

Chapter One

"All right, you lovely single ladies, come on up for the bouquet toss."

Rats. She should have sneaked off to the restroom earlier.

Trish ducked to hide from the Master of Ceremonies, her skeletal Uncle Charley. He

stood at the front of the large banquet room in his rumpled black tuxedo, his wisps of wiry grey

hair floating several inches above his nearly bald head. Light from the overhead fluorescent

fixtures glared on his oversized glasses as he swung his head back and forth, seeking innocent

maidens to capture.

There were two good things about the table configuration at Chinese wedding banquets:

One--there was no head table, so Trish didn't have to sit like a conspicuous pink bon-bon in her

bridesmaid's gown. And two--the large round tables made it possible for her to hide behind an

old uncle's shiny head, or an auntie's black-dyed beehive hairdo.

She hunched over her dinner plate, squeezing herself behind Aunt Lena's large bulk. She

stared at the congealing clams in salty black bean sauce and pretended she hadn't heard the

booming announcement. Maybe she would go unnoticed.

Author 1/2/07 6:43 PM  
**Comment:** The first line should be a little stronger. You want to start the novel with a little more bang. This is your chance to grab the reader and glue their eyes to your story. Start the novel with a catchy first line. Cute, clever, mysterious, dangerous, puzzling, ominous, curious, disastrous...you get the picture. Basically, something unusual is happening or going to happen.

Author 1/2/07 2:03 PM  
**Comment:** Who is "she"?

Author 1/2/07 6:35 PM  
**Comment:** For the first time you mention a character's name, sometimes it's a good idea to list their last name also, to introduce them to the reader. I also didn't know she was Asian until later in the chapter, and her last name might have clued me in to that fact.

Author 1/1/07 10:36 PM  
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Author 1/2/07 6:40 PM  
**Comment:** Nice visual, but the way this sentence reads, his HEAD is seeking innocent maidens, not Uncle Charley.

Author 1/2/07 2:04 PM  
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Author 1/1/07 10:37 PM  
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Author 1/2/07 6:36 PM  
**Comment:** You use the word "table" quite a bit in these next few paragraphs. Readers pick up on repetition pretty easily, so you might want to reword so that you don't use "table" so much so close together.

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Author 1/1/07 10:37 PM  
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Author 1/2/07 6:40 PM  
**Comment:** Are all uncles old with shiny heads? This feeds into stereotypes and you might want to be careful about that.

Author 1/2/07 2:16 PM  
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Laughter and chatter spiraled around her in English, Japanese and Mandarin while the rich aroma of beef and broccoli mingled with the sweet-sour tang of Chinese five-spice and strong black pepper. Sitting around the table, her parents and a few of her closest aunts and uncles picked at the last of the deep-fried lobster dumplings and crispy Peking duck.

Author 1/2/07 2:29 PM  
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Author 1/2/07 6:42 PM  
Comment: Yum, sounds good!

Surprisingly, no one glanced at her. No one sighed and lamented, "Trish, you're still not married?"

She always bit her tongue so she wouldn't say something like, "Oh, my husband came, but he's stashed in the car trunk."

Or, "No, I've decided to dedicate my life to finding a cure for cancer."

Author 1/2/07 6:36 PM  
Comment: Same thing with "or" as with "table" (above)

Or even better, "What's the use? I think I'll join a convent."

Author 1/2/07 2:08 PM  
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Yeah, that would go over well. If her relatives weren't mentioning her marital status *ad nauseum*, they were scolding her for not coming to Buddhist temple anymore.

Author 1/2/07 6:43 PM  
Comment: LOL!!! This section is hilarious!

Author 1/2/07 2:08 PM  
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Besides, her Bible study that week had been on the fruits of the Spirit. Love, patience, kindness, self-control. That meant no glaring, gritting her teeth, rolling her eyes, snapping back,

or uncouth behavior in general. Or at least while she sat next to her mother, who would whap her chopsticks on Trish's knuckles.

Author 1/2/07 2:08 PM  
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But no one seemed to have heard Uncle Charley's call to the single women, which also sounded like Trish's death knoll. Auntie Jill wiped the plum sauce globbing her son's mouth while Uncle Mark scrubbed at his tiny, sticky hands. Uncle Russell reached for a golden-brown drumstick when Aunt Elisha wasn't looking. Auntie Yumi served Uncle Garret more steaming jasmine rice.

Author 1/2/07 6:40 PM  
Comment: Same thing with "But" as with "or" (above). Also, be judicious about starting a sentence with "But" or "And"—use it more to make an impact or for dramatic effect.

Author 1/2/07 2:33 PM  
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No one prodded, "There you go, Trish. Here's your chance." No one even remarked, "What? What did he say?"

Author 1/2/07 2:10 PM  
Comment: This seems redundant to what was said earlier.

Hm, maybe she'd be able to escape the dreaded wedding ritual.

Author 1/2/07 2:21 PM  
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But Uncle Charley, having changed the diapers of many of the young ladies present,

Author 1/2/07 2:33 PM  
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started calling out names. "Deborah Fong, come on up to the dance floor. Eloise, I see you sneaking off. You too, Amanda. No, just because you're dating a guy doesn't mean you're exempt."

Then Aunt Lena shifted her chair and exposed Trish's bubblegum-pink skirts.

"Trish Sato, I see you hiding."

She was had. She stalled, patting her hair in its French twist and brushing nonexistent

Author 1/2/07 6:39 PM  
Comment: Try to vary your sentence structure a bit for more pleasing sentence rhythm, rather than all subject-verb sentences.

crumbs from her lap. Uncle Charley was getting old and just might forget--

"C'mon, Trish. We're waiting."

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She heaved a long-suffering sigh as she hauled herself to her feet.

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Her mother hissed, "Smile. Stop looking like a martyr."

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Trish glowered. Mom must have forgotten the embarrassing bridal tosses in her own youth.

Why in the world wouldn't a girl want to stand in front of a roomful of people and make a fool of herself? Who wouldn't want to leap and fight for a stupid bunch of flowers to win the title, "Next aging spinster who wishes she were married"?

Author 1/24/07 6:47 PM  
Comment: Question mark goes outside the quotation marks.

Not to mention the public shame of a beaming mother who says in front of everyone,

Author 1/2/07 2:24 PM  
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"See, honey, this proves you'll get a man sometime."

Author 1/24/07 6:47 PM  
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Bad enough when Aunties and Grandmas keep nagging, "So when are you getting a boyfriend? You're not getting any younger. You need to honor your mother with grandchildren before she dies."

Author 1/2/07 2:24 PM  
Inserted: ?

It wasn't that she didn't want a relationship with a nice guy. Especially if he happened to

Author 1/2/07 2:26 PM  
Comment: Be careful of your sentence structure. The majority of your sentences start with a lead-in then on to the quote of what would have been said.

be six feet tall with broad shoulders, a chiseled face and dark bedroom eyes. She just didn't like being pestered, prodded and provoked about her single state.

Trish's **cousins** had hit on the clever ploy of holding a little girl during the bouquet toss.

The baby may be three months old but she was still a single female. Then the child reached for

the bouquet and eased the social pressure and shame off the older woman. **Cousin** Sophia

captured her niece while **cousin** Emily snatched baby Marie on her way to the front.

Author 1/2/07 2:27 PM  
**Comment:** Where is Trish? Has she made it to the stage? There is little of the setting mentioned here beyond people eating. Is she watching her cousins trudge to the front? Keep us up with your character.

Author 1/2/07 6:39 PM  
**Comment:** Same thing with repetition of the word "cousins."

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