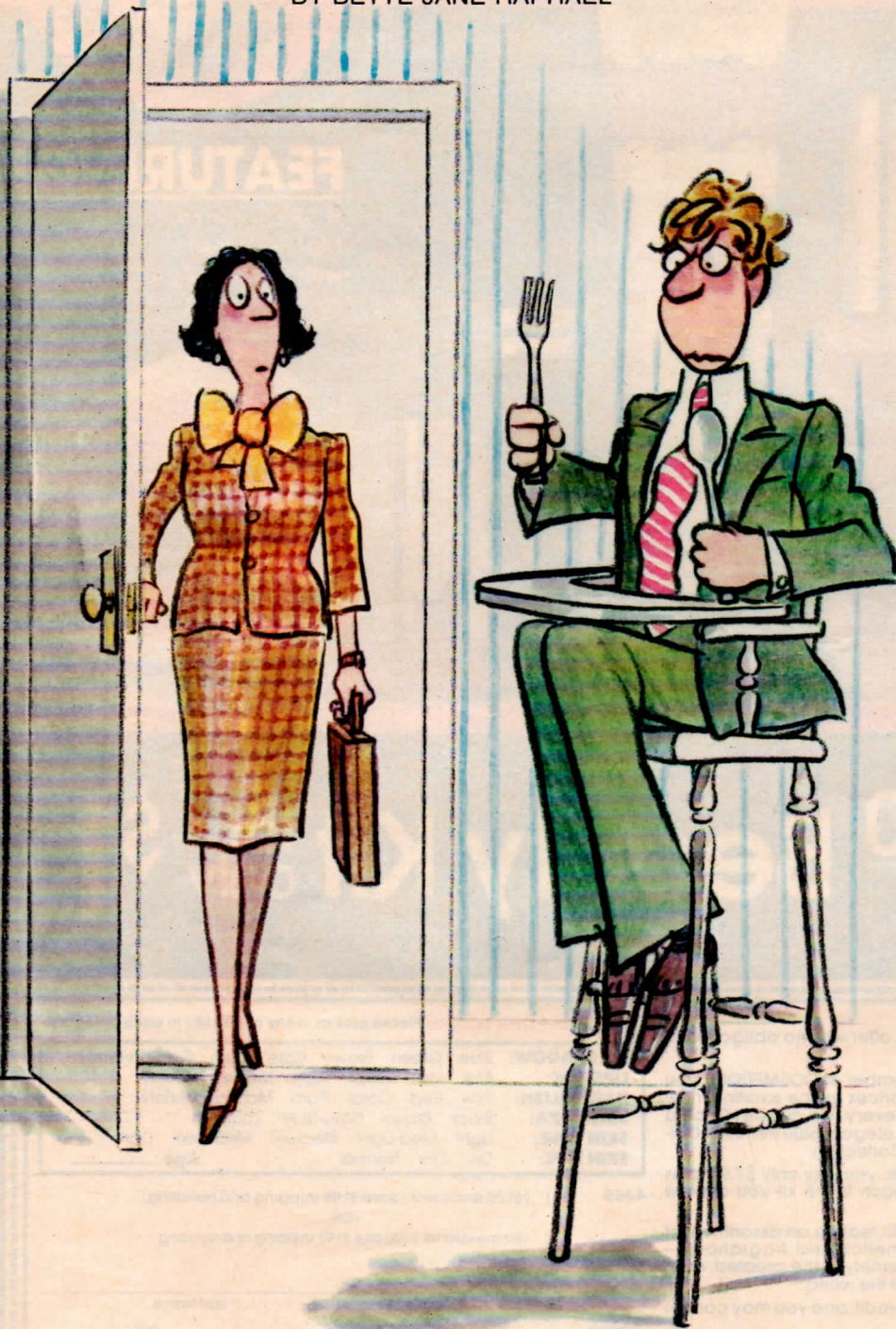


LIVING WITH A SPOILED MAN

BY BETTE-JANE RAPHAEL



It is six o'clock on a Monday evening, as I am finishing up a good day's work, that I receive a phone call from the man in my life with the following news: He's just made an unexpected and highly gratifying professional coup; he's having drinks with an associate and they've decided to celebrate; Why don't I get a sitter for the baby, make reservations at a restaurant, order the car from the garage, put on something sexy and come downtown to pick him up for dinner? I hang up the phone, grab my daytime baby-sitter, who is just leaving, and promise her a million dollars to stay until midnight. Then I call a restaurant that usually requires a two-week wait for reservations but that tonight has just had a 7:30 cancellation. Then I order the car. When my love calls me back ten minutes later to find out if I have everything arranged, I am looking to see if I have something to wear that is both sexy and clean. I promise to pick him up on the dot of seven, which I do.

