In what follows I am going to tell the full story of everything that has happened between Jennifer Lee, Evans Clinchy, and me. I know that some people will eagerly read this because they are well acquainted with all of us and were already aware that something was going on but were unclear on the details. Some may read it out of prurient curiosity or interest in human drama. Some may find it distasteful that I am apparently airing dirty laundry that was better communicated privately. I too would have preferred to handle a number of matters discussed herein in a private way, but they have made that impossible. Furthermore, actions that they have taken have had a ripple effect that have made these affairs impact not just the three of us, but many mutual friends of ours and—as I will explain later—to some extent the entire North American Scrabble community.

My message is not intended primarily for Jennifer and Evans, and they are not the people I feel the need for resolution with. My target audience is the rest of the Scrabble community. At the same time, I am sure that the two of them will not be happy about many of the things that I reveal in this writing. Though my intent is not to attack them, they have also done absolutely nothing to deserve my protection. Furthermore, I believe that a full perspective on the history of my relationship with Jennifer is necessary and relevant to understand the context of events that have affected the entire community. And I also want to make sure that I am not guilty of presenting a partial and biased view of events, so I will do my best to reveal all of the relevant details, including ones that are not complimentary and sometimes embarrassing to me.

I will be discussing events and times when all parties involved, including me, were in an emotionally distressed state. My intention is to be completely honest and forthright about what my thoughts, intentions, and emotions were at the times these things happened. Please do not infer from this that these descriptions correspond to what I think and feel today. I am in a very different mental place from the times when these events happened, most of which were several years ago. I will also present contemporary evidence, including my own writings. The writings do not reflect the current state of things, but are a window into these past events. Also, the reason I am going into so much detail about my past relationship with Jennifer is not in any way because I am hung up on that relationship. It is only because the repercussions of its history continue to affect our lives in very concrete ways up to the present day. As I hope I will convince you as you read this, the relationships that I do have hangups about and want to address are my relationships with the rest of you.

There will probably be people who read this who will conclude that I am a jerk or worse and will be predisposed either to disbelieve me or dislike me more afterward. I'm sure there will be others with a different opinion as well. But no matter how much you like or dislike me, or agree or disagree with me putting these things out in public, I hope that anyone who knows me well enough will appreciate that I am 100% honest all of the

time. I never lie about anything, and I have told nothing but the truth in what follows. If there are any factual inaccuracies, it is entirely due to error on my part, and I am doing my utmost to ensure that there are none. At the same time, there are many things in this story which I intuited to be true long before I actually had the evidence to verify that I had intuited correctly. There are many aspects of what has happened that have increased my faith in my own intuition, and I will do my best to make clear when I knew or believed things in an intuitive way as opposed to when I knew them for sure.

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I first met Jennifer in 2014 at a local Washington DC Scrabble tournament, but we didn't get to know each other much then. It was only at the National Scrabble Championship in Buffalo that summer that we really started to talk a lot. She was married, which I knew, but sparks were flying between us very, very quickly. Nothing specifically romantic happened between us at the tournament. We never kissed or anything like that. But I did get her phone number, and we did start texting each other incessantly. Most of our conversation was explicitly about Scrabble and me coaching her. This continued in the week following the tournament, while she was competing in another tournament in Delaware. She was clearly exhausted and strung-out from playing two tournaments in rapid succession, but as soon as the Delaware tournament was over and she was on her way back to DC, she wanted to make plans to come down to Falls Church, Virginia, where I was living, the very next day, i.e., Monday evening, for dinner and Scrabble.

This is when I slammed on the brakes. Yes, I was highly attracted to her, and I had already crossed a line by texting back and forth with her to a degree that assuredly her husband wouldn't have been happy about if he had known. But now this was like a date, and I could very easily see things going in the direction of an extra-marital affair. I'm not speaking from any feeling of moral superiority or judgement here. I've made the mistake of getting involved with married women in the past, but I've tried to learn my lesson and not repeat the same errors. I tried to turn her down or at least delay the meeting, as she was clearly exhausted and needed rest. But she was relentless in insisting we meet right away, and I relented.

