

The New Bride's Guide to Training Her Husband



The Perfect Primer for Creating an
Obedient and Incredibly Happy Husband

By Emily and Ken Addison

Around Her Finger

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This book is dedicated to all new brides... your marriage will
be everything that you make of it.

Prologue

This book was written at the suggestion of several visitors to the website that I run with the help of my husband. The site is called Aroundherfinger.com, and it is based on the best-selling book by the same name.

The book represents the repackaging of our ideas from the previously mentioned site and book, along with a generous dose of new content specifically tailored to the needs of the new bride. Please enjoy the book, and please go to the site to email me and let me know what you think of it.

Emily

Introduction

If you are like most of the women that begin reading this book, you have probably received it as a gift at a wedding shower and assumed that it was written to amuse and offered no real advice worth pursuing. Let me first assure you that while at times the book does entertain, it takes the subject matter very seriously. This book has a great deal to offer any woman that gives it a thorough reading with a completely open mind.

As a means of putting everything you are about to read into context, let me tell you a little bit about my own husband. We were married in our mid-twenties and got off to what can only be characterized a very happy and healthy start to our marriage. Then, as now, we enjoyed each other company, we shared similar interests, and our love for each other was the driving force in our relationship. From a big picture perspective, nothing changed over time. From a day to day perspective, however, a great deal changed.

He started doing less and less of what I would consider his fair share of the housework. We didn't fight often, but we did fight, and it was usually over little things. He was pretty stubborn and always had to have his way. I would often give in just to avoid a fight. Sometimes, however, I would be the one to start the fights. What I considered polite reminders that he needed to chip in with the housework was interpreted by him as nagging.

Nonetheless, I was so frustrated by his laziness around the house that I couldn't let things go unsaid. He reacted by playing more golf on weekends, and I started finding activities that I could enjoy without him. We started moving apart in a way that just didn't seem right.

Then, quite suddenly, everything changed. I do not like to go into the details of his own personal metamorphosis, but suffice it to say that my husband now acknowledges the fact that I am the authority in our marriage. He now keeps the house in immaculate shape. He does all of my laundry, my ironing, most of the cooking, washes my car, fills it with gas, comes shopping with me, wouldn't dare think of changing the channels without asking permission, etc. He also gives me either foot massages or full body massages every single night. I'm not talking about five minute, token massages. For the full body massages, he actually bought a professional massage table. He lights candles, turns on special music and gives me no less than a one hour massage. He gives the foot massages if there is something on the television that I do not want to miss. These can last all night. I sit sipping a glass of wine while he lovingly caresses, kisses and massages my tired feet.

My sex life has never been better. There is nothing more pleasant for a woman than to be with a man that is *completely* committed to *her* physical satisfaction before his own. My husband is a strong man and in wonderful physical condition. It is incredibly empowering and an amazing turn-on to have this powerful man so enthusiastically dedicated to my pleasure.

The most amazing thing about my husband's transformation, his surrender to my loving female authority, is how happy it has made him. It took a long time for me to really understand it. But now that I do, I feel compelled to share what I have learned.

As a new bride, you absolutely have it in your power to train your new husband. He will be attentive, affectionate, and he will embrace the fact that you are the ultimate decision maker in your marriage. The ideas that are presented in this book have made countless wives *and* husbands happier than they ever imagined that they would be. The husbands are often happier than the wives. Don't miss an opportunity by dismissing the advice in this book.

If you remain skeptical, just listen to what one new husband had to say when his wife discovered the secrets contained in this book and on our website:

Dear Emily,

I got married ten months ago to a beautiful woman that I had been dating for about three years prior to our wedding. We had a great relationship from the start. The energy level of the relationship started out supercharged as we were just sort of discovering each other. Then we went from the discovery phase to the wedding planning so the energy never really had a chance to diminish. It was only after being married a couple of months that we started to experience the withdrawals of all that energy. It's not that we had any particular problem. It's just that it dawned on both of us that the honeymoon was very literally over and now we had to get on with the reality of getting along together in a shared household.

About this time, unknown to me, someone made my wife aware of your site. She still won't tell me who it was, but I have my suspicions. In any event, she started changing her behavior around the house. She was a little more playful sexually, but ultimately she was turning into an incredible tease. She was keeping me on edge constantly, and although I never would have

predicted it, I loved it. She had me waiting on her hand and foot, doting on her constantly, and sexually it became all about her.

One night as I was kneeling in front of her rubbing lotion into her feet she asked me if I had noticed any changes in our relationship. I had to confess that I had. She had become much more assertive and demanding of me, and I had never been happier in my life. She told me that she had very consciously made these changes, and she too was happier. She asked me to go to the computer and read through your site. When I was done I was to come back and discuss my reaction with her. I can tell you that my reaction was somewhere between confusion and euphoria. Even after reading your site, I didn't understand why a female led household had such an appeal to me, but it felt so absolutely natural, that from that moment on I couldn't imagine any other arrangement.

She made it clear to me that night that she had never loved me more. She would be in control in our marriage. I would be expected to obey her, but we would go on loving each other with just as much intensity as ever. Now, about nine months later, those principles remain in place. We are the happiest couple in the universe. I owe it all to your site and whoever it was that first made her aware of it.

Here's another letter from a young bride that was actually made aware of the site by her future husband:

I am getting married next spring and wanted to share with you a success story that your website has spawned for at least one set of newlyweds-to-be.

As part of what he called full disclosure, my fiancé confessed to me that he has had a very long-held interest in female-led households. I didn't even know what he meant by the term when he brought it to my attention.

I was initially shocked by not only the fact that there are men that genuinely want a relationship like the one you describe on your site, but also by the fact that my fiancé was one of them. I read everything on your site, but I still remained uncertain that this was right for me. After all, this is definitely not the way I pictured my marriage working out. I was raised and still remain a pretty conservative Midwestern girl. However, my mind was open, and now I am completely sold on the idea. Let me share with you the process with which I came to be convinced that both I and my future husband will be happiest in a female led household. I think it will help to convince a lot of other skeptical women that this sort of a relationship offers everything you promise.

After getting myself educated on this topic, I finally sat down to discuss it with my fiancé. We agreed that we would try a one week, modified boot camp approach like the one you lay out in the book. If it worked out, I would continue to incorporate loving female authority into our marriage, if not, I would agree to indulge his interests playfully in the future, but only as temporary and very self-contained adventures in the bedroom. Otherwise, our relationship would be just like it always was. Honestly, I thought that there was no way it would work out. I fully expected to enjoy the week, but I also thought that after seven days of chasing his tail doing all of my errands and seeing to all of my comforts, he would have had his fill of it. Was I ever wrong.

We don't officially live together, but just the same he practically spends all of his waking and sleeping hours at my apartment. For the boot camp week, I made it official that I wanted him to stay away from his apartment and spend all his time, with the exception of work, at mine. I gave him lists of things to do around my place. I really didn't think he could follow through on everything as the list was so long, but on the first morning, he woke up at 4:30 to get started. He did everything I asked plus things I didn't ask him to do. When I woke up on that first morning, all of apartment was cleaned, my laundry had been washed folded and (where it needed it) ironed. He also had made coffee, prepared breakfast, and laid out my clothes (which he helped me into after I got out of the shower). After work, I went out for a drink with a friend to give him a little extra time to get home and prep for me. When I got home he greeted me at the door and led me to the couch where he proceeded to give me a foot massage. When I was ready, I had him open me a bottle of wine and serve me dinner. The after dinner massages and the (extremely unselfish) sex that followed was icing on the cake.

The next day, and the next day, and all the days that followed during that week pretty much went the same. What's more, he was opening up and communicating with me like I had flipped a switch in him. At the end of the week my decision was easy. Not only did I enjoy my week in charge much more than I thought that I would, I would never imagine having it any other way. Just as you suggest, I told him in no uncertain terms that from that point on I would expect him to obey me and respect my authority. In the weeks and months that have followed nothing has changed. We have never been happier.

Keep these letters in mind as you start reading this book. Know that you are not the only woman that ever read it with a nagging sense of doubt that it could really work.

Around Her Finger

The book you are reading now borrows heavily from a book written by my husband called *Around Her Finger*. I have more or less repackaged it with the needs of the new bride in mind. In his book, my husband began by pointing out that the term *head of the household* has virtually dropped out of the lexicon of the American marriage. It is an understanding among most every young couple today that the wife and the husband enter into the marriage as equal partners. In one sense this is a monumental achievement of cultural evolution and social justice. Women have finally broken from the shackles imposed on them by countless generations of male-dominated marriages. In another sense, however, there has been a price to pay for this new sense of equality among the sexes. It has opened a Pandora's Box in terms of the practical challenges of making decisions in a marriage where neither spouse really has the final say on any issue on which the couple may disagree.

These challenges are overcome in most marriages through open communication and, just as importantly, a demonstrated willingness to compromise. No relationship can be successful if both partners cannot resolve disagreements without having them always erupting into a major source of tension. But no matter how well developed any couple's aptitude is for this key relationship skill, the process of compromise can be mentally exhausting and can often lead to results that are unsatisfying for one or both of the parties. Points that have been previously conceded frequently become the seed of future arguments. Lacking a final authority to resolve disputes, these old issues resurface and the process of communication and compromise must begin again. This is admittedly a small price to pay

for equality in our relationships, but is it a price that can be avoided altogether?

The Central Theme of this Book

This book introduces what many of you will consider a bold new dynamic for your relationship with your husband. It is based on the premise that men are happiest when they are wrapped around the finger of the woman that they love. That is to say that when a wife taps into her sexuality to energize the day to day routine of the marriage, the husband will do almost anything to please her. He will take great pleasure in helping her around the house. He will go to great lengths to prove his affection. He will respect her opinions and demonstrate this respect by happily acquiescing to her decisions. The implication of this premise is that the wife assumes a new degree of authority in the home. This authority stems from the subtle manipulation of her own sexuality over her husband's sexual desires. She can build upon this authority and formerly take the position of head of the household. In doing so there will less tension in the home and both the woman *and* the man will be happier and more satisfied with their new roles in the relationship.

The intricacies and nuances of the approach may hold even more intrigue than the broad concept just introduced. At the heart of each of these finer points is the necessity that the husband remains appropriately engaged and is desirous of this new dynamic. This all begins with an enlightened discussion and understanding of men's attitudes towards romance and sex. Capitalizing on this new understanding and bringing sexual energy into more and more of the relationship is a hint at what ultimately motivates the husband.

Bringing the Bedroom into the Living room

When pressed, many men will confess that they would prefer a greater level of sexuality in their marriage. They may very well feel that they are not having as much sex as they would like, but when I say that they desire a *greater level of sexuality*, I mean something even more than that. They want and need sex to play a more significant role in their *day to day activities*. Climbing into bed with their wife at night to have sex is table stakes. Whether they end up getting it or not, this is what every groom at least expects out of his marriage. When sex does not occur as frequently as they hoped that it would, they are often ready and capable of articulating how they feel about its absence. However, they are less likely to articulate how they feel about a relationship where any and all sexual energy is reserved explicitly for the bedroom. In other words, while climbing in bed and having sex gives him a great feeling, it also gives him a great feeling to have her whisper a sexually suggestive comment when she kisses him goodbye in the morning. It also brings him enormous satisfaction when she wears a sexy outfit out to dinner and lets her foot find its way between his legs at some point just before desert is served. For men, romance is the coming together of their sexual life with their every day life. This book will advocate that women exploit this intersection for the couples' mutual benefit.

Brides are More Reluctant to Embrace this Book than their Grooms

Because so many men desire a greater level of sexual energy in their marriages, they very quickly grasp what the ideas in this book have to offer them. This is true even despite the fact that the husbands will be expected to cede some control to their wives. Women, ironically, are less likely to become enthusiastic about the ideas in this book. It is not, however, because they fail to see that a more sexually charged relationship has something to offer them as well. It is instead that many women resist the

suggestion that they become the one that assumes a leadership role in the marriage. Most women expect to be an equal partner in their marriage, but they have no desire to be any more than that. Later chapters will deal with this reluctance in detail, but for now, just know that this book does not go so far as to suggest that the wife has to become some sort of high-heeled, household dictator. It only suggests that she should and will become more comfortable in knowing that her opinions and decisions will be respected in the home. Even after initiating this new dynamic, she can still feel -- if it is her wish -- that her husband is very much taking care of her and protecting her. How far she goes with these ideas is really up to her. She can take it as far as she believes will work best for her and her husband given the intricacies of their own particular relationship.

Is this Book Right for You?

This book does not presuppose that this sort of relationship is right for everyone. Any individual man or woman can read this book and decide on their own whether or not it is right for their marriage. If you find yourself so uncomfortable with the concepts that you do not even want to embark on a trial period, then you will at least have been exposed to new ideas that in some small way can broaden your perspective and improve your relationship. However, if you are one of those reluctant readers, consider that my husband Ken was probably the least likely man on the entire planet to have put these ideas into practice. He was, like many men I know, a relic of a different generation. He was raised in a household where the husband was definitely in charge. While he entered into our marriage with the best intentions, he always found himself trying to impose his own decisions on me. Furthermore, he was reluctant to do his fair share of the household chores. He even felt that there were certain cleaning and domestic duties that were really not for men, but were exclusively the domain of women.

Ken had a moment when it dawned on him that he could be happier if he embraced the ideas that we now present to you here in this book. So in my case, my husband actually ended up presenting me with his own training program. I'm going to guess that you won't be that lucky, but don't worry, slowly but surely this book will tell you everything you need to know. We will teach you by telling you a story rather than by laying out a specific set of guidelines. It seems like a round-a-bout way, but these ideas can come across as so out in left field that they really do work best when we tell the story and then discuss the ideas in the context of the lives of the characters.

Cassie and Al, a Love Story

The story's main characters, Cassie and Al have what might be considered a typical marriage. It could be your own marriage a few years down the road. They have settled into the routine of their daily lives and while not unhappy, are hardly achieving the sort of satisfaction that most of us hope for in our own relationships.

Leigh Ann and Zach are their neighbors that live right across the street. They used to be just like Cassie and Al, but some time ago, they made some very fundamental changes in their marriage. While they are also in an established marriage, their story is very different from Leigh Ann and Zach's. Their marriage, in my opinion, delivers absolutely the right message for new brides and grooms.

I will not give away too much now by telling you any more about these couples. I will let you read about them for yourselves. I will only tell you that this story, and the message of this book itself, can only be understood by reading it through to the end. As you turn the pages from chapter to chapter, you will end up with as many questions as you have answers. Some of these questions will be answered in the story itself, some of them

will be answered in the *intermission* chapters that are included to provide additional commentary and perspective on the concepts that surface in the narrative. When the story ends, the book features some very key chapters that offer advice and suggestions for implementing these ideas in your own new marriage. Ultimately, this book will educate you regarding alternatives for the way you and your future husband relate to each other. I will provide you some ideas, but exactly how you might want to implement these ideas will be entirely up to you.

Our Story Begins

Al's sleep was interrupted by the rhythmic squawk of the digital alarm clock. His hands fumbled around the top of the clock until he found the on-off switch, sliding it to the off position without so much as one indulgent tap of the snooze button. He let out a low moan as he sat himself up in bed and rubbed the life back into his eyes. He leaned over and mechanically kissed his wife on the back of her sleeping head before forcing himself to stand, stretch, and slumber towards the bathroom. Shutting the door behind him, he found himself squinting his eyes before he even turned on the light. He brushed his teeth, slid on a pair of jeans and pulled on the sweatshirt that he had laid carelessly on the floor the night before.

Every other week it was Al's turn to get up with the kids. This week was one of Al's *on-weeks*. The youngest child, a two year old girl, would keep sleeping, but the five year old and seven year old boys needed to be shaken out of their own heavy slumbers, dressed, fed, teeth brushed and walked down to the bus stop. As much as Al loved his kids, and genuinely knew that even this tiresome morning time with them made for good parenting, he still hated his on- weeks. At the beginning of the school year he would make a careful analysis of all the holidays, teacher work days and three-day weekends. He did this to make sure that he started his cycle on the week that would maximize the number of extra mornings during which he could sleep another thirty minutes. He was always willing to work very hard to be lazy.

He ran the children through their morning routines and lined them up at the door for inspection. “Ok, got your homework, your ice-cream money, your snack...ok, let’s go.” Then he marched down to the bus stop to mingle with the other parents and wait the five or so minutes until the bus arrived. Al walked slowly, keeping a few paces behind his kids and sipping his beloved cup of black coffee. It was a little cold this morning, but at least it was Friday.

Most of the other parents at the bus stop were moms. By and large, the other families did not split the duty between the moms and dads, but delegated the job to the women. To say that Al resented this would have contained a kernel of truth, but probably would have been an overstatement. He did not expect that his wife would take on *all* the domestic duties; he just felt that she should take on *most* of the domestic duties. He did, however, make a mental note of the fact that he was one of the few husbands walking out with his kids in the morning. He kept a mental catalogue of *each and every one* of his contributions to the household chores. While this catalogue was in reality relatively small, to Al it seemed the most enormous list that had ever been compiled. If it did not represent at least half of everything that was done in the way of combined housework and yard work, then he figured it was certainly close. This catalogue would occasionally be heavily referenced during arguments and disagreements with his wife over who should be doing what to help out around the house.

In saying that most of the parents at the bus stop were the mothers in the neighborhood leaves out a very clear exception to that rule. Zach Newman from across the street was out at the bus stop every morning with his son and daughter. There were no on and off weeks at the Newman household, there was just Zach getting up every morning and cheerfully walking his kids to the bus stop. Al made his way over to Zach and greeted him between sips of coffee, “Morning, neighbor.”

“Hello, Al,” replied Zach. A big, broad smile lit up Zach’s face. Zach, like Al, was in sales. They worked for different companies, but they both sold software to Fortune 500 businesses, working out of offices in their homes. They were both successful and commanded the respect of others within their companies. On this morning, as on all mornings, Zach was already showered, shaved and dressed. Al, as was typical on days he had no sales calls, looked pretty rough. Maybe Al would take a shower later in the day if he had to go somewhere, but morning grooming definitely was not his priority.

“Are you and Leigh Ann doing anything special this weekend,” Al asked just as a means of starting some small talk.

“Not really,” said Zach. “She’s going over to her sister’s tonight to help her pick out some curtains. I’ll probably just do laundry. I’ve already rented a movie for tomorrow night.”

“I don’t do much laundry,” replied Al, I think she doesn’t like the way I fold everything. Suits me. What movie did you rent?”

“That new Meg Ryan movie, the one about the nurse and the soldier,” answered Zach.

“That’s kind of a chick flick, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, but that’s what Leigh Ann likes. It won’t be so bad.”

“Well, at least you’ll get your pick for the next movie,” Al said.

“What do you mean?” Zach had a puzzled look on his face.

“Well, I assume you trade off on movies. She rents a chick flick; you rent something you like... you know.”

“Actually,” said Zach, “I’m really not too picky. Unless it’s something I really want to see, she generally decides on the movies.”

“Uh, ok,” said Al. “Cassie and I just have such different tastes in movies, we generally trade off.”

“We used to be that way,” Zach began. The site of the bus turning the corner and pulling up the street interrupted him. “There she blows,” shouted Zach. He kissed his children off to school. Al, Zach and all of the moms waved to their children as the bus pulled away and started back to their homes.

Al stepped into his house and headed over to the coffee maker for another fix of his morning habit. He noticed a couple dishes in the sink and started to put them in the dishwasher. Noticing it was full of clean dishes that his wife had loaded and washed the night before, he quietly put the dirty dishes back into the sink. He needed to sneak upstairs without getting stuck unloading all those dishes. Anyway, he had work to do. He needed to pull down and respond to e-mails from yesterday afternoon before the two-year-old woke up. Getting the toddler out of her crib and getting her dressed was usually the job of whoever was *on* during that particular week. Al, however, got immersed in his morning correspondence and very much lost track of time. He then took a morning phone call which seemed to last forever. When he hung up the receiver, he heard his wife talking and his toddler giggling down the hall. He got up from his desk and went down to join them.

“Hello, little cutie-pie,” said Al as he walked into the room. “Good morning, Honey,” he added, planting another mechanical kiss on his wife’s shoulder. “Sorry about this, I got a little caught up in work this morning.”

“No problem,” answered Cassie. She was always very supportive of his need to work, and understood that working out of the house presented certain challenges. Cassie had stopped working when the children were born. She had been successful in the corporate world in her own right, but her priorities had changed and she was now doing what she believed was best for the family. Al picked up the wet diaper that Cassie had just changed and followed her back downstairs to the kitchen. He opened the trashcan to throw the diaper away. Seeing that it was just about full, he quickly stuffed the diaper into the last remaining space available and quietly shut the lid. He wouldn’t want to get distracted this morning by having to take out the trash.

