

Very few things in my world necessitate standing in a long line to "get the best." I tired of the Ticketmaster campout as a teen. I sit wherever I have to in a movie theater and shun those who get there early for the center row. I've even discovered the beauty of the express DMV office, thank you very much. But those things have nothing to do with my wedding.

In the wee hours of Jan. 2, I dragged my fiancée, Melissa, my sister and my brother out to a ritual most often reserved for heterosexual brides-to-be: securing a Portland Parks site. A crowd of brides gather under the Portlandia statue each first business day of the new year to ensure their dream wedding can take place in their dream location.

Melissa and I had decided to get married under a canopy of trees at the Hoyt Arboretum wedding meadow. Since our July ceremony falls within prime wedding time, however, we decided not to take any chances. Instead, we braved the cold and dreary morning to guarantee we'd be married in the middle of the city, yet not within sight of telephone poles or buildings.

The sexual division of labor in the wedding game was apparent. Mostly women gathered in the lobby, some with pop-up chairs, pillows and gallons of coffee. Nervous chatter filled the air. "So, what's your date?" we asked each other. "Um-hmm. And where?" But we were all really thinking, "I'll take out your knees if you even breathe on my date!"

It didn't take too long for our line mates to notice that Melissa and I weren't your average brides-to-be. The big-haired gal from Beaverton—the one who had been there since 3 a.m.—looked quizzically at us and asked, "So, who is getting married?" As if she couldn't tell while watching us share a bagel in prenuptial bliss. "We are!"

I do—and I did

by Erin Sexton

And the damndest thing happened. The brides started to coo. "Oh! Congratulations!"

The heterosexuals I know have said that a lot lately. Sure, some of them have questions like "Is it legal?" and "Are your parents coming?" Logical questions. But not one straight person has said, "Oh, that's...interesting" or "You're just doing it for the gifts, right?" No, the folks who've uttered those charming words have all been queer. Funny.

Plenty of stores sell bridal gear in Portland. Très Fabu is near my neighborhood and has an ever-changing array of gowns and dresses in the front window. One taffeta frock with flowers caught my attention, so I decided to go in and try it on. A word to the wise: There is no such thing as simply entering a bridal shop and trying on a dress. I learned the hard way.

I was immediately approached by a petite saleswoman with a high voice and fluttering movements. We'll call her Chelsea. "So, when are you getting married? How exciting!"

I explained that I just wanted to try on the dress in the window and move on. She had another plan in mind. "Your figure would look best in an empire waist dress! And you said you wanted ivory, right?"

Soon after we set our date, I found myself diving into more than the traditional bride

It was like buying a car, only she was more attentive. She pulled out gowns that cost more than I make in a month, most of them ready for an evening at the Oscars. I bargained her down to trying on just three, none of which was my dress in the window, and that's where things got scary.

In a normal store, you go into the dressing room, strip down, try on the clothing, decide and go. Ha! Chelsea and I were going to get a lot closer than that. She asked my bra size and ran out to get a loaner bustier. Meanwhile, I stripped. (Note to self: Don't wear black socks whilst dress shopping.)

Then Chelsea suddenly appeared in the dressing room. Apparently, trying on wedding dresses was going to be a group activity. "Here, let me help you on with that!" She held the dress up over my head and chirped, "Dive in!"

This is where I started to sweat.

See, bridal stores carry one of each dress in one size. And that size isn't my size. I had thought I'd be able to tug, wrestle and squirm my way into these expensive little goodies in private. But Chelsea was there to watch it all and clip the dress closed so I could see what it



Bride-to-be Erin Sexton consults a local gay-owned bridal magazine, *Portland Bride and Groom*

might look like if the dress were my size. Good 'ol Chelsea!

We stepped out of the fitting room into the viewing area. There, perched with the other brides-to-be, I stood atop a pedestal and took it all in. Me, a long white gown, fluorescent lights and a bunch of straight gals.

Hey, I'm getting married! ☺

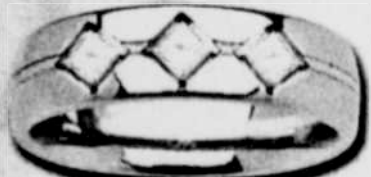
Advertising Associate ERIN SEXTON celebrates her wedding with Melissa Sayler on July 12. Congratulations can be sent to erin@justout.com.

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