

## **Two Parties in One**

In the summer of 2006, we are in Maine for a vacation to visit family and friends.

Gerard's birthday is going to fall during our trip so I ask Annmarie if we can have a get together there and have a surprise party for him. As I pack for the trip, I am careful to hide the presents I have for him.

The day of the cookout and party Annmarie has put up decorations and soon after arriving Gerard realized it is a birthday party for him. There are fifteen to twenty friends and family there. We have excellent food and Gerard opens his presents and we have chocolate cake. As people are getting ready to leave Gerard asks if everyone can get together for a couple minutes. He appears anxious and I wonder why. Maybe he wants to thank everyone for making it a special day for him. Everyone comes into the living room.

He asks me to sit down. As he turns his back to me, I can see him take something out of a little jewelry box. I think oh my God he is going to propose to me. My face becomes flushed, and my hands start to shake. He gets down on bended knee and takes my hand while holding a diamond ring in the other hand. My friends gasp. One friend even leaves the room crying. He professes his love for me and says he wants to spend the rest of his life with me. He then asks,

“Will you marry me?”

I jokingly say, “I will have to think about it.” And everyone shouts out,

“What is there to think about?”

I then tell him “I love you too and would love to be your wife.”

He smiles at me as he slides the stunning ring on my finger. While holding my hand we stand up, embrace and kiss.

Every person comes up to us with hugs and kisses and saying how happy they are for us. I am in shock, not only did he propose but he got down on bended knee. Doesn't every woman dream of a man proposing like that? So not only had I been hiding a present from him he was hiding an engagement ring from me. The party just got more memorable for everyone. My friends and family felt honored to be able to share such a special moment with us. A day I will never forget.

Gerard later takes me aside and asks me,

“Was it ok I did it in front of your friends and family?”

“It was fine.”

“We do romantic things together and I hoped you did not mind I did not do it in private.

“You know that my friends and family mean so much to me, and I mean so much to my friends.”

My son later tells me Gerard approached him before he proposed and told him of his intentions. He asked if my son agreed and Mike said he has never seen his mother happier than she is with him, so yes please do ask her. It means so much to me to have him ask for my hand in marriage, even at my age.

Gerard is going to be leaving the following day and I am staying for a couple more weeks. Here we get engaged and then we spend our next two weeks apart. I feel sad about having to be apart after such an exciting thing happens in our relationship. We speak every day and are

so happy to be back together after the two weeks are up. Again, I cannot wait to get off the plane because I miss him so much more than I ever thought I could. I feel like the luckiest woman around to have found such a good man who is even romantic also.

I always love a bargain so before I have to leave Maine I go shopping at JC Penney in Waterville, Maine. There is a fantastic deal because the summer items are on sale. I decide to look through the dresses and I find my wedding dress. It is an exquisite ivory strapless cocktail dress with a gathered waist which is very complimentary. There are two layers of light flowing material which goes to my knees. This is a great deal because it only cost me twenty-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents. Good thing I got my dress at an unbelievable price because my shoes are twice that but matched perfectly. I later find a beautiful sheer shawl with hand sewn beads adorning the back making a beautiful design. I am all set now with my wedding dress and beautiful accessories.