

Torn
A Short Story
Digital Edition
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Part One

“Naima, what is that commotion?” Sharon said over the phone.

“You don’t even want to know, girl,” Naima replied.
“These two have got me fit to be tied.” Then her voice trailed off, “Ooo, ‘tied’... now that’s an idea...”

Sharon shook her head and rolled her eyes. “Are they fighting? You’ve got to do something!”

“I’ve done all I can”, said Naima. “Who knew a little olive oil could cause so much trouble?”

“Uh, you’re right. I don’t want to know,” said Sharon. “Poor Richard. I told you that you were gonna get that man hurt.”

“He’s holding his own pretty well, girl. You’d be proud.”

“Stop them!” Sharon insisted, getting more worried by the minute. “Jump in or something—”

“Ah, jump in... Now that’s the best idea you’ve had all day. Okay. I’ll go get between them...” she said with a deliberate pause. “But you’d better stop yours before it starts.”

“Stop my what?” asked Sharon.

“You know exactly what I’m talking about...” said Naima. “Lee and Jake. And if you don’t take care of that problem, you’ll be right where I am right now. I’d better go. It just got suspiciously quiet, so I’ve either got to slip in or slip out. Bye.”

“That girl gone,” Sharon said aloud to herself. But she knew her friend was partially right. She had a lot to think about regarding Lee and Jake. She found herself in a position she never dreamed she’d be in... she loved both men. Jacob, who she and her friends affectionately called Jake, was strong and masterful, and would do anything for her. He was everything she thought she ever wanted in a man. She felt so safe and adored when she was in his arms, and there was no place she’d rather be. That was, until Lee came along. He made her feel the same way. But he was

different than Jake. Something about him was just *gentler*. He too was strong and protective, but there was a sort of vulnerability in his eyes. Those breathtaking deep blue eyes. She had no idea what to do. She wanted to crawl in a hole—with both of them.

Both Jacob and Lee were aware of each other. Sharon had made no promises to either man, but both men wanted desperately for her to give them the word, any sign she was ready for commitment. But they didn't want to pressure her and risk pushing her away.

Jacob came to her home one night. She'd asked him over to have dinner and watch some classic movies on TV. He brought popcorn and the ingredients to make his famous homemade hot chocolate, and they had a fantastic time. She loved to watch him working over a hot stove, and he loved to make her smile. He wore her white apron around his waist in order to look like a pro, and several times while stirring the pot of chocolate he would stop to reach over and stroke her cheek or give her a wink. Sharon was in bliss. It felt so right having him there with her, in her home... when he was there it felt like "their" home.

Later, while watching *Tea and Sympathy* with the lights off, Sharon found herself curled up next to Jacob with her hand on his thigh. His arm was comfortably around her, holding her close. When she realized the absent-minded placement of her hand she started to pull it away. But Jacob's reflexes were fast. He moved his hand over hers and slid it further up his thigh. He looked down into her

eyes and she stared wantonly up into his. She wanted him more than she'd ever wanted anyone, and he knew it. He lowered his head and captured her mouth with his lips. She was taken away to another place. She instantly melted in his embrace. Tonight was finally the night.

The movie rolled to the credits as their foreplay began. Their breaths were short and fast... and as Jacob removed her blouse and climbed over her waiting body, the phone rang. They ignored it at first, and the incessant ring carried on. Sharon pulled Jacob closer, and moaned his name, "Jake—"

But alas, the answering machine picked up. It was Lee.

"Sharon, are you there? I need you."

His voice cracked as if he'd been terribly upset. Jacob knew he needed to let Sharon up, and she knew this was one call she couldn't ignore.

Part Two

That was another reason Sharon was in love with Jake. He always considered her feelings first. When she'd hung up the phone from her call to Lee, Jacob understood she had to go to her friend. He said he would stay and clean up and lock up before he went home. Even though she tried, he told her there was nothing to apologize for, and that Lee was lucky to have such a caring friend. He kissed her tenderly on the lips before she went through the door.

When Sharon arrived at Lee's mansion, he was sitting outside on the steps under the moonlight, his head in his hands. Sharon parked and hurried over and sat next to him. She quickly pulled him into her arms. "Lee, come here, it's going to be all right."

Lee had lost a dear relative, and knowing the time had been nearing was not much consolation. Sharon held Lee for as long as he needed, but she knew he was strong. Soon he stood and took her by the hand. He guided her to stand. He towered over her, but somehow they were a perfect fit; her body firmly against his. He stroked her face with one hand and held her close with the other. And he stared at her in the moonlight.

"My Rose of Sharon," he said softly. "Today I'm reminded that we have to tell the ones we love how much we care, lest we miss the chance."

When Lee stared into her eyes and when he spoke softly to her, Sharon felt at total peace.

"That is very true, Lee," she said. "And I want you to know that I care for you very much."

"Sharon, I love you," Lee admitted. "You have my entire heart."

"What..." Sharon breathed.

"It's true," he said. "I've tried to hold back, for fear of rejection. And I know you might not feel as strongly as I do, but I had to tell you the truth, no matter the outcome—"

He ended abruptly and swallowed hard as if he'd been afraid to say those words and had drummed up all of his

courage to do so. He was so tall and masculine, but he seemed so tender in this moment, Sharon didn't know what to say. But she loved him too. She soon fell into his arms and they kissed with such passion that they forgot the world existed.

Suddenly, Lee swept Sharon into his arms and carried her up the stairs and through the giant doors. He took her upstairs to his bedroom and laid her on the huge bed which was covered in disheveled silk linens. Again only bathed in moonlight which poured in from the skylight above, his eyes sparkled when they lay upon her. He lay against her on the bed, and she slid her hands into his silky hair and pulled him closer to her. She then slid her hand down to his belt and pulled at it anxiously, trying to free him of his confines. He helped her, but never stopped kissing her, until finally the wait was over.

He sat up and took off his white suit-shirt and she slid off his loosened slacks. The light caressed the muscles of his chest and she gazed over him breathlessly. He then gently removed her clothing and without wasting another moment slid over her and they began to make love. She wrapped her legs around him and held onto him with all of her strength as they took each other away to another world and another existence. They shared their love throughout the night and into the dawn.

When the morning sun had risen, Lee slept deeply, and Sharon stood at the balcony of his bedroom watching the leaves fall into the waterfall. She was truly in love with

Lee... yet her heart was broken, for she was also in love with Jake. Had she betrayed him or betrayed herself? Her heart was truly torn.

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