

I promise to love, honour and bore you



CITY LIVES NIRPAL DHALIWAL

MARRIAGE, as ever, is a hot topic for discussion. An article in *Forbes* magazine warns men against marrying career women because they make bad wives, and Guy Blews's book, *Marriage And How to Avoid It*, says men can't be faithful. But amid all the fuss, no one's dared to state the most obvious but subversive fact about marriage: it's boring.

The awful truth is that we're all

condemned to one of two fates: the loneliness and anxiety of singlehood, or the monotony and boredom of marriage. Happiness is a myth.

A little while back, I met a guy who'd recently married the mother of his daughter. "How's it going?" I asked. He paused thoughtfully before replying: "I'm an optimist. I cling to the hope it'll get better." He was a cool, funny guy, a successful photographer, and he was brave enough not to be another bluffer who makes out he has no problems. The week before, his mother-in-law had baby-sat his kid so that he and his wife could have an evening alone. "We went to the cinema," he said. "That way we didn't have to talk to each other."

He wasn't a bitterly unhappy man; he was just articulating the plain fact that after you've spent several years with someone, there's not a lot left to say. What hidden depths are there to plumb? What startling new observations are there to share? The only undis-

covered truths about each another are wisely kept secret because they'd wreck everything if they emerged: infidelities, indiscretions and unsavoury desires.

Women are better at maintaining a deception about the fulfilment of marriage, having swallowed tons of propaganda since childhood from glossy magazines and chick-flicks. Most newspapers in Britain have at least one self-righteous heifer pontificating on the subject of marital and domestic bliss. Women will devour books on how to rejuvenate a marriage and arrange outings to keep the flame alive, but men simply sink into the sludge-like routine of it all. We accept the truth, and comfort ourselves with food, beer and televised football.

Men almost automatically gain weight as a result of marriage. On an unconscious level, I think becoming fat is a man's revenge against monogamy. If he can only

ever have sex with one woman; then she has to have sex with a man who doesn't turn her on: a vicious, subliminal quid pro quo. Men only stay in shape to hook up with women, and once the sex is on tap, they let themselves go.

The security of marriage, like that of a good job, can help people to protect themselves against the worst kinds of unhappiness: isolation, poverty and sickness. But it's no recipe for happiness itself. If anything, it's a reality check that makes you realise what an elusive and shadowy thing the idea of happiness actually is. It's a worthwhile lesson to learn, even if it's not exactly fun.

MANCHESTER City football club has just been recognised as a gay-friendly employer, which is great news that goes some way to acknowledging that football is an incredibly gay pastime. The innate homoeroticism of the game reveals itself whenever players lunge into a writhing, muddy bundle of flesh after every goal. The hysterical adoration of the fans towards their favourite players, and their fishwife bitchiness when hurling insults at players for being ugly or fat, isn't the straightest behaviour in the world either.

Meanwhile, the awe young boys have for their favourite player is the same crush little girls exhibit when they idolise a footballer. Many players are gay icons, including David Beckham and Freddie Ljungberg.

The beautiful game should come out of the closet and declare itself the queen of all sports.