

ALWAYS A BRIDESMAID

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. RECEPTION HALL -- AFTERNOON

TRYSTAN, early 30s, stands with her back against the wall of the building. She is wearing an awful pink taffeta dress.

She is smoking a cigarette and has one pink, high-heeled foot propped up against the building.

A GUY who looks too much like the bulldog he's walking looks her over.

GUY

Nice dress.

Trystan continues to stare straight ahead while taking slow drags off her cigarette.

TRYSTAN

Thanks. It's an original.

Two other bridesmaids, ALICE and SARAH, walk past and into the reception hall wearing the same pink taffeta disasters.

The guy looks at Alice and Sarah, then back at Trystan, smiles and keeps walking.

Trystan stamps out her cigarette and walks into the reception hall.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL -- MOMENTS LATER

Trystan walks to the table containing the guest book and seating assignments, next to which is a chart with a map of numbered tables.

Alice stands next to the table. Trystan looks at the seating chart, looks down at the table assignment in her hand, and then back to the seating chart.

TRYSTAN

Alice, where is the table for the wedding party?

ALICE

Oh, didn't Jane tell you? There's no table for the wedding party. We're all sitting at different tables.

TRYSTAN

Why?

ALICE
 So we can sit with our spouses or
 dates and mingle with the rest of
 the guests.

Trystan stares at her incredulously.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 At least this way you won't have to
 sit with Jack.

Trystan is still not pleased.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 What table are you at?

TRYSTAN
 Four.

Alice looks at the seating chart, finds table four, points
 at the reception area, and smiles.

ALICE
 The singles table!

TRYSTAN
 Joy.

Trystan looks over at the singles table - mostly senior aged
 widows and teenagers. All female.

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)
 (under her breath)
 You have got to be kidding me.

INT. RECEPTION HALL -- AFTERNOON

Guests mill about chatting with each other and finding seating
 assignments.

INT. SINGLE'S TABLE -- AFTERNOON

Trystan is sitting at the single's table with LOUISE and
 KATHY, both in their late 60s or early 70s wearing Nancy
 Reagan-esque outfits and THREE TEENAGE GIRLS in breezy summer
 dresses. None wear wedding rings.

The table guests stare at Trystan in her cotton candy attire.
 She's uncomfortable and rhythmically sips her cocktail without
 missing a beat. The glass never leaves her hand.

LOUISE
 You're Janie's sister aren't you?
 The famous one?

TRYSTAN

I don't know about famous, but yes,
I am one of Jane's sisters.

Louise looks like she just won a game show prize.

LOUISE

Yes, you are the famous one! Trystan!
You're a writer aren't you? What
was it that you wrote?

The teenage girls are intrigued. Trystan is more
uncomfortable by the minute and the rate of her cocktail
sipping increases.

TRYSTAN

Essays mostly. I've had a couple
things in magazines, that kind of
stuff.

Kathy smiles warmly at Trystan. Trystan looks more
uncomfortable.

LOUISE

No, no, no. You wrote a book!

Louise pauses to think. Trystan turns red and fidgets in
her chair. A light bulb goes off in Louise's head.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

It was about weddings! A bestseller
too! What was it called?
(to KATHY)
Kathy, do you remember?

Trystan is perturbed. One of the girls stifles a laugh.

TRYSTAN

It was nothing. Really.

A light bulb now goes off in Kathy's head.

KATHY

Oh yes, I remember Louise, it WAS
about weddings!

Kathy pauses to think of the book title. Trystan facetiously
mouths the words towards the teenagers while Kathy continues.

KATHY (CONT'D)

"MARRIAGE: YOU CAN SAY I DO, BUT
SHOULD YOU?"

Trystan gulps down the remainder of her drink as all of the
teenage girls giggle.

Louise smiles wickedly. Kathy beams. Trystan can't decide whether to kill them or herself.

TRYSTAN

Yeah, it was something like that.

LOUISE

So how do you feel about little Janie getting married then?

TRYSTAN

I'm happy for her.

KATHY

Really? Isn't that against the principles of your book?

Trystan sighs and clinks the ice around in her empty glass. She's defeated, but tries to be cordial.

TRYSTAN

Marriage is a personal choice for each individual to make. I can only speak for myself.

LOUISE

That's not what you said in your book.

