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about 1600 words

## Mama Bear

By Angel Turner

Charley inhaled a long drag of his cigarette. The cloud of white smoke tickled his nose before camouflaging back into the clear air. As he looked up Diane approached the school doors alongside her friends. Her smile always made his heart skip a beat but today she didn't have her usually smile. Her golden locks bounced effortlessly off her shoulders.

"Bear, wait up," said Charley. He pushed past a group of kids huddled in front of the school. Diane quickly glanced at him and continued walking.

"Bear! Bear! Diane, wait up!" His leg throbbing from bumping into the group of kids, Charley now limped as fast as he could before his fingers locked around Diane's shoulder. Her soft hair tangled around his fingers. A familiar smile cascaded across Charley's face as he remembered the last time her hair tangled in his fingers.

"What do you want Charley?" said Diane.

“Why haven’t you returned any of my phone calls? I’ve been calling you for over a week now. What’s wrong?”

There was a lot wrong, but Diane couldn’t bring herself to tell him. She nervously played with the thin hairs of her left eyebrow. Anytime Diane had something serious going on, she did this. Charley knew something was definitely up.

“Diane, you can talk to me. Did I do something?”

“I need to get to class before I’m late,” she said.

Charley watched her enter the school. He knew he had to leave before the assistant principal made her rounds. Charley decided a few months ago that school wasn’t his thing. Even though he only had two years left, he hated the confinement that came along with school. He had to wake while the world around him was still dark, stay there all day and turn in the heap loads of non-essential tasks that his teachers came up with. Since dropping out, Charley unfortunately had gotten into more trouble than he did when school was a part of his life.

Charley met Diane in his English class. She moved from South Carolina because of her dad’s job. She didn’t say much and seemed to not like hanging out with the “in crowd.” Every day, Charley caught his eyes locked on her. He always started with her hair, then his eyes would examine how perfectly symmetric her face was. Her right hand always seemed to zig-zag across her paper. Charley’s moment of wonder would often meet a red-faced Diane with her eyes piercing his soul.

It took him almost two weeks to work up the courage to try his hand at telling her a joke. When he finally did, he left out an over-strained chuckle surprised that Diane laughed at it. Her half snort-filled laugh gave Charley the motivation to eventually ask her to be his girlfriend.

Again, surprised, Diane said yes. Now, the young couple seemed to have another

senseless issue to deal with. It seemed almost every week Diane had something to be upset with Charley about. Charley professed his deepest feelings to Diane. Their relationship barely had made it six months but for some reason, he wanted her forever.

“You love me?” Diane’s face instantly went from the paleness the world was used to, to blood red. Charly loved Diane more than he loved himself. His broken home situation always made him want to settle down and have a family- sooner than later. He knew Diane was the one.

He wanted to propose to her but he knew her parents would not allow it at this time, especially since he longer attended school.

Charley called Diane “Bear” because her skin tone reflected light like a polar bear. Diane had a love hate relationship with the name. The name although sweet, at times embarrassed her.

Snapping back to reality, Charley dashed off the school property and waited for the end of the school day to meet up with Diane again. He contemplated the idea of enrolling back in school. That’s the only time he knew he could see Diane and it helped him stay out of trouble. The only thing that stopped him were his so-called friends that would never let him hear the last of it.

*Why does she put me through this? There’s only so much back and forth that I can take from her.*

At 3:15 promptly, Charley waited outside the school. He started to flick his lighter to light up a cigarette but he hesitated. *Man, she hates these things* Charley thought. He tossed the cigarette to the ground and twisted his shoes to erase the trace of it. He paced the sidewalk to calm his nerves. He had 15 minutes before school was out. He didn’t want to miss the opportunity to find out what he did wrong.

The school bell finally rang and the sound waves bounced around for about 20 seconds. The school kids jolted through the double doors and the open space and the sidewalk quickly became congested. Charley hopped up and down as he looked for his girlfriend among the crowd before his leg throbbed from earlier. His heart pounded when he saw her golden hair bounce on her shoulders. Her smile was gone and her pale face had evidence of her crying.

“Bear!” Charley yelled. “Bear, come here,” Charley said as he motioned her over.

“Charley, I can’t talk right now. I need to get home,” said Diane.

“Wait. What is wrong? Did I do something? Please tell me.” Charley had genuine concern.

“Meet me at my house in one hour,” Diane said. “My parents have to go to my brother’s school. We can talk then.” She gave Charley a quick kiss on the cheek and sprinted to catch up with her friends.

*What the hell Diane? One hour, really. I’ve been waiting all day,* Charley thought. He walked dreadfully slow to her house. He made sure the 20-minute walk would take an hour at the pace he did.

Ding dong. Ding dong. It took Diane forever to answer the door. The blue Volkswagen Beetle wasn’t in the driveway so he knew her parents were gone.

“Diane, it’s me,” Charley said. He waited a few moments before her slender silhouette appeared through the door.

She slowly opened the door before letting Charley in.

“Hey baby, you are really scaring me,” he said. “Please, what did I do?”

“Umm, just come up stairs,” Diane said.

Charley followed her up the stairs and down the long hallway to Diane's bedroom. He quickly scanned the photos of her and her brother that lined the hallway.

"Have a seat, I'll be right back," she said.

Again, he waited unsure what he would see or hear.

After a brief moment, Diane returned. She threw something down on the bed beside Charley. He looked over and immediately his heart began to race. The room started spinning and his eyes began to blur from the tears.

"Is this?" Charley said. "I mean, are you? Are we? You're pregnant?"

Charley said the magic words and immediately she started crying. Her body shook from the immense amount of sobbing that came out in the brief moment following my realization.

"Yes, I'm pregnant," Diane said. "But I can't keep it." Her tears flowed down her face like a faucet.

"What do you mean you can't keep it? You're 'Mama Bear' now," Charley said. His excitement took Diane by surprise.

"I'm serious," she said. "I wasn't going to tell you but you kept bothering me and I felt bad getting rid of it and you not know about it."

"It is our baby. And you're not going to kill our baby," he said.

"Don't say it like that, you make it sound bad," Diane said. "I'm not going to kill it, just get rid of it."

"Why would you say that about our baby? I love you and I love our baby. We're not killing him, or her."

“Charley, I’m only 15. My parents would kill me. You dropped out of school. You smoke and you’re always in trouble. Clearly, neither one of is ready for a baby.” She frantically twisted the thin hairs above her eyebrow. It looked she was missing a few.

Now, Charley sobbed uncontrollably. He wanted to keep this baby but she was right. Neither one of them was ready to bring a baby into this world.

“What do you want me to do,” Charley said. “I don’t want you to kill our baby and I’ll do whatever you want me to do to make this work.”

“Charley, there’s nothing you can do. I made the appointment for tomorrow.”

Charley picked up the test and stormed out of Diane’s house. He ran. He ran up the street. The wind sliced his face but he didn’t care. Everything in him wanted to breakdown so he just kept running. His phone rang. He didn’t bother answering it. His blood boiled. He couldn’t think.

He was hurt by Diane and now he had nothing. He didn’t tell her about his parents kicking him out of their house. He didn’t want to add stress to their already stressful relationship.

He darted across the street, not paying attention to the oncoming traffic. The blue Volkswagen Beetle screeched to miss him but drove right into him.

Charley’s body flew into the air before smacking into the pavement.

“Oh my god!” the woman yelled. “Someone call 9-1-1.”

Charley let out six more exasperated breaths before he took his final breath. In his hand, Diane’s pregnancy test twisted in between his fingers. This was the first and last time for one moment in time he had everything he wanted and nothing at all.

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