



The Man Who Married Himself

by Charlie Fish

'Why not?'

With those two words, my good friend Reverend Zatarga changed the course of my life. When he said them to me, he had just spent two hours on the telephone with Bishop Fleming discussing various sections of the Bible in excruciatingly fine detail. He pointed out that Leviticus warns Christians not to marry their sister, aunt, mother, mother-in-law, daughter or even their granddaughter (should they be tempted). But nowhere in the good book is there a rule against marrying oneself. So when I told Reverend Zatarga that was exactly what I wanted to do, he eventually conceded those two fateful words:

10 'Why not?'

Of course, the Bible also neglects to forbid anyone from marrying great-grandmothers, tables or pet fish. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Bishop Fleming ended up marrying his beloved French poodle as a result of all this. Or his blanket - after all he's been sleeping with it for years. Anyway, once I convinced the good Reverend to let me marry the man of my dreams, I had to convince my mother and father. I'd have to say that between an international religion, firmly established for two millennia, and my own humble parents, my parents were far more difficult to persuade.

20 My mother just wouldn't take it seriously at first. OK, very few people took it seriously, but I needed her to know I meant it. She kept asking me silly things like 'Why marry - you can just live with yourself?' or 'What will you wear for the wedding?'

And sadly, it drove my father quite mad. Literally. For years after the wedding he spent days typing up articles for a wide variety of news journals, record books and space administration newsletters claiming that he was the first person to have had sex in space. He seemed quite convinced, despite the fact that the closest he had come to space was the big button on his computer keyboard. When asked who he had allegedly had sex with, he would usually pause briefly for dramatic effect, turn his wild eyes towards you and yell shrilly: 'Myself!'

30 I would have hoped that I could trust my best friends to be sympathetic towards my cause, but I think it was all a bit of a joke for them. They were often supportive, but after the wedding they just spent a lot of time making fun of me. Some of the wedding presents I received from them were quite demeaning: pornographic magazines, silk gloves, even a ceiling mirror. And I'm disappointed in them for not stifling their mirth when Reverend Zatarga recited the marriage vows: 'Will you

keep yourself as a husband, to live as one in marriage? Will you love and comfort yourself, obey and honour yourself in sickness and in health, and be faithful to yourself as long as you shall live?' I swear one of my friends wet himself laughing.

40 I had a great honeymoon in Las Vegas, gambling away all my savings with nobody to nag me about how much money I was spending. I had a penthouse suite in the Luxor hotel for the night of consummation . . .

I had many reasons for getting married when I did, apart from the tax benefits of course (trying to make the tax inspector understand that I was my own spouse was hell, though). Ever since I understood the concept of wedlock, I longed for a partner that I could trust. I wanted to have someone with me always, to whom I could tell all my deepest, darkest secrets without having them laugh at me. Unfortunately, although getting girlfriends was usually not too big a problem for me, I tended to have excruciatingly bad taste. Then I realised that my perfect partner was closer to home than anyone could have realised.

50 Altogether, I think the marriage was a great success for the most part. I rarely argued with my spouse; in fact I found myself to be the best conversation holder around. The few times that I did argue, I always won. And the sex was, well - it was whatever I made of it. There was some media intrusion of course, lots of cheap journalists trying to cash in on this unusual union. I found some of their articles amusing, and others quite offensive, especially the ones dubbing me the most conceited and/or narcissistic man in the world. I don't think I'm such an egotist, I just happen to enjoy my company.

60 I suppose it was a hormonal thing, a stage of life or something, that made me suddenly crave a child. The cliché is that I realised I was mortal, and I therefore wanted to pass on my genes. So after many days weighing up the pros and cons I decided to split up from my husband in order to find a wife. I had a chat with Reverend Zatarga, and he informed me that I couldn't just file for a divorce on a moment's notice. I had to have legitimate justification. Curiously, wanting a baby wasn't on the list of good reasons to divorce.

70 As the good Reverend explained, I could only divorce if I had been living apart from my spouse for at least a year which would be difficult without major surgery or if my spouse had treated me cruelly or been imprisoned for at least a year. I wasn't particularly willing to beat myself up a bit or lounge around in prison just so I could divorce myself. That left one option: Adultery. I just had to have sex with someone other than myself; normal, straight, human sex, and I could be free from the bonds of marriage.

And so it was that I reluctantly removed my wedding ring and started searching for a mate. My friends were cruel about it, saying that I was separating to stop myself from going blind. I think my mother was relieved when I told her that my

relationship with myself was coming to an end. My father just paused for dramatic effect, turned his wild eyes towards me and yelled shrilly: 'Myself!' Maybe he really is on another world.

80 I expected it to take me quite a while to find someone who was both willing to sleep with me and who hadn't read the newspapers enough to know that I was already married, but I soon found a plain-faced Malaysian girl who was relatively easy to seduce. The sex was, to be honest, rather disappointing. It seemed that she knew almost nothing of what turns a man on, whereas by that point I myself had become quite an expert. I suppose it wasn't great for her either - I wasn't practised in pleasuring members of the fairer sex.

The divorce was easy after that. It seemed that the church was keen to split me apart, as if my marriage had been a big mistake. I felt quite lonely for several months after the break-up. At least the local psychiatrist (specialising in multiple personality disorders) stopped sending me his damned business cards every week.

90 It took me nearly a decade to find a good wife who didn't think she'd be marrying into a threesome. Most of that time was just waiting for the media to forget about 'The Man Who Married Himself'. Meanwhile, I wrote an autobiography with that very title. Included in the book was a detailed account of my marriage to myself, including the ups and downs of living with myself, how I dealt with everyone's criticism of me and my husband, and some intimate details of my relationship. I think it was these sections that made the book a real success when it was published some years later. People were just curious to read about the implications of such an unusual marriage. I suppose it made people think. They would read my book and ask themselves: 'Am I easy to live with? If I had to live with me, could I do it?' They all stopped searching for their Mister or Little Miss
100 Right for just a moment to ask themselves if they would ever make a good spouse for anyone.

I didn't hear of any copycat self-marriages, which probably either means the media lost interest or the church is determined not to let it happen again. Anyway, that's all behind me now. My wife and I have just moved into a new home, big enough to accommodate our new child when he is born. I am happy now. In fact, right now I can't wipe the smile off my face. You see, our next door neighbours are Bishop Fleming and his lovely wife, the French poodle.

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