

COMMON PRACTICE

by

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INT. MARLA'S KITCHEN - DAY

MARLA serves JANE a cup of coffee.

JANE

I admire you. I do, I really do.
How you and your husband have been
together for so long. I can only
hope the same can be for me.

MARLA

It's an art form.

JANE

How so?

MARLA

You don't know the half of it
child. I have my husband wrapped
around my thumb. (beat) Don't
look so shocked. It's natural.

JANE

I'm not so sure I understand.

MARLA

Do you really want to know?

JANE

Sure.

MARLA

Do you really want to know why
Paul is the way he is?

JANE

Okay.

MARLA

He's been trained. Paul was never
the way he is now when I first met
him. When I first met him he was
full of fire and chic, always had
a buzz about him but overtime I
calmed him down and positioned him
to my specifications. (beat) Can
I tell you a secret?

JANE

Please.

MARLA

It's a sadistic secret. (beat) I
kind of like giving him a hard
time.

JANE

How so?

MARLA

There's something about it, the way he gets when I push his buttons...I get into it.

JANE

Into it?

MARLA

Yeah, it kind of gives me a ride, a thrill to see him get all hot under the collar.

JANE

You're cruel!

MARLA

I know I am. Never said I wasn't but the truth is the truth. Point of fact is that I just love getting him mad. I can't help myself. A girl's got to entertain herself or else the marriage falls apart. How do you possibly think I've actually put up with Paul for so long?

JANE

Is that the trick, to find private ways of entertaining yourself?

MARLA

It works for me. Cruelty is a guilty pleasure. Now, I'm not talking nothing more than seeing him get...well, I kind of love it when he takes a certain tone with me.

JANE

Yeah?

MARLA

He gets this tone in his voice when I've reached his line...like ah, "Alright now Marla, that's enough." Haha. It drives me wild.

JANE

You're too funny.

MARLA

There are times when I must say I play his fiddle like a Goddamn master conductor. I get him to hit all my notes. It's a gift. Even I don't know how I do it.

JANE

How do you do it? Tell me.

MARLA

It's a mood. I have to be in the right mood. And the timing, the timing has to be right. So, if I'm in the mood to be a little devil, which is my usual state of self and I see he's having a better than usual day, I strike. I sink my dirty tiny claws into his large back and I chew down. I don't stop nibbling until I hear him say ouch!

JANE

I admire you. I wish I could do that with Tom. Tom is so aware. He's so aware of my moods.

MARLA

You've got to work around it. I'm telling you. If you don't start playing notes now, I give you two five more years at best.

JANE

Really? Oh no, don't say that!

MARLA

It's true dear.

JANE

There are other things that make us happy, I mean, we're not unhappy.

MARLA

Ha! Give it time. True misery takes time to seep in and drown you.

JANE

What do I do?

MARLA
Sweetie pie, you need to
interject.

JANE
Interject?

MARLA
Absolutely. When he comes home
from work and he goes on about his
long day, interject.

JANE
Just cut him off?

MARLA
Mid sentence. Don't give him no
fuss about it, just do it as if
it's normal.

JANE
Really?

MARLA
Oh yeah. I'll show you. Say
something, anything.

JANE
Okay. Ummm, well, I'm really
listening to you because I want---

MARLA
Hahaha and that is good darling.
Want some potatoes? You see? Just
like that.

JANE
Wow. Can I try?

MARLA
Yes. Ready?

Jane nods.

So the other day I bumped into
Florence and she was telling me
all the details of this---

JANE
Do you want to go to the theatre
this Friday?

MARLA
That was good.

JANE

Yeah?!

MARLA

That was pretty damn good. Start on him immediately. Now, once you got this whole interjecting thing down, it will become common. At first, he'll get annoyed, he may even be ready to argue, but you must be coy and pleasant and polite and smart. In a word, INNOCENT. You wear him down and eventually, eventually it will become common practice. That's when you will finally have your hold over him.

JANE

Marla? I really had no idea this sort of thing in marriage even existed?

MARLA

Do you want to keep your man or not?

JANE

I do. Believe me I do.

MARLA

Then believe what I'm telling you. I've seen too many breakups with no makeups and families destroyed all because the woman wasn't wise enough to manage her husband effectively.

JANE

I'm amazed. I must say this to you Marla, I don't know what I would do without you. You are truly like a big sister to me. I'm so thankful we've moved into this development and have you as my neighbor. Talk about luck.

MARLA

Now, now, there, it's fate and the good news is that if you learn to play the fiddle now, you will have a marriage that will withstand time. That's how you win.

(MORE)

MARLA (CONT'D)

Get this first bit down and then I
will help you mold him further and
believe me, you will be all set.