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For Richer or Poorer
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Q: What are some of the greatest relationship pitfalls faced by women who earn more than their male partners?

A: The greatest relationship pitfall is the lack of communication between the partners because of feelings of shame on both sides. Men feel confused about their "manhood" and women feel ashamed, not only of their "unmanned" husbands, but ashamed of themselves for marrying the "wrong guy." This is related to their serious lack of knowledge about the fact that they are part and parcel of a huge social revolution currently taking place. There is no longer any need for them to feel that they have to hide from their peers or from one another. They have lots of company, but they don't know it.

Q: To what extent are traditional ideas about gender responsible for friction in homes where women earn more than men?

A: To a great extent. Most modern men and women are still influenced by traditional ideas about gender roles. Much of the time they think and feel as though they were still living in the middle of the last century, even though present day social and economic realities are so very different. It affects everything in their lives together and it leads to confusion, anxiety, hurt, and resentment.

Q: In the course of conducting interviews for this book, you found many female breadwinners reluctant to admit their status to friends and family. Why is there a social stigma attached to earning more than one's husband?

A: It's the feelings of shame and embarrassment that we just mentioned. Women still think it is morally wrong for them to earn more than their husbands; it's their familiar world turned upside-down. They are drowning in traditional feelings even though intellectually they know better. Men are supposed to be the providers. If their men are not providers, then women are ashamed of their men on some level and ashamed of themselves for having married "the wrong guy."

Q: What do you think accounts for the phenomenon of working women doing more of the housework than their husbands?

A: These are the same old traditional ideas running rampant. Both men and women believe that women are supposed to be in charge of the house. We haven't reached the point where we truly believe that it takes equality and mutuality to keep the home fires burning.

Q: How many generations do you think it will take before a woman's earning more than her husband is not considered exceptional?

A: That won't take as long as it will take to reach parity in gender roles. There have to be new definitions of masculinity and femininity. That might take until the end of the century . . . maybe longer.