

# A Bride's Revenge

*by Meiri*

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*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Astoria Greengrass, soon to be Mrs. Godfrey Waters, stood in the vestibule off the ballroom at the Goldenbrook estate, a dignified old manor that belonged to her fiancé's mother's family. Her mother had been incredibly pleased with the match, gratified that generations of breeding and years of educating her daughter in the finer points of society life had not been wasted. Adare Greengrass had announced the engagement less than two weeks ago, filled with a smug sense that everything was right in the world.

Astoria, however, had been dazed by how quickly things had moved. She had never even shared a conversation with Godfrey Waters before she found herself continually thrown into his company. Now, less than a month after he claimed to have noticed her, and with no idea how she got here, she was trapped in a blinding white gown with her throat uncomfortably enclosed in a diamond choker. She had her something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue. All that was left was to become a wife to an older wizard, about whom she knew next to nothing, and who, in turn, knew nothing about her.

Sighing, she drew her wand and cast a one-way mirror spell on a small section of the wall and gazed into the ballroom. Guests were starting to filter in—gossips desperate for good seats, the chronically early, and the like. Watching the guests settle into their seats, she wondered if she could go through with this wedding; this marriage.

Sooner than she would have liked, the ballroom was filled, and the frantic voices of her mother and the bridesmaids encroached on her contemplation. After taking a moment to conceal her wand, she stepped into the corridor.

"Young lady, what were you thinking, just vanishing like that moments before your wedding ceremony?" Adare Greengrass demanded. Her strident tones hammered into Astoria's head.

"I needed a moment of quiet, Mother," she replied, her voice huskier than usual because of the choker.

"Threw everyone into a tizzy and for what? Moment of quiet, indeed." Her mother fussed around her and continued the lecture all the way to the ballroom doors.

"Now, my girl, just walk down that aisle and repeat after the officiant when you are meant to and the rest will sort itself out."

"It would be easier to do, Mother, if I loved him. Even if I knew him," she said resignedly.

"There's time enough for that later," her mother told her. "Now stand just there. Perfect. If only your father were alive to give you away," she said, nose crinkling at the inconvenience. "Oh well. It may be best that you give yourself away."

And with that Adare turned and went into the ballroom to find her seat. Once she was seated, the music started and the bridesmaids and groomsmen started down the aisle.

In no time, she was standing by Godfrey at the altar, facing the officiant. She gazed ahead without fully registering the ritual in which she was meant to be taking part. She heard the words but they meant nothing to her.

"Do you, Godfrey, take this witch..."

"Of course he does, else he wouldn't be standing before you," interrupted Adare.

Hearing her mother interject shocked her out of her daze for a few moments. There was no reason for anyone but the celebrant to speak until the vows, which she wasn't sure she would even repeat. Why was that shrill, commanding voice battering at her nerves?

"...to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold," the officiant continued, ignoring the interruption, going through the list of conditions.

"I already told you he does," Adare shouted from the first row before Godfrey could say 'I do'.

The officiant glared at her before turning to Astoria. "Do you, Astoria, t..."

"Oh, for Merlin's sake!" Adare stood and stormed up to the altar. "Neither would be standing here facing you if this marriage were not consensual. Now pronounce them husband and wife and be done with it!"

"Madame, sit down and respect the ritual or leave this ceremony immediately," the officiant said through clenched teeth.

"If you would just do the job you were hired to do, then I would. Now marry my child to this man. Go on. Pronounce them husband and wife," she demanded.

"Very well," the officiant said. "I hereby pronounce you husband and wife. Godfrey, you may kiss your bride."

The firm grasp of his hand on her waist brought her attention back to the ballroom and to her new husband. He looked at her with dark blue eyes. If he was as disoriented by the abrupt ceremony, he did not show it. He revealed nothing in his gaze, and she shuddered to think that the marriage was finalized or would be when he sealed the ritual with their first kiss.

