

## **American at Armenian wedding**

When we arrived bearing our big, shiny silver box with bow, I scouted the room for the place to leave presents but didn't see any. I tried to ask someone seated at our table, but my Armenian was too threadbare for her to understand me. I placed the present at my feet but fretted over the protocol...

My colleagues were too busy discussing the merits of Armenian brandy to give any useful input into managing the gift situation, so I decided to approach Lusine, seated at the front of the room together with her new husband. She looked nervous but beautiful, and both so young. After many congratulations, I asked her hesitantly where to leave the present. She looked at me confused. It didn't seem like she understood what I was talking about, even though her English was excellent. I showed her the box. She looked embarrassed. Had I somehow offended her by asking so directly where to put the present? Maybe I had wrapped it in the wrong color—what if certain colors had symbolism and I was ignorant about this? I had figured silver and shiny was safe but what did I know.

She said she wasn't sure where to leave it but motioned I could just put it close to her chair. I sat back down and whispered to my colleagues about the odd exchange. They didn't seem to think much of it and had now moved onto shots of vodka. Something was off, though. I chalked it up to her embarrassment at accepting a gift so directly and took a shot of Russian vodka as well.

... a new procession of people began to advance toward the bride and groom. A sort of ceremony was coalescing where each person walked down the aisle of the hall with something in hand and presented it to the bride. It took a brief moment to process the situation, but in a moment our mistake became very clear. Each guest was approaching the bride with their wedding present, cupped in their hand. And the present was jewelry, gold jewelry. Before the night was out, Lusine's arms and neck were adorned with enough dainty gold necklaces and bracelets to have fed some of the surrounding villages of Armavir. I swallowed. Not only was our gift not jewelry, it was also silver (a large silver picture frame, matching candlestick holders and an ornate bowl). Every piece of jewelry she received was gold, making our guffaw even more glaring.

<http://www.incultureparent.com/2011/09/cultural-faux-pas-what-not-to-bring-to-an-armenian-wedding/>

Recently I went to a wedding of a childhood friend; we aren't that close anymore but we're on good terms. She's Chinese American, married a white guy from New Orleans. Others in the bride's party mentioned to me that it seems like there's a bit of drama with the groom's mom...and that they been getting the impression that this is the first time the groom's parents have really interacted with Asians...and I heard the groom's mom tried talking him out of this marriage. I've known the couple for a few years and they are great together and really match. He defended his bride all the way to the mom.

Faux Pas: the groom's mom and her family talking loudly, at the wedding/reception, about how the marriage isn't going to last. Them taking bets about how long they think they will be together before the "inevitable" divorce.

<http://thoughtcatalog.com/hok-leahcim/2014/07/28-incredible-stories-of-wedding-faux-pas-thatll-have-you-cringing-in-your-seats/>

In 2001, I was in Delhi, India. While there, I was honored to be invited to a traditional Indian wedding. Of course, I jumped at the opportunity. Indian weddings occur after nightfall and run well into the wee hours of the morning.

This wedding occurred at an outdoor pavilion somewhere in the hopelessly labyrinthine streets of the city. Before the ceremony, guests gathered to eat hors d'oeuvres, and socialize. I was by myself and feeling a bit uncomfortable. I made a few attempts at conversation, but didn't have much luck.

Then, I espied a beautiful young Indian woman, perhaps 18 years of age, standing with her family. She was a vision of Hindu mystique, with her veils and jewelry. I caught her eye from across the courtyard and approached her.

"May I take your picture?" I asked, brandishing my camera.

Her father asserted himself abruptly. He stepped between us. "No!" he said. He wore an expression of outrage. Startled, I looked to the young woman for appeal.

"Sorry," she said. She shrugged. The family --father, mother, beautiful young woman, and siblings --turned away from me as a single unit.

I was left standing by myself in the courtyard. I sensed that I had transgressed some boundary but I wasn't sure how. Later, I asked an Indian friend about it and he told me: "You spoke to the daughter without speaking to her father first. You insulted him."

<http://dadecariaga.blogspot.sk/2011/10/cross-cultural-faux-pas.html>