

AMAZON ORIGINAL STORIES

# FALLEN GRACE

SADEQA  
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*NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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I believe that if you'll just stand up and go, life will open up  
for you.

—Tina Turner

*Washington, DC*  
*January 1950*

**B**ubbles closed the door to the attic bedroom just as the tiny baby in her arms started to whimper. Gertrude looked back up the stairs, holding her finger in a way that was meant to silence her. But how do you silence a newborn? Bubbles didn't know.

Less than twenty-four hours ago, she had given birth to this little creature in secret with the help of the other Negro girls in the attic. Somehow, they had gotten through Bubbles's labor with a perfect baby girl, and now Bubbles's midsection ached like she'd been run over by a fire truck. The double-wadded rags that the girls had stolen from the supply closet were wedged between her legs, wet and sticky with blood, and her sagging stomach was like unbaked cake batter, not firm enough to hold her steady on her feet. But no matter; she had to continue moving. Keeping custody of her daughter depended on it, because there was no way she was giving up her baby.

For months, Bubbles had rehearsed this escape from the House of Magdalene, a maternity home for unwed mothers-to-be where the mission was to assist "the prostitutes; the troubled, lost, and fallen women; and the wayward girls." In reality there wasn't much redemption. The girls were worked to the bone no matter how pregnant, shamed and insulted daily, and forced to surrender their newborn babies even when they didn't want to. After giving birth, the girls were required to work for the home as Lifers, live-in handywomen who did everything from plunging toilets to cleaning gutters to washing the laundry to polishing the pews at the local church. These girls lived in the basement until they had cleared their "debt" to the house. But Bubbles had made up her mind

early on that she wasn't doing any of that. From the moment she had arrived, she'd practiced moving up and down the old wooden steps every chance she got, careful to avoid the planks that creaked. But as she followed Gertrude, the head Lifer and her escape partner, down from the attic, where Bubbles and the other Negro girls slept, all her practice fled from her head, and she seemed to touch every loose and creaky floorboard underfoot.

When Bubbles reached the second floor, where the white girls slept, she listened for movement before heading down another flight. Sister Katherine slept on the first floor in a small room off the kitchen, and as Bubbles hit another creaking board, she prayed the rumor of Sister Katherine being deaf in one ear was true. She knew the penalty for getting caught. Her daughter would be taken away from her, and Bubbles would be sent to the shaming room, the severest punishment of the house. No one knew exactly what happened in that dark room, but the last girl sent there had come out on a stretcher.

Gertrude opened the door to the basement and then ushered Bubbles through the damp laundry area. They passed two rusty washing machines, a double-size utility sink, shelves of sheets, and racks of Clorox, washing powders, disinfectants, scrub brushes, and buckets. They moved silently to the back window that Gertrude had propped open with a piece of wood. Then she pointed to an old milking stool perched just beneath.

"We gotta hurry," Gertrude murmured, just slightly louder than the hissing pipes.

Gertrude was the mastermind behind their escape from the home. She had given birth and surrendered her baby to the nuns nine months ago but had been sentenced to work off her debt at the House of Magdalene's laundry room with no release date cited. As a result, Gertrude was the Lifer who had been at the home the longest, and the nuns had grown to trust her. Gertrude played the perfect head Lifer. She ratted out girls who got out of line, taught the new Lifers their duties, and

managed the entire laundry operation. Her hard work had earned her the privilege of tidying Mother Margaret's office twice a week, which in turn gave Gertrude access to make secret calls on the only telephone in the building.

Gertrude had just turned twenty years old when she and Bubbles hatched their plan two months prior. Bubbles had been picking up the hymnals for evening Bible study when she overheard Gertrude on the phone trying to secure a ride out. Even though she was leery of Gertrude's reputation, Bubbles had no other option. She suggested they work together. Gertrude had access to the telephone, Bubbles the money and a ride, and two heads were better than one.

Gertrude lifted the window higher, and it made a screeching noise, but she didn't hesitate, hoisting herself out of it. Bubbles climbed up on the stool behind her.

"Hand me the baby," Gertrude whispered, her dirty blonde hair blowing with the rush of winter wind.

Just as Bubbles reached her arms through the window, a light from the basement door shone through. Bubbles's heart hammered against her chest, but she was prepared to fight, scratch, and bite to the end. She didn't want to hit a woman of God, but she would go to any lengths to save her baby. Bubbles turned, certain someone was about to shout and alert the whole house of their breakout. As far as she knew, no one had ever escaped.

