

She pauses. "I was one of those," she confesses. "I know what a mistake that was."

Young women get such contradictory messages it's no wonder that trying to live up to them is as impossible as it is for guys to live up to the Guy Code. And it's no wonder that they then send out contradictory and confusing messages to guys.

Tom's concern was given voice years ago in an Anna Quindlen column in the *New York Times*. She called it the Boyfriend vs. Husband problem. Women, she argued, knew they were supposed to want Husbands—"upright, dependable, prone neither to wild partying nor to gross flirtation. He will show up for dinner on time and be the kind of father a kid can depend on for lots of meaty talks about life and honor." But at the same time, women simply couldn't stop themselves from being attracted to boyfriends—"entertaining, unprincipled, with a roving eye and a wickedly expressive brow above it."

To make her point, she offered a stark contrast, which I immediately incorporated into my class the next day. I invited the women in the class to imagine two different men. One is short, thin, with wispy thinning strawberry blond hair, and an honest open face. He loves you completely, will always be faithful: He'll be a great father, and a loyal friend. Now imagine the other. He is tall, dark, and roguishly handsome. He has a dark side, cold and cruel; he is a scoundrel, untrustworthy, and has never been faithful to a woman, and there is no reason to think he will start now. Which one would you choose?

My students looked confused and most seemed unhappy at the choice. Why did they have to choose at all? And were those the only choices? Half the women said they would choose the good and decent man, the honorable husband and father. The other half chose the swarthy and seductive boyfriend.

One woman in the class, Jeanine, simply wasn't buying it. "How about if I have sex with #2 and marry #1?" she asked. The class howled with laughter.

"Okay," I said, now referring to Quindlen's example. "Let's give them names. How about we call #1 'Ashley Wilkes' and #2 'Rhett Butler.' Now, whom would you choose?"

The class went silent. They had bumped up against the choice that Scarlett O'Hara made in what has been generally considered the most romantic movie of all time, *Gone with the Wind*. Of course, Scarlett chose Rhett—a man who, if you follow the narrative of the movie closely, actually rapes her. He picks her up and carries her up the stairs as she kicks and screams, fighting him off, clearly and unequivocally saying no. This being 1939, the film cuts to the next morning, when Scarlett awakens with an enormous cat-ate-the-canary grin and stretches to greet the sunlight streaming through her windows. Rhett read it right; she said no but meant yes. (Today he might be headed to jail.)

A few women hemmed and hawed, praising some of Rhett's better qualities. One or two tried to put Ashley down. But most felt stuck.

Not Jeanine, again. "Okay," she said. "I get it. But look, the problem is that Rhett Butler has never been loved *by me*. When I love him, he'll change." Again, the class erupted in laughter.

Jeanine had expressed, more concisely and eloquently than any self-help treatise, the core of women's romantic fantasy: A woman's love is transformative. It makes the Rhett Butlers of the world into Ashley Wilkeses—without sacrificing all the parts of Rhett Butler they found so compelling in the first place.

"But," as Quindlen wrote,

Lots of women fall for someone who is the life of the party, a dancing fool who has a weak spot for women, and then become enraged when they find themselves married to someone who is the life of the party, a dancing fool who has a weak spot for women. They expect matrimony to turn Jack Nicholson into Alan Alda. Yet they know that if they woke up one morning with Alan Alda, they'd soon yearn with all their hearts for just a little sturm and drang, a little rock and roll.

Women sustain Guyland because Guyland seems to be populated by Rhett Butlers, and they are much cooler than the Ashley Wilkeses of the college campus—the guys who study hard, are considerate of their feelings, and listen to them. Those guys are a bit nerdy, good friendship

material, but they don't take your breath away. Better to latch on to the ones who treat you badly, with the hope that your love—and only your love—will transform him into a doting and attentive man, while he retains all the sexy guy-ness that drew you to him in the first place.