I told all this to a friend at lunch the next day, as an object lesson in my own competence. But my friend didn't see it that way. She seemed to think the story told less about my competence than it did about my candidacy for the meatball club. "He had *you* get the baby-sitter *and* make the reservation *and* get the car and pick him up?" she asked in a tone of voice that implied I could only be living with Simon Legree's favorite nephew. "Why didn't *he* do something? It was his celebration. Boy, is he spoiled!"

Spoiled? Spoiled describes kids who have temper tantrums because they can't have their own home video computer systems. Spoiled describes teenagers who leave their rooms looking like areas of flood devastation on the assumption that, when they return, all will have been put to right by—as the mother of one such adolescent describes it—"The Unseen Hand." But can a grown man be described as spoiled? You bet. How else is one to classify behavior that takes for granted the delivery of a variety of services? Spoiled is as good a word as any.

But if my own Mr. Right takes certain things for granted, he has plenty of company. Practically every woman friend I asked found it absurdly easy to come up with examples of behavior on the part of her spouse that could fairly be described not only as spoiled but as spoiled rotten. / turn to page 18

"Why is it that the man who takes perfectly good care of himself when there is no female in his life becomes helpless around the house when he starts sharing it with a woman?"

Eve

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continued

Here we are, in an era of supposedly raised consciousnesses and razed sex roles, and yet it looks as if most men are still behaving like Victorian patriarchs. What is more surprising is how we women provide a fertile medium in which they can not only grow but flourish.

I think the word *spoiled* could certainly describe the ex-husband of a friend of mine who, after showering, would invariably grab one clean towel to dry himself with, while throwing a second, equally clean towel on the floor to stand on. These were towels my friend had to drag to and from the laundry room in the basement of their apartment building on Saturday mornings. She couldn't wash them during the week because she was too busy working as a high-school guidance counselor—a job that requires approximately the same energy expenditure as heavy construction work. When my friend would try to explain to her husband the work that went into providing clean towels, he would look at her as if she had indeed gone off her rocker and say, "What's the big deal? They're only towels!" (Another woman, whose husband also stands on clean towels, recently devised what she calls "the locker-room theory of behavior modification" to explain the phenomenon. "They learned to do it in all those places where they played ball or worked out," she says. "They think

that some skinny fellow in a white T-shirt comes along through our bathrooms and picks up the towels when they're finished with them.")

And if these men are spoiled, what about the legion who leave their dishes and glasses in the sink as if they expected the things to rinse themselves off and jump into the dishwasher unaided, or who ask if their suits came back from the cleaners, as if all they had to do was walk back on their own; or the men who step carefully around the neatly packaged bags of garbage left by the door to be taken out? Am I wrong, or do they seem to expect the same kind of service at home that they might get at a resort in the south of France?

But not even there could they get the sort of emotional cosseting some of them seem to expect from women. There is, for instance, the man who told his wife right after they were married, "One thing I'll always expect is a kiss when I come in the door at night." (Since it turns out that she works longer hours than he does, he now gets that kiss from their dog.) There's also the man whose wife tells me that at their house "there seems to be a certain expectation that I'm in charge of entertainment. When he comes home tired and cranky, I'm supposed to provide not only the dinner but snappy conversation to go along with it, even if I'm tired and cranky, too. I'm the wife, so it seems it's my job to cheer him up."

Other women variously describe be-

ing assigned the roles of social director, caretaker and nurse simply by virtue of their femininity. "He obviously believes that making social engagements is woman's work," says one friend. "He always says something like, 'Why don't you call the Joneses and make plans for us to see them?' He never says, 'I think I'll call the Joneses and make plans for us to see them.'"

Finally, there is the man who, his wife says, expects to be speedily and unconditionally forgiven for any trespass, from arriving home three hours later than expected to saying something that hurts her feelings. "He allows me the right to get mad at him," she says, "but then he expects me to forgive him immediately, just the way his mother did."

Did somebody say "mother"? I'm afraid so. Once again, blame is to be laid at the feet of this poor beleaguered woman. Truth to tell, mothers often do spoil their sons, sending them out into the world with truly off-the-wall assumptions about women. One friend recalls the chill that came over her heart when, at her wedding, her new mother-in-law whispered, "Well, dear, maybe you can get him to pick up after himself."

