MONEY · LOVE · HEALTH

THE WOMAN *He Comes Home To*

The money, love and health rules most people learn too late



A WIFE'S GUIDE TO A LASTING MARRIAGE

SARAH ZADE

DIGITAL ZADES

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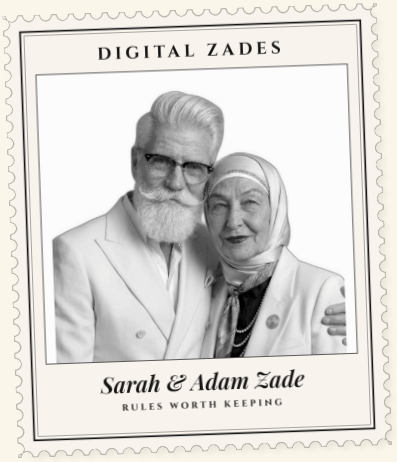
Sarah Zade

79 years old · married to Adam, who keeps notes in the margins



Digital Zades

To the woman holding this book



Let me tell you what this book is not.

It is not a book about how to please a man. I have no patience for those. I have read a few, mostly at the hairdresser, and they all seem to think a wife is a hostess with a wedding ring. Smile more. Cook better. Never have a headache. Dear, if smiling and cooking kept men at home, every restaurant waitress would be married five times.

This is a book about building a home a good man wants to come back to, and making sure he is a man worth coming back to you. Both halves matter. I'll spend most of these pages on yours, because yours is the half you can actually control. His half is in his book. Adam wrote it. It is very good, though I would never tell him so.

Here is what I've learned the long way round, so you can learn it the short way.

Men don't drift away because their wives got older, or rounder, or busier. They drift away for three reasons, the same three reasons women do, just with different words. They stop feeling **steady**, because money became a battlefield instead of a plan. They stop feeling **wanted**, because somewhere along the way they became a list of chores and a source of disappointment. Or they stop feeling **well**, and nobody noticed, least of all him.

So the book has three parts. Steady is about money. Wanted is about love, the daily kind and the nightly kind, because I am seventy-nine and I have not retired from anything. Well is about your body and his, because the most romantic plan a couple can make is to grow old together on purpose.

Every chapter is one rule. Read one a day, or one a week. Do the rule before you read the next. A rule you read and don't do is just a nice paragraph.

You'll find old teachings in these pages too, most of them fourteen hundred years old. I put them in because they are the wisest marriage advice I know, and because they are far kinder to women, and far franker about the bedroom, than most people expect. You don't have to share anyone's faith to recognize good sense.

Adam has read every page. He has left notes in the margins. I have allowed them, in the spirit of marriage.

Rules are rules, dear.

SARAH

PART ONE

STEADY

◆

He comes home where the ground is steady.

Money fights are the loudest fights in most marriages, and the least honest. Nobody is really shouting about the electric bill. They're shouting about fear, and pride, and who gets a say. These seven rules turn money from a battlefield into a plan you both understand.

CHAPTER 1

The Open Books Rule

He can carry a lot of weight. What breaks him is weight he didn't know was there.

For the first three years of our marriage, I had a shoebox.

It lived on the top shelf of the wardrobe, behind my winter hats, and it held a little money I'd saved from before we married, a store card I'd forgotten to cancel, and a small loan I'd taken for my sister and never mentioned. None of it was wicked. All of it was hidden.

Adam found the shoebox looking for his good scarf. He sat on the edge of the bed with it on his knees and didn't say anything for a long time. Then he said: "Is there another box?"

That question hurt more than any shouting would have. Because I realized that from then on, every time I went quiet, every time I closed a drawer a little quickly, he'd wonder about the other box.

> ***Adam's note:*** *There was not another box. I checked. Twice. I'm not proud of the second time.*

WHAT HE WON'T TELL YOU

Men are raised to believe that money is their test. Whether they pass or fail as a man is measured, in their own heads, in bills paid and roofs kept. So when a man discovers a debt or a card or a habit he didn't know about, he doesn't just feel betrayed. He feels ambushed. Like the exam had extra questions nobody told him about.

Many wives keep a little secret money for a perfectly understandable reason: they want something that's theirs. That's fair. But "mine" and "hidden" are two very different words. You can have the first without the second.

THE OPEN BOOKS RULE

Every account, card, debt and regular payment is known to both of you. Your own money can stay your own, but it is never secret. Any purchase over your agreed number is mentioned before, not after. If you'd feel uneasy about him finding it, tell him first.

HOW A WOMAN DOES THIS

She writes it all down on one page. Every account in her name, every card, every debt, every "small" monthly thing. She starts with the line she least wants to say.

She keeps her own money if she wants to. Many wise women do. But she says out loud that it exists, roughly what's in it, and what it's for. "This is mine, and this is what's in it" is a sentence that builds trust. A shoebox destroys it.

She agrees a number with him for "mention before you buy." Not permission. Just no surprises, in both directions.

And if he's the one hiding something? She still opens her books first. It's much harder for a man to keep his drawer shut when his wife has just opened hers.

THE OLD TEACHING

Here is something many people don't know about the old teachings: they are very clear that a wife's money is her own. What she earns, what she inherits, what she brings into the marriage belongs to her. Providing for the household is placed on the husband. What she chooses to give is a gift, not a duty.

There's a beautiful story about this. A woman called Zaynab, the wife of a companion of the Prophet, had her own money and wanted to know if she could give it to her own husband and the orphans in her care, as charity. The answer came back: yes, and she would have two rewards. One for kinship, and one for charity.

Her money was hers. She chose, openly, to share it. That's the whole rule. Not "his money" or "her money" hidden in shoeboxes. Open books, and generous hands, by choice.

◆

NEVER *let your husband discover your money from a letter, a statement or a stranger. Secrets cost more than debts.*

TONIGHT

Write the page. Every account, card and debt in your name. Then pick a calm moment this week, put it on the table, and say: "I want you to know everything. No surprises, either way."

The shoebox is in our garage now. It holds Christmas lights. Much better use for it.

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A good man doesn't stop coming home all at once. He stops one evening at a time.

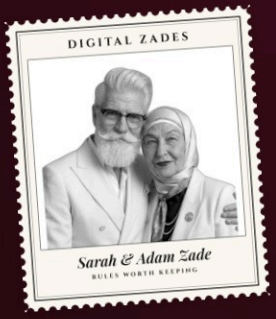
Not because she got older, or busier. Because home stopped feeling steady, he stopped feeling wanted, and nobody was watching their health. It happens to good couples every day.

Twenty-six small rules, told woman to woman, that make a home a good man can't wait to walk into, without ever making yourself smaller. Ten minutes a night. Start tonight, and he will feel the difference by Sunday.

STEADY	Open books, a later jar, and money talks with cake, not ambushes.
WANTED	Thanks, welcome, plain words, and a real say in the bedroom.
WELL	Strong bones, early nights, and the check-up you keep skipping.

THREE RULES FROM INSIDE

- *Never greet him with a problem before you've greeted him with a smile.*
- *Never punish him with silence. Leave his name if you must. Never leave him.*
- *Never fake it, and never feel ashamed to want.*



"She let me keep some margin notes. In the spirit of marriage."

ADAM ZADE

DIGITAL ZADES

Sarah and Adam Zade are characters created by Digital Zades. The rules and the old teachings are real.