

SWEET BRANDY

Written by

NOT HIM, THE OTHER GUY

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FADE IN:

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - BATHROOM STALL - DAY

SETH PUCKLER, 15, thin, gawky, perches atop a closed toilet clutching a cremation urn. He sniffles, eyes wet with tears.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK - PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

WELDON and JUNE PUCKLER, both late-50s, lean, country-raised, wait at the front of a rundown bathroom block.

Weldon wears a worn Stetson. He fusses over a pair of spectacles, trying to set the arm back in place.

JUNE

Maybe we should check on him?

WELDON

I'm sure he's just fine.

JUNE

The boy's grieving.

WELDON

Well, he needs to harden up some.

JUNE

What he needs is a little emotional support.

WELDON

Is that like fishing?

Off her scowl -

WELDON

What the hell do I know about that kinda thing?

JUNE

Plenty. You was farm raised.

WELDON

And?

JUNE

You come up the hard way. My Pa was a postmaster. The boy don't need no lesson in mail fraud and coupons.

Weldon huffs and shakes his head, relenting.

She takes his glasses.

JUNE

Just give the boy a talk to of some kind. Some insight - man to man. Go on, I'll see to these old things.

WELDON

Insight...

Weldon grumbles off around the side of the building.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

Weldon enters. He looks around, spots the closed cubicle.

WELDON

Stayed for the view, huh?

He waits for a reply. Nothing. He winces, digging deep, mustering his empathy. This isn't easy for him.

WELDON

Listen, I know it ain't easy. ...I know. Really I do...

He paces to a sink. Tests the faucets, idling, buying time. Squints at his care-worn reflection in the grubby mirror.

WELDON

I was younger than you when it happened to me. Her name was Brandy. Spirited little thing. Not the sharpest - mama was past her prime. Somehow got herself tangled in with the Holsteins, they'd just calved so... Ain't nothing like a half-ton of pissed off beeve turn a man to God in a hurry. Uncle Benjamin jumped in the pen to fetch her out. Just a boy, he didn't think twice. Them cows set to him with their hooves. Which is how his head got to being the way it is - didn't help matters none that Grandpa had to haul him out by his ears. And Brandy, well, she was right as rain...

He takes a breath, steeling himself.

WELDON

Ma cleaned him up best she could, put him to bed. We waited on the doctor, when he never came we took to waiting on the Lord instead. Ma never left his side in all them days. All the while, Brandy's out there in the yard, begging to be let in. I pleaded, but that woman's as stubborn as old wire. Anyway, it was a week before he woke, when he did, he looked right at me and asked for Brandy. I'm all 'mercy hallelujah' - but Ma, she looked into them blue eyes of his and knew as only a mother can, the boy she raised weren't there no more. He was gone. Trampled to blood and shit in Grandpa's cow shed.

He pauses at the cubicle door, lost in memory. He removes his hat in reverence. Thumbs the rim.

WELDON

And there's Brandy at the window, staring in at us with them big sad eyes. Ma never said a word, just took up a coal shovel, went out into the yard - that was back when a shovel was a shovel. Yessir, cast iron, built for life. None of this low-grade aluminum garbage. We're talking hand-forged - swing weight like the devil's own pecker. Poor Brandy. Such a sweet thing. Not the smartest, nor the fastest turns out. I never heard such a sound. And I heard me some. Cousin Iris strangled a hog - sober too.

He shudders, burying the memories deep. He shakes free from the thought - a change of tact.

WELDON

And, well, that there's death. She comes to us all, man and beast, be it at the hands of time or a fireside implement to the base of the skull. ...It ain't ever easy to accept, never has been, never will, but you come on out and we'll face her together.

IN THE CUBICLE

GIRL, 14, cowers in the corner, staring at the door in stone cold fear, phone held in her shaking hand.

WELDON (O.S.)

I want you to know, I'm here for you.

GIRL

(whispered)

Daddy...

EXT. COUNTRY PARK - PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

Seth shuffles into view clutching the urn - from the opposite side of the building that Weldon disappeared.

June greets him with a smile, comforting.

JUNE

Are you ready?

He nods, sheepish.

SETH

Can we scatter Mally down by the pond?

JUNE

We sure can. She loved chasing them ducks. All I could do just to keep her on the leash.

They share a smile, barely registering as a BIG MAN, late 30s, storms past them, heading around the building in the direction that Weldon took.

JUNE

Has your Pa gotten lost in there?

Seth shrugs, puzzled.

June shakes her head with a sigh.

FADE OUT