

Chapter 63

The Wedding, Part 3

The Reception

After Michael and Amanda left the altar, Reginald and Victoria approached each other and Reginald offered her his arm. They followed Michael and Amanda down the aisle. After Reginald and Victoria passed the first row, the groomsmen approached the bridesmaids each offering his corresponding bridesmaid his arm and escorting her down the aisle. After the groomsmen and bridesmaids passed the first row of seats, the ushers started allowing the families of the wedding party to head toward the Reception Hall. After the families left, the guests were allowed to leave.

When they arrived in the Reception Hall, Michael and Amanda were led to a wall next to the double doors where they were instructed to stand to receive the well wishes of everyone who had been invited to the wedding. This was the most boring part of the wedding as far as Michael was concerned. He had never been one to draw undue attention to himself when he was growing up and, despite his oratory abilities during several of his college classes, it hadn't changed since he had awoken. However, he also knew it was a tradition as old as marriage itself so he was willing to deal with it because he knew Amanda wanted it to happen.

The first couple to greet them were Jacob and Ophelia.

"Welcome to the family, Michael," Jacob said, happily.

"Thank you, Mr. Fuchs."

"When did you decide to add the Fuchs name to your name?"

"A couple of weeks ago."

Amanda turned to him and said, "You didn't tell me you were going to do that."

"I know, Sweetheart. I wanted it to be a surprise gift to you."

"It was definitely a surprise," Ophelia said.

"You didn't think I cared enough about you to be willing to become a Fuchs?"

"No, Michael, I didn't."

"I know, Mrs. Fuchs. I wanted you to know that, despite how you felt about me from the day

we met, I never held any animosity toward you. Why? You may ask. Because almost everything you said about how humans treated animals before the Humanimals were created was true. I witnessed it. Well, I didn't actually witness it but I knew about it. Believe it or not, I was one of the humans who said we shouldn't treat the animals the way they were being treated."

"Really?"

"Yes, Mrs. Fuchs. I did try to tell you more than once."

Embarrassed, Ophelia said, "I'm sorry, Michael."

"Don't worry about it, Mrs. Fuchs. I used to deal with humans who were like that when I was a child."

After talking for a few more seconds, Jacob and Ophelia moved along and were replaced by Leo and Tigresa.

As Dr. Leo stood a little behind her, Dr. Tigresa once again cried on Michael's shoulder. "I'm so happy. you were able to find someone who makes you happy, Michael. The only way I could be happier for you would be if you were one of my cubs I had carried for 8 months before giving birth to you."

"Don't worry, Dr. Tigresa. Richard will be getting married soon. You can be happier for him next."

Looking at Michael with surprised, she said, "How do you know?"

"Haven't you seen how he looks at Maria and she looks at him? It's almost exactly the way you and Dr. Leo look at each other."

Straightening herself to her full height of 6'2", Tigresa said, "Well, I guess I need to have a little talk with my son and his beloved." Tigresa strode off to find Richard after giving Amanda a big hug and her congratulations.

Dr. Leo watched her walk off before he turned to Michael and said, "Why did you tell her that?"

Michael smiled mischievously before saying, "Because it's true, Dr. Leo. Haven't you noticed it?"

"Yes, but I kept it to myself. I knew Tigresa would react the way she did." He laughed, hugged Amanda and walked after Tigresa to try to defuse how he knew she was about to talk to her son.

The well-wishers kept coming and coming and coming. Michael, never one to feel comfortable in a crowd, was starting to get more than a little antsy. When Amanda saw him starting to get

uncomfortable, she would reach over, take his hand, squeeze it, and smile at him. That always calmed him down enough to endure another 30 people.

Michael closed his eyes after another couple left to find the buffet. As he was standing there, her heard a somewhat familiar voice saying, "Is that anyway to greet me?"

With surprise in his voice, Michael opened his eyes and said, "Zig Zag!?"

Zig Zag was smiling a giant smile that exposed her sharp canines. She was accompanied by a red fox vixen and an American striped skunk. Michael said, "Hello Sabrina and Sheila! I'm glad to see all of you could make it."

