

## Chapter 10

That evening at the H&H restaurant, the dinner went surprisingly well. Several of the patrons, both female and male recognized the couple. A few even stopped by briefly to chat.

One middle age couple stopped by their booth. The husband starts the conversation by looking at Dee; “My wife and I have been coming here for years. We remember way back when you had pink ribbons in your hair.”

The wife takes over; “He sometimes forgets his manors. I'm Beth and he's Melvin.”

Edward starts to get up when Beth puts her hand on his shoulder; “Oh don't get up on our account young man. We just stopped by to say hello. When we seen you two sitting next to each other, I knew you two are together. This lug I'm married to wasn't sure until he seen you two looking into each others eyes.”

“Looking into each others eyes? Hell no. They were looking into each others soul!”

“Quiet Mel. Let's leave these two alone. Just one question young man. Are you serious with this young lady?”

“The rest of our lives serious.”

Beth bends over to be closer to Dee so not overheard; “You two have a big hill to climb and conquer. You're gonna have a lot of enemies; some black, but mostly white looking down at you.”

Edward smiles; “This lovely woman captured my soul. Before she would let me capture hers, she made that real clear about us.”

Mel adds; “Come on dear. They're young and I'm sure they're going to figure this out and handle any problems that come up.”

Goodbye's are exchanged and the mood in the restaurant seems warmer and more friendly. Cousin James comes in from the rear, says hello and sits at a more front table.

A few minutes later, a man with a rough looking face comes in and is looking around. He sees Dee with Edward and walks over to their booth.

Loudly; “Hello Dee, remember me? I was your first. Who's this? Because you've had black men, you want to see if what they say is true? Marry light and pray your babies come out light?”

Dee is somewhere between shock and crying.

“Let me tell you, I was the first and oh my, she was tight! She was so good, I can't describe how good. She did all eleven of us. Now ain't that right.”

Edward grabs Darnell by the belt. The look on his face suddenly changes; “Hey man! Let go of me! Are you queer?”

His face drops to one of shock; “You feel a sharp point in your belly? I'll gut you like a fish.”

Darnell now looks frightened. From behind, James forcefully grabs the offender by the back of his neck.

“Don't push me man! This honky has a knife in my gut!”

James sticks the gun under Darnell's chin; “I'd blow the top of your head off it wouldn't splatter all over ceiling and the customers.”

“What are you gonna do?”

“You're going to apologize to Dee and her man. Then you're going to leave and never come back. Now apologize!”

“I'm sorry. Your front was so good, I should have tried your backdoor. Hahaha.”

James hit Darnell so hard with the gun, he hit the floor like a sack of potatoes.

While asshole is on the floor looking up; “The next time you see me, I won't be so hospitable.”

James bends over and drags Darnell out backdoor. A few moments later, James reenters the restaurant shaking his right hand as if he injured it. He sees Dee and Edward going through the front door. he catches up with them outside.

“Don't worry Dee. You won't ever be bothered by him again. I'll make sure of that. Trust me.”

When they reach their car, Dee is too upset to drive. Edward gets behind the wheel and the drive to their apartment is dead silent. Once inside, Dee silently makes them cups of tea. They sit at the kitchen table in silence.

She breaks the mood with; “Let's have sex.”

“No. Not right now.”

She almost explodes; “Oh, that's because you met the guy who turned me into a filthy rotten whore. You can't be bothered touching me now that you've seen the truth. You don't want me because Darnell and his friends had me first. Okay, now I know where we stand.”

She's fidgeting and is about to cry. Edward gets up, walks over and tries to put his arms around her. She screams; “Don't you touch me! I'm nothing more than a filthy whore to you.”

He lowers himself to his knees. He forcefully pulls her right hand from the table. She resists at first, then gives in. He places her hand on the side of his face.

“If you won't look at me, at least feel my face. I love you more than life itself. I would love to have sex with you anytime you're willing. But now is not that time. Not while you're like this.”

“I need to know. I need proof you're still willing to have me.”

“Well then look at me. I'm on my knees trying to give you comfort. I only want what's best for you. Having sex to prove something to yourself would make you feel worse.”