Instead, a pale girl dressed in the gray Lifer's uniform tiptoed to the window. "Please. Can you help me?" she croaked. She looked about Bubbles's age, seventeen. Before Bubbles could answer, the girl handed her a scrap of paper. It had a telephone number on it. "I think my mother forgot I was here. Ask her to come for me. My name is Sadie."

Bubbles nodded. "Just don't tell anyone you saw us."

Sadie nodded. "Godspeed." She looked at Bubbles with such admiration that it broke Bubbles's heart to leave her behind, but she could not save the poor girl and risk losing her baby.

Bubbles landed on the soft mound of grass. January's chill hit like a knife to her throat, and she panicked, thinking her baby wouldn't be warm enough. She had hurriedly grabbed some sheets and towels to swaddle her newborn, who wore nothing but a pillowcase as a diaper. If Bubbles had been at home with her parents' acceptance, her daughter would have been cradled in the softest and coziest baby clothes that money could buy. Bubbles had never pictured falling so far from her standard of living, but she couldn't spiral down that road now. Gertrude handed back the baby, and Bubbles held her tightly while moving down the side of the old gothic house, sticking to the shadows.

She did her best to keep up. Every step hurt, and she felt inside out. The faster she walked, the more blood leaked between her legs. But the movement soothed the infant, and it would all be worth it once she and Ray were reunited.

Ray, the light of her world. Ray, the father of her daughter. Ray, the man who'd asked for her hand in marriage when he found out she was in the family way. Ray, the man whom her parents had denied because he was her high school janitor, eight years her senior, with a dead wife and a young daughter. So instead of allowing Bubbles to marry and become an honest woman, they'd sent her away. Her parents thought it better to erase this "mistake" from her life and start over. Even if it meant living a lie.

Her parents' plan had been for Bubbles to give up her baby and return to First Baptist City Tabernacle, where her father was both the founder and pastor. She was going to show up as the good girl, who had been away participating in an impressive government internship in Washington, DC. Churchgoers would fawn over her accomplishments while guessing whether she'd take her smarts to Spelman College, Hampton Institute, or Howard University.

Bubbles's parents had planned it all out, right down to the frilly silk dress she'd wear and the hymn she'd sing upon her return to church.

But Bubbles couldn't do that. She refused to turn her baby over to the nuns she'd been living with for the past five months. She'd witnessed what had happened to the girls who gave their babies away. Guilt had changed sturdy young women into wailing, wimpy damsels. No. She would not follow that path. She would take her chance with shame rather than live with regret.

Escape had been the only option, and now that Bubbles was out of the house, she was going to meet Ray and let him take care of them both. They would be a real family, and this thought gave her the pep to catch up with Gertrude, who was waiting at the bottom of the hill.

"You all right?" Gertrude asked, her acne-marked face even redder than usual, her lips chapped from the cold.

"Just a little winded is all. I'll be fine."

Together, they walked two blocks more, turning into the sleepy northeast neighborhood before stopping at the corner of a well-groomed one-way street. It was just after midnight, and the residents of the single-family homes were tucked safely in their dreams.

Bubbles held the baby closer to her chest as a gust of wind rattled through her. Her teeth chattered. Neither she nor Gertrude had dressed properly for the cold, both wearing identical housedresses over sweatpants and hand-me-down coats. Gertrude had managed a pair of mittens and Bubbles a scarf, but they still shuddered.

"You sure you gave Ray the right location?"

"Yes."

"You called him last night from Mother Margaret's office, right? Told him I had the baby and to come get us tonight at midnight?"

"Yes, we've been over this." Gertrude looked down the silent street. "Where's the five dollars you promised me?"

Before dropping her off at the maternity home, Bubbles's father had hidden five dollars in a pair of ankle socks for her "in case of an emergency." Bubbles had promised it to Gertrude in exchange for her

help, but she wouldn't turn it over until she was safely on her way home with Ray. That was their deal.

"In my shoe, like I told you."

Gertrude started biting her already nubbed nails. "I finally got in touch with my brother. He said he'd come for me."

"I thought you wanted Ray to drop you off?"

"Figured this was better, cleaner for us to go our separate ways. Stay anonymous, like they preached in the house."

