

Look Into My Eyes

SHAR STURGES

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CHAPTER ONE

I can't believe I let Randy talk me into getting mixed up in the paparazzi fiasco. Every reporter and onlooker anticipated Fu Yung, one of America's Most Wanted. Randy wanted to catch a glimpse of the member from the underground organization the Triad Society. The mafia world fascinated Randy. Fu Yung was untouchable. The movie *The Usual Suspects* fit his profile to a tee.

Time lapsed over an hour as we sat outside superior court. Randy was anxious for whatever reason.

"Quick, here he comes!" Randy yelled.

He blabbered so fast, I thought he was speaking another language. We both jumped and stood on our seats. Fu Yung was short and slender. He wore an olive green button dress shirt with black pants. His diamond watch sparkled more than the handcuffs. Escorted by sheriffs, his hands were positioned to the front of his body as his coat rested on the handcuffs. He walked as if he were invincible. He dropped his coat as his shoes touched the concrete steps. Motionless, he stood there with a stoic look of deceit. The sheriff bent over to pick up the coat. Spontaneously, Fu Yung gave the officer a swift kick, punch, and swing combination.

"What the hell is going on?" Randy shouted.

The guards drew their guns and fired shots. People screamed and yelled, pushing each other, trampling over cords and chairs. Randy disappeared. I flew to the ground as the unknown bullets looked for innocent targets. I didn't move. Scared to breathe, I tightly closed my eyes. My surroundings were peaceful as a cemetery on a dark summer night.

Seconds later, I felt heat nearby. I leapt up and saw Fu Yung. His cold stare sliced my body into pieces. My heart pounded faster. He walked slowly toward me. I didn't give him the satisfaction to allow his strength to increase from my fright. I ran as fast as I could. No one

LOOK INTO MY EYES

was in sight. Where was Randy, the onlookers, or even the media who anticipated Fu Yung's arrival?

Exasperated from running, I saw a battered laundromat on the corner. I heard a loud boom. Startled, I glanced back. The courthouse was engulfed in flames. Fu Yung was on my trail. The faster I ran, the quicker he walked. Killing was on his mind. Living was on mine. I ran past a girl on her cell phone inside the laundromat. She didn't notice my eyes whisper for help.

I yelled, "A crazy man is trying to kill me!"

The woman shrugged her shoulders and sucked her teeth. Maybe she didn't understand me.

"I have too many problems of my own to try and help you," the woman scowled.

Was she serious? I ran into the restroom and locked the door. I heard a loud shriek. I didn't budge. Fu Yung had my undivided attention. There was a loud knock on the stall door. Fists pounded. I froze in terror. I held my hands over my mouth to keep from making a sound. The pounding became louder and louder. Suddenly, the thumping stopped. I heard a match strike and then the fire alarm rang. The sound was unbearable. The noise blared again and again. My voice could no longer keep silent. I screamed. My eyes opened wide. It was pitch black. The beeping alarm clock changed to 2:31 a.m. Drenched in sweat, I sat up in terror of my dream. I stared at the stillness of night and wondered where Randy was. Then I remembered: he wasn't coming home, ever.



CHAPTER TWO

I was not ready to go to Randy's funeral service. I pulled the covers back and stared at the glossy painted ceiling in my apartment. Attending the funeral service would be a bittersweet reunion. As callous as those words sounded, it was true.

I stepped into my house shoes and walked slowly to the shower. It seemed farther away than any other day. Suddenly, I lost my balance. I felt light-headed, nauseated, and groggy. There was a sharp pain in my stomach. I fell halfway to the floor. The pain throbbed and jolted, as if someone tugged my insides. I sat Indian style on the floor. I rocked back and forth and held my breath. Was God trying to tell me something? Well, if He were, did I ever listen? I continued my journey to the shower. I ran the hot water and whimpered.

I dropped my robe to the floor and opened the shower door. A quick flash of Randy gathered in my mind. I heard Randy's disembodied voice:

"Hey baby. Come and join me for a hot shower."

