

THE BEST FRIEND'S STORY

Written by

22-DE02-W09

A family struggles to reunite after years of misunderstanding.

FADE IN:

A black SUV comes down a long narrow drive and stops in front of an old farmhouse. A wood fence around the yard is in need of paint. A few scraggly flowers struggle to rise above the weeds chocking them out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

See that car stopping in front of that old farmhouse. That's Hope Boudreau driving. Her son, SAMMY my best friend in the whole world, is in the backseat. Sammy's a little nervous cause he ain't never met his Grandpa before even though he's six. Sammy I mean not Grandpa. Soon Sammy will be seven which is a lot older than me. I'm only three and small for my age. But, this is Sammy's story, at least as I see it.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

HOPE BOUDREAU, a blond 25-year-old woman steps out of the car and surveys the farmhouse and yard.

HOPE

Wait here Sammy. Let me see if Grandpa's in. He might be out at one of the barns.

Hope goes to the front door and disappears into the house. The screen door BANGS behind her.

SAMMY immediately climbs out of the car with GABBY, his Emotional Support dog close behind.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Mom said 'wait' but being the boy that he is, a little curious... Nosey, if I'm honest, he follows her to the house.

Gabby grabs Sammy's shirt tail in her mouth and tries to pull him back.

SAMMY

Let go of me you dumb ole dog.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

See what I mean. He's the one getting into trouble but, he calls the dog dumb? Something's wrong with this picture.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Hope is talking to her father, CALEB CAMPBELL, a man in his late 50's with greying brown hair. Hope and Caleb face each other over a small table. Hope reaches out and takes Caleb's hand.

HOPE

Dad! It's so-o-o good to see you. You look well. I can't say the same for this place.

(Smiles to soften her words.)

I've missed you.

CALEB

You must not have missed me too much, you didn't even come to your Mother's funeral.

HOPE

Dad, I couldn't. I was pregnant with Sammy and almost lost him. I was bed-ridden for four months. A very l-o-n-g four months.

(squeezes Caleb's hand)

I wrote you. Didn't you get my letters? Oh, forget it, Dad. Let's not go down that rabbit hole.

CALEB

You're right, the past is the past.

A door to the hallway opens and Sammy and Gabby enter the kitchen.

Sammy sidles over to his mother and tries to hide behind her.

HOPE

(looks over her shoulder)

Sammy meet your Grandpa. He can hardly wait to show you around the farm. You're gonna love it!

Sammy stands there staring at Caleb.

CALEB

That's right Sammy. How would you like to ride in my golf cart? I might even let you drive it. We can even take your dog with us. What's his name?

SAMMY

Her name is Gabby. She's a girl.

CALEB

Girls are cool. At least girl dogs are.

SAMMY

(grinning)

Yeah! Girls are yucky. People girls I mean.

(looks over at Gabby)

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Not you girl.

Sammy ruffles the fur on Gabby's head.

(to Grandpa)

Can we go now?

CALEB

Sure, I don't see why not.

HOPE

Wait! Sammy, what about your medicine?

SAMMY

I won't need it Mom. I'll have Gabby with me.

HOPE

(hesitates)

Alright, but just this once. You do what Grandpa tells you to, okay.

CALEB

(looks at Hope)

Medicine?

HOPE

(shakes her head)

I'll tell you about it later.

AROUND THE FARM - MONTAGE

Caleb, Sammy and Gabby ride the golf cart across a pasture. Cows are milling about.

They go to another field that holds a flock of goats. Gabby jumps off the cart and tries to herd them. Sammy and Caleb laugh at her antics.

They pass by ducks in a pond and an old equipment shed that houses an ancient Ford Tractor and other rusting machines.

Finally, they stop outside a high wooden fence that extends for several acres. Some of the boards are scorched.

SAMMY

What's behind the fence, Grandpa?

CALEB

Nothing anymore. It used to be a vineyard. Do you know what a vineyard is Sammy?

Sammy shakes his head.

CALEB (CONT'D)

It's row after row of sweet, juicy grapes.

SAMMY

I like grapes. Can we pick some?

CALEB

There aren't any now.

SAMMY

Why not?

CALEB

Because lightning set the field on fire several years ago and burned them all up.

(beat)

Then your Grandma passed away and I just didn't have the heart to start over. Let's go find your Mom! And, why don't you drive.

Grandpa and Sammy switch places. Gabby jumps out.

