



BY JAMIE ROSEN

When we were engaged and tending to pre-wedding rites of passage like registering for china and arguing about the guest list, my future husband asked me to sign a prenuptial agreement. Not one that protected his assets, mind you, but mine. And instead of detailing what would happen to our finances if we were to break up, this prenup would be a promise: a promise to not get plastic surgery. It's not that the frozen assets in question are without flaw, for they are flawed aplenty, but as my husband explained at the time, he didn't

want to go to bed with one woman and wake up twenty years later to find an entirely different one in her place. While the request was made in jest, the sentiment behind it was very real.

The romantic view is that when we fall in love with someone, we fall in love with every part of them, including the curve of their nose or the extra bit of fat around their belly. The idea of this person surgically altering themselves just seems wrong. "Ultimately, if a patient says to me 'My husband's really against this,' I respond, 'Then don't do it,'" says Manhattan plastic surgeon Gerald Imber. "I really think it has to be something you can live with together."

ore often than not, though, he says the protesting has more to do with the fear of freakish results—the windblown faces, the torpedo implants, the lumpy liposuction—than a desire to see a spouse live

with saggy breasts for the rest of eternity. Of course, a fear of change—be it coming from spouses or the patients themselves—hasn't stopped millions of people from undergoing elective procedures every year. But does the swift physical change inflicted by a surgeon's scalpel also have the power to alter the anatomy of a relationship?

While this question would certainly apply to either spouse, the overwhelming majority of plastic surgery is done on women (ac-

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cording to statistics from the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, women received eighty-nine percent of the 1.5 million procedures performed in 2009). So the conversation usually ends up centering on what he thinks of her getting surgery. And surprisingly, most husbands are not quite as opposed to the idea as they might have thought they'd be earlier in their marriages. "Men marry someone, and they go in with the implicit expectation that she's going to stay as she was when they got married," says New York behavioral psychologist Stephen Josephson. "Some [even] have this fantasy that she's going to get better-looking." According to him, men take one of two stances when the subject of surgery is broached: "passively supportive or actively encouraging," he says. "But for the majority of the people I see, it's the latter."

Imber recalls a common scenario among couples: "The wife says, 'You know, I look in the mirror and I'm just looking old.' If the husband says, 'You're right,' he's dead meat. The sensible person says, 'You look better than everybody else, but it's okay if you want to do something.' There's a way to be honest and not insulting."

But even if a husband is secretly excited by the idea of his wife sporting a lifted butt or a sculpted chin, there is almost always unease about the concerns that go along with elective surgery. "There was an anesthesiologist involved—she was on the table for five hours!" says one man whose wife recently had a neck-tightening procedure performed by Beverly Hills plastic surgeon Robert Kotler. But in the end, he says, it was worth the risk. "We gave it a lot

of thought [beforehand]. Now I think it's wonderful. She doesn't always wear these big turtlenecks anymore!"

For certain men, the issues they have with their wives choosing to go under the knife go beyond medical worries. "There's always that concern of, 'Why is my wife doing this?'" says Mark\*, whose