

DANIELLE STEEL

The Wedding Planner

A NOVEL



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Dedication

By Danielle Steel

About the Author

No one will be allowed to miss the boat.

Chapter 1

The alarm went off at five-thirty, as it did every morning. Faith Ferguson opened an eye, saw the time, turned off the alarm with a graceful hand, and a minute later, rolled out of bed, ready to start the rituals of her day. She was a consummately disciplined person. At forty-two, she had the body of a twenty-year-old. Ballet exercises in the morning six days a week kept her in shape. She got up, brushed her teeth, combed her shoulder-length blond hair, and wound it into a tight knot, and looked like a ballerina as she put on her black leotard and pink ballet shoes. She was wide-awake by the time she called her ballet teacher on her computer. They smiled and wished each other good morning, and started the same exercise routine she did every day. She had a highly disciplined life. Teacher and student did not converse as they went through the familiar exercises.

They finished their work together promptly at seven A.M., wished each other a good day, ended the connection, and Faith headed for the shower. It was a dark blustery January morning, and she had a busy day ahead. January was one of her busiest times of year. She was one of the most sought-after wedding planners in New York. People often came to her to plan their weddings right after the holidays.

She had appointments with three new clients this week, all referred by satisfied previous clients. Some had seen interviews she'd given or read her

books. She had published three successful books. They were the bibles for anyone about to get married. Her first was a coffee-table book, full of photographs of the most beautiful weddings she'd done, and packed with helpful hints about how to achieve the same effects as in the photos. Except, of course, that couldn't be done, not without her help and expertise. The second book was a wedding planner, detailing how to keep everything on track in the months before a wedding. It was the gift everyone gave to a newly engaged woman. The third book was filled with background on all the traditions that related to weddings, the etiquette, the things you had to know to plan a wedding, from seating to formal titles, what was proper and what wasn't. Her book rivaled Amy Vanderbilt's and Emily Post's. She had a definitive, friendly, accessible style, while being definite about what was correct etiquette and what wasn't. Another must-have for any bride.

Faith had never been married herself, although she had come close twice. She was young the first time, and it had been a devastating experience. She was a junior editor at *Vogue*, given a wide range of assignments, from beauty to parties covered by the magazine. Her upbringing in New York City in a genteel home with well brought up, aristocratic parents made her well suited to assisting the editors she worked for in covering socialites' parties and events, and even occasionally weddings. Her grandparents on both sides were of equally distinguished origins and blue blood.

On one of the shoots she'd been on, to photograph a very important young bride, she had met Patrick Brock, a handsome young photographer. She was twenty-five, Patrick was a year older, and they had hit it off immediately. They dated for almost a year before he proposed. Their engagement had been a whirlwind. Faith, her twin sister, Hope, and their mother, Marianne, had planned her wedding. They had bought a beautiful, delicately embroidered French lace dress at Bergdorf's bridal department. She felt like a fairy princess in it, and even more so when she tried on the veil, made of delicate French tulle that floated like a mist over her face. Everything was in order for the wedding at the Metropolitan Club. Her parents had divorced when she was ten, and her father was coming from

Europe with his German wife, a baroness, to attend the wedding and give her away. Her parents had remained on cordial terms. Her sister was going to be the maid of honor, and six friends from college at Georgetown in Washington, D.C., were bridesmaids. Hope was a very successful model then, had done shoots with Patrick, and liked him. Her parents and grandparents approved of the marriage. He came from a respectable family in Boston and had talent, and good manners. Faith was crazy about him.

Everything had gone according to plan until a week before the wedding when her fiancé showed up at the apartment she shared with her twin, and dissolved in tears in her arms as soon as he came through the door. It took him an hour to explain that he had had some earlier “forays” which he had thought were only experimental but turned out to be a lot more than that. He explained that he had just realized that he was gay, and had fallen in love with a Russian ballet dancer. There had been no sign of any doubts about Patrick’s sexuality. He said he couldn’t marry her. He loved her as a friend, but he had had the growing suspicion that he couldn’t live up to what would be expected of him in marriage, and he needed to be free to explore the relationship with the Russian dancer, with whom he admitted he was deeply in love. His own family was shocked beyond belief when he told them, as was Faith’s.

