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Potatoes and Cross-Dressing

So what, you may ask, does boiling potatoes have to do with cross-dressing, anyway?

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My wife and I have been dealing with my cross-dressing and how it fits into our relationship since before we were married ten or so years ago. We bounce among acceptance, repression, denial, pain, and hatred (sometimes for my cross-dressing, sometimes because of it).

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Ours is a deeply loving relationship and the cross-dressing, which in some marriages acts as a catalyst and the glue that binds, is for us the final, major burr under each our saddles. When discord hits our life, it almost always ends up being blamed on the cross-dressing. Blame is key in our duels and because I am the one with the transvestic paraphilia, I accept the blame.

I struggled long and mightily to find a way to express to her that this cross-dressing thing was not going to go away and that it would have to be incorporated into our life together if we were to stay together. Telling her that it was a part of me and needed expression was accurate but rather ethereal. Saying that I "had to be me" was a bit too theatrical. And speaking of it as a hobby did not fit accurately for me. It is and was a part of my personality; an essential fragment of the whole that wakes daily, loves passionately and drives too fast; it was one of the facets that made her fall in love with me, and me her. But none of these

characterizations was deep enough, accurate enough, or understandable enough.

I am an educator by passion and rely heavily on storytelling and mental imagery to convey ideas. My favourite tool is the metaphor and the analogy (I consider them to be one, unified tool). It is no accident then that I have long searched for a metaphor for my cross-dressing and I can now tell you, gentle readers, that I have come up with one that, though it is a bit long and drawn out, works explicitly well for me, and for, I think, my wife in describing how I perceive one aspect of my cross dressing as it directly relates to her.

Of course, there are many aspects of cross-dressing and each one may be best suited for a different metaphor. This analogy is associated with the need to cross-dress, how it works in a relationship and what can happen if it is suppressed, not allowed to be expressed - I told you it was a long analogy.

I used to be in the kitchen a lot, always a valued help to my mother. Okay, so I was always a presence and sometimes a help. Point is, I spent a lot of time in the kitchen when there was cooking going on; still do in fact.

One of the things that I got to do as a child was to monitor the potatoes. When company was coming and mashed potatoes, or boiled potatoes, was on the menu, I would climb up on my kitchen stool and I would get to make sure that the potatoes cooked, properly and thoroughly. In fact, I would forgo the television or playing outside to watch the potatoes boil. Now this is not an easy task, to be sure.

The monitor is responsible for making certain that the boiling continues at an even roll, never boiling over, boiling dry, or stopping altogether. A heady responsibility for any six-year-old and I announced my successes as potato monitor when dinner was at last served.

"I made the mashed potatoes," was what I said, and in fact, had it not been for me and my diligent monitoring, so far as I knew, the potatoes now mounded white in front of me would have been so missed from the table as to be equally noteworthy as there delectable presence now was.

So what, you may ask, does boiling potatoes have to do with cross-dressing, anyway?

For a long time I tried to associate the sublimation of cross-dressing with placing a lid on a boiling pot; the lid securely in place would surely blow if steam were not allowed an escape of some sort. That association, while not altogether incorrect, did not fit closely enough and did not allow for necessary alternatives, save the lid being on or the lid being off. So I formulated the following analogy of cross-dressing and boiling potatoes as a means of understanding the pressures, the tumult, and the potential for cross-dressing as it comes into a relationship.

The cross-dresser is the pot in which the potatoes are boiling. The cross-dressing is the boiling itself, combining the potatoes and the water and spices therein that are the other facets of the person and the relationship. The lid is the sublimation, either by design or by guilt. The goal, for both the cross-dresser and his partner, the cook, is to keep the pot boiling without allowing the water to boil out and the potatoes to burn, or to keep the lid on too tightly so as to allow the pot to boil over and either soil the stove or to put out the flame beneath the relationship. The pot boils along nicely, sometimes with the lid nestled over the pot and the pressure building, sometimes with the lid askew so as to allow more steam to escape, and sometimes with the lid completely off and the water rolling feverishly. Each position of the lid; nested on, askew, and off, creates a different set of opportunities for the potatoes and for the cross-dresser in their relationship, and simultaneously permits unique circumstances to occur.

