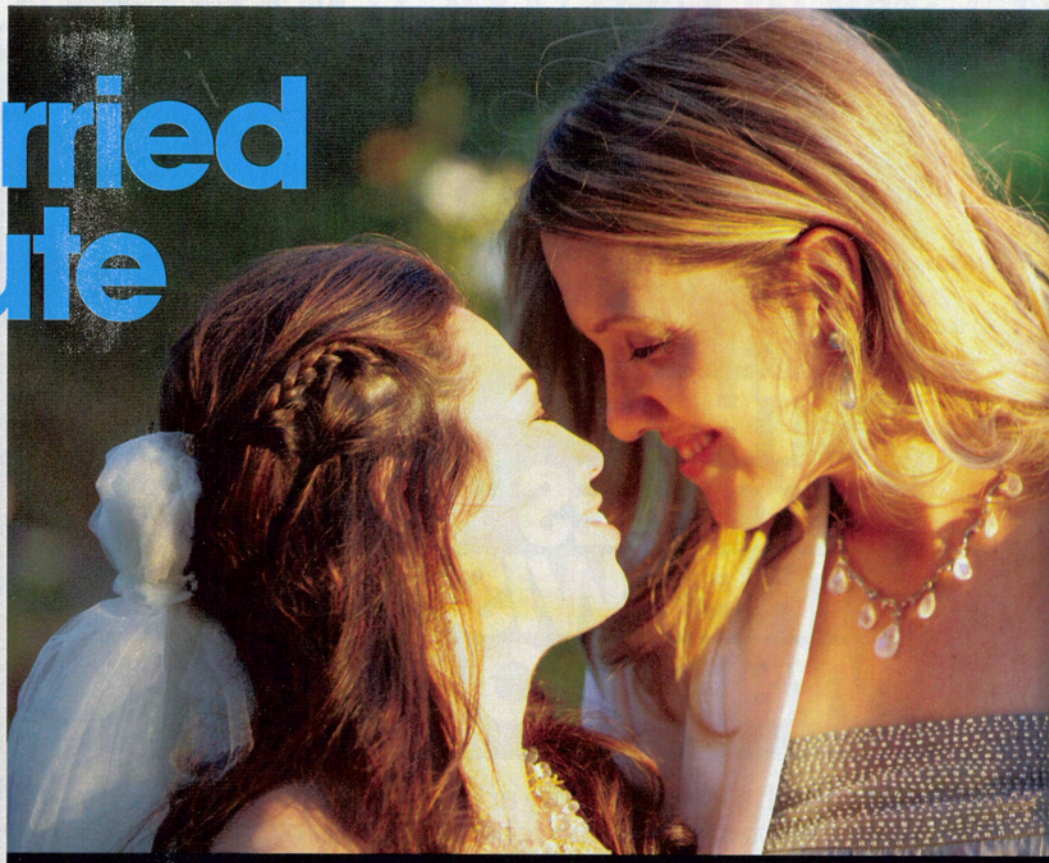
TOTALLY COSMO

"I Married a Cute Girl"



Stacey (left) and Jenn tied the knot at a vineyard in Santa Barbara, California.

What's the biggest difference between a straight couple and a fun, fearless female couple who decide they want to spend the rest of their lives with each other? The chicks both get engagement rings.

BY HILLARY QUINN

Reality-television producers Jennifer Duncan, 36, and Stacey Book, 28, met three years ago while working on CBS's *The Amazing Race: Family Edition*. Neither knew the other was gay, but they each felt an immediate attraction. What ensued was a modern love story that culminated in a legal wedding last year. Here, the couple recalls how a boat trip in Central America started it all.

Jenn We were in Panama. I had been running the race with the contestants when I went into the hotel, and there was Stacey, whom I'd noticed back at the office in Los Angeles. She greeted me with a big hug. I was embarrassed because I was covered in sweat, but I had an intense reaction. She asked if I'd eaten, got me a plate of fruit...and I was head over heels.

Stacey She was very attractive, but I thought she was too cool to hang out with me.

Jenn Even though I have great gaydar, with same-sex relationships, it can still be hard to know which way the person swings at first, and you don't want to make a fool out of yourself. Plus, neither of us was "out" at work.

Stacey I had dated boys for most of my life and had only one sexual relationship with a woman before Jenn.

Jenn I was married to my college boyfriend for almost five years and was raised in a family where I wasn't exposed to homosexuality, so I was always desperate to feel normal. It wasn't until I was divorced nine years ago that I had my first sexual experiences with women.

