

# FIRST NIGHT AT

*from fudge fights to nude portraits, a wedding-night experience has a lot*

BY SHERYL BERK

**T**he party's over (already?). Now it's just the two of you, alone as Mr. and Mrs. for the very first time. No matter what age you are when you tie the knot, your wedding night is an evening you'll never forget. Whether it's passionate, playful, or totally unpredictable, most couples say it's as memorable as the wedding itself. What can you expect? We asked brides and grooms of all ages to share their most intimate memories of that one enchanted (mostly) evening.

## *tasty beginnings*

There's no sweeter start to your wedding night than feeding each other bites of the top layer of the cake. These couples decided to dig in rather than go the traditional route and save it for their first anniversary.

"Jeff and I were so busy making the rounds at the wedding, we didn't have a chance to eat our cake—except for that little forkful for the photographer," says Melinda Guyllen, 34, of Woodside, New York. "We climbed into bed at four in the morning, cut a huge piece, and fed each other. There's nothing like breakfast in bed, especially when it involves raspberry filling and vanilla buttercream."

Robyn Ettinger of Huntington Beach, California, and her husband, Ben, ended up having a food fight in their apartment. "There was fudge flying everywhere," the 23-year-old bride recalls. "But we had a great time licking it off..."

## *dreaming of you*

"What were we thinking?" said 31-year-old Rob Guilles of Ann Arbor, Michigan, when

he recalls the ungodly early-morning departure he and his wife, Karen, had picked for their honeymoon. "When we finally got to bed, we only had an hour before we had to leave for the airport. The minute our heads hit the pillow, we were out cold, but somehow we managed to wake up and make our flight. When we got to Puerto Rico later that morning, we finally had our wedding night."

Bonnie Chaiken and her husband, Bill, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, were so exhausted after their ceremony and reception that they could barely make it back to their apartment. "We just came home and collapsed on the bed," the 28-year-old bride remembers. "I think we tried to be romantic, but neither one of us had any energy left, so we went right to sleep. We stayed in bed the entire next day, and I don't mean napping."

## party on!

Stacy Polsky, 32, of Bremerton, Washington, and her husband, Jay, thought they'd be alone once their reception was over—but friends and family had other ideas. "People came up to our hotel suite and the party continued for a few more hours," Stacy recalls. "The manager sent up champagne, and believe it or not, we didn't mind the company. Since we didn't spend much time with them at the reception, it was nice to see them later."

Ron and Helen Berman, of Los Angeles, would have preferred going the two's-company route: "The last guests had finally left the reception, and we went up to our room," Helen, 41, recalls. "Ten minutes later, the phone rang. A couple of friends from out of town missed their flight back home. They had nowhere to go, so they asked us to come down and hang out with them at the lobby bar. We felt obligated since they're close friends, so we went. The four of us stayed up all night, and then Ron and I drove them to the airport at seven a.m."

teddy and I was ready to get romantic—but Marc insisted that we tally our wedding take first," recalls Toni Griffith, 24, of Boca Raton, Florida. "He actually got out a pocket calculator to do the math!"

Sabrina and Jim Jerome, 30-year-olds who hail from Minneapolis, spread out all of their cash—hundreds and hundreds of dollars—on the king-size bed in their bridal suite and rolled around in it. "We felt like millionaires," she says.

Lara Parker, 37, of Darien, Connecticut, and her husband, Josh, played a game: "I'd open the card, announce the name, and Josh would try to guess how much they gave. We had a lot of laughs—and a couple of big surprises."

## close encounters

"It was, by far, the most incredible sex I have ever had," recalls 22-year-old New Yorker Sarah Anson. "When we fell into our king-size bed around two a.m., we just held each other for a few minutes and said nothing.

our suite," says Kara Muranes, 24, of Fargo, North Dakota. "I couldn't wake him up till noon the next day."

Helene Maxwell, 30, of Great Neck, New York, got married on a warm summer night at a bed-and-breakfast. "When we got to the room I couldn't wait to take off my gown," she says. There was just one problem: The zipper was stuck. "It had been thirty years since my mother had unzipped it on her own wedding day. We spent an hour, my husband, my mom, the housekeeper, and the hotel manager trying to free me without tearing the dress. I was humiliated."

Finally, there's more than one way to put a damper on romance. Marybeth Graham, 43, of Dallas, was flattered when her husband decided to serenade her with a romantic rendition of "Endless Love" in their suite. "He was totally into it when the phone rang. It was the concierge: Five guests had called to complain about the noise."

# 20, 30, 40

*to do with imagination—and nothing to do with age*

## picture this

Stealing an idea from Hollywood, Katy Chen, 25, an artist in Minneapolis, sketched a nude portrait of her husband, Rey, on their wedding night. "I know it was kind of a corny thing to do—very *Titanic*—but I just felt like I had to capture the moment."

Paris and Mitchell Jordan, both 29, of Chicago, had packed a camera for their honeymoon in Jamaica—but broke it out the night before. "I posed in my lingerie, and Mitch took pics," the newlywed remembers. "We were laughing like crazy, having a great time. We vowed to put them away someplace safe—they're for our eyes only."

## the envelopes, please

Not many newlyweds can resist the urge to open every card and count the checks and cash on their wedding night.

"I remember I had on my white lace

After making love, the reality suddenly sunk in—we were husband and wife."

Other romantic encounters? Couples of all ages report dancing in the dark, long bubble baths, even Victoria's Secret-inspired fashion shows.

"I lived with Jason for a year, and all he saw me in were T-shirts when we went to bed," recalls 48-year-old Natalie Mercer of Atlanta. "On our wedding night, I came out of the bathroom wearing a red-lace negligee—see-through, of course—and matching thong. He couldn't take his eyes off my outfit—but it didn't stay on for long!"

## the unexpected

More than one bride and groom admit their postwedding was less than storybook. At least they can look back and laugh.

"My husband drank so much at the reception that he passed out when we got to

## THE MORNING AFTER

♥ *Just as a glance inside your refrigerator reveals a thing or two about your personality, so does the way you leave your bridal suite say something about your age. We talked to a pair of hotel housekeepers who've seen it all.*

*"In general, couples in their forties and fifties clean up after themselves," says the cleaning-staff supervisor of a small hotel on New York City's Upper East Side. "Couples in their twenties and thirties usually leave the sheets and pillows in a heap, and the towels on the floor.*

*"With older couples, I'm also less likely to find little surprises—like food in the sheets, condoms on the nightstand, or lingerie in the bathroom."*

*A housekeeper for a large Beverly Hills hotel says whether or not she receives a wedding-night gratuity also seems to be age-dependent. "Younger newlyweds often forget to leave a tip," she says, then adds, "I guess they have other things on their minds."*

Embracing Jewish  
wedding customs

# under the huppah



BY SHERYL BERK

**M**azel Tov! If you're a Jewish bride, yours will be a marriage made in heaven—literally. According to ancient Hebrew Scriptures, angels announce the name of a bride's intended 40 days before she's born, and rejoice on the day she and her groom are united. The Jewish culture is filled with many meaningful wedding traditions that date back to biblical times. Depending on what type of religious ceremony you choose—Orthodox, Conservative, or Reformed—you can incorporate some or all of the following customs into your wedding day.

## the chosen one

In olden times, in-laws-to-be (called *mehutonim*) insisted on a series of tests to judge the suitability of their children's prospective spouse. Men were asked to demonstrate their knowledge of Judaica, while women had to thread a silk string through a thin needle. If both passed, the joyous families sanctioned the couple's union by presenting them with family heirlooms.

Nowadays, in-laws skip the tests but still give gifts as a way of welcoming a new son or daughter into the family. A Passover Seder plate or lace Sabbath scarf are traditional engagement presents for the future bride; a silver kiddush (wine) cup or Bible are often given to the groom.

## it takes a village

If you're part of a Jewish community, expect the members to celebrate your nuptials in a spiritual style. Your synagogue may hold an *oyfruf* (a Yiddish word that means "calling up") for your fiancé. On the Sabbath before the wedding, the groom is given the honor

of reciting an *aliyah*, a special blessing, in front of the congregation. The fathers of the bride and groom as well as other male family members may also be called to read. In some congregations, women—including the bride—participate as well. Sabbath services are then followed by a Kiddush, in which everyone feasts on wine and sweets.

## going under cover

It's customary for Jewish couples to marry under a huppah. In ancient times, the canopy was actually a tent elaborately decorated by the bride's family as a symbol of the new home the couple would make together. Over the years, it has evolved into a simpler setup: four poles, either held by

attendants or mounted to the floor, with a large piece of fabric draped above them. The only requirement is that it cover the couple's heads. The rabbi officiates under the canopy behind a small table with kiddush cups, kosher wine, the marriage contract, and pens for signing.

Many modern-day brides and grooms go all out when it comes to decorating their huppahs. Some have it trimmed with floral garlands. Others prefer the simplicity and significance of using a *tallis* (a large prayer shawl) belonging to a member of the family. Leah Friedman, 22, of New Fairfield, Connecticut, created a unique canopy for her nuptials. "My fiancé, Noah, and I met while skiing," she explains. "So my girlfriends and I embroidered the huppah with skis, mountains, and snowflakes. After the wedding, we hung it in our home as a reminder of our vows."

## KEEPING THE FAITH

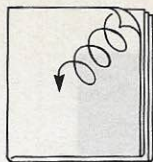
Sometimes the things with the greatest significance only take minutes to do. Here, a few quick and easy Jewish traditions to incorporate into your wedding day.

- Step in the right direction. According to an old Jewish wives' tale, a bride should always begin her walk down the aisle with her right foot, ensuring good fortune.
- Fruits of plenty. Instead of rice, supply your guests with raisins and nuts (a symbol of the land of Israel) so they can shower you in sweetness.
- Name that tune. There's a lot more to choose from than just "Hava Nagileh." Check your synagogue library, a Judaica store, or even the Internet (under "Judaica") for a collection of traditional Jewish tunes and sheet music.
- Do unto others. In the Jewish tradition of charity, or *tsedakah*, donate all your wedding flowers to a hospital or nursing home after the reception.

## the dotted line

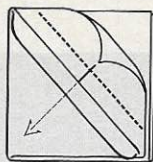
The marriage contract (*ketubah*) spells out the duties of a husband and is blessed and sanctified during the ceremony. It dates back to 500 B.C., and was originally a document willing the groom's property to his bride if he died. While there are different kinds of *ketubabs*, the Orthodox version states, among other responsibilities, that a husband has to support and satisfy his wife sexually. Two witnesses who are not related to the couple sign the contract.

