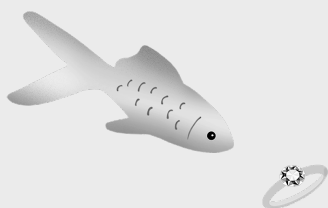


# Wedding Challenges!



# Wedding Challenges!

Inspirational Stories of Love, Strength,  
and the Unexpected Depths  
of Wedding Planning



Robert Winton

This book is a work of fiction. All of the names, events, characters, and organizations are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

WEDDING CHALLENGES!

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To Judy, Ryan, Maja and August

*Thank you for being my family*



“Elizabeth looked forward  
to our wedding  
with placid contentment,  
not unmingled with a little fear.”

— *Frankenstein, Mary Shelley (1818)*



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## A NOTE TO READERS

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### DISCLAIMERS

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This book is not a guide or self-help resource. It is intended solely for entertainment and inspiration.

This book does not provide professional advice. Any depictions of characters seeking or receiving professional guidance are for illustrative and narrative purposes only. The actions, decisions, or advice described may not be accurate or appropriate for real-life situations. Readers should consult qualified legal, financial, insurance, psy-

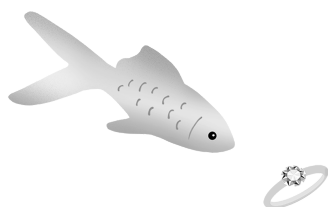
chological, medical, or other professionals for advice specific to their circumstances.

The photographs featured in this book are presented for artistic and illustrative purposes only, highlighting the beauty of authentic wedding moments. These images are not connected to any fictional characters, places or stories within this work.

No implied affiliation, endorsement, or association is intended with the individuals shown in these photographs.

All individuals depicted are actual people who were photographed with their consent. Their appearance in this book does not suggest or imply any specific narrative, personal history, or opinion.

# INTRODUCTION



## INSPIRATION

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### EXPLORING INSIGHTS

My thirteen-year career as a wedding photographer provided a unique behind-the-scenes vantage while the celebrations and regrets of brides and grooms played out before, during, and after their wedding days.

After hundreds of weddings, it seemed obvious that even brilliantly planned weddings were only as certain as the weather forecast. That should not be surprising, as most brides and grooms walk the aisle only once in their lifetimes and might not anticipate the challenges of weddings, ranging from predictable to unpredictable, preventable to unpreventable, and hilarious to devastating.

My original goal to write a helpful book, *Solutions for Wedding Problems*, was ultimately abandoned after realizing most solutions are frivolous or irrelevant. For example, ‘making a schedule’ is a great idea, yet it is painfully

obvious, depends on unknowable individual circumstances and — even still — it rarely solves the problem of keeping people on time, although it logically should.

The project grew into a myriad of exhausting pages where a hundred solutions might solve one problem, one solution might solve a hundred problems, a hundred solutions might solve zero problems, and so on.

After a year of struggling to write ‘*Solutions for Wedding Problems*’, it all went into the trash. Engaged couples need more than a list of solutions that “fix” problems.

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*Solutions to “fix” wedding problems too often seemed frivolous or irrelevant.*

---

Could my experience as a wedding photographer unveil insights into how couples handle wedding challenges and how moments of imperfection often turn into the most memorable parts of their wedding?

Perhaps seeing wedding planning behind the scenes could inspire engaged couples to explore and approach the challenges in their own individual ways. This is the hope for *Wedding Challenges*!

---

*‘Wedding Challenges!’ was born.*

---

Each chapter in *Wedding Challenges!* explores insights through two fictional short stories about our bride and groom, Diamond and Slate. In the first story, they face an unexpected challenge to their dream wedding. In a twist of fate, an alternate story imagines our couple getting a second try!

The epilogue tells three stories of how love and devotion bring Diamond and Slate through their toughest challenges to discover ‘The Secret.’

Whether you are looking forward to a wedding or just enjoy reading about them, I hope *Wedding Challenges!* enlightens and inspires you to find your own personal secret for overcoming wedding challenges despite the storms!

By the way, wouldn’t it be nice if *Wedding Challenges!* included real wedding photography of beautiful, happy weddings as a bonus, especially since everyone loves weddings? Well, it does! The book concludes with a gallery of beautiful, happy moments from real, successful weddings. While these images are not connected in any way to the fictional stories or characters in the book, they are a special gift intended to warm your heart!

## CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR!

---

YOU ARE INVITED TO SHARE  
IN DIAMOND AND SLATE'S  
WEDDING DAY!

