

Help!

EXCERPT

Chapter One.

Women are intriguing creatures; strange, some would say. They kick you out of the house declaring you worthless and then send for you when some minor domestic crisis means something wants mending or doing.

The funny thing is, most men are even more strange.

They respond!

Certainly, in my case this was so. My wife Tania, physically smaller and lighter in weight, had lambasted me with very personal insults, belittled me in front of my friends and even threatened me with physical attack. Finally, declaring me useless, she had shown me the door. And, angrily, I had gone!

Yet now she wanted me to fix something in the house that used to be mine and I, being just a man, responded. So, although we were separated and I felt genuinely the aggrieved party, I was there at her call, almost literally with my tail between my legs.

Male putty in her female hands.

I had not seen her for about 6 months. Not since the water feed hose for the washing machine burst and I had to be the `knight` in shining armour rushing to her rescue to avert domestic disaster. I had cleared up the mess, bought and fitted a new hose and then, would you believe, got told it was my fault.

Well, I had bought the washing machine in the first place.

At least I got a cup of coffee out of it and a sit at the kitchen table in what once had been my home, before being declared once again a *persona non grata* and given peremptory thanks and sent on my way.

She had things to do, she told me – like the delayed washing.

Now, on this occasion, the outside security light I had put up just before I was `shown the door` had stopped working and she wanted me to `fix it`.

Easy enough.

I guessed it would be the bulb and bought a new one on the way round. In fact, I fixed it so quickly that she made some barbed comment about me being at least good at some things – but as usual too quick to finish!

The old resentment was still there.

I felt sorry for her, this inability to let the past go revealing itself in ways other than bitchy unpleasantness. As an example, not once in all the time we'd been together had she let me see her kitted out so sloppily; always eager it seemed to show herself off to best effect. Now though, there was no trace of make-up to be seen and her face was puffy and blotchy. *Not* the slim, sweet girl I thought she was when I married her but, I could do no more than admit, looking older than her 34 years.

And by a fair distance.

Okay! Not by *that* great a distance, I admit it; exaggeration, I confess, brought on by her none-too-subtle reference to my sexual inadequacies. The same failings that had been one of our marriage's major bones of contention and the same ones she brought up on a constant basis; the familiar and tiresome recriminations surfacing as I was finishing the obligatory coffee she had provided with such bad grace.

Sneer barely hidden, she started, "You still chasing porn on the computer, Carl?"

It was a remark no less barbed for being utterly predictable, her incessant references to my anti-social behavior having been at the root of our separation. Though, from my point of view, the real cause had been her selfish and ever-demanding attitude; believing as she did that I should have devoted all my free time to her.

I hadn't done so and a rift had grown between us.

A rift that swiftly became a chasm before developing with equal rapidity into a canyon.

The distance between us always likely to be too wide for either of us to bridge.

Parting had not been the sweet sorrow that Shakespeare had described but bitter and fraught with insult and accusation from both sides.

Particularly hers.

She avoided my eyes as she asked that derisory question; still angry after all this time and to be honest, I do have to admit it was my preoccupation with sex *a la Internet* rather than in the marital bed that provided the straw that finally broke the camel's back between us.

So, with a semi-apologetic shrug, I admitted I was still porno driven but no longer of my own free will and watched her expression change. Women are nosy creatures and, I knew, such a strange admission would require explanation.

With furrowed brow and eyes still sharp with malevolence, she asked:

"What do you mean: not of your own free will?....."