Smiling, Sabrina replied, "Well, someone had to keep these two in line." Michael joined her in laughter.

"You know I know how to behave myself in social settings, Sabrina. It's when I'm not in a social setting that I need someone to keep me in line." Zig Zag said with a wink. Once again, Michael laughed.

Sheila was standing in front of Amanda saying, "What did you say to Michael right after you two kissed?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Uh, yes?"

"I told Michael that I was going to kill you. You're my cousin and I love you to death but I'm going to kill you."

Sheila looked shocked and scared. "Why?" She asked.

"Because of your outburst, my dear cousin. But, don't worry, Michael told me that you're just happy for me and he's right. I would never hurt you, Sheila." Then, Amanda gave Sheila a big hug and a kiss on her cheek.

Zig Zag said, "Ooh! Can I get one of those, too?"

"Yes, but that's all you can have, Zig Zag."

As Zig Zag said, "Aw," Amanda gave her a kiss on the cheek and a hug as well.

After this short exchange, the three of them left and were replaced by someone else very familiar to Michael and Amanda.

Michael whined and said, "How much longer do I have to endure this?"

Michael turned, saw who was next in line, and his face turned bright red. “Mr. Xiongmao! I’m so glad you could make it!”

Jinse stood there and, with a bit of a peeved look on his face, said, “Now, Michael, did I not tell you to call me, Jinse?”

“Yes, sir, you did. But, all of my ancestors would come out of their graves and get me if I failed to show you proper respect. I may be close to 100 times as old as you are but, you are still my senior as far as my mind is concerned.

“How are you doing, Mr. Jinse?”

“Well, that’s better. My lovely wife and I are doing fine. You can well imagine our surprise when we received the invitation to your wedding. I asked Diane if she wanted to come to Catlanna and see you, how do you say it, get hitched?”

Michael smiled and said, “That’s it.”

Michael noticed that Jinse was wearing a bright red Chownese overcoat and black pants and said, “By the way, I’m honored that you chose to wear the traditional Chownese wedding guest attire to my wedding.”

Jinse said, “It is not traditional Chownese wedding guest attire. It is traditional from my home village and could I do no less for you, Michael? You did not have to invite my lowly family to your wedding but you did.”

“Did you close the restaurant while you’re here?”

“No. It is still open.”

Diane said, “It wasn’t easy finding someone we could trust to keep the restaurant open while we are here. However, Mei’s fiance, Anthony, has ancestry from the same general area that Jinse is from and his parents taught him Chownese cooking. So, he is running the restaurant during his break from college.”

“That’s good, Mrs. Xiongmao.”

Mei walked up and hugged Michael as she said, “Thank you again for lighting a fire under Anthony’s tail, Michael. Now, he spends so much time studying that we don’t have very much time for each other but we both know that as soon as he graduates from college, we can get married. I do hope you and Amanda will come to our wedding.”

Amanda said, “We’ll be there, Mei.”

Michael said, “What she said.”

As he chatted with the Xiongmao family, Michael heard of snickering and off-handed remarks about Jinse's attire. The look of embarrassment on Jinse's face said that he heard it, too. The more it went on, the angrier Michael got. Finally, he could take it no more. He took Jinse by the arm and walked to the middle of the room. When he and Jinse arrived at the middle of the room, all talking stopped.

Michael looked around the room with a look of unbridled disgust on his face. After several seconds, he spoke, "It would seem that some of you have a problem with whom I choose to be friends with and how they choose to dress for my wedding."

There was a palpable silence as Michael looked around the room once again. He continued, "Allow me to introduce my friend, Jinse Xiongmao. As you can see, he's a panda and the "white" areas of his fur are golden yellow. As a matter of fact, in the ancient language of Chowna, Jinse Xiongmao means golden panda. Jinse was born in a small village in southwestern Chowna in an area near the border with Mootan. He was the youngest cub his mother birthed. When the other villagers saw him, some feared him because they said he was bad luck. Others loved him because they said he was good luck. His attitude was and is, 'I'm a golden panda. Big deal.'" Everyone laughed before Michael continued, "Because of his mother's age, she decided that he shouldn't learn the family business of growing rice. Instead, she took him with her to the restaurant that she owned and taught him how to cook. By the time he was 6 years old, he was cooking dishes that his mother had created. When he was 10, he was creating his own dishes. In fact, many of the villagers would stop by the restaurant to sample one of Jinse's new dishes.

