

Shiny White Dress and a Used Car Wedding

By Tyler Patrick

A beat-up, old Dodge sits in the middle of a ratty garage. Half-nude, bikini clad pinups and tool ads litter the walls. The smell of gas, exhaust, and motor oil permeates through the small space. Bubba, mechanic extraordinaire, slides from under the car on his creeper, his beer belly catches briefly on the frame. His balding head reflects the sunlight that beams in from outside. He looks up at his pregnant fiancée, Charlene. A cigarette hangs from his lips. “What do you mean the bowling alley burned down?”

“Baby, I just got the call. They said it was something in the kitchen,” Charlene says.

She sits on a metal mechanic stool, her hands lay across her pregnant stomach with her fingers entwined. Her swollen feet stick out in front of her.

“You got to be freaking kidding me,” Bubba says. He stands up and throws a silver socket wrench through the air. It tumbles and crashes to the concrete garage floor.

“Why did I book that damn place? I knew we should’ve went with the Dairy Queen. Hey, are they open?”

“No, honey. They’re booked for a funeral today,” Charlene says.

Bubba punches the drywall behind him. His hand jerks back in pain.

“Dammit, that wasn’t even a stud!” he screams while he shakes his hand.

“Calm down, honey. We’ll figure something out,” Charlene says as she stifles a laugh.

“What the hell are you laughing at?” Bubba asks, “We only have four hours before the wedding and you’re the one that wanted to have this before you shot that bun out of the oven.”

“I want to be a proper lady, like one of them fancy folks up in the suburbs. Ring on the finger before the baby comes.”

“The only ring you were concerned about before you got pregnant was the one that didn’t go on a finger,” Bubba says with a wince and a cross of his legs.

Charlene struggles to stand. With a hand on the stool and the other on a toolbox, she pushes herself up, gains her balance, and rests her hands on her hips. Out of breath, she scowls at Bubba, he cowers back against the wall.

“Well, if you would have worn that ring we wouldn’t be standing here arguing now would we, Mr. Two-stroke? I’m going home to put my dress on. One way or the other, I’m wearing that thing today. So, get your shit together and show me you love me.”

She storms out of the garage and disappears behind a row of used cars.

Bubba leans back on the wall and slides down it. He reaches into his coveralls and pulls out a flask. He tips it back and takes a shot. “You’re a damn idiot, Bubba. Stupid,

stupid, stupid.” He bangs the back of his head against the wall then takes another pull from the flask.

A *crash* echos through the garage startling Bubba out of his self-degradation. A hubcap rolls across the garage floor followed by a hulking figure in spandex. His shadow falls over Bubba.

“What the hell do you want, Garret?” Bubba asks as he puts out his smoke.

“Well, brother, I want a million dollars. I want to win back my heavyweight championship belt. But most of all, I want my darling sister to find a decent guy and marry him instead of the loser I see in front of me, brother,” Garret says.

A smaller, much skinnier figure steps from behind Garret. He laughs like a shrieking bird. “Yeah, a decent guy. Not you, you little punk.” He emphasizes “punk” with a hard poke to Bubba’s chest.

“Thanks for the pep talk, guys. Good to see you too, Vince,” Bubba says, “You know, Garret, for someone who doesn’t like me, you call me “brother” an awful lot.”

Garret punches the wall over Bubba’s head causing drywall pieces and dust to fall. Bubba wipes the debris out of his eyes and looks from the massive hole in the wall, to Garret, to his own throbbing hand. “How the hell did he do that?”

“What’d you say, punk?” Vince asks.

“Not a thing,” Bubba says.

Garret reaches down and pulls Bubba to his feet. He holds Bubba against the wall, his massive hand wrapped around Bubba’s throat. “I saw my sister storm out of here. What did you do?”

Bubba tries in vain to wiggle himself away.

Vince leans against the wall with one hand beside Bubba's head. "The next words out of your mouth better be the truth or my client is going to make you a permanent fixture on this wall."

"I didn't do a damn thing. The bowling alley burned down and she's upset about it," Bubba chokes out, "Let me go."

Garret loosens his grip on Bubba and lets him slump against the wall.

Bubba massages his throat with his hands and gasps a deep breath.

Vince dusts off Bubba's shoulders and mockingly slaps him on the face. "Aww, well, looks like the wedding is off," he says.

"Good. Now I don't have to pound you. I got to save my strength for "Pale Rider" anyways," Garret says.

"Screw you both," Bubba says.

