Double Wedding

Patricia Scanlan

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'Let's have a double wedding!' Carol Logan burst out impulsively, brown eyes sparkling with giddy anticipation.

Oh no! Jessica Kennedy's stomach lurched as she gazed at her friend with undisguised dismay. A double wedding with Carol and Gary was the last thing she wanted.

'Hey, that's not a bad idea,' Gary, her friend's fiancé, approved. 'What do you think, you guys?'

'I suppose it's an option.' Mike, Jessica's boyfriend, eyed her quizzically.

'I don't know,' Jessica demurred, privately raging with him. Surely Mike would know that she wouldn't want a double wedding.

'Oh come on, Jessie, it would be fun, we could invite all our friends and have a great bash and split the cost between us,' Carol urged enthusiastically. Jessica could see she had the bit between her teeth. She knew what lay behind her friend's proposal and she felt a surge of resentment that her friend could be so self-centred as to hijack her and Mike's wedding for her own purposes.

Nip it in the bud now! she told herself sternly, wishing she wasn't such a wimp. She wasn't good at drawing her boundaries, as her cousin, best friend and great adviser, Katie, was always telling her. Katie'd freak when she heard this. She and Carol didn't get on at all.

'Er . . . I don't know, Carol. It won't be for ages yet, and besides, Mum's really looking forward to organizing the wedding,' she fibbed. 'It's given her a whole new lease of life.'

'Well, that's fine, she can organize it. You know my parents won't be particularly interested, it's not as if they're going to be paying for mine. My mother probably won't even bother her ass to come. It might mean she'd have to stay sober,' Carol added with a hint of bitterness. 'Gary and I will be paying for our own, that's why it would be nice to split the costs.'

'Oh come on, Carol, it's not that bad. We're not paupers,' Gary interjected tersely.

'I'm not saying we are! I just said we'd be paying for the wedding ourselves,' Carol said huffily, her animated expression turning sulky.

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'Look, let's sleep on it and not reject the idea out of hand. As I said before, it's an option. Nothing's set in stone,' Mike said easily, squeezing Jessica's hand. She didn't squeeze back. She was mad with him for even considering the idea in the first place.

'Oh well, if Jessica's not keen on the idea there's no point.' Carol sulked. 'Forget it.'

Jessica bit her lip. Now Carol was in a huff, which was a real bummer. She could keep up her huffs for ages. Jessica usually caved in after a day.

Gary glanced at Mike and threw his eyes up to heaven. 'Another pint, mate?'

'I don't think so, I really need to do some serious swotting this weekend. Exams are starting on Monday.'

'Poor bugger,' Gary sympathized. 'I'd hate to be you. You should have gone into IT like me.'

'Company car, great salary,' Carol interjected smugly, never able to resist a bit of one-upmanship.

'Well, Mike will have all that too and letters after his name. He'll probably have his own engineering company,' Jessica retorted childishly.

'Steady on.' Mike grimaced. 'I've to get my exams first.'

'You'll walk it, mate, walk it,' Gary said supportively.

'Well, I'd better go and get the head down anyway.' Mike stood up and held Jessica's jacket for her.

'I'm hungry. Can't we go to Temple Bar or Flanagan's for something to eat?' Carol grumbled.

Mike slanted a look at Jessica's grim expression.

'Not tonight. After next week, I'm all yours. See you, guys.' He moved out into the crowd milling around the upstairs bar of The Oval.

'Night, Gary, night, Carol.' Jessica edged her way around the table.

Carol kept her gaze averted and muttered a goodnight. Gary raised his almost empty beer glass in farewell. He didn't look very happy, Jessica noted. He probably knew he was in for a good whinge session. She sighed as she followed her beloved downstairs and out on to Abbey Street. It was a busy, buzzy Friday night. Dublin was alive and kicking.

It was balmy out. A warm breeze whispered on the air, refreshing after the stultifying heat of the bar. They turned left and walked towards O'Connell Street in silence.

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'OK, get it over and done with. I know you're mad.' Mike dropped an arm around his girlfriend's shoulder.

