



THE WEDDING

Barbara Rady Kazdan

We had time to prepare, we focused on that—did we have the right outfits, could we borrow a shawl? My daughters and I checked in with each other, reassured, consulted, and logistics aside, relationship-shifting imminent, counted on gaining strength from our physical closeness, rare but precious now, taken for granted long ago when we'd shared the same home, blissfully unaware of how brief that time would be in the whole of our lives. Now here we were, the winds having carried us from our separateness to wholeness once more, and we rallied, sharing our strengths, rekindling relationships, remembering rivalries like muscle memory, ignored in the rush to support our baby now grown as he stepped into marriage, each of us wondering, resisting the question, What now? Realizing this boy had become the last man standing in many of our lives, had slipped into that role as if he'd been rehearsing for it, confidently, caringly, nurturing in his tender, upbeat way, showing up for, bolstering his widowed mom, his suddenly single sister, her fragile preteen daughters, becoming for them what his sisters have been for him with his own gentle strength and joyful life force.

As he stepped into the life he'd make with his bride, we whose lives have been interwoven with his clung to each other for reassurance before breaking away, separating again, remembering and renewing the ways we buffer our separateness, reminded what a distant second it is to sharing one physical space, embracing, touching, all of our senses filled with each other's presence, energy, familiar uniqueness; reminded what laughing together sounds like unfiltered by electronics—seeing the eyes twinkle, the laugh lines crinkle, having those unique,

viscerally-remembered loved ones close enough to touch, to hug—savoring our connection.

Every cell in me cried out, “Yes!” this is where I belong, where I’m known, not only as who I am now but who I came to be, all those years when I was becoming and so were they, knowing me as others never will, loving me unconditionally. Together, celebrating the youngest in our death-diminished but strong nuclear family, as he shed his singleness to embrace, at last, the woman who’d recognized as he had, almost instantly, their long search was over, eager to plunge into their life together like two kids holding hands, leaping into unknown waters, confident they’ll surface and swim strongly, joyfully, to solid ground.

And the three of us, his older sisters and I, the “three moms” who remember him before he could crawl, who celebrated his first steps, who hovered nearby till he found his footing. And his nieces—nurtured, sustained and engaged with him from birth—return to lives changed by this new phase in his life and ours, feelings raw, emotions swirling, tears surfacing, wondering, hoping, loving, uncertain now of our footing, but hopeful, always hopeful, and telling ourselves it will be the same but different, we’ve done this before, it will be good.

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