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nice out; we will all eat outside!” the woman exclaimed gleefully. *Great! Let’s eat outside with the blazing heat and flies. This is just perfect,* the husband and father of this group thought. *Just great!*

The great thing about stories like this is that it shows what we’re willing to do for love. The guy did not complain once, and though he left later that day with a splitting headache due to severe dehydration, the couple is still happily married thirteen years later. The mother-in-law was ultimately persuaded to make some adjustments to better accommodate the husband at such

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functions. Better still, for the sake of the marriage, both have proven a willingness to make such adjustments when needed. All these years later, even the mother-in-law is knowledgeable enough to realize: Oh, it's 100 degrees out; he needs to eat inside!

Another couple shared a similar story: The wife (white) shared with me how her husband (100 percent black) didn't "do" vacations early in their marriage. What she soon discovered was that it wasn't that he didn't "do" vacations so much as he didn't "do" the sun. They both told me about a cross-country

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car trip they took from New York to California, with a few stops along the way. This family of six planned to stop in Arizona for about three or four days to enjoy the sites along their route. The long and short of it was that they arrived in Arizona in the evening and enjoyed a family meal together. A few laughs, a few hugs, and words of gratitude were shared about how the whole family was together. You know, the usual family-trip stuff. The following day, they all woke up and had breakfast, but the family did not see the husband for the rest of the day. They came to realize that the only time he seemed to appear throughout the

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trip was at night, and even then, he never ventured too far away from the hotel room and air conditioning. While they were off swimming and sightseeing, he remained alone in the hotel room—and loved every minute of it!

When I asked the husband why he never left the room to join in any of the family activities, he answered, “It’s Arizona.” I followed up with, “What’s wrong with Arizona?” His matter-of-fact reply: “It’s Arizona! That is the problem with Arizona! It’s all heat, sweat, and sun! I don’t do sun!” After that comment, I fully understood his decisions!

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I mean, I might have done a few things with the family, like join in the sightseeing or swimming once, but hey, I am half-white, after all :)

To give you a better idea visually of how such environmental issues (sunlight!) factor in, I placed two sets of photos in this book: one with shade and one with all sun!

One of the setups is for a predominantly white cookout and one of a primarily black family cookout. You tell me which one is which.

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Reflecting Thoughts

It's funny what we're willing to deal with while in relationships. Heat is one issue I can testify to having faced. It's also amusing how, early on in relationships, we don't seem to realize what we put the other person through, whether it's the suffering spouse who can't stand the sun and thus forces their significant other to stay inside, or the other spouse who doesn't mind air-frying their partner. What seems normal to us can also be a significant burden to another. This is what relationships are about. It's not really about who fits *their own* needs; rather, it's about identifying

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and adjusting to the needs of the other. More importantly, it's about finding another person worth all the adjustments in the world. Examples like those above show how interracial couples do just that

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Chapter Three

No Place Like Home

When sharing a home with someone, the true colors start to show. Sometimes, you receive a revelation of “annoying” things about your partner that you never knew existed until cohabitation began. Though most couples likely face such challenges, they can get especially intense in interracial relationships. I mean, even minor things like the frequency of showering are clocked by the other person. To one person, it might be inconceivable to shower

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at night. The other might be equally baffled as to why any sane person would prefer a morning shower. Even bedtime routines can seem like the most bizarre rituals when viewed through the lens of a different cultural norm—as one couple shared with me. The wife (Dominican) shared with me how odd, and somewhat annoying, she thought it to be that her husband (white) never stayed in the bathroom to finish brushing his teeth. “Yeah, he will start in the bathroom, then he will walk around the house brushing his teeth! Come out, sit on the couch, and watch *SportsCenter* while brushing his teeth!” Another wife of

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color commented how her white husband never used anything for soap when he took a shower. “Not a washcloth, not a loofa, not nothing!” she lamented. To which he simply shrugged and responded, “Yeah, I would just use my hand or the bar of soap itself.” Another disagreement they often grappled with was how to properly do dishes. The wife had grown up in Queens, NY, with a grandmother, mother, and two siblings, in a residence with only one sink. So, she thought it odd that the husband filled up one side of the sink with water and soap, washed the dishes, and then used the other sink to rinse them. “It is like he is