



★ lesson overview

What this lesson covers and where it is going.

This lesson uses wedding traditions from around the world as a way of talking about culture, family and celebration in English. It is not a culture studies course, and the learner needs no background knowledge of any country or custom. The topic opens up several familiar areas at once: family and community, the gifts and good wishes guests bring, the things people do to bring luck or keep trouble away, and the traditions families keep going without always knowing where they came from.

The central question is: **“What do weddings around the world tell us about what people want for a couple?”** The learner travels through several countries in a short video, then reads about what these traditions are actually for, then hears two friends talking about the traditions in their own families. Finally, the learner describes a tradition of their own – what happens, who takes part, and what it is supposed to bring.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe wedding traditions from different countries in simple, clear English, saying what happens and who takes part.
2. Explain what a tradition is supposed to bring the couple, such as luck, money, protection, or a welcome into the family.
3. Compare two traditions from different countries and say what they have in common.
4. Use the present simple and past simple passive to describe customs and ceremonies.
5. Talk about a celebration tradition from their own family or country and explain why it matters.
6. Say that they are not sure about something, using simple expressions of uncertainty.

Lesson Flow and Timing

#	Section	Time
1	Warm-Up	10–12 minutes
2	Video Comprehension	12–15 minutes
3	Pre-Reading Vocabulary	12–15 minutes
4	Reading and Reading	28–32 minutes
5	Activities Listening	<i>main focus</i> 12–15 minutes
6	Grammar – the passive	12–15 minutes
7	Discussion	12–15 minutes
8	Homework and Crossword	<i>separate from class time</i>



How the World Says "I Do"

Wedding traditions around the world
what happens, who takes part, and
what families every where hope for a
couple they love.

Level: Intermediate (B1 CEFR)

Duration: 90–120 minutes · 1:1 General English

Skill Focus: Reading, Speaking, Listening,
Vocabulary, Grammar

Grammar Focus: The passive — present and
past simple

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1 warm-up

1. What is the last wedding you went to? What do you remember best about it?

Follow-ups: Who got married? · What did you eat? · How long did it last?

2. What usually happens at a wedding where you live? Tell me the day from the morning to the end.

Follow-ups: What happens first? · Is there anything that always happens?

3. What do guests normally give the couple, or do for them, at a wedding where you live?

Follow-ups: Is there a special moment when guests give something? · What happens, exactly? · Who joins in?

4. What do families hope the couple will have in their life together?

Follow-ups: Money? Children? Luck? · Do people say this out loud, or show it in another way?

5. Do you think weddings are the same everywhere in the world, or very different?

Follow-ups: What do you think is the same everywhere? · Have you seen a wedding from another country, on TV or online?





SCAN
ME



2

video comprehension

Watch the video, then do the tasks. (12–15 min)

▶ Watch here: youtube.com/watch?v=6WeD_a0Zil4

 The video is quick and uses some difficult words. Don't worry — you only need the main ideas. Watch it twice.

A — True or False

Write T or F. If a sentence is false, write the correct sentence underneath.

T/F	Sentence
---	In the money dance, guests give money to the couple while they dance with them.
---	Jumping the broom started in the United States and is not done anywhere else today.
---	In Greece, the close friend of the groom helps him get ready on the morning of the wedding.
---	At the Chinese tea ceremony, the couple receive tea from their parents.
---	In Germany, guests break plates and the couple clean them up together.

2

video comprehension

B — Questions

1. What is the video about? Say it in one or two sentences.

2. Choose one tradition from the video. What happens? Describe it in your own words.

3. Choose one tradition. What is it supposed to bring the couple?

4. Which tradition in the video needs the whole family? What does the family do?

5. Which tradition did you find most interesting? Why?



3

pre-reading vocabulary

Read, repeat, and master these words before reading the article. (12–15 min)

 **A — Matching.** The definitions are mixed up. **No word is next to its own definition**, so there are no free answers. Write the correct letter in the Answer box.

#	Word	Answer	Def.	Definition
1	Tradition		A	something you give to someone, often at a celebration
2	Custom		B	good or bad things that happen by chance
3	Ceremony		C	to hope that something good happens to someone
4	Guest		D	to give something to someone directly
5	Relatives Gift		E	to give something to younger people in the family
6	Luck		F	to be part of a group or family
7			G	to believe someone is honest and will not let you down
8	Wish		H	something a family or country has done for many years
9	Hand over		I	the usual way of doing something in a place
10	Pass down		J	a formal event with special actions, done in a set order
11	Belong to		K	a person who is invited to an event
12	Trust		L	the people in your family, such as aunts and cousins





3

pre-reading vocabulary

B – Odd One Out

In each set, three words go together and one does not. Circle the odd one and say why. The explanation is the exercise. More than one answer can be right if you can explain it.

