

"Dearly Beloved"

by

Donald Steele

CHARACTERS

JOANNA – early 30s

MARTIN – her father

A bedroom in Martin's house in Downer's Grove, Illinois. Joanna's wedding day.
Afternoon. Now.

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A bedroom. Afternoon. JOANNA is sitting in a chair. SHE is dressed in a nice stylish dress (or suit). Nearby is a bridal bouquet. In a moment her father MARTIN enters, also nicely dressed in a suit and wearing a boutonniere.

MARTIN

We're waiting for you. What's the hold up?

JOANNA

I can't do it dad.

MARTIN

Do what?

JOANNA

That downstairs. What everybody's here for.

MARTIN

You...want me to tell them to go home?

JOANNA

You'd like that.

MARTIN

Meaning what?

JOANNA

Then you wouldn't have to go through with giving me away at my gay wedding.

MARTIN

Did I or did I not say you could have the ceremony in my backyard? Was that me or wasn't it?

JOANNA

Only so you didn't have to say you had it in your house.

MARTIN

The house was going to be used in case the weather was

bad. As back up. We're having the reception in the house. Or have you failed to notice the tables set up for the buffet? And the flowers everywhere? I have been nothing but supportive.

JOANNA

Only because you knew I wouldn't go through with it.

MARTIN

And I would know that how? Lots of things I am Joanna but psychic isn't one of them.

JOANNA

Because I never follow through on anything.

MARTIN

I'm confused. I thought we were talking about you.

JOANNA

I have a tendency to run out of steam. I do.

MARTIN

And that's why you're a successful interior decorator whose been featured in Architectural Digest 5 times? You run out of steam and pack up your follow through so houses and apartments and summer homes all over have rooms half wallpapered? Sofas half upholstered? Rugs...

JOANNA

I said tendency.

MARTIN

You and Amy have been together for 7 years. If that's not follow through.

JOANNA

Well today my tendency is in full bloom. Today I am running out of steam. Today I am all out of follow through.

MARTIN

Today.

JOANNA

Today. Right now. This minute.

SHE exhales making a hissing sound.

MARTIN

What the hell is that?

JOANNA

The sound of me running out of steam.

MARTIN

Get up. Get downstairs. Your mother and I raised you better than this.

JOANNA

I can't do it.

MARTIN

Are you now suddenly paralyzed as well as having been taken over by some alien entity that looks like you but isn't you?

JOANNA

I can't do this to Amy.

MARTIN

Do what? The only thing you're doing to Amy is making her wait.

JOANNA

This.

MARTIN

Humiliate her? Jilt her? Leave her at the altar?

JOANNA

I thought I knew what I was doing when I suggested this. But now...

MARTIN

"But now...?"

JOANNA

Now I don't think I do. I don't think I ever did.

MARTIN

What did you think you were doing? When you were interviewing caterers? Discussing flower arrangements with the florist? Sending out 68 invitations all of which were RSVPed in the positive?

JOANNA

Not this. Not what it's become today.

MARTIN

And what has it become today? Other than a potentially embarrassing disaster.

JOANNA

I wanted today to be about love, to be an act of love. I wanted to get married as an act of love.

MARTIN

And it is. Downstairs waiting for you in front of 97 people is a woman who loves you. Who I am so so so happy you love.

JOANNA

You are?

MARTIN

Oh God yes. I like her much more than any of the boys you ever dated.

JOANNA

You do?

MARTIN

Not that I didn't like them. On the whole. Andrew was sweet. But with everyone of them I thought, "She could do so much better." And you did. Amy.

JOANNA

I can't do this to you.

MARTIN

Do what? Make me go downstairs and face 97 people who are waiting for vows, food, and cake...

JOANNA

Cake is food.

MARTIN

Yes I know that. I have been to a few weddings. I was planning to go to this one. In my backyard. Like you thought would be so nice when I suggested it. I did not think I would have to go downstairs to tell everyone Oops Joanna has had a breakdown, but don't let that stop you, go ahead help yourself to the Lobster Newburgh and cut into that cake which I gladly paid for that cost more than a lot of people's monthly mortgage.

JOANNA

Don't you see what today has become?

MARTIN

A disaster.

JOANNA

No. It's political. This is a political act I am committing. I didn't want it be a political act.

MARTIN

How could it not be?

JOANNA

And that doesn't bother you?

MARTIN

You are gay Joanna. I am the father of a gay daughter. I am a father who was planning on hosting the wedding of his gay daughter. I may not have marched in the streets protesting a war - any war - but I would say doing today here what I was planning on doing here today, watching happily as you and Amy took your vows, leading toasts, celebrating this, does have some political overtones to it. And I am also the father of a daughter who isn't gay. And a son who isn't. And as with them when they met someone, met The Someone, loved The Someone, lived

MARTIN (Cont.)

with The Someone, married The Someone, I put aside whatever hesitations I might have had, any fears, any objections, and I embraced fully - or as fully as I could given the person I was being asked to embrace - and accepted what I was being offered.

JOANNA

What objections could you have had with the people Susan and Paul married?

MARTIN

Susan could have done better. And I don't mean that euphemistically. But I wasn't the one marrying Gary.

JOANNA

But when Susan and Paul got married, it wasn't a protest.

MARTIN

You don't think so?

JOANNA

It was?

MARTIN

Paul's wife is nice enough and all, and I do think she is an awfully good mother. No complaints there. But I have never really taken to her. And your brother knew that.

JOANNA

How? You didn't say...something?

MARTIN

You know me.

JOANNA

Yeah I do. You said something?

MARTIN

He has eyes. He can see. You see how I am with Amy? Do I act like that with Beverly?

JOANNA

(Realizing.)
No. No you don't.

MARTIN

And your brother sees that too. I felt a bit when they got married - and not in my backyard I remind you - I felt Paul was saying, "So there" to me. And if that wasn't an act of protest I don't know what is.

JOANNA

But I want Amy to think I'm marrying her out of love.

MARTIN

She does. She will. As soon as you show up downstairs. The second he sees your face. fDownstairs. Where she is waiting. Like we all are.

JOANNA

I don't want anger to be part of this.

MARTIN

I'm angry. Anger will be part of my day.

JOANNA

Angry about what?

MARTIN

That there are people who think this is wrong. My motive in offering you the use of my backyard, the backyard you used to play in when you were little, where I could watch you out my back window, wasn't exactly pure. I'm angry that people could see you and Amy together, love each other as much as you do, as much as you have for 7 years, and hate you. They may say they don't hate you, just the act, what you represent. They hate you. Nobody is going to tell me that God doesn't love you and who you love. This is my act of protest today. This is my March on Selma. This is my bus. This is my March on Washington. Don't take today away from me. I love you and there is no where else on the face of this planet, in this country, for you to get married but in my backyard where I watched you take your first footsteps.

JOANNA

And that anger won't get in your way?

MARTIN

No. The only anger that could get in my way today is theirs. Don't let them spoil this day. Don't let them get in your way. You haven't so far. Don't start now.

THEY embrace.

JOANNA

Let's go downstairs and have ourselves a gay wedding. Gay in every sense.

MARTIN hands her her bridal bouquet.

MARTIN

There now. Picture perfect.

HE offers her his arm which she takes.

JOANNA

Just one thing.

MARTIN

What?

JOANNA

How did you get Father Brodeski to officiate?

MARTIN

I told him if he wanted the money for that big new stained glass window he could be a really good Christian and think for himself.

THEY exit.

THE END