

When do you  
take a chance on  
love?

# THE Rescue

By Blondie Africano

*I wanted to write a short story to showcase my writing skills. It was supposed to be a five page story but turned into a fifteen page draft. I want to do more with it now. Maybe a script turned into a play or indie movie? Maybe a full length novel? Not sure yet. Still working on the other novel and things have been crazy in my life so I'm not sure when I can get around to complete this one. I want to give something more to introduce myself as a writer to readers and maybe a draft of a...movie...play....novel....whatever, will do. So here is the beginning of...something for you to enjoy.*

## Chapter 1

“So they hired a new girl? I hope she’s cute”, Jeremy thought as he watched the new file clerk sort through a file. She was sitting at the desk with her hand holding her head as she looked down at a file that was half open with her other hand behind it. Her hair was brown with blond highlights in the front. Jeremy couldn’t see her face and hoped that she would look up before the other clerk came back with his files. He saw the other file clerk approaching and was trying to think up a name so he could request another file but couldn’t think of any. She handed him the file and he thanked her. Later on he found another reason to return to the file room. This time the new girl had her back to him looking through a file cabinet and the other file clerk wasn’t around. Jeremy was very pleased and waited for her to turn around, enjoying the suspense of finding out whether or not she was attractive. After a few moments he decided it was time to find out. He didn’t want the other clerk to suddenly return and ruin his chances of talking to the new girl in case she was cute. Jeremy said hello loud enough to get her attention. She didn’t turn around but said, “ I’ll be right there. I need to make sure this file goes back in the right spot.”

She put the other files on the desk and slowly turned around. Jeremy watched intently to see what the result would be. She smiled and walked up to the desk and he was in shock. He just stared at her and had to remember what he went there for. She apologized for making him wait and explained that a misplaced file was one of a file clerk’s nightmares. She thanked him for his patience and asked if she could look up a file for him. Her words came out slowly in a soft and calming voice. Jeremy finally remembered the name of the salesperson’s file that he wanted and asked for it. She went to look for it and when he saw that she was gone, he let out a quiet laugh and shook his head. She returned with the file and he thanked her. Jeremy wasn’t sure what else to say so he left without further conversation.

After entering his office, he sat and thought about her. Jeremy was focused on how attractive she would be because of the wild wavy brown hair with blonde highlights in the front and didn’t even consider that she wouldn’t be white. It was a shock to see her very dark skin and even more of a shock that it looked good with the blonde hair. As she talked to him, Jeremy studied her face and there was not an ounce of make-up on it. The blond highlights framing her face looked so natural on her skin that it seemed as if she was born with it. He wondered what her ethnicity was because her features were a bit exotic. Jeremy quickly looked through the file that she gave him and decided to wait a few days before going back. He didn’t want to make his interest in her too obvious or make her uncomfortable.

Jeremy stayed away from the file room for a day and wondered when would be a good time to go see her again. He stared out his office window watching the cars drive by as he drank his latte. A few minutes later, he saw the new file clerk cross the street and go to the little creek across from the building. She sat down and opened a bag with her lunch in it. She watched the creek as she ate her lunch. “ It can’t get any better than this,” Jeremy thought as he quietly watched her. He watched her until his phone rang and snapped him out of it. He ran to answer it and realized that he had been watching her eat lunch for twenty minutes. One of his coworkers was calling to see if he wanted to go out for lunch with him. He agreed to meet him in about ten minutes. He wanted to walk out in time to run into the new file clerk. After Jeremy hung up, he ran to the window but she had already left. He was upset and walked back to his desk. Jeremy got ready to go to lunch with his coworker and finished a few tasks before leaving.

Jeremy held off going to the file room for a few days because she was regularly going to the creek to eat lunch. He had been watching her eat lunch for a few days and even set up a little sitting area to have her in sight as he worked. He didn’t want it too close to the window, lest she looked up and saw him watching. Jeremy didn’t even watch her the whole time but liked having her within view when he looked up. He put off running into her when she came back from lunch because it could give away that he knew her lunch time. He liked just quietly

watching her without interfering with her life. It rained the next day so she couldn't sit at the creek. Jeremy decided that was the day to go to the file room. He had planned out what he would say and was eager to actually have a conversation with her. He approached the window but the other file clerk was there. He asked for his file and asked if there would be two file clerks now. The file clerk said that the new girl, Daphne, would take over for her leave of absence once she was fully trained. The file clerk worked two jobs and was suffering from burn out. She needed a break and would be on leave starting the following week. Daphne was completing some training at the moment and that was why she wasn't there. He wished her well on her leave and hoped she would come back feeling better. Jeremy went to back to his office pleased that the new girl would be the only file clerk starting next week.

Jeremy was going over files with his coworker, Chris, one day when the new file clerk knocked on the door and entered with a cart full of files. He was surprised to see her and could feel his face getting red. Jeremy quickly said hello and looked down as if intently reading a file to hide his face. He watched Daphne from the corner of his eye as Chris showed her where to put the files. Chris thanked her and she left. Jeremy didn't look up because he was afraid that his face was still red. Chris closed that door and returned to his desk. He stared at Jeremy while holding back a chuckle. "So that's the reason why you have been going to the file room more often?", his coworker asked.

"Why do you say that?", Jeremy said with his face still down.

"You're blushing," Chris said while laughing. Jeremy let out a laugh and admitted that he found her attractive.

"I heard she thinks you're attractive, too," Chris said.

"What?! How did you find that out?", he asked.

"I was about to get some files when I overheard the two clerks talking. They were in separate areas of the file room and had to yell to hear each other so I was able to hear everything. They didn't think anyone was around. The old clerk was talking about all the cute guys that went to the file room and your name came up. Daphne didn't know you by name but after the old clerk reminded her of who you were, she agreed that you were cute," Chris explained. Jeremy tried to hold back a smile but couldn't. "It's always flattering when someone you find attractive finds you attractive too, huh?"

Jeremy tried to play it cool, shrugged and said, "Yeah."

"Are you going to make a move?", Chris asked.

"Things are so weird now-a-days and you have to be careful with office romances. I'll have to think about it. Those type of things could get messy," he said.

"Understood. Let's get back to work," Chris said.

