

The May August Wedding

a short story by

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The May August wedding, as it was called at the time, took place in the scenic surroundings of Assiniboine Park on August 5, 2017. It was a perfect summer day, sunny and windless, with a comfortable temperature near 24 degrees from morning to night. On that memorable day, Terri-Lynn May and Tommy Allstedder, both 31 years of age, were married. It was a gorgeous setting, overlooking a lovely pond, surrounded by white and yellow lilies in full-bloom. The bride and groom exchanged their romantic vows under an ivy-covered, arched canopy. Two hundred guests, in colourful summer dresses and smart new jackets, strained to hear every word.

No one could have been unmoved by the beautiful ceremony, the idyllic setting and especially, by the stunning bride. Terri-Lynn was wearing a strapless, form-fitting white dress with a sweetheart neckline, with white lace over tulle and a classic bustle. Her rich, auburn hair was gorgeously styled, cascading down on her bare shoulders. Tall and thin and perfectly made-up, she looked absolutely beautiful, proudly escorted to the canopy by her father. Beside her, the groom, Tommy, was impressive in his own right, dashing and handsome in a black tuxedo and linen shirt, with Italian-made red-leather shoes and a stylish new haircut.

But there was much more to the inspiring nuptials than met the eye. The same of course could be said of most weddings, preceded as they are by arduous preparations and often marked by high drama and tense conflict behind the scenes. But this wedding was in a class by itself.

Most of all, what distinguished the May August wedding, why no one who was there will ever forget it, was the incredible spectacle at the dinner party following the ceremony. But there were other aspects of the wedding that were equally remarkable. For instance, the unseemly circumstances which led to the couple's decision to marry in the first place. An unfaithful groom, a vindictive mistress and a bone-chilling ultimatum, all played their parts.

When Tommy got busted, five months before his marriage to Terri-Lynn, his tempestuous affair with Melody Wall had been going on for two years. Melody was from the same hometown as Tommy and Terri-Lynn, all born and raised in Oakbank, a small community 10 miles east of Winnipeg. She was a year younger than Terri-Lynn and Tommy. Growing up, the three were well-acquainted, though neither Tommy nor Terri-Lynn was a particularly good friend of Melody's.

Tommy and Terri-Lynn had been boyfriend and girlfriend in grade 12, going steady for nearly seven months, from October to April. Terri-Lynn was a pampered only child. Her parents ran a car dealership in Oakbank. She had been on the pill since her sixteenth birthday and, with her house free most afternoons, she and Tommy made the most of the situation. Whenever they could safely cut classes, they would head to Terri-Lynn's and fuck each other silly, careful to leave before her parents got back. The backseat of Tommy's dad's SUV served the purpose as well, whenever Tommy could get it.

But high school romances are fragile things, and Terri-Lynn and Tommy's was no different than countless others. Theirs didn't make it past the thirtieth of April. It may have been a result of Tommy's new job at the lumber yard, which severely cut into their time together. Or maybe it was the day Tommy stayed behind at school for lunch, the news reaching Terri-Lynn that he'd sat alone with a cheerleader named Joyce Furillo the whole time. In any case, Terri-Lynn was a fiery, strong-willed young woman and she seemed relatively unfazed by the changing

circumstances. The two split up with a minimum of drama and life went on. Both readily found dates with other people for their graduation.

Terri-Lynn, at age 29, was living in Winnipeg, working at a small printing company. She was one long year removed from her third serious relationship, with a graphic-arts instructor named Colin. After going out for a year and a half, she and Colin had moved in together, splitting the rent on a gorgeous new apartment in the exchange district. Colin was a charming and inquisitive man, eight years older than Terri-Lynn, very smart and worldly. They went to fabulous concerts, edgy plays and stunning gallery openings. Terri-Lynn thought she'd found her soul mate, until one Thursday night in June. That night, she decided to surprise Colin after his night class and take him out to a club for some live music. It's arguable as to whose surprise was greater. When Terri-Lynn walked up to Colin's third-floor office door, the primitive carnal sounds coming from within were unmistakable. Whoever had closed the door - Colin or his student - had obviously turned the cylinder in the doorknob before closing it. The knob was locked but the door easily pushed open. Colin's student was naked, lying on her back on the desk, with her legs in the air. Colin was standing, facing the door, with his pants down to his ankles, pounding away at his student like a jackhammer. When Colin sheepishly crept home the next day, he found the lock changed and his things randomly scattered in the hallway outside their apartment.

