

Sweet Auburn

The Auburn Festival comes around every April and is the unofficial start of summer. It's a festival to celebrate the heritage and history of Sweet Auburn. Located near the Martin Luther King site and Ebenezer Baptist church you would think it would be more than an occasion to buy cool stuff and meet people.

It's already hot in Atlanta, already a humid eighty-five degrees. This is one of the reasons why I have given up on perms; my hair is so thick that it would never hold a style anyway. So last year I decided that was it – no more perms for me. I grew my hair out over the course of that year and the night before this year's festival I went to Crowning Glory to get the perm cut out and had little twists put in. I finally decided to grow my dreadlocks. It is a style I had always admired and wanted since I was fifteen but my step-mom said I was too pretty to have my hair all nappy like that and immediately sent me to her stylist Andre. So I was stuck with getting relaxers and wrap hairstyles all the while admiring those who took the leap of faith of dealing with their natural hair.

I was so excited while sitting in the salon - all those years of paying forty - fifty - sixty - even a hundred dollars for a hair style that would sweat out in two days were over. I went to Crowning Glory because that's where my friend went when she got her hair twisted. Plus I knew I wasn't going to get the blank *I can't believe*

you're cutting off all that pretty hair look from the rest of the clientele. Crowning Glory was right on Auburn Avenue, I could see all of the setting up activity for the festival right outside their window.

Crowing Glory was a *righteous* shop; they played Erykah Badu, Bob Marley or the local jazz station instead of the regular pop station. You would smell peppermint, jasmine, frankincense and myrrh instead of harsh chemicals. It was where the sunlight danced through house plants and bounced off of mustard and brown colored walls and rested on hardwood floors. A place where they said *Greetings* instead of hello. The owner Vickikah did my hair. She was an older sistah with long salt and pepper dreads who would tell you how to keep up your new locks. She also taught me how to make crowns that would used to cover my locks at a later date.

I felt lighter when all of that dead hair was cut off my head and when I left the salon the warm breeze swept over my sensitive scalp. I went home and covered my short twists with a scarf. The next morning was the day of the Auburn festival and I was feeling good. Awakened by the streams of sunlight trying to burst through my blinds, to what I knew was going to be a full day. I jumped out of bed and showered, a ritual you must get used to doing several times if you live in Atlanta during the summertime, especially if you had no air conditioning like I did. When I got out of the shower I wiped the foggy mirror and noticed how unconcerned I was about

the moist bathroom air attacking my hairstyle. I removed the scarf from my head. I wrapped the towel around my body and headed for the bedroom where I smeared my body with the shea butter purchased from Crowning Glory. I put on a tank top and wrapped a sarong around my waist. "

I opened my sliding door and allowed the warm morning air to wash over my body. I went out onto my balcony porch to water my plants. Next door was my neighbor Khalil standing on his porch smoking a black and mild and playing with his phone.

"What's up Khalil?"

"Aw shit Janai, you finally cut your hair," He exclaimed while he ceased his dialing. "Damn you just went all *la amistad* on a brothah huh."

"Shut up," I said, sucking my teeth.

"Nah, I'm just playing. It's real cute but you should come down to the shop and let me clean up the back." Khalil was a pudgy barber always trying to cut or shape-up something.

"I'll think about it. You going to the festival today?" I asked.

"Not until later. I'm going to go down to the shop first to see what's crackin'."

"Alright...."

"But I will be at the Royal Peacock to see Sean Paul tonight." He said nodding his head in the affirmative. "I know you

and ya girls are going to be up in that piece.”

“You know it.”

“Hey, what’s up with you and my boy Shaheed?”

I knew that was my cue. I liked Khalil and all but he ran his mouth like a female. “Bye Khalil.”

“Aye! Let me get some of dem incense,” he yelled as I went back into the house.

I yelled back, “Bye, Khalil!”

I got on the phone and called my friend Orah to see what time she was coming over.

“I’ll be there at about noon, I have to drop off Malik at his nana’s house, I’m giving him a bath right now *stop splashing me.*”

Orah was a new momma just trying to make it; I tried to make my calls short with her because she needed all of her attention to go to that little boy. “Okay, I’ll see you then...don’t electrocute yourself.”