Jeremy and Chris had been working on a month long project. After it was all done, Chris invited him out to celebrate over a drink. While they were out, he asked if Jeremy had made any advancements with the new file clerk. Jeremy said that he hadn't tried anything. It felt silent and he thought about the situation. He had been concentrating on completing the project and was content watching her during her lunch breaks. Sometimes she would sit quietly watching the creek, sometimes she would get up to film nearby animals and sometimes she would make phone calls. He liked to watch her expressions as she talked on the phone. Jeremy visited the file room sometimes and made small talk but nothing significant. Daphne seemed like a nice person but he was nervous about making any moves.

"Do you want to have sex with her?", Chris asked bluntly.

"What? Yeah, I am sexually attracted to her but I told you that office romances can get messy and I don't need the drama," he explained.

"Very true. I am part of an experimental AI group that develops remote and safe sex devices," Chris told him.

"Sex robots?", he asked.

"Yes, we have some those," Chris responded.

"What? Are you going to build a robot that looks like her for me?", Jeremy asked.



Chris laughed and said, “ I could do that, if that is what you want but it is even better than that. They have a program that uses synthetic telepathy to simulate sexual intercourse. It’s like in that old movie “Demolition Man”. Have you seen that movie? There is a scene where they have sex by putting on some VR helmets and goggles and it feels real. It’s all done with no touching. Our device uses synthetic telepathy to allow you to enter someone’s dreams and have sex. If you are interested, you can attend a meeting and try it out.”

“ I heard about that stuff. I think it’s called....astral...astral projection. I don’t know if I believe in any of that,” Jeremy said.

“ This isn’t astral projection. I mean it is but it isn’t. It’s the same concept of some kind of telepathic experience but it is actually computerized. It’s called an elexual intercourse program. Elexual intercourse because it is electronic sexual intercourse. It’s a brand new technology that is being developed and could one day be mainstream. It’s all cutting edge experimental stuff. You are welcome to come and try it out. There is something like a tech expo for people to try out these devices and see the newest toys. If it doesn’t work for you, you can walk away,” Chris said.

“ It’s intriguing. I’ll attend a meeting to see what you’re talking about,” Jeremy said.

When Jeremy entered the meeting room, it looked like a tech show. There were booths with different kinds of devices. Rooms were available for consenting adults to try out the elexual intercourse devices. Both adults had to confirm consent before being given a room. There were couches and partitions for those who felt more comfortable testing the devices out in the open. Jeremy was introduced to the regulars. Everyone was friendly and looked happy to see him. He couldn’t help but notice that there were a lot of unattractive people but a few attractive or plain people were seen from time to time. Jeremy was looking at one of the devices when an attractive brunette introduced herself and asked if he wanted to test out the program with her. Her name was Samantha and she mentioned that it was her first time there. Jeremy laughed and said that it was his first time, too. They talked about how they both ended up being there. She was invited by a friend who was into that type of freaky stuff. She thought it was weird but wanted to see if it really worked because her friend was always talking about it. Jeremy agreed to test it out with her but didn’t want a room. He said they could go off in a corner where the partitions were.

They sat down across from each other after confirming consent to one of the organizers who handed them the head sets. Jeremy told her to let him know any time she felt uncomfortable or wanted to stop. Samantha said the same to him. They put on the head sets and waited for the program to connect them. After the connection was stable, he could see her but not in the normal way. It was like having a vision. They both were shocked by the experience. “ This is strange. I guess we should get started,” Samantha said to him.

She asked if she could kiss him and he said she could. Samantha sat close to him in their virtual fantasy and started to kiss him. Jeremy waited until she was more relaxed and into it then started to rub her back and pull her in a bit more. It was starting to get hot and heavy. She took his hand and put it under her shirt. He rubbed her bare skin until she took his hand again and cupped it around her breast. She was moaning and he was getting into it. Samantha removed his shirt then removed hers and pressed her chest against his while they kissed. After a while she slid her hand down his belly and grabbed him down there. Jeremy jumped up and took the headset off. Samantha was surprised and asked if she had gone too far. He said no but they were still in public and he didn’t want to have an embarrassing reaction in front of everybody. Samantha asked if he would like to get a private room to continue. He was a bit freaked out by how real everything felt and wasn’t ready to go there with her. He admitted that even though it was very erotic, the whole thing was a bit scary and he needed time to get used to it. He wanted to test it out on his own first so he would know what he was getting into. She agreed and they looked at the other devices together. At one of the tables, some other guy caught her eye. Samantha and the guy gave each other a few looks. He approached them and found a way to ask if they were a couple. They both admitted that they just met and he asked if they were willing try things with other people. He said that

he wasn't but Samantha was free to go with whomever she wanted. The guy asked if she would like to test out a device with him and she agreed. Jeremy happily sent them off and went back to looking at the other devices. It was getting late and he wanted to go home. It was all a bit much and he wanted to dissect what he experienced with Samantha. He looked for his friend but couldn't find him. He figured that he must have gotten a private room with some girl. He texted his friend to say that he was leaving.

They both agreed not to talk about the experience at work and waited until the next time they hung out. Jeremy asked Chris how he could have sex with Daphne using the elexual intercourse program. There was no way that he would ask her to attend one of those meetings at work. She might be freaked out and think he's a perv. Chris laughed and said that she wouldn't know that he was using it on her. He looked confused.

"Here is where the astral projection part comes in. You can actually tap into her dreams and seduce her. She won't even know that you are using the device," Chris said.

"How is that possible? Samantha and I had to be in the same room and wear the VR gear," Jeremy said.

"I can't explain that right now but if you want to try it out, you have to start talking to her more so that she is more aware of you. After she becomes more aware of you, you can express an interest in her without asking her out to see if she is attracted to you because finding someone attractive and being attracted to them are two different things," Chris explained.

"I don't know if I am ready to make a move yet," Jeremy said uncomfortably.

Chris smirked and said, "I know, it's a bit scary because you're white and she is black. You don't know if she'll date a white guy. What if I told you that didn't matter? Not in a color blind utopia sort of way but it literally doesn't matter. What if I told you that she could be yours for as long as you want her and won't be able to reject you?"

"That's not possible without committing a crime. I am not going to drug her or hold her hostage," Jeremy laughed.

