

Like Margot, Lady at the Wedding

When it comes to follow-through, I'm sometimes lacking—an understatement, close friends might argue. Over the years, I have missed a number of can't-miss events, life-altering occasions. Weddings remain at the top of that list. Aside from the distaste that stems from the crippling fear I feel at the prospect of tying myself to one person for all eternity—and that I project that sentiment onto others, I loathe the pomp and circumstance that usually accompanies such spectacles.

During my self-absorbed, booze-and-drug-laden twenties, I flaked on many weddings. My then-best girlfriend, Lindsey, bore the brunt of my antics. Not only did I skip her wedding, I missed her college graduation. She moved to San Diego to finish school—after, I mustered a hundred reasons to regularly visit. (I got the run of her studio apartment in super gay Hillcrest.) Back then I couldn't possibly fathom a reason to make someone else a priority. I suppose everyone exhibits shameful characteristics sometimes.

I've since made strides, concerted efforts to annihilate the leftovers from my twenties-as-teens persona, the result of growing up with tongue-talking born-again. Regret is only useful if you can use it to forge some greater good in your life. In *that* way, regret is useful. Hurting people like Lindsey—and watching



lady about town

BY DANIEL BORGEN

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a friendship *end* after repeated hurting—helped me realize there are some things you simply can't skip. Weddings top that list.

So, despite my inability to procure a date, recently I ventured to Edgefield for my friend Christian's wedding. Christian, probably my best friend in high school, always provided respites from my then-crazed religious circumstances. "Your church is insane. God isn't like that," he'd say—little seeds of doubt that helped me grasp my sanity and hang on for dear life. I took heart, but to me, Jesus was Jesus: mad as hell and on a rampage.

During my drive to Edgefield, I mused. Who goes to a wedding *alone*? What kind of sad sack can't round up a single person for hosted bars and wedded bliss? It's one thing to show up solo to a party where you'll know 20 people, it's quite another to venture off to a Jesus-themed wedding where you know 5: the groom, the bride and the groom's family, whom

you haven't seen in 12 years. As I ambled up the gravel walkway, basking in Troutdale's impressive brand of nature, hordes of strangers surrounded me, pouring into the auditorium.

I settled in a middle row; I counted chairs, not wanting to be the sad single person whom 10 couples ask to move. Hoping to blend in, I didn't—as soon as the aisle started filling up, I was peppered with questions. "Is this seat taken? No? Bev, over here, this guy's by himself, these seats are open! You, could you scoot down a few seats and make room for all my friends?"

Christians generally terrify me. (I'm rooted in agnosticism, religion's bisexuality.) I can hold my own one-on-one or in smaller groups, but the prospect of facing hundreds at once transports me back to my alter ego: the anxious queer kid sitting in Pentecostal Sunday school. I fear spectacular prayer circles, "Let's cast demons out of gay Daniel" liturgies. My panic eased, though, as the wedding began—and it turned out quite charming, even enchanting. Imagine my surprise when the officiant quoted Cornel West, among others. The ceremony: lots of talk about love, family, justice, no mention of "Thank God it's a man

and a woman marrying today." (I've attended *that* wedding.) Was I missing something?

Between the ceremony and reception, drink tickets. We were free to roam Edgefield, nestling in any bar we chose. I found the closest watering hole, an oddly shaped, closet-like setup and passed the time sipping beer. I met a man named Skip—a recycled biker-plus-old, weathered Jesus combo, with hair to the floor and a penchant for mumbling. He wanted to talk religion. Hesitant at first, I found him compelling. Instead of religion itself, Skip ranted about social justice, helping people. Soon Christian's father, who recently abandoned a strict religious congregation, joined us. "This may surprise you, Daniel, but I voted for Obama. And Palin? Dumbass." And we all *drank* together.

Although I slipped out discreetly during the reception (a struggle I'll address later), I loved most every minute of that night. My friend Christian, again, helped me take heart. I stared down lingering, pesky fears and caught sneak peeks of specimens I didn't realize existed: rational-thinking Christians, ones not fixated on the gays and destroying unions. And I decided the world would be a much better place if they collectively wrestled the microphone away from Sarah Palin and Glenn Beck. ☐

A lady is beginning to love weddings—and she still regrets missing Lindsey's. Email DANIEL@JUSTOUT.COM.

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