

The
Tattered
Black Book

Lexy Duck

Chapter 1

Early Morning, October 21, 1951

It was raining hard when we arrived. Mother got out of the car then sheltered me under her umbrella and we hurried into the house.

“Auntie, we’re here!” Mother called from the vestibule as she shook off her wet raincoat. “Where are you, Auntie?” she shouted. She looked toward the kitchen before she turned to face me. She told me to take off my coat while muttering under her breath, “We are running so late, and this weather isn’t helping.”

My parents were taking my two older sisters to see a new exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. My oldest sister saw an advertisement for the exhibit in the newspaper. And she begged Mother to take her because she knew Mother would enjoy the exhibit too.

Mother thought about it then talked to my father and sisters about it. And they decided to make a day of it. They’d have lunch at Schrafft’s after the exhibit then go to the Franklin Institute and catch the afternoon show at the Fels Planetarium. So, for the next week that is all anyone talked about. No one invited me. My middle sister was going because “she knew how to behave,” they said. But I couldn’t go. I wasn’t old enough. I’d get bored and spoil everything, so I had to stay with Auntie.

“I’m right here, Diana. I’m right here,” Auntie said, entering the vestibule.

She stood in the doorway to the vestibule, watching my mother with her shoulders back and her chin up. Her posture was impeccable. She was tall and slender without

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a discernible curve to her frame. She wore a pale green dress dotted with small flowers and accented by a white collar and cuffs that she had starched and ironed until they were perfect. Its skirt flared from her waist and was hemmed below her knees covering her calves. Lyle stockings covered her legs and her feet were laced into highly polished leather Oxfords with two-inch heels.

Her hair had grayed over the years and her dark hazel eyes change color with every movement of her head. They were sometimes green, sometimes brown, and sometimes a combination of both. And the rimless glasses she always wore perched on her majestic straight nose seemed to intensify their color. Her skin was white to the point of being translucent, yet there was a pale, pinkish tint to her cheeks. She cut her hair short, in a bob, and it fell in soft gray and white ringlet curls around her face. And when she smiled her eyes twinkled and she revealed a mouth full of straight white teeth. She was so proud of her teeth because at her age she still had every one of them. She wasn't a beautiful woman, but she had an inner beauty that exuded from her every pore.

"Why such a commotion?" Auntie asked. She removed her apron and leaned down to kiss me. She lifted her head and looked at my mother. "Diana, you are in a huff this morning."

"We are running late. I want the girls to enjoy every minute of this whole day, and I dallied a bit too much this morning," my mother said.

"Now, child, stand up straight and take a deep breath," Auntie said to Mother. "And settle down this instant. It's early yet. You have plenty of time to get everything in." "Why can't I go? I want to go too," I said, stomping my feet.

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“Danielle, I’ve had enough. We’ve been through this a hundred times. Now, I expect you to be good for Auntie. Do you understand me?” I shook my head and said, “Yes, ma’am.” Mother nodded. She smiled and touched my cheek. She turned to Auntie. “We will be back, I’m thinking, sometime around five. Is that okay? I hate to leave you with her. She’s in such a snit this morning.”

“You have a good time, and don’t give us a thought. Danny and I will do fine. We will have supper ready when you get back. Won’t we, Danny?”

I didn’t answer. I scowled, trying to stop my tears as my mother bent down and kissed me. I looked into my mother’s eyes as one small drop escaped from mine. She smiled and pinched my cheek. “Be good for Auntie,” she said. She reached over me, kissed Auntie, then she went out the front door, waving goodbye as she left.

Auntie turned and looked down at me with her arms folded in front of her. “So, you’re in a snit this morning,” she said, smiling.

“That’s what Mother says,” I replied with a tinge of belligerence. “I’m not, though. I wanted to go, that’s all.” I tried to hide my tears so Auntie wouldn’t see them.

“Well, why don’t you read or play with your toys while I finish what I’m doing in the kitchen. Then may . . . be,” Auntie said, stretching out her final word. I looked at her, knowing good things usually would follow. “Then, if you are good, I’ll ask Fireman Harriman to show you the new hook and ladder truck that arrived last week.”

“The Sugar Bowl too? Can we go? Will you take me for ice cream too, please?”

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Auntie chuckled as she always did. She never laughed aloud. Ladies don't laugh like that, she said, so she chuckled her chuckle that always made me laugh. "You can if you may, Danny. I'll be twenty minutes or so. I'll be in the kitchen." She hung my coat on the hook and left the vestibule, walking through the middle room on her way to the kitchen.

I followed her from the vestibule into the large, square middle room. Dark, hand-hewn, peg and groove planked flooring lay under my feet. And a long staircase with dark treads and white risers was against the wall to the right. A bronze man, three feet tall, stood atop the newel post at the end of its banister. The man was holding a big round glass ball over his head. The ball looked like a globe of the world. Auntie called the man Tiffany. Mother called him Atlas.

Straight ahead a large archway led to the formal dining room and the kitchen. To the left of the archway was a massive, carved wood chest. It looked like it was two different chests stacked one on top of the other. The bottom half had three big drawers running the whole length and width of the chest. The top half was much smaller. It had three drawers across the front with two tall glass doors above. Behind the glass doors were some of Auntie's favorite books.

To the left of the chest, in the middle of the wall, was a large window dressed in sheer white panels that reached the floor. An over-stuffed leather rocker was in front of the window and a Tiffany floor lamp stood next to it.

Behind me was a small, narrow, burgundy tufted bench with a short back and narrow seat. Beside the bench were two doorways. The one on the far left led back to the vestibule and the other one opened into a large

formal parlor at the front of the house. That room was used on special occasions for entertaining special guests only. Auntie always referred to it as the front room and I wasn't allowed to play in there.