"You don't have to. It's the synthetic telepathy factor. As long as she is initially interested, you can hold that interest for as long as you want. You just have to make her want you in the beginning. Smooze her a little. For a while you'll just be having wet dreams about her until you can actually get her alone. Then you can work your magic and since she has already been synthetically intimate with you in her dreams, it should be easier because you will actually re-enact a dream of your choice in real life and she will go along because it feels so familiar," he explained.

"So much for all the talk of consent at the meeting," Jeremy thought to himself, "It's not really rape or molestation because I have to find out if she's interested. Breaking into her dreams isn't that bad, who knows where dreams come from anyway,". He agreed to try it out.

"I sell those devices so I will give you a discount on it. I'll give it to you next week," Chris said.

Chris delivered the elexual intercourse device the next time they hung out. He showed Jeremy how to use it. Jeremy had been making small talk with Daphne to make her more aware of him and it seemed as if they liked each other. However small talk was no indicator of attraction. Daphne could have been nice because she was at work and is required to play nice with others. Jeremy needed some real evidence that she was attracted to him and didn't just find him attractive. Never-the-less, he decided to try the device out because he knew he really liked her. He tried it one night after talking to her that day. He was showing her pictures of his trip and they were pretty close as both looked at the pictures. Daphne looked up at him at one point and held his gaze for a moment. She continued to talk as if she was only thinking about what she wanted to say but he was mesmerized. He snapped out of it when she turned to point at something in the picture. Jeremy hadn't heard a word she said but nodded his head as if he did. He thought about her the rest of the day and couldn't wait to get home. He turned the device on and started to fantasize about her. He felt a connection in the same way that he did when he got connected to Samantha at the first tech meeting. He felt Daphne wanting him so he continued his fantasy. Everything went well until the end when she started

to fade away and he saw someone else in her place. It was brief, like quick glance. He didn't quite understand why that happened but figured it must have been some kind of glitch in the program. He did this a few more nights and the same thing kept happening. He wanted to ask Chris about it and see if it could be fixed because some of those brief glances left him horrified that he had an intimate moment with someone else. Some of the faces he saw were unattractive or even repulsive and he ended up slightly regretting the fantasy. It got to the point where he decided to stop using the device until he talked about the glitch with Chris.

Jeremy passed by a new vegan cafe one weekend and went in to see what they had to offer. He ordered a latte and pastries. He pulled up to the drive-thru window and was surprised to see Daphne handing him his order. Jeremy smiled and asked what she was doing there. She said that was her part time job until she found a permanent position. The file clerk job was temporary unless they offered her a permanent position. Daphne hoped that they would but this was just in case they didn't. Jeremy started going there more often but decided to always use the drive-thru so Daphne didn't get creeped out by him. They start talking more at work and Jeremy told her stories about his sales teams. Daphne had stopped eating lunch at the small creek for some reason and it forced him to go to the file room to see her. Jeremy was driving home one weekend when he saw Daphne at a bus stop. He wondered if he should stop to offer her a ride while waiting at a red light. He drove up, told her he would not be offended if she said no and offered her a ride. Daphne hesitated for a moment but then accepted. She said that she missed the last bus and needed to get home right away to get ready for work tomorrow. She had a long commute that required her to get up really early. They had an interesting conversation about the plays they had seen while he drove her home. Jeremy parked outside her apartment and checked out her neighborhood. It was a nice affluent area. They talked for about twenty minutes in his car before she realized the time. She thanked him for the ride and he left. It was a long drive home but so worth it. He knew now that she liked him, too, even though they never really flirted and kept everything professional. It seemed that she understood the dangers and drama that could come along with an office romance. They were both playing it safe so he decided that maybe they should meet outside the office a bit more.

The next day, Jeremy told her how much he enjoyed talking to her in his car. He asked if he could visit her at the cafe sometimes during her break. He wouldn't be offended if she said no and she could let him know when she wanted see him. She thought it was a great idea to get to know him better without being the main topic of office gossip. Jeremy started to stop by and they hang out during her breaks. They got along pretty well and he had stopped using the elexual intercourse device because he liked the real life experience better. They weren't intimate but it was still better than any experience he had fantasizing about her with the device. Sometimes they sat outside on the cafe patio. Daphne didn't like to sit inside because she didn't want her coworkers to hear their conversations so on rainy days, they sat in her new car. After a while, Jeremy decided to ask her out on a date. They had been hanging out as friends but he wanted to see if they could be more than friends. He wanted to use the machine to see if his idea for a first date would be agreeable to her. He was nervous and didn't want to mess things up. He put the device on and waited for a connection. This time the connection felt a bit different. Maybe it was because he knew her better now but it felt more like he was interacting with her. He played out the fantasy of a nice dinner at a fancy restaurant that had a patio in the back with a bar for cocktail hour. He went there often and would sit on the grass while staring up at the stars. He wondered how she would feel kicking off her heels and laying down on the grass in her nice dress to watch the stars. In the fantasy, he laid down a blanket and she was comfortable with the idea. They laid down next to each other and looked up at the sky. They thought they saw a comet and he sat up eager to see another one. He had bought a monocular and kept searching the sky with it while Daphne remained lying down. He gave up and turned towards her. He looked down on her lying beside him and stared into her eyes. She stared back at him. They just looked at each other for a while then he laid down

partially holding himself up on one elbow. He put his hand on her stomach and she gently laid her hand on top of his. He rubbed her stomach figuring she would let him know if she didn't like it because her hand was laying on his arm. Daphne allowed it and he slowly bent over to kiss her neck. He didn't know how she would respond to a direct kiss on the lips and decided to test the waters. She tilted her head back slightly and towards his head. He moved his arm around her waist and positioned his upper body above hers as he started to kiss her face avoiding her lips. He could feel her breathing heavily and moved in for the kiss. He held himself up to look at her then slowly lowered his lips towards hers. When their lips met, he felt this energy rush through his body. He kissed her with a closed mouth then went for the french kiss. As soon as their open mouths met, he woke up with a tingling sensation all over his body. It was surreal. He waited to see if another person's face would appear but none did. He was relieved and relaxed into the arousal that lingered from the fantasy.