"Randy, I don't have time. I have to go to your funeral."

"Come on. I won't try anything. I promise," he said with a smooth tongue.

The phone rang. Startled, I jumped out of the shower, grabbed my robe, and ran to the living room.

"You have a collect call from Blythe Penitentiary."

I immediately pressed the button to connect the call.

"Hey baby girl."

"Hey dad."

"Are you going to Randy's funeral today?"

"Yeah."

LOOK INTO MY EYES

“I don’t know why. He never treated you like you were meant to be treated.”

“I know dad, but I’m going.”

“All right, I’ll check on you later.”

Without notice, I heard a click and then a dial tone. My dad never said goodbye. He felt goodbyes were bad luck. I guess our last name should be the “Badlucks” instead of the Summers. Bad Luck Chuck was my dad’s street name. People always said that when my dad came to see you, it was bad luck. I knew my dad’s history, but I didn’t want it to know me.

I was afraid to go back to the shower for fear Randy would haunt me. Despite my reservations, I went back. The water was cold. I turned the nozzle over to extreme hot. Randy kissed my neck.

“Why did you do it? Why did you do it, Beauty?”

I whimpered, gasping for air. I quickly rubbed my body down with Victoria’s Secret shower gel. What secret did Victoria know and how long would it be before she told? After the water failed to get any hotter, I rinsed the soap off, attempting to wash my aches and pains down the drain.

The funeral service started at 10:00 a.m. I left home and took the surface streets to the mortuary. The moment I arrived, I saw Randy’s mom exiting the limo. Ms. Henderson wanted me to ride with the family, but I felt much better in my own solitude. I sat in my car for several minutes. Once I saw Ms. Henderson enter the building, I proceeded to walk in without removing my sunglasses. I was too afraid to show my red, watery eyes. My heart shattered into pieces like a new puzzle scattered in a box. I loved Randy more than anything in the world. At some point, I knew he would settle down. I had no idea it would be in a dark grey casket. I felt completely empty. Randy’s mother sat moribund on the front pew next to Natalie, Randy’s sister. I contemplated how many women Randy slept with were there. Yes, Randy was brutal. He was a womanizer, and he simply did not care, but for one reason or another, I loved him.

I grabbed my stomach. The pain was back. I held my breath in hopes the discomfort went away. I continued to breathe slowly until the soreness subsided. I held the obituary and noticed the picture on the front. I remembered when Randy took it. In fact, I picked out the shirt he wore. Tears welled in my eyes. I folded the obituary and put it in my purse.

The service had progressed. It was time for a solo. I saw Aunt

LOOK INTO MY EYES

Elizabeth. I sighed as she gracefully walked toward the front of the church in her tilted feather hat. Aunt Elizabeth was short and petite. Everyone in Randy's family respected her. Aunt Elizabeth did not have any children and was married six times. Her last husband left her for a younger woman. Randy used to say she killed her husbands. I knew one thing: she gave good advice on life. I loved to converse with Aunt Elizabeth. She listened to my poems while I recited them. She tried to help me conquer my fear of stage fright.

Aunt Elizabeth approached the front of the mortuary. She removed the cordless microphone from the stand. I never heard the song before; it was something about His eye on a sparrow. Aunt Elizabeth sounded beautiful. Her voice echoed like the sounds of Billie Holiday. Aunt Elizabeth's up and down octaves made the hair on my back stand at attention. When she finished her last verse, everyone cried, including me.

The minister spoke, "Thank you for that lovely solo. Now we will have one more selection by the choir, and then Reverend Towne will give the eulogy. After that, there will be the viewing of the body."

Halfway through the choir's song, Randy's mother wailed. She fainted and hit her head on the wooden bench. Randy's sister and the ushers escorted her out of the mortuary. The woman leading the song sounded horrible compared to Aunt Elizabeth. I wanted to grab the microphone myself. Quickly, Aunt Elizabeth walked to the choir stand and snatched the microphone. The choir continued to sing. No one reacted to Aunt Elizabeth's stunt. Once the choir and Aunt Elizabeth finished the song, she handed the microphone back to the woman and smiled. Classic.

