Mrs. Hemer

Creative Writing

Descriptive Story

Due Date

Her lace trimmed blouse and now-frayed flowing yellow chiffon skirt had “city girl” written all over them. And if that wasn’t obvious, the black four-inch stilettos were certainly made for pounding the pavement, not stumbling over gravel pathways. Bret Carlton was in a different world. For all she knew, it could have been another country.

Bret had grown up on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. She had attended an all-girls private school complete with uniforms and regulations about hairstyles and shades of fingernail polish (clear or muted tones only). Her college years at NYU were successful, and she stayed in the city for her career as a photo editor at *Allure*. She had run into Jesse one evening while out with a few girlfriends at The Place. They had been seeing each other a little bit for a couple months. She enjoyed being with Jesse, loved listening to him talk in his southern drawl, and was mesmerized by how “real” he seemed. He was unlike anyone she had ever met. Was there a future? It was too soon to tell. But Bret felt more comfortable around Jesse than she had with anyone else ever before. She was a little surprised that he had asked her to fly back to his “stomping grounds” for a family funeral, but she realized she would have been disappointed if he hadn’t, so she excitedly agreed.

Louisiana was completely foreign to Bret, but as soon as Jesse stepped off the plane, she could see a difference in him. He was home. Like Bret, Jesse had grown up, attended college, and started his career all close to home. He had been working in New Orleans as a mortgage broker until just nine months ago when he had moved to New York City. Bret adored showing him around the city. But if she had known the real reason he left Louisiana, she may have felt a little differently…

Jesse’s great uncle Lonnie had battled cancer for a long time so had made all of his funeral plans, right down to what kind of sandwiches he wanted served at the restaurant/bar where the family and close friends gathered afterwards. He had requested BBQ’d brisket at Billy Bob’s BBQ Pit in Effie. Though Bret had never eaten anything even remotely close to Southern home cookin’, she delicately ate her sandwich while listening to tales about Lonnie and bursts of laughter.

At one point Jesse asked what she thought of the whole ordeal. “It’s great. Your family is so loving. Under different circumstances, I would be having a wonderful time,” she laughed.

“You can still have a wonderful time,” Jesse said as he leaned in to kiss her cheek. “This is probably a little different than what you’re used to, huh?”

“That’s for sure. But it’s great. This is what funerals should be like – a celebration of life. Not just the grieving.”

Jesse nodded. “Agreed. I’m glad you came,” he said with another peck on the cheek.

“Me too,” Bret acknowledged.

The family stayed at Billy Bob’s BBQ Pit all evening and late into the night. As the hours waned, the regulars came in for their nightly wallowing. Members of the family ordered their favorites off the menu and bought round after round of drinks. Bret was a social drinker, always knowing her limit, but Jesse’s family was drinking her under the table. She figured *What the heck? I’m on vacation!* and started trying to keep up. The regulars in Effie all knew Jesse’s family, thus more drinks were bought. It was a Friday night after all; it seemed everyone was trying to close down the bar.

Around midnight, when Bret’s head was spinning, she excused herself to the restroom and scanned the crowd through her underwater eyes. She thought she saw Jesse arguing with a girl by the door. When she came out of the restroom, she saw him at the bar ordering more drinks. She took her seat back at the table, knowing her wobbly legs needed to rest. The drink in front of her looked repulsive now, so she pushed it away as Jesse returned.

He forced a smile. “You feelin’ okay?” Bret shook her head, afraid that if she spoke she might be sick. “You wanna go?”

She nodded. “I think I’d better,” she managed. Jesse helped Bret to her feet. They waved goodbye to family, made plans to get together tomorrow afternoon after everyone had slept it off, and headed out. As they reached the door, a girl stepped in front of them. Bret recognized her as who Jesse had been arguing with earlier.

Jesse seemed unsure of what to do as he nervously glanced between Bret and this girl. Suddenly Bret became more alert. “Jesse, *who* is this?”

The girl snapped, “She don’t even know who I am? Typical.” She thrust her hand out towards Bret. “I’m Candi. We have a daughter. Her name’s Leesa. You must be the City Snob.”

Bret looked at Candi’s hand with her fake dagger nails painted neon pink and cheap rings on every finger. She glanced back at Jesse and knew immediately it was true. “This…is your wife?” she stammered.

“Bret –“

She cut him off, “Don’t bother,” and stormed out the door. She didn’t have a car, didn’t even know which direction to head, but she hurriedly walked as far away from Billy Bob’s BBQ Pit as she could. Her wispy blonde hair blew in the breeze as the salt carried from the ocean strengthened her senses. She walked aimlessly, needing to be alone, but desperately wanting to hear Jesse running to catch her. Soon she got to the edge of town and only dark highway stretched in front of her. She kept going.

The darkness, the rough terrain, and the countless drinks were inhibiting Bret’s progress, not to mention the mass of confusing thoughts swirling through her brain. *Jesse has a daughter? He’s married? Isn’t this something he should have told me?* Bret stumbled on a clod of dirt and fell to her knees. She heard water lapping along the shore, crickets, cicadas and other nighttime creatures her only company. Too exhausted to go on, she sat on the side of the road and finally let it all come crashing down on her. She was thousands of miles away from home, she didn’t know anyone except the person who had betrayed her, and she was alone by the side of an abandoned road in the middle of the night. The tears started flowing freely, smudging her makeup.

The ocean sounds were somehow soothing and the waves mesmerizing in the moonlight. Bret didn’t realize there were headlights behind her until she heard the crunch of gravel under car tires. Had Jesse gallantly decided to look for her? She turned to look over her shoulder.