## Chapter 2

Daphne woke up with a moan and feeling very aroused by the dream she had. For some strange reason, she wasn't able to wake up completely. She laid there with her eyes closed. She was short of breathe and now felt the aroused feeling growing in an artificial way. She usually woke up with a warm soft feeling from erotic dreams like that but this was turning into a waking nightmare. Daphne still felt aroused but even though she saw Jeremy's image, there was someone else there. It was if someone was wearing a mask of his face and trying to have sex with her. She started to feel a pulsing energy between her legs and was trying to rub it off. It felt like someone was trying to force her to kiss him while molesting her. It wasn't Jeremy anymore and she was confused. It was suffocating and felt as if someone was there but there was no one in the room with her. She finally snapped out of it when the alarm went off. It felt like some strange kind of sleep paralysis. Luckily, it was the weekend and she didn't have to face Jeremy at work. She decided to go see a shrink because things were getting too strange. Daphne called in sick to her second job because she didn't want to see Jeremy. She was confused by the dream nightmare that she had about him. Jeremy would want to hang out that day so she texted that she called out sick and needed to rest all day. He understood and hoped she would feel better.

"I'm here because I'm not sure what to do. I don't know if I'm losing my mind, being stalked, something else or somewhere in between. I have been having a hard time finding a job, which is outrageous because I am a top candidate and most of my peers are doing very well. I look good on paper and I interview well. I have great interviews and it looks like a sure thing but then something strange always happen and I don't get the job. It goes from hot to cold instantly. I don't know what I did wrong or what to make of it," Daphne told the therapist. The therapist nodded her head in a compassionate way. She asked if Daphne had exhausted every way of finding a job and Daphne said that she did. The therapist wrote down some notes and asked if there were other issues that she was dealing with. "The frogs. I would call them my demons but I have no idea who these people are and they are not people that I would know. I wouldn't have people like them in my life but they act as if they know me. Some of them act as if they are in charge of me. It is so strange when someone you never met comes up to you and starts bossing you around as if you have known each other for years and have tolerated their behavior. I don't know what to do," Daphne said in tears.

The therapist asked if these were real people or people in her head. Daphne explained that they were real people, random strangers that showed up in different places but displayed the same behavior as if to torment her on a daily basis. The therapist was starting to think it was a psychosis but asked her to explain.

"It started on the commute to work when someone would sit across from me and start licking their lips in a sexual manner. At first I thought it was only the usual perv and didn't think much of it. I would move to a different seat then soon another person would come, sit next to me and do the same thing. It happened during most of my commutes. I started standing the whole trip instead of sitting down but then people suddenly started standing, too. Even when the train or bus had seats available or was empty, they would stand. Some would even stand across from me and lick their lips in a sexual manner. It wasn't just guys, the girls even did it. People of all ages. I started to think that maybe someone had posted some false information about me online and googled myself. I searched the internet but could find nothing. I don't know why this is happening," Daphne explained. The therapist asked if she could change her commute or commute times but she replied that she couldn't. The therapist wrote down some notes then asked where she was commuting to because she said she couldn't find a job.

"Oh, I found a job now. I was only telling you how hard it was to find a job. One of my jobs is a temporary position because someone is on a leave of absence. The other is for extra income because I am not sure if they will offer me a permanent position after the person returns from LOA," Daphne said. The therapist asked how things were going at work.

“ At the cafe, the same strange things happen. Not everybody does it but some of the customers actually grope themselves in front of me as well as lick their lips sexually or in exaggerated manners. Girls rub their breasts and touch their genital areas in front of me while I’m taking their orders. They acted as if there was nothing wrong with what they were doing,” Daphne told her. The therapist asked if she said anything to them about it.

“ Yes, and they act as if I am crazy and call me rude. I am not rude about it. I just told them where the bathroom is in case they needed to adjust themselves or use it and they got upset. Guys do it, too. They grab themselves down there or hold their hands right over their genitals. When I point it out, they say that they are touching their belts and treat me as if I’m crazy. I started to think I was losing it because, why would all these people act like that, right?”, Daphne asked. The therapist nodded cautiously, trying not to give away that she was suspecting a psychosis. She held back and told Daphne not to call it crazy but maybe the stress was getting to her.

“ Yeah, that’s what I thought until one day a supervisor was nearby when a guy practically pulled his pants down in the middle of the cafe. No one reacted and everyone acted as if nothing was going on. I don’t know if they didn’t see or they were ignoring him. I looked over at the supervisor who was busy with something else and asked him to come over to the register. He came over and I asked him to look towards the guy’s way but not make it obvious. He was shocked but said nothing. He said that he didn’t understand why the guy would do something like that and I was relieved. I honestly was starting to think that I was hallucinating. He was about to say something but the guy pulled up his pants and a female in military uniform approached him. They both came to the counter and I took their order while the supervisor stood nearby. They placed their order and left. After they left the store, the supervisor explained that he wasn’t sure what to say to the guy and that was why he kept quiet. He was going to make a note of it and if that guy did it again, he would approach him. I was so relieved at that point that I told the supervisor about the other customers acting in lewd ways toward me while placing their orders but I didn’t want to report it since there was no else around to see. They always denied the behavior or made excuses for it so I stopped saying anything. He asked me to point these incidents out to him when they occurred so he could see what he could do. I was able to point out several incidents to him and he brought the issue to the manager’s attention to see what they could do,” Daphne explained. The therapist was surprised and wrote down some notes. She asked what the supervisor decided to do.

“ He took me off register and placed me at the drive-thru. If I had to be on register, he stood nearby and watched as much as he could while he did other tasks,” Daphne said. The therapist asked if that stopped the lewd acts. “ Some of them. At the drive-thru, they continued to lick their lips in exaggerated ways but I didn’t want to complain about it because I didn’t want it to seem as if I was complaining about every little thing. I let those incidents slide but to prove to myself that I wasn’t crazy, I recorded “the frogs”, as I call them. I have the videos here to show you. It all sounds insane so I wanted to bring proof,” Daphne said as she sat closer to the therapist to show the videos. The therapist watched the videos and found it repulsive how these people were obviously being sexually disrespectful towards Daphne. It was bizarre and they acted as if nothing happened. They would continue their conversations as if they didn’t just behave inappropriately. She was getting a better understanding of the client’s predicament. She asked if Daphne had gone to the police.