The lid nested tightly on the pot and the potatoes boiling wildly creates pressure. The cross-dresser is not allowed his need for emotional expression and the pressure on the pot grows. The effect of not removing the lid comes in explosion, either in the form of the pot itself (the cross-dresser in this analogy) damaging itself, or in the form of the water boiling over.

The water boiling over results in a mess to clean, and if you have ever cleaned a stove where potato water has overflowed you know how difficult it is, or with repeated overflows or a really severe one, the flame goes out (the flame in this case is the passion and love between the cross-dresser and the mate) and the cooking stops. The alternative to allowing the boiling over is to remove the lid, either occasionally or permanently, to allow the pressure to equalise or diminish.

Now what happens if the lid is removed occasionally? The steam dissipates and the potatoes boil along to a delicious completion. The same is potentially true if the lid is removed completely. However, both methods require diligence by the cook (in this analogy, the significant other) so as to prevent boiling dry or boiling over, but both methods allow similar results.

With both methods of success just outlined, precautions and alarms must be minded. If the lid is to be removed when the potatoes are at the brink of overflowing, the cook must be cognizant of the warning signs of immanent overflow. The experienced cook watches for little spurts of stems from around the lid, listens for a change in the sound of that steam escaping and watches for watery discharge around the top of the pot. These signs noted, the lid can be removed before the water boils onto the stove. Likewise the cross-dresser will show signs of the need to have the opportunity to release the steam; the legs get shaved, the eye lingers on the fashion pages of the newspaper and the plans to be 'alone for a while' emerge.

The spouse who is experienced in reading the signs can act on them and encourage a weekend shopping spree or tryst for her girlfriend, lesbian lover, or passionate queen, or she can get the sponge ready to clean up the next, inevitable boil-over.

Cooking potatoes without a cover, not surprisingly my favourite culinary method, also requires specific methodology for success. Care must be taken to not allow the water to run dry. This may come in the form of the cook adding water to keep the boiling action alive or by reducing the flame slightly. This method allows for the nearly direct interaction between potatoes and cook. Spices can be added, stirring may be done and water level can be monitored without removing the lid or chancing overflow.

This method also does not preclude the cook from doing other things in her kitchen and allows for the fragrant aroma of the potatoes to permeate and add to the smells of the kitchen. Likewise, this allows the cross-dresser the opportunity for expression of self, by means of adding his aroma to the others in the kitchen, prevents him from making a mess on the stove by boiling over, and keeps the flame of the relationship burning brightly.

Now before you jump to the understandable conclusion that it is the spouses' or the cook's responsibility to monitor the boiling of the potatoes and all its many idiosyncrasies let me anthropomorphize the pot just a moment and tell you that that is just not so. It is the pot's responsibility to communicate throughout the cooking process "how it is doing."

This is done subtly by allowing steam to escape from beneath the lid, emitting those gentle kitchen sounds that tell the seasoned cook that more water, less fire or removal of the lid altogether would help the process. This, as any great cook will tell you, is a process that is slightly different for each pot, with each relationship with a cook and indeed may, and probably will, change as the pot, and the cook, mature. Make no mistake, without finely tuned communication between the pot and the cook, the process may well go awry. Also be mindful that when a pot and a cook come together for the first time, or come together in a new situation for the first time, the subtleties of communication might need refining, specific to the situation.

The cross-dresser and spouse must form a unique communications system unlike any anywhere else used. It is the hallmark of successful partnerships that above all else they communicate very, very well.

Of course we all wish that dealing with a cross-dressing relationship was as easy or painless as cooking a pot of potatoes. Those couples who are successful may tell you that it is never easy, but that the flavours that fill their lives are worth the effort.

Some cross-dressing relationships may well benefit from an evening in the kitchen boiling a pot of potatoes. The results may not only be a more healthy relationship but also a dish of tasty mashed potatoes. For a real treat add a bit of spice, parsley or sage, to the relationship and to the potatoes. And, as Julia Child would say right now, Bon Appétit!

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