



## Amore

by Dennis Gardin

...continued from front page

**Amore = love, affection, fondness, desire.**



I've always found dating to be an interesting relationship dance. It can be exciting, scary, happy, sad, joyful, painful, intimidating and even a little overwhelming. After being burned in an explosion as a teen and acquiring a facial difference, I didn't believe I would ever be in a real relationship; "why would anyone want to be with someone as unattractive me?" Fear of rejection kept me paralyzed from attempting to date anyone; I pretended not to have any interest in girls just to avoid the potential embarrassment.

You may find it hard to believe from someone *cosmetically challenged*, but I actually went through a period when appearances did matter, I thought there might be some kind of balance in the universe that would make me seem less ugly if the girl with me was more attractive. People often limit the definition of intimacy by mistaking it as merely sex without communication, and my first sexual experience was not very pleasurable for me, because the entire time we were together, I was wondering if she was only with me out of pity. I was

shocked & surprised that the woman said yes to my marriage proposal (I was really scared because I didn't expect her response). The surprised reactions from family and friends were also very hurtful (did they not think it was possible as well). I denied her the storybook wedding she so desperately wanted, thinking this would cause her to have a change of heart about marrying me. My self-esteem was at such a low point, that it didn't allow me to think true happiness was possible for me or if I was even worthy. My mother-in-law and those in the church thought that she could do much better; causing my wife to experience a very difficult time trying to convince people, including me, that she really married for love, not sympathy.

I would not share my true feelings about my appearance and would avoid potential uncomfortable situations when we were together; her frustration intensified from limited opportunities to express her feelings because of my refusal to acknowledge that the public comments and reactions really bothered me. Divorce was a direct result of the difficulties derived from my refusal to believe I could be loved, nor allowing myself to open up and need my wife.

As a much wiser man today, I realize that marriage is a true partnership that requires trust, acceptance, compromise, communication and of course LOVE! We must first love ourselves before others are allowed to love us; allow ourselves to trust enough to be vulnerable; be honest with ourselves to acknowledge & honor our feelings. I certainly don't have all the answers, but what I do know is that the world can only view us as we view ourselves. This life offers an abundance of happiness if we are open, but before we can experience the beauty of meaningful relationships, we must begin to believe in the unlimited possibilities of true LOVE!