a guy who ran a stop sign, I might never have noticed any of the titles. But as fate would have it, they slid all over the front seat and floor of the car and I had to gather them up. They were mostly craft books, but two of the titles were a bit of a shock. One was "The Empowered Woman's Guide To Divorce" and the other one was "The Poisoner's Handbook."

We've always had the occasional quarrel, but nothing serious - this seems out of left field. Should I be worried?

- Pete in Peril?

Dr. B says: I would hope you are not in the position of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and delivering your own message of execution! But I think you may need to have a conversation with your wife. I'd start out with "Dear, is something bothering you?" and I would offer to go to counseling with her if there is. It not only adds in a third party, whom she would then need to kill as well, but it also might diffuse whatever pressure or resentment has built up. Of course, as yet you don't know if there was any to begin with. For all you know, she might be researching for a new play or book or screen play that she is writing.

Good luck.

C says: What exactly does your wife do? If she is in fact a writer, then an explanation for the books seems plausible. But if she is a visual or teaching artist for children, I have to wonder what the divorce and murder is all about. She may have a friend who is getting divorced and needs answers. She may have seen a movie or TV program on crime and gotten curious about an unsolved murder. Or - she may be getting ready to hire her own lawyer...after she poisons you.

If you want to test the waters without seeming obvious, there's a few things you may want to check for. Does your wife grow lilies of the valley? Walter White used an extract from this plant to poison a few people on Breaking Bad, but even the water in a vase containing these flowers can contain a lethal dose of poison, so if you see new flower arrangements suddenly appearing around the house, watch out! Another decorative flower you should beware is Oleander. This one is so toxic that a single leaf can kill an adult if ingested. Peace Lilies are lethal as well. Do you have a pet your wife has a problem with? Philodendron is especially toxic to cats, as are many plants in the lily family.

Honestly, I think you are probably safe. She did ask you to pick up the books, and murderers rarely ask their victims to fetch the means of their own destruction or give them an opportunity to figure it out. But every marriage could benefit from periodic efforts to touch base and find out if you are meeting

each other's needs. Let's put it this way - if your wife really does want to get rid of you, some kindness and concern could change her mind. It certainly never hurts.

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com