



GREEN EYES
AND GOOD HAIR
HUGH O. SMITH

GREEN EYES AND GOOD HAIR

Tony is young good-looking and successful, the ultimate ladies' man. Everything about him, from his clothes to his apartment, to his uber-confident swagger is designed to be a trap for the women who catch his eye. Tony has no immediate plans except to advance his career and continue with his playboy ways. Then one day he meets Olivia, a beautiful plus-size executive, and he sees a way he can do both.

Olivia is new in town, but certainly not new to the ways of the player. She knows that no man can treat her the way she deserves so she doesn't even try to find one. As far as she's concerned, life is just fine without the encumbrance of a boyfriend or husband. When she meets Tony, she sees him for exactly what he is, a playboy looking for a good time. She's wise to his playboy ways but still, she wouldn't mind spending a little time with him.

Tony and Olivia get together, each with their own agenda. Then, against all odds, something happens that changes them both...

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I truly hope you enjoy ***GREEN EYES AND GOOD HAIR*** as much as I enjoyed writing it, thank you for reading.

Hugh.

*For my best girl.
I do it all for you.*

“He had kissed her good night that night, and she had tasted like strawberry daiquiris, and he had never wanted to kiss anyone else again.”

— Neil Gaiman, *American Gods*

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ONE

The crowded diner hummed with the energy of the after-church crowd. It was still early, only around noon, but already the waitstaff's starched white collars drooped and the bow ties the owner forced them to wear hung limp at their necks. Their soft-soled sneakers made little sound as they glided between tables and booths where men in dark Sunday suits and women in wide brimmed hats ate and drank with gusto after a morning spent in vigorous worship.

Tony Truman and his friends occupied a booth in a corner of the diner, as far from the din as it was possible to get but when he spoke his friends still had to lean in to hear his voice above the buzz.

"...and then when I finished doin' my thing, home girl lay back chillin', gettin' all comfortable like she was wanting to cuddle." He spat the last word out, as if it left a bad taste in his mouth.

He paused, and his companions leaned in closer to hear the rest of the story.

"Then what?" Curtis asked impatiently.

"Then what?" Tony repeated with a tone that implied the answer was obvious. "I gave her five minutes to catch her breath then I said, yo baby girl, you gots to bounce."

"Damn brotha, that's cold," Jay said.

"Oh please! Give a chick an inch and she'll take a damn mile. Next thing you know..."

Tony went silent as a convoy of elderly ladies, glorious in Sunday best complete with white gloves and coiffed hair fine as mist tottered unsteadily by on canes and walkers. One of them noticed Tony and paused at the table, peering closely at him with watery eyes magnified by thick lenses in tortoiseshell frames.

"Anthony Truman? Is that you?"

"It's me, Ms. Rose," Tony said. He stood and kissed her gently on the cheek.

The old lady beamed, showing perfectly white, perfectly straight teeth.

"How are you, young man? I don't see you in church anymore."

"I'm good Ms. Rose, thank you for asking. I miss Brooklyn Bethany but my niece and nephews beg me to come out to Long Island to go to church with them. How can I refuse the children? My friends here wanted us to have breakfast together so I rushed back to Brooklyn after the service this morning."

"Such a good boy, your mother must be proud. How is Helen by the way? We miss her."

“She’s great, loving retirement and enjoying the Florida weather.”

“That’s so wonderful. You let her know we’re thinking about her, you hear, it’s been a…” Ms. Rose’s hand wobbled and her cane shook unsteadily. Tony quickly held onto her arm to steady her.

“Come on Ms. Rose, I’ll walk you to your table, the other ladies must be wondering what you’re doing over here associating with a bunch of hooligans like us.”

The old lady chuckled as she took Tony’s arm. They tottered slowly over to the table where the rest of Ms. Rose’s group sat, chattering away like magpies. Tony pulled a chair out gallantly, then said something to the other ladies seated around the table. Almost as one, gloved hands flew to mouths and they giggled like schoolgirls. Tony said his goodbyes and rejoined his friends.

“Wow,” Curtis said in amazement. “That was like watching Superman change back to Clark Kent.”

“What are you fools talking about?”

“You go to church with your brother and his family on Long Island?” Jay asked.

“We…what did he say, oh yeah, we hooligans asked you to have breakfast with us?” Sean added.

“You rushed right back after service? Fool, you haven’t been to church since your mother moved to Florida two years ago,” Curtis chimed in.

Tony rolled his eyes at his friends as he retook his seat.

“I’ve known Ms. Rose since before I could walk. She was my Kindergarten teacher and my Sunday School teacher. What did you want me to tell her? Oh Ms. Rose, so nice to see you again. Me? Oh, not much, just eating some breakfast after I spent the night at Rebar. Fornicating with big-breasted sluts all night is hard work.”

“Speaking of the big-breasted slut, how did that end up?” Curtis asked.

“Oh right. Where was I…oh yeah, she wanted to stay the night but to hell with that. If I let that bitch stay over before you know it there’s pantyhose hanging in my bathroom and she’s snooping through my phone. Fuck! That!”

“So what did she say?” Sean asked.

“The usual female bullshit, oh we had such a great time, you seem like such a great guy I’d like to see you again blah blah blah. I said baby I didn’t even know you a few hours ago. I picked you up in a bar then took your ass home, and now you want a relationship? Great sex ain’t the foundation for anything but more sex. Anytime you want another dose, you know where to find me, but for now you don’t have to go home but you need to get the hell outta here.”

“Damn,” said Curtis. “That’s messed up, even for you.”

“You really said that to her?” Sean asked. “Fine as she was?”

“Hell yes! Let me school ya’ll. Honeys like that are a dime a dozen. Plus, they like being treated like shit. Trust me on this one, there ain’t a chick alive that wants a nice guy. Oh, they say they do but ya’ll know that a nice guy will get played.” His friends nodded their heads in agreement. “That ain’t never gonna happen to me. You know what I say, treat her like a whore and you better believe she’ll keep coming back for more.” He leaned back in the booth and sipped his coffee, a smug look on his handsome face.

