

FREE EXCERPT

THE
WEDDING
VIRUS

and other snippets

natalie shell

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VIRUS**

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www.theweddingvirus.com

To my girlfriends everywhere.
You know who you are.

And to my Mr.
You know who you are, too.

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“Everyone lies.
Or they have
amnesia.”

“A real relationship
is the ultimate
fantasy.”

The Wedding Virus

I'm in a café, waving my hand in my soon-to-be-married friend's face.

"I've caught the wedding virus," I say.

"It's OK to admit that, darling, most of us catch it eventually."

"No, I mean literally. There is a thing growing on my left finger. . . ."

I thrust my finger closer to her face.

"On my wedding finger!!

"And I have to have it lasered off!

"What the fuck?"

And she looks at me and starts laughing hysterically. And I'm joining in.

"This needs to be in a movie," she says, shaking her head.

Be careful what you say, people.

I've been joking about the wedding virus (followed closely by the baby epidemic).

I made it up as a concept. You know, to explain how suddenly weddings and kids spread.

It's especially contagious in groups of couples.

At least, I thought I made it up. . .

Oh, and believe me, I'm a stereotype.

Soon to be thirty. Living with my boyfriend of two years.

No ring. Having spent two years not once mentioning, forget pleading or begging or announcing my need to get married . . . a need I didn't have.

Suddenly wanting it.

And now frustrated at his lack of interest.

The fact that he has an ex-wife and therefore presumably knows full well how to propose isn't helping.

And I'm sitting here.

With. A. VIRUS. On. My. Wedding. Finger.

That needs to be taken off.

With a laser.

What have I become?

Who is this person?

What happened to all the stories they fed me about the man on one knee?

Of him or you or you both knowing and spontaneously getting it together?

"Obviously you've ignored all the other stories," my friend cuts in.

She reminds me of her year of torture convincing her boyfriend of eight years that they should get married. And the story of our other friend who lived with a guy for two and a half years only to break

up when he announced to our Manhattan-born-and-raised-senior-associate-lawyer-at-top-firm friend that actually he had always imagined she would want to just have babies, move back to his small hick home town and be friends with the wives of his friends, and did she really want to work?

Only to find out via Facebook that he was engaged six weeks later. And married within three months.

"Do you know what my cousin told me the other day?" I interrupt.

"We don't wait, darling. We force."

"Oh, everyone knows that," she says.

"What?" I'm still holding up my finger.

"Huh? No-one told me.

"Where's the romance in that?"

"Oh, there isn't any. Not for most people. Not really."

"Um, my parents."

"So your parents are one in a million, darling. But that's not most people's story.

"Most people beg. Cry. Scream.

"No guy really wants to get married."

It's not true, I want to yell. It can't be.

"I know guys who propose. They've always told me. I was always the girl they told.

My best guy friend proposed to his girlfriend.

OK, so what if his girlfriend told him she expected to get married that year? She also told me.

Heck, she told the butcher.

"But the point," I said to my friend, "is that he

proposed.”

“Darling, his wife informed him and the whole known universe that she expected to be married. And she repeated it and repeated it and repeated it.

“Until he understood there was no way out. Unless he actually wanted out of the relationship. Which most guys don’t want. Because the reason they don’t propose in the first place is because they don’t want anything to change. They want everything to stay the same. Always. Think of their favorite underwear or t-shirt that they can’t bear to part with . . .”

I shake my head and bang it on the café’s table.

“This can’t really be the way it works, can it?”

“The way I see it,” she says, “you have two choices. Well three, really.

“You tell him you need to get married and then you either do, or break up.”

“You said three.”

“The third is you accept that he doesn’t want to get married. And you are OK with that.”

“That’s all you have for three?”

Argh.

I’ve caught the wedding virus!