Some *ketubabs* are pieces of artwork that can be displayed after the wedding. A custom-designed contract, with colorful pictures and symbols of the Jewish faith, can take several months to make and cost as much (Continued on page 725)

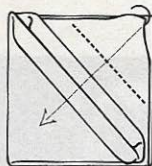


### 7. CUMMERBUND

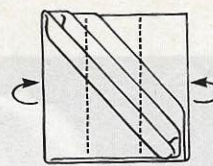
a. Fold napkin into quarters, making sure the four free corners are at the top right. Lift the first corner and roll it diagonally down toward the opposite corner, stopping just past midway. Flatten the roll.



b. Lift the next corner at the top right and, lifting the roll slightly, slip the corner into the pocket behind the band. This new band should be parallel to and about the same width as the first band.



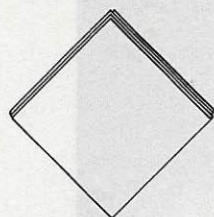
c. Repeat with the third corner, folding it behind the second band, forming a third band.



d. Fold the right and left sides of the napkin to the back to form a rectangle.

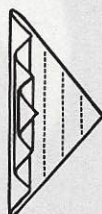


e. Arrange completed Cumberbund horizontally on plate.



### 8. FLEUR DE LIS

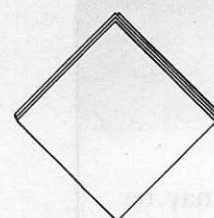
a. Fold napkin into quarters and place in a diamond shape with the free corners at the top.



b. Pleat it completely, starting from left.

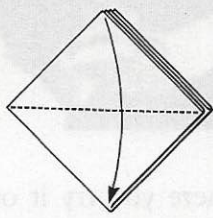


c. Hold the folds in place, and insert the napkin into a napkin ring or band. Fan out the folds, tucking in the corners.

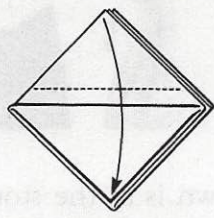


### 9. THE POINTED POCKET

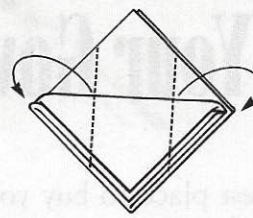
a. Fold napkin into quarters and place in a diamond shape with the four free points at the top.



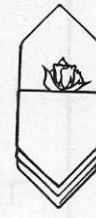
b. Fold the top layer down so the point almost meets the bottom point.



c. Repeat with the second layer, placing the point a little above the point of the first folded layer.



d. Fold the side corners behind to overlap at the back of the napkin.



e. Place a flower in the pocket.

## Under the Huppah

(Continued from page 723)

the look but don't want the expense, some artists offer preprinted *ketubahs* that are just as ornate, at a fraction of the cost. Most calligraphers will be happy to hand-letter them for you with names, places, and dates.

### Light up my life

In a Jewish ceremony, candles signify the union of two soul mates. It is believed that each person radiates a light to heaven and when he or she finds the perfect match, their lights merge and shine brighter than the sun. Besides placing tea lights on tables, some rabbis request the couple place a pair of family candlesticks under the wedding canopy. The best man and maid of honor then light them while reading a prayer.

Rachel Resnick, 31, of Tenafly, New Jersey, liked the tradition so much she asked each of her six bridesmaids and ushers to carry a braided candle (*Havdallah*) as they walked down the aisle. "The lights were dimmed and in came this procession of soft flickering flames," she recalls. "It was ro-

mantic, but it also had this feeling of holiness and reverence."

### The write stuff

Many Jewish couples pen a pamphlet for their wedding guests that is part prayer book, part memento. It can include the words to recite for grace after meals, explanations of each wedding ritual, even a copy of the wedding *ketubah*, and should be distributed prior to the ceremony so guests can follow along. Shari Kramer, 29, a graphic artist from Riverdale, New York, designed hers as a "fairy tale" that illustrated her courtship. "We were always getting asked the same question—'How did you two meet?'—she says. "So we decided to answer it in a fun way. We also included a special thanks to our family and friends for seeing us through."

### Honor thy family...and friends

Let each special person in your life play a part in your wedding ceremony. In Jewish tradition, both bride and groom are escorted down the aisle by their parents. Grandparents are also included in the procession, usually right behind the rabbi. The bride and groom may also designate two married cou-

ples—known as *unterfirers*—to walk before them and after the maid of honor and the best man. Is there any limit to the number of people you can have head you down the aisle? "My philosophy was 'the more the merrier,'" says Tobi Spindler, 26, of San Mateo, California, who had 20 people in her party. "My *unterfirers* were my college roommates and their spouses. It was a nice way to make everyone feel appreciated."

### A clean break

No Jewish wedding would be complete without the groom stomping on a glass. While this custom is not a religious requirement, some rabbis say it's a reminder of the "fragility" of life and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Others believe it marks a break from childhood. A thin glass or lightbulb is wrapped in a napkin or a paper bag. At the end of the ceremony, the groom stomps on it, guests cheer, and the couple is "officially" wed. Tara Mayron-Meyer, 22, of Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, had the shards collected and encased in lucite as a paperweight for her husband's desk. The pieces can also be framed or incorporated into a *mezuzah*, which is mounted on the doorjamb.

# on-line liaisons

BY SHERYL BERK

**T**om and Meg made it look so tempting: Just chat via the Internet with a total stranger and presto: *You've Got Mail*—and an on-line friend to flirt with. Fun? Definitely—an e-mail rendezvous can be exciting and pleasantly addictive (just picture Meg racing home to check her screen). But before you point and click, consider what the experts say: Internet infidelity may not be as harmless as you think. "It's become more and more of a problem among married couples today, perhaps because the movie romanticized it," explains Shirley Glass, Ph.D., a Baltimore psychologist and relationship columnist for America Online. "You think it's all innocent amusement. This person may live hundreds of miles away and not even know your real name or anything about you. You don't talk on the phone or meet in person. What could possibly happen?"

## CYBER SONNETS

■ Writing a passionate love letter to your spouse via the Internet can really rev up a relationship, says Brian Holtcamp, author of *When Romeo Wrote Juliet: Your Inspirational Guide to the Art of Writing Love Letters* (Stylus Publishing, 1994). "You don't have to be Shakespeare," he says. "Just be sincere in communicating your affection, and don't worry if it sounds silly or mushy. Everyone loves to be told how wonderful they are. There are no rules, and you're not being graded."

■ Need some help getting started? Write about the little things you love about your mate: the sound of his voice, the way he wrinkles his nose when he smiles, his talent for making amazing blueberry pancakes. Reflect on a favorite time spent together. "Intimate details are what make a love letter special and meaningful," Holtcamp adds. "You can't find that in a greeting card!"

Don't kid yourself, say couples who've been in these cyber situations. Somebody—be it your new on-line significant other, your spouse, or even you—is bound to get hurt. Not to mention that a quest for computer companionship usually signals underlying problems in your relationship that need to be addressed. "Flirtations, even if they're through a keyboard, don't compute for happy wedded life," maintains Glass.

## altering her ego

Stacy, 32, a freelance writer from Princeton, New Jersey, was researching an article on investment strategies and dropped in on a finance chat room. "This guy was giving me some tips," she recalls. "When he offered to e-mail me in private with more pointers, I thought, 'Why not?'" The pair began corresponding regularly about mutual funds and stock options. Then one day, the topics started to get more personal. "He asked me what I looked like, what my real name was, and if I was single," says Stacy, who took this opportunity to dream up a whole new identity. "I said my name was Jackie and I was a grad student at Columbia. I lied about my looks and, of course, the fact that I had gotten married five months ago. Then I flirted shamelessly."

Every night for hours, Stacy locked herself in her home office to read endless e-mails from her on-line amour. "It was getting pretty steamy and I was loving the attention," she admits. "I didn't realize how much time I was giving to it, until one day my husband, Marc, asked me if there was a reason I was spending so many evenings working and not with him. I felt so guilty that I started to cry and told him everything. He absolutely freaked and refused to talk to me for a week."

Stacy should have recognized the warning signals, says Howard Markman, coauthor of *Fighting for Your Marriage* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996). "She was devoting all her time and energy to a relationship other than the marriage she's committed to. It's hard enough to make one relationship work.



When you juggle two, you're only headed for trouble." How can you gauge when you're in the danger zone? "When your Internet friendship contains secrecy, deception, emotional intimacy, and sexual arousal," warns Markman. "Spot any of those signs and end it immediately before it goes too far. A relationship doesn't have to be physical to constitute cheating. Emotional affairs can be just as powerful and just as damaging."

Stacy and Marc talked things over with a marriage counselor and agreed to work on their problems. "I think I was just having a hard time adapting to my new married-woman role," reasons Stacy. "I thought my love life would settle into a routine and the excitement would be gone." Marc, however, proved he knew how to keep the flames burning. "He started e-mailing me sexy little notes at work during the day," Stacy says. "And the most seductive part was this guy was for real—and he was all mine."

## the spy who loved him

Over a romantic dinner, Tom, 31, of Newport Beach, California, told his wife, Shari, he had something he needed to get off his chest. "He said that he had been e-mailing some woman he met in New York at a business convention for the past six months," relates Shari. "Tom insisted it was strictly platonic. He felt nothing for her, but keeping it a secret was making him feel guilty." Shari shrugged it off, but later that night began to wonder if her husband had told her the whole story. While he was sleeping, she searched through all his old stored e-mails on their home computer until she found one from "Sweet4YouNow." "It was an extremely graphic note about this woman's sex life. I was livid, and so was Tom. He accused me of spying."