Many young women don't actually want what Ashley Wilkes has to offer—intimacy, commitment, a *serious* relationship. Who knows why? It might be that they're every bit as afraid of commitment as the guys are, and by choosing the guys who won't commit they can avoid looking at their own fears. Or perhaps they're so focused on their careers they don't have time for such foolishness—or the significant emotional investment they have to expend to sustain a relationship. Or maybe it's because they simply want to have fun in college, to play a bit more. They're just beginning their sexual adventures, and they're still looking forward to the promise of romance. They don't want to play house, instead they want to be swept away, to conquer and be conquered, to feel passion.

Of course, part of wanting what you can't have is inherent to desire in general—we tend to ascribe value in direct proportion to how hard a thing is to get. The coolest guys, the ones who are sought after by the most women (thus the least likely to choose any single woman since that would reduce their chances of scoring with numbers) are still the ones most women want. Getting the most popular guy is a coup. The Rhett Butlers of Guyland can be status symbols among women—they validate you, prove your worth. It's the feminine version of a "Trophy Wife."

Marriage: The City Limits of Guyland

Young women assume they will have both careers and families, and that they will be able to balance the two. Most plan to marry and have children, and they hope to have the flexibility and work/life options that will make it possible to continue their careers. And this is where things get complicated. Because in order to complete the project of becoming adults, they'd like to be able to count on the partnership of men. But given the cultural dynamics of Guyland, men their age are lagging far behind.

It's true that young men believe they will marry a woman who is committed to her career, and that fewer and fewer men report anticipating any emotional difficulties if she is more ambitious or earns more money (whether or not they experience actual difficulties might be a different story). It's also true that they expect to be involved fathers—far more involved, they say, than their own fathers were. Yet while women are preparing for adult life, guys are in a holding pattern. They're hooking up rather than forming the kind of intimate romantic relationships that will ready them for a serious commitment; taking their time choosing careers that will enable them to support a family; and postponing marriage, it seems, for as long as they possibly can. While girls are busy becoming women, boys seem content to idle in Guyland indefinitely.

Though marriage itself might be more of an issue for women who are beyond the age parameters of Guyland, the issue of commitment is nonetheless important for those who live in Guyland as well. The dynamics of Guyland are a powerful omen for what is to come. While most young men will eventually outgrow many of the more unattractive aspects of Guy culture—group porn watching, binge drinking, video game playing, predatory sexuality, puerile male bonding, and the like—the hookup culture can extend for years. Though the range of available female partners might diminish after college, the vagueness and lack of commitment that characterize guys' relationships with women often continue well into their thirties and even their forties. "Are we a couple?" seems to be a question women are condemned to repeat for a long time.

There is one simple reason why men haven't stepped up to the pace women have set for themselves: They don't have to. Why should they? The whole setup is skewed in their favor. As long as they continue to buy into the idea that marriage is the death of fun—an idea that is reinforced by the media, their peers, and even adult men at every turn—they will continue to prefer casual sex to long-term commitment. And as long as there is a steady stream of young women who will "hook up" in the hopes it might lead to something more, the burden for defining the relationship and securing commitment falls entirely on the women.

Most young women simply make their peace with Guyland. Not détente, in which each side gives ground—rather the women agree to

put up with it in return for fun times now and the hope of more responsible and serious relationships later.

"I figured it was a done deal," says Amy, a 23-year-old recent graduate of Ohio State:

I mean, the fix was in. The guys ran the whole show—they had the parties and organized social life. If you didn't go along with it, you had no social life. It was their way or the highway. So I went through all the motions, had a fine time of it, never got hurt or anything, and graduated. I made some good friends, and met my boyfriend, and now that we're living together, he's not like that at all anymore.

Lucy, her old roommate, back for a campus reunion, agrees:

I mean what choice did I have? There simply was no other way. You know, that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger. And I definitely survived it—and now can get what I want. When the guys grow up a little . . .

The two women laugh loudly.

Many women put up with Guyland—for now—because they believe it is the only country in which they *can* live. They hope (and expect) that guys will eventually grow out of it, at which point their patience and forbearance will have paid off. Guys will have gotten all that stuff out of their systems and they'll settle down to the happy domestic life of a father and spouse.

