

# Love IS A GUTSY Journey

A CHRISTMAS VALLEY ELOPEMENT

BY MAISIE SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BENJAMIN EDWARDS

The day of your wedding is one of the most epic stories ever told. The dress, the vows, the connection between two people deliriously in love with each other – it all folds into the pages of your life together.

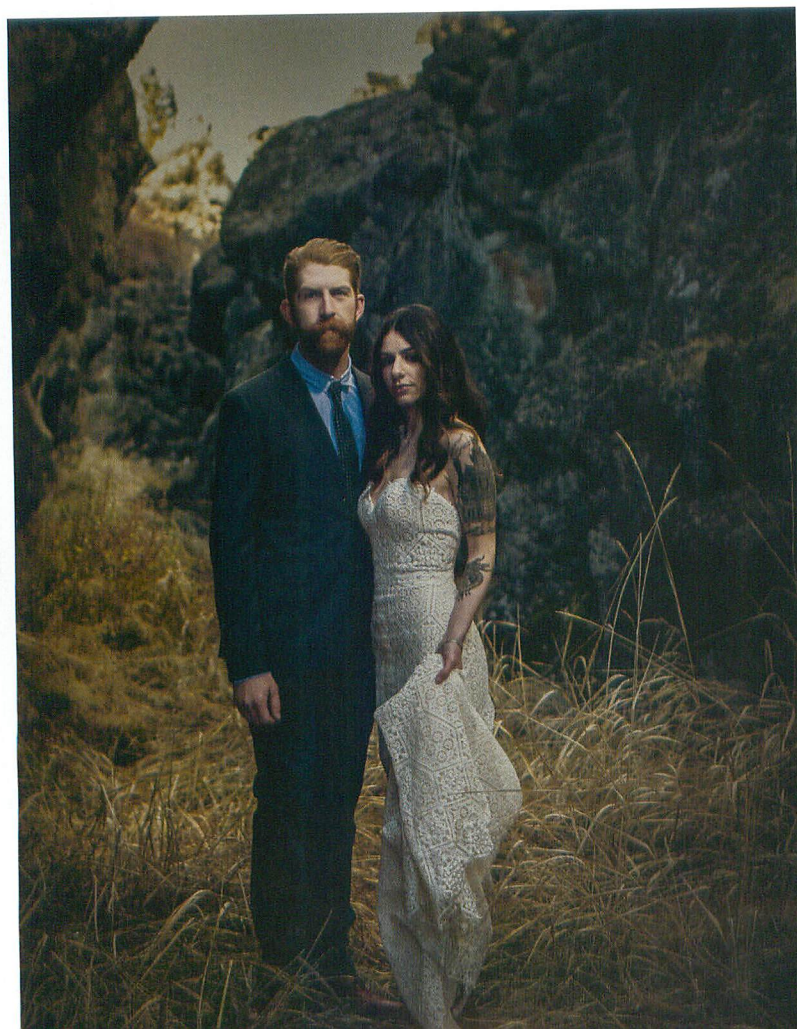


Capturing a gutsy love story was the mission of photographer Benjamin Edwards during a styled elopement shoot in the high desert of Central Oregon. "I wanted to showcase the earthy, romantic vibe Central Oregon offers at two of my favorite spots — Crack in the Ground and the Christmas Valley Sand Dunes," says Benjamin. Abby Elvebak, owner of ae creative, was there to bring the vision to life.

The players (aka models) in this modern love story were real-life couple Cat and Dusten. Perhaps they eloped by moto with an ordained friend to perform the ceremony. Or maybe theirs is a tale of wanderlust and multiple pairs of shoes, with sagebrush and juniper trees serving as guardians of their uncommon love.

The first stop was Crack in the Ground, a volcanic fissure located 100 miles southeast of Bend, Oregon. It's an unexpectedly dreamy chasm with moss-covered walls and amazing textures and colors.