“ I only have videos of random strangers. They won’t be able to track everyone involved. These people don’t even seem to know each. I don’t know how they could help me. That’s why I am here. Maybe talking through it could help me figure out what to do because it is getting to be too much to hold it inside,” Daphne said. The therapist asked if she had a friend, a boyfriend, relative or anyone to talk to about what has happened.

“ No. I am afraid to contact my family since it seems like some kind of stalking. I am too scared to make friends because I am afraid that they will turn out to be one of these people. I don’t have a boyfriend,” Daphne said. Then she remembered Jeremy, smiled a little and shook her head. The therapist noticed and asked if she was seeing someone.

"Yes, and no. I have been hanging out with this guy at work but we aren't dating. We're only friends. We like each other but it hasn't gone there," Daphne explained. The therapist asked if she trusted him enough to talk about what was going on.

"No, I don't trust anyone. I don't even know why I am hanging out with him since I am so scared. We hang out in public places and I was only alone with him once when he drove me home because I missed a bus. I only took the risk because I needed to get home and if something happened, I knew who he was so I could report it. So far he hasn't done anything to scare me off, even though I'm still very cautious with him. You never know," Daphne said. The therapist asked if this was the supervisor.

"Oh, no. The supervisor at the cafe is married with kids. This the file clerk position. He works in a different department and we talk sometimes. Sometimes he hangs out at the cafe with me," Daphne said. The therapist said that she was glad that things were normal at one of her jobs.

"Well, kind of. There is this guy who works there who makes me cringe. He hardly ever comes down to the file room and usually wants a bunch of files delivered to his office. I have to shut down the file room to deliver them. He watches me closely when I bring the files and place them on his desk. He hasn't tried anything but it makes me uncomfortable. I like the job and want a permanent position so I don't say anything right now. I am hoping that when the other clerk comes back there will be two file clerks so she could deliver the files or maybe they will transfer me to another department. She would understand and he has shown no interest in her in that way so she should be okay," Daphne explained. The therapist said that it seems as if she has that under control and asked if there were any other issues that bothered her.

"I have nightmares about him. The one who wants the files brought to him. It's strange. I have been having a lot of erotic dreams lately. I haven't been with anyone in years and don't miss intimacy. There is too much going on so I don't even have time or energy for that. It always starts out with the guy I actually like and then it turns into the guy I don't like. I wake up aroused and horrified at the same time. I go in wanting him but come out fighting him off. Except there are two hims. It's strange. Even stranger is it's as if he, the bad guy, has me under a spell. Sort of how Ursula had the prince. He saw Ariel but was really with the sea witch. I see Jeremy but it starts to feel as if I'm really with Chris, the bad guy, underneath it all. Anyway, he gets really forceful once I start to realize it's him and fight him off. I wake up suffocated and tense before it gets too far. I lay there for about an hour trying to get over those nightmares," Daphne said. Her half hour was about to end so the therapist asked if the session helped. She said that it helped to talk about it for the first time. The therapist said that she would review the notes and give Daphne thoughts during the next session. Daphne thanked the therapist and left.

The therapy session helped Daphne. She was starting to feel better and was thinking about the session during lunch one day. She had been eating lunch in her new car ever since Chris started showing up at the door when she tried to go to the creek during her lunch hour. He was a mildly attractive guy but he had a big ego. He must have thought she ate in the file room because he hadn't showed up so far when she went out to her car. As she shook off the bad feeling he gave her, he walked out the exit door to the parking lot. Daphne froze and pulled the seat back a bit so he wouldn't see her in her car. Shortly afterward, Jeremy came out and talked to him for a few minutes. They got into Chris' car and drove off. Her heart sank. She wondered if they were friends. If they were then Jeremy was probably one of the frogs. Chris had finally given her reason to believe that he was a frog. He asked for files to be delivered and she firmly said no. He would have to come to the file room because she was busy moving files during the renovation. They had decided to renovate the file room and there were file boxes all over the place. Chris didn't like that and looked at her angrily while she got his files even though she apologized for the inconvenience. Before he left, he licked his lips in the exaggerated way that the other frogs did. She was horrified and looked down at the file in her hand. He walked off with a smirk knowing that he had an affect on her. That was a few days ago but she hadn't gotten over it. Now that it seemed that he was friends with Jeremy, she felt

worse. Since it was around lunch time, she watched from her car to see if that was a one time thing or if they always ate lunch together. Daphne was disappointed to see that all that week, they drove off together at the same time. Jeremy even picked up files for Chris the next week because she refused to deliver them. She started to pull away from Jeremy and he noticed. He asked if everything was okay and she blamed it on feeling sick. Jeremy hadn't made any of the frogs' displays but she started becoming weary of him.

One night she had another erotic dream about Jeremy. It started off the same harmless way. Jeremy hugged her then things start to heat up as he held her tighter and kissed her neck. He backed her into a wall then pulled back to look at her with one hand on the wall. As they were staring at each other, he started to look like Chris. He moved in for a kiss and she was under the spell again. Before their lips met, she yelled no and tried to run. He put the other hand on the wall to stop her. She felt suffocated again. He moved in but she turned her head and tried to push him away. It was confusing because she still felt the arousing energy of Jeremy but saw the repulsive Chris. Chris continued to kiss her neck while she was confused and tried to stop to get her head together. It was happening again the dream was becoming a nightmare. He was getting more forceful and tried to kiss her again. By then Jeremy's image had completely disappeared and she was in an intimate situation with Chris. She tried to fight him off again and it feels like he is getting off on the fight. "This can't keep happening," she thought to herself and decided to that she must do some damage to get him to leave her alone. Daphne looked up and saw an object that she could hit him with. She hit him in the head and he backed away shocked. She kicked him in the groin and he bent over in pain. She wanted to make sure he was in too much pain to use his genitals so she hit him in the face with the object. He grabbed his face and fell down. She took the object and started to fervently beat his groin with it. This time, Daphne woke up laughing.