"When Jinse turned 16, he decided that he wanted to move to Amurica so he took all the money he had saved and traveled to Xiaming and sought passage on a ship coming to Amurica. Unfortunately, either the ships weren't coming here or the cost was more than he could afford. Finally, he boarded a Fursian ship and asked to speak to the captain. When he was ushered into the captain's presence, he asked the captain to take him to Amurica. The captain told him how much it would cost and asked Jinse if he had that much money. When Jinse said he didn't have that much, the captain simply said that their business was ended and showed him the door.

"Jinse wasn't to be thwarted and said, 'I will make a deal with you. Hire me as your cook and take me to Amurica. I will ask no wages other than food to eat and a place to sleep.'

"We already have a cook, Chowna, we do not need another one.'

"Allow me to prepare you a meal and then decide if you cannot use me.'

"The captain agreed and had him taken to the galley where Jinse prepared a meal the likes of which the captain had never eaten before. Because of this, Jinse received free passage to Amurica and all he had to do was cook every meal that the crew needed. The Fursian ship had to make several port calls but, after about 6 months, they arrived in Jaguarville, Flamingo, and Jinse disembarked. The last thing the captain said to him was, 'You asked for no wages but, the crew has decided to gift you with 20,000 Yenars to help you get your start here in Amurica and, if you ever change your mind and wish to work for me again, we visit Jaguarville about every 6 months. I will be happy to hire you as our full-time cook.'

“Jinse accepted the money and found a place to open a restaurant. Shortly after opening his restaurant, he met a red panda woman by the name of Diane Xiǎo. They started dating and a couple of years later, they married. Diane was born in Amurica and spoke no Chownese and Jinse spoke very little Anglerfish but Diane taught him and he speaks Anglerfish as well as anyone here. On their wedding day, Jinse wore this very outfit. When Diane asked him about it, he said, ‘It is traditional wedding outfit in my home village in Chowna.’

“I checked on Mr. Xiongmao and guess what? He’s currently worth of 100 million Yenars.” An audible gasp could be heard. “That’s right ladies and gentlemen. Jinse could buy most of you and barely notice the money gone.

“I am honored that Jinse chose to wear this outfit to my wedding and if any one of you has a problem with his outfit, I will personally escort that person to the door of the chapel and lock the door behind him or her. I do not care who you are or what your position is in this world.”

When he finished speaking, Michael noticed a movement at the back of the crowd. As he watched, he saw a 7-foot-tall polar bear wearing a Fursian military uniform working his way through the crowd. The polar bear walked directly up to Michael and stood in front of him for several seconds as he looked Michael up and down.

Finally, the polar bear spoke with a noticeable Fursian accent, “I am Colonel Polyarnyy-medved’. I am ambassador of Fursian Federation to United Provinces of Amurica. Do you believe you could throw me out of wedding reception?”

“Sir, with all due respect, I may not throw you out but, I will escort you out.”

“You would risk international incident for this panda?”

“He’s my friend, sir. I would risk a world war to defend his honor.”

Colonel Polyarnyy-medved’ once again looked Michael up and down before picking him up in a true bear hug and saying, “HA! HA-HA-HA! You are good human, Michael Edwin Fuchs Panthera Thomson. I would be your friend as well if you will accept me.”

There was a hush over the crowd as it was Michael’s turn to look the Colonel up and down. After a few seconds, Michael smiled and said, “I would be honored to have the Fursian ambassador as my friend.”

After Michael said this, the Colonel crossed his gigantic, muscular arms across his equally gigantic, muscular chest, did a 180 degree pivot and stood next to Michael and glared at the crowd as he said, “If anyone has problem with Michael’s choice of friends, please to speak to me first.” Michael couldn’t hide the smile on his face.

As the Colonel was speaking, Michael overheard another conversation going on next to him. He turned and saw an elderly Chinese Golden snub-nosed monkey talking to Jinse.

