

Episode 9: Brett proposed in court

The story you're about to hear, I love it and I think you will too.

It's about two people. One of them is Tiffany, who is a probation officer. That means she sometimes works in a courtroom.

The other person is Brett. Brett and Tiffany started dating a couple of years ago, and ended up falling in love with each other.

So recently, it came time for Brett to pop that all-important question. And even though they had talked about marriage, so it was already on both of their minds, Brett wanted to propose in such a way that it would take Tiffany completely by surprise. I think it's safe to say he succeeded.

Brett conspired with some of Tiffany's co-workers, including the judge, and came up with a plan. He would be dressed in a prisoner jumpsuit, handcuffed, and brought into the courtroom to appear before the judge. And Tiffany would be sitting there to see it all happen.

And the nice thing is, the whole thing was recorded so you can see how it happened too. I'll have the video on my website at whatwasthatlike.com/09

I love a great prank, and to me, a great prank has to have a couple of elements. First, it has to be something that is planned out in detail. And second, it has to be one that has everyone feeling good about it afterward. This one definitely is both.

I talked with Brett about how he planned this, how he worked with the people at the courthouse, how he felt when it was actually happening, and the publicity it has received. People really love this story.

And I also got some insight from Tiffany about what was going through her mind as the whole thing played out right in front of her.

I'll have Brett's contact information in the show notes for this episode, along with the video as I mentioned, and of course you can always see more pictures and other great content when you follow me on Instagram, @whatwasthatlike.

And now, here's Brett.

Scott

How long in advance did you plan for this little event?

Brett

About two years. I started not long after I found out where she worked.

Scott

So, she made the mistake of revealing her employment to you.

Brett

Yes, that's right.

Scott

All right. Let's get a little bit of background on this. You guys have been dating for about two years - is that right?

Brett

That's right.

Scott

How did you meet?

Brett

We actually met online on Plenty of Fish. We had some good conversations before we actually met face-to-face. I think that's what kind of helped us connect on the level that we did and made me know that she's the one that I wanted to finally pull the trigger on. I've never been married - this will be her third. Because her first few marriages were bad, I guess this would make this her first official love story of our life.

Scott

That's pretty cool. The thing that you planned and came up with can only be described as epic. How did you come up with this idea?

Brett

Well, I was thinking of ways to really surprise her. I wanted it to be epic because, of course, that's what our love story is. She's a probation officer. I was like, "Well, do I get myself arrested so that she would bail me out?" Then, I was like, "No. I'm gonna have them bring me in court right in front of her where she really can't react." Believe it or not, I wrote the dialogue. The night before, I stayed up all night pacing. I'm sure she was wondering what I was doing. But that was all the night before. I knew what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be. I wanted to stand in front of the judge with the jumpsuit, with the shackles, and just let it all go.

Scott

I watched the video that you told me about, which you gave me the link to, which will be on the website for anybody who wants to watch it. Man, you are a performer! Have you done any kind of acting, drama, or anything like that in the past?

Brett

No, sir. I did show choir in high school.

Scott

You were in control of the situation. I mean, it was clear that you had kind of scripted it out. You knew exactly how you wanted it to play out - what was going on - exactly the way you wanted and planned it. Tiffany was completely-- I mean, shocked isn't even enough of a word. She was. You could hear her try to breathe several times. I mean, you literally took her breath away when you did this.

Brett

Yeah, she wasn't expecting that at all. She had been wanting me to propose and I can't plan it off. We had done numerous things - like, earlier in the summer, we went on a cruise and all of her friends were like, "Oh, he's gonna propose to you!" She slipped up and said that's what they were telling her. I was like, "You know that's not my style, right? I'm not gonna propose on a cruise ship."

Scott

That would be a little cheesy.

Brett

Yeah. Mine wasn't cheesy enough, right? (Chuckles) But yeah, I haven't done any acting, but I'm good at posturing, I guess.

Scott

Well, it was partly shocking because it is, kind of, out of your character.

Brett

That is correct. She never would have seen a prank coming from me because I'm pretty straightforward with her. I think that is out of character for me. Also, she never would have expected to see me in court for any legal mishap because I don't get into trouble. So yeah, it was definitely a shock to see me brought in in shackles.

Scott

Yeah. If you see the pictures, you can see on her face that she was shocked. What was your strategy when you first decided, "Okay, I want to do this!" How did you start planning this? What was your first step? How did you map it all out?