"Uh, thank you Sister Lady for assisting the choir, and thank you Sister Johnson for allowing our guest to participate in a glorious fellowship," another minister said as he wiped the sweat cascading from his forehead.

Sister Johnson leaped to her feet and ran out the side door. It was time for the eulogy. Quietness fell upon the audience as if we all waited for a sign from God.

"To the beloved family and friends: Today marks a regrettable day, as God has decided to take back one of His own."

Did he just say one of God's own? God gave Randy over to Satan a long time ago.

"No one knows the time or day when we will cease from living, but I say to you all, learn of God and who He is," the minister said.

LOOK INTO MY EYES

The minister turned to the family and said, “I know Randy was very dear. He was the epitome of compassion.”

He definitely has the wrong Randy. Did Ms. Henderson pay the minister to say those remarks?

The minister continued, “I remember when I would see Randy. He always helped his mother out the car and smiled as he entered the church. The last time we spoke he said he was ready for God’s great plan.”

I must be at the wrong funeral!

“I want the family and friends to know, Randy is in a better place. Don’t be sad, for Randy is smiling on us right now. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Please be strong, family. We will get an opportunity to see Randy again,” the minister said.

I needed to excuse myself. Outside, the motorcycle escorts placed big yellow funeral stickers on all the cars. I asked one of the men if he knew where the restroom was. He pointed to another door adjacent to the mortuary.

The navy blue carpet and red painted walls created a somber hallway. The first room I passed had an open casket. There was an older man lying inside the casket with his arms folded across his chest. His shirt was stiffer than his body. He had grey hair and gold rings on every finger. His black suit accentuated the black and white interior of the casket. I whisked past the door, trying not to regurgitate. I finally noticed a sign that read “restroom.” I ran and almost didn’t make it to the toilet before my food gave way.

I went back into the mortuary to bid my Randy adieu. The minister was near the end of the eulogy. Ushers escorted Randy’s mother and sister back inside the mortuary. The minister made it seem like Randy was a faithful churchgoer. Randy did not attend church unless his mother or sister asked him to come. He asked me to attend a few times, but the church thing was not for me. I didn’t understand what all the hype was about church. In the news, there were stories about priests molesting children, ministers stealing the church’s money, and preachers cheating on their wives. No thank you, I have enough drama in my life.

After the minister sat in his chair, the pallbearers walked toward the casket and pulled back the lid. Seeing Randy’s handsome face revealed made mountainous tears fall from my eyes. My heart died with Randy. I had one last look at the man whom I loved and hated.

I walked down the aisle and faced his mother. I didn’t look at his

LOOK INTO MY EYES

sister. I leaned down and gave Ms. Henderson a hug. I made my way toward the casket. How could he just lie there with a smile on his face, as if he were the perfect gentleman? Every wrong thing Randy ever did flashed in my mind. Angrily, I stuck out my middle finger. When I looked back, it looked like he gave me the middle finger too.



CHAPTER THREE

The sun was beaming. On the way to my car, Randy's sister ran toward me.
"Beauty! How do you have the audacity to show your face here?"

Natalie used to be my best friend. I met her in junior high. Natalie was a bit taller than me, and people used to think we were sisters. We were like twins, practically inseparable. We took the same classes together in high school and hung out on the weekends. I didn't pay her brother any attention back then because he was very irritating. Randy would tease and mimic our conversations. He dressed funny. I'd never thought we would be together today. Natalie and I lost touch when we went to different colleges out of state. After graduation, we moved back to L.A. and became two peas in a pod again. That's when my feelings for Randy deepened.

Our chemistry was strong. We became a couple and moved in together. Natalie was jealous. Natalie and I soon faded into a "hi and bye" relationship.

Randy was my everything. I couldn't believe how hard I fell for him. He complimented me every day and cooked breakfast for me Saturday mornings. Somehow I didn't see the true person he really was until it was too hard to let go. We practically did everything together. People didn't understand our relationship. It seemed so perfect — or so I thought.

