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## Wedding

by Sue Hitchcock

This wedding is some hell. Well, perhaps more of a mystery. They had their reasons for arranging to marry quickly with a special license at Brixton Register Office, where Roald Dahl had got married in 1953. There was little time for explanations, and their reasons would probably sound ridiculous, so each guest made their own speculation.

Preparations started with sending invitations in the form of a British Museum postcard showing a statue of a seated pharaoh and his wife. They liked that it had inspired Henry Moore to create a bronze of a seated couple. Also it was pre-Christian, which reflected their disregard for the importance of the vows they would have to make. There wasn't even an administrative reason for the formality.

She dressed in a neat grey suit, with a wide-brimmed, peacock blue hat, bought from Selfridges where it had been especially stretched to accommodate her large head. He looked trendily cool in a green cord jacket and black cord trousers bought in Carnaby Street. The sunglasses added to the effect, although they were needed to replace the eye patch he had to wear after a splinter of metal was removed two days previously with a magnet at Moorfields hospital.

On the day, close members of the family assembled at his mum and dad's council flat to arrange rides to the Register Office. When they had departed, the couple found themselves without a ride and no facility to call a taxi, so they decided to do what they usually did – they walked.

There was a queue at the Register Office. One wedding was taking place and the next group, a beautifully dressed Jamaican crowd, was waiting on the wooden staircase. By contrast the assembly of elderly aunties looked very drab. If their mothers had not been there to introduce them, they would have been strangers.

The ceremony was conducted in a small room, which must have been an upstairs bedroom in the previous century. Its furnishings could have been discarded from a local school. The highlight of the event was when the Registrar asked for the payment of the licence fee. In his new jacket the groom had failed to bring any money, so a collection had to be made amongst the family, groping for coins in their pockets and handbags.

At the reception, a buffet at his parent's house, aunties speculated at the possibility of a pregnancy. Her father had said he couldn't get the day off work, but he still held a grudge against the boy he had discovered to be his daughter's lover five years before. The bride's two friends who had been witnesses had both left their husbands at home, minding children, as had her sister. The bride, shy of the aunties, spent the afternoon washing tea cups, allowing at least one aunt to mistake her friend for the bride.

At last it was time to go home, so with the two witness friends, they caught the no.133 bus which ran direct from Brixton to Highgate, where they had found their bedsit. This was the reason for their wedding. When they had met again, five years after their initial romance, they still felt a fondness and had looked for a two bedroom flat, but property was scarce and expensive. What they could afford was a bedsit. They had told the landlord they were married and had purchased a ring in a pawnshop behind Victoria station. But then there was the problem of their mothers, who would insist on a respectable ending, so the wedding had to be.

They had an enjoyable trip to Regent's Park zoo on the next day, a honeymoon?

