



Double trouble

By the time you decide to get hitched, you may think you know your partner well. But married life often turns out to be full of unexpected disappointments and joys. Here's what relationship researchers, marriage therapists, and married couples say about what winds up surprising people most after they tie the knot.

You need to sweat the small stuff.
 "Many couples say that what surprised them most about their marriage is that they really have to address the little things that are irritating them, which is the opposite of what you hear in the media about letting the small stuff go," says Terri L. Orbach, PhD, author of *Five Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage from Good to Great*.

For 24 years, Orbach has followed 373 couples for a long-term study called the Early Years of Marriage Project. In interviews and questionnaires, the couples reported that small irritations like leaving things cluttered or always being late to the movies – became big issues if they didn't talk about it.

"It's very important to talk about what's irritating you in a non-threatening way and to compromise," Orbach says. "Don't let these things fester."

Your families matter more than you think.
 Once you've had a few holiday meals with your future in-laws, you may feel that you know how to negotiate your relationship with them. But doing so can be surprisingly hard.

"The most difficult part of my marriage has been dealing with our families," Michelle, 31, a New York writer married for six years, opens.

Jen Uscher "For example, my in-laws desired an instant closeness," Michelle says. "They want so much to treat me like the daughter they never had. But I feel like that would be a bit of a charade for me. Also, I think it may have hurt them at the beginning that I didn't change my name."

But Michelle was pleasantly surprised by her husband's effect on her own family. "He acts as a buffer at family dinners and his presence makes everyone behave better," she says.

Some people are most surprised by how much their marriage is like their parents' marriage.

Couples often underestimate the role that each individual's family history plays. They vow that their marriage will be different from their parents' marriage, and then are surprised and often horrified by the similarities.

Your marriage will need more juggling than you expect.
 "It may seem obvious, but there is twice as much that you go through when you're married: all the emotional ups and downs, job-related successes and anxieties, medical issues, family commitments and celebrations and conflicts – everything doubles," says David, 36, a financial strategist in New York, who has been married for five years.

"This sharing is what makes it a deeper relationship. But it's surprising how this doubling is both rewarding and more taxing," David says.

Orbach says the couples she studied didn't know, when they were first married, that life would get so busy and stressful that sometimes they'd put their relationship on the back burner.

Compliments are key.
 Experts say they've been surprised to learn how essential it is to long-term happiness to compliment your spouse and to celebrate his or her achievements.

"Look for opportunities to get excited about your partner's successes," says Arthur Aron, PhD, professor of social psychology at Stony Brook University. "It really strengthens the relationship. And research shows it's even more important than supporting your partner when things go badly."

A good marriage won't necessarily make you happy or fix your problems.

After the excitement of setting up house and getting married, Michelle says she was surprised to feel the same old frustrations.

"I didn't realise that even with a relationship that made me happy, I had to continue working on the other parts of my life. Being in love and having someone's love didn't make my problems go away," she says.

Also, Aron notes that people are sometimes dissatisfied with their marriage when the real problem is that they're depressed or have other problems in their life.

If you're unhappy in your relationship, he says, it makes sense to look at how the rest of your life is going.

You'll be surprised at what you can get through together.

Getting through a particularly tough situation together can put things in perspective, says David Halper, MA, a marriage and family therapist. "When a big issue like a serious illness arises, couples often realise that their disagreements that seemed so important are really trivial," Halper says. "And this renewed perspective can be the catalyst for a more positive, intentional relationship focused on what the couple truly values."

Much water has flown down the bridge, so to speak, since I wrote the first part of this series on Confluence – the Asia International Literary Festival, held in Guwahati from December 3 to 5. It would be natural, even expected, that the giddy euphoria of those magical days would by now have given way to a sort of cautious sobriety, along with the feeling that we need to tone down the airy hyperboles all of us who were present at the fest were using to describe the tapestry of thoughts, ideas and stories weaving, it seemed, of their own accord, binding us as a family of man, cocking a snook at barbed wire, guards with guns, and warmongers who tell us not to trust each other.

Close on the heels of this festival, I had the opportunity to meet Professor C. Mathew Snipp of Stanford University. The Director of Stanford's Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CCSRF), Professor Snipp's focus has been to promote scholarship, teaching and research about race and ethnicity within a comparative framework. This method highlights the differences, as well as similarities linked to particular racial and ethnic communities. Interestingly, with the collaboration of Dr. Deepa Dutt, visiting scholar at Stanford, Professor Snipp is about to engage in a comparative research study on the identity assertions of indigenous populations, with special reference to the Native Americans and the indigenous peoples of Assam. The identity assertions of myriad groups of indigenous people in the region and State have shattered the cohesiveness of society, giving rise to hostility, widespread unrest, and even attempts to wrest independence from the State.