"If it was that easy, why hadn't you called your brother before?"

"I did, but he never agreed to come until I had money to pay him," she said, blowing on her hands. "He better hurry his ass. I'm colder than a witch's tit."

Bubbles blew white clouds from her mouth as she spoke. "The first thing I'm gonna do is buy this baby some warm clothes."

"Heck, first thing I'm gonna do is eat three strips of crispy bacon on white, buttered toast." Gertrude shivered.

"I'm going to shower and slip into my favorite satin pajamas."

"I'ma watch the *Lone Ranger*. I miss seeing Clayton Moore in action."

Minute after minute passed with no sign of either ride. The baby started a soft whimper. Bubbles rocked and bobbed in response, but she would not be soothed.

"What are we supposed to do? She'll need to be fed soon." Her daughter's soft sob worked Bubbles's nerves so that she thought she might vomit.

Gertrude's face had become red with cold. "Well, we can't go door-to-door. That's for sure."

The air gushed around them violently. Bubbles realized she could no longer feel her toes. As soon as she opened her mouth to say, "Maybe this was a bad idea," the lights of a car appeared in the distance.

Bubbles squinted as a motor rumbled their way. *Please Lord, let it be Ray*, she prayed silently. The vehicle putt-putted up the street and

stopped in front of them. It wasn't Ray's car. Bubbles felt fresh blood leak into her rags. What was she going to do?

A white man with the same color hair as Gertrude rolled his window down and flashed his stained teeth. He looked to be in his early twenties and needed a shave. A cigarette dangled from his mouth, and Bubbles caught a whiff of stale beer.

"What took you so long?" Gertrude barked at her brother. "We're out here freezing our asses off."

"I got here quick as I could," he snapped. "More than anyone else would do for you."

Gertrude gestured to Bubbles. "Get in the back seat while we wait for Ray."

"Who is she?" He puffed hard on his cigarette.

When Gertrude opened the back door for her, Bubbles was too cold to argue or even to consider the implications of climbing into the back seat of a white man's car. Her mother had told her the story of a Negro friend, Milly, out in Amherst County. Milly had been raped by five white men, passed between them like a plaything along with a flask of corn liquor. When Milly's husband tried to save her, the white men strung him up in a tree, leaving his body on view for all to see. Bubbles knew what she could be subjecting herself to, but she was a mother now. She could no longer feel her fingers, and she worried she might drop the crying baby.

Gertrude walked around and got into the passenger seat.

"A Colored girl? Have you lost your mind?"

"It's not even your car," Gertrude shot back.

"I can't be late for work again."

"Well, I'm not leaving her out here in the cold with a baby."

"I'll give you ten minutes and then we're out of here." The man caught Bubbles's eyes through the rearview mirror.

Bubbles unraveled the baby as her whimper turned into a full-out wail. The poor thing was hungry, and the sound of her cries let Bubbles's

milk down. She threw one of the sheets over both of them and attached the baby to her breast. The car was warm, and her nose began to thaw.

“Do you have to do that in here?” he said, drumming his fingers on the steering wheel.

“Turn your head and pipe down, Liam. I’m trying to think.”

Their voices faded as Bubbles’s eyes darted up and down the desolate street. She willed Ray to pull up and rescue her and their baby.

“We ain’t got the money to be wasting all this gas, Gertie. We need to go.”

“Something must be wrong,” Bubbles said, patting a satisfied baby on her back to burp.

“Maybe, but we can’t stick around much longer. It’s already been thirty minutes. If Mother Margaret finds out we escaped with that baby and sounds the alarm, we are all going to jail.”

“Jail? What the hell, Gertie! You know I already have a rap sheet.” Liam gripped the steering wheel with both hands.

“We’ll take you to Ray’s.” Gertrude turned around in her seat.

“The hell if I’m getting on the road with this spook.”

“Watch your goddamn mouth,” Gertrude shot before Bubbles could defend herself. “This is my car. You are lucky that I loaned it to you. Now get in the back and rest. You need to sleep it off anyway. You smell like a distillery.”

Liam looked like he wanted to protest, but to Bubbles’s surprise, he started climbing over the seat. Bubbles bundled up the baby and moved to the front. Gertrude got behind the wheel, put the car in Drive, and they pattered off.

“Thank you,” Bubbles said.