“So what happened then?” Asked Jay.

Tony rolled his eyes.

“What do you think happened? She got dressed and broke out like I told her to, that’s what happened.”

Sean shook his head and was about to comment when he noticed a group of women being seated a few tables away.

“Hey, check it out. Isn’t that Charlene and her sister?”

They all shifted in their seats to look at the women.

“Tony didn’t you and Charlene have a thing not too long ago?”

“Yup, then I got with her best friend too,” he said with a huge grin.

“Oh damn. That’s foul. She must have been pissed.”

“Pissed ain’t the word,” Tony said. “She showed up at my place beating on the door and causing a scene, my neighbors almost called the damn cops. She calmed down eventually though.”

“How? Did you apologize?” Jay asked.

“I don’t apologize my brotha, you know that. You know what I say...”

“Only suckers say sorry.” His friends completed Tony’s mantra.

Tony grinned. “I see you fools pay attention. No, I let my dick do the talking and she was fine.”

Tony chuckled as his friends smiled and shook their heads.

Curtis nudged Tony. “Hey who’s that with them, I’ve never seen her before?”

“I don’t know who she is, but damn that girl is thick!” Sean said, craning his neck to stare at the new arrival.

Tony looked at him in amazement.

“You like that? She’s FAT! I don’t care what you call it, thick, BBW, healthy, zaftig, whatever, the girl’s still FAT!”

“Yea you’re right.”

“I don’t care for that either.”

“Ya’ll are crazy,” Sean the lone dissenter said, glaring at them. “That girl is sexy as hell. And she’s cute too. Those green eyes...damn!”

“Yea,” Tony said, “I’ll give you that. She’s a cutie. For a fat chick. Who is she anyway?”

“I met her at a seminar last week, her name is Olivia Reynolds, she’s the new head of Sato Electronics' New York office,” Jay said.

Tony looked at the newcomer in a new light. Sato Electronics was a Japanese firm that had fast become one of the major players in consumer electronics. The Sato Tablet, or the S, was a low-cost high-quality tablet that had quickly challenged Apple's iPad for superiority in the tablet computing market. Tony's firm had repeatedly tried and failed to get the incredibly lucrative Sato account and his mind churned with the possibilities. Fat chicks are desperate, he thought. Why not show her some attention and give her big ass a thrill? A little dinner, some sweet talk, hell if it came down to it he might give her some. With the way he put it down there was no doubt he would be the one to land Sato. After that, there was no way in hell he wouldn't make partner.

“Too bad you don’t like big girls; you could work your magic on her and have the inside track on the account,” Jay said.

“You read my mind my brotha,” Tony said, rising. He adjusted his already perfectly knotted tie. “I’m not into the heifers but sometimes, well, you just have to take one for the team. Excuse me gentlemen.”

Tony left his flabbergasted friends behind and made a beeline for the ladies’ table, pausing here to shake a hand or there to kiss a cheek as he navigated through the throngs of breakfasting churchgoers. He glanced at a mirror along the way to check if his tie was as straight and his fade was as tight as he thought.

They were.

He arrived at the ladies’ table a moment later but passed it, then did a double take as if he’d only just noticed them there.

“Ladies, how are you? I didn’t see you over here. You all look stunning this morning. If I knew you were going to be here I’d be breaking the fast with you all and not with that bunch of knuckleheads over there.”

He punctuated his sentence with a smile that showed every one of his capped and whitened teeth to dazzling effect.

“How’ve you been Tony?” Charlene asked. Her tone was icy but the look in her eyes gave away her attraction.

“Pretty good Char. And you?”

“I don’t know how you could ask me that, you know what the f...”

Charlene's sister Michelle put her hand on Charlene's and spoke up, cutting her off.

"So Tony, have you met our friend Olivia? She just moved here from Atlanta a couple of weeks ago."

"Hello Olivia, it's my pleasure." He stuck out his hand as he gave her the full dazzling wattage of his smile.

She returned his smile with a mega-watt smile of her own.

"Very nice to meet you too, the pleasure is all mine."

She was even prettier close up. Her green eyes and light mocha skin were a deadly combination for him. As she smiled a sprinkling of tiny freckles played across her nose.

"So Olivia how do you like Brooklyn?" He asked.

She sighed. "It's been so hectic for me I haven't seen too much of it, but I love what I've seen so far. I'm looking forward to seeing more."

Tony's already huge smile grew bigger. Olivia had just given him all the opening he needed.

"Well, I'm a born and bred Brooklynite so if you ever need someone to show you around I'm your man."

"That's great, I'd like that," Olivia said. A business card materialized in her hand and she handed it to him. "My cell number is on the back, why don't you give me a call."

Tony was momentarily taken aback by Olivia's directness but didn't allow it to show. He quickly fished in his pocket for his own business card and handed it to her.

She tucked his card into her purse and returned her attention to her friends. "It was so nice to meet you, we'll talk soon," she said.

"Ah...yeah...nice to meet you too. Take care ladies."

He hadn't expected Olivia to respond to his advance so boldly and in front of the others no less. He was used to being in the driver's seat and the feeling was disconcerting. His walk back to his table had less swagger in it, but he saw his friends looking over at him as he approached and knew they would expect a typical Tony story. By the time he was back at his table he was himself again. She was one of those type-A career chicks, he reasoned. They go for what they want and she saw me and wanted me. She's no different from any other woman. Plus, big job or not, she was only some fat chick. He would work it out.

TWO

Charlene watched Tony as he returned to his table then reached over and punched her sister on the shoulder.

“Why did you do that? I wanted to give that fool a piece of my mind.”

Michelle glared at her younger sister. “This is neither the time nor the place. It’s Sunday and we just came from church. Save the drama for another time.”

“Drama?” Olivia asked.

Michelle rolled her eyes. “You’re going to be sorry you asked.

Charlene gave her sister a nasty look.

“Girl, that asshole Tony sweet talked me and took me out a couple times, telling me he was looking for a good woman blah blah, bullshit, and bullshit.”