Pulling her roughly into his body, he leaned down and took her lips in a dispassionately thorough kiss. It was hard and claiming but lacking in desire or caring. Dragging his lips along her jaw, he nipped just below her ear before pulling away entirely and striding up the aisle.

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During the reception, Godfrey was anything but attentive. He spent most of the time talking business with his colleagues. Despite that, Astoria was aware of someone watching her. The weight of the gaze pressed upon her but a glance around the room did not reveal its owner, so she pushed the awareness of it from her mind.

Since her husband would not dance, not that she particularly felt like dancing, she plucked a flute of champagne from a tray and wandered from the ballroom into a nearby study and through a glass door leading to a stone patio. Pleased to be alone, she leaned against the stone railing and looked at the gardens in the fading summer light. The air was heavy with heat and the fragrance of many blossoms. The peace was beguiling.

"So, this is marriage," she murmured as she reached over the rail to stroke a rose on one of the climbing vines.

"Marriage? I shouldn't think so, Miss Greengrass," a quiet, masculine voice said from behind her.

Astoria whirled around to face the intruder of her peace, finding a spectre of unrequited crushes past. She'd last seen Draco Malfoy three years ago at her older sister's graduation. He'd disappeared from pureblood society, much to the disgust of those who reigned over the realm of jockeying for social position.

"Mrs. Waters," she corrected him, looking into amused silver eyes.

"Indeed not," he returned, coming to lean against the railing beside her. "I was there this afternoon. The ritual was not performed correctly. The portions where you and your dashing Godfrey would have been bound for the remainder of your mortal lives were skipped over."

"The vows you mean?"

"And the 'I do's." He said with a nod, blond hair drifting to cover his eyes briefly. "Neither of you committed to a life together, therefore you are not wed."

Listening to his words, Astoria wondered if he were correct. If he spoke the truth, then there was no reason to remain at this farce of a reception. No reason at all to go through with the expected wedding night with Godfrey either. Glancing at her companion, she took note of his rakish air and mischievous expression. Briefly, she wondered whether she could trust his word.

"I can see you are trying to decide whether you believe me or not. You dare not hope and yet, if the look in your eyes as you walked down the aisle was anything to judge by, you wish for any other fate than to be wed to your dear Godfrey," he said, eyes never looking from her face. "Had you been allowed to speak during the ceremony, I wonder if you would you have said, 'I do.' Is it possible that you would have said, 'No.'?"

"What nonsense," Astoria protested, unwilling to concede to how close to the mark he really was.

"Nonsense? Really, Astoria?" His voice was low and rough as he used her given name for the first time that she could remember, and she repressed a shiver at how forbidden this conversation should be.

"Adare, my love, I cannot believe we did it!"

Astoria looked up trying to figure out where the speaker was. Draco caught her eye and gestured toward the balcony above them.

"Oh, Godfrey, how could it have failed?" Astoria's mother spoke, adoration clear in the soft tone of her voice.

Astoria blinked. Her mother? And Godfrey? Really?

"Well, despite her current frigid disposition, your daughter has a reputation for having a fiery temper, to begin with," Godfrey said plainly.

Adare laughed. "Only if you give her time to process the situation and get her footing. We kept her so disoriented and overwhelmed that she had no choice but to go along with our wishes."

"True. I still don't understand why I couldn't have just married you. We could have gone to Germany and lived there for a few years, avoiding any scandal that would have resulted in marrying so soon after Herman's death," Godfrey persisted.

"It just isn't done, love," Adare insisted. "We're doing what we have to do, especially with this little one on the way. We had to take steps to legitimize the child. You understand, don't you, that there was no other way to remain in polite society and carve a proper place for our child."

"I can't abide by having Astoria raise your child, *our child*."

"You can't but you will," Adare told him firmly.

"For now, aye."

