

The Wedding

By T. E. Stazyk

It was one of those perfect weddings. You know. The blue sky and warm breeze. The garish rented tuxedos. The fancy limo. The slightly off color toast by the best man. The flowers. The cake. The mothers of the bride and groom in dresses specially made for the occasion and in which they somehow didn't look quite right. The incipient romances among the young guests. The baby screaming during the ceremony.

As I say, it was a perfect wedding. Sort of the Platonic form of what a wedding should be. But there was something that made this particular wedding even more special--it was the linking in connubial bliss of Brittany Chelsea Brodie and Tyler Alexander Merriman.

To you and I, casual observers, it looked like a scene which had been, and probably would continue to be, played out thousands, no, millions of times. And like other casual observers, we might smile indulgently at the image of high hopes and lofty promises statistically more likely than not to be dashed or broken. Nevertheless, on such a perfect day, so full of promise, our inclination is to wish the couple well, hoping that they beat the odds.

At the same time, we might wonder if the groom had given enough thought to the dictum that girls turn out like their mothers when we observe the way the bride's mother's bulk threatens the structural integrity of the folding chair she has engulfed. We might wonder how well the bride knows her new spouse as we overhear the groom and one of the ushers discussing various attributes of the female wedding guests and their inertial potential in an alcohol and testosterone fuelled philosophical discussion while crossing streams in the men's room.

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But that shouldn't divert us from how special this wedding truly is because of the essential uniqueness of the day's two protagonists. You see, at least as far as Mr. Brodie and Mrs. Terrano, (formerly Mrs. Brodie), and to a lesser extent, Mr. Merriman and Mrs. Lobotsky, (formerly Mrs. Merriman) were concerned, the coruscating bride and smirking groom played a fundamental role in various natural phenomena, such as the sun rising in the east, the rotation of mother earth upon its axis and the rising and falling of the tides.

Incidentally, the wedding arrangements were made perhaps even more platonically representative as a result of a long period of sustained ugliness arising out debates as to which set of "parents" (and concomitant siblings) would take which roles in the various matrimonial rituals such as sitting at the head table. It was rumoured that permanent damage had been done to some relationships. But exploring that topic is best left for another time.

As for the bride, from the day of her birth – make that conception – Brittany Chelsea appeared to have been singled out as a special gift to the human race. Although Mr. Brodie's earnings and savings were somewhat modest, no expense was spared on things Brittany. Mr. Brodie complained to Mrs. Brodie that he couldn't find the crib under the sprawl of stuffed animals and toys in the room. He further claimed that even if he could find the crib, approaching it was impossible because of the forest of mobiles depending from the ceiling. There were stars and moons, Winnie the Pooh, fairies, various aircraft and mythical beasts such as unicorns. Even Mrs. Brodie's mother, who was a major investor in Brittany Enterprises thought that the room looked "a little busy."

But Mrs. Brodie was undeterred by such japes and she knew that even Mr. Brodie was being largely facetious when he complained, for he too couldn't wait for the advent of Brittany. After the ultrasound scan proved to everyone's satisfaction that the new arrival would in fact be Brittany rather than Sky--Mrs. Brodie's name of choice for a boy--the physical plant acquisitions took on a decidedly feminine cast. Before she was even born, Brittany could have

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populated a small village with the dolls in her collection. And they performed, collectively, if not individually, virtually every bodily function. Mr. Brodie wisely counselled Mrs. Brodie to set some of the more educational dolls aside until little Brittany might have more interest in their arcane capabilities.

There was, by the way, a rather unpleasant incident associated with the ultrasound test. Mr. Brodie took the scan printout to his office to show it to his co-workers. Most of them politely oohed and ahed as he pointed out various parts of Brittany's anatomy.

"Look, there's her little hand."

"Awww, how sweet!"

"And this is her little head."

"How cute!!"

"My wife thinks this is her little toesy, but I think it's her little nosey."

"Just darling!"

"They say she is very well developed for her age."

"You must be very proud."

"We sure are."

After almost of week of being invited to admire the now dog-eared black and white version of Brittany, Mr. Brodie's, boss, Mr. Pangero, decided that office productivity was being impaired by excessive Brittany adulation. Mr. Pangero was very well liked by his bosses, but most of the people who worked for him thought he was a very mean man and he proved it yet again when he came upon Mr. Brodie showing Brittany to a Federal Express delivery man in the front lobby.

"Brodie! How many times to I have to tell you. I don't see any hand. Put that thing away and get back to work. Next time I see you flashing that thing, it's going in the shredder."

Mr. Brodie clutched the image to his chest in horror. How could Mr. Pangero not appreciate it? Then, moving toward Mr. Pangero, he extended the

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icon, intending to enlighten his boss on how to hold it so that he could see the little hand.

Instead of having a look, the mean man simply pointed toward the office, "Back to work, I said."

