

WEDDING BELLS - EVERYTHING FOR THE BRIDE AND GROOM!

Wedding customs: Reasons for those cherished traditions

Every wedding tradition has a story behind it. Discover the reasons we practice some of today's popular customs, such as tossing the bouquet and garter, and having a wedding cake.

• **Why does the bride wear white?**

White has been a symbol of celebration since Roman times. At the beginning of the 20th cen-

tury, white became synonymous with purity. Today, white again symbolizes joy, but women are marrying in many other colours, too.

• **Why do the attendants all dress alike?**

To confuse evil spirits that were thought to lurk at the altar, several of the 10 witnesses required at Roman weddings dressed like the bride and groom.

In Europe, wedding parties walked to church. Friends dressed like the bride and groom to trick rejected suitors who might see the couple and put a curse on them.

• **Why does the ceremony end with a kiss?**

In ancient Roman times, a kiss was a legal bond that sealed contracts, and thus, the betrothal. Christianity incorporated the betrothal into the marriage ritual. It was believed that when a couple kissed, part of each of their souls was left in the other with the exchange of breath. Occurring at the end of the rites, the kiss announces a new status.

• **Why is there a wedding cake?**

The cake is a symbol of good luck, fertility. In Roman times, a bun was broken above the bride's head at the ceremony's end. Wheat, the main ingredient, symbolized fertility; guests reached for crumbs for good luck.

During the Middle Ages, the bride and groom kissed over a pile of small cakes donated by guests. In Elizabethan times, bridesmaids baked buns as the feast's centre-piece.

In the 17th century, a visiting French baker frosted the stack of buns - creating the first tiered, frosted wedding cake.

• **Why is rice thrown?**

In the Orient, rice symbolizes a full pantry. In other cultures, grains represent fertility, bounty. In some countries, brides carried sheaves of grain. In others, guests sprinkled the newlyweds with grains or nuts, wishing them a large harvest, abundance - and a large, happy family.

Today, guests may throw rice, rose petals, ecologically disposable paper, pot pourri, wheat millet seed, safflower seed or birdseed.

• **Why is the bouquet tossed?**

As the bride left the wedding, she tossed her bouquet to a friend - for good luck and protection. The custom evolved to imply that whoever caught it would be lucky and wed next.

• **Why is the bride's garter tossed?**

Guests once ripped off pieces of the bride's gown as good-luck tokens. In self-defense, the bride soon simply threw her garter.

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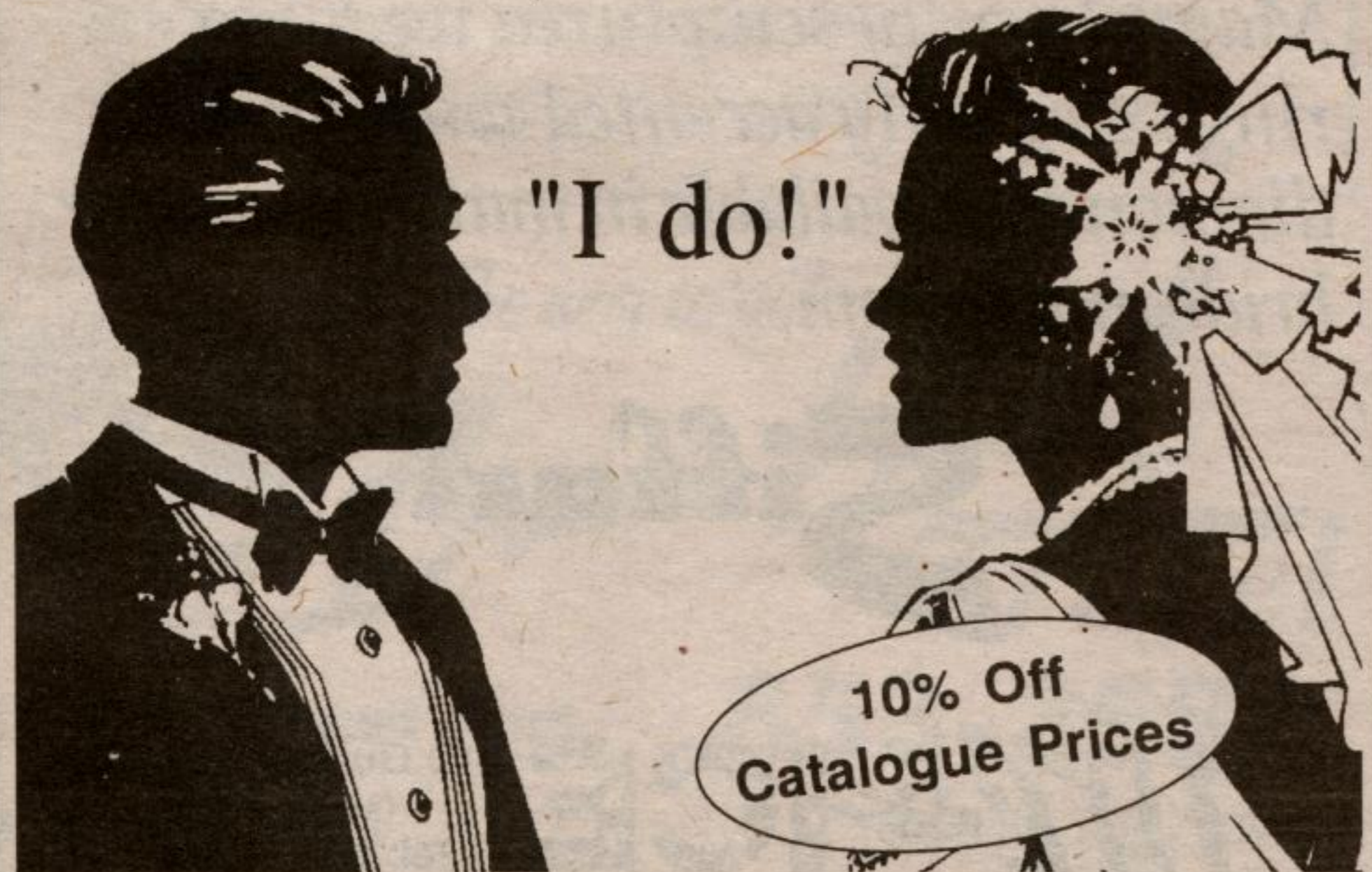
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