Bride & Glory
Bold Looks for Your Big Day

Grooms Behaving Badly
When the Diva Wears a Tux

Reception Completed
How to Be the Perfect Guest

Metro Boston's Registered Guide to Entertainment, Culture and a Shiny, New Toaster
WEDDINGS CAN MESS with your mind. When my husband and I got married recently, both sides of the family scoffed at our modest desires for a small beach ceremony, tearing apart our plans with the relish of nit-picking monkeys. So instead of one wedding, we ended up with two: one for each mother. No barefoot vows on the sand (handicapped attendees might’ve gotten stuck, according to our moms), no barbecue reception (so the neighbors wouldn’t think we were cheap) nor bonfires (too associated with huddled homeless people). Few of our original plans made it down both aisles with us, but our minor triumphs I credit to my groomzilla-ish fiancé who won us the right to make our own invitations. And the freedom of getting a chocolate cake.

I saw firsthand how inter familial stress wreaked havoc on my partner’s ordinarily placid temperament. If you watch the reality shows Bridezillas and Whose Wedding Is It Anyway? or romantic comedies like Bride Wars and 27 Dresses, you’d think the only people who obsess over décor and hair are the ones wearing the white veils. But countering the cliché is a growing group of men who insist on more visible roles in planning their special day. Groomsontline.com, one of many Web sites catering to them, even argues that caring about such details is the macho thing to do: “We deserve control… [Without] having participated, you will look like a loser who let his woman do everything.”

According to this black-is-white, up-is-down logic, real men should demand dominance… over the seating chart and color scheme.

But with power, comes pressure. When weather, hidden costs and feuding family members are unknown variables, fixating on the invitation font or iPod playlist can be a way of exerting some semblance of predictability. According to CostofWedding.com, the average American couple spends $20,398 on their nuptials; the average Bostonian couple spends between $20,959 and $34,932. And this doesn’t include the price of an engagement ring or honeymoon. With the economy on a downward spiral, it’s a wonder everyone doesn’t elope. As so many people bleed that much cash or credit on something with more moving parts than Meryl Streep’s résumé, it’s understandable why groomzillas are joining their female counterparts in the popular imagination. Mywedding.com even launched “the Great Groomzilla Search,” defining the term as “a new breed of fanatical grooms who wrestle for full wedding detail control and obsess over every detail of the big day!” Apparently, little girls no longer have proprietary ownership over exclamation marks, either.
Based on purely anecdotal evidence from local wedding professionals, here are three types of groomzillas we’ve identified from this emerging, aggressive genus.

**Double Agent**

The double agent is so good at creating a front of agreement that his bride might be misled until her wedding day that their desires are in sync. Christyna Kassaraba, guest service and event director for the Beehive, tells us how she dealt with her first, and she hopes her last, double agent. At the initial stages, the couple agreed that they both wanted a traditional sit-down dinner with ivory tablecloths to keep attention on the space’s dramatic architectural features. “And then it began,” Kassaraba recalls ominously. The groom started bombarding her with phone calls and e-mails in which he asked her to change all those details they’d talked about. And not tell his fiancée. The double agent might even convince others, as he did with Kassaraba, that this is what his partner would want. She remembers him claiming, “I am responsible for the creative side of things in the relationship…so let’s just move forward and keep the plans between us. I know she’ll love the changes.” Devious planning may lead to self-doubt and recriminations. Kassaraba felt guilty towards the bride, who had no idea her husband had been going behind her back. “I felt like I was cheating on someone,” and so she was definitely being sketchy. Unlike in the spy world, where there’s at least a chance you won’t get caught, with wedding planning, it’s inevitable that groomzillas will be found out. Kassaraba had to finally stage an intervention to end all the “craziness.” Though the bride forgave the groom, Kassaraba suggests that “guys [should] know what’s good for them and stay out of the bride’s way.”

**Fire-Breather**

The fire-breather might erupt at any moment, and his lack of control over his public explosions makes him the most disagreeable of groomzillas. Naz Kupelian, owner of Naz Kupelian Salon in Lexington, still shudders at the memory of one such monster. It wasn’t so much that he made the hair appointments for the wedding party, or came into the salon in person days before to confirm the scheduled time, says Kupelian. Things became tense when the man arrived with magazine pictures of how he wanted his fiancée’s hair to be styled and bossed everyone around. The bride turned alternately angry with her betrothed, then silent and passive. “It was horrible,” Kupelian recalls. Making Kupelian’s staff uncomfortable with his demanding attitude, the groom wouldn’t let up. “He kept saying, ‘This is how I like it’ or ‘I like…’ It was all about him.” The Yin to the flip-flopper’s yang, the fire-breather couldn’t care less about pleasing others, fixated as he is on himself. His domineering temperament bodies poorly for the marriage, as it did for the couple at Kupelian’s salon, who divorced after only a few months.

**Flip-Flopper**

The flip-flopper is characterized by such open-mindedness to new ideas that all nothing, no matter how bizarre, carries equal weight. Not having spent much time contemplating style and appearance before his engagement, he becomes convinced that his family and peers might recoil in disgust if his wedding isn’t up to par. One such groom shocked his friends when he changed from the kind of guy whose wardrobe consisted of “old armpit-stained T-shirts and jeans” into someone who couldn’t stop talking about centerpieces. His wife recalls the abrupt shift: “He’s generally not like this at all. I never really had a picture of my wedding in my head, just sort of not my thing, but I was really surprised that he did. He really made a lot of the wedding decisions.” His friend Gwen Leung, owner of Gigi Floral Design, was the recipient of his numerous suggestions. The most creative (and quickly vetoed) plan was to adorn the flower arrangements with birds—without specifying whether he meant taxidermied ones or fake ones, or how that would fit in with the theme they had decided on months earlier. Because the groom wasn’t “a fashionable person himself,” Leung says, “I found him struggling to find out what he really wanted. And in the end, I question if he really wanted things for himself, or to try to please his siblings or his dad.” His bride agrees, “Most of his crazy wedding behavior was fueled by his family. We were going to do minimal floral arrangements. But his die was very insistent that we have a lot of flowers.” Paradoxically, the flip-flopper’s desire to please leads to an indecisive stalemate that makes him all the more annoying. ***