

I AM Before "I Do"

Unsolicited Advice on LOVE & Goddess Philosophy

Ranee A. Spina

a raz book production

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*Think of this book
as my attempt to walk the fine line
between having respect
for your individual paths
and me exercising
some loving leadership.*

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*Feel free to read the topics in this book
in any order that you desire.*

"There are no rules, only choices."

Chapter 1
A Happy Heart

"I wanted to find out where I was going before I found out who was going with me."



*Make this book your own.
Write yourself notes that pertain to
your individual situation.
Tell your girlfriends to get their own copy!*

THE institution of marriage: actually standing before God, a priest, rabbi, justice of the peace, or Elvis in Las Vegas, and making a vow to be part of someone else's life. You will now determine 50% of his happiness, sadness, and everything in between. He will now determine 50% of your happiness, sadness, and everything in between.

Wow, what power that is! What I do not understand is why so many women disregard that power and set themselves up for failure.

Why not give yourself a 70-80% chance for this important commitment to be successful? One of the reasons the divorce rate is so high is that people tend to set themselves up for failure. We enter into a marriage with a 20-30% chance of true success, because we fail to take stock of:

- 1- What we are,
- 2- What we have, and
- 3- What we want.

All the hoping, praying, and closing our eyes to the truth is not going to change the facts. You must take responsibility for the choices you make. Together, we will analyze important relationship issues, and through humor and common sense (which is not all that common), you will clearly see pitfalls to avoid in the future (if you so choose).

Give yourself the advantage now, by taking the time to consider the topics in this book. Only then will you have the peace of mind that is essential for building a healthy and truly happy union. It is your choice to be happy 360 days out of the year or just 5 days out of the year.

Here's to happy and healthy hearts 360 days out of the year!

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Chapter VIII
What Role Are You Auditioning for?

What role are you auditioning for?

His Mom
His Caretaker
His Maid
His Cook
His Mistress
His Assistant
His Shadow
His Daughter
His Sister
His Fling for Now
His Sex Partner
His Punching Bag
His Default Girlfriend
His Teacher
His Student
His Nurse
His Traveling Partner

Or . . . His Lover, Best Friend, and Life-Long Companion?

Make a decision. What you wish for and what you are willing to settle for, will come to fruition.

Do you need him, want him, or love him?

Everyone surrounding the two of you will know the answer to this question before you do.

Today, I am playing the role of _____

Tomorrow, I will be content playing the role of _____

Next year, I hope to play the role of _____

30 years from now, I will be playing the the role of _____

Think of it this way - when you're driving too closely behind a big truck, it is impossible to see what lies ahead of you down the road. Now, if you were to slow down and pull back from the truck, your vision of the road would improve. So, your friends and family, who are along side of you, will see the relationship road you're heading down while you're caught up in the euphoria of having a boyfriend.

What need does he satisfy for you? What need do you satisfy for him? Are these healthy needs? Ha! There is no such thing. If you NEED his financial assistance--*strike one*. If you NEED him in order to feel attractive--*strike two*. If you NEED him to further your career--*strike three, YOU'RE OUT!!* Oh, but there is more. If you NEED him to not be lonely--*strike four*. If you NEED to feel needed--*strike five*. If you NEED (or shall we say use) him for good sex--*strike six*. *Are we getting the picture here?*

What role do you want the man in your life to play?

Needing him because he fulfills one or more of your current sappy needs (or because you fulfill one or more of his current sappy needs) is setting yourself up for failure. Your needs will change. When your "new need" is not being met by the man who only fulfilled your "old need," you may feel trapped or resentful.

Feeling trapped or resentful are two very common complaints in unhappy marriages. Feeling trapped will lower your self-esteem. When you believe that you have no control over your own life, how can you feel good about who you are? Then, resentment towards your man grows and eventually squashes sexual attraction. Resentment has a way of unconsciously creeping into a person's psyche. When we resent the man in our life for anything (i.e., verbal abuse, disregard, lack of ambition, negativity, or forgetting to do all the things that remind us how beautiful we are), sex becomes an exercise of "going through the motions," even if at one time you could not sleep at night because you ached to be intimate with this man.

What Role Are You Auditioning for?

Be very careful about which role you choose. As time goes by, your preferences may change. Perhaps this man will become unable to fill the necessary slot in your life because, do not forget, he has also chosen a slot for you! *Ooohhh* . . . something to think about.

Marry the man that is healthy for you to love with all of your heart, mind, and soul.

Listen to your innermost being. It will tell you whether the two of you are in harmony. Listen to the sixth sense that we women are blessed with, even if it tells you what you don't want to hear . . . that there is something just not right with your relationship. Courage is needed here, girlfriend, if you desire a love that will sustain a marriage.

Did you ever notice that the bride and groom figurines that stand on the top of the wedding cake are next to each other rather than one in front of the other?

<input type="checkbox"/> I totally get this chapter.
<input type="checkbox"/> I should re-read this chapter.
<input type="checkbox"/> _____ (fill in name) needs to read this chapter.

Chapter IX
The Quake of Twenty-Nine

"Oh, I'm too young to get married.
Seriously. I'm 22 years old.
It's so annoying that they put pressure on you."

 Kirsten Dunst

I cannot stress the importance of this chapter enough. "The Quake of Twenty-Nine" could have been the title of this book.

In our early twenties, we *all think* we know what we want and have great faith in our ability to plan out our lives. You have heard it before, "I want to be married by 25 and have two children by 30." At 23, many of us long to play house. Oh, the joy of setting up house with our boyfriend!