She was slightly distracted and answered, “huh...uh...yeah around noon I’ll call you when I leave my moms!”

Just then I heard my other friend Kimba stomping up the walkway. I got up and opened the door before she got a chance to knock.

“Oh my God! It’s so cute!” she squealed as she entered my apartment. “When did you get it done?”

“Last night! You like it?” I asked her while striking several

Vogue poses at the door.

"Hell yeah, it's about time you converted!" We both took a seat at the table in my make shift dining room. "Did you go to Vickikah?"

"Yeah, she's real cool," I affirmed.

We ate a little breakfast and waited for Orah to arrive. When she did she didn't even realize it was me.

"Damn, I didn't even recognize you," she said inspecting my head. "Vicki did a real good job, I need to go down there to get my shit tightened up too."

There we were a group of natural sistahs just out to have a good time. We all packed in Kimba's car and headed down to Auburn Avenue the site of the festival. There we found a warm sea of chocolate faces. The air was saturated with smells of incense, funnel cake and barbeque. The endless rows of vendors proudly displayed their merchandise, from t-shirts to jewelry and African goods, and tried to entice us at every stop. "That piece right there is \$10 but for you sistah, you can have it for two for \$15." An African jeweler would exclaim. Occasionally we would run into the young guy who couldn't afford to purchase booth space, hawking incense or t-shirts. I purchased some frank & myrrh from this dude named Damood. I don't think that's his real name.

About every ten booths or so you would hear a new set of music; the DJ's mostly played reggae or hip-hop. In some spots the

music was so live that people would be stopped and dancing in the middle of the street. It slowed down the foot traffic but it was fun. And every so often I would get "I like your twists sistah" or "You lockin?" mostly from men. Apparently my hair was quite the conversation piece, especially when they found out I was indeed "locking." I caught a guy looking at me through the crowd - I looked back. What? He was fine! Tall, light skinned with an afro and goatee, I thought to myself *I wish I had some game...I would go right over and talk to if I wasn't so lame. Oh well.* I turned around and noticed that my party had left me and was almost a block away so I had to hurry to catch up.

Kimba, Orah, and myself continued the course of the festival making mental notes of what we wished to purchase before leaving for the evening. We got to the end of the festival street right around 4 o'clock. We noticed we had been on our feet for a while and decided it was a good time to stop and eat at the Jamaican Patty Hut. We all ordered veggie patties with cocoa bread and the Jamaica drink, sorrel. The Hut was the only place where you could find decent sorrel in the south. After enjoying forty-five minutes worth of seated bliss we decided to make our final run so we could go back to my place and rest up for the evening.

It seems that when you live in Atlanta, there is one degree of separation. So when we stepped out of the restaurant all those degrees converged in one spot at the same time. Old boyfriends,

friends, clients, co-workers and their friends seemed to be at the same place, at the same time we all broke apart and spoke to our respective acquaintances.

I was talking to my girl DJ A. Nice, asking her if she was spinning at the Peacock tonight.

"Yeah, but it won't be until real late. I think I go on about 1am," she huffed. "We'll see though. Janai you know how black folk are!" she continued while shaking her head.

I laughed and just when I was about to ask her to put us on the guest list, I felt a pair of cold masculine hands on my head and a whisper in my ear: "I love your hair."

I immediately turned around, cause you just don't go around touching black women's hair all willy nilly! It was Khalil.

"Ahh, what's up ma' I scared you huh...you was scurred!"

I reached back and slapped him on his shoulder. "Boy are you crazy? You were about to get jacked up!"

He mocked me, "You were about to jacked up!" He took out a black and mild from his pocket and searched for a lighter.

"Don't be smoking around me!" I exclaimed with my hands on my hips.

He put the black and mild back in his pocket and sucked his teeth. "Oh, let me introduce you to my boy from NY...YO JAY! Come here and let me introduce to my neighbor Janai. Janai this is my boy Jamal."

Okay so he *was* checking me out earlier. Then I replied “I’m good”.

She's a **Black Girl** ... your girl.