Brett

I'll give you an idea. End of June this year, I finally told a couple of people - I told my mom, her mom, and Dana, who is her supervisor and the girl who actually got the ball rolling on this. Tiffany is really good friends with all of her co-workers. She's really good friends with Dana. Every time I see Dana, she'd be like, "Why haven't you proposed yet?" So, we would talk about how great she thinks our relationship is. Believe it or not, when we first met Dana together, after meeting and talking to me, she went to Tiffany and said, "He's gonna be your husband one day." So, she'd been our biggest cheerleader. She's like, "When you're ready to go and pick out a ring, take me with you!" I knew I wanted to do this on our two-year, kind of, dating anniversary. So, around the end of June, I spoke to Dana and I was like, "Okay, look. I'm ready to do it. This is what I want to do. We're going to go pick out the ring." Basically, a couple of months before, I had to kind of get that ball rolling. There wasn't much planning as far as the logistics of the courtroom goes.

Scott

It seems like there would have been a lot of planning. Well, Dana was your inside person then?

Brett

Correct. Dana got with the lead prosecutor in the municipal court. She squared it away with the judge. She squared it away with the court clerk. After Dana went to the prosecutor, everybody

was like, "Oh, my goodness! He's really fixed to do this! Let's all make it happen!" They were all going to be in on it. It's such a close whole circle there because this group is only in there on Wednesdays - Municipal Court is held on Wednesdays. So, once everybody knew what to do--

Scott

Then it became, like, a group project, right?

Brett

Right. They all picked out what role they wanted to play, but it was all down to me. It was crazy. When I got there that morning, they were all like, "Okay, how are you going to do this?" I was like, "Man, this was, like, maybe, 20-minutes planning of how I was going to have them bring me in, how I wanted the judge to react to me, and how I wanted to do it."

Scott

I thought those were planned way ahead of time. How did you get the jumpsuit, shackles, and everything? Where did that all come from?

Brett

That was all part of my idea of how I wanted it to be. The deal was happening on Wednesday, so I came in on Tuesday morning to meet with the court clerk because - I had met her before but I didn't really know her that well - she was the one, kind of, coordinating at the scene. I asked her, "All right. You do have the jumpsuit, right?" She's like, "Well, we don't have it yet, but we're working on getting that." Oh, my goodness. The shackles and the jumpsuit are critical elements to this. They're like, "Don't worry about it. We'll make sure we get it." They informed me that they had hidden cameras everywhere which, initially, I hadn't even thought about - recording it. They were, like, "You need to have it recorded. People will want to see this - family members." So, that was all being handled. When I got there that morning, they had 2 jumpsuits. I was glad that they got that. Of course, the shackles were hard for me to fit into because I'm a big guy. The planning of what I wanted to do had taken some time. I took, maybe, 30 minutes on Tuesday to talk to them. The next day, I came to court at 9.00 AM - the judge probably rolled in about 9.30 AM. I went to his chambers and he's like, "Okay, how are we going to do this?" I was like, "Oh, let me catch my breath. Okay, this is what we're gonna do." And I just laid it out there. They had two of the police officers there with me, and I was like, "Hey, I want you guys to kind of bring me in."

Scott

Yeah. They would escort you in like you were a dangerous criminal.

Brett

Correct. It's so hard to kind of jump around, but let me tell you how it was going. To get Tiffany there without her knowing, they told her that they were going to do an interrogation in the back room - they have an interrogation room outside the door that they brought me in. They did that from time to time, so she wouldn't think that anything was off. They brought her in kind of early. They told her that there would be a meeting to get her to where they wanted her to be so that she wouldn't run into me. Once again, she had no clue.

Scott

Does she always sit in the same place in the courtroom?

Brett

Yes. She sits to the left of the judge. The door that I came in from was at the right behind the judge, so we were kind of away from her. I was in the judges' chamber and said, "Okay, this is what I want to do. I want to be back here and, kind of, cause a commotion. That way, one of the officers can come out there and stop the judge when he was reading off the docket and fixing the court in session.

Scott

Like any other day.

Brett

Yeah. It was court day. She would not suspect a thing. When I started making a commotion, one of the bailiffs would come in and say, "Excuse me, Your Honor, but we have an unruly guy back here and we need to get him out of here because he's causing too much of a commotion." After that, they're gonna bring me in and I'm just gonna take over - that's all I told him. All he had to do was start reading out the docket. Then, they would come in and say, "Hey, we got an unruly guy back here", and bring me in. Literally, that's what happened.