What happened afterward was a blur of tears, despair, and humiliation. Formal announcements were hastily printed and sent out, canceling the wedding. She had taken two weeks off from work to hide, and was still a shambles when she went back. Her twin, Hope, had nursed her as though after an accident or an illness. Faith was shattered by the shock.

She had never seen Patrick again. He had left New York and moved to London with the dancer. She had heard that their relationship was passionate but didn’t last long, but he was sure of his sexuality by then. He had eventually come back to New York, and mercifully their paths had never crossed.

In one of the ironies of life, six months after the aborted wedding, she had been assigned to exclusively cover weddings for the magazine because she did it so well. It had taken her years to get over the blow of being nearly

jilted at the altar. Her father couldn't understand why she was so upset. He told her it was a blessing to have found out before they married, rather than years later. Her mother and sister fully understood how traumatized she was, and how covering weddings for *Vogue* was like aversion therapy for her, or a form of inoculation. Something hardened in Faith as she went from wedding to wedding and wrote the descriptions in rhapsodic terms, after directing the photographer to get all the shots they wanted for the magazine. She felt numb for a year. Her mother had packed away the wedding dress. The whole experience was a sensitive subject for a long time.

It was nearly ten years later when she considered trying it again. William Tyler was a strong, interesting man, an architect. She admired his work. She had left the magazine and set up her business as a wedding planner by then. After covering dozens or hundreds of weddings for *Vogue*, it was what she knew best. She had learned her lessons well.

At first, William had seemed like the perfect partner. He was as disciplined and precise about his work as she was about hers. Then shadows began to creep in as he started to tell her what to do and what to wear, what to say, and what not to discuss. He lived in an apartment he had designed in Chelsea. She and Hope each had their own apartments by then. Faith was living in SoHo and Hope had moved uptown. William didn't like her friends and had none of his own. He told her precisely how he wanted their wedding to be and where. He had a strong aesthetic sense, and the only opinions he respected were his own.

After being engaged for two months, she felt as if she were suffocating, that he was trying to strip her of her identity and redesign her to his own specifications, like a building he was buying to remodel. She felt as though she had been gutted. He was constantly tearing her down. She returned the ring to him and fled. She was older and wiser, and wondered how she could have made such a grave mistake again. She felt free and light as soon as she got away from him.

She had no regrets this time about the failed engagement. He never understood what went wrong. He had controlled every move she made, and wanted to control her every thought. She recovered more quickly the

second time, since she was the one who had left. The legacy William left was that she was convinced that marriage wasn't for her. Weddings were her job, even her career, but they were no longer her dream. She could create an exquisite wedding for anyone who came to her for help, but the thought of a wedding of her own filled her with dread. William had cured her of ever wanting to be a bride, forever.

Six months later, her twin sister, Hope, had announced that she was getting married, and all Faith could feel was pity for her. Hope had had a lively, liberated life as a model, and insisted that she had found her soulmate in Angus Stewart.

Hope and Faith looked nothing alike and had entirely different personalities. Faith was smaller and more delicate, blond with green eyes. Hope was nearly as tall as their father, with dark hair and brown eyes. She'd had fun for a dozen years in New York as a model. She met fascinating people, traveled all over the world, and was ready to give it all up for a man whose favorite pastimes were hiking and fishing, skiing and mountain climbing. Angus soon absconded to Connecticut with her sister. He was a writer, and they'd had three children in seven years. Hope claimed that she was blissfully happy, which was hard for Faith to imagine, in a rural suburban life, surrounded by noise, chaos, and mess. The children were adorable, but lively and uncontrollable, which Hope seemed to enjoy. They only behaved when their nanny was around. Hope could never quite seem to get them to sit still, which didn't bother her at all. They had three very boisterous boys, Seamus, six, Henry, three, and the baby, Oliver, who was a year old.