“So what are you doing today?” asked Al.

“I’ve got to go sign the boys up for spring soccer. If I don’t do it this morning, it just won’t get done. And I need to run out and pick up our Christmas cards from the printer. At some point today I need to update our mailing addresses. I’ll put her down for her nap at 1:00, and if at all possible, I’ll use that break to go work out.”

Cassie had been working out and taking care of herself for years. At thirty-five, she was really an incredibly beautiful woman. Al knew he was lucky to be married to her, but his boyish reluctance to communicate much about his feelings kept him from reminding her of it. He did the typical guy thing of nice cards and flowers at Valentines Day along with the occasional date night. He recognized that he did not do enough to tell her how beautiful she was and to make her feel special in their marriage. However,

having been married for nine years, he had more or less settled into the routine of daily living and abandoned romance long ago.

As far as Al's own eating and exercise habits were concerned, he had sort of let himself slip a little. He used to commit a great deal of time and effort taking care of himself. He ate right, he worked out, and he dressed and groomed well. Now he was sliding downhill. He wasn't in *horrible* shape; he just wasn't in *good* shape. He thought about working out and eating right. He even made the occasional effort to start a diet or work out program, but he never stuck with it. He just did not have the same motivation anymore. As Al had said to his buddies, "You work out and look good *to get the woman*. Once you've got her, it's only important that *she* stay in shape." He was only half joking.

When he and Cassie first started dating everything had been so different between them. He doted on her; he completely adored her. He left her little notes telling her how beautiful she was and how important she was in his life. He would take her car out and wash it without her even having to ask. He would cook her wonderful dinners hoping that he could prepare something that would please her. Now it seemed that everything had changed, and not for the better. It just seemed like nine years of marriage had caught up with him.

Even sex had fallen into a routine. They still had what statistically would be called at least an average sex life. They had sex a couple of times a week. The sex, however, had become not much more than the satisfying of physical needs, and to be more precise, Al's physical needs. The closeness, the bond between the emotional and the physical that had typified sex earlier in their marriage was just not there like it used to be. There were occasional exceptions to this, but by and large sex between Al and Cassie was very routine.

“So what are *you* doing today?” asked Cassie.

Her question snapped Al out of his thoughts. “Well, I’m in my office all day. No customer meetings, but I do have a lot of phone calls to make and letters to get out.”

“Ok, well I guess I’ll see you when I come back from errands to put her down for her nap. Oh, and before I forget, can you promise to be home from golf tomorrow by 1:00? Leigh Ann Newman and I are going shopping.”

“No problem,” answered Al. An almost platonic peck on the cheek sent him back upstairs to his office. He shut the door and settled into his chair. It was going to be a long day. He had a couple of contracts he was trying to get through his own legal department and he was going to spare no energy in pushing them through. He was definitely a “Type A” personality. He knew that this personality was more of an asset at work than it was at home, but it was hard to switch it on and off. He often butted heads with Cassie regarding the smallest things and jumped into making decisions at home without careful regard to what her input might be. The funniest part about this was that she was a better decision-maker than he was, and he recognized this fact. He just couldn’t turn off his ego and cede any control to her.

The day proceeded more or less as planned, and Al ended up leaving his work and office behind him before 5:00. It was tough to get customers on the phone at the end of a day on Friday, so it was typical that he could wrap up his paperwork and shut down a little early at the end of the week. He came downstairs and found the family all seated around the kitchen table. The two boys were engaged in a game of table football, flicking the folded paper football back and forth and trying to get it as close to the

edge as possible without going over. Cassie had their little girl on her knee and was playing paddy-cake with her.

“So, what’s for dinner, Hon?” asked Al.

“I didn’t get a chance to cook anything, I thought we could all go out for Chinese. I’ve kind of had a taste for it lately.”

“Oh,” Al seemed disappointed. “What about pizza? Do you think maybe it would be ok if we just did pizza?”

“Yeah,” screamed the two boys in unison, “Pizza!”

“Peeesa, Peeesa, Peeesa!” shouted the toddler.

“Well,” replied Cassie, slightly aggravated and with a noticeable scowl, “I guess you’ve rallied the troops behind the pizza things. I guess pizza is ok.”

“Awesome, Honey. We’ll get Chinese soon; I promise. I’m just so much in the mood for pizza.”

“Pizza is fine,” said Cassie. She was used to this sort of thing. Sometimes it was just easier to let Al have his way.

The family went out to dinner and got back to the house just about the time that the kids were ready to go to sleep for the night. Al sort of disappeared around the children’s bedtime, not just tonight but every night. Cassie almost always ended up owning the task of getting the kids into bed. The older boy pretty much took care of himself, but not the other two. Diapers had to be changed, teeth brushed, stories told, etc. It was really a lot of work. When Cassie finished and came back downstairs she was

exhausted. She had very little energy left for anything other than melting into the cushions of the couch.

“Let the weekend begin,” exclaimed Al. He had already plopped himself on the couch with a bowl of ice cream and a bottle of beer. He was watching an old movie, *Animal House*, on TBS. “I love this movie! People forget how funny this movie was.”

“Do you think maybe we could watch something else, Sweetheart?”

“What? I thought you would like this movie?”

“The *Design Channel* was doing something on bedroom furniture, tonight. You know we’ve been thinking about getting new bedroom furniture, and I thought it might give us some ideas.”

“Well, truth be told,” Al started scrambling, “I was thinking about watching that golf video on the TV in our bedroom. After all, Mark and I do have our tee-time tomorrow, and I thought maybe I could use a couple of tips...”

“Well, I was hoping we could watch something *together*, tonight,” interrupted Cassie.

“This would just be for a little while,” said Al. He thought to himself that he would figure out another excuse *not to watch* the Design Channel again once his video was over, he was just dealing with the current threat at the moment.

“Ok,” said Cassie. She had learned from his experience that her husband was going to do whatever he wanted to, despite her sincere and heartfelt wishes to the contrary.

Al left his empty ice cream dish and now empty beer bottle on the floor next to the couch and headed up to the bedroom to watch his golf video. In Al's mind he had scored a successful compromise. He had given up watching *his* show on the big television in the den to let her watch her own. So what if he wasn't watching the Design Channel with her. He was still the one that made the sacrifice. True to form, he ended up tinkering around on the Internet for an hour or so after the golf video was over. When he finally went downstairs, Cassie had fallen asleep on the couch and he woke her up. The Design Network's special on bedroom furniture was already ended.

"Hey, Sweetheart," said Al, rubbing Cassie's neck and shoulders, "did you enjoy your show?"

Cassie opened her eyes slowly and she blinked as they adjusted to the light. "Yeah, it was ok. I'm sorry you didn't see it. It had some ideas you would have liked."

"Well, whatever you want to do with the bedroom is fine with me, as long as it's pretty cheap. We don't need to be spending much money on new furniture when the furniture we have is perfectly fine."

"But you just ordered new golf clubs from the pro shop?"

"That's different. My skills have been getting better. I need those new clubs so that my equipment can keep up with me."

"Well, maybe we don't need a new bed after all. Your skills in the bedroom haven't gotten any better," snapped Cassie.

"Oh, come on," Al responded with full confidence that she was just kidding, "I'll go practice my *skills* right now, what do you say?"

Cassie got up and walked into the bedroom with Al. Here was another case where it just felt easier to give in to his habits than to fight them. Another evening of satisfying Al's masculine needs ensued.

The next morning Al was up early and was out to the golf course before his kids were even out of bed. He was golfing with Mark, one of his neighbors. The two had had a regular weekly tee time for about three years. They used to play with Zach Newman, but about a year and a half ago, Zach had stopped playing golf altogether. In fact, a lot of things had changed with Zach.

Zach used to be just one of the guys. He would go out and watch the games with them at the local sports bar on Monday nights. He would golf on weekends. He would stop by and pick up Al during the week to go and get lunch. Something changed about a year ago, however, that was causing Zach to spend less time with the guys and more time with his family. Neither Al nor Mark held it against him, but they both noticed it. Actually, although neither admitted it to each other, both Al and Mark admired Zach. They wished that they could derive the same satisfaction from their home life that Zach seemed able to derive. Sure, they both gave Zach a little ribbing about it at first, but on the inside they were jealous.

Al ended up having a pretty good round of golf. He finished up at around 11:30 and then headed into the clubhouse with Mark to grab some lunch before heading home. Al learned a while ago that heading straight home after a morning round of golf placed him smack in the middle of having to get lunch ready for all the kids. These days he played the game just a little bit wiser. He would grab a leisurely lunch before heading home. This

would put him in the driveway just about the time the kids were finishing up their lunch. Today was running just like clockwork. After having a hamburger with Mark, he was opening his garage door at about a quarter after one, just as Cassie was picking the dirty dishes off the table. He set his clubs down in the corner of the garage and opened the door into the kitchen.

“Hello, everybody! How was the morning?” The kids swarmed all over him with stories and request for attention. Cassie just quietly loaded the dishwasher.

“Weren’t you and Leigh Ann going to do something this afternoon?” asked Al.

“Yes, at one o’clock, we were going to run to the mall to do some shopping. Remember... I told you the other day that Leigh Ann and I were going shopping and you said that you would be home in time for me to go by *one o’clock*.” She tapped her watch to emphasize the fact that it was a *quarter after one*.

“Ok, I’m sorry. I totally forgot. Go ahead and run over there; I’ve got things under control here.”

Cassie was visibly frustrated as she grabbed her purse and stormed past Al to walk out the door.

“Have fun, Honey. Buy something nice.”

Ann and Zach: A Happier Marriage

Cassie walked across the street and banged on the Newman's door. Zach answered, holding furniture polish in one hand and a dust rag in the other.

"Hello, Cassie. Leigh Ann is in the den, come right in," Cassie stepped through the door with a warm smile. Zach was always so polite. He shut the door behind Cassie and followed behind her into the den. "Is there anything I can get you, Cassie?"

"No, Zach. But thank you very much." He went back to dusting the dining room furniture. "I'm sorry I'm late, Leigh Ann. Al was late getting back from the golf course."

"No trouble at all, Cassie. I understand perfectly." Leigh Ann had been sitting in an overstuffed chair reading a magazine and sipping a glass of diet Coke. She stood as Cassie walked into the room. "Are you ready to head out?"

"Definitely, I've been looking forward to getting out all morning."

Leigh Ann stepped into the kitchen and sat her diet Coke down on the countertop. She picked up a pen and scribbled a couple of lines on a small green notepad before grabbing her purse and keys from the table

near the garage door. “Zach,” she poked her head around the entrance into the dining room. “I’ve added a couple things to your *Honey-Do* list. And do please go up and check on the kids, I worry that they may be up to something when they’re as quiet as they have been.”

“Will do. You two have fun,” answered Zach. He walked into the kitchen to see her off.

“We’ll be home in a few hours. Love you.” Leigh Ann planted a wonderfully sensuous kiss on her husband’s lips. The kiss lingered just long enough that Cassie felt a little awkward in their presence. Leigh Ann seemed to whisper something to Zach before she pulled away. Whatever she said put a gigantic smile on his face and caused him to blush with either embarrassment or anticipation.

“Love you, too,” said Zach as Leigh Ann turned away.

Cassie and Leigh Ann stepped out into the garage. Cassie walked around and got into the passenger seat of Leigh Ann’s car. Leigh Ann sat down in the driver’s seat and reached up to the sun visor to hit the remote control button for the garage door. Both women buckled their seat belts as Leigh Ann backed out of the garage and headed out of her driveway. She headed past Cassie’s house and out to the mall.

“I have to tell you, Leigh Ann,” said Cassie. “I am amazed, envious and amazed, at the relationship that you have with Zach.”

“Oh, you are sweet to say that,” replied Leigh Ann. “He is such a great guy, I love him more and more every day.”

“But he’s so...nice. Nice isn’t even the word, he’s great. He treats you like you are his queen and he’s your knight in shining armor. He’s willing to

help out around the house, I never see you two fighting, and he's... I don't know, *he's perfect.*“

“I have to tell you, I agree with you one hundred percent. No relationship is ever *really* perfect, but our relationship is *just about* perfect. I can't think of anything I would change.”

“I don't mean to be nosey,” said Cassie, “But it seems like he hasn't always been that way. It seems like he used to be a lot more like... a lot more like my Al. Am I wrong?”

“Well, I don't want to make any assumptions about your Al...”

“Let me just clear up your assumptions,” interrupted Cassie. “He's not exactly pulling his weight around the house. It's almost like he spends more time trying to get out of helping me with everything that I have to do than he spends actually helping me. More than that, he's less affectionate than ever. He's fallen into a routine. *We've* fallen into a routine. I'm just not as happy as I used to be.”

“I definitely understand,” replied Leigh Ann, “I definitely saw the same thing as you just described happening with Zach and me. It didn't start out that way. We started out like most couples. We couldn't keep our hands off of each other. All of our waking thoughts were about each other. We dated for a little while before ever having sex, and those early days were the best of all. Even after that though, there was still magic in the relationship. A lot of that magic was the fun of discovering each other. Finding out who we were as persons, what we wanted out of life, what our values were. It was all the stuff that you go through when you really fall in love. But it was even more than that. The physical part of our relationship, the sexual energy, was pervasive in everything that we did together. There was constant flirting. If he brought me flowers or took me

out to a nice dinner, we both understood that implicit in these little things was a message.”

“What was that message,” asked Cassie. She was obviously very interested.

“The message was ‘*I want you*,’” answered Leigh Ann. “So sex was really woven into even the most mundane parts of our relationship. It is probably this way in most relationship in the early days of dating.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean. We were like that too, but years ago, before we got married and before we had kids.”

“Many women just write all of that off as old-fashioned romance,” explained Leigh Ann. “Romance is real, don’t get me wrong. Women, however, don’t understand what romance is for men. For that matter, most men don’t even understand it. For men, romance is an opportunity to bring sex into other parts of their relationships. Women can’t appreciate how important sex is to men. Men need a strong physical relationship to feel that they are loved. They *want* to bring sex into more of their relationship, but they need reinforcement from the women in their lives in order to make that happen.”

“What do you mean?” asked Cassie.

“You know,” Leigh Ann stopped in mid-sentence as if she thought better of talking on the subject any further. She scrambled for a way to shift the conversation. “I told you that I saw the same things happening with Zach and me as you see happening with you and Al. At first I was complacent. We talked about it, we argued about it.”

“What were some of the key things that were bothering you?” asked Cassie.

“For one thing, I just expected more from him. He would make himself a snack, and leave the mess for me to clean up. He would just leave his dirty clothes in a pile on the floor for me to pick up. I know that he works and I stay home with the kids, but keeping up with the kids is a lot of work. After chasing them around the house all day, I still had to cook dinner, do the laundry, clean the house. I didn’t expect that he would do everything, but I did expect that he would contribute.”

“And now?” asked Cassie.

“Well, let’s just say that now he does his share... and then some,” replied Leigh Ann. “But it wasn’t just helping out around the house. He had a major control problem. I thought we entered into the relationship as equal partners, but he had this male ego thing that just compelled him to make decisions for me.”

“I know what you mean,” said Cassie. “We’ve got a major case of *male ego* in our house.”

“I really value his opinion,” continued Leigh Ann. They were just pulling into the parking lot of the mall. “I just don’t think his assumption that he should have the final say on things made any sense. It is probably true that *somebody* has to have the final say, I just don’t think his judgment is as good as my judgement. He is so impulsive with his decision making.”

“So how does it work now?” asked Cassie. “Do you feel like you now have the last word on big decisions?”

“Hey,” exclaimed Leigh Ann, totally changing topics, “There’s a parking space right next to the food court. Want to get an Orange Julius before hitting the shops?”

“Sure,” said Cassie. She sensed that maybe Leigh Ann needed a change of subject and let it go.

“Stuck at home with the kids again,” thought Al.

It was just about time to put the toddler down for her nap. The boys had already rushed outside to throw the football back and forth. Maybe this won’t be so bad after all. Maybe I can kick back with a couple of beers and catch a nap. Al carried his little girl upstairs and changed her diaper. He kissed her on the top of her head and laid her down in the crib. “Sleep good for Daddy, Sweetheart.”

He heard the doorbell ring before he had even gotten back downstairs. Zach was at the door holding a food processor. Al opened the door and invited Zach inside. “What you got there, partner?”

“I had borrowed this from Cassie a couple of weeks ago,” answered Zach. “I had almost forgotten I had it. Leigh Ann asked me to make sure I got it back over here this afternoon.”

“That wife of yours, if you don’t mind me saying, has got you wrapped around her finger. Why don’t you come in and let me treat you to a beer. You could use it.”

“You know, I think I’ll take you up on that. The kids both just took off to play with friends. I’ve got some time before I need to get back home, and I would sure enjoy a beer.”

All of a sudden, Al felt guilty about voicing his observation regarding Leigh Ann. He opened the refrigerator and pulled out a couple of Heinekens. “You know I’m just kidding about you and that woman of yours, don’t you, Zach.”

“Oh, yeah. I don’t mind you giving me a hard time. I know I come across as just a little bit henpecked sometimes.”

“Now I didn’t say that,” said Al. “Those are your words, not mine.” He sat down at the kitchen table and Zach pulled up a chair as well. Al opened one of the beers and handed it to Zach. He opened the other and took a long sip. “You just make me look bad by comparison. That’s all.”

“It’s funny, Al. I know I don’t go golfing much anymore, or spend near as much time with you and the other guys, but I’ve *never been happier*. I don’t want to come across as a fuddy-duddy, but I was really ready to start focusing on my marriage, and I’m glad I did.”

“Like I said,” replied Al, “I am not here to judge. We are still ‘bus stop buddies’, and nothing can take that away from us.”

“I know,” said Zach, raising his beer in a mock toast. “I just know that I must seem so very different from the way I used to be. I sometimes feel like I need to explain myself.”

“Look, Zach. I don’t want this to turn into an episode of the Oprah Winfrey Show, but to say you have changed is the understatement of the century. You used to play golf with us every weekend, go watch Monday Night

Football with us, sneak out to lunch a couple times a week. All of a sudden, it all stopped. It's like you got caught sneaking around on her and now she's got you living it down for the rest of your life."

"Well," laughed Zach, "It's nothing like that, I promise."

"I may be yapping too much for my own good," said Al, "I'm not here to judge. To each his own. If you're happy, I'm happy."

"Well, thank you, Al." Zach lifted his beer can for yet another mock toast. "In that case we are both very, very happy."

"But, Zach," asked Al, "If you really don't mind my asking, I'd love to know what happened. What turned you around? What caused this dramatic, one hundred and eighty-degree reversal in your life? Did she issue you an ultimatum? What was it?"

Zach laughed yet again. "No, Al. It was nothing like that. I just resolved to myself that I would do a better job at working on our relationship, a better job at making her happy."

"So you discovered the 'yes, dear' solution," said Al.

"The what?" asked Zach.

"You know, the 'yes, dear' solution. The secret to making your marriage better is to stand in front of the mirror and practice saying 'yes, dear'. Then, anytime she asks you to do something, you just say 'yes, dear'."

Zach laughed, "No, Al. I think it's been a little more complicated than that. Saying 'yes, dear' sounds like you are just giving up. It's as though by giving in to your wife's happiness, you are *giving up on your own*. For me

it was fundamentally different. I have found happiness in making her happy. That sounds like a subtle difference, but it's not subtle at all. The difference is everything in the world for those that really understand it."

"I'm skeptical," said Al. "I just could not imagine that giving in to all of Cassie's nagging would ever make me happy. I get so tired of 'Honey, could you please do this,' or 'Honey, could you please do that'."

Zach laughed out loud.

"What's so funny?"

"It's just that I know exactly what you mean," answered Zach. "Leigh Ann used to nag me all the time."

"*Used to nag you?*" replied Al. "What do you mean '*used to nag you?*'?"

"There is no nagging that goes on in my house, none at all," answered Zach.

"I guess I'm a little confused. Doesn't she give you a list of things she expects you to do every weekend?"

"Yes. In fact she updates that list just about every day."

"But... you said there was no nagging in your house?"

"You know what, Al. This *is* turning into an episode of the Oprah Winfrey Show. Can we talk about something else? How was the golf today? Did you hit them straight or far."

“Both, today!” answered Al. He greeted the opportunity to change the topic of conversation with great enthusiasm. “Yep, my marriage may be tanking, but my golf game is getting better every week!”

