

BELLE PRATER'S BOY

By Ruth White

Characters

Gypsy Arbutus Leemaster – 12 yr. old girl who is narrating the story. Cousin to “Belle Prater’s Boy.”

Woodrow – Title Character and Gypsy’s cousin.

Belle Prater – Woodrow’s mom and Gypsy’s aunt, who disappears.

Everette Prater – Woodrow’s dad.

Love Ball Dotson – Gypsy’s mom and sister of Belle.

Porter Dotson – Gypsy’s stepfather, editor of the Mountain Echo newspaper.

Grandma & Grandpa Ball – Belle and Love’s parents.

Amos Leemaster – Gypsy’s father.

Hubert Dotson – Town doctor (Doc Dot) and Porter’s brother.

Irene Dotson – Hubert’s wife.

Dottie & Dee Dee Dotson – Hubert’s twin girls.

Buzz Osborne – classmate of Gypsy & Woodrow.

Mr. Cooper – School Principal

Mrs. Cooper – his wife.

Blind Benny – Man who walks the streets at night, singing and collecting trash.

Chapter 1

When does Belle Prater disappear? 5 a.m. on a Sunday morning, October, 1953.

According to Uncle Everett, what was she wearing? Only a thin nightgown.

What kind of evidence was found? None. There were no footprints and no one heard anything unusual.

What is Uncle Everett’s job? Coal miner.

Where did Woodrow live with his parents? Crooked Ridge, near Coal Station, Virginia.

What job does Love Ball Dotson have? Speech & drama teacher at Coal Station High School.

How long was it after his mother disappeared before Woodrow moved away from home? 6 months.

Who did he go to live with? Grandma & Grandpa Ball.

What is the name of Grandpa’s German Shepherd? Dawg.

Where does Gypsy live? In Coal Station, Virginia next to her grandparents.

What paper is Porter Dotson the editor of? The Mountain Echo.

What’s wrong with Woodrow’s eyes? He’s cross eyed.

What book did Woodrow have from his mother? One Thousand Beautiful Poems.

Who did Belle get the book from? Grandpa Ball as a high school graduation present.

Chapter 2

Whose birthday cake did Gypsy help Grandma prepare? Porter’s

Who did Grandma say was the “prettiest thing on the planet?” Love.

What did Grandma say was the most important thing to Belle? Her looks.

Why couldn’t Belle keep a boyfriend? They were pulled towards Love.

What happened after Love went to college? Belle had boyfriends of her own and went to dances and parties.

Who was Amos Leemaster? He was Aunt Belle’s sweetheart before he met and fell in love with her sister. He is Gypsy’s father.

How does Gypsy feel about Porter? She did not like him after he married her mother.

How does Gypsy treat him? She gives him the silent treatment.

Chapter 3

What did Grandpa buy for Woodrow? Comic books, clothes and shoes.

Where does Gypsy take Woodrow? For a haircut.

Chapter 4

What kind of lessons does Granny give Gypsy? Piano.

What does Gypsy hate to do? Wash her hair.

Who else did Granny teach piano to? Belle.

Could Love play piano? No. She tried but couldn't get the hang of it.

What does Woodrow ask for at Porter's party? If they could have a party on his birthday.

When was Woodrow born? December 31st or January 1st, at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, 1942.

What does Woodrow say about the day he "would choose?" His mother told him that when we die we're allowed to live one day over again exactly as it was.

Chapter 5

How does Mama say Belle reacted when Amos choose her over Belle? She was like "whipped dot," wouldn't talk or leave her room.

What happens when she finally comes out of her room? She's all dressed up and goes out. Belle met Everett and ran off with him.

Why does Mama think Belle ran away with Everett? Because she was hurt and desperate and did not want to see Love and Amos together every day.

What does Gypsy have nightmares about? Something about an animal and blood, and an ugly thing in the animal's face.

Chapter 6

What church does Belle take Woodrow to on Sunday? Presbyterian.

What kind of story does Woodrow tell at Sunday school? About Buck Coleman and a tape worm.

What did Gypsy's father build for her? A treehouse.

What does Woodrow say he really wants? Mama to come home and to have his eyes straight.

What does Gypsy say she really wants? To have her hair cut short.

How does she sometimes feel because of her hair? Invisible. People talk about her beautiful hair and don't really see her.

Chapter 7

Where do Gypsy and Woodrow sneak out to at night? The treehouse.

What is behind the shack where Woodrow lived? A place where the air is thick and vibrates. It has a warm spot where you feel the air quivering and hear funny noises, like someone talking through a fan.

Who is heard singing at night? Blind Benny.

Why does he only come out at night? People made fun of him because of the way he looked.

Before she disappeared, what did Belle say she felt like? As if she was in a straitjacket, squeezed to death.

Why does Woodrow feel Belle is trying to contact him? He gets a feeling and wakes up remembering her voice from a dream, saying his name over and over as she cries.

Who catches Gypsy as she sneaks back home? Porter

Chapter 8

Why is everyone at school interested in Woodrow? Because of his mother's disappearance and also the story he told about the tape worm.

What does Woodrow say the first time anyone at school mentioned his mother? "I don't know what happened to her, and I don't want to talk about it."

Who is Woodrow especially nice to at school? Rita Presley, a girl who was always being picked on.

Chapter 9

Who comes to visit Woodrow? His dad, Everett.

Who was waiting in Everett's car? A blond-headed woman.

