

Green Card

BY ANONYMOUS

Jittery, I walked down the aisle. I shared all the same feelings of every first-time bride. I was beautiful in an informal kind of way. I wore a short, cream-colored dress with a matching gilded veil. My groom was also handsomely dressed in a matching cream-colored suit with a gold cummerbund and bow tie.

To outsiders, we looked like we belonged together, but underneath it all we were creating a lie. I was not a bit more in love with this man than with the man in the moon. My new husband-to-be, Emre (not his real name), was a foreigner who needed his green card to stay in the country. Fearing deportation, he asked me to marry him. I accepted and looked upon the union as a business deal, although no money changed hands. I did it out of friendship. I didn't realize it then, but the ceremony would turn out to be the beginning of my worst nightmare.

A short time later, when I received our marriage decree in the mail, my mate reminded me that we still had to pass the Immigration and Naturalization interview. Emre started to grill me on the kinds of questions the interviewer would be asking. He explained that the interview would be more like an interrogation. The slightest slipup could cause both of us to be thrown in jail. It was at that precise moment that I realized how much I had risked for my friend. It was more than I had bargained for.

Emre pretended to be the interviewer, and I was the interviewee. He asked me questions like, "How long have you guys known each other?

When did you first meet? Where do you two reside? Who witnessed your wedding?" My better half told me what to say and drilled the answers into my head. Although we didn't live together, we had to pretend we knew each other's habits. He even gave me a fake phone number in case they needed to contact a friend or relative. He assured me that the phone would ring indefinitely. By the end of three months I was an expert on how to trick immigration. The practice sessions had built up my self-confidence. I was more than ready, or so I thought.

We drove downtown to the immigration building. We barely spoke. We wanted to keep our heads clear. Once inside, we waited in a long line to fill out some forms for his green card. After about an hour they called us into a tiny, brightly lit room.

Immediately, my stomach started to knot up. The interviewer eyed us suspiciously. I made sure to give her full eye contact. She interrogated us for about 30 minutes. Then they took us into two different rooms for more questioning.

I thought that we had passed with flying colors when suddenly the interviewer asked for a witness's phone number. I began to sweat. I tried to hold my

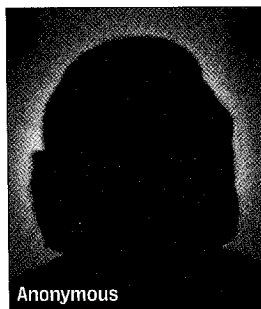
composure by maintaining my gaze. I quickly responded to her request by giving her the fake number. Unable to get an answer, she slammed the phone down. She demanded to know why my mother wasn't picking up the line. I lied, "My mother is on medication and sometimes heavily sedates herself." Under scrutinizing eyes, she allowed us to leave. To our dismay, we would be returning for a second interview.

Once outside, my knees started to shake. I wasn't going to jail for anybody. Inside the car, I released all my fears and cried uncontrollably. I told Emre that that would be my last interview. He tried to persuade me to rethink the situation. I straight out told him, "No!"

Weeks went by, and I hadn't heard a word from "hubby." One night, unexpectedly, Emre called. I heard excitement in his voice. He told me that a new amnesty law had been passed. He read from a letter, "Foreigners who had entered the country before a specified year would be granted their citizenship." I was enormously relieved.

We spent the next six months going through a divorce. Getting the divorce was even more of a hassle than the marriage. After a lot of paperwork and a lot of money the divorce became final. I finally had my freedom back.

That's when I vowed to never do anything so stupid again. The whole situation had been a learning experience. It made me realize how far I had strayed from my morals and beliefs and how close I had come to being convicted of a crime. I also vowed that the next time I walked down the aisle, it would be for real. **CL**



Anonymous

The author is currently an upstanding citizen.