

Two days before his wedding, Seth was in a cab with his best man, Marty, who was advising him on the responsibilities of the groom.

“Your job,” Marty said, “is to get hammered.”

“I’ve seen the movies,” said Seth. “It never ends well.”

“It’s a *tradition*,” said Marty. “The groom, about to give up his old lifestyle forever, spends one last night partying with his buddies, laughing with them, crying with them . . .”

“Throwing up on them,” said Seth.

“Not on the best man,” advised Marty. “That’s the function of the lower-ranking groomsmen.”

The cab was approaching the American Airlines terminal at Reagan Airport.

“One thing,” said Seth. “No stripper.”

“Seriously?”

“If a stripper shows up, I will run. I will run like the wind.”

“Strippers are traditional,” said Marty.

“Strippers are *hookers*. Remember the one we got for Kevin?”

Marty made a face. “OK, I’ll admit hygiene was not her . . .”

“She was *disgusting*, Marty. She personally controlled two-thirds of the world supply of stank. I’d rather get a lap dance from Charles Barkley.”

“You want us to get Charles? Because I hear he’s pretty responsive to fan requests.”

“*No stripper*, that’s what I want.”

They were pulling up to the curb.

“I got this,” said Marty, paying the cabbie, which was unlike him. “You go inside.”

“I gotta get my suitcase.”

“I’ll get it. You’re the *groom*, man. Let people cater to you.”

Seth frowned. It was also unlike Marty to cater. Marty was, by nature, a cateree. Feeling a twinge of suspicion, Seth put a hand on Marty’s shoulder, leaned in eye to eye. “Marty,” he said, “swear to me on your mother that there will be no stripper.”

“Absolutely. I swear on my mother, may she rest in peace.”

“Your mother’s still alive.”

“Unfortunately, yes. Now go find the rest of the Groom Posse.”

The rest of the Groom Posse consisted of Kevin (he of the stanky stripper) and Big Steve. The four of them—Seth, Marty, Kevin and Big Steve—had been close friends since they met as roommates at the University of Delaware, where they had distinguished themselves by amassing the largest vertical stack of used pizza delivery boxes in the school’s history, and quite possibly in the annals of higher education. After graduating they had pursued different career paths, but they remained close friends, connected by the bond of college, as well as the bond of being unsuccessful at everything they had tried since.

Seth spotted the hulking mass that was Big Steve by a boarding pass machine, his finger hovering uncertainly over the touch screen, his face scrunched into a frown, looking like a man about to enter the code that would launch a nuclear strike against Pyongyang, as opposed to a man confirming his selection of an aisle seat. Big Steve was a man who always . . . wanted . . . to . . . make . . . absolutely . . . sure . . . of . . . *everything*. Standing behind him in a movie concession line was a nightmare. He could take five full minutes to choose a beverage, before moving on to the far more difficult issue of what *size* beverage. Not to mention the popcorn decision, which more than once had made him miss the beginning of a feature film.

Pacing around Big Steve like a small, jittery asteroid orbiting a planet was Kevin, who, as always, was on his cell phone, lying to somebody about something. As Seth drew near, he gathered that in this case the person being lied to was Kevin's wife.

"... feeling a little sick, to be honest," Kevin was saying, shaking his head at Seth to indicate that he was in fact feeling fine. "No, I'm still going. It means a lot to Seth. I'll just take it easy, skip the partying." Here Kevin grabbed his crotch to indicate that he did not intend to skip the partying. "I know, baby, I know . . . I am soooo sorry you can't come . . . Right. You too. Bye." Kevin pocketed his phone, then, with a swift and fluid motion, reached past Big Steve's still-hovering finger and stabbed the boarding pass machine's screen.

"Hey!" said Big Steve. "What the hell!"

Ignoring him, Kevin turned back to Seth. "You ready? Everything good in WeddingLand?"

"I guess," said Seth. "There was an issue with the centerpieces."

