

*Muse: Brown Skin*

But safety built on silence is never real.  
And love without honesty is just a dressed-up  
wound.

Still, I'm grateful.

Because each heartbreak handed me a  
mirror.

And now?

I don't beg for clarity.

I am the clarity.

I don't chase rooms I was never meant to  
live in. I build my own. Because the truth is I was  
never just a guest.

I was the one holding the key the whole  
time.

*Geri Cohen Bidy*

## **Chapter Three**

### *The World's Longest One-Night Stand*

*"Some connections don't ask for your  
permission. They arrive unannounced, rewrite  
your rules, and make you remember what it  
feels like to be wanted down to your bones." —*

*G*

**T**he moment we met unofficially is still  
crystal clear.

The Howard Theatre had just reopened  
its doors in April 2010 after years of anticipation  
and a multi-million-dollar renovation. There was  
a buzz in the air that Spring. Black excellence  
was returning to a place that had once hosted  
legends like Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald,  
Marvin Gaye, James Brown.

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The architecture was stunning. A blend of restored classical grandeur and modern elegance. The original Beaux-Arts façade remained intact, but inside, it had been transformed. Plush seating, dramatic lighting, and a state-of-the-art sound system brought the space into a new era while honoring its legacy. You could feel the weight of culture in the room, like every note played there carried echoes of those who came before.

When I heard Dee was performing the following month, I knew I had to be there. Her new album had been the soundtrack to my life that year. It was soulful and raw; the kind of music that made you cry in traffic and dance in your kitchen. She got it. The highs. The heartbreak. The heavy hope of wanting love to stay. It felt like she'd been reading my journal.

I didn't hesitate. I bought two tickets and told my sister, "*We're going to see Dee.*" I even ordered a custom-made dress for the night. It

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hugged every curve just right. My hair was laid, lashes full, and I slipped on the cutest little heels. That night, I felt like that girl who walked into a room and owned it. Who glows before the lights even dim.

We got there early and wanted to soak up every second. We grabbed a cocktail table on the floor, ordered food, and sipped drinks while the theatre slowly filled. The ambiance was electric with velvet seats, crystal chandeliers, the hum of excitement bouncing off the walls.

Then the lights soften.

A single spotlight hit the stage.

I leaned over and whispered, "*I didn't know she had an opening act. That wasn't on the ticket.*"

Then I looked up and couldn't take my eyes off the stage.

There he was.

Guitar in hand. Calm. Confident.

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Magnetic.

He introduced himself and said he was from Maryland. Then he began strumming an acoustic version of Al Green's Simply Beautiful.

His voice? Smooth. Full. Effortless. It wrapped around the lyrics like silk.

I remember thinking, why isn't this guy famous? Why is he just the opening act? I was locked in. Not just because he was fine, but because of the way he sang. Like he wasn't performing. Like he was praying.

When he finished, he smiled, thanked the crowd, and casually shared his social media handles. I pulled out my phone and followed him right then and there.

And then Dee came out.

And I lost my mind.

We screamed. We danced. We cried. It was church, therapy, and a turn-up all in one. The kind of show you don't forget, not because it entertains, but because it touches something in

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you.

After the show, his voice stayed with me. Like a hum beneath my skin. I didn't know him, but I knew I wanted to hear him again.

I didn't think I would.

*Twitter: The Night It All Started*

I was on Twitter, ranting about an episode of Single Ladies with Lisa Raye. One of the characters was desperate to get laid, and honestly? I was sexually frustrated too. So, I tweeted:

Just give up the dick already! People laughed. Chimed in. Added their two cents.

And then... Brown Skin replied.

If you're so sexually frustrated, why don't you let me take care of that?

I blinked. Laughed. He was clearly full of shit, but I was bored and down to play.

If you're serious, come down here and take care of it tonight.

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"What's your address?" he wrote back.

Normally, I never would've given my address to a stranger, especially a man from the internet. But it was late, the vibe was flirty, and something about him felt familiar. So... I sent it.

"I'll be there in two or three hours," he said.

I didn't believe him. Ain't no way this bama driving all the way here.

Hours passed. I moved on with my night. Then, around 2 a.m., I heard a knock at the door.

I froze.

No. Way.

I peeked through the peephole. There he was. Brown Skin.

I opened the door, still in disbelief.

He smirked and said,

*"You didn't think I was coming, did you?"*

"Nope," I laughed, my heart thudding like a warning bell and a welcome home rolled

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into one.

I let him in.

He stepped across the threshold like he'd done it a hundred times, eyes scanning the room with that same calm confidence he carried on stage. My heart was pounding, not just from nerves, but from the quiet swirl of emotions I hadn't fully named yet.

I lived in a one-bedroom apartment. You know the kind that are all utilities included, linoleum floors curling in the corners, heat that clanked through old pipes in the winter. Mice that ran across the kitchen like they paid rent. No roaches though which was a small mercy.

The furniture was a mix of hand-me-downs and curbside blessings. The couch sagged. The coffee table wobbled. But it was mine. I kept it clean. I kept it sacred. Candles, vinyl's, thrift-store art like I was curating a gallery.

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Part of me worried he'd judge it. A man like him must be used to studios and hotel suites. What would he think of a girl like me in a place like this?

But fuck it.

He was here.

And that meant something.

I gave him the tour, which took all of thirty seconds. But when we got to the bedroom, something shifted.