Tom was right to reveal his Internet relationship, says Leslie Parrott, coauthor of *Relationships* (Harper (Continued on page 360)

## Home Details

(Continued from page 264)

### RESOURCE LIST

#### CATALOGS

Benza  
www.benzadesign.com

Chambers  
800-334-9790

Crate & Barrel  
800-451-8217

Pottery Barn  
800-922-5507

#### MANUFACTURERS

Aston Grove  
619-456-2200

Baker  
800-59-BAKER (592-2537)

Bernardaud  
800-448-8282

Calvin Klein Home  
800-294-7978

Cambridge Silversmiths  
800-890-3366

Carvers' Guild  
800-GUILDING (484-5346)

Christofle  
800-799-6886

Côté France  
212-684-0707

Cowtan & Tout  
to the trade only  
212-753-4488

Cristal Saint-Louis  
800-238-5522

Dansk  
800-293-2675

Fonthill  
to the trade only  
212-755-6700

Fortuny  
to the trade only  
212-753-7153

Heartwood  
distributed by Robert  
Greenfield Ltd.  
888-545-1890

John Hardy Home Collection  
800-2J-HARDY (254-2739)

Kenneth Cole  
800-KENCOLE (536-2653)

Kosta Boda  
800-351-9842

La Table Hermès  
800-238-5522

Lee Industries  
800-892-7150

Marc Blackwell  
212-627-4486

Nambé  
505-471-2912  
www.nambe.com

Nautica  
serviced by Pfaltzgraff  
800-499-1976

Pfaltzgraff  
800-499-1976

Philippe Deshoulières  
800-993-2580

Pratt & Lambert  
800-289-7728

Ralph Lauren Home  
Collection  
212-642-8700

Richard Ginori  
212-213-6884

Rogers & Goffigon  
to the trade only  
212-888-3242

Rosenthal  
212-696-1846

Schumacher  
800-332-3384

Smashing Plates  
609-755-0285

Steuben  
800-424-4240

Studio K Glassworks  
512-443-1611

Tiffany & Co.  
800-526-0649

Vietri  
800-277-5933

Wamsutta  
800-344-2142

Waterford Wedgwood  
800-955-1550

Waverly  
800-423-5881

#### RETAIL STORES

Barneys New York  
660 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
212-826-8900

Bergdorf Goodman  
754 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10019  
212-753-7300

Bernardaud  
499 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
212-371-4300

Calvin Klein Home  
654 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10021  
212-292-9000

Crate & Barrel  
650 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
800-451-8217

Medici  
420 Columbus Avenue  
New York, NY 10024  
212-712-9342

Moss  
146 Greene Street  
New York, NY 10012  
212-226-2190

Pottery Barn  
600 Broadway  
New York, NY 10012  
212-219-2420

Ralph Lauren Home  
Collection  
1185 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10036  
212-642-8700

Ruth Shaw  
68 Village of Crosskeys  
Baltimore, MD 21210  
410-532-7887

Tiffany & Co.  
727 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
212-755-8000

Troy  
138 Greene Street  
New York, NY 10012  
212-941-4777

## On-line liaisons

(Continued from page 180)

Collins, 1998). "He didn't feel right about keeping anything from his wife, and that's a good call. Honesty is the best, and the only, policy in a marriage." Understandably, Shari felt deceived and jealous, and Tom felt violated. "The trust between them had been breached," says Parrott, "and the only way to rebuild the relationship was to be completely up front about the situation and their feelings."

After his anger had subsided, Tom wanted to reassure Shari, so he showed her many of the e-mails he had sent. "He had actually insisted in them that this woman cool all the sex talk," Shari says. "Eventually, his on-line friend moved on to another target, and Tom promised me that he'd never let anything or anyone come between us again. And I promised to believe him."

### a chat-room romeo

Audrey was having a slow day at work. So the 32-year-old paralegal from Boston decided to log onto a singles chat room. "I guess I was just curious," she says. "Some of my single colleagues had met men in them. Even though I was married, I wanted to check it out." One of the men in the chat room sent her an Instant Message, and they began e-mailing each other at work daily. Audrey found it surprisingly easy to talk to a total stranger. "I told him I was married, but I felt like all the passion was gone from my relationship," she says. "He said he understood, and we confided in each other. After a few months, I found myself falling for him and I began to think that marrying Paul had been a big mistake."

It's so easy to get swept away in the fantasy, says Glass. "Of course, Mr. E-mail sounds like Prince Charming—you don't have to discuss everyday irritations like mortgage payments or nag him to take out the trash."

Audrey should have examined what her on-line search for romance was telling her about her marriage. "What was her relationship missing?" questions Glass. After doing some serious thinking, Audrey confronted her husband with her true needs and signed off on her on-line affair. "I told Paul how much I loved him and confessed what I had done out of frustration," she says. "At first, he was angry and jealous, but then I started to notice some changes." Paul began surprising her with things like weekend escapes and home-cooked dinners. "Just knowing how much he cared was a turn-on. And the greatest part was that he was right there next to me. Who needs an on-line fling when you can have the real thing in the flesh?"

# THE DIAMOND COLLECTION

DESIGNED BY RANDY FENOLI

#### CALIFORNIA

Woodland Hills—*Bridal Designs*  
www.bridaldesigners.com  
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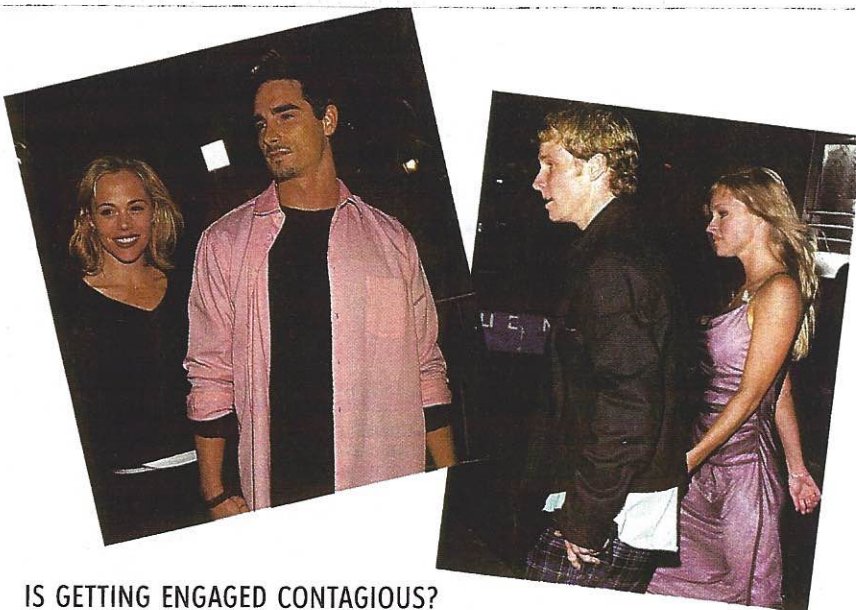
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Engagements that were in synch: Backstreet Boys Kevin Richardson (FAR RIGHT, with Kristin Willits) and Brian Littrell (with Leighanne Wallace).

IS GETTING ENGAGED CONTAGIOUS?

# the love bug

BY SHERYL BERK

**W**hen Backstreet Boy Brian Littrell announced last February that he was getting engaged, fellow bandmate Kevin Richardson teasingly called him a “copycat.” Richardson, if you’ll remember, had dropped the bomb about his own impending nuptials on the same day in an earlier MTV News interview. Though their female fans were less than thrilled, the singers (who also happen to be cousins) were cool with their coengagements. “There’s a time for everything,” Littrell told the press when asked about his upcoming wedding. But was it a coincidence—or a case of contagious matrimony—that the boys popped the question at the same time?

“It’s not like chicken pox—something you catch,” says Ellen Goodman, coauthor with Patricia O’Brien of *I Know Just What You Mean: The Power of Friendship in Women’s Lives* (Simon & Schuster, 2000). “But it can feel that way. Watching a friend go through a new stage of life can inspire you to move ahead yourself.” However, while the idea of sharing this exciting and nerve-wracking time with your best buddies sounds ideal, it’s not always such a

positive experience, Goodman warns. “Competition, jealousy, injured egos—you should be prepared to deal with all of the above if your prenuptial paths cross.”

## three’s a crowd

Margo\* and her two childhood chums, Michelle and Caryn, were known as the Three Musketeers while growing up. “My mom was always saying, ‘If Michelle and Caryn jump off the Brooklyn Bridge, does that mean you have to?’” recalls Margo, a 29-year-old from New York City. “We were inseparable. If one did something, the other two copied her—right down to our Tretorn sneakers and bad perms!”

Fast forward 20 years to Margo’s engagement announcement. “Matt and I had been living together for two years and were really jazzed about taking this step.” Michelle and Caryn were excited for their friend, says Margo, but “it also set the wheels turning in their heads.” Three weeks later, Caryn had a little news of her own: She and her boyfriend of 10 months were also tying the knot. Two months after that, Michelle and her on-again/off-again beau of five years announced that they, too, were

## MAKING A BREAK FOR IT

When love is in the air, it’s easy to get swept up in the momentum. Unfortunately, the same goes for breakups. Often when a woman says “forget about it” to her fiancé, her friends follow suit. “The same motivation that makes you evaluate your relationship when a friend gets engaged also makes you rethink it when she calls it off,” explains Ellen Goodman. “You wonder, ‘Maybe I’m not ready either.’” If you’ve been having any doubts, this could fuel them. “No one wants to break off an engagement—it’s heartbreaking. And, of course, there’s the social reaction to deal with.” But when a friend splits with her guy, it somehow looks a lot easier to do—after all, you’re not the only one with cold feet. “Just be sure any decisions you make are your own and not based on what you’re seeing around you,” advises Goodman. “Sometimes it’s not easy being independent, making decisions based solely on your feelings. But it’s part of maturing.”

taking the plunge. “It was strange,” says Margo. “All three of us were getting married within two years.”

Margo’s buddies wanted to do everything with her, from shopping for gowns to tasting wedding cakes. “I felt almost threatened,” she admits. “They were elbowing in on my special time and this made it really hard for me to be happy for them.”

Margo’s feelings are not uncommon, says Goodman. “You want to have this moment all to yourself and your friends are asking you to share it.” So how do you cope when gal pals steal the spotlight? Keep your focus, advises Goodman. “Getting married is not a competition or a group event. This is not *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. Each one of you has your own wedding to plan, and that’s what you have (Continued on page 454)

LEFT: CATUFFE/SIPA. RIGHT: LISA ROSE/GLOBE PHOTOS. \*SOME NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

## THE GOOD AND THE BAD OF SIMULTANEOUS ENGAGEMENTS

### GOOD

- **THE GOWN:** Someone to laugh with over the dressing room walls.
- **THE FLOWERS:** She knows the difference between African daisies and French tulips.
- **THE GUEST LIST:** Licking envelopes is lots more fun—and quicker to do—when there are two of you.

### BAD

- **THE GOWN:** A knockdown, drag-out fight could ensue if you fall in love with the same dress.
- **THE FLOWERS:** She starts a War of the Centerpieces (hers are bigger, bolder, better!).
- **THE GUEST LIST:** You can only afford to invite 30 guests; she’s inviting 300.

## LET'S GET DIGITAL

continued from page 378

attend," says Jeff. "It was really easy."