What if I were to tell you that between 27 and 29 years old, "everything you want in life" goes through serious scrutiny? What if I were to tell you that if you were to make a major life decision prior to age 30, like choosing your life-long companion, there is a BIG chance you (or he) may change your mind?

Why take the risk? (Unless you believe that the vow of marriage should not include the phrase "until death do us part.")



This cycle in today's world is out of control. How is it that people can have children with two or three different spouses (or those they are just living with) and yet have so little regard for the negative impact it has on a child? "The kids adjust so well." Yeah right. (OK, we're not going to get into divorced and blended families here. There are plenty of books on that subject as well.)

Nobody warned me about the Quake of 29, so, I set up house when I was 22 with my boyfriend who was 30. Of course, he had great biceps and a motorcycle and I loved him. Sounds mature, doesn't it? Six years later, at the age of 28, those great biceps were not what I focused on anymore.

I AM Before "I Do"

"We hoped to create this extraordinary bond together.
The problem is we were just too young,
and we weren't right for each other."

★ Tea Leoni, on her marriage at 25 years old

"We realized how well we worked together.
We encouraged each other's strengths
and supported each other's weaknesses."

★ Tea Leoni, on her marriage at 31 years old

Did I love him? Absolutely. He was a good man. Did I resent him? Yes! Imagine that! I had matured over the time we were together, and I began to think about where I was in my life and where I wanted to be in ten years. Was I on the right path?

(Gasp!) The ground shook! The foundation I once stood on cracked open! He was comfortable with his lifestyle; I was not. I did not want to live in his world, and he was uncomfortable in mine. Remember, no relationship is worth more than having a sense of self.

*Life continues on past the "I just want to have a boyfriend" stage!
This was definitely an aftershock!*

You will know when the Quake of 29 hits. Somewhere between age 27 and 29, the firm ground on which you once stood (envisioning your future) will begin to shake. We all, both male and female, go through a metamorphosis. We look at what we have not yet accomplished, and ask ourselves, "What do I want to be when I grow up?" with more urgency. You will look at:

- 1) Who you are at the moment,
- 2) Where you are in your life, and most importantly,
- 3) Whether the choices you have made are fulfilling (and fulfilling enough to stay on this path).

It is strange how our likes and dislikes change during this metamorphosis. What we absolutely "loved" at 23 will be cast aside for what represents us now, what we have become, or what we wish to grow into.

metamorphosis n. - change

Maybe you went to law school for your parents and they wanted you to marry a lawyer. At approximately 29 years old, you may not be so fulfilled with that legal career or your lawyer husband. You have just realized that you would be happier living in a small town teaching art to third graders. You will not be a good mate for anybody if you are not content with yourself. And, you will start resenting your spouse for everything you're not, but desire to be. You may be in a BIG hurry for the wedding, husband, kids . . . *but, guess what?*



"Your love is lifting me higher . . ."



performed by Rita Coolidge

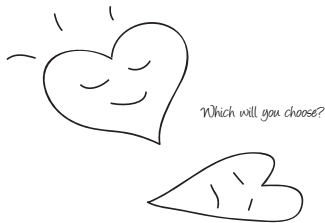
Love does not conquer all. Sometimes it's just like bubblegum on the bottom of our shoes, holding us to a place in our life that is not in our best interest. You have the rest of your life to be married. That is a long time to deal with another person's idiosyncrasies. It is also a long time to listen to the man sleeping next to you snoring in your ear night after night.

Time spent on our own is where we tend to work on our own growth. Maybe it is because we are not wrapped up in someone else's life and actually have the time to focus on our own goals. Reread Chapter Two. Use your twenties to determine your self-worth. Set yourself up for success in life and success in love.

If you haven't made a commitment to yourself, what makes you think you're prepared to make a commitment to someone else?

Give yourself the best marriage gift possible. Time.

**Time for you to discover
who you are,
who you want to become,
how you want to live,
and if your selected partner has complementary desires.**



Choose your future husband as a woman, not as a girl. Making a decision at 23 regarding the man with whom you want to spend the rest of your life is like making that decision as a high school freshman. Yes, you're slightly older and slightly wiser, but the self-development IS JUST NOT THERE. (Sorry, don't blame me; I didn't lay out the course of personal growth.) Why marry "Mr. OK for right now," when at 29 you will probably say, "I'm sorry honey, but I didn't know what I really wanted at 23 years old. I'm a different person now, and I guess we just grew in different directions." And, what happens to those women who have never stood on their own two feet? *What if they went from Mommy & Daddy to Husband?* Those women usually do not have the courage to leave a bad situation. Their hearts are no longer happy and they feel "stuck."

A happy heart promotes a healthy body.

Carrying around a "heavy heart" for a long period of time is not healthy. If the man you choose has a bad attitude and dumps negativity into your world, don't you think there is going to be an effect on your stress level? Don't you think there is going to be an effect on your immune system? You cannot go back and start over. Why walk out on the gangplank (*as if you are blindfolded*), where you will need to be rescued before drowning in the waves of an unhappy relationship? Let's not rush to say "I Do" only to find ourselves in our early thirties as one more divorce statistic. Let's choose wisely from the beginning.

Everybody wants to believe that they will be the one to defy the odds. If that were true, Las Vegas would not be cashing in on the millions of dollars that it does each weekend. Will there be a small percentage of winners? Yes. Will there be a small percentage of couples that marry in their twenties and live happily together until death do us part? Yes. It is your choice as to whether you want to risk the only hand you have to play, or should I say, give away. Good luck.

- I totally get this chapter.
- I should re-read this chapter.
- _____ (fill in name)
needs to read this chapter.

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long to hear from their man

*We all know at least three women
who could benefit from reading this book.*

*Tell them about it, email them about it,
or buy it as a gift for them!*