



Bedded Bliss: A Couple's Guide to Lust Ever After

Kristina Wright

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This book presents valuable advice for couples yearning to maintain magic in their marriages.

Bedded Bliss: A Couple's Guide to Lust Ever After, edited by prolific and award-winning erotica writer Kristina Wright, enters bold new sensual territory with its mix of erotic fiction and suggestions for heterosexual couples to help keep the spark alive at different stages in their union, such as the beginning, parenthood, tough times, middle age, and the twilight years.

This anthology stands out from many self-help books (although *Bliss* isn't exactly part of this genre) because the contributors frankly open up about their struggles and triumphs, not mincing words. The collaborators thus remain eminently real as they draw one into the multiple facets of their intimate lives.

Interspersed among the short stories are exercises to reignite passion, known as "sensual suggestions." However, these suggestion boxes, while containing practical, useful advice such as holding hands whenever possible and taking a massage class together, may leave some couples wanting more than three numbered ideas.

Each chapter begins with an anecdote from a spouse offering a snapshot glance into their union. The couples have been married for varying amounts of time, ranging from three years, to more than twenty years. It is interesting to get a glimpse into the actual lives of the writers before reading their erotica.

In the prelude to her story "The Weight of Things," Wright succinctly captures the pain when somebody one admires makes an inadvertently stinging comment. "When I was a high school freshman, I took a summer class with a young actor fresh from college ... he was a family friend, and I had a tremendous crush on him. During our final evaluations, he told me ... I needed to either lose weight if I wanted to play a lead role, or gain weight and play the "buddy" role. I remember my face freezing into a forced smile ... I was neither skinny enough—nor fat enough—to be an actress."

The glimpses into married life are frank, honest, real, and varied. While the characters in the erotic short stories change, many of the stories are similar in their themes of thinking of love as possession of one's spouse, and having the husbands physically dominate or overpower their wives. While this maybe arousing to some, others may find the similarities repetitive.

Fortunately, many of the stories contain dashes of humor. For example, in "The Proposal," by Christopher Cole, the protagonist finds himself on the floor with his girlfriend trying to put a children's bandage on an injury he sustained when he fell over. In the midst of their sexual escapades, he asks her to marry him, promising to watch chick flicks every Friday, and to ignore her Johnny Depp poster.

In "Bound for the Bedroom" by Christine d'Abo, the couple uses ordinary household items for their S&M play. The last sentence says "The challenge has been keeping the kids from wondering what happened to all of the kitchen utensils."

Bliss intends to mix erotica with self-help and real life experiences, but ends up giving the real-life component short

shrift in favor of steamy stories. Although it veers toward sensual fiction, this book presents valuable advice for couples yearning to maintain magic in their marriages.

JILL ALLEN (January 23, 2014)

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