### Chapter 3

Chris woke up screaming. He was scared because Daphne never fought back so hard. He was usually able to molest her until she woke up. He thought one day he would get to the sex part. Now that she is attacking him, he would back off a bit. He and Jeremy had been so busy working on the launch of a new product that there was no time to talk about her. He needed to find out what she liked about Jeremy and then become those things. Chris could tell she didn't like him but figured if she thought he was friends with Jeremy then she would probably doubt her suspicions and start warming up to him since she liked Jeremy. He noticed that she stopped sitting at the creek since he had been "accidentally" running into her on her way out. He noticed that she sat in her new car now, a very nice car he thought. He left it alone but wanted her to start seeing him and Jeremy together more often. Jeremy had been talking to her more but every time he brought it up, Jeremy would say a few things about her being nice then say that the product launch was more important. After the product launch, he will invite him to cocktail hour to celebrate then pry a bit more. He didn't want to seem too eager to get information about her so he agreed to focus on the product launch for now.

After the product launch, they went out for cocktail hour at a new restaurant. He made small talk about other things then brought Daphne up. Jeremy said that things were going great but recently she seemed a bit distant. He asked if she was seeing someone else. Jeremy responded that as far as he knew she was single and had no time to date. Chris said if there was another guy involved then Jeremy should find out what she likes about him and play that up. Then he asked what he thinks she likes most about him. Jeremy responded that he didn't know. He told him to ask her in a round about way what she likes about guys then ask her what a girl would find attractive about him. "I wish I could help you out but she is the first black woman I ever found attractive," he said.

Jeremy agreed that he should try a little harder but she seemed like the type to take things slow so he didn't want to push. Chris said, "That could get annoying. You're an attractive guy. Most girls would have slept with you by now. It's a good thing you have the patience for that type of girl. I prefer the fast type. Not too fast but they must know a man has needs,". They laughed and talk about something else.

Chris' plan was to get them together. The Programmers in his network had been after her for a while but she never responded to anyone, not even him. When he overheard her say Jeremy was attractive, he jumped at the opportunity to finally get her. Chris thought that once those two got together, he would find some way to initiate them into the Program by reminding Jeremy that it was what brought them together. After all, he was the one that encouraged Jeremy to go for her and use the device to build a synthetic telepathic connection. They both owe a lot to the Program. He wanted them to be grateful that the Program got them together and in that way associate their relationship with it. After they got comfortable with the Program's network, he would talk about the benefits of open relationships so that he could start a relationship with Daphne behind Jeremy's back. First and foremost, he wanted to become the new couple's trusted friend. The one who encouraged them to get together. In that way he will be warmly welcomed into the relationship and get first hand information. It should be easy because he will use the work relationship to sort of groom Jeremy for all this so he won't fight back as hard. It will all make sense to Jeremy and he will offer him an attractive second girlfriend to win him over.

The girls were thrilled when Jeremy started using the device. He was number one on many of their lists and they couldn't get enough of him. Ofcourse he didn't know that when he used the device, he was with someone other than Daphne. Jeremy wouldn't even be attracted to most of the girls that paid to be with him. Chris was able to pay for a vacation with sales he got from erotic sessions with Jeremy. He laughed thinking about it. Those in the know didn't call him the Synthetic Pimp for nothing. He didn't even feel bad that he told Jeremy that he was connecting to Daphne when it was really someone else. No one got Jeremy going like her. All

the other girls tried but she was the one that he always responded to the most. He noticed that Jeremy hadn't been using the device as much and meant to ask him about that but other things came up.

Jeremy's last fantasy sent a wave of the most intense erotic energy throughout the whole network. It registered on headquarter's monitoring computer. They asked Chris about it because it came from one of the devices he sold but he had no idea why that was. He had set up some receivers in the file room when the maintenance guy let him in after hours. Chris told him that he was working late and needed to get some files. He put some receivers in Daphne's chair, around her computer and other strategic places so that he could connect to her at night. The devices "sprayed" nano-chips on her that allowed her "senses" to be connected to the program without her knowing. He allowed a limited connection to Jeremy so that he could utilize his image and their attraction to get her going. Once that happened, he could transform into the image and gradually transfer her attraction for Jeremy to him on a subconscious level. The plan was to bypass her awareness so that she would date him instead of Jeremy. A sort of subliminal "possession". It seems that a glitch caused her and Jeremy to be connected that night and whatever happened was intense. "They must really like each other," he thought, "That's the only time it really gets that heated,". He couldn't wait to actually achieve a complete sexual fantasy with Daphne, especially now that he had an idea of how much she was turned on by Jeremy.

Chris returned from his "free" vacation and asked Jeremy if his device was working because other people had reported connection issue lately. Jeremy responded that he hadn't been using it because he has been having real experiences with Daphne. Not intimate experiences but he liked spending time with her. Jeremy told him about the intense first date kiss that he used the device to find out if she would like it. Chris realized that he was correct and those two did make a real connection. Now was the time to start reminding him that the Program was helping him find love. He sees that Jeremy really likes her and enjoyed the session so he decided to make him an offer. Chris told him that the group that makes the AI device is an erotic group that explores many sexual boundaries through computerized fantasy simulations. Sometimes they find people who heighten the groups' collective sexual arousal and she was one of them. They couldn't get her attention so they did things to make her notice them. Jeremy asked what they did and Chris answered that they just made her life hard enough to get her to start thinking about how others can help her. "Well, let's say that she's a crowd pleaser. Many guys wish that they were in your shoes. We have tried to get close to her for years and you seem to have the magic touch. Daphne was too frigid and independent. Always thinking about her career and accomplishments. No romance. We needed to take her down a notch and make her fall in love. It sounds harsh but we don't keep them down long. She is like Scheherazade and kept our interest for longer than usual. You are the only one who has gotten so close. You can rescue her. You don't have to worry about whether or not she dates white guys or even likes you. She can be yours, guaranteed. Just go in, make her fall in love and live happily ever after. You can be her knight in shining armor. You can handle her, she really likes you. After you two connect, her life will go back to good. We won't interfere anymore. We like to play cupid sometimes, we want to see happy couples get together," Chris explained.

