

# **TEN TERRIBLE TRUTHS ABOUT MEN**

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## INTRODUCTION

### BE QUIET NOW, IT'S MY TURN TO TALK.

***“Praise makes me humble, but when I am abused, I know I have touched the stars.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

***“It is sad. One half of the world does not believe in God, and the other half does not believe in me.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

It is time for drastic tactics.

A word about harsh words.

Some thoughts about the unthinkable. Confronting the truth about WHY we are unwilling to confront the truth. There are those who say that this book is too brutally honest. Cruel in its candor. The book contains answers, alright—but to questions that you were either too dim or too timid or just, well, too *female* to ask.

The bald fact is this: there have been dozens of self-help books written, purporting to tell women how to snag a man, make a man happy, lose weight so that they will be more attractive to men, get a man to propose, keep a marriage alive when the honeymoon is over, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

And yet, in spite of this flood of advice, I have traveled cities and suburbs from one end of this great country to the other, in my quest for the secrets of the sexes, and I swear, women are looking crankier, lonelier, more depressed and desperate, and last but not least, chubbier than ever before.

Clearly, the current crop of books is failing for vast numbers of women. And I believe I know why. First of all, because many of them were written by women who are thin, blonde, botoxed, financially thriving, and who therefore cannot possibly speak for the rest of the women in their species, any more than they resemble them physically. These women are, in many respects, a part of what you other women should, in truth, consider “The Enemy”. More on that in a later chapter.

My point is, if you want to hear what men are really like, and what they really want from women, and the depths to which they will descend, just in order to have some steamy sex—and lastly, if you wish to learn what to do about all of this—the fact is, you should probably listen to a man.

More to the point, you should listen to the collective agonized shriek of legions of bitter, frustrated, exhausted, but still searching men who have tried in placid tones to make ourselves understood, only to have you respond with some vapid non-sequitur about shoes you just purchased at ten percent off.

Not only should you listen to those shrieks, you should hear them. Really hear them, for the first time in your life. And so now, it is time for you to read this. The TEN TERRIBLE TRUTHS ABOUT MEN.

Read the book, and it will inflame you with righteous indignation.

Accept the truths of this book, and it will be the last self-help book you will ever need. Not the last one you will ever want to read, please note. But the last one you will ever need. Reading subsequent books will not make you happy, but happier.

Because this is the book that will finally make you happy.

Trust me on this.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE TRUTH? YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!

*“Women, as some witty Frenchman once put it, inspire us with the desire to do masterpieces, and always prevent us from carrying them out.”*

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

*“Every woman is a rebel, usually in wild revolt against herself.”*

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

Let me begin this blunt, brusque book, “TEN TERRIBLE TRUTHS ABOUT MEN,” with one of my favorite Hollywood anecdotes. It is the story of how I accomplished the nearly impossible: broke into Hollywood. Now I will grant this much, you have probably never heard of me, not even if I told you my true name. And I have not yet achieved all of my Hollywood goals. But I have gotten in the doors through which many of you seek to pass. I have supped with the stars you only gaze at on the silver screen. I have heard their infamous stories told in the first person. And this is how I got in: by drastic tactics. Just as this book should represent for you a last, drastic self-help book.

My first step was to write, by hand, a towering stack of letters to assorted “Players” (primarily screenwriters) in Hollywood. They were handwritten, rather than computer generated, so they would not look like part of a huge self-promotion campaign. I spent quite a bit of time on these letters. You don’t want to be a writer writing letters to other writers requesting a little chunk of their time without getting it just right.

The letter snagged me a number of lunch meetings. Huzzah! I was not to be part of some massive “pitch fest,” where hundreds of writers turn out, each with only a couple of minutes to pitch to big Hollywood suits—no, I was to have private lunches with these writers and producers; my meeting with that genius duo of Lowell Ganz & Babaloo Mandel lasted for two whole hours! (Babaloo Mandel, by the way, who is one of the highest paid writers in Hollywood, made his journey West after his stand-up comedy partner blew his brains out. How’s that for creating a thriving career out of tragedy?) One writer, whose privacy I will not violate by mentioning his name, granted me a particularly productive meeting, during which time he gave me a glowing review of one of my scripts. He even said that he’d had similar ideas himself, and he envied me for executing

mine first. He had asked me for the best script I had, and I'd given it to him. He thought it was one of the best scripts he'd ever read, but definitely over the head of the average movie audience. He then said that if I gave him the script I considered to be not necessarily my "best script," but my "most marketable," he would personally recommend it to his agent, who turned out to be one of the most powerful women in Hollywood.

Jazzed and stoked, I gathered my things to leave the meeting. Before I did, I asked him what he thought were the two most important things that any "marketable" script should contain. Without missing a beat, he responded: TITS and TREES.

I probably had some visual facial reaction to his alliterative bullets of wisdom, because he chuckled and explained: ***"Hollywood people are nearly all liberals, so they're tree huggers. You know, environmentalists, in love with nature, who like to live on a few lush acres really far from other real folks. They just love trees. Indifferent about people, sometimes hate them outright. But they love to worry about nature. They're crazy for trees, go figure. So they like panoramic views of 'em in their movies. Car crashes and gun battles may pull in the box office bucks, but show me an Academy Award Winner that doesn't have in it bountiful shots of Mother Earth in her glory.\*\*\* Forests primeval and all that jazz."***

[ \*\*\*How Green Was My Valley, The Sound of Music, Rebecca, Dances With Wolves, Out of Africa, Around the World in Eighty Days (they fly over lots of nature), Braveheart, Avatar, Hunger Games, Philomena ...the list of tree panorama scene movies goes on and on. Plus as I write this, you've got that whole Lord of the Rings crew being nominated, in which the arboreal extras even get dialogue: "...This year's Best Supporting Actor—a mangrove tree!" And Best Picture Academy Award Winners that don't have actual trees have heroes that dream of living or working among trees—Titanic and The English Patient both feature lovers stuck plunk in the middle of panoramic shots of the wrong kind of nature, and they're always gabbing about getting the hell out of the desert or the drink, off to someplace peaceful—presumably a cozy cabin in the woods, if not an A-frame in Aspen. Same for the West Side Story lovers, trapped in urban sprawl, crooning about "A place for us..." which you just know is a place with trees. Platoon and Deer Hunter are about fighting wars in jungly forests. Forest Gump is named after a bunch of trees, John Nash thinks he works in a cabin in the woods (A Beautiful Mind), The Gladiator fights in the forest, and he thinks he's eventually going to get home to that house in the woods (maybe it's a Russell Crowe thing). ]

So. Lots o' trees.

But they're all money-mongers too, those Power Players who pull those levers behind the Tinsel Curtain, and when it comes to the movie business, they know that SEX sells tickets. So even if a movie doesn't have a lot of violence crammed into it, you

always, always got to have lots of cleavage. In fact, in Hollywood, it's so 'in their face, twenty-four hours a day, in this silicone city—tits, tits, tits, cleavage, cleavage, cleavage, boobs, boobs, boobs—that if they have to sit through a two hour movie without lots of breasts, they go through withdrawal. So you want lots of tits in your movies\*\*\*

[\*\*\*tit to wit: Tom Jones, Midnight Cowboy, Shakespeare in Love, Titanic (nude figure drawing), Amadeus (absolutely bursting), American Beauty (the cheerleader variety), Silence of the Lambs (cross-dressing cleavage), Wolf of Wall Street, American Hustle, Dallas Buyer's Club (boy cleavage)]

And lots of trees. Trees and tits. Tits and trees.

("Frozen" and "Gravity", inexplicably, think that we will like them without having either tits or trees.)

That's the magic formula, the one they don't tell you at those screenwriting seminars. To hell with political correctness, it's all about décolletage and Dame Nature.

And so, when preparing my 'most marketable script' for the screenwriter's perusal, I put together a little joke for him that I thought was quite funny: I bought a few X-rated magazines and I clipped out dozens of pictures of breasts, boobs, brisket, tits, jugs, knockers, headlights, bazooms, yentabongers, (and of course, there's the Russian word for breast—"enigma."), however you care to parse it, and I playfully glued them here and there, throughout the pages of my script. Then, as a finishing touch, I gathered other magazines that were not X-rated, and I clipped many lovely pictures of trees, forests, bosks, thickets, chaparral, saplings, spinneys, woodlands, arboretums, etcetera, and I glued those in too. Sometimes I nestled the little pictures of breasts in amongst the trees, and glued them next to a character's monologue, since monologues, while sometimes structurally crucial to the story, are always a challenge to the gnat-like MTV attention span of Hollywood script readers.

I then left the script in a manila envelope on his front stoop, as we had discussed, then went to a bar for a beer and a chuckle, at my little antic. Imagine my horror, then, when I came home from an overnight "slumber party," if you will, to this message: ***'Hey! Got your script, but I just found out I have to leave town for a week, gotta catch a plane in twenty minutes. Since I loved your other script so much, I just messengered this one right over to my agent. I know she'll love it. I'll read it when I get back.'***

My reaction itself was, funnily enough, like a scene from a movie. I gulped audibly and dropped my glass of buttermilk. I remember leaping into my car and flying to the agency where the script had been sent. It was a Saturday, but using the kind of intrigue that one only sees in the movies, I got into the agency and into HER office: the powerful female agent, a known man-hater, who was always photographed at all the big feminist events around town.



I found my manila envelope opened, and my script gone. Here is how the story turned out: (And herein lies the true introduction to our book entitled “TEN TERRIBLE TRUTHS ABOUT MEN.”) She was offended and horrified. She was appalled and irate. She took an immediate loathing to me, and told everybody about my breach of taste. The reaction was cataclysmic and widespread. Everybody heard about it, she made sure of that, and guys all wanted to take a glance at the script. They all claimed that they wanted to take a look at the story written by a man who would do something so daring and suicidal, but I secretly think they wanted to peek at the tittie pictures. I noticed that when the script was finally returned, those pages were dog-eared.

And the thing is, because there was a rather brilliant story lurking around all that cleavage, the script got optioned.

That’s how it all started, for me, in Hollywood.

Bold moves. And breasts.

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***“The book of life begins with a man and woman in a Garden; it ends with Revelations.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

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Even though the preceding story appears to be one about Hollywood, and not about boy-girl relationships, it is really the best way to start this book, “TEN TERRIBLE TRUTHS ABOUT MEN,” not only because it reaffirms the ugly truth about what corndogs most men really are, but also because it points out a second, equally uncomfortable truth: sometimes you have to say shocking things to get the world’s attention. And when it comes to the need for the utterance of shocking things, most people do not care to hear them, much less be the social pariah who utters them.

And since we are setting this introduction in Hollywood, there is one more story coming out of that town which explains a great deal about why love goes wrong. It is based on a cloyingly stylized but covertly wise flick starring Sandra Dee and her husband Bobby Darin. It is called “If A Man Answers,” and it contains the secret to a happy marriage. To any relationship, for that matter.

The movie starts out with Bobby “picking up” the gorgeous Sandra; he offers to buy her a hat, and Sandra is so amazingly adorable during their whirlwind montage of dating that he quickly proposes. (This is set in 1962, remember, when men still had a propensity for that kind of silliness.) However, once Sandra has legal ownership of Bobby, things quickly fall apart. This is a movie slightly ahead of its time, in that the ‘happily ever

after” comes at the beginning of the movie, and it goes downhill from there. It is a movie about trying to get the bliss back.

After attempting a whole battery of strategies, Sandra Dee ends up crying in her mother’s arms. Sandra weeps and whines, and asks why is it that her mother’s marriage is so blissful? What is the secret to a happy marriage, Sandra begs to know?

Her mother tells her the great secret of lasting love: **“TREAT YOUR HUSBAND LIKE A DOG.”** Sandra is naturally shocked and offended that her mother would talk about her father in such disparaging terms—or that her elegant French mother would be so sarcastic and low class in her regard for all of the opposite sex, for that matter! Sandra’s serene and gorgeous mother (portrayed beautifully by Micheline Presle) tells her daughter in a firm but caring tone to sit down, shut up, and listen. So let me echo her wisdom, please. And if you find yourself balking at this book, at any point, please hear me telling you, in a firm but affectionate tone, to SIT DOWN, SHUT UP, and LISTEN. GOOD GIRL.

Here is the advice of the mother in the movie:

***Men often leave home. Dogs never do.***

Think about it. How many times have you had guys flee from you, sometimes without any explanation? Yet your dog comes bounding to the front door, every time he hears the telltale jingle of your keys in the lock. No matter how predictable your routine or strange the hours you keep, that adoring face is always there when you step across your threshold, waiting to cover your face with kisses. (Even if you are a cat owner, and the feline insists on playing that pseudo-alooof game with you, a house cat who is loved will hardly ever run away from home.)

Why? Is it that pets and men are so different? No, not really.

The difference, as Sandra Dee’s screen mother points out, is how we treat them. There is a huge difference between the way women treat their dog, and the way they treat their man. Particularly when marriage sets in. You coo to your pet, and talk to it in the most adoring tones, except on those rare occasions when it misbehaves. Even then, ever notice how it is impossible to stay angry at your pet for longer than a few minutes?

Yet many times, a woman will shriek at her man, before he even has a chance to misbehave—if she wants something from him, if she’s had a bad day, if she even suspects he is not listening, if she senses that he dares to think that something is more interesting than what she is saying—the TV, for example.

You would never think of interrupting your pet when he is eating his food, because you understand enough about primal creature issues to know that you could lose your hand. At the very least, it would be cruelly unsettling to a pet that you wish to see happy. Yet you harangue at your man all through dinner, sometimes every night. And what is worse, you intrude on his simple pleasure of watching sports, even though you know this annoys him, and “the game” is as primally important to him as food is to a dog: it is

armchair armed combat, “La Guerre La-Z-Boy, his kitchen colosseum where he is a warrior, a gladiator, a vicarious victor. And a peek at the purse you bought today at half off, or your news flash about Lisa's bikini wax lawsuit, all your nattering just can't compete, so don't even try.

And think about this: You schedule certain moments in your day for quality time with your puppy—walking him, talking to him, even rolling around on the floor, cuddling and playing and tickling and massaging. Do you go out of your way to do this with your man?

Enough said.

So, if the above makes any sense to you—and if you think there might be some truth to it, even a truth that offends you—read on. You will be glad you did.

Trust me on this.

\*\*\*\*\*

***“A kiss can ruin a human life.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

***“Women are meant to be loved, not understood.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Sphinx Without a Secret*

## CHAPTER TWO

### SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX, SEX

***“Nothing is more painful to me than to come across virtue in a person in whom I never expected its existence. It is like finding a needle in a bundle of hay. It pricks you. If we have a virtue, we should warn people of it.”***

Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

***“The only difference between the saint and the sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

This chapter comes early in the book, because it is terribly unpleasant, and I like the thought of getting it behind us and getting on with it.

Actually, most of the chapters in this book are rather unpleasant, which is why I am fairly sure it will be a huge failure. Nonetheless, so much of it is painfully true, which you will see if you are honest with yourself, that you will at least understand why women have so damned much trouble with the opposite sex; then after you read this, you can all herd back to The Mall wiser, if not happier.

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For men, it is all about getting laid. For men, it is all about having lots and lots and lots of sex. For some freaky reason, probably having to do with the antediluvian days of the survival of the species, many men need to go through long periods that can last years (decades, if they are particularly Troglodytic) during which they do whatever they have to do in order to have as much sex as possible, with as many women as possible. That's just the way we're wired.

Your problem, as women, comes in finding fault with that.

This is tough to swallow, but you'll swallow worse if you are willing to do whatever it takes to get a man, so listen to that again, with a more accepting attitude:

***Many men need to go through long periods that can last decades during which they do whatever they have to do in order to have as much sex as possible with as many women as possible. And even if the harsh realities of modern life make such a lifestyle***

*a thing we would shun, when it comes right down to it, that doesn't mean that we don't think, nay, fantasize about having as much sex as possible with as many women as possible.*

YOUR PROBLEM, AS WOMEN, COMES WITH FINDING FAULT IN THAT.

I realize that sounds like a terribly misogynistic thing to say, but you have to ask yourselves this: why shouldn't men do that? What is it about life that makes that wrong? Who are women to judge? Millions of years of evolution have created a gender which knows mostly about conquering, conquests, and reproducing as much as possible, so that the species has a chance of surviving, what with all the Bengal tigers lurking about, and all the children who die in childhood of horrible diseases. Forget that there is no more real danger from tigers or any other four footed carnivore; forget that in civilized societies, children hardly ever die in childhood. Those relatively recent (given the Big Picture) changes for the better DO NOT and CANNOT reverse millennia worth of conditions and conditioning: Conquer the enemy, take their women into your power, and reproduce, reproduce, reproduce.

(We're working on changing, I promise we are, but it is going to take time. And patience on your part.)

And so if you think that millions of years of evolution and conditioning have turned men into virtual sex machines, let's now add to it the twists of twenty-first century life, and see how, if men were libidinous lotharios before, they now have cause to be ten times worse:

1.) Birth control takes away the whole "fear of pregnancy" thing. (Since we don't always want to reproduce, reproduce, reproduce. Not really.)

2.) Sex is a fantastic and immediate stress release strategy in a world that suddenly has so overwhelmingly much stress in it that we are now shooting each other on the freeways, taking calm-me-down drugs in record amounts, keeling over from heart attacks long before our time, and watching reality television that is primarily about the suffering and humiliation of others, just to distract ourselves from our own.

Were we ever so stressed before, in the entire history of our species? A good long look at modern life makes the bliss-injection of a good roll in the hay seem not only delightful, but imperative. And since most grown-up men have to spend almost every day of their lives confronting these stressors in one way or another, no wonder they are looking to get laid as often as they can. (Or at least masturbate a hell of a lot.) It doesn't eliminate or repair any of the other sources of stress, but it gets you through the day. It may be merely a band-aid on a tumor, but there is no finer distraction. At least, that's how most guys see it.

3.) Most men find modern life humiliating, (although we would rather have a gratuitous prostate exam than admit it to you on a date), and sex is a great counter to that humiliation, even if the ego boost it provides is fleeting and, in most cases, false. According to all the data, both qualitative and quantitative, both empirical and anecdotal, most men hate their jobs, crave a far better car than they own, did not win the woman of their dirty little dreams, feel grossly underpaid and overworked, owe huge amounts of money (partly because of the opposite sex, by the way), and are harassed both at home and at work by Significant Others (or, in some cases, Significant Bothers), even if that harassment takes the form of nothing more than a seductively appareled, face painted female employee leaning over our desk, displaying her ample cleavage, then threatening us with career-decimating litigation, should we so much as comment approvingly on the view.

On top of which, every time we find ourselves standing in line at the grocery store, be it to buy a six pack of beer for the game, or that box of Tampax that you insist on sending your personal knight-in-shining armor to purchase, without a thought to his pride, thank you very much, we are assaulted by snapshots of sultry, pouting, nubile young models, their breasts protruding from the magazine covers (without even a soothing woodland shot of TREES to offset it) ... and always, always, shouting over their liberally moussed heads are the dreaded Cosmo headlines, which invariably claim they can teach women how to control us poor men even more than they already do.

It's enough to endanger erections everywhere. (And apparently, it does, considering the amount of Viagra sold annually.)

And then, when men finally do grow up to the point where they can quite possibly get a handle on the above assortment of crises, irritations, and humiliations—their own bodies turn against them! (As in, the prostate exam is no longer gratuitous.) Now that they are finally in a position of power in their job and making decent money and in control, their hair begins falling out, their teeth start falling out, and their gut expands in proportion to their ballooning responsibilities. Worst of all, their penis stops getting as hard as it once did, back during the days of their miserable and arduous youth.

Is there any greater betrayal, any more painful disloyalty or treason than that? Your own body turning on you! Your Mini-Me from Down Under, who has been your dearest friend since puberty, is suddenly not returning any of your calls!

BUT!— if a guy can manage to counter all of this humiliation and ego stomping by a quick roll in the hay—suddenly, you are King of the World again. And getting laid is something a man can accomplish, sometimes rather easily, if he is willing to say the right thing, tell a few lies, tolerate that which in some moments seems intolerable, and/or stoop to the unsavory and/or the indiscreet. (As in: a man will give the illusion of enjoying something or someone he loathes, if he has learned that there will be occasional sex involved, as a reward for his tolerance.) Oh, occasionally his conscience may bother him,

because the most sure fire way to get laid, and get laid quickly, is to bear false witness: tell her she is pretty, smart, witty, not like any other woman you've ever met, and dammit soldier, be prepared with the specifics of why and how that is so.

But on the other hand, his conscience may not bother him. After all, he is doing what he must, to find the courage and confidence to go on doing what he must do in the world. And without him, how would his sector survive, after all? Women must not get angry at men for thinking like this. Guys are not evil or wicked. They are not even mean-spirited and hurtful. They are just weak and lazy and frightened, and even a bit dim. Creative though some of their seductive stories may be, that is about the extent of their mental dexterity.

Please note the subtle but crucial distinction between analyzing men and judging them. I firmly believe that my above evaluation is true of most men. That is not a moral judgment. It is an objective analysis. It is not unlike finding a large, old, hand-hewn trunk at a flea market. You can either appreciate all the flaws and knots in the wood as part of the trunk's character. Or you can buy a brand new particle board storage case at IKEA, with its smooth, perfect finish and limited life span. Up to you.

What women ought to do, rather than loathing men or judging them too harshly, is appreciate them in spite of all their loathsome qualities.

And so, there you have the lowdown on why men are obsessed with sex, and thinking about it almost non-stop, even as you are secretly planning the wedding and picking out a china pattern: millions of years of evolution, combined with the horrors of modern life. Ego humiliation, and mindseering stress.

If women are to love men or even tolerate them, it must be in the face of, and even in spite of, these unpleasant truths about them. And most difficult of all, women must accept that much of the time, there is nothing they can do to change any of this.

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***“The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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## SOME FUN AND IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

FOR YOU: Ferret around, find that blank Journal you bought after seeing “Bridget Jones's Diary” for the third time, and crack that baby open. Get prepared to write, and write honestly.

(NOTE: The softback printer of this books actually comes with a blank area of lined

paper beneath the questions. But if you purchased this as an e-book, don't think that gets out of the exercises. I was serious when I said find your Journal—or of course any blank paper will do—and answer the questions. Do the work. Better if it's in something bound, though, so you can look back on the first few answers to this first round of questions as you evolve. )

1. What negative behaviors do YOU engage in, just because you are a chick, and are wired that way; you just can't help it? Just the way we guys can't help it...(i.e., if we are sexaholics, what kind of -aholic are you, and what is the real damage it is doing to you and yours? Here's a tricky one: is your seemingly harmless non-chemical addiction hurting you and yours? Examples: your shopping, your gabbing on the phone all the time, your websurfing, you addiction to soap operas etcetera?)

2. Do you think that a man can love a woman deeply and have sex with another woman/women at the same time?

3. Can you forgive an infidelity from the man you love?

4. Can you forgive recurring infidelity from the man you love?

#### IMPORTANT ASIDE:

There are a couple of instances in which I think it is fair to condemn we male bastards for womanizing, and I want to set those out right away, so that you and I don't have a complete parting of the ways.

1. If a man tells a woman that he is ready to settle down with her, and then, if he keeps hunting down new prey, he is a lying bastard, and should be treated as such. If you are married to him when he goes ahunting, you can try to take him for everything he's got.

Having said all of that, statistics reveal that there is a probability your man will cheat on you anyway, at least once or twice. What you decide to do about it is your business, not mine, so what is there for me to say about it?

2. When a man decides to have kids, the joy of procreating and the pride of having created offspring absolutely necessitates a trade: kids require unbelievable amounts of time and energy, and if a man is out prowling for women, in all likelihood, he cannot be giving his children what they need. A divorced man with children can date, and a married man can slip up and possibly be forgiven, but the fact of the matter is that there is a fundamental change in priorities once kids enter the picture, and a man who does not understand and accept this immutable truth must be squashed like a bug.

All in all, I guess it all comes down to this. When somebody I loved deeply betrayed me, I asked myself this question: IF we can get back to a semblance of what we had,



twenty years from now, will I be glad that I forgave the person and moved forward with the relationship?

THAT ENDS THE ASIDE.

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***“Women are not meant to judge us, but to forgive us when we need forgiveness.  
Pardon, not punishment, is their mission.”***

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

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But other than that, ladies, if a man is single, what he does is his own business, and it is not Woman’s place to judge him, as long as he’s honest about being a man who plays the field.

Just because women are programmed to want to settle down and get married and raise children, that doesn’t automatically make Man wrong for following his nature. It just makes him frustrating as hell.

AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH

You can feel any way you want about the fact that men are such thoroughly sexual creatures. For that matter, you can feel any way you want about this chapter, and about me for pointing it out. That is your right. That is your prerogative. Such power the wily reader wields! But the fact remains, I have hammered home such an unpleasant truth so that you can have a chance of understanding men, and then, quite possibly, seeing through their duplicity.

LIE, LIE, LIE

The male’s obsession with sex will lead many men to lie, lie, lie in order to get what they want.

Again, they can’t help it. “The Lie” often appears to be the most efficient way for men to get what they want. And to get them that which they have convinced themselves they not only want, but need.

And since we all know from Dr. John Gray’s pithy observations that men are fundamentally problem solvers, it follows logically that to a man, The Lie is not so much A Sin as A Tool. The artful lie is merely a step in problem-solving to him, like

purchasing a caulking tube prior to bathroom repairs, or unscrewing the bolts in order to remove a flat tire.

You need to make home upgrades, you go to the hardware store. You need to change a tire, you gotta remove the flat so you can put on the new one. You need to get laid right away, you take a deep breath and lie. You think the truth will get you laid? Try again, pal.

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***“Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Ladies, I can feel your resistance from here. Very carefully now, no sudden moves, step away from the Cosmo.

Still, I feel your resistance.

And so, a few examples: Can you imagine a man saying the following *honest* things, and having the slightest chance of getting laid:

—***“Hi. I’ve really got the hots for your best friend, but I notice she’s dating my boss. Can I have sex with you and pretend it’s her?”***

—***“Hi. I don’t think you’re at all attractive from the front, but you have a great ass, and hey, I can work with that.”***

—***“Hi. You have far too much make-up on, we’re talking enough to cover a corpse that’s been in the water three days, but I know that lots of make-up is usually the M.O. of a chick who wants to get laid, so how about it?”***

—***“Hi. My ex-girlfriend is over there with her new boyfriend, but I see she’s eyeing me. Can I put my hand on your tit to make her jealous?”***

***“Hi, you’ve got a laugh like someone choking on a chicken bone, but women never laugh at my jokes anyway, so we’re a perfect match. Wanna fuck?”***

***“Hi. I am never getting married again after what that bitch did to me, in fact I am never even dating again after that weird woman stalked me all over town, but I really need to get laid. How about it? No names, no phone numbers, no morning after, just a quick feud with the ferret?”***

***“Hi, you talk more than any woman I’ve ever met, but I know just what to do, to shut you up, baby...”***

***“Hi. You’re big enough to be redistricted, but I’ve had more than my share of pork chops, truth be told, so let’s stop waiting for the Disney prince-slash-princess to come along, take a deep breath, and lower our standards, bigtime. Do I feel a multiple***

*orgasm coming on?”*

Ladies—are you starting, at least just a little bit, to see where I am going with this? Being honest will rarely get a guy laid.

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***“There is no secret of life. Life's aim, if it has one, is simply to be always looking for temptations. There are not nearly enough. I sometimes pass a whole day without coming across a single one. It is quite dreadful. It makes one so nervous about the future.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

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So ladies, are you following this? Are you with me? Of course men don't tell the truth. It just doesn't solve the problem at hand.

And, it is your job, as a human heart putting itself out there, to be aware of this at every moment, and to never let your guard down.

Now, this begs some obvious and urgent questions. Firstly—Why should women bother with men at all?

Well, the answer to that can only be the echo of what Louis Armstrong said when the white woman asked him “What is jazz?”

***“Lady, if you have to ask, you'll never understand.”*** And that, by the way, was a gorgeous example of a man being honest. When they are, it's a beautiful thing to behold. And since it actually does happen once in a blue moon, that's another reason to put up with their lies.

(Besides, what are your choices? Be a Lesbian? I give it six weeks; all you ladies would see exactly what we men are up against, and you'd come panting back on your hands and knees. Become a nun? You could never handle the footwear requirements. The level of your self-esteem is too completely correlated to the height of your heels.)

At the end of the day, best to except this general axiom about males:

- a.) Many men have an insatiable sexual appetite.
- b.) As a result, they tell more lies than there are stars in the sky.

So know this. When you meet him in a bar or at a party or on a blind date or however you meet him, chances are that you two are not thinking the same thing. Say, for example, you are at your favorite watering hole, and he sidles up during happy hour and offers to buy you a drink. Here is what the two of you are thinking, and how completely

you are on different wavelengths:

HIM: Hi there.

HER: Hello.

HIM: I've noticed you here before. *(You have a hot body. Well, not as hot as my fantasy. You're no 10. But considering what I'm capable of attracting, you're passable.)*

HER: I've noticed you too. *(I noticed your left hand. No wedding ring.)*

HIM: What's that you're drinking? Looks like one of those fancy umbrella drinks? *(How strong is it & how many have you had?)*

HER: Oh, this is a Cosmopolitan. You know, like Carrie drinks in "Sex and the City." *(If he buys me a drink, that's a good sign. Oops, I wonder if he'll get the wrong idea about me, if he thinks I watch that show all the time, and I'm trying to be like her. Does he think I'm a slut already?)*

HIM: Oh yeah, I've seen that show. *(Maybe she's a slut. There's more sex on that show than in the Penthouse Forum letters. If she watches it, she must want it, and want it bad. Wait—does that mean if I drill her tonight, I'm going to be analyzed in the morning when she has breakfast with her girlfriends?)*

HER: Yeah, well it's OK, but I like a lot of those cable shows. And sometimes I like watching NASCAR. *(I better make him think we have things in common. Shit, I hate that football season is coming up. I hate trying to start a relationship at the beginning of a sports season.)*

HIM: Yeah, I like cable too. They're so much more realistic. I mean, if you're going to talk about the relationships, and the mob, and Hollywood, and all that, you just have to, well, you know, use language you can't use on the networks. You know, honest talk. *(Fuck. If she does talk about me with her girlfriends, I wonder if she'll talk about how much dick curves to the left. Then again, if she has breakfast with her girlfriends, it means I don't have to hang with her in the morning. This might not be so bad after all.)*

HER: Of course, you have to be careful who watches those shows with you—kids, I mean. It's a little x-rated for kids. You know what I mean? *(Do you have children? Have you been married? How many times? Do you pay alimony? How much do you make? Are you looking to get married again? Will your X be a problem? Would you like to get married in a church, or someplace exotic, like Cancun?)*

HIM: Well, I don't have kids, so it's not an issue.

