

Sweet Lavender

by
Terry a O'Neal

Based on her Best Selling Novel

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FADE IN:

Shots of the old, southern town of Cecilia, Louisiana, ending on the railroad tracks.

A school bell rings on a small, elementary schoolhouse. School lets out for the day. The wooden, double doors burst open and children run out.

Children shouting and laughing fades out slowly.

Pass an old road sign that says: WELCOME TO CECILIA. Behind it, in the distance, sits an old, abandoned windmill, with a round stone tower. It's red, wooden blades turn slowly.

RAE LYNNE (V.O.)

(Young Adult Voice)

In our backyard, there stood an overcrowded field of Sweet Lavender, where the honeybees would loiter in clusters.

(pause)

Mama had a special name for our backyard. She called it: The Healing Ground. Mama said that it was her safe haven -- her paradise away from all the ills of the world.

(pause)

She said that the purple flowers contained special herbs that healed the body, the soul, and the mind.

EXT. SOUTHERN NEIGHBORHOOD

A small house sits on a lavender field. A subtle breeze blows the lavender stems.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY 1964

RAYMOND, 28, a fairly good looking black man, clean cut with a short mustache, sits at the table reading a newspaper. His young wife, 28, ANGELA, a beautiful, slender woman, is cooking dinner. She opens the window over the sink.

ANGELA

(yelling)

Rae Lynne! Get yourself in this house and get cleaned up for dinner.

EXT. BACKYARD

RAE LYNNE, a happy five year-old girl, sings while playing with a lady bug in her favorite spot in the backyard, the lavender field.

RAE LYNNE
(singing)
One-Two
Baby girl blue
jigga-bay, jigga-boo
I love you
lotty-dee, lotty-dah
Rae Lynne and Pa
diddy-doo, diddy-dee
Daddy loves me
(to Angela calling out)
Okay Mommy!
(to lady bug)
Okay, lady bug, I have to go eat
dinner now.

Rae Lynne carefully puts the lady bug onto a lavender stem and runs into the house.

INT. KITCHEN

Rae Lynne runs in and immediately jumps onto her daddy's lap. He smothers her with kisses.

RAYMOND
Who's Daddy's number one girl?

RAE LYNNE
Me, Daddy, I am.

ANGELA
Ray, put that girl down. She needs
to wash them filthy hands.

RAYMOND
Okay, baby girl, go wash your hands
like your mamma said.

ANGELA
(with a grin)
I swear, Ray, you spoil that girl
rotten.

RAYMOND

(chuckles)

There's nothing wrong with Daddy giving his number one girl a lot of good lovin'...now is it?

ANGELA

(with a subtle, jealous smirk)

Number one, huh?

Raymond whispers something into Rae Lynne's ear. They both burst into laughter. Rae Lynne runs off to the bathroom.

RAE LYNNE (V.O.)

(Young Adult Voice)

I can still remember the sound of Daddy's voice and his silly laugh. He had that Daddy's touch. When he held me in his arms, I knew nothing could ever harm me.

BEGIN FATHER/DAUGHTER TIMES MONTAGE:

EXT. BACKYARD IN LAVENDER FIELD - DAY

Rae Lynne and Raymond play hide and seek in The Healing Ground. She hides behind a lavender bush. Her father finds her. Rae Lynne runs out of the field laughing.

Beside The Healing Ground rests an old oak tree. Moss dangles from it's limbs.

Raymond is putting up a makeshift swing onto the tree. He puts Ray Lynne on the swing and pushes her.

INT. RAE LYNNE'S BEDROOM AT BEDTIME - NIGHT

Raymond tucks Rae Lynne into her bed. He kisses her on the cheek. Raymond blows out the flame on the oil lamp that sits on the table beside her bed.

RAE LYNNE (V.O.)

(Young Adult Voice)

Not only was he my guardian, but he was my angel. His shadow was my shield. Nothing else in the world mattered to me. Sadly, that all changed...after Paul was born.

