



August 26, 2013

HYMENEAL IN MANY VOICES (COMMENTS ON THE LAUNCH OF STACIE AND KYLE'S WEDDING REGISTRY)

Ivy Goodman

The value of a cash gift is on its face, and that, in some circles, is the value of the giver. But excuse me, the value of a \$130 vegetable peeler is \$5.99.

Have you traveled abroad? I'm sure you have. Exhaustive registries not only discourage ugly gifts but also, like a currency exchange, help establish what a dollar buys.

Either they're opening a restaurant or they've never set foot in an actual kitchen.

Like the old joke says, they can't boil water so they're cooking everything *sou vide*.

To preserve the rush of "love at first sight," Kyle and Stacie plan to recreate shifting facsimiles of store displays at home, e.g., linens, cookware, culinary tools. I swear. That's what I heard.

But do they really want these things? If they began compiling their registry in earnest, I don't think the mood lasted very long. Whoever got bored first said, "Wouldn't that be funny," and then the other said, "Top this if you can!" On they went, daring each other in a spree of laughter. When the deliveryman brings another box, and it's the silver ice bucket on a pedestal for chilling wine, tableside, in their own house, they'll fall down falling all over again. They think the joke's on us. Let's indulge them, shall we?

That's so not true! They love to cook and entertain!

Listen, they chose manufactured patterns when they could have commissioned silversmiths, ceramists, and glassblowers. I agree, eventually they want to entertain a lot, but for now they're still in Stacie's condo. I wonder where they'll put their gifts?

Self-storage units range from 20 to 400 square feet, depending on your needs. Ask about climate-control. 24-hour access. Rebate for signing six-month online lease.

Stacie's 34, and Kyle's pushing 40. The good news is they know exactly what they want.

Remember, happiness is all that anyone can really ask for. Write your prenup now. Convenient legal offices nationwide. www.yourweddingyourdivorce

Stacie, imagine it's five years from now, on an August afternoon. Hours ago, your amiable husband went off somewhere—body surfing, he claims—but now he's back, and you're telling him to watch the kids so you can go calm your nerves. "Sure, fine," he says, and you say, "Screw you." At the water's edge, the sound of breaking waves overpowers the high-pitched, demanding screams of everybody's children. Your feet sink in and lift; your big toes fling up dollops of dark wet sand. The breeze cools your skin, and you're running fast, far from home, carrying nothing, not a dollar bill tucked into your bathing suit, not your car keys, not your shoes. Even your anxiety thrills you when you look back quickly and can't see Kyle, your children, or your beach umbrella in the crowd. No one's in pursuit—so far so good. But of course you're only pretending you're unencumbered, aren't you?

Whoever you are, you're not Stacie's friend. When Kyle and Stacie travel en famille, I know for a fact that they'll bring along a nanny

Back up a minute. I count myself as a friend of Kyle, and Stacie's not a bitch. So yeah, forget that scenario above, except for the body surfing and the waves. Feel the water lift you, Kyle. You're a vector transmitting power. Just let it try and slam you, right? I won't say "don't get married," but this list of shit you're asking for? That's the shit that kills you, man.

I'll give what I always give, a bag of rocks as ordinary as potatoes but symbolizing the eternal.

I'm reminded of the pharaohs in their tombs and all the objects they thought they would need in the afterlife.

I had jury duty last week, and when the judge asked the assembled pool if anyone had been a victim of violent crime, more than 30 people rose. My point is, the ironist who buys Kyle and Stacie the \$2000 knife block, equipped with knives, may not really wish them well.

Don't start me on the knife block. Look at the cheese knives, steak knives, sushi knives, bread knives, hunting and fishing knives. The issue is kitchen safety, not assault, God forbid. I lost count at five varieties of rasp-style graters, and they're all ferocious. Mandolines slice fingertips and should be banned by law. It isn't enough to lose these tools in the back of a drawer. Lock them up, Kyle and Stacie, I beg you!

Hey, guys! Fuck each other all you can, and lay off other people, at least for the time being. Also, use a stopwatch when you fight because you'll just repeat yourselves after 15 minutes. I'm buying you the knife block. Enjoy!

Silk, hand-sewn bedding made of kimono cloth? I didn't think sybarites could live with monogamy.