Mr. Brodie told Mrs. Brodie about what had happened at work and they discussed it at length. Both were shocked that anyone could feel that way about Brittany. After some time, they concluded that Mr. Pangero must be jealous because he didn't have a beautiful child like Brittany and that if Mr. Brodie were only to explain more about how special Brittany was, Mr. Pangero would no doubt come to appreciate her as much as they did. A few weeks later, however, Mr. Brodie was transferred to another department, so he didn't have a chance to convince Mr. Pangero.

Mrs. Brodie was having similar experiences with her co-workers. More than once, Mrs. Brodie came home in tears, telling her husband that her boss had told her to spend less time talking about her doctor appointments, prenatal classes, Lamaze classes, bladder dynamics and Brittany's progress. And that it was not necessary for her to announce that Brittany had kicked or moved during a staff meeting. Together they would ponder how mean and unreasonable some people could be.

Like many first babies, Brittany was late, but that was not a problem. Mrs. Brodie luxuriated in the solicitous attention she got from every one, secure in the knowledge that when labor started, she would be quickly sedated and Brittany would be revealed to the world through a scarless incision.

Her few short days in the birthing suite at the local hospital were probably some of the happiest of Mrs. Brodie's life. She bonded with Brittany as only mothers and newborns can, and received guests in the quiet, comfortable suite that was the envy of her friends and the result of the largesse of Mr. Brodie's group insurance policy.

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But dwelling on the suite takes away attention from the guest of honor. Little Brittany was, according to all accounts, the most beautiful, intelligent, well-behaved, perfect little child to have ever been born at that hospital. Mr. and Mrs. Brodie were fond of pointing out to visitors how alert and intelligent she seemed, how dexterously she wiggled her fingers and how discreetly she cried, how angelically she slumbered and how quickly she came to recognize them, and how she seemed to be able to differentiate the nurses who came to check on Brittany's delicate little vital signs and to ask Mr. Brodie to let Mrs. Brodie and Brittany rest instead of continually videoing their every action. The only thing missing from the entire birthing process were celestial phenomena.

Mr. Brody was completely enraptured by Brittany and the only thing that distracted his attention from her daily activities was the fact that he had again been transferred at work and needed to learn a new job.

Not surprisingly, as she grew, Brittany lived up to her early promise. She excelled in everything. In kindergarten, she was clearly the best ballet dancer, best swimmer, best shortstop and best violin player. Even at that young age, she was accreting honors, being named "Junior Environmentalist of the Year," for her discerning collage demonstrating matters of environmental concern to six year olds.

It is a tribute to Brittany's strength of character that she did not become bitter and jaded by the petty attacks from jealous detractors that her success spawned. For example, Jennifer Ragland's mother challenged whether Brittany's winning entry was in fact environmentally friendly based on the CFCs that must have been emitted when Mr. Brodie sprayed it with a plastic coating to seal it against the elements for posterity. Further, he had used highly volatile adhesives to glue the various objects he had collected for Brittany to the PVC mounting board he had gotten from the print shop at the office along with the lettering stencils that Mrs. Brodie had affixed under Brittany's supervision.

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Mr. and Mrs. Brodie also chose to ignore the hostilities, preferring to focus on the positive and remembering how Brittany had clapped her hands with glee and declared, "I'm learning so much," as she watched her parents assembling the collage.

But for the most part, kindergarten served as a template for the rest of Brittany's school life. She was always at the top of her class academically. She was the lead cheerleader. When the drama club did *West Side Story*, she was Maria. When they did *Jesus Christ Superstar* she was Mary Magdalene. She led the debating team to national honors. That's just the way it was. She was class president and homecoming queen and Mr. and Mrs. Brodie were very proud.

Unfortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Brodie were no longer living together when Brittany graduated from high school. In what might have been a dress rehearsal for her wedding, they their differences on hold and hosted a gala graduation party for her. After all, it wasn't every day someone graduated at the top of their class and was accepted into college with a full scholarship

Brittany majored in sociology in college and she learned a lot. Although she wasn't quite sure what career she might pursue, she was without a doubt well educated. She knew the type of car she wanted to drive, where she wanted to live, what type of computer and cell phone she needed, where she wanted to travel, the carbohydrate counts for virtually everything edible and which personal care products to avoid because of sodium lauryl sulfate. Again she graduated at the top of her class and although her professors encouraged her to continue her studies, she wanted to get into the job market. She took a job in the marketing department of Monumental Bancshares, an international financial services company. Her primary task was to analyze demographic data in an attempt to determine which financial services the bank's customers were using. This data was mapped onto the fee structure for the various services so that the bank could serve its customers better. Brittany was very committed to customer service and took her job very seriously.

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After college, Brittany had moved back in with her mother, and with a respectable income for someone with a bachelor's degree--and few expenses because her mother was providing room and board and subsidizing her transportation--she settled into a rich and rewarding young professional lifestyle. Her biggest expenses were clothes, gym fees, fast food and movies.