“His bullshit must’ve been great since he talked you out of your panties on the first date,” Michelle said.

“Shut up Michelle, whose side are you on anyway?”

Charlene shot her sister another nasty look. “Anyway, we...you know...were...together a few times and then the fool told me that he didn’t think we would work out, but that if I still wanted to sleep with him once in a while that was all good.”

“An offer you took him up on quite a few times,” Michelle said.

“That’s not the point.” Charlene snapped. Her face reddened and she shot her sister yet another nasty look.

“Then what is?”

“You know damn well what the point is. After he kicked me to the curb he went and fucked Keisha.”

“Keisha?” Olivia asked.

“Her best friend,” Michelle said.

“Former best friend,” Charlene corrected. “To hell with that bitch.”

“No!” Olivia said.

“Oh yes, he sure did,” Charlene said angrily.

Michelle rolled her eyes at her sister. “And you still want him bad. He’s got you so open you don’t know what to do with yourself.”

Charlene sighed. “Well...it was good...real good. Really, really, good. A woman has needs, shoot,” she said sheepishly.

The women laughed at the look on Charlene’s face.

“Listen Char, I didn’t know about your history,” Olivia said when the laughter passed. “If he calls me I’m going to tell him to forget it.”

“No, it’s okay. I don’t think he’s interested...I mean...he just...”

He just what?”

“Well it’s just...he doesn’t...he doesn’t...you know... like bigger girls. I heard him say plenty of times he’s not into...you know...big girls.”

"Charlene!" Michelle gasped.

To their surprise, Olivia burst out laughing.

“Honey it’s okay. There are plenty of guys who want all this,” she said, passing her hand over her body with an exaggerated flourish.

The waitress arrived to take their order and the conversation turned to other matters, but Olivia’s mind remained on Tony and his offer to take her out. Despite what she’d told her friends, she’d seen the look in Tony’s eyes when he looked at her. He was definitely interested. She’d had enough experience to know that they were plenty of men who said they didn’t like a big girl but behind closed doors it was a different matter entirely. Plus, he was pretty, and pretty boys were her weakness. If he were as good in bed as Charlene said there was no way she was letting him escape. No, she had this one on her hook and she intended to land him. After all, he was just some pretty wannabe Playboy, not her first and he certainly wouldn’t be her last. She would work it out.

T H R E E

Tony checked his reflection in his office mirror. Perfect, he thought, but it never hurt to get a second opinion. He pressed the intercom on his desk phone.

“Carmela, can you come in for a second please?”

The door opened a moment later and Tony's Executive Assistant Carmela Minucci entered the office, purse in hand.

“Do you need something Tony? I was just getting ready to leave.”

“How do I look?” He asked.

“Ravishing,” she replied, smirking. “Who’s the lucky lady this time?”

“Oh, no one in particular,” he said smugly. “Just Sato Electronics’ new Executive Vice President of East Coast Marketing.”

Carmela’s eyes widened and she glanced outside the office to make sure no one had overheard, then quickly shut the office door.

“Sato? Tony this could be big.”

“I know, I know, I’m going to...”

“If you get this account you’re a lock for partner. A lock!”

“I know Carm, this is...”

“Could you imagine us working up on the 40th floor? It would be amazing, we’d be set! You better play your cards right Tony.”

“Carmela, calm down. I got this. You know how I do.”

Carmela put her hands on her hips and glared at him angrily. She pulled herself to her full 5'2" height and stuck her finger in his chest.

“Yea I know exactly how you do,” she said angrily, her Lawn Guyland accent in full effect.

“You do lousy that’s how you do. I can’t count how many times I’ve lied to some poor broken-hearted woman for you. I think I changed your cell number three times last year alone.”

He rolled his eyes. “You’re just exaggerating, I’m not that bad.”

“Oh really? Remember Tanya, the first-grade teacher?”

Tony sighed.

"No? Let me refresh your memory. She cried on the phone for almost an hour. I mean weeping, Tony, like someone died. How about Carolyn, the woman that owns the flower shop in Hoboken? She sent you flowers every single day for a month; it was like the Botanical Gardens in here. Oh, and who can forget Marta the translator at the U.N.? She quit her job and flew home to Barcelona because she couldn't bear to live one more day in the city where her heart got broken. Do you know she calls you here every year on the anniversary you broke her heart? Then there was..."

Tony threw up his hands. "Okay, I get the point. I get it. Damn."

"Do you really? I don't know that you do. This isn't some woman from 'round the way or one of your bar skanks. The point is, don't screw this one up Tony," she said, poking him hard in the chest.

"Ow, ow. Damn Carmella, I won't, Jesus."

"See that you don't."

She removed a speck of lint from his suit jacket and made a minute adjustment to his tie. "I have to go. I expect a full report in the morning."

She opened the door then turned and glared at him.

"Don't screw it up!" She said again.

In the cab on the way to Olivia's SoHo office Tony thought about Carmela's warning. He had to admit that she was right, in the past he'd been somewhat cavalier in his dealings with women but that wouldn't be the case with Olivia, she was just some fat chick and this was strictly business.

Kind of.

She wasn't his type in the least but she was still beautiful, there was no denying that. He'd been intrigued when they'd met on Sunday morning, and had found himself strangely attracted to the beautiful, plus-sized woman. He made it a point never to date anyone above a size 4 but for some reason Olivia had stayed on his mind. He'd put it down to the circumstances of the meeting and the fact that Olivia could help to advance his career. Also, Charlene had been there and the thought of sleeping with another of her friends appealed to his darker side.

The truth was he hadn't set out to sleep with Charlene's friend Keisha but they'd been out one night and Keisha slipped him her number with Charlene not six feet away. Her boldness turned him on and an hour after he'd taken Charlene home he was naked in her best friend's bed. He hadn't cared why Keisha had done it, he supposed it was some weird female competition thing. He never understood the urge of some women to betray the friends they held the dearest and he didn't try to, he just took advantage of it.