Escalating Problems

“What a mess,” thought Cassie. She returned from shopping to find Al sleeping on the couch. The kitchen was full of dirty dishes from the boys’ efforts to fix their own afternoon snacks. The toddler was crying in her crib upstairs. “Boys, get in here and clean up this mess!”

The boys came trouncing down the stairs from where they were playing video games. “Sorry, Mom. We didn’t think you’d be home for a while.”

“So when I’m not home, it’s ok to make a mess?” She sat a couple of bags and packages from her shopping trip down on the kitchen table. The two empty Heineken cans remained from Al’s talk with Zach earlier in the day.

“Dad doesn’t mind when we make a mess like you do, Mom.”

“That’s because he never cleans it up,” said Cassie.

Al had woken up from his little catnap. “Hi, Honey. How’d the shopping go?”

“Better than the kid-watching from what I can tell. This place is a mess.”

“I’ll get it cleaned up, Sweetheart.”

“No,” said Cassie, “I’ll have the boys clean it up. “Can you just go get your daughter, please? I hate to imagine how long she’s been screaming up there in her crib.”

“Yes, *Dear*,” said Al. He thought about what Zach had said. This was definitely a case where he was going along with his wife just to avoid conflict. She was probably in the right -- he had been a little slack to doze off -- but there was nothing fun about her barking at him the way she was. Al came downstairs with the toddler and things started to return to their natural state of order, or at least what passed for order in their household. After cleaning up the kitchen the boys flew back up the stairs to return to their video game, and their little sister followed close behind. Al stood in the kitchen peeking into the bags and boxes that Cassie had brought home.

“Sometimes you really, disappoint me, Al. I think I’m pretty reasonable, I just want you to meet me halfway.” Cassie did not want to nag. She was just feeling a growing sense of dissatisfaction with Al. Her trip over to Leigh Ann and Zack’s before heading out to the mall only made matters worse. Al stood in such sharp contrast to Zach. Maybe she wasn’t seeing the whole picture. Maybe her impressions of Zach were formed from isolated instances, but she didn’t think so. In Zach she saw a man that she could respect, a man that was willing to contribute to everything that it took to keep the home and the relationship running. Al, it seemed to her, was just interested in Al. If he did any work at all around the house, he resented it. He didn’t seem interested in taking the relationship forward, he didn’t even seem interested in keeping it alive.

“Honey, I *just* fell asleep. She couldn’t have been crying for long.”

“It’s not just today that has me frustrated, Al. It’s not just you being late coming home from golfing. It’s not just falling asleep on the couch while

your daughter is screaming for you to get her up. It's not just letting the boys make a mess in the kitchen. It's your playing golf *every* weekend. It's the fact that you never clean up your messes. It's your having to have your way with absolutely everything..."

"Having to have my way? What do you mean?"

"Just last night, for example," responded Cassie. "I was really in the mood for Chinese but you *had to have* pizza."

"Come on, Honey, you're blowing up little things and making me sound like a thug."

"It *is* little things, Al. It is *lots and lots* of little things. You have to have the remote control. You never help with the dishes. You hardly ever help me get the kids to bed..."

"I get the kids up in the morning. None of the other Dad's take their kids out to the bus in the morning."

"Every other week, you do, and I appreciate it. And, by the way, Zach takes his kids out there *every* week." Oops, it slipped. Cassie hadn't really meant to bring Zach into the conversation.

"Oh, are you going to compare me to Zach!" Al saw an opening to divert the conversation away from his own shortcomings. "I've got to castrate myself and hand you my masculinity in a jar to be a good husband? Is that what you want?"

"Slacking off does not make you masculine, Al, believe me. I shouldn't have brought Zach up, but you can't deny it, Zach *is* a good husband. I'm

not comparing you, I really don't want to compare you, but he is a good husband. He really helps Leigh Ann a lot."

"I'm sick of getting yelled at, Cassie. You had your shopping trip, now I need my own little break." He walked to the refrigerator and pulled out two beers. "I'll be home in a little while."

"Where are you going?" asked Cassie. "Every time I try and have a conversation with you, you get up and walk away."

"Conversation? *Confrontation* is more like it. I'm going over to Mark's to see if he wants to shoot some pool in his basement."

"Fine," said Cassie. "Just go shoot pool. I don't care." She sat down at the kitchen table and began to cry. Al walked out the kitchen door and slammed it behind him. He walked down his driveway and headed over towards Mark's house. Zach's house was on the way. He stopped in front of Zach's driveway and looked up to see that Zach's car was parked outside his garage. Leigh Ann's car was gone. He looked back at his own house. He felt horrible leaving Cassie crying in the kitchen. Maybe he did need to take a good hard look in the mirror. Maybe he did need to make some real changes in his life. Al, with both beers still in hand, headed straight up to Zach's house and knocked on the front door.

Cassie picked up a napkin out of the pile in the center of the kitchen table and dried her eyes. She started unpacking the shopping bags on the table and arranging the clothes that she had bought for both the kids and for Al into neat little piles. She just wanted to take her mind off of everything that had just exploded between herself and her husband. She was in no way ready to give up on Al. She had loved Al dearly when she got married,

she had given birth to three children with Al, she was committed to making it work with him. She wished that she understood what had clicked with Zach and Leigh Ann that drove Zach to change his behavior so dramatically. Could somebody just wake up one morning and decide that they wanted to be a better husband? She doubted it.

Cassie picked up the phone and dialed Leigh Ann's cell. She knew that Leigh Ann was heading back out to her sister's house after she had dropped Cassie off at home. If she dialed right now, she could reach her before she got to her sisters. "Hi, Leigh Ann, it's Cassie. I wonder if you have some time tonight that we could get together? Maybe after the kids are all in bed I could pick you up and we could head over to Starbucks for something decaf?"

Zach opened the door with one hand while holding a laundry basket in the other. He greeted Al with his characteristic smile. "Hey, man. What can I do for you?"

"I wonder if you've got time for another beer?" asked Al.

"Sure, I've got time. Especially if you're buying," Zach looked down at the two Heinekens in Al's hands. "Leigh Ann has headed over to her sister's house for a visit. Have a seat in the den. Let me just get this load in the washer and I'll join you in a second."

Al took a seat and opened his own beer. He set the beer for Zach down on the coffee table in front of him. He wondered what he was even doing over there. Zach claims he's happy and by all appearances, he is happy. His wife was certainly happier than Al's wife was; there was no doubt

about that. Was there a secret? Was there something that Zach could teach Al that would make everything fall into place?

Zach walked back into the room and snapped Al out of his thoughts. “I guess this one is mine,” said Zach, picking up the unopened beer. “So what’s on your mind?”

“Can I just be real honest with you?”

“Of course you can, Al. We’ve been friends for a long time.”

“I appreciate that, I really do. I don’t mean to burden you with all of my troubles, but truth be told, I think you can help me. I don’t want Cassie to have to yell at me. I want to fight less. I want things to be more the way that they were when we first started dating. I want to be a better husband.”

“What are the changes in your behavior that you think you need to make to improve?” asked Zach.

“For starters, she doesn’t think I do enough around the house.”

“Is she right,” asked Zach.

“I don’t know; I do more than most guys. I may not do as much as you, but I do more than most guys.”

“I used to feel,” began Zach, “that it wasn’t a man’s place to do housework. Cooking on the grill, yard work, fixing things that broke... sure, I would do that stuff. If a tree needed to be chopped up with the chainsaw, I was the man to do it. But when it came to good old housework – day in day out

laundry, sweeping, ironing – that wasn't for me. My manhood was directly related to how *little* of that kind of stuff I did."

"And that's sort of how I feel," interrupted Al. "But how can I change the way I feel. *This is who I am.*"

"That is such a copout, Al," answered Zach. "People who have smoked their entire lives give up cigarettes. People with serious addictions give up alcohol and even heroin for that matter. People who think they can't change *can* change. It's only a matter of *wanting* to do so."

"So what do I do, run home and start doing laundry?" asked Al.

"It's so much more than just doing these chores," said Zach. "You have to embrace this change in yourself. You have to take pleasure in doing things that make Cassie happy."

"How do I do that. It seems impossible."

"Don't get ahead of me. Let's talk more about your current situation. Is it just that you don't help out enough around the house. Is it anything else?"

"She says I impose all my decisions on her. I guess I thought she was crazy when she said that, but I think she really has a point. She wanted to eat Chinese last night, but I *suggested* pizza – or I guess I *decided* pizza. Maybe she's right."

"Truthfully, I always valued Leigh Ann's opinions," responded Zach. "But in practice, I never behaved that way. I would do the same thing that you just described. I had to have my way. I also had to win every argument. I was always quick to say 'I told you so' and usually in some passive-aggressive sort of way."

“I think I do that, too,” said Al.

“Don’t knock yourself. Most men do this stuff. Most men, in fact, just keep on doing this stuff and never even realize it. At least you are admitting you have a problem and want to do something about it. Now is there anything else that you want to change?”

“I guess I’m pretty weak in the whole romance and affection department. Maybe I could be a bit more considerate in that way.”

“Ok,” said Zach. “It sounds like you’ve got a lot of opportunities to improve your relationship. One good thing about your current state being as bad as it is now is that when you begin changing your behavior, she will notice right away.”

“There’s still a long way between wanting to change and changing,” answered Al.

“Not really,” replied Zach, “not so far as changing your behavior is concerned. Let’s just make a list of ten things that you can do this week that will be noticeable changes in your behavior. Pick some things that you know she will appreciate. Start working today on doing each of those things on that list. This won’t be everything you need to change, but it will be a good start.” Zach got up and went into the kitchen. He returned with a pad of notebook paper and a pen. He made a note on the top of the pad and handed both the pad and pen to Al.

Al took the pad from Zach and read out loud “Al’s Relationship Improvement Opportunities”.

“Start writing,” said Zach.

Al's Relationship Improvement Opportunities

1. Do all the laundry all week long – fold, iron and put away as necessary
2. Get up and get the kids ready *every day* - no more 'off weeks'
3. Load the dirty dishes every night, unload them every morning
4. Take out the trash
5. Clean the house (bathrooms, vacuum the floors, dust, etc.)
6. Surprise her with Chinese take-out for dinner
7. Surprise her by arranging a sitter and taking her out next Saturday night
8. Start taking better care of myself – eat better, start exercising
9. Offer her back rubs *every night*

"I've got nine," said Al. He handed the pad over to Zach. "Do you think I've bitten off more than I can chew for my first week?"

"Absolutely not," said Zach. "I'm proud of you. I just want to add one more...." He took the pen and began writing. He pulled the pad away from Al when he tried to peek. "Now, here's the deal," said Zach." He put the pad facedown on his lap. "You are going to think that this last item is crazy. Before I show it to you, I'm going to ask two things."

"Go ahead," said Al, "I'm up for anything."

"Ok," replied Zach. "First, if you want to continue to get my help, my advice, you have to promise to follow through with 'item #10' exactly as I've written it down. I'm not going to ask you to jump off a cliff or sell your first born, you just need to trust me and agree to that stipulation."

"Agreed," said Al.

“Second,” Zach continued, “you need to never repeat this last item to anyone unless you come to me and I give you specific permission to tell the secret. This is very private and not something I want to get around that I told you.”

“Agreed,” replied Al, his curiosity peaking. Zach handed him the pad of paper and watched Al’s face for a reaction.

“You want me to go at least three nights without an orgasm?” shouted Al. “What’s the deal? I don’t get it?”

“I know it sounds a little unconventional. You may even think that I’ve lost my mind. You’ve just got to trust me on this. Do everything on that list *including item #10* and then we’ll talk more about it.”

“Look, Zach. You’ve got to give me an explanation for this. I can see how cleaning, helping out with the kids, giving her surprises, back rubs, everything else helps my marriage... but this? I’m just not supposed to have sex for a three nights?”

“Actually, that’s not exactly what it says. I’m telling you *not to have an orgasm* for at least three nights. That’s very different from not having sex. People go three nights without having sex all the time. The difference is that I fully expect that you’ll be intimate with Cassie over the next few nights, in fact it is important that you are. Only make sure that everything will be about *her* and not about you. Under no circumstances, with or even *without* Cassie, are you to have an orgasm. We made a deal that you’d follow through on this. It’s important, believe me.”

“What am I supposed to say to her?”

“Just tell her that you want to try something different. Just ask for a little creative leeway with her. I doubt very seriously that she’ll mind too much. Just give it a try, trust me.”

“I guess a deal is a deal. I appreciate your help, Zach. I don’t know what you are getting me into, but I know you are genuinely trying to help me out, and I appreciate it.”

“One other thing. I know we’ll at least see each other at the bus stop this week, but let’s save this topic of conversation for when nobody else is around. It’s obviously pretty personal, for both of us.”

“Agreed,” said Al. They shook hands and Al walked out the door. He had ripped the piece of paper off the top of the pad and walked down the driveway looking at it and shaking his head. “I have lost my mind,” thought Al.

Al walked into the house and immediately sought out Cassie. She had chased the boys outside to get some exercise and was bundling up the toddler to take her for a walk. “Honey, “ said Al as he closed the door behind him, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s ok,” replied Cassie.

“No, it’s not ok,” answered Al. “Not only am I sorry, but I am going to start making some changes around here. I’m going to start helping out more, I’m going to be less of a jerk. I really want to be a better husband.”

“I appreciate it, Al.” Cassie was grateful for the sentiment, but truth be told, she was not impressed. Al had made many promises in the past. On

occasion, he had even started changing his behavior. In the end, however, it never lasted. Before long he always went back to his old ways. It was like pulling a rubber band, you could stretch it, but sooner or later you would let go and it would snap back to its original shape. Cassie finished bundling up her daughter and placed her in the stroller. "I'm taking her out for a walk before dinner. She needs some fresh air. The boys are out playing in the Murphy's backyard."

"Ok," said Al. He was puzzled by Cassie's lack of enthusiasm for the changes he intended to make. Maybe this wouldn't work after all. She pushed the stroller through the door, shutting it behind her without even a goodbye.

Al looked down at his list to see what he could accomplish before she got back. He grabbed the phone book and immediately ordered some Chinese food to be delivered. He then took the trash in the kitchen out to the larger trashcan in the garage. He put a new bag in the trashcan as any thoughtful person would but he very often did not. He ran into the bedroom and collected both his dirty laundry and Cassie's dirty laundry. Before walking out of his room he went to the bed and pulled off the sheets and pillowcases, adding them to the dirty laundry he already had collected. He put clean sheets on the bed and actually *re-made* the bed. He usually never made the bed. "Why," he would often ask Cassie, "do we have to make the bed when we are the only ones who see it." Maybe, he thought this time, that *Cassie* might be the one that likes to see the bed made. Maybe this was reason enough.

He ran around the rest of the house and picked up all the laundry in the kids' rooms. He then gathered everything together in the laundry room and started sorting it between whites and colors. "This is a lot of laundry," thought Al. "I guess I never realized how much time this must take." It

looked like he was going to need to do four loads, two whites and two colors. He got the first load of whites started and headed back downstairs.

The dishwasher was almost empty, so he would wait until that evening to do the dishes. The kitchen, however, could stand to be straightened up. He finished that quickly. Now he could easily clean the master bathroom before Cassie got home, and at least get started on the other bathrooms. He was upstairs cleaning the boys' bathroom when he heard the door from the garage open. It wasn't Cassie. He heard the mad rush of children running up the stairs. The oldest boy bounded into the upstairs hallway and dashed to the open bathroom door, "Mom... guess what!" he called out.

He looked in the door and stopped. He stared in disbelief at the sight of his father cleaning the bathroom. "Your Mom is out taking your sister for a walk," said Al. "What's wrong with you? You look like you've seen a ghost." His younger brother crowded into the doorway beside him. He too looked like he was witnessing a miracle.

"What are you doing, Dad?"

"I've decided that I should help out more around here. Is that such a big deal?"

"Whatever," said the older boy, and he dashed out of the doorway and over to the playroom to start up the video game console. His little brother followed close behind.

"I guess it *has* been a while since I've done anything around here," thought Al.

Soon after, Cassie arrived home. Al remained upstairs for another twenty minutes and finished cleaning the last bathroom before heading down to greet her. He had a bucket of cleaning supplies in his hands. “Hey, Honey. How was your walk?”

“It was fine, thanks,” said Cassie. “I see you’ve straightened up the kitchen, I appreciate it. And I guess you’ve been cleaning something?” She made a gesture with her eyes to indicate that she noticed the cleaning supplies.

“Like I said before, I just thought I would start helping out a little more around here. I cleaned the bathrooms and I’ve got the laundry going upstairs.”

“Don’t think I don’t appreciate it. I really do, it’s just that you and I have got more problems than just....” The doorbell interrupted her.

“Just a second,” said Al. “That’s dinner.” He ran to the door and paid the deliveryman for the Chinese food. He walked back into the kitchen and actually managed to get a smile out of his wife.

“Well, I’ll give you this much,” said Cassie, “You’re motivated... at least for now, and that’s a start.”

Al set the table and the family sat down to dinner. Cassie mentioned that she would be heading out with Leigh Ann that evening after the kids went to bed. “I think that’s great, Honey. You just go out and relax with Leigh Ann. In fact, why don’t you go out before the kids go down to bed? I’ll get them put to sleep, teeth-brushed, stories read – everything. “

“If only this could last,” thought Cassie.

Our First Intermission

I think that there is a little bit of AI in most every husband. It is easy to end up getting lazy and complacent in a relationship over time. In our story AI has taken the critical first step of recognizing that he is unhappy with the current state and has made up his mind to make some positive changes. Importantly, this is not the first time that AI has promised to change. How many of us have resolved to change, but how few of us have made lasting changes that really impacted our lives over time? I suspect that most of us have not.

Many of the changes that AI needs and wants to make are obvious. He does not need Zach's help, for example, to figure out that he should be doing more of the housework and spending more of his free time with the family. AI, however, has a big problem. He *knows* that doing these things will make Cassie happier, but he *believes* that doing these things will make him miserable. Zach challenges this point. He tells AI that while Leigh Ann used to have to nag him to contribute to the housework, she doesn't do it anymore. Zach *willingly and happily* shoulders a greater share of this burden. To AI, who is yet to grasp the complexities of Zach and Leigh Ann's relationship, this makes no sense at all.

Many Men are still stuck in the Past

Consider that whatever pretenses men may make about being equal partners in a marriage, they are still wired, from birth or from their upbringing, to want to be in control. Add to this the fact that many men

feel very strongly that there are certain household activities that are not a man's work. Is this an outdated and ridiculous attitude? Absolutely, but it exists nonetheless. I admitted in the introduction to the book that my own husband had shared this attitude for many years.

Women generally understand that this thinking might exist in the men they love, but they still have a very real need for their husbands to chip in and help out. What we call nagging is just the negotiation process between two parties with very incompatible interests. The wife needs the husband to vacuum the floor, the husband feels that vacuuming the floor emasculates him. Conflict inevitably follows. However, when a husband accepts that its ok to cede some is control to his wife, then suddenly it ok for her to tell him what to do. But how does this happen? How does he give up control in some way that still compatible with his long-held notion of appropriate male and female roles?

Easing Men into a new way of Thinking

Just consider, as a beginning framework, the notion that the man is vacuuming the floor in *anticipation* that it will lead to sex. This, of course, is completely consistent with his notion of appropriate male behavior. The man now feels as though he is wrapped around her finger, maybe even a little manipulated, but masculine nonetheless. Succumbing to the seductive ways of a woman has always been and will always be very masculine. *Anything* is masculine – and even exciting -- when it is done in anticipation of sex. Now if *vacuuming the floor in anticipation of sex* is ok, then think about replacing that phrase with a new one: *vacuuming the floor because of its association with sex*. The different meanings that the sentences have when going back and forth between these two very closely related phrases is subtle, but may have some impact on how you react to this book. When any task, vacuuming in this case, is exciting in *anticipation of sex*, the implication is that sex is the reward for the

husband's good behavior. This is very clearly manipulative on the part of the wife. To a certain extent, I like this notion, and it is an appropriate theme for this book. Manipulation is ok as long as both parties understand what is happening and both parties enjoy it. However, when something is exciting in *association with sex*, the implication is that there is some mental link between the husband's domestic work (or doing helpful thing for his wife) and his sexuality. This is a less manipulative model, and probably easier for some to accept. This message too is an appropriate theme for this book.

