

Chapter 1

THE FINE ART OF SURRENDER**Rage**

The first phase of dealing with this diagnosis was realizing I was facing major issues about ever having a normal erection again. My timid hope dissolved into disbelief, then a seething rage. I remember times looking up at the ceiling, shaking my fists to the heavens, shouting to whatever Higher Power would listen: *“You have GOT to be f***ing kidding me!!!!!!”* As if it were God’s fault for my predicament while giving me no credit whatsoever for remaining faithful to my sexless marriage.

Fortunately, for me, this period of victimhood was short lived. For many men, however, erectile dysfunction is considered ‘worse than death.’ The despair lies in the thinking that someone with erectile dysfunction is no longer ‘a man’... this couldn’t be further from the truth. Physical side-effects of cancer can never change who we are at our core.

Any reproductive cancer, in a male or a female, can have a tremendous negative impact on someone’s sexual self-image. If you are a man facing treatment for prostate cancer, your thoughts, like mine, often include: What’s it like to pee? Will I have incontinence and will it turn off my partner? Will I ever have an orgasm again? What will happen to my libido? What if my friends or associates find out I have erectile dysfunction? Will I still feel like a man? Will my partner stop finding me attractive?

This condition often has a profound impact on your partner as well. They may think you are no longer interested or attracted to them. Even though they understand they are not the cause, it still can be difficult to reconcile emotionally. Likewise, women going through the rigors of cancer and its treatment, particularly breast and other female reproductive cancers, can feel ‘less than a woman’ with the same concerns about their attractiveness.

If you or your partner are experiencing any of this, there are ways to transcend this sense of loss and diminishment. It is quite possible to reestablish, and even exceed, your previous experience of emotional and sexual intimacy. Whatever your circumstances, don’t give up hope. Instead, we invite you to be open to the possibilities shared throughout this book. Consider them as a proven guide to an adventure you can share with your partner, leading to greater levels of intimacy and sexual fulfillment.

Thankfully, my mounting anger did not plunge me into deep depression or feelings of shame. I realized shame is a terribly destructive emotion, in which far too many men find themselves trapped; this is due to unfortunate cultural imprinting that equates manhood with a functioning penis. Once I was over anger, I moved on to ‘bargaining’—which meant I would do whatever it took to get my erections back. Man, did I ever.

Besides the usual erectile aids, I tried much more powerful intraurethral and injectable medications, and even a penis pump. None of these were very effective, or in the case of the penis pump, particularly romantic. Once it was clear the usual medical treatments did little to help my situation, I considered more radical remedies such as surgical implants, which I decided against primarily for their post-surgical risks. After that, I explored unconventional therapies that just might do the trick. These non-traditional methods included Chinese herbal medications, Reiki energy work, meditation, massage, acupuncture, colon cleansing, Watsu water massage and even a Shaman (no, really!)

who beat a drum and danced around my prone body in a small, dark, incensed-filled room.

Nearly everyone from the medical community to the well-intentioned unorthodox practitioners were reassuring me my penis would soon have a modicum of normal erectile function. These encouraging notions helped me adopt a wait-and-see attitude. I was willing to wait because I wasn't seeing anyone. In fact, I had decided to move to Brazil for a few months to figure out what was next for me.

I will admit, however, I had fantasized about meeting a sensual Brazilian woman who might just nurse me back to reasonable intimate enjoyment. That's the one thing the doctors and other practitioners hadn't considered.

It is intriguing how life sometimes gives us exactly what we need and often, many times greater than what we wanted. I did meet a wonderful, sensuous Brazilian woman... but not in Brazil. I also never got my erectile function back. Meeting her showed me I didn't need it after all.

Instead, what I got was an incredible opening to ever-growing emotional, sexual and spiritual ecstasy, far exceeding what I ever believed possible. This was achieved without medication, 'toys' or aids of any kind. I can honestly say all of this occurred because of my full impotence, not despite it.

Ponder that last sentence carefully. As difficult as it may be to believe, this experience of elevated intimacy is also available for both of you.