HER: Oh. Well, I didn't—that is—what I mean— *(Good. No baggage. Wait, why doesn't he have kids? Hasn't he ever been married? He's got to be in his thirties, what the hell is wrong with him that he's never been married? Is he commitment phobic? Oh fudge, maybe it's worse than that. Does he have a record? Does he cross dress? Maybe he's sterile.)*

HIM: So, can I buy you a drink? **(Damn, I can hear the cogs in her chick brain working. Look at her trying to figure out how much my suit costs and checking out my key chain to see if she can tell what kind of car I drive. Better get her drunk fast.)**

HER: Sure, that sounds great! **(He's falling for me! I will always remember this moment.)**

HIM: Let me try to get the bartender's attention. **(Hot damn, she's making googoo eyes at me. I wonder how long that will last. Wait'll she finds out I drive a Yugo.)**

STILL HIM: Bartender, could you make the lady's drink a double? **(If she still makes googoo eyes AFTER she finds out I drive a Yugo—is that bad or good? Shit, does that mean she'll like me for what I am, or does that mean she's really desperate? Is she a stalker? I wonder what her problem is? Damn, women are confusing.)**

STILL HIM: Bartender, make mine a double, too.

See what I mean? Two different languages. **“If you wish to have a relationship in English, Press One. If you wish to have a relationship in Female, Press Two. If you want to learn the language of the Opposite Sex, Press Three. To go back to the Main Menu...”**

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***“If a woman wants to hold a man, she has merely to appeal to the worst in him.”***

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*

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JUST FOR FUN:

1. Grab yourself a jumbo piece of paper. Journal pages alone may not be enough. Recreate below the last meaningful chat you had with the Opposite Sex. Below each sentence, put subtitles. Are we having fun yet?

2. Did you know at the time the above conversation was going on that there were such subtitles involved—and that the subtitles on the screen might sound nothing like the words coming out of his mouth?

3. If the answer to Question 2 was YES, and then YES again, go back, back, back in your female memory and ask yourself when you first became aware of these subtitles, and how you have used that knowledge to protect yourself, and to get what YOU want?

4. Now, this hard part. Do the subtitles for your part of the conversation. And remember, the Goddess is watching...

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***“It Must Be the Second Greatest Disappointment for American Brides.”***  
—Oscar Wilde, *Upon visiting America and seeing Niagara Falls for the First Time*

## CHAPTER THREE

### SAY ANYTHING

***“Many a young man starts life with a natural gift for exaggeration which, if nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something great and wonderful. But, as a rule, he comes to nothing. He falls into careless habits of accuracy, and in time he develops a morbid and unhealthy faculty of truth-telling...and often ends by writing novels which are so life-like that no one can possibly believe in their probability.”***

Oscar Wilde *“The Decay of Lying”*

***“I sometimes think that God, in creating man, somewhat overestimated His own ability.”***

Oscar Wilde *“In Conversation”*

It is amazing how many women will go to bed with a man, simply because he has said the right words. He has not spent money on her, he has not taken her any place special, and he may not even have that many desirable qualities to offer: he ain't rich, he don't like his job, he don't speak high tone, he dresses like the loser in a New Jersey bowling league, his car is a piece of crap, and his future is about as promising as the Menendez Brothers'. But if he says the right things, he can get laid.

And the guy thinks this is great, because saying the right thing is free; it doesn't cost him a cent,\* and it can be learned by a dude of even moderate intelligence. (\*Sometimes it does require a moderate outlay of cash. But even then, it doesn't cost you as much money as it would if you didn't know just the right things to say.)

Since the above may sound as appalling and unbelievable as it does maddening and unfair, let us examine some of the reasons that women of all ages believe these outrageous lies we men tell them. This is what I have learned, both from my own personal experience, and from an exhaustive inquiry of men and women who will tolerate talking to me.

WOMEN BELIEVE OUR LIES BECAUSE:

- 1.) ***THE LIES ARE DESIGNED TO MAKE YOU WOMEN FEEL GOOD***

**ABOUT YOURSELVES.** And since the preservation of the “Ego” or “Esteem,” concomitant with a feeling of being loved, is the most important need of the human creature, after the basics of food and shelter are satisfied—and since virtually all women in civilized countries take for granted, since birth, that they will get enough to eat and always have a roof over their head—it naturally follows then, that most “civilized” females spend their entire lives in a frantic search for love and esteem.

Cases in point: why do women buy so many clothes? Do they do this to keep warm, or to protect themselves from icy arctic breezes or tumbleweed dust storms? No. Wearing “This Season’s Fashions” makes them feel more attractive than if they wear an item of clothing that is one-year-old. Which is odd, because sometimes, last year’s fashions look better on you ladies. But you do not see that, you do not care; you troop to the mall like lemmings off the cliff, and buy, buy, buy that all important Self-Esteem.

Why do women buy so many colors of nail polish, even though some of the shades look virtually identical to men? Do these women do it to protect their claws, which they need to fend off wild creatures? No. They do it because it makes them feel more attractive than if their fingernails were their natural color. They do it for their “Ego.” For their “Self-Esteem.” A coat of “Scarlett Letter Red” nail polish, lovingly painted on all twenty fingers and toes, makes them feel better about themselves than if they’d taken a course at a community college. And it’s so much simpler to accomplish.

Why do women read so many self-help books about males and having relationships with them? Because women feel like this information will help them to attain love, even though people have been loving each other for thousands of years, long before “self-help” was a phrase in the English language. Forsooth, I find it very ironic and amusing that this entire category of literature is called “self-help,” because if you were *really* helping yourself, you would be following your womanly intuition—and I do not consider myself a sexist for firmly believing that such a thing exists; I believe it is coded into the DNA, for the survival of the species. You would be trusting your instincts and your acumen, and learning from past experiences, instead of dupably downloading into your cranial computer the advice of charlatans whose primary goal is not to tell you the truth, as this book does—because the truth is unpleasant to hear, and even more unpleasant to practice—but rather, most books merely tell you what makes you feel good.

That is how come they sell so many. Which takes us right back to men who do that very same thing—tell you what makes you feel good, rather than the truth of what he is really thinking.

Which takes us back to why men will SAY ANYTHING, and get away with it: ***because we can!***

Because you give us “permission-through-submission.”

And so, the FIRST reason that so many women fall for so many of our lines is that these ladies’ lives are primarily about a search for love and esteem. We know that, and



our “lines” are custom tailored to provide the illusion of same.

But surely there must be more of an explanation than that, as to why women fall for men’s lines?

Yes. There are. Here are some more “bulleted reasons,” that do not require lengthy explanations.

2.) ***MANY OF THE FEMALES WHO FALL FOR OUR LINES ARE YOUNG, AND DO NOT HAVE THE EXPERIENCE TO SEE THROUGH OUR LIES.*** For all their young lives, they have been grasping, grasping, grasping at baubles and treasures that “look pretty”, and manipulating daddy to get them. (“Thankyou, daddy, you’re the best, daddy!”) Why, then, wouldn’t they gullibly gobble up words that “sound pretty?”

3.) ***YOUNG WOMEN ARE OFTENTIMES AS SUPERFICIAL AS THEY ARE HEARTLESS, AND SO HAVE NOT TRAINED THEMSELVES TO DISCERN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TRUTH AND A LIE.*** They don’t really care if a man has money or a great job, they don’t care if he is educated or witty, if he is kindhearted or considerate. Instead, they are still clinging to absurd priorities, like whether or not the guy spouting the lines is “cute.” Mix this with a couple of Jello shooters, and she’ll blithely believe anything. She is not unlike a “Sex in the City” character; she imagines herself to be a liberated and sophisticated Kim Cattrall—but she is only fooling herself when she tells herself that she will not get emotionally entangled. In the end, at the morning’s light, she invariably feels crushed and betrayed when she learns that his feelings are not and never were mutual.

4.) ***MANY OF THE FEMALES ARE DIVORCÉES, STARVED FOR ANY KIND OF ATTENTION AND AFFECTION.*** And they wolf down our sweet lies, just like a starving alley dog scarfs up an old hamburger it finds in the trash.

5.) ***SOME WOMEN, THOUGH NOT SELF-SUFFICIENT, HAVE MONEY COMING IN FROM SOURCES LIKE DADDIES AND X-HUSBANDS, AND HAVING BEEN THUS SHELTERED FROM DIRTY BOYS BY FILTHY LUCRE, THEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN FORCED TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT MEN WHO LIE***—particularly if their daddies and their X’s were capable of being wrapped around the lady’s little finger. If anything, it is she who has a history of being duplicitous, and she doesn’t yet quite understand what it is like to be the victim of similar manipulation.

That about covers it for females who are lacking in cerebration and sophistication, the ones who make “Romy and Michelle’s High School Reunion” take on distinctly

documentary tones to the male viewer.

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***“What people call insincerity is simply a means by which we can multiply our personalities.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Critic As Artist*

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Here are some further reasons that more sophisticated women fall for our lines, even when those “lines” come from men who don’t have a lot of money, who aren’t particularly promising or educated, and who don’t have great jobs or fancy cars:

**6.) MANY FEMALES ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT, HAVE A CAREER OF THEIR OWN, AND AREN’T LOOKING FOR MEN TO PROVIDE THEM WITH MATERIAL COMFORT OR FUTURE SECURITY; THESE WOMEN JUST WANT TO FEEL LOVED AND HAVE THEIR EGOS ASSUAGED.** These same women often complicate it by thinking that if they (the woman) have money, and the man doesn’t, well, then the man’s compliment must be sincere, because the man must feel lucky and grateful to have found a self-sufficient woman. Or—and this is equally likely—she assumes that just because she had good judgment in her business affairs, it means that she is a good judge of a man’s veracity, as well. Nope. Different buttons are being pushed.

Trust me, it doesn’t work like this.

But these reasons still don’t quite seem to explain why women who are otherwise savvy and experienced in the ways of life nonetheless keep falling for the myriad of lies and lines vomited out by predators of the opposite sex. There is one last reason that women keep making these massive mistakes in judgment which cause them such devastating heartbreak, ego humiliation, and often, thousands of dollars.

This is the heart of our duplicity, so listen up:

Otherwise bright women (and of course, dim women) fall for our lines because most men are willing to SAY ANYTHING to achieve our objective. The above listed reasons that women fall for our blather really has to do largely with the way that they are wired; conversely, the male ruthlessness when it comes to strategic palaver boils down to our ruthlessness, our willingness to say anything. We flirted with this notion in the previous chapter; now let us examine it in a little more depth.

There is an art to misleading women, and many of us tripods have worked hard to master it.

Here is one of my favorite examples. Let's call it, for the hell of it, STRATEGY

NUMBER ONE:

“IT’S THE WHOLE PACKAGE.”

Take a woman who is smart. Bright. Together. Savvy. Witty. And—how shall I say this diplomatically—less than a “10.” She is realistic enough to be able to appraise herself honestly: a few pounds overweight, imperfect skin, perhaps a few wrinkles here and there, and yet in spite of her advanced years and development, somewhere deep in her soul, she is still stinging from having been asked to the prom only at the last minute, and as a second or third choice, at that.

Yet when a man looks into her eyes and whispers sweet things, she believes them. Why? “IT’S THE WHOLE PACKAGE...” A woman who is not in denial may know she is not a “10.” A woman who is not in denial may realize that she does not have a perfect body. A woman who is not in denial knows that she does not have a history of being sought out by men.

You might think that this smart, cynical, realistic female would be too sharp to fall for a guy’s lies.

But this is exactly the kind of dame who falls for the “WHOLE PACKAGE” line.

It goes something like this. You are looking into her eyes, preferably in a fairly romantic setting—under the moonlight, or after a few glasses of wine. You tell her that she is the most beautiful girl you’ve ever seen. (What the hell; you give it a shot.) She eyes you skeptically. You can tell she is not falling for it. Damn. Don’t panic, though. You can always go for the ‘WHOLE PACKAGE’ line.

It’s time for a DoOver: (more moon, more wine.)

***“You are so beautiful, the most beautiful girl I’ve ever seen.”***

***“C’mon. Don’t tease me, that’s cruel. I know what I look like.”***

***“No, you don’t—you don’t see what I see. You don’t see you like I see you. I’m talking about more than just how you look—and you are beautiful, by the way—but I’m talking about THE WHOLE PACKAGE. I’ve never met anyone like you. You’re smart, AND you’re funny. AND you’re sweet. Why is it that women think men are so shallow that all they care about is how a woman looks?”***

And bam, just like that, you have her. Notice the nuance in the above line. You aren’t trying to get the girl to go against what she knows to be true about herself. You aren’t telling a lie so big as to be unbelievable. And chances are, if this girl is not a “10,” physically speaking, she has worked to develop her personality, brain, sense of humor, etcetera.

Finally, she thinks, a man who appreciates her for exactly what she is!

There you have it! While the old cliché lines which praise her beauty to the heavens might not work on this savvy chick, the “WHOLE PACKAGE” line is just what is called for in this situation. Her self-protective ego, which most of us possess to some degree, will allow her to believe that while she is not what you’d call a “10,” she is attractive, if

seen as “THE WHOLE PACKAGE!” Yes, this she can believe. This she has yearned to hear from some man's lips. This line she will buy, as a prelude to bed. Submission through permission.

Also, note how this line has cleverly, wickedly, put her on the defensive: if she disbelieves your compliment, suddenly she is “shallow,” because she is being like so many other petty women, all of them thinking that men are so shallow as to only care about looks. And since many women, particularly many bright women, are all too anxious to separate themselves from philosophical association with the more superficial specimens of their gender, they will be more than happy to distance themselves from the pack, and not think you shallow. What a thrill, they think, to meet a guy who cares about more than just looks, more than just “tits and ass.”

“THE WHOLE PACKAGE” line works a hell of a lot of the time.

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***A little sincerity is a dangerous thing, and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal.***

Oscar Wilde, *The Critic As Artist*

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## STRATEGY NUMBER TWO:

2. DEFLECT THE CONCERN—there she is, her mind racing, questions flying through her head: “Is this guy the one? Is he at least not a jerk? Is he just looking to use me, then drop me? Why is he even available? Is he a freak? A criminal? A crossdresser? I’ll wait a while before I sleep with him, this time.” Etcetera, etcetera.

One great way of shutting up the noise in her head and moving the seduction along is to call upon her maternal and nurturing instincts. This will shift her focus from her own worries about getting hurt once again:

Express your own profound concerns about getting hurt. Allude to deep heartbreak that you experienced because a woman (allegedly) did to you exactly what this new lady is afraid you will do to her. Talk about what it felt like to have invested all the time and emotions; talk about what it felt like to have your hopes dashed, talk about how much it hurt to be used for some woman's amusement, and then tossed out like yesterday's garbage ... Look into her eyes, making yours wide, like a puppy dog's, as you share the story of your heartbreak: ***“I really thought she was the one. One minute, we’re talking about having kids, and we’re moving in together, and we’re picking out paint chips and china patterns. And then, just like that, she leaves me for some rich stockbroker. Jeez, isn’t it enough just to be a nice guy any more?”***

Look deep into her eyes, then look quickly away, as though you are on the verge of a single tear:

*“I really cared about her. I mean, she seemed so sweet and sincere. Then, the minutes she meets my old college roommate, suddenly she stops returning my calls. He’s supposedly this big hunk stud, I don’t know, I don’t see it. But I guess I’m not a woman. He used to steal girls out from under me in college, too. I really cared about here...the thing is, I’m just not sure I can trust again.”*

Oh cripes, now she’s all yours. Go get her, boy!

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*“He knew the precise psychological moment when to say nothing.”*

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Do you see how brilliant this all is? You have articulated a veritable shoe tree full of the female fears in precise and penetrating terms, just changing the lingo a little, to make it sound like a male concern. Mirroring, it is called, in the literature of empowerment.

The Sly Guy has, in one fell swoop, done several evil-genius things, all of which collude brilliantly in disarming the prey and leaving her vulnerable:

a.) The man has appealed to her maternal and nurturing instincts: you, the man, have been terribly wounded in the past, but this new, kind damsel who sits before you is the one to rescue you, heal you, nurse you back to health, help you to trust again, to provide a loving relationship that will not ultimately break his heart and slay this rusted knight-in-shining armor. Is the poor lug asking so much? (If the guy talked like this around his friends, he’d get shamed out of the sports bar. But women love this kind of thing, and almost always fall for it.)

b.) The man has created a division, a wedge, if you will, between this woman (his prey) and that *other* kind of woman who has tortured HER (his prey) all of HER life: the head-cheerleader thing, the tall leggy blonde thing, the legacy of condescending looks, the catty remarks, the exclusion from girl-cliques. The COMPETITION, you remember.

This woman is delighted to hear you confirm what she has always secretly known: that so many women are truly bitches. And now, finally—Huzzah!—here is her chance to nurture a real man whom these women were too stupid and selfish to appreciate. Now, in her mind, it’s just you and she against the world.

c.) (This is the most powerful of the three, to my way of thinking.) The man has created a bond between himself and his prey: she has been hurt in this exact same way, she thinks! Your friends have actually stolen girlfriends from you, she marvels! She has

gone through the exact same kind of betrayal, losing boyfriends to her slutty roommate or the like. Amazingly, she has had men treat her exactly the way you have described being hurt by women! You and she are perfect for each other, both betrayed by your own gender, both survivors of the society of pain.

Oh, and by the way, if any of you are worried that this strategy of talking about past girlfriends could backfire and drive the girl away, because it implies “baggage!” “BAGGAGE!”

...Not to worry...

Basically, this is much more of a guy issue than a chick thing, the whole “baggage” business is. Specifically speaking, guys are the ones who dread baggage; guys want relationships that aren’t messy, talky, dramatic, traumatic, or otherwise encumbered. They don’t want some female hanging around their life that brings with her issues, neuroses, needs, fears, rage, shrieking, hostility, distrust, suspicion, and worst of all, a constant need to discuss The Relationship while The Game is on. And let’s face it. The Game is always on.

Guys want their chick to say dirty words during sex; chicks want their guy to think up new ways to say “I LOVE YOU” at the same time that he is trying to “get off” while attempting to peer through his lover’s armpit at the TV, so he can watch the college game scores on the Fox News banner crawl at the bottom of the screen.

Now, men are not completely intolerant, oh no no no. Guys know that women complicate a guy’s life by the simple fact of being female; that’s like the “carry-on baggage” that all normal passengers have. But any additional carry-on is the death of romance; the first time he has to strain himself stowing a lumpy suit bag that is your last relationship into his overhead compartment, and a guy will deplane. Frankly, he would simply prefer to stay earthbound and masturbate while watching Paris Hilton milk the cows and get straw in her privates.

Women, though, don’t have such baggage issues, when it comes to taking a man into their lives. In spite of how much they protest otherwise, they rather like it. It makes the man seem vulnerable, and in need of much TLC. In fact, a man with baggage comes across as more sensitive and less likely to hurt her, because he knows what it’s like. He’s been there. Apparently. Oh, sure, there is baggage that women don’t want to take on, like a passel of kids from the man’s previous marriages, or a stalking x-wife.

But a man who has been hurt by other women? That’s an aphrodisiac! “Wounded” and “vulnerable and “sensitive” and ‘still searching” trump the “baggage” argument every time. And so now you see why STRATEGY NUMBER TWO, DEFLECT HER FEARS, always works so well, even though I think it is so very transparent here, the way I describe it.

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***“I enjoy women with a past. They’re always so damned amusing to talk to.”***

—Oscar Wilde, Lady Windermere’s Fan

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A THIRD STRATEGY that works so well, in addition to:1. “The whole package” line and the2. “I have been hurt, too” bit:

This third line is a bit more complicated, so hang on. But in its complicated nature lies its very charm, so, well, like I just said, hang on.

YOU CREATE A STORY, A MONOLOGUE, IF YOU WILL, THAT IS SO PECULIAR AND DETAILED, SO MEANDERING AND UNIQUE, ( ***“GEE... AND MOST GUYS ARE SO RELUCTANT TO OPEN UP...”*** she will be thinking,) that you couldn’t possibly be making it up. Although, that is, of course, exactly what you are doing. Your adorable prey will rationalize to herself that you could not possibly be using this line on all women, just to seduce them. Surely she must be special to you, she thinks as she swoons, if you are sharing all of this with her.

Submission through permission.

Here is a really good one that a colleague of mine uses frequently, and always with lustrous results. He would take his dates to the cemetery where his grandparents were buried, bringing along with him a bunch of flowers for their graves. When he first brainstormed this tactic, he wondered how he could explain why he was coming to the cemetery on this particular night of the year, since he liked using the strategy almost weekly, to get laid. He couldn't exactly lie and say that he was coming to the cemetery because it was the anniversary of his grandparents’ birth or death, as that date was carved right on the headstones, of course. The explanation he came up with was, I thought, rather brilliant. He told his date for the night that back when he was just a little nipper, his grandmother would bring him a present every time she visited, always slipping the little boy surprises and treats: penny candy, five dollar bills, forbidden comic books, Matchbox cars, coins for his coin collection. And all the while she did it, she was sweetly extracting the promise that her dear grandson would forever keep fresh roses on her grave, after she passed on.

He’d finish telling his date the story, then he would place the roses lovingly on the grave, flash a bittersweet smile, and say, “My grandmother loved roses! Oh, she had such a green thumb, you should have seen the roses in her garden! Dear Nana, she always gave me my heart’s delight, on the promise that I would never let the roses on her grave get wither and die. For some reason, that thought terrified her. And so now, here I am, keeping my promise. After all, she was so kind to me in her will...”

That alone was quite an aphrodisiac, he slyly informed me. It was all a sweet, stinking lie, of course. None of it was true, except for the fact that his grandparents, who had died when he was a teenager, were stuck in the ground there. But he was not done. He would then gaze at the names on the headstones, and say that *he really wanted to name his kids after his grandparents—Luke and Samantha. He dreams of that day*, he'd lilt to his date, looking into her trusting face, "I would so love to be a daddy..." he muses, knowing full well that the moonlight was making deep, azure pools of his big blue eyes, and glinting on his cowlick, that little curl of hair that all the girls loved to finger. Speaking of fingers, he would then take the fingers of her left hand in his, and gaze cryptically at her empty ring finger.

Do you see what he has done? How brilliant is this! The entire M.O. of the genders, if I may be allowed to generalize broadly, is that women are looking to settle down and get married, whereas men are constantly balking at the ball and chain. And yet this Romeo has, while standing in the cemetery under the moonlight, all but proposed marriage. The girl he is with cannot believe her own good luck!

She is now putty in his hands, but he secures his seduction one hundred percent by tweaking it a bit. He does not make a pass at her on that night, nor on succeeding nights. Then, when he invites her over to his house, there are photos of his family in all of the rooms. She is going crazy!!! When are they going to get on with it, so they can get married and have all those kids? She practically rapes him.

Granted, he probably could have had his way with her much sooner, and granted, he forced himself to wait much longer than he really needed to. But the gentleman capped off his explanation of his strategy with two points: a.) Even though his ultra-restraint caused him to wait longer than he needed to, for that which most men cannot wait at all, one advantage he savored was that his strategy hardly cost him a penny. He cooked dinner in his apartment with groceries he had on hand. Nothing fancy, no expensive ingredients, because then dinner wouldn't have seemed like what he claimed was "his grandmother's favorite recipe." Irish stew or goulash or whatever.

He didn't even have to pay for the roses he took to his grandmother's grave; his cute next door neighbor happily clipped her bush and offered the buds to him when she learned where he intended to stick them. Sweet man. (And the American Beauties did, in truth, end up on his grandma's grave, right where he promised they would.)

b.) Even though his ultra-restraint caused him to wait longer than he needed to, for that which most men cannot wait at all, the fact was that he had a long-term agenda. This guy realized that one helluva great thing to have in your life is a regular free lay, and that goal is best achieved when the prey that you're bedding thinks there is some lasting pay-off down the road, in return for her investment of providing you with lots and lots of sexual favors, for weeks and months and even years. How very preferable the male finds this to, say, having your Sex Source realize all too soon that she was taken advantage of,



when she was gullible and tipsy on a couple of dirty martinis. Once she sobers up, zips her pants, cuts her losses, and moves on, she is cursing your name widely, possibly scaring off other game. And you're left alone again, to tend to your own pathetic and tawdry needs.

That's a shameful waste, and a damned tragedy.

The free, gratis, round-the-clock kind of long-term, determined-to-please-no-matter-what, sure-I'd-love-to-try-that-position Hot Sex can only be derived from a woman who thinks she is investing in a husband.

Bottom line.

Submission through permission.

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***“The liar at any rate recognizes that recreation, not instruction, is the aim of conversation, and is a far more civilized being than the blockhead who loudly expresses his disbelief in a story which is told simply for the amusement of the company.”***

Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

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A FUN AND IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR YOU: (Grab the journal, Bridget, and think back.)

1.) If you are a woman, you have probably had some doozies laid on you in your time. If you are a man, you have probably told some whoppers. What were they, and how effective were they?

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Now this chapter could and should be a book in and of itself, this treatise on how men will say anything to get laid. But I hope I have at least offered enough categories and examples for you to be able to work with the concept, and more critically, to be on guard when a man tries to use one of these ubiquitous lies and lines on you. After all, men will..SAY ANYTHING.

Trust me on this.

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***“If you really want to know what a woman means, which is dangerous, always look at her but never listen.”***

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan*

***“If one tells the truth, one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out.”***

Oscar Wilde *“In Conversation”*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

***“Never trust a woman who wears mauve, whatever her age may be, or a woman over thirty-five who is fond of pink ribbons. It always means they have a history.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

***“Never give a woman advice; one should never give a woman anything she can't wear in the evening.”***

Oscar Wilde, “*In Conversation*”

***“Never trust a woman who tells you her real age; a woman who tells you that would tell you anything.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

Put your best foot forward?TRANSLATION: In “female terms”, in dating terms, in snaring-a-man terms, this means to look your best, and be at your prettiest, pithiest, wittiest, sweetest, sexiest, smartest, and most generally charming self.

And don't forget the push-up bra.

I get exhausted just thinking about what all that entails, much less doing it. Cripes, for that matter, I got exhausted just writing that sentence. Never have I heard a more exhausting, irrational, and ultimately disappointing approach to snaring a man than these fatal words, ***“Put your best foot forward.”***

Let's think about this logically.

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD. Translation:

Win a man and begin a relationship by looking your best and being your most irresistible self?

(And let us set aside for a moment the rather pricey proposition that to many women, putting her “best foot forward” necessitates, by its very definition, doing so in brand new three hundred dollar shoes. Sometimes, four or five hundred or more, from the horror stories I hear.)

Think about this: if you're dating around, and go on just a couple of dates each month that require putting your best designer dogs forward, that can easily run into twelve thousand dollars a year. If you are aggressively searching for Mr. Right, 'cause you just got back from some empowerment seminar, and you're stoked, you got a goal, you got "a dream with a deadline," and let's say you are going on one date a week that requires news shoes, "putting your best Manolo Blahniks forward," that's nearly twenty-five thousand bucks a year, just spent on putting your best foot forward.

That is a big, chunky down payment on a house.

In some states, it pays for the entire house. A wee cottage, I'll grant you, and you'd have to buy your shoes at Payless for the rest of your life, but at least it would mean that you could retire and spend your entire life pursuing men, instead of squeezing it into Happy Hour and around picking up your dry cleaning and taking Pilates classes on the weekends. A lady of leisure in your thatched cottage, like the Brontë Sisters, you could let your pursuit of the opposite sex gloriously flourish into the art form that it truly is. And believe me, if you are a consummate artist, your man won't even notice that your shoes came from a two-pairs-for-the-price-of-one, second-pair-must-be-of-equal-or-lesser-value Sale.

(Think I'm leaning unfairly in the direction of indulgent, Carrie Bradshaw type over spenders? Fair enough. How about the real statistics: \$125,000 spent in her lifetime on clothes, shoes, make-up, and jewelry. Breaking it down differently: between \$2700 and \$3000 a year on clothes, shoes, make-up, and jewelry. That is, of course, nearly \$30,000 by her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. Cut your spending by half—that's reasonable, right?—and you have \$15,000 by your 30<sup>th</sup>, which, at 5%, is a tidy downpayment in a condo or house.)

Trust me on this.

The only ones who will notice will be your girlfriends, and you want them to hate you for being able to snare Mr. Right in cheap Candie's Jellie sandals, right? You want them to just die of envy, right?

By the way, did you know that on Ebay, for seventeen bucks, you can get a Manolo Blahnik shoe box with accompanying Manolo Blahnik tissue, and that's the same price I paid for the spanky new Target tennies I am wearing, even as I write this. Go figure. And there were bids on the empty boxes! And you women wonder why we men so seldom take you seriously.

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***“Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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But where was I? Ah yes,

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD. Translation:

Win a man and begin a relationship, by looking your best and being your most seductive self?

You have two options, from there on out:

A.) Be at your best twenty-four hours a day for the rest of your life,

OR

B.) Go downhill in his eyes, from his first impression of you. As in, you will look worse and generally be less charming, witty, sweet, sexy, “on”, etcetera.

There are no other logical outcomes or options than the above noted

A.) and B.). So let us examine A.) and B.) a bit more closely:

A.) Be at your best twenty-four hours a day, for the rest of your life.

This is what you would logically have to do, to measure up to what he perceived you to be in the very beginning, on your first few “put your best foot forward” dates.

Obviously, this is impossible.

It is the nature of a life fully lived to make us occasionally cranky, depressed, disheartened, boring, unattractive, unadorned, perspired, haggard, older, grizzled, bitter, cynical, outraged, and sometimes just plain exhausted. Granted, none of the aforementioned adjectives are exactly considered “aphrodisiacs.”

But how deceitful of you to use all the available aphrodisiacs (i.e., Victoria’s Secret lingerie, home cooking, a supposed tolerance for Fox Sports Channel, and a passion for fellatio), and all in dizzying succession, in order to legally win your man—then, and only then, unleashing all your true Medusa-like qualities, but only after you have ensnared a male of the species in your web.

Of course he will flee! Of course he is disillusioned!

These human qualities that you are afraid to show him—homeliness, sweat, sadness, fear, selfishness, weakness, fatigue, frumpiness—can be accepted and understood by a well-adjusted man; he can tolerate these flaws in a woman. In fact, he may even welcome these imperfections in his mate, because he figures it takes the pressure off him to be perfect. And there are well-adjusted men out there, believe it or not.

But ladies, beware! If you are constantly running at one hundred percent in the beginning, but then the realities of life cause you to slack off and go downhill from there, he will note with alarm a negative change in you, rather than perceiving you as just giving yourself over to the natural rhythms of life.

You will be like the brand new car, which was so perfect ... such a cream puff when he drove it off the lot, but which a year later, when the rattles and tics set in, and when

the “new car smell” wears off, he trades in for a newer model.

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***“Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years.”***

—Oscar Wilde , *The Importance of Being Earnest*

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***But what if you were to be the vintage vehicle instead?*** Well-built, forged of solid materials, easing off the line at a time when folks cared about a great ride, a dependable machine...the foundation is good, your engine could purr again, just maybe you are in need of a little buffing, a little retooling. Faced with such a lovely challenge, he will savor the Saturday afternoons in the garage, restoring his coveted trouvaille, enjoying how responsive her ride is to his gentle masculine maneuvering.

Put your best foot forward?

