

The Bride's Song

By George Davis

A stranger came walking down the pathway one day, where a battered Bride sat weeping.

Oh dear Bride, why so sad, your face telling a thousand tails of horror and woe? Why so bruised, your face, your arms, your hands, your legs? Why do you tremble as if I would hurt you? You look so distant, your mind perhaps racing back to better days, days of love, days of your Beloved's near and intimate embrace. Why is your dress so dirty and torn? Oh tell me of your pain. Why do you look so? Speak to me, dear child. My ears are eager to know.

I am trying to remember by beloved's face. I cannot! I think about Him all the time, but I cannot picture Him, nor can I remember the endearing tones of His voice. I try to remember His final words to me, but they are faint as well. "I go to prepare a place for you..." I think that's what He said. That's right! He was going to prepare a home for me. It has been so long ago, I cannot be sure. I do remember times of joy brought simply by the sound of His voice, although now I cannot recall its tone or inflection."



Not long after my Beloved's departure, a man came to my home. He told me that he was my Beloved's most trusted friend that he was sent to bring my Beloved's mail, and help in whatever way he could. He spoke to me often of my intended.

I noticed his eyes upon me one day, looking longingly. However, as soon as our eyes met, he turned his quickly away. I blushed.

My Beloved's friend would bring me letters from my Beloved, from time to time. At least he told me they were from my Beloved, though strangely, he had forgotten to sign them. When my Beloved's friend spoke of my Beloved, my heart would leap within me.

You must love your beloved very much.

Oh yes! I think I do.

As time passed my Beloved's friend spoke less and less of my Beloved. He spoke of things too difficult for me to understand, or so he told me. He seemed to understand much more about my Beloved than I, so I forced myself to listen carefully to his every word, in hopes that somehow I might hear news of my beloved. He seemed so intelligent, as though there were nothing he did not know. When I would ask him of my Beloved, his answers always sounded so authoritative and yet so difficult to understand.

My Beloved's friend has a commanding presence, which somehow inspired my confidence in him. I found myself trusting him more and more as the days went by. I had hardly noticed that my Beloved had not written in a while.

I could not explain it, but I kept feeling wanton eyes upon me, staring at me. After a while it was as though my Beloved had died. I received no mail at all, but instead my beloved's friend insisted that I tell him the intimate things, things that once I whispered in my Beloved's ears. He said that my beloved wished it so, and that in telling him I was telling my Beloved. This sounded somewhat strange to me but I had no reason to disbelieve him.

My Beloved's friend increased his visits even though he had no mail to deliver. He would come stay for a while, talk about things that I really didn't understand, look somewhat impressed with himself, and then leave. I thought to my self, "What a strange ritual." Thinking that perhaps this was part of the wedding preparation, I silently bore it.

I recall a few times when I attempted to speak. He kindly told me that I had forgotten my place, and was out of order. I remember thinking "Oh, I don't want to be out of order, whatever that means. I must be careful, never to do that again." Though, I knew my Beloved's friend would tell me if I did. As strange as it may seem, I found comfort in that.

Under the watchful eye of My Beloved's friend, I learned about my place, and how to walk in an orderly manner. It is indeed a discipline, you know, and it did not come natural to me. But my Beloved's friend was there to constantly remind me. I needed his

prompting, because it seemed I always forgot. With every step I took I caught myself looking his way, checking for an approving or disapproving glance. My Beloved's friend taught me how to do everything. How to walk, sit, comb my hair, and most important, how to maintain a meek and quiet spirit. He knew more about being a woman than I did, so I learned much from my Beloved's friend. All that I am, and all that you see before you, I owe to him.

What about your Beloved, what happened to Him?

Oh yes...My Beloved! It has been such a long time since I have heard from him. I hope he is not dead!

My beloved's friend came more frequently now. I could sense his gratuitous eyes upon me every time he came. Then one day, I could sense him standing behind me; he began to run his fingers through my hair. I turned somewhat shocked. Quickly drawing back his hand he said, "There, that looks much better, you had a hair out of place, and we cannot have you appearing unsightly now, can we?" This puzzled me, for I had combed my hair exactly as he had shown me.