In a mild Chownese accent, the monkey was speaking to Jinse. “So, you are Golden Panda I have heard so much about.”

Jinse, showing absolute deference, answered, “Yes, Mr. Ambassador. I am he.”

“Your fame reached all the way to Bayjing, Jinse. I am honored to meet you. The president of Chowna was saddened when he heard that you had chosen to leave the land of your birth. Are you happy here?”

“Yes, Mr. Ambassador. The Amuricans have been very friendly to me and my family.”

“I understand you and your wife have not produced a family other than adopting a flying fox daughter.”

“She needed a home, Mr. Ambassador. She was an out-of-wedlock pup and, as you know, flying foxes abhor an out-of-wedlock pup almost as much as they abhor aborting such a pup. Diane and I saw that tiny little pup without a family and chose to adopt and raise her as our own.”

The Chownese ambassador nodded his head sagely before saying, “Your decision was made in love for the needs of another. That is a trait of the people from your province. I cannot fault you or your wife for that decision.

“This human, you trust him?”

“Yes, Mr. Ambassador. From the moment I met him and his girlfriend when they visited my restaurant several months ago.” Michael looked at Jinse in shock when he said this. “Michael never once said anything negative about the way I looked or talked. He and his girlfriend came to my restaurant several times during their stay in Jaguarville and he even treated my, my wife, my daughter, and my daughter’s fiancé to dinner one evening. Michael is a good human and I would defend his honor with my life.”

The ambassador nodded sagely again before stepping in front of Michael and saying, “Michael Thomson, I am Aiguo Tā bízi. You befriended a panda that you had never seen before in your life. Is this normal for you?”

“I try to be friends with anyone who will have me for a friend, Mr. Ambassador. Jinse has proven to me what a good friend he is by wearing his traditional wedding clothing to my wedding.”

Once again, the ambassador nodded sagely before turning to the crowd and saying, “Like Colonel Polyarnyy-medved’, I stand with Michael. If he will accept me as his friend, I will be his friend.”

Michael said, “Yes, Mr. Ambassador. I accept your offer of friendship.”

Mr. Tā bízi stood next to Jinse and crossed his arms. When everyone saw the Ambassadors flanking Michael and Jinse, all snickering and condescending remarks ended. Michael thanked Colonel Polyarnyy-medved’ and Mr. Tā bízi and he and Jinse returned to the receiving line. As he approached, Michael saw the look on Amanda’s face and wasn’t sure if she was angry or surprised.

“Michael,” she said, “You continue to amaze me at your ability to step into a situation and make everyone understand your point of view. When I saw the Fursian Ambassador approaching you after your little speech, I thought there was going to be trouble.”

“I’m sorry if I embarrassed you, Sweetheart, but you know how I feel about my friends.”

“I know.” Amanda said, smiling. Then, she slipped her arms around him and gave him a kiss. “I think we should go get something to eat before all the food disappears.”

“Music to my ears.” Michael said.

As they were eating, Jacob approached Michael and said, “Michael, could you come with me for a few minutes?”

Amanda looked at her father but didn’t say anything. Michael didn’t know whether or not to be nervous. “What about Amanda, sir?”

“Amanda can come with us if she wants but I’d rather speak to you in private.”

“Amanda?”

“Go ahead, Michael. I’ll see you in a few minutes.”

Michael stood up and followed Jacob to a door that Jacob held open for them. Upon entering the room, Michael looked around and saw, Mr. Blaidd, Mrs. Gatopardos, Mr. Schimpanse, and all of the rest of the Vice-Presidents of SoGa Industries in the room. He also saw Leo and Tigresa Panthera, Susan Mola-Blaidd, and Ophelia Fuchs. Michael thought, “Oh, God. What have I done?”

Jacob said, “I believe you know everyone in here, Michael.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good. Well, I guess the best thing to do is get right to the point. Michael, have you ever wondered why you’ve never met your boss?”

“But, I have met him, sir. It’s Mr. Blaidd.” Michael looked from Mr. Blaidd to Jacob and back. “Right?”

Jacob smiled and slowly shook his head. “I’m afraid not, Michael.