Stacey Anyway, a rule of thumb is that you just hang out with somebody until there's a definitive clue, but I felt the same immediate connection. Jenn, you tell the next part.

Jenn This is actually pretty funny. That night, Stacey and I had a great long talk. The next day, the race went on to Costa Rica, where I was working with a male producer named Dave, who confided in me that he had a crush on Stacey—meanwhile, I'm thinking *Me too!* The crew decided to take a boat ride. Dave, Stacey, and I were the last to get to the dock. There was a nice catamaran and an old pontoon boat, both of which were really full, so there wasn't room for all three of us on either. Dave jumps

Kevin Calloway/myotherride.com. Jewelry designed and lent to subjects by Victor Veylan.

on the catamaran, I jump on the pontoon, and Stacey is just standing there on the dock. We both look at her as if to say *So, which boat is it?*

Stacey It was really clear what was going on. Dave's boat was way cooler, but I got on the boat with Jenn. I knew my choice would out me.

Jenn I actually stuck my tongue out at Dave behind your back! There were subtle clues on the boat, like brushing up against each other's legs during the ride. But that night, we were talking in my hotel room, and I said, "I think there's something going on between us."

Stacey I turned crimson and thought, *Either I'll lie because I'm embarrassed or I'll take the leap*. So I took the leap and told her it wasn't her imagination.

Jenn I admitted to Stacey that I had a girlfriend back home...and that's when she kissed me.

Stacey No way! It was a mutual thing! We still argue about this.

Jenn Stacey initiated it, but it took me all of a nanosecond to kiss back.

Stacey Okay, I'll agree with that.

Jenn I had to go back to Los Angeles the next day, and the first thing I did was end my relationship, which had been on the rocks anyway.

Stacey I went home to New York. Initially, I had no intention of moving, but the show offered me a job in the L.A. office. I was supposed to live at a friend's apartment, but I think I stayed there a total of one night. Jenn and I knew this would be a forever thing within a few months. I always imagined that I would have a wedding and do the fun planning and celebrating, and we wanted a wedding to be part of our story.

Jenn We hadn't talked about a ceremony as much as we'd talked about a *marriage*. It sounds trite, but I wanted a buddy for life, someone to make big decisions with.

Stacey And when you're in a same-sex relationship and dealing with societal stigma, your relationship has to be so important; you have to make sure it can withstand anything.

Jenn That's exactly why I wanted to go with traditional symbolism. I went and bought Stacey a diamond solitaire ring on a platinum band.

Stacey I had left the *New York Times* open to the Tiffany ads! But six months later, I gave Jenn a diamond solitaire ring and proposed right back. At that point, we started talking about the fact that we wanted to call this wedding a marriage, not a commitment ceremony. We were going to make it as traditional as possible.

Jenn Exactly. We were not going to apologize for our same-sexness by downplaying a wedding. We chose a vineyard in Santa Barbara, California, and we got to do all the stuff that happens with every wedding.

Stacey Initially, we were both going to wear dresses, so we went to try on a bunch....

Jenn But I don't really wear dresses, and as I tried them on, I started to feel like an impostor. The whole experience was harkening back to my days of being in the closet. It caused me a lot of stress. So we're in the Nicole Miller store on Sunset Boulevard, and I call my mother, crying. In the end, I realized what I needed was acceptance from myself, not from others. Once I made peace with wearing a suit—

Justifying Their Love

More than 1,000 U.S. daily newspapers accept same-sex wedding announcements. Fewer than 75 did in 2002.

SOURCE: GAY AND LESBIAN ALLIANCE AGAINST DEFAMATION

"I'd always imagined a wedding with all the fun planning and celebrating."

Stacey Which was a fabulous Dolce & Gabbana, by the way!

Jenn —It made me feel feminine, and it represented a lot more than clothing for me.

Stacey The ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in California happened about two months before our wedding date. We had planned to be married by a rabbi—I'm Jewish; Jenn is not—and we thought, *Cool. We'll have a piece of paper, but that doesn't change what it means to us*. But when that rabbi said "I can now pronounce you legally married," it was the most unbelievable thing. We had about 70 people there—including Dave the producer—and everyone was crying.

Jenn I was shocked by how much emotion came out. While legal recognition helps with public acceptance, no law could ever tell me I was not married. Stacey is my wife, and I'm blessed to be in such a wonderful marriage. ■

Jenn's decision to wear a suit was a sign of self-acceptance.