



Short Story Feature: "Wedding Bells"

Aislin Freedman, Sophomore

Silks brushed against my legs, moving smoothly with my slow stride. There were two girls behind me, watching as I walked. I didn't know their names. I didn't know the names of most anyone here.

I knew a few names, though.

Everyone that mattered.

There was the Wind, blowing cold against my skin and making my hairs stand on end.

There was the Ground, stable beneath my feet, so I didn't fall.

There was the Grass under my toes so my bare feet didn't hurt.

There was a cluster of lilies on a pond over to my right, and even from where I was I could smell their sweet scent, keeping my mind centered inside the safety of my skull.

There was Katelyn, padding at my side, her pure white and grey fur matching my dress and the lights hanging from trees wrapped up beautifully like presents in long strips of fabric.

Yet--I didn't know the names of the people sitting in the seats I walked by. I didn't even know the name of the man patiently waiting at the end of the long daunting hallway that just seemed to grow in length. He had brown hair and wild, mischievous green eyes. I couldn't deny he was handsome. He even had the decency to look sorry for me.

I didn't want his sympathy. I had all the friends I wanted right here. My mouth tasted like soot, it was dry, and my lips stuck together gently. It was hard to swallow the thick glue sticking in my throat. The taste of mint everywhere didn't help. The two girls behind me had forced me to chew so many mint leaves I lost count as they dressed me in this big monstrosity.

I told myself I wouldn't trip. It was shorter in the front than in the back. That was good, because I was clumsy and the back was so long that the girls holding it up were five feet away. My feet were comfortable though; the only shoes I was forced to wear were my own skin, and whatever dirt they picked up on the long walk. It was the tradition of the kingdom. It was the only tradition I understood.

Looking up should have been more daunting than it was. There was an enormous stone structure. A castle. I knew that castle. It was where I had lived my entire life. This was my home, and I wished all the people would leave and it would be like it was. I had been alone since I was five years old, when my parents had left me there and never returned. There were always servants, but my parents had taken them all from prisons where they would have been killed and reformed them. None could talk; the neighboring kingdoms took the tongues of their prisoners. My parents had been good people, my mother with beautiful silvery hair curling like clouds around her angel's face. My father with his sharp features, piercing dark blue eyes and messy crimson red

hair. I had my mother's hair, and my father's eyes.

But I had turned 16. And 16 year olds aren't allowed to live in castles playing swords and rangers all on their own. They weren't allowed to wear leather pants and shoulder armor or hooded cloaks unless they were made of velvet.

So here I stood. Surrounded by strangers. My own servants were there, but I didn't know any of them personally. They knew me though. I wished Katelyn would bark, but I knew that was a futile wish. The canine was silent as a ghost, fast as a falcon, and protective as a mama bear.

The outdoor hallway got shorter now, and the man with green eyes got closer. He wore ribbons on his jacket, some sort of honorary badge system. I didn't care. He held out his arm for me to grab.

It was just as I had been taught yesterday when they practiced. He hadn't been there, though. It had just been my servants. I hadn't seen his face until I came gliding down the aisle.

There was music playing somewhere, but I didn't hear it. I didn't hear the sound of bare feet on stone steps. I didn't hear the sound of male breathing by my ear. All I heard were the sounds of my heartbeat and Katelyn's footfalls. My friend was close then.

I could protect myself, though. The mute maids hadn't stopped me when I asked them to make a dress with special accommodations on the back design. They hadn't stopped me as I stuck my beautiful sword down the dress. They had merely rearranged it so the hilt, sticking up, looked like it belonged to the lace.

Now I wished the sword was in my hand, instead of the leather sheath pressing against my spine.

Eventually I stepped up to the platform, where all the people could see me. The ground and grass had left me, but the wind was still there. It comforted me, whispered encouraging thoughts in my ear. The moon was high in the sky, but the sun hadn't completely set yet. There weren't any stars out yet.

The man with the green eyes didn't even know what I looked like. My features were fully concealed beneath a pale white veil. He wasn't a warrior. I knew that from the way he held himself, like he trusted that he would be protected. He hadn't ever had to fight for his life. The woman who came to brief me on how to act and what to expect had told me he was a great swordsman. Undefeated. I wondered if it would be ladylike to challenge that status. I thought not.

A silver necklace bore its cold surface into my skin. Painful--but not unwanted.