Garret punches Bubba in the stomach. Bubba falls to his knees and doubles over. He rolls around and tries to regain his wind. Garret steps over him and walks out of the garage.

Vince kicks Bubba in the stomach as he steps over. "Should have kept your mouth shut around the big guy. He's not smart, but he hits like the devil."

Bubba catches his breath and sprawls out on the cold concrete floor. He grabs his flask and gulps down warm whiskey. He chokes and exhales a burst of air. "Mmmm, smooth."

The sun blazes down on him through the rolling bay-doors. Bubba squints and turns his head to the side. The wacky-inflatable-tube-man sitting by the street dances in the wind. "I swear that thing is mocking me. Just as well, so would I." He stands and

stumbles out of the garage, one hand holding his stomach. He vomits up in the garbage can by the door. “Ugh, old deer jerky and Mt. Dew don’t taste good the second go around.” He wipes his face with a dirty shop rag and glances around the car lot. He takes a pull from his flask and lights another cigarette.

A glance around the car lot reveals an empty field, stacks of old car seats, and other random car parts.

“Hey! I could do something with this!” Bubba yells.

He fumbles in his pocket for his cracked cell phone, scrolls through the contacts, and presses dial.

“Charlene, baby, I just had the greatest idea. We’ll have the wedding here at the car lot. I know this is your big day. I won’t screw this up. I love you, got to get on this. Bye, baby cakes.”

He hangs up and shoves the phone into his pocket. He runs to his beat up truck that sits behind the garage and pulls it up to the stack of car seats. He jumps out and tries to load them into his truck. His unimpressive frame struggles to lift the seats. He finally gets one up to the bed of his truck, but he loses his grip. The seat slides off the truck, hits Bubba’s right foot, and tips back toward him. He loses his balance and falls on his back. The seat comes tumbling down on top of him, but his beer belly catches most of the blow.

“Thank God for Budweiser,” he says.

He kicks, pushes, and claws at the ground until he wiggles his way from under the seat. He pulls himself up and grabs the seat for another round. He strains to get it back up, but finally gets it into the bed of the truck. “One down, forty-nine to go.”

He carefully proceeds to work seats into the bed then hops in his truck, drives to the field, and backs up full speed. He slams on the brakes and the seats tumble out the back of the truck. “Good old redneck offload.”

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After an hour the field is set up. The seats are in two rows with an aisle in between, the tube man by the street is now dancing in front of the makeshift seating, and an archway of tires stands as the centerpiece.

Bubba looks at his creation and prides himself at his handy work. He plops down on one of the seats and pulls his pack of cigarettes and flask out of his pocket. He takes a long swig from his flask and flicks a cigarette out of his soft pack. He lights it and leans back, enjoying his brief freedom from work.

Garret’s booming voice interrupts Bubba’s reverie. “Well, what do we got here?”

Bubba’s shoulders slump and he turns his head to see Garret and Vince strutting towards him. He finds his way to his feet and faces them. “What the hell do you want now, Garret?” Bubba asks, “Didn’t you already punch me today, or is the pain in my stomach from your mother’s cooking?”

Garret’s face turns beet red. “Don’t you talk about my mother, brother.” He storms up to Bubba and pushes his fat pointer finger into Bubba’s chest. “What’s this I hear about you having the wedding here at the lot?”

“Charlene told me to find a place, so I did,” Bubba says.

Garret looks around the car lot and Bubba’s haphazard creation. Disgust creeps over his face. “My sister deserves better than this, brother. You’re a turd, a fly’s lunch. I

won't let you ruin her like this." He motions for Vince. "Destroy this dump while I force him to watch."

He reaches a big bear paw hand down to grab Bubba by the top of the head. He holds him in place as Vince starts to tip over the seats and slice them with his pocket knife.

"Dammit, stop!" Bubba pleads.

Garret laughs and Vince follows his lead.

"Would you freaking stop already?" Bubba asks.

"Not a chance in hell," Garret says, "I'm keeping my sister in the business. She's a star."

Bubba kicks frantically at Garret. "She's your valet, asshole. That's not a damn star."

"Shut up. I'm not going to lose her to you. I can't lose her to you," Garret says, "That's why we burned down the bowling alley." He punches Bubba in the ribs and knees him in the back.

A hollow gasp escapes Bubba. Blood trickles down his face and tears form in his eyes from the pain. He watches the destruction continue. He twists and flails as he tries to escape Garret's death grip. Bubba gets nowhere and slumps his shoulders in defeat.

