

I Married a Werewolf: The Richest Man

by Kailin

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Christmas was upon us. I don't know why it always takes me by surprise, but it never fails to happen. It's the same every year: one minute the leaves are beginning to turn, and the next, there are only three more shopping days until December 25.

This year, of course, my Christmas will be totally different from any other. For one thing, I'm married. It's been four months since the wedding, four months that I can honestly say are the happiest I've ever experienced. If anyone had told me that I'd be acting like a goofy, starry-eyed newlywed, I'd have laughed in his or her face. Surely that's an affliction of nineteen-year-old brides, not thirty-year-olds. But my husband is even worse: Remus' friends have been tolerant in the extreme, settling for a lot of eye-rolling and smirks when they could easily have teased him mercilessly. I think the conglomeration of witches and wizards that compose the Order of the Phoenix give him a lot of latitude; the general consensus is that Remus Lupin, a genuine Nice Guy as far as almost all are concerned, deserves to have all the newlywed bliss he can handle.

And that, of course, is the other oddity that makes this Christmas different. I have one foot in the Muggle world and the other in the British wizarding world. If that doesn't make your life interesting, I don't know what will. For example, the *Times* is delivered to our doorstep every morning; at approximately the same time, a handsome tawny owl pecks at the side window to drop off the *Daily Prophet*. If it's a day where I'm not working, Remus and I curl up on the sofa, sip coffee, and read our respective newspapers. While I'm reading about unrest in the Middle East and fluctuations in the economy, he's looking at the latest news on Lord Voldemort and perusing ads for broomsticks and bat spleens. I would swear we were living on different planets if I didn't know better.

I will be working on this Christmas Day, although it's far from a first for me. It's by no means unusual in the medical field, and by virtue of the fact that I'm one of the newer employees in the Post-Anesthesia Recovery Suite at London Heart Hospital, I expected no less. 'Last hired, first to work holidays' is sort of a given anyplace I've worked. Although no surgeries would actually be scheduled for Christmas day, there would certainly be at least one emergency. I knew I could count on somebody's heart seizing up while gnawing into Aunt Tillie's plum pudding. As soon as the Emergency Room staff could ship him out (it was almost always a him), he'd go straight into surgery for a multiple artery transplant graft. Then, sometime after the surgeons had taken their bloody sweet time finishing their handiwork, the patient would be all mine to monitor until I was convinced he was stable enough to go to a ward. In short, I was liable to waste most of the day away from home.

I started my Christmas shopping sometime in mid-November. Remus had spent quite enough of his life living in want, and I planned to use Christmas to rectify that situation. I had already bought him some Muggle clothing items and hid them in the closet. He is, and I've yet to be proven otherwise, just about the only adult wizard I've seen who seems to have any clue how to dress without looking like a walking billboard for vintage clothing shops. Still, there were a couple of things I wanted to buy for him that could only be found in Diagon Alley. And the problem with Diagon Alley, of course, is that it's inaccessible to me. I asked Remus if he would take me there and then occupy his time elsewhere while I shopped.

We went to Diagon Alley on a Saturday the week before Christmas. It was crowded, the streets filled with holiday shoppers. After stopping at Gringotts to exchange pounds for Galleons, Remus kissed me good-bye and said he'd be doing some Christmas shopping of his own, and that he'd meet me outside the Leaky Cauldron in an hour.

I did a bit of window shopping before vaulting into seriously spending my money. Diagon Alley is an intriguing place if you're a Muggle, and the atmosphere of the street never ceases to amaze me. One store is more fascinating than the next.

I had wandered for about ten minutes when I found myself in front of a narrow, brightly painted storefront that proclaimed itself to house Weasleys' Wizarding Wheezes. I smiled at once: it was Fred and George Weasley's joke shop. I had no intention of buying anything, but I'd gotten to know the twins pretty well after their mother Molly befriended me, and it seemed like a nice idea to pop in and say hello. When I opened the door, a raucous cackle of laughter rang out instead of the usual tinkling bell. Fred spotted me at once and hurried over to greet me. George was waiting on a customer and merely waved to acknowledge my arrival.

"Kailin! What brings you out today?" Fred asked cheerfully.

"Just doing some Christmas shopping," I said, my cheeks stinging red from the warmth of the shop after being in the cold, "and I saw your shop and thought I'd say hello."

"Well, this is it," Fred said, modestly waving an arm around to encompass the whole place. "Not exactly Harrods, eh? But we're doing well."

"That's the important thing," I said. "Wouldn't want your mother to worry."

Fred grinned. "She'll worry anyway. It's her job in life, and I'd hate to deprive her of it."

