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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

January 2005

A Man's Perspective On The Surrendered Wife

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When I began reading *The Surrendered Wife*, by Laura Doyle, I didn't expect to write an article about it. Before I finished reading the book, I knew that I would have to write the article. Before I could finish writing the article, I had to read the book again. It's a very important book.

Laura Doyle's book contains a strong autobiographical component which reveals her to be, among many other things, articulate, intelligent, perceptive, and sensitive. She's also occasionally insecure, frightened, and controlling. Regarding certain matters, she's distressingly ignorant. Sometimes, she can be a shrew. In other words, she's a real and believable woman with real and believable virtues and defects who is nevertheless on an "upward path". I have always hoped that women are inherently good and that they just don't know the first thing about how to behave around men. Laura Doyle does a fine job of addressing that deficiency, at least regarding wives and their husbands. If she actually follows the advice that she dispenses in her book, a question to which only John Doyle knows the answer for sure, then she could be the wife of any man's dreams, the woman that we sought for all of those years but never found.

Laura Doyle's book addresses several topics to varying degrees and in different ways. I can't possibly comment in this short article on every topic in her book. I won't even make all of the comments that I could make on the three topics that I will address. Those three topics are: wives in monogamous marriages with men, feminists in the workplace, and wives in sexual intercourse with their husbands. The reason for the third topic is that Laura Doyle views intimacy

in marriage as including sexual intercourse but not being limited to it. I think that's probably much more of a feminine than a masculine view of intimacy. Whatever the case, when she discusses sexual intercourse later in her book, she addresses it as being in addition to other aspects of intimacy.

The majority of Laura Doyle's book deals variously with the first of the three topics. Here's a very short quote from her *Introduction*:

The basic principles of a surrendered wife are that she:

- Relinquishes inappropriate control of her husband
- Respects her husband's thinking
- Receives his gifts graciously and expresses gratitude for him
- Expresses what she wants without trying to control him
- Relies on him to handle household finances
- Focuses on her own self-care and fulfillment

A surrendered wife is:

- Vulnerable where she used to be a nag
- Trusting where she used to be controlling
- Respectful where she used to be demeaning
- Grateful where she used to be dissatisfied
- Has faith where she once had doubt

Various little gems of wisdom are scattered lavishly throughout the book. Here are a few that I particularly liked.

- The only thing worse than a man you can't control is a man you can. (Chapter 2, *Give Up Control to Have More Power*)
- He'd rather have your blessings than your opinion. (Chapter 9, *Resist Biting the Bait*)
- A man is already halfway in love with any woman who listens to him. (Chapter 18, *Listen for the Heart Message*)
- ...asking a man how he feels is like asking a woman about her weight. (Chapter 25, *Be a Diplomat in the Male Culture*)

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After enduring feminist nonsense about gender equality for the past 30 or so years, I particularly appreciate Chapter 25, *Be a Diplomat in the Male Culture*.

Forget the notion that “more communication” is the key to an intimate marriage. Some things that are perfectly reasonable to discuss with women are not so comfortable for men. Talking about feelings is not a popular pastime in the male culture, so to be polite, don’t ask about them, but continue to share yours. Generally, men talk far less each day than women, so don’t expect your husband to want to talk as much as you.

The truth is, the less you communicate your complaints, negative thoughts, and criticisms to your husband, the better your intimacy will be, and the stronger your marriage. Withholding information from your husband may feel dishonest, but it’s really being mature and polite.

Men have a culture all their own and being a diplomat in it will improve domestic relations dramatically....

... when we overcommunicate with our husbands, and beg them to tell us what they are *feeling*, they have the sense that they have just landed on foreign ground — and generally it feels like enemy territory because they are being interrogated and bombarded.

Such attitudes in a wife probably seem like a dream to most husbands and like a nightmare to most wives. However, women shouldn’t be put off by the “return to the Dark Ages” that might seemingly be implied by Laura Doyle’s advice. As she states in her *Introduction*,

Surrendering to your husband is not about returning to the fifties or rebelling against feminism.

This book isn’t about dumbing down or being rigid.

It’s about following some basic principles that will help you change your habits and attitudes to restore intimacy to your marriage. It’s about having a relationship that brings out the best in both of you, and growing together as spiritual beings. Surrendering is both gratifying and terrifying, but the results — peace, joy, and feeling good about yourself and your marriage — are proven.

I think that Laura Doyle’s predictions of universally wonderful responses from husbands might be unduly optimistic. I think that many husbands might “take advantage” of the kind of behavior that she advises, rather than responding to it in kind, as she predicts. Even so, her suggestions are certainly worth a try. What does a wife have to lose? If surrendering doesn’t work then she can always return to being a shrew and a nag. If surrendering does work then — as Laura Doyle repeatedly assures us — the rewards are worth more than any amount of effort that might have been necessary to achieve them.

Later in her book, Laura Doyle briefly addresses her expectations as a feminist in the workplace. This next statement comes from Chapter 13, *Abandon the Myth of Equality*.

So, how can I advocate that women surrender to their husbands and still identify myself as a feminist?

I believe that feminism addresses what I want at work, but says little about what to do in my marriage. In the workplace, I would never settle for anything less than equal pay, equal opportunity, and having a voice equal to my male counterparts. But at home, those qualities contribute nothing to the romantic, intimate relationship I want.