1. gift · money · envelope · luck

2. guest · relatives · bride · ceremony

3. wish · hope · hand over · bring luck

4. tradition · custom · pass down · trust

Useful sentence starters: "I think ___ is different because..." · "The other three are all..." · "___ is a thing, but the others are..."





4

reading

The Wishes Behind the Wedding (28–32 min with activities — main focus)

Read the whole article once. Do not stop at words you do not know.

1 The music is loud, and there is a queue. One by one, the guests step forward to dance with the bride. Each dance lasts less than a minute. While they dance, they pin a banknote to her dress, or press it into her hand, or drop it into a small bag held by someone standing beside her. By the end of the evening her dress is heavy with money, her feet hurt, and she is still laughing.

2 This is the money dance. It is done at weddings in Poland, and also in Mexico, Hungary, Nigeria and the Philippines. It looks like a party game. It is really a wish.

GIVING AND WISHING

3 The money is a gift, but it is also a message. A new couple usually needs help at the beginning, and the guests know this. In some families the money pays for the honeymoon. In others it simply goes into the bank. Either way, the guests are all saying the same thing: we want life to be easy for you.

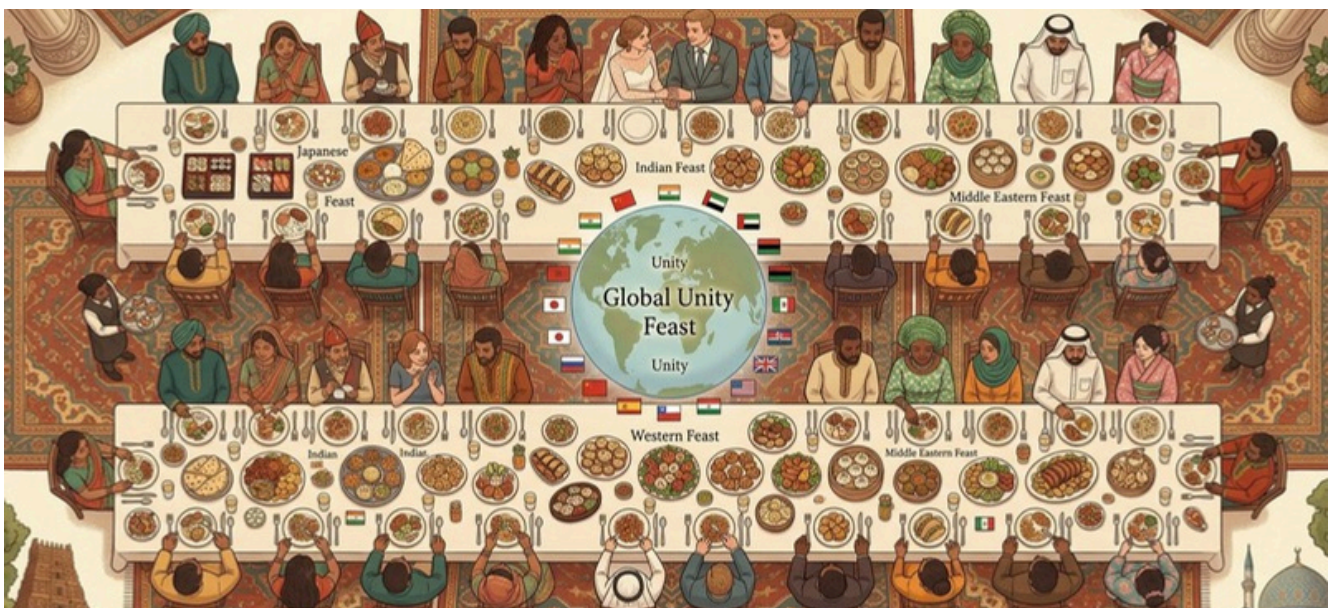
4 In Japan, the same wish is given in a completely different way. There is no dancing and no noise. Guests bring money in a special envelope, decorated with fine paper and thin cord, and hand it over quietly at the entrance when they arrive.