“No it wouldn't. If we had sex, it would show me I'm not tarnished filth to you.”

“It would prove I'm an asshole who only thinks of what's between your legs than you as the woman I love and want to marry.”

She finally turns to face him; “After all this, you still want to marry me?”

“Now more than ever. I'd get a minister to marry us right now. This evening if I could.”

A huge smile comes over her face; “Are you really serious?”

“Find me a minister and I'll give him a thousand dollars to marry us tonight. That should take care of any no license issue.”

Dee leaves the table, picks up the phone and makes a call; “Hello Uncle Herbert? ... No customers for you tonight. Or at least so far. Is there anything going on at the parlor? No? Great! I need a favor. ... What's the phone number for Minister Davis? ... Edward wants to get married as soon as possible. ... To me! ... Hahaha thank you. Do you think Minister Davis would marry us tonight? ... Do you think he would marry us for a thousand dollars? ... Okay. Give me his number. ... If he says yes, I'll call you right back.”

She looks at Edward who has a blank stare; “Are you sure you want me to make this call?”

“I'll dial the number and talk to him if you're scared.”

Dee looks like she's glowing while picking up the phone receiver and dials the number. A moment later; “Hello Mister Davis, this is Dee Mullins. ... Yes I'm Herbert and Harold's niece. ... I'm fine thank you. I'm calling to ask you to perform a marriage ceremony. ... This evening if at all possible. ... We're in a hurry. ... I understand you're a busy man. ... No we don't have a marriage license. Would a five dollars in cash change your mind? ... I knew you would understand. ... Where? How about an hour from now at your home? ... Okay, I understand you want to keep your wife from knowing. How about an hour from now at my Uncle Herbert's funeral parlor? ... Thank you. We will see you in an hour. ... Yes with the cash.”

She looks to Edward; “It's still not to late.”

“Not to late for what? A glass of warm milk? I'd pass out during our wedding.”

She calls her uncle back and tells him her plans. He calls Howard who calls James. An hour later, everyone is gathered in the funeral homes viewing room. Cousin James even has on a clean shirt. Herbert and Harold are smiling like proud parents.

Two minutes later the minister says; “You may now place the ring on her finger.”

Panic sets in. Edward looks like he's about to die; “I forgot I needed a ring. I'm so sorry.”

James hands Edward a wedding ring; "You can borrow this."  
Edward takes the ring and places it on the third finger of Dee's left hand.

"You may now seal your marriage with a kiss."

After they finish their embrace, Minister Davis approaches; "I hope you're satisfied with my service. Here's your certificate of marriage. I've never married anyone in a funeral home before.

Now may we settle the other matter we talked about on the phone."

With Dee watching, Edward gives the man \$500 cash. Then he reaches into his other pocket and hands the minister another \$500.

He looks surprised; "What's this for?"

"I promised the love of my life I would pay someone a thousand dollars to marry us tonight. I'm a man of my word."

The minister is all smiles; "Now that your married young man, let me give you some advice. Whenever extra money comes your way, never tell your wife. She'll find creative ways to spend it. She'll want to pay bills, buy new curtains or something else foolish."

"Thank you. Unfortunately, that won't work with us. This beautiful woman manages all our finances. She's better watching over the money than I will ever be."

"Well good luck and thank the both of you."

With the minister now gone, Edward asks; "Thank you for letting us use the wedding band. Who's was it?"

"My father was killed before I was born. My mother died giving birth to me. This was her wedding ring. When Harold told me of your sudden wedding, I had a hunch you may need a wedding ring in a hurry."

Thank you. We're going out tomorrow so I can by Dee a wedding ring."

Dee looks to James; "Once again, you come to my rescue. Thank you."

She steps on her toes to give him a kiss on the cheek.

He looks embarrassed; "Thank you."

James and the uncles went to a kitchenette in the rear. There was a couple of minutes of talk between them with Howard standing in the doorway watching the newly weds. (So they don't overhear the conversation.)

When the three man conversation ended, they return with several urns that are normally filled with the ashes of the deceased, now filled with bottles of beer and ice.

"We needed something to help celebrate. Let's drink Herb's beer!"

