

## Abandoned

My wife returned to college two weeks after her forty-fifth birthday. I felt abandoned. It was horrible. I was nearing retirement myself, and had planned to sit around the house all day, giving her advice on a variety of important topics. Immy said she'd rather hear from someone who knew what he was talking about. That made me resent telling her God allowed redheads to do anything they damn well pleased.

"You know," I lied straight-faced, "if you'd stayed in school twenty-five years ago, today we'd be free to take ballroom dancing lessons and fly off on celebrity cruises."

"If I had murdered you twenty-five years ago," she said, "I'd be out of jail by now."

I'll admit I'm not the easiest person to live with, and that's been mentioned more than a few times in my presence. I require a lot of attention, it's true, but I must be worth it. After all, Immy hasn't left me yet. So at least I knew enough to find a girl with a sense of humor..

Our marriage was made in heaven, I've always said, no matter where it might be going. I consider our holy union unrivaled, and I'm annoyed when Immy points to younger couples to describe how the husband is so helpful. He might offer to change diapers (I did that once, it was awful), or spend his evenings cleaning the house (I sweep the floor when I can no longer see it) or shop for groceries (the store no longer allows me to use a shopping cart ... something about their insurance.)

I have to remind Immy that we were married way back in 1965, when the marriage contract was more manly, or so I remember it. Forty years ago, the husband went to work, won the bread and came home to sit quietly while being waited upon. Immy says my memory is off by a hundred years.

After college, Immy continued on to graduate school, while I learned to defrost frozen pizzas. I had to figure out how to operate a vacuum cleaner,

which ... don't let anyone fool you... can be a dangerous machine. My biggest challenge was learning to use all those household devices. That big box at the foot of the basement stairs? It holds food and evidently keeps it frozen for years! And it's much easier to let the frozen waffles sit for an hour, instead of breaking them apart with a hammer. Underwear and socks don't just magically appear in the dresser drawer, I came to realize. They have to be washed and brought all the way back up to the bedroom. And you can tell the clean from the dirty by the smell. Lots better with soap. When I found out the box next to the washer was a dryer, I grudgingly gave up hanging the wash all over the living room. I thought it looked cool there.

Today, I'm practically a new man. I vacuum regularly, if not carefully, and I've replaced all my clothing with absolutely nothing that needs ironing. It's too bad you can't buy a seersucker suit any more.

"You've actually done quite well," Immy said one day, by way of a compliment.

"I try."

"I was sure you would make it," she continued. "You may not often make sense, but you've got guts."

"And I knew you would make it, too, Immy. I'm very proud of you."

"Really? I wasn't sure you'd recognize me as a real human being!"

Immy has built a professional career and a thriving practice. I have to say that along the way, however, a couple of small things got under my skin. The first was when she went out and got her own rubber stamp. Just her name on it ,, no Mr. and Mrs., a term she had seemingly cherished all these years. After the rubber stamp, she marched out and bought her own car, without my expert advice! Turns out Immy is a much better bargainer than I. Lately, she even buys my cars and has saved me a lot of money.

I guess auto salesmen can never win with a redheaded woman. Neither can I.



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