But what if, just once, you didn't? What if you were to give yourself over to those natural rhythms from the start: sometimes you look great, sometimes you look average; sometimes you are the perfect date, sometimes you are hectic or blunt or insecure; sometimes you wear thong panties, other times you indulge in your comfortable guilty pleasure of the big white cotton drawers like our grandmas wore. (And wore proudly, I might add, often through half a century of thriving matrimony, when there were far fewer divorces.)

What if you acted like you realize that the kind of woman a man takes home from the bar for a one night stand is NOT the same kind of woman he picks for a life mate?

Hey, ladies, listen up. Guys get it; they know you can't be “on” all the time. Hell, they hate *ever* having to be “on” for the opposite sex; most men are “on” so infrequently that they forget how to do it between first dates.

The biggest problem with putting your best foot forward is that it is not fair to him. He feels a victim of “bait-and-switch.” Win him with garter belts, gourmet home cooked meals, and listening to him attentively for hours—and he'll feel you literally switched chicks on him three months later, when you are wearing his oversized t-shirt and scarfing down half of his pizza while you bitch about your sad sack life late into the night—when the whole time, he'd like to be having sex with that babe in the garters, wherever the hell she went to.

And before you know it, he'll be out at a singles bar, searching for her.

Where the hell'd she get to, anyway?

## NARCISSISM

More importantly, if you are one of those women whose first priority is to always, at every waking moment, put your best foot forward—then you will always end up doing the exact opposite. As in, ultimately, you will be making a bad impression.

Why? Because the better you look and the more “finished” your appearance is in the beginning, the greater the chance that you will be blackballed as a “high maintenance” woman. Make no mistake, men happily bed women like this, and repeatedly. Sometimes for months, for years even. As long as you can trot out a new shade of Victoria’s Secret teddy, he’s up to the challenge. It’s a carnal thrill and a titillating triumph.

But these kinds of affairs never last; no man wants to end up with a high maintenance woman. No, no, no, no.

No.

The time will come when *you* see expensive lingerie, but all *he* sees is astronomical alimony payments.

Trust me on this.

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*“A woman begins by resisting a man’s advances, and ends by blocking his retreats.”*

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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That is why so many men seek the company of call girls. Their sexy lingerie looks like exactly what it is; hookers don't get alimony. Whatever you owe them will be negotiated and finalized within a matter of a few minutes. And no divorce attorneys will be involved.

Which is not to say that men *completely* enjoy this alternative, nor do all men seek out the company of sex-for-hire. It's just that oftentimes, this alternative seems simpler, safer, and so satisfying.

LET ME SPELL IT OUT: If you are one of those vain, self-absorbed women who spends all your time washing, waxing, plucking, plastering, going to the gym, getting nail wraps, being injected, having certain parts of your body stitched and sucked in, while other parts are puffed and pushed out ... and last but not least, this flurry of activity is interwoven around shopping, shopping, and more shopping, about which you speak at length when around him ... yes, my dears, if all of the above is the case, you will quickly become in his eyes (because it's what you truly are) a superficial, Narcissistic egotist who

puts your physical façade above wit, wisdom, charity, humility, a robust appetite for life, and a good old fashioned ability to laugh it all off.

A sense of humor will save True Love long after the elastic in your garter belt goes limp.

An important part of America is Capitalism, and the very essence of Capitalism rests on creating an endless series of items for the consumer to purchase. This purchasing occurs because very highly paid professionals create massive advertising campaigns to make you think you need to purchase these items. Billions of dollars are spent making certain that no female is ever satisfied that she has enough. Or is enough. Therefore, if your feminine energies are maniacally focused on “getting it all” or “being it all,” if those goals are what you think you must accomplish before you can “put your best foot forward,” then you will never quite feel like you’ve gotten there, and you will always be struggling to keep up. I eviscerate the whole female shopping obsession thing in a later chapter, but I think I’ve planted the seed here. I think you get the idea. I hope you do.

We have not yet even touched on the core-shaking notion that the more time you spend on your own Narcissism, the less time you have to spend helping others. And while philanthropy may not exactly be an aphrodisiac, not in and of itself, there is nothing more profoundly lovable, more adorable in the sense that we adore the saints, more ultimately irresistible, than someone who has constant love to give the world, without care for a return on their investment.

“Faith without Works is Dead.”

You can't just want to love. You must offer compelling evidence to the jury.

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***“Her capacity for family affection is extraordinary. When her first husband died, her hair turned quite gold from grief.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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But where was I? Ah yes, PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD. Translation:

Win a man and begin a relationship, by looking your best and being your most sexiest self? If you are at your best at the very beginning of a relationship, you can only go downhill from there.

This is life: if you are a sexy, glittering, giggling thing in a push-up bra who tosses her hair during your first few dates, there is a strong statistical possibility that one year later you will be a chubbier, crankier, sadder soul, whose underwear is showing signs of wear. And no, your roots won't necessarily be showing, nor your ends splitting, nor your



hair thinning, as perhaps you thought I might oraculate. But my point is this: The ol' hair toss maneuver won't have the same charm that it once did.

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***“She wore far too much rouge last night and not quite enough clothes. That is always the sign of despair in a woman.”***

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

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What is the answer then?

If PUTTING YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD is lousy advice, what is the solution?  
FIRST, THE BAD NEWS.

You must begin by accepting that if you are truly self-actualized, you will go through life not always looking your best or being your most charming. Because now, given your superior choices—your personal spiritual upgrade, if you will—you are leading a real life, a meaningful life, a dizzying and busy life, a life that bears witness to the pain of others, a life that does something about that pain, (on a part-time basis, at least), a life that dictates the watching of less television, a life that finally realizes Rwanda's tragedies are not the carping of some black girl on Jerry Springer, a life that has learned the difference between worrying and whining, a life where your vanity stares at your face in the mirror evaluating your inner beauty, a life that requires you stick your braying inner child in daycare, so you can get on with the business of being a grown-up human being. And if you're high on something other than life, it is time to embrace a life where detox trumps botox. A life that goes beyond the superficial. In a phrase, an exhausting life.

Accept it, honey: after twelve hours of volunteering at the dog adoption fair, what you will look like is the exact opposite of a Hollywood celeb. People going back to night school now spend money on books that they used to spend on accessorizing, and if you've decided to spend a little more quality time with your kids, it may mean less time at the gym. Mother Theresa did not always have time to swing by Bally's for a few rounds on the Butt Blaster or the Ab Crunch. We all make choices.

Trust me on this.

THE NEWS GETS WORSE.

This means that you get a lot fewer offers, in the beginning. (Read between the lines: if you aren't so damned obsessed with “putting your best foot forward” all the time, you may not get as many fun invitations, as a general trend, but, on the PLUS SIDE, you will

also spend a lot less time crying because you were dumped after meaningless flings and gratuitous sex. There will be fewer superficial heartbreaks, that were so ultimately meaningless as to hardly be worth the cost of the recuperative Ben & Jerry's. And there's more good news: the offers you do get will be more sincere, and they will issue from somebody searching for a real person and a long term love. Huzzah!)

Classic case in point, particularly for someone like me, who lives in Los Angeles:

The gym.

There are two kinds of females who frequent the health clubs of Hollywood.

There are the kinds of babes who buy a tan, a perm, a waxing, a haute line of workout clothes, and then style their hair and put on full make up before striding out of the ladies' locker room. A great deal of "strike a pose" goes on at the workout machines with these ladies; it is not unusual to track them throughout the course of an entire workout, and not see them crack a bead of sweat. Not a bead.

Then there are the kinds of ladies who pull on the sweats, drag their ass to the machines, and start exercising. They proceed to work up a healthy shine, get fit, and generally improve their physical and mental well-being.

I know from years of experience that it is the ladies in the first category who are getting picked up, hit on, asked out, whatever. This is because men are like children who like pretty, shiny things, and want to grab those baubles and fondle them, until they get bored and something else sparkly catches their eye.

Fear not. Do not be discouraged. It is that rare man who has evolved beyond his childhood mentality of grasping for pretty things that you are patiently awaiting, on your terms.

Remember, you are holding out for a better life. You are holding out for a better love.

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***"Our splendid physique as a people is entirely due to our national stupidity."***

—Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*

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Are we still at the gym? Are you now in the second category of female, who doesn't bother with the make-up and the hair spray, just drags herself into her sweats and out to those exercise machines?

Who notices you, dear lady, dear Plain Jane, dear Frumpy Francis, with all those Spandex Sweeties competing for the attention of the single, and sometimes not-so-single men?

Who notices you is this:

Who notices you is the man who sees not how thin you appear, but how healthy you look.

Who notices you is the man who sees you reading a textbook instead of a Jackie Collins novel or a Harlequin Romance; his interest is piqued.

Who notices you is the man who spies the title of the bestseller you're reading as you walk by, instead of eyeing your ass—well, OK, he makes time to do both—and he realizes to his delight that you have similar taste in literature.

Who notices you is the man who checks his watch and sees that you are at the gym every morning at six a.m. on the weekends, just like he is, and he wonders if finally he has found another morning person, like him, who could love him just the way he is at dawn.

Who notices you is the man who sees that instead of picking up the Style section of the newspaper, or the Cosmo magazine in the rack, you pick up the Wall Street Journal, and he can't wait to find out what that's all about.

Who notices you is the man who checks to see which channel you are watching on the bank of televisions, and he is pleased to see that you like the same 24 hour news channel.

Who notices you is the man who can't help but notice that you listen to audiobooks through your headphones, instead of the generic Top 10 hits station, and he wonders if you would like to go with him to a hit play that he has tickets for, because he's tired of going to the theater alone.

Who notices you is the man who would describe you as confident, not desperate.

Who notices you is the man who watches you laughing all the time, and he finds himself wanting to be around you, to see what is so damned funny. And if he starts hanging around you when you are sweaty, at the gym, during these first few encounters, think of how much deeper in love he will fall later, when you are showered, and sharing a glass of wine. Laughs and soap both! Wow!

And so, while all those size six Spandex Sweeties, with the fake tits and bought tans and freshly applied lip gloss are surrounded by men like Scarlett at the barbecue, you just lay back, be patient, and bide your time.

The guy who approaches you will have been worth the wait.

## THERE IS HOPE OUT THERE: THE SHOWER TEST

You did know, of course, before you even picked up this book, that there are two kinds of men. Please tell me that this is not a Fox News Alert to you—you did know that there are two, and only two, kinds of men? (We males are not as complex as self-help books written by peroxide blondes, who are not even comfortable enough with

themselves to sport their natural hair color, would have you think we are.)

Drumroll, please.

The Two Kinds of Men:

A.) Men who are still playing the field, and who have no intention of settling down. Either they've been burned recently, or they have not begun to bed enough women to satisfy their ingrained, genetic, sow-their-wild-oats, corndog nature. Ladies, be forewarned: unless you are playing the field too, they will break your heart. Best case scenario: they will waste your *time*. And in the end, *time* is the most precious commodity there is. Ask folks on their deathbed, if you don't believe me.

B.) Men who are drained from the drama of playing the field, who are ready to settle down. Know this: these men won't be fooled by you "putting your best foot forward." They have been around, they have played the field. They know it's about the morning after.

Because there are an awful lot of those, once you settle down with someone for a happily ever after. One time my older brother and I were sitting in a bar, comparing notes on the opposite sex. He told me that when he sees a woman, he imagines her going through the shower test—what would she look like all clean-scrubbed, in his big terry robe, without the high heels and the moussed hair and the Egyptian eyes. What would she look like after a shower, wearing his PJs? Granted, there is still a bit of the Typical Guy in my brother, evaluating her on the basis of how she looks. But I had to give him credit for cutting to the chase. Not being fooled by all the plasticity, but rather trying to evaluate her on the basis of what she really looks like, under all that War Paint. Because after all, it shouldn't be the War of the Sexes. It shouldn't even be the Battle of the Sexes. We Knights in Shining Armor have enough dragons to slay; the last thing we want to do when you drop the drawbridge and let us back into our own castles, is to have yet another fight with you.

## THE GRUELING WORK BEGINS

These next two exercises are definitely not new.

I have seen them on places as high profile as The Oprah Show. But I still reiterate the need to practice them, because there is evidence everywhere of the need for these drills. Most women remain obtuse when it comes to the lessons that these exercises offer. Think of them as emotional sit-ups: no matter how many millions of pot-bellied people bemoan their weight problems and search for new solutions, nothing can change the simple truth that every gym teacher and marine drillmaster knows: fifty sit-ups a day will fix the problem.

Similarly, the way to make sure that there is something deeper in you, that will attract husband material, is to make sure people have no choice but to look beyond the

façade—because the façade has been dropped.

#### EXERCISE NUMBER ONE:

Not once, but on a regular basis, on a daily or weekly basis, go someplace not wearing any make-up, and wearing “ordinary clothes.” Jeans and a t-shirt. Not designer jeans with a low cut tank top and heels, but jeans and a t-shirt and old sneakers.

Walk your dog this way, or go to the dog park for that matter, because that is a great place to meet men. Or go to the gym wearing sweats and no make-up.

Where you go is not the point: go for a walk, go to the store, go to an AA meeting, go pick out plants at the nursery, the point is, you need to do it without the war paint. Granted, you may be self-conscious at first, but you have to do this exercise for two reasons:

A.) If you do catch a guy, he’s going to see you in old clothes without make-up sooner or later anyway, so the sooner he gets used to this, the less he’ll be resentful and the less you’ll be self-conscious down the road, when he sees you unadorned.

B.) If there is *not* currently something inside of you that makes you attractive beyond the designer jeans and the make-up, you are in deep trouble, and you need to begin addressing that immediately. Cancel your plans for tonight. Get to work on your immortal soul.

You have to be able to catch a man and keep a man, without all the bells and whistles. It’s that simple.

#### EXERCISE NUMBER TWO

Whatever it is that you are physically or cosmetically proud of now, ignore it for a moment. Let it go, get over yourself, already. Now pick something spiritual about yourself, of which you are justifiably proud, and write about it. Punt, if you have to. Are you witty? Inspiring? Creative? Bright? Philanthropic? An Activist? Or are you the reason dumb blonde jokes are so damn funny? What changes need to be made, so that when you have wrinkles and dentures and wear Depends instead of thong panties, you can still be charismatic. In your old lady way.

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***The soul is born old but grows young. That is the comedy of life. And the body is born young and grows old. That is life's tragedy.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

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AT END OF THE CHAPTER, AT THE END OF THE NIGHT—CAN YOU STAND THE LACK OF HEAT?

If you are frustrated because you have taken the advice of this chapter, and you have studiously *not* put your best foot forward, and if you further believe that doing so has caused you to miss some opportunities along the way...calm down, take a deep breath, and look at it this way:

What you may actually be missing out on, *is agonizing heartbreak.*

The more you appeal to a man using your physical appearance and first impressions *only*, the more likely it is that he just wants to get you into bed. (See Chapter One: Sex, Sex, Sex, Sex, Sex.)

While you are standing there at the gym in your spandex, or at the local yuppie bar in your push-up bra and high heels, you are wondering if maybe this guy is marriage material...but the guy, he's just wondering how many drinks he'll have to buy you, to get you into sack. But let's say the two of you do fall in love...Here is one of the big boyfriend secrets:

When you study him or mingle with him—be it at the gym, the office, the bar, the museum, the dog park—and you comment to yourself or to a girlfriend about him, (as in, you mention something you like about him,) ask yourself these crucial questions:

Is what you like about him a quality that will be there in ten or twenty or fifty years? Is it the kind of quality that can help sustain a relationship, in the face of the hell that is part of living? Is it the kind of quality that feeds love? And when he has his first few encounters with you, will he comment (to himself, or to a buddy,) on a quality he sees in you that will still be there in a few decades?

Do you like him because he has a nice ass? Because sooner than you know, it will be that tragic and diminutive oddity, “an old man’s ass.” And if he gazes at your perky breasts, how are you going to keep him interested, when your tits are in your toe shoes?

Is it your perky tits that appeal to him, or your rapier-like sense of humor? Or is it your perky sense of humor and your rapier-like tits. It’s alright for it to be both, you know. There is nothing wrong with mutual physical attraction. As long not as that is not all there is.

Remember. Don’t put your best foot forward.

Because if you do, it’s all downhill from there. For both of you.

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***“Women’s styles may change, but their designs remain the same.”***

Oscar Wilde, “*In Conversation*”

***“The secret of remaining young is never to have an emotion that is unbecoming.”***

Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### WHAT DOES AND DOES NOT IMPRESS HIM OR THROW PILLOWS AND THE END OF ROMANCE

*“Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals.”*

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

*“American women are pretty and charming: little oases of elegant unreasonableness in a vast desert of practical common sense.”*

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan*

*If a woman can’t make her mistakes charming she is only a female.*

Oscar Wilde “*In Conversation*”

*“I don’t know that women are always rewarded for being charming. I think they are usually punished for it.”*

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

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So deluded. So misguided. So mistaken.

Wrong about it, in monolithic proportions.

Most women are, and that’s the truth of it. When it comes to WHAT IMPRESSES MEN.

This being true, it logically follows that women are also woefully ignorant re: WHAT DOES **NOT** IMPRESS HIM. As in, those attempts to impress him which actually backfire, and drive him away. Send him running for the safety of baseball fantasy camp, and the company of other guys who “get it”. Whom he can, dare I say it, relate to?

It is astonishing how women can have remained so completely in the dark about this issue of what does and does not impress a man. And after much analysis, I can only attribute the confusion and ignorance to:

1.) Females mostly having lunch with other females, and not having enough male friends. AND



2.) The Capitalistic system. Women seem to think that there is a direct link between purchasing things, and finding happiness with a man. This could not be further from the truth. MONEY PROBLEMS are one of the three main reasons that couples divorce. And because so many of the men who are ready to behave like decent grown-up human beings have a divorce or two under their belts, it only makes sense that a woman with a propensity for spending money unnecessarily will become LESS ATTRACTIVE TO A MAN, NOT MORE ATTRACTIVE.

And yet you women blindly spend on, spend on, spend on, actually believing that you impress a man with your designer purses, your little love nest crammed full of catalogue bric-a-brac, your ambiance, your aromatherapy candle collection, your Bed, Bath, and Beyond What You Can Possibly Begin To Justify Putting On Your Already Overburdened Credit Card, and more stuff, and more shopping bags, and more accessories, and tastefully decorated bathrooms crammed with God Knows What's in those bottles, placentas and yak urine and pit peeling masques, and always, always, a vast arsenal of lipsticks in shades of pinks and purples and oranges and reds and umbers that not even the Old Masters could mix.

What is the deal with one pair of lips needing so many dozens of lipsticks? And the names, oh, the names of those lipsticks, what a hidden agenda those monikers convey to the Clouseau in us males: "Pouting Pink." "Dizzy Blonde." "Duwop Shades of Venom." "Philosophy Coloring Crayon for Lips." (Yeah, like the babe who buys that knows anything about ontological inquiry or "Being and Nothingness".) "Vision for Lips." "Wisdom for Lips." "Bad Attitude Red." "Xerox." "Hate." "SheWolfe." "Threesome." "Break-up Brown."

These are *real names* of lipstick shades, that I had a girl I know look up on the internet, because if anything happens to me, I don't want people going into my computer and seeing that I surfed girly-girl cosmetic sites. Everybody is so ready to think the worst. But what I am getting at is that these are actual names of colors that your kind have dreamed up, and others of your kind have purchased.

What point, exactly, are you trying to make with these names? Here is where you women need to think more like men. Give those mouthpaints regular, human sounding colors, like Bruise Burgundy and Ketchup Red and Burning Barbecue Briquette Orange and Skinned Knee Mauve and Fishbait Silver and Spam Pink and Single Man Apartment Carpeting Beige and so forth.

Those are names you can glom onto, you see, and I guarantee you that with clear, concise tube titles like these, you would never have to traipse back to Needless Markup to return another make-up because it's not the color you expected, no not never ever again.

Anybody, even a dumb guy who knows nothing about cosmetics, can look at just the

name on the lipstick tube (if tubes were titled by males), and automatically know that Rotorooter Umber is not the same as Homeless Man Tawny which is a hint darker than Toejam Taupe, which is not to be confused with Old Milwaukee Beer Gold or Leftovers Brown. Just as he will immediately grasp that Sears Tool Box Red is a markedly different hue than Rosy Recurring Rump Rash (inspired by the more autumnal Festering Fungus Fuchsia of last season), which is also quite separate from Gitmo Torture Scarlett, which is not quite the same lovely shade as Geneva Convention Violation Vermilion.

These are all names that leave nothing to the imagination, and darlin', you don't want to be too imaginative, when imagining what color you want your lips to be, to attract a man.

Trust me on this.

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***“A man's face is his autobiography. A woman's face is her work of fiction.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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Where was I? Ah yes. The ways women wantonly waste their hard earned money. And our hard earned money.

Bottom line, harsh truth:

Most of what you think is impressing your prey will either go unnoticed by him, or it will be noticed in the wrong way. Not that there is anything wrong with buying or owning dozens of shades of lipstick or nail polish. If you are rich, and can't think of anything more charitable or practical to spend your money on, then go ahead, buy armies of little bottles.

But just don't do it for our sake. Don't do it to impress a man. You are not impressing your fella. Similarly, he is not impressed by:

Designer purses.

Designer shoes.

Designer dresses.

Designer suits.

Designer jeans.

Designer anything.

Jackie Gleason makes a great comment about this modern obsession with haute labels in the movie “Nothing in Common,” when he chides his son, Tom Hanks, (whose character is an advertising executive, and therefore something of a male label whore),

about the whole “designer jeans” thing. Quips Gleason, *“These days, you need some designer’s name on the ass pocket of a girl’s jeans, to get turned on. In my day, we just needed an ass.”*

Here is the bald truth: (And just ask any honest male friend you know, if you don’t believe me.)

You can strut down the street in a Chanel suit, wearing your Manolo Blahnik shoes, carrying a Fendi bag, sporting a hot new color-and-cut from Rodeo Drive Salon and Day Spa, with three hundred dollars worth of color coordinated make-up on your face and hands and toes, all of this accented by a five carat tennis bracelet and matching Tiffany diamond stud earrings, and you can think you are the hottest thing to hit the Strip since they put the Stars on Sunset Boulevard.

You notice the men eyeing you...

...And then you realize that what they are actually staring at is the Daisy May look-a-like behind you, wearing faded cut-offs, a tank top, and old flip-flops at the end of her long, shapely, tanned legs. The priciest thing about her is the fistful of quarters she has for the parking meter, but the guys are all looking at her, not at you.

Why?

Three little words:

Tits and ass.

She is revealing more of it.

So, your attempts at “haute” were a failure.

(Also, she’s obviously lower maintenance.)

None of this should depress you, by the way, meaning, the whole Daisy May thing. Just because we stare at her, rather than you, doesn't mean we wouldn't rather end up with you—if you weren't trying so hard. No guy really wants to end up with Daisy May, just maybe he wants to flirt with her a little when he's away from the home fires, out on one of his secret sorghum runs. But we always find our way home to our Good Wife.

What else is he not impressed with?

Most of your jewelry.(Unless he is a thief, which is always a possibility.) Cellphone cases that match your designer outfits.

The fact that you are wearing “this season’s color.”

The fact that you used to be a size eight and now you are a size six.(In fact, depending on what insane diet you were on, it might have stripped much of the fat from your breasts, causing them to sag and your bra size to be reduced. Your diet may well have backfired on you, because, more than likely, we would have preferred your breasts larger.)

And, when you finally lure him into your web, he is further UNIMPRESSED BY:

Your new queen bed comforter with matching shams and contrasting color

coordinated dust ruffle.

Your personalized fingertip towels.

Little soaps he might mistake for candy and eat.

Potpourri bombs planted around your apartment like land mines in a war zone.

Bric-a-brac, in general.

Your collection of Hummel Figurines, your collection of statuettes of children with large eyes, your collection of ballerinas, your collection of angels, your collection of Franklin Mint dolls who look like famous great dead ladies; i.e. Marilyn Monroe, Lady Di, Jackie O., etc. In fact he is singularly unimpressed with a female's collection of anything: snow globes, salt 'n pepper shakers, pigs, unicorns, potholders, trivets, dishtowels from all over the world, refrigerator magnets, and anything from Hallmark.

What he will notice is your push-up bra collection.

He will also be impressed by your collection of dildos. There is still some confusion about why this is true; chatroom research suggests three possible theories: 1.) It suggests to him that the woman is highly sexed, and that means *he* will be getting laid a lot.

2.) The collection suggests that she has not yet found a man who can truly satisfy her, and the notion that *he* might be that sexual dynamo is a thrill to his ego.

3.) The sight of females pleasuring themselves is a thrill to many men. This, of course, is a circular and unsatisfying explanation, begging the question of why *that* should be so. Perhaps because he knows from experience that it takes dames a helluva lot longer to climax than it takes him, and he reasons that her impressive collection of sex toys means that the Guy can use her to satisfy himself, and then be back to watching ESPN seven minutes later, while She hunkers down to the grunt work of achieving her own elusive female orgasm.

Quickly, then, what else IMPRESSES him?

Collections of beer bottles.

Collections of Bobble-heads of famous sports icons.

He will also be impressed by cars, if you collect those, but women don't, so the point is moot. He is also impressed by tools neatly arranged on a peg board, but I have never in my life met a woman who had anything like that.

He will be impressed by the fact that you have no credit card debts.

He will be impressed if you own property.

He will be impressed if you own a dog that does not fit in your purse. (Men love dogs, but not the breeds that are smaller than a cantaloupe.)

This is what DOES NOT impress him:

Painting your dog's toenails to match yours.

Outfits you buy for your dog.

Anything in your breakfast nook except coffee, and perhaps a spare bag of pretzels

or jerky. ('Nook is not even a word men understand or use.)

- Potholders too pretty to use.
- Your collection of refrigerator magnets.
- Seasonal houseware or kitchen items.
- Placemats that match, well, anything else.
- Things that match, period.
- Your new napkin rings.

In fact, your entire napkin ring collection, it basically annoys him. It may, in truth, annoy him deeply:

- Your seashell napkin rings.
- Your Zimbabwe napkin rings.
- Your faux pearl napkin rings.
- Your ladybug napkin rings.
- Your unicorn napkin rings.
- Your napkin rings you got for a steal off e-bay.
- You harvest turkey napkin rings.
- Your nautical motif napkin rings.
- Your Precious Moments napkin rings.
- Your Mount Rushmore souvenir napkin rings.
- Your down on the farm animal napkin rings.
- Your angel napkin rings.

Your Seven Wonders Of The World Napkin Rings. Wherein the dopey artisans had to make an Extra Hoover Dam Napkin Ring so it would add up to eight rings, the traditional size of a dinner set.

Your whimsical I Love Lucy napkin rings where Fred's skull is chipped and Ethel's nose is broken, but when there's just the two of you, you can still use Lucy and Ricky with the matching dinnerware.

- Your safari motif napkin rings.
- Your Celtic napkin rings.\
- Your personal coat-of-arms napkin rings.
- Your retro plastic 50's napkin rings.
- Your Martin Luther King napkin rings.

Your Gilligan Island Napkin Rings, featuring Gilligan and the Skipper and the Howells and the Professor and Ginger and Maryanne and the Minnow, the collector's edition that you ordered from [tvguide.com](http://tvguide.com).

- Your napkin rings that match your throw pillows.

Why do none of these glamorous napkin rings, not one single set, impress him nary

at all? That is easy to answer. Because men think napkin rings are Stupid. One could artfully argue, in fact, that napkin rings, ARE stupid.

You see, men are problem solvers, who worship The Functional, and they cannot see, in any way, shape, or form, what function napkin rings serve. A napkin ring appears to be designed to hold something together, but a napkin is in no danger of falling apart. There are rings used in plumbing and construction and automobiles and space shuttles that serve very useful functions in clamping assorted tubes and hoses and pipes together; men get this, and they are OK with these rings. In fact, it would be a touching sight to see a man trying to impress a woman by cooking her dinner, realizing at the last minute that he owns no napkin rings, running to his tool box, and fetching some of these unattractive but functional plumbing or automotive rings to wrap around the paper napkins he bought as linens for the romantic dinner he is preparing.

What makes napkin rings seem particularly absurd to men is that the rings remain circletted around the napkin for such a fleeting moment. Oh, yes, they may be around the actual napkin for hours, if the hostess has set the table early in the day, knowing she will need those last precious few hours for the more urgent matter of cooking the meal. But the whole point is, as far as the man can figure, nobody is there to see the napkin ring and admire it, if there is anything admirable about a napkin ring in the first place. Nobody is around the dinner table for those long hours; then, when the guests do arrive, they are invariably ushered into the living room, to enjoy cheeseball and chitchat, while meal prep is in its final stages.

Then, just seconds before one is to eat, the guest is ushered into the room where the dinner table is, at which point everybody sits down, and, if they have any kind of manners at all, (even a male knows this,) they put their napkin in their lap, which of course requires removing the damnable ring, which thereafter, in the guy's eyes, only clutters up the table.

The entire napkin ring experience is, all in all, a very baffling and annoying experience for a man. And yet women continue to collect them, by the dozens, nay the hundreds.

Curious, I halted my rabid indictment of napkin rings long enough to Google the phrase "largest napkin ring collection in the world," to see what came up. (My mood, as of this napkin ring condemnation, was somewhere between whimsy and fury, that women constantly make such dense and dim choices re: how to spend their money.)

Do you know what comes up when you Google that phrase, "largest napkin ring collection"

Elton John's napkin ring collection. Enough said. (Now don't get me wrong; I dig his music, and I grew up rockin' out to "Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting" and "The Bitch is Back" and "Pinball Wizard", just like so many of you. But a man's man, he ain't. He is a guy with the biggest napkin ring collection on the planet. Like I said, enough

said.)

Well, no, enough has not been said, I think, because I am sure that there are women who will continue to cheerfully support the napkin ring industry, even after reading this chapter. Like Lady Lemmings, they will march on, march on, march on, scampering blindly, one behind the other, into Crate & Barrel, and Bed, Bath & Beyond, and Pier One, searching frantically for napkin ring collections which they do not yet have in their nest.

LET ME STATE IT IN BALDEST TERMS: Either your napkin rings annoy a man, or he is a queer. (Oddly, what may impress him are your Elvis napkin rings, or your napkin rings shaped like little penises. Actually, now that I think of it, he may like the Gilligan's Island rings, but he still will find them ridiculously impractical and without purpose, although God knows The Professor could probably figure out how to lash them together to the matching bamboo placemats and make a pontoon that could get everybody off the Island.)

What else annoys a man? Even more than the napkin rings?

YOUR THROW PILLOW COLLECTION.

Your new throw pillow from Bed, Bath & Beyond.

Your very old throw pillow. .

Your throw pillow shaped like a heart.

Your throw pillow shaped like a piglet.

Your throw pillow shaped like a star.

Your smiley face throw pillow.

Your throw pillow shaped like a bolster.

Your throw pillow shaped like a circle.

Your throw pillow shaped like a square.

Your throw pillow shapes like the Pyramid of Giza.

Your throw pillow which is quilted and made of pieces of your baby clothes. Your throw pillow festooned with genuine Belgium lace imported from there which you know because you hand carried it from there yourself.

Your throw pillow shaped like ladies' lips.

Your throw pillow shaped like a lady's shoe.

