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“How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men folk? Why didn’t you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks, but I never had the chance o’ learning in that way, and you did not help me!”

Young Tess of the novel, Tess of the D’Urbervilles,  
Thomas Hardy

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## Chapter Eleven

### The Masquerade of Love \*Especially for Women

Insight #11 Young women, in their desire for love and affection are inclined towards unhealthy love relationships masquerading as love.

A mother pleads with her daughter, “I don’t know why you stay with him; he’s broken your nose three times, he’s blackened your eyes more times than I can remember.”

“You wouldn’t understand,” her daughter replies. “You don’t know what it’s like to be *in love*.”

**“I deserved the beatings.”**

Who would believe that she had ever been abused? She was beautiful, slender with dark, brown hair cut to her shoulders. She had a soft, childlike voice that was easy to listen to. She was renting the apartment next to ours, and upon our first visit we immediately became friends. After awhile she told me that her first marriage was a nightmare of physical abuse. Despite the abuse, she stayed with him for several years.

“Why did you stay with him?” I asked.

“Well, with the first few beatings I was enraged,” she said, “and

threatened to leave him. After awhile I grew kinda numb to the whole thing; I thought maybe all wives get beat up. It was my only marriage--how was I to know? Besides, I thought maybe I deserved the beatings.”

“Deserved?”

“Well, when someone you really love is abusive, your self-esteem is shattered to the point that you begin to believe that maybe you deserve such treatment. After awhile, you just don’t have the will to fight it.”

“How did you finally get away?”

“One day I looked at myself in the mirror after a beating the night before. My face was all puffy and I had a black eye. As I stood staring at myself in the mirror, I began thinking to myself, ‘I used to be pretty; I’m not pretty anymore. I’m ugly.’ Then something dawned on me. I realized that the reason that I wasn’t pretty anymore wasn’t because of the beatings; the ugliness was coming from within--deep within. And it wasn’t really that I was ugly, I was dying! Not physically dying, but dying emotionally, dying spiritually. I knew then that I had to get out--to save my life, or what was left of it.

“When he came home that night I said, ‘If you ever hit me again, I’m walking out. I’ll never come back.’ Two weeks later he hit me; I walked out.”

### **When Unhealthy Relationships Masquerade as Love**

Long after this conversation, and others like it, the difficult questions kept coming back. What happens to the instinct for self-preservation? What happens to clear thinking? What keeps women or men stuck in relationships that are emotionally and physically abusive? What leads to the tragic loss of conscience?

We have all heard the reasons: “He really loves me; he just can’t control his temper. . .She didn’t mean to do it. . .He just needs someone to love him enough, then he won’t do those things. . .She likes to control me, but then that’s the way she is. . .That’s just the way he is, but we’re really in love.”

On the outside looking in, we can see clearly these relationships are unhealthy relationships masquerading as love, but for those caught in the smokescreen it’s not so clear. Some go along with the abuse because abusive relationships are all they’ve ever known--having grown up in an abusive family. Others, like the song, “Some of them want to use you, some of them want to get used by you, some of them want to abuse you, some of them want to be abused,”

actually *want* the abuse. Some fall victim to masquerades--especially the immature--because they like the dramatics of it all! With hormones raging, they choose relationships to match their youthful nature: wildly emotional. The rifts, and tears, and passion make it all so much more colorful, exciting--and often painful.

"It's all a part of the game," said C.S. Lewis, "a game of catch-as-catch-can, and the scrapes and tumbles and head-on-collisions are to be treated as a romp."

Masquerades can range from simple unhealthy and stagnating relationships to abusive relationships, either physically, sexually, or emotionally. Since young women are prone to enter into a masquerade, and surrender virginity in the name of love, they need to be prepared to recognize unhealthy relationships masquerading as love and the motives that lead into them.

### **The Men Women Difference**

Women's strong emotional side, unchecked by reason and spiritual strength, can lead them into masquerades--unhealthy relationships masquerading as love--or to fantasies of romantic love. Men's strong physical side, unchecked by reason and spiritual strength, can lead into what I call the *mystique*--sex divorced from love, affection, emotions, courtship, friendship, honor, honesty, commitment.

Men seem to be drawn towards the fascination of naked bodies--panting together, while women are fascinated with naked emotions--weeping together. Men fall for the fantasy of lust (sex for power), while women fall for the fantasy of obsessive love.