Faith and Hope had loved being twins as children, particularly since they looked so different and had such distinctive personalities. Hope was casual and more relaxed. Faith had always been wound more tightly, and wanted everything to be perfect. It suited her to live alone. The house she had bought in the city, from where she ran her business, was as impeccably chic and neat as Faith herself, and the weddings she planned. Nothing was ever out of place. She watched every detail. A Faith Ferguson wedding was flawless, just like Faith and the home she lived in. Hope was more helter-

skelter. Her house was always chaotic, with shoes and magazines and books and sports equipment lying all over the place. Faith loved visiting her, but she was always happy to come back to the silent order and peace of her own home. Having three boys would have killed Faith. She loved her nephews, but she loved her twin sister more, more than anyone in the world. She wasn't sorry she hadn't had children. It was all part of a package she had decided wasn't for her. She helped others get there, but not herself.

After she showered and dressed, she made a cup of green tea and sat down to call her sister, as she did every morning before she started her day. It was the ritual in her life she loved most. She called her at eight o'clock, when her brother-in-law, Angus, of good Scottish stock, had just taken the two older boys to school, and the nanny had arrived to take the baby to get him dressed. She and Hope could have a peaceful chat about whatever came to mind, or whatever they were doing, or any interesting gossip they'd heard about old friends. Like Faith, Hope didn't look her age. She had a striking natural beauty devoid of artifice. Her long hair always looked as though she had forgotten to comb it. She rarely wore makeup, and she had an unconscious sexiness about her, as though she had just climbed out of bed. She usually wore jeans and riding boots or Wellingtons. She liked to ride every day at a nearby stable. She favored fisherman's sweaters and often wore her husband's parkas and jackets, which looked just right on her.

"What are you up to this week?" Hope asked, sipping a latte. It was her second one. Her son Seamus had spilled the first one at the breakfast table. It was just part of the morning landscape for them.

"I'm seeing three new clients," Faith reported to her. Hope was always happy for her success. After twelve years of modeling, she had been thrilled to leave the workforce and stay at home, especially since Angus did his writing in a cozy room over the garage that he had set up for himself. It was nice having him close at hand. She didn't miss the city at all, and Faith had to beg her to come to town to do some shopping and have lunch.

Hope hated to shop, and said she'd seen and tried on enough clothes to last a lifetime. She had felt that way when she was modeling too, although she looked fabulous on the runway when she walked in a fashion show. She

had been one of the most sought-after models for most of her career, and now she just wanted to stay home and be a wife and mother. Faith would have been bored with that life, but Hope was happy and fulfilled. Angus was a great guy, and he was always happy to see Faith, and encouraged her to visit more often. But Faith kept busy in New York. The twins often talked to each other two or three times a day, just checking in, or reporting on something they'd done and seen. "All three were referrals," Faith said about her new clients. "It's always busy this time of year." Hope knew that too, and admired her sister for her talent, and the successful career she had built. The weddings she created for her clients were fabulous. Faith had done Hope's wedding too, with all the men in the wedding party in kilts in their family tartans.

The twins knew everything about each other's lives, and shared their most private thoughts, and always had. They were close to their mother, but even closer to each other. They had been best friends growing up, to the exclusion of other friends much of the time. There was something very deep and special about their relationship. They had loved each other when other girls their age, in their teens, were fighting with their sisters. But it was different as twins. They rarely argued as children, and never as adults. Their mother was a kind, sensible, intelligent woman who had accepted that the twins' relationship left little room for anyone else, even her.

"Have you talked to Mom lately?" Hope asked, and Faith sensed it as a gentle reproach.

"No, why, is something wrong? I talked to her a week ago. Did she complain or say I hadn't?"

