

The Last Darren and Bonnie Story

“I hope the staff will like them. Apparently they were pretty expensive.”

“Well ... they’re certainly very colourful!”

Darren, Val, Bonnie and I were in the office on the last day of summer vacation. At least, it was the last day of summer vacation for students; the staff had been here for three days of meetings already.

“So, what do you think?”

Darren was showing us the shirts that had been purchased for the staff by the school division. Every school was supposed to have gotten a set. And they were supposed to be in our school colours.

“They’re kind of ... orange.” Bonnie wasn’t kidding. They were a bright fluorescent orange, with collar and sleeves coloured a rather unpleasant shade of green.”

“I think they got our colours wrong. And isn’t there a ...”

“The spelling mistake? Yeah, I noticed that. Don’t worry ... I think our sewing class can fix that.”

Neatly stitched above the pockets were the words ‘Worsley School Wildcuts’.

“Well, Bill ... at least they describe your hair accurately!” Bonnie was being sarcastic again. I’d noticed she’d been doing that lately. I think she was a little peeved at some of the stories I’d been writing about her. Maybe I’d have to write a few more.

Although actually, I wasn’t all that happy about my hair. I’d shaved it completely off for the summer heat in Ontario, and it was pretty slow growing back. Jesse said I reminded her of a billiard ball with fuzz.

“So, Darren ... who paid for these shirts?” That was Val.

“I talked to the Second Assistant Deputy Superintendent for Purchasing ...”

This was a new position created over the summer, along with four others. We now had a Central Office staff larger than any school staff in the division. Sometimes it was difficult to keep track of them all.

“She says it was covered by a special emergency contingency fund that’s earmarked for helping schools maintain school spirit. We’re supposed to wear them every day for the first week.”

“Mindy won’t be happy about that!”

“Oh? Why not?”

“Since she found out she’s the new grade one/two teacher, she’s bought a whole new wardrobe. She looks very ... teacherish!”

“What? No more cowboy boots and western shirts?”

“No. And Jeremy isn’t too happy. With the money she spent on clothes this summer they could have bought three more horses.”

Darren interrupted. “I found out some more stuff that will interest the staff. Have you read the new policy about technology in the classroom?”

Bonnie groaned. “Don’t remind me!”

Darren went on to explain how the school division had decided to join the twenty-first century in a big way. They wanted to be on the forefront of technology use in the classroom again, and were pushing all sorts of initiatives.

“Teachers will be expected to find ways to allow students to use their laptops, iPhones, iPads, iPods, or any other technological device they own, in the classroom, to enhance their learning. And we’ll have to supply devices for students who don’t have them. Equal access ...”

“But my Smartboard still isn’t working, and I’m still trying to figure out ...” But my objection went unheard. Darren kept talking.

“Our school now has a Twitter account, so parents can be updated on an hourly basis about things that are going on in our school”.

I wasn’t sure about that one. We still didn’t have a new intercom system. Most of the time the teachers didn’t know what was going on here on an hourly basis.

“Uh ... who’s going to do the updates?” Val was looking a little worried.

“I was meaning to talk to you about that, Val ...”

Val didn’t say anything. She just hung her head.

“And our school website isn’t compatible with smart phones, so it will all have to be redone.”

“What??” That was me. “There are over three thousand pages ... it will take me ...”

“It’s OK. They said the deadline isn’t until October. That’s also when we have to have our three-year staff Fitness Plan completed by”.

“What??” I was being repetitive. But I couldn’t help myself.

“Yeah, it’s a new initiative by Central Office. Everyone is supposed to prepare their own three year plan to show how they will lose weight and get into shape ...”

“Whose idea was that!?” Mindy had just joined us, and she’d overheard the last bit of the conversation. She was wearing a chic two-piece pant suit in light grey cashmere, a wine-coloured silk scarf, and matching black leather high-heeled boots by Blahnik. She looked terrific.

“The Fitness Plan? That directive came from the Third Assistant Deputy Superintendent for Wellness”.

Darren continued. “By the way, the entire Central Office staff is touring the school division this month. They’ll be out to see our school and meet with the staff on Monday ... I think”.

“All of them? And what do you mean ... ‘I think’?”

“Well, apparently they’re having some trouble chartering a bus ...”

I left the office with Bonnie. I think both of us had heard enough.

“Bonnie ... I’m wondering if I really want to keep doing this job ...”

She looked at me strangely. “You’re not depressed again, are you? Darren will be a good Principal, you’ll see. It won’t be like last year ...”

I’d felt pretty worthless last year, because of problems at the school that I couldn’t do much about. And on top of that, I’d been depressed for most of the second half of the year. It had led me to do some pretty weird things to help myself feel better.

“I’d hate it if you were depressed again! I don’t want to be in any more of your cartoons!”

“No, no, Bonnie, I’m fine. And I know Darren’s going to be great. It’s just that there’s too much to do. I may never get caught up on all my work ... and the year hasn’t even started yet!”

“You need to relax more”. She thought for a moment. “I know ... you need a hobby!”

“Bonnie ... I think I did that story already ...”

“Oh, yeah, I forgot. Sorry.”

“But I think you’re right. I’ve sort of discovered that I’m pretty good at writing short stories. Maybe I’ll do more of those to help me relax”.

“Why do you think you’re pretty good at it?”

“Well ...” Bonnie was being sarcastic again. Who did she learn that from??

In point of fact, I’d never had much feedback about any of my stories. I’d just assumed that people were reading them and liking them. In any event, I hadn’t had any death threats yet.

“Actually, it doesn’t matter. I enjoy writing them, and that’s what’s important!”

“You could ... uh ... maybe find someone else to write about?”

“Uh huh! I have a few stories in mind about life in college. Jesse wouldn’t mind. And I think Brooke and Amanda would make good subjects.”

“But no more stories about me? Oh, I’m so relieved.”

I wasn’t sure if she was being sarcastic again or not.