

6-15-1989

Love for Emily

John Patrick Wall

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Recommended Citation

Wall, John Patrick (1989) "*Love for Emily*," *The Mythic Circle*: Vol. 1989 : Iss. 8 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mcircle/vol1989/iss8/15>

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Abstract

I have never actually met my cousin Emily, even though I have known her all of my life. We've talked on the phone often enough, and I keep up a lively correspondence with her.

Additional Keywords

Fiction; Love for Emily; John Patrick Wall

LOVE FOR EMILY

By John Patrick Wall

I have never actually met my cousin Emily, even though I have known her all of my life. We've talked on the phone often enough, and I keep up a lively correspondence with her. We grew up close enough together so that our families were able to visit each other frequently, but upon those occasions we were always kept apart. The reason that we never met in person is that my cousin Emily is a medusa.

Now don't get me wrong, I don't want you to imagine that she is a frightening-looking gorgon with wings, claws, enormous teeth, and hair made of snakes. Absolutely not! From what I understand

Emily is a very attractive tall, willowy, blonde. It is merely that, through no fault of her own, she apparently causes people outside of a certain degree of relationship to turn into stone.

It was when my father and his first wife and son went to visit his sister a few days after Emily was born that our family first found out about this odd situation. Our grandmother is a midwife and she delivered Emily as she had done her seven older brothers and sisters, so no doctor or nurse (or anyone else) outside of the family had yet laid eyes on the newborn girl. Although my father remained unaffected by his little niece, his young wife and infant son... well, there is a very good reason why the sculpture of the madonna and Child on their grave is so realistic.

←—————→
EDITORIAL, cont.

extra copies per issue, to be mailed out prudently and judiciously with an eye to promoting our writers. Christine and I have decided to reduce the frequency with which TMC appears, from quarterly to once every four months (is there any good word for that? If biannual is once every two years it can't be triannual... Somebody, help!) because We Get Tired of apologizing for being late and thrice annually seems to match our natural circadian rhythm.

I know, I know: these are behind-the-scenes details and you may not want any part of them. But, having grown up in America, we believe in soliciting your opinions AND THEN going on to do whatever we darn well please anyway (!!!).

So we implore you, kindly take a few minutes to answer the questionnaire (anonymity is perfectly acceptable) and mail it back.

We thank you for your time and support, with special thanks to Stan & Angelee Anderson for a generous monetary donation (if you appreciate the extra length of this issue - thank the Andersons).

Lynn Maudlin & Christine Lowentrout, editors

*For those of you who don't know, the Mythopoeic Society is an international literary non-profit organization which focuses on the study and enjoyment of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams specifically and myth and fantasy in general. The Mythopoeic Society sponsors publication of The Mythic Circle.

It was never figured out how this odd condition of Emily's came about. My father believes that it is a genetic condition. This is a reasonable supposition, considering that parents, siblings, grandparents, and blood aunts and uncles appear to have an immunity to Emily while cousins, more distant relations, and non-relations do not. According to my father's theory, great-aunts and great-uncles would also be immune to Emily, but Great Uncle Harry, the only one available, had decided not to try his luck.

Thus, after the unfortunate incident with my father's first wife and my half-brother, began the efforts of our family to not so much shield Emily from the rest of the world but rather shield the rest of the world from Emily. Fortunately, she was one of eight children and had a total of twelve aunts and uncles, along with a complete set of grandparents, so she was never lonely as a child.

The first crisis came when Emily came of age to enter school. She quite naturally could not go to class or else we'd have the lives of twenty to thirty six-year-olds on our consciences. Fortunately, my aunt had been a teacher before she got married so she renewed her teacher's certificate in order to tutor her youngest daughter at home.

As Emily grew older, she began to desire the companionship of boys and men who were not closely related to her. Her rational mind told her that this was impossible, but deep down in her heart she hoped and she prayed.

She began to answer advertisements in magazines for pen pals. She began to place advertisements herself but, sooner or later, all her pen pals would drift off.

That was until she was eighteen and she received a letter from a fellow in rural Colorado named Owen Thoreau. They seemed quite right for each other. They both liked the same books, the same music, the same television programs, and so on. For three years they carried on a lengthy correspondence and finally he begged to get a chance to meet her.

Emily agonized a great deal over what to do. She knew it could never come about but she feared she would lose a good pen pal. She finally decided to write him a letter explaining the whole truth and hoping they could still be friends. It was with a great deal of regret that she gave it to her mother to mail.

We were all surprised when Owen Thoreau sent her a reply that he still wished to meet her. Emily sadly wrote him that it was his life to throw away as he wished.

On the appointed day Emily waited with a combination of anticipation and apprehension. Owen Thoreau arrived and was ushered into Emily's room.

Her eyes grew wide at the sight of the short, stocky young man whose beard seemed unusually long for his age.

The whole family wondered why this man did not immediately become granite. But here he was, obviously alive, in fact quite animated. Finally Emily could bear it no longer and asked him how he managed to avoid mineralification. Owen laughed heartily. He explained that he was a dwarf and that his people were originally made from stone, thus it was impossible for him to change into something which he already was.

Needless to say, matrimony was soon committed. Emily went to the mountains to live with the kind of Oin son of Thoror, to give her husband's real name. They are deliriously happy and have two lovely young daughters who are just at the age when their beards begin to show first growth.

