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# CARIBBEAN NIGHT

*He was supposed to row her out onto a picturesque lake and propose to her on the tranquil water, until bad weather conditions foiled his plan. Good thing there's a Plan B!*

text SUMMER LEE



Just before daybreak in a luxury spa hotel in North West England's Lake District National Park, a reluctant Avisha Patel was pulled out from under her warm bed cover and gently nudged out onto the pitchy, chilly balcony that overlooked England's longest lake, Lake Windermere.

She and her beau of one year, both of whom were based in London, were there on a weekend trip to celebrate his 29th birthday. But waking up so early in the morning was not exactly her idea of a romantic getaway.

On the damp balcony floor, her boyfriend, Bhavesh Kumar, now 30, a general practitioner and dermatologist, dropped to one knee and popped the big question as the sun rose afar. "We celebrated with champagne and white-chocolate-dipped strawberries which he'd prepared. It was truly magical," said Avisha, a 27-year-old financial services risk consultant, who considered this the best wake-up call ever.

Their wedding celebration in February 2010 was a three-day affair that took place in India, starting from their fathers' hometowns in the Gujarat state.

"We decided on our fathers' hometowns as the starting point for our ceremonies to reflect the fact that we appreciate and cherish our heritage, and also to have our extended families present and involved in this great occasion," said Avisha who was born in San Fernando, Trinidad in the Caribbean. Bhavesh was born in Yorkshire, England.

She added: "We were both keen on an intimate wedding, small by normal Hindu standards, in a venue which allowed and encouraged our fusion upbringing. If anything, the wedding planning process brought us closer together as we worked on ensuring that each other remained happy throughout."

The second part of the celebration was held at the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower in Mumbai. The colour theme of the wedding was gold and ivory to give the ballroom a warm sun-and-sand feel.

"Bhav made a grand arrival on a white horse with his family and friends accompanying with Indian song and dance. I was escorted into the ballroom to a Caribbean steelpan rendition of Here Comes The Bride," Avisha recalled.

The ceremony was translated into English by the Brahmin, a Hindu priest, to help the guests from abroad understand the meaning of each step of the ritual.

For the night reception, the couple opted for a Caribbean theme, choosing to have it outdoors on the hotel's Chambers Terrace that looked over the iconic Gateway of India and the Arabian Sea.

The décor was white with shades of blue and silver, again to reflect the Caribbean. The couple's favourite Caribbean islands were used to name the tables. Fresh coconut water was served for the toast speeches.

Now months after her wedding, Avisha shared: "Our wedding turned out perfect and gives me such a warm feeling whenever I think about it. I can't help but dwell on a few special moments, including the time I was holding Bhav's hand through the blind and seeing him for the first time after the blind sheet was removed.

"These were all special moments that would remain in my heart forever."

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