

ONE QUESTION FOR COMMITMENT

MAN, WOMAN
+ PERSONAL SPACE

BY RAMI SALAMÉ



“Will you marry me?” That dreamy line from every romantic movie; that touching proposal from every climax of every love story. They make it sound so easy and so spontaneous. Like the decision to marry is a spur-of-the-moment thing. But it’s not.

Any man on the brink of that decision will tell you it’s complex. The swinging between doubts, fears, and hundreds of questions: Should I marry her? *Why* should I marry her? Is she right for me? Ironically, all these are the wrong questions. There is really only one question to ask yourself before you make the decision. This very question was posed to me by my father when I declared my intention to get married:

**WHAT MAKES
YOU SURE YOU
ARE READY TO
GET MARRIED?**

You see, guys, marriage isn’t about her. It’s about you. Marriage is a commitment to share not only a lifetime with someone, but also to share personal space. Men are territorial creatures by nature. That’s probably best exhibited in the way we urinate at public bathrooms. To put it politely, men mark the entire area.

From the time they are young boys, males are already dreaming about their future “crib”. They imagine where their 50-inch TV will be. (Thanks to the world of porn and spam mail, men think in terms of “inches” all the time.) They think of the giant loveseat in the living room, the Jacuzzi in the bathroom, and the copious bar in the kitchen. In their minds, young boys have already designed the space they want to occupy as grown men. But in our part of the world, the ticket to leaving your parental nest and creating your own space is marriage. Grown men must therefore redesign their “perfect house” to accommodate their partner. The truth is that men never really own space. They only guard it. Women, on the other hand,

are the gatherers, the bearers of fruit, and the more practical of the two sexes. They understand how to utilize space. And the sacrifice begins.

I used to joke that the only space I actually own in my house is the area on which I sleep. But even that is debatable. The bed-sharing deal is that I get to sleep on whatever area that is left after my wife has settled down to sleep.



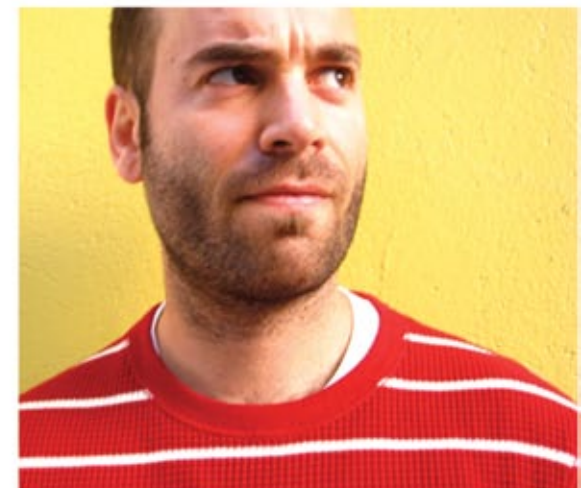


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That is only a fraction of the deal. A woman has a wonderful way of marking her territory. She marks it with "stuff". There's no other word for it. Stuff. She will *own* the bathroom by spreading her countless creams and skin products over any available counter. The man's ownership of the bathroom is reduced to the area occupied by his shaving kit, and his single, solitary shampoo bottle standing next to the bathtub surrounded by her mob of hair care products. She will *own* the kitchen by the default, owing to a man's instinctual fear of dishwashing. Her stuff is all over the place. Her Tupperware might fall out of cupboards when opened. You will always have to ask where the soup ladle is, because your territorial mind will tell it you it should be in the drawer while her aesthetic mind says it looks better hanging on a hook by the stove. Forks on left, spoons on the right. Don't ask why; just know it's for the best. She will *own* the living room because the plants and bookshelves are more important than your PlayStation and

your huge TV (No, your woman does not think of your TV in terms of "inches"). Her small side-lamps will cast warm shadows across the room. To her, the shadows are romantic; but to the hunter in you, they evoke those caveman nights when a group of hairy men were hiding behind a rock, hoping not be spotted by the even-hairier mammoth. She will *own* the bedroom. The dresser surface will hold her "stuff". The closet will be unequally divided between her clothes and your small set of shirts. Your bedroom looks like a post-war treaty where you are the losing side. You own shoulder-space on the mattress. And, if lucky, a side table with your alarm clock on it. And a book. And every night, before you go to sleep, you will set your alarm, close your eyes, and try to recall images of the "perfect house" you never had. But to your right lies a wonderful woman, smelling like a field of lavender, smiling at you like you've just returned safely from a perilous journey at sea. That is your reward; your fragrant, heartwarming reward, for commitment.

Oh, before I forget. The answer I gave my father was as simple as the question: I'm willing to give up a boy's obsession with personal space, his need for territory, for a man's need for love and companionship ■



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