

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/3

*Alice Weiss*

### **Emmie's Wedding**

I went downstairs in the old Grange Hall where the tables were already set up long-ways, like a Parisian student eatery and, Faye, Annetta's mom, was tying ribbons on the backs of folding chairs. Emmie wasn't there yet so I went upstairs to the plain paneled public room and poured myself a Dewars 'neat'.

Molly and Kat showed up around then, kissed me and also Gail's mom who always kept a daybed in the attic for Emmie even though her husband hung marijuana leaves to dry there on the rafters, and Ryan's mom who took Emmie with her own boy in the afternoons because, she said, the kids got on so well and Mrs. Lindgren, who owned the Swedish fish store and made sure Emily got to go to music camp.

The Bassett twins slouched in with their mom who helped out with the air fare when the Baptist minister drove Emmie to Logan for the funeral in Pittsburgh when her father O.D.'d. Molly and Kat reminded me that the three of them together constituted the three musketeers in Ms. Butts's history class against the kids who teased them (like the Bassetts), Molly said, because they were *exponentially* the best, and me, Molly's mom, who ran to school for this and that if Emmie seemed to need it, and tried and failed to convince the guidance people to let her walk with the class at graduation even though she'd failed her finals.

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I guess she knew we each had her back  
even though we barely knew each other,  
except to know that none of us would ever  
comment when Emmie's mother didn't show  
or showed up late like she did today  
in a green short sleeved Henley buttoned T shirt.  
Then it all happened swiftly for our bride  
and this French accented gleaming boy and  
even though the wedding had the whiff of green  
card we were hopeful and joyful and  
at the supper Kat sat beside me and Ryan's mom--  
a few seats down from us--and, Moll and Marc,  
my husband, across the table. Ryan's mom  
called to Molly to thank her for finding that picture  
of Ryan and Emmie together, they had been so close,  
she said, using, I thought, the wrong tense and  
when I looked at Moll she mouthed to me  
--he died four years ago when he was twenty two--  
the water rose in my head, almost cresting,  
like the waters of a creek before it overflows.  
I turned to Ryan's mom and knew  
from her reddening face that she had seen us.

She reached across Kat and showed me the picture  
she wore pinned to her shawl like a campaign button.  
I said he was beautiful and finally began to weep  
and my husband, focusing, of course, on me with  
that look he has--equal parts concern and impatience—  
said, "He wasn't your child." and I swallowed and  
hating him for the obliviousness of his love for me,  
and myself for self-righteousness and sentimentality,  
quoted from the first grown up picture book I ever owned--  
my throat constricted so I sounded like a frog--  
"All children are my children."