This man/woman difference shows up in studies. While women are inclined towards romance novels and magazines that stimulate emotionally, men are inclined towards pornography, that stimulates sexually--one study reported that 94% of those addicted to pornography are men.

The old expression that women give sex to get love is still true. In a survey conducted by Mark Clements Research, Inc. "More than four in five (83%) said girls engage in sex because boys pressure them or they think they will lose their boyfriends if they don't have sex. 'Girls often trade sex for love, just as they always have,' maintains Deborah Tolman, director of the Adolescent Sexuality Project at the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College. 'Society teaches girls that love is what should matter to them, and we teach boys that what they should want most is sex. We end up

shortchanging both genders.’ ”(San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 2, 1997)

### **Intent of the Heart**

Masquerades are all unhealthy, but some are more unhealthy than others. Some are immature, or frustrating, or stagnating, but others can be abusive! The intent of the heart makes all the difference. The darker the motives of the heart the more diseased the relationships will be. When the heart is cold and hard--without compassion, without respect--the abuse can be ruthless.

When a crime is committed, the judge and jury weigh the evidence carefully to determine both the crime itself and the premeditation--or intent of the heart--that preceded the crime. In this same way, masquerades are unhealthy or diseased depending upon the intent of the heart and the behavior. There are those who inflict intentional harm, and those who do harm without malice. There's a difference between the man who accidentally runs down a pedestrian and one who kills "in cold blood" with calculated and premeditated intent. Yet, each took a life. A woman who steals a loaf of bread to feed her starving, sick child, could be considered a thief, but the intent of her heart would not be in question.

A young girl who gives into her boyfriend's demands and surrenders to an immature relationship may be acting out of the craving to be loved and fear of abandonment. The man who cunningly plots to win a young girl's love and affection in order to score another virgin is motivated by self-centered power and vanity. A woman who stalks another woman's husband in a spirit of competition and jealousy may be acting on selfish pride. The husband who gives in to the affair may be acting out of pride and vanity. The intent of the heart makes the difference--but all are a self-betrayal. All lead to unfulfilling relationships.

There's a *definite* difference between adolescent curiosity about sexuality and a cold-hearted craving for sexual conquest. Even so, such child-like playing with so powerful-of-forces produces immature and usually short-lived relationships; there's a time and season for all things, and something within gently reminds us that it's too soon for something so important. These immature masquerades lead to broken hearts, premature parenthood and aborted childhoods.

### **Motives for Human Bonding**

Another attribute of masquerades is that they are collusive--

there's a loss of conscience. Healthy relationships heighten conscience; unhealthy relationships diminish conscience. This idea needs developing.

People bond together for various reasons. Some gather together with common beliefs and goals like garden groups, political groups, church groups, save the environment groups, etc. These collective groups form for the common good, to *contribute* to society. Joining together increases their power to do good like a rope becomes stronger with more strands. The rope idea also works for opposite motives. It increases the power for *crime*, such as gangs, terrorist groups, mafia, etc. The goals that bond them together determine whether the group is bonded for the greater good, or bonded for the greater bad.

In healthy groups, consciences are enhanced. In fact that's one reason that they have frequent meetings and lectures, to remind each other of their common interests, and to take action based upon those interests. Bird watching groups gather to share their love and appreciation of birds, and to plan trips together to act upon that love. They may form lobby groups to influence legislation to protect and preserve birds that are threatened with extinction.

Our family attends a wonderful church group where each week we gather together to discuss our common belief system. Through the talking, and the teaching and the discussions we keep our beliefs alive and the motivation to act according to those beliefs. We humans are a forgetful lot; we need constant reminders that "the things that matter most should not be at the mercy of the things that matter least."

Now contrast this with unhealthy bonding. Consciences are silenced, human sympathy is shut down and gang spirit reigns. Think of the gangs in which the initiation process demands that the new comer must commit murder. Think even of the elite groups that band together in wealth and shut out the poor. Think of religious groups who profess to be followers of Christ, but love the family of God less, not more. This list could go on and on; the idea is simple: people bond together for various reasons, and couples bond together for various reasons. If the bonding leads to progression, peace of conscience and more love it is healthy, but if that bonding leads to stagnation, anxiety of conscience, and indifference or hate, it is unhealthy. Preventing masquerades and preparing for healthy love relationships begins with oneself and understanding the difference between heater problems and engine problems in

relationships.