Your throw pillow which doubles as a purse.

Your "Welcome to Florida" pillow shaped like an alligator.

The throw pillow you crocheted yourself when you were ten in the Brownies. Your throw pillow shaped like Betty Boop's head.

Your seasonal throw pillow shaped like Santa's head.

Your coveted throw pillow from the Oprah Show gift bag when you were there for her "Favorite Things" episode.

Your throw pillow shaped like a throw pillow.

What may impress him, inexplicably, is a throw pillow shaped like a penis, or a throw pillow shaped like a football.

Now, granted, there are a few men who actually are impressed by hand crocheted throw pillows, not because they have the least appreciation for the aesthetic nuances of such handiwork, but merely because if they have been married, they have learned that women, when engrossed in their needlework, are silent for long periods of time. Ah, bliss!

### EXPLAIN THE THROW PILLOW THING

Why my obsession with throw pillows, you may ask? What did throw pillows ever do to me, that I speak of them with such vitriolic vituperation? Did I have a traumatic experience with throw pillows as a child, you may ask, that I hurl such hatred at these benign and beautiful objects that are meant to cause comfort?

Well, I might very well throw the question right back in your face, ladies. What is YOUR obsession with throw pillows? How many pillows does one person need?

HERE IS HOW THROW PILLOWS RUIN THE ENTIRE ROMANTIC DYNAMIC BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN:

(Substitute napkin rings, shoes, nail polish, etcetera:)

When you (meaning you, a FEMALE) walks into another female's apartment for the first time, and you see a large and lovely collection of throw pillows on the living room sofa or adorning the davenport, you gasp and say "Oh, what a beautiful collection of throw pillows you have!" and then, bafflingly enough, you ladies will then probably choose to discuss them at length.

Of all the urgent and hilarious things under the sun that two humans could talk about, you and she are actually going to engage in dialogue about throw pillows: where you got this one, how this one is from some foreign land, how this one was handed down through the generations, how you made this from a kit you got at Kit Galaxy but now you're more into latching hook rugs, how your teacup poodle threw up on this mauve one here, but you had it dry cleaned and now you can hardly see the stain.

Yes, you ladies may see fertile grounds for dialogue, but we see Trouble. Why? Because when you look at throw pillows, you see, well—throw pillows.

BUT. AND THIS NEXT POINT COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE, SO GRAB A HIGHLIGHTER:

When a man sees a neat row of pretty throw pillows, he does not see throw pillows.

WHAT HE SEES IS A PROPENSITY.

He sees your propensity for buying things you don't need, and what he further sees is



a mind that is not practical or functional or logical.

And you can show me the prettiest damned throw pillow in the whole world, I dare you, whip out your best antique festive heart shaped crushed velvet hand sewn needle pointed Americana vintage whatever fancyfringeass pillow you have, you CANNOT deny that it is NOT:practicalfunctionallogical.

Oh, I do realize that there are those of you touchy women, who also fancy yourselves clever, who will try to argue that pillows are at least functional. After all, how many folks can savor a good night's sleep without a comfy pillow, you say to me challengingly?

But I am not fooled. My personal history with throw pillows is long and sad, and here is what I retort:

One: Throw pillows are not comfortable and therefore not functional. A comfortable pillow has down feathers in it, or some equally appealing filling, but the very nature of throw pillows requires a certain unforgiving rigidity in their stuffing or filling or whatever the craft jargon is, so they can keep that whimsical shape of a heart or a star or a rhomboid or whatever.

Secondly: Throw pillows are too small to be of any real use. A guy wants a bigass pillow that he can sink his big arrogant head into at the end of a hard day, and that he can wake up and punch into a comfy new position in the middle of the night, when he has awakened screaming from his nightmare of taking it up the butt in Debtor's Prison, where he has been dragged to because he can no longer pay off the huge credit card bills that his wife has charged to the max in her frantic quest to comb the city buying every new throw pillow she can hunt down.

Thirdly: You never let us put our heads down on your precious throw pillows, anyway. Before we can put our ass on your sofa, or crawl into your bed, what first has to happen, always, is this annoying and lengthy ritual wherein all the throw pillows are removed from the bed to some special new place where they will spend the night, onto some fainting couch or bay window or hope chest, which we find ironic, because if you didn't constantly annoy us with your throw pillows, you might actually have some hope of using the crap in your hope chest.

So don't try to win this debate by claiming that throw pillows are functional, logical, practical, or at all worthy. And so, because of your obsession with throw pillows, two huge problems emerge. And I mean HUGE. If problems were tits, these would be 44 Double D's.

1.) Your throw pillow collection has immediately told us that you are not logical or practical. And you are probably dysfunctional as well, else why would you waste your hard earned money on so many things that serve no function like throw pillows and napkin rings, when you could be spending your hard earned money on worthwhile stuff like NFL Bobble-Head dolls and faux endangered species skin fur car seat covers?

AND HERE IS THE BIG GRAIL SECRET, LADIES: Virtually every problem that

a guy has, (he will be quick to explain), has to do with living in a world that is not logical or practical or even functional. It follows without saying that most of these problems with the dysfunctional, impractical, illogical world we live in are caused by WOMEN, because certainly every guy the guy knows is pretty down to earth, or they wouldn't be friends.

Do you see where I am going with this? This guy walks into your love nest, this guy who you think might be The One, he might be the love of your life, and suddenly he is standing in the Museum Of The Inane, assaulted by napkin rings and novelties, pillows and potpourri, samplers and statuettes, curios and congeries and collectanea, twee trouvaille and mauvais gout and omnium-gatherum, gewgaws and gimcracks, knick-knacks and bric-a-brac, give your dog a bone ...and these all purchased by a woman who has a stack of bookmarked catalogues in the corner which clearly indicate that she is poised to pounce on even more bric-a-crap, YES, all this, AND a parapet of shoeboxes which, when stacked all in a row, rival the Great Wall of China.

Why on earth would he want to be permanently around someone who wastes, wastes, wastes their money, and who has no logical or practical sense? (This is setting aside for a moment the Other Problem, which is that we see no room for us in your cote pocket, nor is there any space for our precious crap.) It's not that the throw pillows are ugly, it's that he does not want to have to deal with your ugly credit history, or an ugly psyche that is so illogical and impractical, when dealing with the weighty and practical decisions that must be made in a marriage. A man needs a logical, functional, practical brain to match him in the trials and travails of marriage. And your physical environment has proved you to be the opposite of that.

What a man really wants to marry is another man, but with big hooters and a tight vagina.

But there is something more dire and serious going on here, than just the twisted and twaddled nature of your feminine brain, as revealed in your decor.

Let's back up a bit: I said it before, and I'll say it again. When you look at throw pillows, you see, well—throw pillows.

When a man sees a neat row of pretty throw pillows, he does not see pillows.

HE SEES A PROPENSITY.

A propensity to shop.

Not just to shop, but to blindly, blithely spend money on stupid, inane things. And keep in mind that financial issues may well have been part of his troubled history, particularly if he is divorced. Seriously, ladies: both your accessories and your ambiance may be broadcasting exactly the wrong message necessary to win his heart. You are driving him away, with your very efforts to make yourself and your home look beguiling.

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***“Women have a wonderful instinct about things. They can discover everything except the obvious.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

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Keep your shopping minimal and private.

He does not want to hear about your trip to the mall. He does not want to hear about what this season’s fashions look like. He doesn’t care what hemlines are doing, or what colors are “in.” No matter how impressive your purse is to you, it will elicit no reaction from him, unless he has occasion to actually look inside it, in which case, if it is like most ladies’ purses, it will frighten him. What famous General was it who said that you could have dropped two women’s handbag over Hanoi and Haiphong, and the North Vietnamese would have fallen to their knees in surrender? (“Oh, the Humanity!”) Dame Edna refers to her purse as “the handbag of Hieronymus Bosch.”

More than anything else, he does not want you to EVER take him along to the mall to shop for clothes. And if you EVER actually make him sit in that pathetic little chair in the women’s clothing section and hold your purse while you try on clothes, you can be sure that the relationship is over as of that moment. Oh sure, he may be a gentleman and drive you home from the mall, but unless you have a legally binding paper between you, never expect to see his face again after that. (Alternative route: he pretends like everything's fine, but first chance he gets, he's online researching divorce lawyers and how to get out of his side of the pre-nup and deciding how he can get custody of the dog.)

Again, repeat after me, “no taking Loverboy shopping at the mall.” The only thing you can do that is worse than this, is to ask him the infamous no-win question, ‘Do these pants make me look fat?’

No ladies. It is not the fault of the slacks. I'm betting it's the size of your rump.

#### THE QUESTION FOR THIS CHAPTER:

A. What question do you think I should ask you now, as this chapter draws to a close? You know what it is... Pose it to yourself, and then answer it, young lady.

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And so, it is time for a big change, ladies. All those things you thought were impressing him, aren’t. And it’s not enough to just hide the collection of Hallmark Merry Miniatures or Franklin Mint Faeries Of The World when he comes over. Sooner or later, like all dark secrets and skeletons in closets, they will be revealed, and he is bound to

catch on.

Remember—it does not matter what YOU think of your nest, or your collectanea. You are not trying to date yourself or get yourself to propose marriage; that is the whole reason you are reading this book, isn't it? You are sick and tired of your own company. You want a Guy in your life.

Ladies, it's time to choose.

The boy or the bric-a-brac. The nookie or the napkin rings.

The Prince or the Pillows.

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***“We live in an age when unnecessary things are our only necessities.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

***“You love the beauty that you can see and touch and handle, the beauty that you can destroy, and do destroy, but of the unseen beauty of life, of the unseen beauty of a higher life, you know nothing. You have lost life's secret.”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

## CHAPTER SIX

### WE ARE NOTHING SPECIAL AND NEITHER ARE YOU

*“There is one thing infinitely more pathetic than to have lost the woman one is in love with, and that is to have won her and found out how shallow she is.”*

Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

*“Only the shallow know themselves.”*

Oscar Wilde, *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young*

Ladies, you are looking for something you won't find.

Trust me on this.

There are no more princes left.

There are only average Joes, ordinary fellas, regular guys, men of the people. And most of us are toting a few extra pounds, losing our hair, mostly bald—and we have bad habits.

Romance is not our specialty. Romance seems like hard work to us.

We are nothing special, ladies. But then again, neither are you. Statistically, here is the grim truth about you: most of you are toting a few extra pounds, just like we are, you too are unhappy at work, you drown your woes in debt incurred from being spendaholics—\$16,000 per household in credit card debts, according to the Federal Reserve and corroborated by private firms.

And your penchant for spending is WHY our hair is falling out in handfuls.

The women who helped settle this vast land, the Women of the Plains, the Woman of the Wagon Trains, the Women of the West—they had no credit cards, none of them had a single charge account, and all of their husbands had thick, rich, full heads of hair. Have you ever seen a bald pioneer? No, they all looked like Michael Landon and Alan Ladd and Fess Parker.

Your spending is making us hairless.

And as for having a few bad habits, you can match us flaw for flaw. You just get confused because the genders never have the same bad habits. They have DIFFERENT bad habits: You don't create piles of mess around the house, you don't put pride ahead of asking for directions, you don't watch endless hours of sports, while guzzling beers and

eating great heaps of garbage and making silly displays of Nachismo to the other men. No, instead you nag, nag, nag, you spend more money on potpourris to make our mess areas smell good than third world countries spend on rice, and you waste endless hours at the mall, buying things that you already have in that shade, and then you buy multiples of stuff that you didn't even need the original of in the first place.

Trust me on this, ladies.

We are nothing special, and neither are you.

There are no more princes.

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***“There are no extraordinary emotions left. Only extraordinary adjectives.”***

—Oscar Wilde, “*In Conversation*”

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There is a charming myth, a popular one that is as widespread as it is time-honored, which suggests that each person on this earth is an individual, unique, a soul like no other. We are all little snowflakes, no two of us are alike. One of a kind little snowflakes! (Of course, you can say the same thing about turds.)

In a word, you are Special.

Not so.

In truth, you are about as Special as the driven-over snow. Most people are ordinary, typical. In a word, average. The reason that most folks object so strenuously to this characterization is that it “feels insulting.”

And, in a New Age Culture that increasingly prizes “feeling” over “thinking”, why should I be surprised? If I tell you that you are ordinary, (because the simple, and not-so-unpleasant truth is that most people are very ordinary), you will probably parrot the parry that “everybody’s life experience is unique; no two people’s individual histories are exactly alike”.

Alright, that may be true— *to a point*. True, no other person but you was born in Reddick, Illinois, is a true redhead, was educated at Hamburger University in Oak Brook, Illinois, spent summers in Dublin, collects old 45’s and Cary Grant memorabilia, breeds ferrets for extra money, and teaches skeet shooting to Reddick boys and girls in the summer. Just like nobody but your next door neighbor was born in Monkey's Eyebrow, Arizona (yes, a real place; life is weird enough that I don't have to make up the weird parts), dropped out of school in the tenth grade, spent several summers waiting tables on Bourbon Street, makes a healthy living designing Odorama greeting cards for convenience stores, has a Commandore dog, and teaches Learning Annex courses in how

to bake wedding cakes.

Are these two women “individuals?” Yes, in that sense, in the raw data sense, of course they are. But not in a larger sense, not in ways that matter, and certainly not to a male’s way of thinking.

To our way of thinking, both ladies, no matter how unique they may appear to be, will turn out to be typical, average, usual, and ordinary. They more than likely want the same things and have the same goals:

They both want to get married.

They both want children.

They would both blow our brains out with a shotgun for having a steamy affair, IF they knew they could get away with it and not face criminal charges.

They are both always on a diet, yet under the driver's seat of both of their cars, we men can dig around and always find balled up Krispy Kreme bags and bits of fossilized curly fries.

They both feel better about themselves because they both have jobs. As in, they prefer careers, to devoting themselves to raising children full time.

They both shop at the mall.

They both carry credit card debts.

They are both too busy to do charitable work.

Yet they both have plenty of time to watch television. (Roughly 20 hours a week, according to both the Bureau of Labor Statistics and assorted polls; congratulations, most of you have made watching the idiot box your new part time job.)

Both nag us for watching too many sports, yet feel no guilt about owning too many shoes. At least our addiction costs less.

Both constantly harangue us for leaving certain rooms of the house a mess (the garage, our study, our side of the bedroom), yet both women mess up the house with their collections: of thimbles, of snowglobes, of teddy bears, of kittens, of fairies, of refrigerator magnets, of music boxes, of tea towels, of Americana, of angels, of dolls, of little people, of little villages where I guess the little people can live, of catalogues containing more things than you can possibly collect in a lifetime, and all at great expense, shipping and handling is extra.

We believe that your insipid, twee collections make just as great a mess as our mess. Both women “just need to be held.”

Both women get their wisdom from Cosmo, not Plato.

Both women talk, even when our non-verbals clearly indicate that we wish you'd shut up.

Both women engage in “bait and switch,” when changing gears from courtship to marriage.

And both women go from thinking that their mates are wonderful during courtship,

to trying to change everything about us, once we are legally their property.

You see. These two ladies aren't so different. In a word, these two ladies are ordinary.

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***“Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*

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The list could go on, and I grant you that I appear to be focusing on the negative qualities these two ladies possess. But you get the point. The point here—and it is a crucial one, if we are to understand our place in the great scheme of things—the point here is that most of us are not unique or unusual; we have similar kinds of dreams and goals. Forsooth, the reason we all have similar kinds of dreams and goals—and here is the good news—is because the species has decided, in a sustained collective unconscious, that these are *good* goals and dreams. Just as we suffer from the same kinds of foibles and faults, particularly and specifically because we are human.

You think you are so unique? You think you are not average or usual or typical or ordinary? It is, by definition, BY DEFINITION, mind you, impossible for most of the women out there, or most of the women reading this book, for that matter, to be unique.

Unique implies a woman who is not like most women.

Most women can't be unlike most women, it is not logically possible. Get it? Ergo, most women cannot be unusual or unique.

Only a few women can be in that rarefied class.

Now here comes the question that you probably don't want to face: Is there really enough about you that is amazing, to vault you into that rarefied class?

Probably not. Because the very definition of “unique” implies “that which is rare or uncommon, not found with any frequency among a population.” Similarly, the meaning of the word “average,” distasteful as modern society and marketing have made that word sound, is “that which is typical, common, or ordinary.” And these adjectives, like it or not, most likely describe you, because “typical” means: 1.) Conforming to a particular type. 2.) Exemplifying most nearly the essential characteristics of, and forming a type. 3.) Of the nature of, or serving as a type, or representative specimen.

That's you, baby. Typical. You represent a type, you exemplify a type, you conform to a type.

You cannot have a trendy haircut and shop at the mall and peruse the magazines for



what they're wearing this season and conform your hemlines to the dictums of the "arbiter elegantiae" and spend time gossiping on your cellphone when you should be concentrating on your driving, and read the books that everyone is reading and stand in line to see the latest movie and watch the same TV shows as lots of other people and have the same hopes and dreams as millions of other women, without being "representative of a type," AS IN, "YOU ARE TYPICAL."

And you really do want to be typical, don't you? Deep down, in the depths of your soul...bristle though you might at first brush with these words, uncomfortable as you might be with these adjectives as accurate descriptors of you, the truth is that when you walk down the street, it is not your goal to be perceived as a freak or an oddball or a weirdo. To be typical is literally to be "representative of a type," and the undeniable fact, one of the great provable truths of the universe, is that most women spend much time and waste vast amounts of money trying to fit in with the "type" that is in vogue at the moment.

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***"Wicked women bother one. Good women bore one. That is the only difference between them."***

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"HOW AVERAGE YOU LOOK TODAY, MY DARLING

"AVERAGE: "typical, common, ordinary." —Webster's Dictionary

All of fashion merchandising is based on getting you to fit into the look that is TYPICAL of the times, the type of clothes that are being worn "this season." Almost no woman would be caught wearing a toga to work, because although such an outfit is the most comfortable clothing you can wear, and can even be made from the most beautiful and expensive fabrics on the planet, you don't want to look ATYPICAL.

Instead, you want to wear what that skinny bitch in Vogue is wearing, and even if you live in a trailer park, it's all about the "haute couture." For those of you who don't speak French, that means, in the King's Spanish, "la moda alta." Millions of patriotic American women, enraged at the French reaction to our efforts at freeing the Iraqi people from the tortures they suffered under Saddam Hussein, vowed to boycott all things French, until fashion mavens from sea to shining sea realized it might mean getting our wardrobe cues from the Dutch or the Welsh or the Polish or the Ukrainians or the Australians or, God forbid, the English, a people who traditionally knit garter belts out of

ewe's wool.

No, better to forgo the wine and fromage blanc and Victor Hugo and the guillotine, than turn a deaf ear to “le dernier cri.” Paris Runways trump Patriotism every time; God forbid a woman from Newark, New Jersey dress like a woman from Newark, New Jersey.

Are you beginning to see why we men have trouble taking you women seriously?

White woman, for decades, have risked death by skin cancer and the agonizing disfigurement of a potentially fatal skin condition rather than appear pale; they tan because it's typically considered attractive to do so. It was Coco Chanel who first “invented” the tan; can there be a greater endorsement for following this deadly trend than the CC stamp of approval?

Afro-American women no longer wear massive afros, rather, many pay big money to first have the natural kinks in their hair removed, and then have new kinks put in. A pricey exercise in conformity. Why? Because it's the typical look. What the TYPE is wearing now.

And you all wear cosmetics to look prettier and boost your self-esteem, but how the hell can you feel better about yourself when you know that those cosmetics came to you only after animals were tortured to test it, using draconian methods that are not only inaccurate, but unnecessary. Only a third of you dames\*\*\* use cruelty-free cosmetics, even though if you witnessed somebody doing to an animal what your make-up manufacturer does every day, you'd be outraged, and make your boyfriend do something about it right now.

You want to be unique? Fine, be one of the minority who buys cruelty-free. Seriously. The European Union has already banned products that get their beauty from being cruel to animals; could America stop being this second class country, and could women possible lead that charge? If the pain these animals endured was slathered across your face, along with your make-up, what a hideous sight you would be. Think “Portrait of Dorian Grey”, since we're quoting so much Oscar Wilde here.

(\*\*\*findings courtesy Lake Research Partners, similar results from Vitacost.com)

But most of you are comfortable with the status quo. The ordinary.

You want to look like you belong and represent something that *he* is familiar with, and comfortable with, (and fantasizes about, even), or else you would have no chance at all with the opposite sex—unless he was, say, of the Charles Manson ilk, or The Elephant Man, or a “lives-with-his-mother-even-at-the-age-of-forty-chap,” or a “unibomber-skulks-in-his-cabin-in-the-woods, chipmunk-stew-for-dinner-again- type,” who wears a toga himself.

Indeed, I could write an entire book documenting the inane history of bon ton, and how your gender's slavish yen to fit in has made you fashion's bitches. In fact, I should.

But I trust you get my point.

I trust you on this.

And by the way: If you are prettier than most, by those arbitrary cultural standards we use to determine what is pretty, that still does not make you unique or rare or unusual. There are millions of pretty women in the world; again we see that you are not all that unusual, you merely possess an advantage that all women are not lucky enough to enjoy. Your brag of “being pretty” is all the more anti-climactic in that it may not be your personal accomplishment, but rather a matter of your parents’ genes.

Also, if you have short-circuited the development of your wit and intellect, because you are one of those shallow souls who has always skated by on their good looks, you may actually be below average or mediocre in some of the most important human dimensions.

In a phrase, your looks may have backfired.

A thirty year old woman who looks like a goddess, but who has never read a book, rarely watches the news, cannot tell a joke, and has trouble discerning when a witticism has transpired in conversation, is in far graver trouble than she realizes: In time, and sooner than she knows it, her looks will fade, and she will have neither the wit nor the wits to survive the special challenges of being an old lady. (Note: for lessons in how to age gracefully, read the biography of Audrey Hepburn—one hot sexagenarian. Now there is a dame you can adore at any age.)

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***“Woman are sphinxes without secrets.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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My entire thesis in this chapter is to convince you that you are not as wonderfully unique or whimsically unusual as you like to think you are; not only do you run with the herd, you try like hell to conform. You try to conform far more than you are willing to admit to yourself.

When you opened “THE RULES” and read ***“First, be a creature like no other,”*** your first instinct was to do what every other female creature in the country was also doing, at that very same moment: you kept reading that silly book. My gal? She tore the book up at that moment, announcing, ***“I’ll be the only female in the country that hasn’t read this book—hence, I’ll be a creature like no other.”***

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## CHAPTER BREAK: THE QUESTIONS

1. What is unique about you, when you compare yourself to the hordes of women all around you in the world? Remember, it obviously has to be a good thing. (As in, the reason you think it will get you a high quality man.) And it also must be something for which your efforts, and not your DNA, are responsible.

2. Why do you need to be so unique, or special? Is there not dignity in being a worker among workers? If this is what you are, an ordinary soul, are you willing to settle for an ordinary man, a good ordinary man, a Joe who is an average worker among workers?

## LOGICAL CONCLUSION

Because much of what we've been talking about is a matter of human nature, not female nature, one TERRIBLE TRUTH ABOUT MEN is that most of us men are nothing special. We men are not, each of us, unusual, rare, anomalous, or unique:

If we don't listen to you now, we aren't going to attend to your words with any more zeal when you begin saying the same thing for the tenth time.

If we don't recite poetry or speak poetically when we are trying to seduce you, we're not going to start doing it after you're married to us.

If we have already told you that we love you, and if we were sincere when we said it, we "feel" you are calling us an insincere liar, if you need to hear it again and again after that. Or perhaps you weren't listening the first time, something you frequently accuse us of doing.

We probably have a bit of a gut when you meet us, and it ain't gettin' smaller as the years roll by, believe me. (And as we get more successful and can afford better vehicles, we certainly aren't going to start caring less about cars in the future.)

We like watching sports, sometimes several games a week, and we aren't going to suddenly develop a passion for opera, just because you put on an aria from Aida while giving us a blowjob. Our idea of bringing you breakfast in bed is seeing if our beer on the nightstand from the night before has any dead flies in it, and if it doesn't, we may offer you a swig, and maybe there's part of a Slim Jim left or that bag of pork rinds.

If you think Tony Robbins is so great, why don't you go have a thing with him, instead of trying to turn us into Tony Robbins? We men don't trust a guy with such a

large head and big teeth. *He is compensating for something*, how can you not see that?

And so that is the way it is: we are guys, dudes, men, cavemen, jocks, jerks, pricks, dick-for-brains, assholes, fellas, friends, Neanderthals, troglodytes, overgrown boys, bastards, chaps, significant others, sweethearts, and shitheads.

The point is, we don't care WHAT you call us. Doesn't phase us a bit, rolls right off our back. We are ordinary and we know it. We are comfortable with that. We seek it; you shun it.

We are not nearly as politically correct as you are, because if someone calls us something we don't like, we know we can always fix it by slugging someone—men are fixers, you know. After we slug someone, we always feel better. Sometimes the person we slug even feels better, in a weird way that a chick probably couldn't understand. (Helpful Tip: rent "The Quiet Man" and watch it with your fella or prick or whatever. It's a guy's movie masquerading as a chick flick, or vice versa. Anyway, this movie explains, in pictures, how a guy can be happier after some other guy slugs him, and then they can be friends and drink beer, while the women fix snacks.) The only guys who are really P.C. are politicians, because they have to answer to women, who are more than half the voting population. Or else the dope is one of those fussybutts like Phil Donahue, and he and Marlo Thomas are that unique way they are because, well, they are married to, well, each other. You would be that way too, if you were married to one of them. Or both of them or—c'mon, you know what I mean.

But the point I'm getting at remains singular, consistent, and unflagging: it is, by the very semantic reality of the words we're bandying about, a world full of typical, usual, average people. The rare are rare by definition. As are the unusual and the unique, following the same linguistical logic.

We are ordinary, most of us.

And so are you.

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*ALVY: You look like a really happy couple. Are you?*

*WOMAN: Yeah.*

*ALVY: Yeah? So how do you account for that?*

*WOMAN: I am very shallow and empty, and I have no ideas and nothing interesting to say.*

*MAN: And I'm exactly the same way.*

*ALVY: I see. That's very interesting. So you managed to work something out?*

*MAN: Right.*

*"Annie Hall," Alvy stops strangers on the street*

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THE ALTERNATIVES:  
YOU CAN ACCEPT BEING ORDINARY.

As a person who has been diagnosed as having more than one disorder (or “behavioral aberrations”), I personally think that the notion of being ordinary sounds delicious.

To work hard at a decent job, to look forward to the certainty of a paycheck, to come home and lounge on the sofa and watch some groovy escapist entertainment, then to sleep through the night, safe in the security of knowing that tomorrow your life will be equally safe, equally comfortable—complete with coffee in the morning, companions in the form of pets or even possibly humans, along with remote controls when you're lazy and/or bored, computers when you're curious, and 24 hour drive-thrus when you are too lazy to hunt the savannas for fresh kill...Ah, that sounds so soothing!

If you do not understand this, try living a life that is not comfortable for a while. Try living a life that is not safe. I am serious, go all “Somerset Maugham” on yourself, and live on the Razor's Edge and see how that feels. Just see. Try living a life that is very unsafe and very uncomfortable for a while, and you will appreciate the secure and predictable life, which is the watermark of an ordinary person.

Ah, the prestige of the plebian!: stupeficient security, married to decadent democracy. Ah comfortable, aging Freedom, locked in the La-Z-Boy, hardly noticing that unsavory elements are gradually moving into the neighborhood, driving down the value of those properties we once so cherished...But where were we? Ah yes. What to do, if you have accepted that which is the inevitable truth for most of you: the fact that you are ordinary. Typical. Know that if you are TYPICAL (as in, REPRESENTATIVE OF A TYPE), you can still make it your life goal to be THE BEST OF YOUR TYPE.

Let's get this clear from the kick-off: This is not a book about how to transform yourself into a better person. Acres and acres worth of forest have already been destroyed producing books, fine books with sage advice, that tell you how to do this already, so why waste any more trees?

Besides, I plan to save that for my next big controversial bestseller. And if I publish it as an E-book, Bambi's neighborhood will remain unplundered. MY RANT, as I just mentioned, is simply that if you have to be ordinary, be a little atypical in your typicality.

For example: If you are typical, in that you must watch TV at night, if watching TV at night is your stress therapy, if you are so glued to the tube once you crawl between the sheets that the Jaws of Life could not wrench you from your Craftmatic Adjustable Bed, then for God's sake, at least do yourself a favor and watch something other than reruns of “Friends” for the seventh time.

Try watching the Discovery Channel (the behavior patterns of the animal world will teach you almost everything you need to know, in order to be happy with a man), or the Biography Channel (find out how a man as homely as Winston Churchill got elected to office—and was loved by the same woman for a lifetime), or the Travel Channel (with terrorists flying into buildings and killing thousands of other ORDINARY people like yourself, you might want to learn something about what other cultures truly think of us, instead of traveling over there on your Visa Card Points and making a scene in public eateries because they don't provide Equal Sweetener, and why the hell is your Diet Doctor Pepper more expensive than the local wine?), or the History Channel (the story of “The Man Who Never Was” is not only true, it is so romantic that Hollywood made a lusciously sad film about it a few decades ago). And for those of you who can't abide watching movies in black and white, no doubt Hollywood, daring in its brazen lack of originality and willingness to steal from its own attic, will soon be releasing a remake of “The Man Who Never Was,” starring Drew Barrymore as the long-suffering love interest, and Ben Stiller as the wacky sidekick to the non-existent hero. The special effects to create the illusion of a man who is not there should be hilarious in the remake.

Or try watching the Science Channel or Animal Planet or the Health Channel; the shows you see about toxins in food or animal rescue squads or life on other planets might just cause you to change your diet, your career, and your core beliefs about the cosmos. My point is, watching “Bachelorette” or “Seinfeld” or “Wheel of Fortune” will not change your life, but watching the truth about the history of life, and the reality of the lives of others, might just put it all in perspective for you in a way that you never imagined, in a way that rocks your world and changes your entire outlook.”A Course In Miracles” describes “a miracle” as “a change in attitude.” Wise words, if initially anti-climactic.

I predict that changing what you watch on TV might just cause a miracle in your life.

Alternatively, you can get of your Snackwell’s ass, turn off the TV, and go live life, before what is left of your brain atrophies completely.

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***“The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world. They can sit at their ease and gape at the play. If they know nothing of victory, they are at least spared the knowledge of defeat. “***

—Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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**WHAT ELSE, BABY?**

If you are typical in that you must spend hundreds of hours a year shopping, at least buy clothes that suit you, not clothes that are trendy. Please, please, ladies, stop embarrassing yourselves. I heard it once said on The Oprah Show: ***“There is a difference between style, and fashion.”***

On The Oprah Show I heard it, ladies. Surely that must be good enough for you. Three things to avoid, right off the bat: Spandex, faux animal prints, and any clothing which, if you wore it on “What’s My Line,” would elicit the question, “Are you are a professional slot machine player in Vegas?”