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The Montenegro Case

It was 11:15pm and we got a call from someone saying that there was a strange odor coming from an alleyway in the Highlands, just between good and Atlanta and not so good Atlanta. I walked up the dark damp alley way wondering what I was going to find. I'd been on assignments like this before; sometimes it's just a dead cat or possum, but on this side of town it's usually a body. I had a knack for knowing when we were going to find a body. This was one of those times. The night air was cold. Even through my triple down coat and gloves, I still shivered. I got this way when I knew there was trouble. The alley was only lit by the blue lights of the sign above the local night spot, "Club 9". As my partners Officers James Godby and Ben Rolley and I, Officer Brenda Finks, approached the area, you could smell the stench of death. I thought, *God damn, you telling me ain't no body smelled that until now?* I reached down into my coat pocket and pulled out my flowery smelling hanky, especially made for times like these.

"Aw Finks, you know these kids are all tripped out on drugs. They were probably partying right on top of the body," said Officer Godby.

"Either that or screwing," added Officer Rolley.

"Real nice Ben," I said and looked back at him with a scowl. Why do men have to be so insensitive? "Besides we don't know it's

a body yet." They both gave me that aw, *isn't that sweet look* and pointed down the alley at a pair of feet sticking out the distance.

"Damn!"

We finally walked up to the body's feet that were sticking out beneath some trash bags. I kneeled down to the ground, placed a latex glove on my hand, and proceeded remove the bags from the body.

"Ugh, this is nasty," I winced while I continuing to take off garbage bags with my left hand and still covering my nose and mouth with a hanky with my right.

"Yep, she's dead," said Officer Godby with a sigh. "Call the coroner".

I looked at the woman. You could tell there was something special about her. She was beautiful even though her face was gray from the rigamortis that had started to set in, and flies and insects started picking away her skin. "She's got to be in her early twenties," I took a closer look at her stark naked body. "Who would do this to you? You're too young for this," I whispered to myself.

"What'd you say?" asked Officer Rolley.

The murder victim was beat from head to toe; black and blue all over, dry bloody nose but more blood on the ground, it looked like she'd been shot but we couldn't see any bullet holes.

"I just wonder what a pretty young girl like this is doing here butt naked with all these bruises on her" I questioned. Then we saw

a sign...or the sign. With the blue lights from the Club sign illuminating everything in the alley we looked above our heads and wondered how such a thing could happen right outside the club without anyone knowing. I knew that there were answers to my questions in that club. But first the coroner would have to come and determine exactly what happened.

Even though there was a crime scene outside, it didn't seem to stop party goers from trying to come and ask if this was going to prevent the club from being open. Some people have no respect for the dead.

It seemed to take hours to get the body downtown for inspection. I told the chief immediately that I wanted to be on the case. Frankly, I was sick of seeing young girls keep turning up dead around the city. The coroner inspected the body and said nonchalantly, "Well she died from a bullet to the back. That's where all the blood came from, it ripped her coronary artery and caused her to bleed out. She also had a couple cracked ribs and a bruised kidney and a ruptured spleen. We found semen on her body but we aren't sure yet if the assault was done before or after she was killed. We think it was before though because she had some defense wounds on her hands."

By this time it was 3:30 in the morning and I was so tired.

"Well see if you can get a DNA match on the semen", I wearily stated.

"Sure thing," yelled the coroner as James and I walked out. "Go home, we have investigators on this and I'll brief you in the morning." James Godby was not only my partner he was like a best friend to me and knew me like the back of his hand. He must have seen *tired* written all over my forehead. "Just go home and watch a funny movie or something before you go to bed." He patted me on the back and guided me to my car.

He knew that watching one of those funny movies could prevent me from having one of my dreams. When ever I worked a case with a young woman I always dreamed of what might have happened, and I never got a good night sleep. I got in my car and shook off the night. As I drove home I took deep breaths all the way, looking over my shoulder for any suspicious people. I knew that anyone could be a suspect, but I became fanatical about looking for "suspicious" people right after a homicide like this. You'd think after seven years in the business I would have a better grip on myself. I pulled up to my apartment and entered, immediately clapping on the lights and checking the closets, the bathrooms and under my bed. It was habit ever since Nick and I separated, and that was five years ago.