"What issue?"

"I'm still not sure. Couple days ago, Tina calls me up, she's crying like she found out she has cancer, I mean *sobbing*, and I go, what's wrong, and she says something about the centerpieces, and I go, hey, the important thing is we love each other, and we're getting married."

"You stupid shit," said Kevin.

"I know. She goes, 'I can't *believe* you sometimes,' and hangs up."

Kevin nodded. "We had these wedding favors, little custom-scented soaps that said 'Love and happiness always, Karen and Kevin,' but two hours before the wedding Karen discovers they spelled *happiness* with a *y*."

"Oh man."

"Yeah. Talk about a wedding *totally* ruined."

"So what happened?"

"Her mom and her aunt opened up all the soaps, we're talking a hundred forty-five soaps, and used razors to change the *y*'s to *i*'s."

"No."

"Yes. You look at the soap from our wedding, you'll notice that the *i* is leaning, and has no dot."

"No offense, but I never looked at the soap from your wedding."

"Of course not. Nobody did. Nobody gives a shit about wedding favors. But Karen and her mom and her aunt still talk about it, how they saved the day with their razors."

Marty appeared, towing his and Seth's suitcases.

"Ready, men?" he said.

Big Steve was frowning at his boarding pass.

"Row twenty-six," he said. "That's pretty far back, isn't it?"

"We're all in twenty-six," said Seth.

"Maybe we should try to move closer to the front," said Big Steve.

"Good idea," said Kevin. "Get to Miami a little sooner."

"Maybe we should go through security and find a bar," said Seth.

"You're the groom," said Marty.

They took the escalator to the lower concourse and got into the TSA line. Kevin went first, followed by Big Steve and Marty. After they went through the screening they all turned to watch Seth. This was the first indication he had that something was up. The second was when the TSA agent, a large African-American woman whose name tag read R. WILLIAMS, pointed at his suitcase and said, "Is this your bag?"

"Yes," said Seth.

"I need to search it," she said, picking it up off the baggage carousel.

"OK," said Seth, following Agent Williams and his bag. He heard a snorking sound from the direction of the Groom Posse. Agent Williams hefted the bag onto a table, then put on a pair of blue latex gloves. She opened the bag and, after a few moments of rooting around, pulled out and held up a pinkish, soft rubber object about the size of a football with a dangling electrical cord.

"What is *that*?" said Seth.

"I was going to ask you that," said Agent Williams.

"That's not mine," said Seth.

"This is your bag, right?"

"Yes, but that thing is not mine."

"But it was in your bag."

"But it's not mine."

"I understand that, sir, but it was in your bag."

"But it's *not mine*."

Another agent came over, a thin, prematurely balding man whose tag said W. PITTOWSKI.

"Is there a problem?" he said.

Agent Williams showed him the pink thing. "This was in his bag, but he says it's not his."

"It's not!" said Seth.

Agent Pittowski was peering at the object. "That's a male sex aid," he said.

"A what?" said Agent Williams.

"Artificial vagina," said Agent Pittowski.

Agent Williams dropped the thing. It bounced off the table and rolled, jiggling, across the floor, trailing its cord, like a badly deformed pig having a seizure. Some travelers stopped to look at it.

"I'm sorry," said Agent Williams. "But I ain't touching that."

"That is *not mine*," said Seth. The onlookers' eyes went from the pink thing to Seth, then back to the thing.

"Excuse me," said Marty, stepping forward.

"Who are you?" said Agent Pittowski.

Marty pointed at Seth. "I'm this man's attorney."

"No he's not," said Seth. "He's not even an attorney."

"Well, not *technically*," said Marty. "Not in the sense of practicing law or passing the bar exam. But I do have a hundred and seventeen thousand in tuition debt from a third-tier law school, and by God that should count for *something*."

"He doesn't need a lawyer," said Agent Pittowski. "He needs to pick up his vagina and move along."

