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VF AGENDA

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Read the Legal Contract Between a Famous French Novelist And His Submissive Wife

by **Vanity Fair**



If you haven't heard of Catherine Robbe-Grillet, you haven't been Googling "dominatrix" enough. Robbe-Grillet, the widow of writer and filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet, is France's most famous dominatrix. In this month's *Vanity Fair*, Toni Bentley visits the idyllic chateau where Robbe-Grillet, 83, now resides with her submissive companion, Beverly Charpentier, who is 32 years her junior. Charpentier kindly (well, she probably didn't have a choice), translated the Robbe-Grillet's unofficial marriage contract, in which Alain set out explicit details for arranging their sex life as a system of "conjugal prostitution." Though Catherine never signed the contract, she willingly submitted to its regimen of whippings and torments. That was in 1958. Here is "Le Contrat," in its never-before-published, unedited English translation:

Contract of Conjugal Prostitution

The present contract between the undersigned parties has been drafted in order to define special rights which may be exercised by the husband upon his young wife during sessions of a particular nature, sessions - to be compensated in cash - during which the young woman will be subjected to ill treatment, humiliation and torture beyond the extent of customary practice, the limits of which have come to be mutually understood during the course of the first year of their marriage.

1. The duration of these sessions, which, generally, shall not exceed two hours may, should

the husband so wish, be inferior to this period. The date and time of each session shall be determined by mutual agreement of both parties. The date, once established, may be revoked by the husband alone. Furthermore, the husband may demand a minimum of three sessions per month. On the appointed day, at precisely the designated time, his wife shall present herself at the rendezvous, dressed strictly according to instructions. Unless receiving orders to the contrary, she shall kneel immediately before her husband, eyes lowered, hands behind her back, and shall remain thus until summoned.

2. For the duration of each session the young woman shall conduct herself in a reserved manner, behaving with perfect obedience. She shall express no surprise, nor, indeed, any opinion in response to what is asked of her, but shall obey all commands directly. She will speak only when her husband so orders and then, shall repeat only what he instructs her to say. She may never take the initiative, but shall attend with zeal and intelligence to all things from the least significant detail to the most outrageous demand. The only manifestations of a personal nature permitted, shall be those of fear, pain or disgust - manifestations which, naturally, must be overcome at once. The least hesitation will result in severe punishment, at the husband's discretion.

3. The reason for her presence being solely to gratify the husband's vices, he shall treat her accordingly, with relentless harshness and brutality; no consideration whatever shall be taken of the possible enjoyment or otherwise of the young lady herself. She must know that should she find herself fondled or caressed, this will not be for the purposes of imparting to her pleasure of any kind; it shall be merely that the husband desires contact with her flesh. It is, therefore, of little importance whether she experiences pleasure or not; neither, however, is this forbidden. The only participation required of her shall be of an intellectual nature: an immediate understanding of all postures and gestures imposed upon her, each of which shall be undertaken to the husband's entire satisfaction.

4. These postures will nearly always be humiliating. They may be accompanied by chains or any manner of restraint whose purpose will be to maintain the body in a specific position, either whilst being fondled, during the infliction of torture, or merely to emphasise the condition of slavery which shall be imposed upon the young lady for the duration of these sessions. Likewise, her submission may be emphasised by means of a blindfold or any other accessory devised for the sole convenience of the beneficiary. Many of these positions will be uncomfortable; the young lady shall, however, maintain the pose as long as it pleases her husband: and since the wife's pleasure is of no concern, any fatigue she may experience will not be taken into consideration; nevertheless, should she experience pain too extreme as a result of this treatment, she might beg her master's mercy which shall, in most cases, be accorded.

5. Torments inflicted upon her may either be varied or, if it so pleases the husband, repetitious; once more, it is not the place of the young woman to judge their value. Should she grow bored, become impatient, or weary of any treatment inflicted upon her, she may console herself with the notion that the man to whom she belongs is thus afforded pleasure and his pleasure is the sole purpose of the exercise. As a rule, and not excluding the possibility of additional practices, she shall be relentlessly slapped, bitten, etc. . . . ; her flesh - preferably in the most sensitive areas - shall be rent by fingernails; finally, she shall be beaten repeatedly during each session, on any part of the body chosen by the husband, with a leather whip acquired specifically for this purpose, for as long as he so desires; none of the blows, however, should be delivered with sufficient force to tear the flesh or produce conspicuous bruising. No visible marks resulting from these torments should remain beyond the period of a few hours. Moreover, the victim shall have the option, when she no longer believes herself able to bear the torment, of begging respite.

6. It is of the greatest possible importance to the husband that, for the duration of these distractions, his wife remain exposed and open to him at all times. Unless otherwise instructed, the least pressure of his fingers shall be interpreted as an invitation to render

herself even more accessible, or to offer her husband a better view of any area he might wish to see, caress or torment. Above all, each of the body's natural orifices should be exposed and easily accessible - insofar as this is possible - in order to facilitate penetration. This rule shall be respected at all times, even in the event of severe pain which might, momentarily, divert the young woman's attention from any erotic whims to which, simultaneously, she must deliver herself. Furthermore, when her mouth or hands are required to fondle him, it shall be expected of her that she apply the greatest possible diligence to this task, regardless of whether the position in which she finds herself, or the torments to which she must submit, make the performance of her carnal duties arduous.

7. When the husband tires of these occupations (or when the two hour limit has been attained), his woman shall be dismissed without further ado. For the duration, she shall respect the rules concerning her demeanour as stipulated in the present Contract of Prostitution. Finally, she shall kneel, thighs apart, hands held over her head, eyes wide open, to demonstrate willing acceptance of everything that shall have been imposed upon her. Thus shall she remain for approximately one minute after which she shall gather up her clothing and leave the room without uttering a word. Should she have acquitted herself deferentially and conscientiously, her bank account shall be credited with a previously agreed sum.

8. This sum shall be fixed at twenty thousand French Francs per session; however, should the harshness of treatment imposed upon her so justify, new conditions may be determined. Monies thus earned shall be the wife's sole separate property: she shall not be expected to give any account of their use and may even use them for amusements in which her husband takes no part, such as extravagant travel, any manner of personal acquisitions, costly gifts for her friends, etc... Exceptionally, by mutual consent of the undersigned, special provision might be made for additional sessions which might be longer, more audacious or cruel.

Signed in Neuilly, 22nd September 1958

Translated into English by Beverly Charpentier

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