The front of the car smelled worse than the back. A beer can rolled at her feet, and the ashtray overflowed with butts. As Gertrude maneuvered the big car onto the highway, Bubbles eyed the tin of Bon Ton Potato Chips on the front seat. When was the last time she’d eaten?

“I don’t think Ray drives well at night because he needs glasses,” Bubbles rambled, trying not to think about her stomach rumbling. “Well, he has glasses, but he told me he needed a stronger prescription because the signs still look fuzzy.”

Gertrude nodded and passed the tin of chips to Bubbles. “Here. Eat somethin’.”

Bubbles accepted, gratefully, and continued talking between bites, sharing the chips with Gertrude. “Plus, he had a bad experience with the police that one time. Maybe he’s afraid of state troopers.”

Gertrude nodded, munching on chips with Bubbles until the tin was empty. Then she tilted the tin to her lips and sucked down the crumbs.

Bubbles’s mother would have had a fit and called Gertrude unladylike. But Bubbles could not think about her now. Where was Ray?

“I’m gonna need some of that money you promised me for gas.”

“Okay. What’s your plan once you get home?” Bubbles asked to get her mind off her own problems. The baby was heavy with sleep in her arms.

“I ain’t stickin’ around long. Movin’ out to Hollywood to try my hand in show business.”

“Really?”

“You sound surprised.”

“I’m not,” Bubbles said, but she was. Gertrude was not what most would consider pretty. She had forgettable features, pink acne around her mouth, and stringy hair. Even in a dress, she moved like a boy. “You want to be in the pictures?”

“Nope, management. Got a head for numbers and an aunt out there with connections. I just need to make a little money first, and then I’m gone. Leaving Virginia for good.”

Bubbles looked out the window. That sounded like a big fancy dream. All Bubbles wanted was to become Ray’s wife, maybe finish her last few months of high school, and take care of her family.

“You need to sleep while the baby sleeps,” Gertrude said. “Put your head back. That baby will want you soon.”

Bubbles closed her eyes and, to her surprise, fell right asleep.

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By the time Bubbles woke, Gertrude had dropped her brother off at work and was driving through the neighborhood of Jackson Ward in Richmond. The clock on the dashboard read 3:42 a.m. Bubbles rubbed sleep from her eyes, unable to believe that she and the baby had dozed for so long. She directed Gertrude to Ray’s block. The street was lined with cars, but Bubbles didn’t see Ray’s ten-year-old, forest-green Ford Fordor. Had he been in Washington, DC, looking for her? Maybe he’d arrived late and was stone-cold worried about her and their baby. She instructed Gertrude to park at the corner.

“Hold the baby for me? I want to make sure he’s home before I take her back out in the cold.”

Gertrude took the baby in her arms. “Don’t take too long.”

The narrow street was lined with row houses, their short porches fronting both sides of the street. As Bubbles approached Ray’s, she was, all of a sudden, worried about the way she looked. She touched her thick hair, which had been styled in two braids instead of the Dorothy Dandridge curls that normally framed her face. Worse, she smelled like sour milk, sweat, and blood. She wished she had time to make herself presentable before Ray received her, but she had no other option.

Ray lived in a white house with the paint chipping around the front-porch railing. Bubbles lifted the knocker and let it bang against the front door. It was all she could do not to picture Ray in a ditch somewhere, or worse . . . in a police station, banged up by an officer who’d felt threatened by his mere existence. She lifted the knocker again and let it rap louder this time, using all the force her desperation could muster. The

magnitude of what she had just been through weighed down on her, and she started shouting his name.

“Ray. Ray, are you in there?”

Nothing.

Bubbles could not believe it. All her energy had gone into escaping that home and staying with her baby. She couldn't bear the thought that her dreams of them being reunited as a family, despite the shame and judgment, would end like this.

Sinking against the door, she wrapped her arms against the cold. What was she supposed to do now? She had no other plan. What had gotten her through her time at the House of Magdalene was returning to Ray. She kicked the door with the back of her foot in frustration. Finally, the living room light flicked on.

Relief washed over her. He was alive. He was okay.

The locks turned and the door swung open.

A rosy-brown woman with soft, tossed hair stood barefoot in a silky, peach-colored robe, one that looked fresh from the pages of the Fall 1949 Spiegel catalog—the very one Bubbles had flipped through as her mother drove her from Richmond to the House of Magdalene in Washington, DC, five months prior. Bubbles took a step back and checked the address painted on the front bricks. Had she banged on the wrong door?