"Convenient, too," says David White, of Dayton, who created an on-line album after his April 1999 wedding. "It was a lot less expensive than printing multiple copies of each picture. If someone wanted a copy of an image, they could pick the size and the frame and get exactly what they wanted [at their expense]."

If you don't want to spring for a digital camera, you can still easily turn your 35mm pictures into a digital format. Many photofinishing companies now provide not only prints but a CD-ROM or floppy disk with the photos in an electronic format. Kodak ([www.photonet.com](http://www.photonet.com)) and Fuji ([www.fujifilm.net](http://www.fujifilm.net)) will even post your photos in an on-line album, free of charge, when you drop off your film, including all those disposable cameras from the reception, at one of their thousands of dealers nationwide.

Snapfish.com is one of a growing number of mail-in film developers that are taking the trend a step further by offering free developing, free high-quality Kodak prints, and free on-line sharing. Mail your film to Snapfish in one of their postage-paid envelopes, and a set of free prints will be sent to you. The catch? There doesn't seem to be one. All they ask is that you view your pictures on-line within 30 days, and answer a few questions about the whole photo-developing experience. Snapfish is counting on the fact that you will be so hooked on the photos and their operation that you and your loved ones will want to order reprints and enlargements for a fee.

## jumping in

Increasingly, pro lensmen are also displaying wedding photos on the web, hoping to attract business from a customer base that didn't exist before—wedding guests.

"Most guests never see the pictures from the weddings they attend," points out Andrew Wei, president of Club Photo, a photo-sharing and print-finishing firm that recently unveiled a web site serving professional photographers. But when photos are posted on the web, he says, guests can view them and purchase whichever ones they want. "It's a win-win situation. The couple doesn't have to spend money on reprints, the guests can get photos quickly and conveniently, and the photographers are doing more business."

Smile and say "e-cheese."

## THE LOVE BUG

continued from page 377

to concentrate on," she says. "Your friendship, of course, is very important, but at this time in your life, it's all about you and your fiancé. If your friends are true friends they will understand when you tell them this is something you want to do on your own."

## double trouble

Thirty-year-old Pam of Los Angeles was stunned the day her best friend, Stacy, called to say she was engaged. "I had just spoken with her a week before—and Stacy had confided that her boyfriend, Rob, was pushing her to get married, but she wasn't anywhere near ready for that kind of commitment." When Pam asked what had changed so dramatically in just a few days, Stacy admitted that Pam's own impending marriage, plus pressure from family and friends, had gotten her thinking. "She sounded overwhelmed instead of overjoyed," Pam recalls. "I worried that this was just like high school, when Stacy joined the debate team because I did even though she was terrified of public speaking." Over the next few weeks, a stressed-out Stacy called Pam in need of support. "She asked me to compare my relationship with Michael to her and Rob's. She wanted affirmation—and I couldn't give it to her because it was obvious that she was unhappy."

There can be tremendous pressure to stay in sync with your peers at various stages in your life, says Ruthellen Josselson, author of *Best Friends: The Pleasures and Perils of Girls' and Women's Friendships* (Three Rivers Press, 1999). "They're getting married, you're still single; they have three kids, you're not a mom yet. It makes you wonder, 'What's wrong with me? Why aren't I like everybody else?' And it can cause you to make rash decisions to keep up."

Of course, it's not always wrong to be inspired by a friend's progress. "It can make you reevaluate your feelings about where you are at this stage in the game," Goodman adds. "You start to think, 'Maybe I should worry about my biological clock ticking. Maybe it's time I grew up, too.'"

After giving their relationship another six months, Stacy realized she did love Rob and wasn't just jumping on the bandwagon. "It would have been tragic if she'd gotten married because she was afraid of being left behind," says Pam. "You should never make that serious a decision based on your friends' actions. In the end, you're not going to spend your life married to your friends."

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When unmarried pals give you the cold shoulder

# single-minded friends

BY SHERYL BERK

**T**wo years ago, a typical 2 a.m.: I am on the phone with one of my single girlfriends deconstructing my date du jour.

Rita was always eager to offer a refresher course in *The Rules*. Andrea offered to analyze our horoscope compatibility. Steph, just divorced, was the one I called when Mr. Right turned into Mr. Wrong.

My pals pulled me through many heartbreaks, so nothing made me happier than to call each one of them on a Saturday afternoon last August with great news: I was getting married.

"Another one bites the dust," Rita joked. But as the time came closer to my wedding, one thing became clear: My friends were a little freaked out.

What was up? Wendy Hubbert, coauthor of *The His and Hers Guide to the First Year of Marriage* (Dell, 1998), says all gal pals go through separation anxiety.

"They're used to you being part of their single-girl pack, and they're losing you," she explains. "Like all loss, there's a grieving process, and each friend handles it in a different way. Some people are capable of adjusting to your new role, while others don't adapt as easily."

## The Clinging Vine

"My friend Stacey would call us regularly at midnight or at six in the morning on a Saturday," recalls Emma, 28, of New York. "My husband, Jerry, was ready to kill her! So I told her to cool it and ignored her calls."

Instead of taking a hint, Stacey showed up one night on her buddy's doorstep. "She asked if she could come in and talk—she was desperate. She wound up sleeping on our couch that night."

Stacey's neediness began to cause tension between Emma and Jerry. "Jerry gave me an ultimatum: her or me. He said I was married now, and Stacey had to learn to stand on her own two feet. I agreed with

him, but I felt so guilty. There were plenty of times that Stacey was there to lend me a shoulder to cry on."

Guilt is what Stacey was counting on to keep Emma close, Hubbert says, and that's taking advantage of the friendship. She advises that the best way to deal with a clinging vine is to be proactive rather than wait for a crisis to come up.

"Don't leave it to her to call you with a problem," she says. "Make a regular date once a week to meet or talk on the phone. Set the ground rules for the times that are off-limits. It's a weaning process—it may be hard on you both, but in the end, your relationship will grow."

## The Vaporizer

Marci and Maureen, both 30, had been college roommates and were virtually inseparable for over 10 years. They lived down the block from each other in Pensacola, Florida, carpooled to work every morning, and went to Happy Hour every Friday night. Then Marci met Mike.

"It was as if I had betrayed her," Marci recalls. "The happier I was with Mike, the more Maureen distanced herself from me."

When Marci and Mike got engaged, things got worse. "Maureen never even congratulated me. And when I sent her a wedding invitation, she didn't reply.

"I racked my brains to find some reason for her to be mad at me. Had I done something awful to hurt her?"

Not likely, says Hubbert. "Maureen is probably jealous. Suddenly, all that atten-

tion and affection you had showered on her was being focused on another person."

What to do? Hubbert says you shouldn't necessarily give up: Decide if your friendship is worth fighting for. "If it is, then don't let your pal distance herself from you. Kill her with kindness and be persistent. Eventually, she will realize she's still very important in your life."

## The Troublemaker

Patrice, 26, of Santa Monica, California, and her husband had a fight one night shortly after they were married. Needing to vent, Patti called her best bud, Sophia. "I was upset over some silly little thing Paul said," she remembers. "When I asked Sophia what I should do, she told me to pack my bags and leave."

Patti ignored her advice and worked things out with Paul. But from that day on, Sophia seemed to encourage—even

incite—arguments between them. "She would constantly say things like, 'I saw Paul checking out some girl when I was out to dinner with you guys last week,'" says Patti. "She'd bad-mouth him all the time."

Sabotage is how some friends may cope when you couple, says Lori J. Goldman, a communications specialist and coauthor of *What to Do After You Say I Do* (Prima, 1998). "It's not that they want to make you miserable or that they

are doing it on purpose. They think they're protecting you—even helping you."

The solution? "Resist the urge to complain to your friend when you and your husband bicker," says Goldman. "Talk to someone who's more impartial. Arguments are common the first year of marriage—it's all part of becoming more intimate. If a friend tries to incite trouble, stop her in her tracks. Try saying, 'I'm so happy being married and I know, as my dear friend, you're happy for me.'" Enough said.

## Ripe pairs?

You've got tons of single girlfriends and he knows a dozen great guys. So you're going to be playing matchmaker now that you're married, right?

Sure, say the experts, as long as your friends can handle the possibility that things may not work out. Otherwise, keep in mind that the situation could get awkward down the road if both parties find themselves face to face at a party, for example. If you decide to make introductions—or even go on a double date—then start with a disclaimer: "We'll make the intros, but the rest is up to you."

Nuptial nightmares and what they mean

# dream weddings

BY SHERYL BERK

**A**nd you thought Ally McBeal had problems: About three months before my wedding, I had a recurring nightmare about a naked baby cha-cha-ing his way down the aisle instead of my flower girl. Two weeks before the ceremony, my nightmare got worse: This time I was cha-cha-ing along with him—and I was as naked as my little buddy. After each dream I woke up in a cold sweat. What did it mean? Was my ceremony doomed to disaster? Was this some kind of omen? Or was late-night pepperoni pizza the culprit?

"Most women have strange or troubling dreams before they say I do," says Gillian Holloway, author of *Dreaming Insights: A 5-Step Plan for Discovering Meaning in Your Dreams* (Practical Psychology Press, 1994). "It doesn't portend disaster or mean you're crazy. You're simply embarking on a new and exciting chapter in your life, and you have a whole host of emotions to deal with. When your conscious mind doesn't want to handle all these feelings, your unconscious mind takes over."

Well, my wedding went off without a hitch (I arrived fully clothed), and I was happy to hear that my nocturnal fantasy—bizarre as it seemed—wasn't anything out of the ordinary. In fact, most brides have a naked dream at least once. Experts explain that it actually means you may be worried about being the center of attention on your wedding day. "The key is to try to look at your dream not for its literal interpretation, but for the more subtle meaning that lies behind it," Holloway advises. "Since dreams have common themes and patterns, they can open your eyes to your inner self and put your mind and heart at ease."

## one wedding...and a funeral

Margo Manheim, 29, of Corte Madera, California, woke up five nights in a row in tears after becoming engaged. "I kept dreaming that our wedding started off just fine—my mom and dad were smiling and walking with me," she says. "Then when we reached the huppah, there was a coffin and my par-



### ANALYZE THIS

Trying to interpret what your dreams are telling you? A few tips from the experts:

- **Jot in a journal.** By writing your dreams down and making a regular effort to remember them, you'll start to recall more and more details. Keep a book and pen by your bed and write as soon as you wake up.
- **Examine the big picture.** Instead of deconstructing all the details of your dream, look at the sum total of all the parts. For example, if you dream you lost a red balloon and it floated over a circus, don't dwell on each piece of the puzzle (red, balloon, circus). Instead, look at it this way: Could it be that something or someone in your life has floated away out of your reach?
- **Get a second opinion.** Share your visions with someone you trust—a close pal or a family member. But think twice before confiding in your fiancé about dreams of wedding horrors; he may misinterpret common bridal anxiety as hesitation to getting hitched. And you wouldn't want to give him nightmares of his own!

ents suddenly disappeared. I couldn't find them and I was crying hysterically." With each dream, Margo became more and more stressed out. "It got to the point where I was afraid to close my eyes. I was so worried that my dream was some horrible omen that someone in my family was going to die."

