

# 1 The Unthinkable

**There is no such** thing as changing a husband. In my experience, a woman either lives with her man and deals with the good, the bad, and the ugly, or she divorces him. If neither option is viable, she must come up with a different plan.

The idea of murder first occurred to me in the kitchen, on a Thursday evening, halfway through football season. As I squeezed garlic into a mixing bowl of steaming potatoes, I tried to squash the dastardly thought.

*Stop it! You can't kill your husband! That's crazy!*

Yet by the time I finished whipping the potatoes, I decided it wouldn't hurt to make a list of the pros and cons, something I liked to do for every important decision in my life.

"Charlie, I'm starving."

"It's coming," I hollered over the thunderous sound of cheering fans. For the hundredth time, I wondered why my husband Billy couldn't mute the volume for five seconds, the length of his average sentence. I hated screaming over the surround sound speaker system.

Pulling a brown meatloaf covered in burnt red ketchup out of the oven, I stabbed it with a giant fork. Then I cut the loaf in half and threw one chunk on a plate positioned in the middle of a serving tray. The mashed potatoes followed, along with silverware, several napkins, and two beers.

Biceps braced, I hoisted the order and carried it into the family room to its final destination, a TV tray. It was parked in front of Billy who sat sprawled in his chair, an oversized recliner covered in butt-worn chocolate leather. Billy ate all of his meals in the chair. He spent most of his non-working hours there as well, including the nocturnal ones, watching men run, throw, catch, hit, kick, block, and score. So many channels, so many sports, so many hours logged in the chair.

Back in the kitchen, I nuked a leftover chicken breast, a scoop of mashed potatoes, and six baby carrots in the microwave. After I cleaned my plate, I grabbed a notepad and pen, and a glass of water, then began my list.

"Always start with the pros." I spoke out loud as I wrote the words, a habit I started when Billy became seriously involved with the TV.

"In no particular order," I added for clarity's sake.

## *The Pros and Cons of Murdering Billy*

### *Pros*

- 1. I can get rid of Mistress A, the chair.*
- 2. I can get rid of Mistress B, the TV.*
- 3. I can get rid of Mistress C, ESPN.*
- 4. Billy will no longer be a permanent fixture in the family room.*
- 5. Death is cleaner, quicker, and less expensive than divorce. No lawyers. No loose ends. No lingering paperwork.*
- 6. I can have sex somewhere other than in a chair. I can get it on with an active and interested partner who will do his part. \*Note to self. Get instructional book like The Karma Sutra and review all possible positions.*

Sex with Billy had become an express workout in the chair, usually occurring during half-time of a televised game. The workouts consisted of me climbing onto his lap and bouncing up and down for three to four minutes. Often, I would throw a bag of popcorn in the microwave before I started, confident that he'd reach a conclusion before the last kernel popped. Billy always seemed grateful to have a snack ready for the second half.

*7. Financial advantages. Money from the life insurance policy. Money from Billy's sports memorabilia collection?*

I put a question mark next to money from his sports memorabilia collection. If I sold it, Billy might come back and haunt me. The longer I looked at number seven, the more I felt inclined to cross it out. If I went through with the dirty deed, money would come as a result of his death. It wasn't a motivating factor. Still, brainstorming meant writing down every idea that popped into my head, no matter how distasteful.

"Charlie, I need more beer."

I jerked at the sound of Billy's bellow and dropped my pen. As I watched it roll off the table, I waited to hear if a second sentence would follow his first.

When I felt confident another request wasn't imminent, I hollered back, "okay," then pushed back the chair and grabbed two icy cold brewskis out of the fridge. Two beers would buy me another half-hour of writing. After the hand-off, I retrieved my pen from the floor and continued the list.

*8. Mother Mona will be out of my life.*

Billy's mother was a piece of work. Not having to deal with her anymore...priceless.  
Number nine. Almost too obvious to mention.

*9. I'll be free to start a new life.*

I underlined it for emphasis. Could be a theme for all the pros.

Number ten? I waited a few minutes, but nothing came. Too bad. The top ten reasons for murdering your husband had a nice ring to it.

I moved to the other side of the paper and began with the obvious.

#### *Cons*

*1. I will have to commit a heinous crime. I will have to MURDER my husband.*

*2. Making it look like an accident or a natural death will be a challenge.*

*3. If I get caught, I could go to jail for life, or worse, unless the majority of the jury is made up of married women.*

*4. Guilt. If I succeed, will I be able to live with myself?*

I stared at the white space, wracking my brain for another con. But I couldn't come up with anything else. Sighing, I closed my eyes and gave my subconscious a few more moments to produce a heartfelt objection.

Nothing.

I totaled the list. Nine pros vs. four cons. Holy Cow. As Billy would say, the pros just kicked the shit out of the cons.

A buzz of adrenaline zapped me. Leaping to my feet, I shoved the chair back and lurched over to the fridge for a beer. I gulped down half a can in one swig then whispered nine pros vs. four cons over and over, until the words turned into a sick sort of mantra.

The spell broke when Billy yelled, “Hey Charlie, how about I buy you a new sixty-five inch Digital Light Processing TV for your birthday next week? The screen can split into four pictures. Wouldn’t that be great?”

Wow. Three complete sentences from the man in the chair. I didn’t bother to respond. Regardless of what I said, tomorrow, or the day after, a sleeker, smarter, better endowed mistress B would show up in my house posing as my birthday present.

I chuckled at the irony and slammed the rest of my beer. Then I dug two more out of the fridge for Billy. My half-hour just expired.