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Nebraska's Wedding Crasher

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 Nebra9a's Wedding Crasher

LINCOLN, NEB. LAST summer I attended more than a dozen wedding receptions they were either hosted in the auditorium of my bathroom. This was not by choice. In the aftermath of my divorce, I moved to Lincoln Nebraska, and the idea of "starting over" in my head. Of course this required renting a fancy apartment that had nothing in common with the suburban house my ex-husband and I had just put on the market.

The one I found was gorgeous (20-foot ceilings!) and quirky (it used to be the federal building - I'm living in what used to be the city's mailroom!) and seemingly perfect for the young, hip, professional single person I was turning into. And it was perfect, until the first weekend I was there. That's when the weddings started.

My building thinks of itself as Lincoln's premier wedding venue. I was not told this when I signed the lease. A glitch of duct work sends the sounds of every single party straight through the exhaust fan of my apartment's bathroom, so loud and clear that I can hear the names of everyone in the wedding party as they are announced - not just in the bathroom, but from the living room. I can hear when people are clapping, can hear the claps as individual sonic events: I can almost always distinguish the names of everyone in the wedding party. I know because I started going to the cake. I considered it fair compensation for hearing "Baby Got Back" twice a weekend and having to ask Taylor/Tyler to talk somewhere else. From my building was host to a wedding fair.

About a third of the time with these weddings, there is a moment deep into the reception when the D.J. stops the party to say that the groom would like to dedicate a special song to his bride, and that song is almost always Sir-Mix-A-Lot's "Baby Got Back."

This, too, has happened several times: A bridesmaid and her boyfriend or a groomsman and his girlfriend stumble downstairs ever leaving the common doorway is a safe place to sit and have the conversation she needs to have with him and the median age of the people involved is named Taylor or Tyler. In each of these instances, Taylor/Tyler wants to know where this is going, and her mate partner is very confused as to why they have to talk about this right then when they were not even five minutes ago having a great time on the dance floor at their big sister/brother's wedding reception.

The girl every time has been in tears, her careful eye makeup obliterated, face patchy with red. Both have been drinking; their words are slurred, the points and evidence they each try to bring up poorly argued. I can hear their entire conversation word for word, from my bedroom, as clear as if they were in bed with me.

The cake at these weddings is pretty basic. I know because I started going to eat the cake. I considered it fair compensation for hearing "Baby Got Back" kept playing. I deserved cake.

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At the wedding fair, I confronted one of the D.J.s - the cheesiest looking one, who'd set up all his lights and was using a microphone even though it wasn't necessary. He was why I was really there. He was the one filling my bathroom with a cacophony of reminders that lots of people were in love and happy, reminding me that I, too, was a type, a sad little rat scurrying around the fringes of a wedding reception, picking at leftover cake in an effort to throw myself against the glass jar wall of my new life. The life of a divorced woman who suddenly found the institution of marriage troubling but who didn't want to be that type and so started doing this unique version of crashing weddings that was actually not unique at all.

"Do you do a lot of weddings in this building?" I asked.

"Oh, yeah, yeah, I do most of them, actually. I'm in high demand.""That's great," I said. "Do you realize that everyone on the west side of this building can hear every word you say inside their apartments?"

"Interesting," he said to me. "You say the same thing at every wedding," I said. "Sometimes you even play the same songs in the same order;" I turned around, and whether I looked pretty much exactly the same.

At this point "Crocodile Rock" came on over his speakers. "Whoa, that's weird," he said to me.

"You say the same thing at every wedding," I said. "Sometimes you even play the same songs in the same order;" I turned around, and whether I looked pretty much exactly the same.

"The Mason jar thing is so over," another vendor told me. My mouth full of bacon-wrapped dates, I asked what, then, is the new thing. "Industrial Modern or Bohemian Classic," she added. "We're seeing a lot of unique things come out of those themes."

I overheard vendors asking brides the same questions and receiving the same excitement when the women said that whatever they did, they wanted it to be unique. Yet all the receptions I've witnessed in this building so far - despite every bride's best efforts - looked pretty much exactly the same.

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There is nothing like having a wedding D.J. ignore you to the tune of "Crocodile Rock" to make you realize how different your life is from what you thought it would be.

Behind me, a runway show was starting to the tune of Pitbull's "Fireball." I turned around, and whether I liked it or not, they shimmied: a gaggle of young Nebraska women turned into princesses, each floating by me to the strains of Pitbull's "Fireball." I turned around, and whether I liked it or not, they shimmied: a gaggle of young Nebraska women turned into princesses, each floating by me to the strains of Pitbull's "Fireball."