Now it is time to introduce Jacqueline, my life partner and Intimacy Muse. I have the utmost confidence that you will see what an amazing, courageous woman she is. She is my inspiration and the inspiration for this book.

I am Jacqueline Lopez



I still wonder, did it really happen? Did I find the most exquisite intimacy with a man who can't get it up to save his life? For 10 years I was previously in a committed relationship. Two

years after becoming single again, when I least expected it, I met Michael. My friend and I were standing outside our local Unity Church, trying to figure out what to do next. I had mixed up the date for a particular talk that evening. Michael showed up for another talk about life transitions and asked us in which room it was being held. As he walked by us, I sniffed his scent. My friend who was with me, looked at me strangely trying to understand my reaction. I composed myself but the next words out of my mouth were: *"Hmm... Did you smell him?"* My friend paid little attention. But I couldn't let him go. I immediately suggested we check out the talk where this gentleman was heading. We followed him and I sat three seats away. After the talk, we connected and became friends which eventually led to us dating. After that, we continued dating for four years before we moved in together. I mention our timeline because it's important to show we took the time necessary for a solid relationship to 'take root' and grow strong. Ours has grown like a redwood tree. We can weather any storm.

At this point in my life, I realize that what I want in a partner is someone open to exploring unconventional ways to be intimate. I am a 51-year-old raised by a single mother, the oldest of three siblings raised in South America. I am here sharing the most intimate details of my life with you so Michael and I can help couples struggling with cancer-related intimacy challenges. You will see I am not your average South American woman.

My mother had an enormous influence on who I am today. She believed in raising us 'free-range' in terms of education. She never tried to persuade us to go to college or to pursue specific careers. We weren't even a highly religious family, despite being raised in a Catholic culture. Her strong independence instilled confidence in each of us to act on the things in our best interest.

My parents married young; my mother was 19 and my father

21. My father came from a traditional paternalistic family. Not only do such men deeply believe their superiority over women, the women in my culture sustain that belief. However, my mother is inherently strong and always believed something beyond herself was guiding her to do the things she did to thrive in a male-dominated society. She was my inspiration and absolute hero. However, to show how insidious social programming is, she too, fell prey to patriarchy while she raised two girls and a boy.

Although there were few demands on me, there was one thing my mother expected, since I was the last to live at home after graduating from college: that I would get married and have children. In our culture, girls leave home only after finding a suitable husband. There were no other options.

Despite that, I did it differently. Once I saved enough money for a down payment, I moved into my own apartment. In doing so, I savored freedom for the first time and it was delicious.

I never had a strong desire to follow what my friends were doing, which meant not following the script imposed by parents, the educational system or society. They expected me, along with all women my age, to 'do the right thing.' My 'right thing' was doing what was best for me.

I don't know who made this list of milestones for girls. They always seemed like rules. The adulthood template looks something like this: having a career path, being married or coupled before 25, having a kid, owning a home and so on. I realized meeting these milestones weren't interesting.

The question was, how do you figure out what it means to be an adult if you haven't achieved those milestones? During a speech at Stanford University, Oprah Winfrey said something that spoke to me: *"If you have no idea what your purpose is, don't panic, the key is to know what you don't want to be or do. Then, identify them and stay away from them! Your purpose will show up later."*

When I turned thirty and still hadn't found my purpose or 'The One', my mother worried I'd end up alone with nobody to take care of me when I grew old. Or worse, I would never have children. That makes me laugh because during my teenage years, she threatened to show me the door and disown me if I ever became pregnant out of wedlock. Now, she was backpedaling, begging me to have at least one child or else a pervasive darkness would forever cloud my life, because I didn't fulfill the ultimate female mission.

