

# JANET GARRICK

## PASSION

“I would like to express my desire for you to move your hand two inches closer to my left nipple” said Anne assertively and her tiny chest rose and fell with desire.

“I understand what you’re saying,” whispered her lover, an expert on feedback. “And I respect your right to express it.” And he carefully repositioned his hand.

A few moments elapsed. Anne’s deep breathing could be heard in the silence of the room.

“David,” she spoke to him again, her voice a little hoarse. “We can negotiate this if you like . . .” She paused to draw in her breath and release it again, “But it would give me pleasure if you were to caress my nipple in an anti-clockwise direction while kissing my neck in a clockwise motion.”

David, who prided himself on having read the *Hite Report* and understanding the intricacies of remade pleasure, proceeded to cater to her needs. The small body under him tensed in delight.

“David,” she called him again. “Could you move your knee? It’s poking into my thigh.”

The knee quickly repositioned itself.

Outside, the rain very romantically began to fall on the roof. The young woman’s breath grew deeper and louder. Her lover’s hand and head continued their circling.

“Tell me what you’re experiencing, darling,” murmured the latter, momentarily interrupting the motion of the clock. “Otherwise how can I know?” And immediately the motion began again.

Anne well understood the importance of communicating one’s reactions to one’s partner.

“Well,” she began and her voice was unusually high-pitched. “I’m experiencing quite strong sensations of pleasure” — she smiled up at him warmly — “Particularly in the middle region of my left breast and between my head and shoulder blade.” Her tone of conviction was a joy to his ears. He pursued his endeavours with renewed enthusiasm.

She sighed, glad to have given him this feedback. For it had just occurred to her that the structure of her earlier sentences could be categorized as “aggressive”. It was the “I would like you” that was wrong. She remembered that now — they had picked her up on that on the course. She hesitated a moment before formulating her next request.

The rain was now beating down on the window.

Her lithe body heaved and writhed under his caresses. "David," she breathed. "I'm really enjoying what you're doing. But my clitoris could be only too happy if you were to rub against it." Yes, that avoided the first person pronoun. Her conscience appeased, she relaxed and awaited ecstasy.

Her lover began the new caress, unsure of whether he should proceed in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction this time, but having at this stage a little too much difficulty coordinating to be able to articulate the question. At such moments he was grateful to have a woman on whom he would rely to communicate her needs.

"Clockwise," she whispered, as if reading his thoughts. He marvelled at the harmony they had attained and concentrated on moving . . . clockwise.

The rain had frozen into hailstones and was now threatening to shatter both the roof and the window. Anne's breathing was growing shorter and shorter. Her eyes closed in bliss. What a perfect lover David was. When she had met him on the course she had never imagined he would be such a good listener, so perfectly sensitive to her preferences. Well, almost perfect. As usual before the crucial moment, that little toe on her right foot was just begging to be stroked.

"Darling," she gasped. "My little toe . . ."

"Anne," he interrupted her abruptly and in a tone that definitely wouldn't come under the heading of "passive behaviour." "Can we transact?!"

"Of course darling," she answered at length when she had found her voice. "That's what you and I are all about, isn't it?" and her breath gradually became more regular, her body calmer. "If there's anything you feel you want to convey, I'm asking you to express it verbally. I acknowledge your right to do so." Her body gave one more twitch of pleasure as if in memory of the caresses that had so recently ceased. "It would be worse for both of us if you held it in."

"Well Anne," he continued in a voice that had even moved beyond the category of "assertive behaviour". "My neck's starting to ache like hell, my head's feeling dizzy and I'm going cross-eyed." She gazed into his obvious astigmatism and showed she had received his message.

"I understand," she recapitulated in a voice grown quite steady now. "That your neck is starting to ache like hell, your head is feeling dizzy and you're going cross-eyed. Perhaps we can neg . . ."

"And I'm dying to screw you!"

“Oh!” she paused. “Well, I’m willing to come to some arrangement . . . ”

But she broke off, noticing that the arrangement was already being made . . .

“Darling,” he murmured, curling around her in contentment. “My impression is that our interaction was imbalanced. I’m ready to acknowledge that I may have been at fault to some degree. What is your perception? I feel we should talk about it . . . ”

But his sleepy voice, serene and easy, joined the slumber of his body.

Anne suffered a moment of guilt at her blatant passivity, wondered how she was going to face next week’s women’s group, then recalled the last rule in assertiveness training:

“One has the right to choose *not* to assert oneself.”

She breathed a sigh of relief, leaned over and switched out the light.

Having died down almost completely, the rain was now tapping very gently on the roof.

## PETER KIRKPATRICK

### ANOTHER FISH STORY

Laconic Thommo, that soulful fisherman,  
was friendly with my father: they’d take  
a boat out all day long and bring it back  
slithering with the silver catch,  
the boards running in sea-blood.

Once, out of the blue, a squall coming up  
and Dad slowly pulling at the oars to edge  
them round a headland, Thommo said  
*Row*. End of conversation.

*Row, John . . . Row*. The sea shushed.