SAMMY

Come back, Gabby. Don't you want to see me drive?

Sammy cranks the cart and presses the gas pedal. They jerk forward, then stall out. Sammy tries again and they take off.

Gabby follows at a safe distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NEXT MORNING

Hope is on her knees pulling weeds from a flower bed. A bucket of paint sits on the steps--a clean paintbrush and paint stirrer rests on the lid.

The front door opens and Caleb walks out, sits on a wood rocker and watches Hope. He holds a cup of steaming coffee.

CALEB

Tell me about Sammy's medicine. Why does he need it? What's wrong with him?

HOPE

No good-morning? Just straight to the point, huh Dad? You and Radford are a lot alike.

Hope stands up, stretching her back.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Sammy has epilepsy.

CALEB

Epilepsy? You mean the kind where the person falls down, shaking and...

HOPE

Seizures. They're called seizures.

CALEB

Poor kid. Can't anything be done? So he can be normal?

HOPE

He is normal, Dad. He can do anything any other kid can do. He just has to take his daily medicine.

CALEB

Is that the medicine you were talking about yesterday?

HOPE

No, I was talking about his emergency meds. We usually take them everywhere we go just in case.

Hope picks up the paintbrush.

CALEB

What's the paint for?

HOPE

I thought I'd paint the fence. It could use a fresh coat.

Caleb joins Hope in the yard. He fishes in his pocket and pulls out a knife and uses it to open the paint bucket. Picking up the stirrer he swirls the paint in the now open can. He carries the paint over to the fence and sets it down.

Hope follows with the brush. She dips the brush in the paint and makes the first swipe on the fence.

CALEB

You said something else yesterday about Gabby? I like dogs, I just don't much care for them in the house.

HOPE

Gabby's different. She is not only an Emotional Support dog, but she alerts when Sammy has or is about to have a seizure. She taught herself that. She's amazing. And she sorta has to be with him all the time to do her job.

Hope continues to paint while they talk.

CALEB

While we're confessing, you still haven't told me where that husband of yours is. Did he finally dump you?

HOPE

Dad! Why would you say a thing like that. Radford is a wonderful husband and an awesome father to Sammy.

CALEB

(snorts)
Sure he is.

HOPE

Dad! That hurts! I didn't want to say anything until we knew for sure but Radford had an important interview for a job that could allow us to move here. I'd love for Sammy to get to know you and grow up around the farm. We could help you fix it up.

CALEB

You know you and Sammy are welcome anytime.

HOPE

If Radford is not welcome, Sammy and I are not welcome.

Forgetting she has the paint brush in her hand, Hope spins around slinging paint in a circle. She turns to Caleb.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Why don't you like Radford, Dad? He's wonderful, smart, kind, funny and he loves me and Sammy. Can't you ever forgive him for marrying me? For being Creole?

CALEB

It was never about his race. It was about his reputation. I didn't think he was good enough for you. Still don't.

HOPE

What reputation? Tell me, Dad. You owe it to me.

CALEB

Everyone knew about it but you I guess.

HOPE

(frustrated)
Knew what, Dad?

CALEB

He got some girl pregnant and left her. I didn't want that for you.

HOPE

Oh, Dad. I knew all about that, but it wasn't Radford. It was his spoiled younger brother.

CALEB
Are you sure?

HOPE
Positive. And I'm positive I'm
through painting for a while.

Hope puts the lid back on the bucket and stomps it closed with her foot. She start to go past Caleb but he grabs her arm. Hope looks up at him a questioning look on her face.

CALEB
How about we call a truce? Give
everyone a chance to step back and
get to know each other again.

HOPE
Everyone? Even Radford?

CALEB
Yeah, even Radford.

HOPE
(holds out her hand)
Truce then.

CALEB
Done! Give me a hug.

They embrace.

HOPE
Speaking of done. Sammy's breakfast
is gonna be over-done if he doesn't
come eat. He's usually up by now.
Have you seen him this morning?

CALEB
No. Not him or the dog.

HOPE
Let me call him. I'll be right
back.

Hope goes in the house but returns a few minutes later.

HOPE (CONT'D)
I looked all over the house. Maybe
he took Gabby for a walk. They
didn't come this way. I'll go look
for him. It's time for his
medicine. He needs to stay on
schedule.

CALEB

I'll help you. We can cover more ground faster that way.

