You know that song by Jimmy Soul that advises, "If you wanna be happy," for the rest of your life, you should marry a woman who's not so good looking? Well, I did it. I followed his advice and married the ugliest heifer I could find on short notice.

Get an ugly girl to marry you he said. Be happy for the rest of your life he said.

Ha—it wasn’t that easy.

Why not, you ask? Well, because Jimmy Soul never met Martha. Yeah, so I’m still a little sore on the subject of the gargantuan beast who occupies the living room. Suppose I deserve it, though. No one’s supposed to follow the advice of one-hit wonders. But, I was desperate and Jimmy Soul sounded pretty sure of himself.

Funny, though, now that I think about it I never saw any pictures of his wife. You think she is as ugly as my Martha?

Doubt it. Ironic, isn’t it?

I just love irony. Never really put much stock in it until I met Martha. Now everything is ironic. The sound of the kettle whistling is ironic. The rattling of the tea cup against the flowered saucer is ironic. My fat shrew of a wife and her $100,000 life insurance policy is ironic. And, of course, the rat poison in the bottom of her favorite chamomile tea is also ironic.

I tried to make it work. Honestly, I did. I spent the first six months of this God-forsaken marriage trying to convince myself it would get better. She was so fat she had to be a good cook,
right? Wrong. She looked like an animal so I figured she might be one in the bedroom. Wrong again! It was hopeless.

Jimmy Soul lied to me.

Then I spent the next six months trying to get out of it—to separate, you know, get a divorce. I screamed, I ignored, I complained. I even smacked her around a couple of times, but I hated it more than she did.

Finally, I begged. But, she wouldn’t do it. She refused to let me out.

“But, Miles-honey, I love you,” she would ooze. Every word dripping with sentimental slop. The sound of my name through her hairy lips made me gag.

I had no choice. She left me no choice but to pursue a more permanent separation.

I blame Jimmy for making it okay to marry the gorilla, but I blame my father for forcing me to actually go through with it. If he hadn’t been so damn insistent on me getting out of his house I may have had time to find a suitable bride. I wasn’t the only 35-year-old who still lived at home, you know. Sure, I wasn’t the most handsome guy in the neighborhood, but balding, tall, desk jockeys all over America had wives. But my father wouldn’t hear of it. He knew a guy who had a cousin who had a sister who he also needed out of the house. So, my marriage to Martha was born out of convenience in the summer of 1969. And now that marriage was ending on a cool, fall day just two years later.

“Miles-darling, how’s the tea?” The wailing cut through my thoughts like a knife. I hated it when she said my name and always with some kind of endearment. Miles-darling. Ha! What it really sounded like was Hey Limp Dick! Where the hell’s my tea? I nearly tipped over the tiny tea cup as I tried to think of a reply. If I didn’t answer soon she might actually move her fat-ass and check on me. Unlikely, but it had to be avoided.
I swallowed. “Just steeping. Be there in a few.”

That’s right. C’mon, dissolve dammit. Who knew rat poison was so chunky?

I almost couldn’t believe it, but I only have a few more minutes with my wife. This day has been a long time coming. Since our one year anniversary I’ve been trying to kill her. It was my gift to her that did her in. Only Martha would find life insurance romantic. I’d forgotten—or rather tried to forget—the day marking our union and I was out of excuses and time. But then, who’d have guessed that I’d be visited by an angel at that very moment. Well, an angel in a door-to-door insurance salesman outfit. It was just so ironic.

I took out a bells and whistles policy on her and it made those fat cheeks dimple even more. Probably got the salesman off the pavement and behind a desk, too.

And that’s how it hit me. I had to kill her. I could be the grieving, rich widower and I could find me a good wife.

Of course, this has not been an easy task as evidenced by the ever-deepening ass print on her battered paisley recliner. She was a disease. No. A leper. Maybe even worse. Pestilence just seemed to spread all around her—kind of like her massive rear-end.

The first attempt on her life should’ve been easy. The only time she left the house was on Thursdays for bingo night at the Ladies Auxiliary. So, when I got home from work I cut the brakes on the Buick. A minor price to pay. Even Jimmy would agree it had to be done.

Everything was going perfect. The stairs groaned under the weight of the tree trunks that held my wife upright as she descended toward the carport. The car door squeaked as she opened it and the metal frame grunted as her wide girth was placed behind the steering wheel. The engine roared to life. This was it.

Goodbye, Martha.
CRASH! I bounced out the door ready to play the devastated husband. I made it to the sidewalk and somehow managed to replace the joy with shock as I looked with the rest of the neighbors at my wrecked Buick. I imagined Martha dripping in blood, head tilted in a way that could only be described as unnatural. Her black eyes glossed over and vacant. Dead and gone. The thoughts almost made me scream with delight.

But, something was wrong. No one was screaming. No one was crying. And Martha was alive. The fat cow never made it out of the driveway! She hit the neighbor’s dog while backing out and the car rolled into the next yard. She wasn’t even bleeding! I was so angry I started crying. I hadn’t cried like that since the Colts were schooled by the Jets in Super Bowl III. My neighbor thought my grief for the loss of her dog was nice.