It wasn't until a year later when the lies started to surface. I noticed he would stay out late. He began to lie about where he was or what he was doing. I remember one day Candice, an old friend, called me.

"Beauty, I'm here eating lunch at Red Lobster and I think I see

LOOK INTO MY EYES

Randy here with another woman,” she said.

“Maybe that’s his cousin. He said she was in town visiting and he was taking her out.”

“I don’t know about that. Do you want me to go over there and say something?” Candice asked.

“Definitely not. I don’t want him thinking I sent you to spy on him. I trust Randy.”

“Yeah, well at least somebody does, because from the looks of it, he’s not worth being trusted. I think you should come meet me here,” she said.

“No way!”

I stopped talking to Candice because she always tried to get me to break up with Randy. Had I known then what I knew now, I would’ve gone to Red Lobster and ended everything. I would have called the relationship off that very moment. I would’ve thanked Candice rather than push her to the side. I would’ve saved myself a lot of heartache and pain. Only if...



I forgot Natalie had asked me a question. I came back to reality.

“What do you mean what am I doing here?”

I was not in the mood to hear whatever Natalie had to say.

“You killed Randy!” She exclaimed.

I lost control, balled my fists, and hit her with all my might. She fell and her eyes fluttered. No one noticed she was on the ground so I hurriedly left the scene.



I didn’t plan on going to the gravesite. I was emotionally drained. I decided to go home and rest. There was so much traffic on the way home. I contemplated on how my life was changing, now that Randy was gone. I felt hopeless. I pulled into the parking stall and turned the ignition off. I was paralyzed with sadness. I leaned on the steering wheel and cried. Randy treated me wrong, but I couldn’t control my pain. A part of me wished he was with me, and part of me was relieved I didn’t have to deal with his lies. I wouldn’t have to worry about when he was coming home or who he was with. I felt like peace should’ve been on my side, but it was nowhere in sight.

LOOK INTO MY EYES

I managed to open the car door. My body felt weak. I dropped my keys on the ground. I stared at the keys and cried again. Sniffling, I got out the car, closed the door, and picked up the keys. I took the elevator to my floor. I didn't smile at the couple that held hands in the elevator. I stared with envy as they walked off, adoring each other's love. The elevator door closed and I went up one level. The elevator door opened. I walked to my apartment and stuck the key in the door. When I opened the door, I froze. I felt like Randy was sitting on the sofa, staring at me, asking me why was I sad. Then I realized he wasn't there. I closed the door and walked to the bedroom. I fell on the bed and cried again. I cried myself to sleep. That day was just the beginning of what I thought would be the end.



CHAPTER FOUR

*I can't take the pain of being lonely
I don't know how to love again
Sick and tired of these phonies
Like Toni Braxton, wishing I could breathe again
I'm not going to let you take my joy
I'm not going to give you that pleasure
I'm so glad that you are gone
Ha ha ha, I hope you enjoy the hot weather*

Writing poetry made my life livable. I, along with other poets, hung out at Joi's Café. The popular coffee house in West Los Angeles was a place where upcoming poets displayed their talents. One day I planned to get on stage and recite my poem, but I lacked courage. Aunt Elizabeth said my fear was only what I thought would happen if I failed. No matter how much she tried to encourage me, I couldn't get on stage. Randy never went with me to Joi's – my pleasure, his pain.



I sat in my car in the parking lot at Joi's. I couldn't focus. It was only a few days since I attended Randy's funeral. My heart still felt heavy. I cried when I saw couples kissing. I cried when I saw anything that remotely reminded me of Randy, from the car he drove to the cologne he wore. I was miserable and I didn't know how to cure the pain. I decided not to go inside and went for a drive. I ended up at Dockweiler Beach. I didn't get out the car, but rather sat in the car and

LOOK INTO MY EYES

stared at the ocean. The moonlight danced on the waves as my heart pounded with sorrow. My cell phone rang. It was Natalie. I didn't answer. I didn't want to hear anything she had to say. I let the call roll over to voicemail. My phone made another sound. Natalie sent me a text that read:

“Don't ever come around my family. You killed my brother and you will get what's coming!”

