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Wives Submit -- Husbands Love

By Mrs. Paul E. King

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"Here. Read this!" Ruth Angel said, all but shoving the religious paper under her husband's nose.

Tom shrugged, then bristled; then, grabbing the paper up in his hands the way he'd hold a squirming, struggling piglet that resisted his touch when he wanted to check it out and look it over for size and quality, he tore the paper in two, his eyes great, blazing, angry balls of fire.

"Another thing on marriage, huh?" he hissed the exclamation through clenched teeth, his fists tightly-knotted.



**"I'm the root of all evil,"
Tom said bitterly.**

"But Tom, something's got to be done!"

"Sure. Sure! Our marriage is 'going to pieces!'" Tom mocked in mimicry of his wife. "And I'm to blame. I'm the root of all evil around this place. So what!"

Ruth made a whimpering sound much like that of an injured puppy. "But Tom," she remonstrated, "the divorce epidemic is no longer merely limited to the city; it's beginning to reach us here in the country. Families are breaking up, farms are fractured and..., and people are being hurt -- sometimes permanently."

"Sure. Sure," Tom ejaculated again. "And, in our case, I'm the blame." Getting quickly to his feet, he stormed further, "I'll tell you one thing, Ruth. As soon as you do more than profess to love the Lord, I may begin to listen. Not before! I'm sick and tired of all your nagging."

"But, Tom..."

"You heard me. I mean it!"

The loud banging of the door told Ruth that her husband was gone.

She stood staring at the floor like one dumb. She felt numb in her body and trembly-weak in her knees. Was their marriage over? she wondered with fear. But no, that couldn't be. It just couldn't! They had been married less than six years.

It had been going along in a state of chill for the past year or so, she realized suddenly, too warm to be dead but too cold to qualify even as friendship.

If only Tom were not so downright bull-headed and stubborn, she mused. All he thought about anymore was the price of cotton, beans, hogs and combines-in that order. These were the most important things in his life, it seemed. It didn't matter that he had a wife -- she was unimportant. The farm, and its progress, was the all-important thing in his life. The only important thing really, she thought, feeling terribly injured and neglected.

She recalled how happy and elated they had been when Tom's father, forced to retire from farming for health reasons, had asked Tom to take over the farm and its complete management. It had been their dream come true! But dreams that come true are no longer dreams; they are reality.

The reality of Tom's and her new life together on the farm was a husband under pressure, throwing every waking minute into farming, wanting desperately to make that farm go and prove to his wife and himself that he could do it.

With sudden force and subtlety, their former beautiful and satisfying relationship was thrown off balance. With Tom's pre-occupation with farming, Ruth's feeling of unimportance in his life became paramount. He was no longer with her at certain hours every day and he seldom was home in time for her regularly-set, carefully-prepared meals. He had no time for projects -- the together kind -- and there wasn't even time to talk. Always, it was work, work, and more work. He was a workaholic, she thought bitterly.

Ruth felt devastated. Tom no longer cared for her, she was sure. To him, she was worthless. Positively and absolutely worthless!

Tears stole from her eyes and scurried down her sun-burned cheeks. What good was taking care of his many pigs while he worked the soil, not caring the least about her? she thought with bitter resentment. Let him have the farm; she would get a job in town, move into an apartment and have some peace.

Getting out of her apron (not even bothering to wash the breakfast dishes), Ruth hurried up the stairs to their bedroom. Throwing clothes hastily and quickly into her suitcase (had Tom bought it for her purposely? she wondered as she packed), she was soon out of the house and on her way to the city.

She bought a paper and did a quick check in the Want Ad section, and when she found an advertisement suited to her secretarial ability, she drove to the building where the help was wanted.

On her way up the elevator to the suite of offices, a young woman gazed, then paused in her round of duties.

"Ruth," she called. "Ruth Angel! Fancy seeing you hear!"

Ruth spun around and came face to face with Janette Carpenter. "Janette!" she exclaimed in surprise. "Do you work here?" she asked quickly.

"Yes. Yes, I do. But quick, tell me something; can you take lunch with me? You're in town on business for Tom, I suppose. But an hour for lunch! Surely he can spare that much for me. After all, it's been years since we last saw each other. How about it, Ruth? Quick, I'm in a hurry. Work hours, you know." "Wh . . . where will I . . . meet you?"

"Right here, of course. In this building, I mean, in the lobby downstairs. At twelve o'clock sharp." "Twelve sharp!" Ruth parroted, watching Janette smile at her as she entered one of the many doors down the long hall and disappeared inside.

Now what? she thought miserably. She couldn't get work here, not with Janette working in the same building; she'd know that hers and Tom's marriage was on the rocks.

