

Sinner Girl

I hope the lady from the agency does not pull into the driveway but stops along the sidewalk like I said. I watch from my bedroom window, rising up from time to time, then leaning my head against the wall again and resting on the bed. After the lady comes, I know I will be able to have a big lie down, a big thank you Jesus and sleep and it will all be over.

“Sucker!” I can hear my brother Jamie yell at his game in his bedroom. “I’m a blow your head off!” He is talking to himself loud like that cause it’s only us here. Momma won’t be home till after dark.

In that way I am lucky.

I rise up a little again and feel the leaking, but it's okay. I have a few left over supplies from before. Though this time is totally different. This time I have prepared everything myself. I got the number to call from the sign in the MARTA train. I planned everything out and I prayed and I kept myself still and God seems to have seen my side of things maybe.

“We’re gonna alright,” I hear myself say, wishing I could get a real deep breath, wishing that lady would get here. I don’t want to have to call for Jamie. I don’t want to make him have to say he knows what is happening here. He is just a little boy. He shouldn’t have to deal with all this.

The last time, two years ago, Momma put me in the car and drove me to the place and I wouldn’t get out of the car.

“It’s a sin, Momma,” I said.

“Girl, what you have done is a sin already. This is all talked out. Now, you get out of the car and face your consequences,” she said in that low, no-feelings voice. She wouldn’t look at me, but sat looking straight ahead out the windshield.

The tears slid out and my nose started going too, all into my mouth, and said I would not get out of the car. She told me we would sit there all day if we had to, but she was not turning around and going home until I went in there. She said we would sit all night in the car and the next morning too until I decided to go in. She said if she lost her pay it made no difference, two or three days of no pay was nothing in comparison to twenty or more years of paying for another child.

So in the end I had to go in. The nurse, she held my hand, but the doctor worked real fast and barely said a word to me and it made me feel ashamed.

When church came along I watched my mother sitting up so proud, her lipstick lips pushed together in a line, her eyes straight ahead. I glared at the side of her face, but she never saw. Afterwards, she smiled and laughed with everyone, all of her friends, pretending like nothing ever happened. Well, God knows. He can see into our souls.

I raise up again at a humming sound and see a car out the window. It is a newish blue kind of car pausing, but it goes by. I think it must be the lady, but she passed. She missed the address. I cannot go out and flag her down. I cannot go stand out there in the yard or in the street like that.

You would think that a girl whose Momma forced her into such a situation would never get herself into that kind of mess again. You would think that I would have been more careful. But the thing about boys is, when they are needing you, they are full on real

about it and helpless in a way that is not easy to turn away from. I know I am a sinner girl and will probably go to hell, but I could not murder again.

Momma just kept her face at me sideways all the time. Like she didn't know nothing that was going on. Well, I say, let her not know. Just let her keep on with her not knowing.

There is a lot more leaking now, and I am not breathing so well. Sticking here raised up by the window, I feel a little dizzy. The blue car has turned around and is stopping outside. I hold onto the windowsill and the wall a little to steady myself and reach for my sports bag. The weight of it is more than I thought. It pitches forward to the heavy end and moves of its own accord. I hold on to it careful and even. Jamie mumbles at his game as I pass his room, holding along the wall in the hallway. The bag bumps against my leg and I have to set it down just so I can hold on around the front door while I turn the knob to go out.

Heat flies up off the damp yard and the cicadas are making a racket. I feel sweat on my face right away. The lady is getting out of her car and coming around toward me. She is younger than I thought she would be, like a kindergarten teacher.

“Are you Sharon?” She doesn't really smile at me, just mostly looks a little worried. “Are you okay? Come here. Come sit in the car. Get in the a/c.”

I need to give the lady my bag, but just now I think I am going to fall. The heat makes my head feel too big and my legs go all shaky. Bending at the knees I set the bag as slow as I can on the too hot sidewalk. It seems a terrible thing, but it is all I can do before tipping into her car, which is cool inside. My head falls back against the passenger side seat and the lady helps me put my feet in but she doesn't close the car door. I

wonder what the neighbors will think. Jerome and Ms. Grace are watching, I know. I am feeling like I might throw up.

“Here, have some water,” she says, reaching across me and twisting the cap off a small bottle and handing it to me. It is warm, but I drink it nearly all.

“My bag—“ I say, my voice a thin little scraggle, but she is already getting it off the sidewalk. She looks into it and her face screws up like someone just poked her real hard in the neck with a stick.

I want to ask her to please just keep everything in the bag until she drives away, but she seems to know, setting it on the backseat, pulling the zip full open so I can hear little sounds. She has a car seat ready, I see. Decorated with Peter Rabbit. I turn to look back at the cracked sidewalk and then the air-conditioner knobs in her car. She asks me if I have any diapers or clothes, but I shake my head. She gives me some papers to sign and a pen, asking me if I understand what I am doing.

I understand perfectly.

The sun blasting through the windshield makes a lined and spots pattern on the dashboard and papers. I try to sign everything as fast as possible.

“There’s no one here with you?” the lady asks me in this real soft voice, and her hand goes on top of mine when she takes the pen, so that I grab it away back to my lap real quick because I don’t want the tears coming now, that is for sure. She asks me if I think I can make it back to the house okay or if I will need some help.

I try to explain everything as fast as I can, in about two sentences, as she walks me up to the door. It kills me that Ms. Grace might see her doing this, but I don’t even know really how I made it down to her car in the first place, I’m so wobbly.

I already took five Advil way back there. The bed is my floating nest, my easy place I finally get to. Jamie's game and his voice now and then ramble around like an easy dream. The bloody towels and newspapers are in my closet and will keep awhile till I can get to them. I don't even remember if I told that lady good-bye, which makes me a little sad.

Later after everything is dark, Momma comes home from work. I hear her snap on the TV. Finally, she taps on my door, "You asleep Sharon?"

"Mmm."

"Djou eat?"

"Mmm."

"Good night."

"Good night, Momma."

I turn on my side in the bed and run my fingers over my empty sack of tummy. "Thank you, Jesus," I whisper over and over as the tears begin to fall sideways into my pillow. I am a sinner girl, but God must see my soul. My little girl went off with Peter Rabbit and the kindergarten lady. I grab the pillow from under my head and wrap my arms around it and rock from side to side, biting into the top of it to stop the sound.