However, the more I exposed myself to new ideas through reading and meeting influential people, achieving my ultimate fulfillment as a wife and mother seemed too limiting. I sensed there was, and eventually discovered, a wonderful limitless world waiting for me to explore. The more I read and the more people I met, the more my feelings about love and intimacy changed. I realized the disturbing things I had learned started with the slanted story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

I believe the Creation Story to be the most catastrophic PR campaign against women and sexuality ever known. From my perspective it was a team effort by the Judeo-Christian tradition to spread guilt, and the omnipresent fear of hell, both of which make our lives hellish.

Fast forward. Now, as a post-menopausal woman, I no longer have the slightest guilt about my lifestyle and, most importantly, about my sexual fulfillment, which has shifted gradually over the years. Changes in female sexual desire are more about *how* women want to experience sex, not *if* they want it. We do!

As women, we still have a long way to go to claw our way out of the Victorian, guilt-ridden society in which we live. This guilt seems to have sown the seeds of many erroneous assumptions that can easily trip us up, even within the most

compatible relationships. I think Michael feels lucky we don't have to combat those issues at this stage in our lives.

Many women assume men know what women want sexually, but they really don't. Many men hope their partner will remain unchanged, seeking the same form of intimacy as they did when they first met many years ago. Often, they don't. I, too, fell prey to these same assumptions. I wasn't even aware of them until I realized I wasn't getting them. That's until I became a more conscious person, I met Michael and we started on this journey together to find a whole new level of emotional and sexual fulfillment.

During my childbearing years, I admit, I used to find traditional sexual intercourse very appealing. This was due to my innate wiring, intended for procreation and survival of the species. Later, like many other women, as I approached my 40s, the ticking of my biological clock grew louder. For me, this was a minor annoyance, but for others, it's a strident reminder of their primary purpose (biologically speaking), which is to bear offspring—ideally with a man who will adequately support and protect the family. This physiological reminder, along with well-intentioned pressure from family and friends, often causes women to make poor choices they come to regret. However, I have learned from every relationship I've ever had. Each one was part of the journey of realizing who I am.

The second realization I had came from understanding the impact of the cultural and religious beliefs around female sexuality. In Western culture, sexuality is often deeply rooted in shame and ignorance. Upon arriving in the United States for the first time, it quickly became apparent that the word sex has a significant charge. The United States is probably one of the most uptight countries in the world regarding human sexuality. There seems to be an intangible barrier most people never cross when

talking about it. That's why men and women grow up with so much guilt-driven anxiety and repression of their own desires.

If nothing else, learn about your sexual self for survival reasons. If women know little about their own anatomy, it could cost them their lives. According to a new survey in the UK done by the gynecological cancer charity The Eve Appeal, 44% of women could not identify the vagina and 60% were unsure where the vulva was.

In Latin countries, discussion about sex is no more charged than talking about the weather. For us, sex is natural and not considered immoral or dirty. I realized avoiding the discussing of sex openly and authentically has caused many Western women to experience tremendous shame about their bodies and because of that, never understand their full sensual potential.

When my niece was a teenager and dating her boyfriend, my sister always asked her boyfriend if he wanted condoms. In my country, it's common for parents to ask their daughter's boyfriend whether he needs condoms for the night. I think that is a great example of parents being honest, realistic and encouraging about the inevitability of this natural phenomenon called sex. This is a great example of a responsible culture that takes preventative measures to avoid potentially disastrous outcomes.

I noticed a stark difference between living in South America and in the U.S. There's a strong cultural message to women in most developed countries to pursue success in a world designed for men, and to compete tooth-and-nail for their place in the corporate arena. The fast-moving modern world means women are working longer hours, juggling more responsibilities, and progressively less able to place their intimate relationship as their top priority. In my humble opinion, this frantic rush for success which has permeated femininity has done great collateral damage to the balance of the masculine and feminine.

Most men in South America are 'machista' which means they believe in an exaggerated sense of manliness and dominance over women. Pursuing gender parity at a slower pace found in South America helps balance male and female roles. This is opposite to the clash I see happening to couples in Western societies.

