

JAILED BIGAMIST: I'VE GOT FOUR HUSBANDS'

Last week Amileannya Carmichael, 25, was jailed for six months for being a serial bigamist. Before she was led to the cells, she told *Closer* why she did it...

AS I WALKED UP THE AISLE IN my beautiful black evening gown, I thought this was the best day of my life.

James, my husband-to-be, and I had decided on a *Pulp Fiction*-themed wedding and all the guests were dressed in black and shades – including the vicar.

This was my fourth wedding and each time I really believed it was forever. There was just one thing I tried to forget. I'd never got divorced – not from any of my husbands.

Now I realise that jumping into one marriage after another was a big mistake. But I was living life so fast, I never thought it would catch up with me.

I didn't set out to deceive anybody. I eventually confessed to all my husbands that I'd never been divorced. But I know that's no excuse. I've come to realise I was craving some sort of security, which I hadn't had growing up.

Even the sexy photograph

'I didn't set out to deceive anybody. Each time I married, I believed it was forever'

that I posted on the internet describing myself as Annya – a 25-year-old model in a long-term relationship – was a way of seeking attention.

THE FIRST TIME

The first time I got married was 11 days after my 18th birthday on 20 December 1996. Paul Rigby was a squaddie with the

Royal Irish Regiment at Catterick. We married in York Register Office and I really believed we were going to live happily ever after.

Paul became my world. I didn't have a happy childhood. My mum and dad split up when I was 11 and I'd never felt wanted by either of my parents.

But soon I knew I'd made a massive mistake. I realised that we didn't have a lot to say to each other. After a year, we separated.

Two months later, in June 1998, two policemen knocked on my door. They told me that Paul had been arrested in Ireland for involvement in a murder.

Paul's friend Stephen Scott had killed his ex-girlfriend, who had been four months' pregnant. He'd chopped her body up into eight pieces and got Paul to help him hide her dismembered body. I was stunned.

Paul pleaded guilty to perverting the course of justice

and assisting in the disposal of her body and was given a two-and-a-half year sentence. Scott was sentenced to life for murder.

After that, I just wanted to forget I'd ever known Paul, never mind been married to him.

That summer, after finishing the first year of a degree in electronics, I went to live with a friend in Otley near Leeds.

One night in August 1998, a friend of his came round. Sean Cunningham, 33, was a retail credit officer and we got on like a house on fire. Five weeks later, I moved in with him.

Soon afterwards, I found out I was pregnant. I was honest and told him I wasn't sure if the baby was his. I'd been seeing other men too.

Sean was surprised but said: "Well, let's get married then."

I was thrilled by the idea. But I couldn't face telling Sean that my husband was in prison, so I just kept my mouth shut.

I married Sean on 5 February 1999 at Leeds Register Office. I gasped when the registrar said: "If anyone knows any reason why these two should not be joined in matrimony?"

But no one knew my secret.

CONFESSION TIME

One night I burst into tears and told Sean the truth. He was shocked, but told me: "In my eyes, we are married."

Two weeks later, I had an abortion. It wasn't the right time for a baby.

By summer 2000, Sean had moved away for a job and we drifted apart.

A few months later, I spotted a guy reading a magazine on the bus and we got chatting.

He was attractive with dark curly hair. He introduced himself as Chris Barratt, 21, a website designer.

We met that night and again



Signing the register with Chris, husband number three



Amileannya and Chris cut the cake

The saucy picture 'Annya' posted of herself on the internet

within weeks I'd moved in with him. We were shopping one day when Chris dropped down on one knee.

"Annya, I love you, will you marry me?" he blurted. It was so romantic, I couldn't help but say yes. Before I knew it, he had organised the wedding.

I did later confess to him that I'd been married and wasn't divorced, but Chris still loved me.

So, on 5 December 2000, I got married for the third time. Once again, it was in Leeds Register Office.

The marriage lasted a few months. I realised I loved being wanted. I craved the affection and the security but I didn't love Chris so we separated.



EXCLUSIVE

Then, in August 2001, I was formally arrested and cautioned for bigamy by West Yorkshire Police. I resolved to get divorced.

I started getting the papers together, but I soon realised that, once you commit bigamy, it's a nightmare trying to sort it out

and it's very costly. So I put the caution to the back of my mind. A few weeks later, I was on a train when I met train guard James Matthews, 34.

He rescued me from some yobs and then asked me out. At the end of the evening, he invited

me back to his place. I said yes. We became inseparable and set up home together in Ipswich.

He bombarded me with flowers and chocolates. One day I texted him, saying: "Marry me!" Half serious, half joking – the reply was yes.

FOUR TIMES A WIFE

James was so excited about getting married, I couldn't bear to tell him I wasn't divorced.

The next day we looked for rings. That night James announced he'd booked the wedding – in three weeks' time.

Knowing there was no way I was going to get divorced from my three husbands in that time, I buried my head in the sand.

On 6 March 2002, a month after our first meeting, James and I married in the local chapel.

The only person who knew I'd been married before was a friend called Alex and he thought I was divorced.

A week later, I admitted everything to James and he seemed to accept it.

But then he became preoccupied by religion, saying I was possessed by demons for my previous behaviour.

I knew it was all over and that was when I met and fell in love with my present boyfriend, Ross Beech, 25, a computer engineer.

But in January last year, the police caught up with me again. I was arrested and charged with bigamy after James tipped them off.

In a way, it was a relief that I had finally been found out.

In November last year, I pleaded guilty to bigamy.

I've since been seeing a counsellor and I now realise that the attention I crave can be traced back to my childhood when I felt neglected by my mum and dad.

I'm looking ahead to a different future now, once I'm out of prison. Ross and I are going to buy a house together. We want to get married, but not for a few years. And I will obviously get divorced first this time.

One of the questions I was asked by my probation officer was: "Did I think there had been any victims in my crime?" I don't think there were but I know I hurt people. And I'm sorry for that. ■

By Amanda Revell Walton and Kirsty Rhodes