Then one day, strangely, he placed his right hand upon my shoulder, and ever so gently maneuvered me around the room. It seemed as though he was testing me, perhaps to see if I would freely move at his bidding. I was not sure what to make of this, for my Beloved's friend had never touched me before. His touch was gentle and something in me was flattered that he would treat me with such fragile hands. After that, every time he came, he would repeat this ritual. At first I was very uncomfortable, and stiff, but in time I began to relax. This brought a smile to his face, and a sense of gratification to me. I loved it when my Beloved's Friend smiled at me, and so I would relax even more. I grew to love this strange ritual. It seemed to meet some secret need in me.

Then one day, with his right hand upon my left shoulder, he extended his left hand, placing it upon my right shoulder. This brought back those old feelings of tension I remembered feeling when he first had touched me.

My Beloved's friend had never put both hands upon me before! Once again, he gently moved me as if to some more desirable place. And once again, I began to relax, which

brought that familiar smile to his face. With each visit it seemed he became freer with his touch, as I became more accustomed to it. I must admit, I secretly loved his touch upon me. Although deep in my inner heart there remained a tension that would not subside.

At first, what was just a touch was now his hand upon my hip. I must say this made me feel very uncomfortable at first, but as time went on, this also grew to seem more normal. Then one day, his arm around my shoulder, he told me for the first time that I was his. "I am yours?" I questioned. "What do you mean?" "Yes, you are mine, Ekklesia, you belong to me! Your Beloved has wished it so. He has left you in my capable hands."

I thought at the time that this seemed a little forward. Nevertheless, if my Beloved had wished it, I could do no less than bear it gladly. It seemed that from that day forward, he felt freer with me. His roaming hands knew no bounds. Squeezing, pawing, grasping continually. This began to wear upon me! I did not like this very much! But when I thought of how much it pleased my Beloved, I suffered it. I would close my eyes and content myself by pretending that the arms that embraced me were my Beloved's arms. This brought me a small degree of comfort. More and more his arms and hands were upon me. More and more he told me how much this pleased my Beloved. In fact, as I recall, from that time on, this was the only message that he brought from my Beloved. My Beloved's friend rarely ever smiled at me now, no matter how yielded I was to his touch. He seemed to be much harder to please, demanding more each day, and speaking even more of how pleasing it is to my Beloved when I yield myself completely and submit myself fully unto him, just as I would to my Beloved. "Your Beloved would be upset with you if you did not!" he said.

The visits of my Beloved's friend slowly became more and more important to me as the years went by, for my Beloved, you see, had been away so long.

Tell me about your beloved. What is He like?

Oh, I cannot, dear stranger! All I have left is His Name, and the promise that He will return. I cannot remember more, as His memory has mysteriously departed as well. Then one day my Beloved's friend, his arm around my waist, and his hand resting upon my thigh, looking longingly upon my face he said, "I will be your provider. In your

Beloved's absence, you may look to me. I will meet all your needs, and protect you" "Your Beloved would have it so." I must admit that those words brought some relief. "He cares for me," I thought, "perhaps his strength will be my defense." I had felt so vulnerable since my Beloved had departed--a feeling that seemed to worsen as time went by.

I found myself thinking of my Beloved's friend quite frequently now. His visits increasingly became more important to me, until it seemed I could think nor speak of nothing else. He slowly became the topic of my every conversation. I spoke of him everywhere I went. Once while speaking of him to my friends, I noticed him listening in. He loved to hear me mention his name. And then I saw it, that old familiar smile. "This pleases him," I thought to myself. Therefore, I purposed to speak of my beloved's friend as often as I could. I felt that it pleased him and my Beloved as well. I also noticed that things went so much better when I did this.

Then came that awful day when suddenly and unexpectedly my Beloved's friend, against my will, forcibly pulled me to himself. Grasping me tighter than he ever had before, so tightly that I could not move. With his body pressed firmly against mine he said to me "Tell me that you are loyal to me. Tell me that you are mine!" I told him how much he meant to me and how important he was in my life. His wishful eyes, begging, and somehow obligating me to more, he, yet unsatisfied, asked, "Are you truly mine, are you mine alone? Tell me of your love for me."

This made me feel very uneasy. I endeavored to get free, but the more I resisted, the angrier he became. Squeezing even harder, I fainted in his arms. And when I awoke, which seemed like only moments later, he was bending over me, whispering in my ear. "Oh Ekklesia, so frail, how much you need my protection. You must never resist me like this again, my dear. Don't you know that I draw you close so I might protect you? Have you forgotten how much it displeases your Beloved when you do not yield to me?" A sorrowful and pitiful look crept over his face as he whispered, "I have served you all these years, Ekklesia. Please don't think to betray me now!

