

CAN THIS BE LOVE?

JUNE WEDDING WANTED? Just do as I say (not as I do)

Several predictable things happen in June: The weather turns noticeably warmer; a larger selection of fresh fruit appears in the supermarket; a lot of people get married; my lover gets an urgent desire to take an overseas trip; and my friend Beverly gets depressed. It took me a while to connect these last two occurrences as direct results of the one just preceding them, but there it is: Beverly gets depressed because a lot of people, not including herself, are getting married; and my lover wants to leave the country for approximately the same reason. He believes that being in such close proximity to so many people exhibiting such poor judgment is hazardous to his health (which in a way it is, since the sight of other people getting married makes me want to kill him).

There's not much I can do about my partner; trying to change him is like trying to change the tides with a pail and shovel. But I think I might be able to help Beverly, and other people like her who want to cry at one wedding next June with tears of relief. If you'd like to reach the altar by next year, the following timetable should help.

June-September. Choose the right candidate. It is crucial to your plan that you find, during this period, someone who does not equate marriage with incarceration in a federal penitentiary. (Don't pick Mr. Cynical, as I did, unless you have a particular affinity for lost causes or get a kick out of seeing your dreams turn to dust.) He will unwittingly give you all the evidence you need in order to make an informed decision. For instance, is his living-room mantel adorned by a photograph of his smiling parents at their 25th anniversary party, or a photo of Hugh Hefner and the Playmates of the Years 1978 through 1983?

Sound him out on his views regarding matrimony before deciding whether or not it's wise to include him in your wedding plans. Remember, it's one thing if he believes that two can't live quite as cheaply as one, and another if he believes that marriage—as opposed to war, or famine—is responsible for all the misery in the world.

October-January. When you are certain that your candidate finds the idea of marriage no more hideous and revolting than the next guy, open his eyes to the joys of conjugal life. Think of this as introducing the beauties of nature to someone who's

been blind all his life, or bringing religion to an atheist. Of course, the atheist might not realize that his life is an empty shell, but he'll be grateful to you for pointing it out to him.

Take him to a lot of weddings. (It's okay if you don't actually know the people involved. Just tell him the two of you aren't invited to the reception and blow a kiss to the bride on your way out.) Socialize only with the happy couples you know, and don't worry if you find this severely limits your contacts. It's only for a few months.

Gradually prove to him how unfit he is to run his own life. Become his manager (*not* his slavey). Change his laundry for one that does not shred *all* of his shirt collars. Replace his cleaning woman with one who doesn't exhibit such a pronounced taste for his whiskey. Introduce him to a pizza place that delivers his favorite combination pies in less than half an hour. Get his refrigerator fixed so that the door stays shut and keeps his beer cold. Tip him off to how he can save fifty dollars a month on his phone bill.

February-March. When you've convinced him that without you, he'd be a piece of human flotsam, it's time to apply some pressure. Let him know you're thinking of taking a job in another town. Have him over for a candlelight dinner at your place, then tell him you've lost your lease. Inform him that research supports the contention that women lose all their sexual inhibitions once they're married. Wear white a lot.

April-May. Once things are settled between you, don't bother him with details, such as where and when you will be married and who will be invited to your wedding. He may be one of those people who tend to get testy and have second thoughts when embroiled in discussions about why a Madras jacket isn't suitable attire, even for an afternoon wedding; why the dog, no matter how well behaved, isn't a suitable guest; or why rice pudding isn't the most sophisticated dessert to serve at a reception. Better he should put the coming event entirely out of his mind and go out and enjoy himself, at a ballgame, maybe. There are a lot of them in June, which is why it's a perfect month to get married.

by Bette-Jane Raphael