

Redefining Seduction:
Women Initiating Courtship, Partnership and Peace

Reviewed by **Robin Carpenter**

My grandmother's stories sustained me through the maze of my childhood. When I started school I discovered the stories Mammaw told me were different from the "school" versions. I was ten and looking in a mythology book when I saw the "Rape of Persephone" - I was horrified. In Mammaw's Persephone story wonderful things happened. She said Persephone heard the cries of the dead and *chose* to go to the underworld to comfort them. She gained maturity and invited Pluto to be her lover. Her time below turned her into a powerful woman. Her mother, Demeter, convinced Persephone to take personal care of herself and spend sometime in the light with her. I asked Mammaw which story was true, she said, "The true story is the one that makes you feel stronger."

Forty years later sitting in the Marshall kitchen of Donna Sheehan and Paul Reffell they told me new versions of seduction myths that made me feel stronger. I cringed a bit at the word "seduction" - I thought of manipulative women exploiting their sexual attractiveness - I envisioned exotic *femmes fatales* like Cleopatra stepping from a milk bath. My cringe was erased as they described Donna's seduction of Paul and the loving, highly productive twenty-year partnership that resulted. I now knew the "true" story of seduction.

Donna and Paul's personal story of coming together along with their years of research had led them to realize that as activists the greatest positive impact of their lives could be restoring the innate power of female seduction to its rightful place. Interweaving their love story with Darwin's "sexual selection" they create a compelling call for change. *Redefining Seduction* rescues feminine seduction from its

negative connotations restoring its rightful place as an essential feminine skill. Science indicates that women are the natural initiators of love, sex and partnership. Biological imperative directs women to select the male displays that lead to the maximum spread and continuation of the species – seduction is survival. What is seduction but an invitation to pleasure? A valuable thing when applied to a healthy, natural need for companionship and species survival.

In *Redefining Seduction*, Donna and Paul share the intimate lessons of their own relationship. They walk you through each phase from selection, to initiation, to seduction and into partnership. The book has alternating chapters written by Donna and then Paul – this gives helpful insight into the differences in male and female perception. They also cover the rough spots and what to do if seduction goes awry, including their own near disaster. They detail health benefits of loving partnerships, including “Sunday Sex” and the importance of the chemical bonding that making love creates. If you’re a woman looking for love and partnership, *Redefining Seduction* mixes memoir and science to guide your quest. If you’re a man, the book will teach you a lot about the benefits of partnership, what women need and how to have more effective male display behaviors – not to mention “Sunday Sex.”

Redefining Seduction erases a story Mammaw called a bitter tale hurting all who heard it – Adam and Eve. I think the story of Adam and Eve came from a rejected Alpha male whose inappropriate male display behaviors left him out in the cold. With *Redefining Seduction* we can begin to create a paradise in which women and men come together and create true partnerships. Imagine a society without loneliness where great sex is thriving and we lovingly care for our planet and each other. This is a true story that makes you stronger.