Jeremy was uncomfortable with the whole thing but was afraid to say no. It sounded like some kind of new age sex cult. "They made her life harder just to get her attention, what the...," he thought. Then he remembered how upset she was while telling him how hard it was for her to find a job. She had to work two jobs just to make ends meet. He was starting get upset but calmed himself down. Jeremy decided to go along and "rescue" Daphne to get them away from her. Chris was pleased and invited Jeremy to another one of his meetings. This time Jeremy was going to a members' meeting and not a tech expo.



## Chapter 4

Jeremy nervously leaned against his car waiting for Chris to arrive. He didn't want to attend this meeting but it was the only way to save Daphne from the Program. It seemed as if they weren't going to give up until she gave in to them. She had been through so much and he could tell the stress was getting her. Maybe that was why she was pulling away from him lately. She seemed a bit more cautious around him. He wondered if she had any idea of what was happening around her. Did she have any idea that she was being stalked by some type of new age sex cult? Jeremy suddenly jumped back when Chris tapped his shoulder and asked if he was ready. Chris apologized for scaring him and noticed that he was a bit tense. "Relax. Nobody's going to bite you. It's only an introduction meeting. You won't see any of the good stuff today," Chris said.

"I want to be upfront that I am not sure about joining right now. I only want to find out more to see if it is something I can do," Jeremy explained to Chris.

"That's fine. I am sure we'll win you over with time," Chris said with a warm smile.

As Chris and Jeremy walked in, one of the members yelled, "Here comes our pimp,". They laughed and shook hands. They said they were happy to see each other and Chris introduced Jeremy to him. More people eagerly came by to say hello and be introduced to the new member. Some of the faces looked familiar but Jeremy couldn't quite place them. Their greetings and conversations were pretentious, as if they were putting on a show for him. Many of them were noticeably unattractive and he had to look down or away a lot while talking to them. Everyone was friendly to him but there was a strange energy in the place. It didn't help that some of them looked at him as if he was an appetizer. He only wanted to find out as much as he could and leave as soon as possible. There was a brief welcome speech by the organizers and then some announcements. A few people welcomed those who were new and thinking about becoming members. They gave a brief history of the Program and answered a few questions. Afterwards, everyone was left to mingle and do as they pleased. Chris left to go talk to some old friends and encouraged him to get to know the other members. A few members approached him and engaged in small talk before leaving. They answered some of his questions and gave him their cards saying that he could contact them if he ever wanted to talk about the Program. Chris came back to check on him. He said that the same devices and private rooms from the tech expo were available if Jeremy was interested in anybody. At that point someone pulled Chris away to introduce him to a few people who were eager to meet him. He left and Jeremy walked over to a strange statue. It was in an area that looked as if it was a shrine to some goddess. As he stared at the display, Chris came by and explained that the statue was of a sex goddess and was there because it fit the theme of today's meeting.

"Really? What is the theme?", Jeremy asked.

"From lust to love. How initial desire can also become something more. Speaking of which there has been a lot of request for a private room with you. What can I say? You're a crowd pleaser. All the ladies love you. Don't feel pressured to do anything. Remember that mutual consent is required in all these sessions," he said.

Jeremy responded that he was not in the mood and no one has caught his eye. Chris thinks it's because he likes Daphne too much. "It's her isn't it? You have your heart set on her. Good enough. Your first night with her is going to be incredible. You two together are like aphrodisiacs. I can bottle it up and grow rich selling your attraction to each other," he said with a psychopathic smirk. Jeremy felt a chill run down his spine.

Jeremy stayed a little bit longer then made up an excuse to leave. He drove home and woke up in a cold sweat that night. He recognized one of the faces he saw at the meeting. It was a face he had seen during the first weeks that he used the program to fantasize about Daphne. He laid there and thought about it. Soon he recognized most of the synthetic post-coital faces as some of the people at the party. It was a bunch of plain and ugly people whose faces showed up afterwards even though he was fantasizing about Daphne. He was starting to

suspect some foul play after he remembered that Chris called their attraction to each other an aphrodisiac that he could sell. He also remembered being called a “crowd pleaser” and how they find people that heighten the groups’ collective sexual arousal. Jeremy suspected that he may have been lured to attract Daphne and was also used as an aphrodisiac. He got up to drink some water. He decides to get her to date him and quit his job. He would get her to move in with him and quit the file room position. He would help her find a new job and start over. They would move as far away from Chris as possible so that he couldn’t contact him. He got the sexual intercourse device from under his mattress and threw it away.

Jeremy texted Daphne to see if he could come over but she said no. He asked if they could hang out at the cafe because he missed her. She agreed and told him when she would be on break. After some small talk in her car, he sees she still likes him but is weary of him. He asked if he did anything to upset her. He apologized if he did and starts to let her know he wants to get serious with her without pressuring her. Daphne looked shocked and smiled but then covered her face with a groan. She let him know that she is having some mental health issues at the moment. She doesn’t want to get in a relationship and burden him with her issues. She said that she has been having the strangest interactions with the strangest people and needed to get her head together. He suspected that it was the members of the Program harassing her and wanted to tell her that she wasn’t crazy. There were really crazy people after her but he doesn’t know how to say it without scaring her away or explaining how he knows. After all, he did participate without knowing. What if she thinks he is one of them? What if she never wants to see him again? He decided that the best thing to do would be to be supportive and give her space so that she doesn’t run away. Daphne thanks him for understanding and it goes well.

One day, Chris stopped by the file room with flowers and a small cake. “I don’t mean to be forward but my good friend, Jeremy, wanted me to drop off this for you. He’s a bit busy right now and couldn’t get out of the office to get them,”. She forced a fake smile as she took the presents and thanked him. He left with a big smile and she felt sick to her stomach. She hated Chris and this confirmed that he was Jeremy’s friend. This could mean that Jeremy was trying to trap her. She threw out the presents and decided to quit her job. He knew where she lived so she had to move away before anything happened.

Chris went to Jeremy’s office and told him that he just delivered presents to “our girl” for him. He didn’t like the idea but didn’t think it was a big deal. He thanked him but told him that he and Daphne had agreed to not do things like that at the office. Chris wasn’t even supposed to let on that he knew they were seeing each other. “She’ll think you are romantic and head over heels for her,” Chris said.

