

## The Worst Woman on Television

My relationship with Bobbi Jo isn't going particularly well. Apart from the fact that she's a cavewoman sporting one of the most annoying Southern twangs I've ever heard, she's also an absolute glutton and a *terrible* cook. Things really started to go downhill after the first time she made squirrel for dinner—and now she's cheating on me with her cousin. Honestly, the woman has fewer brains than she has real teeth in her mouth, and that's saying something. I suppose this is what I get for signing up for *Newlyweds: Blind Marriage Edition*, though. All I wanted was a quick hundred thousand bucks, and now I've got Bobbi Jo. And enough poorly-made gumbo with roadkill ingredients to last a lifetime.

*Newlyweds: Blind Marriage Edition* is one of MTV's more hilarious reality shows, and until now, I've never felt sorry for the losers I saw featured on the weekly program. Now I feel their pain. The premise is simple: marry a random stranger and stick with them for six months, then receive a luxurious sum of one hundred thousand dollars plus your own one-hour TV-spot on the coolest cable channel since CNN. Easy, right? Wrong.

Inevitably, I—the lovable, slightly-geeky English major looking for a down-payment for a new Austin apartment—was paired with the greedy, toothless, thirty-three-year-old, trailer-trash, squirrel-gumbo-making Bobbi Jo Hutchinson. Six months of hidden video-camera hell. MTV sure has a great sense of humor.

When I first met her for the pre-show taping, I was stunned. She looked like the type of person you might see on *The Jerry Springer Show*, challenging her child's

biological father's sister's lesbian lover to a fist-fight. Straw-blond curls framed her fat face. A thin layer of blonde hairs lined her upper lip. She also had a permanent scowl etched across her face. I could tell she wasn't too pleased with me, either.

We gritted our teeth and made our way through the annoying interview process. I couldn't hear what she was telling the cameras but I guessed her grammar was quite probably very similar to Yoda's in *Star Wars*.

The producers explained to us the formalities of our arrangement, making sure we had no questions about the particulars of the hidden camera placement or the fact that anything they captured could (and most likely would) be broadcast on MTV without prior written consent from us, the idiots on the show. We agreed, and signed off on another release agreeing to abide by the details of the release we first signed when applying for the show. This done, it was time to make our way back to the location of filming: Bobbi Jo's humble home in Mobile, Alabama.

I can say with complete sincerity that the six months I spent imprisoned in her dingy, disgusting trailer were among the worst months of my entire life. I can barely bring myself to write it down, the experience was so awful. I suppose I'll do my best, though for the sake of a good story. Here goes.

The first month required a bit of adjustment on both our parts. However, since compromise isn't Bobbi Jo's strong suit, all of the adjustment ended up involving one person: me. I for one didn't have the cash to dine out every night, so I was forced to train myself to become immune to her foul-smelling and equally-foul-tasting concoctions. I learned that if I ate enough Atomic Fireballs, the fiery cinnamon flavor would temporarily burn off my taste buds, making Bobbi Jo's meals a bit more manageable.

“What are we having for dinner tonight?” I’d ask her. “Another woodland creature?”

“*Supper,*” she spat, stirring the contents of a gigantic pot lazily with a wooden spoon, which she periodically removed to lick. “We’re having *pork* for supper. You *do* eat pork, don’t you? Or are you Jewish?” For a woman whose favorite TV show is *Jerry Springer*, Bobbi Jo is amusingly anti-Semitic.

I saw right through her clever ruse, however. According to Bobbi Jo, “pork” could just as easily mean “pigs’ feet” as it could mean “pork chops” or “pork loin.” I stabbed my watery lump of meat with caution, taking special note of whether or not blood oozed from the flesh when I poked it with my plastic fork. Bobbi Jo didn’t believe in washing dishes.

By the second month, Bobbi Jo had apparently become fed up by how normal and rational I was, so she took the liberty of penning a list of regulations she was presumptuous enough to assume I would abide by. The list, creatively titled “Bobbi Jo’s Rules,” was authored in language that only vaguely resembled English and was attached to the refrigerator with duct tape. The fridge was like Bobbi Jo’s bulletin board: since it was the place she most frequently visited in the house, she figured it was the best place to remind herself of things. There was “Bobbi Jo’s Shopping List,” “Bobbi Jo’s Calinder,” “Bobbi Jo’s Corn Bread Recipee,” and now, “Bobbi Jo’s Rules.” One thing all of the documents had in common was her name, which I suppose Bobbi Jo had attached to each one to remind herself of exactly who was in charge.

When I saw the list while foraging for something that wasn't killed by Bobbi Jo's own .22, I was both taken aback and highly amused. Considering she was a woman content with eating jambalaya with her bare hands, Bobbi Jo was remarkably strict.

Rule #1 stated that "Bobbi Jo's space is her own and no one can invade it especially her husband."

Rule #2 clarified this: "Especially the futon."

Rule #3 addressed meal policies, establishing that "What Bobbi Jo cooks is what everyone in the house will eat, including Fat-Man and husband." (Fat-Man is Bobbi Jo's dog, by the way.)