The plan was for me to pick her up at the Metro station and take her to a restaurant for dinner, but before that she wanted me to take her to some place like a park. I saw immediately where this was going. She didn't want to go back to my place, but she wanted to be somewhere we could have a private conversation. When I took her to the park, it was kind of hilariously awkward. We found a private spot, and then she just didn't say anything nor look at me at first. She was so insistent in putting us in this situation, but she didn't know what to say or want to make any kind of first move. Finally, I spoke up about how it was obvious that there was a lot of attraction between

us, but I also made clear in the conversation that I was not going to continue seeing her. I don't know what she was expecting to happen. It seems to me that she might have thought that by talking about these things at that moment we might have been able to resolve the tension or "solve the problem," but as I said at the time, it doesn't work like that. The more we were alone together and talked, the more our attraction was going to keep growing.

We ended up going to dinner and then going to the party room on the first floor of my apartment building to play one Scrabble game afterward. She did not come to my apartment. I brought her back to the Metro at a reasonable hour. We never even kissed. And in accordance with what I said, I didn't go out with her again afterward, but I did add her to the mailing list for the Collins Scrabble Club we had in the Washington DC area. The text messages basically stopped.

About a month later, when we had not been having private communication, she started reaching out via text again, and she was relentless again, this time insisting that we talk on the phone. I didn't want to. I texted her that nothing good was going to come of us talking on the phone. But she insisted that we get on the phone so she could tell me something that would only take ten seconds. Again, I eventually relented, and what she told me was, "I'm getting divorced." I still didn't agree to continue talking to her or see her immediately after she told me this. It didn't seem like a good situation to get into, and I was also not entirely out of another romantic entanglement with someone else at the time, though that other "relationship" had already degraded and was on its way out.

In the same month that Jennifer told me about the divorce, a good friend of mine died. This was September 2014. I was very broken up about that and traveled up to Connecticut for a weekend for the funeral. I wrote some things about it on Facebook, where Jennifer and I were already connected. Jennifer started providing me some consolation about what I was dealing with over text messages, and I think it was around late September when she softened me up enough to agree to see her again. She came down to Falls Church and spent the night with me three times in late September and early October. She told me that her soon-to-be-ex-husband had already moved out of her apartment in DC.

It was maybe our fourth date when I first came into DC to have dinner with her there. After dinner, I drove her to the front of her apartment building, where I had never been before, just to drop her off. When I stopped the car, she sort of invited me in, except that she didn't want me to come to the apartment, just the rooftop deck of the building. This immediately raised my suspicion and got me asking questions, through which I discovered that her husband still apparently had boxes of things in the apartment and might be back and forth to pick them up and move things out, so she thought it

wouldn't be a good idea for me to be there. I can't say for sure that she explicitly lied, but this was not the impression she had given me earlier. She made it sound like he was already entirely out of the apartment before we even went on our first couple dates in Virginia.

Further questioning revealed more details that she had been hiding. Her mother was flying in from Seattle later that evening and wasn't going to be there until well after our dinner date. That part she had already told me before we went out to dinner. But what I learned, while we were sitting in the car, was that she had convinced her soon-to-be-ex-husband to pick up her mother at the airport that evening and bring her back to the apartment. That's right. She had convinced me he was no longer in her life and went on a date with me, WHILE she was having him pick up her mother.

I was not happy with this. I told her I was not sneaking around with her. I had not signed up to be her secret lover rendezvousing on the rooftop while her husband brought her mother back to the apartment.

And I stopped seeing her for several months. There was one Halloween party that we went to together, because before that DC date I had already made the commitment to take her, and she had gotten a costume for it that she was really looking forward to wearing. I didn't really want to go on the date with her, not in the least because things had very temporarily heated up between me and the other girl a few days before Halloween, but I always try to stick to my commitments and my word. We had kind of an awkward time on Halloween, but after the party she did ask me to take her home with me. I admitted what was going on with the other girl. I just dropped her off, and we didn't date for almost all of the rest of 2014.

In summary, in September and October we had about four dates in relatively rapid succession, and then this one-off Halloween thing a few weeks later, and then didn't see each other for nearly two months.