Seen against this backdrop, this lit-fest does seem like a miracle. With our imagination, idealism and the power of hope, we have gone beyond the ever-present resentment against a callous Centre, swallowed the bitterness of being belittled by the unformed Indian elsewhere, withstood the storm that rages still in our midst and made possible a resurgence of our identity in the most peaceful, creative and generous way possible. The medley of voices from this region, be it Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Monalisa Changkija, Ananya Shankar Guha, Jodha Chandra Sanasam, D Kuoli, not to speak of writers from Assam – Kula Saikia, Dhruva Hazarika, Mitra Phukan and Srutimala Duara and so many others, rises like a triumphant hymn of hope and affirmation, of truth and all-embracing humanity.

Take for example, the craft of Padmashree Temsula Ao, a professor at the department of English, and the dean of School of Humanities and Education, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Among her eight books, I particularly recall a riveting story in her anthology of short stories – *Laburnum For My Head*. A simple question is the story of an illiterate village woman's blunt question which rattles an army officer and forces him to set her husband free. The illiterate Imdongla has a firm grasp of the history and politics of her village. Holding her own against underground forces and government soldiers, Imdongla keeps vig-

When words merge-II



Preeti Gill, in her foreword to *The Peripheral Centre, Voices from India's North East*, writes of "this corner of the world resonating with a deep silence. A whole way of life is dying, slowly melting away into the shadows of the unknown." This change, which would have otherwise taken place gradually, imperceptibly, under normal circumstances, is accelerated by the grim onslaught of insurgency, counterinsurgency, state and non-state violence. When one's very life is at stake, customs, rituals, the artifacts of every day life – fashioned with the skill and artistry of many generations – all are jettisoned. That perhaps explains why we feel the urgency of words spilling over through our pens, and the keyboard. We want to capture that moment of flux, of one world dying, the other struggling to be born. And this unique first-time international litfest has tried to transform the enigmatic, remote, insular silence of the past, the volley of gunfire and bomb blasts of the present, to a tremulous, hopeful blossom awaiting the silver dawn, a dove of peace spreading its wings.

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3rd eye

Indrani Raimedhi

il in front of her imprisoned husband, asking the army captain "What do you want from us?" This enraged, defiant sentence questions the validity of the Army's presence among the people, a question hurled in silent accusation by from Shamilia, our larger than life icon of protest.

In the lucid recesses of Mamang Dai's poetry, we discover a timeless world of magical monsters and roaring rivers, living forests, history, legend and personal memoir mesh to take one's breath away. Dai's poems are almost painful in their lyrical intensity, and yet, paradoxically, a soothing balm for the soul. If Temsula's sto-

ry painted the portrait of the earth mother-rooted, strong and fearless, Mamang's Adna Anime, the protagonist of her second novel *Stupid Cupid*, celebrates, with quirky humour and wistful tenderness, the young, mobile Northeastern woman claiming a precarious toehold in India's capital city, straddling the two worlds of the old and new, tradition and modernity, fighting for her identity, freedom and love. Adna is the fictional prototype of the thousands of young people who leave the region for education, a job, a quality life. The difficulties of this relocation is made all the more harsher when the rest of India call them derogatory names, ask if there are cars and electricity back home. The reports in the mainstream media about the unrest and violence in this part of the region reinforce common assumptions by Indians that the Northeasterners are nothing but trouble. It is deeply humiliating for our young when their attire, food habits, physical features – everything is under scrutiny.

What should we do then? Do we continue to live in silent resentment? Do we cover our tracks, so to speak, so that no one can trace where we come from? Do we tell our young not to speak their native tongue, never to make the mistake of singing our songs and danc-

ing our dances? If that is not enough, do we tell them to change their names? In the anxiety to belong, to be accepted by that India, do the Indians of this region have to efface their identities? Of course not. We have to understand that those we meet in the rest of India have no idea of the kind of people we are. They simply never had the opportunity to do so. We are not in their school, college texts. It was never easy for them to come here for a holiday. They are confused by our features, which have so much resemblance to the people of South East Asia.