Engaged to be married, Diamond and Slate struggle to overcome their wedding challenges and celebrate their dream wedding. Will they discover 'The Secret'? Follow them as their wedding planning faces unexpected storms.

Explore highs and lows of wedding planning through fictional short stories inspired by the insights of a wedding photographer who worked behind the scenes before, during, and after the big day.

*Wedding Challenges!* is for engaged couples looking for inspirational wedding ideas and anyone who loves wedding stories.

## CHARACTERS

---

### IMAGINARY WORLD

Welcome to Diamond and Slate's imaginary world of fictional characters, establishments and locations.

Get ready to support our bride and groom as their close friends, Morganite, Calcite, Mica, and Gypsum join their wedding party. Their caring parents, Ruby, Pearl, Hematite, and Shale, contribute to the family drama. You'll find these and many more characters celebrating Diamond and Slate's wedding at the famously imaginary Opaline Manor!

Diamond - Bride

Slate - Groom

Sunstone - Newborn Baby

Ruby - Mother of the Bride

Pearl - Mother of the Groom

Hematite - Father of the Groom  
Shale - Father of the Bride  
Galena - Grandfather of the Bride  
Garnet - Great-Grandmother of the Bride  
Morganite - Maid of Honor  
Mica - Best Man  
Gypsum - Groomsman  
Calcite - Groomsman  
Silica - Guest  
Citrine - Guest  
Peridot - Guest  
Aquamarine - Guest  
Tourmaline - Guest  
Topaz - Guest  
Tiger Eyes - Kitty Cat  
Magnetite - Minister  
Malachite - DJ  
Moonstone - Venue Manager  
Quartz - Manager  
Celestine - Manager  
Rhodonite - Sommelier  
Jasper - Photographer  
Amber - Bartender  
Aventurine - Florist  
Thulite - Videographer  
Amethyst - Baker

Obsidian - Catering Manager

Euclase - Tailor

Opal - Salesperson

Tanzanite - Insurance Agent

Alexandrite - Attorney

Coral - Planner

Flint - Uninvited Friend

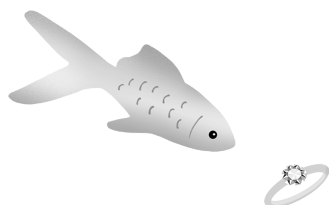
Opaline Manor - Wedding Venue

Tugtupite Motors - Car Dealership

Fluorite's Feast - Catering Company

# Wedding Challenges!

## THEIR CHALLENGES



## INDECISION

---

### OPTION OVERLOAD

Diamond and Slate were excitedly planning their dream wedding, but excitement turned to frustration while their ideas piled up.

“We have to narrow this down,” Slate said, gesturing at wedding websites, magazines, and books.

“I know, but every time I think we’re done, I find something awesome,” Diamond replied. “Here’s something else! I really want either a vineyard wedding or a cruise wedding. I can’t decide!”

“Those do sound awesome,” Slate agreed. “What about a museum wedding?”

Diamond agreed. “That sounds good, too! Oh, I forgot to mention that our parents want either a live quartet band or a jazz band.”

Slate wondered, “Should we do a laser light show or a paper sky lantern release during the reception? Or, how about a drone light show?”

Diamond paced. “How will we ever decide?”

---

*Planning a wedding means choosing from  
infinite possibilities.*

---

Diamond and Slate brainstorm ideas to create a wedding that has everything, but Slate realizes they have too many ideas. “It’s exciting and a bit overwhelming. Maybe we should categorize our ideas to make it easier?”

Diamond and Slate jot their ideas on index cards. Then, they remove cards with similar ideas or ideas they can live without. They stick a gold star on cards with ‘must-have ideas’ and then organize them all into categories such as fashion, decorations, entertainment, personal interests, food and more.

“Okay, we have to focus on our vision instead of what’s out there. Let’s see what we’ve got,” Diamond says, spreading the cards.

Diamond and Slate discuss their vision and wonder if several cards could be placed under a reception activity: dessert bar, classic black-and-white movies, love for vintage themes, popcorn, DIY, something unusual decoration, trivia, and a competition.

“Imagine the setup,” Slate says, his eyes lighting up. “We could decorate a DIY dessert bar to look like a retro movie concession stand. It would satisfy an activity after dinner.”

“Yes!” Diamond shouts, “And we could paint everything on the bar in black-and-white, even the popcorn in a vintage black-and-white package, like in an old movie!”