Fortunately, only a very small part of her book deals with that topic. It would have been better if she had left it out altogether because it doesn’t have anything to do with marriage and it reveals her very inconsistent view of men. She appears to regard men at work as a completely different species than husbands. She seems to believe that all of the gender considerations and attitudes regarding husbands that she so wonderfully addresses in the major part of her book don’t have any relevance at all to men at work. It’s a sadly typical feminist misconception regarding men at work. My favorite statement of it is that feminists expect men at work to successfully pretend that women at work have nothing but a smooth piece of skin between their legs, kind of like a Barbie Doll. In fact, we all know better. I’m reminded of an incident that occurred back during my days as a →

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Nuclear Engineer at GE. A female colleague came into my office and, noticing my Playboy calendar, commented that one of the women in the calendar that year looked exactly like her. I flipped through the pictures and, pointing, said, "That one." The woman was outraged that I would know so accurately the appearance of her naked body. She even seemed to think that I might somehow have been spying on her. Maybe she never heard about interpolating within the known data. The fact is that a woman is always completely naked under her clothes and there isn't anything at all that she can do about it. If she's uncomfortable about that then she should probably avoid the proximity of men. From Laura Doyle's brief treatment of workplace relationships, I'd guess that she's utterly unaware of such attitudes in men. Of course, we don't usually reveal those attitudes to women.

Laura Doyle displays additional naiveté in Chapter 20, *Say Yes to Sex*, one of the chapters in which she deals with sexual intercourse in marriage. From time to time throughout the book, she acknowledges two categories of men: Good Guys and Creeps. I have the impression that she perceives those two categories to be mutually exclusive and sufficient to include all possible living men. It's the typically narrow feminist view of diversity among men. In the section titled *The Seven Sexual Myths*, she asserts that a Good Guy will never seek sexual intercourse outside of his own marriage, regardless of the provocation. I'm particularly annoyed by her simplistic view that a man who is "sleeping with other women" is a sex addict. Does a preference for variety in my diet cause me to be a food addict? Nonsense. She devotes at least two chapters to giving advice about how a wife can get more and better sex from her husband. Why doesn't that make the **wife** a sex addict? The answer is that the whole concept of sexual addiction is nonsense.

My observations and experiences reveal a different view of male sexual fidelity, or lack thereof, than the one that Laura Doyle imagines. Monogamy is a favored goal of many ideologies and a cherished fantasy of most wives,

at least regarding their own husbands. Promiscuity is discouraged by social pressure and by the fear of consequences. However, monogamy isn't natural male behavior. As a previous girlfriend used to say, "a man will always take it when it's offered" if he thinks that he can get away with it. For the record, I'll note that we couldn't have all those affairs unless there were a lot of available women. My experience is that women are just as naturally promiscuous as men. Note that an office affair includes both a man and a woman. Also, being married is almost never a deterrent. Some of the best girlfriends are married women. Most of the advice that Laura Doyle gives regarding the proper management of sexual behavior by wives is good advice. Chapters 19 and 20 are, mostly, a wonderful exposition of enlightened sexual behavior in the specific situation of monogamous heterosexual marriage. However, her unquestioning acceptance of things that are NOT foregone conclusions such as the supposed harm of unconventional relationships or adolescent sex and the supposed validity of notions like sexual addiction and date rape are a disappointing aspect of her book.

For the most part, the book is well written, entertaining, informative, and easy to read. The very short topical sections make it easy to lay the book down and pick it up again later. A very small portion of the book is based on misinformation, ignorance, naiveté, or an excessively uncritical acceptance of certain politically correct ideas. By far, however, most of the book is an engaging and articulate explanation of a wonderful philosophy about how to be a good wife. I'd say that it's well worth reading. Women will learn how to be better wives and men might get some insight about how to appreciate, protect, and cherish a good wife when they're lucky enough to have one. ♂

The Surrendered Wife: A Practical Guide for Finding Intimacy, Passion, and Peace With a Man, by Laura Doyle, A Fireside Book Published by Simon & Schuster, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore, Copyright © 1999, 2001 by Laura Doyle, paperback, 285 pages, ISBN 0-7432-0444-1

Special thanks to Sir Donald the Elusive for donating the book. —editor

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Nation in Distress

To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.

—Confucius

Some women work so hard to make good husbands that they never manage to make good wives.

—Anonymous

Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: Sir James the Bold, SantaClara Bob, Lady Jan the Voluptuous, C. Victor G., of Tonopah, Arizona, Joseph, of Northridge, California, Stephen, of Fremont, California, and [Sir John the Generous](#).

—editor

Buck Hunter Shoots Off His Mouth

Dear Buck

How do you like listening to Telemann?

—Music Lover

Dear Music Lover

I got a Walkman but I never heard of a Telemann. I just use the phone in the kitchen.

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Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by David, of Idaho Falls, Idaho.

- You take a bus and you're shocked at two people speaking English.
- Your child's 3rd-grade teacher has purple hair, a nose ring, and is named Breeze.
- You've been to a baby shower that has two mothers and a sperm donor.
- It's barely sprinkling rain and there's a report on every news station: "STORM WATCH 2005."
- A low speed police pursuit will interrupt ANY TV broadcast.
- You can't remember ... is pot illegal? ∞

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