After performing my safety check, I decided to disrobe from all my heavy wool and denim garb and take a nice hot shower. *How did I get so lucky*, I thought. All these girls they seemed to have such bad luck, being strangled, battered, raped, shot and stabbed. It

seemed to happen all over the city. Good parts and bad. *Stop it, think of something else*, I consciencely reminded myself. *Positive thoughts!* Well one thing I knew for sure was that tomorrow was going to be a long day.

I feel asleep to Coming to America, my favorite movie with Eddie Murphy and I woke up to the phone ringing. I can't stand waking up to loud noises. That's I why I trained myself to automatically wake up at six thirty every morning, I removed my sleep mask from my face and looked at the clock; 6:15. Rats! Either this was a bullshit call or some bad news. "Hello?"

"Finks...Rolley here. Listen we need you, we found out some information overnight that we have to discuss. We're going to need you go undercover." Ben Rolley is one of my least favorite people. He got stuck with us because his partner quit, he's one of those cocky hot shots. He thinks he's hot shit because he was one of the lead investigators that bust the big Cordova crime family that went down in Miami last year. Plus he was a real playboy and playboys and I didn't get along.

"Um, a couple of things. One why do I have to go undercover, two who told you to call me...and three why are you calling me so early." My voice still groggy.

"First of all, that was more than a couple and because you're the only woman who can do this", he let out an unsympathetic sigh.

"Look, there's no time you have to get here right away, Chief Harvard said so..."

I let out a big sigh, threw the covers off my bed and said, "I'll be there in half an hour." I got out of bed and put on my J Lo sweatsuit and leather jacket and immediately went down the station. A girl still has to look cute you know.

I didn't care too much for Ben but I knew he meant business and I knew that he wouldn't use Chief Harvard's name unless there was really an issue. All kinds of thoughts went through my mind like, *what does being the only woman have to do with it?*

When I got to the big gray station, I grabbed a donut and some coffee. Rolley met me at his desk and we both walked to the Chief's office as he caught me up to speed. He told me that the murder last night was no ordinary one, turns out that this woman was Betina Montenegro, the daughter of Ambassador Gustav Montenegro of Spain. When we arrived Chief Harvard's office I found out what my role was going to be.

"Where's her father?"

"He has been on vacation for the last two weeks; he's on his way back now. We also found out that Carlos Espinosa owns the club so the murderer could be anyone".

Carlos Espinosa was a crime boss suposively trying to turn over a new leaf by opening up a legitimate operation. "I don't think

that something like that could go down without him knowing something about it," stated while pulling out my note pad.

"Exactly, but we can't prove a thing, that's where you come in Brenda; we need someone to infiltrate the consulate and the club to find out who murdered that girl. We think she might have been killed because she walked in on some sort of deal." So when she told me, "we need you because no one knows your face, you're beautiful and we'll teach you everything else you need to know", I trusted her.

"Know about what", I naively asked. I leaned forward in my seat and rested my hands on my knees.

Chief Harvard tilted her head to the side and took a deep breath, "about becoming a vixen..."

"Club 9 is a strip slash fetish club newbie", stated Rolley with a smirk. I knew he was loving this. "You have to learn to be a stripper!"

"Whhaaa? I don't know...I have no rhythm...I don't even match my underwear. What...why...who...where's James?" I asked frantically, he could always slap some sense into me.

"He's on the case but he is too know in the community so it's going to be up to you and Rolley...Brenda?...Brenda!" Chief Harvard tried snap me out of my daze and assure me that all would be well. They would teach me the tricks of the trade and "you and Rolley have to be married".

"WHAT!" I sat up and looked at a shrugging Rolley.

"Listen, this is an order, it's the only way I could get you protection on the inside trust me if there was any way I could not have to two paired up I would." She turned into professional police chief and stated sternly, "We.....need.....you! If we don't handle this, you know Washington is going to be crawling all up our asses about this one!"

I looked down accepting my fate, "when does all this start?"

Chief Harvard stood up and sat behind her desk, "right now. Ben will brief

you on all of the particulars about where you are going to be living, your new identities wardrobe change, all of that. You both have class with Stripperella in an hour. Keep me posted."

"Both", asked Ben. "What do you mean both?"

Chief Harvard sat up and looked Ben in the eye, "what did you think you would be doing?"

"I thought I was going to be her protection...like her bodyguard or a bouncer". He stood up and started pacing the floor.