5 The notes inside are usually new and clean, and many guests choose an odd number of them. An odd number cannot be divided into two equal parts. This is not an accident. People hope that the couple will not be divided either. **6** These two traditions look nothing alike. One is loud and crowded. The other is quiet and careful. But a guest pinning a banknote to a dress in Krakow and a guest handing over an envelope in Osaka are doing exactly the same thing. Both are wishing the couple money, help and an easy start.

BRINGING LUCK AND KEEPING TROUBLE AWAY

7 Other traditions are not about money at all. They are about keeping trouble away from the couple, or clearing it out of the way before married life begins.

8 At some weddings a broom is placed on the ground, and the couple jump over it together, usually holding hands. The idea is easy to picture. A broom sweeps the floor clean, so jumping over one means leaving old troubles behind. Whatever happened before this day stays on the other side of the broom.





4

reading

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4

reading

The Wishes Behind the Wedding, continued

9 Where does this tradition come from? Many people in the United States believe it began there, among enslaved people who were not allowed to marry. That is part of the story, but it is not all of it. Jumping the broom is older than that, and it is still done today in Ghana, where the broom has an important meaning of its own. Some African American couples include it now as a way of keeping a link with the past.

10 This is quite common with traditions. People do them for years without being completely sure where they started, and the custom still matters to them. Not every couple does it, of course. Families are different, even in the same town.

WELCOMING A NEW FAMILY MEMBER

11 A wedding does not only join two people. It joins two families, and some traditions are built around exactly that moment, when one family opens and lets somebody new inside.

12 At a Chinese tea ceremony, the couple kneel and serve tea to their parents and older relatives. The groom's family is usually served first, then the bride's, starting with the oldest. Each cup is offered with both hands, and the couple wait while it is drunk. Nothing is hurried. It is a small, slow, careful thing to do, and it says something that would be difficult to say out loud: thank you for raising this person, and please accept me.

13 The older relatives drink the tea, and then they give something back. It is usually a red envelope with money or jewellery inside, pressed into the couple's hands. After this, the new husband or wife belongs to the family. Nobody announces it. The tea does it.

14 Back at the party, the music is still loud and the queue has not become any shorter. The bride's dress is covered in banknotes. Somewhere else in the world, at the same moment, a couple are kneeling with a cup of tea, and another couple are jumping over a broom, and someone is quietly handing an envelope to a stranger at a door.

15 The customs look completely different. The wishes behind them do not. Everywhere, families want the same few things for a couple they love: a little money to start with, a little luck, no trouble, and a place to belong. The dress covered in banknotes and the cup of tea are not really two different ideas. They are two ways of saying the same sentence.





4

reading activities

A—Find It Quickly & B—Put the Paragraphs in Order

A — Find It Quickly

Which paragraph mentions each thing? Write the paragraph number.

¶	Which paragraph mentions...
-----	money given quietly, not in front of everyone
-----	a tradition that is done in more than one country
-----	something the couple do together, at the same time
-----	a gift the couple receive <i>from</i> the family
-----	people not being sure where a tradition started
-----	a reason why guests choose a certain number of notes

B — Put the Paragraphs in Order

These four paragraphs come from **Giving and Wishing**. They are in the wrong order. Number them 1–4.

No.	Paragraph
-----	The notes inside are usually new and clean, and many guests choose an odd number of them. An odd number cannot be divided into two equal parts...
-----	The money is a gift, but it is also a message. A new couple usually needs help at the beginning, and the guests know this...
-----	These two traditions look nothing alike. One is loud and crowded. The other is quiet and careful...
-----	In Japan, the same wish is given in a completely different way. There is no dancing and no noise...

Now write down two words or phrases that helped you decide the order.



4

reading activities

C – Questions

1. What happens at the money dance? Describe it in your own words.

2. Who takes part in the Chinese tea ceremony?

3. What is jumping the broom supposed to do for the couple?

4. Why do many Japanese guests choose an odd number of banknotes?

5. The money dance and the Japanese envelope look very different. What is the same about them?

6. Which tradition in the article would you most like to see? Why?

Complete the table using the article.

Tradition	What happens?	Who takes part?	What is it supposed to bring?
The money dance			
Money in an envelope (Japan)			
Jumping the broom			
The tea ceremony (China)			

Now look at the last column only. Which two traditions are hoping for the same thing, even though they are very different? Say why you chose them. There is no single correct answer here – your explanation is what matters.

Keep this table. You will use the same three columns for your own tradition in the homework.