I fully support every woman who pursues breaking glass ceilings in her career, however, I encourage her to take off the 'corporate cape' when she returns home from the trenches. At home you are his woman and he is your man. Your mate longs for the alluring soft, sweet and sexy feminine side of you. When you walk through that door, take a deep breath and shake out all traces of dominance that rubbed off in the boardroom battles you had to contend with that day. Don't forget that your man has also had to deal with dominant behavior from the other men in his office. When both of you take it down a notch, you will enjoy just being yourselves together.

My perspective may sound antiquated for one who claims to be a modern woman. However, I feel I represent a more balanced view of femininity that works effectively when joined with a man's perspective of himself. My views definitely changed as I aged. It has taken time for me to no longer have the urge to please a man to keep him. Now my focus is on keeping myself intact as a woman. Age has freed me to be myself which includes knowing and embracing the full spectrum of my sexuality. Along with that, I am now more vocal about what I want emotionally and sexually.

Fortunately, I met Michael, an emotionally evolved man, who relishes these traits in me. He receives his greatest sexual fulfillment by helping me achieve mine. I learned from Michael that there's nothing more satisfying to a man (who truly cares for you) than knowing he can please you, unlike any other. With



that being said, my sexual desire for Michael grows stronger every day because its foundation is the deep and growing emotional connection we share.

Hopefully this helps you understand who I am and what Michael has in me as a woman and partner in his life's journey. To all women reading this, it's crucial you embrace and accept your sexuality and body as the beautiful and unlimited fountain of sensuality it truly is.

This book is an exploration into the incredible journey Michael and I share. A journey that continues with no end in sight. It is my hope for all the women and men reading this, that you find extraordinary intimacy which serves you both, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

We realize that you may be among the majority of readers who have been with a partner for many years before cancer knocked on your door. Nearly every long-term couple encounters emotional wounding that can inhibit access to the kinds of intimacy shown within this book. We are living proof that intimacy *can* grow stronger the longer you are together, even with the challenges of cancer.

Starting out slowly

Jacqueline and I met under the most unusual circumstances. I was preparing for my three-month trip to Brazil and was not particularly interested in starting a relationship with anyone before leaving. Jacqueline had just ended a marriage one year earlier and given up on dating.

While we found each other interesting, neither one of us fell head-over-heels. This ended up being a good thing because it was our first step of a shared journey towards extraordinary intimacy. This included developing a foundation of deep emotional intimacy and friendship before we even thought about becoming physical. This is an important consideration when in a committed relationship. You will find that

re-establishing genuine emotional intimacy is *crucial* to experiencing fulfilling sexual intimacy, especially within the context of cancer.

For the next several weeks after we met, Jacqueline and I deepened our so-far platonic relationship. When she wasn't helping me find and negotiate a place to stay in Brazil or learn rudimentary Portuguese, we hiked together during the week and danced to live music on Friday nights at a local pub.

During the times we shared a dance floor, it became clear our friendship may blossom into something more. Of course, I was leaving for Brazil in just six weeks: hardly ideal conditions to start a new relationship.

One night, we sat in the car chatting after driving back from one of our Friday evening dance dates. Without warning or much thinking, I impulsively reached over and gave her a quick kiss on the lips, just a peck. She was the first woman I had kissed besides my ex-wife in well over 30 years. The stunned look on Jacqueline's face practically shouted: "*Uh, oh...*" The fact that my face wasn't slapped, and that no awkward dialog ensued, fueled my otherwise wobbly confidence.

A couple of days later, as she was leaving my apartment, I kissed her again, a little more ardently this time. It was at that moment our eyes met and silently revealed where things were heading. The only problem: I still hadn't mentioned my 'condition'—something I was not looking forward to sharing, yet clearly necessary.

We agreed to meet the following Saturday afternoon at my place to discuss what might happen next. Keep in mind, initially neither one of us found the other overly attractive. So, imagine my surprise when I opened the door and standing before me was a woman who almost took my breath away.