Scott

That's good for him! He just had to follow your lead!

Brett

That's all the judge had to do. When I was being brought in, he's like, "We're not gonna have any of this commotion in my courtroom!" That was his ad-lib. When they brought me in, I kind of kept my head down as if I was ashamed. I did make eye contact with her for, like, a split second and I saw the look of utter confusion. She said that when she saw me look at her, she was like, "You looked like you were so ashamed and had so much regret in your eyes."

Scott

Like a dog that had just gotten into the trashcan in the kitchen or something, right?

Brett

Right. At that time, I was like, "Oh my goodness, what am I doing?" It's not because I was fixing to get engaged, but I was fixing to take this floor and everybody's gonna be watching me - it's kind of a stage fright moment. Also, I am an aged man. That kind of things could make you feel a little nervous.

Scott

Yeah, a lot of overwhelming emotions come in at the same time.

Brett

I had not thought about how I would react - it was more about how she would. When I came through the door, I was like, "Game on!" As I said, I had, kind of, gone over what I wanted to say - which was great because the judge did follow my lead - so it made it easy for me to go through what I wanted to say. I kind of stumbled - not really stumbled. I sat there and was trying to think

about what I wanted to say. It wasn't what I was going for but it actually worked better - like the pauses between stuff - because I was trying to remember my lines that I wrote.

Scott

If it was real life, you would have been stumbling anyway, right?

Brett

Correct. It worked out.

Scott

Yeah. So, a whole lot of pieces had to fall in place for this to really happen successfully. With so many people working together behind the scenes, were you worried that any of them might slip up and she'd find out ahead of time?

Brett

I was kind of concerned because at the office that she works in, things get around there like wildfire, but Dana really kept it under wraps there. Not too many people even knew what was going on. I told absolutely nobody besides our parents and Dana, so it was pretty hush-hush. She has 2 kids from her previous relationships and I have one. They were, kind of, like, "How come you didn't tell us?" I would have never been able to pull it off. I told as few people as I possibly could because she couldn't have an inkling of what was fixing go on, or it wouldn't work.

Scott

There were hidden cameras from various angles around the courtroom for the video recording. Were you worried that she would notice those?

Brett

I was told that they were going to have hidden cameras, so I didn't worry about them. One of the officers also had a camera, but he didn't come into the courtroom and start recording until they brought me in. My mom and her mom also had their phones - they allow them to bring their phones because we wanted to get every angle that we could.

Scott

Were they there, though?

Brett

They were there, but they were outside the courtroom. They had her, kind of, sequestered so that we could get everybody there without her seeing them or knowing that anything was different. Dana - who isn't normally at that court on that day - actually came in to, kind of, distract her a little bit too. At first, they thought that might make her think something was up because, like I said, she's usually not there at the court, but she told her I had to come by and and pick up some stuff, so that kept her occupied over there in her area. Normally, before the court, she would work on her paperwork or whatever right there at the desk, so she wasn't paying attention to what was going on at the back of the court or in the chambers around.

Scott

Now, in the video where we saw her reaction, for a brief second, she looked over to the lady standing at her left, like, "What's going on?" Was that Dana?

Brett

That is Dana. It's funny too. Did you see the guy that walked up to her, like, right after they brought me in?

Scott

I've only watched the video once so far, but I don't remember that. I'll look at it again.

Brett

It was some of the footage of the hidden camera up in the corner. It panned to another one - the court clerk's shot. You may not see him, but he's an attorney/friend who was told about it. Dana wanted to have everybody that was, kind of, in their circle to be there and see it. Well, he showed up right when everything was fixing to happen. He walked over to Tiffany and was like, "Is that your boyfriend?" - he thought he was drugged. When Dana saw that, she said to him, "Get over here!" Tiffany was, kind of, like, "Move! Move!" It was because she was completely shocked. I mean, she didn't even pay any attention to what he said to her.

Scott

Did you have a hard time keeping a straight face at all?

Brett

No. Like I said, I was kind of petrified. I have performed a lot. Like I told you, I've sang, so I've dealt with stage fright a lot. I mean, I do have stage fright. Actually, I was able to stay in my head and handle it. It's a lot different than trying to remember tunes and words. It worked in my favor. I was ashamed to be up there in shackles and in a jumpsuit. Especially because my girlfriend's a probation officer, I was bringing a lot of bad publicity to her. But yeah, it wasn't hard for me to keep that mad and straight face - I didn't smile or laugh at all.

