

## The Right to Wed

Moira

Her hand rests on my brow, fingers entwined and slipping through my hair. I feel soothed like a girl on a trusted lap. It is an old memory she stirs in me as we lie close. Her chest rises and falls next to me, the life beating warmth. I love her. We talk of the gold bands we wear.

Every morning my littlest son walks to the one store in town and returns with the paper for us. As I pour the tea we notice Victorian wedding bands advertised. They remind me of our wedding. We can't make it legal she tells me, but I don't understand why. It is a remarkable fact to me, that in this day, on the crest of the space age and glasnost, puritan thinking persists to such a degree that two people of the same sex cannot make their bond legal. This smaller issue encompasses a much larger one, one of discrimination at the very core, that of acknowledging lesbians and gays and allowing them basic rights.

I do not agree that the gender of the person I love is more important than who that person is, even though the law books state it. I have read about relationships between women that have spanned their adult lives, that have been productive and loving, yet the romantic nature had to be hidden. I question why it is okay for people of the opposite sex to marry and divorce as frequently as they please, somehow their unions are considered "blessed," even in a Las Vegas chapel. These dichotomies strike me the wrong way. I know that making something legal doesn't make it stronger, and it doesn't make it last.

But it is in the denial of my rights that I am angered. I am angry that marriage is not an option for us. What is it in our limited thinking that lets this persist? I would like to see more people who value their long-term relationships question the state's denial of their legal right to marry.

I know they are there, out there, some speaking, some quietly living their lives. For some, such as myself, it hasn't needed to be an issue till now, till the commitment of relationship and family became real. Maybe the time has come for these basic rights, the right to love, to marry, and be recognized by our community.

Lesbians and gays are no less committed to their relationships, their families, their communities, than anyone else. However, because of the impossibility of the legal bond, many people view their relationships as not quite real. Again it comes back to self-acceptance: we need to believe in ourselves, that our marriages are valid, and project that image out.

It is difficult because, like so many of the coming out issues, being married in a same sex relationship is generally not accepted. There are many people who would laugh at such a marriage, and others who would react in a violent way. Certainly the preparations and sharing that goes on in families or the workplace are different. We did not have the hat passed around at work for us because of the negative consequences that our openness would cause. Nor did we have our whole families with us because of a similar response.

For my partner and me, it was a personal decision who we told about our wedding, who we asked to join us in our celebration. It was painful planning something that filled us with such joy and at the same time made us startlingly aware of its unrespectability. However, in her eyes I found all the love reflected that one could need. I found the words filled with the divine that blesses. I found the validity in our union. I do believe that a day will come when she and I are legally joined, but it will take working for it, demanding the respect we all deserve, and showing that we value our commitment. It will take exposing the bias that still rules our courts.

In designing my own wedding, I decided

to view the unconventionality as a freedom. We can decide how we want our weddings and where, without the traditional constraints imposed on us. A marriage is an intimate union between two people, it need not have a legal process to validate it, it need not be sanctified by a church that wears blinders to the times we live in. But it can be, as it was for my partner and me, a moment when the rain clouds cleared and the sun fully gave its blessing. As we stood in that chapel by the sea and exchanged vows, the marriage became for us all that it needed to be. ▼



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