As we approached the holidays of 2014, this time I was the one who tried to win her back. By this point, my other romantic entanglement was over, and her husband and all of his stuff were truly out of her apartment. She was reluctant this time, but she eventually let me take her out to a nice dinner in DC just a few days before she was flying back to Seattle to spend Christmas and New Years with her family. We had a good time together and ended up chatting a lot over text message while she was away for the holiday. The holiday in Seattle was stressful for her, and she decided to move her returning flight earlier. I picked her up at the airport on January 1st, 2015, and that's essentially when we began something resembling a real relationship. We started attending Scrabble tournaments together, and I introduced her to many of my longtime friends in the game.

Jennifer and I were in a de facto relationship, but she was never willing to commit to exclusivity. Though we got along well during most of our time together, my attempts to talk to her about these issues always resulted in us talking in circles and not resolving anything to my satisfaction. I don't necessarily consider myself polyamorous or into open relationships, per se, but I am also not orthodox-thinking or draconian about what constitutes a relationship. As far as I am concerned, whatever two consenting adults agree to is fine.

I understood that Jennifer was not eager to get into a committed relationship quickly and still felt a need to be out there and dating, because I had similar feelings in the time after I divorced in 2008. But it was maddening trying to talk to her about these issues, because she was both avoidant about direct communication and unwilling to analyze and accept what were to me clear conclusions about her behavior and attitude. I don't remember things well enough to give a clear description of how our conversations went, but I do remember what my takeaways were from these conversations, and in retrospect experience tells me that my intuition was exactly right.

It was obvious to me from these conversations that there was nothing polyamorous about Jennifer or her desires. She was happy to date me and be sexually active with me, because she preferred me to anyone else right now, but she needed to be able to see other people. She said that she was only going on first dates with other people and she wasn't having sex with them, but I could tell that as soon as she found someone she liked better than me, she would have been happy to "trade up" for the other person. Furthermore, she agreed that if she was going to see other people, she couldn't say no to me doing the same. But she didn't want to know about it. There was no open and honest communication here. My general feeling was that she wanted to lie and to be lied to. It was in my opinion a terribly unhealthy approach to a relationship, but when I tried to reason with her, I got nowhere. And even though I knew it was an unhealthy relationship, when we just didn't try to deal with these issues, we ended up spending most of our time together anyway in what was a de facto relationship, and we had a good time.

By the way, in the first few months I wasn't seeing anyone else, and I didn't want to, even though I was free to do so. There were several times later on in which I did start seeing other people at the same time as her, but overall it was a minority of the time. I never felt serious about anyone else I was seeing concurrently with her. It was mainly a distraction to keep me from thinking too much about her and becoming too reliant on the relationship with her. But that said, it worked. It was often when I was least depending on the relationship with her that she and I had the happiest times together.

In late April 2015 I went to Los Angeles for a weekend trip to my sister's wedding, and then I had a mini-vacation in Portland, Oregon for the first half of the following week. I was mostly catching up with an old buddy from DC in Portland, but I did meet up with the Collins Scrabble group, which included Dave Wiegand, Pete Armstrong, Conrad Bassett-Bouchard, and Evans Clinchy while I was there. Evans was actually my contact person who told me when the club was meeting. At this point, I do not believe that Evans and Jennifer had met, and the fact that I was playing Scrabble with him there is immaterial to the story, but it's just kind of a funny fact in retrospect.

I got back to DC midweek, and that Friday Jennifer and I were heading up to Ontario together to play in the inaugural Niagara Falls tournament. This was the first weekend of May. We were taking a flight from DCA to BUF and then renting a car to drive across the border and staying in a cute bed & breakfast near the venue that Jennifer had booked. We had planned out all these logistics well before I made my west coast trip.

Jennifer and I met up on Friday at the airport having not seen each other since I got back from Portland. This wasn't a concern to me, as I had only been back for a short time and we were both busy with work. We ended up driving Rob Robinsky, Weibin Toh, and one other player from the airport and dropping them off in Niagara Falls. Then we checked into our B&B and went straight out to dinner.