Dreams of death, while very upsetting and frightening, are usually the mind's way of preparing you for the end of an era (your childhood) and the birth of a new one (your adult life). "It shows how deeply we feel when we move from one stage of our lives to the next," says Karen Signell, author of *Wisdom of the Heart: Working with Women's Dreams* (Fromm International, 1998). "A bride may feel like part of her life has died—the part in which she was dependent on her parents—and with that comes fear, even grief."

It's also not uncommon to dream about relatives who have passed away. "You're not having a ghostly encounter," insists Signell. "You're simply looking for approval as you move on in life. And who better than a loved one like a grandmother or dear aunt to give it to you? Your unconscious mind is trying to tell you that you're making the right decision."

Once Margo realized what her dreams were saying to her, she called her folks and had a long heart-to-heart. "I guess I needed reassurance that I would always be their little girl," she says. "Once we talked, my bedtime horror stories were history."

## trips of titanic proportions

"In my dream, Jon and I were on our honeymoon on a big cruise ship," explains Kristin Russell, 31, of Coconut Grove, Florida. "There was a terrible storm, and the water was flooding up on deck." This vision became more vivid and harrowing as the weeks to her wedding ticked down. "In one dream, all we could do was cling to each other in the torrential rain and wind. We didn't know if we would survive or drown at sea."

"Marriage is a journey," explains Holloway. "It's one that you and your husband embark on together—without a map." Many brides dream of long, perilous voyages in automobiles or on trains, planes, or ships. Why? "Because you're worried about your future together," theorizes Holloway.

Despite the negative overtones, Kristin's dreams were a metaphor for something positive. "I think they were trying to show her that no matter (Continued on page 102)

## Dream Weddings

(Continued from page 92)

what, she and her husband would stand by each other and her heart was on the right course," explains Holloway.

Kristin came to terms with her nightmares by jotting them down in a journal and using

**"I also pictured a snowstorm erupting in the middle of our outdoor ceremony—on an August afternoon."**

them as a catalyst for discussing the future with her fiancé—both of which dream experts recommend. "When I went back and reread them, I saw that Jon was brave and

strong and my protector," she says. "My fears were coming from questions I had about our future, so I sat Jon down and we made some sensible plans. We opened an IRA, decided who washes the dishes and who dries, even picked out a few baby names!"

About a week before the wedding, Kristin's dream took a new direction: "We were on a ship on our honeymoon again," she recalls. "But this time, there was just a passing shower—and much smoother sailing."

### comedy of errors

"You know the old saying 'If something can go wrong, it will.' Well, that's what always happened in my dreams," says 24-year-old Leigh Patterson of Leonia, New Jersey. "It was like Murphy's Law applied to my wedding." In one, Leigh's wedding gown fell apart at the seams as she danced with her groom. "I was waltzing naked and everyone was laughing," she recalls. In another, she tripped walking into the room and landed in the wedding cake. "I also pictured the florist decorating the tables with cactus plants instead of roses, and a snowstorm erupting in the middle of our outdoor ceremony—on an August afternoon."

The subconscious mind will often exaggerate scenarios so we can see how ridiculous and ill-founded our concerns are,

Signell says. "The bride is the focus of the whole wedding," she adds. "And with that responsibility comes tremendous pressure to be perfect. Leigh clearly had an idealized vision of every little detail in her wedding, and was stressed to excess over it."

Her night visions were probably trying to tell her that compared to all of the unlikely events she was dreaming up, nothing could spoil her big day. After some analyzing, Leigh discovered that her dream about bursting at the seams was, like my cha-cha-ing nightmare, based on her anxiety over how she would look. "I guess I was uncomfortable with the idea that all eyes would be on me," she says. "And once I came to terms with that, I could actually laugh about it—but you know, I carried a few safety pins just in case."

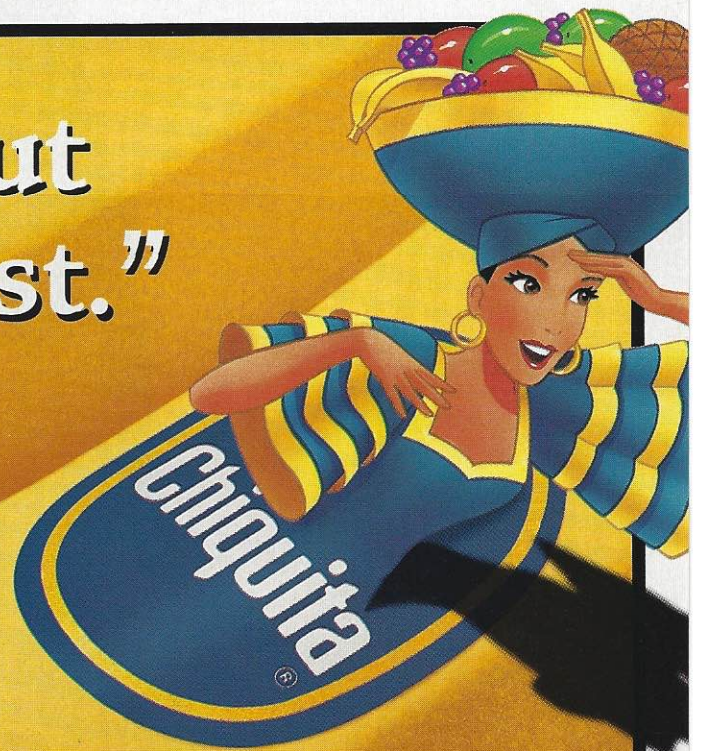
## Faking It

(Continued from page 62)

### getting a leg up

Elizabeth Gayle, 27, selected a short wedding dress for her San Francisco nuptials last summer. "So getting my legs in shape was crucial," she says. "I worked with a personal trainer, who recommended specific leg exercises. I did them daily for the two weeks before my wed-

**"Take Me Out For Breakfast."**



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DEALING WITH DIFFICULT GUESTS

# bad company

BY SHERYL BERK



**O**h, no. It was Great Aunt Evelyn. Kathy Spierman,\* 30, of Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, heard her relative's booming voice all the way across the dance floor of her reception hall. "She was talking so loudly it sounded as if she was yelling," Kathy recalls of the incident. "Clearly, she had a little too much champagne and was now making a scene. I thought I would die!"

Rowdy, cranky, clingy, or even exhibitionist guests always seem to pop up at weddings. Explains Judith Segal, author of *Getting Them to See It Your Way: Dealing with Difficult and Challenging People* (Lowell House, 2000), "Since your wedding is a microcosm of the world, there's a good chance that you'll have one or two strong personalities in that group who might want to stir things up a bit."

Below, how to handle any sticky situation and keep your cool.

## the critic

At Melissa Marchese's New York nuptials, her mother's co-worker greeted her with a warm hug. "I thought she was a lovely lady," the 27-year-old recalls. Then, as Melissa and her groom mingled during the cocktail hour, she overheard this woman make a snide remark about the "skimpy floral arrangements." Later at the dinner, the grumbling guest complained that the meat was inedible and the salad

soggy. "She was totally trashing me," Melissa says. "Was the food bad? Was everyone having a terrible time? Or was she just a chronic complainer?"

Rather than worry all night, the best way to deal with a critic is to acknowledge her, but not her complaints, advises George H. Green, coauthor with Carolyn Cotter of *Stop Being Manipulated: How to Neutralize the Bullies, Bosses, and Brutes in Your Life* (Berkley, 1996). "Ignoring them may only encourage them to continue," points out Green, "but if you give them the attention they crave by thanking them for their concern, you can diffuse their negativity."

Melissa did just that by confronting her guest. "I went over and said that I had heard she was unhappy with her meal. Then I offered to see if the kitchen could find something else for her to eat. That shut her up, because she didn't expect me to be so sweet. I think she wanted me to get defensive."

The surest way to kill the critic is with kindness, adds Segal. "Not only does it silence the nasty naysayer, but it makes you look like a gracious hostess."

## the performer

"When Petra asked if she could sing a special song during my reception, I was touched," recalls Mia St. John, 28, of L.A. "She had an amazing voice and often performed in nightclubs." Little did Mia know that her old college roommate

would take her moment in the spotlight too far. After finishing a ballad, Petra kept asking the band to play other songs for her to sing. "She performed everything from 'Flashdance' to 'Feelings,'" remembers Mia. "Suddenly, my wedding had turned into 'An Evening with Petra.' I was mad—and mortified."

How to handle a scene-stealer? "Understand that the person is not malicious—she's simply crying out for attention," says Green. "At the root of her behavior is a tremendous need for approval—and perhaps a little jealousy as well. She wants someone to think she's special and seizing center stage is the most direct approach to achieving her goal."

To close the curtain on a cabaret act, he suggests having someone quietly ask the bandleader to either switch to an instrumental number or take a break and leave the stage. "Darren's best man made eye contact with the bandleader and mouthed the words, 'No more.' Thankfully, he took the cue and as soon as Petra was done, he announced that the musicians were taking a break," says Mia. "Petra took her bows begrudgingly, but was content when everyone applauded. Thankfully, that put an end to her musical review."

## the wallflower

At 30-year-old Ariel Binder's Denver reception, her childhood chum Pam stuck by her side all evening long. "A friend's support is great, but this was ridiculous," Ariel says. "Every time I turned around, there was Pam, wanting to talk about the old days. I couldn't even be alone with my husband, much less visit with my other guests. I felt bad (Continued on page 814)

## LOVE 'EM OR LEAVE 'EM

**Is it okay to ask a problem guest to exit your wedding?** Yes, if you feel that his or her behavior is causing a scene and disturbing others. But a bride should never play bouncer. Delegate a friend or family member to confront the troublemaker in private. If a few words of warning don't do the trick

(and they might not, if the person is very belligerent or intoxicated), then have someone (security or the restaurant manager, if need be) tactfully escort them outside. Maybe your unruly guest will be so embarrassed at the prospect of being booted that he or she will buckle down.

## BAD COMPANY

continued from page 770

for her because she was shy and wouldn't talk to anyone else, but her constant company was making me crazy."