I will say no more about the various ways that you could, to the universe’s benefit, be atypical re: your approaches to fashion and shopping, because let’s be honest, I go after that topic like a rabid dog in many other parts of my jaunty Jeremiad. Suffice it to say, you ladies are awfully good at picking out what is mediocre about us, the male of the species, yet strangely oblivious when it comes to self-examination of anything other than your breasts. Aristotle said ***“The unexamined life is not worth living.”*** If this is true—and how could it not be—then the \$64,000 question is this: ***Is your life worth living?***

What kind of professional line-up would there have to be, waiting to get that one last space in the Titanic lifeboat, in order for the group to vote that your life will be the one most likely to contribute to the further betterment of humankind, hence you should get the seat. You had better hope there’s not a cardiac surgeon or a brilliant inventor or a schoolteacher or a missionary, or even a really good plumber or pastry chef in line with you. Women and children first, but what makes a selfish, self-righteous, idle-rich first class lady a fairer choice for that last life preserver than the scientist who has the cure for cancer in his pocket, or the doctor who saves a dozen lives a month, after putting himself through medical school?

Equality is equality, ladies, you can’t have it both ways. Not suffragettes when it comes to quota hiring, then damsels in distress when the boat hits the berg. It’s amazing how many of you see no difference in the sexes when it comes to paychecks, yet see all kinds of handy gender discrimination when it comes to deciding custody battles: i.e., which gender is more capable of love.

If you are typical in that you must nag us and nag us and nag us—to improve, shape up, measure up, be a better man—then why not shock us by calling your own bluff? Live up to your own high standards, take your own genius advice, listen to your own stinging admonitions. As in: Improve, shape up, measure up, be better women! Yes, dammit, be a rare and reflective sort of normal nagging woman: for every bad habit we give up, (if we are even capable of that), you must give up a bad habit as well.

If you are TYPICAL in that sometimes, “you just need to be held,” chastising us because our love does not always have to express itself in sex, then grant us our typical



male nature, and understand that sometimes, “we just need to get laid.”

Straight, fast, furious sex, without the foreplay.

Is that so much to ask?

After all, we are all, both all of you, and all of us, typical.

Get over it.

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*“We are each our own devil, and we make this world our hell. “*

—Oscar Wilde

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### YOU ARE ORDINARY—THE TEST

***“One should always be a little improbable.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *Phrases and Philosophies for the use of the Young*

***“To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all. “***

### ARE YOU ORDINARY? THE TEST

The following questions ought to give you some idea about whether or not you are the unique lady you think you are, or, in truth, just an ordinary, run-of-the-mill gal.

#### THE BIG BREAK UP:

1.) The guy you are dating calls you and tells you he has something important to discuss, but it is too important to say on the phone. He needs to see you in person. You assume he is going to ask to see you exclusively, because you've really been laying it on thick—you know just how to please him. But instead, when the two of you meet for a cocktail, he tells you he just can't see you anymore. He's feeling too pressured. You are stunned. You can't even finish your All Puckered Out. You push your glass away, fighting back the tears, and stumble out of the bar.

You react in which of the following ways?

a.) On the way home from the bar, you get two or three pints of Ben & Jerry's, and chow down while cursing men and watching a “Sex in the City” marathon.

b.) You drag yourself home and crawl into your jammies. Then you immediately get on the phone and commiserate with your girlfriends. Their lives are also checkered with man problems, so you know that they will say exactly what you want to hear.

c.) Even though it's well past nine at night, you go to the gym and work out. You work out long and hard. The next time that you see The Bastard, you want to be ten

pounds thinner (which was your New Year's Resolution anyway), and you are determined to make him regret his decision. You are going to look hot. You may even start dating his nice friend who asked you out once. When you leave the gym, you are grinning. Your muscles ache, your heart aches, but under the circumstances, you feel damn good.

## THE DREADED REUNION

2.) You go to your high school reunion, hoping desperately that all those cute, bubbly, cheerleaders will have gotten wrinkled and bitter and fat. They have not. Or, perhaps you were one of the cuties in high school yourself, and you go to the reunion, shocked to discover that the folks who were the geeks and the nerds back then, now drive a car worth ten times what yours is worth. They have their own businesses and run corporations, while you hate your low paying dead-end job at StarchMart. They have vacation homes, while you spend every month trying to scrape the rent together for your shabby little one bedroom apartment. The point is, while all this stuff was hilarious in “Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion,” no chopper soars down from the heavens to save your loser ass—so you return home older and wiser, determined to do something about it.

So, your idea of doing something about it is:

a.) You decide on a fun weekend with old high school girlfriends to renew your friendship, so you all book cheap flights to Vegas and paint the town red. You enjoy dishing the cheerleaders all weekend, and you only lose five hundred dollars in the casino, but you were up for a while, winning two hundred, so that's not so bad, right?

b.) As soon as you get home from that damn reunion, you make a To Do List. But this is no ordinary To Do List, this is one of the greats, the stuff of legend. This one takes you through the seasons. This one has deadlines and blueprints and flowcharts and power point. This one makes you feel so much better about yourself that by the time you are finished with it, you are yanked right out of your gully of pain and humiliation, so much so that your angry, fire-in-the-belly motivation fades away, and you slide right back into your old routine and never actually do anything on the list, except the easy things like getting your car detailed and shopping for rainbow Post-It Notes—which people at the reunion think you invented, of course.

c.) You go home, get that Learning Annex catalogue out of the trash, and comb through it, looking for something to do with your nights. Three years later, after taking a few evening courses (and meeting some decent guys, for a change), you find yourself actually teaching a Learning Annex course. Who would have ever guessed, back at that

silly reunion, that your secret talent for—well, you know what I am referring to—your secret talent, that once you only practiced as a private hobby, would end up giving you a second career, a nice income boost, and a new way of meeting a higher class of man.

### THE LOST JOB

3.) You have been fired from your job. Or laid off. Either way, you're out of work, with no paychecks pending. Damn! Damn, damn, damn! You react in which of the following ways?

a.) Buy a bottle of gin, go home, get drunk. You deserve it. And it's not like you're drinking and driving.

b.) Take advantage of the down time and clean out all your drawers. You've been waiting to do this for a long time, here's your chance. Now, your drawers have room for all those potpourri sachets you've been snapping up at Pier One, Hallmark, and Bed, Bath & Beyond. By the time you finish this project, you don't feel so bad after all. *Ah—potpourri, potpourri, potpourri!* Your boyfriend thinks that your apartment smells like a field of wildflowers farting, but it sure makes you feel better.

c.) You go home, spruce up your résumé, and Google corporate headhunter sites. With your qualifications, dammit, you deserve better.

### AULD LANG SYNE

4.) It is two days before New Year's, and although you have plans for December 31st, you are depressed as hell. You promised yourself that ***this year would be different***. But instead of things getting better, they've gotten worse: you are three thousand bucks deeper in debt, ten pounds heavier, still in the job you hate, and your relationship is still in the doldrums. (Your love life didn't even have the courtesy to get worse, so you'd have an excuse to break up, or enough material for that cynical romance novel you've been planning.) So, during the last couple of days of the old year, before another new year begins afresh:

a.) You say what the hell, and cruise the after-Christmas sales. You do not really need anything, but shopping always soothes you. Now, you are another few hundred dollars deeper in debt.

b.) You watch “Bridget Jones” again and decide on a JOURNAL, yes, that's what you need! That's what's been missing in your life. It takes you two whole days of

combing the stationary stores and the bookstores to find that absolutely perfect blank book, but finally, late in the afternoon of New Year's Eve, you find it!

You have also spent money on a fancy new pen, spare cartridges, re-filler paper because you have so very much to write in your journal, a leather carrying case for your journal so it doesn't get banged up when you carry it around, because you plan to take it absolutely everywhere (your thoughts are just bubbling out of you, now that you're committed to your journal!), two refrigerator magnets to hold the "Before" and "After" pictures of you from the weight loss you're planning in your journal, some more neon Post-Its for things you think of that are important, but do not have the kind of eternal importance you'd want to put into a journal (you spilled your energy drink on the ones you bought after the reunion), and a neat little thingie for your desk that has tiny stainless steel magnetized bits that you can shape into anything you want and it stays like that.

You are embarrassed, (as you ponder what's the first thing you're going to write in your new journal), to find that you have shaped it into a little penis. Whatever. Anyway, you promise yourself a sober and solitary New Year's Eve, a lonely choice, maybe, but it feels right. No anti-climactic kiss at the stroke of midnight, no cops to worry about while driving home, no agonizing hangover on January First. You spend the whole evening writing resolutions and drinking sparkling cider, as you watch the glitter ball drop in Times Square on TV.

After Jan. 1, you never write in the journal again.

c.) You go over your credit card receipts and realize that not a single thing of all the crap you've bought, except for maybe your big new TV, means anything to you now. Every purchase was a meaningless perishable—nail polish, hair clips, neon shoestrings, a foot massager, a home hair-waxing kit, diet pills, magazine subscriptions, trips to the tanning salon, movie tickets, aromatherapy candles, yet another sweater, a salad chopper from an infomercial, a fruit drying-beef jerky maker from an infomercial, some abdominatrix thing for your stomach that is really the same as doing sit-ups and which you have used twice, Sweatin' to the Oldies," "Sweatin' S'more to the New Oldies," a weekend at the beach, an outfit for your dog—the list is endless. The smartest thing you charged was a Suze Orman book about how to get out of debt, but you never got around to reading it. Once you charged a burrito at the Taco Bell drive-thru. Minimum payments alone due on your credit cards totals \$450 bucks. Your credit card bills are in the five figures. You call around, and find a 12 Step Group that can help you deal with your addiction to shopping. You are a spendaholic.

And you are getting nowhere doing this alone.

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*"I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to*

*read on the train.”*

—Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

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## FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

5.) You return home from the funeral of a loved one. Fortunately, it's a slow time at work, so you decide to take a few days off. With all this time on your hands, you:

a.) Sit on the sofa, drink Irish whiskey, listen to sad Enya music, and sob.

b.) Look through the deceased soul's memorabilia, learn some new things about them, remember how great they were, listen to sad Enya music, and sob.

c.) You go on craigslist.com and find someone who can set you up with a new web page. You can't help but notice that it costs no more than the price you paid for fingernail maintenance last month. This is on your mind, because you remember studying your mother's manicure as she lay in the coffin—she used to say “you can always tell a lady by her hands.”

You use the web site as a Family Tree Page for your sprawling clan, Googling to learn how it's done. It fills up those sad, spare Sunday hours that you used to spend gabbing with mom on the phone? Gradually, you get in touch with assorted long distance relatives in your far-flung family. Some of these birds are fascinating. Soon, you have these dynamic online penpals. You start getting great old family photos in the mail, and letters, and assorted treasures. Some of this stuff is over a hundred years old. There is correspondence written from foxholes during the war, cards mailed to your mother on the occasion of your birth, vintage Valentines, tintypes, daguerreotypes, you even get boxes of old political buttons, antique clothes, mechanical toys, Boy Scout badges half a century old—amazing stuff. You like this all so much that you parlay family tree research services into a commercial website, which leads to an entire cottage industry. Soon you quit your crappy job, and begin your own online business that starts up family trees and finds lost relatives and researches coats-of-arms and hunts down ancestral tartan patterns. You get so busy, next thing you know, you are hiring extra employees.

And all of this while wearing your favorite fuzzy slippers, the flannel robe your mother gave you last Christmas, and those comfy, oversized perfectly-broken-in grey sweats that once belonged to your lying bastard ex-boyfriend, but which he left at your place after dumping you for that bitch cocktail waitress.

But you are not bitter. You are loving life. You are not bitter. And you still love listening to Enya, but she doesn't always make you weep, only just sometimes, when you

get a little nostalgic.

#### AND MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY:

6.) It is a big birthday: the big 3-0, the big 4-0, or 35, which essentially means that your life is half over, or maybe it's your 37th, which is big because that means the big 4-0 is only THREE years away. Or maybe they are all big for you. Your life is not bad, really, but it has bored you to tears thus far, and this perplexes you. So you:

a.) Take a lover. You do love the guy you've been seeing for a while, but he seems to have no interest in marriage, and dammit, if you were engaged, then you'd be faithful to him. But there is this really cute guy in the office...the affair is great. Now you're happy. For a while.

b.) You resolve to ask for a raise. You've been working at the same place for years now, and dammit, you are a great employee, doing twice as much as before, to make up for friends who have been laid off. You march into your boss's office and make your demand. He says yes! You have more money in your life now! You are happy! For a while.

c.) You finally agree to volunteer a few hours on the weekends, because that girl two cubicles down is always bugging you about it. She's always nattering on about it, she won't shut up about it, she is in love with that cause like you've been in love with men. It is annoying and irritating at first—all this procedural stuff they expect you to learn, and even classes they want you to take, just to do a good deed.

But it pays off:

— *On one snowy Christmas Eve*, when you go to the nursing home to do a good deed, you find out that one of your baskets is going to a little old lady who has not had a visitor or a present in five years. She cries with joy as you give her some candy and hand cream and a pair of discount clip-on earrings from the Walgreens. It costs you the price of a Starbucks. You made a mental note of that point, because the register amount was exactly the same as a double latté.

— *In that unforgettable moment* when you see the look on a child's face as he enters Disneyland for the first time. You arranged this. The child has never been off the ghetto block since the day he was born, until the day he walked into your Citizens of the World recording studio, and cut an audiobook about what it is like to be in a gang at the age of nine. The recording studio is just your garage, with a CD burner and a mike. It cost you \$800 to set up. This maxed out your new credit card. But since the other cards were maxed by trips to the mall and nights out with the gals, it seems like a small price to pay. (And next year, you get to deduct the recording studio from your taxes. You're not just

sweet, you're savvy.) The Gang Boy CD will become a best seller. You are the CD's producer.

And you are the kid's hero.

— *When you get a letter* from the third grade class at the elementary school in your neighborhood, thanking you for sponsoring the Read to Feed program, that resulted in their buying an impoverished African family a goat.

The goat now gives an entire African family hope, food, and a future, in the form of milk, cheese, fuel (they burn the dung), and, when they team up with another family's gift goat, there are baby goats, and more food, and more hope, and more baby goats...etcetera, etcetera. The goat not only financed the family's life, but the education of the children, and money for medicine. Not a bad way to spend fifty bucks. You spent that much last month getting your private parts waxed. This month, you made the ultimate sacrifice: you did your own waxing. You decide you are very noble indeed.

—On the night when you crawl into your big bed and find that finally, you are no longer sleeping alone. Itchy is sleeping with you. That was his name at the pound, when you whisked him from death row in the nick of time, and though you have tried to change his name to something more noble, Sir Lancelot, “Itchy” is what he answers to. You bought him a special dog bed, but he cries unless he cuddles up with you at night, because he acts tough, but really he's scared. So you let him on the bed. You share Saltines. He calms down. He nods off. You can hear him breathing next to you. What the hell, it's a start.

—OK, OK, so these examples seem a bit Pollyanna. But believe it or not, there are certain kinds of people that have these kinds of experiences every day.

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Alright, let's examine your answers to the above six questions.

If you answered “A” to all of them, and were proud you did, you may be beyond hope. Pass this book along to someone who still has a chance at a meaningful life...

If you answered “A” to all of them with growing chagrin, that's acceptable. At least you know there is a problem. Obviously, in every case, “A” was the self-destructive response to a bad situation, a course of action that is only destined to make matters worse, thereby leading to even more type “A” actions, making matters even worse still. This is how so many people end up fat (and/or) drunk (and/or) hugely in debt (and/or) bitter (and/or) total losers.

As you hopefully figured out, “B” was always the neutral answer—usually it constituted a course of action that was not exactly negative, but not positive, either. *But that is kind of a trick statement, just as “B” was always a trick answer.* Are you really interested in pulling yourself out of denial, and rising to the next level? There really is no



“neutral” or “standing still”, when you are in a bad situation, or coming off of one. Situations are dynamic, they get better or they get worse. Even a situation as seemingly benign as a boring job can be a bad situation, because if you wake up one day and realize that you’ve spent two thirds of your waking life bored, you may be besought by a barrage of negative emotions that will at best, ruin the quality of life. At worst, they can lead to—well, use your imagination. (If you still have an imagination, that is, after stultifying your mind with an average of 30,000 hours of television over the last ten years.)

Unless you have the I.Q. of a Milk Dud, you had to see that “C” was the choice of a superior human being. These are the kinds of people with bountiful lives and sincere smiles and glowing souls, souls that when you see them, you find yourself envious of them, saying, *“Why can't I be more like them? I guess I'm just not lucky, like they are. If only...if only...”*

But of course, the “C” answer always requires work, hard work, and just at the time when you are least in the mood to do it.

That's one of the great secrets of life, you know.

Trust me on this.

The sad conclusion about this test: the truth is that a lot of you probably answered “A” to most of the questions, if you were honest. (Or, if the action you took was not “A”, it was in the self-destructive spirit of “A.” You know what I mean.) I'd ask you to keep a journal about it, but how many thousands of really pretty blank books and journals have been bought in the past, by ladies with high hopes, only to end up as blank as the mind of Paris Hilton on Jeopardy.

But, ah!

Perhaps you boldly and forthrightly assert that you are a type “B” answer girl, licking your wounds, nurturing yourself, healing, going to a pretty place, doing whatever New Age crapola you read about in some other book that is neither as demanding nor honest as mine.

Fine, then, heal. Sleep in one weekend, take some time off from work, talk to people who care, and oh just generally feel the love. But the unavoidable truth of it is that people who are not ordinary *sooner or later kick into “ANSWER C” mode*, and the truly extraordinary people always go for “SOONER.”

So the bottom line is, based on this test, we can conclude that you really are quite ordinary, yes?No? That is refreshing.

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Some final thoughts, re: just how amazing and extraordinary are you willing to be? To become?

Are you willing to renounce earthly pleasures, become a religious soul, and devote

everything to charity? Become (drumroll, please...)... the next Mother Theresa? Look, we know the answer to that is no. None of us really want to be the next Mother Theresa, because the very nature of the kind of work she did usually implies thankless labor and lifelong anonymity. She was an anomaly. Are you willing to join in her work? Probably not. Most ladies I know go through a crisis of confidence if they so much as miss a bikini wax, or if they get a bad perm, or if they are forced to mince around in last season's heels. The thought of wearing a habit, ugly black shoes, and no nail polish is way beyond the ken of most women.

No, the above is clearly not going to happen in your life. I can tell because you chose to buy this book, in the self-help section. If you were a candidate for such selfless service, if you were even close, you'd probably have been roaming any section of the bookstore except the section of the store with the word SELF prominently in the title. Get it? It's still about "SELF" with you.

Trust me on this.

Or prove me wrong. Nothing would make me happier.

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***"How many men there are in life who would like to see their past burning to white ashes before them?"***

—Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

***"The past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are."***

—Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of a man under Socialism*

***"I don't recognize you. I've changed a lot."***

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE MONEY THING—WHAT WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK AT YOU THE MONEY THING WHAT WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK AT YOU

***“Nowadays, people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.”***

— Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

***“Ordinary riches can be stolen from a man. Real riches cannot. In the treasury house of your soul, there are infinitely precious things that may not be taken from you.”***

Oscar Wilde *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*

Know this: most guys do not have an eye for clothes, and we can hardly tell the difference between a blouse from K-Mart that costs \$9.95 on deep discount and one from Nieman Marcus that costs twenty times that full price. Ergo, when you wear your new designer sandals (fill in haute name) that you bought because they go perfectly with the new designer (fill in other haute name; we aren't listening anyway) floral print summer sheath that you just had to have, because it was so darling, we guys do not notice that both the slingbacks and the sack are the exact same perfect shade of peach! We don't notice, and we don't care.

What we do notice is your propensity for spending money.

And when you sashay down the boardwalk with your purse, and you swing your purse, and clutch your purse, and place your purse down so that it is impossible to miss the trademark double “CC” that can only mean Coco Chanel, we do not notice that you have exquisite taste.

We notice your propensity for spending money.

And when your costume jewelry is so dangly and bangly and loud that it drowns out the conversation we are trying to have with you, we do not notice the rodeo motif earrings or the Zimbabwe totem necklace or the seashell festooned bracelets or the diamonds or rubies or pearls.

We notice your propensity for spending money.

And when we walk into your house and notice an environment right out of House Beautiful, with overstuffed furniture and bric-a-brac strewn about everywhere like so much Dresden bombing detritus, (and we have already discussed the throw pillows at

length), we do not notice what exquisite taste you have.

We notice your propensity for spending money.

Our money.

### **WE ARE ALL FRIGHTENED: THREE NERVOUS GROUPS OF GUYS**

Don't get me wrong. Don't get us wrong.

It is not as though we want you to dress like a bag lady, have the spending allowance of a Taoist monk, and live in an apartment that looks like a Spartan war tent. (And granted, we always do seem to appreciate the money you ladies spend on push-up bras, thong panties, garter belts, and seamed stockings. OK, so we're Neanderthal jerks.) But when we see excess, when we see "designer," when we see a profusion of the unnecessary—i.e. that which does not have a discernible function—we truly do see only one thing: a propensity for spending money.

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***"Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination."***

—Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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### **IF YOU GLEAN LITTLE ELSE FROM THIS BOOK, KNOW THIS:**

There is no category of man who is not frightened by your pandemic propensity for spending money.

While you are frantic that he has rejected you because you are too old, or not pretty enough, or because he prefers that other bitch, or because you look fat in those pants, the more likely truth is that he sees you as addicted to spending. And if he has already experienced that kind of hell once in his lifetime, he will drop you like Beelzebub drops a Bible.

You whine to your girlfriends that he is "commitment phobic." Wrong. He is Debtor's Prison phobic. You tell your girlfriends that he has "intimacy issues." Wrong. He has issues with women who are spendaholics. You tell your girlfriends that he is "not emotionally available." Wrong. His credit cards are not available, that's all.

And he worries that *that* is what you really want from him—even if you, yourself, do not realize that about yourself.

Maybe that's where men have their real issues.

Men do not want to marry spenders. Logical analysis will immediately make this abundantly clear:

1.) IF WE ARE A STRUGGLING, LOWER MIDDLE CLASS MAN: we are frightened because money is a constant challenge, and a recurring terror in our life. We are salaried dopes. The math is simple. We only make so much money, we already have a heap of expenses and a pile of bills, so naturally, we balk at the notion of hitching up with a woman who will make our life that much harder, require us to work even more hours a week than we are working now, and, worst of all, who will ring up so many credit card bills that most of our billable manhours will go just to paying off the interest on those credit cards.

And if we want to have kids with you, or if we have kids by a previous marriage, we may see life with you as near impossible. Kids are expensive enough, naturally, without mother multiplying that logarithmically.

Now, this does not mean that we won't propose anyway: in a blind moment, swept away by the magic of a push-up bra and the daffy notion that we are in love with you, sure, we might pop the question. But the idea is to get a guy to stay with you for the long haul, right, not just to seduce him into temporary submission? Happiness, isn't that the goal? But that is just not going to happen, if a spendaholic hooks up with a man of modest means.

I can see how you will think that you are being reasonable, and lowering your expectations, in settling for a lower middle class guy: you tell yourself that you are willing to compromise your dreams, you rationalize that you aren't aiming too high, to go after this cute plumber or this muscled construction worker. After all, you tell yourself, he's just a blue collar "man of the people." But he will get nervous and flee from you, lady, as the credit card bills start to stack up, and that then leads to the inevitable arguments. Much cheaper, and much more fun, to stop by the local watering hole after work, and buy that lonely blonde a beer.

And as you sit alone on your sofa, with your pint of Ben & Jerry's, pondering the Separation, you wonder how you ever managed to drive him away, because you went to such great expense to look so good, and feather such a lovely nest.

2.) THE MIDDLE CLASS MAN: Granted, this man may have a bit more money to spend on frivolities, but in a capitalistic society, (God Bless America), where thousands of people are paid billions of dollars to THINK UP NEW THINGS FOR YOU TO BUY and also THINK OF ADVERTISING SCHEMES THAT WILL GET YOU TO BUY THEM, the Middle Class Man knows full well that no matter how comfortable his income, and no matter how much he manages to increase his salary over time, you will always be ahead of him by leaps and bounds in your spending. It would be like Fat Albert trying to catch up to Elizabeth Joyner in a marathon. Ain't gonna happen. Once he has fallen into the pit of debt, (especially credit card debt, with him struggling to pay just the

minimum payments), many of his hopes and dreams which would have required an outlay of cash just won't come true, because you have maxed out the credit cards. And your rationalization that you didn't spend it all on yourself, you spent it making a lovelier home, that's no comfort to him. Gone are his guy fantasies of being able to afford to quit his job so he can start his own business, just as the plans for a decent workshop, useful tools, early retirement (or any kind of retirement, for that matter), and the fishing boat, and the vacation home (just a wee cabin in the woods, so the family can escape urban blight every now and then), all of these are vanished. Gone with the Wind.

MINIMUM PAYMENT DUE: YOUR DREAMS. Even the extra money from that second mortgage has suddenly vanished like a fart in a hurricane. He is just going to have to work that much harder, put in longer hours at work, and eat more caca at the behest of his boss, his clients, and the other bastards of business that drain his lifeblood, just so you can have exactly the right shade of shoes, or so that you can redecorate a powder room which to him seemed just fine the way it was—after all, you just redecorated it last year, didn't you? What's the problem? The toilet flushes. The faucets work. There's a rack for a towel, with a towel on it. Who do you think you are, anyway, (he mutters to himself, as he wonders if he'll get yelled at again for using the little soaps shaped like seahorses), Princess Grace of Monaco? She died an ugly death now, didn't she?

You have lost more good, solid, middle class potential mates than you know, being a Visible Spender.

3.) RICHMEN! Needless to say, but what the hell let's say it anyway, Richmen have the most money to spend on you, financing your obsessions and addictions, but for obvious reasons, the Richman is also the most wary. As noted before, the Lords of Capitalism and their hard working minions will always make absolutely certain that there is lots of pricey stuff for you to buy out there. Lots and lots o' stuff.

Try this simple test: Fast as you can, hurry now, surf to [robbreport.com](http://robbreport.com) or [millionaire.com](http://millionaire.com) or the [billionaireshop.com](http://billionaireshop.com), then click six times in a row real fast on all the pretty pictures, and in about forty-five seconds, you will have spent a few million bucks.

This is what some wives of Richmen do all day long. In a world where yachts feature solid gold bathroom fixtures and you can buy a children's Napa Valley Manor style playhouse for fifteen thousand clams and dog beds sell for forty thousand dollars and a single 14K gold diamond encrusted three inch martini sword costs six hundred bucks—you can bet that when debt hits, it hits deep, and it hits dire. Your prospective wealthy husband (Richman) knows with absolute certainty that you can go through his fortune in no time, and put him in deep hock. Deeper in hock, in fact, than any poor man could even imagine.

CASES IN POINT:

Amy Irving got a cool one hundred million out of Spielberg, and that's back when he was not nearly as rich as he is now.

Britain's record is 26.3 million pounds, awarded to Mona Al Khatib for her husband's "very grave behaviour." You'd think that for that kind of money, he would at least have been described in the lawsuit as having "very frolicsome behaviour" or "very bawdy behaviour" or "very satyric behaviour." What kind of person gets sued in the millions for acting gravely? Almost makes you not want to pay the piper.

Harrison Ford paid Melissa Matheson \$85 million, an amount called "record breaking" in the business.

Neil Diamond paid his wife a record-setting show biz divorce settlement, saying "I wish her all the happiness 150 million dollars can bring."

Phyllis Redstone, wife of Sumner Redstone, sued for divorce to the tune of three billion bucks. Of course, he was spotted with a young female media executive in Paris. Of course, that is his job, he works as a media executive. If he was never seen with a female in the business, he would be accused of refusing to hire women, and he would have been sued for that. What's a media tycoon to do?

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***"No man is ever rich enough to buy back his past."***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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No wonder Richmen insist on pre-nups. On top of it all, the poor Richman constantly experiences one of life's most terrifying primal fears: he doesn't really even know if you love him, at all. Perhaps you are just marrying him for his money? That is probably why those campy movie romances about the man who pretends to be poor, and finds love anyway, are so charming, even to men, though they'd rather take up lacemaking than admit it. ("Thoroughly Modern Millie," "Clambake," "A Successful Calamity," "Let's Make Love," and let's not forget "So ein, Millionaer hat's schwer." A fun genre.)

To sum it up, a woman who is addicted to spending is a vast source of stress and worry and outright panic for the responsible man. For that matter, a woman who is addicted to spending is a vast source of panic to an irresponsible man. I'm willing to guess that most of the men out there who are serious about settling down to marriage, perhaps a second marriage, are the Walking Wounded, when it comes to their money fears and women.

If you want to win his heart, it is your job to allay those fears, not increase them.

Meanwhile, do you any damned thing at all about saving money?

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***“When a woman marries again, it is because she detested her first husband. When a man marries again, it is because he adored his first wife. Women try their luck; men risk theirs.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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### THE STARBUCKS THING

Let us play a game. In fact, let’s fancy it up in the fashion of the trailer park set. Let us imagine that you are on a game show. One of those where you must dress up in a ridiculous outfit in order to get a chance at spinning for the big enchilada. And you have just the costume that you know is sure to catch the M.C.’s eye! So let us stop for a minute and picture you as a giant lobster or a space alien or Little Bo Peep (lots of cleavage) or, well, a big enchilada.

The handsome, tanning booth-bronzed Master of Ceremonies wends his way over to you and gives you a chance to play the game! He takes your trembling, sweaty hand in his, and leads you to a table. He smiles, his capped teeth glistening under the studio lights. You can hear your friends in the studio audience squealing in delight, and applauding, and shouting bits of advice. The M.C. gestures to his lovely assistant; she walks to a table where sits a box with a big bow. She gently lifts the box, revealing...a paper cup full of coffee!

On the other side of the table, you see a picture of a beautiful retirement condominium built on your dream property—next to Burning Tree Country Club, next door to the Spielbergs in Beverly Hills, or on the beach at Malibu, or on 5th Avenue in Manhattan, or nestled in the woods at Aspen, or perhaps it is a charming flat in London's elegant Regency Square, or a sweet pied-à-terre on the Champs Elysées in Paris, or wherever. Whatever suits your fancy.

Next to the picture is a set of keys.

“Which are you going to pick, Miss Bo Peep,” says the M.C., “A delicious cup of Starbucks coffee? Or a retirement home, completely paid for, that you will own, scott free. That’s a picture of it, on the table there, and those are the keys to the front door. All you have to do is touch the keys, and the dream house is yours.”

You look up at him, puzzled. “Hey, is this a trick question?” you snap, perplexed.”Well, which will it be?” the M.C. persists, “A cuppa Joe, or the luxury condo,



with the mortgage paid off and the title, in your name!”

You are stymied.

There are no other boxes to choose from, no mystery envelope, no attractive Vanna Beige gesturing towards a curtain with some unknown booty or booby prize behind it. Is he kidding with this?

“Is this some kind of joke?” you ask him. “This is a no-brainer. Of course I’ll take the coffee!”

The stupid audience cheers your stupid decision; they are applauding wildly, they love you!

