

ALTAR EGOS

The I Do's and Don'ts of an American Wedding

by Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

“All we want is a simple wedding,” agree Mark and Colleen as they get engaged. And their simple wedding stays simple ... for about two minutes. Then the families get involved. There’s the McMasters, who think the Frobishers are a bunch of snooty dudes, and the Frobishers, who picture the McMasters as a crowd of hillbillies. The bride’s father keeps offering the soon-to-be-wed couple thousands of dollars to elope, “No questions asked!” The bride’s mother decides to call in her sister, who is a sweet, lovely woman ... until she becomes the Coordinator – a drill sergeant! The groom needs a best man so he enlists his Uncle Josh, who’s an old hippie. The bride’s kid sister can’t wait for the wedding, either, since she gets the bride’s old room ... if she can talk Dad out of it, who wants it for a den ... if he can talk Mom out of it, who wants it for a quilting room. The two mothers are literally dueling over the rehearsal dinner seating chart while the bride and groom wonder where it all went wrong. Throw into this mix football referees, tailors, circus ringmasters, caterers and even an interpreter and you get just some of the **Altar Egos**. This riotous spoof comes to you from the author of “Barbecuing Hamlet.”

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 men, 9 women; doubling possible and encouraged)

COLLEEN McMASTERS: The bride-to-be, an emotional woman in her early 20's.

MARK FROBISHER: The groom-to-be, a slightly confused man, in his mid-20's.

DINAH McMASTERS: Mother of the bride, a woman in her 40's.

CARL McMASTERS: Father of the bride, in his 40's.

VERA FROBISHER: Mother of the groom, in her 40's.

LEW FROBISHER: Father of the groom, in his 40's.

SPORTS ANNOUNCER: Play-by-play announcer (doubles with TAILOR and REFEREE).

JAN McMASTERS: Bride's kid sister, with an ulterior motive.

INTERPRETER: Woman interpreter for those who aren't married (doubles with AUNT PAM).

UNCLE JOSH: Vera's hippie brother (doubles with RINGMASTER).

TAILOR: Old gentleman who rents tuxedos (doubles with SPORTS ANNOUNCER and REFEREE).

CATERER: Food saleslady (doubles with MOM).

MARIA: Mark's old girlfriend, in the wrong place at the wrong time.

REFEREE: Football referee (doubles with SPORTS ANNOUNCER and TAILOR).

RINGMASTER: Circus hawker (doubles with UNCLE JOSH).

AUNT PAM: A drill sergeant type (doubles with INTERPRETER).

MOM: Dinah's and Pam's mother, an all knowing type (double cast with INTERPRETER).

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The living room of Carl and Dinah McMasters.

SET

The setting for this American tableau is the McMasters' living room plus other rooms as indicated by representational "sections" or pieces of furniture. The living room, used chiefly in the play, is totally middle class. Tastefully decorated, the area utilizes two walls which hold two practical doors – the first door leads the bedrooms and the second leads outside. There is a large couch and matching chairs, and behind the couch is a long sofa table, on which the telephone rests, next to several magazines. On the US wall is a curtained window looking out into the front yard.

Another area, located adjacent to the "living room," holds a love seat (possibly a Parson's bench), next to which is a small table and telephone.

ACT I
Scene 1

(Before the LIGHTS come up, we hear ORGAN MUSIC and then, as this subsides, a VOICE.)

VOICE: Dearly beloved, I would like to thank you all for coming today. We are gathered here to witness the beginning of a marriage. This is a holy state and one not to be entered into lightly. A great deal of thought and planning and emotion are brought to fruition with the wedding of these two people. Two people very much in love.

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up in the MCMASTERS' living room where MARK and COLLEEN are sitting on the couch, facing away from each other. Colleen has her arms folded and Mark is shaking his head. There is a long pause.)

COLLEEN: *(Finally.)* You're just like your mother.

MARK: At least, MY mother isn't trying to fix me up with someone else!