Suddenly I felt such shame and sorrow for what I had done. "How could I have done this?" I quietly thought to myself, "After all my Beloved's friend had done for me, how could I have been so rude?"

I quickly apologized, and almost instantly, a smile came over his face. I was relieved and somewhat impressed that he could find the grace to forgive me so easily. "He must love my Beloved very much" I thought, "to put up with the likes of me." And then, removing his hand from my breast, he stood, turned, and immediately walked out the door.

I sat quietly and fearfully in the dark.

My Beloved's friend visited more frequently. In fact, it seemed that he never left at all. His hands, once gentle, were much more forceful now. His vice-like grip now left bruises upon my arms and waist. He would often look at my wedding dress as if he hated it. Many times when he would fondle me he would rip and tear away pieces of my dress. I have mended it many times as you can see, dear stranger, but it now hangs on me nothing but rags.

Soon it seemed that no matter where my Beloved's friend touched me, it hurt. Then one day he came running through my door, heading strait for me. He had a look of rage in his eyes. "You must tell me now!" he screamed, his hands crushing my arms. Shaking me violently he screamed again, "Are you mine, Ekklesia? Do you recognize my right to you? Your Beloved has given you to me, has He not?"

I could not answer. I was disheartened and silent. "I have done it again," I thought. "I have failed my Beloved. I have rebelled against His friend. How could I be so evil?" His hands clenched even tighter upon my arms.

"You're hurting me," I quietly whispered, afraid of upsetting him further. Then squeezing even harder still, he threw me to the floor. "You will be mine!" he shouted, as he stretched his body over mine like a dark and heavy blanket, repeatedly screaming, "Your beloved has commanded it!"

I could not speak! I dared not speak!

Then he sat up, upon my chest. I could not breathe! "Speak to me," he said. "Tell me of your devotion to me." I did not feel devotion! I was scared. My continued silence enraged him even more. He began to strike me on my face, neck and shoulders. Vicious blows, hurting, breaking! One after the other, they came. "Will he ever stop? I

know I have it coming," I thought to myself. "I have upset my Beloved and His friend. Maybe these blows will purge me. Maybe they will remind me to be good."

The hands that once gently pampered my body were now instruments of pain--inflicting grievous wounds.

Then, the worst horror of all! He grabbed my beloved's wedding dress, and tore it off my body. Throwing it with a bewildering disregard into the corner. "I am naked," I thought, "I must find my Beloved's dress!" After he left, I mended it as best I could, but it never seemed to fit quite right after that.

He insisted now that I speak highly of him, even telling me what I could and could not say. If I refused, which I would never do, I knew that more blows awaited me. I have learned to say those things he loves to hear most, and my beatings have momentarily stopped.

I tried to remember my Beloved's face. I could not. I know He loves me. But why did He leave such a friend? My Beloved's friend is gone now, Sir, but he will be back. For it seems he feeds on my praises.

I wish I could remember my Beloved's face, Oh how I wish I could hear His gentle voice again!

Thank you, dear stranger, for listening to my deplorable tale I have one thing more I might ask of you. In your travels have you heard about my Beloved? Is there anything you can tell me of my Beloved, dear Sir? Does He truly love me? I keep trying to envision Him, but when I close my eyes, all I can see is my Beloved's friend. Oh why do I bother? I cannot face my Beloved now! My dress is tattered. I am bruised from head to toe. Tell me, dear stranger, could you love such a bride? Could you?

Yes, dear mournful and battered Bride, I could indeed! In fact I do!

You do? What ever do you mean, dear stranger?

Look deep into my eyes, dear Bride, and see what you have not yet seen. For a stranger I have become, and a stranger I am indeed. The one you have forgotten, my dear, is Me. I am your Beloved, your first love. Remember how we loved to be

together? Why did you not call upon Me in your time of woe? Why did you not call My name aloud? My love for you is sweeter than wine. Why did you not run after Me?

Know this dear bride, I am not a wife beater. I inflicted none of your wounds. I wept with each blow. That man, that horrible man you call my friend is no friend to me. He was, and is, an emissary of my enemy, who was sent to seduce you. I did not send him! I do not send him now, except as far away from you as possible. My love shall heal you, my Bride. My love is better than life. Cast off your rags and put on this new wedding dress. You have been man's plaything but now all shall see, He who rightfully has the Bride is me.

I am my Beloved's and He is mine!