"No, she knows you're busy. She doesn't want to bother you. I think she gets lonely at times." Their mother had married three times, the first time to their father, Arthur Ferguson. It had lasted for twelve years. The girls were shocked when they got divorced. They had always seemed to get along so well, and were so polite to each other. The twins were ten when they divorced. Their father had never been a constant presence in their lives, even while their parents were married. He traveled a lot, and wasn't very interested in his wife or children.

Their father had married Beata, his second wife, fairly soon after the divorce. Their mother, Marianne, had taken longer to meet the love of her life, a brilliant, well-known playwright, who was said to be a genius, but was also depressive and alcoholic. The marriage had lasted for five rocky years. The twins were already in college by the time they married, and steered a wide berth around their erratic, volatile stepfather and felt sorry for their mother while she was married to him. He wasn't an evil person, but impossible to get along with. They weren't surprised when it ended in divorce. The third time she married an Italian count, who had seemed insignificant to the twins. They were living in their own apartment together by then and hardly knew him. He made no effort to get to know them, and left their mother after two years to find greener pastures and a richer wife, just as their father had done. Marianne was disappointed, but not amazed.

She lived on what she had inherited from her family and never worked. She didn't have a huge amount of money, but enough to live very comfortably. She took a few trips a year to visit friends, mostly in Palm Beach or Newport in the summer. She had a trust, which enabled her to send the girls to private schools in Manhattan when they were younger, and she rented a house in the Hamptons in the summer. They'd had everything they needed, without being ostentatious or living in great luxury. But Marianne was financially secure, without worries. She had just enough money to attract men who were after it, like the twins' father and the Italian count.

Marianne was proud of how successful Faith's business was, and of Hope's modeling career. They'd had an easy, happy life as children, with a devoted mother and a father who was seldom around. He'd had an insignificant banking job while he was married to their mother, and wanted a wife who didn't expect him to work and would support him. He had finally found it with Beata.

Their mother still lived in the apartment on Park Avenue where they'd grown up, and stayed after their father left. Marianne was sixty-seven now, and careful with the money she had. It was comforting to know that she had enough to live on, and could be independent, but there would be no big

inheritance waiting for her daughters at the end of her life. They didn't expect it and had done well themselves, and had invested their earnings well and wisely. And Angus was successful as a writer, and had family money. It pained Hope at times knowing that their mother was alone. Faith always said she was better off than if she were married to a bad guy who'd spend her money or interfere with her life, which was what she felt for herself too. Hope reminded her that not everyone was as self-sufficient as she was, or preferred to be alone. Her mother preferred to have companionship but after three tries hadn't found the right man.

“Why would Mom want to marry now? She has everything she needs. A man would just screw it all up at this point. She's better off the way she is,” Faith said matter-of-factly. They disagreed on that point. Hope always suspected that their mother would have preferred to have a man in her life rather than be alone, but she hadn't had anyone for a long time. She'd been devoted to her daughters when they were young. She had always amply made up for their father's rare appearances, visiting New York with Beata once or twice a year, to see friends. The girls had never liked visiting him in Germany in the summer. They always felt unwelcome and out of place. Beata was polite to them, but she wasn't a warm person, and had no children of her own. They had always understood that their father had married her lifestyle, which he enjoyed, and preferred it to working, but he wasn't madly in love with her. He played his role of devoted husband well, and they had been married for almost thirty years. It was an arrangement that seemed to work for them. He was a handsome, distinguished husband for Beata, and he traveled a lot on his own. His family had gone through their money when he was young. And the second time, he had married well. He hadn't worked since he'd married Beata. He was from an old New York social family. He'd been a good example of what neither of the twins wanted. Hope had married Angus for love and was happy. And Faith was perfectly happy unmarried, with occasional companionship, which never lasted long. She didn't want a husband telling her what to do, spending her money, or running her life.

