

# Town & Country

ESTABLISHED IN 1846



## LOVE & the RICH

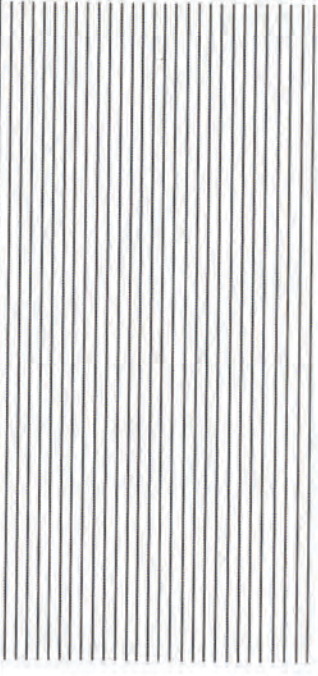
I Wish I'd  
*Married Ric*  
What Is Marriage No

What He  
*Really Think*  
About Your  
*Plastic Surge*

The *DIVORCE*  
of the *YEAR*  
The Top Divorce Law

FEBRUARY 2011 \$4.50  
0 2>  
0 74470 08833 2





WHAT HE  
*REALLY*  
THINKS OF YOUR  
PLASTIC  
SURGERY

BY JAMIE ROSEN

When we were engaged and tending to pre-wedding rites of passage like registering for china and arguing about the guest list, my future husband asked me to sign a prenuptial agreement. Not one that protected his assets, mind you, but mine. And instead of detailing what would happen to our finances if we were to break up, this prenup would be a promise: a promise to not get plastic surgery. It's not that the frozen assets in question are without flaw, for they are flawed aplenty, but as my husband explained at the time, he didn't



want to go to bed with one woman and wake up twenty years later to find an entirely different one in her place. While the request was made in jest, the sentiment behind it was very real.

The romantic view is that when we fall in love with someone, we fall in love with every part of them, including the curve of their nose or the extra bit of fat around their belly. The idea of this person surgically altering themselves just seems wrong. “Ultimately, if a patient says to me ‘My husband’s really against this,’ I respond, ‘Then don’t do it,’” says Manhattan plastic surgeon Gerald Imber. “I really think it has to be something you can live with together.”

**M**ore often than not, though, he says the protesting has more to do with the fear of freakish results—the windblown faces, the torpedo implants, the lumpy liposuction—than a desire to see a spouse live with saggy breasts for the rest of eternity. Of course, a fear of change—be it coming from spouses or the patients themselves—hasn’t stopped millions of people from undergoing elective procedures every year. But does the swift physical change inflicted by a surgeon’s scalpel also have the power to alter the anatomy of a relationship?

While this question would certainly apply to either spouse, the overwhelming majority of plastic surgery is done on women (ac-

## Does the swift physical change inflicted by a surgeon’s scalpel also have the power to alter the anatomy of a relationship?

ording to statistics from the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, women received eighty-nine percent of the 1.5 million procedures performed in 2009). So the conversation usually ends up centering on what *he* thinks of *her* getting surgery. And surprisingly, most husbands are not quite as opposed to the idea as they might have thought they’d be earlier in their marriages. “Men marry someone, and they go in with the implicit expectation that she’s going to stay as she was when they got married,” says New York behavioral psychologist Stephen Josephson. “Some [even] have this fantasy that she’s going to get better-looking.” According to him, men take one of two stances when the subject of surgery is broached: “passively supportive or actively encouraging,” he says. “But for the majority of the people I see, it’s the latter.”

Imber recalls a common scenario among couples: “The wife says, ‘You know, I look in the mirror and I’m just looking old.’ If the husband says, ‘You’re right,’ he’s dead meat. The sensible person says, ‘You look better than everybody else, but it’s okay if you want to do something.’ There’s a way to be honest and not insulting.”

But even if a husband is secretly excited by the idea of his wife sporting a lifted butt or a sculpted chin, there is almost always unease about the concerns that go along with elective surgery. “There was an anesthesiologist involved—she was on the table for five hours!” says one man whose wife recently had a neck-tightening procedure performed by Beverly Hills plastic surgeon Robert Kotler. But in the end, he says, it was worth the risk. “We gave it a lot

of thought [beforehand]. Now I think it’s wonderful. She doesn’t always wear these big turtlenecks anymore!”

For certain men, the issues they have with their wives choosing to go under the knife go beyond medical worries. “There’s always that concern of, ‘Why is my wife doing this?’” says Mark\*, whose



wife Sharon had an eyelid lift, a face lift, and a neck lift with New York plastic surgeon Gerald Pitman in March. A week before the procedure, he and his children sat her down and tried to talk her out of it—they questioned whether it signified a deeper unhappiness with herself, and reassured her that they loved her as is. “It was actually kind of funny,” recalls Sharon, who was touched by the sentiments, though not enough to back out.