Newspaper in hand, Ruth pushed the button and waited for the arrival of the elevator to take her down to the first floor, her mind in a whirl. Outside the tall building she jotted the number down on a piece of paper for her convenience in locating it for the lunch date with her friend; then she headed for the car. Turning the key in the lock, she opened the door and slid behind the wheel, trembling like a leaf.

"Now what do I do?" she asked herself out loud. "Where to from here -- till 12 o'clock?"

Unfolding the paper, she scanned the ads again, but nothing appealed to her. Nothing, but the one in the same building where Janette worked. Well, that was out, she decided, looking down the list of available apartments.

On an impulse, she started the car and drove away from the city out to a suburban area where there were rows and rows of new apartments -- acres and acres

of them. She had seen them when she drove in from the farm. Now she was eager to see what they looked like at close range.

She turned down a lane called Sunshine Road. A sharp pang, much like a dart, shot through her heart. How much sunshine was there, really, inside these lovely, exclusive looking apartments? she wondered. Were other couples having problems like Tom and she? Was there bickering and quarreling?

Ruth shuddered. What had happened to their marriage? she asked herself. Why had it gone stale?

Ahead of her, she saw a young woman stacking suitcases inside the trunk of a car. Moving, perhaps, she decided. Then another thought struck her: separation!

Accelerating harder, Ruth hurried past her, her own conscience and heart accusing her. What's more, she felt restless.

She turned down a street called Pleasant Lane; it crossed Happiness Court. Suddenly she felt ill. What a farce, she mused, confident that very little sunshine and happiness or pleasantness resided in many of the beautiful buildings. It was almost mockery to name streets by such lovely names, she decided, when there was so much heartache and heartbreak in the world.

In disgust, she headed the car back toward the city. She would wait for Janette, she decided, then go from there after her friend returned to work.

Janette was punctual to the minute, and over a crisply-cool, delightful delicious salad, Ruth learned the reason for her friend's desire to speak with her.

"I'm so happy!" Janette exclaimed, reaching across the table and giving Ruth's hand a tight little squeeze. "I felt I just had to share with someone."

"Share? What?" Ruth asked.

"You mean you haven't heard?" Janette's eyes were dark and round and merry looking.

"I'm sorry, Janette, but I don't know what you're talking about," came Ruth's honest reply.

"Oh, but naturally you wouldn't. You, on the farm, away from city gossip and talk. Well, it's this way, Ruth: Jerry and I were on the verge of separation and divorce . . ."

Ruth gasped; involuntarily her hand flew to her throat.

"I'm sure it's quite a shock to you," Janette continued; "especially since you hadn't heard or known. Then, too, you and Tom have such a stable and beautiful relationship that even the thought of separation would be repulsive and unthinkable to either of you. But Jerry and I... well..., frankly, it all amounted to stubbornness and rebellion in both of us. I wasn't submissive, like the Bible says the woman is supposed to be to her husband, and Jerry got to the place where he wasn't as loving and considerate and kind as he could have been. Consequently, we were at dagger points with each other almost constantly. I dreaded coming home from work at night, and he almost hated the sight of me; said all I did was nag, nag, nag.

"And it was true, Ruth. That was the part that hurt so badly. I'd shove one article after another under his nose while he was eating -- or, I should say, trying to eat. They all dealt with marriage -- what to do, how to make it work, et cetera. I learned the hard way, that marriage articles usually contain much good advice. Converting it into action and putting it to practice was the struggle.

"We were a mess, Jerry and I. Our home was on the rocks, figuratively speaking, and our respective jobs were feeling the effects of our battling at home. No one can do his or her best work nor make best and proper decisions when the emotional spark plugs are all fouled up. When a marriage sputters, so does one's business. Jerry's, in our case."

Ruth felt hot then cold. It was like Janette was relating hers and Tom's marriage problems. But Janette didn't know, she reminded herself.

"Our hearts and our home were turning cold and icy even though our thermostat was set at 70, and our two small children were the innocent and much-frightened victims of our constant bickering and fighting. Knowing that something had to be done, and that quickly, I called on an old acquaintance of my mother's. That dear old soul showed me, through the word of God, where our trouble was coming from. Honestly Ruth, you'll never know how wretched I felt as she read Scripture verse after Scripture verse to me on the duties of husbands and wives. I fell far short of the mark, I must confess, and I told her as much.

" 'Do you really want to make your marriage work?' she asked me, looking me in the eye. I told her that I did -- very much so. Next she asked me if I had ever been truly born again by God. That hit my ego part, for I had thought that because I attended church regularly I was a Christian.

"She continued her questioning and that's when I knew, in the light of the Scripture which she was reading, that I had never had a personal, definite knowledge of sins forgiven.

