

Bubbles' Baby
by
Austin Mitchell

As I drove into Creighton on my way to Latore's Ridge a young lady waved me down. When I stopped the car and she came up to it, I recognized her as 'Bubbles' Kenton, one of my former students.

"Teacher, can I beg you a ride to Rennals?"

"Sure, Bubbles, get in."

I opened the car door for her and she got in.

She had a young baby with her, but I noticed that she didn't have a bag, although the baby was wrapped in a towel.

"Your first baby, Bubbles?" I asked as I drove off the car.

"He's Leta's baby, teacher. I don't have any children yet. She's gone for an interview in Kingston so she begged me to keep him for her."

I used to teach both Bubbles and Leta at Mc Cauley High School in Oakley district. That was about eight years ago. I was no longer teaching school. Bubbles might have been about twelve and Leta was two years older.

"So what are you doing for yourself now, Bubbles?"

"I plan to go to evening classes next year."

"That's good, so what do you plan on studying?"

"I want to do nursing so I have to do over Mathematics and Human and Social Biology."

"I wish you the best. By the way, what's the baby's name?"

"His name is Russell, Deron Harper is his father."

"Deron Harper, I remember him. He was in class with you? Wasn't he?"

"Yes, teacher."

For the rest of the journey we just discussed things in general about other past students and teachers at Mc Cauley High.

When we reached Rennals I let Bubbles out and continued on to Latore's Ridge.

When I completed my business in Latore's Ridge night was already falling. I drove back home and decided to stop in Creighton and have a drink at Archibald Crook's bar. Creighton was a mile away from Oakley so I knew most of the people there.

There were only about half a dozen patrons in the bar. Archie was behind the counter.

I ordered a beer and was drinking it when I heard Archie remark.

"I don't know what this country's coming to. The girl just left her baby sleeping and somebody took him away."

"Somebody stole a baby around here, Archie?" I asked.

"Dennis Charley's daughter, Yvette. You should know her, Don. You should have taught her at school."

Yvette Charley, I remembered her now. She was in the same class as Bubbles.

"Laddie Harper's son, Deron, is the baby's father," Leslie Johnson, a middle aged farmer informed me.

My head began spinning. Now what the hell was happening here?

"I used to teach Deron too."

I ordered another beer and told Archie to refill their glasses.

I was still anxious to find out more about the child stealing, but I hadn't planned on doing any drinking and I hated to drink and drive. I bought them another round and decided to leave.

Before I left I announced that I hoped that the child would be found. I went outside and was opening my car door when I saw Leta Kenton and I beckoned her over.

She was taller than Bubbles, and bigger in body. She was probably around five feet six inches tall.

"How are you, Leta? I thought you didn't live in Creighton anymore."

"What makes you say that, Mr. Reed?"

I told her to have a seat in the car as I didn't want anybody to hear what I was about to say to her. She was dragging her feet as she came into the car and I turned on the overhead light.

I told her about Bubbles and what she told me and she started to cry.

“I don’t have a baby, Mr. Reed.”

“So why did Bubbles take away Yvette’s baby and told me that it was yours?”

I was of course assuming that the baby I saw Bubbles with was Yvette’s baby.

Leta cried even harder now and then she told me what had happened.

“Deron got Bubbles pregnant first and then we heard that Yvette was pregnant for him too. The two of them start to curse each other, although they never came to blows.”

“One day Bubbles was sitting on a tree stump and it broke and we had to take her to the hospital and she lost her baby. When Bubbles was pregnant anything she wanted, Deron would give her. After she lost the baby, he changed. He no longer cared about her.”

“I know that something’s wrong with Bubbles, teacher. After Deron stopped talking to her, she took it badly. I told mummy and daddy but they said nothing was wrong with her. They believe she will soon get over Deron and the loss of her baby.”

“We have to find her and take away the baby from her. I’m not saying that she’s going to harm it, but you never know what might happen. The police are going to charge her with child stealing plus a battery of other charges.”

“He made a fool of my sister. I told her not to talk to him, but she wouldn’t listen.”

“I think it would be best to report what we know to the police. I gave her a lift with the baby so I think I have a duty to report this matter and let the police take it from there.”

“I don’t want them to beat up my sister. They aren’t going to treat her well, especially after what she has done.”

“Even if we find Bubbles and take the baby away from her. Do you think Yvette is just going to take back her baby without raising a stink?”

She sat in the car silent but still shedding tears, but after a while I saw her nodding.

“I’ll call Jassette and tell her what’s happening and then we can go to the police station.”

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