

Two-Sixteen-Ought-Four

Sherilyn Connelly

2004

00) This is not an apology.

01) It was a very, very long Monday, starting at 7am in the rain. It had been sunny and beautiful for the last few days, until it was *our* turn to stand in line outside City Hall.

02) By 2:30, the paperwork was turned in and the fee was paid.

03) Just what is Gavin Newsom, the controversial new Mayor of San Francisco and ostensible architect of this mad rush of same-sex matrimony, *up* to? What's his angle? Is it just the notoriety? How is this going to help his career, exactly? He is most certainly *not* doing this out of the kindness of his heart or any particular love for queers. To put it mildly, I do not trust him. I voted for rival Tom Ammiano in the main election and Matt Gonzalez in the subsequent runoff, and performed at fundraisers for both. I would do it all again if I could, and I still wish Tom had won. Gavin is not our hero just because we're getting married. There's something vaguely Faustian about the whole affair.

04) The actual ceremonies took place in the City Hall rotunda. At the front of the line of people volunteering to witness was a fairly average-looking fellow--maybe straight, maybe queer, certainly innocuous. Immediately behind him was a large, bald and seemingly gay man carrying a camera. Guess who I picked. (Many moons later, I discovered my gaydar had been malfunctioning and he is, in fact, hetero. Regardless of who he boinks, he takes great pictures.)

05) Food was provided by do-gooders and well-wishers. Problem was, most of it was sugary junk food—not exactly the best thing when you're standing on concrete for hours on end. The thought very much counted, however.

06) We realized that if we got in and got married—and we weren't going to believe it until it happened--this would be the third anniversary we observe. The first is in honor of the day we officially became a couple: July 10, 1999. The second is the day we became domestic partners, June 29, 2002. It was Pink Saturday, so that one's a floating holiday for us, the last Saturday in June regardless of the actual date. February 16, 2004 would be the third. The couple immediately ahead of us nodded, saying that this would become their third observed anniversary as well. I'm sure there were many, many others.

07) The City is making serious bank off of us—the staff is largely volunteer, and each of the thousands of couples is paying around a hundred dollars each. I'm not good at math, but it's a lot of money in a short period of time. That can't be the only reason they're doing this, though.

08) Two days before, we had a threesome in a hot tub at a party. Getting married now did not feel contradictory.

09) How many of us are risking our domestic partnership benefits?

10) Sometimes, when I'm talking to a straight person I've just met, I refer to Maddy as my girlfriend rather than my wife. It's just easier that way. Not because they might say, "How can you have a wife? You're a woman!" Rather, they might think to themselves, "A-ha! You have a wife! You *are* really a man!"

11) The Very Ill Little Dyke. I saw her on one of my occasional walks around the building. None of us looked *well*, really, since it was sickness season and we'd all been standing the rain for hours, but she was bad. A cold for sure, and possibly the flu. She should have been home in bed, heavily medicated, not sitting out in the rain. Dedication, in the classic sense.

12) A lot of people brought their own witnesses. We, however, did not plan ahead that far. Just as well; nobody should have to wait through all of this with us. I briefly considered asking San Francisco fixture Frank Chu, this planet's ambassador to the 12 Galaxies—anywhere there's a crowd in San Francisco, you'll find Frank in his dark glasses, holding high his sign with its incoherent message of intergalactic justice—but decided against it. The day was surreal enough already.

13) I greatly resent the notion that we got married in order to show the world that queer couples are just like straight couples. Y'know what? The only thing that makes us like a straight couple is the fact that one of us has a dick. Otherwise, we create a different beast entirely, and I've never suggested otherwise.

14) Will divorce figures be changed? Will straight versus queer stats be reported? If so, you can bet they'll be twisted and repurposed as proof positive that queer marriage is evil.

15) I made sure to bring my checkbook along because of what happened at our domestic partnership ceremony: Checks only. I'm glad cash is an option today, because I don't like the idea of our marriage being ruled invalid before the check even clears.

16) A girl with a camcorder asked if she could tape the ceremony. We said yes. Aside from her and our photographer/witness, I detected at least three other people taking pictures as Maddy and I vowed at each other. For people not in wedding clothes, we were no doubt very striking. Of course, we were both gothed out, not to mention I'm six feet tall and was wearing vinyl pants.

17) If I'm bashed, or either of us is hospitalized for any reason, the other will have visitation rights and the ability to make medical decisions. I don't see why I need to explain *anything* beyond that.

18) Our friend David West happened to walk by, and he stood in line with us for about an hour. He was a capital-C communist back in the day, and even though he and the Party are no longer an item, he still keeps the social agitation faith—he considers being arrested in anti-war demonstrations to be no big deal, just fighting the good fight. I respect the hell out of him, and the fact that he supported what we were doing meant a lot to me. (I asked David if he knew which window Dan White used when he snuck into City Hall to assassinate Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone. He did, and pointed it out. A lot of history has happened in this building.)