She laughed at him, "Why no Ben, this is an *everything goes* club".

"All of the sudden, I'm feeling better about this assignment", I said smirking at Ben. Now I'm loving this. "Hmmm, I can't wait to see you in a patent leather thong!"

Chief Harvard and I looked at each other and started laughing hysterically.



To pull off a job no one would ever dare,
you need a team no one would ever believe.

Hit!

BILLY DEE WILLIAMS, "Hit!"
RICHARD PRYOR, BILL HANFON, GYEN WELLES
 ALAN FUSTWICKER, DANIEL HARTNOSS, RENE JURE
 GARY FREDERICKSON, LAZARUS, ROBERTO, HILARY, AND WILHELMINA

I don't think I shall ever be able to do that again.

My mother called me a coward and told me she

I came to myself at last and I knew what I had done.

She said she didn't know how to be like me.

I told her that she was wrong and that I was not.

She said she was right and that I was wrong.

I told her that she was wrong and that I was not.

She said she was right and that I was wrong.

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Up In Smoke

His momma called me immediately and told me she was sorry...said she didn't raise him to be that way. I told her make sure he was gone by the time I got home. "

I stared at the door with my keys in my right hand while straddling my suitcase to prevent it from falling. The air was hot – it was an Indian summer and for some reason in Atlanta it got hot early and stayed hot until the wee hours of the morning. I looked over to my friend as she grabbed the garment bag from the backseat of her car. *I better do this*, I thought, *can't let them see you sweat*. I opened the door to the end of five years of bullshit and the energy resonated thru the house – I could see it before I even stepped inside. As I walked into the townhouse and up the stairs, I felt the cold brisk of conditioned air. "He could have at least turned off the air when he left," I sucked my teeth. "Stupid son of a bitch." My friend Katrina, walked in behind me.

I sat my roller suitcase down next to the couch and when over to the thermostat to turn off the air. She placed the garment bag over the suitcase and went over to the chair and inspected it with a watchful eye. "I had to make sure there wasn't any nastiness on the chair." She shook her head and wiped her hands on her pant legs.

"I know, I don't even know where I'm going to sleep tonight. I don't think I want to sleep in that bed now." I leaned

against the hallway wall and peered into the bedroom. He hadn't even made up the bed. "You know what? The first couple of times I went out of town he would call me and tell me he missed me and when I got home there were rose pedals leading up the door all the way to the bedroom. The first time I left there was a card waiting for me. Now that he fucked up he can't even clean up after himself or his hoe."

Katrina felt so sorry for me, I could see it in her eyes. Well what I actually saw was *Imma get one of my boys to fuck him up*. "You know you can come and stay with me for a while if you want."

I stared off into space, "yeah, I might take you up on that." I let out a deep sigh. I left a long pause and let out another deep sigh. "yeah I'm going to take you up on your offer – I just have to do a couple of things here first, go ahead and go home and I'll just met you there."

Katrina stared at me intently with a wrinkle in her forehead, "girl how you going to do that, she stole your car remember?"

"Oh...well I have to rent a car anyway – I'll just do it tonight – they'll come pick me up – they have a satellite office down the street," I assured her.

I knew she wanted to go but she didn't want to leave me there alone either. "Okkaayyy," she said slowly looking at me as I walked over to the couch. She changed her glare, started fiddling

with her keys and said, "here take these, just let yourself in just in case I go to the store or something."

"Thanks, Kat." I rolled my shoulders back and tilted my head from left to right as a feeble attempt to relax myself. I stood up and walked Katrina to the door and thanked her for her help and all.

"I know you don't see this now but this could be the best thing that could have happened to you." I she looked at me while nodding, "I'll see you later?"

"You will see me later!" I closed the door, to her and the rest of the world. I knew this was going to be a rough day – that's why I got on the first thing smoking from D.C. So I could have the whole day to deal with this – even if it was a Sunday.

I grabbed the remote and flicked on the T.V. to look at CBS Sunday morning. I like that show because they show all good news. I had enough bad news to last me the rest of the year.

* * *

See what happened was I went out of town on business and Dalvin decided to bring some stank bitch over to our place. The only problem was she was a thief and he didn't know her. So she fuck and sucked him right to sleep and when she was sure he was long gone so was she. With money, jewels, a

couple of dvd's oh and my car! That's how I found out Dalvin was cheatin'.