And in many cases, it's not just wishful thinking. As we'll see in the next chapter, most guys do move on, grow up, settle down. But they often do so with regret and remorse, and not just a small amount of bitterness, at what women have "forced" them to give up. Countless movies and TV sitcoms remind men that marriage and parenthood are women's victories over the guys of Guyland, and that once they are permanently attached to nagging wives, they'll never again have sex or any other kind of fun again.

What Women Hear

Women believe that if they love him well enough, hard enough, and are as accommodating as possible, he'll change. They can "win" the war between the sexes. No wonder they collude! And no wonder those women end up, a decade later, the most avid consumers of those self-help books designed to help "smart women" stop making such "foolish choices."

Girls who learn to accommodate themselves to Guyland run the risk of becoming grown women who accommodate themselves to men's intransigence. Smart women learn from those self-help books to just leave him alone. Look at the contradiction: The cardinal rule of those books is that he is not going to change—no matter what you do. In other words, all that work was for naught. Your new task is not to try to change him, but to accommodate yourself to his intransigence. You have to change because he won't. Women have to accommodate themselves to guys' rules and learn to play by them. To my mind, those may be the most foolish choices of all.

Self-help shelves are crammed with books for women—by women. Women are seen as the experts in relationships—but also so woefully lacking in expertise that they need constant help in making relationships work. That's largely because these books all seem to counsel accommodation to Guyland—an accommodation that completely lets men off the hook.

While there are dozens of such books available at any one time, they all seem to offer similar advice. Take, for example, some recent prescriptions geared to young women in Guyland that turn out, in the end, to simply recycle old ideas in new packages. Wendy Shalit proposes that young women "return to modesty"—that they resist by just saying no. In her book *A Return to Modesty*, Shalit urges women to resist using men's standards as a barometer of freedom—indeed, she argues, it makes them more vulnerable to sexual predation and assault. Even worse, equating liberation with acting as piggishly as men do is a cruel seduction.

And while resisting Guyland as a barometer of female autonomy sounds like a pretty good idea, Shalit takes an odd turn, blaming femi-

nism for holding out its false promise in the first place. Instead of independence, she suggests a recovery of the lost virtue of modesty, which, she argues, “gave women freedom to walk the street without having to fear being harassed, stalked, or raped, freedom for a girl to study in school without being sodomized, freedom to be alone with a man and still deserve respectful treatment.”

But such a retreat to these lost pre-feminist virtues is just bad history. Life was hardly better for women before feminism. The reason that women weren't harassed in school was because they were prohibited from going. The reason that women didn't “fear” being battered or raped was because these things weren't crimes—they were simply the way things were. Men had their rights; women had no recourse. Where's the virtue in that?

At least Shalit comes by her modesty honorably; her return to virtue is at least, well, virtuous. Shalit intends hers to be a treatise in the moral philosophy of sex, and she models the modesty she asks from others. By contrast, the authors of the wildly bestselling *The Rules* see that return to pre-feminist modesty as a tactical weapon in the war between the sexes—a war, they believe, like Shalit, that women will lose if they act like men. Instead, they counsel accommodation, subterfuge, sabotage, and stealth. (What they don't see, of course, is that the rules they lay out play right into the rules already written by men.)

The Rules is a step-by-step guide promising to help young women land a husband through a step-by-step retreat through the 1950s and back to the '40s—the 1840s, that is—when Catherine Ward Beecher, Sarah Hale, and others articulated the need for separate spheres and for women to be “the angel of the house,” in Virginia Woolf's memorable phrase.

According to *The Rules*, women can't find husbands because they have been too busy being men's equals to connive to trap men in the time-tested ways that our grandmothers did—by holding out through manipulative coquetry. Women, they counsel, have to bury their competence, their ambition, their drive. And why? Because men will feel threatened. They are such pathetic creatures, completely preoccupied by surface appearances. “Don't leave the house without wearing

makeup. Put lipstick on even when you go jogging!” they caution. Men are devoted to the chase and conquest, but not the simpler pleasures of domestic life. So the way to “catch” him is to let him chase you. Like Shalit's book, the message is clear—women's unhappiness is their own fault. Accommodating herself to men is the best chance a gal can have.