END MONTAGE

INT. RAE LYNNE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - SPRING 1964

Rae Lynne is sitting on the couch watching television. It's dark outside and the rainstorm is coming to an end. The children's show, Romper Room plays on the television screen. On the television a large bumble bee [MR. DOO-BEE] holds a tambourine while playing follow the leader with three children. Mr. Doo-Bee sings and the children repeat line for line.

MR. DOO-BEE

(Singing)

Do be a play safe. Don't be a match
toucher. Sidewalk player. Car
sitter. Plate cleaner. Play safe.

Rae Lynne moves from side to side and begins to sing along.

RAE LYNNE

(Singing along)

Doo-Doo-Doo.
I always do what's right. I never
do anything wrong. I'm a Romper
Room Do-Bee...
A Doo-Bee all day long.

The front door opens. Raymond enters late from a hard days work.

RAE LYNNE

(Young Adult Voice)

It was the tenth day of May in
1964. It was a hot humid Wednesday
night. The rain finally had ceased
from a sudden hostile down-pour,
when my father arrived home late
from work. I was sitting on the
couch watching television, my every
routine after supper, when I heard
the front door open which was my
signal.

Excited to see her father, Rae Lynne jumps up and down on the couch.

RAE LYNNE

(shouting)

Daddy's home! Daddy's home!

Raymond takes off his trench coat and tosses it onto the easy chair that sits beside the door. His head is facing the ground. He removes his wet hat and sets it down on top of his trench coat.

Raymond looks up at Rae Lynne. He smiles. Rae Lynne quickly runs over to her father and jumps into his arms, wrapping them tightly around his neck. Raymond is slightly wet from the rain.

RAE LYNNE (V.O.)
(Young Adult Voice)
At that moment I noticed that something wasn't quite the same about Daddy.

RAYMOND
Hey, there's my baby girl blue. And just how was your day today, little one?

RAE LYNNE
My day was...happy. It was a oh happy day...
(pause)
...you're wet Daddy.

Raymond carries Rae Lynne over to the couch and sits down. She sits on his lap facing him.

RAYMOND
Well...God cried great big tears for us tonight, baby girl.

RAE LYNNE
(low voice)
I know Daddy...I heard him.

RAYMOND
(grinning, he pinches her nose)
You did?

RAE LYNNE
(giggling)
Yep!

RAYMOND
So...an oh happy day, huh? Wow! Not just a happy day...but an oh happy day.

RAE LYNNE
Yep...How was your day, Daddy?

Raymond takes a breath. He looks a little disturbed.

RAYMOND

Hmm...well, not nearly as happy as yours, baby girl, but it was definitely an oh day.

RAE LYNNE

You had an oh happy day, too.

RAYMOND

Not an OH happy day, baby, but an oh no day.

RAE LYNNE

What's an oh no day?

RAYMOND

Well, it's kinda like a...well, it just means that it was a crazy day.

(pause)

Where's Mommy?

RAE LYNNE

She's in her room. Daddy you missed dinner. Mommy cooked beans and chicken...

RAYMOND

(cuts her off)

Why don't you sit tight and finish watching your show. I'm gonna go talk to Mommy for a minute, okay?

RAE LYNNE

Yes, Daddy!

RAYMOND

(putting her down on the couch)

Alright.

Raymond stands up and sighs under his breath.

Looking dismayed, Raymond walks toward the closed bedroom door, pausing between every few steps.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF AFFAIR SOUND/IMAGES

Raymond and a woman making passionate love in a back room of an auto body shop.

A soft, passionate moan of the woman is heard.

She throws her head back and moans as Raymond kisses her neck.

END MONTAGE

Raymond stares nervously at the bedroom door as he takes a few steps closer. He wipes the sweat from his forehead.

Raymond finally arrives at the door. He grabs the doorknob and hesitates, then turns away. Raymond turns back to the bedroom door and touches it with his left hand. He takes a heavy breath, pauses for a moment and walks in.

INT. RAYMOND AND ANGELA'S BEDROOM

Raymond's hand closes the door.

