

## HOW I GOT MARRIED

No, it's not that....

It's a bit stranger than *that*.

We'd seen each other a bit and it was OK, but one day she came round to my house – I had a house then, and that's what this is about. Maybe I didn't deserve to have a house, but I had one. Strange things did happen then and we thought nothing of it. mostly.

Anyway, she said, "You're a bit quiet." So I told her what *had* happened that morning.

At 9 AM a man in a black suit knocked on the door and introduced himself as Stephen K Wirral, from solicitors Forage, Forage and Wirral. Perhaps I'd heard of them? No I hadn't. Anyway, he had some important news for me. So of course I let him in. He complemented me on the fine hazel trees in my garden, but refused tea saying could we come straight to the point? We sat down and he produced a file.

"I'm afraid the news is bad," he said. "For you. This is the title deed for the property you currently occupy. As you will see, the true owner is my client, Mr Antic. There can be no doubt of his title. My client understands you will be flabbergasted so he gives you three days to vacate the premises. *His* premises."

He named the date, wished me good day, and left.

I'm no lawyer, but it didn't sound good.

Still, since she was studying law I told her what had happened.

She said, "It's a joke, right?"

Which was annoying, so I gave her the document and she read it over.

"Um, um, um... No," she said. "Actually it looks fine. Where's your paperwork?"

Paperwork is my Athlete's Foot.

I nodded at the old school desk in the corner of the kitchen I kept stuff in because it had deep drawers.

"Let's go to work," she said.

Which is a phrase I hate. But we cleared off the dusty stuff that covered it, and she burrowed away, with her going all the time, *Um, yeah, right, ok, I see...*

Which was very annoying.

"You're screwed," she said at last. "You don't own this place at all. Best pack."

"But I did nothing wrong," I told her.

"That's what they all say. Maybe you didn't, but the papers say otherwise. Best pack. I'll come back to see you off."

And the skirl of her skirt as she left said *Loser* more than words ever could have.

Came the fateful day and Mr Wirral arrived with his cruel briefcase and knocked on my door.

"You are ready to vacate?" he said, and slipped into the kitchen. "Those trees really are very fine. Now sign this and you can be on your way."

"Don't you dare sign that," she said, coming in through the French windows.

I'd had no idea she was there.

We both gaped at her, but Mr Wirral recovered first.

"And pray who might you be, young lady?" he asked.

“You can call me Nemesis,” she said. “Since you’re the one who needs to pray.”  
And she took out a cellophane package, ripped it open and tossed the contents on the floor.

Mr Wirral dissolved.

I had never seen anything like it.

One moment he was there, the next his clothes were falling in a wrinkled heap - trousers, shirt, jacket along with stuff I hope never to see the like of again. Then his face landed on top of the heap and an army of squirrels was skittering over the floor chasing the peanuts she had thrown.

“Quick,” she said, and thrust a broom into my hands. She took another and between us we drove the pests out onto the balcony with their nuts.

“Don’t try that round here again,” she shouted at them.

“And as for you,” she said to me. “Get a cat.”

I’m allergic to cats so I asked her to move in. And she did. With her brooms.

Later that night she explained.

“This had squirrel written all over it from the start. They’re very, very smart, but getting too cocky for their own good. They invented ways round the commercial bird feeders, but that wasn’t enough of a challenge so they infiltrated the manufacturers’ design studios, hacked the computers and tampered with the products. At source! But impersonating professionals is an evolutionary quantum leap. Luckily for us their nut addiction is as yet unmodified.”

“You’re a biologist? I thought you were a lawyer.”

“Don’t pigeon-hole me,” she said, and turned away.

“That was very clever of you,” I told her.

She turned back.

“I can make mistakes,” she admitted. “That policewoman who did me for speeding really *was* a policewoman. I found out when we got back to the nick and threw the nuts down. (I always carry a packet with me.) They made me pick up all the nuts, then ‘accidentally’ tipped them over again. I was so pissed they got away with it three times. They laughed at me.”

She shuddered and I put my arm round her.

“But not this time. That Land Registry document was too neat. The papers in your school desk were too tidy, unlike any of the others we see round here. They were classic gnaw marks in the wood of the drawers. Wirral’s outfit was based on an old black and white film they love. They make mistakes too. But their target profiling is generally spot on.”

I had to think about this.

“Me, you mean?”

“Mr S K Wirral? Really? REALLY?”

I thought some more and said, “Will you stay with me?”

“As long as we get married.”

“Er, why?”

“It’s my best protection,” she said.