I couldn't believe this was the same Natalie who was my best friend. I didn't kill Randy. I had no idea why she kept insisting on why his death was my fault. I deleted her text message. I wasn't afraid of Natalie one bit. She was the least of my worries. I leaned my car seat back and closed my eyes.



“You sure know how to make a man feel good,” Randy said as I massaged his back.

“I don't know what I'd do without you,” I said.

Randy turned around and grabbed me by the waist. He kissed me like I was his one and only. It was Friday night, and we didn't have any plans. We spent a romantic evening at home until Randy's cell phone rang. He picked up the phone and started talking as he walked toward the bedroom. A few minutes later, he told me that his sister called him crying, because she broke up with her boyfriend and she wanted him to come over. Immediately the mood changed. I didn't buy his story. I couldn't call Natalie because our relationship was severed.

“I thought we were spending a romantic evening together.”

“We will pick up when I get back. I'll be over there for an hour or two. I'll call you when I get there,” Randy said.

He grabbed his coat and keys and kissed me on my lips. Just like that. He was gone. He didn't come home until the next afternoon.



I woke up remembering I was in my car. The waves had subsided to subtle ripples against the sand. The excruciating pain in my stomach was back. I sat still with my hands over my stomach. I crunched over in pain. A few minutes later the cramping stopped. I decided to call it

LOOK INTO MY EYES

night and head back home. I felt lonely and didn't know what to do with my life.

When I arrived home I went straight to bed. I pulled back the covers halfway and laid in a fetal position. The sheets were cold. My pillow was flat and I couldn't get comfortable. I tossed and turned until I finally fell asleep.



CHAPTER FIVE

I sat on the sofa and turned on the television. Before I could relax, I heard a woman's loud voice.

"You better stay away from my man! I'm sick and tired of you showing up here. You don't know me, and you don't want to know me! Now come closer and you will!"

I could tell it was my neighbor Sarai from her high-pitched voice. She has the most handsome husband on Earth. Last year, I saw Sarai's husband Doug for the first time, standing outside the apartment building. I never told Randy or Sarai that's how I noticed the "For Lease" sign. I couldn't keep my eyes off his bulging muscles.



"Hi, beautiful," Doug said charismatically.

"Hi." I leaned slightly to my right to read the "For Lease" sign again.

"Do you know if any apartments are still available?" I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"If it is, I hope to share it with you," he said.

I laughed nervously. He was extremely tall. I later found out that he played international basketball. He had a deep, dark complexion with a short fade and a shapely goatee. He wore black and red basketball shorts with a red T-shirt. His tennis shoes were immaculately clean. His deeply defined calves caught my attention as his chest protruded through his sleeveless shirt. My thoughts alone would have perturbed Randy.

When I came back to reality, I noticed the titanium band on his left

LOOK INTO MY EYES

ring finger. I continued to stare. I walked up a few stairs and pulled a brochure from a clear box.

I never told Sarai about our conversation and I definitely didn't tell her what happened when I moved in.



“Sarai, are you OK?”

“Of course! Doug’s sorry, baby wannabe mama is here, and it’s about to be a problem!”

She yelled as the other woman briskly walked away.

“I am so sick and tired of her coming here begging for money! I’m going to give her something to really beg for if she keeps at it.”

I tried to defuse the situation.

“I’m going to Joi’s tonight. Do you want to go?”

“Sure. I need to talk to you about something anyway.”

“All right. I’ll come over in about an hour.”

