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Southern Fried Women: A Collection of Short Stories by Pamela King Cable

Pamela King Cable
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“We were opposites. I was a towhead blonde with freckles, pallid and plain. Bertie had a body that caused men to walk into walls.” This is a description of Bobbie and Bertie, the two sisters at the heart of “Beach Babies,” one of the nine short stories in this collection. The author studied with Donald Maass, New York Literary Agent and author of *Writing the Breakout Novel* at the Writer’s Digest Writer’s Conference Book Expo in Chicago in June 2004. She is a member of the North Carolina Writer’s Network and the International Women’s Writing Guild.

These stories all deal with the various issues that women face, such as love, self-discovery, religious faith, coming of age, and tragedy. Two of the more intriguing titles are “Vernell Paskins, Mobile Home Queen,” and “Pigment of My Imagination.” All of the stories are set in the South, an area the author knows well.

Before each story, Cable includes a little background. For example, she says that she had been thinking about “Beach Babies” for a long time when she met her mother-in-law, Bobbie Sue Rossi, who reinforced much of the character of Bobbie Doogan, and whose picture with a friend) graces the book’s cover. Bertie and Bobbie seem to epitomize many Southern women who face hardships from an early age. Loss of innocence, death, and love are some of the prevalent themes in this story.

Another strong character is Vernell Paskins. She says, “I live in Needmore, North Carolina. In the land of the doublewides … The town’s name fits perfect because everybody here is needing more.” She makes purses and bags from ragged quilts and sells them at a flea market sometimes called Spencer’s Garbage Dump, while raising her granddaughter and daughter and living paycheck to paycheck. Vernell’s luck changes the day she gives a box of old books to Dot Bickham, who owns an antique store. Dot finds an old painting in the bottom of the box and takes the picture to a professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As a result, Vernell’s life is transformed. Reflecting on her luck, Vernell says, “God has breathed life into my past and is blowing it into the present.”

Cable does a good job of portraying Southern women as strong, determined, and family oriented. Whether a Beach Baby or a Mobile Home Queen, the Southern woman is a survivor.
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