

“RUBY YEAR” by Alexander Lee-Rekers

A small community hall, decorated for a party. Siblings MARGARET and HARRY sit with their estranged brother NOAH, slumped in his chair and looking at them both.

NOAH: You won't look at me. *(Pause.)* Not that weird, is it?

MARGARET: It is a little strange, you being here.

NOAH: Should I go?

HARRY: Maybe.

MARGARET: No- They, they wouldn't want that. They want to see you.

NOAH: *(Nodding.)* Did they miss me?

HARRY: They were worried about you.

NOAH: Hey, me too.

Silence.

NOAH: The, uh, the place looks great! Got some bunting, paper napkin swans. I liked the photo collage on the wall near the buffet.

HARRY: Josh did that. He's six, now.

NOAH: Shit, I was going to ask. Six? That flew, he must be like a little person already. Can't wait to meet him.

HARRY: Sure! And you know that's the only reason you're not in the collage, yeah? We weren't sure how to explain to him about-

NOAH: Totally, totally. Best done in person.

HARRY: So. You need help with something? Haven't done much hosting lately. I could mop the floor, it's kind of sticky where you walk in-

MARGARET: Noah, are you going to be okay today?

NOAH: Of course.

MARGARET: But are you going to be ... nice?

NOAH: Nice, Mags? I'm always nice. Remember?

MARGARET: Today's not about you.

NOAH: I can go, I'm happy to go, I just need to know now so I don't surprise them in the parking lot.

HARRY: We're not asking you to go.

MARGARET: Harry, maybe it's best if he-

NOAH: Don't do that. Don't speak about me like I'm not in the room.

MARGARET: Force of habit.

NOAH: You want to have the talk? We can have the talk. But I don't think our parents' anniversary party is the place for it.

MARGARET: *Then maybe you should go. (Silence.)* I don't know how we can see each other and talk, without having the "talk" talk. We didn't know you were coming, we didn't even know you were getting out-

NOAH: *(Talking over her.)* It was a surprise, it was meant to be a nice surprise.

HARRY: Don't talk over her.

NOAH: Fuck off, Harry.

MARGARET: You can't show up and dictate the pace of our lives. You don't get to do that.

NOAH: *(To Harry.)* I thought you'd be on my side, at the very fucking least. She's gotten worse, hasn't she?

HARRY: Don't speak about Mags like she's not in the room.

NOAH: This was a mistake. I'm sorry. I thought I was ready, clearly I'm not.

A long pause. He stands up, looks at his siblings. Makes to leave in silence.

MARGARET: Mop of the floor would be great.

NOAH: Okay.

MARGARET: Use hot water.

NOAH: No shit.

MARGARET: It's their fortieth wedding anniversary. Ruby year. Did you get them anything?

NOAH: I did. "Wizard of Oz" DVD.

HARRY laughs.

HARRY: So did I.

A moment of lightness between them. Just for a moment.

MARGARET: Well it's the thought that counts. *(Her phone buzzes.)* They're on their way. Let's get ready.