

My Daughter's Marrying a Tree, Should I Attend the Wedding?

by Joe Bissonnette (April 2015)

'C'mon Sir Elton, come to daddy, time for a trot and a tinkle'. Sir Elton is excited as usual, that's one of the things I love about him, he always sees the bright side. But I am disturbed, I am upset.

Like a lot of 30-somethings, our daughter Nancy has recently moved back home and has brought with her a dark cloud of 'nihilistic ennui'. I hate the sound of that, those French are so superior and devil-may-care, but more than once we've had to haul their boney arses out of the fire. Nothing good ever came our way from across the channel. But that Nancy, she's all over the map and no matter where she lands she can make Mum and me out to be the villains.

A few months ago Nancy went vegetarian. I loves British beef and there was no bloody way I was givin' it up, but Nancy pointed to Sir Elton and made him out to be the cousin of every cow or pig or chicken we'd eaten and I didn't know what to say. There's no way me own dad would've stood for it, he'd have sent me flyin' across the room. But with thousands of cameras everywhere, I'd have to be named Mohamed and she'd have to be wearing a burka for me to get away with that. Anyway, even poor Sir Elton was reduced to vegetarian dog food, and that didn't go well. When I'd slip that baggy over my hand and pick up his poop it didn't have the texture and temperature of a good bowel movement. It was runny, and Sir Elton wasn't. He was losing his zip. Too much whimper, not enough bark – why if I were him...but me therapist says I can't allow myself too far down that path.

Anyway, I talked it over with Reggie at the dog park and he set me straight. Me and Reggie used to share a pint at the pub before it shut down because it was too close to the new mosque, and also because sharing a pint with the lads lost out in the old cost-benefit analysis when compared with internet porn. But we still meet up for the sake of the fury children. I told him about the vegetarian dog food and Reggie was furious. Reggie's baby is a Pug named Winston which he insists is a British Bulldog. He pointed to the canine incisors meant for tearing flesh (it was kind of funny because Pugs have those crooked English teeth). He said it was unnatural. I felt flushed with excitement.

I stood my ground with Nancy and even added to what Reggie had said. 'What about plants rights', I said. 'What right do we have to eat poor, innocent plants?' I said. 'Don't plants have feelings?' I said. Nancy was speechless – which was a shock to both of us.

Two days later Nancy was looking even more tired and pale than usual. Against my better judgement I asked her what was wrong. Her voice had changed, it was less shrill, more distant, with a touch of the Gandhi sub-continent. She had become a Jain she said. It was on the far side of Hindu asceticism she said. No longer would she kill and destroy she said. I must admit, I felt the thrill of triumph and liberation and was deeply tempted to let well enough alone. After all, she's a grown woman and once she had transcended this particular incarnation, Sir Elton and me would no longer have to eat Halal in hiding. But Nancy is my own flesh and blood, and it was flesh and blood she needed. Damn the cameras, I said, and went and bought a beautiful bloody roast. I ate, Nancy ate, Mum ate, Sir Elton ate and blood red juices ran down our chins as we groaned with invigorated delight. We drank pints, we sang 'God Save the Queen', we laughed at the French and even vaguely alluded to the Muslims. It was like a 21st century V-Day. But it wasn't to last. Defeat would be snatched from the jaws of victory.

Nancy had eaten the roast with as much vigor as the rest of us, but without touching her potatoes, peas and carrots. We hadn't noticed at the time, but in the days and weeks that followed Nancy ate meat and only meat. All she would do is eat meat and water and talk to the plants.

Now every Englishman loves the English countryside with the hills and meadows and stone walls, but for me, trees had been rather spoiled by Monet and those French Impressionists. I had even bought myself a chainsaw one Christmas, just as a declaration of defiance. Maybe it was to spite me that Nancy went and fell in love with a tree.

Nancy loved *Lord of the Rings* and out of patriotic duty I sat through all three movies – but those marching, talking trees never made sense to me. They were so somber and serious, I figured it was symbolic, like The Church of England, and didn't read too much into it. But Nancy loved those talking trees. She *really* loved those talking trees.

Then the fateful day. It began in hopeful tones, when Nancy came home and told us she was in love with Tim and planned to marry him. Mum and I were thrilled and peppered her with the usual questions. When could we meet him? What was he like? When and where did they plan to marry? It sounded too good to be true. 'Tall and sturdy' was how she described him and they wanted to marry in the forest. We drank a toast and laughed and embraced. We drank some more and Mum took on an intimate playfulness. 'How do you know he's the one?' she asked. 'Do you

ever wonder about others?’ It was the sort of mildly daring questioning that enhances the thrill. ‘Yes, I sometimes look at others, but I never touch’, she said, ‘that’s my rule, I never touch’. She wanted a splashy Dolce Gabbana style wedding. Sir Elton seemed to feed on the excitement that charged the room. We all decided then and there to go and meet our soon to be son-in-law, Tim.

With Sir Elton curled up in my lap, we happily drove past minurets and warm fires blazing in steel barrels, past the Anglican Church which was now a Frankenstein-themed bar and out into the English countryside. We allowed ourselves to warmly nudge against each other as we wound around corners and Mum and I may have even mentioned grandchildren, although Sir Elton is more than enough. The further we got the more excited Nancy and all of us became, and then we parked. It wasn’t as grandiose as I expected, no ancient oaks, just a stand of fast-growing poplars. There was no one to be seen, but we walked forward expectantly. Then it happened.

Sir Elton ran forward and lifted his leg to relieve himself on a tall, straight poplar. Sir Elton seemed to have a thing for straight trees. I felt relief as I always do when Sir Elton relieves himself, he is after all, my fury child. But the scene quickly went from English Pastoral to Cain and Abel. Nancy lept forward in a fit of rage and grabbed the offending organ. ‘Hateful phallus’! she shrieked and she swung Sir Elton skyward. Sir Elton is not a big dog, but the combination of his weight and the centrifugal force created through the arc of Nancy’s swing strained both the soft tissue of Sir Elton’s masculinity and the laws of physics beyond the breaking point. The sound that came from Sir Elton is indescribable, but the terror, turmoil and enlightenment I experienced remain vivid.

I identify very strongly with Sir Elton as the other male in our family and as Nancy swung him skyward his pain was my pain. But Nancy is also my child, and though I love both equally and was enraged by the pain she caused Sir Elton, I suddenly understood the intensity of the love Nancy had for Tim. Tim stood there stoic and dignified through it all, unmoved by the affront, and I couldn’t help but feel admiration for Tim, if not love. Tim even seemed good-humoured as a gentle breeze blew and yellow poplar leaves rained upon us.

Sir Elton’s member did not survive the extreme strain of Nancy’s grip. He and his manhood parted ways. But there always did seem to be something about Sir Elton... Leaving Nancy behind I quickly grabbed the broken member, gathered up Sir Elton and Mum and sped homeward in the Austin Mini. Nancy has written us that she has made a home within Tim’s loving embrace. They have an Anglican Bishop marrying them and in a gesture of reconciliation have invited us to their upcoming wedding. Sir Elton is quickly adjusting to the new normal, as I suppose our whole culture has, and my own once rigid indignation has softened. And so I shrug meekly and

smile wanely. What's a father to do?

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