I didn’t give a second thought as to what Sarai wanted to talk about. Lately, all I could think about was Randy. It’s been a month since Randy’s death. Destined to have a good time tonight despite my feelings of depression, I walked to my closet and pulled back the shutters. Last week, I noticed my clothes were squeezed to one side of the closet, even though Aunt Elizabeth came and took all of Randy’s belongings. I noticed a shirt of Randy’s I wore from time to time balled up on the floor. I picked it up. I could smell his cologne. I still could not come to terms that Randy was gone for good. He could sell me the world repeatedly; take the same piece, jazz it up, and present it to me a different way. Little did he know that I learned his game better than he taught it to himself.

At the beginning of our relationship, everything was great. Our first date made me feel like Randy was the man of my dreams.



“So where do you want to go eat?” Randy asked as he drove behind the wheel of his red convertible Mustang.

“I don’t know. Anywhere will be fine.”

“Anywhere?”

“Yes. I trust your judgment.”

He took me to some fancy restaurant in Malibu. We talked about our childhood, what our dreams were, and things we had in common.

LOOK INTO MY EYES

Randy was suave. He knew exactly what to say, how to say it, even if it weren't true. Every part of me wanted to spend all my time with him. Had I known our relationship would turn into four years of empathic hurt, I would've ended our friendship that night. Instead, I let my heart lead the way to destruction. I knew from that night forward we would be together forever. I had no idea it would be his forever.



CHAPTER SIX

The ride to Joi's was pleasant. Sarai made me forget about my feelings of depression. She plugged in her iPod. We reminisced over songs we listened to growing up.

"Uh! Uh! Remember this one?" Sarai asked.

Sarai sung the lyrics to "*I Need Love*" by LL Cool J. I chimed in. We knew every word from the beginning to the end. We giggled and teased each other like two mischievous high school girls. We parked across the street from Joi's. There were many people entering the building because of the poet contest. Luckily, Joi kept my name on the guest list so I never had to wait in line. Envious eyes from women and drooling men followed Sarai's every move. Sarai was a personal trainer to several celebrities, and had the body to make her own mama resentful. We walked into Joi's and took a seat at my favorite table. Nikki, the weekend server, walked over and started writing on the tablet.

"I know Beauty wants the 'usual'," Nikki said.

"Sarai, what do you want to drink? I'm buying," I said.

"I'll have a Long Island iced tea. That'll last me all night," Sarai said.

We all laughed as I told Sarai we might need to call a cab to take us home tonight.

"All right, a Watermelon Daiquiri for Beauty, and a Long Island iced tea for you," Nikki said, pointing the top of her pen toward Sarai.

Nikki was very amicable. She always wore a smile on her face even when people were belligerent after a few drinks.

"I'll be right back with your drinks," Nikki said.

While we waited on Nikki to return, Cyfin, a usual performer, took the stage. Her hair was naturally curly. She wore a white top with flowers on it and light blue jeans. The flower in her hair complemented her glowing skin. Many people felt Cyfin favored Jill Scott, an R&B singer.

The D.J. played a soft mellow jazz tune.

"How y'all doin' out there tonight?" Cyfin asked.

"We're doing fine, just how you look," a man shouted from the audience.

"Oh my, well, thank you. I'm going to recite for y'all tonight, *Life*."

Cyfin closed her eyes and swayed from side to side in rhythm with the music. Her vocals echoed through the speakers.

"You know, sometimes we get ourselves
Into positions unknown to fate
I mean we can't even relax
Sit or even just wait
We're made to love ourselves

LOOK INTO MY EYES

Deep, deep
So deep
That sometimes we can't help but weep

Have you ever looked at the moon
For all it's worth?
I mean, damn
Its beauty
Its fullness surrounding Mother Earth
The moon...
And, sometimes it stares right at me
Fooling me
Having me feeling down and out, lonely, and blue

Don't be dismayed
When the love starts to fade
Away from you
Into this big black ocean of love
Sometimes you have to stay and breathe
You feel that
Yeah! Breathe. Um, Um, Um, Um
Yeah
Love is a funny thing
Sometimes you feel it
Sometimes you're invincible
Yeah
Invisible to the truth
Of who you are
Or
Who love wants you to be
Hmmmmm

So when you feel life inside
It gives you sheer lust
Of one's egotistical remains
Of the soul."