There was an accent wall that was my favorite color royal purple. It was rich and bold. I painted it myself one Saturday with Solange playing in the background and a scarf wrapped around my head. I wanted the room to feel like something special. It felt like my sensuality and solitude all in a room. It was poetry wrapped in silk.

He didn't say a word. Just stood in the doorway, took it in, and smiled like he understood it. The playlist was already queued,

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slow jams from 112 or SWV filling the room. Smooth. Sultry. Nostalgic.

When he walked in, it felt like time slowed. He didn't just enter the room. Baby he shifted it.

The energy. The atmosphere. Me.

His presence was quiet but undeniable, and when our eyes met, it was like the entire night had been waiting for that exact moment.

We didn't say much.

He stepped closer, and I swear the candles flickered in rhythm. He kissed me like a man starving for softness. His hands roamed carefully, reverently, touching me like I was made of something delicate but necessary.

When he undressed me, it felt like slow motion. Not rushed. Not performative. Intentional.

He looked at me like I was a work of art.

A poem with curves.

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A prayer with skin.

He touched me like he needed saving, but  
not from me. *Through me.*

As if this kind of intimacy, this kind of  
connection, was the only thing that made him  
feel alive. Like my body was the only safe place  
left in a world that had demanded too much.

His fingers tangled in my afro as he kissed  
me harder, deeper. By the time I reached for his  
waistband, I was breathless.

Oh my God, I thought. He's packing.

I slid off his briefs.

And when our bodies met, it was more  
than sex.

It was rhythm.

It was music.

It was SWV's Rain or 112's Cupid in  
physical form, slow, intentional, intoxicating.  
We moved together like a melody we already  
knew.

For the first time in years, I felt

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completely seen.

Wanted.

Worshipped.

Whole.

It was magical. Unforgettable.

Damn am I lunchin'?

How could someone from Twitter come  
to my house and take my whole world to a planet  
I'd never been to?

I was in awe.

At how many orgasms I had.

At how sensual he was.

At how fully he saw and devoured me like  
he'd been waiting his whole life to find me.

Every stroke felt like memorization.

Every kiss felt like reverence.

Every movement like a prayer.

It wasn't just physical, it was cosmic.  
Like his body spoke a language mine had been  
aching to understand. And that night, I finally felt

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fluent.

When it was over, he got dressed, left, and  
texted me when he got home.

I figured that was it.

But it wasn't.

That one night turned into six years of the  
most chaotic, emotional, addictive connection  
I'd ever known.



*Muse Reflection*

There are moments in life that don't feel  
like beginnings; they feel like detours, accidents,  
indulgences.

But sometimes, those are the moments  
that shape us the most.

That night wasn't supposed to lead to six  
years of chaos, passion, and unraveling.

It was supposed to be a night. A spark. A  
memory.

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But deep down, I think part of me wanted  
something more...

Even if I couldn't admit it to myself.

That night taught me how easily desire  
can blur into hope.

How quickly attention can feel like  
affection.

And how dangerous it is when chemistry  
is mistaken for connection.

It wasn't just about the sex.

It was about the way he made me feel  
wanted. Even if only for a few hours at a time.

And for a woman raised on toxic love and  
partnerships filled with dishonesty, that kind of  
want felt loud enough to believe in.

But love, real love, requires more than  
moments.

It requires intention.

And back then,

I didn't know how to ask for more.

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*Brown Skin Reflection*

I ain't even plan on staying that long. Not that night, not in her life.

Thought it was gon' be a quick vibe. Something wild to laugh about with the homies later, maybe flip into a bar if the beat was right. Wasn't expecting nothing deep. Definitely wasn't expecting her.

But the moment she opened that door, it felt like something I forgot I prayed for.

Shit hit different.

She was barefoot, wrapped in some soft ass robe. No makeup, no fronting. Just being her. And somehow, that hit harder than any chick I ever seen backstage or tucked up in a green room.

Her place smelled warm. Orange peels.

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Some kinda candle that made you breathe slower.

That one purple wall? Man, I still think about that. It looked like she painted it outta pain. Like she said, "*Nah not in here. This room gon' feel like peace.*"

And it did.

Everything about her felt intentional. Solid. She ain't have to raise her voice to own the room. She just had presence.

She ain't just let me in the crib.

She let me in her world.

Into her energy. Her rhythm. Her body.

All that.

And I ain't realize back then how rare that type of trust was. Or how bad I was about to fumble it.

What we did that night?

That wasn't just sex.

That was something sacred. A ceremony,

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for real. She ain't need words. Didn't press for  
'em. She just felt me. And for once, I ain't have  
to perform. Ain't crack jokes. Ain't put on the  
usual show. I just pulled up as me.

And she ain't flinch.

But here's the thing.

When you get held like that? That real  
kind of held? You gotta look at yourself.

And I wasn't ready. Not to see myself  
through her eyes. Not to sit in that kind of truth.

So, I dipped.

Not 'cause I ain't feel nothing. But  
because I did. And that shit scared me. You meet  
people sometimes that stop your whole motion.  
Make you question your habits. Your pride. The  
way you move through the world.

She was that person for me.

I called it a one-night stand to protect  
myself. To act like it ain't mean nothing. But if  
I'm keeping it all the way a buck?

That one night stretched across years.

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Across verses.

Across every version of me I ain't even  
become yet.

And I don't think I ever told her this...

But she's still the one verse I never  
finished writing.