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The Filmy Proposal Factory

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Proposing underwater or setting up a fake kidnapping snare before going down on your knees are no more filmi gimmicks; professionals help you become outrageous for V-Day

It was a regular date for Shruti Pandit when her boyfriend Abhishek Dubey (names changed) planned a movie outing. The hall was empty for the couple, but that didn't seem unusual. Realisation dawned on Pandit when she saw that the film being screened was not Bollywood fare but a specially-put-together video of the couple. She sat through the video, overwhelmed till the end, which is when Dubey proposed to her.

While this story ends like any Mills and Boon tale where Prince Charming wins over his beloved, there's a twist in the tale: the idea wasn't Abhishek's. It came from professional experts at Marry Me, a Mumbai-based wedding planning company that also offers the service of customised proposals. "Marry Me is mainly a wedding planning company, but once a client approached us to plan a proposal for his girlfriend. He wanted to make a trip to Disneyland where he'd surprise his sweetheart when they are there. Once we managed to organise that successfully, we decided to add it to our already extensive list of services," recounts Candice Pereira, who co-owns Marry Me with Jarret D'Abreo.

However, Marry Me isn't the only agency that plans customised proposals. MyGenie, a personalised occasion management company, introduced this facility last year. "The germ of the idea was laid in 1999, when no florist was willing to make a six-foot bouquet in the shape of the name of a girl I wanted to send it to, leave alone delivering it early in the morning. I was frustrated and wanted to start myGenie right then. But people were not ready for this concept," recalls Bhavesh Mehta of myGenie. Again, in 2009, when the 29-year-old couldn't find a designer to re-do photos for creating something special, he decided that it was time to introduce his concept of personalised occasion management.

"Proposing is probably the biggest high in a relationship and it has to be special, so I launched the service when I started myGenie last year, just before Valentine's Day."

The popularity of the service, according to Mehta, is surprisingly high. He receives close to three requests every week, but ends up realising only one as a certain amount of planning goes into each proposal. The most outrageous proposals he has ever set up include a fake kidnapping snare and proposing underwater. Pereira also feels that it is better to work one proposal at a time since it allows space to think of something unique.

When the demand for such services peak around wedding season and occasions such as Valentine's Day, certain hospitality establishments turn to occasion management. ITC Grand Central, Parel, is offering such a service where the person who books their special Valentine's suite — located at the pinnacle of the hotel overlooking the city — is entitled to a dedicated butler service, a personalised menu and other goodies. Apart from these, the hotel is willing

to make special arrangements to customise the set-up for a proposal.

Though novel, such ideas pinch the wallet. While the cost of the service clearly depends on the nature of the idea, Mehta and Pereira say that it starts at Rs 5,000 for something basic yet unique. At ITC Grand Central, the service is priced at a premium Rs 1,50,000. “The price can sometimes play deterrent for our clients, but then proposing to your love is such a special moment that people are willing to overlook the cost factor,” Mehta assures.