Chapter 10

What new rule did Granny, Grandpa and Mama give Gypsy and Woodrow? No moviegoing or television watching during daylight unless the weather was bad.

What movie does Porter take Gypsy and Woodrow to see? "Rear Window"

What happens to Gypsy at the movies? She becomes feverish and starts screaming at the movie.

What was wrong with Gypsy? She had a bad case of the measles.

What kind of medicine does Mama give Gypsy? Hot rum.

Chapter 11

Who does Woodrow bring to visit Gypsy? Blind Benny.

Why does Blind Benny call gypsy "Miss Beauty?" It was her father's name for her.

What song does he sing for Gypsy? Her father's favorite song.

Chapter 12

What do the children do when Gypsy is well? Get together with their friends for a wienie roast.

Who does Woodrow tell a story about? His Aunt Millie.

Chapter 13

What do Gypsy and Grandpa talk about? How people feel about the way they, and others, look.

What does Grandpa tell Gypsy about her hair? That it was her daddy's idea to let it grow and that her mother promised to never cut it.

What did Granny and Grandpa think was the reason Belle did not want to see them? They thought she was embarrassed with her living conditions.

Did Belle and Love ever become friends again? No.

Did Grandpa think Belle was happy with Everett? No.

What does Woodrow overhear Gypsy ask Grandpa? If Everett might have had something to do with Belle's disappearance.

Chapter 14

What does Woodrow like to cut out of the Sunday papers? Personal ads.

Why does Gypsy think Woodrow looks at the ads? She thinks he was looking for his mother to send him a message.

Chapter 15

What event happens in midsummer? Mama's annual garden party.

What were Gypsy and Woodrow in charge of? Getting all the names of the women there for the newspaper, and also serving refreshments.

Who gives Woodrow a hard time about his mother? Mrs. Cooper.

What does Gypsy think is the reason for Mrs. Cooper's anger towards Woodrow? Belle embarrassed her in front of her boyfriend as a young girl.

What did Woodrow tell Mrs. Cooper about the Peach Ice she was drinking? That it had some rum in it.

What happens to Mrs. Cooper? She starts to act silly and wades in the creek.

Did Woodrow really put rum in Mrs. Cooper's drink? No.

Chapter 16

What did Woodrow say was the reason he told Mrs. Cooper there was rum in her drink? It was an experiment about the power of the mind.

What made Gypsy jealous? Woodrow could stir up the whole town in a single afternoon and not even get scolded for it while she could never get away with anything.

What does Woodrow say he and his mother were saving money for? To take him to a famous hospital in New York to have his crossed eyes fixed.

What happens when Gypsy asks Woodrow what happened to the money? He gets angry and tells her it's none of her business.

What does Porter tell Gypsy after she says nobody sees her? That he sees her even under all her hair and that she reminds him of her Aunt Belle.

What does he say happened to Belle? That she actually vanished many years ago when she was Gypsy's age and is out there now trying to find herself again.

Chapter 17

Who is Mr. Collins? Gypsy and Woodrow's 7th grade teacher.

What story does Woodrow tell Mr. Collins and the class? His mother learned the secrets of invisibility.

What does Gypsy say happened to her father? He was a volunteer firefighter who went into a burning house to save a baby and died.

What does Buzz Osborne say really happened? That Amos Leemaster had his face badly scarred in the fire and shot himself in the face.

Chapter 18

What does Woodrow do to Buzz? He beats him up.

What happens after Gypsy hears the truth? She leaves school and remembers finding her father after he killed himself.

What does she do when she gets home? Cuts off her hair so she would not be Amos' Beauty any longer.

Who finds Gypsy? Porter.

Chapter 19

What does Mama say is the reason Amos committed suicide? He was in a deep depression and couldn't accept his disfigurement.

Why did Gypsy cut off her hair? She was mad at her father but also felt the hair was a veil that hid the real Gypsy.

Who takes Gypsy to have her hair trimmed? Porter

What does Clint, the barber, tell Gypsy about her haircut? That models in fancy New York magazines wear the same cut, called the Pixie.

Chapter 20

What name does Gypsy give her hair cut? The Dixie Pixie.

What happens when the girls see Gypsy's new hair cut? They like it and several decide to get their hair cut the same way.

Chapter 21

What adventure does Woodrow take Gypsy on? They go with Blind Benny on his rounds.

Who does Benny say is responsible for finding him a place to live? Gypsy's parents.

What does Benny say he became after his parents died? A sin eater.

What is a sin eater? A backwoods tradition that believes a dead person's sins go into the food at the wake and when the sin eater eats the food he takes the sins into his own self so the dead person is clean and free.

What does Amos tell Benny? That sin eating is superstitious nonsense.

How does Amos help Benny? He gave him a place to live over his hardware store.

What does Benny do on his rounds? He collects things from the trash or that people have left for him on their porches.

Chapter 22

What surprise announcements does Porter make at Granny's birthday party? That it was time for Gypsy to have a piano recital and Woodrow would be taken to a friend of Doc Dot's who is an eye specialist to see if they could fix his eyes.

Chapter 23

Where do Woodrow and Gypsy go on the one year anniversary of Belle's disappearance? To the tree house to watch the sun come up.

What does Woodrow think his mother really did? He thinks she wore some of his hand-me-down clothing from his daddy and uncle and took the \$30 they had saved and went over the mountain dressed as a boy.

What is the truth Gypsy thinks she and Woodrow faced that day? That Aunt Belle and her daddy had left them on purpose. Not because they didn't love them but because their pain was bigger than the love.