

Meet Sydney Bennett

Repeat the mantra, Sydney. Breathe. “Good enough is not nearly as wonderful as perfect, but it is good enough.” How often had my mother said those words to me? Countless times. She would always look at me with her warm brown eyes, smile reassuringly and squeeze my hand. During a particularly traumatic period in high school, she went as far as framing the words for me and asked me to read them (and take them to heart) at least once a day. Though I believed in the truth of these words, on this day as I had on every other day, one thought kept occurring to me. Shouldn’t your wedding day be the one day where perfection is expected?

I had tried to stay calm, but things kept going wrong and I REALLY don’t like it when things go wrong. I am definitely not a “roll with it” type of person. From a very early age, any divergence from the plan I had formulated in my head was enough to send me into a tailspin. I thought that if anything happened outside of what I had planned for, I would lose control. And losing control was not something that I enjoyed. I therefore planned for every possible scenario and worried obsessively that I had not planned enough. My father had always told me that if worrying were a sport, I would be the champion of the world.

But, I digress. Let’s get back to the problem at hand. It all began with my wedding party. In my infinite wisdom, I had asked six women to be my bridesmaids. My older sister and best friend, Kate; my sister-in-law, Zoe, and four of my closest friends. All six had gladly accepted the role, but a week before the wedding all hell broke loose. First, my friend Maya came down with mono. Who has SHE been kissing lately? I saw her every day and the identity of the infector was a complete mystery to me. Three days before the wedding, my friend Amanda got the chicken pox. I’m sorry, but who didn’t get that as a kid? The parents in the neighborhood where I grew up actually took their kids to “parties” to make sure that they had the chicken pox when they were young. Then the day before the wedding, my friend Holly broke her leg in four places and had to be immobilized for an unforeseen amount of time. She has yet to tell me exactly what she was doing when she broke her leg, but I get the feeling that it was highly embarrassing. Seriously??? THREE bridesmaids down? Was this a bad omen for anyone involved in our wedding party? Focus, Sydney. No problem; Kate and I would reformat the ceremony along with the new bridesmaid/groomsmen ratio.

Then the breathtakingly beautiful gown that I had planned to get married in was MISPLACED two days before the wedding. The fitted bodice was intricately beaded and the full tulle skirt hung perfectly. When I wore it, I felt like a princess, as every woman should on her wedding day. The hotel manager told me that he was extremely sorry that my dress had been misplaced (um...lost!) and would be happy to put in a good word for me at the costume rental shop down the street. He felt that the Juliet gown would give “an exciting period feel” to our “incredibly lackluster” wedding. I informed him, as my fiancé held my arms back that he would have a much better idea of what sorry was once I was through with him. He seemed to be completely nonplussed, leading me to assume that he had dealt with many a bride in his time. I sat in the hotel lobby in a state of shock for an hour before I was able to move. I closed my eyes and tried to slow my breathing, but my mind wouldn’t stop racing. Was this really happening to me? What had I done to deserve this? And most importantly, what in the hell was I going to wear?

As usual Kate came to the rescue. She pulled her exquisite wedding dress out of its protective cocoon and offered it to me. I felt incredibly relieved and incredibly guilty at the same time, as Kate was constantly coming to my rescue. Older and wiser was an understatement when it came to her; she was perfection personified. I both loved and hated her for it. How I could I ever live up to the standard that she had set? It felt like an impossible task. And as sweet as the offer of her dress was, if I wore it I would have the impossible task of wearing a long sleeved satin gown in the sweltering July heat. Kate's decision to get married in December meant that I had the choice of sweating in her perfect dress or sweating in Juliet's velvet monstrosity. I thanked my sister profusely and suggested padding the dress with lots of tissues. I took a deep breath and started to relax. Crisis averted.