However, mothers are not the only ones who spoil men rotten. Wives and girlfriends help, too. Or else why, when my conquering hero asked me to do everything for our gala evening of celebration, hadn't I told him to take care of

a couple of the arrangements himself, instead of following his instructions like some combination of social secretary and paid escort? The answer to that may lie in my friend Emily's theory of Voluntary Female Servitude: Because women tend to see men as being so self-sufficient we are anxious to make ourselves useful to them in any way we can, even if that way entails essentially becoming their servants. Well, if someone presents herself to you as a willing slave, you'd be a fool not to take advantage of the offer. And so it is with men. Which is why the man who takes perfectly good care of himself when there is no female in his life becomes completely helpless around the house when he starts sharing it with a woman. Suddenly he never even heard of an oven, and the ins and outs of a coin-operated washing machine are a mystery to him.

But before we go blaming ourselves too harshly for this state of affairs, maybe we should take a look at the roots of our behavior. The fact is that most of us grew up in traditional homes, where we saw fathers who went off to work in the morning and mothers who spent the day seeing to it that they came back to (1) a clean home in which all the appliances worked, (2) a good dinner, (3) a supply of laundered underwear and well-ironed shirts and (4) a carefully groomed and smiling wife.

These are our images of legitimate loving, and all our later acquired ideas about equality can't erase them. If a man expects certain services performed for him, it is because he saw his mother performing them for his father. And if a woman expects certain things from him in return—material and emotional support, fidelity, praise—it's because those are the things she saw her father giving her mother.

Perhaps this is why, when the man with whom I share my bed gets into it at night without bothering to remove and fold the bedspread, or tosses over his shoulder instructions for me to call and arrange to have our windows washed, I rarely reply that he seems as physically able as I to perform these chores. I understand where his assumptions come from. I understand, too, that part of me believes that I should be doing all these things he expects of me, the things that my mother did for my father. This belief persists in spite of the fact that he does not take care of me quite the same way my father took care of my mother and in spite of the fact that, unlike my mother, taking care of my mate is not my only job. I also work for a living. Still, the things he expects of me are—in my mind, too—valid expressions of love, and somewhere I think that, if I don't make sure there is milk for his cereal or don't wash his wool sweaters by hand, I am not being a loving woman.

And if I'm to be honest about it, I also have to admit that I have a few expectations of my own—which, I realize, might very easily entitle me to be called spoiled. After all, I saw what my mother got in return for the services she

continued on page 110

Sally Struthers
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LIVING WITH A SPOILED MAN

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rendered. I saw the material comforts—like wall-to-wall carpeting and shoulder-to-hem mink. These observations resulted in the expectation of being taken care of by the man I love and account for the fact that I am likely to get sulky every Christmas when, once again, I find myself *not* draped in fur.

Many women with similar expectations are engaged these days in a never-ending fight against them, in the certain knowledge that dependency is not, ultimately, in their own best interests. Deep down we know that we're better off buying our own fur coats. It is because we are engaged in this struggle that we tend to get a little touchy about the fact that men don't seem to be similarly engaged in so fierce a battle against *their* expectation of us.

Which is why it looks as if we're going to have to fight their battles for them. In order to do this, we must tell other women—our daughters included—that when they meet a man and have an immediate desire to cook dinner for him—an act that legitimates the relationship in a way that going to bed with him does not—to resist the urge. Instead, suggest that the two of you cook dinner for each other. Fight the desire to show him how incredibly competent you are in the kitchen, or you might find yourself stuck there forever. Resist every urge you have to prove yourself indispensable. It is the road to

his infantilization and your martyrdom—neither of which is a pretty prospect. Remember, spoiled men need our help! We can't afford to be stingy where their reclamation is concerned.

That is why at our house we're now sleeping under a blanket *and* a bedspread. I figure that, when the weather heats up again, he'll realize something is afoot. When he asks me if I'm uncomfortably warm, I'll say no. Finally, maybe he'll take the damn thing off himself!

If you have something to say on this subject, we would love to hear from you. Send your letter to: Spoiled Men, McCall's, 230 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10169.

PEACE ON EARTH

see page 69

Design by Carl Tcherny. Embroidery by Miriam Kursawe. Photograph by Karl Eric Steinbrenner. Linen by OOE/USA, Inc. Embroidery floss by DMC.

For a full-size, charted instruction sheet, send a stamped, self-addressed, business-size envelope and 50 cents to: McCall's, 230 Park Avenue, Dept. 733A, New York, N.Y. 10169.

