



Photographs by Peter Corless for The New York Times

VOWS

Lisa Faden, Robert MacDougall

By LOIS SMITH BRADY

YOU should not believe everything Lisa Yoshiko Faden and Robert Duncan MacDougall tell you about their relationship. Ms Faden, for instance, says that she “picked up” her future husband “in a dive bar.” Mr. MacDougall claims that the two first met in Hong Kong. In truth, the two were introduced by mutual friends at the Hong Kong, a Boston bar of last resort known for sticky floors and a cheerful disregard for legal drinking ages or closing times. “The Kong is not where you’d expect to find Mr. Right,” said Jennifer Morrill, one of the friends who brought the couple together. “Just his evil twin, Mr. Available.” Daniel Hamilton, another friend who engineered that meeting, agreed. “You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy,” he said.

But both bride and groom are sincere when they marvel at their good fortune in finding one another. “Think of all the unlikely things that had to happen just so that Lisa and I would meet in that exact place at that exact moment,” said Mr. MacDougall. “The only rational explanation is that all of human history has been an immense and secret conspiracy to bring us together.”

History is a subject the couple knows something about. Ms Faden, a graduate of Amherst College and Harvard University, teaches world, American, and East Asian history at Newton North High School in Newton, Massachusetts. Mr. MacDougall, a graduate of Queen’s University at Kingston, is completing a PhD in American history at Harvard. “He charmed me on our first date talking about Gordon Wood’s ‘Creation of the American Republic,’ how Wood drastically underestimates the impact of social distinctions predicated on wealth,” recalled Ms Faden. “Wait—on second thought, that was a scene from

‘Good Will Hunting.’” For her part, Ms Faden won Mr. MacDougall’s heart with a “really goofy” impression of Alexis de Tocqueville. “Plus, she dances just like a Muppet,” he said.

Friends described the couple with enchanting, if meaningless, paradoxes. “Lisa is daring yet traditional, grounded but berserk, sensible yet spontaneous, high-flying yet down to earth, out-going but shy,” said Elaine Worthy Thomas, a bridesmaid. “Rob is the last, or maybe the second-to-last, of the neo-quasi-post-retro-Renaissance men,” said Mr. MacDougall’s friend Peter Stuart. “But he hates labels.”

Ms Faden, 29, grew up in Bethesda, Maryland. She has traveled throughout Japan and China, where she gained the mysterious power to cloud men’s minds. Returning from the East, Ms Faden made a name for herself in the 1990s as an international art thief. But she soon learned that with great power comes great responsibility—and gave up her life of crime for a career in teaching.



AMHERST, MASS. JUNE 29 Guests, top, mingled in an idyllic woodland setting before the ceremony. Above, the happy couple share an embrace.

Mr. MacDougall, 30, was raised by wolves in the Canadian wilderness. There he learned their cunning and cruelty, but his noble bloodline reasserted itself when he was discovered by missionaries and restored to his family’s ancestral estate. “A-wooooooo-oo!” said James MacDougall, the bridegroom’s brother and best man.

On June 29, a crowd of family and friends gathered at the bride’s alma mater, a picturesque New England college, to see the happy couple wed. Guests sipped cocktails of litchi, pomegranate, and prosecco, and danced to a hair-metal band containing former members of Poison and Warrant. After much coaxing, the bride sat in on bass guitar for a rousing rendition of “Unskinny Bop.”

In the spirit of the occasion, Americans and Canadians mingled together, mostly without incident. (The

Canadians were polite in mixed company, but huddled amongst themselves to complain about Yankees who conflated the Ottawa and Saskatchewan Roughriders, while American guests laughed openly about the Canucks’ pronunciation of the word “sorry.”)

The ceremony reflected the couple’s diverse heritage. Bride and groom composed their own vows, entwining elements of medieval French love poetry, the Kabbalah, and lines from “The Simpsons” and “WKRP in Cincinnati.” Ms Faden, who is of Jewish and Japanese descent, wore an antique kimono in the style of Tomoe Gozen, a legendary woman samurai. The couple stood under a chuppah hand-quilted by the bride’s chakra circle. Mr. MacDougall’s Scotch-Canadian ancestry was reflected by a cash bar.

“Tā! The stars are right, the age of man is at an end! By marrying you I complete the ancient prophecy!” said Lakota shaman Donald Scary Bear, who performed the ceremony.

“Mwaa ha ha ha ha ha!” he added.