Enclosed please find my check. I no longer attend weddings, compulsory chapel, pep rallies, or school assemblies.

Are they parvenus? Then I predict their children will be ascetics.

If they plan on having kids, they should register for Lego.

Those high-end suitcases? I thought a bunch of us could pool assets for the matching pair and fill them with poker chips, you know, for a laugh. The thing is, and I checked this out, the list price exceeds the airlines' reimbursement in case of loss, and they get lost, believe me. I'm talking \$1K each for two empty worthless bags.

It's shadowy at first. You'll think it's newsprint, but it's not. Rubbing spreads it. You blame yourself, but there's nothing you could have done. Over time, with ordinary use and washing, white ironstone blackens like the soul.

Congratulations, Stacie and Kyle! Our compliments on your gorgeous selection of service for 20, in your fine china, your casual, your barware, and your "handwash only" crystal. Did you know that EasyLife can assist with documented domestics, live-in and -out, including personal chefs? Ask for our newlywed discount! 789-232-3861.

Donate your used dishes and equipment here. Shop Goodwill. Explore the detritus of domestic lives.

My late mother's green bordered dishes, with a chicken motif, outlasted all her marriages. Isn't that funny? Her entire adult life, she was in deep with painted roosters, hens, and chicks, and the special gift shop where she bought replacements, Viola, it was called, scented with sachet, paneled in knotty pine, and lit by table lamps placed on hutches. Things are different now, and I don't just mean that dishes are bigger in scale because we eat more. You can't be certain how long or well anything will last. Glazes quickly crack and wear off. Fork tines scratch parallels every which way, as if you'd been eating with pencils. Stacie and Kyle, you know you won't be stuck with your registry dishes for life. Even faces don't age now, if we can help it. Do you already regret your official choices? Then switch patterns fast, switch again on whim, and throw out whatever you can't return. People expect you to. Despite the length and breadth of your registry list--no, precisely because of it--you show that you're not materialists. You want only the best, but any one material object matters no more to you than any other because there are always more and better. Still, the first time a wedding plate shatters, when it slips from your soapy hands or your elbow knocks it off the counter and you helplessly watch it fall, I hope you're startled, for just that instant, by a pang of vestigial sorrow.

Genetic, epigenetic, and environmental illnesses are "gifts" you can't return. CharityRegistry funds biomedical research. Click [here](#) and give nobly.

My grandpa wet himself at my cousin's wedding, but Grandma wrapped him in his trench coat, and he danced and danced and had a glorious time. Please, fight Alzheimer's for Grandpa.

For CONSUMPTION, see TUBERCULOSIS.

My own great granduncle credited his TB cure to the two-step juicer. First the fruit (or veg) is pulverized, and then the pulp is pressed. I'm 93 and a fellow juicer. If you kids drink carrot juice till your skin turns orange, you might live forever!

Stacie and Kyle, what a unique registry you've invented. You're now in the midst of inventing a wedding. You aren't virgins, I assume. Remember when you each invented sex? Soon, if you want to, if you're fortunate, you'll invent conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. Good luck inventing parenthood. It's worth the struggle to invent excellent schools. Let's hope you'll reinvent the good times after you invent marital strife. Do you like fortune cookies? As Confucius said: "True wisdom is knowing what you don't know." It's night, decades from now; I

can't provide the year. The draperies are open, and one of you is standing alone at the window, uncertain of what you see in the glass. Either the reflection behind you has snuck into the room without your hearing—your hearing is poor—or the one in front of you, bent over in the wind, is lost and cold outside in the snowy yard, unless you're seeing double, as sometimes happens, and the indeterminate figures that appear to exist at different points in space are both you, optical illusions wrapped in the same pillared cardigan. Let's rehearse this moment again. One of you is standing at the window, alone.

Dear All: A tribute to us? Unbelievable! Thank you! We promise to read it soon. As of this a.m., the proposal video is up! Check the website!

xoxo,

S&K

Ivy Goodman has published two collections of short stories, *Heart Failure* and *A Chapter from Her Upbringing*. Her fiction has appeared in *Epoch*, *Witness*, *Washington Square* and many other literary magazines. New work is out in *The Fiddleback* and forthcoming in *ARDOR*.

image: *Andromeda Veach*