"At least I found a way around that pesky Wizard's Oath you took, declaring you would marry no one but me," Adare said smugly. "Everyone in that ballroom, including my daughter, believes the two of you to be married. It couldn't have worked out better. So, you will live with her and in eight months' time, I will have this child. You and she will raise it, and if, in a year's time, she should meet with an accident..." Adare trailed off.

"No one would question it," Godfrey replied quickly.

"And no one will question you taking a new wife so soon after the death of your previous, not with a child in your care."

Astoria felt suddenly nauseous. She'd always known her mother didn't particularly care for her, but to hear the woman practically plot out her murder? That was too much. Hands shaking, she moved away from the railing only to be pulled into a solid body, held by strong arms, and comforted by soothing whispers.

After a few moments, she composed herself and pulled away from his embrace. She had to. It would be entirely too easy to take comfort from him when she really wanted revenge against another. Angry as she was, she didn't think she could ever be *that* girl. With that thought, she led him back into the study. Moving through the room, she felt his gaze follow her, and she knew that he had been the one watching her before. Now though, knowing the source of the gaze, she revelled in it. As she ward and silenced the room, she could almost feel his left eyebrow raise, his lone concession to curiosity.

Walking with clear purpose, she made her way across the wood floor to the writing desk. Not bothering to sit, she found a clean sheet of parchment and a quill. Dipping the nib in an ink pot, she wrote a short letter. When she was finished, she cast a spell to dry the ink before folding the note and sealing it with a wax seal.

"Who are you writing?" Draco asked from a chair near the window.

"The new society columnist at *The Daily Prophet*," she said. "It's a decent solution to this mess, and since Mother hasn't actually tried to kill me yet, there's no use taking this to Magical Law Enforcement."

"Trying her in the court of public opinion, then?"

"Yes. It will make the scandal she wished to avoid even worse." She shrugged before conjuring a vial. Bringing her wand to her temple, she extracted the memory of Adare and Godfrey's conversation. "Tarnishing their sterling reputations is better than no recourse at all," she told him as she sealed the memory in the vial and packaged it in a small box that she transfigured from a throw pillow.

Astoria unwarded the study before opening the patio door. Stepping into the warm summer evening, she summoned an owl to the patio and fastened the parcel to its leg. Once the owl lifted off and flew out of sight, she sighed. Now that her mother's part in this debacle was addressed, she allowed her thoughts to turn to the spineless snake that she'd falsely wed.

"You do realize that there is one injustice left unaddressed by this course of action," Draco spoke, his breath tickling the shell of her ear.

"Oh and what is that?" she asked, shivering as his arms slipped around her from behind.

"Waters' assertion that you are frigid," he said, stroking her ribcage just below her breasts with his thumbs, making her breath catch. "I can tell you aren't from just a couple of soft caresses."

"What do you propose we do about it?" she asked as his hands moved to cup her breasts, teasing them through the silk of her wedding gown.

"I have a few ideas." Brushing his lips against the skin below her ear, he continued, "You could have a highly publicised fling. Or a series of passionate one night stands," he suggested, dragging one of his hands along her exposed, creamy skin to her shoulder.

"Or I could have mind-blowing sex with another man on my not-quite-wedding night?" Astoria leaned back into him and ground her backside into his growing interest.

"So you could. On the patio, where anyone from the reception could hear you, if they came out for some fresh air," he said as his hand drifted to the fastenings at the back of her gown's bodice.

"So wicked," she whispered as he began opening the tiny hooks that held her gown together.

Planting light kisses along the skin he revealed, he murmured, "At the moment, you wouldn't have me any other way."

"Most of the time," she admitted as he pulled the gown past her hips and let it fall to the stones beneath their feet, leaving her in her knickers and stockings. As the silk hit the ground, she whirled around and began tugging at his clothes.

He caught her hands and pulled them behind her back, thrusting her bare breasts towards him. "This is all about you," he said. "Let me make you feel good; let me please you."

She hesitated, wanting to take rather than be taken, wanting to act rather than be acted upon.

