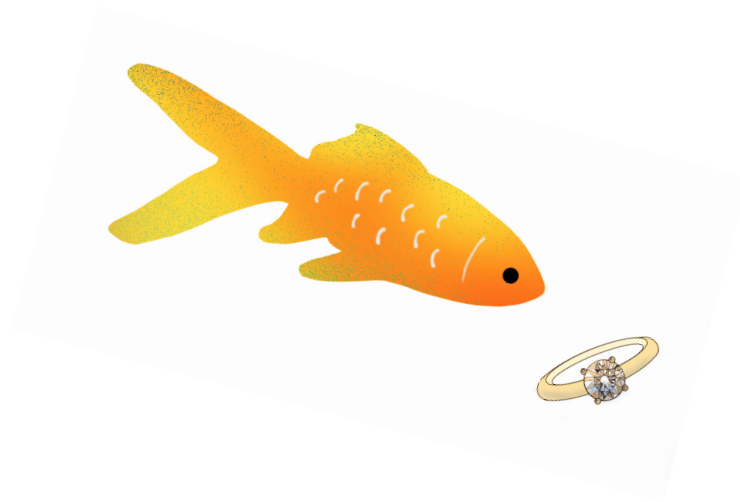


WEDDING CHALLENGES!

Inspirational Stories of Love and the Highs & Lows of Wedding Planning

Robert Winton



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Dedicated To
Judy, Ryan, Maja & August
With Love.

Elizabeth looked forward to our wedding
with placid contentment, not unmingled
with a little fear.

— Frankenstein, Mary Shelley (1818)

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DISCLAIMERS

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

By reading this book, you agree to accept these disclaimers. If you do not agree, you are encouraged to stop reading.

NOT PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

This book does not offer professional advice and is not a substitute for it. If medical, financial, legal, insurance, or other expert assistance is required, seek the services of a competent professional.

While this book includes fictional stories where characters seek professional advice, these scenarios are for illustrative and narrative purposes only. They are not intended to provide guidance or substitute for professional consultation.

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This book is for entertainment and inspiration only.

FICTIONAL CONTENT

This book is a work of fiction. Names, events, characters, and businesses are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHS

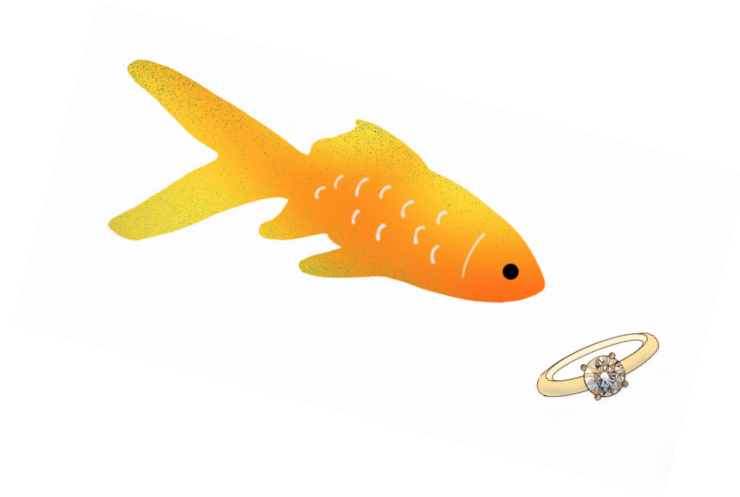
The photographs in this book are included for editorial purposes as artistic and inspirational illustrations of happy and beautiful wedding moments.

While the book is a work of fiction, the photographs feature real individuals and authentic moments. They do not imply any personal or commercial endorsement, nor do they depict or represent the content in this book.

JURISDICTION

This book and its content are governed by the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Any disputes arising from this book shall be resolved exclusively in the courts of Pennsylvania, unless otherwise agreed.

INTRODUCTION



CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR!

*You Are Invited to Share in
Diamond and Slate's Wedding Day!*

Follow the bride and groom, **Diamond and Slate**, behind the scenes as their wedding planning takes unexpected turns.

