

living

NEWS AND TREATMENT INFORMATION FROM THE BC PERSONS WITH AIDS SOCIETY
JULY / AUGUST 2004 / ISSUE 31



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I DREAM OF JOHNNY



by Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco

I dream of Johnny, but Johnny does not want to marry me. If marriage is now available to gay men, why not use it the way we use Botox, crystal, or Cialis? Brand new laws are like shiny new tools and when we have a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail. Ugly can be the divorce between nail and wood, those who are fastened together by a house, a life insurance, purchased appliances and pets (and sometimes children), or because they afforded the wedding pageantry, the multi-million dollar assembly line of social pages portraits, bridesmaids in pink taffeta prancing around an erection of fruit cake and royal icing.

In 2004, marriage is a choice on a Wal-Mart shelf of designs for good living. I want to have my cake and eat it too, live my own reality show, be the spectacle.

We marry to have a family. We have a motley crew of friends who recognize us as a family. Under Canadian laws, we live in common-law, and the government recognizes us as a couple. The stretch is that "marriage" demands that the community at large recognize us as a family.

I should have worn something prettier that hot summer day we moved in together. We were dusty and sweaty and horny at the end of that day. What was I thinking? Together to pool resources, fight, and clean our cat's litter, we married a mob—dead or alive—whose DNA signature is inscribed under our nails, in my warts, in my herpes outbreaks, in the HIV of my bloodstream. If

one in the community feels joy, envy or pain, we all do. If we get married happily ever after, shouldn't we all be happy? By marrying, do we queers show care for each other and not for an archaic covenant that envelopes us in a Champagne bubble?

Historically, marriage preserved bloodlines and wealth, a social tool akin to the suffrage to elect civic representatives. If practice makes perfect, or at least it improves us as citizens, we should marry to reshape marriage as a viable queer social institution.

On second (and more sober) thought, I would marry because I care. However, I may care for too many. I give myself fully when I share myself with one man or many men, and this I say under considerable social scorn and biological risk. If not a virtue, promiscuity among queers is a practice of caring for oneself and others, in each body and its rivers of saliva and tears and fluids that entails consensuality and maturity.

Reportedly, monogamous marriage is equally caring so promiscuity and marriage should not be at odds; they sleep in adjacent rooms. Is carnal sex the only measure of promiscuity? Is having sex with one single body the measure of monogamy?

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Marrying is giving oneself to one man in body and soul. To marry is to have someone to call "my own." Ah! Such contrived stereotypes hovering like fairies around the heads of our dicks. Such great expectations; that one man could abate my sexual, emotional (and financial) cravings.

Maybe I had little self-esteem to embrace Mr. Right when he came my way. Horror! Do I think of Johnny as a second choice, a compromise, and a lesser evil? My first choices, Justin Trudeau, on cold days, or Ashley Maelsaac when I was feeling randy, never knocked at my door. Hell, I was HIV-positive and scared. Was I only looking for anyone to take care of me at the end of the antiretroviral cocktail party when the night ahead was dark and voracious? Is Johnny a serotriage casualty in the cruel battlefield of epidemic gay love?

I stop writing, I look down the window onto our garden and I see Johnny tending his flowers in his worn-out Dickies, the spring sun shining on his fair face, aging beautifully, I see Lucy the cat circling him mischievously, and I see that my second choice is not even close to a fairy tale prince but is so real that I could burst into laughter and tears and melt at his feet every single time. ⊕

Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco's collection of short stories (many of them about living with HIV) will be published in August 2004 by Suspect Thoughts Press, San Francisco.