"It's not my vagina!" said Seth. The onlooker crowd was growing.

"Do you have any proof that it's his vagina?" said Marty.

"Shut up, Marty," said Seth.

"Sir," Agent Pittowski said to Seth, "if you don't pick it up and move along right now, I'm going to have to detain you."

"He's getting married this weekend," said Marty.

"That is not my problem," said Agent Pittowski.

“It’s *somebody’s* problem,” said Agent Williams, looking at the thing on the floor.

Seth, with a glare at Marty, grabbed his suitcase, picked up the vagina and stalked out of the security area. He went to an overflowing trash can and put the vagina on top of the pile, then turned to face the approaching Groom Posse, festooned with idiotic grins.

“Not funny,” he said.

“Yes! Funny!” said Kevin. He held up his phone. “And soon to be on YouTube.”

“I’ll kill you,” said Seth. “Seriously, I will.”

“Totally worth it,” said Kevin.

A briefcase-carrying, suit-wearing man in his fifties approached the trash can. Looking neither left nor right, he opened his briefcase, put the vagina inside, closed the briefcase and walked briskly away.

“I’m guessing Secretary of Commerce,” said Kevin.

“Well, he’s got himself a nice little unit there,” said Marty. “The Fleshmatic Orgo-Tron, top of the line, with heat *and* pump action. Hardly used.”

“Wait,” said Seth. “You *used* it?”

“Hardly.”

“Jesus,” said Seth, watching the suited man’s back as he disappeared down the concourse.

Kevin said, “The bar is this way.”

The man was telling Laurette to get up, but she was too weak from vomiting; she could not stand, especially not on the wet and slippery deck of the boat, pitching in the turbulent waters of the Gulf Stream.

“GET UP! GET UP!” shouted the man. The crew were Dominicans, and Laurette had trouble understanding their crude, heavily accented Creole. The man grabbed Laurette’s arm and yanked her to her feet so roughly that for a moment she thought she would drop the baby. The thought flashed through her mind: *Maybe it would be best. Maybe we should all die right now in the angry water.* For the hundredth time since she had boarded this wretched boat, she wished she had never listened to her sister in Miami, never trusted these men, never left Port-au-Prince with her babies.

Stephane, her little man, had risen with her and was holding on to her dress. “What’s happening, Mama?” he said.

“It’s all right,” she said. The man was pulling her to the back of the boat. She almost fell, struggling to hold on to the baby and keep Stephane close. “What are you doing?” she said to the man.

“You are getting off here.”

Laurette looked around, seeing only water in every direction.

“No!” she said, her voice rising. “We are nowhere!”

“We are close to Miami.”

"Where is it?" Laurette waved at the horizon. "Where is Miami?"

The man gestured vaguely. "Just over there. But we can't go closer."

"NO!" shouted Laurette. "You said you would take me to my sister! To the meeting place! You promised this!"

"I'm sorry," said the man. "This is not possible."

"How will I find my sister? How?"

The man didn't answer. They had reached the back of the boat. The other men were pulling a rope attached to the tiny beat-up rowboat they had been towing since they left Haiti. Several inches of water sloshed around the bottom of the boat.

"No!" said Laurette. She tried to yank her arm free.

The man tightened his grip. Laurette cried out in pain.

"The current will take you right to Miami," the man said. "You will be there in an hour."

"Please, no," said Laurette. "We will go back with you to Haiti."

"No," said the man, dragging her toward the little boat. "You must get off here."

"NO!" screamed Laurette. "NO, PLEASE!"

The man ignored her. He and the others grabbed Laurette and Stephane and lifted them roughly over the side, into the little boat. It was pitching violently; Laurette fell awkwardly, bumping the baby's head against the side. The baby was screaming now. Stephane was crying. Laurette pulled them both to her. She looked up at the men.

"Please," she said. "They are babies. Please."

The men looked away. The motor rumbled, and the big boat churned away. In a few minutes, it was a tiny dark shape in the distance. Then it was gone.

