

Michael and Allison

November 16, 2012

New York City

"Once in a while, right in the middle of an ordinary life, love gives us a fairy tale." – Unknown

We're not from New York, but we've fallen in love both in and with the City. When Michael proposed to Allison (just before Christmas), he sent her on a "scavenger hunt" all over New York City – to all of the places dear to their hearts. When she said "yes!", we knew our wedding had to be in the same city (and the same time of year) where we fell in love, so we could share the magic of our relationship with our out-of-town family and friends.

Ever since she was a child, the bride was spellbound by fairytales. Her first vacation was to Disneyworld, her first Halloween costume was Snow White, and her first injury came after she sprinkled herself with souvenir Tinkerbell fairy dust and attempted to fly...unsuccessfully. The groom didn't grow up dreaming of princesses and enchanted forests, but after meeting Allison through the most unlikely of circumstances, he began to believe in fairytales himself.

Our vision needed to shine through every detail of our big day – from the save-the-dates that included a sketch of the vintage taxi we used as our getaway car, to the welcome bags equipped with a homemade candy apple and cutting board (representative of both the "Big Apple" and Snow White's Evil Queen), to the "Hop-On, Hop-Off" bus that gave guests a brief tour of the City on their way from the church to the reception. We researched and visited nearly 100 venues, but the grandeur of Gotham Hall swept us off our feet and was the perfect setting for our very own fairytale to take place.

Our guests' first glimpse into what was in store would come from the invitations, so we wanted to create something that would really set the stage. Knowing that our idea could only be fashioned from scratch, we enlisted our entire family and close friends to help us design and construct a "once upon a time" storybook, with each page detailing both the tale of our relationship and the timeline for our nuptial events. Countless hours (and late nights) were spent picking twigs from Central Park (to hold the binding), wrapping the moss filled-boxes with the bride's late grandmother's special paper, and searching for and creating unique images to hint at the theme and surprises that would await our guests.

With the help of Ara Farnam of Rock Paper Scissors Events, Jessie Weidinger of Roundtree Flowers, and the bride's mother, we transformed Gotham Hall into the enchanted forest depicted on the invitation's pages.

Violinists greeted the guests arriving at Gotham Hall, and they were escorted up the winding staircase lit with votive candles. They then entered the cocktail area – a "castle" complete with rustic wrought-iron candelabras, goblet candles, and tall pillar candles glowing in the fireplace. The main reception space (over 50 feet below) remained dark, but for the glow of over 500 candles and our invitation monogram shining on the dance floor.

Weathered, cement urns, covered with moss and filled with tall branches, held the vintage keys, which acted as place cards and were needed to enter the enchanted forest. The room was enclosed by floor-to-ceiling drapes that were up-lit by images of branches to give the illusion that guests were now in our “forest”. They then found their table numbers displayed on antique mirrors of Snow White acclaim, painted gold with the help of our family and bearing our monogram. Two rows of long rectangular tables created a glowing aisle of large, crystal candelabras atop copper-sequined linens, complete with an array of votives and flower clusters spilling out of antique goblets.

The grandeur and glamour of this “dinner party” was juxtaposed by a surrounding “forest” mirage, formed by trees atop round tables on both sides. Individual branches and flowers were manually stitched together to create our own little miracle – blossoming branches in the middle of November! These 5-foot tall centerpieces were covered with Spanish moss, flowers, and hanging votives (which were held inside glass ornaments to give the illusion that they were actually floating). Laying beneath were copper sequined linens covered in a shimmering branch overlay, and menus bore the image of the tree depicted on the first page of the invitation.

In addition to having our guests share in our fairytale, we wanted them all to have a great time. The party began when the bride and groom entered through Gotham’s iconic gold doors and were received by our bridal party holding sparklers on the dance floor. We went right into our first dance – a carefully choreographed number, complete with dips, spins, twirls and a “Dirty Dancing” style lift at the finale, which we’d been rehearsing for many months preceding the wedding.

The band kept the dance floor packed all night, but those guests needing a break were entertained by no shortage of things to do: a photo booth, the bride’s mother’s candy bar (an array of homemade chocolates cleverly named to coincide with our love story), old pictures of parents’ and late grandparents’ weddings posted all along the walls, and our take on a guest book, where guests could leave marriage advice (tied to keys) for us on an old gilded frame decorated by the bride’s mother (“a key to good marriage is…”).

As the clock struck midnight and guests prepared to depart, we had another surprise waiting – sounds and smells drifted from the balcony to the “forest” down below. Upstairs, guests discovered comfort foods from our favorite NYC food carts (Eddie’s Pizza and Wafels & Dinges) and a DJ who was already in full swing. As the night came to an end, guests stepped out of our make-believe kingdom and stepped aboard the trolley to go home. We had hoped we’d given them a night that we and they would never forget and had convinced them that fairytales can in fact come true.