Jeremy shrugged and figured that he would text her later to ask if she liked her presents and apologize for sending Chris. He would explain that he was the only one that knew and he didn’t tell him much about what they did together. He hoped she wouldn’t be too upset. It seemed that Chris could keep a secret because no one had let on that the whole office suspected that something was going on between those two.

Chris was pleased with giving her flowers. His plan was going so well that he started seeing Daphne as his future girlfriend after Jeremy moved on. He wanted to buy his girl some flowers but needed an excuse to do so. Jeremy was a perfect excuse and he was very pleased with himself.

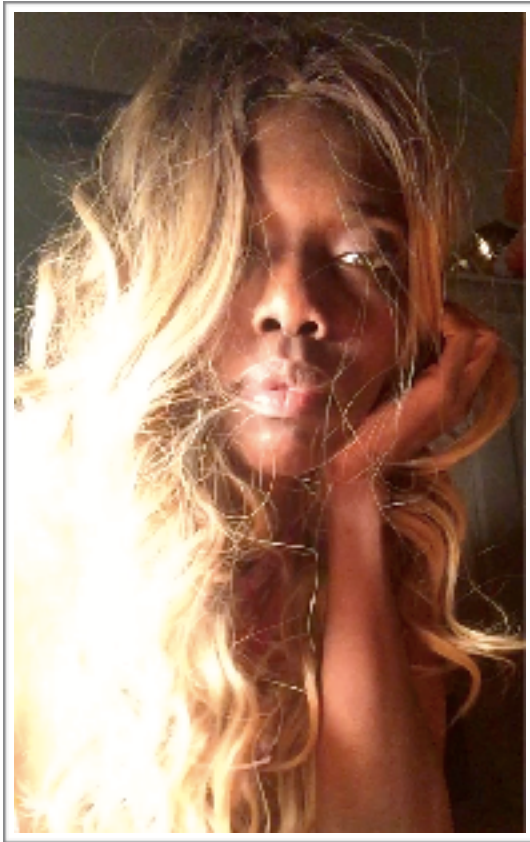
Jeremy noticed the change in Daphne but didn’t know why. He wondered if it was because Chris knew that they were seeing each other outside of work. She had texted back that she liked the presents and thanked him. However, she refused to see him outside of work saying that her issues seemed to be getting worse and she needed more space. She explained that she couldn’t have a relationship right now and needed to be alone for a while. Jeremy wondered if he should just spill the beans. Maybe she will believe him. He hated that she was going through so much stress and mental anguish for no reason. How relieved she would be if she knew that she wasn’t crazy and that he would help her escape. Since she wouldn’t see

him at the cafe, he decided to tell her in the file room. Maybe she could close the window while they talked privately for a few minutes. Jeremy went down to the file room, nervous and anxious to see how she would respond. He walked up to the window but no one was there. He rang the bell, not wanting call to her name because she had been acting so distant to him. A new girl came to the window and asked how she could help him. "She must be out delivering files," he thought. He asked for a file then asked when Daphne would be back in the file room. The new girl told him that Daphne quit and she was the new file clerk. It hit him like a ton of bricks. He thanked the girl and left. He went back to the office and sat looking out the window. He was hurt that she didn't tell him she was quitting. He started to get angry and wanted to text her to let her know how upset he was. He decided that since she was going through so much, sending an angry text wouldn't help the situation. He waited until he was more calm. His anger started to subside when he realized that this actually made it easier. He started getting relieved because now he didn't have to convince her to quit anymore. He was in the process of interviewing for a job that was out of state. He knew he could convince her to move in with him and start fresh. She'll be at the cafe this weekend and he will stop by and wait for her to take her break. He'll apologize for showing up uninvited but after he explains everything, she'll see why it was so important.

He went to her other job over the weekend. He nervously walked in and the other baristas were happy to get a close up of the guy Daphne always took a break with. The girls thought he was cute and wondered why she never let him come in the store. They always met outside. He walked up to the register and the barista welcomed him with a big smile. He ordered a latte and asked if Daphne was there. The barista's smile dropped and she looked confused. "She quit. She didn't tell you?", she said forgetting that she was supposed to act as if she didn't know who he was. He was shocked and said that he must have misunderstood a text that she sent him about quitting. He thought Daphne meant the other job. He paid for his order then walked out of the cafe. He sat in the car and was very mad. He drove away without his latte and parked at the other end of the parking lot. Jeremy wrote and rewrote some text asking her why she didn't tell him that she quit her jobs. He tried to not sound as angry as he felt. Then he realized that maybe she wasn't okay, maybe she was sick. So he erased the long text and simply texted "Are you okay?" and wait anxiously for a response.

After a half hour, she sent back a short text to say that she left town and can longer talk to him. She said she really liked him but strange things have been happened and she no longer feels as if she can trust anyone. He should move on with someone else and never contact her again. In panic he texted that he knew what was going on and wanted to talk to her about it. As he was texting, she sent another text that she was in the process of changing her number and the current number wouldn't work in a few minutes. He stopped texting and tried to call her but she wouldn't pick up. He was so upset and hurt, he didn't know what to do. How else can he contact her? All he had was her phone number. The number that wasn't going to work in a few minutes. He decided to send the text hoping that it would reach her before the number change was complete. He sent the text and waited over an hour for a response. He drove home and waited for her to text saying that she read his message and wanted to talk. He even thought that maybe she would call him and they could talk over the phone because she would be so relieved to find out the truth. He fell asleep with his phone in his hand. He woke up the next morning and checked his phone for texts or missed call but there was nothing there. He was devastated and fought back the tears. Jeremy lost her, she was gone and he wouldn't be able to find her. He sat around all day, depressed and shocked. She didn't have his personal email address but he checked his email anyway thinking that maybe she found it somehow and would email him. He checked his email and found out that he got the other job. He was happy and sad at the same time. After thinking about it he cheered up a little knowing that he was also moving and starting over, even it was without her.

## About The Author



Blondie Africano is an activist, model and author. She is currently working on her first book, *Children Of The Lion*, while raising awareness about pigmentism. Pigmentism is discrimination or harassment based on someone's skin tone within ethnicities or groups that are usually associated with each other due to their skin color. She models to help other females with very dark skin live outside the "dark skin girl" box and stop limiting themselves because of their very dark skin. Pictures, videos, and contact information for Blondie Africano are available at:

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