That was probably the same reasoning behind Olivia's actions, he'd thought, as the cab pulled up in front of Olivia's office building. She'd seen an opportunity to stick it to her friend and she took it. And right in front of her no less. No matter. His plan for Olivia was textbook. Wait a day or two before he called her, then make reservations at an expensive place, take her out and spend

the evening charming her then back to his place for some wine. He'd dangle the promise of some good sex then talk about business. If he liked what he heard maybe they'd end up in bed.

Or not. He would see.

Olivia had other plans however and that evening his phone rang and he was surprised to hear her voice on the line. The call only lasted a minute or two, just long enough to exchange brief pleasantries and arrange a day and time for dinner. He'd put the phone down feeling vaguely disconcerted by her for the second time that day. She hadn't proposed a day and time as much as dictated it. It seemed she had a way of taking control of situations that he wasn't sure he liked. It was he who usually made the brief call to dictate the time and place for dates. He enjoyed the predatory feeling of hunting, tracking and stalking before making the kill and devouring it, leaving behind the carcass of his conquest. Again, he put it down to that weird female competition dynamic. No doubt, Charlene had bragged of his skills and Olivia couldn't wait to experience them for herself.

He reminded himself of that as he paid the cabbie and entered the building; still he couldn't shake the feeling that this time he was the one being hunted.

FOUR

Olivia leaned back in the Herman Miller chair, attention fixed on the massive monitor on her desk. It had a state of the art webcam built in and she could see her face in a small window on the bottom right hand corner of the screen. The face of her CEO, Masahiro Sato, Japanese billionaire and owner of Sato Electronics, dominated the rest of the screen in crystal clear HD. As Olivia listened intently to her boss speaking in rapid Japanese, her assistant silently entered the office and placed a post-it on the desk where Olivia could see it.

Olivia ignored the note and continued to listen intently to Sato, taking notes as he spoke.

“Watashi wa rikai shite Sato-san,” Olivia said, a few minutes later when Sato was done speaking.

Sato smiled broadly from half a world away. “Ah, Olivia, it is always such a pleasure hearing my language spoken with your delightful accent.” Sato said, switching to his Oxford-accented English.

“Sore o hanasu koto no yorokobidesu Sato-san. It’s always a pleasure speaking it, but please forgive my poor pronunciation.”

“Nonsense. Your Japanese is excellent.”

Olivia smiled, bowing at the waist as Sato ended the video conference. She made a few more notes about the meeting then glanced at the post-it on her desk. Don’t forget Tony Truman is here, it said. Olivia glanced at her watch. It was almost 6:30; he’d been waiting for about thirty minutes but she wasn’t concerned. Let him wait.

Her office had its own bathroom and she took her time freshening up then grabbed her purse. Her hand was on the doorknob when her cell phone went off. She intended to ignore it, but a glance at the screen showed her father’s number.

“Hi Daddy,” she said, smiling.

“Hey there baby girl. How is the Big Apple treating you? Are you Mayor yet?”

Olivia smiled. Gunnery Sergeant William Jefferson Reynolds, USMC (Ret) was probably the only person left in North America who still called New York City the Big Apple.

“No, not yet, I’ve only been here a few weeks, but check with me next month, I might have some news.”

Her father’s booming laughter made her smile even harder. They'd moved from base to base over the years, never staying in one place for more than a year or two, but the one constant, the one

thing that always made her smile no matter where they were was hearing her father's booming laugh.

"Wiseass," her dad replied.

"Hmm, I wonder where I get that trait from?"

"Not me, I'm a serious man. And speaking of serious, how are you really doing, Olivia?"

She'd thought about making another wisecrack but thought better of it. Her father never called her Olivia unless he was being serious. She knew he was worried about her. Like him, she'd chosen a career that kept her moving around the world, and like any parent of children who were a certain age and hadn't settled down, he wanted to see her sharing her life with someone.

"I know you daddy, the real question you want to ask is did I meet anyone yet."

"Okay, now that you mention it, it has crossed my mind."

"Well if you must know, Sergeant Nosy, I did, and he's waiting for me right now. We're going out to dinner this evening."

"Wow, that's great Princess, how did you meet?"

Olivia gave a quick rundown of her and Tony's introduction at the diner, conveniently omitting Tony's sordid past with Charlene.

"All right honey, have fun. And try to...just have a great time okay."

"Try to what, daddy?"

"Nothing, just have a good time. Go on, get outta there, don't keep the young man waiting."

"Please. He's not going anywhere. Speak your mind, daddy."

Her father sighed. "Just give him a chance Olivia."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. Give him a chance. Give someone a chance for Pete's sake."

"How can you say that dad? I always do."

"Is that right? Like the lawyer in Tokyo or the stockbroker in Rome. How about the doctor in Sydney, Lord, I still don't think that man is over you."

Olivia said nothing. Her dad had spoken in that strict Marine tone that made her feel like a little girl.

When he spoke again his tone had softened.

"I didn't do the right thing by you, Olivia," he said.

"What? Are you kidding, daddy? I couldn't have had a better parent. You did a great job."

"No. I didn't. I should have..."

"How can you say that? It was me and you traveling all over the world. How many little girls can say they saw most of Asia before they were ten years old?"

"I loved those times 'Liv, but after your mom died I should have taken a posting stateside and settled down in one place. Maybe met someone nice and given you a normal childhood."

"That's not what I wanted daddy, it was me and you. Us. Together. We didn't need anyone else. We had each other."

"But it's not me and you anymore Princess. We had some great times, we really did. I tried my best to raise you to be independent but I think I did too good a job. Don't get me wrong 'Liv, I couldn't be more proud. You're on your own, traveling the world, and making your mark. That's fine, nothing's wrong with that, but you need someone to love, someone you can love back. We all need that."

"Daddy, I have you. Plus, you didn't need anyone."

He sighed. In her mind's eye she could see him removing his reading glasses and rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Oh yes I did," he said. "I still do. And so do you."