A vintage radio clock on the beside table reads 7:36 PM.

Angela is ironing Raymond's work clothes for the next day. Raymond walks up to Angela and gives her a kiss. Angela smiles.

ANGELA

(yawning)

Hey, honey, how was work? You must be pretty tired.

Raymond doesn't answer. He stares nervously at Angela. Angela continues to iron. Her head is down.

ANGELA

Ray, honey, how was your day at the shop today?

(setting the iron down)

...musta been pretty busy. You too tired to even open your mouth.

Angela looks up at Raymond who looks stressed as he walks over and sits down on the bed.

RAYMOND

(hesitantly in a lowered voice)

Baby, come sit down. I need to talk to you about something.

ANGELA

(with concern)

Honey, what's the matter?

No Answer.

Angela takes a seat on the bed beside him. Raymond stares down at his hands.

ANGELA

Ray, honey...is everything alright?

RAYMOND

Well, baby...

(beat)

I prayed to the Lord all the way home and I still can't find a right way to tell you this.

ANGELA

(leans over to Raymond)

Honey, it's okay. Just tell me what's botherin' you.

RAYMOND

(looking up at Angela)

Some time ago. Mid last year or so. This woman, named Olivia...she brought a Caddy into the shop. It was a four-year old white DeVille. She said a friend of hers told her that her carburetor needed fixin'...and she asked if I could take a peek under her hood.

ANGELA

(listens attentively)

Yeah...?

RAYMOND

(in a sad reverie)

She said to me that she had the devil under her hood there.

(break)

So, I checked it out. I told her that it wasn't her carburetor at all but all she needed was a new battery and she'd be up and running in a jif'.

ANGELA

Okay...and?

RAYMOND

...well, a week later, she came back to the shop saying that now she was having trouble with her transmission. So then I went ahead and checked it out.

(MORE)

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(pause)

A couple days later, just before I was 'bout to close up shop, here she comes again. She said that she was pulled over by a patrol officer while driving down Brushville Highway yesterday, and that her odometer wasn't rolling over like it should.

ANGELA

(confused)

...okay, so? Where are you going with all this, Ray? What happened?

RAYMOND

(scared and hesitant)

...Baby, I guess I better just come out and say it. There's really no easy way to tell you this.

(pause)

I...I don't want to lose you behind this...

ANGELA

(shocked and thinks the worst)

Ray, please don't tell me--

RAYMOND

(cuts her off)

I...I'm sorry, Angela. I'm so terribly sorry.

No Answer.

Angela puts her hand over her mouth. Tears fall from her eyes. Hesitant and ashamed to look her in the face, Raymond gently grabs for her arm.

RAYMOND

(looking over at her)

...Angela, this woman and I...well, we made love that night.

ANGELA

(crying and shaking her head)

Ray! How could you!

RAYMOND

(kneeling before Angela)

Baby, I'm sorry. Listen to me. I love you...

(MORE)

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(pause)
but--

ANGELA
(cuts him off)
But what, Ray! But what, huh?

RAYMOND
(apologetic tone)
That's not all...there's more.
(break)
This woman...Olivia...well, she got
pregnant...pregnant with my baby.

Angela is shocked.

ANGELA
(crying out)
Oh-my-God! Lord please...please
tell me that this isn't so. This
cannot be happening to me.
(pause)
Oh dear God, no!

Angela turns away, sliding away from him in disappointment.
She holds her hands to her mouth which muffles her crying.

RAYMOND
(moving near her)
Angela, there was complications.
The doctor said that it was...high
blood pressure. She was 42 weeks,
and that she should have come to
the hospital sooner.
(pause)
Olivia died, Angela...she died
trying to push the baby out...
(pause)
...bled to death right there on the
delivery table...just like that.

Silence.

RAYMOND
(sympathetically)
Angela, I've never felt so sorry in
all my life.
(pause)
This, this wasn't supposed to
happen.

ANGELA
(with anger and utter
disappointment)
(MORE)