Today, many of my young friends of this region, based in other cities of India and abroad, are passionate about issues social, political, cultural, relating to the North East. There are blogs, on-line literary journals, groups promoting causes which prove that we are finally getting over that vacuum, that remote silence which has been our lot for so long. The translation of our works into major Indian languages and English is a part of that effort to bridge the distance between minds.

All of the people whose hard work and unflagging enthusiasm got the litfest off the ground feel that something almost impossible has been achieved. Srutimala Duara speaks of the pre-fest worries of raising funds, the endless meetings to chalk out the programme, the reaching out to writers in India and abroad.

Like others, she will treasure memories of not only the formal interactions, but also the teasing, the bantering, the deep connect between people who would perhaps never have met at all.

Says Mitra Phukan: "Confluence – the idea, has been with the Forum for years. This kind of international meet of writers from Asia was a dream, and it is because of the hard work and concerted efforts of all members of the Guwahati Chapter of the NEWF that it came true. The President Arup Kumar Dutta, especially, deserves kudos for focusing on the event single-mindedly, and moulding the diverse personalities of the members into a cohesive unit, allotting them specific tasks, and they were done well, and on time. The interactions with the invited authors were a humbling and learning experience, listening to them read from their works, with the Brahmaputra flowing tranquilly outside the windows, an occurrence that happens only rarely."

Literature is, in conclusion, not an elite, leisure-oriented pastime. It is a throbbing, vital thing, ever changing, ever growing. It has its roots in the masses. In that lies its power, its justification for existence.

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Yogi Bear

Cast : Dan Aykroyd, Justin Timberlake, Anna Faris.
Director : Eric Brevig.

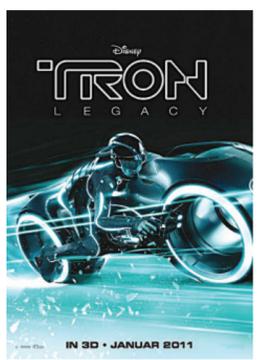
Everyone's favourite picnic basket-stealing bear comes to the big screen in *Yogi Bear*, a new adventure, filmed in 3D, that combines live action with computer animation. Dan Aykroyd stars as the voice of Yogi, Jellystone Park's notorious troublemaker, and Justin Timberlake as the voice of Boo Boo, Yogi's faithful pal and co-conspirator in his never-ending schemes to separate park visitors from their lunches. Yogi has always relied on his quick wit and fast feet to stay one step ahead of irate campers while dodging his long-suffering nemesis, Ranger Smith. But he and Boo Boo are about to face a situation worse than anything Yogi has ever gotten them into... Jellystone Park is being sold! To cover his mismanagement of city funds and fuel his election campaign, Mayor Brown plans to sell the park to loggers. Families will no longer be able to experience the natural beauty of the outdoors. Jellystone has always provided – and, even worse, Yogi, Boo Boo, and all their friends will be tossed out of the only home they've ever known. Faced with his biggest challenge ever, Yogi must prove he really is "smarter than the average bear," as he and Boo Boo join forces with Ranger Smith to find a way to save the park from closing forever.



Tron Legacy

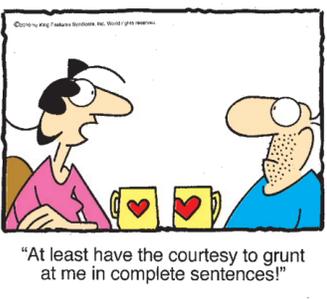
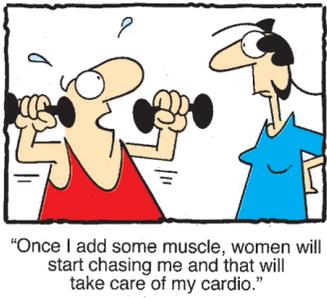
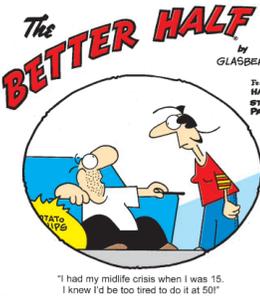
Cast : Garrett Hedlund, Jeff Bridges, Bruce Boxleitner.
Director : Joseph Kosinski.

Tron Legacy is a 3D high-tech adventure set in a digital world that's unlike anything ever captured on the big screen. Sam Flynn (Garrett Hedlund), the tech-savvy 27-year-old son of Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges), looks into his father's disappearance and finds himself pulled into the digital world of Tron, where his father has been living for 25 years. Along with Kevin's loyal confidant Quorra (Olivia Wilde), father and son embark on a life-and-death journey of escape across a visually-stunning cyber universe that has become far more advanced and exceedingly dangerous.