The woman flicked on the porch light and peered at her.

“Bedelia Jones? What on earth are you doing here in the middle of the night?”

“Ms. Broussard?” Bubbles stumbled.

Ms. Broussard had been Bubbles's tenth-grade English teacher, her absolute favorite in the whole of Maggie Walker High School. When Bubbles had worked on the school paper, Ms. Broussard had told her that she would go far. But here she was, dressed like an escaped prisoner in front of a woman she admired.

“Ms. Broussard, why . . .” Bubbles couldn't finish her sentence. She was positive that this was Ray's home. She could see through the open

door to the living room, right to the brown plaid sofa where she and Ray had watched *Texaco Star Theater* on NBC. The same sofa where Ray had whispered into her ear that age was just a number, and that the eight years between them didn't matter. The exact spot where Bubbles was sure their baby girl had been conceived.

When Ms. Broussard took a step forward, it was clear that she had nothing on under the sleek robe by the way her supple breasts shifted freely beneath the material. The fog loosened in Bubbles's head, and she reached back for the porch railing to keep herself from plummeting to the ground.

"Is Ray home?" She hated how small and girlish her voice sounded.

"Mr. Williams? And what business do you have with him in the middle of the night?"

The reality before Bubbles was too much to bear. Her mouth opened but nothing came out.

"I am sure that your parents would be quite disappointed to know that you are sneaking around after curfew, knocking on a grown man's door. Isn't your father the pastor of that big church up on the hill?"

Bubbles mumbled, "Yes, ma'am."

Ms. Broussard stood taller, like the real nature of Bubbles's intrusion had just come together in her mind. "This will remain between us, young lady. Now, go before you get your feelings hurt."

Somehow Bubbles made it down the front stairs without falling, but she staggered like a drunk back to Gertrude's car.

"Was he there?" Gertrude now had dark circles under her eyes. She looked like she was barely keeping it together.

"He's sleeping with my tenth-grade English teacher." Bubbles slumped against the seat. "All of his letters telling me he wanted us to be a family were lies. The bastard never had any intention of picking us up."

Gertrude held the baby out to her. "So what are you going to do now?"

"Just drive, please. Get me away from here."

When Gertrude turned the corner, Bubbles spotted Ray's car, the one he said took him years to save for. "Stop the car."

Gertrude pressed her foot on the brake.

"What do you have in your trunk?"

"Probably old tools." Gertrude killed the engine.

Bubbles laid the baby on her seat and walked around to the back of the car, where she rummaged around the trunk until she found a screwdriver. Then she walked back to Ray's precious car and stabbed the screwdriver into the back tire. Nothing happened. Frustrated, she scratched the metal end against the paint of the driver's side door. A loud screech sounded as she etched deep lines across the frame.

A light in the house across the street came on.

"Get in the car," Gertrude hissed.

Bubbles jumped in, and they pulled away quickly.

"I can't believe you just did that. What if someone phones the police? We stole a baby, for Chrissakes."

"She's my damn baby. And we are miles from DC."

"The law won't see it that way. Your word against Mother Margaret's." Gertrude turned the corner. "So what are you going to do now?"

Bubbles rocked the baby, even though she was fast asleep. "I have no idea." But she knew two things for certain: With or without Ray, Bubbles was keeping custody of her baby. And she might not have a pot to piss in, or a window to throw it out, but she would provide for and protect her daughter, no matter what.

Gertrude made several turns and they ended up on Broad Street at the corner of Fourth. She parked the car in front of Havertys Furniture. Last Christmas, Bubbles's mother had parked in this exact spot when they went shopping for gifts at Baker's, Swatty's Pants, and Rayless Department Store. *How could that have only been a year ago?* Back then, her biggest problems were passing geometry and deciding which

dress she would wear for first Sunday when she sang solo with the church choir.

“Look, I’m sorry this is happening to you, but this was supposed to be quick and easy. There’s gotta be someplace else for you to go.” Gertrude chewed at her finger.

She cared, but Bubbles had learned while they hatched their escape plan that she was also pragmatic. If Bubbles became deadweight, Gertrude would leave her and the baby behind.

“What about your parents?”

