Weekdays I rode the number 1 train to the end of the line, 242nd Street in the Bronx, and walked up the hill to the prep school where I still worked in the kitchen, entering inventory and counting money at the end of each day.

My best friend in the kitchen was Earl Starks, and my only friend among the preoccupied teachers was Barry Siebelt. Barry and Earl were way way out of the closet. One taught and directed theater, the other did it daily while he worked in the kitchen: Diana, Madonna, Chaka, and Earl.

My coworkers, who had known me for several years (and since I was with Jamie), were not thrilled when I told them I was gay. I came out to them in solidarity with Earl and Barry, but mostly for Barry, who, when he found out he was HIV positive, sat down in my office and burst into tears.

My straight coworkers tolerated the new me.
They even tolerated us when I brought Mars around to meet them. Needless to say, Earl and Barry adored her. She’d come up to get me after work, hang out trading insults with Earl (the dozens) while I counted the cash, then she and I would head back to her apartment or down to the Village for an AA meeting.

What they couldn’t handle, seemingly en masse, was our announcement that we were getting hitched, well, holy-unioned.

Here’s one thing my boss said: How would you like it, Molly, if I came to work one morning and told you I had slept with my horse?

I was officially offended, even if I couldn’t see her point. I’d been living with Mars for months, had known her for almost two years, and I’d never once mentioned sleeping with her to my boss or brought up sex in any way.

Also, I’d seen pictures of the horse at my boss’s home in Connecticut. He was beautiful. I felt sorry for him, so Give me a break, I said, and drew up a letter I presented to the school’s attorney about the harassment I was receiving from management. My boss quit her insults to both me and her horse immediately.

The snubbing from the other women was more difficult to take. I’ve often wondered how it happened that so many kind people suddenly turned biblical on me. What I’ve decided is that my straight coworkers didn’t so much mind if Mars and I were lovers. What seemed to bother them the most was that we thought we had the right to be a real couple, kind of like them, although this was 1990, fourteen years before the first same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, and certainly, we weren’t asking for anything legal. I’d already been divorced twice, for God’s sake.

All we wanted was a party!