19) *scene missing*

20) Our friend James proposed to his girlfriend Jyllian at their New Year's Eve party on December 31, 1999. This is an excerpt from what I wrote in my diary in the wee hours of January 1, 2000.

This sort of thing has a tendency to result in the unmarried couples asking themselves why THEY haven't gotten hitched yet. Of course, it isn't an option for us; if someone told me that to save my life I had to get married as a boy, I'd ask for a Dylan quote to be put on my tombstone, and then haul off and shoot myself so fast they wouldn't even get a chance to ask which song. Anyway, it was nice to see that Maddy has very much the same attitude about it as I do: it's swell for other people, and their wedding is already being greatly anticipated, but it's not something either of us want or need to do. She's already been down that road once, and I've never wanted to. Indeed, that was a point of contention between Kim and I from the early days; she wanted to get married, and I didn't. I was rather content just to be together, not seeing what difference the piece of paper and ring on the finger meant. Granted, for most people it's not even those symbols so much as it's the ceremony and pageantry and pomp and fucking circumstance. Spare me.

Most likely my distaste for the concept of the wedding ceremony stemmed from my association of marriage with divorce. My parents got divorced, their friends got divorced, my friends' parents got divorced, and, perhaps most significantly, I attended my brother Joe's wedding only to watch his marriage deteriorate from day one. As it was happening, I couldn't help thinking that on top of everything else, it must have been humiliating to have the memory of their wedding fresh in so many minds. Maybe it's related to why I don't handle praise very well: it makes your inevitable failure that much harder.

The wedding says *yes, this is it, this is the person, this is the one that I'm going to spend the rest of my life with, so I'm going to make this big huge elaborate spectacle proclaiming it to god and fuckin' everyone*, and the divorce says *whoops! never mind*. At least praise comes from an outside source. The wedding was *your* idea.

I know that not all marriages end in divorce. I believe Jyllian and James are going to stay together forever. They've both been through enough in their lives and have come together at the right time, when they need each other the most. They love each other, there's no question of that. Kim and I loved each other, too, but we came together when we very young, and at least one if not both of us still had a lot to learn about ourselves. Even if I hadn't transitioned, I believe we still would have broken up for simply having grown apart. We were perfect for each other at the time, but not by eight and a half years later. We couldn't have been. Joe and the mother of his children, I've always suspected, got married at least partially because the fundamentalist Christianity they embraced at the time required it in order to do normal human things like sex. (Is there a worse reason to get married than just to have sex and/or make babies? No, there isn't. Next question.) Maybe they even loved each other at first, but it must be hard to tell whether you can really be intimate with someone if you can't get close to them until after you've gotten married. Whatever the reason, their marriage dissolved four years later, and his two daughters call someone else "Daddy."

So, from my observation, nothing about getting married seemed to make a bit of difference as to whether or not the couple stayed together or how they felt about one another, so how could not getting married make a difference? Do two people who don't get married, by definition, love each other less than two people who do get married? I just don't see it. Never have.

21) The mailing list. *That's* how The City is paying for all this, judging from the recent influx of wedding-themed junk mail: "I just wanted to send my warmest congratulations for your blessed union..." Ugh. Isn't there an opt-out list or something? No, probably not.

22) They won't all last. That's a given. Being a snarky bitch every once in a great while, I could just tell by looking which ones were doomed. I decided that the older they were, the better chance they had. Of course, being in our early thirties, we're on the riskier side of the curve.

23) When we arrived at a friend's annual Valentine's Day-Slash-Anniversary soiree on Saturday, we discovered it had mutated into their wedding reception. I'm sure there were many such re-jiggered parties all throughout the City.

24) I'm a performer. I love a crowd, and there was one ready and willing on the steps of City Hall, greeting every couple. When the doors opened and we stepped outside to the cheering throng, I raised our freshly printed marriage certificate up high. I worked the moment for all it was worth, for all we were worth.

25) As we made our way down the steps, someone offered us a piece of cake. I declined. A couple more steps down, and a bag of Hershey's Kisses-type candy was offered to us. I was feeling guilty for having turned down the cake, so I reached in and took a piece. Unfortunately, I spazzed when I took my hand out of the bag, and the piece of candy went flying like an individually wrapped bullet into the forehead of a nearby well-wisher. Painfully, from the looks of it.

26) I grew weary of long lines many years ago. It always amazes me to drive past a nightclub and see people standing in line out front, devoting their precious time to *possibly* getting in. It makes no sense to me. I would do this for very few things.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 2nd Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.