"You truly are an asshole, Garret," he says.

"Aww, poor trailer trash. You shouldn't have got your hopes up," Garret says.

His cockiness causes his grip to loosen. Bubba reacts by slamming the back of his head into Garret's nose. Garret lets go and paws frantically at his face. Blood seeps through his fingers.

“You live in the same trailer park, asshole,” Bubba says between labored breaths. He turns to face Garret and slams his knee up to the giant man’s groin.

Garret lets out a deep howl and doubles over.

“And you tried ruining your own sister’s wedding, just to keep her to yourself.”

Bubba wraps his left arm around Garret’s head and jumps backward, driving the crown of Garret’s head into the hard grass. It causes the ground to shake around them. Garret lets out a puff of breath and lays unconscious on the ground.

Vince sees the commotion and stops his slicing. He runs to Garret’s side. “You used his own move against him! How dare you!”

He jumps up and barrels toward Bubba who sticks his arm out for a clothesline. Vince’s feet continue to run as his upper body is stopped by Bubba’s arm. He flips onto his back, slamming his head to the grass. His knife flies out of his hand.

Dazed and confused, he crawls to Garret and begins to poke him. The big man slowly comes back to consciousness. The duo crawl back to their truck and use the frame to push themselves up into the cab. They leave a dust cloud behind them as they drive off.

Bubba watches them leave while he rubs the arm Vince ran into. “Little bastard has a bony chest.” He picks up his flask and pack of smokes. He lights his cigarette and surveys the damage done. “It’s by pure damn luck that they didn’t screw anything else up. Now, let’s stick this pig and git r done.”

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The guests arrive, file in, and take their seats. Garret, with a bandaged nose and an ice pack on his crotch, and Vince, ice pack placed on his head, hide in the back row.

Bubba hooks a clip-on tie onto his coveralls and stands at the archway with a preacher. He catches Garret's gaze and the big man gives him a nod then hangs his head in embarrassment. Vince gives Bubba a dirty look, but is punched by Garret. He slumps down in his seat.

Bubba smiles at the crowd and holds his phone up to a megaphone. He plays "Redneck Woman."

Charlene appears in her pearl-white, lace filled, lie of a wedding dress and begins her walk down the aisle. Her pregnant stomach leads the way. The crowd murmurs and applauds as she makes her journey to the archway. She reaches Bubba and leans in for a whisper. "This is absolutely perfect, baby."

Bubba stops the music, hands the megaphone to the preacher, and smiles at Charlene as he stares into her hazel eyes. He grabs her hands in his.

The preacher clicks on the megaphone and addresses the circus sideshow of a crowd. "We are gathered here today to witness these two enter into holy matrimony. This is a union between Bubba, Charlene, and God. If there are any objections to said holy union, speak now or forever hold your peace."

"Oh, no," Charlene says as she rips her hands away from Bubba.

"Is that an objection?" asks the preacher.

Bubba stands slack jawed, his hands drop to his side.

Charlene shuffles back and forth on her feet and holds her stomach. "Nope, just my water breaking."

The preacher and Bubba both take a quick step back and check their shoes.

"Baby, are you okay?" Bubba asks.

“Yes, of course. I have to be married before he comes out.”

The preacher stands silent in shock. He fumbles nervously with the megaphone.

“Well, come on then, get to the good part already, preach,” Charlene says, “You may want to move a little bit to the right, though.”

The three of them sidestep. The preacher straightens his collar and clears his throat. “Yes, of course.” He looks toward Bubba and hands him a ring.

“Bubba James Crawford, do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?”

Bubba slides the silver ring on Charlene’s finger. “I do.”.

The preacher turns to Charlene and hands her a ring. “Charlene Betty Wayne, do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?”

Charlene screams and grasps at her stomach. “Sorry. Contraction. And yeah, I do.” She hands the ring to Bubba and he slides it on his finger.

“By the powers vested in me by God, I now pronounce you husband and wife,” the preacher says, “You may now take your bride to the hospital.”

The crowd gives the couple a standing ovation and throw chicken feed in celebration. Firecrackers and bottle rockets explode.

Bubba and Charlene race to his truck amid the celebratory chaos. They climb in and drive off, dust and gravel shoot up from the tires. Chipped hubcaps and empty beer cans stream behind the beat up, multicolored truck. They clatter across the gravel road as Bubba races out of the car lot. Old motor oil spells out “Just Married” on the tailgate. Charlene’s contraction screams echo through the lot.

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