



A Wise and  
Wild Path for  
Navigating the  
Dating World

Marcy Miller

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To Stephen and Amy: You know why

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



# THIS MARRIAGE HAS A SHELF LIFE OF ELEVEN YEARS

It was December 5, 2005, and the mail arrived as it always does in Beverly Hills—on time and neatly stacked. In the inch or so of invitations and announcements of openings and events was an envelope from Bergdorf Goodman in New York, the Garden of Eden for shoppers. Having often received Bergdorf mail addressed to my husband, I ripped this one open to see what retail therapy was available today. What I read would change my life.

Dear Mr. Eagle,

Thanks so much for your purchase of the beautiful sable coat the other day. It was a pleasure meeting you and your lovely wife, and I look forward to seeing you both again on your next trip to New York.

Sincerely,

Jack Kann  
Manager, Fur Salon

My first thought was, “Where’s my sable?” My next thought was, “What wife is he talking about?” I checked the envelope and the name and address were correct. So what could this possibly mean? What should I do with this nuclear bomb that had landed in my lap?

I am a serial marry-er and this, my latest marriage, having lasted eleven years, was nearly a personal best—. Like any marriage, ours had lost some of its excitement, but I still felt as loved and protected and happy as I had on my wedding day. I had every reason to believe that my husband felt the same way. In fact, just two weeks earlier, in honor of his birthday, I had given him a celebratory dinner party at our home, catered by a celebrity chef, with a sommelier, a magician from Las Vegas, and a special birthday cake baked in the shape of his favorite dog. He had toasted me with such adoration that several guests teared up. I did, too.

*This letter must be some mistake*, I reasoned, although it dawned on me that my husband had in fact been in New York on business when the letter was sent. I just wanted to hear from the source that a mix-up had occurred. So I picked up the phone and called Jack Kann, employing my very best Nancy Drew snooping skills.

"Hello, Jack, this is Mrs. Eagle."

"How are you? Have you worn your fabulous sable in L.A. yet?"

"No, not yet. I wonder, do you really think it goes well with my hair color?"

"Of course! What could be prettier than red hair and sable?"

I'm a blonde.

In a prior life, I had been a high-powered lawyer, and one of the first women in a huge Wall Street law firm. In 1998, my husband of four years convinced me to stop practicing law and make myself available to him full-time—as a kind of Jewish geisha—and I embraced the new role.

But I smelled blood emanating from New York's Bergdorf Goodman, all my years of being a shark in the courtroom had trained me to go in for the kill, and it was time to cash in some professional chips. So I called the managing partner of my old New York firm, a well-respected ex-politico who always had a fondness for me.

"I need a favor, Mark, but you can't ask the details. Do you still have a private detective on staff?" (Big New York law firms often keep a detective as a consultant for due diligence investigations and as a service to their clients—a Michael Clayton type).

"Of course. Why?"

"No asking 'why,' but I need about four hours of his time 'on the house.'" I could not take the risk of alerting my husband to my espionage through a charge on American Express.

"He's yours—call and tell him I adore you."

So I sent my new operative (or Private Dick, as I preferred to call him) to the scene of the crime to interview Jack Kann. I requested that he employ water boarding to get to the truth, but no Bush torture techniques were necessary. In fact, by the next day, thanks to advanced technology and a few well-placed Franklins, I had more information than I could stomach.

On the week in question, my husband had taken a suite at the St. Regis, not the small room at the Peninsula that we always stayed in. He had not been alone. He had gone on a shopping spree at Bergdorf's with our community property—a black AmEx card—and spent more than \$75,000 on a woman named Therese de Compte, who turned out to be a red-haired former "escort." Several years ago, she had moved from Las Vegas to the San Fernando Valley, obtained a real estate license, and begun "brokering" her way into numerous bedrooms.

And this New York rendezvous had not been their first trip. The week before, he had taken Therese and her out-of-wedlock five-year-old son to the site of her wildest dreams, her personal Disneyland—the Mall of America. The three had flown first class from L.A. and spent thousands of our dollars on tacky miniskirts and fishnet stockings for her and overpriced Snoopy gear for the kid.

I wanted to believe that this was all some kind of horrible mistake—that a credible explanation would soon be forthcoming, or at least that my husband's midlife crisis had played out and he had returned to sanity, full of repentance and unconditional future devotion to me. Maybe I could still salvage my "Beverly Hills bubble" of a life and avoid a thunderous pop. I needed to get the slut out of my husband's life, enroll in marriage crisis counseling, and try to mend this massive breach of trust before it became too much for me to forgive.

So that night after we made love and while he was still in his post-coital daze, I gingerly raised the issue.

"Honey, a very peculiar note came in the mail from Bergdorf's the other day."

"What?"

"It appeared to be a thank-you note for a fur coat that you bought with your wife."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Just what I said."

"It must be some sort of mistake. How dare you open my mail!"

There it was—the defensive maneuver that men always employ when caught cheating. Some super-secret male manual must set forth specific instructions on how to respond under such circumstances. Even if you catch him in bed making love with another woman, he will blame you for driving him into her arms. Chapter Two of the same manual must state that, even if a black lace bra falls out of the glove compartment of his car, you had no right to open the latch.

Or, for those men not given a copy of the manual, perhaps this is a male reaction programmed during childhood: "I'm rubber and you're glue. Whatever you say bounces off of me and sticks on you."

Ludicrous denial is the grown-up version. Everything is your fault and now, as the faithful wife, you must beg for forgiveness for being inconsiderate and untrusting in order to stop his pouting and maintain the peace.

This time, however, I just rolled over and pretended to go to sleep. After all, I knew the truth, he did not know that I knew it, and knowledge is always power, particularly when you need to devise an intelligent strategy.