I was determined to make the next time count and waited a few months so as to not draw any strange looks when the sad news hit the streets. Martha caught a nasty cold in April and she’d taken enough cold medicine to kill a small elephant. But, being that she was a large elephant she was fine. I left for work as the house shook with her snores, but stopped in the kitchen first leaving the oven open and the gas on.

I was unusually happy at work. Everyone tried to take a guess. Was it the weather? Was it the rumored raise on the horizon? Was it a baby? I almost spit my coffee on Mrs. Vargas with that guess, but managed to turn my disgust into surprise. From the way she looked at me the rest of the day I don’t think I was very convincing.

I couldn’t wait until six o’clock. I hummed all the way home and when I saw the first fire truck I nearly fainted in relief. Parking down the street, I raced toward my burning house. I could just see the fireman loading the enormous, charred woman into the ambulance bay. Everyone
crinkling their noses at the smell of the burnt flesh and remarking on the loss of such a *large* life.

I stifled my giggles as I rounded the back of the fire truck.

But, my house wasn’t burning. Nothing was burning. And Martha—still alive—was weighing down the ambulance in my front yard sucking on a bottle of oxygen.

The fireman said it was a miracle she was still alive. His theory was God must have a special job for Martha on Earth. I bit my lip to hold the hysterics inside. My theory was she was so fat all her tissue soaked up the gas and the cold medicine wore off too soon allowing her to regain her sense of smell.

I wrestled for the next several weeks with my conscience. Was I doing the right thing? Maybe I should give Jimmy another chance. It shouldn’t be this hard to kill someone. They did it all the time on *Hawaii Five-O*. Hell—Nixon probably ordered hits in his sleep!

And then she found the first rat and insisted—no, demanded—I kill them all. It was ironic and it was perfect.

Now, here I sit steeping her cup of tea. Wondering if it will take long. Wondering if it will be painful.

I shudder. Maybe *I* could use some chamomile tea, too. I grab a cup and place it next to hers.

“Miles-sweetie, need any help in there?”

Ugh. I better hurry this up. “I’m coming.” My voice is shaky. I wonder if she’d noticed.

Well, here goes nothing.

The tray clattered as I came through the swinging door into the living room spilling a little tea from our cups.
I set her cup down on her TV table trying to act natural. I place the rest of the tray on the wooden end table next to my chair. The smell of Gold Bond powder is everywhere around her. No doubt in all of her crevices.

My conscience decided to give it one last try. Could I go through with this? What was I doing?

“What? No honey?” I just stood there looking down at my wife. Was it really all that bad? Could Jimmy still be right? Could this ugly woman be it for me?

She looked back at me with her beady, little black eyes probably wondering why I was standing here like an idiot staring at her. Then her brow wrinkled and the beast returned. “Miles-baby. The honey.”

“Right.” I turned and almost tripped heading back into the kitchen. Honey. Honey. HONEY! This is the only way. The only way I can get out. I took two deep breaths, grabbed the honey from the lime green cabinet I had painted a year ago and burst through the kitchen door covered in sweat.

She was just as I’d left her.

I sat in the equally abused chair next to her. Waiting as she stirred the honey and milk into her tea. Watching as she brought the tiny cup to her groping lips. Listening as she slurped the poisonous liquid into her fat cheeks.

It wouldn’t be long now. It should be over soon.

I picked up my cup with sweaty hands and took a long drink letting the hot liquid scald my throat. Hoping it would calm me. She tortured me with small measured sips. I took another sip of my own tea feeling a bit better knowing that she wasn’t going to explode or anything. This
process was probably going to be slow. Leave it to Martha to drag it out. Maybe she would die in her sleep tonight and I wouldn’t have to suffer through her screaming in agony.

I relaxed a little more and coughed up a laugh. Martha just kept sipping her tea like a good, little rat. She would probably live through this too. She wasn’t a rat. She was a beast. Another round of laughter escaped my tight lips.

Wait, not laughter. This is coughing.

I. Am. Coughing.

My chest. My chest is burning. I…I…I can’t breathe.

Throat…closing. I drop the hot tea in my lap, but don’t register the pain I should feel in my crotch. The room is spinning and I feel carpet. I am out of my chair on the floor. I suck in air through loud gasps more like a fish than a man. There’s something at the back of my throat. It rises and the bitter tasting, frothy bile fills my mouth and trickles from my lips.

Martha. What about Martha?

_Help me!_ My eyes search through the haze for the rotund figure perched somewhere above me. Where _is_ she?

“You know, Miles. I thought of a song the other day and it reminded me of you. You remember it I’m sure. Something about making an _ugly_ woman your wife. Of course, you remember. Big hit a few years ago. Well, they talk about _ugly_ and _pretty_, but they never mention anything about smart. What about making a _smart_ woman your wife?”

_What_?

“Yes, dear. You made a smart woman your wife, but you never knew it. Did you? Oh, well. Better late than never I suppose. Miles-angel, stop gurgling or you’ll stain the rug. By the way, thanks for the honey.”
The tea. Oh, God.

Jimmy…got anymore advice?