

## Some Relation!

She took my breath away. Self-assured as she came into the smoky bar from the much colder street. She stood for a moment, looking around at the faces of the fifteen or so men and women sitting at tables in the gloom. Her eyes met mine and paused there. My breathing stopped. She seemed to make up her mind and moved to a table near where I was sitting. She kept looking at me and each glance sent a shiver along my spine.

I normally avoid places like this – dim light, noisy music, smoky, desperate singles looking for someone to spend the night with. It wasn't me, but George had insisted that this was where he'd meet me. "It's important," he told me when he rang me at the office that morning. What could be so important? He wouldn't say. So here I was.

I had come twenty minutes earlier than the six-thirty George had indicated I should be there. "Don't be late, whatever you do," he said. "It's very important." I was impressed, as George is rarely so insistent. Both of us preferred more laid-back arrangements.

The woman called to the barman for a double whiskey, neat. She was in her mid-thirties, dark hair framing an oval face. Her big eyes were shielded by long lashes. Her wide mouth joined the rest of her face in a warm smile as I watched her. I blushed and turned back to my black coffee (I knew the alcohol would flow once George joined me). He was late.

As I took another sip of my strong coffee I caught her looking at me again. Her look was very direct but had nothing about it of someone on the make. I couldn't work it out, but there was something familiar about her. She looked relaxed and (was I imagining it?) seemed to be casually teasing me. Why did she look so familiar to me?

I couldn't ignore her any longer. I finished my coffee and stood up. Leaning over her table I asked her, "Do I know you?"

"We haven't met before, but we have a common acquaintance." She smiled.

I sat down. "Who?" I asked.

"George," she replied.

I was silent. She smiled at me again. "George has been..." She hesitated. "He's been held up. He asked me to... to look after you."

This latter gave me an odd feeling, though she'd said it matter-of-factly. I raised my eyebrows. "Does he think I need looking after?"

She shrugged her shoulders and tilted her head. After taking another sip of her whiskey she said, "George will meet us here at about ten o'clock."

"But that's more than three hours away. I really don't like this place," I said with some passion. "If it's going to be that long, I'd rather spend the time somewhere else."

She smiled again and finished her drink. There was a disarming quality about her smile – it invited me to relax and also had the quality of reaching out to me. This latter made me a bit uncomfortable. She rose, took my hand from where it lay on the table and tugged me to my feet. "Oh well, what the hell," I thought and walked out onto the cold autumn street with her.

I stopped and turned towards her, took a deep breath and opened my mouth, but before I could ask what was on her mind, she placed a finger on my lips. "All I'll tell you David, is that my name is Sara."

"But..." I got out before she placed her whole hand over my mouth.

"Uh, uh," she said and then replaced her hand with her lips. I nearly fainted, partly from the surprise and partly from holding my breath too long. Before I could respond to her light, teasing, kiss, she withdrew, took my hand again and said, "Come!" That simple command had me feel a bit like a puppy.

As we walked along the dark street and around the corner into the car park, and all through the drive in her car to her flat, I said nothing. Nor did Sara. But my mind was racing faster than my heart. Somewhere in my brain I knew where this was all going, but most of me had trouble coming to terms with it. Except for one particular part of me, however – it was already straining against the inside of my pants.

Sara said nothing as she drove. My mind was racing, trying to make sense of what had happened and was, I was now sure, about to happen. Several times I opened my mouth to ask her a question, but didn't know what to ask. It was the strangest situation I had ever been in.

I glanced at Sara, but she seemed not to notice. Then I turned and looked at her openly. She still did not respond, concentrating on her driving.

Passing streetlights and the lights of other cars played across her face. In profile she looked just as beautiful as when I first laid eyes on her. Her nose was not small and it turned up slightly at the tip. It suited her perfectly. She had a slightly prominent brow, giving her a look of intelligence and shading her eyes somewhat. Her cheekbones were high and wide, which gave her face the oval shape I had noticed in the bar. Her mouth seemed to have a smile playing over it continually. Her chin was strong and rounded. I followed the line of her neck and, for the first time, allowed my eyes to rest on her breasts, which were obvious under her blouse.

I suddenly felt embarrassed as I imagined how I would feel touching them. As if she could read my mind, she turned her head slightly towards me and grinned. She said nothing, but the heat rose up into my face.

I didn't look at her again until she pulled the car into the driveway of a small block of units in a tree-lined street. I got out when she did and stood waiting. She motioned, with a sideways nod of her head and a smile, that I was to follow her.

Once inside her front door, Sara leaned full length against me, pushing me against the door, and kissing me; first gently and then with increasing energy. "Well," she said, "I can feel that a part of you at least has no doubt about this."

I blushed.

Not since Vivienne had disappeared three years ago, while bush-walking with our two-year-old daughter, had I been with a woman in this way. I'd not even been out with one.

I had avoided situations which might lead to what was happening now, despite the earnest attempts by my friends to create opportunities. At work I had gained the reputation of being a recluse and I had heard that some of the women thought me a cold fish.

I initially felt awkward and uncomfortable as Sara pressed herself hard against me once more, and kissed me tenderly on the lips. However, despite my wish to hold back, I found myself responding. Sara stepped back and started to undo my shirt. I clumsily undid the buttons of her blouse. We were moving towards the far side of the room as she deftly removed my belt and undid the button and zip of my pants. I managed to unhook her skirt and pull the zip down. By the time we had gone through the bedroom door, we had nothing on except our underwear.

We stopped and stood there, appraising each other. Then, with a few economically fluid movements, Sara removed her bra and panties. She looked beautiful: the contrast of her black hair and pale skin; her breasts with goose bumps over them; her dark pubic hair and long legs. And that smile.

I clumsily stepped out of my underpants, took a step towards Sara and we collapsed onto the bed, with her underneath me. Soon we were kissing and licking and stroking each other without reserve. We made love furiously and joyfully and finally collapsed into a sweaty, sticky heap with both of us struggling for air.

I fell asleep and woke when Sara moved. I slowly opened my eyes and looked at her in a way I hadn't looked at a woman since Vivienne had gone. I experienced feelings I had forgotten were possible. It felt natural and right.

Sara smiled down at me, kissed me lightly on the lips and stroked my face gently. "Happy birthday, David."

I was dumbfounded. I opened my mouth, then said, "How did you...?" She prevented the rest of the question with her lips.

We made love again, slowly. I had tears in my eyes, because of the closeness I felt to this extraordinary woman, and because of her gentleness. When we finished, she held me as I sobbed quietly.

Finally Sara said we should go soon. We showered together and silently got dressed.

Reluctantly we returned to the bar just before ten o'clock. George walked in right on the dot and surveyed the scene. He found us sitting shoulder to shoulder with hands entwined, talking earnestly, as he joined us.

"So David, you've met my sister."

I opened my mouth, but Sara stopped my words again with a kiss. George's face was a huge grin. "Happy birthday and welcome back to the land of the living," he said. I squeezed Sara's hand and laughed.

*This story received a commendation in the Scribblers Literary Competition - June 2006*

*and was Highly Commended in the Hawkesbury River Writers Fictional Competition 2007*