With this beginning framework in mind, I feel like I now have some context for articulating the first really dramatic concept that is being developed in this story. Simply stated, wives need to develop strong association between sex and the behaviors that they expect and desire from their husbands. Think back again to the earliest stages of your relationship with your new or soon to be husband. In these early days of the relationship, you certainly felt as though *you* were in charge. He probably called you and asked if you wanted to go out. You decided whether you would accept this proposal. He then drove to your home, picked you up, and maybe even opened the car door for you. He hoped he could impress you so that you would allow him to take you out again. He paid for your dinner, he brought you flowers, and he did little favors for you, all to win your approval. And the carrot on the end of that stick was always, at least somewhere in the back of any man's mind, your willingness to have sex with him... the most powerful motivator in the world! His good behavior and his sexuality were inseparable.

Now fast forward to where you are in your own life. Think about who it is that holds the balance of power in your own relationship. You may both still be so giddy in love that things may not have settled down for the two of you yet to even answer that question. For the sake of discussion, let's just look at where Al and Cassie are in their marriage. While Cassie, like

most women, probably held all the cards during their courtship, she certainly does not today. If she were even an *equal* partner, then the overwhelming share of shouldering the household chores would not fall on her shoulders. It would, at minimum, be distributed equitably between herself and Al. She would not have to *nag* Al to get him to do each and every little thing. He would either do his chores spontaneously as part of his accepted responsibilities, or she would simply remind him to do them. Just because Al has not taken the initiative to step up to the plate to help out around the house, that doesn't mean that the chores do not have to be done. Since they have to be done anyway, and since Al does not do them, Cassie is in effect left holding the bag. Either overtly or via his indifference, Al actually controls the relationship. Over time, Al has taken back the control that Cassie had when they first started dating.

If you can see where I am going with all of this, then you probably are struck with a major question: Why on earth would any man want to cede control in his marriage to his wife? Why would a man want his wife to tap into her sexual energy and use it to assert any kind of influence over him? On the surface at least, Al seems to have a pretty good set up. After all, he's out golfing on Saturday morning while Cassie is going nuts keeping up with the housework. Golfing, at least for Al, is pretty fun. Housework on the other hand, is generally not considered a source of entertainment for most men. Furthermore, men want to make decisions. Men may be rash, impulsive and close-minded... but none of that matters... they want to make decisions anyway.

In the final analysis, multiple reasons exist as to why men would want to give up the balance of power in a relationship. All of these reasons are fundamental to understanding the larger concepts presented in this book. Understanding the answers to this question are not all there is to understanding the larger concepts (there is more coming, I promise), but they are a critical piece just the same. Let us discuss each one.

Why would any man give up control to his wife?

- It is easier and much less stressful. Companies don't have multiple CEO's, armies only have one Commander in Chief; things just go more smoothly when one person is in charge. Importantly, *she* will be much less stressed. *She* will be happier, have more time for her husband and appreciate her husband more and more. This will return a treasure trove of benefits over time. As the old saying goes, "When Momma's happy, everybody is happy."
- Generally speaking, women have better judgment than men do. Exceptions exist to every rule, but by and large, women are better decision-makers than men are. They are less impulsive, more patient, and better able to consider all elements and all sides of an issue. In the conclusion to this book I will offer you some evidence beyond my own experience. My evidence aside, I ask you to consider your own experience and honestly ask yourself if you do not come to the same conclusion.
- Ultimately, most women like being in control. At first women are actually as likely to resist taking back control as are men to give it to them. This is only because women are so often raised to put value on a man that will *take care of them*. This is a good value; husbands *should* take care of their wives. The fact that a woman might now be granted a little more authority in a relationship has no impact on this reality whatsoever. Once women see that having more control and being taken care of are not mutually exclusive, they embrace their new role.
- Men love it. This is really the beauty of the whole thing. Remember that he is not just ceding control for the sake of some philosophical

point that says it is more rational, fair and just if she was in charge. This, while true or otherwise, offers him nothing in return. He is instead ceding control because he is surrendering to her *conscious effort* to exercise her sexual power over him. He is being seduced into giving up control, and this is a major turn-on for most men. Again, think back to when you were first dating your fiancé/spouse. Think back even further to when you were first becoming interested in the opposite sex. Most guys (all guys?) were at one time or another wrapped around their girlfriend or fiancée's finger. It was at this point that they were google-eyed, floating on a cloud, and sleepless at night with thoughts of only their true love. It was also, as I have already explained the point in their relations with the opposite sex when the man had the least power in their relationships. All this said, I believe that the fact that men will love the new dynamic in is a reality that many men and women reading this book will not accept until they have actually given the concept a fair trial in their own marriage. If I cannot convince you that this is the case just as a result of reading this book, I hope I can at least convince you to try it yourself before making up your mind.

How does this Change the Relationship?

None of this means that the woman has to become some sort of dictatorial control freak. All that any of this means is that she will feel more comfortable making decisions in the household. She will feel secure in the fact that her decisions, while open to input and discussion, are ultimately the final word. For the most part, life goes on as it normally did. What changes is that the husband now presents his *opinions* for her consideration rather than his *decisions* for her to rebel against. The wife is considerate of her husband's opinion, but not bound by it.

A natural consequence of this changing dynamic is that the balance of domestic work will shift over to the husband. For many or most of the couples reading this book, the current workload probably rests predominately with the woman. After putting the ideas presented in this book into practice, the wife should expect a much more equitable split. In fact, I will later suggest that the husband's share of the workload should be a *minimum* of 51%. Over time, it is likely that the husband would at least aspire to do much more than this. Hopefully he can blow past that 51% marker. In reality, there is enough work in any household to allow both spouses to make significant contributions. Men, while going through the motions of a marriage, often choose to ignore this sheer scale of the workload needed to keep the home up to her very reasonable standards. I know my husband did. In my own marriage, even though he now tries to do everything he can to keep my life as hassle-free and uncomplicated as possible, I still contribute immensely. I am just so much more efficient than he is that he can hardly keep up with me.

Here again it seems appropriate to remind you that the husband will in fact grow to love this arrangement. While the joys, already briefly touched upon, of being wrapped around her finger as if in early courtship are a beginning to understanding this truth, there is certainly more to it.

Recall now the most radical suggestion that Zach had for AI. I am referring to his requirement that he go several days without an orgasm. I know that by throwing this element into the story I risk losing much of my audience, yet I include it anyway. Why on earth would this be so important?

Denying his Orgasm: The New Bride's Secret Weapon

I am certain that we all accept the fact that sexual desire is as powerful an element in human nature as any of the forces that drive our behavior and

make us who we are. Consider that the loss of a sexual appetite can lead to depression, and people will go to great lengths to get it back. This is unlike other basic, physiological needs. If we are *hungry*, we seek to eat, but if we are *not hungry*, we don't desire *to be hungry*. There is no satisfaction in being hungry just for the sake of being hungry. Even if you may never have thought about it, sex is different.

When men are sexually aroused, *they feel good*. They desire sexual release, make no mistake, but the state of being aroused is in and of itself desirable. Men love to see their wives dressed in not only sexy lingerie, but also sexy cocktail dresses. The sexy lingerie says, "Arouse me, I want to make love to you." The sexy cocktail dress, however, says something slightly different. It says, "Arouse me, I want to make love to you later tonight, but I want to think about it constantly until then!" Going to dinner or to some boring office Christmas party in that dress will then, for the husband, bring sexual energy into an otherwise non-sexual activity. Here is that link between the sexual and the non-sexual that characterizes romance for most men. This is a key to understanding this book. Do not underestimate it.

So, we have first established that the link between a man's sexuality and little day to day chores is an important motivating factor for the husband. Second, we have established that a man likes – no loves – the idea of being aroused by his wife even when sex is not imminent. It only remains that we have some thoughtful understanding of how to exploit these two realities to the satisfaction of both spouses. How exactly does the wife go about wrapping her husband around her finger? It all begins by taking the husband's sexual arousal to a whole new level and this is where orgasm denial comes into play.

Most people call it teasing, taking a man to the height of sexual arousal through intimate contact but leaving him "unspent". Teasing generally has

very negative connotations, and most husbands would consider it very undesirable behavior on the part of their wife. However, if men can muster enough self-discipline to try it on their own initiative, in other words to start but not finish intimate activity, then they will be amazed at the result. This experience will very likely represent an awakening for the husband.

It is no great secret that after sex men become very sleepy and disinterested in affection and communication? Men have a physiological response to orgasm that is in conflict with a woman's emotional requirements for cuddling and talking after sex. I promise that any man that is denied an orgasm will have no desire whatsoever to get quickly off to sleep after being intimate with his wife. In fact, he will probably open up and talk as never before. He will dote on his wife, playing with her hair, rubbing her back, and kissing her neck and shoulders. He will behave as if he is just getting to know her. It will be as if the old flames have been rekindled and newlywed flames will burn even brighter.

It was my husband that suggested to me that I try denying him orgasms. When I first agreed to play along with him, he confessed that he was amazed at what it did to his brain chemistry. The intensity of the feelings he had for me went through the ceiling. Do not misunderstand, he had never stopped loving me, but I think he *adored* me less than he did when we were first married. This all changed when we started experimenting, again on his suggestion, with orgasm denial. Not only could he barely get to sleep that night with all the great thoughts he was having for me, but he also woke up with the same intense feelings that he had had the night before. He literally could not wait to do something, *anything* to please me. He actually got out of bed early and started doing my laundry. There was no end to what he wanted to do for me.

Back to our Story

There is much more to say on the topics discussed in this intermission, but it has distracted us from the story for too long already. Let us return to Al, Cassie, Zach and Leigh Ann and see how some of these dynamics play out in their relationship. The next chapter reinforces some of the ideas presented in this chapter, but also introduces some new concepts that will be discussed in a second intermission chapter similar to this one.

A Solution Presents Itself

Leigh Ann and Cassie took seats in a quiet corner of the neighborhood Starbucks and sipped on decaffeinated cappuccinos. A cold drizzle had started to come down. Cassie watched the tiny droplets splash on the window outside and reflect light from the passing cars. Why had she even called Leigh Ann? Her life was pretty good; her marriage was not so bad. Al was a good provider. He loved her and he loved the children. He wasn't the most supportive husband around the house, but she could have done worse. After all, she had quit her corporate job after the first baby was born to stay home and raise the children. Maybe *it was her job* – her duty – to do the housework, to keep up with the children, to keep her husband happy. Maybe she was just being a little self-centered. What could Leigh Ann possibly tell her that would make any meaningful improvement in her life?

“You look like you’ve got a lot on your mind,” observed Leigh Ann. Her voice snapped Cassie out of her thoughts.

“Yeah, I suppose I do,” answered Cassie. “I guess I’ve just been thinking about our conversation in the car earlier today. I wonder if maybe there are some changes I could make in my own marriage. But I’m torn. Maybe I shouldn’t even be here; maybe this is all a mistake.”

“Cassie, are you happy?”

“Well, I’m not unhappy.”

Leigh Ann smiled. "I think I know what you mean." She took another sip of her coffee and put her hand on Cassie's. "You can talk to me about anything you would like. I want you to know that you can trust me completely. What is said here stays here."

"I know," smiled Cassie. "I appreciate it. I'm just not sure how to begin. I see what Al and I have and then I see what Zach and you have, and I just think, 'I want that'. Is that wrong? Am I being unreasonable?"

"Definitely not. Every woman is entitled to expect the most from her marriage."

"But I can't just demand that Al change by snapping my fingers. I need for him to want to make the changes on his own. And I want the changes to last. Like today, for example. After we had a fight, he came home and started doing the laundry. He *never* does the laundry. I appreciate that he did the laundry today, don't misunderstand me, but I know it won't last. He's promised to change so many times before and it never lasts any longer than it takes for me to forgive him."

"It used to be the same way with Zach. I would blow up at him about something, and then I would have two weeks of him on his best behavior. I got sick of it. I'm sure he got sick of it too. Meaningful change is not just something that comes about as a knee-jerk reaction to circumstances. It takes effort and a systematic approach to nurture it, to make it take hold."

"What do you mean by systematic approach? Did you guys go to counseling?"

"No, it was nothing like that. I actually ended up turning to a friend much the way you are turning to me now. I was envious of the relationship that

she seemed to have with her husband, and I wanted to know what her secret was.”

“But you have some sort of system?”

“I wish I hadn’t used that word, it sounds so clinical. It’s nothing like that. It’s really more of an approach, a framework for understanding how we can best relate to one another. There are some tricks and techniques that we use to keep us both motivated, but it is really just a slightly different way of thinking about our relationship. It is really very subtle, and at the heart of it, amazingly simple.”

“What do you mean?” Cassie half expected that Leigh Ann would reach into her purse and pull out a magic potion, something that she could just sprinkle on AI as he slept. What could be so simple about turning an “AI” into a “Zach”?

“I have to first tell you that this is incredibly personal. Even though we are great friends, Cassie, I have never felt comfortable in talking about this before now.”

“Leigh Ann, if you don’t want to talk about this, please understand that you won’t hurt my feelings. I want to respect your privacy and I would never....”

“No,” interrupted Leigh Ann. “This is important. I want to talk to you about this because I care about you and AI. I want you to feel that your marriage is as successful as I feel mine and Zach’s is. Zach knows we are talking and he has agreed that it is for the best.”

“Thank you so much, Leigh Ann. I value your friendship as well. I appreciate any advice you give me immensely. I promise to be very discreet about anything you say.”

“Let me ask you a question, Cassie.”

“Anything.”

“Who would you say is the head of your household?”

“Well, I guess I would say that we both are. I consider us both equal partners in the marriage.”

“Cassie, if one of Al’s buddies asked him that question – say it was Mark down the street, his golfing buddy – what do you suppose he would say? *Who would Al say is the head of your household?*”

“He would probably say that he was in charge... unless I was standing there of course.” She smiled. “I think I see your point.”

“Well, I’m not sure you do just yet. Stick with me though, and you’ll see it soon enough. Now, assuming for just a moment that you are equal partners in the marriage, do you both do an equal share of the work in the marriage?”

“I don’t think so, definitely not. I am the one that keeps the wheels turning in our house. I definitely do most of the work. I kill myself just trying to keep up. However, I am sure that Al would tell you, if you asked him, that he does as much as I do. He works, after all, and I stay home with the kids. He factors the nine hours he spends tinkering in his office, or the time he spends on airplanes and in hotels into the equation. He’s working,

don't get me wrong, but it is more mentally stimulating and has different rewards than the work that I do around the house."

"So he sort of feels like his job and his paycheck are his contribution. You should do most of the housework just to sort of balance things out? Do you agree with that?"

"No, actually. I think staying home with the kids is infinitely more difficult than what he does. It is at the very least much more exhausting than his job. Plus, he gets to get on the road once in a while, go to nice dinners and lunches with customers. My routine is a little less exciting, less glamorous."

"Zach used to expect that since he worked outside the home, he shouldn't have to work *in it* at all. Things are different now though."

"So do you not do *any housework* now? Does he do it all?"

"I still do plenty of housework, but it is nothing like it used to be. When you factor in taking care of the kids and everything else that we need to do, there's just too much to expect that one person could do it all. That's what caused the problem in the first place. What I would say about Zach is that he now does *all he can*. He really makes my life a lot easier."

"Doesn't he resent it?"

"Cassie, he loves it. It's not that he loves the housework, he loves *pleasing me*. It's really a source of satisfaction for him."

"So, Leigh Ann," asked Cassie, "Who is the head of your household?"

“That’s an easy question. I am the head of our household. I know it, Zach knows it, and we both accept it. It didn’t used to be this way. I thought, like you did, that we shared the role. Zach would say as much, but deep down, he believed he had the final say on household matters. It was a source of tension in the relationship. Everything was a negotiation over what I wanted and what he wanted. We were both sort of stubborn and it brought us nothing but trouble. It represented a fundamental change in our relationship when we both decided it would be for the best if one person took charge and that that person be me.”

“How on earth did he agree to that? *Why* on earth did he agree to that?”

“Remember, Cassie, that I took the initiative to make these changes. It didn’t happen overnight. Let’s just say I eased him into it. By the time we talked about it, he was ready for me to take charge. In fact I already had. He wouldn’t have had it any other way.”

“With all due respect, Leigh Ann, you are talking in riddles. You’ll have to explain this to me. Exactly what sort of advice did your friend give you?”

“Her advice to me, and now my advice to you, begins with one simple statement,” she leaned in and went on to finish her thought in a slight whisper. “Men are happiest when they are wrapped around their woman’s finger. That simple sentence contains more truth and more wisdom than a whole library of self-help books and an army of marriage counselors. There is a strange and irresistible appeal that men find in the idea of a woman tugging at their strings to get him to do whatever it is that makes *her happy*. Now this may not be true of all men, but it probably is. It is at least true of *most* men.”

“Ok, I guess I can buy that there is something to that, but there must be more than just knowing that simple phrase to be true?”

“Of course there is. You don’t accept what I just said as truth and be done with it. You have to exploit it for the benefit of both partners in the relationship. The first thing that you have to do is raise the sexual energy in your marriage. Zach and I had always had a pretty healthy sex life, but I needed a couple of little tricks to really get his hormones cooking the way that they were when we first started dating. Here, take this.” She handed Cassie a large silver coin.

“What’s this?”

“It’s just a silver dollar. You don’t see them very often anymore. I happened to have brought a few back from Vegas a couple of years ago. You can have it.”

“What do I do with it? Bribe AI?” She rubbed the coin between her fingers as if to assure herself that it was real and then placed it down on the table in front of her.

“No,” Leigh Ann laughed, “It’s actually more fun than that. You are going to use this to get AI started. When you get home tonight, tell him there is something you want to show him. Give him this and tell him that you have a little game you want to play. Tell him you want him to flip the coin. Don’t explain anything to him, just ask him to flip the coin.”

“Ok, I can handle this so far.”

“No matter which side comes up, tell him he just lost. Remember what side it is, because you will want that side to become the losing side for the next time you play the game. The next time you play, he really will have a 50/50 chance, but tonight, he’ll lose this little game no matter what.”

“What does losing mean? What exactly does he lose?”

“He doesn’t get to have an orgasm. You’ll fully expect him to be intimate. You in fact will get your orgasm, but he will not get his.”

Cassie stared at Leigh Ann in silence. “Al’s not going to go for this at all.”

Leigh Ann Smiled. “Actually, Cassie, there’s something else I need to tell you. Al came over today and talked to Zach for a little while. Zach only just told me this before I left to talk with you here tonight. Al had come over to ask Zach the same thing that you have asked me. He wanted to know what made Zach so happy in our marriage. Zach did not tell Al nearly as much as I am going to tell you, but he did tell him one thing. He told him that in addition to stepping up the workload around the house, he needed to hold back from having an orgasm for at least a few days. Al already committed to Zach that he would do it.”

“So this is going to look awfully fishy when I suggest the same thing.”

“It definitely will. You should go ahead and tell him that we talked. He wants change as badly as you do, Cassie. He came to Zach, you came to me. I think there is nothing wrong with just being honest with each other and admitting that you want to try and make some changes in the relationship *together*.”

“You’re right. Ok, so I flip the coin and tell him he lost. What’s the purpose of this? He had already agreed to go a few days without an orgasm when he talked to Zach. Why do I need to bring the coin flipping game into this at all?”

“This is important because by flipping the coin you are taking the control of whether or not he has the orgasm *out of his hands*. If he decides to go

without an orgasm on his own, it's not enough. You are making the random act of a coin toss the determining factor of whether or not he has an orgasm. Eventually, you will get rid of the coin and you will make the decision yourself, but for starters, the coin is a good way to get him used to the fact that it will no longer be up to him."

"Here's a pretty basic question," asked Cassie, "Why wouldn't I want him to have an orgasm? What possible benefit could that have on our relationship?"

"It is going to make him appreciate you like he not done for years. I do not mean to suggest for one second that all he should appreciate you for is your ability to help him have an orgasm, quite the opposite, actually. By denying him an orgasm when you and he are intimate together, he will become obsessed with you... obsessed with pleasing you, with making you happy. He will not be able to sleep at night and he will wake up thinking about you."

"I don't get it?"

"Men's emotions and even men's behavior is very closely related to their sexuality. By building up his sexual energy but failing to let him release that energy, you will be impacting his attitudes and behavior towards you not only that evening, but throughout the days that follow. You may have to accept it as a leap of faith initially, but try it and you will see exactly what I mean."

"I'll try it, but I think he's just going to end up frustrated and resenting me for it."

"The potential for that exists, there's no question about it. You can't make him go without it forever, you'll just frustrate him. If you manage this

correctly, however, you will really make him appreciate how he feels about you. He will really learn to love being intimate with you just for the sake of pleasing you. Lie there together afterwards. Talk to him. Cuddle with him – I promise you – he will want to cuddle. He'll want to talk, he'll open up like never before.”

“All this because he didn't have an orgasm?”