For the first time in her memory, Olivia heard a hitch in her father's strong voice. It was so unfamiliar that for a moment she was at a loss to explain it. Her dad had been acting out of character for a few months now. She'd sensed there was something wrong for a while now, but he wouldn't admit to anything, even when pressed. One of the reasons she'd taken the New York posting was because it put her closer to Washington, D.C., where he'd retired to. Then suddenly it dawned it came to her. Her strong father, Vietnam veteran, winner of more medals and citations than she could count and one of the toughest and most respected Marines the Corps had ever produced, was lonely.

"Daddy, I..."

"I've taken enough of your time baby girl. Go on your date. All I'm saying is, if he's worth it, give him a chance. Trust me on this one Olivia, you do not want to get to my age and find yourself alone."

"Okay daddy," she said in a small voice.

"That's my girl. I love you Princess, call me tomorrow and tell me all about the date, okay."

"I will daddy, I love you too."

Could her father be right, Olivia thought as she put her phone away and dabbed at the tears that had formed in the corners of her eyes. Hadn't she given anyone a fair chance? She stared at her reflection in the mirror as she freshened her makeup. No, she decided when her makeup was perfect again. Her father was wrong. She'd given plenty of chances but not a one had lived up to the standard she demanded. The standard that he himself had set by his strong, unwavering

example. Her mother died when Olivia was about a year old and from that time until she left home for college her father had made it his duty in life to raise his daughter. He'd never put anyone before her, he'd never even been on one date that she could recall. All his energies were devoted to her and to the Corps, in that order. No, she doubted Tony would live up to her standards but she would keep her word to her father and give him a chance. She gave herself a last once over then walked out to meet him.

End of excerpt. To continue reading Tony and Olivia's story, buy [Green Eyes and Good Hair from Amazon](#) by clicking [HERE](#).

Be on the lookout for the continuing story of Tony and Olivia coming in 2016!

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CANDYLAND

Coming in 2016

Writer Shaun Harmon should be the happiest man alive. His novels are best-sellers, Hollywood just made one of his books a hit movie, and he and his daughter recently left the Bronx and moved into a huge home in the New Jersey suburb of Willows.

But, all Shaun's success comes at a price. His wife passes away just as he achieves his dreams, the words that used to come so easily to him won't come anymore and the affluent new town he's moved to is not quite what it seems. Soon, Shaun finds that the town harbors dark secrets, secrets that it would do anything to hide.

Even kill.

ONE

Shaun sprinted through the back door of his house, past the pool and onto the broad expanse of lawn. The adrenaline gave him clarity, every blade of grass stood out, the fireflies flickering light stood in stark relief against the dark backdrop of Willows Lake. He felt his daughters' weight in his arms and her breath, hot and afraid, against his neck.

He should be panicked, but he wasn't. Strangely, all he could think about was how to use this experience in his next novel. After all, Shaun Harmon novels were known for moments like this, a hurt and bleeding hero running in the dark, using his wits to escape harm and defeat the bad guys. If he were writing this scene, the hero would be injured but unflappable, working out the ways to use the everyday items around him as weapons even as he weakened from blood loss.

He ran across the grass, his mind working to find a way to describe what was happening.

Early evening had given way to full on night. Fireflies were the only light, but his eyes adjusted quickly to the gloom. The grass was damp from the evening's rain and soaked his bare feet and the cuffs of his jeans as he ran.

That was okay, he thought, but not dramatic enough.

He looked right, then left. Nowhere to run except straight ahead into the dark waters of Willows Lake.

Too dramatic, he thought, and not strictly true, he had choices. He could...

Tanya's terrified breathing in his ear brought him back to reality. Usually he couldn't shut her up, but now her wide and terrified eyes did all the talking.

"It's gonna be okay baby, don't worry, everything's gonna be okay," he whispered to his daughter as they ran.

He hoped.

Shaun ran around to the side of the house, sticking close to the building, cursing the floodlights that activated at his movement. He stopped to peer around the corner. His Range Rover sat in his driveway and his hopes flared, only to be dashed a moment later when he realized that it sat on slashed tires.

"Fuck," he hissed under his breath.

Usually Tanya was quick to admonish her father when he let loose the occasional swear word, but terror had rendered her mute. He peered around the corner once again, looking and listening for their assailant. Seeing and hearing nothing, he scurried across the open expanse of driveway then took refuge behind his SUV. There was no sign of their attacker and he took a moment to smooth Tanya's hair out of her eyes.

"It's gonna be okay Princess," he said again, trying hard to sound convincing. Tanya's eyes were wide open and staring down at his side.

Shaun didn't look.

He didn't have to, he could feel his t-shirt sticking to his skin, soaked with blood. There was no pain yet, adrenaline was probably delaying its onset, but Shaun had no doubt it would come soon. In his second book, *Van Cortland*, his hero was injured by a serial killer operating in the Bronx. He'd had his hero chew periwinkle leaves and apply them to the wound to staunch the blood flow. Or was it dandelion? He couldn't remember. His friend Nelson's *Abuela* had told him that when he was writing the novel. The old woman had insisted on taking him out and actually showing him how to chew the leaves and apply to the wound. He put his hand to his side and they came away red and wet.

He put his hand to his side and it came away wet and red with blood. The knife had been sharp. So sharp the cut was almost painless. He'd only realized he was hurt when...

Oh, now you want to write, he admonished himself silently. He should be running for his life...their lives, but his mind kept on trying to find the words. Writer's block had plagued him for months and now, in the most unlikely of moments was when the words chose to come to him again.

He knew they had to keep moving but he hesitated a second longer, trying to stay calm long enough to weigh his options. His first thought was to return to the back of the house but there was nothing for them there except the dark waters of Willows Lake (maybe that line would work after all) and the dilapidated boathouse that he'd been meaning to demolish since he bought the home six months ago. He glanced out at the lights twinkling in the homes on the far shore of the lake, there were far more homes there than on this side, if he were alone he would chance the half-mile swim but making an attempt with Tanya was out of the question.