### **Heater and Engine Problems**

Imagine you're flying all alone in a small plane--it's late at night, in the middle of winter. The moon's light is reflected off the snow-capped mountains, and you marvel at the beauty of it all. The air is biting cold, but you're comfortable inside, enjoying the sights. Then all of a sudden, the heater stops working--that's bad. Gradually the air inside the cockpit turns cool, then cold. You think to yourself, Why? Why me? Why this? Why now? This is about the worst thing that could happen. I'm going to freeze. Why do things always happen to me?

As you reach over to grab the jacket in the back seat, the engine sputters and stops. Suddenly irritation turns to terror. In a flash of a second the heater problem is no problem at all. Now there's a real problem--a life and death problem. There are heater problems and there are engine problems in relationships. Heater problems are: leaving the toothpaste out, forgetting to put gas in the car, friendly disputes and disagreements about disciplining the children. They are frustrating, but hardly cause for divorce or separation. Fine-tuning heater problems--the process that naturally goes on in relationships like two musicians trying to get the harmony right are normal and even productive. This needs a bit more explanation.

While love and marriage is a refuge from the prickles of the world, it is still a refining process. The day-to-day intimacy of marriage enables us to see quirks of character of the other--and family traits--that hinder growth and happiness. Young couples, beginning their new circles of love, naturally discuss and determine what family traits and traditions they want to hold onto from their original families and which ones to discard. By this process of natural selection, each new family builds upon the good of the previous family. This is the heater refining process.

There's the old line that women marry men they want to change, but marriage, by its very nature prompts growth and change for both. This is one of the greatest challenges and *rewards* of a marriage--together they become more than they ever could alone--more in marriage, but more personally, as well. Men need women to help them become better men, and women need men to help them become better women. It's the, "Did you realize that you. . ." factor, that I recently used when I told my husband that he needs

to balance Saturday chores so that there's more time for the family. There will always be heater problems in relationships--not because one is the victim and the other is the enemy--but simply because both are human and still maturing.

Now let's turn to engine problems. Whenever there's a deliberate abuse--emotional, physical, or sexual--it's an engine problem. Engine problems are stagnating, demoralizing, and even enslaving. Whenever there is a craving to escape oneself, it's an engine problem. Whenever conscience must be silenced, it's an engine problem. Whenever there is indifference, dishonor, and despise, it's an engine problem. Engine problems mean an eventual collusion, they require immediate attention and immediate action.

Preventing the masquerades begins with understanding and recognizing the difference between heater problems, engine problems and the signs and symptoms of healthy and unhealthy love relationships. Simple self-evaluations like the following may help detect a masquerade. Once again the key words for mature and wholesome love are: love, honor and cherish.

### **Signs of Healthy Love and Symptoms of Unhealthy Relationships: Three Keys**

#### **1. Love--adore, passion, fascination, magnetism.**

##### Healthy Signs:

He/She wants to meet out in the open--with friends and family.

He/She is anxious to learn what you think and what you feel.

Being with him/her makes you feel more alive.

You feel like you've found your other half--your better half.

Exciting warmth, tenderness and joy flows between you.

Intimate feelings of mind, heart, and soul are shared.

You share the same dreams and aspirations.

##### Unhealthy symptoms: Hate--enmity, hostility, rancor.

The relationship incites a reckless passion that shuts out rational thinking.

The relationship leads to a dead end--no commitment, no future, no chance of building together.

Love-making is physical only, without tender conversation or spiritual bonding.

No one can understand why you're together--especially family and those who love you.

In the worst case your partner wants you to view pornography.

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## **2. Honor--willingness to sacrifice, high motives and morals, responsibility.**

### Healthy Signs:

He/She assists you to become your better self.

He/She shows willingness to make sacrifices for the good of the relationship, including abstaining from sexual relations.

He/She encourages you to develop yourself, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

He/She helps you to attain your noble goals and aspirations.

He/She sharpens your conscience and desires that you be a person of integrity.

He/She desires to build life a life together.

### Unhealthy symptoms: Dishonor--contempt, scorn, humiliate.

He/She criticizes you with a hostile nature that includes cursing, vulgarity, ugly names.

