

Chapter 12

I slept deeply in that cool and dark barn. I began to dream. I dreamt that I was sitting by a lake on a warm summer evening. There was a rainbow stretching from one side of the lake to the other. There was a flock of swans swimming in gentle figure eights on the surface of the lake. Suddenly one swan separated from the rest of flock, swam ashore and walked up onto the bank and looked at me in my dream. It starts honking swan talk at me like I should know what it is saying. I don't know what to answer. The honking gets louder. More unbearable with each sounding of its voice. And when it finally got so loud that I couldn't take it anymore, I shook myself out of the dream and forced myself to wake up.

I jumped to my feet and my heart began to race. There she was right in front of me no more than 5 feet away, the mysterious red headed clarinet girl, looking at me, playing and squeaking her clarinet. She's would blow a note, look at me, laugh, and then blow another note.

She put the clarinet down to her side and said, "Sit yourself back down, mister!"

I slowly sat down on a bail of hay. I wonder how long she had been sitting there watching me sleep.

"Do you know what my Paw-Paw does to critters who steal his peaches?" she asked me?

I didn't give her a reply.

She honked her clarinet at me. She put it back down and said, "Well, do ya?"

I shook my head and whispered "No."

"He shoots them with his twelve gauge, pins their hide out on the barn and feeds the carcass to the dogs. Do you think that's what we should do with you?"

"But I'm not a critter." I said in my defense.

"Critters eat peaches that don't belong to them. You ate peaches that don't belong to you. You're a critter." She giggled, put the clarinet up to her mouth and tried to play a scale and then said, "What do you have to say in your defense?"

I gulped in a lung full of air and said, "I'm sorry. I'm lost. I was hungry. Those peaches were so good. I hadn't had anything to eat all day. I won't eat anymore, don't tell him, please."

"Hmmm..." she pondered, "I guess your secret is safe with me. At least for the time being." She put the clarinet back to her mouth and tried to squeak out a tune. This time, slightly more melodious than before.

"Well then," she said. "What's your story? What's your name? Where you from, you mysterious peach eating critter!" She moved closer and poked at my chest with the clarinet.

"I really don't know where to start," I said. "I ran away from Church Camp. I hopped in a truck. I ran through the woods. I ended up here. I ate the peaches and then fell asleep."

She played a few notes and said, "What's your name, mister?" She asked.

"David," I replied.

"And where is this supposed Church Camp you ran away from?" she asked.

"East Texas," I said.

"And is that where you live?" she asked.

"I live close to Houston, maybe 30 or 40 minutes from the city". I said.

"Lordy Mercy, boy!" she said. "You are a long way from home, Mister!"

"Well, where am I then?" I asked

She put the clarinet in her mouth and honked one loud note at me, "I'm asking the questions here, Mister!"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"So, you want me to believe that you ran away from church camp, stowed away in a pickup truck and somehow ended up here in my Paw-Paw's barn?"

I nodded, rather meekly.

She squinted her eyes again and looked me over. She pointed at me with the clarinet and said, "A likely story! You could have just made all that stuff up, you...peach eating critter."

I didn't say anything.

"You stay right here," she commanded. "I'll be back in two shakes."

She paused, "You hear me? You understand? You. Stay. Right here. Don't leave."

"I won't," I said.

"If you do my Paw-Paw might shoot you with his twelve gauge."

"I'm waiting. I won't move." I promised.

She walked out the door and shut it. Just a few seconds later, she peeked in again and said, "My name is Angela. Not Angie. Don't call me Angie. It's Angela. You got that, Mister?"

"Got it," I said.

"Ok then, David. I'll be back in a jiff," she said shutting the door again.