“We’re married twenty-one years and we’re at that stage where a lot of people we know are getting divorced,” she continues. In some cases, “the wife gets a breast enhancement, changes the haircut, the hair color, and next thing you know, she’s out the door.” While Sharon’s surgery was prompted less by a twenty-one-year itch and more by drooping eyelids that had become “like a visor,” it did set off a chain reaction of self-improvement. Prior to the surgery, she lost fifteen pounds and has since dropped another ten. That, coupled with her newly refreshed, rejuvenated appearance, caused a lot of attention among friends. “I think he was mad at me for a while,” she admits of her husband’s reaction. “He didn’t like people saying I look good.”

Mark remembers it slightly differently. For one thing, he was under the impression that she was going in for her eyelids and “a little refreshing.” “What I didn’t realize is that ‘a little refreshing’ is like ‘a little pregnant,’” he says sternly. After the six-hour procedure, there was an intense recovery period at home that happened to coincide with a power outage, causing Mark to borrow emergency electricity from his neighbor’s generator. “I ran an extension cord with heaters and everything so she would be comfortable, and we made a fire so she would be warm,” says Mark. “It was tough to see her go through all that.”

Pitman reports that he’s seen a shift in spousal involvement over the past few decades, from “grudging support” to genuine commitment. “The guy now makes it his business to be there,” he says of husbands who accompany their wives to every pre- and post-surgical

## Pitman remembers an enthused husband who half-jokingly offered him an extra two grand if he upped his wife’s implants from a C-cup to a D.

appointment. In some cases, the men have a few choice words for him prior to surgery. Pitman remembers an enthused husband who, just before a breast augmentation, half-jokingly offered him an extra two grand if he upped his wife’s implants from a C-cup to a D. “It’s fairly common for women to tell me that their husbands would like them to be bigger than they want to be,” he adds.

Some spouses are so supportive they end up lying in the operating room side by side. His-and-hers procedures, whether they’re done on the same day or a week apart so that partners can care for each other and have ample time to recuperate, is an emerging trend. “I was always complaining about my face sagging and Joe always complained about the waddle under his chin,” says Judy, a sixty-year-old who recently had a full face lift done by Imber. As soon as her procedure was complete, the doctor performed a neck liposuction on her seventy-one-year-old husband. The pair both say they’re thrilled with the results all around. “We’ll age together,” says Joe.

They may not end up getting companion procedures, but many husbands follow their wives on the road to self-improvement, whether it’s with a follow-up surgery or their own diet and exercise regimen. Even Mark, who was not thrilled with his wife’s surgery at first, has begun exercising and losing weight. “I would say on a subtle level there’s a feeling of being threatened, like ‘I better get in shape because I’m going to look like this old guy with this young woman,’” he says. Now, though,



he's enjoying the results. "She looks younger, but not artificially younger. We're [both] fifty-one, and she looks more like thirty-eight."

**I**n spite of all the glaringly obvious plastic surgery out there, it is shockingly hard to find a husband these days who truly objects to his wife's new face or new body. The simple truth is that many men are happy to wake up to a wife who looks younger and hotter than she has in the last decade. And now that there are countless ways to turn back the clock with natural results, there is less opposition on all sides. (I won't blame my husband if he changes his tune once things begin to head south—after all, it's easier to take a stand on these issues when you and your partner are years away from needing a nip and tuck.)

But perhaps no joy is greater to both man and wife when the former is both husband and surgeon. Kotler had performed face-lifts on several of his college friends when his wife submitted to the scalpel. "For selfish reasons, everybody wants to have a mate who looks good. It's a basic human desire," admits Kotler, who says that his satisfaction is coupled with pride. "Just like I admire architects who build things and get to look at and enjoy them and say, 'Wow, I did that.' I feel the same way."

*\*Some names have been changed.*

# FIELD GUIDE TO DIVORCE LAWYERS BY DOREE SHAFRIR

Divorce lawyers are a peculiar breed. "At the highest level of matrimonial practice, it's a pretty small field," says Manhattan divorce lawyer Allen Drexel, who worked for four years for one of the giants of New York divorce law, Robert S. Cohen, and now has his own boutique firm. "You're all repeat players against each other, sometimes in multiple cases in any given year. And the competitiveness inherent in the litigation process makes chummy casual interaction between divorce lawyers pretty infrequent." In other words, in the animal kingdom of law, divorce attorneys are the lone wolves. And yet, regionally, the species does have some common traits. Read on for our findings.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN VOLDMAN