The twins chatted for half an hour, and then Faith made her way to her office. Her desk was impeccably organized, as she left it every night. She'd had two big weddings to do right before the Christmas holidays, and then there was always a lull. No one seemed to get married in January. But they planned their summer weddings immediately after Christmas, and she knew that she'd be busy soon, particularly if she took on the three new clients she was scheduled to see this week. Faith could pick and choose which weddings she would do. She was the best in the city. Anything too splashy and too vulgar, or in seriously bad taste, she always gracefully declined, explaining to the client that her schedule was so overloaded that she couldn't do them justice. She had a feeling that the first client she would be seeing was planning a big affair. The client who had recommended them had spent nearly two million dollars on their daughter's wedding at their estate on Long Island the year before. It had been spectacular, with six hundred guests, and a very sizable fee for her. Weddings like that always brought in new clients. She'd already had two excellent referrals from them.

The one thing she hated was destination weddings. They were so hard to organize and do well, with local suppliers she didn't know, depending on the location. She avoided destination weddings whenever possible. She loved weddings in people's homes, if their homes were large enough. She'd done many at magnificent estates. She did simpler weddings too, if she liked the people, and the budget was workable. She loved making people's dreams come true. Weddings were all about fantasy, understanding what people wanted, and making magic happen for them.

She always loved the look on the groom's face when he first saw the bride and watched her come down the aisle, often with tears in his eyes. It was like watching a carpet roll out toward their future, with everything they hoped would happen. It was a very special day, and she loved being part of it. It was a dream she no longer had or wanted for herself, but she loved giving it away to others who still believed in the dream. No longer having that dream was a choice she had made, not a disappointment for her. Giving

a successful wedding was also a question of imagination and logistics, and having the best suppliers in the world, who never let her down.

She heard Violet, her assistant, come in, while she was making herself another cup of tea. Faith didn't like having a lot of staff underfoot and was satisfied with a housekeeper, who came in daily, and one assistant in the office. She did the rest herself. She was sitting at her desk when Violet came into the room. She was a bright, smiling young woman who loved her job, and made every day better for Faith in some way. She was twenty-nine years old and had worked for Faith for three years. They worked well together, and Violet dealt beautifully with their brides, and handled their mothers with discretion and patience whenever things got tense, which happened often between mothers and daughters while planning their Big Day. The fathers rarely cared about the details, only the bills. But coming to Faith to do a wedding was never going to be an inexpensive event. They knew her reputation before they came to her. They were going to have an unforgettable wedding, at a serious price. And it would be well worth it.

Faith was wearing a simple black pantsuit with high heels for the meeting. She always dressed respectfully for her meetings with clients. It didn't matter who they were. Violet had worn a black skirt with a simple white cashmere sweater, and high heels as well. She could wear jeans when she worked on-site, but never in the office. She never disappointed Faith.

"What do we know about the Alberts?" she asked Faith as she took away her empty cup of tea, and Faith smiled.

"Not much. He's a big real estate developer. They were referred by the Ferdinands, so I have a feeling it's going to be a big event. We'll know in a few minutes." They were due in five minutes, and Faith expected clients to be prompt.

Half an hour later, they were still waiting for the Alberts. They hadn't called to say they'd be late, as Faith looked at her watch again. The doorbell rang forty minutes after the appointed time, and Violet went to let them in.

She ushered them into the living room on the main floor that Faith used to see clients during work hours. Faith gathered up several folders and a pad in a leather folio to make notes during the meeting. She walked in just as

they sat down, and Violet left to hang up their coats. Mrs. Albert's was a bright red mink.