Trystan crunches on ice from her liquor-less glass, annoyed.

TRYSTAN

If you'll excuse me, I think I see one of my many exes. I should go over and say hello.

Trystan takes her glass and gets up from the table. She walks off towards the bar.

KATHY

Poor girl. She's pretty. I bet she could find a husband.

Louise scoffs.

LOUISE

But that cynicism. No one wants to marry that.

KATHY

She gets it from her father.

LOUISE

Which one of her mother's husband's was he?

INT. RECEPTION HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Most guests are sitting or standing near their assigned tables. Well dressed, considerably haughty. Laughing and chatting.

JANE, the twenty-something bride, in all of her matrimonial glow, intercepts Trystan on her way to the bar.

JANE

Trystan! Oh my god! Can you believe this?

Both women look around, Jane with a sense of awe, Trystan with a sense of uneasiness.

TRYSTAN

Nope, Jane. I can't.

JANE

Come on, cheer up. I'm not going to let your crankiness ruin the happiest day of my life.

Trystan looks a little guilty. Jane smiles and waves at the people around here like she's the star of a parade going down main street.

TRYSTAN

Sorry. I didn't mean it like that. I think it's great, Jane. You scored yourself a good one.

JANE

I think so.

TRYSTAN

Can I ask you a question though?

JANE

Sure.

Jane's still waving at the parade goers.

TRYSTAN

Why am I at the singles table with a bunch of teenagers and half the cast of Golden Girls?

Jane stops waving and actually lets out a laugh at Trystan's otherwise serious inquiry.

JANE

Well, I didn't want a wedding party table. And there aren't that many other singles here. And...

Jane hesitates.

TRYSTAN

And what?

JANE

And this way you don't have to sit by Jack.

TRYSTAN

Why does everyone keep saying that? We're both adults. We can be civil. We made it through the ceremony without bloodshed, didn't we?

JANE

Yeah, but prolonged exposure might cause more friction and more friction might cause sparks which might cause an explosion.

TRYSTAN

Got it. You just don't want me to blow up your wedding.

Jane ignores the sarcasm.

JANE

Exactly.

From the other side of the room CLINKING of glasses for a kiss between the bride and groom is heard. Jane perks up in that direction.

JANE (CONT'D)

They're playing my song, sis! Gotta go!

Jane traipses off. Trystan looks around at the revelry and sighs.

INT. RECEPTION HALL BAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Trystan walks up to the bar and orders another drink - a double.

JACK, 30s, clad in a tuxedo almost as handsome as he is, approaches the bar with a sly grin. Trystan doesn't see him.

The BARTENDER hands Trystan her drink and she turns around - right into Jack.

Oh!
TRYSTAN

Hi.
JACK

Jack.
TRYSTAN

Trystan takes up her rhythmic drink sipping, silently.

How are you, Trys?
JACK

Fine.
TRYSTAN

She stares off into the bustling reception, never making eye contact.

You wouldn't be avoiding me, would you?
JACK

No.
TRYSTAN

Do you plan on using words that have more than one syllable today?
JACK

Jack motions to the bartender for a drink.

Yes.
TRYSTAN

Prove it.
JACK

Why does my usage of multi-syllabic words interest you so anomalously?
TRYSTAN

Touche.
JACK

The bartender hands Jack a beer. Trystan still refuses to really look at Jack.

You always did have a way with words.
JACK (CONT'D)

TRYSTAN
Cut the bullshit, Jack.

JACK
No bullshit. I'm serious. What are you doing later?

TRYSTAN
Washing my hair.

JACK
Come on. We've always had a thing. What about last time?

TRYSTAN
I got drunk, you got lucky. End of love story.

INT. RECEPTION HALL -- LATER

The bride and groom cut the cake. They lovingly smear frosting on each other's faces.

INT. RECEPTION HALL BAR -- CONTINUOUS

Trystan has made the bar her new home. The bartender hands her another drink.

TRYSTAN
I hate it when they do that. Smashing cake in someone's face. It's so juvenile.

The bartender gives her a sympathetic nod.

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)
You don't say much. I like you already.

The bartender smiles.

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)
Just keep 'em coming.

She raises her glass to the bartender and he shakes his head, still smiling. He should probably cut her off soon.

Trystan stares at the merriment around here, bewildered.

