

Imaginings

## Married with Husbands

A pitch for a new one-hour television series

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### THE CONCEPT

Rachel Waisberg, a fiftysomething writer, loves her husband, Sam, but they haven't had sex since their son Jason's bar mitzvah. In what will be an ongoing motif of this groundbreaking series, God speaks to Rachel in a vision.

"Rachel," He says, "Sam's a mensch, but we both know he suffers from hypochondria and erectile dysfunction. You, on the other hand, are a fox. You work out, you watch what you eat, you have regular microdermabrasion. You deserve a husband who can spin your dreidel."

That night, while watching *Big Love*, HBO's much-ballyhooed series about a polygamist who has three wives and seven children, Rachel has an epiphany. She doesn't need a divorce. She just needs more husbands. Rachel springs into action.

"Sam, I love you," she says to his heaving blanket mound. "But you have sleep apnea, you come to bed with a breathing mask, and you spend half your life in the can. It's time for us to bring a second husband into the family."

"Hmfff," says Sam. Rachel is encouraged.

The next morning, easygoing Sam green-lights a brother-husband, Luke, and they all move into a more spacious loft. Then Rachel has a stroke of genius: since men are challenged in the multi-tasking department, she'll have to acquire a different husband for every need—stick man, handyman, soulmate, design consultant, personal chef, concierge, doorman. Rachel reasons that, for a woman, the payoff will be roughly equivalent to going to heaven and having unlimited sex with seventy-two virgins.

Although God speaks to Rachel, she is a thoroughly modern matriarch. Unlike other polyandrists who abuse their husbands by forcing them to watch the Women's Network, she treats her husbands well and wants them all to feel valued in their roles. She never interferes in their running of the household ("That's men's work!") and always gives them pocket money.

Rachel eventually takes a third husband, Roy, a gay man with a background in interior design, and starts to develop a profile as a pioneer of plus-size marriage. She

embarks on a lecture tour extolling the virtues of building a husband stable and spearheads a movement to teach polygamy in schools.

But what Rachel doesn't anticipate is the fatal flaw of reverse polygamy. For a man, more wives means more affirmation, domestic order, nurturing, sexual variety, disposable income, and help finding his keys. For a woman, more husbands just means more work.

By the time Rachel puts out tenders for spouse number four, she's feeling like a beleaguered camp counsellor. Wallets, overdue DVDs, and loose change are strewn across every surface; flat-screen TVs blare night and day; and fights are constantly breaking out over Roy's insistence on playing Leonard Cohen before breakfast. Eventually she's forced to acknowledge that the modern woman's future does not lie in more husbands—but in no husbands at all.

It's true that Rachel has more opportunities for sex, a benefit she does not take for granted. But after herniating two discs when Luke jumps her in the laundry room, she

is no longer enthusiastic about this perk.

### THE THEMES

*Big Love* has hooked viewers by subverting traditional notions about polygamy and by making plural marriage seem like a hip, progressive lifestyle. But the show actually peddles a reactionary family-values message. *Married with Husbands* will expose the truth about polygamy: it's not an equal opportunity arrangement.

### THE CHARACTERS

Rachel Waisberg is a funny, irrepressible, libidinous, thrice-married woman in full. She can be abrasive ("Yes, you need nose clippers. I'm just being honest!"), but she's so much fun that men are not daunted. A successful, sexy-brainy writer who works in a home office, Rachel's role model is Mordecai Richler, who wrote from 9 to 4, repaired to the bar to drink with his buddies, then returned to his wife, Florence, and their exquisitely orchestrated bourgeois bohemian life. Rachel's goal is to become a crusty but benevolent materfamilias