This entire thing was always going to happen. It had been an arrangement of my parents. He had been a nice little boy, they had said back when they

Kamasi Washington Music Review: "The Garden Path"

Benjamin Burns, Sophomore

I am reviewing the song "The Garden Path" by saxophonist Kamasi Washington. This song was released on February 2nd, 2022 and is six minutes and forty seconds long. It is a standalone single and is released through Shoto Mas Inc.

I found this song extremely enjoyable as Kamasi has a very intense saxophone performance throughout the whole song. The structure of the song is mainly set up with a chorus at the beginning, which goes into a saxophone solo by Kamasi, and that pattern repeats throughout the song. The chorus contains the only lyrics in the whole song, with the singers repeating "Bright minds, With dark eyes, Speak loud words, Tell sweet lies, Lost without a trace of a way, To get out of this misery."

In between these short choruses, Kamasi breaks into an energetic saxophone solo, and each one goes for about a minute. This song is very good and I would recommend it to anyone who likes any kind of jazz music at all.



were still with me. They had said I would like him, and he would protect me. They said he would be a glorious knight. Now I could defend myself. He grabbed me, gently cradling my hands and starting a bit at my calluses and scars. His hands were smoother than mine. He had few calluses from swordplay, and no scars. I wondered how he would react to my face.

The man in red before us began speaking then, in a language probably even he didn't understand. It was an ancient tongue, and one that now was only used for certain occasions. No one knew what the incantations meant, but everyone knew what they were. What they stood for. They had been recorded down in a book, all three of them. The one for deaths, the one for births, and the one they were hearing right now.

This was the speech for a wedding.

Katelyn wouldn't be taken away, they had said.

They said I had nothing to worry about. The lord would marry me and everything would be fine. I didn't like when people told me that. I knew it wouldn't go fine. The lady who came in to brief me before the ceremony had cringed at my face. The lord did worse. He thought I was a monster. I wondered later if it was a gift or a curse that I had brought my sword. Bite, I called it. My silks clawed at my pockmarked skin as I took off my veil. The wind howled. The ceremony lasted all day, the aisle was the last part. It was all planned so they would kiss just as the sun set and golden rays hit the earth. It was supposed to represent the end of one life and the start of another. But when the handsome man with the green eyes saw my face, he backed up.

I knew what I looked like. When I was little I had dreamed of growing up and looking just like my mother. When my mother had disappeared, I had hated my own reflection for how it looked like that of my mother. And in a fit of anger, I had drawn a dagger across my cheek. The maids had come to me and stopped the bleeding, but the scar was forever there. A long, cruel mark over my eye and down what would be perfect skin. My hair blew behind me like the wind, my friend clearing my face so everyone could see. I had long ago learned not to care about my scars. They

made me beautiful.

The boy with wild green eyes came back to me, and spoke to me. He said to me, "it seems you have lived, far more than I ever have. My father once told me that age is not how long someone has been alive, but how much they have experienced. When I came here today, I expected to find a girl younger than me, for I never understood what he meant. But today, I realize that I have instead come to meet a girl- no, a Queen who is far more my senior." He kissed my hand. That was the day I started loving him. It was also the day I learned to truly speak.

I was no longer alone save for my dog, and the spirits of nature. I was no longer surrounded by mute servants, who may be as caring as anyone could be, yet they never spoke. That day I learned the power of words, for I already understood the power of silence.

"Mommy, Mommy! What was her name?" a little girl with silver hair and green eyes asked.

"Yes Mommy! Tell us!" shouted a little boy with wild silver hair and blue eyes.

"I would like to know what happened after? What happened to them?" asked a girl with brown and silver hair, with eyes the color of the ocean at night. She sat there, regal as ever, with a white and grey dog lying across her lap.

Their mother looked to the ceiling, absorbing the beautiful stained glass ceiling of the stone castle.

"Now children, leave your mother alone. Alvara darling, do you want to tell them?"

She looked at the man, dressed regally as ever, brown hair mussed as the day she met him, and green eyes glowing. She squeezed his hand in her callused one. "No, no, I'll tell them."

"Wind, Silk, calm down you two. Her name was Alvara," she pressed on, despite little shouts that that was her name, and said, "Katelyn, she lived happily ever after. Until she had three kids, and named them after her favorite things from that day. The wind, always blowing just the right way, and calming her down. The silk, the most beautiful part of the day, and at last her, my dog, Katelyn, who died soon after giving birth to that one there you're petting. And the rest of the litter."

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