Will Diamond and Slate discover *The Secret*? Could it be the key to overcoming their wedding challenges and celebrating their dream wedding?

Explore the highs and lows of wedding planning through inspirational stories written by a wedding photographer who captured priceless memories at hundreds of weddings - **and witnessed countless wedding problems along the way.**

Wedding Challenges! is for engaged couples looking for inspirational wedding ideas, wedding planners looking for fresh perspectives, and anyone who loves wedding stories.

CHARACTERS

Join Their Friends and Families

Welcome to Diamond and Slate's imaginary world of fictitious stories, characters, locations, and establishments.

Get ready to support our bride and groom while their close friends, Morganite, Calcite, Mica, and Gypsum join their wedding party. Their caring parents, Ruby, Pearl, Hematite, and Shale, contribute to the family drama. You'll find these and many more characters at the famously imaginary Opaline Manor!

Diamond - Bride
Slate - Groom
Sunstone - Newborn Baby
Ruby - Mother of the Bride
Pearl - Mother of the Groom
Hematite - Father of the Groom
Shale - Father of Bride
Galena - Grandfather of the Bride
Garnet - Great Grandmother of the Bride
Morganite - Maid of Honor
Mica - Best Man
Gypsum - Groomsman
Calcite - Groomsman
Silica - Guest
Citrine - Guest
Peridot - Guest
Aquamarine - Guest
Tourmaline - Guest

Topaz - Guest
Tiger Eyes - Kitty Cat
Magnetite - Minister
Malachite - DJ
Moonstone - Venue Manager
Quartz - Manager
Celestine - Manager
Rhodonite - Sommelier
Jasper - Photographer
Amber - Bartender
Aventurine - Florist
Thulite - Videographer
Amethyst - Baker
Obsidian - Catering Manager
Euclase - Tailor
Opal - Salesperson
Tanzanite - Insurance Agent
Alexandrite - Attorney
Coral - Planner
Flint - Uninvited Friend
Opaline Manor - Wedding Venue
Tugtupite Motors - Car Dealership
Fluorite's Feast - Catering Company

INSPIRATION

Why I Wrote This Book

My thirteen-year career as a wedding photographer provided a unique behind the scenes vantage during hundreds of weddings. I watched the dreams, happiness, and regrets of brides and grooms play out before, during, and after their weddings. It did not take long to notice that despite brilliant and ingenious wedding plans, weddings were often less predictable than the weather forecast.

That should not be too surprising since planning a wedding involves stormy clouds of variables ranging from predictable to unpredictable, heartwarming to awkward, and humorous to heart-wrenching. Most brides and grooms walk down the aisle only once in their lifetimes and do not imagine themselves blindsided by unexpected challenges. Who can imagine a simple one minute walk down the aisle going wrong?

My hope for “Wedding Challenges!” is to entertain and inspire through fictional stories that reflect a few of the challenges I witnessed as a wedding photographer.

Initially, I wrote about potential solutions to the challenges but hit a roadblock after about a year. I began to feel that this approach was impractical, since solutions depend on each reader’s unique circumstances, including their ingenuity, resources, risk tolerance, personality, fortitude, and more. Solutions also depend on the circumstances of the challenge.

Further, for any problem, there are an unlimited number of potential solutions to consider, they evolve over time, and I can not imagine them all. And, the few I know might not be the best!

