

Chapter 30

Life resumed like the summer had never happened. I entered Junior High School, joined band and began learning how to play the trumpet, I was on the math team, and no matter how hard I tried, I knew I was never going to be able to climb that rope in gym class to the top of the ceiling.

I took my parents advice about the events. I put it behind me and didn't think about it. The memory of my flight from Church Camp across state lines into The Old Man's peach barn and assuming an alternate identity seemed less and less real with every passing day. It was sort of link a fairy tale dream that seems so vivid in the morning but fuzzier as the day progresses.

The only real world remind of the summer saga was the occasional letter or postcard from Angela that would arrive. It wasn't often, once every 2 or 3 months. The first of which arrived about a month after the summer and it was a postcard from Disney Land. Her and her mother seemed to migrate from one place to the next. The letters were always postmarked from different places; Alaska, El Paso, Shreveport, Chicago, Phoenix. My mother would retrieve the mail, pick out the letter from Angela, raise her eyebrows and hand it over to me with a look of suspicious but otherwise said nothing.

About two years after the whole ordeal, I received a letter postmarked "Yazoo, Mississippi". It read...

Dear David,

Momma and I came back to The Farm and the peach orchard the first time since that day we left with you. My Paw-Paw died. We buried him yesterday. He had an accident while working on that old tractor. It fell off the ramps he had it jacked up on and he was crushed under it. He died right there in the shade under the sycamore tree next to the house.

You remember Douglas? He was the guy who used to buy peaches from us at the peach stand. He was the one who found Paw-Paw dead beneath the tractor. All the dogs had just snuggled up to him and were sleeping by him. He had been dead for a few days according to the Sherriff.

We buried him right next to Granny who died the week after you and I left. She had a stroke or something like that when she realized that my daddy (her Johnny) was never coming back to her again. They are both buried right next to him in the cemetery. You remember the cemetery, David? You remember the peach orchard and the caboose too? We should make plans to runaway one day ad meet each other at the old caboose, don't you think?

Paw-Paw left the house, farm and orchard to Momma in his will. We are sticking around long enough to sell it. She's selling in to "BAMA". They are the company who makes all that jam and jelly you get at the supermarket. I bet it doesn't taste as good as what we made with Granny two summers ago.

I think Momma wants to go back to California from here. I play my clarinet a log and sit around thinking about whether or not there is a God out there somewhere in the universe. I hope there is, but I really don't know. Hope we can come by and visit you one day.

Love Angela.

And the letters continued with a strange sparse regularity from random locations throughout North America. But one summer, three years later in the summer of 1986, her and her mother stopped by for a visit.

My mother answered the door. "David, "my mother called to me, "There are two ladies here who say they know you."

I came to the door. I could hardly believe it. There stood Angela and her mother, Doreen on my front doorsteps and they were both pregnant. Yes, both pregnant. Not a lite. I wear they were. Angela smiled a little smile at me and said, "Well, are you going to let us in Mister? You silly boy! Or am I going to have to fetch the shotgun? She reached over the threshold and hugged me.

I looked at Doreen and she said, "Well, you turned out nice and strong, didn't you Sugar?" And then she winked at me.

I turned to my mother and said, "Mom...this is." And I never finished that statement. It seemed that she immediately understood. She moved over to Doreen and introduced herself, "Hello, "she said extending her hand to Doreen, "I'm Rebecca Edwards, David's mother."

My mother paused, and then turned around. She held her face as if she was about to sneeze but instead turned back around to face Doreen. She collapsed into Doreen's shoulders and began sobbing. "Oh, thank you, thank you so much. Thank you for bringing my baby back to me. We were just about to fall over the edge. We just weren't going to make it any longer and then just when it was too much to handle, you brought him back to me."

Doreen hugged my mother and patted her on the back, "There, there, sweetie, "she said to my mother. "You let it out. It was a tough time. It's been all over now for five years."

My mother made Angela's acquaintance but fell into long conversation with Doreen about children, Tupperware, furniture and room colors. She gave me some money and the keys to her car. "Why don't you and Angela go out, see a movie and spend some time together. Y'all have a lot of catching up to do."

It was only the second time I had been given the opportunity to drive the car by myself since getting my driver's license. We drove into town and talked. After a few minutes of driving and silence I asked, "So are you going to marry the father?"