He thought to creep along the trees that lined his driveway until he reached the main road, but with Tanya in his arms, his wound, and no shoes on his feet, he doubted he would get very far.

To his west was the Murphy estate but it was over three quarters of a mile away, they'd never make it. His neighbors to the east, the Kings, were much closer, but their house was empty. An elderly couple, the Kings spent much of the year in their Florida home. There was no one there and no help for him, then he remembered the old Duracraft fishing boat that Gerry King kept. The King's had invited Shaun and Tanya over shortly after they'd moved in and Gerry had proudly showed off the lovingly maintained boat he'd rescued from a junkyard and restored. Shaun didn't know the first thing about boats, sailing hadn't been a part of his Bronx upbringing, but he figured that if they made it to the boat he could at least start it. They didn't have to go far,

only to the other side of the lake, then they would be safe. Course of action decided, he glanced toward the house again then ducked into the trees.

Five minutes later Shauna and Tanya emerged onto the edges of the King's property. There was no sign of anyone about, but Shaun paused at the tree line and sat down in the dirt. Tanya was a very petite child, one of the smallest in her Kindergarten class but terror made her a dead weight in his arms that was becoming heavier by the minute.

"Let's rest here honey," he said, trying to put her down.

The scared little girl shook her head and held onto him for dear life.

"We're only gonna rest for a minute princess, I'm not going anywhere I promise."

Gradually, Tanya loosened her grip and he placed her on the warm dirt. Her eyes were wide in the dark and he kissed her forehead gently.

"We're going to be all right honey, don't you worry," he said.

He knelt in the dirt next to his daughter, looking and listening. The King's property was dark except for a dim spotlight that illuminated the front of the massive home. Except for the cicadas there was no sound.

Shaun mapped out the route in his mind, then turned to his daughter.

"We're going to run into the King's backyard then go get Mr. King's boat and ride across the lake. Sounds good?"

Tanya's response was to hold up her arms and Shaun lifted her up and held her close. She snuggled her face into the space between his neck and shoulder and wrapped her tiny arms tightly around his neck.

Shaun took one more look around, then keeping low, ran along the side of the King's property hugging the tree line. A minute later they were at the back of the King's property and he paused again, looking hard into the darkness for any sign of movement. He saw none and ran down the slope of King's back lawn and down the steps to the dock and the boathouse.

Now that they were here, he began to question his idea. What if the boathouse was locked? What if the boat was in dry-dock already? What if he couldn't get it started? He shook off the doubts and turned the boathouse doorknob. The door pushed open with a tiny squeak that sounded as loud as a gunshot in the darkness. Shaun put Tanya down and stood for a moment to get his eyes used to the murk.

The boathouse was large and immaculately kept. There were two spaces for boats, one occupied with the Duracraft, the other empty. On each wall were shelves and hooks that held the various canoes and kayaks that the King's grandchildren were constantly paddling on the lake.

Shaun recalled Gerry King explaining that the boat was small, only seventeen feet, but in the darkness it loomed huge in front of them. Shaun lifted Tanya onto the deck and opened the hatch he remembered led to a storage compartment below.

“Get down there honey,” he whispered. “We’ll be safe soon.”

Tanya quickly did as she was told and Shaun sat in the pilot’s seat, trying to remember Gerry’s lessons. The throttle was to his right and he put the engine in neutral and began to turn the key, but stopped when he realized that the boat was still tethered to the dock. He jumped off of the boat and as he undid the line he heard the squeak of the door opening.

“So predictable,” a voice said.

Shaun turned to see the business end of an oar coming hard and fast at his face. He ducked, and the oar passed harmlessly over his head but as he moved backwards he tripped over the line that tethered the boat to its berth. He fell hard, the breath knocked from his body. He jumped up quickly and ducked another blow that again missed his head but this time struck his shoulder a glancing blow that caused him to stumble backwards. Flailing wildly for balance, his hand found the material of his attacker’s shirt and they stumbled back together and splashed into the dark water, going under as the terrified Tanya screamed for her father.

TWO

TWO MONTHS EARLIER

Shaun peeked through the curtains at the audience, trying hard to stifle his amusement at the standing room only crowd that had come to the Willows Reading Club to hear him speak. The audience was mostly white, very well dressed, and firmly ensconced in the one percent. Ironic, since the Willows Reading Club was formed almost two hundred years ago by members of the Underground Railroad with the express purpose of teaching escapes slaves to read and write. Now, the original purpose of the club was largely forgotten, made up at it was by the wives of investment bankers and Wall Street types who, even now, were in their offices making money as fast as their wives and mistresses could spend it.

“Can I get you anything Mr. Harmon?” The chipper young girl, whose name Shaun couldn’t believe actually was Muffy, asked. She’d been hovering around for a few minutes, tasked with taking care of him while he prepared for his talk.

He closed the curtain. “No thank you, I’m good,” he said.

The truth was he wasn’t good, far from it. He hated these events. In the minutes before he spoke his stage fright kicked in and his stomach became a big knot. He usually found someplace to hide before he went on but the Willows Reading Club, although elegant and obviously exclusive, was small and didn’t offer too much in the way of hiding places. People probably thought the great author was being quiet to collect his deep thoughts but in actuality it was all he could do not to vomit his lunch up on their shiny hardwood floor. The nervousness usually passed as soon as he stepped onto the stage but the minutes before were no kind of fun.

The young woman still hovered, obviously wanting to say something.

“Mr. Harmon,” she finally said. “I hope you don’t mind me saying so but OhEmmGee you are my favorite writer in the whole world and I can’t believe we live in the same town, I mean, it’s such an honor to meet you, I love everything you write, you’re amazing.” She held Shaun’s newest hardcover in her hands. “I was wondering if you would...”

“Muffy, why don’t we give Mr. Harmon a chance to gather his thoughts before his speech,” a voice said from behind the wide-eyed young woman. The voice was cultured, low and very sexy. Jessica Rabbit with a finishing school education.

Trudy Willows-Brown stepped out from behind Muffy and gave Shaun a dazzling smile.