“Michael, let me tell you a story.” Jacob closed his eyes, leaned his head back, and thought for a few seconds. Finally, he said, “Twenty years ago, an 18-year-old red fox tod from south Gargia started college at the University of Gargia Business School. Upon arriving at the University, he was assigned a dorm room which he was to share with two other students, a European gray wolf and a

Nubian lion.” Michael looked at Leo and Mr. Blaid. Jacob continued, “Yes, Michael. Them.”

“The three of us became fast friends before we realized what was happening. Leo was studying Medical Research which surprised me. However, when I asked him, he said that his father wanted him to study Business but allowed him to also study Medical Research as a minor.

“Over the four years we went to college, Edward and I bandied about numerous ideas for businesses we could start after we graduated. Leo shot down most of them as being impractical, unnecessary, or the market was already saturated with them. Finally, Edward and I came up with sporting goods manufacturing, even Leo couldn’t shoot that one down. In fact, he became completely enamored with the idea.

“Shortly after graduation, all three of us had wives to support. Six months after graduation, Edward and I had started SoGa Sporting Goods with Leo as a minor partner. Susan and Ophelia worked with Edward and me as we got the business started. Leo and Tigresa got hired at Gargia Regional Medical Research Hospital and became your caretaker.

“Our Quality Control was so good that nobody could manufacture items with higher quality and, as a result, business for our company started growing so fast we had a hard time keeping up with the orders. Needless to say, our company grew and grew quickly. In fact, we caught the attention of another company and overtures were made to us to sell our company to them. The six of us held a meeting and decided to investigate the company that wanted to buy us out. The company, in case you didn’t know it was, Reynard Manufacturing. After investigating them, we found out that their Quality Control sucked because Reginald Reynard, Senior, was more interested in getting products out the door than manufacturing products of high quality.”

“So, you said no to their overtures?”

“Exactly.”

“But, Mr. Fuchs, did you sell out your interest in SoGa Industries?”

“No.”

“But, . . .” Suddenly, a light came on in Michael’s head. “Wait a minute. You mean, you’re . . .”

A pair of arms slipped around Michael’s chest and a soft voice whispered in his ear, “So, the light finally comes on.”

Michael turned to see Amanda standing there. “I don’t understand, Mr. Fuchs. You’ve had plenty of opportunities to tell me about SoGa Industries.” Then, he said to Amanda, “And you! Why didn’t you tell me?”

Amanda looked at him and said, “Do you remember when I said I didn’t date much in high school?”

“Yes. You said that the boys thought you were a mixed race and thought you would give up sex easily.”

“Right. When those boys found out that I was the SoGa Industries heiress, they begged me to give them another chance. You, on the other hand, never tried to coerce me into sex. In fact, you turned down MY overtures. When you did that, I knew I had found the right guy. I just needed to convince you to fall in love with me.”

“I see.” Michael put his arms around Amanda and smiled. “I guess my aversion to a relationship with a Humanimal worked in your favor.”

“It did, Michael. But, when you finally admitted that you loved me, I was as happy as I could imagine being.”

Jacob said, “That’s not the only thing I wanted to talk to you about, Michael.”

“What else is there to talk about?”

Mrs. Gatopardos said, “I’m going to be retiring soon. I want to retire while I’m still young enough to enjoy it. My husband wants to travel and so do I.”

Michael looked confused. “But, what does that have to do with me?”

Jacob said, “Because, by a unanimous vote of the vice-presidents, you have been chosen to become Vice-President of SoGa Industries’ Computer Information and Telecommunications Department.”

Michael’s mouth worked but no words came out. After a few seconds, he said, “Are . . . are you sure? I mean, I’m only 24 years old.”

Smiling, Leo said, “Ah, ah, ah, Michael, you’re 20,024 years old.”

Michael made a wry face before saying, “You know what I mean, Dr. Leo. I don’t think I’m knowledgeable and experienced enough to be named a Vice-President.”

Mrs. Gatopardos said, “Michael, in the two years you’ve been here, you’ve upgraded our computer system to make it the envy of every other corporation in Catlanna, the entire country! You’d be surprised at how many offers we’ve turned down to have you interview with other corporations so they could match us. What do you think about that?”

