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# Carrie'd Away

In a new novel, *Sex and the City* creator Candace Bushnell, now wed, again eyes the social scene

"People did make a fuss about" the wedding, says Askegard (with Bushnell in Manhattan). "But I don't think she wanted to be single the rest of her life."

In the dining room of their Greenwich Village apartment, Candace Bushnell, once Manhattan's most vigorously single woman, engages in a flirty pas de deux with the handsome dancer she married after just an eight-week courtship. On the evening they met—at a gala for the New York City Ballet—the *Sex and the City* author says, "I felt like Cinderella."

The prince she encountered, Charles Askegard, is the man now effortlessly hoisting his giggly bride of one year toward the ceiling. "You're a dancer, she's a writer," said the friend who introduced them. "Go have dinner and have fun." So they had dinner, and they had fun. ("I fell in love with her immediately," Askegard says.) And last July 4, on a beach in Nantucket, Bushnell, whose musings about love—or what passes for it—inspired Sarah Jessica Parker's character on *Sex*, left the single milieu she had chronicled so knowingly.

Domesticity, though, doesn't work in Bushnell's kind of literature, so her new novel, *Trading Up*, coming out just as *Sex* begins its last season, harks back to the world she knows best. "It's like Edith Wharton rewritten by Jacqueline Susann," says a pal, soon-to-be Court TV anchor Karen Duffy. And, says W, "It's better than sex, frankly (*Sex and the City*, that is)." On a less enthusiastic note, however, the heroine, Victoria's Secret model Janey Wilcox, was described by Michiko Kakutani in *The New York Times* as "a slut with a heart of ice."

Bushnell, 44, says the sequel to her 2001 bestseller *Four Blondes* "shows the underside of glamor," a beat that's been hers since 1994, when, blending fiction and journalism in the pages of *The New York Observer*, she detailed the



Her breakup with Galotti (with her in '95) was "very painful," Bushnell says.

ups and downs of her affair with Mr. Big (in real life, publishing exec Ron Galotti). "At that time," she says, "I really was Carrie Bradshaw." So how does marriage play with a woman who once likened being engaged (before meeting Askegard, 34) to "drowning"? "It's really fun," says Bushnell, curled up on a sofa with Betsy Lou, Askegard's Labrador, whom she has adopted. "I would

"It's important to me to write about women, to show our secret thoughts and that we are as complicated as men"



be very nervous if this were a traditional marriage. But it's not. We let each other be, and we're financially independent."

Friends like *Sex and the City* executive producer Darren Star see something more to the union than separate bank accounts. "Candace," says Star, "puts up a tough exterior, but inside she's a real romantic." And now somewhat of a homebody too. "I

like to whip up Sunday dinner—roast chicken with stuffing and gravy," she says. Like her TV self, Carrie Bradshaw, she likes clothes, but she says that she doesn't shop much. And very unlike Carrie, she's in bed by 9 p.m. to compensate for sleep lost to early-morning writing. In fact, Bushnell has said, "I'd like a marriage like my parents'. After 45 years, they're still together and loving."

And does finding Mr. Right mean one can no longer be a *Sex and the City* girl? "A true *Sex and the City* girl," says Bushnell, "never gives up on love." Especially after she's found it.

- Allison Adato
- KC Baker in New York City



Sarah Jessica Parker became Bushnell's friend while playing her alter ego.