

RELATIONSHIP QUESTION PERHAPS DEALT WITH

Dear Zouki Cultural Labs:

I'm a white male carnivorous bodhrán player who loves watching wrestling, drooling over "Playboy", and who believes sincerely that a Bacon Double-Cheeseburger may be Nature's Perfect Food (Biggie Fries included). I also own bowling shoes and am not ashamed of having two or three six-packs in my refrigerator at any given time.

For me a perfect session consist of nothing but reels, the faster the better. My session buddies are Louie, Kinch the Unclean, Spike, Mick the Goon, and Foosh. I am convinced that the invention of the piano accordion is proof of divine intervention in human affairs. Passing gas at our session table is not encouraged, but will under normal circumstances not result in anything more than tasteless banter of less than a minute's duration.

My girl friend of three years is a vegetarian whistle/dulcimer player who normally wears long non-wool dresses of no particular color and birkenstocks, and who spends inordinate amounts of time in the nearby woods playing tunes for the skunks, squirrels, and other critters. Once while playing "The Butterfly" (one of her favorites), she was severely bitten by a pissed-off chipmunk and had to get rabies shots (after being heavily sedated to put an end to her babbling protests about "animalism", whatever the hell that means).

Her idea of a session is to gather in some poor innocent oak grove with the other Artichoke Lovers, tootle or strum away on a couple of slip jigs, jump into the O'Carolan repertoire for an hour or two, and top the whole confection off with a blaze of "Celtic" slow airs. If I dare to say anything about this, she stares at my bodhrán, hums "The Kid on the Mountain" while choking back sobs, and eventually allows tears to come into her eyes. (I think the skin on my bodhrán is actually plastic, but that's a whole other story.)

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Her session soulmates are Fawn, Laughing Water, StarPriestess, Ariel, and Lilith (who I think is actually a guy but I can't prove it). At least three of them play harp; one of them plays hammer dulcimer; one of them plays recorder. One of them occasionally plays a Scandinavian fiddle of some kind that never sounds as good as it looks.

They're all nice folks in a weird way, but "welcoming" isn't a word you'd use to describe them. "Icy" would be closer to the mark. Example: an Irish box player visiting our town once made the mistake of seating himself at their session table before any of us could intervene. The temperature in the pub dropped twenty degrees in less than 60 seconds, a record even for this bunch. The poor guy tried for fifteen minutes to squeeze a few reels in between the O'Carolan delights, but failed after Laughing Water had "an attack" of something after the first eight bars of "Devaney's Goat".

Rumor has it that the EMTs had to take the visitor to the hospital shortly thereafter to be treated for hypothermia. It took a week for his fingers to heal and six months before he could bring himself to play "The Frost Is All Over" again. If it wasn't PTSD it was damn close.

Their session table at the Sentient Being Coffeehouse across town always has a vague aroma of incense and/or vanilla candles. Their standard session snack is a plate of green things grown on a farm that promotes Vegetable Euthanasia. Alcohol is "not welcome" but occasionally there's evidence of vaping (especially if Lilith is there).

In my heart of hearts I think my girl friend is a little wacky, but I love her a lot anyway, even if she does pray to her salad occasionally (for "forgiveness", she says). I'm convinced that with a certain amount of guidance and luck, she'd make a great wife and mother.

Is there any hope for this relationship?

- Confused in Santa Barbara

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Dear Confused:

Love conquers all, but it will be sorely tried and might give up unconditionally in your case.

How you proceed might depend on the following thought experiment.

You propose, she accepts. Your wedding day arrives. Your best man is Kinch the Unclean, miserable in his rented tuxedo but fortified at the hand of a generous bartender with whom he attended high school. His bowtie is hanging at a 45-degree angle and his cummerbund is nowhere to be seen. He wants desperately to sing "Seven Drunken Nights" but the other guys have so far managed to restrain him.

Meanwhile the XX bridal attendant is StarPriestess, all resplendent in a counter-cultural wedding outfit that looks like it came from a catalogue aimed at the Pennsylvania Mennonite community. She has dispensed with birkenstocks and is wearing some sort of indigenous footwear made from banana leaves. She has what looks like sprigs of poison ivy in her hair. She holds a leash that's attached to your beloved's own Mittens, the cat whose slashing claws nearly destroyed your bodhrán six months before. ("Oh, sweetie, please don't use that clapper thing on your drum when Mittens is around . . . it makes her very nervous . . .")

It is the custom, they say, for the "best man" and the "maid of honor" (sexist expressions both) to dance at a wedding.

Are you getting the picture, Confused in Santa Barbara?

Best of luck in any case, but don't say we didn't warn you.

- the ZCL staff