"Let me show you how desirable you are."

With that phrase, her wavering resolve crumbled. "Very well. Show me."

He released her hands and grasped her waist, perching her on the wide railing along the patio. "Don't move." With that, he took a step back and began removing the clothes she'd been desperately fumbling with moments before. In no time, he was completely bared to her. "See what you do to me," he said, drawing her eyes downwards.

Stepping towards her again, he reached for her hand and pulled it to his chest. "Feel how my heart beats for you."

Astoria's breath caught as another part of him brushed against her thigh. Reaching with her free hand, she stroked his length.

"Damn," he muttered before grabbing her stray hand again. Dragging her hand up her curves, he cupped her hand around her breast, then he planted light kisses from her ribcage down to the edge of her lacy knickers. Carefully, he helped her remove the garment before kneeling before her and shifting her hips so that he could see her glistening sex. "You are so wet for me, witch, and I've hardly touched you. You are so responsive," he told her reverently before lowering his mouth to sample her essence.

As he swirled and teased with his tongue, Astoria's head dropped back and she let the sensations wash over her. This wasn't her first time with a man, but Draco made her feel innocent somehow. Pure. He applied more pressure and the tension building within her, warming her, grew. When he brought his fingers into play, she groaned at the penetration. He was talented and she ground herself against him, seeking more friction, but he only pulled away.

"Dammit, Draco, stop teasing me," she practically growled.

He smirked and resumed stroking in and out of her with his fingers. "What do you want, Astoria?"

"More," she demanded, looking down at him from her perch on the rail. There was something gratifying about having a man kneeling before her. It made her feel powerful.

"As the lady wishes," he said before applying his mouth to the task again, drawing her nubbin in, sucking at it a bit. At her gasp, he relinquished his hold to tease the small bundle of nerves with his tongue. He waited until her hips were rocking against him and her muscles were quivering on the brink before grazing his teeth over her, dragging her over the edge and into a free-fall of bliss.

He held her steady as she trembled around him until she was calmed enough that her muscles could support her before pulling her down from the railing and into his lap. Laying back, he held her to his chest and stoked her fringe from her eyes. After a moment, she stirred and kissed him.

"Thank you," she told him.

"Don't thank me yet. We're only getting started," he drawled.

She raised herself up on her elbows and stared down at him. "You think so?"

"Oh, I know so." Draco smirked. "For a start, you said you wanted mind-blowing sex. That was simply mind-blowing foreplay."

Astoria laughed. "You have a point," she conceded.

"I have indeed," he agreed as he shifted beneath her, his length grazing her sex.

"I could be persuaded."

"If you want it, take it."

Astoria didn't need to be told twice. As good as her orgasm had been, it had left her wanting more. Moving so that she could position him at her entrance, she slowly lowered herself onto his length. They soon fell into a pleasing rhythm, thrusting deep and hard, both reaching for that moment where they would deconstruct each other in their bliss, only to be remade seconds later. As they lay on the patio after, limply draped around each other, Astoria wondered at herself. She thought that perhaps she should feel guilty at using sex for comfort, for revenge, but she felt more powerful than ever for having taken her pleasure from Draco.

"Regrets already?" he asked softly, his lips moving against her temple.

"No. No regrets."

"Good," he said. "I have an idea, in that case. Join me for a few days at my chateau in Southern France. I daresay you could use a holiday, and I wouldn't mind the company."

She was about to answer when they heard footsteps approaching. Reaching for her clothes, she pulled her wand from the pocket concealed in her gown and summoned the garments that were out of her reach.

"What's the catch?" She looked into his eyes.

"No catch."

"Expectations?"

"None," he said.

"Will we be doing this again while we're there?"

"Perhaps," he drawled. "Though, I'd prefer it without people wandering by."

"Take me with you, then," she said.

He pulled her close, and after making sure they had everything gathered up, he turned on his heel and Apparated them both to his chateau.