ARMOIRES ARE THE ANSWER

see pages 78 to 81

Page 78: Armoire from the "Country" collection, Thomasville Furniture Industries, Inc. "Exeter Ribbon" bed linens and flat sheets shirred on walls, Martex. Chair and candlestick lamp, from Chapman. Three-piece AM/FM stereo radio/cassette/recorder and color television, Panasonic. Praxis electric typewriter, Olivetti. Home computer, Timex. "Viewpoint" Antron carpet, Karastan. Black Trimline telephone, The Bell System.

Page 79: "Cupboard," from the "Provence" collection, and footstool, Hickory Mfg. Co., Inc. Kilim rug, from Morjikian. Blue velvet fabric on wing chair and flamestitch fabric on footstool, by Mastercraft for Collins & Aikman. "Jugurtha" fabric used for making table skirt, by Bouscass of France. Table lamp and rabbit sculpture from Chapman. All stereo equipment, video cassette recorder and Atari video system, from Tech Hi-Fi. KV-9400 color television, Sony. Original oil landscape, from Schillay & Rehs.

Page 80: "The Entertainer" armoire, American of Martinsville. Country Heart Stripe wall covering, Hinson & Co. Quartz clock and yellow clip-on lamp, George Kovacs Lighting. Food processor, Cuisinart. Most kitchen accessories shown from Hoan.

Page 81: Armoire and painted rocking horse, Habersham Plantation. "Buddy Lattice" wall covering and "Buddies" fabric shirred on door panels, by Cheryl Lewin Accents for Prelude. Toys, games and stuffed animals, from F.A.O. Schwarz. Children's dresses, Love Company. Play clothes, by Norma Kamali.

CREDITS

PAGE 28, TOP LEFT: GLOBE PHOTOS; TOP RIGHT: THE PENGUIN COLLECTION; BOTTOM: UPI. PAGE 42, BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH: SHOSTAL ASSOCIATES. PAGES 72 & 73: STYLIST, ELIZABETH LIPSCHUTZ. PAGE 112: JAMES L. WOODARD/SHOSTAL ASSOCIATES.

THROUGH AN ERROR WE FAILED TO MENTION THAT THE ARTICLE "STARVING FOR ATTENTION," IN OUR NOVEMBER ISSUE, WAS EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOK *STARVING FOR ATTENTION*, BY CHERRY BOONE O'NEILL, PUBLISHED BY CONTINUUM.

SELF-MASSAGE: A MARVELOUS WAY TO FEEL GOOD ALL OVER

continued from page 85

HIPS AND BUTTOCKS

10. *The Knuckle Stroke* (helps relieve stiffness in the hips): Lie on your left side with your right knee bent toward the chest. Make a fist with your right hand, and place your knuckles on the edge of your right hipbone. Applying firm but comfortable pressure with your knuckles, stroke diagonally across the right buttock toward the tailbone. Continue down and across to the underside of the buttocks. Release your fist, and stroke back up with the palm of your hand. Repeat ten times, slowly; then change sides, and work the opposite hip and buttock.

11. *Hip Percussions* (stimulate the circulation): Lie on your side and do this exercise with one hand, or stand and use both hands. Position the hand in a half fist with the fingers together, so your hand looks like a cup. When you strike the skin with your hand in this position, it should make a slight suction noise. Keeping your shoulders relaxed, cup all over your hips and buttocks. Use a lighter motion on bony protuberances.

FEET

12. *Foot and Toe Stretches* (relieves aching feet, helps prevent fallen arches): For toe stretches, sit with one leg crossed over the opposite thigh so that the foot hangs freely. Curl your fingers over the toes, with your palm on the top of the foot and your fingertips at the base of the toes. Moving your hand forward, stretch the toes so they curl under. With your palm on the sole and your fingertips on the top of the foot, stretch the toes up by pressing down on the top of the foot. Repeat on the opposite foot.

For foot stretches, sit or lie down with your feet 12 inches apart. Point your toes toward your face, then down, then toward each other and then outward, holding each position for ten to twenty seconds. Repeat the sequence five times, shaking out your feet between each. Make circles with your ankles, three times to the right and three times to the left.

PHILANDERER

*I had a rendezvous with
Sleep,
But he, quick lover of the deep,
Dark night, found trysts with
me had palled.
I waited while the dull hours
crawled,
I waited when the clock chimed
three,
Then four, and still no sleep for
me.
Finally, when night was gone,
That errant rascal came—at
dawn.*

—LENORE EVERSOLE FISHER

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