I plopped down in the middle of the couch and stared thru the picture window in our living room. The television turned into white noise in the background. Any noise was fine, I just didn't want it to be silent. It was so beautiful outside, a gentle breeze moved orange, yellow, and red leaves of the huge trees across the street. I watched morning turn into day and it started to get warm inside the house. I walked over to the window to let some of the fresh air wash out the staleness that was left in the apartment.

I knew it was torture but I had to see, I had to go into the bedroom just to see what damage had been done. I walked over to what was my side of the bed and retrieved a stick of nag champa from the night stand and lit it. I turned around to the window and opened it and placed the incense in the holder on the seal. The daytime air from the outside pushed and pulled the smoke in and out of the room.

I first looked at the bed, the sheets and comforter were half way on and off the bed. As I surveyed the bottom sheet I couldn't tell if I saw stains of infidelity or not but what I did know was that there were crumbs from a half eaten bag of sour cream and onion potato chips in the bed and on the floor.

I went to the bathroom located in the room to retrieve my long rubber cleaning gloves under the sink. When I arose from the

cabinet below I got a glimpse of myself in the mirror. I look five years older, my hair was a mess just barely thrown in a pony tail, bags under my blood shot eyes. *You got to get it together!* I looked and the trash can and thought, *umm no condom.* I went back to the bed and peeled off the comforter and top sheet...no condom. Looked under the bed...no condom. *Great! Now I have go get an AIDS test...Lord knows how long this fool been messin' around.*

I sat on the bed hesitantly and surveyed the room. I looked at the walls and all the art we collected over the years. We took up collecting black art the day after we moved into the townhouse. All the couples art; men and women intertwined, man woman and child, woman stroking her man's face; black people in love. I looked down just below the big one over our bed black footprints on the white wall. I start steaming. "WHAT THE FFaa...," I said. I got up from the bed and went back into the living room to calm down.

As I sat back down on the couch I felt tired but I didn't know where to lay my head because I didn't know where she had been so I laid my head in my lap. On my descent down I noticed the couch, the forty-two hundred dollar couch he had to have. I started to think *all these years wasted...down the drain and I won't get a penny. Damn, I wish this was a common law state!*

* * *

I wanted to get married a long time ago, but there was always a reason why we couldn't. Usually the

excuse was he wanted to do it right and give me a nice ring. I told him I didn't care about a ring. Before we moved in with each other he used to tell me all the time that he wanted to marry me. But I guess now there was no need to buy the cow, cause he already had the milk...

I sacrificed a lot over the years. Mainly just to make him happy. That's what I was told made relationships work,* give and take. Sacrifice. So when he said he wanted a new couch even though we had a perfectly good one I said why...he thru a tantrum...and I said fine. It went that way all the time. He wanted a condo I wanted a house we got a townhouse. I didn't notice it until now but as I looked around the room a saw a bunch of shit that I never wanted. The only thing I wanted was a ring...a commitment...a family. But all I saw was electronics, toys, gadgets. It made me mad. I stood up seething. The sky outside turned an orangeish red that faded into the room. I walked on the *other* side of the house, *his side*. It was supposed to be the guest room, but in reality he called it his *chill* room. That's where most of the gadgets were. I walked into the room and noticed his \$500 baseball bat signed by who knows on the mantle. I took it off its resting nook.

I took a meditative breath closed my eyes and million and one things went running thru my mind. Like the time he gave ~~me~~ the silent treatment a week before I left because I had a man's business

card even though I explained to him it was strictly business. Or the time he stayed out until 6 a.m. and had his momma call me to make sure it was okay for him to come home. Or what about all those times he accused me of cheating on him all the while he was cheating on me! I opened my eyes and gritted my teeth and the first thing I saw was that damn 36 inch T.V. he had to have, well fuck him cause he can't have it.