"Whooooo, go on girl!" Sarai yelled.
Cyfin continued.

"Feel that? Yeah.
Love
You know love comes knocking on your heart
Sometimes we answer the beat
But it's the door
To the wrong opportunity
But that's all right you see
Love can do that

LOOK INTO MY EYES

Knock
It's always
The fabric of opportunity
Yeah love

So now, as I listen to life
What is it saying?
Or yet
What will I say to it?

Listen to me
Love me, hold me
Never let me go
Until my soul can conquer no more
So, I end this quest of yearning for your love
You have to understand
We are all one, together
Realizing that love is knocking
Constantly...Knocking
Looooovvvvvvveeeeeee!"

The music slowly faded. Ecstatically, the crowd clapped.

Sarai nodded her head in awe and said, "That was awesome. When are you going to get up there?"

I looked at Cyfin as she walked off the stage and waved to a crowd of her friends.

"One day I plan to. One day."

By now, Nikki had brought me my second drink.

"Try this," Nikki said, handing me a drink.

"What is this?"

"It's a Ruby Hot Mama."

"A *what?*" Sarai and I asked together.

"A Ruby Hot Mama!"

We all laughed.

"It's on the house," Nikki said.

The drink was delicious, however, hearing the word "mama" made me think about my birth mother.



My mom left my dad and me when I was two. I really don't know much about her. My dad said she was strung out on drugs. My dad remarried another woman named Charity, but she died when I was 13. She was somewhat weird if you ask me. I don't know what my dad saw in her. Charity stayed in the bedroom with the door closed most of the time. She was extremely homely. I never introduced her to any of my friends. Many of them were shocked when they found out that I had a stepmother. One weekend my dad flew to Chicago to take care of business. He never told me what "business" he had there. Late Sunday night, on my way upstairs to my room, I heard the TV in my dad's bedroom. Charity never went to sleep with the TV on.

The bedroom door was slightly open.

"Charity!"

LOOK INTO MY EYES

She didn't reply. Charity's pale skin looked ghostly as the static from the television screen casted its rays on her back. She had the same clothes on from yesterday, which was very unusual.

I yelled her name again.

"Charity!"

She didn't move. I shoved the bed with my knee. Now facing her, I realized she was dead. I took the small piece of paper from her hand and placed the note in my dad's drawer. My dad never mentioned Charity's name or her last whispers again.



"I really liked Cyfin," Sarai said.

"Yes. You said that already."

Sarai looked at me without continuing the conversation. I was afraid Doug told her what happened the second time I saw him after I moved in. I forgot where I was, and began to reminisce about the day I kissed Sarai's husband.



"It's good to see you again," Doug said, extending his hand.

I wanted to extend more than just a neighborly handshake. Inquisitively, he walked in my apartment.

"So, did you move in here by yourself?"

I wanted to say yes with all my heart, but I didn't want to play games with a married man.

"No. My boyfriend and I moved in together."

"Oh, I see. Wait, you're not just saying that, are you?" Doug asked.

For the past couple of years I felt I was in a relationship by myself. Randy was preoccupied with everyone else. On his days off, he rarely spent time with me. I was a second priority. Sometimes I would stay out late with my friends and would still make it home before he did.

"Well, welcome anyway. You and your invisible 'boyfriend.' Maybe my wife and I could fix dinner for you and your boyfriend," Doug said.

"That would be great."

He continued to walk around my apartment. I watched his every move, contemplating on kissing his lips. I ignored the fact I had a stranger roaming around in my apartment. I followed his every move. The scent of his cologne made my hormones spiral like a blowing dandelion in the wind.

"We have the same layout as you, but we have a larger balcony!" Doug shouted from the hallway.

He walked back toward the living room and sat on the couch. He patted the sofa cushion next to him.

"Have a seat," he said.

"Have a seat? This is my apartment. I'm supposed to ask you to have a seat, which, by the way, I didn't."

He stood up and walked near the window facing the parking structure.