“Well, combined with the fact that physiologically, his body expected it. He'll be all worked up from being with you, but then the normal physiological release doesn't follow. It's not the same as just going without sex. Any man can do that for a few days. This is going without sex but still having all the intimate contact that his mind so closely associates with sex.”

“So is this all there is to it? Is this the secret to your relationship with Zach?”

“No, definitely not. It is only the beginning. When you talk to him, when you cuddle with him tonight, tell him how much you appreciate everything he has done around the house today. Begin to create some links between the intensely aroused state that he'll be in at that moment and your gratitude for doing all of the chores. Kiss on him a little when you talk about this, nibble on his ears... do whatever it is that really gets him excited.”

Cassie seemed a little shocked at the direction the conversation was taking. “This all seems just a little bit kinky... unusual at the very least, but I don't think kinky is an overstatement.”

Leigh Ann laughed. “I guess I'd never thought about it that way. It's fun for both of us when I tease Zach a little... when I keep him on edge. If

that's a little kinky, sue me. I think it's pretty normal, I think most couples would end up enjoying it if they only tried it. It is personal, however, that's why I don't go around talking about it. That's why I've been reluctant to even share it with you."

Cassie smiled. "I'm interested in this, believe me. It just will take a little adjustment to get used to it. I'm pretty vanilla when it comes to sex, and so is Al."

"Zach and I really are too, but don't be embarrassed to try something a little different. At least see how it works out."

"Agreed," said Cassie. "So I've got the coin flipping, the cuddling, the talking part down. Now what?"

"The key is that you need to take that pent up sexual energy that Al will have the next day and extend it. You need to give him little teasing kisses the next day. Whisper little comments about flipping the coin again. Maybe sneak up behind him, rub him a little and bite on his neck... just keep him going during the course of the day. "

"I can do that," smiled Cassie.

"Be extra certain to do it when you catch him doing nice things for you. If you see him doing the laundry, make a point of giving him a little love pat. Doing the dishes, getting your coffee, vacuuming... anything that represents the behavior you want and expect from him gets rewarded."

"This is crazy. He's going to know what I'm up to and recognize it for what it is... *manipulation*. "

"Yes, he will. And he'll love it."

“So what next? Do I flip the coin again the next night?”

“You’ll flip the coin, yes. If he wins the coin toss, then make sure he gets exactly what he wants, but make sure that you first get what you want. Make him give you a massage. Make sure that you get your orgasm first.”

“What if he loses the coin toss? Do I keep him going for another day?”

“Losing the coin toss is the best possible outcome because it gives you an opportunity to take control of the decision-making process. If he loses, overrule the coin toss and let him have his orgasm. By doing so you are taking the randomness out of the equation. You are taking control. It’s an important step. Ultimately you’ll be making this decision and communicating it to him every day or every night. Sometimes you’ll tell him in the morning what he can expect, sometimes in the evenings. Make it random, keep it exciting.”

“Wow, this is just crazy. And it’s getting crazier.” Everything made sense to Cassie; she just felt that it was not right for her. This wasn’t the kind of thing that *she* would do. It seemed so untraditional and she was by nature *very* traditional. She did not think of herself as the kind of person that would do all of this. “What if AI doesn’t respond to all of this? What then?”

“Cassie, your reluctance is understandable,” answered Leigh Ann. “He will respond to it, I promise. I was just like you. I thought that there was no way Zach would go for this, but I was wrong. He not only went for it, he went for it in spades. In ways he even accelerated it.”

“Ok, but again, what if AI doesn’t go for it?”

“If AI doesn’t respond to it after giving it a fair chance... say a month, then stop doing it. I’ll admit that it didn’t work for AI and we’ll never have to talk about it again. Fair enough?”

“I guess that seems reasonable.”

“There are some other things that you will also need to understand, particularly as you are getting started. If you find, as I expect you will, that AI embraces this just as Zach has, you are going to need to formalize your authority in the relationship.”

“My authority,” asked Cassie.

“Yes. You are going to find that you have more and more control in the relationship. If you two are anything like Zach and I, you will be initially uncomfortable with this. He, however, will love it. He will want you to take more and more control. You’ll see. Zach told me as much when we were getting started. He actually came out and said to me that he liked it when I *told* him what to do as opposed to *asking* him to something. He wanted more and more tasks that he could do to please me.”

“But what did you mean when you said I needed to *formalize* my authority in the relationship?”

“Basically you have to have a talk with him. Wait until you’ve been at this for a while and you can see him accepting it, embracing it. Then one night, after you’ve fooled around but his sexual energy is still, let’s say ‘at its peak’, you tell him.”

“Tell him what?”

“You tell him what he already knows. Tell him that things have been going great in the relationship lately. You feel as though you’ve been communicating better, the romance is back, he’s more responsive to your needs. Tell him how happy you are, how much he’s helped you to reduce the stress in your life, how he continues to impress and please you more every day. Nibble on his chest, stroke his hair, and stroke *anything* that gets him excited. Bring him to the brink and then keep him there. This is exactly where you want him when you tell him.”

Cassie leaned in towards Leigh Ann. Her cappuccino was empty, but she still held the cup in her hand. With unconscious, nervous energy she traced circles around the top of the cup with her finger. “Tell him what, Leigh Ann?”

“Tell him that you’ve noticed that there’s been something very different in the relationship lately. You’ve noticed that you’ve been more comfortable making decisions, that you feel as though you have more control over the relationship than you used to have... that you have more control over Al than you used to have over him. Ask him if he’s noticed the same. If so, does he like it that way? Is he ok with you having more control in the relationship? He’ll tell you he loves it; I’m sure of it. Then tell him that you like it too. In fact, you’d like it to stay that way. For now on, you’ll continue to have more authority, more control in the relationship. Tell him that it’s really the best for everyone.”

“This is just so much,” said Cassie. I’m just so taken back by all of this.

“And then get him to agree, get him to willingly give control to you, Cassie. He will, I promise. Nothing would make him happier.”

“Why can’t I just let Al improve on his own, without all of the theatrics, without the drama?”

“You can try it, Cassie, but it won’t last. You know it, and I know it. Men can only improve so far on their own initiative without a little help. Inevitably, they fall back into their old patterns. Without this framework to help support and sustain these changes, Al will be back to his old tricks again before you even know what happened. You can either accept this, I believe you already know it to be true, or you can find out for yourself in a few weeks by ignoring everything that we talked about.”

Cassie knew that Leigh Ann was right. She picked the silver dollar back up from the small table that sat between Leigh Ann and herself. She held it up and looked directly at it while she spoke. “I think I’m willing to try this,” she said. “I need to think about it, but I think I’m willing to try it.”

Leigh Ann sensed that Cassie was overwhelmed. She sensed the confusion and anxiety that Cassie was clearly feeling about trying something so unusual, so out of step with the way she was raised to think about marriage. She sensed that she needed to reassure her. “You have to understand something, Cassie. Zach and I have not built a relationship around everything that I have just told you. We have built our relationship on trust, mutual values, and shared experiences... everything in our life that is important to us. We have made some of the dynamics that I just described a part of our relationship, but it does not define our relationship. It helps to reduce tension and stress in the house. It keeps the fires of passion burning as our marriage matures. It is rewarding for both of us, but it does not define us. Does all of this make any sense to you?”

“Yes, for better or for worse, it all makes sense. It is just so completely opposite of the way I imagined our relationship would mature. I always thought that Al would be the one who sort of ran the show, sort of took care of me.”

“He’ll continue to take care of you. In fact he’ll take care of you like never before. He won’t be running the show so to speak, but he won’t want to either. Although that typical vision seems like such an ideal set-up, it just doesn’t work that well for most couples. The relationship that Zach and I have may not be typical, but it works. We are both happy, and we are both very much in love with each other. Our relationship, from a strictly practical perspective, just works. It is as simple as that?”

“So have you told me everything I need to know?”

“I haven’t told you everything,” answered Leigh Ann, “But I have told you enough to get started. Much of the fun of this new relationship is in the discovery of its nuances. I don’t want to rob you of that. Also, you will have to figure out how all of this will work best for you personally. There will be subtle differences, things you like and he doesn’t like, that will require you to be creative and flexible as you go forward.”

Cassie took one last look at the silver dollar and put it in her purse. “I am definitely thinking about it,” she repeated. The two of them left the coffee shop and returned to Cassie’s car outside. The cold drizzle was still falling. They said very little to each other on the ride home but both of them, Cassie in particular, were deep in thought. “Would Al really go for this?” wondered Cassie.

The silver dollar rattled as it came to a stop, tails side up, on the kitchen table. Al looked wide-eyed at Cassie. He didn’t know if he wanted heads or tails, he just flipped the coin as Cassie had asked him to do.

“Sorry, Honey. You lose,” announced Cassie. “Do you know what that means, Al?”

“I have no idea,” replied Al. He was too tired to guess. He had been working like crazy all day since getting home from his talk with Zach. He had done laundry, cleaned the bathrooms, and hung that mirror in the upstairs hallway that she had been after him to hang for weeks. He had even changed the burned out light bulbs on the outside porch and in the dining room chandelier. He had lived in abject denial of even the existence of these burned out bulbs for the last two months. He was hoping, he supposed, that Cassie would change them herself. Finally, only thirty minutes before Cassie had gotten back from having coffee with Leigh Ann, he had gotten the kids off to bed. That had been the toughest job all day.

“First,” Cassie said in a very calm voice, masking her nervousness, “go open a bottle of red wine and pour me a glass.”

Al reacted without argument. He was, after all, in apology mode. He picked up a bottle out of the small wine rack in the bottom of the pantry and proceeded to open it with the corkscrew, awkwardly as always. When the bottle was open, he reached into the cabinet and pulled out two long-stemmed wineglasses.

“Just one glass, please.” Cassie had improvised this decision on the spot. Maybe she was going to be good at this.

“Huh?” Al looked at her confused.

“I want you to pour me a glass of wine, but I just want you to sit and listen to me. After we are done talking, I’ll let you have a glass of wine.” Al pulled up a chair at the kitchen table next to Cassie. “Wow,” she thought, “he’s listening to me already, and I haven’t even started.”

“Let me tell you what that coin toss was all about. It’s a little game I want to play with you. Tonight when we go to bed, I’m going to want a massage from you. Not just a token, two-minute massage like you are used to giving me. I want you to watch the clock. I want it to last an hour. When you are done, I want you to kiss me. I want you to kiss me all over... *all over*. I really want to enjoy it, do you understand?”

“Uh, yes.” Al could barely speak. His heart was beating fast. Cassie had never spoken to him like this before.

“Because you lost the coin toss, you won’t have an orgasm tonight. That’s not to say that I won’t, but you won’t.”

“Uh, ok.”

“I know that you and Zach spoke today and that this very subject came up. I will just tell you that Leigh Ann and I spoke as well. Are you comfortable with this?”

“Yes. I mean, sure.”

“Good,” said Cassie matter-of-factly. She was outwardly calm, but inwardly jumping for joy at how easily Al was going along with all of this. Could it be true, did he really love it like Leigh Ann had suggested he would? She gulped down her wine and asked Al to pour her another glass.

“First, I’d like to take a bath. Please go get it ready for me. I want it very warm with about a small handful of those red bath salts that are sitting on my vanity. Light some candles and put something on the CD player that will relax me.”

Al still just sat staring at her.

“Go ahead,” said Cassie, “get the bath going.”

Al stood up and hurried off to their bathroom. Cassie could hear the water come on. Al returned to the kitchen to grab some matches to light the candles. He said nothing but smiled as he hurried back past her to finish getting everything ready. This was almost going too easily. She never imagined that he would react with no resistance at all. He even had seemed to be showing some genuine enthusiasm. She took another long sip of wine.

After a few moments, Al returned again to the kitchen. “Honey, everything is ready for you.”

“Thank you, Sweetheart,” answered Cassie. She stopped and gave him a very long, very passionate kiss. “I love you so much, Al.”

“I love you too, Cassie,” answered her husband.

Cassie walked into the bathroom to soak and to contemplate the new direction with which she was becoming increasingly certain she wanted to take her relationship. It was definitely too early to tell, but it seemed like it was off to a wonderful start.

Our Second Intermission

The previous chapter contained two very powerful themes. The first was the central truth of the book, already introduced, that men are happiest when they are wrapped around a woman's finger. This was the basis of all of Leigh Ann's advice to Cassie. The second theme, just as important and not to be easily dismissed, is Cassie's reluctance to embrace Leigh Ann's advice. Her reaction to Leigh Ann's revelations is likely to mimic the reaction of many of you, particularly the women, who find yourselves continuing to read this book right now despite a growing level of discomfort with the material. Discussing Cassie's reaction to the information presented is just as important a topic of this second intermission as is the core information itself. I will expand upon both topics in the pages that follow.

Reviewing and expanding upon some Basic Concepts

Let us begin by recapping our discussion of the central assumption of the book. Are men really happy to find themselves *wrapped around the finger*, so to speak, of the woman they love? We have already discussed in great length the joys of the earliest stages of a relationship. Add to this all the nutty and irrational behavior that we often see from men that are tightly "wrapped" and I simply rest my case. On some level – emotional, physical or otherwise – men just love it. Just because its root causes remain a mystery or a matter for debate, do not dismiss the phenomena out of hand. Test the assumption yourself against your past experiences and in your own current relationship and see if it does not hold to be true.

The concept of male orgasm denial again surfaces in this chapter where it is expanded upon and explained in greater detail than it was in earlier chapters. We had already discussed how this practice would raise the sexual energy and tweak the brain chemistry (my admittedly unscientific metaphor) of the husband. In this chapter we expanded on both that idea as well as the concept that orgasm denial represents a key source of control for the woman. It is a tangible way for her to exercise her sexual power in the relationship. She is encouraged to leverage this sexual power throughout the non-sexual events in their relationship by “bringing it up” (pardon the pun) throughout the course of the day. In other words, Leigh Ann gives advice to the effect of teasing him a little while he’s doing the laundry, maybe nibbling on his ear a little while he’s vacuuming. She goes on to suggest that Cassie let him know at some random point in the day or early evening whether or not he can expect that she will allow him to have an orgasm that night. In practice, this can take the form of a sensuously whispered message such as: “I really appreciate everything you’ve done for me today. After you take care of me tonight I will make certain that I take care of you as well.” This message is of course the positive indication. The negative counterpart to this message might sound something like, “I know you’ve worked really hard today, but I think tonight -- after my massage, and after you take care of me – we’ll just go to sleep. I know that will be ok with you.” The woman, of course, reserves the right to keep her husband guessing, and this might be the most fun of all for everyone involved.

Flipping Coins

The introduction of the little game with the silver dollar is a very clever mechanism for easing Al into the idea that he can no longer just *expect* to climax. Once he become comfortable, or at least exposed to this idea, the evolution of Cassie taking control of the decision is easy to accept. A key

point, however, is that this little game will be incredibly fun for Al. The monotony of knowing he will achieve sexual release every time he is intimate with his wife disappears. It is replaced by a much more adventurous, less predictable dynamic. Zach loved it, and without giving away too much of the rest of the story, you can bet that Al will too.

Cassie, however, thinks that the silver dollar game is just a little bit kinky. She doesn't really want to be associated with this little game or anything else that is not consistent with her long-held beliefs about what she considers to be *normal* in a relationship. As radical as Leigh Ann's advice appears to Cassie, her problem is not that she cannot imagine it working on her own husband. If she is not *convinced* that it will work, she has heard enough that she can at least *conceive* that it will work. Her problem has much more to do with the fact that she just does not see herself participating in something like this. She does not feel comfortable with herself in a relationship that takes advantage of these non-traditional techniques that Leigh Ann describes. She, after all, is very traditional. Leigh Ann and Zach's marriage, great as it seems to be for both of them, strikes her as anything but traditional.

Understanding and Confronting Your Reluctance to try these Ideas

Cassie finds herself with very much the same questions that I assume many young brides would have. What if this doesn't work out, can things go back to normal? What if things do work out? Will it be everything you expect it to be? For all it is worth, I had some questions of my own. We are often told to be careful for what we wish. Did that good advice apply here?

Here is what I now know in my heart to be true. If two people love each other, they should feel free to communicate with each other. They should not worry about rejection, either the rejection of specific ideas or of the

persons themselves. If in reading this book you decide that you would like to pursue similar changes in your own relationship, you should at least discuss it with your spouse. Encourage them to read the *entire* book and form an opinion of whether they feel that they would like to experiment with some of the ideas that I discuss. If the spouse is certain that these ideas are not for them, they may reject these ideas, but they will not reject their partner for suggesting it. Rejection is just not the reaction that can be expected from a loving spouse.

I don't want to run off on this tangent and begin a detailed discussion of how you can begin implementing some of these concepts in your own marriage. I will save this discussion for a later chapter. I do, however, want to address the very real fear that anyone would have in bringing new ideas into a committed relationship. If the desire to make changes like those described in this book is sincere, they should and will be met by reasonable consideration from any loving spouse.

Having said all of this, I certainly understand that after careful thought, there will still be some that are reluctant to explore these new dynamics. Anyone reluctant to initiate the changes described in this book should consider one of the very important points that Leigh Ann makes to Cassie. Sensing Cassie's reluctance, Leigh Ann explains to her that the peculiar trappings of her relationship with Zach do not define their marriage; they only help to make it stronger. Her decision-making authority reduces tension and enables better communication and a more passionate marriage. Trust, shared values and common experiences are the pillars of Leigh Ann and Zach's marriage just as they are of all great marriages. The underlying techniques and principles that support their marriage are transparent to outsiders. Only the results – the fact that they get along well, the fact that Zach contributes to the workload at home – are visible to those they know. Cassie had known Leigh Ann for years, but only found out about the secrets to her marriage that night at Starbucks and then only

as a result of Leigh Ann's conscious choice to discuss the topic. The outward and observable changes in the way that the couple relates to each other are subtle, and that is ultimately a key to the success of the principles in this book.

A Little Melodrama to Keep Things Interesting

This brings me to an important point of clarification as it relates to the story of Cassie and Al. At the end of the last chapter, as Cassie returns home and decides that she will begin putting Leigh Ann's advice into practice, her initial conversation and instructions for Al might seem anything but subtle to some readers. Let's return to that scene and dissect it for analysis and discussion.

The scene begins as Cassie returns home from her conversation with Leigh Ann. Al has been working like crazy all day in penance for his recent spat of inconsiderate behavior. Of course Al and Cassie both know that, left to its own devices, this new awakening of his domestic nature won't last. As soon as Cassie forgives him, as soon as they kiss and make up, Al will be right back to his old tricks again. Cassie is obviously pleased that Al has at least taken the initiative to put in a good day's work, and perhaps the mild sense of satisfaction that it gives her contributes to the courage that she musters to confront Al with the toss of the silver dollar.

At this point Cassie becomes caught up in the spirit of the moment. She decides to let her creativity enter into the picture and improvise a little above and beyond what she discussed with Leigh Ann. When the coin rattles to a stop on the table, she is not quite ready to reveal to Al what the implications are of having lost the game. She first wants to establish a mood. She sits at the table and instructs Al to open a bottle of wine. He very naturally reaches for two glasses, but she snaps him into his new

reality when she tells him that only one is required. She then tells him in no uncertain terms that he will not be having an orgasm that evening, but *she* will. Recall that Zach introduced Al to the concept of orgasm denial earlier in the day. The concept is not therefore brand new to him, but he must certainly still be shocked that Cassie is discussing it with him. Clearly he understands that Leigh Ann has discussed it with her before she even tells him so.

He takes the news that he will not be having an orgasm in perfect stride. He is obviously nervous, and his reaction is a little awkward, but he clearly accepts it. Undoubtedly he is even a little excited by it. He probably assumes that this really is just a game – short-term in nature -- which he is playing. If it does not end when they wake up in the morning, then it will end shortly thereafter. While he still doesn't grasp everything that is happening, it is all clearly playing to his sexuality and that makes just about anything ok with Al. This link to his sexuality will be a key to making these changes satisfying to Al in the long run. We see another link to Al's sexuality at the very end of the chapter, when he announces to Cassie that her bath is ready. She greets Al with a long, loving kiss before heading off to the tub to soak. She now knows that she is interested in taking more control in the relationship, and she can already sense how her love for her husband can grow in this new arrangement.

The Conversation Where She Formalizes Her Authority in the Marriage

As already stated, a later chapter will deal with how to make all of this work in terms of the day to day, but this last chapter ended on Al's introduction to Cassie's authority. What is very consciously not included in this chapter, and is also excluded when we return to the story, is the conversation that Cassie will have with Al following several weeks of the new relationship dynamic in the marriage. It is excluded because it is

better discussed in the slightly more clinical tone of these intermissions rather than the more relaxed tone of the dialogue in the story.