She lets out of sigh of defeat as a woman approaches, her MOTHER, obviously trying to defy her age and definitely having a good time.

MOTHER
Trystan! Isn't the reception lovely?

TRYSTAN

Hi Mom.

MOTHER

Are you having a good time?

TRYSTAN

Aunt Joan reminded me that I'm almost forty.

MOTHER

Don't tell me that. That old bat should know better. I'm not old enough to have a child your age.

TRYSTAN

I'm thirty-four.

MOTHER

Even so, that's not the point.

TRYSTAN

Of course it isn't.

Trystan's mother ignores her daughter's snarkiness.

MOTHER

I see that Jack's here. He's always looked good in a tux.

TRYSTAN

Uh huh, sure.

MOTHER

Now Trystan, there's no need to be so bitter.

TRYSTAN

I'm not bitter.

MOTHER

Okay, jealous then.

TRYSTAN

Why would I be jealous?

MOTHER

Well, because Jane got married. That should have been you and Jack.

TRYSTAN

I'm not jealous of Jane, and I'm not upset that Jack and I were supposed to get married, and then he cheated

(MORE)

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)

on me with some ski bunny on a business trip. And I'm not jealous that Jane tied the knot because it's not like they're going to last. I hope they figure that out before they decide to have kids. And I'm not upset that I'm still sleeping with Jack.

Trystan is drunkenly revealing her soul, but her mother is oblivious as always.

MOTHER

Is this because Jane chose Alice to be her maid of honor?

Trystan sighs, mostly relieved that her mother didn't absorb her rant.

TRYSTAN

I'm not jealous of Alice either. She's better suited for it anyway.

MOTHER

But you're the oldest.

TRYSTAN

So?

MOTHER

It comes with the territory dear. But yes, I suppose Alice makes a better maid of honor. She doesn't give toasts that include the latest divorce statistics.

TRYSTAN

This coming from the woman who's been married four times.

MOTHER

How did I raise such a surly young woman?

TRYSTAN

Mom, I know why you named me TRYST-an.

MOTHER

Do as I say darling, not as I do.

TRYSTAN

Easier said than done.

INT. SINGLE'S TABLE -- LATER

Trystan sits with Louise, Kathy, and the teenagers. She is now too drunk to care that they are still scrutinizing her.

LOUISE

Alice is about to give her toast!

Glasses CLINK and the reception hall quiets down. All eyes turn to Alice holding a microphone and standing near the Jane and STEVEN, the groom, at their table.

ALICE

I was over the moon when Jane asked me to be her maid of honor. She is the best little sister a girl could ask for, and I couldn't be happier for her and my new brother-in-law! Steven, you are now blessed with the most caring and generous wife. Ever since we were kids, Jane has been the most loving person, which is a trait I know she will bring to this union...

TRYSTAN

(under her breath but
a bit too loud)

Distorted institution.

All the ladies at the single's table stare daggers at Trystan's commentary.

ALICE

Jane and Steven, you will go through this wonderful lifelong journey together...

TRYSTAN

Until the divorce...

The death stares pointed Trystan's way have expanded to the tables surrounding her own as she gets louder.

ALICE

Bringing each other unparalleled happiness that is only found in blissful matrimony...

TRYSTAN

I can't take this anymore...

Trystan gets up from the table. She appears to be storming out of the reception until she turns and makes a beeline for Alice and the happy couple.

Jane and Alice see Trystan approaching and their expressions shift from ecstasy to horror.

JANE
(quietly)
Trystan, no...

Trystan grabs the microphone from Alice who backs off in terror. Trystan raises the microphone to her drunk lips.

TRYSTAN
Hi everyone. For those of you who don't know me or haven't read my book on the numerous reasons why you shouldn't tie the knot, I'm Trystan, Janie's other older sister - the one who wasn't supposed to make this speech, but was still forced to wear this clown outfit and partake in this circus...

Everyone is in shock. Trystan's mother covers her face with her hand. She can't watch. Jack's mouth is agape.

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)
Alice was right. This really is a special day for Jane and Steven, and while glass half full types would certainly deem this all for the best, I feel it is my duty as the oldest and most experienced daughter in this family to pass on some of the wisdom which I have learned in my almost forty years...

Jack moves slowly and quietly towards Trystan. He needs to get the microphone away from her.