I laughed. "True."

"So, what can I get for you? All the excitement gone from your marriage already, and you need to enliven it with a few well-placed Dungbombs?"

I shuddered at the thought. "No, thanks."

"You know," Fred leaned toward me, conspiratorially, "I was telling George that we should branch out with some of our gag sweets. You know about the Puking Pastilles and that sort? It's well and good for the younger, unsophisticated set, but I think we need to start marketing similar items for adults as well."

"Like...?" I was afraid to ask.

"Like a lozenge that gives you a screaming headache for fifteen minutes or so, just long enough to convince your really revolting dog of a blind date that you need to call it an early evening. Or to convince the hubby that he really should totter off to sleep instead of--well, you get the idea. I bet a lot of ladies would go for that sort of thing. I mean, if Mum had something like that, we might have been spared the likes of Ron and Ginny."

I burst out laughing. "Fred, that's terrible!"

"I know, but you have to admit, it has possibilities. So, you only stopped in to say hello?" Fred looked wistful, and I knew I'd have to buy something before I made my exit.

"Well, maybe some really small fireworks for New Year's Eve?"

"Done!"

Five minutes later, Fred bagged an assortment of explosives for me while I fiddled in my pocket to find the exact change, no small feat when it comes to wizarding currency. Finally I gave up and told them to keep the change, earning big grins from both boys. George, whose customer had just departed, propped himself up on his elbows on the countertop and stared at me as if just seeing me for the first time.

"What?" I asked, noting the intense concentration furrowing his brow.

"You know, bro," George said slowly, "it's a good thing Kailin stopped in. She could help us with our shopping."

Fred looked puzzled for a moment, then a broad smile spread over his face. "I do believe you're right. Kailin, how'd you like to do us a huge favor?"

I've learned that it's always wise to treat any request from the Weasley twins with a great deal of caution. Still, it was Christmas. How bad could it be?

"What did you have in mind?" I ventured.

"Well, it's like this," Fred began. "This is the first year we've had anything much in the way of discretionary funds around the holidays, and we'd like to get Mum something really nice for a change."

"That's very thoughtful," I said, still wondering where this was leading. "What do you plan to get for her?"

"Well, that's where you come in. Mum's always fancied that--ah--ladies' lingerie. Ursula's Unmentionables, it's called."

Both Fred and George were beet red now, and I could understand why. I'd seen Ursula's Unmentionables advertised in the *Daily Prophet*. They were the wizarding equivalent of Victoria's Secret, designed to appeal to women who wanted to feel sexy from the skin out, and to men who wanted to drool over the lingerie models.

"Did you need some suggestions for what to get her?" I asked.

"Well, sort of. I mean, it's for our mother," George said lamely. "It's rather hard to think of her as--as--"

"As a woman?" I finished, smiling.

"Yeah," Fred and George chorused together. "We thought of asking Ginny to choose something, or even Hermione Granger," Fred continued. "But they're both younger, and I'm afraid they'd pick something--well--youthful. You're much closer to Mum's age."

"Fred Weasley!" I burst out, my own face now red. "I'm a lot younger than your mother, I'll have you know!"

Fred winced visibly. "Sorry, I didn't mean it to come out like that. I really didn't. What I meant was that you're an adult. More mature."

"Worldly," George added while his brother nodded vigorously. "You'd choose something more appropriate."

I bit back a grin. They'd narrowly escaped death with that reply. "Do they sell gift certificates?" I asked. "That way she could pick out whatever she wants."

"We thought of that," George admitted. "But Mum's way too practical. She'd likely choose a stack of plain cotton knickers or something."

I had to agree with him. Molly Weasley would never voluntarily select something frilly and frivolous. "Well, what about a nice peignoir? You know, a nightgown with a matching dressing gown?"

"But we'd still have to go in and pick it out," Fred blurted.

"And that's where you come in," George said. "If we gave you some Galleons, perhaps you could stop in there and buy her something? We'd feel totally out of place in that store."

"I think 'mortally embarrassed' is the term you're looking for," I said dryly. "Anyway, don't worry. I'd be delighted to do it."

The twins were thrilled. George gave me a stack of Galleons, and Fred thrust another handful of fireworks in my bag, free of charge. I said my goodbyes and headed back out into the street.