The little ship pitched up and down in the rough water.

"Mama," said Stephane. "What's going to happen to us?"

Laurette meant to lie to her son, tell him they would be all right. But all that came out, before she could choke it off, was a wail.

The airport bar was full of people sitting alone and staring at screens. Seth had a Grande Margarita; Kevin and Marty each had two. Big Steve had none, having been unable to decide between the Grande and the Supremo. The Supremo featured Patrón tequila, but it also cost two dollars more and Big Steve wasn't sure it would be worth it. In an effort to decide, he had asked the bartender a series of increasingly specific ingredient-related questions, but this line of inquiry came to an abrupt halt when the bartender, who was busy, asked Big Steve if he planned to drink the margarita or use it as an enema.

The flight, miraculously, was on time. Kevin, taking charge, maneuvered the Groom Posse so they got into the boarding line directly behind two attractive women, one blonde and one brunette.

"You ladies headed for Miami?" he said.

The women looked at each other, then at Kevin.

"No," said the brunette. "We just like being in line."

"Good one!" said Kevin, sticking out his hand. "I'm Kevin."

Neither woman stuck out her hand.

"Kevin's married," said Seth.

"She's a lucky woman," said the blonde.

"Who's not going to Miami, as it happens," said Kevin. "No, it's just us four guys, looking for a good time. How about you ladies?"

"No," said the brunette.

"No what?" said Kevin.

"Just generally no," said the brunette.

"My name is Marty," said Marty. "By the way, I'm not married."

"We're lesbians," said the blonde.

"Fine with me," said Marty.

"Are you really?" said Kevin.

"No," said the blonde. "But keep this up and we will be."

"I apologize for my friends," said Seth.

"I bet you do," said the brunette.

They boarded the plane, found their seats. Seth, as groom, got the window; he was next to Kevin, who was still lobbing unsuccessful pickup lines forward, like grenades, across three rows of increasingly annoyed passengers at the blonde and the brunette, seated in row 22. They did not respond, but Kevin persisted until the flight attendant *shushed* him for the safety briefing.

"Kevin," said Seth, "let me ask you something."

"What?" said Kevin.

"What about Karen?"

"Karen?"

"Your wife. Who you're married to. Karen."

"What about her?"

"Do you love her?"

"Of course I love her. She's my wife."

"So how can you do this?"

"Do what?"

"Try to screw every woman you meet."

"Not *every* woman. Ninety-two percent."

"But . . . I mean, how would Karen feel?"

"Karen doesn't know."

"What if she found out?"

"I'd say it was a terrible mistake and I was very sorry and would never do it again."

"And would you mean that?"

"Absolutely not."

"So being married means nothing to you?"

“No, it means I have a person that I love very much and want to raise a family with.”

“And cheat on.”

“Wait, so you think it’ll be different with you and Tina?”

“Yes.”

“So you’re saying if one of those two very hot women sitting up there, let’s say the blonde, if that woman said she wanted to get naked with you, no strings attached, just crazy animal sex that Tina would never find out about, you’d turn her down? You’d say, ‘No thanks, hot blonde with breasts like honeydews, keep your nakedness to yourself, because I’m in a committed relationship’? Is that what you’re saying?”

“That’s what I’m saying, yes.”

“You’re full of shit.”

“No I’m not,” said Seth, and he genuinely believed he wasn’t, although he knew in his heart that if the question had been about the brunette, he might have been.

They drank more on the flight, even Big Steve, who was aided by the fact that there were only two brands of beer available, which meant he was able to make a selection in under five minutes. After two vodka-and-cranberrys, Kevin made one last valiant effort to storm the blonde-brunette beachhead, walking up and handing them a note he’d written on an airsickness bag. He stood waiting as they read it.

The blonde looked up.

“Seriously?” she said, loud enough that several rows’ worth of passengers tuned in to the conversation.