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Didn’t turn out the way you thought it would? But you make that choice hundreds of days a year, all in a row, morning after morning after morning. You choose the cup of coffee over the retirement home. (Or, substitute for coffee—the gratuitous tube of lipstick, or hairbob, or drive-thru burger, or cocktail, or darling evening bag, or precious spring sandals, or aromatherapy candle, or fairy statue, or neon girlie-bit, or other trinket...all these, you prefer, to easy retirement in the lap of luxury.)

***Albert Einstein once said that the most powerful thing in the world is the theory of compound interest. Yet do you take advantage of it? Are you socking away a little every day, every week, every month?***

It goes like this: Begin by doing something for yourself every day, a good habit for life, the kind you will be happy you started, when you look back on it in ten years, or fifty years. A sane, sober, simple habit, like flossing or exercising, or at least walking briskly around the block every day at sunset. Let’s start with putting a little money away every day. Not an astronomical amount, so don’t go telling me you can’t afford it. Let’s start with four bucks a day. And like I just said, don’t go telling me you can’t afford it. You spend four dollars on lunch, when you could pack lunch at home for a dollar. You spend four dollars when you stop at the drug store on the way home from work, buying a new shade of nail polish, or some other impulse purchase. You spend four dollars on a triple latté at Starbucks. (You spent way more than four dollars on this book, for information that just pissed you off, or that you already secretly knew, or both.)

So, as an example, if you are one of the vast legions of young yuppies who spends four bucks every morning at Starbucks, or what is worse, you charge that coffee—do you realize that you are spending about fifteen hundred bucks a year on coffee?

And do you know what? A lot of these kids I see (as I stroll by the Starbucks and stare in the window, refusing to enter the establishment) can’t even be making

thirty-thousand, after taxes. That means they spend five percent of their income on a morning cup of coffee, that they could just as easily make at home. That's not including the accumulating compound interest that they pay on their credit cards, if they charge the java.

Here is what that four bucks a day could amount to, if you put it in a compound interest bearing account:

COMPOUND INTEREST:  
MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Over the last seventy-five years, the stock market has averaged a return of 12%. Bonds have averaged 6%. Hence, I will use 8% as an “inbetween figure.” Assume a \$4 coffee or other indulgence per day, invested instead: 10 years: @ 6% = \$19,764 @ 8% = \$22,100 @ 12% = \$27,880 20 years: @ 6% = \$55,722 @ 8% = \$71,154 @ 12% = \$119,898 30 years: @ 6% = \$121,145 @ 8% = \$180,035 @ 12% = \$423,590

So four bucks a day, just the four bucks a day that you piss away on what, you can't even remember two days later, that would be, in the most conservative estimation of six percent a day, \$121,000 dollars. That's full payment on a charming condominium or cabin in the country. \*\*\*

And if you boldly could max the stock market average and put in five bucks a day, that would be, at the end of thirty years, almost half a million. That's on a poor soul's salary, too.

(\*\*\*Source: this was calculated with the group effort on a Financial Services Industry blog. 12% is not meant to be a reflection of each year's earnings, but an average. Even if one were to quibble with a few of the figures, we are still talking about a pile of money over time, what Einstein called “the most powerful force on earth”—a power which, ironically, is available to everybody, yet which few people choose to harness. )

PUTTING IT ANOTHER WAY

To return to the girl stuff financial analysis we began in the “BEST FOOT FORWARD” Chapter ...

The average woman spends about \$60,000 to \$85,000 on clothes in her lifetime, \$25,000 on shoes in her lifetime, \$12,000 a year on jewelry, about \$15,000 on make-up in her lifetime—that is conservatively \$100,000 to \$137,000 spent on female fripperies in your lifetime. Imagine not being radical (as in, cutting out these expenditures) but merely conservative (as in, cutting it in half—when most women realize what they spend, they realize in hindsight they could easily do without)—and that means you have between \$50,000 and \$60,000 to put toward your retirement home. There are many parts of this

country where you could pay off half of a condo or cottage with that kind of money, and live comfortably within your retirement. In the charming small town where I penned this book, you could buy a whole house. In the house where I penned this book, we have three bedrooms, a basement, a half acre, and we sit nestled in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. The house can be bought for—\$60,000. Think about it.

So if you are one of the millions upon millions of folks who pisses away four bucks a day—or perhaps ten or twenty, instead of putting it in an interest bearing account- ***-you are the addlepated fool in the game show who, when asked to choose between the coffee or the retirement home, chose the java. Loser.***

That's the way some of us men see you women. Even if we are losers ourselves. That, I admit, is the maddening part of our gender.

#### JOURNAL QUESTION FOR THE CHAPTER:

This chapter's Journal questioned is deferred: instead carry your Journal with you, and jot down your thoughts next time you are standing in line at Starbucks, imagining that quaint rented room and can of cat food you will be savoring in your old age.

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***“It is better to have a permanent income, than to be fascinating.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Model Millionaire*

## CHAPTER NINE

### QUID PRO QUO

***“The only way a woman can ever reform a man is by boring him so completely that he loses all possible interest in life.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

***“Women defend themselves by attacking, just as they attack by sudden and strange surrender.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

When it comes to wives carping at husbands, it always boils down to one of two things.

1. You carp at us because we've changed. We're not the same man you married. Of course we've changed. We're married.

2. You carp at us because we refuse to change. If you hated the way we were so much, why did you marry us in the first place?

Yup, it all pretty much comes down to one of these two categories.

So let's examine them a little more closely, shall we?

This business about you carping at us for changing, and for not.\*\*\*

(\*\*\*This entire chapter can apply to the attitude of couples in long term relationships where the act of marriage has not yet transpired, so hang in there. At some point in your life, this chapter will probably apply to you, one way or another.)

***“When we were dating, you used to romance me,”*** you lament, ***“You used to court me and say sweet things and take me fun places and bring me flowers and you used to romance me!”*** you pout.

Of course we did. We had a mission. To win a wife. We did that. And we can prove it: We're still making the damn payments on your diamond ring every month. That job of getting us a good woman is done, we've moved on.

***“But I want it to be like that again,”*** you say.

And then, you repeat yourself, as though we never explained it to you—the way I just explained it for you here.

***“You've changed since we got married. You're different.”***

Damn right, we've changed.

We've changed from the carefree man who could spend an evening with the guys to spending every evening with you, because if we aren't with you, you assume that we are with our high school sweetheart Leslie that we dated for six weeks before the prom, then we broke up with her two days after prom, and that was fourteen years ago, and we can't even really remember what she looks like, and we only ever even brought up her name in the first place because you asked us once playfully did we go to our senior prom?, and you and I laughed together at pictures of me with Leslie in my dorky powdered blue tux. But now, today, right this minute, present reality—if I stay for twenty minutes too long with the boys after work at the local watering hole, surely I must not really be at the pub. Surely I must be with her. Like a horny Hercule Poirot, I have hunted her down and now, as you wait with a brisket turning to leather, I am having wild high school sex with Leslie. Leslie who saved her corsage in the Frigidaire for freshness, till the day she knew I'd come wanderin' back through her door. How clever you are, to have figured this out.

Yes. I have changed. All men change.

All creatures change, when they lose their freedom.

Hmm, how else have I changed? I have changed from being able to spend my money on my Bobble-Head Doll Collection of Great Sports Idols and even more gratuitous things like remote control model airplanes and faux fur car seat covers and TiVo and airguns and jetskis and baseball fantasy camp and giant foam fingers of my Team to wave at the big game and used broken machinery crap from yard sales that you can't tell what it is, but dammit, I know I could fix it up and it will be really handy to have around—Oh yes, baby, I HAVE CHANGED from being able to spend my money on cool stuff like that to now having to spend it on dopey things like homeowner's insurance and kitchen wallpaper and redoing the bathroom and tickets to Phantom and bric-a-brac shelving, upon which MY Bobble-Head Doll Collection of Great Sports Idols is NOT allowed to sit, don'cha know.

Yes, dammit, I've changed.

I have changed from being able to whip out my porn, which is only mildly dirty in the first place, from its favorite hiding place under my cozy bed, and slipping it into its cozy player, and taking care of business, to now, at your orders, having to hide it way down in the basement in the back of the unfinished rec room behind the water heater in a trunk my great grandfather used in the Great War and there, under the old Life magazines and Cub Scout memorabilia and shredding Halloween costumes and political rally buttons and dead prom flowers and scrapbooks and my x-ray glasses from my youth which I bought from the back of an Avengers Comic, there is my poor abandoned porn. And by the time I trudge down into the dank labyrinth of my cellar, where daddy-longlegs rule and dustbunny armies guard all the yard sale crap, after I have made the long trek from my warm bedroom to the bowels of the earth where evil trolls are guarding my porn tapes of The Naughty Neighbor Nextdoor and Tammy's Lesbian

Tupperware Party—well, you know what, baby? I have pretty much lost the urge. I have trudged by, on my long dark journey through my home, so very many things that remind me of my To Do list (actually, it is your list that you made out for me, thank you darling), that all I can do now is collapse in a sad, emasculated heap, thinking of how tiring tomorrow will be if I even managed to get through one fourth of the chores on that damned list. (And that is when I glance in the trash bin and notice that you have once again tried to throw away my most comfy sweats and my favorite corroding flip-flops and my eight track player and my lava lamp, which needs only a little tinkering with to be good as new. Yes, I am bitter.)

Yes, I have changed. I have changed from being free to being a prisoner. I have changed from being a man of wealth (forty bucks in your pocket on a Saturday with nothing to do makes you feel like a god), to being a man who has nightmares of Debtor's Prison. I've gone from being a devil-may-care onanist, to a husband who tries as hard as he can when he is in bed with you, but still finds Dr. Gray's Women-Are-From-Mars-Men-Have-a-Penis tapes full of effeminate yammering about how I can be as good a lover as him, jammed not-so-subtly into my car's cassette deck where my old Eagles tunes once ruled.

I have gone from a bachelor life of seeing nubile young things in short skirts, revealing sexy navels, sporting low cut tops, displaying ample fleshy cleavage, and having these salacious images keeping me up at night as I fantasize about them—to looking at that same Lolita type and realizing, Holy Mary Mother of God, that girl is my daughter, and she's on her way to her first dance, and Holy Mary Mother of God, I must protect her, because I know what every boy there will be thinking. I will follow her, I will be ready to protect and attack, I am going to stalk my own daughter, if that's what it takes to keep her safe.

Yeah. I've changed. What's your point?

Whereas you have not changed at all, oh no, not a bit—you still wear black, lacy garter belts and push-up bras under your sweats, even when you do the dirty laundry and clean Snowball's catbox and change the baby.

And you haven't gained an ounce and you never crab at me and you are always ready to drop to your knees, you wench, and do my bidding, even if it's right in the middle of "All My Children" or a knock-down drag-out argument about credit card bills or your mother moving in with us.

No, you haven't changed, not a whit. Of course you've changed, baby, of course I've changed. We all changed. Life got real. And here's the deal: *when it's good, it's worth it*. And, God willing, when we do the reckoning, in the deep dead of night, all we ask is that it's just a few more percentage points good than it is bad. That's all we ask—not that it be always good. Just more good than bad. And when it's good, it's miles and miles, light years, even, better than when we were dopey bachelors alone with our porn and our TV

dinners and our nights out with the guys, lying about our sexual exploits.

We have a begrudging, bearish love for it all, an affection we know we would miss (an affection not just for you, mind you, but for all the wee rituals), if you left us—a fondness for the ToDo list and the Saturday errands and the schlepping of kids and meatloaf Wednesdays and the conversations at night, about everything under the sun, even if it has replaced the sex. Because we're really just big oafs, lovable lugs.

We really do love it, these changes.

We just hate that you don't.

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***“The Ideal Man! Oh, the Ideal Man —If we ask him a question about anything under the sun, he should give us an answer all about ourselves. He should invariably praise us for whatever qualities he knows we haven't got.”***

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*

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JOURNAL QUESTION: Explain how you have changed for the worse, since we have known you? Or would you call these trade-offs? What is the difference?

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OK, so we've done that part where we've agreed that maybe yes, we have changed since we courted you and we've explained why. We've defended ourselves, vented a little, even provided you with what we think is a rather elegant apologia. Elegant for us, at least—remember, we're the one that used a napkin ring from the sterling silver set handed down by your great grandmother to clamp that leak in the guest bathroom toilet.

But what about the part where you try to change us? What about the part where we goof around in a fog, like the great Neanderthals that we are, wondering why (as we search for fire and fresh kill) you married us in the first place, if ever since we came back from the honeymoon, you have done nothing but nag, nag, nag about how unsatisfactory we are. I tried mighty hard, when writing this part, to see it from your point of view. And I am attempting to present the problem in ways that I have not seen in other self-help books. (Read: self-help books written by women.)

It's like this: When you see us, you see faults. Faults that you think are hurting us, and you, and the marriage. It may not even be a terrible habit or a big problem, you just think fixing it would make us better, and the marriage happier.

Fair enough.

But the problem comes when you fail to turn that same kind of laser perception on yourself: Quid Pro Quo.

If we have to change something, it's only fair that you should, too. Because change is hard, it is extremely difficult, if, in fact, we are capable of it at all. (Some people just are not, the poor lazy losers.) And if we are going to change, we expect to see you to clean up your act, too. Listen up, because this could save your relationship. (This primarily refers to marriages, but it can apply to living with someone, or just long term relationships, where the nasty little faults and annoying bad habits are being examined more and more closely over time.)

It's tit for tat. It's Quid Pro Quo.

You see that we sit around watching sports all day long, and you want us to stop that, to pay more attention to you, to watch what you want to watch—or at least get out of the house and get some fresh air.

But you talk endlessly on the cellphone while driving the car, calling girlfriends that you don't really need to be talking to at that moment. It is making you an unsafe driver, it is totally unfair to other drivers on the road, it makes us squawk when we get the cellphone bill. And most importantly—as important as the unsafe driving part—it shows how you are irresponsible with your brain, and afraid to be alone with your own thoughts.

Think about this, please.

Entertaining yourself when you don't need to be entertaining yourself, gossiping on the cellphone for hours when you are driving, is exactly the same thing as we guys entertaining ourselves mindlessly for hours, watching sports—with one big difference: What you are doing could kill someone. It has already killed lots of people. Failure to pay full time and attention to the road. I have nearly missed a hundred of them, women who run yellow lights and cut in front of me without signaling and weave all over the freeway, with their Starbucks in one hand, cellphone in the other, driving with their knee, looking down and dialing the phone, when they should be watching the road. It is hard to “pay full attention to the road” when you are cackling with Marge about Sophie's ghastly new dye job. Shut up and drive, already.

Quid Pro Quo.

(Hey, I bet you thought I was going to say that your watching soap operas and reality TV is just as dopey as us watching sports. Of course that's true, of course that's a valid point. In fact, let me ask you this: If we limit our sports intake to just two hours a week, or only on the weekends, or whatever—the point is, if we are willing to cut way down, are you willing to drop one of your soaps? Or one of your reality TV shows? Aha, I thought not. But the point here, and an important point it is, ladies—I didn't go for the more obvious soap opera analogy first, instead I went for the cellphone-while-driving business, because the entire “quid pro quo” argument is based on the fact that you do not (you simply refuse to) perceive flaws in your own behavior that are analogous to our bad



habits. YOU HAVE LIKE FAULTS, TIT FOR TAT, BUT YOU STUBBORNLY REFUSE TO SEE.)What else? What other trade-offs can we find? What other Quid Pro Quos lurk in the bush?

WE ARE PIGS: OK, you got us. So there are socks hanging from the chandelier and poopie undies festooning your precious throw pillow collection and dirty dishes stashed under the bed, with food crusted on so hard it would take a dentist's drill to chisel it off. So we insist that the sports page be littered about the house like Goebbel's propaganda pamphlets dropped from the sky, and we leave the whole place generally looking like FEMA's final whistle tour through the effects of Armageddon after Hell has opened up and blown its evil winds, as prophesied in the Book of Revelations.

What's your point, woman?You hate how the place looks, by the time we get done with it?

Quid Pro Quo.

We hate the way you have made it look.

Consider this: It may well be that the way YOU have decorated OUR space is as ugly to us as our draped boxers and papering job is to you. Ask yourself this: if fair is fair, ***is fifty percent of our mutual living space done the way I would like it?***

Isn't that fair? The dining room is just the way you always pictured it in House Beautiful, why can't we have the living room the way I like it? You have the kitchen done your way, all Norman Rockwell State Fair Americana, with roosters and chickens and Amish people all over everything—so I figure the rec room should be reserved for my beers-of-the-world bottle collection, and my wagon wheel coffee table, and my gigantic dogs-playing-poker-paint-on-velvet. You have the bedroom all froo-frooed up so it looks like Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm meets Belle Watling's Bordello, fine, I want the spare room be my private den. Does it have to be totally devoted to your macramé projects? You have the guest powder room all done up in whatever stupid everything-matching motif cost the most at Bed, Bath, & Beyond Reason, can't the bathroom I use have large towels instead of ones the size of airplane towelettes? Can't we have normal sized hunks of soaps that I can use, instead of ones I constantly mistake for Giant Gummi Bears and Oversized Sweet Tarts?

Until the end of time, along with the Secrets of the Great Sphinx and the Arcanum of the Holy Grail, men will go to their graves pondering this One Great Mystery: Why do women buy soaps that you aren't allowed to use? What's the deal with soaps too pretty to be removed from that fakey conch shell bowl? In this, we find the shadowy beginnings of misogyny. Upshot: unless fifty percent of the living space is done the way we like it, (and I bet that nearly never happens), we have a right to act like caged wolverines, and run about the place marking our territory. We mark it with socks and the sports page, dirty dishes and dirty magazines, underwear and unfinished projects. Just be glad we aren't really acting like the wild dogs we are, chewing up the loveseat and peeing on the

carpet. Just count yourself lucky.

When do we get our special room?

Our den, our study, Our Cave You May Not Enter Without Scumbling & Scraping & Asking Our Lieges For Permission First.

Quid Pro Quo.

(If it's a collection of something you're displaying, we probably hate it. Oh, we probably didn't at first. But when it supplanted *our* collection of something, or when we realized we'd have to spend hundreds of hours over a lifetime paying the credit card bills caused by your collection, we came to hate it. We are fighting the urge to hate you because of it.)

Quid Pro Quo.

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***“There is nothing in the world like the devotion of a married woman. It is a thing no married man knows anything about.”***

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*

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And now the obvious one: you get crabby because you see us pissing away our money on the tacky car seat covers and the singing fish on a plaque and the model airplanes and cars we never finish building or repairing and the tools from Sears and Home Depot that make us feel all manly and the broken yard sale implements and the Bobble head Doll Collection and whatnot.

Well. Think about this.

What we spent on all of that quite often does not even add up to the price of one pair of your designer shoes. (Quid pro quo.) When it comes to spending arguments, there is only one way to really get to the bottom of it. (And I warn you, it's exacting and niggling and difficult.) We make a list of what you spend money on, things that are not a necessity. And we make a list of what I spend money on, that is not a necessity. And we add up our lists. And we see who is the bigger spender. We see who's really a threat to the retirement home. Now, determining what is a “necessity,” arguing over the details of those fiscal semantics—that's where the war would start. And seeing whether or not a couple can survive that part of the experiment is the real determiner of whether or not the relationship should continue.

Let me leave you with this thought. You can buy more than a hundred Bobble-Head Sports Idol dolls for the price of one pair of Manola Blahnik shoes. And—are you ready for this—if you wait until the Bobble-Heads show up at the 99 Cents Store, which they

often do, (I lurk, I wait, I bide my time), you can buy FIVE HUNDRED BOBBLE-HEADS for the price of one pair of Manola Blahniks.

And here's the kicker, ladies. For the price of that single Fendi bag that Samantha coveted on "Sex in the City," you could have bought five thousand Bobble-Head Dolls. Madonna brags that her most expensive purse was a Fendi that cost twelve thousand bucks. For that—you guessed it—we could have bought 12,000 Bobble-Heads. If we were her lover, and wanted to get Miss Like A Virgin back for her splurge, we would march right down to the ol' 99 Cen' Stoh, load up our bigass truckbed with Bobbleheads, throw up some whatnot shelves, redecorate, and we would just show her what for. We'd give her tit for tat, oh yes we would.

So back off, honey. We might just call your bluff.

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***"Yet each man kills the thing he loves, by each let this be heard, some do it with a bitter look, some with a flattering word. The coward does it with a kiss, the brave man with a sword!"***

Oscar Wilde, *Ballad of Reading Gaol from Prison*

***"Women love us for our defects. If we have enough of them, they will forgive us everything, even our gigantic intellects"***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

***"If we men married the women we truly deserved, we should have a very hard time of it."***

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

## CHAPTER TEN

### YOU HAVE HAD A HEART ATTACK— CHANGING YOUR ROMANCE DIET

*“No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist.”*

Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*

*“Society often forgives the criminal, but it never forgives the dreamer.”*

Oscar Wilde, “*In Conversation*”

When last we met:

Just a couple of chapters ago (it seems like a lifetime!) we examined how ordinary and usual and typical you (probably) are. And we came to the obvious conclusion that most men are ordinary and usual and typical as well.

And the obvious conclusion from those two truths, sad or otherwise, is that you will probably end up with a run-of-the-mill guy.

Frankly, I don't find this to be a sad conclusion. I find it quite comforting. There seems to be a relaxed, serene, contented quality to being ordinary. Men like this state of affairs, by the way. A state of bovine calm. “Dégagé,” you ladies would call it... And the honest question you must ask yourself is—are you ready for that? Have you been holding out for Prince Charming? Do you need to lower your standards?

ARE YOU AIMING TOO HIGH? And by the way—as far as the Prince Charming myth goes, I have only known of one sweet young thing in recent times who married herself a prince. They spent the marriage fighting all the time, he fooled around on the side from the moment the wedding ceremony ended, he ridiculed her right into an eating disorder, and she ended up dying in a grisly car accident that many folks thought was awfully suspicious.\*\*\* An even deeper look at the dark history of royalty reveals that holding out for Prince Charming can get you beheaded, imprisoned in the Tower, or tortured. That insurance salesman from Akron is looking better and better.

(\*\*\*For the record, the above paragraph was written before the sweet love story of Kate Middleton and Prince William, so maybe there is a wee bit of hope for fairy tales after all?)

The headlines are littered with stories of couples who appeared, from the photo-ops,

to have a great romance—and then, oops, one of them ends up dead. The tabloids are crammed with tales of nuptials that started out picture perfect, then ended in split-aparts so ugly that records are set, and the wounded never completely recover. You can't swing a dead cat in my town, Beverly Hills, without hitting the victims of a failed marriage which seemed to have everything in its favor, with everything working for it: pretty people with pretty bank accounts making pretty promises at a pretty ceremony that ended in a pretty ugly divorce.

Suddenly, that sweet man who's been asking you out—the one with the receding hairline and the potbelly and two tolerable kids from his first marriage, but who at least has a nice house and treats you like royalty, doesn't seem so bad after all.

The trick, ladies, is not to find a prince.

The trick is to find a frog who treats you like a princess.

The trick, ladies, is not to end the story by riding off into the sunset on a white charger, as you cling to your knight in shining armor.

The trick is to wake up the next morning with a man who still loves you, when the sun is strong on your face.

***“The morning sun when it's on your face really shows your age.  
But that don't worry me none, cause Maggie, you're everything.”***

—Rod Stewart

So, back to the question: are you aiming too high? The problems really begin at that moment when women start confusing reality with fantasy. Let's take a little closer at the difference. It should be obvious, of course, what those differences are.

But do women act like they understand the difference between reality and fantasy? Not always. In fact, not often.

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***One's real life is often the life that one does not lead.”***

Oscar Wilde, *L'Envoi*

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## **FANTASY VERSUS REALITY:**

The way to work through your insanity, vis-a-vis your attitude about men, is to come to grips with this one crucial truth: MONEY DRIVES FANTASY.

Oh, a few hundred years ago, when the Grimm Brothers and other assorted minstrels

were dancing through hamlets, making up fairy tales about “happily ever after,” they may have been doing it just to amuse the crowd, and because storytelling was their passion. But now, it's all big business: be it publishing, Disney, Mattel, Cosmo Magazine, Harlequin Romances, or televised reality programs, the list could go on and on, you name it—the fact remains that images of how romance ought to be in an ideal world are usually driven by crass capitalism, as in: selling movie tickets, spin-off merchandising, books, magazines, beauty products, or commercial air time.

The business of fantasy generates billions of dollars a year in revenue. This is not necessarily a bad thing, unless of course you are a Communist, and despise filthy lucre. It does not even need to be a problem, as long as you understand that most fantasy is generated by the desire to generate profit.

And it will not be a problem, if you can answer this one key question: Is your escapism impacting your grasp of reality?

A key factor in the question of whether or not you are “aiming too high” when it comes to winning a mate is *the grasp you have on reality*. Most adult females probably think they can make these distinctions easily, but just to make sure that you are not living in a delusional world re: fantasy and reality, let's go over some definitions.

(NOTE: This is not to suggest that men don't live in a fantasy world, much of the time. We will deal with that later. Actually, no we won't. You chicks know what our fantasies are, basically. If you didn't, you wouldn't be so mad at us all the time.)

Where was I? Ah, yes: YOU CANNOT REALLY UNDERSTAND FANTASY, UNLESS YOU UNDERSTAND ITS PURPOSE. Think about it: can you truly understand anything, without a thorough examination of its purpose?

It's quite lovely, really: everything from the configuration of a hollyhock to the oddness of a platypus to the elegance of a catalytic converter to the tasty machinations of a Godiva factory all are rendered comprehensible—simple, even—once we understand their purpose. HERE, THEN, ARE THE THREE PURPOSES OF FANTASY: For Homo Sapiens, there can be no more purposes than these, and no fewer:

1.) Fantasy makes movie studios like Disney a swimming pool full of money every five minutes. No matter how many times we see the prince and princess, or mermaid, or whatever, stroll off into the sunset, (or swim off), we never get sick of it. And that's fine, unless we start to believe this stuff is true.

2.) Fantasy “gets you through the night,” to borrow a line from the Beatles. It helps us to escape reality for a while, and heaven knows, most of us need that from time to time.

A well-adjusted guy knows perfectly well that fantasy is just that, a fantasy, and when he turns on Turner Classic Movies, and sees a film noir dick dressed in a trench coat, sitting in his office, and into that office walks a dollface dame with great gams, wanting a light for her cigarette and a decent guy who will help her out of the jam she's

in, 'cause she was naive enough to trust the wrong guy, and two hours later the detective wins the beautiful woman and they stroll into the moonlight—well, the guy watching the movie knows that what he's just seen is a fantasy. Even though the guy watching the movie knows that he will probably never end up with such a dame, still, watching it is such a fabulous escape from his boring day job, that by the end of the evening, he feels satisfied, like the movie has done its job.

And a female watching this noir movie can't help but wonder why it is that the poor victimized heroine, who is always a shopgirl or a waitress or a dame just let out of a women's prison—no matter how troubled or in dutch the heroine is, no matter how desperate for money she is when the movie starts, she always has fabulous clothes, like elegant wool suits and gorgeous leather gloves and sassy little hats, and last but not least, those silky, swanky, satiny, floor length boudoir outfits she wears while pacing the floor of her tiny New York flat that she shares with some other dollface who's trying to make it as a dancer on Broadway. But even as females speculate as to why the poor heroine in the movie can afford these clothes, they know the answer: they are watching a fantasy. So yes, on one level, all of us, both men and women, know when we are encountering fantasy. We don't expect the noir to do anything but help us fall asleep. We don't confuse reality with that shadowy world.

And for some odd reason, the next day seems less daunting and depressing, when the evening before held such cozy and stylish escape.

“Whatever gets you through the night.” Fantasy.

3.) Fantasy serves to inspire us.

Here's just one example, pulled from real life:

A kid from a bad part of town, who is on the fringes of gang life, goes to see “Rocky.” Unquestionably, a great American movie: simple, honest, inspiring—a modern classic. A movie about going the distance. That kid who loved “Rocky” starts spending less time on the streets, more at the gym. Gets into training, working out, competing, coaching. Finds out he's good at what he does. Now that he's got these muscles, a whole new set of chicks start looking at him twice. Ten years later, he's a much sought after personal trainer, while his old friends are doing jail time for their gang violence. I have actually seen such true stories on confessional forum threads.

And Redditt.com is just one of countless websites containing a whole thread wherein people talk about how a certain movie helped them change their life, their circumstances, their very attitude—and so often, as my desk paperweight attests, ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING. Keep in mind, this list is not me offering you some puffed up critic's choice, no, rather, these are human beings declaring that their lives have been transformed by the Power of Story, a notion that is both the Truth and a Fact, and which daily informs my life: “Office Space”, “Seven Pounds”, “My Dinner with Andre”, “Good Will Hunting”, “Contact”, “Trainspotting”, “A Beautiful Mind”, “Fight Club”, “The Big

Lebowski”, “Fight Club”, “2001: A Space Odyssey”, “Deerhunter”, “The Fountain”, “The Tree of Life”, “Girl, Interrupted”, “Supersize Me”, “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington”, “What Dreams May Come”, “The Geen Mile”, “Harold and Maude”, “Stand by Me”, “How to Die in Oregon”, “American History X”, Joe Versus the Volcano”, “Into the Wild”, “Thank you for Smoking”, “Dead Poet’s Society”, and “Saving Private Ryan”.

A fantasy can inspire reality.

In the forties, movies inspired us to support a war, especially when those movies starred actors that had served in the war; that is how completely fantasy and reality were blurring during those moments in history. In the seventies, eighties, and nineties, movies turned some of us against war—against a war that had already happened, and against the possibility of future wars.

Movies have inspired us to be terrified of aliens, to want to nuke them. Movies have inspired us to want to take them home and cuddle them and feed them Reese's Pieces.

Movies have inspired us to transform our lives from the ordinary, movies have taught us how to be content with the good and decent ordinary lives that we live. (It is a Wonderful Life, is it not? If we choose to see it as such?) Some movies inspire us to fall in love, still others to soldier on alone when we have lost love—a small but important genre when you have had your heart pulverized, and need a flick to go along with that pint of Ben & Jerry's. (Or, a movie marathon to go along with the towering stack of pints of Ben & Jerry's in every flavor. As soon as I am done with this book, I am going to harass old B&J into a contest where they give away free ice cream for a year to the contestant with the best [read: saddest] break-up story.)

Because let's face it, it's either that, or stalk over to the Bastard's house and blow his brains out: “Bridget Jones's Diary”, “My Best Friend's Wedding”, “Addicted to Love”, “Swingers”, “Waiting to Exhale”, “Sweet Charity”, “It's My Turn”, “Casablanca”, “Forgetting Sarah Marshall”, and the pilot of “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” are all good watches I'd recommend under those sad circumstances. (Google break-up movies if you're really bleeding bad; it's a whole web cult, this topic.) I suppose I could include “The Burning Bed,” but that's not the way I'd recommend proceeding with a healthy break-up, unambiguous though the message of setting fire to the ol' Posturpedic may be.

But it's a little too real.

It's not Fantasy.

So let's review those.

The three purposes of Fantasy are to help us escape our reality, inspire us to recreate our reality, and make some people's reality mighty fat and wealthy, because they show us the fantasies we crave at our core.