"She prayed with me then, and when I got up off my knees I knew I was truly converted; God's Spirit bore witness to my heart. Oh, Ruth, that has been one of the

happiest times of my life. That, and when I went on into holiness of heart and got sanctified wholly.

" 'Now,' said my dear deceased mother's friend, 'Your husband is not a Christian, right?' I told her no. She barraged me with questions.

" 'First of all,' she asked, 'Do you really love your husband? Are you certain your attitude toward him is not bitter and resentful?.., you are to submit. Remember this always, Janette,' she instructed. 'Pray that you will love him the way Christ loved you and forgave you.

" 'Next,' she continued, 'do you want his salvation or is it merely so you will have an easier, lighter load to carry and bear? Have you been able to catch a vision of your husband spending eternity in Hell? Can you see past what he is to what he could be through Jesus' blood?'

"By now I was feeling the weight of my responsibility to my husband, Ruth; and, too, my heart felt nothing but a deep, beautiful and wonderful love for him. Tears stung my eyes and I was so very happy.

"My friend continued, and with each probing, searching question my heart felt a humbleness and a meekness heretofore unknown to me.

" 'Suppose Jerry cannot see Christ through you,' she added. 'Are you meek or do you loudly demand your rights?' she asked further. 'Are you a peacemaker or do you flare up at the least hint of an argument? And what about your patience; are you long suffering or do you pout when you can't have your way?'

" 'Does your husband feel wanted, needed, and respected as the man of the house? Perhaps you are so busy with outside activities that he only sees you as you pass coming and going. If so, your actions tell him that you prefer others' company to his. That job you took is telling him more loudly than words that he is not able to supply you the way you want to be supplied...'

"Oh, Ruth, she asked and told me so very many things and I had been guilty of them all. But now I was all new inside, and I knew that with God's forgiveness in my heart and His wonderful peace in my soul, our home was going to be reestablished and stabilized again.

"I hurried home to Jerry and told him that I had found Christ. I asked his forgiveness, and I informed him that I was going to be God's kind of wife to him. And a most beautiful thing happened Ruth: as I submitted to Jerry, he became loving and affectionate to me, and now he too is saved and sanctified wholly. This is my last week of work; I'm going in for a full-time wife, mother and keeper at home job. It's a Biblical position. We're so happy. So very happy -- in the Lord and with each other. Christ has

revolutionized our hearts and our home -- Oops! I didn't notice the time. And here you are, not having time to say a thing! Forgive me, please; I didn't mean to monopolize the conversation, but I just had to share it with someone and I'm so happy it was you!"

"And I'm happy too, Janette. So happy. You'll never know what this has meant to me."

"I must run," Janette said. "But do come by and see Jerry and me some time. We'd be delighted to have you and Tom. It's been great seeing you again, Ruth. Thank Tom for me, for giving me an hour of your precious time."

For a long while after her friend had gone, Ruth sat thinking. Then she got to her feet and started for the car.

Once on the road home, her heart skipped a beat Guilty! Guilty! On all counts! her conscience told her, and she agreed fully.

Her first stop was at the small church in the country. She knew what she must do, and she intended to do it thoroughly this time. No mere head and mouth "acceptance." Ah no! This time she would stay on her knees until her heart told her that she was a child of God -- like Janette's did her. And she would not leave that mourner's bench until she did know. She had been exceeding sinful and wrong in wanting to leave her husband, in thinking her marriage had been terminated. God's Word had told her specifically that the marriage contract was for life.

Pulling up in front of the neat but unpretentious white frame church, Ruth hurried down the aisle to the altar, weeping contritely and brokenly and feeling for the world like she was the cause of all Tom's and her trouble. Janette's friend's questions had jabbed her heart. She was guilty; she was weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Mercury lights burned blue-white around barns and in front of houses as Ruth turned the car down the black top road to their farm. Inside her heart a light brighter than the noonday sun shone.

She pulled into the driveway and hurried up the familiar sidewalk. The door swung open.

"Ruth! Ruth!" Tom exclaimed, rushing out to meet her.

"Tom! Oh my darling husband! I'm sorry for everything. I'm to blame; please forgive me." They were in each other's arms.

"We'll sell the farm," Tom was saying in her ear.

"No, Tom. No! Christ will make all the difference. See if He doesn't! I'm converted, Tom, and I'm ready to submit. You shall be the head of the house. This farm's an ideal place to raise a family."

"I have neglected you, Ruth. It's not worth it -- all this slavish work while sacrificing our marriage. And. . . what did you just say?" Tom asked, looking full into his wife's radiant face.

"I said I got saved, Tom. I'm a/l new and different inside. And, Tom dear, I want you to know Christ the way I know Him now."

"Oh Ruth, Ruth! you really are different; I can see it and feel it. Tell me more; I'm ready to listen . . ."

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THE END