

My Brother's Wedding

Last November I visited Texas for my brother's wedding. The venue was a forty minute drive from Houston, down the first dirt track coming off the network of highway interchanges that sheath the city in an immense concrete tumbleweed. Much to my disappointment, there were no actual tumbleweeds at White Oaks on the Bayou. The place was immaculate.

When I arrived with my family, my suit glued to my skin as soon as I stepped out of the car, the exterior walls were smacked white with sun. Sharp petals of light reached out into a sky that seemed as vast as the state beneath it. The bayou edging the sloping lawn favoured us with solidarity, overflowing not with run-off from the previous night's storm but with the same emotion that widened our smiles.

When the other guests arrived, I expected to be able to determine whether they were on the groom or the bride's side based on what they were wearing. Again, to my disappointment, there were no stetsons, spurs or bolo ties. Not because this wasn't the sort of place to allow them (in Texas, this was standard) but because my brother wouldn't allow them. He and his wife wanted a wedding that had a mix of British and Texan traditions.

What followed was a semi-bizarre afternoon of love, laughter, smiles and free alcohol. Country music interspersed with Ed Sheeran, Bonnie Tyler and Bruce Springsteen (and my brother wondered aloud, "Why's nobody dancing?"). A frosted cake shaped like the Lone Star State with the red, white and blue crosses of the Union Jack stretched over the top. Accents mingling on the patio, glasses sparkling in hand, laughter spilling from lips. A miniature film crew that lead my brother and his wife around the grounds for nearly two hours, until their smiles were plastered permanently to their faces.

Though, even if the film crew hadn't been there, their smiles would have still been plastered there. As for me, I won't need any photos to remember the day clearly.