The simplest way to cut a clinging vine is to make sure she has something to keep her occupied, Green points out. "Give her a job, even if you have to invent one—all she wants is to feel needed and useful." Ariel put her arm around Pam and asked her for a favor. "I told her it would be a big help if she took the guest book around to every table and made sure each person wrote a nice note in it. Pam's face lit up and she happily went about her duties." By the end of the night—with guest book in hand—Pam had met everyone and managed to strike up a few conversations. "If you facilitate—instead of force—the mingling, your guest will have a much better time," maintains Green, "and so will you."

## the drinker

With an open bar—and a joyous occasion—you're bound to have a guest or two who will overindulge in alcohol. "Tim, my husband's college roommate, was doing shots of Jack Daniel's all through the cocktail hour," recalls Lisa Lim, 24, of Honolulu. "In the middle of dinner, he stood up, made a toast, then proceeded to tell embarrassing tales about my husband's fraternity days. He was clearly out of control and we didn't know what to do."

"The lush is someone who feels very nervous or uncomfortable in public," explains Segal. "Alcohol rids them of their inhibitions." The only way to address the situation is directly. Segal suggests "looking the person straight in the eye and saying his or her name several times to get their attention. Even through a drunken haze, you hear your own name being called." After making sure Tim was listening, Lisa's husband explained gently but firmly that his behavior was unacceptable. "Then we asked the bartender to stop serving him for the rest of the night," she says.

Warning waiters and bartenders to keep an eye out for excessive drinkers can save you a great deal of headaches—and prevent a few hangovers. "There's nothing wrong with cutting someone off if they've had too much to drink," adds Segal. "Yes, you want your friend to have a great time at your wedding, but not if it disturbs other guests. Just because it's an open bar doesn't mean it's an open invitation to act irresponsibly."

## IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?

continued from page 807

## SCORING

**Give yourself 3 points for every "A" answer, 2 points for every "B" answer, and 1 point for every "C" answer.**


**25-30 points** Run, don't walk, to the altar. The two of you are so in sync, it's impossible to think about living your lives apart. "When two people really like each other—talking together, sharing tastes and attitudes—then love lasts," says Mira Kirshenbaum, author of *Women & Love: Finding True Love While Staying True to Yourself* (HarperCollins, 2000). "Falling in love with someone is great. But loving yourself when you're with the other person is even better. This creates positive energy that's very powerful in keeping a relationship healthy."

**16-24 points** No one's doubting your love, but relationships like yours sometimes travel a rocky road. And while you both seem to have a great understanding of each other, you may need a third party (a counselor or clergyman) to help resolve issues that could become stressful struggles in the future. "In a relationship, your emotional and physical needs should be met," explains Kirshenbaum. "If you find that's often not the case, then it's a sign that things may not work out." Another red flag? "Wishing that the other person were different in fundamental ways," says Kirshenbaum. "That's a recipe for disaster." But don't lose heart: Confronting these problems early and working together toward a resolution is the key to a happy union.

**10-15 points** Maybe you should take a close look at your caterer's refund policy. A score in this range indicates that you aren't quite ready to wed. See a couples counselor, who may try and help you work through your basic problems—or who may ask you to reconsider making this lifelong commitment. According to Kirshenbaum, you're ready to marry only when you can say yes to these five essentials: **1.** You're happier together than when you're apart. **2.** You feel proud of the other person. **3.** You're comfortable saying farewell forever to old loves. **4.** You can imagine what it will be like to spend your life with this person, and you like what you see. **5.** You neither need nor want the other person to change.

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Warning signals that can put the breaks on your wedding

## stop signs

BY SHERYL BERK

**B**ree DeWitt, 27, of Scottsdale, Arizona, was so excited when her boyfriend, Paul, popped the question, that she failed to ask a few questions of her own. “We never talked about things like babies or bank accounts,” she admits. “We were just so happy in the here and now, I guess I didn’t want to rock the boat.” While planning their spring wedding, they met with a priest to discuss the ceremony. “He asked us to tell him our hopes and dreams for the future,” she recalls. For Bree, those future plans included having a large family with three or four children. “Paul just sat there, said nothing, and stared down at the floor,” she recalls. “Later, he admitted that he didn’t want to have any kids, and he was very certain about it.”

Bree was stunned, and despite weeks of heart-to-heart talks with Paul, nothing she could do or say would change his mind. Eventually, she called off the engagement. “I cried a lot at the time, but I’m glad I did it,” admits Bree. “I loved Paul, but I wasn’t willing to give up being a mother.”

Experts advise that there are several subjects you should get out into the open before your wedding day—even if the prospect is a little scary. “Young couples tend to be afraid to talk about serious matters,” says Bobb Biehl, coauthor of *Pre-Marriage Questions: Getting to Really Know Your Mate To Be* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996). “Or they’re so swept up in the emotions of this very romantic, very exciting

### WE CAN WORK IT OUT?

**What if your disagreement seems too tough to resolve on your own? Before returning his ring or canceling the caterer, bring in a third party. “Sometimes an impartial mediator can put it all into perspective for you,” Outcalt says. “Ask for the advice of a pastor, priest, rabbi, therapist, or marriage counselor. They’ll help you hear each other and work through the anger and fear.” However, avoid asking a family member or friend to referee. “They’re too close to the situation,” asserts Outcalt. “Naturally, they’ll be a little biased and can’t help but take sides.”**

time that they don’t look at the big picture.”

One reason for this reluctance is that a difference of opinion could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back—not to mention your engagement. “It’s very important, if you want a happy life together, that you share certain beliefs and values,” adds Todd Outcalt, author of *Before You Say I Do* (Perigee, 1998). “On some issues, if you don’t see eye-to-eye, you may not want to tie that knot.”

Those taboo topics include money, mort-

gages, and children. “No one wants to talk about that stuff when you’re dating,” says Outcalt. “You worry that bringing those subjects up might scare your partner off. But you really need to know and understand a person well before you wed.”

### buffalo or bust

When Nancy Fiorre, of Woodland Hills, California, met Jay, at a college frat party 10 years ago, sparks flew. “We liked all the same things—Billy Joel, baseball, sleeping in on the weekends,” she recalls. “I knew instantly that this was the guy I could spend my life with.” After graduating, they decided it was time to settle down. “We set a wedding date, found an apartment in L.A., and were all ready to sign a lease when Jay got a residency offer from an upstate New York hospital. He told me he wanted to take it, which meant we’d be moving to Buffalo.” While Jay hailed from Rochester, New York, Nancy had always lived on the West Coast—and it was where she wanted to stay. “My whole family lived in California, and I loved the beach,” she says. “The thought of long, cold winters just didn’t appeal to me.”

Geography is a topic that can cause major couple conflicts, cautions Outcalt. He advises discussing how both partners would feel about relocating—whether it’s across town or across the world. Nancy agreed to give Buffalo a try for a year provided they return to L.A. for holidays and vacations. “And despite my reservations, I did learn to like it—now I snowboard instead of surf.”

### cash values

Sybelle Andreasson, 30, of Rockville, Indiana, always kept track of her banking and stock investments. “Over the years I watched my money grow, and I felt like I was doing a great job saving for my future,” she says.

When she and her husband, Bill, married last May, she assumed things would stay the same. “I intended to keep my own account and thought we’d both contribute to paying our home expenses.” Bill had a different fiscal plan—he wanted to combine all of their assets and manage the household money, allotting Sybelle a certain amount every week. “We fought constantly for the first three months,” Sybelle recalls. “Bill said his dad had always doled out the money, and it was a man’s job. In my home, Mom held the financial reins. I was furious—I wasn’t going to get an allowance from my husband!”

Money, reports Outcalt, “is the number-one issue spouses fight over. So it’s even more necessary to talk about finances early on and learn where (Continued on page 188)

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## Stop Signs

(Continued from page 186)

you each stand." Experts advise assessing how much individual debt or savings you're bringing with you, then drawing up a monthly spending budget. Many couples agree to save a certain amount each month (with an annual goal in mind) and then spend whatever's left over after bills have been paid.

"Unlike other problems, financial feuds can be solved fairly easily," Biehl says. "It just takes planning and a little negotiating." A marriage counselor helped Sybelle and Bill solve their monetary misunderstandings. "We compromised with Yours, Mine, and Ours accounts," Sybelle says. "I put half of my money into a joint account, and Bill writes the checks for the household bills. I still don't think he understands my independent streak, but at least he respects my wishes."

## losing your religion

Thirty-year-old Melissa Mansky was brought up in a conservative Jewish home in Leonia, New Jersey. "I'm not as observant as my mom and dad, but I love lighting Sabbath candles on Friday nights and going to synagogue on holidays," she says. "I always knew I'd keep a kosher home and bar mitzvah my kids."

Her fiancé, James, was raised Catholic but never goes to church. "When we first started talking marriage, he told me he was fine with a Jewish wedding and my beliefs," she says. "But from the moment we got engaged, I could tell he was uncomfortable."

James confessed he didn't love the idea of creating a traditional Jewish home. "It felt alien to me," he admits. "I didn't speak up because I worried it would make Melissa change her mind about us. But then I began to have my own doubts. No bacon or ham, separate plates for meat and dairy—I wasn't sure if I wanted to commit to a lifestyle that I didn't understand."

Interfaith marriages can be loving and fulfilling, maintains Outcalt. "Problems only arise when couples are not tolerant of each other's beliefs." In James and Melissa's case, they agreed to go for premarital counseling with a rabbi. "Once I knew more about the customs and culture, I felt a lot better," James says. "We agreed that we would expose our children to both religions, and when they were old enough, we'd allow them to choose whatever faith they believed in."

Melissa feels their story has a happy ending because they were both open-minded. "But if James didn't let me practice my religion, I wouldn't have married him," she admits. "There are some things—like your faith—that you just can't sacrifice."

# daddy's girl

BY SHERYL BERK

**M**y father has always been my hero. When I was little, he killed all the icky spiders that crawled into my room at night. As a teenager, he took me to double headers at Yankee Stadium and patiently taught me how to parallel park. No one could have been happier about my engagement than my pop. He was crazy about Peter (wow! the son he never had) and thrilled that I had finally taken his advice and decided to “settle down.” But as we danced together on my wedding day to “Sunrise, Sunset,” I couldn’t help but notice how quiet and contemplative he seemed. How could I have failed to realize that this day was just as momentous for him as it was for me?