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)
First, marriage really isn't all it's cracked up to be. People cheat. People lie. It's in our nature as humans to not be monogamous for life, and I don't see why we should fight that. Second, this wedding has been beautiful. A beautiful display of all the pleasantries that will no longer matter when you're fighting over the joint checking account and whether spanking is an appropriate way to punish your children...

Jack is now standing beside Trystan and he slyly reaches out to grab the microphone. Trystan turns guarding her word projectile.

TRYSTAN (CONT'D)

Isn't that right, Jack? It's not all as peachy as it seems...

JACK

Come on, Trys. Let's go for a walk.

TRYSTAN

I don't want to go for a walk, Jack. Our promenade of companionship was over when you skied into that snow tramp's bed.

(to Jane)

Jane, I know you didn't want me to blow up your wedding, so instead, I'll thank you. This has all been great research for a new book. A sequel to the last really. I think I'll call it...

(to the single's table)

This one's for you Louise... "ALWAYS A BRIDESMAID, NEVER A BRIDE: THANK GOD!"

Trystan breaks into tears. Jack takes the microphone from her and sets it on the table. He tries to put his arm around her and lead her away from the front of the awe-struck crowd, but she pushes him away and runs off sobbing.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL -- EVENING

Trystan, bleary-eyed and puffy-faced, has resumed her stance against the building. She is drinking a bottle of water and smoking a cigarette - her best attempt at sobering up.

Jack walks out of the front door and up to Trystan. His trademark charm toned down in sympathy.

JACK

That was...something.

TRYSTAN

I rehearsed it a little differently in my head.

JACK

I bet.

TRYSTAN

Jack, please don't make this worse.

JACK

I wasn't going to.

They stand in silence, a long awaited moment of peace between two warring factions.

TRYSTAN
 (to no one in
 particular)
 I'm sorry.

JACK
 Me too...for everything.

Before Trystan can argue, Jack looks at her, still smoking a cigarette, and smiles.

JACK (CONT'D)
 You should be careful. That's
 hazardous for your health.

TRYSTAN
 Now's really not the time for the
 emphysema speech.

JACK
 I wasn't going to give you the
 emphysema speech. Destroy your lungs
 over time if you want to. I was
 thinking of the more immediate effect
 of your dress going up in flames.
 I'm pretty sure that material's
 flammable.

Trystan finally looks at Jack and finally lets out a little laugh and a genuine smile. Jack smiles back.

INT. RECEPTION HALL -- LATER

Trystan stands with her Jack dejectedly. She is calm, but still a bit emotional and embarrassed.

JANE (O.S.)
 I'm not tossing this bouquet until
 we get all the available ladies out
 on the dance floor!

JACK
 That's you, Trys.

TRYSTAN
 I can't go up there. I'm already
 the family pariah.

JACK
 Nonsense. Everyone knows that was
 just the booze and the broken heart
 talking.

Jack smiles, but Trystan is still reeling enough to not find it amusing

TRYSTAN

Great.

JANE (O.S.)

Let's go ladies!

JACK

You should go. A show of faith for Jane. Make her happy. Play along and catch the bouquet.

TRYSTAN

I don't want the bouquet. I want cake. And then I want to go home.

Trystan starts to hide behind Jack.

JANE (O.S.)

Trystan? Where are you? Get up here so we can get this show on the road!

TRYSTAN

You cannot be serious.

JACK

Just go.

Jack gives her a nudge in Jane's direction. Trystan puts down her drink and reluctantly makes her way to the crowd of anxious women. She shuffles to side of the crowd distancing herself from the overeager bunch.

TRYSTAN

(under her breath)

Let's get this over with.

An ecstatic Jane prepares to toss the bouquet.

JANE

Okay, ladies! Here goes...

Trystan stares off to the side disinterested. Instead of tossing the bouquet over her shoulder, Jane turns to Trystan.

JANE (CONT'D)

Here, you're going to need all the help you can get!

Jane tosses the bouquet directly to Trystan, much to the chagrin of the crows. Trystan is beside herself with shock and stares at the bouquet in terror.

She hesitates for an instant before letting out a loud SNEEZE. All the guest stare at her dumbfounded. Trystan's face crinkles up with another sneeze coming on. FREEZE on Trystan mid-sneeze right into the middle of the bouquet.

FADE OUT.