Faith could already guess the size and style of the wedding as soon as she saw them. Jack Albert, the father of the bride, was heavysset, wearing an expensive suit, with a large gold watch on his wrist. His wife, Miriam, was wearing a red Chanel suit, a large diamond ring, and too much jewelry and perfume for so early in the day. In contrast, their daughter, presumably the bride, was wearing leggings, combat boots, and an ancient gray sweater with holes in it. She had a tattoo of a rose noticeable on her left wrist, and her blond hair was held in a tangled mass with a clip. She appeared not to care how she looked, and seemed uncomfortable. She was an attractive girl, and she didn't look particularly happy to be there with her parents. Faith guessed her to be in her late twenties, thirty at most, around her assistant's age. Jack made a point of saying that Annabelle didn't work. She'd gone to college but never got a job. He said she didn't need one. And Jeremy, the groom, worked in his father's business occasionally when he felt like it. Jack was generous with the information.

Faith handed a folder to each of them, with some sample photographs and ideas and her basic materials, so they could go home and get a feeling for the kind of weddings she did. The photographs showed a range of them, both city and country weddings, a few of the more famous ones for celebrities. She could see from looking at the Alberts that one of her missions would be to keep the wedding within the bounds of good taste. It was often one of her most important functions, as well as being a mediator between the bride and her parents if their visions differed. She wondered whose idea it had been to come to her. She suspected in this case it was the parents, not the bride. She knew she had guessed right when Jack Albert explained that their older daughter, Eloise, had eloped five years before. He said they weren't about to be cheated of a wedding again. They were clearly planning to make up for what they had missed.

"She was divorced in a year," he said, with a disapproving look, and Annabelle, the bride, rolled her eyes. She had heard it all before. The implication was that the failure of the marriage had been a certainty since

her sister didn't have a big wedding to show their stamp of approval. He made an odd comment too about Annabelle's fiancé, that he had needed some "convincing to step up to the plate." Faith wondered what that meant. Money, a Ferrari, Jack's connections for a better job, or threats. Faith wondered if the groom was after money or just not ready to get married. In any case, they had apparently convinced him or they wouldn't be there.

Faith could already sense that they wanted a wedding to show off for their friends, and maybe even business associates. Jack Albert was a very successful real estate developer, and had built several skyscrapers in the city. They said that they wanted the wedding at their estate in East Hampton.

"They want seven hundred guests," Annabelle said with an angry look, and Faith smiled at the three of them, while Miriam Albert studied the art on the walls. Faith's home was simple, modern, and beautifully decorated. She had done it all herself, and the art was by well-known artists.

"Maybe we can compromise at three or four hundred. How does that sound to you?" she asked the bride, as though they were alone in the room, and Annabelle smiled for the first time.

"Better. I wanted a small wedding. That's why my sister eloped. She didn't want a circus, and neither do I."

"The wedding is going to be on July fourth." Miriam Albert spoke for the first time. "And we want fireworks." She didn't ask her daughter's approval. It was *her* decision. Annabelle didn't comment, but rolled her eyes again.

"Anything is possible." Faith smiled pleasantly. "We just don't want to draw the attention away from the happy couple by having too much going on," she said, and she could see Annabelle start to relax. Faith needed to win her trust by the time they planned the wedding. She was competent and calm and not unduly swayed by Annabelle's parents, which gained her the bride's faith.

"And we want a crystal tent with chandeliers," the mother of the bride went on. "And two bands."

“I’d like to do a site visit, if that’s all right with you, and then I can make some suggestions. That’s hard to do before I’ve seen where the wedding is going to be.” Jack nodded at that, and Annabelle did too. It made sense. Aside from talented, Faith was practical and wanted everything to run smoothly, which her weddings always did. She was known for that too.

Faith jotted down a few notes about what they’d said, the fireworks, the tent, the chandeliers. She spent an hour getting a feel for what each of them wanted. Jack and Miriam clearly wanted show. Annabelle wanted something more meaningful, and not as overwhelming as they had in mind. It was Faith’s job to blend the two and come up with a wedding that Annabelle would love, and would make her parents feel that they’d gotten their money’s worth and all the bang for their buck she could provide.