Ask any father of the bride and he’ll tell you it’s not easy to see his little girl in the arms of another man—and handing her over reduces many a proud pop to tears. But all of these emotions are understandable—and very common, say experts. Jealousy, fear, dismay—fathers feel any or all of the above. The trick is to make the transition as easy as possible for both of you.

## the instant pal

“From the day we announced our engagement, my father was welcoming to my fiancé,” recalls Kathy Maciarz, 23, of Morristown, New Jersey. “He wanted Joel to feel like he was a part of our family, so he took him under his wing.” Kathy’s dad brought his son-in-law-to-be on fishing trips, to Giants games, and invited him to play golf regularly with his business partners. “He even bought Joel an expensive set of golf clubs,” she recalls. “They were like the dynamic duo, and all of a sudden, I was the third wheel.”

It’s easy for a father to let his good intentions go overboard, says Beryl Meyer, a family therapist in Nyack, New York. “There’s a new person in his daughter’s life and that could pose a threat to him. He wants to impress this young man, win his affection and



## THE PARENT GAP

What do you do if it’s a case of dislike at first sight for your dad and your fiancé? Instead of playing mediator, let your guy give it a try. “Your fiancé may solve a lot of problems by taking that first step,” asserts Meyer. She suggests he initiate an outing—maybe a sporting event or dinner—so they can begin to bond. “At first, your dad may feel like a stranger is invading his family circle,” she says. “But that awkward stage should pass as he and your fiancé spend more one-on-one time together.”

respect, so he’ll secure a place in his daughter’s future life.” What Kathy’s dad was doing was taking out an “insurance policy” of sorts. Her fiancé, who was just as nervous about pleasing his soon-to-be in-law, felt obligated to tag along.

Meyer believes the best way to deal with an overly zealous dad is to talk it out. “Your father may not even be aware of what he’s doing. Try reassuring him by saying, ‘Dad, I love you and that will never change.’ That may be all he needs to hear.”

Kathy followed Meyer’s advice. “I told him I was thrilled he and Joel got along so well, but I was feeling left out—and Joel was feeling overwhelmed,” she says. “Then I explained to Dad that he didn’t have to keep proving what a great guy he is.”

## the strong, silent type

When Mara Ebert, a 25-year-old from Cincinnati, was planning her wedding last year, her father seemed to take a backseat while she and her fiancé, Marc, eagerly organized the event. “He would just nod and smile whenever I told him the details,” she recalls. “My mom had lots of opinions, but Daddy didn’t say a word—except, ‘Whatever makes you happy, honey.’”

Everything was going according to plan—and Mara assumed her father was taking the whole situation in stride—until one day she found him rummaging through old baby pictures in the garage. “He was flipping through albums, holding my baby shoes, and crying,” she says. “I didn’t want to embarrass him, so I didn’t let him know I saw. But it just broke my heart.”

Most men are afraid to express their emotions, says Nicky Marone, coauthor with Gilbert Simon of *How to Father a Successful Daughter* (Fawcett Books, 1998). “Real men don’t cry, right?” she asks. “Wrong. They think and feel the same way women do, but they suppress it. And that can be even more painful and self-defeating.” Trying to talk things over with a father who keeps his emotions bottled up can be tough, adds Marone. “Communication is a two-way street, so if he doesn’t want to talk about it, you can’t force him to.”

But you can show him how you feel. In Mara’s case, she bought a silver frame and placed two pictures in it: one of her and her dad when she (Continued on page 622)



# groom's calendar

The groom has his own tasks. Here, a year-long checklist.

## 12 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Pick out the engagement ring.
- If you'll share wedding expenses, discuss them with your fiancée and all parents.
- Select your attendants (at least one usher per 50 guests).
- Decide on ceremony and reception sites with your fiancée.

## 9 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Arrange a visit with your clergy member or justice of the peace to discuss the ceremony.
- Start making out your guest list.
- Discuss honeymoon destinations with your fiancée; consult a travel agent for ideas.

## 6 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Arrange to pay for the bride's bouquet, plus boutonnieres and corsages for the attendants and mothers.
- Visit the gift registry with your fiancée.
- Complete the honeymoon plans.
- If traveling abroad, check passports.
- Arrange transportation to the ceremony and reception for the wedding party.

## 3 MONTHS BEFORE:

- Complete your guest list; give to your fiancée.
- Consult your fiancée about, and order, wedding attire for yourself and the ushers.
- Shop for your honeymoon clothes.
- Order the wedding rings.
- Consult your fiancée about, and reserve, a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests.
- Plan the rehearsal dinner with your parents.

## 6-8 WEEKS BEFORE:

- Buy your fiancée's wedding gift.
- Choose gifts for your ushers.
- Get all legal and religious papers in order.
- Pick up the wedding rings; check engraving.
- Help your fiancée with thank-you notes.
- Check state requirements for the blood tests.
- If moving, arrange to transport your belongings.

## 2 WEEKS BEFORE:

- Go with your fiancée to get your marriage license.
- If applicable, arrange for transportation from the reception to the airport.
- Attend the bachelor party.
- Double-check the honeymoon reservations.

## 1 WEEK BEFORE:

- Explain any special seating arrangements for family members, etc., to the ushers.
- Put the officiant's fee in a sealed envelope and give it to the best man to deliver after the ceremony.
- Purchase traveler's checks; inquire about ATMs near your honeymoon site.
- Get your going-away clothes ready.
- Pack for the honeymoon.
- Remind the ushers of the rehearsal-dinner details.

## Daddy's Girl

(Continued from page 128)

was a baby, the other of the two of them today. "I had it engraved with the message, 'I'll always be your girl,'" she says. "As usual, he didn't say much when I gave it to him, but I could tell from his eyes that it meant more than words ever could."

### the demanding daddy

As the only girl in a family of five kids, Courtney Gramien, 32, of Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, was her father's favorite. "We were always very close," admits Courtney. "I was a big tomboy growing up, and I idolized him. I even followed in his footsteps and became an attorney." Courtney didn't think she'd ever meet a man who could measure up to her dad until Ed came along. "We met in law school and he was smart, handsome, and funny," she reminisces. "He was everything I wanted in a guy—and after a year of dating, we decided to get married." When Ed asked for Courtney's hand in marriage, her father fumed. "He had a million reasons why Ed was all wrong for me," confides Courtney. "He was too short, he was too boring, he lacked focus. My dad went on and on, and finally said while there was nothing he could do to stop us, we wouldn't have his blessing." Courtney was dumbfounded. "My father and I always agreed on everything. Why couldn't he see that Ed and I were a perfect match?"

"A father only wants the best for his daughter," maintains Meyer. "He has always been your protector and wants to continue to protect you even as an adult. If he has reservations about your fiancé, he's probably trying to spare you from making a mistake."

Sometimes a dad may be right to disapprove. "Maybe he notices certain flaws in your fiancé that you don't. When you're in love, you tend to see only the good things," Meyer points out. But his vision may also be a bit cloudy. "Before you consider his advice, think about this: Could jealousy be causing his concern? Or is it just a case of incredibly high standards? Will anyone ever be good enough for his little girl?"

Courtney and Ed sat down with her father and presented their case. "Ed assured my dad that he loved me and would take good care of me," she says. "We talked for hours. I think he was impressed with Ed's honesty and his ability to argue his side. After taking a week to consider the situation, Dad told me he thought Ed would probably make a pretty good lawyer—and husband."

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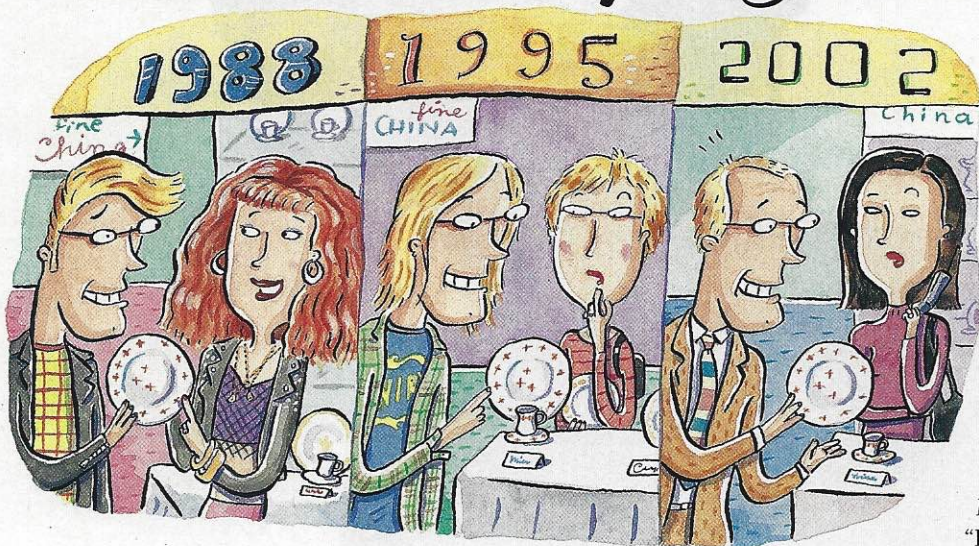
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HOW TO HANDLE A GUY WHO'S BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

# the re-marrying man

BY SHERYL BERK



**e**very guy comes with baggage. But if his past includes a previous engagement or even a trip to the altar, your own wedding could suffer the repercussions. As the Boy Scouts say, be prepared!

## mr. repeat

Ed Santos\* and Carrie Lin shared a passion for surfing, sushi, and the Rolling Stones. "It was wonderful to finally find someone so in sync with me," says Carrie, a 33-year-old Phoenix native. After a yearlong courtship, they got engaged, moved in together, and began picking out items for their new apartment. "Everything Ed suggested—furniture, china, linens—was perfect. It was amazing that we had such similar tastes."

A few weeks later, they were unpacking their new espresso machine, and Ed said something that raised a red flag. "He said, 'I'm so happy this model is still available. I really wanted it last time.'" When Carrie pressed him for an explanation, Ed revealed that practically all the items they had picked out were the same ones he had registered for during his previous engagement. Even their honeymoon cruise to Maui wasn't an original idea: Ed and fiancée number one had planned the same trip.

"I went ballistic," recalls Carrie. "I accused him of still having a thing for his ex. Ed just couldn't understand why I was so up-

## PAST IMPERFECT

Seven years ago, Courtenay Fisher, of Washington, D.C., graduated from college and got engaged. "It was a rash decision and we were both too young," recalls the 28-year-old. "I realized that eventually and broke it off. Jake was hurt, but he understood and we parted as friends." Courtenay's current fiancé, Mark, isn't so willing to let bygones be bygones. "Mark is obsessed with how I did things the first time around. He constantly asks me questions about my engagement to Jake," she says. "He is obviously jealous, which is ridiculous."