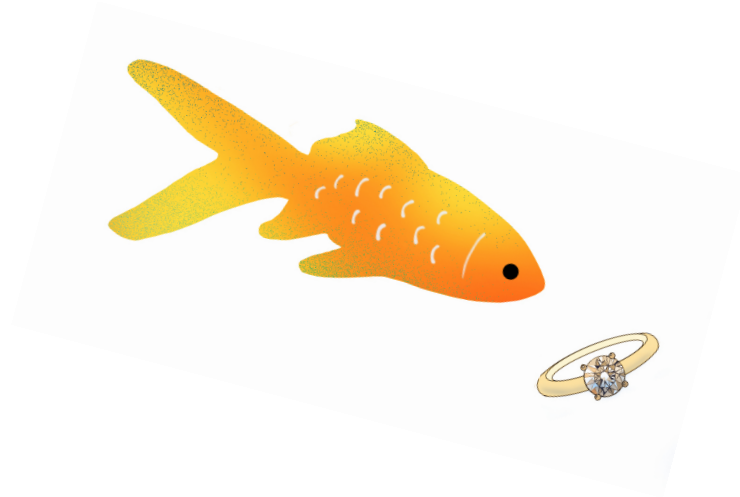
So I decided to start over, this time from the perspective of wedding challenges. My new hope is that greater awareness of the wedding challenges that I witnessed will inspire readers to come up with solutions that feel best for them. In other words, the hope is awareness is a good start, and inspiration is even better!

Thus, *Wedding Challenges!* took shape. Each chapter introduces a fictional story about an unexpected challenge to the bride and groom's dreams. In a twist of fate, an alternate story imagines our couple getting a second try.

Because we all love beautiful wedding photographs, the pages between chapters feature joyful photographs capturing beautiful wedding moments. These photographs are unrelated to the chapters yet sure to charm!

Whether you look forward to a wedding or just enjoy reading about them, I hope *Wedding Challenges!* helps you find inspiration to weather the challenges, despite the forecast!

THEIR CHALLENGES



1: INDECISION

Option Overload

Diamond and Slate were excitedly planning their dream wedding, but their excitement turned to frustration as their ideas began piling up.

“We have to narrow this down,” Slate said, looking at wedding websites, magazines, and books.

“I know, but every time I think we’re done, I find something new,” Diamond replied. “Here’s something else! I really want either a vineyard wedding or a cruise wedding. I can’t decide!”

“Those sound awesome,” Slate said, full of enthusiasm. “But what about a museum wedding?”

Diamond added. “Oh, I forgot to mention that our parents want either a quartet band or a jazz band.”

Slate wondered, “Should we do a laser light show or a paper sky lantern release at the end of the reception? Or, how about a drone light show?”

Diamond paced. “How will we ever decide?”

Planning a wedding means choosing from endless possibilities.

Diamond and Slate brainstorm ideas to create a wedding that has everything. Slate soon realizes they have too many. “It’s exciting but also a bit overwhelming. Maybe we should categorize these ideas to make it easier?”

Diamond and Slate jot their ideas on index cards, using green cards for ‘must-have ideas,’ and then organizing the cards into categories such as fashion, decorations, entertainment, personal interests, and food.

“Okay, let’s see what we’ve got,” Diamond says, spreading the cards. “What if we combined some of these reception ideas of activities, decorations, and desserts? It’s hard to pick our favorites, but what if we started discarding some of the ideas we could live without, and sorting the others?”

Diamond and Slate then discuss their vision and wonder if a DIY dessert bar could feature their shared love for classic black-and-white films and satisfy several cards at once.

“Imagine the setup,” Slate says, his eyes lighting up. “We could decorate the dessert bar like a retro movie concession stand. It would satisfy decoration and a unique activity after dinner.”

“Yes!” Diamond shouts, “And we could make everything in black-and-white. Even the popcorn could be served in a vintage black-and-white package, like seeing it in an old movie! It would satisfy having something personal.”

Slate begins pacing, “What if we gave each table tickets to the dessert bar with old movie trivia questions on the back? The winning table gets a “movie night kit” with black-and-white popcorn and black-and-white candy! Now we have another activity!”

Excited by the possibilities, Diamond and Slate expand their ideas to include a projection of their ceremony next to the dessert bar, in the style of an old black-and-white film with scratchy effects and a 1930s music track playing in the background.

“I’m glad we took the time to come up with our vision and sort everything out,” Diamond says, looking at the neatly organized cards. “We can get rid of a lot of these other ideas now!”



2: AWKWARD

Forced Interactions

Diamond loved tradition and was thrilled to get everyone on the dance floor during her reception for a traditional bouquet and garter toss. She tossed her flowers, and Citrine quickly caught them, and a playful smile spread across her face. Citrine demonstrated her weekend tennis skills by jumping and slashing the bouquet left and right.