The conversation where the wife initially articulates the fact that she has taken more control of the marriage is foundational to the success of the new arrangement. Remember it is not enough that these changes in the relationship just take place on their own; they have to be reinforced by an irrefutable understanding on behalf of both spouses that the wife is now the head of the household. This is cemented by a conversation where the wife tells the husband just exactly this in no uncertain terms. We assume that Cassie waits, as Leigh Ann has suggested, until she has been practicing the techniques that Leigh Ann described for several weeks. At this point, Al will already understand that something has changed in his marriage. When Cassie tells him, it will only reinforce what he already knows to be true.

To set the right mood for the conversation, the wife should pick an evening where she knows that she and her husband will be undisturbed. He should be feverishly excited, maybe on his second or third night of orgasm denial. Wait until after any physical, yet for him anti-climatic, intimacy has transpired and the cuddling has begun. This is an opportunity for the wife to talk with her husband about how he is reacting to all of the changes that are taking place. She should try to stall any prior attempts to bring a deep discussion on this topic up until she is *really* ready to talk about it. When that night comes, it is important that she begin by getting some sense from him as to his reaction to all of this. Most likely, he will be enthusiastic about their evolving relationship. He may even end up articulating the new understanding perfectly on his own. Even if he does, however, it is still important that she say it herself. The words will echo in his head for a long time to come and serve as a necessary reinforcement for him.

She should tell him that she loves him dearly. She should choose her own words to express how important he is to her and how much she appreciates every wonderful thing that he has been doing for her lately. Hold him in your arms. Stroke his hair. Tell him that you have noticed there is something that has changed in the relationship lately. Has he noticed it, too? Does he feel that he has been more or less wrapped around her finger in recent weeks? Is he willing to do anything she asks of him? Does he love to do things on his own initiative because he knows that it what she wants, what she expects?

Wives, choose your words carefully as you bring him to the point where you cement your authority over him. Do not leave anything to chance. Do not speak in generalities. Be very specific. Leave no doubt as to the new structure of authority in the relationship. He needs to understand that you are now the head of the household. His opinions will be heard, in fact, they will often be the basis for your decisions. He will continue to make most of his own decisions, you will not micro-manage his life. You will, however, have veto power over his decisions. Your word is the final say on every dimension of the marriage. You expect that he will work very hard to please you. He will do as much to help around the house as he possibly can. You will feel very free to tell him what to do, and he will be expected to obey you. The word 'obey' is a powerful word with many connotations. Definitely use this word in your conversation.

If you have very particular expectations of her husband, new behaviors that you will require that are specific to your own personal situation, then this is the time to bring them up. This conversation will represent an extremely intimate and sexually powerful moment in the evolution of the relationship, and it is the best of all times to secure long-term behavioral shifts that will improve the marriage over time. For example, a wife could choose this occasion to ask her husband to stop smoking, lose weight or exercise more often. Finally, and very importantly, wives must tell the

husband that these changes are very personal. They are not to be discussed with anyone outside of the two spouses. All attempts should be made to ensure that all but the results of these changes go completely unnoticed by everyone outside of the husband and wife. This is nobody's business but their own.

Back to Our Story

I will now return you to the story. Some time has passed since our last chapter. Let's see how Al and Cassie are adjusting to their new roles in the relationship.

Al and Cassie: Happily Ever After

“Good morning, Dear!” Al greeted his wife with a glass of orange juice and a welcoming kiss. He had just gotten the boys off on the school bus, and his little girl was still sleeping peacefully upstairs.

“Thank you, Sweetheart.” Cassie took a seat at the kitchen table. Al sat a lightly buttered English muffin in front of her. He finished slicing some fresh strawberries and carefully placed these on the same plate with the muffin. He sat down opposite her at the table with his cup of coffee and a bowl of raisin bran. He separated the newspaper into sections and handed her all of her favorites. He kept the sports page, which was of little interest to Cassie, and quickly flipped to the box scores to see what was happening with the spring training games that had just begun that week.

It had now been over three months since Cassie had first had her Starbucks conversation with Leigh Ann. Her very special talk with Al had followed several weeks after that, and the proceeding two and a half months had represented the best days of her marriage. She had never been happier. Al had never been happier. She would never have imagined that things would have worked out so well.

Some of the differences in their lives were very obvious and very easy to enumerate. For one thing, there were no more on or off weeks in regard to getting the kids ready for school. Al was up *every morning* making sure that the boys were on the school bus. He came to appreciate this extra time with them more and more. Since Al worked full time, Cassie

continued to have plenty of opportunities to spend time with her children. However, because Al also contributed immensely to the household chores, her time with them was more of what might be described as “quality time.” The same could be said of her time with Al.

All the stress of holding the house together had been lifted from her shoulders. She still did work around the house, quite a bit in fact, but at least she felt that this new workload was manageable. Al did most of the laundry. Al cleaned the bathrooms regularly. He vacuumed, and he dusted. Cassie and Al shared the cooking duties, while the children started taking turns doing the dishes.

Importantly, Al still did many of the things that he had always done for his own relaxation and pleasure. He still watched sports. He golfed. He would get together with his friends to shoot pool and drink beer. Only now he enjoyed these things in moderation. He did them after he had completed his obligations to his wife and family. Where he used to have a regular Saturday tee time with Mark down the street, he now went golfing about once a month. He was ok with this, however, in that he now genuinely took pleasure in being around and in doing things for Cassie. Golf was ultimately just a distraction from his wife, and one that he was actually caring for less and less.

Other changes in Cassie and Al’s relationship were less obvious to others than those just described. Most importantly was the appearance of a new level of romance and passion that had not existed for years. Al constantly wanted Cassie, and Cassie very much welcomed the attention. He was always dropping her little random love notes. He would bring her flowers all the time. He would seize on any moment to shower her with a romantic token of his very sincere affection. He adored her, plain and simple. To what extent the tips and tricks that Leigh Ann had described to Cassie were responsible for this new energy, Cassie had no doubts at all. Leigh

Ann's advice had been better than any magic potion she could have pulled from her purse that night at Starbucks.

"Are those strawberries any good?" asked Al. "They were on sale at the grocery store. I know that they're out of season. I guess they ship them in from South America or something."

"They are very good, Honey. I love strawberries for breakfast." She finished her breakfast and Al finished his. He picked up the dishes off of the table and loaded the dishwasher as Cassie finished reading the paper. Cassie glanced up at her husband. "You look great, Al. How much weight have you lost now?"

"Fifteen pounds, thanks for asking. I only have five more to go." He had lost his weight the old fashioned way. He was eating less and exercising more. He was taking an increased interest in his health and appearance, and it was really starting to show. Not only had Cassie noticed, but the neighbors and Al's business associates had noticed also. People were taking stock of the fact that Al not only looked better, but he also seemed like he was more relaxed, more in a groove than he had been for quite some time. Everything in his life seemed like it was clicking for him.

"Do you have a lot to do for work today, Al?" asked Cassie.

"I do, yes, but I have kept my lunch free in case you need me to do anything for you."

"Ok," answered Cassie. "I'll just see what develops today. For now, why don't you go ahead and head upstairs to get our little cutie pie out of bed. Get her dressed and bring her down. I'll take over from there, and you can go ahead to your office after that."

“No problem.” Al darted upstairs and woke up his daughter. Cassie could hear baby talk and giggling coming from her bedroom. Al brought her downstairs a few minutes later, fully dressed and with a big grin on her face for Mommy.

“Hello, Pumpkin,” smiled Cassie as she took her little girl from her husband’s hands. Al planted a kiss on both daughter and Mommy’s forehead before heading upstairs to start working. He was already showered and shaved. Another cup of coffee was all he would need to get the day going. He filled his mug and bounded up the stairs to get to his morning emails.

Nobody had been more surprised by the success of the new arrangement than had Al. He simply loved the idea that Cassie had control of their marriage. On the one hand, it was incredibly practical. Arguments had ceased to exist. Everyone was happier because Cassie was no longer killing herself trying to do all the housework by herself. More importantly, she no longer resented him for what had really been very selfish behavior on his part. This selfish behavior had simply gone away. It was replaced by a truly selfless desire to make her happy. Sure he was expected to do more work, but oddly, he enjoyed it. He was happy to know that he could do something, anything to help his wife.

Beyond just being practical, the new relationship dynamic was an incredible turn-on for Al. He very much liked the idea of Cassie having some power over him. He did not quite understand it, but he felt it was a more natural structure for him. He felt as though he had always wanted it on some unconscious level. It appealed to him in a very primitive way and had a very definite sexual component to it. Throw in the fact that Cassie was playing all these wonderful games with whether or not he would have an orgasm on any given night, and he felt that his sex life had never been better. He considered the fact that even though he was not having an

orgasm every time he was intimate with his wife, he was intimate with her so much more than he used to be, that he was having more orgasms than ever. At first, he had thought that this whole *orgasm thing* was a little weird. Maybe it was, but weird or not, he definitely liked it. Sometimes Cassie would come up to him during the day and give him some sort of clue as to whether that night would be an 'on-night' or an 'off-night'. Other nights, he would get no clue at all. He would not find out until he was absolutely begging for it. Her decisions seemed loosely coupled to how he had been treating her that day and this drove him to fits trying to please her. It was a wonderful motivator. He liked not only the uncertainty of the outcome, but oddly enough, he liked the way he felt when he was denied. He just felt closer to her. He was more open to communicating and less interested in just falling off to sleep. This had been a welcome and unexpected surprise.

The morning went quickly. When lunchtime rolled around, Al stepped back down the stairs with the same energy level that had taken him up in the morning. He walked into the kitchen and found Cassie making grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup. "Why don't you sit down, Honey. I can finish that."

"No, that's ok, you sit down. I'll take care of it." Al thumbed through the remains of the morning paper as Cassie finished fixing lunch. Their daughter sat in her high chair eating her own lunch. She was having a cut up hot dog and pineapple chunks.

"Is she going to have some grilled cheese, too?" asked Al.

"Yes, I'll break one up for her. She loves grilled cheese, and she's been eating like a horse lately. I guess she's going through a growth spurt," answered Cassie. Cassie sat Al's soup and sandwich down in front of him. Al thanked her as she went about breaking up a sandwich for their

daughter. Finally she sat her own lunch down next to Al and pulled up a seat. They talked about how the boys were doing in spring soccer. They talked about the new neighbors down the street that were parking a boat, permanently it seemed, in their driveway. They talked about how the grass on the shady side of their house didn't seem to be doing very well. There was nothing unusual at all about this lunch or this conversation. It was just a happily married couple enjoying their meal.

After Al and Cassie had eaten Al cleared the dishes and loaded them in the dishwasher. He put the pot in which Cassie had cooked the soup into the sink to soak, and he pulled his daughter out of her highchair. Cassie took the task of cleaning off the high chair, and Al brought the toddler into the den to play a quick game of peek-a-boo. "What are you going to do when you put her down for her nap, Honey?" asked Al.

"I think I'm going to run out with Leigh Ann. She needs to buy a dress for a wedding they are going to next weekend. I told her I would help her shop for it."

Al could hear his phone ringing up in his office. "I guess I better get back to work, just let me know when you are leaving." He kissed his wife and child and darted back upstairs. Al buried himself in his work for the next hour and a half. He was just finishing up a sales proposal he needed to get out to a prospect when he was interrupted by a knock at his office door. "Come in," he shouted. Cassie pushed the door open and walked inside.

"I just put her down for her nap. She should sleep pretty well. She's been playing hard all day."

"Excellent, are you heading off to go help Leigh Ann pick out that dress?"

“Yes, I am. I wanted to remind you that the boys would be getting off the bus in about an hour. It will be about two hours before I’m back; you can let them play video games until then. When I get home I’ll make sure they get out and get some fresh air. That will also be about the time she wakes up from her nap. I assume that this won’t be too much trouble with your work schedule today?” Her concern for Al’s work schedule was sincere. She respected the fact that his career obligations were important to the family.

“No trouble at all. I hope you two enjoy yourselves.”

“Before I go, I wanted to give you something.” She walked up to Al and positioned herself between his swivel chair and his desk. She leaned back against the desk and locked an intense gaze on Al’s eyes. In her hand was a small envelope. She turned the chair so that Al faced her directly, and she placed her legs on either side of him. With her standing and straddling his seated form with her legs, she was definitely in the power position. She said nothing but tilted her head to one side and flashed a coy smile. She used her thumbs to spin two opposite corners of the small envelope between her two index fingers. “Are you feeling creative today, Honey?”

“Uh, I’m not exactly sure what you mean, Sweetheart.”

“Well, let me explain. I have another little game for you, Al. The instructions are written down on a little card in this envelope. It’s a very simple game, completely self-explanatory. I have the final say in whether or not you win, but I promise I’ll be very fair.” She handed Al the envelope. “I don’t want you to open this until I leave, but when I do – as soon as I pull out of the driveway with Leigh Ann—you can open it. Understand?”

“Perfectly,” said Al. With that Cassie leaned forward and kissed him. It was one of those very sensuous kisses where she half bit his upper lip and pulled on it gently as she exhaled her cool, sweet breath into his mouth. She stood up straight and walked out of the room. Al, mesmerized, silently watched her walk away. From the window in his office he saw Leigh Ann’s car pull up. Cassie hopped inside, and the two women drove off for their shopping trip. Al held the envelope up to the light as if he expected this gesture to yield a clue to the envelopes contents. He reached for a letter opener and carefully opened it up.

It was the middle of a beautiful spring day, and the malls, thankfully, were empty. Leigh Ann and Cassie got a great parking space right outside of Leigh Ann’s favorite department store. They found the perfect dress for Leigh Ann right away and found themselves with a little extra time on their hands. They decided that a couple of iced cappuccinos would really hit the spot. They pulled into the same Starbucks where they had had their talk several months ago.

“It’s been a while since we’ve been here together,” said Cassie.

“Yes, in fact, I think that the last time we were here was when we were talking... you know, *really talking*... about Zach and I... you and Al,” said Leigh Ann.

“I think you’re right,” agreed Cassie.

“I remember you telling me very early, just a few weeks into it,” said Leigh Ann, “that everything was working out well with your new ‘understanding’. Are things still going as well now as they were in the beginning?”

“The last few months,” exclaimed Cassie, “have been like a dream. I feel like a princess in a fairy tale, just after the part where I go off to live happily every after.”

Leigh Ann laughed. “I’m so happy for you, Cassie. You were so reluctant to try it, but it looks like it is working as well for you as it has for Zach and I. Have there been any snags, anything that hasn’t gone according to plan?”

“Not really. He’s embraced it so completely that he hasn’t resisted anything I’ve asked him to do. I think I’ve been really reasonable with him, he usually ends up volunteering to do helpful things before I even ask. Cutting back on golf, for example, was completely his idea. I might not have tolerated him continuing to golf as much as he used to, but I never had to say anything about it.”

“Sometimes,” said Leigh Ann, “even though I know Zach is going to do something on his own, I tell him to do it anyway. I don’t *ask*, I *tell*. I only do it because I know it excites him.”

“It’s funny you say that,” replied Cassie, “I think it’s the same thing with Al. It’s like he gets this big smile when I’m telling him what I expect from him. He tries to hide the smile, but I can see it trying to form on his face.”

“Ninety-nine percent of the time we just go about our business like any married couple,” said Leigh Ann, “particularly since we’ve been at this so long. It’s those times that I step into character that are really fun.”

“That word –fun -- it is really a perfect word to describe all of this. I play little games with Al all the time. He eats it up. I love it too. I haven’t had this good a time since I was a teenager. I may not have even have had this much fun then!”

Leigh Ann laughed again. She was sincerely happy for Cassie. She had been *extremely* reluctant to let her in on her little secret. Cassie was one of the most traditional people that Leigh Ann knew. She had considered the risk that Cassie would reject her advice, and worse yet, that she would reject her friendship. It was her faith in that friendship, however, that had finally given Leigh Ann the confidence to have that talk with her. She was delighted that it had worked out as well as it had. Cassie and Al were an amazing success story.

The two women ordered their iced cappuccinos from the young clerk and took seats in the back of the coffee shop. They sat, in fact, at the same table where they had the last time they were there. The warm sun hovered out of sight directly above them. White, shapeless, clouds drifted west to east in the distant horizon. School busses started to appear in the mix of traffic that moved along the road outside.

“Do you think that this type of relationship is more common than we know?” asked Cassie.

“I really doubt it,” answered Leigh Ann. “What I do think is that so many couples – both unhappy couples and couples that are more or less satisfied with their marriages – would be better off if they just *knew* about this and were willing to try it. Even though it has an element to it which makes it sound crazy, I think on some level, people would recognize instinctively that it makes sense. People might even reject it at first, but then after a couple of months of mulling it over in the backs of their minds, they might return to it, give it a try after all.”

Cassie nodded in agreement. “Do you think it only works if it’s the woman in charge? Do you think that the man could take that role and it would work out just as well?”

Leigh Ann shook her head and smiled. “I won’t say it’s impossible, but I can’t imagine it working with the man in charge. Men don’t have the temperament to lead the relationship. I’m sure that it *could* work, but you would have to make so many allowances for the male ego that it wouldn’t be worth the trouble. We know this much, it works and works well when a woman is in control, why rock the boat? Besides, when a husband denies a woman orgasm, that’s just par for the course. There’s nothing new in that.”

Cassie laughed. She had not started all of this because it appealed to her philosophically; she had started it because it struck her as practical. Leigh Ann was right, why speculate on variations on the theme? She took the last sip of her iced cappuccino and put it down on the table in front of her. Leigh Ann was already finished with hers. Cassie looked at her watch. “We’d better get going. I don’t want the boys watching video games all afternoon.” Both women stood up and headed to the door, tossing their empty cups into the trash can. Leigh Ann noticed that the young clerk behind the counter was checking out Cassie. He smiled as he said goodbye, and Cassie smiled back politely.

“You need to wrap him around your finger next, Cassie,” joked Leigh Ann. “Two dollars and seventy-five cents for a cup of coffee, iced or otherwise, will add up pretty quick. We could use some freebies.” They both chuckled as they climbed into the car.

Al smiled to himself when he read what was written on the card that Cassie had left him to read: *Surprise me with something good, and I’ll surprise you with something good.* He loved a challenge, but was dumbstruck as to what would be just the right “good surprise” for her. He

had spent so much of the last three months trying to do things to make his wife happy. He hoped he had not run out of ideas.

He routinely got her baths ready for her. She liked a certain brand of bath salts. He couldn't use too little or too much; it had to be just right. She liked to take her baths by candlelight in the early evenings. There were certain CD's that she liked to listen to while she soaked. Al had even expanded the CD collection with her baths in mind. Sometimes she would ask for a glass of wine, but usually it was sparkling water with lime or a cup of hot herbal tea if it was particularly cold outside. Her towels were always laid out neatly and were ready for her to use when she was finished.

Massages and foot rubs had become so commonplace that there was really no surprise left in these at all. He had experimented with massage oils, even warming them up ahead of time. He had also purchased a couple of different massage devices from the Sharper Image. In the end, however, she just preferred a simple massage without any accompanying oils or devices. She actually enjoyed the feel of Al's hands working her muscles and caressing her skin. In his effort to take the foot rubs to the next level, he had purchased everything he needed to give her a home pedicure. He had now done this twice and had gotten pretty good at it. They both enjoyed it immensely, but again, the opportunity for surprise had come and gone.

He was always cooking her favorite meals. He was always watching her favorite shows with her. She very often would fall asleep with her head on his lap as he played with her hair. He would leave little love notes for her to find when he would put away her laundry. He would often buy flowers and hide them until morning when he would leave them on her vanity for her to discover when she woke up. Even before being challenged to surprise her with something new, he would spend spare moments

dreaming of her and racking his heart and his head to discover some new way to make her happy.

Then it occurred to him. He had come up with the perfect surprise. He smiled. He leaned back in his chair and placed his hands upon his head. He closed his eyes and pictured her absolute delight when she discovered what he had in mind for her. She would never see this coming, but she would love it. In fact, this was something that they would both enjoy. This was going to be wonderful!

A lifetime of surprises lay ahead for both of them.

The End of One Story, the Beginning of Your Own

I hope that I have left you anxious as to what will happen next with Al and Cassie. At the same time, I hope that you will not be too disappointed to learn that this was the final chapter of their story. We will never know for certain what surprise Al had in store for Cassie. For all practical purposes, you the reader have now been teased and denied. Please do not draw any hasty conclusions from this. I promise that it is more fun in real life!