While Jennifer and I were out to dinner that night, she told me that she had spent the entire last week that I had been gone having sex with another guy, and that she didn't want to continue seeing me after this tournament. She didn't tell me this BEFORE we flew and drove all the way to Niagara Falls or AFTER the weekend was over. She told me on the FIRST night, right when we were starting a long weekend together. Furthermore, her behavior in having sex with this guy was not in accordance with what she had already told me were the parameters she had set for herself, i.e., that she was only going on first dates and not having sex with anyone else. When I pointed this out, the only logic I got from her is that she had changed her mind and changed the rules she was abiding by, but she had felt no need to inform me of that.

We were still stuck together for the weekend. It was awkward, and it was exactly the kind of personal drama I don't want to have to deal with in the middle of a Scrabble tournament. I took the approach of this sucks, but let's just make the best of what we've got and try to play good Scrabble. And I had a mediocre result, but neither the tournament or the weekend was a disaster, all things considered. But of course we broke it off right after that weekend and didn't see each other for at least a month.

In what was a chronic pattern for us, we couldn't stay broken up. We stayed connected on Facebook, and though she didn't necessarily use it a whole lot, we still had some window into each other's lives. We still emailed sometimes. I was still hung up on her,

and a few months later I somehow won her back. (Whether I actually “won” here is a good question.) She eventually decided near the end of June to break up with the other guy and get back with me. As she later told me, the last straw came when a flower delivery came to her place while he was there. She decided she liked being with my flowers more than him, and she threw him out. This time she told me that he was really out of her life for good. She did still have tickets to a video game music concert event in Pittsburgh that she had been intending to go to with him near the end of the summer. (More his and her thing than mine. The two of them apparently used to play console video games together. His name was John, by the way.) But she assured me that she was not going to go to the event and was going to sell the tickets.

After that she and I were back together again for what ended up being most of a year. I do not believe she was necessarily seeing other people during most of the rest of the time we were together, but she was still unwilling to commit to an exclusive relationship, with one very brief exception. We were again unhealthily avoiding talking about our relationship issues most of the time, because whenever we did we spun in circles. However, at one point when things came to a head, she finally agreed that it was time to try being in an exclusive relationship, “because nothing else worked” for us. So we decided to do it as a four-week trial period. We would reevaluate at the end of that time and go from there.

This attempt at a four-week relationship lasted less than a day. We didn’t fight or argue or have a difficult time on that day. Nothing about it was very different or worse than other days we’d been together. But the sheer idea that she was in an exclusive relationship put her into such a mental panic, that she had to declare it was over. This was a pivotal moment for me, in which I recognized that her refusal to commit to me had NOTHING to do with me. It was entirely about what was going on in her head and her own deep-seated issues. And I stopped taking it personally. From that moment onward, I took the approach “I’m just going to be the most supportive boyfriend and friend I can be, and put zero expectations on her.”

I’m not looking back at that time with rose-colored glasses nor saying that I was a perfect saint. I still screwed up plenty. I got upset at times and didn’t always say things as kindly or gently as I should have. But I truly, genuinely believe that I got to a point of selflessness, generosity, and love in that relationship that was better than I have achieved with any romantic partner, including my ex-wife. More so than I have with any other person in my life except for my son. And I’m not even saying I did this particularly well relative to any other human. I’m sure there are lots of people out there who have been more selfless, generous, and loving to their partners than I ever have been or ever will be. I’m just saying it was a personal best for *me*.

At some point, while Jennifer and I were in the middle of our usual trials and tribulations, she told one of her close personal friends who had never met me what was going on. And that friend, who had only heard her side of the story, told her that it sounded like I was being a saint and she was being crazy. And that if she didn't change the way she was doing things, she was likely to lose me. I know this because she told me. So I at least have that data point that someone else thought I was handling things well.

Meanwhile, the World Scrabble Championship was going to be in Perth, Australia in November, still many months away, and both Jennifer and I had interest in going to the tournament and traveling around Australia. I liked the idea of having her as a travel partner and kept trying to cajole her into making it a big trip with me. In late July, we finally decided to commit to making the trip together. We booked flights and lodging all over the place. We would end up going to Perth, Exmouth/Coral Bay, Melbourne, and Sydney on a three week trip. We each paid for our own flights, but I paid for the lodging and meals on the entire trip, which I offered to do as part of convincing her to come with me. In retrospect, at the time that we booked the trip, we had only been back together for about a month after she broke it off with the other guy, although it didn't feel quite that short to me, perhaps because we had never really fallen out of contact.