“I’ve never heard of such happening. You mean that Humanimal corporations have to get permission from competitors to hire any of their employees?”

Mr. Schimpanse said, “Only the employees who haven’t put in applications with those other corporations and, since these other corporations asked for permission to interview you, we knew you hadn’t been investigating working somewhere else. Humanimal laws allow corporations refuse to allow such interviews.”

“Oh, wow! I guess the fact that I’ve been happy with SoGa Industries has helped y’all.” Michael laughed.

Jacob said, “Yes, it most definitely has.

“So, about the offer of the position of Vice-President of Computer Information Technology and Telecommunications, are you interested?”

Michael looked at Amanda, saw the smile on her face, and said, “Yes, sir. Since you believe I can handle the position, I believe I am.”

Jacob stood up and said, “Good! Mrs. Gatopardos’ retirement won’t take effect for 3 months so you’ll be able to go on your honeymoon and not be concerned about that. Also, when you return, you will share her office while she trains you on all the necessary paperwork and other routines you’ll have to do as a Vice-President.”

Michael thought for a moment and said, “But, what about my position? Who’s going to replace me?”

Mrs. Gatopardos said, “We’ve already offered the position to Mr. Kojoto and he accepted.”

“What about Mr. Kojoto’s supervisory position?”

“He will be replaced by Albert Tierboskat.”

“A good choice.”

“Well, that’s what I wanted to talk to you about, Michael. I’m glad to see that you’re receptive to your promotion. Now, you and Amanda get back to your reception.”

“Yes, sir.”

Michael put his arm around Amanda’s waist and led her back to the reception. They were followed by everyone who was in the room. Michael led Amanda to the center of the room and cleared his throat for attention.

“Everyone, as most of you know, I’m relatively new to this time and place. I know that there are customs that the Humanimals have at weddings. However, I’d like to implement a few human customs at this wedding. The first custom I’d like to implement is the ‘First Dance’ custom. This custom is where the husband and wife dance with each other in front of the guests. So, without further ado, Maestro, if you will.”

Music started playing and Michael and Amanda danced. All by themselves they danced. Michael and Amanda couldn’t take their eyes off of each other. The love they felt for one another couldn’t be denied by the look they exchanged. After several minutes, the music ended with Michael and Amanda in the center of the room.

Once again, Michael got everyone’s attention as he said, “The second human custom I’d like to

implement is called “The Father Daughter Dance”. While I’m not so sure as to the reason behind this dance, I can imagine that it was started as a way for the father of the bride to say good-bye to his daughter as she starts her new life with the man she has chosen to marry. So, Mr. Fuchs, if you would be so kind as to come out here and dance with your daughter.”

For the second time, a song started. This time, Jacob and Amanda danced. It was obvious that Jacob was happy for Amanda as they danced. Amanda was equally happy as her father held her in his arms and danced with her around the room. As they danced, Michael stole a glance at Ophelia and saw a mixture of happiness and sadness on her face. But, Michael knew that Ophelia wasn’t the harpy that most people had imagined her to be and, as a result, knew that the happiness was for Amanda’s future happiness with Michael.

The music ended with Jacob and Amanda in the center of the room. Michael joined them and said, “I know it’s boring to watch other people dance but, I promise you’ll only have to endure this two more times. The third human custom I’d like to implement is called, ‘The Mother Son Dance’. Unfortunately, my mother passed away over 20,000 years ago; fortunately, I was adopted by a wonderful tigress who has treated me as if she had given birth to me. So, Dr. Tigresa, if you would be so kind as to join me here.”

Dr. Tigresa walked to where Michael was standing. The music started once again and Michael and Tigresa danced. As he looked at her, Michael noticed tears forming in her eyes as they danced. He thought it must just be a feminine thing when a woman’s son marries. However, he continued to dance with her and smile at her as he assured her that she would be able to cry again when Richard got married.