'Oh Mike, I'd hate a double wedding. You know I want it to be special for us. Why did you even say it was an option?' she burst out, stopping and looking up at him.

'Sorry, Jessie. I didn't know you felt so strongly about it. I wasn't thinking. It could be nice and a bit of fun.'

'Fun! With her weird family and all his brothers getting pissed! Are you mad, Mike? It would be a disaster. We wouldn't get a look in.'

'OK, OK.' He spread his hands placatingly.

'You'd like it. Wouldn't you?' she accused.

'Look, Jessie, it doesn't bother me one way or another. I just want what you want,' Mike growled, his patience beginning to wear thin.

'What do you mean, it doesn't matter to you one way or another? What kind of a thing is that to say? It's our wedding we're talking about. It's supposed to be the most important and special day of our lives. Doesn't it mean anything to you?'

'Would you calm down, Jessie. We're not getting married for ages. I've to get my exams first and get on with my new job. So stop making a mountain out of a molehill. You're like a briar. What's wrong with you?' He stood looking down at her, rubbing his hand wearily along his jaw, trying to suppress a yawn.

'It's Carol. She's driving me nuts. Muscling in on everything we do.' Jessica exhaled a deep breath and snuggled in against Mike. 'I was really looking forward to going away for that weekend on our own and now they're coming and I won't have you to myself.' She and Mike had planned a weekend sailing on the Shannon to celebrate the end of his finals. As soon as Carol had heard their plans she'd immediately suggested a foursome, much to Jessica's dismay.

'And you know why she wants a double wedding?' She scowled as they resumed their walk towards the capital's main thoroughfare. 'She's afraid Gary's going to chicken out and not go through with it. And it would be much harder for him to do that if we were having a double wedding.'

'Ah, don't say that,' Mike chided.

'Why not, it's the truth,' Jessica said bluntly.

'You women! The ideas you get in your head. Come on, forget about them, let's go and have a bite to eat ourselves,' he suggested.

'Will we?' She brightened. 'But what about your swotting?'

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'I'll get up early and go into the library tomorrow. Come on, it would be nice to have a meal on our own, wouldn't it?'

'Yeah.' She snuggled in close against him, her bad humour evaporating. She loved being with Mike. He was so easy-going and good-humoured, and even her worst PMT moods didn't faze him and that was saying something. Come to think of it, PMT was why she'd been so ratty earlier, she really should take some V6 or evening primrose oil. She always meant to buy some when she was passing Nature's Way but somehow she never got round to it.

'Sorry about being so crotchety earlier.' She squeezed his hand. 'I think I've got PMT.'

'Aha, the old PMT. Just as well your hormones and I are old buddies at this stage.' Mike slanted an affectionate glance in her direction.

'Yeah, well, I'll make it up to you when you're going bald, and can't get it up and are having a midlife crisis,' she teased, loving the way he accepted her, PMT and all.

They held hands as they retraced their steps along Abbey Street and headed to Temple Bar. They were going to eat in Luigi Malones, one of their favourite haunts.

'I'm having the rack of baby ribs,' Jessica announced as they made themselves comfortable at their favourite table, at the window that looked out on to the bustling streets of the most trendy hot spot in the city.

'You have that every time we come here, you're such a creature of habit. Be adventurous. Try something different. The fajitas here are something else,' Mike urged.

'I know, but I love the sauce on the ribs and I can taste yours as well. Win win situation.' Jessica grinned at him, happy to have him all to herself. She leaned across the table and kissed him lightly on the mouth.

'I love you very much,' she said.

Mike's eyes crinkled in a smile as he took her hand in his. 'I love you too, my little tetchy crosspatch.'

Jessica giggled and felt immensely happy. She knew her wedding day, whenever it was, was going to be the happiest day of her life and, one thing was for sure, Carol could forget the idea of having a double wedding. When she walked up the aisle there'd be one man waiting at the altar. She and Mike were going to have a wedding they would never forget. Carol and Gary could do their own thing, and if Carol didn't like it, tough!

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