I took the bat and swung it right in the screen, "FUCK YOU FUCK YOU FUCK YOU," I screamed at the top of my lungs, bashing in the screen. "What else you got in here you dumb fuck?" I ran into his closet took down his so called "secret" stash of porn. "Couldn't get enough could you – you fucking pervert!" I threw all of that crap down on the outside of the closet and stomped on it. I took the bat and threw it into his huge poster of Tony Montana. I listened to the glass shatter. I took a shard of glass in my hand and ran it across all his name brand clothes in the closet. "\$80 fuckin dollar Sean John, \$120 Phat Farm AAAGGGGGGGGGG!" I stabbed his clothes with the shard as if I wish he were in them and I was stabbing him. I dropped the glass.

I turned around, my hair is starting to fall out of my ponytail, I'm not caring. I walked back into the living room. The sky even more red than before. I see the plasma screen T.V. on the wall, I snickered and said in the lowest voice to myself. "He really loves that T.V.... he was the envy of all of his friends – oh well." I

stammered over towards the T.V. and pushed it off the wall into the bookcase. Both went crashing to the ground I didn't blink. I walked on top of the T.V. and felt satisfied that I feel it crackling under my feet, and walked over top of the fallen bookcase to the video camera in the corner.

"Ah yes! THE CAMERA, he would say 'come on baby strip for me, let me see you do something nasty...nah don't worry this is just for my eyes only', Well not anymore you BASTARD!" I threw it into a picture on the wall. I listened to glass shatter. I pick it up, it's not broken enough for me. I throw it into another picture. This time tiny pieces of the camera fall with the broken glass of the picture frame. I walk over to pick up the camera again but I slip on the hardwood floor.

I looked around at my home in shambles then I notice that shattered glass found its new home in my skin. I held out my hands palms up and saw the deep cuts in them. I didn't bandage them. I placed my bloody palms on my face, curled into a ball and laid my head in my lap. I allowed the pain and distrust to flow from my body in the form of blood. The sky became darker, more purple. I started to sob.

* * *

I took another meditative breath and looked up...it was still daytime. My hands weren't bleeding and the house was still intact. I

was sitting on the couch and someone was ringing the bell. I stood up, my hair still in a messy bun. I walked over to the intercom.

"Who is it?"

"Enterprise," the man yelled into the intercom "is this Ms. Washington, you called for a rental car?"

"Yeah...yea uh let me wash my face and I'll be right down."

I looked around in amazement. Nothing had been destroyed.

I went to the bathroom and looked at the woman staring back at me. I went over to the bed and lit one of Dalvin's cigarettes and left suspiciously close the bed. I went back into the living room grabbed my garment bag and roller and headed out the door and I thought to myself. Glad I don't smoke.



Brooklyn, N.Y. (UPI) — A man who has been identified as the author of a series of letters to the editor of the New York Times, claiming to be a member of the Black Panther Party, has been identified as a member of the Black Panther Party.

He is a member of the Black Panther Party.

A phone call in a Brooklyn home on Monday, Jan. 10, 1966, was made by a man who had been identified as a member of the Black Panther Party. The man was identified as a member of the Black Panther Party. The man was identified as a member of the Black Panther Party.

He is a member of the Black Panther Party.

"Hello," said the man who had been identified as a member of the Black Panther Party. "Hello," said the man who had been identified as a member of the Black Panther Party. "Hello," said the man who had been identified as a member of the Black Panther Party.

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Brooklyn Heat

A phone rings in a Brooklyn brownstone apartment one hot summer Friday evening. Omar is calling his girl Selah, a mocha skinned twenty three year old who is resting in front of a fan in her dark apartment to cool off.

Selah raised her slightly glistened body to answer the phone, "Hello."

"Seelllaaahhhh whachu dooiinnnn," Omar teased.

"Nooothhhhinnn...what's up with you, how you doin, whatchu doin," Selah rattled off while smiling. Omar was her man for the last 9 months and they had been having a good time. She knew this was a booty call but she didn't mind.

"I just bought some ice cream, you want to come over? I know you hot," stated Omar knowingly.

"You know I'm hot? Mmm Hmm," she huffed.

"What," Omar responded innocently. "Can't a man just want to cool his woman off with some nice ice cream?"

"Oh so it's not to eat?" Selah asked.

Then Omar said in a low sexy voice, "I'm going to eat it."

Selah always ready for an Omar throw down cleared her throat, took a look at her freshly manicured nails and said, "I'll be

over there in twenty minutes...meet me at the Atlantic/Pacific station."

