

Making Amends

by kyriaofdelphi

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The wedding of the heroine of the Second Wizard War was to begin in just over an hour as the reporters for the *Daily Prophet* gathered outside the Guildhall in a small village near Oxford.

Rita Skeeter, who had only returned to reporting after serving a stint in Azkaban for being an unregistered Animagus, noticed a young blonde woman standing at the edge of the building, looking upset.

"Miss, are you here for the wedding?" she asked.

"Oh, my, yes, I plan on stopping it if I can. He can't marry her. He's already married to me," the young woman said, haughtily.

Sensing something not quite right about the young woman, Rita urged her to talk some more.

"I didn't quite catch your name, dear. You say you are married to Mr. Krum?" Rita was going to find out what this was all about if she had to drag it out of this ditzy female.

"Lavender Brown... Krum. He married me months ago. He certainly wouldn't marry that hussy when he sees me again."

Watching the young woman take a drink from a flask, Rita had a hunch she knew just what was going on.

Remembering the notice that had gone to all the papers that morning, Rita guessed that the person claiming to be Lavender Brown was, in reality, Ron Weasley. He was supposed to have threatened both Viktor Krum and Hermione Granger. He was also known to be cohabiting with a woman named Lavender Brown.

Rita called her photographer over and had the man take several pictures of 'Lavender' while she talked to her. Very surreptitiously, she got hold of the flask and emptied the contents out. She kept 'Lavender' talking until the car bringing Hermione Granger to her wedding arrived.

'Lavender' shoved the flask into her purse and moved forward to accost Hermione at the Guildhall steps. Rita signalled the photographer to start taking pictures as Hermione was walking up the steps with her father.

'Lavender' began to change back into Ron Weasley as the camera was clicking away. The Aurors who had been assigned to guard the wedding party recognised Ron and escorted him back to the Ministry.

Rita had her photographer rush through the development of the pictures so she could have a duplicate of the one to be featured on the front page of the *Daily Prophet* the next day.

That duplicate she inserted into an envelope with the notes she had made of the encounter with Ron/Lavender. The actual story was written up and sent into the paper already. These notes she would give to Hermione and Viktor along with her apology for being so awful to them during the Triwizard Tournament.

The story she had written told not the story of the wedding, but that of a man so eaten up with jealousy he would try to ruin the wedding of a woman he used to call a friend.

Rita and the rest of the reporters were allowed into the reception to take photos and interview guests. She took that opportunity to hand the envelope to Hermione and say a few words to her.

"I want you to know I have changed, Madam Krum. Your wedding was beautiful. In this envelope you will find some notes and a photograph which are the basis of a story to run tomorrow in the Prophet. I did what I could to keep this person from ruining your wedding. It was the least I could do to make amends for my behaviour during your fourth year at Hogwarts. I'm glad you married your Bulgarian. He was always very protective of you. Have a happy life. I just wanted to thank you for setting me straight on priorities."

Hermione handed the envelope to Viktor to be opened; she looked at Rita for a long minute and then smiled. "Thank you, Ms. Skeeter. Was that Lavender Brown I saw you talking to outside?"

Viktor answered her, as he handed a glass of champagne to Rita, "No, loff, it vas Veasley using Polyjuice. Look at photograph."

The photographer had caught that arc of time when Lavender's face morphed into Ron's much blowsier one.

Hermione laughed and reached to hug Rita. "Thank you so much for keeping him out of our hair today. We both wish you the best now that you are back reporting."

Rita blushed a bit, but replied, "I had a hunch that something just wasn't right about that young woman. And I was right. This gives me a different story than everyone else and may even restore some of my credibility. Congratulations again on your wedding."

LaMuseAmusant said on January 29th:

A bitter ex-lover uses Polyjuice in an attempt to destroy the reputation of his/her romantic rival. But an inadvertent slip of the lip causes their master plan to backfire. Big time.