If your fiancé seems obsessed by your past engagement, it's your job to put his mind at ease. "You broke it off once before at this point, so perhaps he's worried you'll do it again if he acts in a way your first fiancé did," says Heitler. "He wants to prove to you that he's different and better. And of course, he's curious about why it failed the first time."

The best way to handle his insecurities? "Make it clear that you're committed to honoring your engagement," says Heitler. "Answer your fiancé's questions honestly while reassuring him that what's past is past—and your future is with him."

set. He saw nothing wrong with it and even thought it would be okay to use the wedding bands he had saved from his broken engagement."

People tend to be consistent with their choices, and Ed's behavior bore this out. "If Ed liked blue sheets the first time, chances are he still likes them. But just because he's faithful to his first linens doesn't mean he's being unfaithful to you," points out Susan M. Heitler, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Denver and author of *The Power of Two: Secrets to a Strong and Loving Marriage* (New Harbinger, 1997). "But Ed should have understood why reusing the rings would be hurtful."

If you're concerned that your intended is trying to relive the past or harbors feelings for his former fiancée, you both need to deal with it. "Does he bring up her name often? Call her? Compare you to her?" asks Heitler. If so, he might be hooked. If not, it's probably safe to assume he's over her."

Ed and Carrie sought couples' counseling, during which he revealed that making the same choices made him feel more secure. "He also admitted that he always wanted to go to Maui and saw this as our one big chance," says Carrie. "After a few sessions, I relaxed and realized that just because he wanted to go to Hawaii didn't mean he wanted his ex back. But I stuck to my guns about the rings." Ed traded in the bands for something new.

## mr. know it all

Michael Weller is the head of his own design firm in New York City. "He's the boss, so he's comfortable giving orders," says his fiancée, Marie Langton, 27. But when he started ordering her around after their engagement, Marie began to feel like his secretary. "Michael left me Post-It notes with things to do, like buy stamps for response cards or ask the caterer to fax a wine list."

It got worse when the couple started registering. "I (Continued on page 358)

picked a beautiful china pattern, but Michael rejected it," Marie recalls. "In front of the saleswoman he said, 'Honey, I think I know more than you when it comes to this sort of thing.' I was humiliated."

What Michael was referring to was his first marriage—something Marie never thought would get in the way of their relationship. "He'd been divorced eight years, yet he thought being married before made him the authority on wedding planning. He'd even joke and say, 'I could teach Martha Stewart a thing or two.'"

If your fiancé is showing dictator tendencies, now is the time to nip them in the bud. "The patterns you establish today—and I'm not talking china—may stick," says Corey Donaldson, author of *Don't You Dare Get Married Until You Read This! The Book of Questions for Couples* (Three Rivers Press, 2001). "The great advantage of planning a wedding is that it's often the first time a couple works together on something that involves a degree of stress. It can also be a crystal ball into the future."

So if you feel the decision-making process is slightly (or not-so-slightly) one-sided, speak up. "Explain—in a noncombative way—that a marriage is an equal partnership, and that both husband and wife need to feel respected," advises Heitler. "You each have wisdom from different life experiences, and should both be allowed to express opinions confidently and comfortably without being belittled."

After the dish debacle, Marie pulled Michael aside in the store and yelled at him. "Once I calmed down, I explained how much he'd hurt me. He was stunned because he really had no idea I felt this way. He thought he was making things easier for me and preventing me from becoming stressed out." They had a serious discussion about Michael's attitude, and he agreed that it was time to release the decision-making reins. "Rather than risk losing me or postponing our wedding, Michael was going to be a team player," says Marie. "So from then on we chose everything together. He just made me promise to ask for help if things got overwhelming."

### mr. can't be bothered

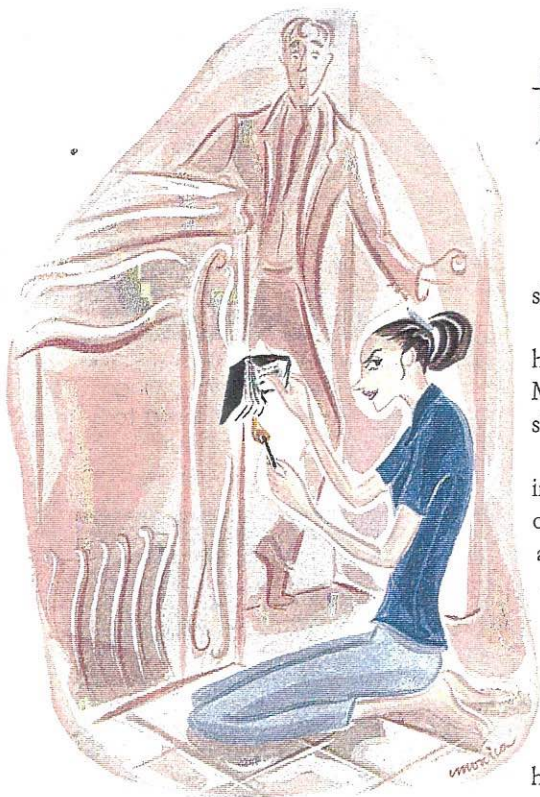
Liz Mellon, 29, of Palo Alto, California, was ecstatic when Greg, her boyfriend of two years, proposed. "I couldn't wait for us to start planning a big, formal wedding," Liz recalls. But Greg, who had been engaged twice before, dragged his feet—showing up late, if at all—for appointments and acting disinterested. "He'd say, 'Sure, whatever you want,' and would never give me his opinion on anything. I began to feel like he didn't give a damn."

When Liz confronted Greg about his blasé attitude, he admitted that he was over wedding planning. "Greg had worked so hard to plan a big wedding, not just once, but twice, and both times the relationships ended painfully. He actually told me he'd rather have a root canal than go through registering again."

The solution? "Make this engagement and wedding very different from the ones before it," says Heitler. Liz learned that if she wanted Greg involved in the planning, she had to be flexible—and creative. She trashed her original idea for a traditional bash, and instead asked Greg to help her plan a more informal celebration. Greg got into it with gusto. "We decided to get married at the Mexican beach resort where we met," Liz recalls. "Greg was so psyched, he made the reservations and picked out the music. We walked down a sandy aisle barefoot to the James Bond theme song, because we're both 007 buffs. It was unique, fun, and totally us." ■



# TOMASINA



# the ex files

WHEN HE WON'T EXTINGUISH OLD FLAMES

BY SHERYL BERK

**O**n the top shelf of our closet—the one I have trouble reaching—my husband, Peter, keeps a box. It holds 15 years of his dating memories: phone numbers on little slips of paper, old photos of summer flings, ticket stubs, matchbooks, and love notes.

My first instinct when I discovered the box was to burn it. But Peter reassured me that these were only ghosts of relationships past, women he would never love like he loves me. Some were still his friends.

I decided I might be overreacting, until one day I found out that one of these chums was a little too chummy—she sent him e-mails at the office and asked him out to lunch. She would call him to complain about work or blind dates, or just to reminisce.

I trust Peter implicitly—it's his ex I don't. How to deal? Other brides and a few experts talk about handling a husband's proclivities toward his exes.

## three's company

Carrie Casserta, 29, of River Edge, New Jersey, was mad. "Michelle was David's first love. Even after we were married she would come over on Sundays to watch football, and she left giggly messages on our machine for 'Duckie,' the nickname

she had given him in fourth grade."

Carrie gave David an ultimatum. "I told him it was her or me." He stopped seeing Michelle, but it created a great deal of tension in their marriage.

"Don't assume that an ex is a saboteur," insists Mira Kirshenbaum, clinical director of The Chestnut Hill Institute in Boston and author of *Our Love Is Too Good to Feel So Bad* (Avon, 1998). "Is she trying to ruin your marriage, or simply being selfish by refusing to relinquish his attention? Before viewing her as a threat, try and gauge her motives."

What's happening in your spouse's head? By maintaining his close friendship with an ex, he may be trying to exert his independence, explains Peter D. Kramer, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Brown University and author of *Should You Leave? Exploring Intimacy and Autonomy* (Scribner, 1997). "He's just gone through a major life change, with commitment and responsibility piled on. This may be his way of holding on to his sense of himself.

"Tell your husband how his actions make you feel," Kramer adds. "Does he ignore you when she's around? If so, ask him to talk to her, and try to work out a compromise."

## to tell the truth

Min-jin Hsieh, 29, of San Francisco, found out that her fiancé, Ray Karp, 35, was still friendly with an ex when she saw them Christmas shopping together.

"Ray had told me he was working overtime, yet there he was, laughing it up with some woman in a mall," she recalls. "I was livid. I thought he was cheating on me."

Ray had dated the woman, a co-worker named Mara, for a few months three years previously—but never mentioned this fact to his wife. "Mara and I decided to take a break from work, and do some shopping," says Ray. "I knew that if I told Min about Mara she'd get jealous—so I kept quiet."

Should Min be mad? "Ray lied, so she has a right to feel a lack of trust in their re-

lationship," Kirshenbaum says. "By not telling her about Mara, he was giving more weight to this 'unimportant' relationship."

At this point Min must make her feelings clear, but also be understanding. "Severing all his ties to Mara may cause Ray trouble at the office. But he needs to prove that his priorities are straight—Min is the most important person in his life and should be treated with honesty and respect."

## an altar-cation?

Ariel Byrd, 27, of Tampa, Florida, fumed when her fiancé, Doug Alzocar, 30, wanted to add an ex to their guest list.

"He's slept with her! How could I walk down the aisle with her there?" says Ariel.

Doug defended his actions. "Denise had been a big part of my life since I was six. She belongs at my wedding."

To settle this disagreement, Ariel could have posed a question to her fiancé, says Beryl Meyer, a psychotherapist in Nyack, New York. "Is this someone we *both* want to share our wedding day with?"

"Doug's attachment could mean he's fearful of the future. The couple needs to talk about what commitment means to them and draw up a road map of how they'd like their marriage to be," Meyer advises. Will it include old friends and lovers? "If you understand what you expect from each other, there's more certainty of what lies ahead."

## burn, baby, burn

Now that you're engaged, do you have the right to burn his little black book? A diamond on the finger doesn't justify torching his trusty index of exes in a blaze of premarital glory. So, assuming he hasn't gotten rid of the book himself, what should you do? Misplace it? Throw a tantrum? Neither. The best bet, say experts, is to ask him to put it away somewhere so that you won't have to look at it. Out of sight, out of mind—both yours and his.