TOP 10 Hollywood

- Tron Legacy
- Yogi Bear
- The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader
- The Fighter
- The Tourist
- Tangled
- Black Swan
- How Do You Know
- Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1
- Unstoppable



FORECAST

DECEMBER 27, 2010 – JANUARY 2, 2011

- ARIES (MAR 21-APR 19)**
 Burning the candle at both ends leads to being burnt out, especially at the beginning of this week. Around midweek, your signature bold moves benefit from some extra diplomacy and tact. This weekend, you may be happiest nesting at home by yourself or with one or two people who're close to you.
- TAURUS (APR 20-May 20)**
 While Monday's not known as the hottest day of the week, with you around, the heat's definitely turned up. Around midweek, coworkers play key roles – whether that's professionally or personally may vary; just beware of overstepping bounds. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, you're not your usual self. Be extra cautious with money and financial matters on Sunday; a mix-up is quite possible.
- GEMINI (MAY 21-JUN 21)**
 If emails or other messages to family or close friends go unanswered (or if you get odd replies) on Monday, don't get miffed – get an explanation. Around Tuesday and Wednesday, your sense of fun and your brain are both all fired up. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, you'd be wise to slow down. Relationships are in the stars this weekend.
- CANCER (JUN 22-JUL 22)**
 A friendship may blossom on Monday, and good times at work or play are in the stars to be sure. Around midweek, issues at home may surface. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, your instincts will tell you what feels right – heed them when it comes to decision-making. Set aside time on Sunday just for you.

- LEO (JUL 23-AUG 22)**
 Monday's a 'do not disturb' kind of day, and you can accomplish a lot on your own. Around midweek, though, you're very much a people person, and people mean very much to you. Your instinct's spot-on: beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend; pay special attention to first impressions, as they're liable to tell you lots more than the people making them will. Sunday kicks off a couple days that are red-hot for you. Work your magic!
- VIRGO (AUG 23-SEPT 22)**
 While everyone else is having their second cup of coffee on Monday, you're taking care of business – big accomplishments are in the stars, so make it happen. Around midweek, a heart-to-heart – with a mentor, a partner, a friend – is an essential part of the decision-making process. Then be conscious of your motives beginning Thursday and through the weekend. On Sunday, find a way to relieve stress or proceed at your own risk.
- LIBRA (SEPT 23-OCT 22)**
 On Monday, you'll be considered an amazing conversationalist, the perfect worker and very attractive, all by doing one simple thing: Listening. Then, a more active role suits you around midweek. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, you may be caught up in what you can acquire. Exploring of all kinds is favoured on Sunday.
- SCORPIO (OCT 23-NOV 21)**
 You just might uncover a secret on Monday – keep those eyes and ears open. Around midweek, you might feel like keeping to yourself. You'll be full of big ideas – and full of energy – beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend. You're unstoppable. Tone it down on Sunday, though; risks are to be avoided in particular.

- SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22-DEC 21)**
 Reschedule any meetings with your boss for later in the week, and watch out for other authoritative types on Monday. Getting along with others and getting what you want is much easier around midweek. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, your energy may be devoted more to your inner life than to what's going on around you. By Sunday, though, you're back to your extroverted, charming ways.
- CAPRICORN (DEC 22-JAN 19)**
 Monday's ideal for setting the rest of your week's agenda, in terms of work, your social life and personal projects. Get that calendar all set – and schedule kickoff for fresh projects of all kinds for midweek when the stars smile on your new endeavours. Just don't ask for a raise or make a big romantic move now. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, decisions that may have been puzzling become much more clear. By Sunday, though, you might be getting ahead of yourself.
- AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18)**
 Get to the heart of the matter on Monday; understanding everyone's motives is key. Around midweek, judge a book by its cover at your own risk. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, you may be assessing where you are, as opposed to where you want to be, whether professionally or otherwise. Sunday might bring a very helpful connection.
- PISCES (FEB 19-MARCH 20)**
 Be service-oriented on Monday. Around midweek, financial or other sorts of debts may be on your mind. If you feel uncomfortable with what you owe or what's due to you, make a plan to restore the balance. Beginning Thursday and through much of the weekend, you can expect emotional ups and downs. Sunday looks lucky for you.