While Dee's uncles are talking with her, James pulls Edward off to the side of the parlor.

“I don't want you gettin involved with that rapist. I'm gonna take care of the soon to be departed Darnell.”

“I can handle him. I'll make him regret he ever existed.”

“No you won't. You're a white guy. You'll stick out so bad, you won't get away with it. Trust me, I'll take care of him. Look at tomorrow's newspapers. Dee told me all about you. I think you'll be satisfied.”

“I don't want you to get in trouble over my wanting revenge.”

“No man. She needs and deserves a man like you to be with her, not in prison because you made a mistake.”

“I don't make mistakes.”

“You will fail if you try your shit in the ghetto. I'm invisible, you're not.”

Dee walks over; “You and James are talking away like two long lost friends. I'm glad to see you're both getting along so well.”

“Cousin James and I see pretty much eye to eye on most things. He gave me an education on some of the ways in the ghetto.”

“He's a good man Dee. I told him to be careful and not do anything stupid and wind up in jail.”

“You better not do anything foolish. I don't want you leaving me alone because you got whacked with the stupid stick.”

Everyone gathers and the idle chitchat started.

Edward finally asked the question he's been wondering; “Everyone calls you Cousin James or James. I know Harold and Herbert are half brothers, I got that. Dee's mother was their half sister.”

Now Edward's uneasy because everyone is smiling at him.

“So how are you related to in the family?”

“I'm not related anyone in the Mullins family.”

Dee supplies part of the answer; “My mother and her brothers all have their mother's name.”

“Okay. So who is James related to?”

“When I graduated high school, I went looking for a job. Couldn't find anything. Desperate to get out of my grandma's apartment, I stopped in Harold's Pulled Pork Palace. That's what H&H used to be

called, to see if they needed a dishwasher or anything.

Harold used to drink many years ago. When he asked my name, I told him James Cousins. He was distracted by someone asking him a question, so he called me Cousin James. It stuck from that moment on.”

“Hahahaha. That's a great story. Did you get out of your grandma's apartment?”

“Because I needed a place to stay, Harold let me stay in the basement for a few months. I was security for the restaurant and the laundromat next door. Howard owns both of them. I made the locals feel safe while they did their laundry.

The Herb sent me to school to learn how to be a funeral parlor director and a mortician. When the parlor business is slow, I work here.”

“When did you start working here for Harold?”

“I was eighteen and Dee was about nine or ten. She would come down stairs every few days to remove my bed linens and laundry, take them next door to the laundromat and wash everything.

She'd wait for them, then come back and make my bed. Then put my laundry away. I owe her a lot. She was like the best little sister I never had.”

A look of sadness comes over his face; “Dee, Herbert, Howard; I need to talk to Edward in private.”

The trio walked to the kitchenette.

When the door closed; “When she was violated, and the police did nothing, I dished out some ghetto justice. I found three of them trying to violate another girl in an abandoned building.”

“What happened?”

“The first one who was standing there watching, I came from behind and bashed his head in with a brick. While his buddy was waiting for his turn, cheering the asshole raping the little girl, I used the same brick on him. The third one, I pulled him off and broke his fu\*\*ing neck. None of them were breathing when I left. I made real sure of that.”

“What happened to the girl?”

“I walked to the next building over and told the woman who answered the door, I heard a young girl being raped and calling for help from the building next door. I also told her she never seen me.

She asked if the rapists are still there. I told her yes they are, but they will never rape anyone again. I seen to that.

The woman looked at me for a moment and told me to wash my face, hands and burn my shirt. When I asked why, she told me there's blood on my face, hands and all over my shirt.”

“Does Dee know?”

“She knows two were beaten to death with a brick and one from a broken neck. I think she knows it was me. The police called it gang related and that was that. Nobody cares about black people killing each other.”

“I understand. ... Can I still call you Cousin James?”

“You can call me anything except late for dinner.”

The men shook hands. James calls everyone from the kitchenette.

After everyone drank their fill beer, it's time for the newly weds to return to their apartment.

On the way home, Dee and Edward decided for her to keep her Mullins name to avoid legal problems. (interracial marriage being illegal)

Oh what a night they had enjoying their first night as a married couple.