

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Linda S. Gunther: “Not the Marrying Kind”

Linda S. Gunther · Wednesday, April 7th, 2021

When I start to craft a suspense novel or short story, I usually begin with a laundry list of things swimming around in my head: plot points, protagonist traits and personality, secondary character descriptions, twists in the story, transitions from one scene to another. Here, in my first attempt at memoir, I could kick off with a description of my six marriages. But that would be leaving out all of the other serious relationships that never actually culminated in a wedding.

I am a serial romantic junkie who savors independence. Not a winning combination, I know. Two incompatible yearnings which have collided numerous times through the decades of my life.

Did each of those six men get down on one knee to propose marriage to me? I think so but honestly some of it is a blur. I wish I could smell, taste, feel and listen to those proposals all over again. Occasionally, I test myself, check on whether I can list them all from marriage number one when I was nineteen years old through number six when I was – oh, never mind about that. But to my surprise, each time, I manage to get the husband sequence exactly right, a good sign that I am staving off dementia at the age of – oh, never mind.

The thing is when people hear that there are six husbands behind you, unfortunately, you can rarely count on remaining credible. So, I rarely mention it. Good thing I have a couple of Master’s degrees under my belt, including study at Oxford University and Columbia Grad, and a flourishing Human Resources career. But then again, I have had six husbands. Ouch.

I respect all of my spouses. They are, as you say, *good guys*. Well, except for the fifth one who was sadly the most fun I ever had. Daring, dishing out the unexpected, Gregory, husband-to-be number five showed up on my business trip in New Delhi at my hotel room door in the middle of the night wearing an Indiana Jones hat. There is no denying that’s what made me sizzle. The romance factor was off the chart. Although his corporate position of Vice President was pressing, he waited patiently for four days while I trained my company’s managers who came to New Delhi from various cities across India to learn about Leadership. At the end of the week, when I dragged Gregory to a Software Engineer’s wedding which lasted from early morning until after midnight, he engaged fully in the experience like I did; especially the groom’s white horse procession down the avenue. We threw flowers. I wore a teal-colored sari and a long white chiffon scarf. There were oxen roaming the streets.

When Gregory ordered a private taxi to take us to the Taj Mahal the next day, I was more than impressed even with a stomach virus that steadily haunted me during the entire ten-hour outing. The New Delhi amusement park on our final day in India clinched the deal for me. I was hooked

on his love and in disbelief when he popped the question just a few weeks later.

But that was husband number five who turned out to be the only “bad seed” in the hexad of husbands. *It's a doozy*, as my Bronx friends would say.

The secret to a happy divorce: Give up stuff. “Here, take the house,” I’ve said more than once, or “How about you keep our newest set of luggage? It’s yours, honey.” Be generous. You’ll lose a husband but you’ll gain a friend for life. Maybe more than a friend. You never know. In fact, you may end up marrying one of the same men again. It’s not an impossibility.

The secret to a happy marriage: Resist taking his last name. When I have taken a man’s family name, it’s always proved to be a jinx. When I didn’t take it, I actually stay married, like this time, and it’s lasted eighteen years. He might grumble now and then about the “last name thing” but I can handle it, and make a joke about not needing to live in prehistoric times. “We love each other and that’s what counts,” I say. Fortunately, he always agrees.

Another tip: Keep your money separate. Pay your own bills. Nope, don’t even think about a joint house account. Split the cost of things. *You take this bill. I take that bill.* You can divide based on ratio of income, if needed. That way when, and if you split, it’s not so complicated. Avoid complexity. Again, it reduces hard feelings and anxiety. The love will stick beyond the paper plate marriage vows, beyond the divorce.

I never meant to emulate Elizabeth Taylor in any way except maybe for her acting chops, especially in *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* or *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. But that’s as far as it goes with any desire to be like Liz. Nevertheless, there is some synchronicity. Can’t deny that!

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