4

reading activities

E—Words in the Article & F— Your Turn

E — Words in the Article

Find each phrase in the article. What do you think it means? Use the sentence around it to help you. Then say which words helped.

Phrase (paragraph)	What do you think it means?	What helped you?
there is a queue (1)		
hand it over (4)		
divided into two equal parts (5)		
sweeps the floor clean (8)		
nothing is hurried (12)		

F — Your Turn

Did anything in the article remind you of a tradition in your own family or country? Write a few sentences. Say what it is, what happens, and why it reminded you.





5

listening

Nina and Jakub talk about weddings. (12–15 min)

 **Audio:** Nina went to a wedding in Greece last month. She tells her friend Jakub about it, and he tells her about his own wedding.

A — Questions

1. Where was the wedding Nina went to, and who got married?

2. What does the groom's close friend do on the morning of the wedding?

3. What did Jakub's parents give the couple at the door?

4. Jakub understands one part of this tradition but not the other. Which part does he not understand?

5. What did Jakub do, even though he could not explain it? Why?

B — Fact or Opinion?

Write **FACT** or **OPINION**. Then write the words that helped you decide. The last column is the real exercise.

Fact / Opinion	Sentence	Which words helped?
-----	The friend helps the groom shave on the morning of the wedding.	
-----	"I found it really lovely, actually."	
-----	Jakub's parents were waiting at the door with bread and salt.	
-----	"That is quite a lot of trust."	
-----	"I think sometimes the reason does not matter very much."	
-----	"In my opinion that one is just because it looks good in photographs."	

C — Your Turn

Whose family traditions sound closer to the ones in your family — Nina's or Jakub's? Why? Give one example from your own family.



6

grammar — the passive

Describing what is done, when we do not say who does it. (12–15 min)

1 — Notice

Underline the passive in each sentence.

- Money is pinned to the bride's dress.
- A broom is placed on the ground.
- Each cup is offered with both hands.
- The groom's family is usually served first.
- The tradition was started a long time ago.
- The custom was brought to America by families who moved there.

2 — Think About It

- In sentences a–d, do we know *who* does the action?

- Which small word appears in every sentence, before the main verb?

- Which sentences talk about *now*, and which talk about *the past*?

- Try saying sentence (a) a different way, starting with “Guests...”. Which one sounds better when you are describing a tradition?

3 — How It Works

Form	We use it for	Example
is / are + past participle present simple passive	what is done now, every time	Gifts <i>are given</i> to the couple.
was / were + past participle past simple passive	what was done, or where something came from	The custom <i>was started</i> long ago.



Why use the passive here? Because we do not know who does it, or it does not matter who does it, or *everybody* does it. When we describe a tradition, the important thing is **what happens** — not who.



6

grammar — practice

4—Active to Passive & 5—Use the Word

4 — Active to Passive

Rewrite each sentence in the passive. Keep the same time (now or past).

1. Guests pin money to the bride's dress.

2. The couple serve tea to their parents.

3. Someone places a broom on the ground.

4. Families passed the tradition down for many years.

5. People started this custom a long time ago.

6. The older relatives give the couple a red envelope.

5 — Use the Word

Finish the second sentence so it means the same. Use the word in CAPITALS.

1. Guests give money to the couple.

Money _____ to the couple by guests. **(GIVEN)**

2. People still do this tradition in Ghana today.

This tradition _____ in Ghana today. **(DONE)**

3. My grandmother brought this custom from her village.

This custom _____ from her village. **(BROUGHT)**

4. They serve the groom's family first.

The groom's family _____ first. **(SERVED)**



6

grammar — about you

6 — Finish the Sentences

Finish each sentence about your own country or family. Use the passive.

1. At weddings in my country, _____ is given to _____.
2. In my family, _____ is always done before _____.
3. This tradition was started by _____.
4. In the past, _____ was _____.
5. Something that is still done today is _____.

 If you are not sure where a tradition came from, you can say: "I'm not sure, but I think..." · "Nobody in my family really knows." · "I've never asked, actually."

7

discussion

Talk about these with your teacher. (12–15 min)

1. Which tradition from this lesson would you like at your own celebration? Why?
Follow-ups: *Who would you invite to join in? · Would your family like it?*
2. Are weddings in your country changing? What is different from your grandparents' time?
Follow-ups: *What has stopped? · Is anything new?*
3. Why do you think families give money or gifts to a couple?
Follow-ups: *Is it only about the money? · What else are they saying?*
4. Do you know why your family does the traditions it does?
Follow-ups: *Who could you ask? · Does it matter if nobody knows?*
5. What would be lost if weddings were the same everywhere?
Follow-ups: *Would anything be better? · What would you miss?*

60-Second Challenge

You have **sixty seconds**. Describe one tradition from your country to someone who knows nothing about it. **What happens, and what is it supposed to bring?**

Do not stop. If you forget a word, go around it and keep going.