“From the heart,” said Kevin.

“No, I mean, seriously, you don’t know the difference between *y-o-u-r* and *y-o-u-apostrophe-r-e*?”

“It’s a rough draft,” said Kevin.

“Also,” said the brunette, tossing the bag back to Kevin, “there’s no *e* in *horny*.”

Kevin returned to his seat next to Seth. “Bitches,” he said.

“I know!” said Seth. “If women don’t want crude propositions written by illiterates on barf bags, what *do* they want?”

In two hours they were over the vast green muckscape of the Everglades, banking toward the skinny strip of hyperdevelopment where several million South Floridians live close together in nothing remotely approaching harmony. They landed, taxied, parked at the gate. Seth and his Groom Posse joined the line of exiting passengers and shuffled unsteadily out of the plane. In the Jetway they were enveloped by the sweetish aroma of tropical decay that welcomes visitors to Miami the way Mickey Mouse welcomes them to Orlando.

“What’s that smell?” said Marty.

“Miami,” said Seth.

“What, the whole city has mildew?”

“Basically.”

Seth’s phone rang the instant he turned it on. He looked at the screen: Tina. He saw she’d also left six text messages. This was not good. There had been a time when many of Tina’s messages were playful, flirtatious, romantic, even sexual; but in the past few months the vast majority concerned the ongoing and infinitely complex crisis that was the seating chart for the reception.

“Hello?” he said.

“Are you in Miami?” said Tina.

“Yes. We just la—”

“Come to Baggage Claim *right now*.”

“You’re still in the airport?” Tina had flown in on an earlier flight with her bridal party; she was supposed to be at the hotel by now.

“I got delayed,” she said. “By this *stupid dog*.”

“A dog?”

“Seth, it alerted on my dress!”

“It what?”

“They’re saying I have to . . . Wait a minute. Don’t touch that! You’re going to ruin it!”

“Tina, what . . .”

“Just get down here, OK?”

“OK, but what’s happening? Which Baggage Claim? Hello?”

Tina was gone.

“What was that about?” said Marty.

"I don't know. Tina said a dog did something on her dress."

"Like, *peed* on it?"

"I don't know. I have to go to Baggage Claim."

He heard her from twenty-five yards away. Tina had a strong, confident voice. It was the reason Seth had met her in the first place, on the grounds of the Washington Monument. He'd heard this woman's voice talking through a bullhorn and he'd wondered if the owner of the voice was hot and it turned out she was. She was leading a protest either for or against something, Seth could not remember which. He had stuck around and managed to meet her afterward. She had believed then, and still did believe, that he was there for the protest. He had never told her that he was merely passing through on his way home from playing Ultimate Frisbee.

Tina was a fast-rising, plugged-in lawyer in a D.C. firm that specialized in social causes and getting on television. She cared passionately about disadvantaged people, all of them. She was intelligent and beautiful and had a killer body. Men wanted and pursued her; it was a source of widespread bafflement that Seth had managed to win her hand. Seth himself did not understand it. He knew he was fairly good-looking; he'd been told that by enough women. But Tina had plenty other attractive men after her and many of them possessed desirable qualities that he did not.

Employability, for example. Upon graduating from college, Seth had discovered that he was fundamentally unequipped to do anything that anybody was willing to pay serious money for. His degree was in marketing, and he'd earned a solid B average, but the harsh truth was, he had never actually marketed anything, and neither had any of the professors who had taught him what he knew about marketing.

After college he'd gone to Washington, telling himself that there were many good reasons for him to look for work there aside from the obvious and pathetic truth, which was that he could live with his parents. This led to two years of unemployment and humiliating underemployment, including a stint handing out flyers at a mall for a twenty percent discount at a teeth-whitening booth.

