

Janine & Tyrone





When Janine Fletcher first noticed Tyrone Thomas in class at the University of Illinois College of Law, she tells us, “I told myself right away that he was trouble. He was so cute!”

Tyrone noticed Janine too. “I always made a point to talking to her whenever the chance arose, but I played it close to the vest. I didn’t want to be too aggressive.” Not only did they find themselves in the same classes, they were also teammates in the school’s intramural softball league, so the idea that a relationship should blossom between them should come as no surprise. Their romance began simply enough; after the first game, Janine gave Tyrone a ride to the team’s first “after game party”. As she got to know Tyrone better, Janine had to re-think her “trouble” assessment. “I found him to be smart, ambitious and kind. And he loves to cook!”

Janine started to think up ways to spend more time with Tyrone. She hosted a team building event and asked Tyrone if he wouldn’t mind cooking. When they went shopping for the party, “It was the longest shopping trip ever!” says Janine. They started to spend more and more time together while attempting to keep their friends in the dark. But of course, some secrets are hard to keep - theirs came out one day when they were both late to class. “He was supposed to wait five minutes before coming in, but he didn’t follow the plan!” said Janine with a laugh. Tyrone adds, “People were already figuring it out, but now they knew. The good thing was, there was no need to hide it anymore.” And it wasn’t just Janine and Tyrone who found love on the softball field – in the last year, Janine and Tyrone have been to four weddings from their small section.

The couple dated all through law school, after which they spent two years together in Washington D.C. where Tyrone joined a private law firm

and Janine held a government position. The subject of marriage was never discussed, Tyrone being a traditional guy who wanted it to be a surprise when the time came. Janine’s good friend Karla let Tyrone know that when he was ready to propose, she could help him find the perfect engagement ring. It seems that Janine and her friends had an arrangement for each girl to have one friend who knew her preferences for an engagement ring. “It’s a ‘Sex in the City’ thing” explains Janine. After much research, Tyrone had a unique ring designed specially for Janine. “I love planning surprises, but it was good to have Karla’s help” said Tyrone.

The couple made plans to go to New York City for the opening night of the Michael Jackson’s Immortal tour at Madison Square Garden. Tyrone thought that this was the perfect opportunity for his big proposal, but somehow he tipped his hand – Janine figured it out! When Tyrone realized his secret was out, he set about coming up with a new scheme so he could surprise her anyway. He created a fake “the plan is off!” email to his friends, and he made sure that Janine saw it. She felt so bad! With that done, Tyrone made elaborate plans for the perfect proposal.

When the big day came, Tyrone found himself hobbling the streets of New York with a broken foot. They were late to the show, and then friends invited them to meet for drinks after the show. It seemed at times that fate was not in his favor, but that was not enough to stop a determined Tyrone. He created a “work emergency”, excused himself from the group and hurried back to their hotel room to set the stage for the big moment. He



brought a lavender silk runner that he placed from the door to a chair. He scattered rose petals throughout the room. He even had special engagement champagne flutes.

Returning to the bar, he was very anxious to get Janine to their room, but he had to be careful to avoid tipping her off. Janine didn't have a clue. "He was so patient and I had no idea he was waiting for the evening to end so that he could propose." His acting must have been pretty good – when he told her that there was a surprise at the room, she thought it was going to be pizza! Then Janine entered the room and saw everything that Tyrone had done, and when he proposed, she happily let Tyrone put the beautiful ring on her finger. They drank champagne and the next day, they called their friends and family to make the announcement.

Because the couple had plans to move to California, they decided that was where they would have their wedding. Janine's mother, being in the area already, was able to help line up vendors. After interviewing several planners, they chose Lora Ward of A Day to Remember. "Lora had so much good advice and gave us lots of options. We knew what we wanted, and she made it happen. And she was great at keeping us on a timeline" said Janine. For the venue, they chose a lovely outdoor location. "It reminded me of my grandmother's garden" said Janine.

The couple put a lot of thought in to every detail of their wedding. Because Janine loves wildflowers, her bouquet was made up of bold colors that would pop next to the gray bridesmaids' dresses. Janine and her mother even designed her wedding dress together. Since 90% of the guests were from out of state, they rented the venue for the whole weekend, and the entire bridal party stayed there. All of the guests were invited to



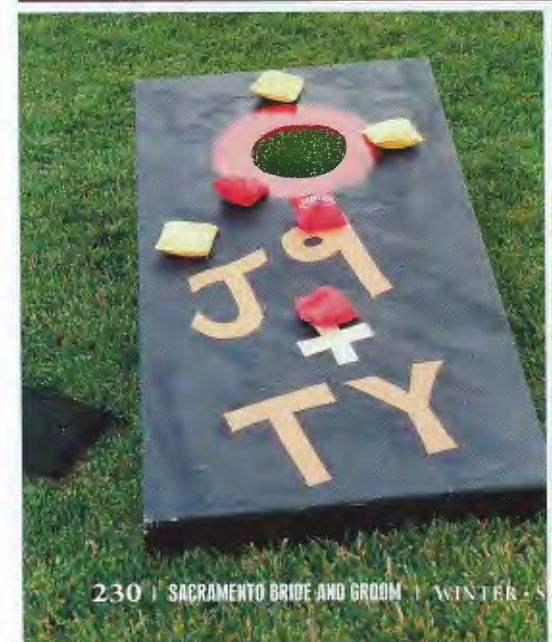
the rehearsal dinner, which they referred to as the “pre-nup” dinner as a legal joke. “It was a three day celebration, and I loved every minute of it,” said Janine, “but I think the part I loved the most was the ceremony. We wrote it ourselves and my aunt performed it. I was worried that it would be too hippy-dippy, but it ended up being so personal that it’s just a special moment.”

Tyrone and Janine’s wedding day had many special touches unique to the couple, like a scotch and cigar station. The food was best described as “modern southern”. “We went for elevated comfort food” said Tyrone. “Even though I’m from the Northeast, comfort food for me is Southern cooking.” They also provided a late night snack of sliders and sweet potato fries with truffled grill cheese and homemade potato chips. There was also a photo booth and a sparkler exit. The DJ had each table request a song and offer advice for the newlyweds.

After the weekend was over, the couple said that it made them so happy, they wish they could do it again, saying “It was wonderful having all the people we wanted to have at such a perfect party.” Tyrone planned a dream honeymoon which had the newlyweds visiting Scotland, England, Denmark, Germany and finally ending up in France for Janine’s 30th birthday.

When asked what advice the couple offer to other brides and grooms planning a wedding, Tyrone said, “The groom needs to find the things that they care about and be a part of it and give proper feedback.” Janine adds, “Enjoy it! It may get stressful at the end, but it’s worth the work. Make it a special time worth cherishing because you’re never going to do it again.”







the vendors

PLANNER:
A DAY TO REMEMBER

PHOTOS:
RACHELLE PHOTOGRAPHY

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