At 28, Melody was still living in Oakbank, where she'd been working as a pharmacist's assistant since high school. A year earlier, her vapid four-year marriage had dragged itself to the finish line, ending in a painful and costly divorce. Her ex-husband was a local man, fifteen years older than her, a boring, jealous man who owned two apartment buildings in town.

Tommy, meanwhile, had established an unflattering reputation as a carefree womanizer. He was living on a small piece of land a few miles from Oakbank, making a good living as a property inspector for the rural municipality of Springfield. It was a job that took him to a number of communities in the area. Women loved Tommy. Tall, good-looking and single, his seductive smile and winsome manner were hard to resist. And best of all, he was always ready to party. By the age of 29, his rollicking sexual adventures had run the gamut: from enterprising older women in unhappy marriages, to single women his own age, out for a good time or looking for a husband. From raunchy, aggressive women who just wanted to party, to shy, lonely introverts. Whether they were blondes, brunettes or redheads, rich or poor, was of no moment to Tommy. If you were to run into him on a Saturday night, summer, winter, spring or fall, you were sure to find a shapely woman hanging happily on his arm, the two heading either to his place or hers. Rarely was he ever seen with the same woman twice.

A few months after his twenty-ninth birthday, Tommy received some good news regarding a job application. He was offered a position as a property inspector for the City of Winnipeg. It was the same kind of work he'd been doing in Springfield, but the pay and benefits were significantly better. The travel involved was much less demanding as well. Rather than being constantly on the highway, from one small community to another, his work day would be spent entirely in the city. The forty-minute commute from home, twice a day, was a piece of cake.

After settling into the routine of his new job, Tommy's adventurous social life experienced parallel changes. Whether he was actually maturing or not was unclear. He was still living in the Oakbank area and he may simply have run out of potential paramours. In any event, his night life became somewhat quieter. Saturdays nights he would often play cards with his married guy-friends, or have a couple of beers after golf and go home for the night by himself.

Not that his Casanova days were entirely gone.

The idea to call up Terri-Lynn May didn't come out of nowhere. While they hadn't kept in touch since high school, neither had exactly forgotten the other, and especially those insatiable frenzies in the backseat of Tommy's dad's SUV. With his new job, Tommy was in the city every day now. So, when a mutual friend mentioned he had run into Terri-Lynn, the idea quickly took hold and he called her. It was great timing. Terri-Lynn was nicely over Colin and ready to move on. Tommy, while perhaps not entirely reformed, was ready for something more than a one-nighter.

It was as if they'd never been apart. After the first few dates, they were madly in love again. Why had they ever split up in grade twelve? It was like being reborn, like re-discovering their youth.

And so began the two-year period leading up to their marriage. Most weekends, from Friday night to Monday morning, Tommy stayed at Terri-Lynn's apartment, spending the rest of the week at his place in the country. Groceries were shared, new furnishings were purchased. Sunday dinners at each other's parents' homes became a regular event.

It was only a matter of a few months until the idea of marriage came up. And why not? They were in love and it was working so well. And they were almost living together as it was. Certainly the idea was promoted more zealously by Terri-Lynn, but Tommy wasn't entirely against it. He was just in no hurry. He liked things the way they were. So, when Terri-Lynn started talking about the future, about where they would live - a house in the city with a huge yard, of course - and about the children they would have, Tommy would gently try to slow her down a little. Things were so good between them, he'd say. Why should they change anything? Especially so soon? There was a lot to think about. When the time came, there would be so much to do. He'd have to sell his house. They'd have to find the right place. Those things were going to be hard and they'd take time. And how about his parents? They were getting old, and if he moved into the city, he wouldn't be around to help them as much. For now, things were good.

Only rarely would such conversations become heated. Terri-Lynn thought she understood Tommy. He was just stubbornly dragging his heels like any man would. She loved Tommy so she didn't want to push him too hard. She'd just give it some time, she thought; keep working on him. In the meantime, she did her best to keep her frustration under control.

But Tommy had another reason for dragging his heels. A secret reason. Melody Wall. Less than three months after re-connecting with Terri-Lynn, he hooked up with Melody.