I am awake early on a Sunday morning.  
My lover and son are asleep.  
I drink coffee, read the paper, and every now and then look out my bay windows. It’s early, but not still. Things are moving.  
A rabbit’s hopping near the old, peeling white trellis, scarlet roses everywhere. My tops and panties ripple in the breeze on the clothesline.  
And now I see a pretty woman—she must be in her forties—hopping up the stairs to visit my neighbor.  
My neighbor is a young, handsome artist, as many men here are in this small, artistic town, who earns his rent building houses, as even more men here do. And he’s having an affair with a much older, married woman, he once told me, and now, I have just gotten to see her, and I love it. It’s voyeuristic, yes, but ultimately soap operaish; because one day, in this town which gets smaller every week, I will meet her, at a parent meeting or at the local farm stand. And I will feel close to her in a way she can’t possibly know. She’ll probably never know I watched her bound up the stairs to her young lover or that I was re-living that euphoria I had enjoyed many years ago when I first moved here from the city. That we share something.  
My then-husband and I had just gotten here when I met a younger
man and had an affair. And I know with a certainty that is as fierce as knowing when you love, that it would never have happened back in the city. Not that affairs don’t happen there. But there’s a fluidity in a small town you don’t have in the large city, where things seem more fixed: socially, architecturally, economically—even temporally—who has the time? There’s more time where I live now. Here, where there are no nannies, jobs are secondary to families, art, and love, even immoral love. Or perhaps especially immoral love.

As a teenager, in the city, I watched a lot of soap operas. I longed to have people show up at my door unexpectedly the way they did on those shows, but it rarely happened. You don’t just get on a subway and show up at someone’s apartment. What if they’re not home? No one has time for that. And then there was the fear of a mugger at one’s intercom. So we called and made plans first.

But New Yorkers will also walk by a friend’s building without giving a thought about popping in, or up, because cameras, intercoms, doors, more doors: there’s no seduction. You can’t see anything until you’re in. If you get in.

The relationship between interior and exterior is more fluid here in the country, where private and public blur. I’m inside, I’m outside, in a matter of seconds. I see plenty that is going on around me. And I can be seen. Here, you really might just “happen to be in the neighborhood,” and find me outside gardening or writing or you might even see me in my living room. Houses are approachable. They show skin. They’re looser, available, closer to nature. They’re penetrable. Here in the country, people are unexpectedly in and out of my house all day: friends, neighbors, workers, my kid’s friends. The affair, in fact, began with an unexpected visit—the bored housewife’s fantasy par excellence.

Showing up out of the blue is romantic. It’s tied to the stars, with a sense of fate, not earthbound obsessional scheduling. It’s both less committed and more committed at the same time. No calls or plans. But it’s real. Fleshy. Immediate. I like the sexy casualness of it; I want to be overwhelmed, to lose control, to submit.
I’m still wondering if all that Clinton/Lewinsky coverage I was exposed to before I moved here had something to do with my lapse of moral character, and my confessional mode. “Clinton's Europeanized us,” I told my then-husband, “he's made the American affair almost de rigueur.”

It was a powerful meme, this cheating meme. (The word meme was coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976. A meme is the cultural equivalent of a gene—an element of a culture that is passed on by non-genetic means (brain to brain), especially by imitation, like: ideas, tunes, fashions, and customs. A group of memes, like those found in a religion, a book—even an essay—are called memeplexes, at least for now. Though I wish they'd come up with another word, like memesome. It sounds better and it makes sense—a chromosome is to genes, what a memesome is to memes.)

Anyway, I heard the unfaithful meme loud and clear, from just about everywhere: Adultery is okay. In fact, it's pretty good, and everyone does it. Ha, ha. We're human. If you think the percentage of affairs didn't go up after our great model, our father figure, Clinton, was exposed, you don't understand memes. It's like our dad gave us permission to stay out late. He was like the weed-smoking parent we stole pot from. It's not that I blame my infidelity on Clinton or the memes. I made the decision. But there's no question I was influenced.

It’s almost noon. The guys are up and playing in the yard. I see the married woman’s car still. And I know what she is doing. I am that woman. (Aren’t we always?) I’m also that trellis, a little worn, in some ways damaged. And the roses: tangled, revealing, growing. And that pink tank top flapping in the wind on the clothesline, drying in the hot May sun.

It’s nice, I think, drinking my now cool coffee, to dry clothes on a clothesline. I certainly don’t need to. I have something most city dwellers deeply covet: my very own laundry room. And it’s good that I do, too, because here in this soapy, small town, which gets smaller every day, and where the physical space allows you to feel alive, life is pretty messy. But oddly, there is room for it.