“Oh. You're right. I'm sorry Mr. Harmon, I really didn't mean to...”

It's okay...um, Muffy,” Shaun said. He could barely say her name without want to laugh. “You weren't bothering me at all. Tell you what, catch me after the speech and I'll sign your book, okay.”

“Muffy could you go get Mr. Harmon a Cherry Pepsi please, I left some in the icebox special for him.

“I'm so sorry Mr. Harmon,” Trudy said after Muffy eagerly ran off to get his soft drink. “I hope she didn't bother you too much, it's just that she admires your work so much. We don't get many celebrities in our small town. Much less one that lives here.”

“I'm hardly a celebrity,” he said. “And please call me Shaun,” he said.

“And I'm Trudy,” she said with a smile. “I think I'll have to disagree with you about the celebrity part. You're one of the most famous writers in the world. The President of the United States said you're his favorite author, your books have been on every best-sellers list and they just made a movie out of your first book. I'd say that grants you celebrity status.”

She extended a hand and he took it. He expected a well-manicured, soft hand but her nails were short and the hand was hard, and calloused with a strong grip. His surprise must have shown because she laughed and pulled her hand back.

“Horses.”

“Excuse me?”

“Horses. I've worked with horses since I was old enough to walk. You have to have a strong grip, and manicures don't really survive too long when you're on horseback most of the time.”

“Have you been around horses much Mr. Harm...Shaun?”

“Not much. My mother took me for a horseback ride once for my birthday when I was about six, but that's about the only experience I've had.”

“That's a shame, all children should get a chance to be around horses.”

“Maybe, but there's not much chance of that in the South Bronx.”

“Well, now you're here in Willows where's there's plenty of chance. This is your open invitation to bring your family by our farm anytime.”

“It's just me and my daughter,” Shaun said.

“How old is she?”

“She's five. She just started kindergarten over at Candyland.”

At the mention of the prestigious local school, Trudy's face darkened but she regained her composure quickly.

“My daughter goes there too, she’s in the sixth grade. Five? What a great age! I have the perfect horse for her, his name is Puddles, my daughter started out with him, he’s perfectly gentle and...”

Trudy caught herself and laughed.

“Look at me Shaun, I chased poor Muffy away from you and now I’m here doing the same thing.”

Shaun smiled.

“I don’t mind at all,” he said, and meant it.

There was something about Trudy, despite her obviously expensive clothes and patrician air that calmed him. He hadn’t been living long among the wealthy, a class that he was now a part of thanks to the massive success of his books and the resulting hit movie, and he felt constantly off balance among them.

“That’s very gracious of you,” Trudy said. “But I think I’ll leave you to gather your thoughts. She turned to go but turned back to look at him.

“They told me you had a way of making a lady feel...at ease. They were right. Good luck with your talk.”

She smiled and walked away before Shaun could ask her what she meant. “They” said? Who were “they”? Before he could speculate any further she was gone.

A moment later footsteps approached and his agent, Sara Diamond, appeared with a Cherry Pepsi.

“I intercepted some teeny bopper back there with this,” she said, handing him the soft drink.

He greeted Sara with a kiss on the cheek, before accepting the soft drink from her.

“I see you met the local gentry,” she said, as Shaun sipped the soda.

“Who, Trudy?”

“Trudy? My God. She even has a snooty name,” Sara said, rolling her eyes.

Shaun said nothing. He loved Sara, if it weren’t for her none of his success would have occurred. She was the only agent out of the fifty or so he’d sent his manuscript to who had bothered to even respond to his queries. Since his success, plenty of other larger, more established agencies had contacted him, trying to woo him away from Sara, but she’d believed in him when no one else did, and that earned her a loyalty that would never waver. She got him, more importantly, she got his work. She believed in it and fought for his manuscripts like a mother tiger defending her cubs.

Shaun took another sip of his soda and glanced at his agent. As usual, her butt was prominent in her tight skirt accentuated by the insanely expensive heels she was addicted to. Her top was

equally as tight and her enhanced cleavage tried its best to bust out of it. She fit in perfectly in New York City where she was another hard-driving fifty-something with dyed roots. Here in Willows, among the tasteful pearls and Prada she stood out like a roach on a wedding cake. She didn't care. Sara had nothing but contempt for the wealthy women of Willows and did absolutely nothing to hide it.

She parted the curtain and looked out onto the growing audience.

“My God, it’s like shark week out there.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Just look at them. Predators in tasteful pearls. All come to get a look at the big, handsome, Bronx import.”

“Sara, please...”

“I don’t see why you couldn’t just stay in the city. If you wanted suburbs you could have moved to Westchester. What’s wrong with Scarsdale? Chappaqua even. There’s plenty of rich people there and I wouldn’t have to drive for three damn hours and pay a hundred dollars in tolls to see you.”

“It’s only an hour from New York and not anywhere close to a hundred bucks in tolls. Stop exaggerating.”

“Whatever. It’s far.”

She took the Pepsi from him and sipped.

“I do appreciate the pool though,” she said.

“Are you saying that you're staying the night and taking advantage of my pool?”

“Fuck no. I’m saying I’m staying the entire weekend and taking advantage of your pool AND your hot tub. Plus, we have some business to go over, so get used to this face buddy, you’re putting me up for a few days.”

Sara smiled at him, and he smiled back. He enjoyed having her around and his daughter Tanya loved her too. He was about to reply to Sara when he heard the microphone come alive and the hostess begin the introduction. He squeezed Sara’s hand, plastered a smile on his face, and walked onto the stage.

T H R E E

“Daddy can I ask you a question?”

Shaun knew this was coming. All through her bath time the normally talkative Tanya had remained silent. He knew her well enough to know something was on her mind, and she would come out with it in her own good time.

“Sure hon, you can ask me anything.”

“Daddy, why doesn’t Sara stay with us all the time?”

“Because this isn’t her home, honey. She lives in New York. C’mon, arms up.”

Tanya held her arms up and Shaun slipped her Hello Kitty nightshirt over her head and onto her tiny frame.