"Being nestled between the canyon walls begged Dusten to take Cat by the small of her back and gently pull her towards him," notes Benjamin. He perfectly captured small moments of connection between the couple, as if looking through a window into another world. Sometimes, a glance. Other times, a touch. Abby worked with Kelly at Illuminate Your Night to hang battery-powered lights within the walls of the crack, giving the images a beautiful, glowy bokeh.





Cat's dress, from Lillian West's romantic-boho Spring 2018 collection (found at The Bridal Suite in Bend, Oregon), complemented the untamed edges of the canyon floor and walls. The ivory geometric lace pattern with nude underlay and unique center front slit struck a delicate balance between ethereal and earthy. A barely-there ghost veil from Edward Berger trailed from Cat's floral crown, created by Heirloom Floral.

Perfect for riding off into the Central Oregon night with his bride clinging tightly to his waist, Dusten's suit from Revolvr Menswear in Bend, Oregon was elopement-ready, with just enough edge to whisper of all the adventures to come. A custom heirloom hat from Havstad Hat Co. completed his look.

After exploring the truly hidden Oregon gem of Crack in the Ground, the team traversed down dusty washboard roads to the Christmas Valley Sand Dunes. Rolling on for 45 square miles, the dunes served as a stunning backdrop for ae creative and Illuminate Your Night to create an intimate space for dining and dancing under a rising moon.









Sand, sagebrush and azure skies played witness to the story of a wild couple embarking on their next adventure. Using a gorgeous living floral installment, ae creative staged the ceremony site at the top of a towering dune with expansive views. The Broomsmen provided a completely silent solar-powered generator to light up the night, proving that the middle of nowhere is an epic place to be.

"The focal point of the evening was my personal Russell Woodard fiberglass spun table. It's unique and a little edgy," notes Abby. "There was minimal foliage at the dunes and I wanted to create a 'living table' that came alive in the desert. I used sand as a base for arranging the blooms and greens provided by Heirloom Floral." Allison Schultz of Heirloom Floral chose a late fall, high desert palette for the shoot. "I fell in love with the textures and arid nature of a few South African-inspired native botanicals and used them for the bouquet," she explains. Also styled was a delectable charcuterie board and a bottle of wine for the couple to enjoy. Candles were

scattered around the site to create movement and lend a dreamy glow at dusk.

"I knew this shoot was going to be beautiful, but the outcome was even more magical than I could have imagined!" Abby raves.

As the sun dipped below the high desert horizon, the unforgettable day became one for the books. But the story lives on.

"There's a shift in wedding storytelling," says Benjamin. "A new bride is emerging — one who seeks a wedding day story not contained within the walls of an event center, but rather the world in which she's about to begin her new life. She's a bride with few boundaries...and shoes for every location." -WV







## The Wedding Vendors:

**Coordination + Design:** ae creative, @ae\_creative, ae-creative.com | **Photographer:** Benjamin Edwards,

@benjaminedwards, benjaminedwardsphotography.com | **Florist:** Heirloom Floral Design, @heirloomfloral, heirloomfloraldesign.com

**Dress:** The Bridal Suite, @bridalsuitebend, thebridalsuitebend.com

**Makeup:** Kaelin McDowell Beauty, @kmcowellbeauty, kaelinmcdowellmakeup.com | **Hair:** Kaila Lundstrom, @haircolumn

**Lighting:** Illuminate Your Night, @illuminateyournight, illuminateyournight.com | **Solar Generator:** The Broomsmen,

@thebroomsmen, thebroomsmen.com | **Groom Attire:** Revolv Menswear, @revolvrmens, revolvrmens.com | **Hat:** Havstad Hat

Co., @havstadhatco, havstadhatco.com | **Locations:** Crack in the Ground and Christmas Valley Dunes | **Our Bride + Groom:**

@ayleroy + @dustenryen

*We end, in memoriam, of the items lost or deceased from this styled shoot: (3) Nikon flashes, (3) wireless receivers: fell into a lava crevasse, (1) table: stolen from roadside point in which it fell off the creative truck coming home, (1) trailer tail-light: beaten to death by washboard roads.*

