

Better Things

Once Richard Ontel had dreamed of better things. Of starting his own farm with Jenna. He had imagined a nice quiet place not far from his parents' and brothers' farms, where they could raise their children and grow old together. It had seemed so easily reached, once upon a time.

He stood at the bar of the Green Door Inn and Tavern, serving up drinks to the gang members who frequented his establishment. The room before him was low and dark, misty with smoke from the lamps. The patrons were pretty quiet tonight, most if not all were from the same group, The Ambassadors of the Green Flame, who claimed the east end of town as their territory. They were waiting for something, or someone, from what he gathered from the low conversations around him. He only hoped it wasn't trouble that involved him. His eye's kept going to little Dianna. His little girl sat only a few feet away on a bar stool, playing with her doll and have a one sided conversation with the older man beside her.

"Did you know I'm seven?" she asked.

"No I didn't," The man gruffly replied.

"Yeah, it was my birthday a couple weeks ago," she continued. She was a nice child, her pale face dwarfed by the mass of red curls.

"That so?"

"Yes," She replied her face lightening up at having someone to talk to, "My daddy, he's the man over there," -she pointed- "gave me this doll!" She held up her doll.

"Really?" the man said. He had been here a good hour or more, and was still nursing the same drink. Richard didn't think he was drunk, but that didn't make him any less weary.

"I call her Annie, I'm Dianna!"

"I'm Glick," The man removed one hand from his drink and offered it, Dianna took it.

"Nice to meet you. I never met anyone with that name before."

Richard bit his lip as he scanned the room yet again, a feeling of unease sweeping over him. There was Big Tom, Captain Leeberg, Torris, and several other prominent members of the Ambassadors here tonight. He wondered what might be going on below that would bring them all here. The door opened and another group of three entered, one of them was Little Cassi; a short black haired woman who he heard had a body count of sixteen by her first month in the city. The room quieted even further as people noticed her.

"Yeah, I hope you like your drink. Daddy says I'm not old enough to drink," Dianna told her new friend.

"Good for him," Glick replied, before taking another sip of his beer, "Stay away from liquor kid, a nice girl like you shouldn't drink."

"Yeah, drinking makes people all funny in the head. Once there were two guys who were friends who came in here, but by the end of the night both of them had broken noses. Drinking made them angry."

"Here Dianna," Richard said keeping his voice low, and sliding in in front of his daughter, "Why don't you come over here with Daddy."

Richard put Dianna down, “I want you to go upstairs and play in your room now okay? Be quick.”

He raised a hand back, still looking back over his shoulder at the company. Richard felt his breath come easier as Dianna's footsteps retreated into the back.

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