It was during this stint that he found himself handing a flyer to

Jennifer Claremont, whom he had dated for two years in high school. She went on to graduate *summa cum laude* from the University of Michigan and was midway through Stanford medical school. By the time Seth had realized who she was, she had the flyer in hand. He quickly assured her that her teeth did not need whitening and in fact looked great. This was followed by a hideously awkward pause-filled conversation during which they avoided any discussion of what Seth was doing and agreed, at least four times, that it was really great to see each other. When they finally managed to break apart, they walked briskly in opposite directions, neither looking back. Seth proceeded directly to a trash can, into which he dumped all of his flyers. He then drove straight home from the mall, went to his room and played Grand Theft Auto 3 (Where Lunatics Prosper) for seven straight hours.

He finally found permanent work, of sorts, at a large beltway public-relations firm, where he was assigned to the Social Media Mobilization Team, which sounded a lot more impressive than what the team members called themselves, namely, tweet whores. Seth's job was to try to generate buzz for clients by posting Facebook updates and sending out enthusiastic tweets under various Twitter screen names. He had tweeted enthusiastically about a wide range of products, including forklifts, energy bars, and douche. He was paid a salary in the low thirties, augmented by incentive bonuses based on total followers, retweets, etc. In a typical week, Seth's bonus was around \$20, which was why, when he met Tina, he was still living with his parents.

Tina, who came from money—buckets of it—had her own place in Georgetown. She was dating an attorney who looked like Jude Law, had argued before the Supreme Court and had been named one of Washington's most eligible bachelors by two different glossy magazines. And yet when Seth asked Tina that day near the monument—she glowing radiantly from bullhorning on behalf of or against something, he sweating from Ultimate Frisbee—if she'd like to meet for coffee sometime, she'd said, yes, as long as it wasn't a Starbucks. Seth didn't know then—he still didn't really know—*why* it couldn't be a Starbucks. This, he would learn, was one of many principled stands

Tina took as a consumer. It seemed to Seth that at least half of the products in any given supermarket offended her.

They met at a coffee shop specializing in coffee that did not take advantage of the disadvantaged. She asked him what he did and he told her he was in marketing. Via skillful lawyerly probing, she quickly determined what he actually *did*, then whipped out her iPhone and started looking up his tweets.

“Wow,” she said, reading the screen.

“So,” said Seth. “What kind of law do you . . .”

““WomanFresh,”” she read. ““Because you never know when somebody unexpected will drop in.”” She looked up at Seth and said, “Drop in?”

“Hey,” said Seth, “that got retweeted.”

She stared at him for several long seconds, during which he was sure she was about to walk out of his life forever.

Instead, she started laughing. She had a deep, hearty laugh, very unladylike. She insisted on reading all of his WomanFresh tweets. Each one struck her as more hilarious than the one before, to the point where it took her nearly thirty seconds to gasp out, “When you need to feel confident down there.”

“Confident?” she said. “*Down there?*”

“What,” said Seth. “You don’t call it that?”

She couldn’t answer; she was weeping, fighting for breath, waving her arm in a *Stop it, you’re killing me* motion.

He decided, right then, that he was in love with her.

They went out again. Then again and again. He sent her flowers. She formally broke up with Jude Lawyer. He started attempting to become informed about current events other than sports. She followed him on Twitter. On their fifth date, she invited him to spend the night. At a critical physical moment he made a joke about dropping in, which gave her such a case of the giggles that he thought he’d blown his opportunity. But it turned out he had not.

Two months later, he moved in with her, having concluded that the embarrassment of being provided for by his girlfriend was more

bearable than the embarrassment of living with his mom and dad. She got to know his friends and found them to be amusing but not of long-term interest. He got to know her friends and found they ranged from serious to deadly serious, with tendencies toward assholery. For their part, they found Seth to be unimpressive. As did Tina's parents, who viewed Seth as unworthy to house-sit their pets, let alone marry their daughter.

