

... "You Really Gotta Hold on Me" played on her transistor radio, featured as a "golden oldie highlight." Nicky turned it up.

Sweating but happy for the diversion from the breezeless, broiling beach heat and the monotony of staring at the brown lake water, Ryz'n 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. Our first date."

Ryz'n stood up in her red two-piece that featured a sprawling pattern of orange and yellow hibiscus-flowers. She sang along with Smokey Robinson and the Miracles. Cinching a green and orange striped towel length-wise about her waist, she swayed slowly on the nearly empty beach in time with the music, putting on a show for her man, ignoring the perspiration dripping between her cleavage and under her arms.

"Are you something special or what?" said Nick. "Why, you're ... you're—"

"Hey! bean-keen-ee girl! Dancing in the sand.

Hey—bean-keen-ee girl! You're the best one in the land!"

She and Nick turned aside to spy a small, sandy-haired boy with big brown fawn eyes playing nearby, crooning his lyrics to her in a loud, clear, high-pitched voice. 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 her and grinned.

Astonished, Ryz'n stopped dancing to laugh out loud.

"Gee Ry, the little tike took the words right out o' my mouth."

Flashing white baby teeth, the boy half-skipped over to them, one foot in front of the other, scooting toe to heel over the white sand, arms raised out to his sides for balance, walking like an Egyptian, leading with his small, pot belly. His idea of dancing, she figured. Reminded her of Jackie Gleason, "—and away we go." She bent over to the tike, kneeling down to his eye level to shake his hand.

"Why thank you Mister, what's your name?"

"Bwett!" The tike's large fawn eyes flashed beneath long, dark lashes.

The boy stuck a finger in his mouth. He batted his eyelashes after checking her out. Adjusting the camera, Nick snapped a photo of her and her miniature admirer.

"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?"

Grinning wide now, he nodded vigorously. The kid stepped forward.

"Gibb me kiss?"

Nick rolled his eyes and fell over laughing. Ryz'n laughed, too.

"Well, I have to ask my boyfriend first? How 'bout it, Nick?"

Nick nodded. "If I can get one, too."

The rival Romeo's little twig poked out from beneath his droopy green swimsuit.

"Yeah buddy, she'll do that to you. Or mebbe he's just gotta go?"

Nick snapped a photo as she kissed the boy on the cheek. Throwing his hands up in a touchdown signal, Bwett cried, "Yippeeee!" and spun around.

Ryz'n crawled over the blanket on her hands and knees, trying not to wrinkle it up again. Her towel fell off. After she kissed Nick hotly on the mouth, she noticed a rising inside his suit. Waving at the tell-tale sign, it was her turn to laugh at him.

But Nick ignored her, saying "That was great Baby, but I meant—from the kid."

Ryz'n faked a pout then scooted aside. Nick dragged his calf-high ankle cast behind him, half-crawling, half-rolling 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. Ryz'n picked up the camera to snap the picture. Instead of a kiss, Bwett offered Nick a handshake.

"Allriiiiight!" cried Nick

She took the picture when Nick shook Bwett's small hand with a flourish. The boy smiled.

Nick said, "His folks don't have to worry about this kid."

Ryz'n snapped another photo when a handsome woman with fawn eyes and honey-gold hair bearing a strong resemblance to Bwett strolled over to their blanket.

"Come on now Brett, Honey," pleaded the handsome woman. She held out her hand to the boy. "You've bothered these folks long enough."

The little man 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. She and Nicky lay back side by side, their elbows resting on the blanket. They watched the wee one trip away holding his mom's hand, not looking back on to the next adventure.

"To be three again. Ohhhh, Baby. Love to have one like that some day Nicky."

Ryz'n stroked a lazy finger between Nick's tan shoulder blades along his spine down the small of his back. He didn't answer. The touch of his muscular frame never grew old to her tactile nature. But that little guy had sung in a few simple words a tune that Nicky, under a ton of wasted adjectives, had failed to compose for her all afternoon.

She heard the tike tripping away, singing: "... *You're the best one in the land.*"

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

Bwett's Tune ~

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