

The Caribbean Expo

The Expo was a much bigger occasion than Suzanne had expected; thousands of people flocked to the venue in the Docklands for the three day event. She made over three times as much money as she had invested in the stand and printing her posters. But it was the third day that was to change her life forever...She spotted him in the distance; he seemed to stand out like a neon light, appearing head and shoulders above everyone else. As he approached her stand, Suzanne felt butterflies in her stomach. Did she know this man?

When he reached a few feet away, she could see that she didn't know him, and at over six feet tall he really *was* head and shoulders above everyone else! It then occurred to her that he wasn't heading towards *her* stand, but the stand opposite! She *had* to get his attention;

"EXCUSE ME!" she called out to him on impulse.

He turned and began walking towards her. Suddenly she began to feel nervous; she wasn't in the habit of pursuing men, plus, she was at work! As their eyes met, she flashed him a huge, inviting smile. He accepted her invitation.

She knew he thought she was attractive, and she thought he was attractive too.

As he reached her stand she flicked her hair and said cheerfully "Hi! I thought you might be interested in my posters"

"Hmmm....they're nice, did you design them?" He asked, looking at them.

"Yes, I wrote the poetry too"

He stood silently, reading one.

"I can tell, you're deep" he commented when he had finished.

Suzanne laughed.

"Would you like one?" she asked.

"How much are they?" he enquired.

"Well you can buy one for £4.50, two for £8.00 or three for £10"

He chose three different designs, saying "My mum will appreciate these" and paid her the

£10.

“What made you come here today?” Suzanne asked, trying to prolong his stay by rolling the posters up slowly before putting an elastic band around them. Neat, heavy eyebrows adorned his sparkling dark brown eyes. He was dressed casually but neatly in a pair of jeans, a shirt and polished shoes. As she handed him the posters he smiled with full, luscious lips revealing perfect teeth. But it wasn't his *looks* that had attracted her to him in the first place. In fact, she couldn't quite put her finger on *what* it was.

“My friend invited me” he replied, pointing to another brother at the stand opposite.

“Oh sorry, I didn't realize you were with someone!”

“It's okay. So how long have you been doing this?” he asked, indicating towards her poster designs with his tube.

“I've only just started actually – this is my first time selling them!” she replied, smiling proudly.

“What were you doing before?” he asked.

“I used to work in Admin, but I left my job two weeks ago so I could focus on starting my own business”

“Wow, sounds pretty much like me...”

He proceeded to tell her how he had just left the job he'd been in for 7 years, as well as ending his long term relationship. It sounded as if they were both at a turning-point in their lives. In a weird kind of way, during the time they were talking, time literally stood still; everything around them became like a blurred whirlwind, as if they were in some kind of time warp. Suzanne forgot she was meant to be selling. In that moment, nothing else existed in the room but the two of them. For the two minutes or so that they conversed, they both shared personal information about themselves, as if they had known each other forever.

“...I have to go – do you have a card?” he asked.

Suzanne picked up one of her home-made business cards and handed it to him. He read

it and smiled at her slogan; *'Touching the Heart...through Art!'*

"I'll call you" he said with promise in his eyes.

"I'll look forward to it" she smiled encouragingly.

"My name's Charles, by the way" he added, extending his hand. His smile was as warm as a summer's day, making her feel all hot and flustered.

As their hands made contact, what felt like an electrical current passed from his hand through Suzanne's whole body; she wondered if he had felt it too. They shook hands quite formally, but there was a lingering in the time they should have let go.

"Suzanne"

As Charles walked away, Janice asked "Who was *THAT?*"

Flashback

I woke up thinking 'Damn, I wish I had a woman here right now to relieve me of this stiffie!'

A text came through from Sharon. "Do you fancy meeting up today?" it said. I like Sharon, but she's not the one for me, and I'd rather not lead her on; I know how emotional women can be. And besides, there are so many other options that I haven't even experienced yet. I don't know what I *want*, but I know what I *don't* want. "Sorry, but I'm busy today," I rep-lied.

Then my mate Dave called to tell me about this Caribbean Expo taking place in the Docklands. He said there were going to be loads of sisters there, so we should go. I didn't want to; I wasn't looking for anyone right now, I was quite happy being on my own after the break-up of my long-term relationship. But Dave, he was *always* on the look-out! He insisted he'd pick me up at 12pm, so reluctantly I agreed to get ready and go with him. He

was right; when we got there I'd never seen so many Black women all in one place, except in church.

"She's nice," Dave commented as this beautiful Black sister passed us, smiling at me. But I wasn't interested. Nothing really caught my eye. So here was me and Dave having an in-depth conversation as we headed towards the 100 Black Men of London stand, when all of a sudden I heard someone call out "EXCUSE ME!"

When I looked in the direction of the voice, all I could see were colors – that's what caught my eye at first, the colors of the posters she was selling. Then, I noticed her eyes; amazing, large, deep, intense, dark eyes, beckoning me to come. "Come to bed" eyes some might have called them, but honestly, I wasn't thinking along those lines at the time. All I was focused on was the deepness and intensity with which they drew me in. They were magnetic, and I was powerless to resist. I veered off to the right involuntarily, leaving Dave to carry on heading towards the 100 BMOL stand. I didn't even hear him call out to ask me where I was going. As I reached her stand, I couldn't understand the strange feeling that came over me. Her eyes were still fixed on me and I began to feel all weak, light-headed, hot, warm inside, all at the same time. "What's going on?" I asked my Self. I may be 6' 3", but in that moment I felt 3' 6". She asked me if I'd be interested in buying one of her posters. I pretended to read one, but I couldn't really focus on the words properly. It was as if my mind and body were somewhere else, but my consciousness was locked into this person. Exhilaration, fear, anticipation, and confusion all mixed as I tried to hold it together. I could see her lips moving, but all I could hear were muffled words. It felt as if everything around us became a blur, and it was just me and her in the room....

Once the noise came back, all I was interested in was how I was going to speak to her again. I just *knew* I was going to have to see her again, that's all that was on my mind. I chose three random posters and asked if she had a business card. After she handed it to me, I introduced myself and began walking back to meet Dave. As I crossed over to the stand

opposite I was thinking “I’ve got to look back – but I’m a guy, I *never* look back!” I could feel her eyes piercing into me, and sure enough, when I turned around she was looking. She smiled and waved, and in that instance, we both knew something special had just happened.

I spent the rest of the Expo walking around in a daze. I kept looking at her card and smiling to my Self, thinking “I can’t wait to call her!” I wasn’t interested in anything else anymore. I found what I’d been looking for.

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