Scott

Alright. Take us from the point of when they were bringing you into the room. What did you say and what happened?

Brett

They brought me in. I came and stand in front of the judge. He said, "No, we're not going to have this in my courtroom." I said, "Your Honor, with all due respect, there's no need for this court to examine me. I'm guilty of being madly in love with the girl of my dreams. She's my best friend and I will forever love her." But I kind of spread that out a little bit longer. I had already told the judge, "After I kind of pause and nod at you, you can call her down so that she can be in front of me." When we got to that point, he went, "Miss Allison, will you please come down here?" I turned to her - you can't see it on the video, but you may actually be able to see it in other videos - she came down and said, "I'm shaking so bad. He's in handcuffs. This isn't funny." It's kind of hilarious if you watch it on video because we, kind of, know what's going on but she had no clue. She said, "This is the love of my life!" She looked like she was fixing to have a heart attack, so I started feeling kind of bad at that moment and I was like, "Do I need to run over there and be, like, 'No, baby, it's just a prank. Well, not really a prank.'" At that moment,

I was like, "Man, right now, she is really, really having a hard time." So, that was the moment I said, "Okay, you got to follow through with this." Because I knew she was struggling there for a minute, when she started to walk down, I was like, "Come on! Let's get this over with!"

Scott

Yes. She seemed like she was very hesitant to approach you.

Brett

Yeah. Well, she couldn't fathom that I would do anything to get in trouble, but then there I was, professing my guilt - you don't do that in court. So, the legal mind of hers kind of came out and she was like, "No, no! Hold on, hold on!" She wanted to, kind of, interject when I was saying that I'm guilty. Then, she realized that I was talking about her, so there were a lot of emotions running through her mind at once. When he called her down there, she saw me turn to her, and I reached into my pocket. I think, at that moment, she kind of said, "Wait, wait. What's going on?" That's when she started to cry, smile, and go, "Awwwww!!!"

Scott

It was complete confusion up to that point.

Brett

Oh, yeah, up to that point. As I said, when she came down and said that this isn't even funny, she knew something was about to change. I slipped out of my shackles because I didn't have the shackles completely latched. When he called her down there, I slipped out of them. Then, when I reached my hand out to her and fumbled to get the ring in my pocket, I think that's when it hit her. She was, kind of, coming down from that adrenaline rush.

Scott

When in such complete shock, you don't just come down from that right away.

Brett

Correct. Yeah. I thought she was getting close to stroking out on me for a minute.

Scott

Yeah. That would not have been funny. After she came over to you, what happened next?

Brett

She came over to me and I proceeded with all of my court puns. I love court puns. I told her that she's the one whom I want to represent me in this trial we called life, and I asked her to marry me. Yeah, I did that. I guess that was the only thing that was old-fashioned about it - I got down on one knee and asked her. Then, I told her, "I'm ready for my life sentence" - that was the line that I knew from the beginning. I mean, that one had to be in it because I always joke with her about it. I never got married because I never wanted to be tied to somebody that I didn't love. After I asked her to marry me, she said, "Of course!!" Everybody was like, "Did she say yes?" Because she's really in shock, people couldn't see if she said, "Of course!" It was definitely how I wanted it to turn out - it worked out great. I guess, sometimes, you're your own worst critic, and I was like, "There are things that I could have done differently." But the effect was a big surprise. She never saw it coming and she said, "Yes." Now, we're engaged to be married.

Scott

Yeah, it couldn't have worked out any better, right? Let me jump in here in the middle of the interview because I want you to hear something at this point in the conversation. If you watch the video, you'll see Tiffany's reaction - she was literally speechless. This show was called "What was that like?" So, I wanted to actually hear from her to find out what was going through her head at that moment as things were unfolding right there in the courtroom. She sent me a few of her thoughts. Here's Tiffany:

Tiffany

I got called in early for a meeting that we were supposed to have. I had actually asked the court clerks where everybody was because the judge and the prosecutors hadn't shown up. I was told that they were running behind, so I didn't think anything about that because that's pretty normal. I was told not to go to the back of the courthouse because there was an interrogation going on. Again, I didn't think much about that because that was pretty normal. I was sitting there, getting ready to start the session, and going through paperwork. I heard a bunch of stuff in the back - there's people yelling. So, I was thinking, "Oh, my gosh. Today, these inmates are getting pretty rowdy back there." I heard one of them say, "My girlfriend works here and she'll get me out of anything." I'm like, "Oh my goodness, who is this guy's girlfriend? Who could that be?" Then, here comes Brett. When he walked through the door, my heart just sank and I was speechless. I had no words for that moment. I saw the handcuffs and the jumpsuit he was on, and I was like, "Oh my God. What could you possibly have done?" It just took me by surprise. It was something way out of his character, so I didn't really know what to think. All I knew was to figure something and get him out of whatever mess he was in. I think it finally dawned on me when he was in front of the judge and pleaded guilty to his love. He started talking about me being his best friend. That's when it kind of hit me, like, "Oh my God! That's me! I'm his best friend!" So, I think, that point in time was when I realized that something is happening. In fact, when it all happened in the courtroom, I was so focused on Brett, the jumpsuit, and the handcuffs that I didn't even notice people filming. I didn't even notice our moms out there recording videos. I never noticed an attorney walking up to me and talking to me. I was strictly focused on Brett. I have never once dreamed that a proposal from him would be anything ordinary - I always knew it would be something spectacular. Brett's style is, maybe, appearing on TV for a commercial or having something on a billboard. I never dreamed that he would go to that extreme and put so much effort into doing that to truly make that moment so special. It was an epic day in my life. I wouldn't change anything about it. I love all the effort that was put into it by so many people.

Scott

Now, we're back with Brett in this conversation... Did you have any idea that this would be so popular? I mean, so many people wanted to see it.

Brett

I didn't. Initially, recording it never even crossed my mind because some courts do have closed-circuit TVs, but there wasn't any in this court. Tiffany's mother didn't think that she would be able to be there. Everybody was kind of worried that she would think something was up if she saw them there.

Scott

Of course. Because her mom and your mom aren't usually in the courtroom.

Brett

Right. I tried to think of ways for them to be there. But then, when they were not able to be there, they were like, "Somebody better be recording!" I was thinking, "Well, yeah. You can't bring your phone or stuff in there." That's why when I met Dana, I said, "Look, my mom, her mom, people that I've spoken to, have expressed that they wanted to see this. Is there any way that we could record it?" So, that's where the recording came into play. The Facebook Live that her mother posted got 10,000 hits and we were shocked. It was being shared repeatedly. So, at that moment, we knew people really liked the story. Now that I think about it, with so much negativity in the world, something like this is good - it's good news!

Scott

Yeah! It's something that's great to see!

Brett

I can see why. I want everybody to see how much I love Tiffany with all of my heart. I wanted her proposal to be huge for her, and it's big for a lot of people. We've had a lot of people saying, "You're making it hard on other guys. They're gonna have to come up with something."

Scott

You set quite a standard here.

Brett

Yeah, I really did.

Scott

This happened in the morning. Did she have to work for the rest of the day?

Brett

Yes, she did. She was able to take a break. You can see in the video where we're all hugging in the back - part of that was edited - for maybe, like, 10 minutes. He let her come back to, at least, hug me, kiss me, and slap me a couple of times. Then, she went back to work, I went back to work. As a matter of fact, I spoke to her that morning on the phone. So, we were both at work. Two hours later, she's like, "Were you even really at work?" I was, like, "You're darn right, I am!"

Scott

This whole thing must have been the talk of the courthouse that day and that week.

Brett

Oh, yeah. As I said, a lot of our co-workers were wishing that they could have been there. But yeah, everybody loves it. Everybody loves us - they knew we were going to be married.

Scott

So Dana is now saying, "See, I told you! I predicted it!" Did you set a wedding date yet?

Brett

Tentatively. I think the reason that I kind of picked our 2nd year was because - when we first started talking about marriage - I told her, "If we're together for 4 years, I'll marry you." So, that was, kind of, like, the halfway point. So, it would probably be November 2020. We'll announce it, for sure.

Scott

I want to ask you one last question. What do you love most about Tiffany?

Brett

The thing that I love about Tiffany the most is the fact that I've never been able to be myself and love somebody as much as I want to love them - she allowed me to do that. I have a big heart - I really do love with all that heart and. We're able to share that love together - I've never had anybody that was on that level.

Scott

Now you do!

Brett

I truly do. Yeah.

Scott

That's cool. If anyone wants to contact you, I'm going to have your email address on the website for this episode. Also, we'll have pictures and videos there for people to see, which is great. If you're listening to this right now on audio, you got to go to the website and watch the video - it's pretty cool. Thanks again for sharing your story. It's great!

Brett

Thank you for having me, Scott!

Scott

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