“I know that, Daddy,” the little girl said. She used the tone that all daughters used when they thought their Daddies were being silly. “But she can move here, right? Just like we did.”

“I don’t think so, Princess, her home is in New York. She would miss her friends.”

“But I miss my friends in the Bronx and we moved here anyway. I miss Nylah and Jose and Jordyn and Madison and Caitlyn and Juliette and...”

“I know you do hon, but let’s talk about it tomorrow okay. It’s time to go to sleep.”

Tanya yawned as Shaun put her in her bed and pulled the covers up to her chin. Normally, the let’s talk about it tomorrow ploy would never have worked but she was exhausted. She loved when Sara came over and the two of them had run all over the house playing until they wore themselves out. Shaun had let her stay up a little bit past her bedtime but now she was dead tired and more than ready for sleep but she kept on trying to fight it.

He kissed her on her forehead and stroked her hair.

“Have a good night, I’ll see you in the morning. I love you.”

“I love you too Daddy,” Tanya said, yawning.

Her eyes were already closing as Shaun gently pulled the door halfway closed, making sure, as he always did, that light from the hallway entered her room. He lingered for a moment, feeling a pang of guilt at his daughter’s question about their former home. It’d been almost six months since they’d left the Bronx but Tanya still asked about it from time to time. Hell, her new bedroom was almost as big as their old apartment, he thought, and the school he now attended was only about one thousand times better than her old one, but none of that mattered to a five year old who missed her friends.

After his third novel had hit the bestseller list and was quickly snapped up by Hollywood, his first and his second, which no one had paid any mind to before, quickly followed suit. Much success and even more money had quickly followed and Shaun saw no reason to stay in the Bronx. The idyllic neighborhood he'd grown up in had changed for the worse. Landlords refused to make any repairs to the buildings, the gangs were more and more of a presence every day, and Shaun shuddered every time he passed the school that Tanya would soon attend. As soon as he was able, he looked for a better place to raise his daughter, and had quickly found the small but affluent town of Willows about ninety minutes away in New Jersey.

Shaun walked down the gigantic staircase and into the kitchen where Sara sat at the table drinking from his bottle of twenty-five year old single malt.

“Found the good stuff, I see?”

“No sweetheart, it found me,” she said.

She picked up her glass and took another sip, then poured him a shot and pushed the glass over to him.

“Now it found you too.”

Shaun rarely drank but he picked up the glass and drained the contents, then pushed the glass back over to her for another.

Sara raised an eyebrow in surprise, but poured him another and pushed the glass back.

“You all right?”

He drained the glass again, wincing as the harsh liquid hit his stomach.

“I'm fine.”

“Yea, I can see that.”

Shaun sat down opposite her and poured himself another drink.

“She asked me about the Bronx again. About her friends.”

“Shaun, we've gone through this, you know that...”

“I know Sara, fuck, I know okay! Try and explain that shit to a five year old kid who misses the only home she ever knew.”

“Did I ever tell you why I accepted you as a client?”

He shook his head.

“I did it because I knew you were just like me. You would do whatever the fuck you had to do to make your dreams come true. You came into my office that day with your manuscript in your hand, remember? You wouldn't leave until you put it in my hands personally. You had that fire in your belly. You have ambition! I knew you were going to do big things.”

“I know, but maybe I should have stayed closer to ho...to the Bronx, so she could visit her mother once in a while.”

“Claire lives in her heart, Shaun, and in yours. It’s only her body that’s in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. I break your chops about this Stepford town, but maybe moving here was the right thing to do. Of course, you don’t exactly fit the Brooks Brothers, suburban mold,” she said, smiling.

Shaun laughed. “You’re one to talk, you don’t fit in here either.”

“Maybe. But the difference is I don’t give a fuck. I don’t have to live here and play nice with the Stepford wives.” Sara put her arm around Shaun. “Speaking of Stepford wives,” she whispered in his ear. “How many of them have you...um, you know?”

“Uh...well there is someone I’ve been...”

Sara smiled. “I was kidding, Shaun. I don’t care.”

Shaun held Sara close, and said nothing.

“Is the Princess asleep?” Sara asked.

“Yea, she’s knocked out. Playing with you always wears her out.”

“What a coincidence,” Sara said. “I have the same effect on her father.”

She picked up the bottle of Scotch and poured herself another drink, then took her panties off and put them on the table next to the bottle, then sat on Shaun’s lap and drained her glass. He pulled her skirt up to reveal her bare ass and ran his hands over it as she kissed him. Her kisses tasted like Scotch and spearmint gum and he closed his eyes and let the flavor saturate his tongue. He grabbed her long hair and savagely pulled it back exposing her neck, kissing and licking it. She pulled away from him and took her top off and tossed it over her shoulder. Her skirt followed, and she sat on his lap naked. He buried his face in her breasts, inhaling the scent of her as she fumbled with his zipper, finally exposing his manhood. His phone vibrated madly on the table but he ignored it, sighing as he slipped inside her and she rode him slowly. Shaun held onto her tightly, letting his mind go blank as wave after wave of pleasure overcame him. Soon, he felt the pressure building and without warning his orgasm was upon him and he released inside her as her nails raked his back.

Spent, they held one another tightly as the minutes passed and the sweat cooled on their bodies.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hugh O. Smith is the author of *WILLOWS*, *GREEN EYES AND GOOD HAIR* and the novella *SOCCER MOM*. His short fiction story *SOUTH SOUTH BRONX* appeared in the Zane anthology *Caramel Flava II*. Hugh is a contributor to the writing site TheWriteLife.com

Originally from Jamaica, Hugh credits his Jamaican upbringing and its rich storytelling tradition for his writing inspiration. His website is www.hughosmith.com

For more of Hugh's work, please visit his website HughOSmith.com

Via email - hugh@hughosmith.com

Facebook - [Hugh O. Smith](#)

Twitter - [Hugh O. Smith](#)

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Sweatervest Studio
hugh@sweaterveststudio.com