

Kahn Davison

Clean

Mrs. Little, church member remembers Wanda

Her mother buried her
in her wedding dress.
This bewildered most
but not me.
I remember when the double doors
of the sanctuary opened up
and I thought, "Good God from Zion,
that gal is clean!"
Mrs. Smith knew her and that fella'
wasn't going to work out.
But I don't think she could
have seen this coming.
Hell, the boy cried forty days
and forty nights before he ever said I do.
I had the pleasure of seeing
little Ms. Wanda every week
in my Sunday school class.
Her black paten leather shoes,
white gloves,
always so clean.
That's how Mrs. Smith kept
her children.
Them white teeth smiled
every time I asked her a question,
cause you know she was the smartest thing since King Solomon.
Oh yeah, I swear that gal was on the honor roll
every card-marking.
Mrs. Smith wasn't going to have it any other way.
And talk about playing some music,
A few Easters ago Ms. Wanda had that baby grand chirping so good
I thought Jesus himself would walk out that piano!
Mrs. Smith was so proud.
Then Wanda started messing with Iola's boy.
Mrs. Smith didn't take to kindly to that,
but I didn't see nothing really wrong with the fellow.
He was strong as Sampson,
complexion of Harry Bellefonte,
and he carried his opinion like my Uncle Willie used to
carry his knife: sharp and quick on the draw.
Mrs. Smith wasn't impressed,
she felt her child deserved better.
I figured after Ms. Wanda brought her own beautiful child into the world

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her mother's attitude would change -
it didn't.

I just don't think she felt that boy was clean enough for Ms. Wanda.

But that ain't nothing unusual,

I'd probably be the same

if I'd had a daughter.

But like my mammie used to say,

you gotta live your own life

and die with the consequences.

I asked Mrs. Smith was them papers correct

cause it just don't seem possible for no man

to blow his own chest out with no shot-gun.

She gave me a look that told me, "I'd betta'

mind my own business,"

so I did.

Rumor said Ms. Wanda was thinking about

running off with some white collar fellow,

but I paid that hearsay no mind.

People love to gossip,

especially church folk.

I closed my eyes,

looked at Ms. Wanda one more time, said a prayer.

Sista' Sharon worries for Ms. Wanda's little boy.

I don't.

He'll get raised just like his mamma.