Selah hastily grabbed her oversized faux Coach bag and threw a pair of underwear, toothbrush, scarf and a cotton tube dress in it. She went downstairs and saw her sister Lauren sitting on the couch.

"Where you going?" asked her sister.

Selah a little out of breath and fanning herself replied, "Omar's...have you seen my Maxwell CD?"

Lauren pressed her heavily glossed lips together and folded her arms, "why you always got to go over Omar's? Why can't he come over here?"

Selah stopped and placed her hands on her hips, "because you nosey! And besides the last time I checked my momma lived in Florida." She cracked a smile, "don't be mad at me just because I'm getting some!"

Lauren smiled and picked the CD up off the table and handed it to Selah. While Selah made a dash for the door Lauren yelled, "USE A CONDOM!"

Selah peeked back in the door and said, "I am!" stuck out her tongue and flashed the peace sign.

Selah decided to take the street to Omar's instead of the train knowing that it felt better outside then it did inside. The subway's during the summer are too reminiscent of what hell must be like, hot, humid and stank mixed in with the occasional rat or crazy person rubbing against your leg. The distance from Fort Green to Park Slope wasn't that far anyway. Clad in a tube top and booty shorts the mango butter on her skin reflected the light from the local beauty salons and neighborhood bakeries as she past by. When she embarked upon the Brooklyn Academy of Music she looked up at the clock tower and noticed the time, 7:45. *Good, she thought it's not too late, we have all night to spend together.* She knew she was close to her man she looked across the street from the clock toward and noticed him standing there.

The 6 foot 2 chocolate beauty stood in a pair of linen pants and a white T-shirt with a bunch of white lilies in his hand to greet her.

He's so sweet, she thought. Damn I forgot my deodorant. She walked a little faster across the street to greet him.

When he saw her he just looked at her healthy glowing skin, the way it looked so smooth and the way the light reflected off of it at night. Her movements seemed to go in slow motion when he looked at her. First her shoulders, down her arm to her gold

bracelets, to her thighs that gently shook when she walked. When they met he greeted her with a deep embrace and a kiss on the cheek. He gave the best hugs.

They took Flatbush to his apartment. They stopped at Sal's to get a gallon of water, deodorant and new pack of condoms. Sal's wife Rosa, who seemed to work there more than Sal himself, smiled at Selah knowingly as she slid the bag across the counter.

Once they got to Omar's brownstone apartment, Selah noticed that he laid out a blanket on the fire escape so they could enjoy dinner outside. He played the radio and they ate homemade conch fish and peas and rice that he made outside on the fire escape with Santaria candles surrounding them. They talked about everything from who's hot in hip hop to where in the world they would like to vacation. When they were done they retreated inside to his one bedroom apartment. It was dark, as to not generate anymore heat. He burned some Nag Champa incense and put on the Maxwell CD Selah brought. "When am I going to get my CD back," he asked smiling.

"Huh," she looked around avoiding the question. "It is so hot in here," said Selah while rubbing her hand against her collar bone and gold chain that spelled *Selah*.

"I know," he chuckled, while placing the dishes in the sink. "That's why we ate outside so I could try to cool off the apartment."

"And here I am thinking that you were trying to be all romantic!" She smiled at him and started to walk towards the bathroom. "I'm hot and sticky, I think I'm going to take a shower."

Omar placed the plate in the sink, pressed his muscular arms into the countertop and looked at Selah. "Can I join you."

She takes off her top exposing her round breasts and as she headed in the bathroom made a sleepy eyed gesture for him to come hither.

He hurriedly took off his shirt and undid the drawstring in his pants so they hit the floor and he walked out of them and headed into the tiny bathroom.

She met him at the door stark naked on the orange glow of the hallway light showed into the bathroom he kissed her full on the lips and slid his manly hands down her back and cupped her backside and lifted her onto the sink. She rose her right leg with nothing but an ankle bracelet on it up his torso and slid her foot into his boxers and down to the floor.

They groped and licked each other into bliss and what was indicative of their relationship she yelled out, "MAKE ME FEEL GOOD", mimicking Halley Berry in Monster's Ball. They both let a

hefty laugh that broke the mood gently and continued to ride each other into other Brooklyn evening.



zine by Brandi Pettigrew