

**A Knight in Dusty Overalls** by Lynne Marshall – An original Woman’s World short story

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*I sold my first and only Woman’s World story in December 2005 and it appeared in the March 14, 2006 edition. I originally wrote 1,100 words and titled it, **A Knight in Dusty Overalls**, but the title and length was changed to suit the magazine. If you enjoy short romance stories, this one is for you.*

**A GOOD HUSBAND** by Lynne Marshall

Gladys and Russell came to the clinic every Friday morning for a blood pressure check. Alice reached for the stethoscope around her neck and smiled at the pair.

“We’re married sixty-two years,” Russell said, as he did every week. “Can you believe it?”

Alice answered in her typical smart-alecky way with a wink while applying the cuff to Gladys’ arm. “And you’re still talking to each other?”

That got a laugh from both of them. Alice couldn’t help noticing the care the older couple took with each other. She thought about her own marriage and felt a wave of guilt.

Alice had been head over heels for her husband, Brian, when they first married. After the kids came along, it became easy to get annoyed, and too often, she’d said exactly what was on her mind, even though she knew her words often hurt him.

She hadn’t even bothered to kiss Brian goodbye that morning, and they’d only been married ten years. Instead, Alice had complained about how hard it was to get two kids ready for school while she prepared for work. But now, she recalled, it was Brian who had fixed them breakfast and handed off the lunch sacks on their way out the door.

“Everything looks good,” she said to the couple, smiling.

The appointment over, Russell stood and offered a hand to help Gladys up. He placed a sweater over her bird-like shoulders and handed her purse to her.

Gladys smiled. “You’re a good husband, dear.”

“And you’re a good wife.”

Alice’s heart lurched a little. When, lately, had she bothered to say anything sweet like that to Brian? Big, burly, tenderhearted Brian got up every day and went to work as an electrician. Though he might be more of a knight in dusty overalls than shining armor, he supported his family with pride. He wasn’t perfect—far from it. In fact, lately, he’d been choosing to play cards with the guys on Friday nights, rather than watch a video with her and the kids. That irked her, and she’d let him know it that morning.

Alice watched the old couple head down the hall holding on to each other for support, and said a prayer for her own marriage.

On her break, Alice sat talking with Noreen, a co-worker who was considering a separation.

“Listen to what our marriage counselor suggested,” Noreen said. “She wrote it out like a prescription: Be polite to each other.” She laughed wryly. “Don’t allow yourself to say anything spiteful.”

“Maybe she has a point,” Alice said thoughtfully.

“She said another couple in our same predicament tried it. After months of not talking to each other, they started with polite sentences.” Noreen laced her fingers in her lap. “After

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another few weeks, they’d become friendly again and within another month, they’d changed their minds about divorce. Just by being nice to each other.”

“Sounds like it’s worth a shot,” Alice said. She reached across and grasped her friend’s arm. “Don’t give up, okay?”

That night, knowing Brian would come home to change before the card game, Alice gave the kids an early dinner, then fixed Brian’s favorite meal of meatloaf and mashed potatoes. When he walked in the door, she kissed him.

“Hey, thanks,” he said, a surprised sparkle in his eyes.

He wanted to hug her she could tell, but held back, probably because of the dirty work clothes. Instead, he leaned forward and gave her a kiss. They looked into each other’s eyes and smiled. The old spark was still there.

“You’re the best, you know that?” he said.

With Brian’s touch and sweet words, Alice felt a rush of relief—it wasn’t too late, she was sure of it. They were in this marriage for the long haul like Gladys and Russell.

“Hmm, what’s cooking?” Brian peeked into the oven. He smiled and looked questioningly at Alice.

“Because you’re such a good husband, I made your favorite,” she said.

After ten years of marriage, Alice could read Brian’s expressions. By the looks of it, she’d made him very happy with a simple thing like a home-cooked meal.

“So, what movie are we watching with the kids tonight?” Brian asked.

He may have been standing before her in dusty overalls, but she could see him for who he really was, her knight, the man who’d swept her off her feet eleven years ago. And right that moment, in her minds eye he mounted a white horse, reached down for her hand, and pulled her up to ride off into the sunset.