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800 words

## **A Nice Day For A White Wedding**

It was a splendid afternoon for a May wedding. The vineyard was lush and the day warm; creamy canopies floated over the ceremony, glowing in the sun like buoyant paper lanterns. After the newlyweds kissed, the bride pulled away, flushed, and wiped away the moisture glistening on her her upper lip.

“Is my face sweaty?” She whispered to her maid of honor.

“No not at all, your skin looks great— dewy.”

The bride smiled in relief and went back to her new husband, who was standing off to the side looking a little lost. They hooked arms and chit chatted with guests who came up and offered them congratulations, growing thirstier and thirstier after every “thank you.” To the groom, the light filtering through the canopy made everyone look slightly superficial.

The day was growing hotter by the minute. During photographs, the bride dabbed her face with little blotting papers between each frame. She was a pretty woman, in her late twenties, slender with dark auburn hair and freckles that dusted her skin. The groom, who had darker, smoother skin, loved her freckles; he had maybe just a mole here and there to marvel at, so instead he marveled at her, constantly tickling the smattering across her shoulders and nose and feet.

They were normally a beautiful couple. The bride had spent hours on a swept-half-up hair style with soft curls cascading down her back, but today no amount of product could keep

her hair from falling down and flyaways from frizzing up. The groom couldn't stop sweating. His white button down shirt was translucent, sleeves rolled up.

Humidity thickened over the reception. The white tents started to sag, weighed down by the super saturated air. Guests stood around in little groups, trying to ignore the way heat sank oily on their skin and made their hearts beat in their faces. The late-afternoon sun was so low in the sky that its glare was constantly in their eyes, forcing them to avert their gazes when speaking to each other.

The caterers kept refilling the wine buckets with ice to keep the bottles cold, but the resulting condensation collected in pools, trickling down the unforgiving polyester tablecloth to slip sticky under food dishes. The salad wilted. The cheese sweated. The meat was too hot for anyone to feel like eating. Children drew patterns in the melted frosting on the cake.

Most of the guests tried to put on a show of celebration. But *trying* to have fun is always a doomed endeavor. The bride and groom danced. The bride had little dots of mascara under her eyes, and her grip slipped in her new husband's slick hands.

The mother of the bride watched her daughter's plastered on smile and, she didn't know why, but for some reason kept thinking of something she had told her daughter long ago when they were watching *Say Yes to the Dress*: "Honey, some girls get married just to throw a big fancy party. Don't be one of those girls— if you want a party, throw one, you don't need a reason." She wondered if her daughter remembered that little exchange. This party might have been big, but it certainly wasn't fancy. One lady was using a menstrual pad to fan her face. Small children, uncomfortable in their satin dresses and black trousers, stripped half-naked and started wailing to go home. The adults looking on wished they could strip, too.

The bride noticed her mother looking at her. There was something unsettling about the crease between her mother's brows; something that settled cold and hard into her own stomach. She resisted the urge to bury her face in her hands. She was tired of trying to mend this disaster of a reception and just wanted to go home and be alone. But she knew that's not what brides were supposed to do on their wedding night.

After the reception, the newlyweds sat in the back of a car in route to the airport. The bride was swallowing tears. "This was supposed to be the best day of my life. But it's ruined."

The word startled the groom. *Supposed*. As in, it wasn't?

He felt curiously detached. He knew he should comfort her, but all he could focus on was a knot he didn't know he had tightening in his chest. He wanted to reply: "I'm marrying the love of my life. That makes it the best day of my life. I don't care about a stupid party. Don't you agree?" But he couldn't get the words out. He wanted to say: "Aren't I enough?" But that sounded too needy. He couldn't say anything at all. He just sat there, staring at his shoes, sweat dripping chilly down his back, as they began their new life together.