Ursula's Unmentionables was located a ways down from the joke shop. I could see why neither Fred nor George were interested in braving the store themselves as soon as I walked in: there was satin and lace and scantiness everywhere. There was also a distinct absence of males. I counted the amount of money the boys had given me, then set about looking for a nice present. It didn't take long. I found the nice peignoir I'd suggested, and in a midnight blue that would go nicely with Molly's red hair. Then I spotted a rack of lacy black nightgowns which left little to the imagination. One of those would get Remus' blood racing nicely, I decided. I selected one and paid for the peignoir with the twins' Galleons and for the nightgown out of my own purse. Then I left the store and headed down Diagon Alley, unable to wipe a silly smile off my face. I couldn't help it: the look on Remus' face, when he saw me wearing the black nightgown, would be priceless.

I dropped the peignoir and change off at the joke shop, to the hearty thanks of the Weasley twins. There was, however, one small problem.

"It's not wrapped," George pointed out, scandalized.

"Guess you boys will just have to manage that on our own, won't you?" I said smugly. I left them wondering how to go about gift-wrapping something so obviously sensual for their own mother, and headed for my next stop.

When I entered Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions, a tall, older woman with dark hair piled on top of her head greeted me. "May I help you?" she asked, looking like she'd really rather not bother.

"I'd like to buy my husband a new set of everyday robes, please," I said.

The woman surveyed me coolly. "You realize that it will need to be fitted to your husband."

"Of course. But it's a Christmas present, and I'd like to surprise him. I'm sure he can come in after Christmas for a fitting."

"We have a variety of fabrics and colors. Black?"

"Yes." Personally, I thought navy would go nicely with Remus' eyes, but I wasn't ready to rock the boat after only four months of marriage. Black was what he had, so black was what he would get.

One wizarding oddity which I discovered when Remus and I married was that wedding presents given to the bride and groom were usually personal items, rather than gifts for the home, as was the case in the Muggle world. This meant that the usual array of Muggle toasters, crock pots and other appliances was noticeably (and thankfully) absent. The members of the Order of the Phoenix had chipped in to buy Remus a set of dress robes for the wedding. He looked absolutely splendid that day, a marked contrast between that and his usual appearance, and I decided then and there to buy him new everyday robes for Christmas. Our combined incomes now made it possible for him to live above the poverty level, yet he still wore the patched, shabby robes that he'd had for the last umpteen years.

The woman led me to a rack of robes, told me to browse to my heart's content, then moved off to attend to other customers. I pulled out robe after robe, examining the fabric, the cut, the workmanship. One thing I'd noticed about wizarding tailoring: the craftsmanship was first rate. No cheap Third World imports here. Finally, I found one that seemed not too fussy, not too formal, not too plain. I glanced up and found the saleswoman hovering nearby.

"Have you decided?" she wanted to know.

"Yes. I'll take this one."

"Would you like it gift-wrapped?"

"Yes, please."

"It'll be a few minutes," she said, and disappeared toward the back of the store.

Left to my own devices, I wandered over to another rack, which bulged with a colorful display of women's robes. There was a great variety of colors and styles here, even some exotic prints that led me to believe that there must be a large wizarding presence in the South Pacific. Did witches' sarongs come with a wand pocket?

Several styles caught my eye, and then I saw the full length mirror and thought, *I wonder...* I shrugged out of my coat, slipped a pretty aqua robe off the hanger, and put it on.

So this is what I would look like if I were a witch! I said to myself. I pirouetted in front of the nearby full-length mirror, admiring the way the silken aqua fabric swirled about my legs. I was enjoying myself, and I don't know what alerted me, but suddenly I had the distinct feeling that I was being watched.

One thing I hadn't noticed when I made my little modeling debut in front of the full-length mirrors was that I was now in sight of the sitting area at the front of the store. There were several chairs there to accommodate people who were waiting, and that's where the man sat.

He was an impressive, aristocratic figure, sitting there with arms and legs crossed, surveying me like a monarch from his throne. Even from twenty feet away, I could tell that his clothes were expensive and elegantly crafted. He was dressed entirely in black, and his sleek blond hair fell somewhere over his shoulders. His gray eyes were riveted on me, and he was studying me with a relish so intense that it made my skin prickle. I've had my share of leers and wolf whistles, but this went far beyond. I was being appraised, inch by inch, as an art collector evaluates a painting or a farmer chooses a prize bull.

And then he nodded ever so slightly, one corner of his mouth curving into the faintest hint of a smile. It was the gesture that said *Okay, you've seen me, now it's your turn to return the favor.* I blushed furiously and sidled back toward the rack. Just what I needed, I thought: a wizard on the make in the middle of Christmas shopping. But when I risked a glance a few moments later, he was gone.

