

Wedded to Perfection

Sometimes mistakes are part of the fun

By Rachel Eddey

I'll confess: I'm kind of wedding obsessed. I love patrolling catering halls, envisioning centerpiece bouquets and scouting trendy magazines for just the right hairstyle. After my own marriage in 2008, I assumed the fascination with weddings would evaporate or, at the very least, diminish in the face of writing thank you notes and losing my newlywed weight. (To date, I have only completed one of these tasks.) But no. When my sister, Elana, announced she had gotten engaged and wanted me to be her matron of honor, I barreled forward with the same gusto I had shown for my own nuptials, only this time with the assistance of hindsight. My mind blazed with all she and her fiancé, Justin, needed to do and the speed with which they needed to do it. I had awakened that morning a polite and reasonably restrained woman. By nightfall I was matron-of-honor-zilla.

I assumed the happy couple wanted me to step in as full-time wedding planner because, well, why wouldn't they? *They'll love having someone around who can point them away from catastrophe*, I thought. *I would have loved having me around.* Within a week, I had prepared a 14-page Excel "cheat sheet" document complete with recommended vendors, price points and preferred color schemes. I

headed to Crate & Barrel for pre-registry window shopping. I noted all the items Elana and Justin might want in the house they might one day buy and picked up registry cards to include in the bridal shower invitations I envisioned. Before soliciting quotes from a print shop, I popped into the local jeweler to peruse the wedding band selection. Exhausted, I stopped at Starbucks for a

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skinny latté and drafted an engagement announcement on the back of a napkin. I fantasized standing next to my sister on the reception line, thanking everyone for coming as I agreed that yes, the flowers were lovely, the food was delicious, and of course they could take an extra party favor home for the babysitter.

Elana cut my daydream short when I presented her with my findings. I suggested a pink and silver palette; she wanted violet and white. I advised an outdoor ceremony; she preferred indoor. I insisted on platinum; she budgeted for white gold. I was embracing my role with fierce determination, but Elana wasn't feeling the romance.

"Justin and I don't care if it doesn't all come together perfectly," she told me. "We're just choosing what we think will work best, and having fun figuring it all out."

"That's cute," I told her in a probably-not-on-purpose condescending tone, "but you're in the big league here. This is a wedding, not a dinner party. You can't leave any element up for grabs. The venue, the DJ, the hair and makeup stylists—you need to account for it all. Remember, you only have one chance to get this right."

"Yes, Rachel," she said gently. "You do only have one chance to get this right."

"That's what I just..." Oh. I sat silent for a moment as the mother of all realizations took shape: I was not the bride. This was not my wedding.

"Listen, I have to run," I lied. "I'll call you back." I looked at the napkin on which I'd drafted the engagement text, the print-out of my cheat sheet and dozens of registry cards to a store I wasn't sure Elana even liked, and saw the truth: I had hijacked her wedding in an ill-fated attempt to recreate my own, this time without the glaring missteps.

My husband and I had experienced a handful of snafus at our wedding, but they were *our* snafus, *our* memories. And even I could now admit that my mother stepping on my dress had been utterly hilarious. Maybe Elana and Justin wouldn't make the mistakes John and I had made, but they were satisfied with making their own.



dedicated one entire page to the mishaps that had occurred at my wedding—the major ones, like the videographer's lights melting the cake and the ill placement of the guest book, which led me to forge congratulatory messages the following day—and outlined ways Elana and Justin could, should, would avoid them. Sample entry: "Mom stepped on my dress as we processed down the aisle, causing my shoe to come off. Consider hiring a stand-in mother off Craigslist."

I hummed Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" as I closed my laptop and