

42.5  
50

place.

THE STRANGER

She was getting engaged.

And all I could do was stand by and applaud along with all. I didn't dare open my mouth for fear of saying something stupid.

Something like "I LOVE YOU".

I remembered the other day when she had come to me with red eyes. Her "best friend" was going away. It had never mattered to me that her best friend was a guy. I thought I was above such things. But her tears awoke the sin of jealousy in my heart. Fighting it, I had consoled her and given her chocolates to eat. She proceeded to rest her head in the crook of my arm. ~~and~~ And promptly fell asleep. I chuckled at her baby-like innocence.

But now, as I applauded, I felt something stabbing at my heart.  
~~I felt~~

She was getting married.

I saw her come down the stairs decked out in her bridal finery. Never had I seen her looking this pretty. I saw her taking the seven rounds around the sacred fire with the man I had come to hate, holding his hand. I saw her exchanging garlands with him.

She was a total stranger to me now.

I was standing near the car when they both came over to me. I wondered what they wanted. I wondered how to say Farewell to the Departed.

Nevertheless, as my daughter and son-in-law touched my feet, I blessed them. She was openly crying. I told her not to worry. That I'll always be here.

~~And she responded~~

She responded by hugging me. ~~And~~

And I could not stop the tears any more.

\* Beautiful. Just beautiful

\* The climax is great! One tip → the mention of 'daughter & son-in-law' could have been avoided to let the reader assume it is the girl's dad, as they are falling at his feet anyway...

$$F(5) - 4/5$$

$$C(15) - 13/15$$

$$W(5) - 5/5$$

$$L(10) - 8/10$$

$$V(5) - 4.5/5$$

$$Lo(10) - 8/10$$

$$\frac{72.5}{50}$$