For a long moment, I was afraid he was still in the store somewhere and would try to approach me, but a quick look around told me that wasn't the case. I breathed a sigh of relief: whomever he had been waiting for had completed his or her transaction, and now he was gone. Still, I felt unsettled and vaguely unclean even though he'd done no more than look at me. I turned quickly to move elsewhere in the store, but as I did so, I bumped into a manikin posed just behind me. The unmoving figure, clad in a bright red robe and garish red plaid witch's hat, rocked slightly, then the fake wand it held clattered loudly to the floor.

Annoyed by the man's behavior and my own clumsiness, I bent over and picked up the wand. I started to put it back in the manikin's hand, then stopped. Oh, what the heck...

"Presto change-oh!" I waved the wand at the manikin, which, needless to say, remained unchanged and unmoving. I couldn't help but grin at my own silliness. No doubt I needed the horrendous plaid hat to make the spell work. "Abracadabra!" I said dramatically, wiggling the wand in the direction of the manikin's eyes.

There was a gasp, and I looked up. The saleswoman had appeared between two racks of robes.

"Sorry," I said. "I couldn't resist."

She didn't look amused in the least. Quite the opposite: she looked extremely annoyed.

"Are you, by any chance, a Muggle?" The woman pronounced the word as if it crawled with vermin.

"Yes," I said, wondering what difference that made.

"Your purchase has been wrapped," she snapped. "You may pay for it now."

The words 'And then you may leave' hung in the air, unspoken. I felt a chill go down my spine. Well.

"Thank you," I said stiffly. We completed the transaction in stony silence, and I knew I had just fallen prey to wizarding prejudice. For one brief moment, I was tempted to tell her to keep the bloody robe, that I'd sew the patches on my husband's old one until the cows came home. But I didn't and, in the end, handed her the Galleons in exchange for Remus' gift.

I stepped back out into Diagon Alley, but between the man's stares and the rude saleslady, my Christmas cheer was degenerating fast. I went to two more stores, my enthusiasm now considerably lessened. I could find nothing else in the way of presents, so I finally headed for the Leaky Cauldron, knowing that I would be a bit early and that Remus might not be there yet. To my relief, I found my husband waiting outside the pub portal.

"You're early. Get all your shopping done?" he asked, kissing me on the cheek.

"All I'm interested in doing, I think."

I don't care if I live to be ninety, I doubt that I'll ever feel comfortable sitting in a wizarding pub. There are just too many odd characters, not all of whom can be classified as human. But today there seemed to be a predominance of normal-looking people, and I relaxed. We found an out of the way table. Remus pulled my chair out for me, still the gentleman after four months of marriage. It was one of the many things I treasured about him.

I placed my packages alongside my seat, then shrugged out of my coat. "How about you? How did your shopping go?"

"I found one or two things. Of course, the diamonds I wanted for you haven't made it in from South Africa yet, so you may have to wait a bit longer."

"And I so wanted diamonds under the tree. What about sapphires, or has the supply for those dried up as well?"

"Afraid so," Remus said soberly. "I'm considering breaking a bottle of Butterbeer and passing off a chunk of the glass as a topaz."

I burst out laughing. Remus knew that I was totally indifferent to jewelry. Besides my wedding ring, I owned nothing more than a watch, two pairs of earrings, and one gold chain. Since I wanted little and he could provide little, we got on just fine.

Because he had been penniless for most of his adult life, Remus could joke about the absence of money with virtually no bitterness whatsoever. The first time he'd made some silly comment about it, I was appalled and tried to reassure him that we had plenty to live on, thanks to the income from my nursing position. My concerned reaction puzzled him, and we spent the better part of an afternoon trying to figure out where each of us was coming from in regards to not only the conversation, but financial expectations as well.

The oblique references to wealth reminded me of the man in Madam Malkin's. I started to tell Remus about the incident, but just then someone came by the table to take our lunch order and the recollection was pushed to the back of my mind. We were eating our stew and crusty bread when I remembered.

"I nearly forgot... Something odd happened while I was shopping. Well, several odd things, actually."

"What?"

"Well, first of all, the saleslady in Madam Malkin's was quite snooty and treated me like dirt."

Remus snorted. "Welcome to my world," he said through a mouthful of stew. "Why did she treat you like dirt?"

"Because I'm a Muggle."

"How did she decide that? Just because you're not wearing a robe?"

I told him about waving around the manikin's fake wand. When I mentioned the word 'abracadabra', Remus arched an eyebrow in response.

"You may think of it as a Muggle nonsense word, but it comes from the name of the killing curse." He lowered his voice and explained about the Avada Kedavra spell. "Back in school, we used to call it 'getting ay-kayed', or 'ay-kaying someone'. What with the war and all, I can see where she might react that way."