The story is very much intended to leave you wanting more. I want Al's surprise to become your own. At one point, Leigh Ann tells Cassie that much of the joy of the relationship lies in the discovery of what it has to offer. This is really true of anything new that we bring into our lives. If you embrace the concepts in this book, then you will discover your own surprises along the way. You, in fact, can *create* your own surprises.

Have you Formed Any Impressions so Far?

This book has, up until now, been focused on making the case that a wife and her husband can lead a happier, more successful marriage when the woman takes a more active leadership role in the relationship. At this point you are left with one of three impressions of this concept:

1. You are (hopefully) convinced that the idea has merit, and you are anxious to try it in your own marriage.
2. You think that there might be something to all of this, but remain skeptical that it is right for you, and just as importantly, your spouse.

3. You reject these ideas outright and only continue to read this book because your obsessive-compulsive nature demands that you finish every book you start (While I suffer from this very affliction, I suspect that this group is the minority of readers. Most of those that are prone to reject these concepts have likely put the book down before they even finished the introduction.)

This chapter will have something to say to all three types of readers. It will walk you through some tips for introducing the book to your spouse, some pointers for beginner couples, and some advice for making this work over the long haul. While each of these subjects has been touched on to some degree in previous chapters, it is useful to consolidate and synthesize these ideas all in one place.

How to Introduce This Book to Your Spouse

Cassie and Al had a unique introduction to this material. While you are learning about it from a book, they learned about it from friends that were already walking examples of a successful marriage. Leigh Ann's conversation with Cassie was the primary means with which these ideas were exchanged between the couples, but Al was at least provided with a peak at the secrets from his conversation with Zach. In reality, how one spouse will go about introducing this book to another depends most importantly on whether it the husband or the wife that first reads the book and faces this challenge. There are other factors of course, such as how traditional each spouse might perceive the other to be, how open the other spouse might be to new ideas, and the general quality of the marriage at the time you are confronted with this material.

1. If both the husband and the wife are free spirits and used to trying new and extravagant things together, then there will be little hesitation on the part of one to share this book with the other. If, however, your

marriage is more conservative and traditional, then the introduction of this book to the other spouse might be a source of great stress for you.

Three Ways in Which the Wife might introduce this Book to her Husband

1. The wife reads the book and begins implementing the principles and techniques without ever exposing the husband to the book. This is a very interesting scenario. I think that this is how I, if not already familiar with this book, would like to have been introduced to these ideas. I wonder, however, about the shock effect of some of these techniques. When presented out of context these ideas, orgasm denial for example, might be too much for many men to handle. Generally speaking, the more educated that both spouses are on the topics in this book, the better. I think that the woman that introduces her husband to the concepts in this book without every exposing him to the book itself should at least consider letting him read it before she formalizes her authority in the home. In other words, she should make the book required reading prior to that intimate conversation in which she articulates her new role and her husband's new role in the relationship. His deep understanding of the concepts in the book will make him appreciate what she is doing more completely and will provide him with some framework for expressing his reaction to the changes.
2. The wife reads the book and gives it to her husband with a firm statement to read the book and get ready for some changes, like it or not. This is really just a variation on the scenario above. The core similarity is that the wife decides on her own that this is what she wants in the marriage and takes control of the relationship before the husband is ever exposed to the book. She doesn't discuss it with her husband; she has already decided it is what she wants. She does, however, give the book to her husband ahead of time so that her behavioral and attitudinal changes will all make sense to him when

they start to occur. This is very logical way that a woman, secure in her mind that her husband will embrace the new relationship dynamic, can get started.

3. The wife reads the book and then gives it to her husband to read and provide his opinion. Here is what will ultimately be the most common method that women introduce the book to their husbands. This is the mirror image of the scenario where the husband provides the wife with the book and asks for *her* opinion. All of the same comments provided under that scenario apply here as well.

Regardless of how you introduce your spouse to this book, if it appeals to you, then by all means do not keep this to yourself. The benefits I have described are real, and they can only materialize when both spouses embrace these concepts. For those couples that find the ideas intriguing, but are not quite sure that they are willing to commit to a dramatic and permanent change in their relationship, then take heart. The next chapter describes a “trial balloon” of sorts that is much less threatening than the permanent changes already described. This “Boot Camp” concept that this next chapter introduces might just be right for you.

Practical Advice for Beginner Couples

There will be a temptation for beginning couples to over-dramatize the new relationship dynamic. The wife, newly empowered, is tempted to make every decision for her husband and to bark orders to him for the most trivial little request. While this may be exciting at first, recognize that it cannot go on like this forever. Ultimately, the wife will need to delegate those decisions and areas within the household that she feels her husband can manage well on his own. Eventually those barking orders will be replaced by a general understanding on the part of the couple of what is expected from the husband. Her willingness to use the power of her

sexuality over him is all that is necessary to sustain the newly established hierarchy.

How best to link His Behavior to His Orgasm

In exercising her sexual energy in the marriage, the wife should create a loose coupling between her husband's behaviors and her decision on whether or not he has an orgasm on any given night. The phrase "loose coupling" is ambiguous, and deserves a more detailed explanation. Wives should not make it a habit of offering quid pro quo, something for something, associations between their husband's actions and his sexual release. They should keep the general association in place, but if they too closely link his behavior to his orgasm, they will unconsciously put their husbands back in control of his own sexual release. Wives should be very careful about maintaining this control. Your control of his sexual pleasure is foundational to this book.

So how does she do this? How exactly does this loose coupling work in practice? For starters, his continued good behavior is a necessary prerequisite to his being allowed to have an orgasm. Under no circumstances can he possibly expect to climax if he is not continuing to do his household chores and if he does not remain respectful of your wishes. Accepting this as a given, then there are other considerations that you will want to take into account. Has he done anything special, something he hasn't done before? Maybe the first time he gives you a pedicure, he will receive his reward. Maybe the second time he will not. Maybe he'll have to improve his pedicure skills to the point that you are impressed that he does as good a job as the local salon before you allow the pedicure to trigger his next orgasm. In the final example of the Cassie and Al story, Cassie challenges Al to come up with some surprise suitable to impress her. This is an excellent ploy because Al is forced to be creative in developing the surprise, but Cassie ultimately judges the worth of that surprise and the

nature of the reward (which is suggestive, but ultimately it is also a “surprise”). Thus Cassie maintains absolute control. Finally, don’t hesitate to make randomness part of the mix. Just make sure that if you are flipping any coins, that you do it without your husband’s knowledge. It is ok that you know your decision was determined by a flip of the coin, but all he needs to know is that it was your decision... period.

The Real Reward

As you begin to adjust to your new roles in the relationship you should keep in mind that intimate, affectionate contact from you is a reward in and of itself. This is a really key concept that is worth discussing because it is not intuitively obvious to everyone. For a husband to be with his wife, to massage her, to play with her hair, to be intimate with her irrespective of whether or not he achieves his own orgasm, is an intensely rewarding experience. This is true not only in that sense that the physical and emotional aspects of intimacy are pleasurable, but also in the sense that the impact on a man’s psyche, the tweaking of his brain chemistry as I have earlier described, is very addictive. This is one of the most important truths in the book.

Making This Work over the Long Haul

Remember that this is a marathon and not a one hundred-yard dash. This is a change in your relationship that, while certainly revocable, is intended to be essentially permanent. While a husband newly introduced to this book may be willing and even anxious to stay up until two in the morning ironing his all of wife’s clothes and polishing the silverware, it is just not sustainable in the long run. Keep in mind that for most couples these changes will be in large part a reaction to the fact that the woman was already over-burdened with housework and duties relative to the man. So while it is an excellent goal that a husband can eliminate the monotony of

daily chores from his wife's life altogether, for many couples this is unrealistic. As I discussed earlier, a very reasonable and sustainable goal for most husbands is that they do a *minimum of 51% of the housework*. Depending on the demands on the husband's time, he should be able to spike as high as 100% during at least some periods during the year. Men, not accustomed to doing much housework, will find that they become better at it and more efficient over time. My husband, for one, could only recall ever having ironed once in his life (it was a dress shirt for a job interview in college). After committing himself to helping out with the ironing in our house, it took him quite some time to get the hang of it.

Ways a Husband can demonstrate his Affection

Beyond just unburdening a wife of her housework will be the husband's sincere interest in showering his wife with niceties. Consider the following a partial, but by no means comprehensive, list of ways that a husband can display affection and adoration for his wife:

- Massage: Yes, this is an obvious one. You may have no idea, however, at all of the intricacies and complexities associated with a task that many of us feel naturally competent to perform. There is a reason that massage therapists are licensed. If you have ever had a professional massage, you know how markedly superior it is over the kind that most of us have received from our spouses in the past. At the very least, get a book or watch a video on the topic. If you have time take a course or two and learn to do it right. Also, purchasing a professional massage table and setting aside a generous period of time for the massage beats an impromptu shoulder rub any day of the week.
- Manicures and Pedicure: Those nail salons that have popped up in strip malls all across the country are there for a reason. Women love to have their nails done. Manicures are a skill set that I have not yet

learned to master. There are particulars associated with certain styles of women's manicures that are not easily learned by beginners. Pedicures, however, can be mastered by even the clumsiest of husbands. Also, there is something really nice about a man kneeling in front of his wife and attending to her feet. There is something symbolic and almost ritualistic in the whole process that is a huge rush for many men. Whether you focus your attention on him as he caters to your toenails, or if you choose to ignore him altogether and peruse the pages of a magazine, a pedicure is one of the most intimate things that a husband can do for his wife.

- Running her Bath: Have him spend a little money on bubble bath, bath salts or whatever sort of bath potion you prefer. Have him light some scented candles and play a CD of some relaxing music. Make the setting perfect. Be certain that he is there to help get you into the bath and check to see if you need anything before he leaves you alone to soak and relax. Perhaps you would enjoy a glass of wine, or even having your hair washed by your adoring husband.
- Hide Love Notes Everywhere: Have him get creative. He can write short but meaningful notes to you and hide them in your everyday things. He should let you know how much he cares for you with each little message that you discovers during the day.
- The List goes on... There are countless ways for a husband to demonstrate adoration for his wife. Nice dinners, breakfast in bed, flowers, little gifts and homemade poems are the beginning of what could easily be a very long list. If he hits a wall, have him ask some of your girlfriends for suggestions. They are likely to have some great ideas suited to your personal interests.

What is it that makes any marriage special in the long run? It is not always the big things that make the difference, but the accumulation of all the little things. The husband should spare no opportunity to remind his wife how special she is to him. The wife should spare no opportunity to bring her

own romantic elements into the marriage. You should both be the romantic kids that you were when you first started dating. All the tips and techniques discussed in the book will make you feel young and passionate again. Just don't hesitate to act on these feelings. You are in a symbiotic relationship where your spouse will reward every kind and caring action you take on her behalf. Be kind to yourselves by being kind to each other.

More to Come on this Topic

As I close this chapter that has dealt with how you can go about implementing the principles outlined in this book, I must inform the reader that this discussion has been somewhat incomplete. This is only because I have saved certain discussions, appropriate to the theme of this chapter, for the chapter that follows. This next chapter provides a detailed guide on how to initiate a trial period to determine if the relationship suggestions outlined in this book will hold the same intrigue in practice that they do in print. It bears mentioning that many of the ideas presented in this next chapter can be leveraged by those who decide, either with or without a trial period that permanent changes are in fact right for them. In fact, the next chapter consolidates many of the ideas that have been presented in this book and synthesizes them into practical recommendations for your relationship.

Boot Camp: A Strategy for Testing the Waters

Some readers will certainly find enough in this book that appeals to them to become very interested in pursuing its ideas. At the same time, however, they will be intimidated by the permanent nature of the relationship changes. For these readers I have created a ten-day test period that I call *Boot Camp*. Boot Camp will allow couples to run a ten-day experiment to see how the new dynamic impacts their lives. At the end of the Boot Camp, there will be an opportunity for both couples to discuss how they think it worked, how it made them feel, and ultimately decide if they want to extend the trial period into a more permanent dynamic. This is a great way to test the waters and to learn at least some of the pleasures and benefits of a female-led household. As already stated at the conclusion of the last chapter, many of the suggestions that follow are very appropriate for *any* couple that wishes to move forward with this book, either with the Boot Camp approach or the long-term approach.

Note that Boot Camp presumes that both wife and husband have read this book and are familiar with its concepts. Some discussion about the general reaction to the concept and the reaction to specific elements in the book should take place before beginning. Consider the following questions as a rough guide for this conversation. It is written presuming that the new wife and her husband having been living together for sometime and that the wife is leading the discussion and asking the questions of her husband.

Pre-Camp Discussion Guide for Wives

- Do you agree that I do most of the work around the house? The book is written on the assumption that the woman typically does most of the work around the house. While I assume that this is most often the case, I am certain that there are many households in which the workload is more or less evenly split between husbands and wives. In the final analysis, it does not really matter who does most of the work around the house. A thorough reading of this book offers something for any relationship independent of merely shifting the burden of household chores.
- Do you agree that we go about making decisions in very different ways? Some husbands might be reluctant to admit that their wives are better decision-makers than they are. It is a useful starting point to at least understand and discuss how decision-making styles might at least be *different*. After the ten days of Boot Camp are over, it might be useful to return to this question and see if both parties can come to a mutual understanding of if and why the wife may be better suited to making household decisions.
- As you read the book, did you get the sense that having the wife take the role of head of household was a more natural order, that it would just *feel right*? I think that many men know on some unconscious level that yielding control and authority to their wives just plain makes sense to them. Try and get a sense for whether or not the husband already shared this primal sense of how men and women best relate to each other *before* he ever picked up the book.
- Be very specific about the things in the book that appeal to you the most. Try and understand what has piqued the husband's interest in this concept. Be certain to include these particulars in generous amounts over the next ten days. Try to draw any conclusions from his particular likes that will help you understand him better.

- ❑ Is there anything in the book that does not appeal to you? There are some subtleties of the methods in this book that can be glossed over in an experimentation phase, but the general principles must not be dismissed. Importantly, many men will claim, either sincerely or in an attempt to maintain some macho stereotype that certain elements of the book are just not for them. Delve deeper into any objections that the husband might present and realize that some of the techniques in this book are an *acquired taste*. He won't know, for example, what orgasm denial can do for him until he experiences it.

All of these questions will serve as a starting point for the discussion that ultimately will kick off the Boot Camp week. More must be discussed, however, and what remains of the discussion is an important element in setting the tone for the next ten days. Most importantly, the wife must review with the husband the terms of the trial period. There are some basic components that will be common to every couple, but there are also some personalized components that will require just a little bit of work on the part of the wife. Let us first review the basic expectations applicable to all couples. Re-read and review these when you start the program. If you think it will be helpful, you can even both put your initials at the end of them.

Expectations that the wife has for the husband over the next ten days:

- ❑ We both agree that the wife will be the head of the household for the next ten days. The husband's input on decisions will be heard and respected, but the wife will ultimately have the final say. This extends to all matters including who does the housework, how and upon what money is to be spent, and any and all sexual matters.
- ❑ For the next ten days there is no turning back. The trial period officially ends at 9:00 p.m. on _____ (*Write down the day.* Also, note that the 9:00 p.m. time period can be altered of course, it is

intended to be early enough in the evening to allow for a discussion to follow.)

- While the husband agrees to surrender all authority and control to his wife, the wife shall agree to respect the spirit of the trial period. That is to say that the purpose of the trial period is to temporarily evaluate the feasibility of the new relationship dynamic. It shall not be an excuse to make unalterable changes in the couple's lives based on a temporary exchange of control. *(For example, you have wanted to buy a house in a particular neighborhood and the husband has not wanted to do so, it would a violation of the spirit of the Boot Camp trial period to buy the house within those ten days! Please, use your judgment as to this condition.)*

Beyond these very basic principles, there are for any wife a personal set of expectations that she should make clear to her husband. The more detailed consideration that can be given to these expectations the better. I have provided the following list from which wives can begin to build their own list of what they want their husband to do for them during Boot Camp week. The more specifics that the wife can provide as she puts her list together, the better. Also, this list is by no measure intended to be comprehensive. Wives should feel free to add to the list whatever tasks and behaviors they believe will make them happy.

Run her bath
Wash her Hair
Breakfast or Coffee in Bed
Massages
Pedicure
Foot Rubs
Wash, Dry & Fold Laundry
Iron as Necessary
Vacuum/Mop the Floors

Dust
Put Away Dishes after Meals
Clean and Organize Garage
Clean the Bathrooms
Grocery Shopping
Cooking
Control of the TV Remote
Wash her Car
Fill her car with Gas

Caution, should be exercised that the expectations that the wife assembles are reasonable. If you establish the bar too high, you will set your husband up for frustration and failure. The following is a sample “expectations” write-up intended to give you a flavor of how it might read when the appropriate details are included. I have written it using Cassie and Al as my model since we are already somewhat familiar with their family and lifestyle situation. Note that I begin the Boot Camp on the morning of the first day. Given that I plan on ending them at 9:00 on the tenth day, this is not *exactly* ten days. However, this makes for a convenient start and finish and I suggest you do the same.

Sample Expectation Guide: Weekdays

- ❑ Wake up, shower and shave I wake up.
- ❑ Have my breakfast (English muffin, very little butter) ready to go, but not cooked ahead of time so that it will not get cold before I am ready to eat it. Have the coffee cream and sugar on the table. Set my place for breakfast appropriately including the dish, utensils, linen napkin, cup and saucer.
- ❑ When breakfast is ready, you may come and wake me up. After you and I have had our breakfast together you may go off to your office to work.
- ❑ Get dinner ready and see if there is any specific thing that I may need done. Make certain that the table is set for dinner and that the kitchen is cleaned up afterwards.
- ❑ At 7:30 get my bath ready. I want you to light candles and bring in a CD player to play some jazz music very softly
- ❑ When I get out of my bath, I want a full body massage and anything else that might please me.
- ❑ During the week I expect that the house will be kept clean. This includes vacuuming, dusting, cleaning the bathrooms, straightening up

clutter, making the bed, and at some point, cleaning and organizing the garage. When the week ends at 9:00 p.m. on the last day, I expect that most every piece of dirty laundry in the house will have been washed, dried, ironed if necessary, folded and put away.

- ❑ Early in the week, arrange to take me out to dinner. Make an 8:00 p.m. reservation somewhere that you know I will like.

Sample Expectation Guide: Weekends

- ❑ We will spend both weekend days doing activity together. Think of something we can do or somewhere we can go that we will both enjoy. Plan the day accordingly and take care of all the details yourself.
- ❑ Wake up, shower, shave and be dressed before I wake up.
- ❑ Have my breakfast and coffee ready as on weekdays.
- ❑ When I wake up, I will shower and be ready before coming out for my breakfast. After my breakfast, we will go out to enjoy our activity. You can expect that I will be ready to leave by no later than 10:30.
- ❑ When we return home from our family activity on Saturday, I will begin getting ready for our dinner reservation. You can watch the children until I am completely done, then you can go and get ready yourself.
- ❑ When we return home from our family activity on Sunday, I want you to go find something to do that you will enjoy. This will be your time. Be sure that you are home and ready to attend to me by 9:00 p.m.

So here we have a rough outline of a weekday and weekend agenda for the ten days of Boot Camp. While many details have been included in the list of expectations, many have not. This will leave some room for creativity on the part of the husband. It will also provide some much-needed flexibility to go about his week with all of the other obligations that he must deal with *outside of pleasing* his wife. No husband, for example, should be taking time off from his job for this trial period. It is important

that it be a realistic experiment if the couple is to have any idea of whether the concepts would work in the long run.

The wife should not just hand these expectations to the husband for him to read on his own. We have discussed earlier the importance of the conversation that the wife has with the husband where she articulates the fact that she will be assuming more authority in the household. This conversation is also important in the context of this trial period. The setting and context will be very different, but it is nonetheless important that there be a very clear message from the wife to the husband that she will be assuming control. Because this may be an uncomfortable conversation, it is tempting for the wife to treat this with an air of humor, smiling and laughing as she tells her husband all of this. I advise that wives avoid this temptation. Instead, adopt a very serious tone that leaves no doubt as to your sincerity.

Not mentioned in the expectations that we just reviewed were any of the sexual elements that were discussed throughout this book. While these elements certainly are a part of the Boot Camp regiment, they should not be laid out in clinical detail and rob the experiment of any of the excitement and suspense that stems from surprise. To that end, it is impossible for me to provide play by play recommendations as to how the wife should go about teasing her husband during each of the ten days. Since husband and wife are both expected to have read this book before initiating the Boot Camp, my detailed suggestions would ruin the surprise. I will instead provide some guidelines, some things for wives to consider, when structuring the intimate moments that are so crucial to the overall success of the ten-day trial.