At a club one night she met Tyler Alexander Merriman. Brittany had been dating since she was nine, so she was no stranger to the vagaries of relationship building, but Tyler was different. In high school, Brittany's suitors had been primarily football and basketball players because it was de rigueur for the leader of the cheerleader squad to date the captain of either the football or basketball team, depending on which team was better. Brittany accepted the Darwinian inevitability of this social code with good grace, even though she thought that quarterback Brock Smadzynski was much cuter than center Drake Stephanopolous, and therefore wished the football team had won All State instead of the basketballers. In college, Brittany widened her horizons and dated upper classmen and graduate students who appreciated her intellectual gifts more than her classmates did.

But Tyler was something entirely new for her. He was just out of law school and was working with a big firm. He seemed to work all the time, but when they were together, it was magic. He knew the best way to use all the machines at the gym for maximum benefit with least amount of effort. He had a great car, had perfect fashion sense, made a lot of money and was funny. Tyler would make Brittany laugh when he would make fun of the waiters or waitresses in the nice restaurants he would take her to. If the server became upset, Tyler would withhold their tip because they "needed to get a sense of humor." Brittany was impressed with his sense of social responsibility.

He was so witty, but more important, he was clearly going places and he was, as her mother put it, *gorgeous*.

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One of the reasons Tyler and Brittany got along so well was that their backgrounds were very similar. Although they had different values – Brittany thought the world’s greatest ills were prejudice, child abuse and whaling, while Tyler was convinced that the welfare system was ruining the country--they were remarkably compatible. Tyler had grown up in a neighborhood similar to Brittany’s and, like Brittany, his parents had split up when he was just entering high school. But unlike Brittany, who stayed with her mother, Tyler and his brother Jeremiah stayed with their father.

Although Tyler was a good student, he and Jeremiah were well known to the local police and on several occasions they were brought home in a squad car after being caught spray painting their personal logos on peoples’ fences or breaking antennas off parked cars. When that happened they would face the music as Mr. Merriman would assert his parental authority and tell them not to do it again. In retrospect, however, it was a minor miracle that Tyler and Jeremy survived their childhood, because lawn darts weren’t banned until they were in their early teens.

Tyler and Brittany had been seeing each other for almost a year when both of them started thinking about whether they might have a future together. Mrs. Brodie had given Tyler her unconditional approval and served effectively as an unappointed, and perhaps not totally unwelcome, Tyler lobby.

“So how’s everything going with you and Mr. Eleven?”

“Mother, I wish you wouldn’t call him that. It’s so sexist and obsolete.”

“What do you mean? He’s got looks, he’s got money, he’s a gentleman with a future. You could do a whole lot worse.”

“My relationship with Tyler has nothing to do with physical appearances and materialism.”

“Honey, I hate to disappoint you but that’s really about all there is. Like what do you do, quote Shakespeare to each other?”

“No, Mother. You know we’re not religious.”

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Mrs. Brody rolled her eyes. Sometimes she wondered how an honor student could not know so many things.

But Mrs. Brodie was not concerned. Brittany would tell her mother that there was no need to learn “stuff” because it was all on the Internet whenever she needed it anyway. And Brittany did have skills Mrs. Brodie could never acquire. She could text message faster than Mrs. Brodie could type. She knew what she had to know to get ahead in today’s world. She was way ahead of her mother when it came to figuring out which calling plan was most cost-effective, which broadband provider was best and which emoticons to put into an e-mail to just *perfectly* capture what she was trying to say.

Yes, Mrs. Brodie reflected, it was unfair to judge Brittany by her own antiquated standards. While as a young girl, Mrs. Brodie had been thrilled at the footage of the first astronauts walking on the moon, Brittany had shown her incontrovertible evidence she had found on the Internet proving that it had never happened. It was important to let go of old misinformation, she thought, and if Brittany thought that Mozart was a form of painting, it didn’t seem to be doing her any harm.

In spite of what Brittany thought was excessive pressure from her mother, she and Tyler found themselves discussing their future with increasing frequency. Tyler was anxious to get married because he wanted to start a family. Brittany, alarmed that some of her friends had actually gotten married before she did, and worried that her biological clock was ticking and that people would call her an old maid, was ready. When Tyler proposed to her that Christmas it was almost anticlimactic.

There was no reason not to get married. She was twenty-four, loved her career and had a bright future. She knew she had what it takes to rise through the ranks and shatter the glass ceiling. Like Tyler, she wanted a big family and the thought of motherhood suffused her with a warm glow of fulfillment. She simply *loved* little babies. Her mother warned her that if she had more than one

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baby she would not be able to devote full time attention to it, the way Mr. and Mrs. Brodie had been able to do for her, but that didn't concern Brittany. Her company provided twenty-four hour day care so she could return to work as soon as she was out of the hospital. Tyler told her that he didn't want their babies in the same day care as those of the Monumental Bancshares tellers and data entry clerks and promised to see if his firm had a day care service for children of professional executive parents. To Brittany, this confirmed her mother's frequent observation that she couldn't do much better than Tyler so there didn't seem to be any reason not to get married.

And that is how we got to the beautiful wedding on the beautiful spring day, so full of promise for Brittany and Tyler and the beautiful children they will soon be raising. And so full of promise for the development and perfection of the human race.