I failed to see his point. If the woman overheard me muttering nonsense words and actually feared for her life, she needed a long rest, in my opinion.

"Well, that was still no reason for her to insult me," I grumbled. "Then there was this man in the shop, staring at me."

"Staring at you?"

"You know, leering. Checking me out. I don't know what wizards call it, but he was definitely ogling me."

"Can't blame him for that," Remus said, grinning.

"Remus!" I protested. "That's not the point!"

"I know," he said and tried to placate me by patting my arm. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to sound as though I wasn't taking you seriously."

"He was leering at me," I repeated. "And he acted like someone who gets what he wants all the time. As if all he had to do was wave me over and I'd drop everything and fall at his feet."

"You mean I don't have that effect on you? I could have sworn--"

"Just forget it," I muttered, viciously stabbing a piece of meat with my fork and bringing it up to my mouth. "It made me uncomfortable, that's all I'm saying. It wasn't like walking down the street and hearing a wolf whistle--" I broke off, my cheeks coloring. "Sorry...."

Remus had looked up sharply at the wolf reference. He sighed and patiently put down his napkin. "What did he look like?"

I described the man as best I could, from the blonde hair to the arrogant stance. Remus' expression changed long before I finished: from curious to concerned in a heartbeat.

"Lucius Malfoy," he murmured. "It has to be."

I started to ask the obvious question, but then I remembered before the words left my lips. Things I'd overheard in the past few months. Pure-blood wizard, old family.

Wealthy. *Death Eater*.

"Do you mean to say," I croaked, "that I've caught the eye of a Death Eater?"

"Ssh." Remus put a finger to his lips warningly, then glanced surreptitiously around at our fellow diners.

Right now I didn't care if every last person in the pub heard me. No wonder I felt unclean. I'd heard stories about what Death Eaters did to Muggles. I collected myself and tried to give the appearance of discussing nothing more important than the latest Quidditch scores.

"Just tell me," I hissed. "Do I have any reason to be afraid? He wouldn't go as far as following me or trying to learn my identity, would he?"

"No. He may be an arrogant bastard, but he's not stupid." Remus lowered his voice even further. "He was one of the Death Eaters arrested after that affair at the Ministry last summer. His wife got him released from Azkaban. Apparently she managed to convince the authorities that he was under the Imperius Curse at the time."

"Imperius?"

"In other words, he was forced to be there."

"I take it that he wasn't?"

"Of course not. Lucius Malfoy is one of Voldemort's biggest supporters. But when you have as much money as that family, a few well-placed bribes can move mountains," Remus said, pausing to take a sip of Butterbeer. "The whole family's rotten. His wife, Narcissa, was related to Sirius, and Sirius was practically the only saving grace in that entire family. The son is at Hogwarts, same year as Harry Potter. Draco Malfoy. Arrogant little sod in his own right. I expect he'll follow in daddy's footsteps in more ways than one."

Arrogant, but not stupid. Apparently even Death Eaters had their limitations, it seemed. I was more or less reassured by my husband's words. The last thing I wanted for Christmas was a stalker with magical abilities.

By the time we lay in bed that night, the incident was largely forgotten. I suppose inciting lust in a dark wizard could be taken as a compliment, but I was quite happy being ignored by the magical world in general and inciting lust in my husband alone. The black nightgown I'd bought earlier, I'm happy to say, had the desired effect: Remus said he'd have to thank Fred and George for sending me to Ursula's Unmentionables; he definitely owed them one. I was almost asleep when I both heard and felt Remus, curled up close behind me, chuckling quietly.

"What's so funny?" I mumbled.

"Nothing. Well, not nothing," Remus said softly. "I was just thinking about Lucius Malfoy."

"Oh?" That was the last thing I wanted to think about.

"He thinks he has everything, you know? Big mansion, pots of gold, power..."

"Doesn't count," I said sleepily. "He's morally bankrupt, so that cancels out everything else."

"True. Of course, there's one thing he doesn't have."

"What?" I asked.

"You. Bloody hell, I'm richer than he is."

There have been a couple of times in the past four months when I've wondered whatever possessed me to marry a man I'd known only two months. This was definitely not one of those times. I smiled, pulled Remus' arm tighter around me.

"Love you, werewolf," I whispered.

I could feel him smiling into the nape of my neck.

"Love you, Muggle..."

A/N: This is, of course, not the end. There is much more to come. And the usual disclaimers apply, of course. Kailin, Billy, and Marva are mine, while the rest of the characters belong to JKR. I don't envy her millions, just her imagination.