"So where did you say you were from?"

"I didn't."

I figured that if I acted as if I didn't care, he would leave and the temptation of lust would follow him out the door.

"Have I overstayed my welcome?"

I felt sorry.

"No. I feel really uncomfortable because you are married."

LOOK INTO MY EYES

“Oh, I see. So does that mean I can’t talk to you?”

“No, that’s not what I meant.”

I felt trapped inside of his box of passion. I walked past him on my way to open the door for him to leave. He met me halfway and smiled. My heart pounded 10 times faster. The attraction between us was apparent. He leaned over and gently kissed me. His lips were soft and warm. I forgot who I was and grabbed him back, tasting infidelity on his tongue.

“Well, I’ll let you be,” he said.

I didn’t say a word. Mesmerized, I sat on the sofa, wondering what would happen if he hadn’t left my apartment.



“Hello...Beauty! Come back to Earth!” Sarai exclaimed. “Girl, what were you thinking about? I was going on and on...and then I noticed you weren’t paying me any attention!”

“Oh...nothing.”

“I have a proposition for you – or my husband and I have a proposition for you,” Sarai said.

I suddenly felt nervous while my body temperature rose.

Feeling sweat build under my arms, I said, “Sarai, what are you talking about?”

“Well, I’ve noticed Doug has admired you from day one. Last week he told me—”

“Told you what?”

“He told me about when he flirted with you when you first moved in. You know, we like to spice up our love life from time to time. And...well.”

Sarai took a big gulp of her drink. I had a funny feeling where this conversation was going, only I wasn’t prepared on how to end it.

“Would you be willing to engage us in the privacy of our lovemaking experience?” She asked candidly.

I didn’t respond. I didn’t know whether to laugh or change the subject. I saw a few movies about ménage à trios and none of them had a happy ending. The conversation made me very edgy.

A few months ago, my womanly instincts were in an uproar. I knew Randy was up to no good. I came home and noticed Randy left his cell phone on the charger, which was rare. I pressed ‘redial’ on his cell phone. The call went to his voicemail without asking for the password. Flabbergasted by the easy access, his mailbox was full. Countless women left messages. I didn’t recognize any of the few male voices. However, the last message I listened to was the worst one of all. I became infuriated.

A woman was upset with Randy because she didn’t appreciate the fact that after their ménage à trios he tried to talk to her girlfriend. I couldn’t believe my ears. She said he was lowdown and scandalous. She threatened he would get what he deserved.

Thinking about Sari’s proposal, I replied, “Are you for real?”

“Yes. So what do you say?” Sarai asked.

I hesitated, “I don’t think so.”

“This is not the first time we’ve done this, just to let you know,” she said.

“Why are we talking about this?”

I choked on my drink. Thankfully that ended the conversation and I was relieved when a man came and asked if I was OK. I focused more on the stain on his shirt rather than his kind gesture. I told him everything was fine. My lack of interest in his conversation yielded his attention elsewhere.

Later that night, at home in my bed, I tossed and turned, thinking of the time I found a bag full of numbers and condoms in Randy’s drawer. I was absolutely fed up, or so I thought.

He said, “Those are old! And why were you going through my stuff?”

My stomach turned inside out. I wanted Randy to leave, but he wanted to stay. I never met a man

LOOK INTO MY EYES

who lied so much, even God believed him.

*It's funny how time lapses.
And you realize one day...Reality.
Sitting here listening to Luther Vandross,
I remember the day you proposed to me.
Why?
Why did you send me on a fantasy trip?
That you had no intentions on being a part of!
Listening to the song, I had picked to march down the eternal aisle of love...
Why?
Why did you waste life's time, anticipating heartbreak?
And your non-committed self-love and self-hate
That I had no knowledge of.
Time will tell.
It will open up the doors to the truth.
The doors to the soul of reality.
I guess I am grateful to you.
Thank you for not marrying me.
Knowing how conniving, sneaky, and despicable you truly are!
A non-committed walking mammal!
Thanks for having my back!*