There is no correct answer here. Your teacher will time you, and then you will do it a second time. The second try is almost always better — that is the point of the exercise.



homework

Do this before the next lesson · about 20–30 minutes.

Part 1 — Using the Words

Choose **6** of the 12 words from Section 3. Write one sentence for each, about a celebration, a family or a custom you know. At least **2** sentences must use a phrase from the lesson, such as *pass down*, *hand over*, *belong to* or *bring luck*.

Part 2 — Grammar

Write each sentence in the passive. Keep the same time.

- Guests throw rice over the couple.
- Her mother gave her the ring.
- People eat this cake at every wedding.
- My grandparents started this custom.
- Someone opens the door for the couple.
- They served the oldest relatives first.
- Families pass these stories down.
- A neighbour made the dress.

Then write **3 sentences** about a tradition in your own family, using the passive.

Part 3 — A Tradition From My Country

Record a **2–3 minute voice message** about one tradition from your country, region or family. It can be a wedding tradition, or any celebration tradition. Answer these five questions:

- What happens, and who takes part?
- What is it supposed to bring?
- Where does it come from, as far as you know?
- Is it still done the same way today?
- Would you want it at your own celebration, and why?

Try to use: at least 5 words from Section 3 · at least 4 passive sentences · if you do not know where it came from, say so in English.

Before you record: fill in the three columns from the table in Section 4 (*What happens?* / *Who takes part?* / *What is it supposed to bring?*) for your own tradition.

If you prefer to write, write 180–220 words instead.

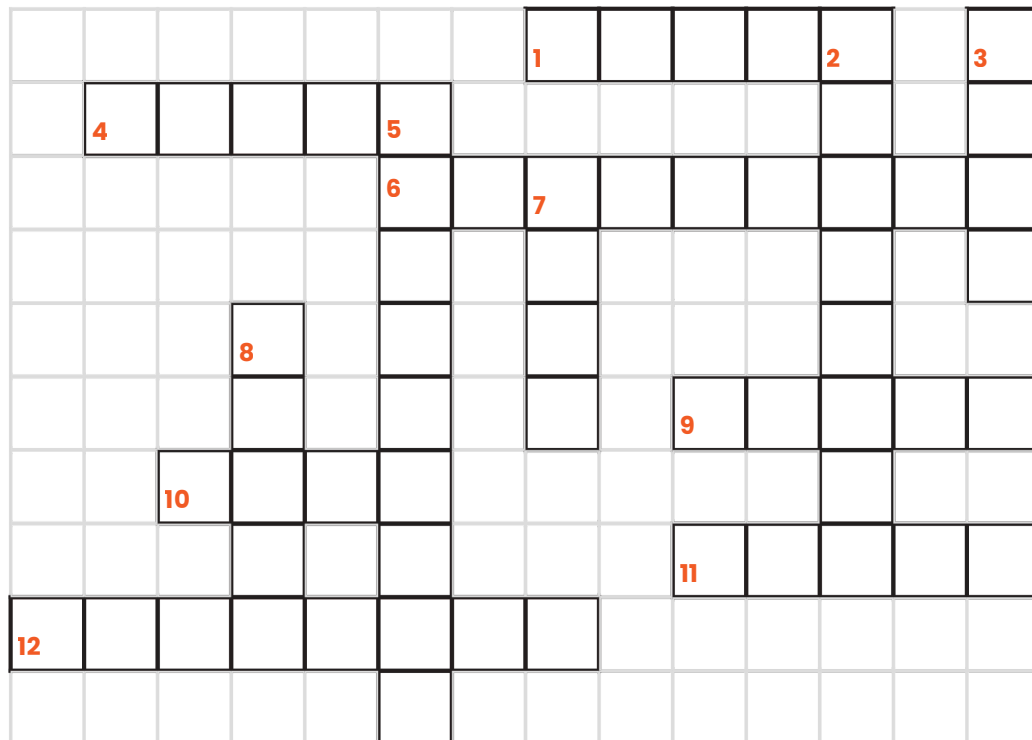




8

crossword

Do this on your own after the lesson. All the words are from this lesson.