"No," she said. "He was just some asshole I met at a party. The biggest mistake I ever made. But hopefully..." she added patting her stomach, "Something wonderful is going to come out of this."

"It will be wonderful. I'm sure of it." I suggested.

"It's it so weird? Me and my mom being pregnant at the same time?"

I nodded and said, "Very weird." I continued driving, fairly nervous behind the wheel.

"Are you curious as to what name I've picked out for the baby?"

"Well, of course, I'm curious."

"Well, if he's a boy I'm going to name him after my Daddy. But I don't want anybody calling him John or Johnny or Jack. I want him to be called 'Jonathan' properly. Got that?"

"Check. "I said. "If I ever meet him, I'll make sure I call him Jonathan properly and not John or Jack."

“Oh of course you’ll meet him you silly boy. You’re never gonna shake me. I’m gonna keep on writing you and popping in on you like this until we are old, gray and bent over like The Old Man was.”

“And what if you have a girl?” I asked.

“Peaches.” She replied.

I turned my head away from the road and looked at Angela. “Peaches?” I asked.

“Yes, Peaches, “she stated. “Don’t you think it’s an appropriate name for a girl?”

“Suppose so, “I said. “but if it’s all the same to you, I’m hoping you have that little boy.”

“Me too!” she agreed. “Girls are nothing but trouble. Trouble. Trouble. Trouble. Step on your toes when they’re toddlers. Step all over your heart when they are teenagers.”

“And you’ll have a child and a brother or sister that are the same age?” I asked.

She giggled and nodded. “Weird, I know. None of it was planned. Momma never plans anything. She just gets up in the morning and goes whichever way the wind is blowing that day.

“Doesn’t that get old?” I asked, “Don’t you ever want to put down roots and find a place to call home?”

“Oh, what fun would that be?” she asked. “Then minute you start planning life is the minute that life doesn’t live up to your expectations. And then you’re just disappointed and depressed.”

“That’s one way of looking at it, “I commented.

She smiled and slugged me one on my shoulder. “but if and when I do ever settle down, I’ll be sure and let you know. You can come visit me. Bring your wife, your three kids and your station wagon. But until then, I’ll just keep you guessing. Hell. I’ll keep myself guessing.” She giggled to herself.”

“Roger Dodger, “I said as we pulled into the parking lot of the movie theater.

We saw a movie called “Short Circuit” It was about a military robot who gets struck by lightning and suddenly wakes up to its own consciousness then decides that killing should no longer be part of its programming. So, it decides to reprogram itself and decides it’s a living

sentient being. That makes it sound more thought provoking than it really was but that is neither here nor there as the saying goes.

I pulled out of the parking lot. Angela started laughing.

I turned to her and said, "What's so funny?"

"You know that's only the second movie I've ever been to."

I blinked and smiled, "Really?"

"Yes, really."

"Well then, what's the other movie you've been to" I asked.

"Coal Miner's Daughter." She said.

"Coal Miner's Daughter?"

"Yep. Momma was going through her country music singer phase and she took me to see it."

"You didn't see Star Wars?"

"Nope?"

"E.T.?"

"Nope!"

"Ghostbusters?"

"Never heard of it."

It was mine turn to laugh.

Angela slugged me and said, "Stop it, Mister.

I nodded and whispered, "Amazing."

I kept driving. We smiled at one another and laughed.

We got back to my house. I have no idea what Doreen and my mother talked about the whole time, but they were still gossiping when we got back. Eventually, though, we all said our pleasantries and goodbyes.

Angela walked out to their car. I put my hand out to shake her hand and she said, “Oh for goodness sake, silly!” She leaned over, embraced me and hugged me tightly.

I smiled and said, “Bye, Bye, Miss American Pie.”

“It ain’t goodbye, David. You can’t get rid of me that easy. Let’s just leave it at see you later. OK?”

“OK, then, “I conceded, “See you later.”

Their car backed out of the driveway and then it was gone. Again, gone. Disappeared down our road. I walked back inside. My mother was putting dishes in the dishwasher. As I walked past her, she said, “David?”

“Yeah, mom?” I replied.

“Your father is going to be home any minute now. He doesn’t need to know about this little visitation. Are we clear?”

“But why?” I questioned.

“Just trust me on this one. Let’s pretend like it didn’t happen. Let’s leave it way back in the past, please?”

“OK. I can do that.” I shrugged my shoulders and walked away