As she gracefully walked over to my couch to take a seat, my fear-machine was working overtime. How would she react when I tell her I can't get it up to save my life? Would she glance at her watch and say: "*My, will you look at the time? I have to go now but we'll be in touch, b-bye!*" Or give me a look that said: "*You poor guy...*" which would be a sting of

unwanted sympathy causing the further deflation of my self-image as a man. I didn't know what to expect.

I took my place next to her on the couch and looked into her beautiful eyes, reflecting the afternoon sunlight streaming in from the window. This was the moment of truth. As I pointed to my crotch I said: "*Sweetie, this isn't working and it may never work. Are you willing to explore other ways of being intimate with me?*" Though I said the words, I was clueless as to what that could entail.

She replied without a hint of hesitation: "*Sure!*" All those angst-ridden hours of anticipatory anxiety and she says, "*Sure!*" Upon hearing it, my Heart leapt for joy. With Jacqueline's unexpected reassurance, we immediately planned our first intimate encounter. We reserved a suite the following Saturday at a private and romantic hot springs resort about 100 miles north of Santa Barbara, California. I could barely wait.

At this point in my journey, I hadn't given up performing like a 'normal' man. So, I brought the full contingent of erectile aids that money can buy including the highest dose of Cialis® one can purchase. A potent intraurethral drug called Muse®, which is so powerful that if any normally functioning man were foolish enough to try it, he *would* go to the hospital four hours later for relief, if you know what I mean. Just in case those drugs didn't work as advertised, I brought the 'failsafe', the penis pump. I was locked, loaded and ready to go.

Or, so I thought...

After taking the Cialis® upon arrival, Jacqueline and I took a soothing soak in the hot tub to give it time to work. Then we proceeded to the bed where we engaged in wonderfully gentle foreplay. It had been over 12 years without sex and here I was naked with the most beautiful, sensuous, wonderful woman I'd ever met. To say I was excited is the world's greatest understatement. However, my excitement wasn't showing where it needed to most.

After almost an hour of continued foreplay it was clear to both of us the Cialis® wasn't working. So, I suggested that we move to the big guns

and try the Muse®. To her credit, she helped me insert the self-dissolving Muse capsule into my urethra, neither a pleasant nor particularly sexy process. Yet we were good-natured about it and laughed at the absurdity of it all. After another 20 minutes of sensuous foreplay... nothing, nada, zip. At that point, I wasn't laughing anymore and experienced the first pangs of deep performance anxiety.

As little beads of sweat formed on my forehead, I issued a silent prayer: *"Please God, don't let me down, not now!"* With as much of a reassuring smile as I could muster, I turned to Jacqueline and said: *"Sweetie, no problem, I brought the penis pump, and it HAS to work because it's based on physics!"* Meanwhile she's lying on her side with a pinched look that silently said: *"Are we going to do this every time we make love?"* With somewhat renewed confidence and absolute determination, I pumped for all I was worth. At first, I saw and felt results, *"Finally! Thank God!"* That is, until at the height of my pumping frenzy, I suddenly keeled over in excruciating, eye-bulging pain... having just sucked in my left testicle. Sweat was now pouring down my face in rivulets as I sat on the edge of the bed, shoulders hunched over in total, abject despair. The voice in my head cruelly whispered: *"It's over. It's over before it even started."*

Then, at this lowest point of my life, something profoundly deep and unexpected happened. That voice in my head went silent with the complete acceptance of my impotence. I surrendered. I fully embraced the 'is-ness' of my circumstances, no longer having any urge to fight or overcompensate for it. Quietly, I turned to Jacqueline, looked deep into her large brown eyes and said: *"I'm done. I'm done with all of this. Let's just lay together and see what happens."*

We made exquisite love, the likes of which neither of us had previously experienced. Our lovemaking began late afternoon and didn't finish until almost midnight. We blew right through dinner and had nothing substantive to eat due to five or six straight hours of lovemaking. We had to force ourselves to go to sleep because we ended

up having more energy after we finished than when we began. Upon waking, we skipped breakfast and made love again for hours, until it was time to check out.

