

DOMESTIC TRANSGRESSIONS:  
THE ART OF MARRIAGE IS A GAME OF ANTICIPATION

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[Assignment: Write a division essay in which you establish a reason the reader may want or need to know the information you are providing. Your purpose is to inform your reader, resulting in his or her clearer understanding of the subject.] .

(1) By the time young men and women enter college, they have usually entertained thoughts about marriage. And while these visualizations are probably wonderful and idealistic, actual marriages can be full of less ideal situations and petty quarrels. Although no marriage is ever perfect, a lot of pain can be avoided if the couple learns to recognize early signs of trouble, because big fights are often triggered by very minor things. For example, in the McKinney household, Sarah and I divided into two groups some of these "minor things" that have led to fights. For the sake of this paper, I shall call Sarah's list "ridiculous requests" and I shall call my list "valid grievances."

(2) Of the minor things in Sarah's "ridiculous requests" list, there are three that are most important to her. First, an argument is almost unavoidable when "someone" leaves the shower curtain open after use. Sarah is extremely concerned that the curtain be closed in order that it match the rug as was intended. Also, she points out, a closed curtain will allow the clear, plastic curtain behind it to dry instead of leaving water spots. It seems odd to me that Sarah has no problem with looking at outrageously expensive new kitchen designs at the lumber store, but "heaven forbid" that we should have to replace a cheap plastic curtain.

(3) Another of Sarah's "ridiculous requests" is that no shoes are to be worn in the bathroom. According to her, the absence of shoes serves to keep the bathroom floor clean. To a visitor it must seem as if we worship the toilet deity in our home. Nevertheless, I must concede that shoes do make the floor dirty.

(4) Finally, one of Sarah's "ridiculous requests" is that newspaper inserts be saved. Whether it is the television weekly that she keeps and never looks at or the cost-cutter coupons, it makes no difference. Having deliberately thrown the inserts out on more than one occasion, I can safely say I have a good idea how Caesar felt when he crossed the Rubicon.

(5) My list of "valid grievances" consists of only three things. This, of course, is because I am easy to live with. First of all, it makes me very angry when Sarah hangs a dishtowel on a kitchen drawer handle. Dangling dishtowels obstruct my way to the canned goods and always get caught in the doors below the drawers they

are hanging on. It is not my problem to "find a better place for them" either. If I could have it my way, we could eliminate dishtowels altogether by eating off of paper plates all the time.

(6) Another of my reasonable complaints is one which invariably rises with the sun each morning. I call it "morning proxemics." How dare she be in the bathroom when I need to comb my hair? Worse yet is when Sarah brushes against me in the slightest way or (gasp!) attempts to talk to me. It would be ideal if Sarah could just cease to exist from eight a.m. to nine a.m. As you may have gathered, I am not a morning person.

(7) Failing to lock the door at night completes my list of "valid grievances." Who would leave a door unlocked at night? And yet, it has happened--and in my home! I erupt when the paranoid man in me wakes up to find the "safety chain" dangling next to its slot. Even though our door has two other locks and a screen door latch, I feel there is no excuse for not using the safety chain. In case of an intruder, that chain might be the link to life itself by allowing me the precious extra seconds needed to reach my blackthorn cane. You must agree that not latching is senseless. It may even be insane.

(8) When the preacher said, "For better or for worse," surely he had not considered closed shower curtains and shoeless bathrooms. At any rate, Sarah and I plan to stay together. In a time when the arrangement of marriage is a fifty-fifty proposition, maybe dividing lists of grievances is not a bad idea.