



Some people are really into the lovey-dovey stuff at weddings. Or they get excited about what everyone's wearing or who's going to be there.

Me? I just wanna know about the cake. If it's a fruit cake, like the one at Uncle Joe's wedding, then it's not normally a great wedding.¹ But if it's a chocolate cake, like the one at Uncle Malo's wedding, then it's normally an excellent wedding.² So when my dads told me they were getting married, I had one question. Were they having a chocolate cake?

Papa Pita seemed disappointed. "Aren't you excited we're getting married, Levi?" he asked. He and Dad both looked at me in the same way: kind of hopeful but scared at the same time. If I was being completely honest, I would have said I think weddings are pretty boring until it gets to the cake. But because they're my dads, I said, "Of course I'm excited!" And I gave them both a hug.

But I'm telling you this now: if I ever get married, you can forget about any of that down-the-aisle and exchanging vows stuff. I'm just gonna cut straight to the cake.

¹ Though actually, Uncle Joe's wedding was a great wedding! The best man kept yelling at the DJ to play "What Does the Fox Say?" before he fell asleep on top of a bowl of ambrosia.

² All the guys did this dance routine, and Nanny Nu'a got up and joined in.



My dads wanted their wedding to be perfect. They spent a lot of time deciding things like when to send out the invitations and who was going to come.³ Only things didn't go to plan.

For starters, Dad emailed his brother Joe and asked if he'd be one of his groomsmen. Joe emailed him right back and said he'd be *honoured* to be the best man. Papa had already asked his brother Stone to be the best man, so then he had to un-ask him!⁴

Then Papa asked Dad's niece Sophia to be the flower girl. But Papa's mum, Nanny Nu'a, hit the roof. She insisted it should be his own niece, Sepela, so then he had to un-ask Sophia to be the flower girl, which made Sophia cry, and that made Dad's mum, Granny Annie, really cross. She even accused Nanny Nu'a of being a control freak.⁵

That night, Papa stood at the fridge and ate coconut ice cream straight out of the container.

"Careful," warned Dad. "You won't fit into your wedding pants, and we both know they're pretty tight already."

"I'm eating my feelings," Papa said.

"Then you should *definitely* wear your 'ie faitaga for the wedding," said Dad. An 'ie faitaga is a formal lāvalava. Dad said it would let Papa eat as many of his feelings as he liked.

"Maybe we should just elope," said Papa.

³ To be honest, I think they spent more time deciding who *wasn't* going to come.
⁴ I won't get into the details, but figuring out who would be un-asked was a major drama that went on for days ...
⁵ Papa and Dad agree that both their mothers are control freaks.



The wedding was in Kaikōura on the farm where Dad grew up. It was a sunny day with clear blue skies, and all the guests said it was a beautiful place to get married. It was *just so peaceful* ... apart from the sandflies.

They were everywhere that day – and vicious. Everyone was slapping and scratching and itching. Even the marriage celebrant was distracted. All Nanny Nu‘a could find to swat off the sandflies was her fan. My dads were saying their vows when Nanny Nu‘a accidentally swatted Granny Annie right in the face.⁶ Papa and Dad had to stop talking and just sort of stand there until Granny Annie calmed down. But you could tell Papa was rattled. When he went to put the ring on Dad’s finger, he dropped it. Papa bent down to pick the ring up. Suddenly, there was this almighty *rip*.

A look of pure horror appeared on Papa’s face. He had split his pants.

“How bad is it?” he whispered to me.

I looked down. “Um, pretty bad.”

⁶ At least she *said* it was an accident.

“I *knew* you should’ve worn your ‘ie faitaga,” hissed Dad.

“Stay right there,” Papa whispered to me. “Don’t move till I say so.”

So I had to stand behind Papa for the rest of the ceremony so no one could see his red undies.

When the celebrant finally announced that Papa and Dad were married,⁷ it was time for them to walk down the aisle, past all the guests. Papa walked like his thighs were glued together, with me scurrying behind, just in case.

He got changed into his ‘ie faitaga, and we went and posed for the photos. This involved the photographer taking lots of shots of Papa and Dad gazing at each other like they’d just had the best wedding ever, even though we’d been attacked by sandflies, Nanny Nu‘a had swatted Granny Annie, and Papa Pita had split his pants.

⁷ Just after slapping himself in the face to get rid of a sandfly.

When we finally got to the reception, I was so hungry I didn't hear any of the speeches. I could only think about one thing. It was right there on the table: all five tiers of it, with two miniature men in suits plonked on top. I was wondering if they were made out of chocolate, too, when I heard Papa say my name.

"Levi?"

Everyone was looking at me: Papa, Dad, Nanny Nu'a, Granny Annie (with her one good eye), Uncle Joe, Uncle Stone, Sophia, Sepela, and all the rest of them.⁸

"Sorry ... what did you say?" I asked.

"I said Dad and I have a surprise. Will you join us, please?"

He beckoned me over.

"I bet you've been thinking all day 'I wish we'd just get to the cake.' So we're going to break with tradition and cut it right now, before dinner, just for you."

I thought for a second I was dreaming, but then my dads found a knife, and together, the three of us cut a huge slice.

"There you go, Levi," said Papa, handing me a plate. "That's for you. Because we know how much you love chocolate cake ... and we hope you know how much we love you."

My two grandmas started to clap.

I took the cake and had a bite. It was fudgy, with a thick layer of chocolate icing. Hands down, it was the most delicious chocolate cake I'd ever eaten in my life. I smiled at my dads. They were looking at me again with that same combination of fear and hope.

I had three words for them.

"Best. Wedding. Ever."



Illustrations by Paul Beavis

⁸ The final guest list had 110 people.

Best Wedding Ever

by Victor Rodger

illustrations by Paul Beavis

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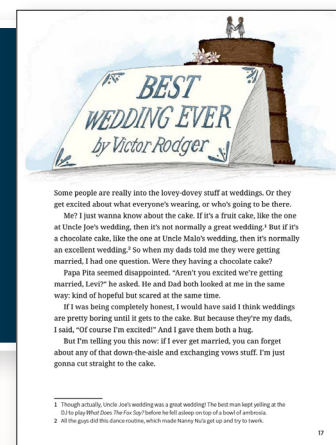
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