That, of course, is how Guyland works. It lets guys off the hook. Women have a choice: either embrace guys' styles as their own (in which case they are either parodic or lonely), or accommodate themselves to them (in which case their unhappiness is all their fault).

Beyond Subterfuge and Accommodation

There has to be another choice for women—a choice that involves men. And there is. A sizeable number of young adult women are searching for ways both to stop playing by men's rules and to find their own voices, their own sense of agency that can guide them into adulthood. To my mind, that choice is equality, a way to inspire women to find their own ethical core from which they can act in the world with authenticity and agency. Call it what you want: Most women who opt for this choice call it “feminism.”

Among young women, discussions of “the F word” nearly always begin with the disclaimer “I'm not a feminist, but . . .” Young women assume that the feminist war has been waged—and won. They think the struggles for the right to work, to control their own bodies, to be safe in their own homes, or on dates, or at parties, are rights they can now take for granted, much as their mothers took for granted the right to vote or drive a car.

When my friends and colleagues hear a young woman say that she is “not a feminist, but . . .” they express disappointment, sensing from her a disengagement from the political struggles that still require so much attention and commitment. But I think we also need to listen to the last word, the “but”—and what comes next. Because when women say, “I'm not a feminist, but” what they are also saying is “but I agree with just about every single thing that feminists have demanded.” Women fear that calling themselves feminists will result in their isolation: After decades

of discrediting by pundits as ugly, man-hating, feminazis, they're wary. Yet they subscribe to just about everything for which feminists have stood for over a century. That is, they want all the rights, but resist the collective action that is required to achieve them.

In a recent op-ed in *The Daily Princetonian*, junior Chloe Angyal proposed a sort of individual "stealth feminism" for women who were afraid to be publicly labeled but still agreed with feminism's ideals of gender equality. She invited women to simply quit obsessing over their bodies, buying consumer products in the name of "empowerment," and make smarter sexual decisions. And she insisted that women stop calling each other sluts and whores, citing Tina Fey's line in the film *Mean Girls* that when women call each other those names they "send a strong message that it's acceptable for men to demean us."

Feminism dares to posit that the choice between bitches and babes is a false choice, and dares to imagine that women can be whole people, embracing and expressing ambition and kindness, competence and compassion.

And feminism also dares to expect more from men. Feminism expects a man to be ethical, emotionally present, and accountable to his values in his actions with women—as well as with other men. Feminism loves men enough to expect them to act more honorably and actually believes them capable of doing so. Feminism is a vision that expects men to go from being "just guys," accepting whatever they might happen to do, to being *just* guys—capable of autonomy and authenticity, inspired by justice. That is, feminism believes that guys can become men.

12 | "JUST GUYS"

"Where lies the final harbor, whence
we unmoor no more?"

—HERMAN MELVILLE
Moby-Dick

Adam Zwecker is no hero. He simply woke up one morning after a long night of standing barefoot on shards of broken glass, being pelted by raw eggs, and doing hundreds of push-ups in order to pledge a fraternity at Cornell, and decided he'd had enough. "That was one of the nights when you go home and you wonder 'What the hell am I doing?'" Zwecker told his campus newspaper. "The frat brothers tried to justify it by saying it would build unity for us, but it was kind of just a stupid, gross experience."

So he did something. He wrote a paper for a class titled "Hazed and Confused." His professor liked it and encouraged him to post it on the campus website, which inspired an intrepid administrator to set up an entire website devoted to exposing hazing on the Cornell campus (www.hazing.cornell.edu). Also included on the website are instructions on reporting hazing violations and allying across houses and teams to oppose hazing on campus.

Nor is a burly guy named John a hero. A lineman on the football team at a major Division I university, he was sitting with 100 of his