Slate begins pacing, “What if we gave each table numbered tickets with old movie trivia questions on the back? The tickets are dropped into a black-and-white ticket box. The winning table gets a ‘movie night kit’ with popcorn and black-and-white candy! Now we have a competition!”

Excited by the possibilities, Diamond and Slate learn that their videographer can create a black-and-white video of their earlier ceremony and project it next to the dessert bar. It will be created in the style of an old black-and-white film with scratchy effects and a 1930s music track playing in the background.

“I’m so happy I could scream! I’m glad we took the time to come up with our own personal vision and sort

everything out,” Diamond says, looking at the neatly organized cards. “We can get rid of a lot of other ideas now!”

## AWKWARD

---

### FORCED INTERACTIONS

Diamond loved vintage traditions and was thrilled to get her guests together during her reception for a traditional bouquet and garter toss. She tossed her flowers, and Citrine quickly caught them.

A playful smile spread across Citrine's face as she demonstrated her weekend tennis skills by jumping and slashing the bouquet left and right.

Next, it was the men's turn to catch the garter, and most were trying to walk away. But Slate cajoled them together and tossed the garter high behind him. As unbelievably horrible, rotten, lousy luck would have it, the garter flew toward someone named Peridot and landed on his forehead.

Everyone knew Peridot was introverted and avoided attention at all costs, which is why he had positioned

himself far in the back. However, the garter had other ideas and drew everyone's laughter when it slid off his forehead and landed at his feet.

Peridot stood alone and contemplated the laughter around him. He didn't want to disrespect the groom, so he picked up the garter.

The laughter died as Peridot's embarrassment became awkward. Everybody finally remembered that Citrine and Peridot had recently divorced.

Peridot had been trying to avoid Citrine all night, but now they were both expected to do this activity together. Peridot looked left and right for either help or a hiding place. This moment was very awkward.

Silica, a friend of Peridot's, rushed to help, snatched the garter from Peridot's hands and waved it grimly in the air as if to personally accept the challenge!

Sadly, Silica's attempted rescue only added to the awkwardness, not only because of Silica's intoxicated stumbling but mainly because his help did not happen soon enough. The rescue would have been hilarious if it happened soon enough. Instead, everyone felt that Silica's rescue attempt was awkward because the help was too late.

Like a mountain of snow, this new awkwardness triggered an avalanche that buried Peridot deeper under awkwardness.

Could this get any more awkward? Sure, it can. As Peridot stood silently and questioned his life choices, a guest's camera flashed in his eyes.

Surely this could not get any more awkward? Sure, it can. Remember Citrine? She couldn't take it anymore and ran through the guests and out of the reception hall in tears.

---

*Randomly pairing people in activities  
might lead to awkward interactions.*

---

Wedding guests are intrigued when Malachite, the DJ, invites parents onto the dance floor. A video slideshow features images from the parents' weddings as they dance to the 1990s song "Because You Loved Me". The mothers wear flowing wedding dresses with long, trailing veils. The fathers wear traditional black suits with waistcoats.

When the parents finish, the music changes to the 1960s song "Unchained Melody," and the grandparents walk onto the dance floor. They begin their dance as a video slideshow featuring images from their wedding days. The grandmothers wear modest dresses with lace

details, and the grandfathers wear navy suits with vintage ruffled shirts.

Finally, the great-grandparents walk onto the dance floor, and the music changes to the 1930s song “The Way You Look Tonight.” Their projector features only a single portrait from each of their wedding days. The great-grandmothers wear modest silk gowns with long trains, long sleeves, and intricate lace detailing. Veils cover their faces. The great-grandfathers wear formal morning suits with a tailcoat, vest, and pinstriped trousers.

When the great-grandparents finish their dances, the air fills with standing applause!

## BURDENSOME

---

### IMPRACTICAL CLOTHING

“Diamond, shall we?” Slate extended his hand toward his beautiful bride. Having finished their romantic photography portrait on the beach, Diamond and Slate walked across the sand to the reception. But Diamond’s heels made her stumble, and Slate’s dress shoes slipped.

Slate grumbled, “I didn’t realize walking on the sand would be this difficult.”

“Oh no!” Diamond exclaimed. “The sand stained the hem of my dress! How can I enter the reception like this?”

---

*Visions of beautiful wedding clothes might  
overlook comfort.*

---

After their romantic forest ceremony, Diamond and Slate stand at the edge of a gravel path where an unexpected rain has turned the ground into a humid, muddy mess. Their wedding clothes are now stained and soggy. “Can you believe this?” Diamond asks.

Slate smiles, “We definitely made the right decision to change clothes for our reception!”