COLLEEN: *(Turns to HIM.)* Mother isn't trying to fix me up with somebody else!

MARK: *(Turns to HER.)* No, YOUR mother is trying to fix ME up with somebody else! Last Thursday, she introduced me to a plumber.

COLLEEN: Don't say anything bad about my mother! *(SHE turns away again.)* Especially, with YOUR mother!

MARK: What's the matter with my mother?!

COLLEEN: Oh, sure, take HER side!

MARK: What?!

COLLEEN: It's just like you to stand up for her!

(MARK looks behind him and then back at COLLEEN.)

MARK: What did you expect?

COLLEEN: You're such a Mama's boy. I swear, sometimes I think she's a ventriloquist and you're –

MARK: What? I'm what?

COLLEEN: *(Rises.)* What did you come over here for, anyway?

MARK: *(Rises.)* What difference does it make now?

COLLEEN: You must've had a reason!

MARK: When I first got here, yes! I wanted to give you something!

COLLEEN: What?

MARK: This! *(HE pulls out a ring box and shoves it at HER.)*

COLLEEN: What is it?

MARK: Open it!

(COLLEEN opens the box and looks at the ring.)

COLLEEN: *(Softening.)* Oh, my ...

MARK: *(Not softening.)* Will you marry me? A simple yes or no, and hurry because the game starts in a half an hour.

COLLEEN: Oh ... oh, Mark! *(SHE begins to cry and throws her arms around MARK'S neck.)*

MARK: I was going to ask you earlier, Colleen ... then you started talking about Mother.

COLLEEN: Oh, my. *(SHE breaks the hug and takes the ring out of the box.)* Here. Here, you put it on my finger.

MARK: *(Takes the ring.)* Okay, hang on. *(HE fumbles with HER fingers.)*

COLLEEN: Not that one.

MARK: It's one of these, right?

COLLEEN: It better be, that's all I have. Third finger.

MARK: *(Struggling with the ring.)* Wait a minute. *(HE shoves it on the finger.)*

COLLEEN: *(Through HER smile.)* OW! That hurt!

MARK: Love can be painful sometimes. It's ... it's stuck. Didn't you tell me you wore a 6?

COLLEEN: Are you calling me a liar?

MARK: Not me, your finger is. You inherited your father's knuckles.

COLLEEN: Don't start in on Dad. Ow! Hang on! *(SHE removes the ring and sucks on her third finger.)*

MARK: You're not going to bite it off, are you?

COLLEEN: *(Finger in HER mouth.)* Willb you bait a mimupe! *(SHE takes her finger out and slips the ring on with great force.)* AaaHA! *(SHE holds our her hand for BOTH OF THEM to see.)* This ring is never coming off.

MARK: That's a safe bet.

COLLEEN: What?

MARK: I said, I'm so glad we met!

COLLEEN: It's beautiful!

MARK: It shouldn't be bleeding, should it?

COLLEEN: I am so glad I found you.

MARK: Me, too. We are so lucky.

COLLEEN: I know.

MARK: We'll just have the family get together and get married.

COLLEEN: Right, a simple wedding.

MARK: Whatever you say.

(THEY kiss softly and then look at each other. Then COLLEEN yells loudly.)

COLLEEN: MOTHER!

(MARK tries to get his ears to pop back. COLLEEN crosses to the SL door. DINAH and CARL enter through the door.)

DINAH: What? What happened?!

(COLLEEN, now crying silently, places her head on her mother's shoulder. DINAH pats her on the back.)

CARL: *(Moves to MARK.)* Well, Mark, I knew this was coming. *(HE consoles MARK and ushers him to the US door.)* Sorry it didn't work out.

MARK: What?

CARL: Just wasn't meant to be, guy. This sort of thing may be painful at first but you'll find someone else, you'll see.

DINAH: *(Yells at MARK.)* I know a lovely girl who works for the sanitation department.

End of Freeview

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