

The Bride Who Never Was

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No one—not a soul—had known that Mr. Sadler had been a swindler back in the nineteenth century. Yes, no one. He made himself to be a fine gentleman, wore his suit and all. He loved drinking coffee in the mornings at any random café he fancied. He even loved to read the morning newspaper at his leisurely pace. His curly mustache and ash gray trilby on his head were his trademarks, just as it could be for any gentleman if he chose that style. His thick ebony hair shone from under his hat, or whenever he removed his headwear.

He had worked at different jobs, be it a bartender, a cashier, a waiter, a delivery man—anything that he could get by with. A living man had to eat, so he had to secure some money for himself. The thing was that he stayed at different hotels, rather than to stay in one place by himself. Ah but do not misunderstand me. Mr. Sadler never felt safe in a sole area because even back during his time, he was suspicious of hoodlums, burglars, murderers, door-to-door salesmen, thieves of all kinds, and whatnot.

Then again, he was not the type of person to display any signs to suspect people. He did not question anyone with a different tone when he spoke. He was the type of person who would blend in the crowd and populace, so to speak. Anyone could have heard him have a pleasant conversation, saying a, “Hello, fine day is it not?”, while he spoke to a waitress or waiter at (like I said) any of the cafés he fancied. But let me get back to the main thing about Mr. Sadler. You see, being a swindler was something he had to do. Not just for himself, but for the women who did not want to get married.

One day, he had left a café and left a tip. What a fine gentlemanly thing to do, right? And so, he had a meeting with one of those women, who had arranged marriages coming up. He strolled around the streets, taking care to look around and help people who were in their own predicaments. He helped crying or lost children, elderly women who had trouble crossing the street, and even trivial matters some people had with complaints.

Soon, he met up with his client to discuss the problem. He had gone to a three-star restaurant and she client was kind enough to reserve a private room for them to chat before they met face-to-face. She was a high-class lady, well-dressed in her long, ruffled pastel green dress. Her olive eyes met with his.

“Mr. Sadler, I presume?” she asked.

Mr. Sadler tipped his hat. Then, he stepped inside and took his seat across from the client. He took notice of his surroundings as well as the waiter, who was standing to a fair distance from the table. What captivating, baby blue regal chairs the restaurant had. Likewise, the glistening surface of the matching table added a marvelous touch to the room. They were practically fit for a princess.

“Why, yes, I am,” Mr. Sadler answered politely. He had to please his client, no matter who they were. He needed the grand amount of money she would pay him later, after all.

The client nodded. "I should introduce myself. My name is Chloe Esther. I heard from one of my servants about you since you had previously helped them with carrying groceries. Have you heard of my dilemma, Mr. Sadler?"

"I do not believe I have been informed anything, except that you wanted something," Mr. Sadler admitted. "Truth be told, this is a first that I've ever been requested to do anything, much less from someone of social standing. May I ask what I can do to aid you, Miss Esther?"

Miss Esther looked and waved toward the waiter. "Before we discuss this, let us have a meal. It would be impolite of me to allow my guest to starve." The waiter nodded and left the room. Miss Esther faced Mr. Sadler and continued. "I am sure this is something unexpected, Mr. Sadler. What I would like to bestow upon you, should you be able to ease my troubles, is for you to bring an end to my upcoming marriage."

Mr. Sadler gazed at his client. "You wish for me to do so?" He paused to contemplate for a bit before he said, "I have a proposal for this, but it is uncanny."

"Go ahead and tell me," Miss Esther said.

"I suggest," Mr. Sadler breathed with a tinge of a smile on his charming visage, "for you to go ahead with the wedding."

Miss Esther was not expecting this comeback. "What?"

Mr. Sadler brought his index finger up. "Allow me to explain further. I will pretend to be the bride in your place, Miss Esther. I will pretend to go forth with the ceremonial preparations, but I will escape from the wedding before 'marrying' your betrothed."

Miss Esther understood the situation, so she nodded. "A botched wedding."

"It'll be the greatest fiasco for him," Mr. Sadler replied.

"Very well," Miss Esther agreed. "I hope your skills will impress me."

Mr. Sadler smiled once more. It would be something quite unlike he had ever tried before. Crossdressing was a serious matter for him. He would have to prepare for his first job as a scammer. Yet, perhaps this could earn him more money from both Miss Esther and the "soon-to-be-husband." Money was what a person needed most, and he commenced to take Miss Esther's place. She had revealed to him about the details of how they had never met before, when the wedding would take place, and had already come prepared with arrangements for someone to disguise as her. Because they were prepared for this, the fake wedding became a success for Mr. Sadler, and he continued swindling people for money.

Author Bio:

Annie Tran is an undergraduate Literary Studies student at the University of Texas at Dallas. She is also minoring in Creative Writing. She concentrates her skills on fantasy works with a futuristic or eccentric element, along with some queer pieces.