Shortly after this experience, Jacqueline and I discussed what happened and how astounding it was. Thanks to that inquiry, we came to several new and surprising insights about what intimacy actually means. The first thing we realized is the word ‘performance’ has no business in the bedroom—*ever*. Instead, we replaced it with *Presence*. Which means being in the moment, in a state of full awareness, without distractions, goals or expectations. This alone allowed us to enjoy levels of intimacy we suspect most couples would give anything for if they only knew it existed.

My biggest ‘Aha!’ was: how a man defines himself is a choice. It can be based on the size and capability of his ‘package’, as popular culture and pharmaceutical companies would have us believe, or how deeply he connects with and pleases his partner in the way they want. This realization has tremendously empowering implications for any man or woman impacted by impaired bodily function or body shame, regardless of the cause. Any of my lingering shame or self-consciousness surrounding my impotence had completely evaporated. After that first intimate experience with Jacqueline, I never felt more like a man. My inability to release or climax during this first experience in over 12 years didn’t bother me one bit. In fact, I had never in my life known such fulfillment.

At this point, you might wonder how we achieved these exquisite and prolonged heights of sexual satisfaction despite my clinical impotence and our refusal to use any aids. Please trust we will reveal all in the following chapters.

Off to Brazil

Just a few short weeks later, the departure for my life-reset trip to Florianopolis, Brazil, which would be my home for the next three months, was fast approaching. I had given up my apartment, so as much as I didn’t

want to leave Jacqueline, I needed to follow through with my plan.

Once settled into my new South American environment, we saw each other daily via online video, which had me longing for her even more. After being there just two weeks I realized I did not want to spend Christmas without her. Around mid-December I flew back and rented a funky little room in a quirky home where we could stay together until I returned to Brazil right after New Year's. Those two weeks together were amazing. The awful weather in Santa Barbara did not prevent us from having the most incredible time together in that small room, making love for untold hours day after day. It was our honeymoon period. The levels of emotional and physical intimacy we experienced made our first encounter at the hot-springs resort seem almost uneventful.

I often wondered, *how is it possible that it keeps getting better and better?* I even grew anxious, pondering what would it be like when I returned from Brazil for good. As you will see, those fears were unfounded. In fact, at the time of this writing, our current depth and expression of all forms of intimacy makes our Christmas honeymoon, nearly five years ago, pale in comparison.

Upon returning to the beautiful beaches of Brazil, I walked aimlessly while pondering what our extraordinary Christmas together meant. We had stumbled upon powerful and unique ways to help ourselves and countless other couples struggling with cancer-related intimacy issues. I remember being quite excited, with a newfound sense of purpose for this next phase of my life.

I reached out to several prostate cancer support groups to interview other survivors and partners from around the world. By the time I returned to Santa Barbara and into Jacqueline's arms, I was on a mission.

Great surrender

Thanks to this first intimate adventure, I have discovered another side to surrender, one far more empowering and transformative than the greatest feats of heroism. Opening yourself up to this shift in how you

view and use surrender means living a life full of self-expression and unimagined possibilities instead of one based on fear and frustration.

Not giving up, accepting

While 'giving up' implies resignation and a sense of powerlessness, acceptance of 'what is' opens the door to possibilities. Acceptance empowers without giving anything away. When you accept what is, you are no longer struggling with the 'isness', which frees you up to explore, discover and experience other wonders that await.

Here's what I discovered through this whole process: to accept what is, is equivalent to surrendering to the possibility of transformation. Once I stopped fighting and resisting what *was*, vast new worlds of intimate experiences and insights became available to both Jacqueline and I.

There is a strong cultural imprint in our society implying that we must do whatever it takes to achieve a certain end, and anything short of that is defeat. In what I have shared, it should be clear that my acceptance and surrender was anything but a sign of weakness. Without it, I would have remained a very frustrated, angry man.

If you find you are still resisting your current circumstances due to cancer, or any of life's other challenges, consider that surrendering to their isness can be your most courageous act towards intimate healing; it opens yourself and your partner to the extraordinary experiences described within the pages that follow.