Next, it was the men's turn to catch the garter, and most were trying to hide. But Slate was able to cajole them onto the floor and tossed the garter high behind him. As unbelievably horrible, rotten, lousy luck would have it, the garter flew toward someone named Peridot, and landed on his forehead.

Everyone knew Peridot was introverted, and avoided attention at all costs, which is why he had positioned himself far in the back. However, the garter had other ideas and drew everyone's attention when it slid off his forehead and landed at his feet.

Peridot stood alone, and contemplated the laughter around him. He didn't want to disrespect the groom, so he picked up the garter.

The laughter died as Peridot's embarrassment became obvious. Everybody remembered that Citrine and Peridot had recently divorced, and Peridot had been trying to avoid Citrine all night. But now they were both expected to do

this activity together. Peridot looked left and right as if either for help or a hiding place, and nobody could be sure, but it was probably both. So, this moment was very awkward.

Silica, a friend of Peridot's, sprang into action and ran to Peridot, snatched the garter from Peridot's hands and waved it grimly in the air as if to personally accept the challenge! But this unfortunate rescue was even more awkward, not only because of Silica's intoxicated stumbling, but mainly because it did not happen soon enough.

A rescue could have been hilarious if it happened at the right time. But, everyone felt that Silica's rescue attempt was awkward because, when it happened, Silica's help was too late and transformed from hilarious into awkward. Like a mountain of snow, this new moment of awkwardness triggered an awkward avalanche that buried Peridot.

As Peridot stood silently and questioned his life choices, a camera flash went off in his eyes.

Remember Citrine? She couldn't take it anymore and ran away in tears.

Sometimes pairing people randomly in a wedding activity can lead to awkward moments.

Wedding guests are intrigued when Malachite, the DJ, invites the parents onto the dance floor. A video slideshow features images from the parents' weddings, as they dance to the 1990s song, "Because You Loved Me". The mothers

wear flowing wedding dresses with long, trailing veils. The fathers wear traditional black suits with waistcoats.

As the parents finish and stand to the side, the music changes to the 1960s song “Unchained Melody”, and the grandparents walk onto the dance floor. They begin their dance while the video slideshow features images from their wedding days. The grandmothers wear modest dresses with lace details, and the grandfathers wear navy suits with vintage ruffled shirts.

Finally, the great-grandparents walk onto the dance floor and the music changes to the 1930s song “The Way You Look Tonight.” Their slideshow features a single portrait from each of their wedding days. The great-grandmothers wear modest silk gowns with long trains, long sleeves, and intricate lace detailing. Veils cover their faces. The great-grandfathers wear formal morning suits with a tailcoat, vest, and pinstriped trousers.

When the great-grandparents finish their dances, all the parents bow while the air fills with standing applause!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My love for photography began during my middle school years while using my father's 1950s Canon rangefinder camera. The wonder of developing film and holding something that had physically captured the very light that touched the scene would later inspire me to capture wedding moments just as authentically.

Photography has always been part of my life. During college, I was introduced to wedding photography while assisting a wedding photographer. Nearly every day of my life, I carried a camera – even bringing it to work as a chemist.

Upon semi-retiring in 2005, I founded the *Because You Love* studio and specialized in love-inspired, photojournalistic wedding photography. Although my work in wedding photography has come to an end, I look back fondly on those 13 years. They meant the world to me. I am honored to have been a part of my clients' weddings.

Today, I share my passion for chasing light and capturing moments through photography workshops at BecauseYouLove.com and through painting at HolidayArt.com.

I can almost hear your question: "Have I ever met a Bridezilla?" The answer is no. All of my clients were delightful and generous. However, there was a groom I jokingly named "Bradzilla." Brad, his wife, and I still laugh about it to this day!

BEST WISHES

Thank you so much for reading Wedding Challenges! We hope our story inspires your walk down the aisle – no matter what clouds may appear in the sky.

Wishing you a lifetime of love and happiness!

Diamond and Slate