The music ended again with Michael and Tigresa in the center of the room. Michael said, “The fourth human custom is one I just made up.” He smiled as everyone laughed. “Yes, this custom didn’t exist when I was growing up but I believe it should be done. When I was growing up, nobody ever considered the importance of the bride’s mother other than giving birth to the bride and planning her wedding. Well, today, I’m going to rectify that. Today, I want to rectify that oversight and slight. Mrs. Fuchs, if you would be so kind as to join me.”

Everyone who knew of Ophelia’s attitude toward Michael was shocked. Ophelia shook her head violently, not in anger but in fear. Michael held out his hand and practically pleaded, “Please.” When Michael said this, Ophelia’s feet seemed to move of their own volition as she walked toward Michael.

When she arrived, Michael turned to the crowd and said, “Some of you know of how Ophelia used to feel where I was concerned. Personally, I don’t blame her. We humans used to treat your feral ancestors horribly. We killed wolves, bears, lions, tigers, and other carnivores simply because we were competitors for the same prey animals. We killed foxes, raccoons, o’possums, and other small predators because we both wanted eggs and chickens for our meals and a lot of animals we killed for their skins. Mrs. Fuchs reminded me of these things numerous times. But, despite the things she said to and about me, I understood her attitude. However, she had one quality that I admired. She really loved her daughter, Amanda. How could I not love the woman who gave birth to the woman I fell in love with? Therefore, without further ado, I’d like to implement the first “Mother-in-Law Son-in-Law Dance”.

The music started and they danced. As they danced, Ophelia whispered, “Michael, how could

you be so kind to me? You told everyone about my attitude toward you from the day we met.”

“Because, Mrs. Fuchs, I also told them why I was willing to overlook all of that. You gave birth to and love the woman I love. If it hadn’t been for you, Amanda would never have been born.” Then, Michael kissed Ophelia’s cheek and gave her a hug. “You will always be welcome in my home, Mrs. Fuchs. Always.”

The music ended and everyone applauded. Michael had shown them what true forgiveness is. Michael’s cheeks flushed red with his embarrassment and Ophelia buried her face in his chest to hide hers. When she finally pulled her face away from Michael’s chest, Ophelia gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and said, “Thank you for proving me wrong, Michael.”

Then, she ran to join Jacob as Michael said, “What are y’all waiting for? Dance!”

After Ophelia left Michael in the middle of the dance floor, Amanda walked up to him and smiled happily at him. “Thank you for what you did, Michael. I believe that, if my mother had any doubts about you left, she doesn’t any longer.”

“I just hope I didn’t embarrass her with what I said.

“Let’s dance.” Michael took Amanda in his arms and they danced.

A couple of hours later, the dancing finished, the meal finished, and everyone hugged one more time, it was time to open the wedding gifts. Michael, who was still trying to understand why there were so many guests at the wedding, was amazed at how many gifts there were. He was equally shocked when he saw gifts for Me-You and Buddy among the wedding gifts.

After all the gifts had been opened. Jacob walked up to Michael and Amanda, got everyone’s attention, and said, “Michael, Amanda, there is one more wedding gift for you. This one is from SoGa Industries and all of its employees. I know you weren’t planning on going very far for your honeymoon but I couldn’t allow you to go to Macorn for a honeymoon, especially since I know how much you enjoyed your trip to Jaguarville a couple of years ago. So, SoGa Industries is sending you two to Dogtona Beach for your honeymoon. You’ll be leaving as soon as you can arrive at the train station.”

Amanda whined quietly and said, “Daddy, it’ll be 6 hours before we get there. Can’t we wait until tomorrow morning?” It wasn’t until she looked around that she realized what it sounded like she was saying. So, in an attempt to hide her minor faux pas, she said, “I just want to get to bed.”

Now, everyone erupted in laughter, including Michael. Once again, she realized what she had implied and buried her face in Michael’s arm to hide her embarrassment.

Jacob said, “Baby, you’ll get there by 1300. You’ll have plenty of time to enjoy your first night as a married woman.”

Before Amanda could say anything else, Michael took her arm and led her to the door. When they exited the chapel, they saw a taxi waiting outside to carry them to the train station. A few minutes later, followed by a long line of vehicles with their horns blaring, they arrived at the train station, boarded the train, found their compartment, and settled in for a 6 hour ride as Amanda was starting her heat cycle.