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME MORNING

Caleb comes from around the corner of the tool shed and joins Hope.

HOPE

Any luck?

CALEB

Don't panic, but the golf cart is missing. Sammy must have taken it.

HOPE

Missing? Where could he have gone? He doesn't have enough experience to drive it. Not by himself. We've got to find him! Now! What if he has a seizure while he's driving?

CALEB

Slow down. Breathe. He'll be okay. They're probably just riding where I took them yesterday. Besides, the cart will automatically stop if his foot slips off the pedal.

HOPE

If anything ever happened to him I'd die. I'd never be able to face Radford. I just want to scream.

CALEB

Go ahead. Scream if it makes you feel better. But didn't you say the dog is with him? She'll look out for him.

HOPE

You're right. Thanks, Dad. You always could make me feel better.

CALEB

You grab his emergency meds and meet me at the truck. We'll find them.

A few minutes later Hope jumps in the truck with Caleb and they head for the back pastures.

They haven't gone very far when they spot Gabby racing toward them as fast as she can.

Caleb stops the truck and Hope jumps out. Gabby runs to her, jumping up and barking, trying to get her to follow. There is blood on her muzzle.

HOPE

Dad! She's got blood all over her face.

Gabby refuses to get in the truck but runs limping ahead of them leading the way.

Gabby goes straight to the fence surrounding the vineyard. The empty golf cart is just outside the fence where a couple of boards have been pulled loose. There is blood and teeth marks in the wood. Gabby squeezes through the narrow opening and collapses across Sammy's legs.

Sammy is laying on the ground just inside the fence. A bucket overflowing with grapes is sitting beside him. Drool runs down the corner of his mouth. He starts to stiffen and jerk just as Caleb and Hope reach him. His head bangs on the ground.

Hope takes one look at Sammy and opens the emergency medical kit. Deftly she fills a syringe with midazolam and shoots it up his nose. The seizure immediately stops. Within a few minutes, Sammy sits up. Smiling sheepishly, Sammy looks up at his mother.

SAMMY

Am I in trouble?

HOPE

We'll talk about it later.
(hands him an energy bar)
Right now, you need to eat this.

SAMMY

Where's Grandpa?

They both look around, but Caleb has disappeared.

HOPE

Dad! Where are you?

Gabby struggles to her feet and goes deeper into the vineyard in search of Caleb.

A minute later the weeds rustle and Caleb and Gabby come out of the vineyard. Caleb is eating grapes from a huge bunch he is carrying.

SAMMY

Grandpa, they weren't all burned up. There's a gazillion of them. They're all over the place.

HOPE

Dad? What's he talking about?

CALEB

This time, I'll fill you in later. Let's get this young man home so he can take his meds and eat some real food. And, I expect we can find something special for a certain little pup, too.

Caleb scoops Sammy up and carries him to the truck.

CALEB (CONT'D)

(to Sammy)

I have one question though, how did you get inside the fence?

SAMMY

(points to tree)

I climbed up that fallen tree and Gabby followed me. But I couldn't find a good place to get out. Then I didn't feel too good and Gabby went nuts. She was biting the wood and whining and digging to get out. I knew she would bring help. I don't remember anything else. Except the cows. They were outside and I don't think they liked Gabby too much.

CALEB

Okay. In the truck, everybody. We'll get the cart later.

Caleb turns back and lifts the exhausted dog and puts her on the back seat of his extended cab truck then opens the driver's side door. He looks back at Gabby.

CALEB (CONT'D)
(looks back at Gabby)
That's one heck of a dog and just
maybe you're one heck of a family.

CUT TO:

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family is gathered for supper. Radford has joined the group. Hope is making a salad. Both Grandpa and Radford are stealing veggies from the salad bowl while Hope pretends to be angry with them. Sammy is nibbling a homemade roll.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Well, that's it. I said in the
beginning that this was Sammy's
story, but I think maybe it was our
story. You know Radford, Hope,
Sammy, Grandpa and my story.

SAMMY
Gabby! Come and eat girl. Grandpa
grilled you your very own steak.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And this is a story about family.
And what family is complete without
a dog? Especially when that dog is
courageous and smart. But I gotta
go now. I've got a WHOLE STEAK to
eat!

Gabby runs over to the group and Grandpa sets a stainless dog bowl down on the floor for her. A huge steak spills over the sides of the dish.

FADE OUT.