

## **Did I Hear Wedding Bells?**

When we get back home, I wonder why the boys aren't back from the oilrig. They should've been home by now. I'm too tired to think about anything else. I'm putting myself to bed.

I open my eyes to the sun barely peeking through the window lace curtains. I look over at Harlan sleeping next to me. He must of have come in late last night. I didn't hear a peep. He looks so peaceful. I think it is time for somethin' to happen. I've always wanted a church wedding but I can't wait around for Harlan to pop the question. I need something to relieve my mind of the scheming Bernard and Clovis has got going on. A married woman in Louisiana has more clout than a single one. Being married gives me that maturing ritual of going from being a girl to a woman. It will look good when I go against them in court too. I turn around and gently leave the bed to go fix coffee. I'm gonna fix him the best cup of coffee he has ever had with extra sugar.

As I sneak into the room, I see Harlan stirring under the covers. His nose gets a whiff of the hot café au lait telling him it's time to wake up.

“Are you awake? Here is your cup of coffee.” I say as I gently hand him his cup.

“How long have we been together?” I ask as I tilt my head and twinkle my pretty green eyes at him.

“About 6 months. I'm keeping track.” Harlan says. He gives me a quizzical look.

“Well how do you feel about us?” I ask as I'm fishing for his correct response.

“Why Marie, you know you are my girl. I'm not stepping out on you.” He says as he sits up and drinks his coffee without realizing how special this particular cup is.

“No I don't think that. I'm thinking about us gettin' serious.” I say as I gently caress his hair.

“How serious do you want to be? We’re living together! What are you thinking, Marie?” Harlan asks as he puts the coffee on the nightstand and pulls the covers off.

“I’m thinking about us gettin’ married. I’m thinking about us gettin’ married real soon. Don’t you think it’s time we do somethin’?” I ask. I expect him to cool my jets like he always does when I present a cockamamie idea.

“Marie you better think very hard before you ask me that question. Where I stand I’m all in with you.” He says as he jumps up out of bed and from out of nowhere starts to do a jig. Harlan very rarely cuts a rug off the dance floor.

“I need to make a respectable woman out of you. How about we go and get us a priest right now.” He says as he lifts me up out of bed and swings me in the air. My head is truly spinnin’.

Before I have a chance to talk this over, Harlan goes and wakes up Lorleen and Tommy Dean.

“Get up slow pokes we have a wedding to attend to.” He yells outside their bedroom door.

Lorleen opens the door with sleepy eyes, “What wedding? I don’t know about no wedding.” She says.

“You do now! Get dressed we are going to find the parish priest. Don’t try to talk us out of it, I got Harlan all wound up and I don’t want to lose it.” I say.

We pull up in the parking lot of the Catholic church wearing flannel shirts, blue jeans and cowboy boots. I didn’t even take the time to dress properly.

I knock on the rectory door that houses the priest and a parishioner answers, “Who are looking for?” She asks as she gives me a disgruntled look.

“Mamam, I am looking for Fr. LeBleu. Is he here right now?” I ask. I take a peek down the hallway hoping to see him.

“He is not here. He is busy blessing the new grocery store in town.” She says as she slams the door on me. I just smile, nothing is going to spoil my wedding day.

We hop on down the main street with the only red light in town. I start to get in the swing of the moment yelling out the window, “We’re going to get married.”

Harlan pulls me back in the truck and grabs a kiss while driving. Whatever has gotten into him I’m going with it.

We swerve into the driveway half crazed and start to hunt down Fr. LeBleu through the store. I find him in the vegetable aisle. Lorleen grabs a bunch of broccoli for my bouquet and Harlan pulls out a high school ring from his blue jeans.

Everybody in the store is part of our commotion. The shopkeeper, the checkout girls and even the people waiting in line stop in their tracks. Fr. LeBleu has no choice but to marry us now we have witnesses. I look at Harlan with loving eyes, “This is the best day of my life, I am going to be Harlan’s wife.” I shout.

Fr. Le Bleu proceeds to splash us with the holy water he was going to use in the blessing of the grocery store. It feels cold on my face with no veil to protect me. I turn to Lorleen and start to giggle thinking this is

crazy. By the look on her face she does too! But I know why I'm doing this. It will serve me in the end and look who I'm getting hitched to.

"I do I do" I say looking at Harlan. He is all starry-eyed ready for the next kiss of the ceremony. I am wondering what was in that coffee he drank this morning. I hope Odetta is not behind this. What jar did I use for the sugar? Sometimes she misplaces her potions and gives me the wrong one. It don't matter something is working.

The ladies in the hot serve Deli are making up a fresh batch of boudin balls made from a mixture of ground pork and beef with rice and lots of hot spicy seasonings. They then roll them into a ball like meatballs covered in ground corn meal and fried up all golden brown. The ultimate Cajun snack. These serve as my hors d'oeuvres for the celebration.

In the corner of my eye, I see the crowd opening up bags of rice. Two women tear open 10 packages of Hostess snowballs and stack them up to present my wedding cake. In the frenzy, we're all carrying on with Champagne bottles a poppin' and boudin balls a boppin'.