

... "You Really Gotta Hold on Me" played on her transistor radio, featured as a "golden oldie highlight." Nick turned it up. Sweating, happy for the diversion from the broiling heat, she said, "Remember the prom, Baby? When you got the guys to play this and sang it for me at midnight, just like I asked?"

"Yeah, you first heard it drivin' us to the base pool to teach me the twisty flips, start o' school last year."

"I remember. I remember."

She stood up in her red and yellow, hibiscus-flowered, two-piece suit to sing, cinching a towel, length-wise about her waist, swaying to the music, dancing slow on the beach, putting on a show for her man. Nick said, "Are you something special or what? Ryz'n, you're, you're . . ." He was speechless.

A small, sandy-haired boy with big brown fawn eyes, who had been playing a few yards away, yelled out to Ryz'n in a loud, clear, high-pitched voice: "*Hey, bean-keen-ee girl! Dancing in the sand. Hey, bean-keen-ee girl! You're the best one in the land!*" Not much more than three, sporting a green bathing suit drooping wet off his butt, the sway-backed little man stuck out his little, tanned pot belly at Ryz'n and grinned.

Astonished, Ryz'n stopped dancing to laugh out loud. Nick said, "The little tike took the words right out o' my mouth." The kid half-skipped over to them, one foot in front of the other, scooting toe to heel, arms raised out to his sides for balance, walking like an Egyptian, leading with his small belly, flashing white baby teeth. His idea of dancing, she figured, reminding her of Ralph Cramden—"and away we go." Ryz'n bent over to the kid, kneeling down to his eye level to shake his hand. "Why thank you Mister, what's your name?"

"Bwett!"

He stuck a finger in his mouth, batting his eyes in embarrassment. Nick adjusted his camera to snap a photo of Ry and her miniature admirer. Ryz'n said, "Why thank you Mr. Bwett for that lovely compliment. And how old are you?"

"Free!" He held up three, half-bent fingers in support of his claim.

"My, you're getting to be a big boy, aren't you?"

He nodded, grinning. The kid grew bold, "Gibb me kiss?" Nick rolled his eyes and fell over laughing. Ryz'n laughed, too. She spoke seriously with the little fellow.

"Well, I have to ask my boyfriend first? How 'bout it, Nick?" He nodded. "If I can get one, too."

She noticed the rival Romeo's little twig poking out from underneath his droopy green swimsuit. Nick said, "Yeah buddy, she'll do that to you. Or maybe he just has to go?" Nick snapped a photo as she kissed the boy on the cheek. Throwing his hands up in the air in a touchdown signal, Bwett yelled, "Yipppee!"

Then Ryz'n crawled over the blanket on her hands and knees, trying not to wrinkle it up again, giving Nick a kiss on the mouth. She noticed his stick rise inside his suit, too. When she was done, she laughed at his response. But Nick fooled her, ignoring his conspicuous lower half, saying "That was great Baby, but I meant from the kid."

She faked a pout to scoot aside, while Nick, dragging his leg cast behind him, half-crawled, half rolled over to the edge of her side of the blanket next to the sandy-haired boy. "How 'bout it little guy? How 'bout a kiss for me on the cheek, too?" Nick touched his cheek, but the boy frowned, shaking his head no. This time Ryz'n took the camera to snap the picture. Instead of a kiss, Bwett offered Nick a handshake.

Nicky cried, "Allriiiiight!" He shook Bwett's small hand with a flourish, saying the little guy's mom didn't have to worry about this kid. The boy smiled. Ryz'n snapped another photo when Bwett's mother strolled over.

"Come on now Brett, honey, you've bothered these people long enough." He waved bye-bye and turned. Off he skipped to his mom, happy as a clam, arms flapping in the breeze like a bird's wings, singing his new composition. They watched him trip away, holding his mom's hand, not looking back. On to the next adventure.

"To be three again." Ryz'n mused aloud. "Love to have one like that someday Nicky." He didn't answer. The boy sang in a few simple words a tune that Nick, under a ton of wasted adjectives, had failed to compose for her all afternoon. He sang loud enough for her to hear: " ... *You're the best one in the land.*"

"Bean-keen-ee" Song by Brett Shegogue Copyright © 1990

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