

Chapter 32

And now that's its all down on paper for you and the world to read, I find myself thinking about Angela. She's be about fifty years old now, give or a take a year here or there. And that baby she was pregnant with would now be in his (Jonathan) or her (Peaches) early thirties. Hell, she's probably a grandmother now. I wonder if she ever stopped rolling like a stone from state to state and settled down.

It would be so easy in this day and age of digital footprints to hunt her down and drop her a line. But I am resisting the urge. If I did, I may not like what I find. She may not like what she finds either. Some things are best left as memories in the past. To me, I just want to leave her deep in my warm used up, passed over memories-a precocious, skinny girl with red hair, an attitude , a mind that flew ninety miles an hour , the eleven year old with a clarinet walking around a farm and through a peach orchard. And I don't think that stirring up present incarnations would serve any purpose at all.

I'll tell you what I did do though. Using what memories I had of The Old Man and a pretty good knowledge of where his farm and peach orchard were, I searched the internet for tax records, real estate and probate records to discover what may have become of the Old Man's Peach Orchard. It seems that the jam and jelly company, BAMA, eventually sold his house and farm to a property investment company who had "held it" for a decade. All the while, I'm sure the house and his orchard fell into disrepair and disregard.

And eventually, according to property tax records, it was sold. The house was demolished and what trees were still producing in the orchard were bulldozed over. I even found a local article from the Yazoo City newspaper about the old railroad tracks that were discovered on his property and how they led to an old rusting caboose car that had been sitting there for decades. The caboose was taken to a local McDonald's and made a playhouse for kids.

The land that was The Old Man's orchard was paved over into a huge concrete parking lot with electricity, water and sewage hookups. It's now an RV park where people can hook up their motorhomes while they are on the road from point "A" to point "B". They call the RV park

“Peach Tree Estates”. They even have a website. You can look it up online. I’ve taken a virtual tour on Google Earth Street View.

This leaves me quite empty and angry. Matter of fact, telling this whole tale and having to relive it on these pages word-by-word has flooded me with a variety of harsh emotions. I’m angry at all those kids at Church camp who abused me. I’m angry at the church camp staff who enabled it. I’m mad at myself for wanting to abandon my family that summer and live as someone else. I’m angry at myself for having made The Old Man out to be a villain when I was finally re-united with my parent. And finally, I’m left with a sense of loneliness for having never seen my friend, Angela again.

And I’m just pissed off as hell at Peach Tree Estates RV park.

It’s been hard for me hashing over the whole story one final time. But I’ve learned something. I’ve learned that you got to let all that shit go. You got to let it go, or it will eat you like a cancer from the inside out. You got to forgive and forget. So, as I come to a close, on my last page of smudgy, tear stained, cursive writing, I’m relinquishing my burdens.

I’m letting go of my guilt. I forgive myself. I forgive whoever made The Old Man’s orchard into an RV park. Can’t change what’s already been done. I forgive my parents for their two decades of fighting tooth-and-nail at the top of their lungs. I forgive Counselor Quentin at the church camp. He was just a young teenager himself, still with acne and barely out of high school.

And finally, I forgive The Hooligans, wherever you may be. Whether you are happily ever after in some suburban home or whether you are in the state lock up in Huntsville.

I forgive you, Hooligans.

But you know what, I’ll never forget, you fuckers!

Yeah you read me right, you fuckers. I forgive you, but I can’t forget you.

Damn, that felt good. Now. Now, I lay me down to sleep, lighter on my toes, higher in spirit.

Goodnight, all.