

10 TRICKS TO BOOST YOUR MOOD IN 60 SECONDS

Psychology Today

DECEMBER 2007
PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM

FOR A HEALTHIER LIFE

Move On!

How to Leave
A Relationship,
Quit Your Job,
Call a Truce, Stop
Procrastinating...
And More

**See the
Light**
7 Reasons
To Get
More Sun

**Creative
Dynasties**
Secrets of
Super-Talented
Families

Night Flights
A New Take
On Dreams

Cad Alert
A Pickup
Artist
Comes
Clean

+
The Miracle Diet Drink
In Your Fridge



\$4.99 U.S./\$5.99 CAN
DISPLAY UNTIL JAN. 1, 2008

Relationships

[TWO-MINUTE MEMOIR]

Unlawfully Wedded Wife

The love was real, but the marriage was fake.
By Liza Monroy

MY SO-CALLED WIFE:
Razi and the author
enjoy a carefree Sunday
at Coney Island.



I DON'T KNOW HOW to tell you this," said Razi. "I have to go home."
At first I didn't understand what he meant. He was my gay best friend, and he'd come to my West Hollywood apartment for a *Sex and the City* marathon. "You forgot something?" I asked.

"Not home to Havenhurst Drive, sweetie," he said. "*Home* home." He was referring to his Muslim homeland.

"What?" I said. "Why?" We'd only recently graduated from film school, where we'd met and become inseparable. Our plan had been to find industry jobs in L.A. He had a window to turn his student visa into a work permit by getting hired by a company willing to sponsor him.

I knew all about visas. My mother had started her diplomatic career in consular affairs, and for my first job, I'd worked in the visa section of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, studying each person's face and name while silently wishing them a better life. I knew that if Razi had to go home, his homosexuality would put his life at risk. Now I truly had a chance to improve someone's life—not just a stranger, but my closest friend.

"I'd rather marry you than see you sent home!" I blurted, surprising myself as much as Razi.

I prayed he'd find a job, but I knew that if he didn't, I would keep my promise. I'd decided long before that I would never marry. I wished my romantic relationships could be as uncomplicated as the unconditional, nonsexual, nonthreatening love that exists between a girl and her gay best friend. He was like the brother I never had.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIZA MONROY

Becoming family almost made sense.

As weeks passed and nothing changed, Razi grew increasingly desperate. We were sitting outdoors one balmy autumn evening at the Abbey, our favorite West Hollywood gay bar. Razi told me yet another story of a job interview that had ended abruptly when he brought up the visa factor. "That's enough," I said, dropping to one knee. "Consider us officially engaged."

I moved into his apartment the next day. I'd never imagined that like my mother, I would tie the knot at the age of twenty-two—and that my marriage would involve deceiving her, just as she

toward a worthy cause," I said. "You."

But reality was sinking in. My mother ferreted out situations like this for a living. She'd cut me out of her life if she ever found out, or worse—she could personally ensure Razi's deportation.

Razi and I married in a kitschy Las Vegas chapel. A bad Elvis impersonator in a red polyester jumpsuit performed our vows as Razi tried and failed to act like a straight man.

A month later, my mother arrived in L.A. for a visit. We went out to dinner, and she asked me to bring that roommate she'd always been so fond of. My mother plied Razi with questions about his job

won the visa lottery, a program that provides visas for diversity purposes.

"Can you believe it?" he said. "We don't have to be married anymore!"

"But I don't think we should get divorced," I said tentatively. "Just in case."

"I like being married to you, too," he said, grasping the meaning beneath my words. I realized it would take a much better reason than Razi's green card to put an end to our union. Sex was out of the picture, but our relationship was strong. We'd invented a deviant offshoot of marriage that worked better than any situation I'd had with a real boyfriend.

We moved to New York City for a job fresh start with our careers. We lived together for another year, and I often forgot that Razi and I were even married. We each dated, worked, and partied like the young twentysomethings we were. Everything was fine until my mother and I decided to jointly invest in a piece of New York City real estate. The co-op board needed my tax returns, so I faxed them to my mother. I didn't remember that Razi's name was on them—we filed jointly—until page 5 had run through the fax machine. I was officially an idiot.

The phone rang and my stomach sank. I knew I couldn't avoid what was coming. "You married Razi!" my mother screamed. "How could you do this to me?"

"It's not something I did to you, Mom," I said. "I did it for him. And for me."

"But why?" She began crying.

"Because I need him, Mom."

I've since asked myself whether marrying Razi was a way of rebelling against my mother's high-power government career spent preventing illegal immigration—but the answer is no. Nor was it a silly prank that went too far. It was love, and it didn't matter that it was nonsexual. It was real. I'd thought Razi was the one who needed me, but the reality was that he filled an empty space in my life. We *had* become family.

LIZA MONROY is a writer in New York City. Her first novel, *Mexican High*, will be published in May.

I never thought I'd tie the knot at 22—and that it would mean deceiving my mother.

had deceived my grandparents when she married my father. She'd met him on a boat to Florence with her MGB convertible, en route to teach English in Italy. He was a mysterious Italian 12 years her senior, working as the maitre d' in the ship's restaurant. They had an instant connection and resolved to get married as soon as they hit dry land. She wired her parents, asking them to send her birth certificate to Genoa, saying she'd met a wealthy Italian baron, knowing they would not have released the document had she told the truth—that he was a waiter who came from a family of farmers.

Razi and I met at a Starbucks on Sunset to hash out the final details.

"Feeling ready, sweetie?" Razi asked.

"Ready as I'll ever be," I joked.

"I just hope you don't have regrets."

"A normal marriage wouldn't work for me, so I'm putting my ability to marry



hunt while I fiddled with my shrimp.

"How is Razi staying in the country?" my mother asked when Razi went to the bathroom. "His student visa would have expired months ago."

"Mom, I have no idea," I said, resisting the lump rising in my throat.

"If he is illegal, no one is going to hire him," she said. "Could he have found an American and gotten married?"

"No," I said. "I don't think so."

Soon afterward, a shocking piece of good news came in the mail: Razi had