Rules #4, #5, and #6 were all television-related rules, and they basically affirmed the fact that Bobbi Jo and Bobbi Jo alone would have express control of the remote and that any attempts by either the husband (or Fat-Man, for that matter) to hijack said remote would result in expulsion from the household and an hour spent in the backyard.

There were four more rules with four equally ridiculous premises, making ten rules altogether—Bobbi Jo's own Ten Commandments. Using these rules as her manifesto, Bobbi Jo lounged around on her futon incessantly and watched *The Jerry Springer Show* marathons on Pay-Per-View. Pay-Per-View, which, incidentally, I paid for.

The third, fourth, and fifth months were punctuated by nothing but more misery. Bobbi Jo had decided to quit her job as a cashier at Wendy's and become what she called a "domestic goddess." Since I was her husband, she reasoned, I should be supporting us both. Now she was free to deep-fry chicken wings and eat Blue Bell ice cream straight from the carton—a married woman's dream, as far as she was concerned. And, as an

added bonus, while I was slaving away at the local Starbucks (I for one was surprised Starbucks existed in Alabama), Bobbi Jo was able to act on another of her guilty pleasures.

Since we were technically legally married, I suppose I should have felt the sting of personal retribution when Bobbi Jo cheated on me with her cousin, Bo. (Actually, I think his name is spelled “Beau,” but for some reason she’s got him saved in her cell phone address book as “Bo,” probably because it’s easier for her to spell.) Quite the contrary, however: I found it unspeakably funny. This was going to make for one extremely entertaining reality show; something I could definitely TIVO and save for posterity in the event that any woman would actually marry me and bear my children after witnessing what a poor, pathetic loser I am.

I caught Bobbi Jo and Bo/Beau getting cozy on her futon (she insists we sleep on separate futons, one of “Bobbi Jo’s Rules” that I’m actually very eager to abide by) last Sunday. She didn’t even bother to turn *The 700 Club* off, which means that God definitely saw her violating one of His Holy Biblical Rules and Regulations. He’s probably angry she has that “Footprints in the Sand” magnet still stuck on the fridge, and with good reason: Bobbi Jo is has violated every commandment there is. And as the hidden cameras will definitely testify, she didn’t even bother to remove her imitation gold cross necklace while Bo/Beau was showing her “what a real man is.” That was the argument she used when I confronted her at dinner—excuse me, *supper*—time the next day. In their fumbblings, Bobbi Jo and Bo/Beau hadn’t even seen me walk in from my afternoon shift at Starbucks. I moseyed on over to my futon at the opposite end of the trailer and dipped into my new copy of Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*.

“Well, can you blame me?” she screamed at me when I casually brought the subject up during gumbo. “*You* certainly aren’t providing any entertainment.”

“I wonder why!” I retorted. “I’m sorry, but I’m in this for the money, just like you. I don’t need your *Southern hospitality*. And frankly, I shudder to think what diseases you’ve given your precious Bo!”

Bobbi Jo’s multiple chins wiggled as her jaw dropped in mortification. “How dare you imply that Bo didn’t use protection!” she screamed. “You absolutely never fail to amaze me! We’re smarter than you give us credit for, you know that?”

“No,” I said, narrowing my eyes. “I don’t know that. And you’re not doing a good job convincing me.”

She raised a chubby hand, as if to say, “Talk to the hand.” This argument was going nowhere fast. Still, it was pretty fun.

“Whatever. Just, whatever,” Bobbi Jo said, breaking her own silence. “I can’t *wait* till next week when I’m *done with you*.”

“And *I* can’t wait until next October when the world will see how disgusting you are!”

“Fine!”

“Fine!”

I slammed my fist down on my futon, making a silent pact with myself to make the remaining week of our marriage a living hell.

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That was last week. Today, Bobbi Jo will be making her television debut a little earlier than scheduled. All it took was a quick lie about a special *Blind Marriage* interview and the rumor of an added fifty grand and Bobbi Jo was on a plane to Chicago with me.

Actually, I can't believe this moment is really happening. It's the perfect plan! Maybe me signing up for *Blind Marriage* was actually a good thing. Maybe God was smiling down on me for being so patient—or punishing Bobbi Jo for being obnoxious, one or the other. All that matters is that this time tomorrow, six months will be up and my divorce papers will be filed. And not only will I be able to pay for my apartment—thanks to my brilliant thinking (with a little bit of help from Bobbi Jo's terrible taste in television), I'll be buying a new car, too.

Bobbi's Jo's name is called. The audience is booing.

As Bobbi Jo makes her entrance onto the stage, Steve the Bald Guy ushers her to her stool. A definite upgrade from the lawn chairs she's accustomed to sitting in while shoveling crawfish in her mouth. Finally, The Worst Show on Television will meet The Worst Woman on Television. I personally can't wait to see this broadcasted on national TV from the comfort of my new apartment on my new completely non-futon bed.

A look of bewilderment registers across her fat face. She's seen this stage before. Not in real life, of course, but on TV. Her invisible blonde eyebrows rise in astonishment. I fight to contain a smile.

The host, a man Bobbi Jo's been watching since she was twelve and who she still doesn't know is Jewish, smiles and introduces himself. "Hi, Bobbi Jo," he says, extending his hand. "I'm Jerry Springer. Welcome to the show."