He/She cuts you off from family and friends.

He/She shows intense jealousy and mistrust.

He/She dulls your conscience and confidence.

He/She causes you to feel alone and misunderstood.

He/She blames others for his/her faults, weaknesses, problems.

He/She rants and raves about things that cannot be changed.

He/She has mood swings that lead to out-of-control temper tantrums.

He/She demands control of your time and your life; wants to know where you've been, who you talked with, what you talked about, why you didn't do this or that.

## **3. Cherish--treasure, reverence, prize**

### Healthy signs:

He/She shows goodwill and respect towards others.

He/She is kind, considerate, and thoughtful.

He/She is thoughtful of your time, your independence.



He/She treasures your time alone together, but enjoys being with others, as well.

He/She places a high value on your feelings, thoughts, and happiness.

Unhealthy symptoms: Indifference, neglect, vulgarity

He/She tells you that you are the only woman that he respects.

He/She seems ashamed introducing you to family or friends.

He/She shows meanness, ill spirited nature, "I hate the way you. . ."

Beware if:

You find yourself being someone you're not.

You have to ignore certain characteristics that are offensive.

You become confused.

You feel used.

You feel less motivated to do the right thing.

You become alienated from everyone else.

You feel bound and stifled.

You know that goals will be harder to attain.

Life will be harder to live.

There's nothing to talk about before or after the sex.

Childhood is lost.

You hate to be alone.

You dislike each other's families.

You feel less alive after being in his or her presence.

You feel you're in a state of bondage, stagnation, even deterioration.

You feel unsafe, threatened.

The question is, "Do I feel loved, honored and cherished in my relationship?"

After understanding the signs and symptoms of healthy and unhealthy love relationships, we need to understand ourselves well enough to detect the motives that lead to an unhealthy relationship in the first place.

Tolstoy wrote, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." The same is true in romance; the healthy are all alike, the unhealthy are each unhealthy in a particular way. In the next chapter we will explore unhealthy motives that lead to the masquerades.

### **Notes and Factors to Consider:**

1. "Nationwide, the number of girls ages 15 to 19 who reported having sex increased from 29 % in 1970 to 52 % in 1988. Nearly one million teenagers become pregnant every year, and of these about 400,00 have abortions. " This article was exciting. A group calling itself Best Friends was formed to assist young woman to choose sexual abstinence. It cited that in one survey, 85 % of young women polled wanted to belong to a Best Friends support group. One young woman wrote, "peer pressure and lack of direction and guidance from adults leads to early sexual intercourse." (Reader's Digest, "These Teens Know How to Say No", Mona Charen, March 1977)

2. "Middle class girls, even more than those raised in poverty, begin sexual experimentation with *romantic myths*-- that they'll marry their boyfriend, finish school, raise a loving family and get a good job. . .Every year some 350,000 teenage girls have babies out of wedlock--a figure that has dramatically increased over the last several decades. . .more than half of all teenagers--boys and girls-- have had sex by the age of 18." (Suzanne Chazin, "Teen Pregnancy", Reader's Digest, September 1996)

3. "It would be unfair to blame teenagers for the epidemic of out-of-wedlock births; only 30 % of the children born outside marriage every year are born to teenage mothers, but the problem of children conceived by unmarried teenage girls is more debilitating than the numbers suggest: children of teenage mothers are more likely to be born into poverty, family instability and welfare dependency, forever locked outside the American mainstream." (Journalist Cynthia Tucker, San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 27, 1996)

4. "Fewer than half the teens who give birth out of wedlock marry within the next few years. Those who do marry are twice as likely to divorce in five years as women who marry in their 20s. . .fatherless children are more likely to take drugs, drop out of school, turn to crime and become teen parents themselves.

"According to Child Trends, a Washington, D.C., research organization, more than half of teenage mothers are not residing with their child's father by the time that child reaches grade school. More than one-quarter never lived with the father. Nor will the father offer much help. . .only 20 % of never-married mothers receive

formal child support. By contrast, four out of five women who wait until age 24 to give birth are still residing with the child's father when the child reaches grade school--and two out of three of those children have never lived in poverty."

(Suzanne Chazin, "Teen Pregnancy, Let's Get Real", Reader's Digest, September 1996)