I could tell that she was reluctant to commit to the trip with me, though I thought that was mostly either because she wanted to do her own Australia trip her own way or just didn't feel our relationship was ready for it yet. However, literally *one day* after we booked all of the flights and all of the lodging for the entire three week trip, she then revealed to me that she was going the VERY UPCOMING WEEKEND to Pittsburgh for this video game concert with John. And she didn't think this was a relevant thing to mention AT ALL when we were making a massive financial and time commitment to a trip to Australia together.

Again, this contradicted what she had told me earlier about how she was going to sell the tickets and had broken up with the guy forever. (She literally used the words "we are never ever ever getting back together" from the Taylor Swift song.) In her logic, she hadn't lied because she thought the things she told me were true at the time she had told me them, but she had changed her mind and felt no obligation to tell me about that. My communication about how much her behavior hurt me and my attempts to lobby her not to go with him were for naught. She was—as usual—completely unpersuadable of doing anything differently than her way, and I was much less able to accept and handle it at this moment than I had been at my selfless best.

I was furious, but I also felt I was committed to that trip to Australia with her, as we had already put a lot of money down on many nonrefundable things. As in Niagara Falls, I

decided that I would still go through with the trip with her and the make the best of it, but it was going to be over between us as soon as that trip was done. Perhaps not the best decision making on my part, but as I think I've already illustrated, we both had a lot of trouble letting the other one go, even when things went south. (And this time we were going very far south… <rim shot>)

When she went away to Pittsburgh, I spent most of the time howling, screaming, and crying in my bed. At earlier times in our relationship when I knew or suspected that she was out with someone else, I had often gone on Tinder and started swiping on other girls or chatting with them. I had never used Tinder or any online dating before going out with Jennifer, by the way. I started using it specifically to keep my mind off of her. I did go on some Tinder dates sometimes, but often I just liked to use it to look at the girls and chat with them, just to get myself not to think about her. But on this particular weekend, I couldn't even bring myself to look at Tinder or think of anyone else. I was just in harrowing pain, both emotionally and physically. I felt sick to my stomach.

While she was still on the road with him that weekend, she emailed me, telling me that she had made a mistake going on the trip with him and that she would rather be with me. And she specifically spelled out in the email that she did not have sex with him at all that weekend. This was on August 2, 2015. I was stunned by this email. Maybe I was gullible. I kept letting her treat me like a yo-yo, pushing me away and pulling me back in. But at the time, this email seemed so much a complete 180º turn from the words and attitudes she had shown me after revealing that she was going to Pittsburgh with the guy, that it seemed to me she might have had a breakthrough.

And the next three months (August through October) while we were in DC together before we left for Australia, were the happiest time in our relationship. We still never made it a de jure exclusive relationship, but I think that de facto we were not seeing anyone else. Things were going really well, and by the time we left for Australia I was no longer feeling like we were going to call things off after the trip.

On October 30th to November 1st 2015, she and I spent about 30 hours getting ourselves to Perth and settling into our downtown AirBnb rental. The first day after we arrived we made a day trip to Rottnest Island with John O'Laughlin, Cecilia Le, Jesse Matthews, Jesse Day, and Evans Clinchy, all people who had been friends of mine for well over a decade. We were part of a tour group that took a boat ride over in the morning, rented bikes for the day, and then took the boat back around dinner time. On the boat ride there, Jennifer was doing everything she could to be the it-girl, chatting up Jesse Day and Evans. I saw and understood very clearly what was going on and said nothing. Jennifer hadn't dated a lot before she had been married, and she hadn't perceived herself as someone who was desirable. When she started dating and appearing with me, a prominent Scrabble player who was socially well-connected to a

bunch of other prominent Scrabble players, she had gotten to know a lot of these people and her social status had risen. She was getting noticed by more guys, and she liked that attention. I totally understood where she was coming from, and I sympathized. I wasn't thrilled with the fact that she wasn't acting like my girlfriend, even though everyone else there knew we were staying together, but nothing that happened on this particular day bothered me much, and I didn't feel the need to say anything about it. I don't think she actually crossed any lines on this day, even though her behavior was certainly not that of a devoted girlfriend.