Unfortunately, my relief was short lived. During the course of our rehearsal dinner, my mother and my aunt decided to have the biggest fight of their fifty-seven year relationship. My aunt began talking about her daughter's wedding and drawing somewhat harsh comparisons to my wedding. My mother, of course, took great offense to my aunt's statements that her daughter's wedding was smaller, more tasteful and thankfully had far fewer "foreign" people. My aunt then pointed out that she was so glad that I had finally found someone who would marry me (even if he was a foreigner) as she thought that I was going to be an old maid. That's right, an old maid at the ripe old age of twenty-seven! Her daughter, Cynthia, she reminded us, was married at the age of twenty-two; a far more appropriate age for women to capitalize on their childbearing years.

After a few glasses of wine, the conversation then degenerated into an argument over who chose the tiger lily china pattern first for their wedding registry, a bitter pill that my aunt has never gotten over since my mother got married six months before she did. I knew this wasn't going to end well. That was when the shrieking and hair pulling started. My older brother, Charlie, and Kate's perfect husband, Nick, had to separate them as any "discussions" they had which were accompanied by liquor usually ended up getting rather physical. What a great impression my family was making on my fiancé's relatives! My father, of course, was no help at all. He sat there, taking it all in, and laughed until he cried. My fiancé assured me that passion of any kind was appreciated by his family, but I think that he was just trying to keep his bride from the edge of hysteria the night before her wedding. He stroked my hair gently and reminded me that in two days we would be on a plane to Paris. Focusing on taking a trip I have dreamt about for my entire life with the man I have dreamt about for my entire life allowed me to obtain a modicum of sanity. I should have known that it wouldn't last long...

The next day as I was preparing to leave my hotel room, already sweating profusely in my borrowed wedding dress, I was handed a bouquet of bright green carnations. You heard me. Bright green. Not, let's say, a shade lighter than a jaunty kelly green. We are talking BRIGHT green. My heart stopped. What happened to my orchids and roses? I chose such beautiful shades of....something, but not green! Why couldn't I remember? I ran out to the balcony to check on the flowers at the wedding site below. They were all the same scary shade of green. The terrace looked like a really bad St. Patrick's Day hangover. My hands began to shake and I noticed the green dye dripping onto the front of my dress. Kate was going to kill me! I closed my eyes and tried to will the panic out of my body. Could this day get any worse? Crap! My father had always told me NEVER to ask that question, because things can always get worse. I wish that I had listened...

As my mother and I approached the top of the staircase from which we would descend to the ceremony, the heel of my shoe broke. Fortunately, I did not fall and make an absolutely unforgettable trip down the aisle. Unfortunately, all those in attendance of our wedding (as well as the wedding on the lower terrace) heard me swear at this occurrence. I guess that this final detail was just the last straw for my strained wedding day psyche. The only thing that made me smile was the cackle my father let out following my outburst as he waited for my mother and me at the bottom of the stairs.

So there I was, standing at the top of the staircase with my mother, wondering if all of these occurrences were a sign. How could my wedding day be this far from perfect? Was “good enough” really good enough on your wedding day? Was it really possible for this many things to go wrong in one day? My disjointed thoughts began to spiral at a fevered pitch. Did my aunt and her daughter hatch a plan to ruin my wedding? Was Maya in on it? Why didn’t I recognize most of my wedding guests? Where had I met my foreign fiancé? I was starting to hyperventilate. Was this really the man that I was meant to marry? Why was I having trouble remembering his name or what he looked like?

As I tried to slow my heart rate, I heard a faint beeping in the distance. What in the hell was that? I started to seethe with rage as I realized that the fire alarm was going off inside the hotel lobby. In just a moment, all of the hotel guests were going to be evacuated into the middle of my wedding. I starting shaking my head. I can’t do this!!! I threw down my soggy bouquet and began to sob. My mother grabbed my arm and started shaking me, gently at first, but then more urgently. I kept trying to break her hold, but she appeared to be freakishly strong for a woman in her sixties. I could feel that something was wrong, but couldn’t quite put my finger on it...

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