The crisis comes when women begin confusing reality with fantasy.



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***“Paradox though it may seem—and paradoxes are always dangerous things—it is none the less true that life imitates art far more than art imitates life.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*

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### STUDY QUESTIONS FOR FRUSTRATED LADIES:

1. Do you think you aim too high? Explain.

2. How many hours of your life do you think you have spent watching television programs or movies where the romance is improbable, as in, a total fantasy. (Warning: this is a tough question. Here is another way of thinking about it: how many hours have you spent watching TV shows or movies in which the characters are uncommonly attractive and/or wealthy? Or whose problems bore no resemblance to contemporary reality?)

3. List the number of inspiring love stories, based on real people, that you have absorbed in your life. (Examples: Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman, the Churchills, Jessica Tandy & Hume Cronin, the Roosevelts, John and Reve Walsh, John and Alicia Nash, the Preston Tuckers. Remember, in order to answer this question correctly, it's not enough to “know of” these couples, you should know “particulars” about their romantic reality, vis-a-vis, as much as you know about the couple in “When Harry Met Sally” or “Casablanca.”)

(Warning: if you are embarrassed because you have almost no names you can list in answer to the above question, good. You should be embarrassed. We learn by example. How can you expect to create true romance in your own life, without having studied real-life examples? Now, what do you intend to do about it?)

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***“Most men and women are forced to perform parts for which they have no qualification.”***

Oscar Wilde, *Lord Arthur Seville's Crime*

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ASSIGNMENT:

Commit to studying the biographies of twelve *real-life* romantic marriages. If you have trouble getting through a whole book, commit to a book every other month. Then, on alternate months, watch an hour long biography on television. The stories are out there, if you get cable TV or digital; alternatively, you can rent them. There are also some decent movies on the topic. You might start with the suggestions above. Learning to Google like a master is a good way to start making your list of romantic examples. I realize that this may sound like hard work—but love is hard work, and that’s the inescapable truth of it. Accept it now, or forever hold your piece.

And don't say that you don't have time to read! That is pure bunk, it is time for that excuse, that lie, to die the ugly death it deserves, once and for all. According to statistics, the average person spends between a half hour and an hour standing in line every day. (Well established; U.S. Department of Labor and assorted studies.) Examine your own life, and you will see the statistic is accurate.

With that amount of time on your hands, even a slow reader can get through five to ten pages a day. That's a book every month or two. Ten decent books a year are a hell of a lot more than most people read, and it will give you the edge. Particularly if one of your goals is to end up with an interesting man.

Love is the most important matter on the planet, yet most of us stumble towards it with no examples, no guidance. (Or what is worse, with unreal examples—which, in a sense, makes them bad examples.) Most of us can't cite even half a dozen examples, with which we can claim any familiarity, to teach us how it's done.

To provide blueprints.

To inspire us.

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*“We teach people how to remember, we never teach them how to grow.”*

—Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

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### **BACK TO THE EXERCISES:**

1. Name three ways that pure-escapist fantasy, geared towards children, is warping your child.
2. Name three reasons that you allow your child to continue to be warped:
3. Name three ways that your “inner child,” who is really not all that young any more and should know better, is being ruined by an excess of improbable romance escapist

entertainment. (Note we said “an excess.” Like Krispy Kremes and Oreos, we find just a wee bit of escapist romance fun, fine, and forever desirable.)

4. Name three reasons that your “inner adult” allows your “inner child” to be ruined by an excess of improbable escapist romance.

***“A sentimentalist is simply one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it.”***

Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

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## **YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF A HEART ATTACK**

Perhaps you do not realize just how dire your situation is.

Perhaps you have heard of those people who have had heart attacks, yet they do not know it? Just as people can have mild strokes, yet do not know it.

But in your case, you have had a massive coronary, you have suffered great damage to that all-important muscle, yet amazingly, you have lived to tell about it. And in the process, you are walking around among the living, doing even more damage to your already weakened heart, and, quite possibly, to the hearts of others. Because the difference between a literal heart attack, and a poetic heart attack, is that the latter is contagious.

Let me explain.

We all know that the heart is a metaphor for the muscle of romance. Cupid shoots an arrow through our heart, and amazingly, instead of bleeding to death, we feel a sense of celestial bliss which is commonly acknowledged to be the most thrilling sign of life that exists on the planet. And quite possibly beyond.

But if you have spent a life overdosing on fantasy romance—and the statistical odds are that you have—then you have had a heart attack, and you do not even know it:

Your metaphorical heart has literally been attacked by thousands upon thousands of images and words portraying a kind of romance that is virtually impossible to find, and even more impossible to sustain in the face of real life. (And, for the record, never have I run across two words less in need of elaboration than the dreaded phrase, “real life.” We all seem to know exactly what that is, and how “faux” romance can wither in the face of it.) The situation may even be worse than a mere mild heart attack.

You may even be addicted to fantasy-romance, to a substance that does not exist in the real world.

Your heart has been attacked by a diet of cloyingly sweet, irresistible, seemingly harmless images, just as your body feels attacked when you keep shoving into it a

seemingly tasty diet of fat, cholesterol, fried foods, sugars, and toxic additives. The constant barrage weakens your defenses. It lessens your ability to function in the real world. It saps your energy. It clogs you.

You have had a heart attack, and you do not know it.

## THE TWO APPROACHES

You are near dead from your heart attack. You are the Walking Wounded. Choose one of the two roads back:1.) Follow the advice above, and gradually introduce a menu of “real romances” into your diet, just as the curmudgeonly patient who has received a dire warning from his doctor begrudgingly switches to margarine instead of butter, soy ice cream, sugar substitute, less steak, more brussel sprouts, etcetera.

Then, see how the inspirational lesson of these true stories changes your attitude about who you are willing to allow to romance you, or how you feel about your current flame, and finally, what your expectations are—not only expectations about what he brings to the relationship, but what you must bring to the relationship.2.) You have had a heart attack, a massive coronary, so act like it. Behave like one of those souls who wakes up in the ICU, with tubes and bags and IVs attached, and who is told by her doctor that if she doesn't start taking better care of her heart immediately, she will be dead soon. For one full year, totally change your romance diet. Refuse to watch any romance based on fantasy. Or, if you can't do that, make the time you spend reading and watching true romances equal to the time you spend watching fantasy-romance. Then, evaluate the effect it has on your own love life.

Be honest. Be strong.

Change your romance diet in a radical way, in a way that will save your life.

Only in this case, it will save your soul—for a soul that does not love is as good as dead.

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***“A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

***“Imagination is a quality given a man to compensate him for what he is not, a sense of humour was provided to console him for what he is.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### WHERE IS YOUR LOVE GOING?

***“Emotion for the sake of emotion is the aim of art, and emotion for the sake of action is the aim of life.”***

Oscar Wilde, *The Critic As Artist*

***“We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”***

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan*

(Author’s Note: I suppose it is fair and accurate to say that this chapter applies primarily to single women, who are still searching...married women may take an a la carte approach to the chapter, with the author’s permission.)

So let me see if I understand this. You are lonely, yes? Lonely and bored and deeply unsatisfied, if the secret truth be told. Your self-image is so uncertain, malformed, precarious, and cowardly that you will not even eat alone in a restaurant, for fear of what people whom you do not know and won’t ever see again, will think of you.

And yet, insecure though you are, you ponder why that insecurity is not an aphrodisiac? Why did he did not call you back? Why, oh why?

You are bored with your own company, so bored that you are going stir crazy when sitting alone in your home, and so boring that you cannot be alone with your own thoughts in the car—you must have the mindless blare of the radio. And yet you just cannot wait to inflict that boring personality on someone whom you expect to be vibrant and witty enough to amuse you?

And yet, boring soul that you are, you wonder why you cannot attract the man of your dreams. Why he did not call back...

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***“To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *Lord Goring, Act 3*

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You are unimaginative to the point where you cannot imagine a meaningful future

that does not have a man in it. And yet you can imagine a Prince Charming. Selective imagination, yours. OK, so you are insulted. I have insulted you to the core. It's not that bad, you say. You're not that bad, you protest.

Let me see if I understand this. You claim you have a lot of love to give—endless love, boundless love, sincere love, floods of love. Yet in a world desperately crying out for love, in the form of volunteer work—be it fostering pets, entertaining children with cancer, raising money for underprivileged kids to go to college, working at wildlife refuges, giving blood, giving marrow, visiting old folks' homes, running in a breast cancer or AIDS awareness marathon, training seeing eye dogs, planting gardens in ghettos, recording books and newspapers for the blind, forming fund-raisers for your local fire department, taking in foreign exchange students, fighting for environmental causes, making wishes come true for dying children, teaching English to immigrants, helping out in homeless shelters, working with battered women to create new careers, the list could go on ad infinitum—this is a world in which you haven't a few hours a month to help out? Because you are too busy trying to get love, to have time to give it?

Let me see if I understand this: in a world with a hundred thousand charities all doing their part to make life not so much better, because that implies “good-better-best,” but let's rephrase that, in a world with a hundred thousand charities created to someday hopefully make life *barely tolerable* for those souls whose life is currently unthinkable miserable, you don't have time\*\*\* to help out?

You have all this love to give, but not the time to give it?

(\*\*\*Which is interesting, that you don't have time, because apparently you do have time to watch “American Idol,” (or whatever is the reality television du jour), and you apparently have time to go to the mall, watch “Sex in the City,” hang out Saturday mornings at Starbucks, get your nails done, watch “Law and Order,” drop by the mall again, browse the catalogues, watch reruns of “Seinfeld,” stop by the store on the way home to make a few impulse purchases, and get together with your girlfriends for a gabfest about how you never have any time, life is dull, dull, dull, and why can't you attract the man of your dreams?)

You don't have time to help those whose lot in life is far worse than yours? All the blessings that have been bestowed upon you, born in one of the best places, in one of the best times in the history of this old wrinkled planet, but you are too busy to give back?

Yet you claim you have love to give. You would have time if Brad Pitt or Harrison Ford or George Clooney or Russell Crowe or the richest man in your town called and asked you out on a date, but you do not have the minutes to give to some soul who desperately needs the love you claim you have to give?

Oh, for Brad or Harrison, George or Russell, you would forgo those reruns of “Friends.” But not for those desperately in need.

I am amazed at the number of women who claim that they have a lot of love to give—so much so that if they were honest, they would admit to a kind of desperation: a loneliness, mixed with spiritual acedia, mixed with a disconsolate, deep-seated, soul-numbing fear, nay, terror of ending up—dare I utter it—ALL ALONE.

Ladies. Here's a tip: That is not exactly an aphrodisiac. Got it? Let me say that again, because unless reading that caused a fundamental change in your soul at the moment that your eyes scanned the words, you need to hear it again: Loneliness mixed with desperation mixed with fear is not an aphrodisiac. Quite the opposite. It repels us. It horrifies us. It frightens men, just as deeply as you are frightened but for polar opposite reasons. You are terrified of ending up alone, and we are terrified of ending up hooked up with the wrong person. To put it more baldly, you are terrified of ending up alone, whereas we think someone like you should end up alone. Better that, than inflict your humdrum, stuporific, self-absorbed, shopaholic Narcissism on another human being. Contain the disease, I say. Quarantine!

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***“Some people bring happiness wherever they go, others, **WHENEVER** they go.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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To put it even more baldly: if you are lonely, desperate, in fear, and you are trying to trap us in order to fix that, then suddenly, both YOU and MEN are both terrified of the same thing: ENDING UP WITH YOU.

YOU don't want to end up alone with YOU. And none of us want to end up with YOU. Because you are lonely, desperate, and in fear.

All of which have, as a root cause, selfishness.

SELFISHNESS.

Here is what:

If it was ***all that important*** for you to put your love (i.e., concern and affection) out into the world and see the positive effect it has on some other soul, you would already be doing that now, right now, this very minute, in one form or another. Your need to love somebody or something, your need to GIVE LOVE, would have found an outlet by now. You would be out there, actively loving, already. There is a good chance that you are confusing your desire to give love with your desire to be loved. ***And if what is driving you is not a desire to give love, but to be loved, then you are already wallowing in a selfish state.*** And if you have heard nothing else that I have said, hear this: healthy souls have a way of intuiting that, even if they cannot intellectualize it or verbalize it, and they

will shun the needy.

They will shun the needy greedy.

SOME SOUL SEARCHERS FOR YOU:

(Grab your journal and a writing implement)1. About how many hours did you spend watching TV last year? About how many hours did you spend volunteering?2. Do you believe that volunteers experience a profound satisfaction that you are missing out on, absorbing all that reality TV?

Do you have a better chance meeting a quality fella:

a.) watching reality TV and re-runs OR

b.) volunteering for noble causes.

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Since I realize that the above generalizations may be hurtful, striking “too close to home for you,” let me provide you with some competing scenarios.

#### COMPETING SCENARIOS, THE FIRST SET

A.) You are lonely on those long hot summer weekends, so, after shopping for a bikini that you think doesn't make you look too fat (although you do spring for a matching cover-up, since you always secretly think your ass looks fat in a bikini)—anyway, you head for the beach or the lakefront or the local pool, maybe dragging some girlfriends along with you, and all the girlie-girls pretend to be interested in what each other is saying, when what you are really doing is scanning the terrain for cute guys. You find one. A cute guy, that is. The sight of you in your bikini, seductively applying coconut oil to your cleavage, makes this cute guy want to have sex with you. The odds of this guy being your soulmate are minuscule. A month later, you find yourself right back in the same place, doing the same thing, still searching for Mr. Right, except with one more heartbreak under your belt. One more creeping suspicion that he just used you. When in fact, you used each other. You used him to distract yourself from your deficiencies.

This is not what the enlightened call “progress.” This is not what the superior call “growth.”

To parse it another way: your emotional résumé has not improved. In fact, this is a black mark. (And not because the dalliance makes you sleazier. That is nobody's business but your own. But because it made you sadder. And that, my dears, is the business of the Universe.)

Your bulb is growing dimmer, not brighter.



B.) You are lonely, bored, irritable on those long hot summer weekends, with the thermometer hitting scorching levels. It is the hottest summer on record, and as you drive to the garment district, to find a hot bikini at a bargain price, you drive through a seedy part of town, where you see a lot of thin, parched dogs roaming alone, and cats that look diseased and starving. As you park and head towards the shops, you pass a box with a cardboard sign that says “Free Puppies!” Inside is a sad looking mother dog and her whelps. The look in the emaciated mother's eyes stays with you. It annoys you, because it kills your buoyant shopping mood. Now you can't enjoy Bikini Quest...you are preoccupied. What do those strays do on days like this, you wonder, when the mercury climbs over a hundred? Or when the snow piles high and deep, like it did a few months ago, during that lonely Christmas when you got looped on spiked eggnog and felt sorry for yourself at the prospect of facing yet another loveless New Year's Eve. Enough is enough, you decide, and somehow you never get around to buying yet another bikini. You decide what the hell, you're bored, so you volunteer for the local Pet Adoption Fair. You stop by that fair they hold outside the Whole Foods every Sunday, and you find out that it's more than just volunteers standing by the cages, answering questions. It turns out that they are able to save more dogs and cats than ever before, they explain above the barking, because there is a system now that requires far less kenneling space: it's called fostering dogs. Some people take a dog into their home during the week, then volunteers take over on weekends and find the dog a good home. Other folks help in other ways, ponying up money for dog food and vet bills.

While you're still at the Adoption Fair, you read a story on a flyer about dog who was hit by a car the day before; it turns out that the dog had gotten away from his owner and was running down the street with his leash still on. The driver in the speeding sports car, oblivious, dragged the poor dog for a couple of blocks. And the poor dog is still just a puppy.

Still another flyer tells of a dog that is burned from some punks who taped a firecracker to its tail for sport.

(True stories.)

Folks are raising money for the poor dogs' vet bills. You can't afford to pony up much for that cause. And your apartment building doesn't allow pets.

But you figure what the hell, you can spend part of your Saturdays helping to find stray animals loving homes. You still wish you had a man to curl up with on Saturday nights, but watching all these critters get matched up with families who want to give an unwanted creature a second chance, it cheers you up a little. It kind of fills in the chinks of your loneliness.

You feel better about things than you have in a long time, which is weird to you—unfathomable, in fact, because working at the Dog Adoption Fair makes you so very sad so much of the time. All those big, homely, gangly dogs that nobody wants, and

the look in their eyes when they realize at the end of each long day that nobody wants them. Nobody loves them. They have to be taken back to the dog pound. Folks just want the cute ones. The puppies. Then, on top of that, there is all that sad, frantic barking. It is deafening. It is despair.

And yet, as sad as all of that makes you at the end of the day, still, you do feel better in a peculiar way than you did when you hung out at the beach and the bars. Maybe because some of the animals do get a second lease on life, kind of like you feel you are getting.

Tomorrow is Sunday, and you have agreed to work at the dog fair an extra day, so one of the volunteers can go to a wedding. You don't feel like spending your precious Sunday that way, but you couldn't think of an excuse fast enough, not without the lady looking into your eyes and knowing you were fibbing. And so that is how your glamorous Sunday begins, downing stale donuts and cold coffee while you watch those unwanted dogs bark and bay in those cramped little jails.

That one old dog with the bad eye has been in the cage for the longest time; it is an ugly dog by some standards, but to your sensibilities, it has the sweetest, most loving eyes of any dog there. Apparently, you are not the only one who thinks so, because a guy ambles by the dog fair and he does not stop until he gets to that cage. Turns out he's had two puppies, one that he lost to a rare disease, another to a more frequent malady: a break-up. Of course the girl got the puppy. She always managed to get everything she wanted.

The two of you get to talking. He is looking for an older dog, a calmer dog. And he doesn't think that this dog is ugly. He loves the spotted coat, and the dog's big eyes get to him, too.

You tell him that this dog is particularly close to your heart. You would adopt it, if your apartment building allowed pets. You playfully insist that he check in from time to time, and tell you how the dog is doing. That is the condition of him adopting the dog, you tell him. Of course, you are kidding—you have grown so fond of this dog, you'd pay the guy to take the dog. Because this particular dog is not living at a no-kill shelter, and his time is almost up. He is Dead Dog Walking.

But the guy likes your obvious concern for the beast, and the next week, he comes by with the sad dog on a new leash sporting a crisp bandana. And you notice that the dog's eyes do not look so sad anymore.

Interestingly, the guy keeps coming by every weekend with the dog, and your chat about the dog leads to other topics. There are no awkward pauses or pressures in the conversation, because the two of you are always being interrupted by bouncing kids, puppies, an endless chorus of barking, and parents with questions and questionnaires. It is all very frantic yet casual, intense yet splintered. Often, you are more interested in persuading some family to adopt a dog than what the guy is saying—although you find

yourself replaying your conversations in the evening, as you sit in your big lonely bathtub and soak off the dog cooties. Also, you cannot help but notice that the guy always shows up later and later in the afternoon, until finally, he shows up just as you are closing the fair, and it is the most natural thing in the world when he asks you if you want to walk down the street and eat deli sandwiches in the park and watch the sunset? The dog will chaperone, of course. It never occurred to you that you would end up owning the old spotted dog with the sad eyes, because your apartment building doesn't allow dogs. But then again, you don't live there any more ... Nor do you bathe alone.

#### COMPETING SCENARIOS, SET TWO:

A.) It is the weekend, and you are bored, bored and fat from all the Christmas cheer that really didn't cheer you up so much at all. So it just makes good sense that when you drove by the "FIVE DOLLAR MEMBERSHIP" sign at the gym near the mall, you waddled in, listened to the pitch, and signed up. Besides, you figured that joining a gym would be a great way to meet men. And you were right, sort of. The first thing you did was rush out and spend a few hundred bucks at the mall on state-of-the-art workout shoes and sexy workout gear; you justified this by rationalizing that your health was at stake, and if you got a husband out of it, so much the better.

You are proud of yourself for actually going to the gym. Your past pattern has been to get all jazzed and sign up for memberships and get very excited about the fantasy of your hot new svelte body, but then you never actually set foot in the gym. Of course, the cute guys who showed up at the gym right when you did, at about 5:30 after work, that was great incentive, this time around.

The months roll by. As you realize that your gym renewal has come up, and you look back on the last year, you ask yourself—as you look at the lack of a ring on the third finger of your left hand—you ask yourself, how did the gym experiment go, overall? Granted, it was a healthier approach to dating than the local Happy Hour, with its two-for-one drinks, and all you can eat wingding bar. But all the men you met at the gym were basically just incredibly horny from all the sweaty spandex, and while you had a lot of sex, (some of it great), the bottom line is, you are just as lonely as you were a year ago, when you joined the gym.

B.) It is the weekend, and you are bored, bored, bored, and fat, fat, fat, from all the Christmas cheer that really didn't cheer you up so much at all. You're not sure why, perhaps it's all that Yuletide God Bless Us Everyone Christmas Carol sappy stuff, but in a rare moment of selfless philanthropy, you volunteer to become a Big Sister.

Actually, that's not how it happened at all.

It all started with you mixing up a swimming pitcher of gin & tonics; you were trying to take the bruise off the silence while you waited for the phone to ring: you are waiting for Mr. Right to call and ask you out tonight. After all, it is Saturday night, and

he did promise on Tuesday morning to call you Saturday afternoon. (You met him on the adjoining Stairmaster last Tuesday. You did decide to renew that gym membership after all.) And just when the third gin & tonic is kicking in, and you're chuckling bitterly, derisively at the Bachelorette on TV, and you're deciding that since maybe he won't call, you should have another g & t, what the hell—that's when you see the commercial on TV for being a Big Sister.

You make the call, and the next thing you know, you find yourself in an annoying interview that you're not quite sure how you got into. Truth be told, you know exactly how you got here, the gin & tonics were the answer to how you got into it, but you have the presence of mind not to drink before you go into the interview.

A month later, after suffering through a couple of tedious preliminary training sessions (only women in attendance, dammit, after all, the organization is called 'Big Sisters'), anyway, you find yourself pulling up to a row house in a very seedy part of town. Cripes, how did you get into this? (Again, you know the answer to that—the G & T's—but it's one of those looped tapes in your head that you can't stop.) Another hour later, you find yourself at your city's grandest museum, holding the hand of a little girl who is a complete stranger to you, but who looks up at you like you are a female Superhero. Like you're Wonder Woman. You find it somehow annoying, and for a moment you think of how you'd much rather be at the Macy's End-Of-Season-Seventy-Percent-Off-Sale, instead of in this boring picture graveyard.

It is at this very moment, when you are having this thought, that the little girl points at a painting of angels, and gasps in amazement. She tells you how the angels look exactly like the angels her grandmother described, when they were all at the funeral of the little girl's younger brother, a victim of a gang related drive-by shooting. You kneel down beside her, although you don't quite know why; perhaps to see the painting from her point of view. You realize, to your chagrin, that you have never really looked at a painting before in your life. Oh, you have seen them. Just never looked at them. The little girl starts to chatter. At first she was shy, now you cannot shut her up. She starts to drag you from room to room, searching for more angels. More angels. She wonders if you would buy her some paints, and she tells you more about her dead brother.

You are so caught up in the little girl's story that you do not notice the handsome man with the pricey, casual, paint stained clothes who has overheard everything.

No, you have not seen him.

But he has seen you. And as you will find out eventually, angels are his specialty.

### A THIRD SCENARIO:

Well, you are done with it. You are done with men. You would join a nunnery this weekend, even converting to Catholicism, if you thought that would fix everything, but you can't abide the ugly shoes they wear. Maybe instead you'll just watch the "Sex and

the City” marathon, to get you through these fallow times.

You are done believing all those lovely lies men have told you, to get you into bed. Each time, you tell yourself this guy is different. But it’s always the same. The fact that you have a few drinks under your belt (or garter belt, to be more specific) whenever some guy sweet talks you may explain why you always fall for their lines. But some annoying lady in your office has been on your case to volunteer for this fundraiser thing; something about raising money for orphans from the war in Iraq. It seems they have been brought to the United States with nothing but the clothes on their backs, and some are dressed in rags. They need money for clothes, food, medicine, plus foster care needs to be set up.

Frankly, to you, it sounds like one big chore. But maybe if you spend a few hours helping out, this woman will leave you alone at work. Cripes.

You meet the lady at a grey, depressing room with long tables, and she assigns you to stuffing envelopes. You have the most boring night of your life, which does not explain why you agree to show up one week later to help facilitate the giant silent auction that the fundraiser ladies are hoping will raise a hundred thousand dollars. Your credit cards are maxed out, so you cannot afford a new dress for what appears might be a very swanky affair, but as you have agreed to unload prizes donated by local businesses and help in the kitchen, you figure what the hell, you might as well dress like the hired help you are, except for that nobody’s paying you to give up your Saturday nights.

They even rope you into driving around all Saturday to pick up some of the prizes; when you get back Saturday afternoon, you have fifteen minutes to shower and change, and you find a message from your landlord informing you that your water will be turned off all afternoon, because of a plumbing emergency in the building.

You swear a lot and head over to the place to unload the prizes, because the bitchy princess heading up the silent auction ranted at all her unpaid volunteers that everything needed to be on display by the time the rich people arrived. You are dead on your feet by seven p.m., and still you have the rest of the night to endure. The women are all looking down their noses at you. And even though you hate their attitudes, you do envy their gowns. One woman actually hands you a wadded up napkin full of shrimp tails and asks can you toss it for her? She thinks you are one of the caterers. If only this arrogant bitch knew you were the top realtor in your office.

A handsome volunteer fiddling with the audio-visual equipment (something about a slide show of Iraqi orphans) observes the entire exchange and you see him smirking. Rich women flirt with him all night, offering him their shrimp tails and asking him if he’s available for hire, but you can tell from the way he winks at you that he thinks you have more on the ball than these grand dames dripping in diamonds. But the auction is keeping you running back and forth, and the two of you don’t even have a chance to talk all night. Amazingly, at the end of the night, even though you hang around waiting, he takes off in his old dented pick-up, and doesn’t even try to hit on you.

When he shows up at a volunteer meeting a week later, in his jeans and t-shirt, you casually get to talking about the logistics of bringing the orphans into the country. He is sweet, you think to yourself, and you agree to a date, wondering why you have signed up to go out with a man who has dried mud caked on his boots and smells vaguely of manure and drives a twenty year old Chevy truck.

What the hell were you thinking? Didn't you make a New Year's Resolution about this kind of thing? About falling for this kind of guy? Only later, much later, after you are madly in love with him, will you learn that he will be flying some of the orphans over on his private jet, and he only wears these boots when he comes straight from his vacation home—a two hundred acre horse farm in the rolling hills, out in the country, far from the madding crowd.

Volunteer Valentines.

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***“Who, Being Loved, is Poor?”***

Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

***“Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE TIRED PRINCE

***“Men always want to be a woman’s first love. That is their clumsy vanity. Women have a more subtle instinct about things. What they like is to be a man’s last romance.”***

—Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*

Yes, it is a grim picture I have painted. Of the male gender, that is:

It is a gender who, when in the mating mode, is focused hugely on sex, sometimes to the exclusion of all else. A gender that uses its penis as a divining rod, which always leads to the blondest babe, with the bazooka boobs and the biggest hair. A gender so obsessive and single-minded in this quest that it will say anything to get it.

More often than not, we ignore your best efforts; we are oblivious to your kindnesses and niceties, and yet with the tenacity of a terrier and the nose of a bloodhound, we sniff out what few faults you have and magnify them in our minds, until we have rationalized our leaving you for a “newer model”. We spend vast amounts of energy avoiding marriage; we judge you with abandon, while resisting any well-intentioned efforts on your part of change us.

What’s a woman to do? All she wanted was one sweet prince. The good news is:

We are not all like that.

We are not all like that, any more than all of you are like the gender generalizations you have read thus far in this book—generalizations which are true enough, if not entirely applicable to each and every one of you.

The good news, ladies:

There are princes out there.

There is a prince out there for you, in fact.

And believe me, he is looking for you, just as doggedly and determinedly as you are looking for him. The trick, though, is that he does not look like what you think he is going to look like. He may not be lurking where you think he is lurking. He may not behave the way you expect him to.

Not at first.

The key, ladies, is patience.

And what you need to look for, is a very, very, very, tired man. Huh?What do I mean by that?

How unappealing is that image, huh?

Bear with me. Do I mean you should search for a man who is snoring audibly from over the wall of the cubicle next to you at work? Do I mean you should look for a man leaning over his shopping cart at the Piggly-Wiggly, literally dragging his feet through the frozen food section, in search of a microwavable pizza that will sustain him through the night, until his early bedtime after Wheel of Fortune is over? Do I mean you should fall in love with a man who yawns without covering his mouth all through your conversation with him, while you are trying to explain to him in detail all about your terribly important whatever. Do I mean that as you jog down the streets of your neighborhood, you should ignore all the tight-arsed men jogging by you in the other direction, and disregard all the energetic guys mowing their lawns, and look past all the handsome young hunks, lovingly buffing their muscle cars in the driveway—do I mean that you should shun all these delicious creatures, in lieu of the potbellied prince in his backyard, snoozing Sunday afternoon away in a hammock, with the Sports Section draped over his fat face?

No, I am not exactly suggesting that you search for such an exhausted Prince Charming as I have described above. Although be forewarned, there is a damned good chance that the guy in the hammock may be the guy you've been waiting for all your life. There is a chance that the snoring man or the guy dragging his feet or the yawning fellow, one of them, one of them just might be the Great Love Of Your Life.

Let me explain. And remember, as I noted before, it's really all about patience. When I talk of your prince being very, very, very, very, very tired, I am not speaking of physical exhaustion. I am talking about emotional fatigue. I mean to say that he is exhausted, fed up, sick of, worn out, done in, and just plain "world weary" of a certain kind of woman.

And fortunately for you, the kind of woman he is very, very, very tired of is the kind of woman that you are tired of trying to be.

Fortunately for you, the kind of woman that has done him in, is the kind of woman you are done trying to be.

Fortunately for you, the kind of woman he is fed up with is the kind of woman that you would consider "the enemy"—if, in fact, she really exists at all. He is world-weary of a woman who is "not of this world."

Fortunately for you, the kind of woman he just can't face anymore is a Fantasy Woman. And you are a real woman.

Fortunately for you, the kind of woman he is sick of is the opposite of what you are.

And so it follows that if the opposite of you has been making him sick, you are the medicine. You are the solution. You are what he needs. You are what will make him well.

You will heal him.



You will heel him.

And believe me, a dose of you will eventually perk him up again, and he won't be quite so tired all the time.

But make no mistake, what you are looking for initially, is "*The Tired Prince.*"

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*"To regain my youth I would do anything in the world, except take exercise, get up early, or become respectable."*

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Let's explore the specifics of his profile:

He is tired of meeting his Fantasy Woman, and making love to her all night, and then discovering, strangely enough, that the twenty minute "morning-after" breakfast lasts longer than the all night lovemaking, because they have nothing to say to each other the morning after. It is awkward. He wishes she would leave, so he could watch the game.