It might have been later that evening or the next day when she and I were home at the AirBnb that we were engaged in a conversation while her laptop was open and on the screen was Evans Clinchy's Facebook profile page. I want to be very clear here. I observed immediately what page the laptop was on, but this was a complete 100% nonissue to me. It was not something that bothered me, nor that raised any suspicion on my part. However, while I was engaged in conversation with her, I saw from her body language that at some point *she* noticed what page the laptop was open to. I could easily read off of her that *she* was uncomfortable with this and that she was gradually positioning herself—while continuing to engage me in the conversation—in such a way that she could get close to the laptop and shut it so that this page was not shown anymore, in a way that she thought she was being subtle and unnoticed. It was like a little kid who was trying to steal candy. I could read her clear as day, but I didn't care and I showed no sign that I noticed what she was doing. I just ignored it and carried on the conversation. But I made a mental note that she must be interested in this guy and was embarrassed about the possibility of exposing that to me.

Fast forward to a group dinner at a really nice restaurant called Petition. I know for sure that Dave Wiegand, Cecilia Le, John O'Laughlin, and Evans were there with me and Jennifer. There might have been one more person. We were all seated around a round table. John and Cecilia were on my right, Jennifer was on my left. Evans was immediately left of her. And Dave was on the other side of the table. For the entire dinner, Jennifer had her chair positioned so she was sitting much more closely to Evans than to me. She also had the chair turned so that she was almost facing him. And she relentlessly hit on him for the entire dinner. She kept trying to chat him up in a playful way and get him engaged. Evans did absolutely nothing wrong. I could tell he found the situation a bit uncomfortable, but he handled it about as well as possible, respectfully engaging her when she talked to him, by trying not to let things get too carried away. It was 100% obvious not just to me but to everyone else at the table what Jennifer was doing, and again all of these people knew that she and I were traveling and rooming together, and had known us as a couple in Scrabble for a while. At one point I looked the other way, and my eyes met with Cecilia's. We both did an eye roll just about simultaneously.

But I never spoke up or got upset or showed discomfort or displeasure with the situation at all during the dinner, except for the silent gesture to Cecilia that no one else noticed. Let me clarify again that although I can give Jennifer a free pass for behavior that was a little bit like this on the Rottnest Island boat, this time she was over the line. The way she behaved was clearly disrespectful of her relationship with me, and I'm 100% sure that was not just in my perception but also the other people at the table. After we left the dinner and were walking back by ourselves to our AirBnb, I spoke to her about it. We had a civil conversation, and I believe my message to her about how hurtful her behavior was to me got across to her. Maybe not right away, but the next day for sure.

On that next day, the tournament had already started. At lunch break, I couldn't find Jennifer anywhere, and she sent me a message from her phone letting me know where she was hiding, on the side of a hill away from the view of the rest of the players. When I found her she was in tears and highly apologetic about her behavior the previous day. In retrospect, the way she expressed herself in that moment, she seemed more worried about how she had come across to my other friends—especially Cecilia—than she seemed to be about my feelings, but I didn't make a fuss about this. And from that moment onward for the rest of the Australia trip, she recommitted to me. She didn't talk flirtatiously with the other guys anymore. She acted much more like my girlfriend, held my hand while we walked, and didn't shy away from showing affection for me in front of other people. The rest of our Australia trip went great, both at the World Championship and around the rest of the country.

After Australia we came back to DC, and Jennifer and I continued dating through most of the first half of 2016. I will spare you the details, but it was a lot of the same dynamics and problems. Unlike in 2015, there were not a lot of big dramatic events that led to the breakup and makeup game, but there was a general ambivalence from her of sometimes withdrawing from me or pushing away, especially when I was feeling more strongly about her and acting clingy. And when I was feeling like this was getting close to ending or I was losing interest, she would pull me back in more. She kept repeating the yo-yo dynamic, but I wised up gradually. We didn't have any kind of dramatic breakup, or really any breakup at all. We just kind of gradually ended up seeing each other less.