Bubbles shook her head. The few family members she had in Richmond were all sanctified and too loyal to her father to take her in. To them she was a sinner. She was no better than Ahab, Jezebel, and Lilith of the Bible. They had all turned their backs on her. Bubbles had been dismissed from the flock, but she would not tuck her head between her knees, bearing their condemnation and shame.

The baby started whimpering. Bubbles felt her bottom. “She’s wet. I only have one spare pillowcase,” she said, feeling sweat gather in the pits of her arms. What was she doing out here with a newborn in the middle of the night? What if Ray had turned his back on her for a reason? Maybe the nuns at the maternity home were right. Maybe Bubbles was unfit to raise this baby. She had nothing to offer her but the milk flowing from her breasts—no partner, no family to turn to. *Damn you, Ray Williams.*

“I can’t park here forever,” Gertrude said.

Bubbles bit her lip. Gertrude was the muscle, but Bubbles was the brains of their operation. Her father would never let her back in the house, not with the baby. But if she could get her mother alone, maybe she’d have a chance.

“Look, you said you were trying to get to California. I can get my hands on some money if you just put us up for tonight.”

The baby cried, and Gertrude reached over and tapped her lovingly. “Okay, you can come home with me. But just one night. Tomorrow you give me the money, and we go our separate ways.”

“Deal.”

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Country music played low on the car’s radio as the girls rumbled into a trailer park community in Chester, twenty-five minutes south of Richmond. When they pulled up to the entrance, the fence held a red NO TRESPASS sign, and the gate was secured with a chain that Gertrude unlocked with the key around her neck. Bubbles had never been in a trailer park, and as they passed an abandoned car without wheels and another without a hood, she held her baby tighter to her chest. Rusted trailers filled weedy lots and skinny dogs roamed free, sniffing around the many piles of debris as they hunted for scraps.

Gertrude must have sensed Bubbles’s shock, because as they got out of the car, she tucked her hair behind her ears and said, “This park is a bit run-down compared to where we used to live. But we won’t be here long.” She led Bubbles up three short stairs.

“Be careful with this door,” Gertrude told Bubbles as she wrenched it open and it fell partially off the hinges. Bubbles had no intention of touching anything.

Gertrude flipped on the lights, and cockroaches scampered in all directions. They were standing in what Bubbles presumed was the living room. The carpet had been pulled up and rolled into a heap in the corner, exposing bare plank floors that were sticky underneath her feet. To the left was a narrow, dirty kitchen.

A long snore pulled her attention to the sofa, where a tiny woman was curled under a pile of blankets. Beer bottles, paper wrappings, and unopened mail littered the glass coffee table.

“Ma?” Gertrude poked at the sleeping woman.

“What the . . .” The woman came to. “Gertie. You’re back.”

“No thanks to you.”

The woman sat up. She was wearing a dingy gray turtleneck, and her nails were painted red but chipped. “I didn’t have the money to get you out of there. I figured they’d get tired of looking at you and send you back soon enough. How was your stay?”

Gertrude sucked her teeth.

“Who’s your friend?” Her mother wiped her eyes. She had the same blonde hair as Gertrude, except hers looked as if she’d left the chemicals in too long during a perm, creating a frizzy tangle of unruly confusion.

“Her name is Bubbles.”

“You know they don’t allow no Coloreds here.”

“It’s just one night.”

“I ain’t prejudiced or nothin’.” She picked up the beer can closest to her foot and swallowed its remains. “Some of my best buddies over at the Dixie Pig is Colored. But you know the rules, Gertie.”

“It’s just for the night. We’ll be gone before anyone notices.”

Bubbles fell asleep with the baby in her arms, her back against the wall of Gertrude’s closet-size room.

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Hours later, Bubbles opened her eyes to find Gertrude’s mattress empty. Her bladder was on the verge of exploding. As much as she didn’t want to, she placed the baby down on the rumpled bed.

In the cramped, garishly pink bathroom, Bubbles squatted over the toilet. She looked around but could find no tissue to wipe herself with. What she needed was a washcloth, soap, and fresh pads. When she turned on the water, the pipe made a humming noise, but nothing dripped. She tried to flush the toilet, nothing.

How had her life come to this? One night had caused her to fall so far from grace that she had no choice but to hide out in a whites-only trailer park with no running water? A fat bug crawled across the peeling linoleum as tears started flowing from her eyes.