Seth basically agreed with their assessment of him. One night at a restaurant Tina got into a lengthy, passionate argument with her lawyer friends about the Commerce Clause. Seth went to the men's room and hastily, in a stall, took out his iPhone and read the Wikipedia article about the Commerce Clause, but he still didn't see why it was a big deal. He spent the evening sitting silent among the brains, feeling like an entirely different organ, or an unusually large hemorrhoid.

When they got home that night, he asked Tina why she wanted to be with him.

"Because I love you," she said.

"But *why*?"

"You make me laugh."

"So does Danny DeVito."

"Yes, but he's taken."

He tried many times, but never really got a better answer than that. For whatever reason, Tina was attracted to him, and for whatever other reason, she was not interested in explaining specifically why. Eventually he gave up trying to figure it out. His feeling was, if this beautiful, smart woman wanted to be with him, why ask why? And so, after a year of cohabitation, he had asked her to marry him, and to the poorly concealed dismay of her friends and parents, she had said yes.

In their first few happy, innocent hours as an engaged couple, they talked of a small, informal wedding, just immediate family and close friends. When Seth told Kevin about this, Kevin snorted beer out his nose.

"What," said Seth.

"Really?" said Kevin. "Small and informal?"

“Yes,” said Seth. “That’s what we want.”

“That’s what *you* want.”

“Tina wants it, too.”

“Tina *says* she wants it. She might even *believe* she wants it. But that’s not what you’re going to have. Not once her mom starts reminding her about all the second cousins whose children’s weddings her mom got invited to. Not once Tina starts reading the bride magazines. And *definitely* not once she meets with the wedding planner.”

“We’re not having a wedding planner.”

“If you don’t have a wedding planner,” Kevin said, “I will get on my knees and personally blow you at a major intersection during rush hour. Because, trust me, you *will* have a wedding planner. You’re already caught in the force field of the wedding industry Death Star, my friend. It has you in the tractor beam and it’s sucking you in. There’s no escape. You will also have a floral installation artist.”

“You mean a florist?”

“No, I mean a floral installation artist.”

“What the hell is that?”

Kevin snorted again.

Seth now knew what a floral installation artist was: It was a florist, only way more expensive. He and Tina had one whose name, as the payee on checks, was Warren Kramdsen, but who went professionally by Raul—no last name, just “Raul.” They also had a wedding planner, whose legal name was now Blaze Gear, it having been legally changed from Gretchen Wentworth. Blaze had two assistants, Traci and Tracee.

Under the relentless guidance of these professionals, Seth and Tina’s small informal wedding for close friends and family underwent wedding bloat, mutating into a large formal affair that would be attended by many people neither of them knew. Seth objected at first, but he backed down when he realized that Kevin had been right: Tina *wanted* a big wedding.

“Just go along,” advised Kevin. “Here’s how you look at it. Tina has a disease. Bride’s Disease. They all get it. There’s no cure, except having a wedding. Until she has one, she’s going to be basically insane. She’s

going to demand that you give a shit about silver patterns. Just hang in there until the wedding and then it'll all go away and she'll be basically normal again, except for sometimes making people watch the video."

Seth took Kevin's advice: He went along. Over the past year, he'd spent countless hours looking with a frown of attempted interest at place settings and cakes and calligraphy samples (they finally settled on Bickham Copperplate, with swash capitals). He did his best to stay connected with what he thought of as Real Tina, who was trapped inside Bride Tina; he saw glimpses of her, and sometimes even got Real Tina to laugh at Bride Tina. But she hadn't laughed much in recent months, and now that the wedding was at hand, she hardly laughed at all.

She was definitely not laughing now. Seth couldn't yet see her, as he trotted toward the baggage carousel: a crowd of onlookers was blocking his view. But he definitely could hear her. She was using her bull-horn voice.

"ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE FOURTH AMENDMENT?" she was asking somebody, evidently rhetorically. "CAN YOU MORONS EVEN COUNT TO FOUR?"

Seth, trailing his carry-on suitcase and leaving the Groom Posse behind, started running toward his bride.