ACROSS

1. Moveto music (5)
4. Believe in someone (5)
6. Members of your family (9) 9.
- Brush for the floor (5)
10. Present (4)
11. Visitor you invite (5)
12. Formal public event (8)

DOWN

2. Paper cover for a letter (8)
3. Hope for something (4)
5. Something passed down for years (9) 7.
- Good fortune (4)
8. Woman getting married (5)



Video Reference

This lesson's video takes the viewer around the world to show how different cultures celebrate a wedding. As this is copyrighted content, we cannot print the full script here. Please watch the original at the link below before doing Section 2.

youtube.com/watch?v=6WeD_a0Zil4

What the video covers: It introduces seven wedding traditions from different parts of the world.

The money dance (also called the dollar or apron dance) is found in Poland, Hungary, Nigeria, the Philippines and Mexico. Money is thrown, handed or pinned onto the couple while guests take turns dancing with them. It is a way of helping them financially and wishing them a comfortable life.

Jumping the broom is a tradition in which the couple jump over a broom. Many people think it began during slavery in the United States, but it actually started in Ghana and is still practised there. It stands for sweeping away past troubles. Some African American couples include it today as a link to the past.

The koumbaro in Greece is similar to a best man. On the wedding morning he helps the groom get ready, including helping him shave — a sign of trust between close friends.

In another tradition, one or both of the engaged couple are covered by friends and family in things like soot, feathers and food, then paraded noisily around the town. It began as a way of keeping danger away.

The Chinese tea ceremony joins two families. Kneeling, the couple serve tea to their parents and elders — traditionally the groom's family first, by age, then the bride's. It shows respect and thanks, and the couple usually receive red envelopes with money or jewellery.

In a **pre-wedding tradition in India**, turmeric paste is rubbed onto the couple's skin by friends and family, with singing and dancing. Turmeric carries several meanings there, and the paste also gives the couple a glow and helps calm their nerves.

In **Germany**, guests smash porcelain before the wedding to wish the couple luck. The couple clear up the pieces together, which shows they can work as a team. More pieces are said to mean more luck.





Listening Script

Nina: So I went to a wedding in Greece last month. My friend Sofia got married.

Jakub: Oh, nice. What was it like?

Nina: Honestly? Long. Wonderful, but long. We started in the morning and I got back to the hotel at two in the morning. **Jakub:** [laughs] That sounds about right for a wedding.

Nina: But the part I keep thinking about happened before the ceremony. The groom has a close friend, a bit like a best man, and that friend helps him get ready in the morning. He actually helps him shave.

Jakub: Shave? Like, with a razor?

Nina: Yes. Properly.

Jakub: That is quite a lot of trust.

Nina: That is exactly the point, I think. Sofia told me it is supposed to show that these two men trust each other completely. I found it really lovely, actually. There was a lot of laughing, and his hands were shaking a bit.

Jakub: I like that. It is a strange thing to do and a nice thing to mean.

Nina: Did anything like that happen at your wedding?

Jakub: Not shaving, no. But when we arrived at the reception, our parents were waiting at the door with bread and salt. They gave it to us before we could go in.

Nina: Bread and salt?

Jakub: Bread and salt. The bread is so that we never go hungry. That part makes sense to me.

Nina: And the salt?

Jakub: I have no idea.

Nina: [laughs] You have no idea?

Jakub: None. I have asked my mother twice. She says it is just what you do. My grandmother gave it to my parents, and her mother gave it to her, and nobody has ever explained the salt.

Nina: And you still did it.

Jakub: Of course we still did it. My mother was standing there holding a plate. What was I going to say?

Nina: [laughs] Fair.

Jakub: And I am glad we did, actually. There is a photo of that moment and it is my favourite one from the whole day. I think sometimes the reason does not matter very much.

Nina: I would agree with that. Although I quite like knowing why.

Jakub: Then you would have hated the salt.

Nina: Possibly. But the shaving thing, I understood immediately. Nobody had to explain it.

Jakub: That is the difference, maybe. Some traditions explain themselves and some just get passed down.

Nina: There was one more thing, actually. At the end, people were throwing rice.

Jakub: We do that too.

Nina: Everyone does that, apparently. I have seen it at three weddings now in three different countries.

Jakub: In my opinion that one is just because it looks good in photographs.

Nina: [laughs] That is a terrible theory.

Jakub: It is a brilliant theory.

Nina: Next wedding, you are asking your mother about the salt.



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