49 Things I've Learned

1. I am not skinny from birth and thus will have to work for the body I have more and more as I get older. And I may have to eat less.
2. I do not look particularly good in fluorescent colors, horizontal stripes . . . I do OK in polka dots.
3. Short and tight are very objective terms.
4. I am able to go shorter than I used to.
5. I will never ever look like Elle Macpherson, Helena Christensen, Kate Moss . . . or Julie who still looks the best of all my high school friends. That said, I also will never have the ass of Kim Kardashian, and I should probably aim toward the likes of Reese Witherspoon—at least she's closer to my height.
6. There are positives to #5. No one will ever write about me in *Us Weekly* or *People Magazine*, and no one out there except my dear friends and family and you cares who I'm with or not with. No one will write nasty things about me one week after saying I'm the best thing in the world.

Nor will I be written up under “Worst bods in Hollywood” and spread over E!

7. I am not attracted to Brad Pitt (I’ve met him). I can’t write the same about Angelina (I’ve met her, too).

8. Johnny Depp ~~is married. He is single.~~ He is married.

9. Ewan McGregor is married.

10. Being judgmental about tummy tucks, Botox, Restylane, microdermabrasion, boob lifts, liposuction, and so forth all decreases proportionally with age.

Never say never (especially if you’ve never seen what breastfeeding does to breasts).

11. Sadly, in the nature vs. nurture debate, genes do matter.

12. Yes, I (and you) am turning into our mothers.

13. All people will die. And some you care about are dead already.

14. There will always be someone else.

15. Life can be cruel.

16. But thankfully, it is also kind.

17. I don’t need to be eighty and wearing a purple hat to know that the less you care, and more fun you have with it all, the more fun it will be and the less you’ll care . . . and the happier you’ll be too.

Unfortunately I am still working on connecting that knowledge with day-to-day wardrobe crises.

18. (Most) men age better than women. The good news is, there is still love and recommended improvements in: personality, income and wisdom to look forward to. And there is also #10.

19. Start yoga now. You'll thank me when you are eighty. I plan on thanking me when I'm eighty.

20. I still suck at relationships.

21. I still don't understand men.

22. I still blush when the coffee guy teases me in the morning and says he's missed me.

23. Lists are incredibly gratifying.

24. If you find yourself suddenly feeling you need to be married, it may be because of you. BUT it is also because of the media.

And Hollywood. And your mother. And your peers. And your age. And where you live.

25. If you find yourself suddenly feeling broody, it may be because of you. BUT it is also because there is a massive baby boom. And Hollywood. And the global financial crisis. And your mother or a well-meaning person. And your peers. And your age. And where you live. And how recently you've held a newborn. Did I mention it is also because of the media—fuck, *Vogue* just told me the “250,000 eggs I

had at 25 have become 50,000 at 30 and . . .” I ripped it up.

26. My best friend was right—she told me when I was fifteen that men didn’t need to get married anymore because everyone sleeps with them and lives with them anyway.

27. Love DOES exist.

28. Small things. It’s in the small things.

29. Lessons are like mold. They come back again and again until they are dealt with. And sometimes professional help and chemicals are necessary on this path.

30. Some lessons are life lessons. They are for life. (I stole that from a guy named Allan Seale).

31. Sometimes it’s very hard to know the difference between twenty-nine and thirty.

32. I am still a grasshopper.

33. “Thank you” and “I’m sorry” are magical words. And “please” isn’t bad either.

34. Hugs are even more magical.

35. Love and making love are still magical.

36. Be kind. Especially to yourself.

37. Yes, you will cry. At the most inopportune times. Often when you are angry. And possibly at work.

38. “Be” is a very big two-letter word.

39. Friends rock.
40. Travel rocks.
41. Parents quite suddenly get older.
42. Life doesn't go in straight lines.
43. You have not yet learned the art of making your boyfriend (and people at work) do things that you've come up with while having them think they've come up with it.
44. Smile lines are nicer than frown lines.
45. A can of paint is a quick way to fix most ugly living situations.
46. When you are overwhelmed, start with a corner.
47. When you are stressed: Stop. Breathe.
48. Just breathe.
49. Keep breathing.

Natalie Shell is an Aussie thinker, storyteller, and coach. In addition to spurting chick lit, she's one half of Apartmentdiet.com; ex-Product Manager, Branding, and UX Junkie at Wix.com; and a former Change Consultant. She lives in Tel Aviv with her Mr. and their son. Previously thought to be immune, she caught and survived the wedding virus.

THANK YOU

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