He is tired of meeting his Fantasy Woman, and making love to her all night, and then discovering, strangely enough, that the twenty minute "morning-after" breakfast lasts longer than the all night lovemaking, because they have nothing to say to each other—because, if he is honest with himself, in his private moments, the lovemaking did not last all night. It lasted about fourteen minutes.\*\*\* And the "morning after" breakfast lasted frickin' all day, because she would not leave, and she insisted on nattering on about her former boyfriend and her teacup poodle and her sales job at the mall and her redecorating projects and how she'd love to redecorate your place for you...damn, you thought she would never leave. She made you miss the first twenty minutes of the game. And, plus, she didn't even touch your Dorito Pancakes with Apple Sausa that you made from your own original recipe. Bitch. (And your stupid ex-girlfriend swore that German-Mex was the next big cooking craze. Bitch.) (\*\*Fourteen minutes? As in, he lasted about fourteen minutes. And even that is a record for him, after changing his diet, starting a workout program, lowering his cholesterol, dropping twenty pounds, and taking more Viagra than you would feed the last male woolly mammoth on the planet, whose juice is needed to keep the species from dying out entirely. Fourteen minutes! Oh Boy!)

He is tired of meeting his Fantasy Woman and discovering just how very expensive she is. In his fantasy, his Fantasy Woman is running towards him in slow motion on a deserted beach, her ample bazooms bobbing, ripe, waiting to be plucked. She is wearing a skimpy bikini, or better yet, the tattered leather remains of what she was wearing before their small plane crashed into the aquamarine lagoon that nestles the deserted tropical

beach, lapping gently at its white sands, and they make love on the beach all day, and into the night under the moonlight, witnessed only by the waving palms, and it was wonderful. But also it was free.

He does not recall ever having to whip out his credit cards on the desert island.

This Fantasy Woman who he dated for a while in his real actual life, she was beautiful, alrightie, yes, but so expensive. Dinner at a fancy restaurant, (cloth napkins, and you had to ask for the condiment tubes special), and this whopping cash outlay only after he went and sprung for his own new duds for the date (he who hates shopping), and paid fifty bucks to have his car detailed, so it would seem like a fancy car, at least on the inside, (there is nothing wrong with a Yugo, it is a serviceable little car, made in the U.S. of A.) and even after all that, it cost him many more pricey dates before they actually—And then, she kept right on costing him money! He tried to instruct her in the subtle pleasures of a pile of nachos between them, while they sat on the sofa and watched the game (free date, except for the price of a bag of chips), and yet she always wanted to go out to fancy places and run up a big bill. And she was outright rude when he offered to fix dinner at home, and whipped up his Rorschach Casserole. (He read somewhere that women thought it was romantic when men cooked. Last time he'd read a Cosmo article again, and I mean never again. The G-Spot? Urban legend. Like Sasquatch.)

In his fantasy, there was no maxing of credit cards, or standing in line at the bank on Saturday morning to make a cash withdrawal, or stopping by the g'damn ATM at two-thirty in the frickin' morning, because after spending every last dime he had taking Fantasy Girl out to that uppity nouvelle cuisine French restaurant, and still being kicked out in the cold to go home instead of staying over at her place, our Tired Prince still finds himself ravenously hungry, because that buffalo-nickel sized portion of raw meat they served him at the nouvelle restaurant, with a pap smear's worth of mint-apricot jelly (what the hell was that even about, and did you see her face when he tried to spread it on the olive loaf bread?), but his point is, dammit, that insult of a meal, a hundred bucks for two people, did nothing to stave off his hunger that had built up after standing in line for an hour to get into the fancy-ass Le Glandouiller, so now he needs a damn five dollar bill from the ATM so he can load up on 99 cent burgers at the all-nite Jack In The Box drive-thru.

Women. Sheesh.

And so even though our Tired Prince managed to actually date and bed a Fantasy Woman in his real life, she ended up not being such a fantasy after all. And yet she was enough of a seductive fantasy to him that for reasons he cannot now, in retrospect, begin to understand, he kept lending her money. And buying her things.

***“Oooh Sweetie, it's just the teeniest little diamond, if I was greedy, I'd make you buy me that great big one over there...but this one is so itsy-bitsy, it's really just a little souvenir of our long weekend.. you don't want me to forget you while I'm away on my***

*trip, do you?"*

*"Ooooh, Sugar, it's just the warmest little fur coat! How can I stay warm when you aren't around me, with your big cuddly-wuddly body, if I don't have this to crawl into...I promise it will make me think of you...you know I love that you have a hairy back." "Ooooooh, Honey Bunny, I promise I'll pay you back, just as soon as my Ex pays me back what he owes me, that rat. Don't call tonight because I'm going over to his house, to get it from him, oh I'll show him a thing or two, you bet I will."*

The Tired Prince considers, in his dark moments, that it would have been equally satisfying, and far easier on his credit cards, to have hired the services of an upscale call girl.

He is tired of his Fantasy Girl calling him in the middle of the night, wanting him to come to her. Drive to her. Be with her.

There was a time when he thought that this was the absolute apex fantasy, getting called to a hot woman's house in the middle of the night, but now he gets tired just remembering it, because he realizes that it means his Fantasy Girl has just broken up with some guy, some other guy, and she needs a ride home.

You see, his Fantasy Girl is only truly attracted to assholes, and this latest one has stranded her somewhere no doubt, after stealing her car, which the Tired Prince remembers he bought for the Fantasy Girl—or helped negotiate the purchase of, or finance, or had the engine rebuilt, or whatever. And now, the asshole has it. And the Tired Prince has been called upon to go rescue the fantasy damsel at three o'clock in the damn morning.

Or perhaps, this time, she has called him at three in the morning because she needs cash, because her new asshole boyfriend has stolen all her money and maxed out her credit cards, and she is desperate, and how can the Tired Prince deny her a little help, she sobs into the phone, after all they meant to each other at one time?

And of course, by the time he gets there, she will have her chastity belt back on and locked up tight. ("She's just not ready...") She will cry on his shoulder a long time. She will want to stay up all night and talk.

Then she'll fall asleep on his shoulder and snore loudly all through the game. Damn.

Or perhaps, she has called him at three in the morning because the bad boy she fell in love with has kicked her out of his house, and now the fantasy girl needs a place to stay. And although she may provide the Tired Prince with sex if he lets her stay at his place, the fact of the matter still remains that the sex still only lasts a few minutes, while the whining and wheedling and interruptions of play-off games goes on incessantly, for days and weeks, and you know what, the fantasy is finally beginning to fade. Suddenly, she is living with him, there is an army of stuffed toys, some of them clutching little hearts that say "I Wuv You" where his Bobble-Head Collection of Hall Of Famers used to proudly stand, and his TiVo, oh crap, his TiVo has been totally reprogrammed to glom onto all

things Soap Opera and Lifetime and the Women's Entertainment Network, and every time he tries to watch vintage basketball or the swamp-rugby finals, with the camera's eye view poised just above the crocodile pit, he instead gets programs about menopause and vaginal warts and redecorating garages so they look like a Martha Stewart wet dream, something which the Tired Prince is certain that Martha has enough testosterone to experience. And although there is less sex than ever, somehow she has taken over his comfy bed, (the damsel in distress, not Martha Stewart), while the Tired Prince is sleeping on the ancient sofa. And she is so very traumatized by what her Ex-asshole boyfriend—(well, correction, he is not an Ex-asshole. He is still an asshole. He is just her Ex-boyfriend)—but her point is, she explains through tears, after what that bastard did to her, she cannot quite get it together to get a job, and so she is living with the Tired Prince for free. Except for on Friday and Saturday nights, when she somehow manages to come home at three in the morning, terribly happy and rather drunk—three in the morning, the Tired Prince notices, with a sleepy grumbling growl—the same hour of night that she needed rescuing just a month before. Yes, he is fast growing tired of his fantasy woman.

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***“I am not young enough to know everything.”***

— Oscar Wilde, *“In Conversation”*

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He is *tired*, yes, actually *tired*, of dating a woman with huge, perfect, purchased breasts, and noticing that his friends chortle and whisper about her bought boobs behind his back. His friends think that he does not hear, but he does. He realizes that while the huge breasts were an interesting fantasy for a few minutes, this is not the kind of woman you want to take on your arm to PTA meetings or dinner parties at your boss's house. The boss's wife has always had her doubts about you, and the boob babe is sure to seal your fate of getting passed over for promotion next year—let's face it, none of the women in the office or women married to men in the office want to compete with *those* at those at the annual pool party. And when the Tired Prince sleeps next to those boobs at night, and has nightmares that he is skiing down the snow-capped boobs and careens off a slope and breaks his neck and ends up in a wheelchair for life, he finds it precious little comfort to awake from that nightmare, groggy, and roll over and slide his arm onto the sleeping Fantasy Girl next to him, only to land his meaty palm onto a pair so stiff with silicone it hurts his hand and startles him so badly he sits up in bed, aghast. He studies the sili-cones as Fantasy Girl sleeps. He muses to himself, you do not take this pair home to meet your parents.

Trust me on this.

He is tired of coming home from his Holy Wars, wanting, nay, needing to talk about his day, his week, his life, the decisions he is trying to make about clients and career changes, about his boss and his underlings, about his x-wife and missing his kids, about whether or not he should take a computer course or relocate, about his team and his dog and his car, and his fears and terrors and nightsweats, and memories and hopes and dreams—only to realize that F. Girl is not listening. She only pretends to listen to him, while watching “All My Children” on TiVo, because now that she finally works part time at the Dairy Queen, it has wreaked havoc with her soap opera viewing schedule. The sad thing is, she thinks she is listening to the Tired Prince, she really does, because she is not clear on the difference between listening and pretending to listen, but what she is really doing is furiously filing her nails, she is focused on a tricky cuticle. He needs someone to listen to him, the Tired Prince does, and he wonders if she ever truly has. He wonders if any woman ever has.

\*\*\*\*\*

***“To get back one's youth, one merely has to repeat one's follies.”***

Oscar Wilde, *In Conversation*

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He is *tired* of having to explain jokes to the women he dates. He is *tired* of receiving hilarious emails from some on-line buddy, and then realizing, as he is ready to click a button, that there really isn't any point in emailing it to her. The Tired Prince is particularly tired of taking his hot date out to dinner with other couples, and watching as they all howl loudly at somebody's witty Wildean repartee, while his date just sits with a forced smile framing her big capped teeth, and then he winces as she forces that annoying little whinnying laugh, the one that sounds like she has a chicken bone caught in her throat (he is always afraid, when she does this in public, that someone will come running from another table to offer the Heimlich). It is the laugh she uses for all such occasions, because the nuances of wit are lost on her.

During one such uncomfortable moment, he vaguely remembers back to his days in high school—he recalls one of the science fair nerds, who tutored him in bio, explaining one time (it started with Darwin), that the beautiful people in life coast on their looks, they do not have to develop brains or humor or creative muscles, and that in twenty years, it is the nerds and bohemians who will dictate life and leisure to the masses. The Prince, who was not nearly so tired back then, did not know what that meant at the time. But now, he looks at his date and is starting to understand. He finds it odd that he is vaguely

attracted to the homely waitress with the delightful laugh, who is joking with everybody at the table, while the Prince's fantasy girl glares at the waitress. He is also *tired* of going out to dinner with her because he is *tired* of making reservations for a fantastic new restaurant, or one of the most exclusive eateries in town, only to have his date order salad with dressing on the side and a glass of sparkling water. Once, just once, he would like to see his date chow down on a rare steak with a baked potato, slathered in butter. He is tired of "on the side." He is tired of dating these fantasy women who don't eat. He started out gazing at his fantasy woman, thinking she was a veritable Playboy Bunny, but now she munches her lettuce and he tiredly thinks to himself that he is dating a rabbit. Not a bunny, but a rabbit. A skinny, frigid, witless, expensive rabbit.

And the Tired Prince is *tired* of the scenes his Fantasy Women have made over the past few years, when they don't get their way. Because they're used to getting their way. Because they are the fantasy women. And he remembers that one of most beautiful babes of all, the ultimate Fantasy Girl, actually ended up stalking him, and there was that ugly, costly, frightening business of having to get a restraining order.

The Tired Prince has an old friend who practices the one hour rule: when his friend goes out on a date with a lady for the first time, he gives her one hour.

One hour.

If she has not stopped talking about herself long enough to ask him about him within that one hour, he aborts the date and takes her home. He even tells her why. He is polite, but he never minces words.

The Tired Prince recalls that his friend has oddly ended many dates after one hour because of this, and also gets laid less, but that his friend seems generally happier than the Tired Prince. This mystified the Prince for a long time, but the Prince is starting to understand.

The Tired Prince is especially *tired* of paying ali-money. He knows he has to, and he does not intend to stop paying, because after all, princes are princes because they do the right thing. Plus he'd get sued if he didn't. But "hang it all!" he swears to himself, every month when he writes out the damn check, he is not going to go through it ever again, he is not going to marry his fantasy dream girl and have it all turn into a nightmare. The next time he gets married, he vows it is going to last, last forever, even if it does mean marrying a girl who is not a "10," but who really loves him, for exactly who he is.

Trust me on this.

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*"Alas, I shall die as I have lived—outside of my means."*

—Oscar Wilde, upon hearing about the cost of an urgent operation.

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And lastly, he is *tired* of always sucking in his gut, when he goes somewhere with his Fantasy Girl.

Just once, the Tired Prince would like to stand in line at the movies, or hang around at a cocktail party, without having to suck in his belly for hours. Because if he fails to suck, when his Fantasy Girl looks at his True Belly, her beautiful fantasy eyes are filled with such scorn and disdain. It is more than he can bear. It breaks his heart. It murders his pride.

Dear God, what he'd give for a real woman, who is not Fantasy Girl.

Dear God, what he'd give to meet a woman like you.

Because he is a prince, but he is a Very Tired Prince.

And he needs someone like you, to slay a few dragons for him.

Trust me on this.

\*\*\*\*\*

***“Love can Canonize people. The Saints are those who have been most loved.”***

Oscar Wilde, in a letter to Robert Ross, May 28th, 1897

YOUR TEN TERRIBLE TRUTH

“TO DO LIST” for the Heartsick

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**ABOUT OUR AUTHORS**  
&  
**SOME SNEAK PREVIEWS**

**WHO ARE OUR AUTHORS?**

Here follow the bizarre bios of our unorthodox writers here at Pickford Studios. Support Meg Langford, Mickey McClain, and Evelyn Ryman, in their attempt to revive “Michelle’s Museum,” a mausoleum of miniatures.

**ABOUT MICKEY McCLAIN**

*“I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train.”*

—Oscar Wilde

*“The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame.”*

—Oscar Wilde

Mickey McClain, B.V. (Bachelor of Visual-Arts) was born in the shadow of the Castle of Robert the Bruce, in northern Scotland’s Kemnay Forest, and was baptized in the Wee Kirk of Loch Lorrie. He summered with his Grandmother on Tyrebagger Hill, where he was lucky enough to watch one of the only two televisions in the village, and this instilled in him the dream of living in Hollywood, California.

But that was not to happen for another ten years. First, he followed in his father’s footsteps, and went to art school at the Edinburgh branch of the Academie D’Art D’Ordure, where he learned the styles of Mainland Europe. It was on a summer trip to the Academie’s main branch in Paris that he got his heart broken for the first time. He threw himself into his work.



Mickey finally got to the United States, but only after having his heart broken again, on a cruise liner to America. He disembarked in New York Harbor. Mickey didn't get to Hollywood right away, but he did buy himself a vehicle made in Los Angeles—a silver trailer home, a vintage 1957 Flying Cloud, that became his pride and joy. In his Cloud, he traveled around the country, painting this great land, always accompanied by his favorite traveling companion, the one great love of his life, Jujubee—a mixed breed terrier, and her son Chuckles. Chuckles' father does not acknowledge his paternity.

Mickey finally got his big house in Hollywood, but he never gave up his silver Flying Cloud trailer, and he spends most of his time in it. He still spends half of the year traveling this great nation.

His hobby/job is attending and writing articles about festivals in the great U.S. of A., and around the world. Among his favorite festivals are the Louisiana Shemp Festival, Mark Twain's famous Frog Jumping Competition in Calaveras County, CA. the Coconut Grove Bed Race in Miami, Montana's Testicle Festival, the Nude Olympics in Flagstaff, the Gloucestershire Cheese Rolling Festival (England), La Tomatina and the Great Fire Festival of Valencia (both in Spain), Thaipusam Festival in Malasia, Costumed Football (Florence, Italy), Wife Carrying Championships (Finland), Hounen Matsuri (Japan), The World Toe Wrestling Competition (roving) and last but not least, Red Bull Flugtag, wherever it happens to be any given year.

Although Mickey is a descendent of William the 4th Earl Marischal, who led the Scots against the British at the bloody Battle of Pinkie in 1547, Mickey McClain has made peace with the enemy, and is now a proud member of the British Origami Society. Mickey does return annually to his birthplace near Aberdeen for the annual Scottish Festivals, where he has been a winner in the Bonnie Knees Competition and the Haggis Throwing Tournament.

Mickey has seen many sights, loved many women in many ports-o-call, has often been homeless, in between amassing great fortunes, and has had much painful opportunity to learn *what is what* in life. Ms. Ryman feels that he was the excellent choice, to oversee the co-editing of the Fatman Adventures. (Even though she is in the process of suing him for everything he has, including his damn Flying Cloud that he brags about ad nauseum.)

Neither of them can be contacted.

They have no desire whatsoever to hear from you.

Their lives are quite functional and enthralling, even without either your input or your opinion.

**OSCAR WILDE, ON SEEING NIAGRA FALLS DURING HIS FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA:**

*“It would be more impressive if it flowed the other way.”*

*“It must be the second greatest disappointment for American brides.”*

EVALYN RYMAN-STİMME

*“I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.”*

— *Bill Cosby*

*“Most of our faults are more pardonable than the means we use to conceal them. “*

— *Francois de La Rochefoucauld*

Eve Ryman did not attend the University of Berkeley, due to financial stresses, but she did live *very near* Berkeley, in a groovy rent controlled duplex with an astonishing number of houseplants on the porch and deck. Because she was not enrolled there, she could not attend classes or make use of the library, but she did participate in all the protests and sit-ins, which gave her a lifelong thirst for activism.

In between rallies, protests, marches, and sit-ins, Eve eked out a living helping her grandmother (who raised Eve) in her wedding cake business. Known to be one of the best bakers in the country, and having won several awards in the field, Eve thrived in the baking business, although her heart was not in it. She did win top honours at the Grand National Wedding Cake Competition for her fully-functional Three Mile Island cake, constructed for the nuptials of the then-president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Organization.

Being *near* history, but not quite in the center of it, has been a recurring theme in Ms. Ryman's life. Her great grandmother, Enid, was actually in Times Square during VJ day, and was almost kissed by that handsome sailor in the famous Life Magazine picture, but the sailor saw that she was very pregnant, so he chose Enid's roommate instead. The excitement of the moment sent Enid into labor, which is how it came to pass that Eve's grandmother had the auspicious honour of being born on VJ day. Enid named her daughter (Eve's grandmother) Ellie, (Eleanor) after the President's wife.

In another strange twist of fate, decades later, Evelyn's grandmother, Ellie, was in Dallas, near the Grassy Knoll on that tragic day in 1963, when the President's motorcade

was parading down Elm Street. A very pregnant Ellie had been up all night, working her swing shift job as stock girl at the Piggly Wiggly, and she had been drinking Dr. Peppers non-stop to stay awake for the big parade. She had to go to the bathroom very badly, so she handed her movie camera to the guy standing next to her and asked would he hold it for her. Abraham Zapruder said yes, and the rest is history.

Again, the trauma of the event sent Ellie into premature labour, and out of that tragic day came a beautiful event: the birth of Evelyn's mother, Eydie, the child being so named because the child was conceived during a stirring rendition of Eydie Gorme's "Blame it on the Bossanova." And indeed, Ellie did.

The decades passed.

And who do you think was coming down the elevator in The Dakota Building in Manhattan one brisk night in December, December 8<sup>th</sup>, to be exact? Eydie was coming back downstairs, after having tucked herself in for the night, to see if she had dropped her copy of "Catcher in the Rye" on the sidewalk outside the luxury apartment building, as she was planning on finishing it in the bathtub that night during a good long soak. While in the elevator, she heard gunshots ring out, and kept hearing people screaming the name "John Lennon." The trauma of it sent her into labour; as she pushed all the buttons on the elevator panel in a panic, she jammed the elevator and it froze between floors.

Everybody was in such a panic about the shooting of the Beatle that nobody noticed the elevator problem until after Eydie had given birth. Eve Ryman thinks that is a pretty damn cool, albeit tragic way to come into the world.

The trauma of the event undid Eydie somewhat, and she began doubting her mothering abilities, so she turned Evelyn over to the care of her grandmother so that she, Eydie, could go serve in the Peace Corps and find herself. That is when tragedy struck again, but this time it was not yet another assassination in yet another crowded, cold city, but a sad anonymous little death that took place in the shrubby hectare just outside of Praia do Xai Xai: while Eydie was teaching villagers how to effect stream diversion for their crops, a marauding herd of charging dik diks, angered at having the water supply tampered with, trampled Eydie and left her clinging to life. Tragically, the nearest doctor was hours away, and Eydie died there in the African shrublands, reportedly singing John Lennon's "Imagine" as the life drifted out of her. Even the primitive tribesmen knew that tune.

Although she was only a toddler at the time, Eve Ryman never recovered from her mother's untimely demise, and has been particularly scarred by the fact that every time she tries to explain the circumstances of her mother's death to people, they invariably crack up, and think she is making it up.

Eve's mother's body was cremated and stirred into the mortar used in the making of the village watering trough.

Eve inherited her mother's love for activism, and has spent most of her life going

from rally to rally, doing her share. She founded the website PausesforCauses, which keeps a rolling list of protests, rallies, marches, sit-ins, and other assorted protests all around the country, and offers information about a festive bus which spends 365 days a year on the road transporting people to and from them: it is primarily a site patronized by young people who can attend the rallies because they do not have to work and hence have inordinate amounts of spare time, and who feel guilty about their inherited wealth.

Eve married during this time, but the marriage was quickly annulled, with Eve Ryman-Stimme citing “irreconcilable political differences.” *“He just let me go on and on about Obama the whole time he was courting me, and he never let on. Never once even hinted that he was a closet Republican. And how I found out—it will scar me for life. I was snooping through his things, going through his stash of porn, which I am fine with, by the way, being sexually liberated and all, but under the porn I found...his collection of Ann Coulter books. I instantly became nauseous. A Republican. And a hard core fundamentalist Republican at that. It’s like a venereal disease. You **tell** someone. You **tell** someone about it before you marry them...”*

Because her grandmother raised her, Eve finally left the west coast and moved out to Appomattox, where her grandmother wished to spend the remaining years of her life, out of respect for her husband’s people, The Lynch’s, who were responsible for the founding of Lynchburg and all that that implies.

By all accounts, life did not go well in Appomattox. Neither her politics nor her bumper stickers sat well with Appomattoxins, and she ran afoul of the law several times.

The first time was in 2008, when she was caught using nail polisher remover to try and remove the KKK graffiti that had been spray painted on Obama signs. She was charged with defacing public signage.

Twice she was arrested on obscenity charges: the first time for cycling in Speedos publicly while en route to a bicycle race in Rustburg, and the second time for baking a large penis cake. Local attorney Michael Brickhill argued Entrapment, however, and got all the charges dropped, as the cake had been ordered by the head sheriff’s brother for the sheriff’s bachelor party.

Once, neighbors called the police, reporting what they said could only be the stench of a dead body coming from Ms. Ryman’s trailer, only to find, when the police burst in, that Ms. Ryman was hosting her night with the Preserving Club, teaching the ladies of Appomattox how to make Kimchi.

And as far as that Restraining Order goes, it is true that Mickey McClain took one out against Eve because of the excessive baked goods she gave him, over and above his protests, but they are working it out, which is crucial since she is his editor. (They met long ago in Los Angeles, by the way, and had a brief romantic tryst when they mistook what they thought was really great sexual chemistry for what was really a very ordinary shag that happened during the 6.6 Northridge quake of ‘94.. They dated briefly, but the

romance fizzled quickly. But some good came out of it. She realized she was not creative enough to write fiction, and he realized he was far too lazy to proofread; out of this blossomed a now famous partnership.)

Her most recent arrest took place when she was taken into custody for failing to carry a concealed weapon in an Appomattox public woodland where “HUNTING ONLY” signs were prominently posted. “*I was just looking for morels under the tulip poplars,*” was her lame defense. She was sentenced to a week in jail, however as the Appomattox jail had just been closed due to overcrowding, she was instead incarcerated in the local animal pound. She looked on the entire experience as a positive one, overall, as she adopted a white mixed terrier mutt at week’s end, naming it, appropriately, Mugshot.

Ms. Ryman has now removed herself from Appomattox and relocated to where her true heart lies, in Woodstock, New York, where her grandmother’s body is now buried ... because it was in Woodstock that Eve’s grandmother experienced that happiest time of her life: she was not able to *actually attend* Woodstock, but she did go to a really good Sigma Pi Phi kegger just down the road.

***“There are two kinds of men who never amount to much: those who cannot do what they are told, and those who can do nothing else.”***

**—Cyrus H.K. Curtis**

***“If you know you are going to fail, then fail gloriously!”***

**—Cate Blanchett**

**MEG LANGFORD:**

**Author, Artist, Curator, Publisher, Speaker, Teacher, tired.**

***“It is what you read when you don’t have to that determines what you will be when you can’t help it.”***

**—Oscar Wilde**

Meg has worn many hats in her life:

After leaving behind a few brief years of living in Panama City and dallying with equestrianism (English dressage, jumping), because of the heartbreak of watching her horse die of colic, she transferred her energy to becoming a Madison Madrigal under the brilliant tutelage of Grammy winning Robert Shafer. The Madison Madrigals were, as

Meg puts it, *“simply the best damn choral group in the country.”*

But Meg did not have perfect pitch, and she lacked the native talent of some of the other Madrigals, so she moved on and found her niche in the world of competitive intercollegiate forensics at George Mason University. Not content with being on a team that was in the Top Ten in the Nation, and further restless with merely being the Number One Pentathlon Speaker on the East Coast, she continued to push herself until George Mason University was the Number One Forensics Team in the Nation, and she herself had been named Number One Pentathlon Speaker in the Nation—*two years in a row*. This record has never been beaten since. *“We were simply the best damn speech team in the country,”* she says with no false modesty. Langford abhors false modesty.

Her first brush with authority and publicity came during that period while she was pursuing her doctorate, when she found herself going up against Lefty Driesell and the entirety of the University of Maryland Athletic Department, after finding it her unpleasant responsibility to flunk Len Bias, and to turn in Tony Massenburg for cheating. The incident exploded into a larger tragedy following the cocaine overdose of Len Bias, an imbroglio which eventually brought the wrath of the NCAA down on the unfortunate Terrapins, and led to the humiliating resignation of Lefty. Meg was elated at Lefty’s demise: *“Almost all of the black players on the basketball team used up their eligibility without graduating, without even having the grades to graduate with a ‘C’ average in Phys. Ed. Driesell graduated those kids without them even having a shot at teaching high school ball. He was, in essence, a slave owner.”*

She left the world of academia and began penning novels and producing audiobooks. They are around, if you are interested in taking a look or a listen.

After optioning a couple of screenplays in Hollywood ( *“...but I never caught the brass ring”* she says wistfully, which is Hollywood speak for she never actually has a script produced.), she changed careers once again, becoming a 3-D miniature artist, developing a technique for making canvases come alive in three dimensions. *“I take stereotypical painters like Kinkaid and Wyland, and do to their landscapes what we as a species are doing to ours—I ruin it. But I have fun doing it. It makes a point.”*

Meg has had shows in Topanga Canyon Gallery, and at the Santa Monica Fine Arts Studio. She attributes her inspiration to Michelle Jacinta Pagan, a dear friend who was killed by a drunk driver on Christmas Day, after seeing the premiere of *“Titanic.”* She gave a show in Michelle’s honour, and also has a show featuring all 9-11 pieces rendered in miniature; both shows were featured on ABC, CBS, and NBC news.

She has several dozen dollhouses and miniature scenes, all of which tell a story or show a slice of Americana (including such unorthodox dollhouses as Bubba the Bootlegger and the House of Hoarders), but her favorite pieces are her more irreverent ones, including her 3-D paint-by-numbers of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. She even has done miniature scenes of illegal immigration, but her naughty favorite, hands

down, is the “Men Are Pigs” Theatre, a 4 foot by 8 foot portrayal of the dissolution of American neighborhoods, featuring a miniature burlesque house-turned porn movie theatre, complete with neighborhood protestors outside. Only twist: the seats in the theatre are filled not with men, but with teeny, tiny pigs. The porn playing on the screen (yes, it has that too) has been supplied by the United States Department of Agriculture Swine Reproduction Division, for which she is eternally grateful. Your taxpayer dollars at work.

Finally, Meg had known quite enough of partying in the troubled City of Angels. (And she denies quite emphatically that Mickey McClain’s trilogy “Adventures of the Fattest Crimefighter in the World” is based on her life in Hollywood, just with the gender changed.) Meg returned to her roots and moved her Dollhouse Museum to Appomattox, Virginia, where she was shocked at the amount of racism oozed to the surface of everyday life. She is currently in the process of suing the town for being generally bigoted, racist, homophobic and anti-Semitic, although she is doing it under the rubric of Virginia Code Section #—well, we don’t want to say too much. She considers the lawsuit a piece of performance art tinged with guerilla marketing, thank you Michael Levine. And no thanks to Michael Brickhill.

Parting Thoughts: Meg Langford has been lucky enough to travel the world, so if she comes across as a little too worldly, that is probably why.

She has climbed to the peak of the Chichen Itza Pyramid, the topmost tier of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the heights of mist-shrouded Machu Picchu, where she was spit on by an errant llama.

She has wended her way through the ethereal Shenandoahs, the Great Smokey Mountains, the Isthmus Rainforests, and the Swiss Alps. She has explored the ruins of Persepolis and the catacombs in Rome. She has watched the machinations of both the Panama Canal elevation locks and the Tower of London torture racks.

She has seen the ball drop in Times Square and watched the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks on the National Mall outside the White House. She has eaten rattlesnake and haggis and fried turkey blood, and gone dumpster diving as a card carrying freegan.

She has stared in awe at the Sistine Ceiling and at the David. She has been moved to tears by the jutting towers of Notre Dame Cathedral, Westminster Cathedral, Sarum, and the awe-inspiring stained glass of Chartres Cathedral, St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, St Mark’s Basilica in Venice. She has cackled at tourists of both genders having their picture taken with the David, and at the absurd comparison implied therein.

She is in awe of the world, and thinks that those living in it should be humbled by its vast majesty. She suggests you spend just a little less money on Direct TV Bundle Plans and 3D plasma TVs the size of Milton’s cottage, and a little less time playing Farmville and watching Dancing With The Stars, save some coins, get off your Snackwells ass, and go see some of the world for yourself.

By the way, the grand triumphs continue: only recently, Meg was inducted into the NFA Hall of Fame. Google it if you don't believe me.

***“The public is wonderfully tolerant. It forgives everything except genius.”***

—Oscar Wilde