“If we do the fireworks at the very end, it won’t distract from the wedding, and will give the couple an exciting send-off into their new life,” she suggested. She could see that they had their hearts set on it, and she had to find a way to make it palatable to Annabelle. “Have you looked for a dress yet?” Annabelle shook her head.

“We’re thinking Dior couture,” Miriam said, and Annabelle didn’t comment. She clearly hadn’t made up her mind yet about what she wanted. All she knew was what she didn’t want, most of which was high on her parents’ list of requirements. “With a long train and an embroidered veil,” Miriam added. “We’re going to Paris in three weeks to see the couture shows.”

“And some other designers,” Annabelle said, as Faith wondered how many other tattoos she had. She had a feeling there were more, which might dictate what style dress she wore, unless she wanted to show them off, which some girls did.

“We have lots of work to do,” Faith said, smiling. When they left, she gave them each a copy of each of her three books. They had set a date for Faith’s site visit to their Long Island estate, and she invited them to call if they had any questions, and she was sure they would. Jack implied that money was no object, which was usually a sign of some serious bad taste to come. But she was ready for it and reining things in to keep the wedding

tasteful, even if lavish, was what she did best. Her events were never vulgar. She wouldn't let them go overboard.

It was starting to snow when they left, and as she saw them to the door, she noticed a driver waiting in a Mercedes Maybach outside. She had guessed that it would be something like that, or a Rolls.

She could still smell Miriam's perfume lingering after they left.

"How was it?" Violet asked her when she walked back into her office, and Faith sighed with a smile.

"Interesting. They want lots of show, seven hundred guests and fireworks, on the Fourth of July. The bride wants something smaller. She's not going to win this one, but we can try and tone it down a little. I'm going to see their estate next week. They're thinking Caesars Palace, I'm thinking Versailles," she said, and Violet laughed. She reached out for Faith's leather-bound notepad, and Faith immediately noticed a sparkle on her left hand.

"What's *that*? Something new?" Faith looked surprised, and Violet blushed.

"It just happened. Jordan proposed on New Year's Eve. But don't worry, we can't afford a honeymoon, I'll only take a week off." She looked instantly concerned, she didn't want to upset Faith.

"And when is this supposed to happen?" Faith asked her. "Hopefully not in high season, in June, July, or August."

"We're thinking about sometime in May. I know how busy it gets in June. I was going to ask you about it later today."

"That's perfect." Faith smiled, happy for her. It was still too chilly for most weddings in May in New York. "Do you have a location?"

"There's an Italian restaurant near my parents' that my dad thought would be okay."

"Let's see if we can come up with some other ideas he'd like and might be more your style. I'll give it some thought." Faith loved a challenge, and Violet smiled. She couldn't afford a Faith Ferguson wedding, but maybe Faith would have some good suggestions in their budget. She loved working for her. She was someone Violet knew she could count on, and the

job was fun and exciting. She had learned a lot from Faith. “Best wishes, Violet,” she said properly, since it wasn’t appropriate to “congratulate” the bride, which was in her book. “I hope you’ll both be very happy.” She had met the groom once and he seemed like a nice boy. He had trained as an accountant, and worked for a startup, and you never knew these days who would be successful one day. Some big success stories started small.

They’d been dating for over a year, and Faith made a note to herself to look up some locations for them, since she knew they had very little money to spend on a wedding, and maybe she could help, and even get discounts for Violet, at least on a dress.

After that, she sat at her desk making preliminary notes for the Albert wedding on the Fourth of July. There was a lot to think about, and it would be a big moneymaker for her, but it was Violet’s wedding that made her smile and warmed her heart. She wasn’t quite as hard-nosed and cynical as people thought. The kind of wedding Violet was going to have was what weddings were supposed to be about. Two people in love on a very special day, with their life together shining like a bright star ahead of them. With Faith walking ahead to lead the way and help her to have a wedding that would be a precious memory forever. Whether for a million-dollar wedding or for her assistant on a tight budget, Faith loved her job, and making magic for her brides, as long as she never had to be one of them.