Tease Him All Day Long.

Recognize and take advantage of the incredible power of your own sexuality. Sexy little brush-ups against your husband's body and warm kisses on his neck can keep him aroused every instant that he is around you and even those times that he is not. Be generous with your affection. Your husband is taking a big step by agreeing to respect *your wishes as his absolute authority* over the next ten days. You need to provide a reward structure that keeps him motivated. Bringing your sexuality into the routine of his day is a key source of this motivation. Dress a little sexier than you might normally dress. Look good and act like you know it. Your outward appearance and your inner self-confidence are inseparable to a man. Like an animal can sense fear in another animal, a man can sense confidence in a woman, and it is incredibly desirable.

Strategic Orgasm Denial

In case any of the previous discussion on the topic has left any doubt, orgasm denial, as it is described in this book, is not simply the absence of sex. Plenty of couples go days and some even go weeks without sex. What is different here is that the husband's climax is denied even though the couple is engaged in sexual activity. All the kissing, caressing and fondling that is typically associated with foreplay is still taking place. Also, as the wife, you are achieving your orgasm by whatever means you feel will give you the most immediate and the most intense pleasure. Oral sex is an obvious choice for most women since it is not only incredibly pleasurable for most women, but it also offers no risk that the husband will ejaculate without permission. Whatever method you choose, coach your husband through helping you achieve your orgasm. Be very specific *and* demanding. He wants to be a great lover for you and will appreciate your very specific feedback as to his performance.

For a husband that participates in all of this sexual activity with his wife then is denied the opportunity to climax, even as his wife continues to caress, touch and generally excite him... *this* is orgasm denial. This is so much more than you just telling him you have a headache. It will have a phenomenal impact on any man that experiences it. Women, you will be like the lion tamer that finally breaks the wild beast. He will become putty in your hands.

Men should recognize that any attempt to sneak off for a little “self pleasure” is completely out of the spirit of the Boot Camp exercise. Nobody likes a cheater.

Keep Him Guessing

So when to deny and when to indulge your husband? The only steadfast rule for Boot Camp is that the first night is definitely a no-orgasm occasion. After that, keep him guessing. Remember that the general principle of loosely coupling the orgasm decision to the husband’s behavior applies to Boot Camp just as it does to a longer-term arrangement. Do not lull your husband into the false sense of security that if he does everything on your list of expectations, that *his own expectations* will be fulfilled. Maybe they will, but maybe they won’t. You, not your husband, will be in control of that decision.

Too much of a Good Thing

I really cannot recommend that you keep him “energized” all week long. Two to four days between orgasms is a good range. You may wonder why if one day is good, and two, three and four is better, why not go for the full ten? At some point he will hit wall and you will start to realize diminishing returns. After it goes on for too long, it just becomes frustrating and the fun goes out of it. Every man may have different limits,

and you will have to experiment with your own husband to learn his particular limits. This ten-day trial period, however, is probably not the time to go for any endurance records. Part of the fun for the husband is the suspense of not knowing. If he becomes accustomed to *never* having an orgasm, then the element of suspense has left the picture just as assuredly as if he was accustomed to *always* having one.

Nature's Truth Serum

Take advantage of the special mood that you will find your husband in following his first experience with orgasm denial. He will want to do anything but roll over and fall asleep, as might be the case after a typical night of intercourse. Continue to be affectionate with each other. Talk to each other. Ask him questions that you may always have been reluctant to ask him in the past. I think you will find that he will open up to you like he has never done before. He will actually love communicating with you.

When the Week comes to a Close

As the evening of the final day approaches, both the wife and the husband will probably already have formed opinions as to how they think the Boot Camp experience worked for them. It is sometimes helpful for people to write down their feelings. Some people express themselves better in writing than they do in verbal communication. You can either exchange the written thoughts prior to your discussion, or you can use them as a guide for expressing yourself to your spouse.

This discussion should take place when both spouses, not just the wife, are relaxed, but not necessarily *too* relaxed. In other words, it may have been helpful to practice orgasm denial the evening before. This is not absolutely necessary. If the week has gone well, then the husband will already have become accustomed to opening up and communicating his

personal feelings. Perhaps the two of you could open a bottle of wine. If you do, share one glass between you, letting the woman hold the glass and offer sips to the husband upon his request. This is a very intimate gesture and appropriate given the context and subject matter of the discussion at hand.

The wife, of course, should lead the discussion. She should open by expressing her own opinions and thoughts as to how she thought that the experiment went. Her reaction is likely to be dependent on a couple of key elements. The first of these is how well her husband honored the terms and the spirit of the agreement. Did he manage to accomplish everything, or just about everything, on the expectations lists? Was he reverent and respectful of her wishes? If so, then at least on some level, the wife will have been inclined to enjoy the experience. She will at the very least have had a chance to catch a breather given the lightening of her domestic burden. The other key element of the wife's attitude towards the Boot Camp is also dependent on the husband. *To the extent that she believes that her husband enjoyed the trial period, she will have enjoyed the trial period herself.* What is fundamentally at issue here is her comfort with having taken on more authority in the relationship. Some women can step into the role and feel comfortable with the changes despite the impact that it has on their husbands, but I suspect that most cannot.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

It is not enough that the husband merely makes a concluding statement that he did in fact enjoy Boot Camp. His attitude and actions during the week speak louder than words. Consider the following questions relative to the husband's behavior. Did he walk around grumpy all week or did he have a little whistle while he worked, a little spring in his step? Did he take pride not only in completing tasks, but the quality of his work? Did he noticeably bite his tongue when assigned a new task or did he respond

with eager enthusiasm? Did the massages get shorter in length as the week progressed?

Now it is very possible that the husband's behavior could have been a result of poor execution on the part of the wife. This is not an excuse for his behavior, but it is an explanation and merits the same sort of considerations on her part that we just reviewed for him. Did she make an effort to elevate the level of sexuality in their relationship, not just through intimate sexual encounters (including orgasm denial) in the bedroom, but also with subtle sexual gestures during the course of the day? Did she get a little carried away with the demands that she placed upon her husband? Too much of a good thing can ruin just about anything. Importantly, did she adopt the tone and an aura of authority in the home? This is a tough one to describe, but it stems from her *knowing* that she is in charge. This can be facilitated in a number of ways, but the easiest way is to find opportunities to tell, not ask, the husband to do something. This behavior is obviously a little strange if practiced in front of others that are not aware of your experiment. However, it is perfectly appropriate, even desirable, when the two of you are alone.

The Wife's Opinion is the Most Important One in the House

Make certain that the wife has plenty of opportunity to fully express how she believes that the last ten days were different from the normal, day in day out, routine of the marriage. If the sense of having any authority in the home was completely new to her, then this says quite a bit about the relationship. The husband should dig down into the particulars of her reactions. He should understand what fundamentally appealed to her or perhaps did not appeal to her about the experience. I suspect that she will have embraced the new relationship dynamic enthusiastically. In any event, her reaction will serve as an important context in which to review the husband's reaction.

In regard to his reaction, looks for not only his general sentiment, but also the degree of his sentiment. Did he like it or did he *love* it. What did he like or love best? Were there particular elements of the Boot Camp that he enjoyed the most? Did he gain a new sense of appreciation for how much work that his wife actually does around the home? Most importantly, is this something that he wants to continue? Does he want to forever surrender authority in the marriage to his wife?

Decide Upon Next Steps

The discussion between the wife and husband inevitably leads us to the question of “what next?” How does the ten-day immersion in female authority lead to permanent changes in the relationship dynamic between the husband and the wife? Does it lead to any changes at all? It is possible, but unlikely that such a dramatic experiment between two consenting participants will have no impact at all in how the couple relate to each other over time. There are essentially three outcomes that can result from Boot Camp for any given couple. Let us review each of these.

Possible Outcome of the Boot Camp Trial Period

- Outcome 1: The couple decides that a female led household, as described in this book, is not right for them, but that there are elements of the dynamic that will improve the relationship. At the very least, the husband is likely to have a new appreciation for the sheer quantity of housework that his wife manages to accomplish. More importantly, he is likely to have a new appreciation for the structure of authority in the household that preceded the experiment. This follows the old adage that you do not know what you have until it is taken away. The husband does understand his own authority and influence in the marriage until he cedes it to his wife. This is an amazing awakening

that can easily be leveraged into a more equitable balance of control in the marriage going forward.

- Outcome 2: The couple decides that the experience was so positive for both of them that they decide to adopt it on a permanent basis. This is a very likely outcome if both of the spouses enjoyed the ten-days and recognize the benefits that it brought to their relationship. If this is the case, then the wife has to formalize her new authority as discussed previously in this book. If she senses that the Boot Camp went very well, she might want to be prepared that evening to have that special conversation. If she does not have the conversation that night, she needs to have it soon thereafter.
- Outcome 4: The couple decides that the experience was positive, but for them at least, this sort of thing is best enjoyed in small doses. I call this outcome the “Boot Camp Vacation Plan.” The couple agrees that it was a wonderful ten days, and while particular things that they learned about their relationship will certainly impact it going forward, that they are just not ready to commit to a permanent dynamic. They will, however, make periodic use of the Boot Camp concept to re-energize their marriage. The husband may choose to give it as a gift for Valentines Day or an anniversary. I think a “Ten Days at Boot Camp” gift certificate would be a present that many wives would like to receive from their husbands. The wife, alternatively, may decide that she needs to request (demand) a Boot Camp if she senses the relationship sliding in the wrong direction. Either way, ten-days of a husband surrendering completely to his wife would benefit any marriage.

As we conclude our discussion of the Boot Camp concept, I hope that the reluctant among you will see it as a safe and reasonable opportunity to explore new facets of your relationship with your spouse. The certain knowledge that it can end very shortly should assuage anyone’s fears that might be otherwise cautious about implementing changes in their

marriage. If you do decide to try it, take it seriously and stick it out to the end. This is particularly true if you are doing it at the urging of your spouse. Do not leave them with a sense that it did not work because you were unwilling to give it 100% of your effort and commitment.

The Wrap-Up

Your new marriage represents the opening of the most wonderful chapter in your life. You have so many possibilities and can take your relationship and your life in so many different directions. I hope you have found something in this book that strikes a chord, something that makes you realize that not only can you have a doting and adoring husband, but you deserve it.

I can easily recognize that much of what I advocate will strike many readers, men and women alike, as radical to say the very least. Just remember that from the very beginning I have told you that my book is based on a simple premise. That premise, simply stated, is that a man loves to be wrapped around the finger of the woman in his life. The premise is not radical, debatable perhaps, but not radical. Rather, it is in the *implications* of this premise where I part company with conventional thinking on relationships.

The most obvious implication for married couples, if one accepts my premise, is that husbands should make a *conscious and concerted effort* to be wrapped around their woman's finger. In other words, they should seek out changes in their relationship wherein their wife exerts control in the marriage through the use of her sexuality. These relationship changes will in fact be desirable to the husband. Other implications flow from here. There must of course be something in it for the wife. Her husband's constant devotion, adoration and respect for her decision making should be adequate to that end. Furthermore, if the true balance of power in the

relationship has shifted, it is only natural and much more practical, that she formalize that authority and that both spouses understand it and accept it as a matter of course.

I hope that by deploying the use of the narrative, the story about Cassie and Al, that I was effective in communicating some of these ideas. The story was certainly intended to ease you into some of the concepts in a non-threatening way. I hope that you as the reader could identify some parallels in the relationship between our characters and your own relationship with your spouse-to-be. This will have allowed the story to become personal for you in some way. I trust that by identifying with either Cassie or Al, you could more easily visualize how you could apply some of these principles to your own marriage.

Don't Fall into the Trap of Over-Analyzing this Book

As Cassie tells us in her story, her motivations were essentially practical and not philosophical. Many of the common problems that we suffer through as married couples can be solved when the husband leaves his ego at the door and cedes control in the marriage to his wife. Over time we may individually decide to move beyond the practical solutions offered by these ideas and perhaps embrace them on a whole different level. At some point we might reach the conclusion that this is exactly how men and women *should* relate to each other in a marriage. It is not just practical, but organically right that a woman take the position of authority over her husband. Regardless of what position you might eventually take on this issue, it is ultimately unimportant to this book. This book has been written as a practical guide and that is what it remains.

Old Ideas, New Spin

I have offered no big, new ideas in anything that I have written. The notion that women are better positioned for leadership has been often discussed. I mentioned earlier in the book that I have some evidence for this conclusion beyond my own experience. The Hagberg Consulting Group in Foster City California was recently cited in a popular weekly business magazine for some work that they have done in assessing the performance of senior executives. The Hagberg Group looked at executives from among their diverse clientele of technology, health-care-financial management and consumer goods companies. The conclusion was that, when rated by their peers, women outperformed their male counterparts on most every dimension upon which they were measured. These included the key leadership skills of goal setting and mentoring, skills that are no doubt useful in a marriage as well as in a business. Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter adds that “Women get high ratings on exactly those skills needed to succeed in the global Information Age, where teamwork and partnering are so important.” These qualities so readily found in women have no doubt contributed to the fact that women now represent over half (50.6%) of the 48 million employees in management, professional and related positions. This is the first time that women have moved past the 50% mark since the Bureau of Labor Statistics started collecting this data in 1983.

Another idea that is not new to this book is the concept of male orgasm denial. It has its roots in Tantra, which is an eastern philosophy relying heavily on yoga and meditation. It is often associated with an approach to sexuality involving specific positions and meditative processes. In Tantra, the male orgasm is not limited to the act of ejaculation itself. Implicit in the Tantra approach to the orgasm is that delaying or denying ejaculation can be pleasurable in and of itself, and creates, for lack of a better term, a form of spiritual orgasm. While the specifics and details are far beyond the

scope of this book, suffice it to say that I was not the first person to recognize the incredible positive impact that orgasm denial can have on men.

What I think is new in this book is the blending of these ideas into practical, and hopefully non-threatening, suggestions for positive changes in traditional relationships. Are these ideas right for everybody? Of course they are not. Are they right for you and your husband? That is the only question that matters.

A Final Plea to Try Something New in Your Relationship

I want to close with a message for the woman that is reading this book. If you find yourself highly excited about what you believe that the ideas in this book can offer your marriage, then *why wouldn't* you ask your fiancé or husband to read it? Do you accept that your relationship with him holds the most dramatic opportunities for creating true happiness for you? Close your eyes and imagine your life one-year from today. Do you want to believe that you have made the most of this year? Even if he decides that they are uninterested in the book, do you think that they will give even a *single thought* to your suggestion one-year from today? Will they even remember it? As in any decision, weigh the upside versus the downside. The upside on sharing this book with him has been provided in great detail in the preceding chapters. The downside... I'm not sure that one exists?

You make the call. Good luck!

Questions and Answers

I have divided this question and answer section up into those that would generally be of interest to wives, husbands, and then both together. I expect that some overlap will exist across these three categories and that anyone reading this book might find this entire chapter useful.

Questions from Brides

Q: If I don't like this, can things go back to normal again?

A: Absolutely yes. There is no reason that just because these ideas are intended to be permanent in nature that they cannot be dismissed altogether if you find that the relationship dynamic is not right for you. Every relationship evolves and changes over time. What might be right for you today, may not be right for you in two years. However, if you come to this conclusion after a very short time period, I encourage you to give it a few more months. Finding your comfort zone with your new authority may not happen overnight. Your new role in the household may take some initial adjustment, but once you settle into it, you may find that it will be difficult to walk away from all that it has to offer.

Q: Will I continue to respect my husband when he so readily gives in to everything that I ask of him? Isn't having a backbone kind of sexy?

A: Your husband will not be retiring his spine, his masculinity or his sex appeal if the two of you decide to go down this path together. In every other relationship in his life he can continue with whatever personality

has suited him well in the past. If you choose to assert your authority and modify his behavior around others, you may do so, but that is entirely up to you. If he is a “Type A” personality at work, he can continue to be so. If he comes on strong with his friends, neighbors, sisters, brothers, parents, etc. he can continue with that demeanor as well.

Even in his relationship with you, you should continue to expect that he would voice his opinion. The only difference is that he will respect the fact that your decision is the final say in the matter. You can decide for yourself to what extent his opinions impact your own decisions. In the end, however, having a single, final authority in the marriage is just a practical alternative to endless debates and arguments.

Q: Can I pick and choose the elements of this book that I like and ignore those about which I am still uncertain?

A: You can really do anything you like. The question is whether or not excluding key techniques will yield the desired results. Of course you are welcome to experiment, but I recommend that you implement these ideas more or less as I have described them.

Q: Sometimes I prefer the sex when he’s a little more aggressive. Can I have my cake and eat it too? Can I be in control of him, yet still feel like he is sometimes taking control of me in the bedroom?

A: Yes, but not at first and not all the time. At first, you really want to get him used to the fact that you are very much in control of the sexual dimension in your relationship. After he has become accustomed to this fact, you may certainly indulge yourself by rewarding him with an opportunity to ravage you (so to speak). Just make certain that it does not become the predominant way in which you engage in intimacy and that it only occurs as a result of your explicit instructions to do so. It is

also a very good idea to demand a massage, a hot cup of herbal tea or anything else that might please you immediately afterwards. This brings him back to the reality that you are still very much in control.

Q: How do I know when I have taken this too far?

A: Do not assume that he will not let you know that he is uncomfortable with the way the relationship is developing. Assume that he will embrace this with eager enthusiasm. If he does not, he will let you know right away. You should, in fact, tell him in no uncertain terms that you expect his open and honest feedback regarding the relationship.

Questions from Grooms

Q: It seemed to me that I really loved this at first, but now it seems like it doesn't have the same sizzle as it did when we first started. What happened?

A: If the relationship begins to lose its appeal to the husband, it is almost always because the wife has begun to take her role in the new dynamic for granted. While the wife is definitely in charge of the household, she needs to remain active in keeping her husband motivated and excited about this arrangement. She does this via the overt exercise of her authority, strategic orgasm denial, and aggressively flirting and teasing you during the course of the week. If she has become accustomed to you doing her laundry without having to be asked, she might consider telling you that she expects it done by such and such time. She can then evaluate the job that you have done and perhaps choose to deny you your orgasm because her clothes were not properly folded or ironed. She can then bring up the fact that she denied you at some point during the next day in some sort of teasing and flirtatious manner. All of these techniques, of course, have been discussed in the book. She just needs to

remember that this is not something that wives begin and then simply put on autopilot. It is a necessary and ongoing component of keeping you wrapped happily around her finger.

Q: How can I take this to the next level?

A: Every individual couple will have to strike a balance between how much control the wife asserts and how practical it is to weave that authority into the day in and day out realities of the relationship. There will certainly be both wives and husbands who cannot get enough of this new dynamic. I think, however, that this book offers a practical beginning and a practical end for most marriages. Couples wanting more will have to explore on their own ways in which they can build upon the techniques that I have already described.

Questions from Both Spouses

Q: What are the implications of this book on the way that we manage money in our household?

A: In any relationship, as in the world at large, money is a source of power. Ideally, the household finances should be consolidated and managed by the woman. The husband should operate under a budget that she approves, and he can appeal to his wife for exceptions to that budget. If, as a practical matter, the wife feels that she wants to defer the administrative component of managing the money (e.g. balancing a checkbook) then she can delegate this task as she would any other. If she decides to delegate this task, however, it is important that she get regular and frequent updates on the status of income and expenses in the home.

Q: We have some friends that we believe could benefit enormously from the ideas in this book. How can we introduce them to these ideas

without revealing the personal decisions that we have made in our own marriage?

A: Although Leigh Ann and Zach were willing to share these ideas openly with Cassie and Al, I highly recommend that you be less candid. This is a very personal matter, and these details are best kept between the wife and husband. There will always be a certain tension in the air if two couples get together and either one know just a little bit too much about the detailed personal life of the other. If you really want to share these ideas with another couple, send one or both of them the book in the mail with an anonymous note. Just make sure that you are discreet enough that they will have no idea who it was that sent them their little gift.

Q: How can we be certain that our children will not be influenced by the new arrangement?

A: This is a very important question. All that the children should notice is that the father treats the mother with respect and vice versa. Any sort of overt exercise of the wife's authority over her husband should be transparent to everyone but the husband himself. When the children are not around, it is fine for the wife to tell her husband that she expects something to be done, and even allude to the consequences that he can expect if it does not get done. However, when the children are present, she should word her demands in the form of a polite request. The fact that this new relationship dynamic will reduce tension and arguments in the household will result in a net positive environment for raising the children. There is not a reason in the world that the children should ever have to understand the underlying principles that have resulted in the more relaxed environment in the home.