On the floor in the middle of the room was a fringed round Oriental rug. The light background of the rug against the dark flooring accentuated its intricate pattern and made its colors pop. In the center of the rug was a round oak table surrounded by four straight-backed chairs. Hanging from the ceiling centered above the table was a large fruit bowl Tiffany chandelier. When it was lit its apples, oranges, and grapes sent out rays of colored light like a kaleidoscope.

I put my bag of things on the table and sat down. I was disappointed and a bit disgruntled that I had to stay behind but I knew it was always fun at Auntie's house. I loved going to the firehouse with her. She knew all the firemen. She lived across Federal Street from Engine Company Number 9. Her husband had been a fireman with that company, and he died when my mother was in high school. He was always referred to as Uncle. Auntie and Uncle raised my mother from the time she was three years old. Before Mother came to live with them Auntie said she was a ragamuffin running wild, roaming the streets. She told us lots of stories about Mother, but I didn't want to hear them today. I wanted to do something special too.

I laid my hands on the tabletop one on top of the other and put my chin on them. In my head, I heard Auntie say, "Patience is a virtue." I knew I had to be patient and wait until she finished whatever she was doing.

I opened my bag and rifled through the stuff I brought.

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I looked at one thing after the other before I tossed each one aside. Nothing interested me at all. It was all the same old stuff. And I was bored with it. There had to be something that was new and different to do. I got up and walked around the room.

I ran my hand over the top of the table; then I touched the man on the newel post. I walked to the tufted bench and felt its velvet upholstery. I knelt on the rocker and looked out the window to see if the rain had stopped. Then I stood staring at the old carved chest.

I looked up at glass doors where Auntie kept her books then down to the three drawers under them. The first one was where Auntie kept the paper dolls my sisters loved to play with. And the one in the middle had her collection of matchboxes that I always played with. The last one had the coloring books and crayons all of us used. *Same old stuff*, I thought and lowered my eyes to the bottom half of the chest.

Curiosity gnawed away at me as I stood looking at them. And, the longer I looked the more intriguing the contents of the drawers became. I had to see what was inside. *But could I?* I thought, *Auntie never told me I couldn't*. So, I spread my arms wide and took hold of the knobs of the first big drawer. I held my breath and pulled hard.

The drawer gave way, sliding out of the chest with a force I didn't expect. Its weight knocked me down to the rug, and the drawer landed on top of me. Two linen tablecloths and an old album tumbled onto the floor beside me. I pushed the drawer to the side and sat up. The album had opened to a page with a photograph of a tall, muscular man in uniform, leaning on a fire truck. The man's head was sideways so all I saw of his face was his

profile. *That's Uncle*, I thought, and I turned the page, looking for more pictures of him and the firehouse.

I leafed through the album and saw pictures of women I didn't know who wore high button shoes. And men who wore high starched collared shirts and waistcoats under their jackets. I'd never seen pictures like these before. Some of the images were reproduced on tin and some on thick, board-like photographic paper. I leafed through a couple more pages looking for more photographs of fire trucks. But when I didn't find more, the album didn't interest me. I set it aside and turned my attention to the drawer, trying to figure out how I was going to slide it back in place. I turned the drawer to the side and a tattered, old black book, along with a faded photograph, fell to the rug. I had no idea where they came from until I flipped the drawer over and saw a ripped envelope pasted on the bottom.

I put the drawer down and picked up the photograph. In it I saw an older Indian man standing beside a young Indian man. The two men were with a woman who didn't look Indian at all. I had no idea who they were. The older man wore a fringed shirt and trousers and an elaborate headdress. I assumed he was the Chief because the young man's headdress was smaller, and his clothing was different. The young man was dressed almost the same as the woman. They both wore white robes with wide beaded belts. The belts were tied around their waists so that the ends dangled down the front of their robes. The only difference between them was the garments I saw beneath their robes. He wore white fringed pants and she a full length white fringed dress.

I wondered who they were and why they were dressed like that. I figured it had to be something special. But

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what, and if it was so special why was the photo hidden? Why was the photo with the black book? And why were they stuffed into an envelope that was pasted under the drawer in Auntie's chest? I had no clue, so I began searching the pages of the black book for answers.

I was in third grade, and I read printed books well above my grade level. But the writing in this book was something I'd never seen before. It was handwritten by someone with a fine cursive script. And I didn't understand it.

So, I scanned the pages for anything I could decipher. Some entries had printed letters interspersed so I was able to figure out the words. As I read, I saw what I thought was an Indian name, Mil-tey-wok-en. Sounding the syllables out, I said the name aloud as Auntie came into the room.

"Miltëwakàn? Child, where did you . . ." she stopped, immobilized by the sight of the book in my hands, and stood with her mouth wide open. Several seconds passed. "What did you do?" she asked.

"It fell out. I wanted to see what was in it and it fell out. That's all."

"That book. You have no right." She wrenched the book from my hands and pressed it to her breast. She bent her head down and held the book to her heart as if she were holding on to the most precious thing in life. Tears fell from her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Auntie, I'm sorry." I felt so bad. I didn't know what I had done to make Auntie cry. I scurried around the room, trying to put everything back where I found it. "It's . . . it's when the drawer came out these fell to the floor too. I saw the Indians. I wanted to know . . ." I hesitated before I tried handing Auntie the picture.

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I had never seen Auntie cry before. I felt so helpless. I had no idea what I should do. I watched as she walked to the rocker and fell into it. She laid the book and photograph in her lap and traced the image of the young man with her finger over and over again. After a long while, she raised her head and beckoned for me to come to her side. She stroked my cheek and said, “Well, child, you’ve opened quite a can of worms.” She leaned back in her rocker and closed her eyes. All I could hear was the squeak the rocker made as it moved back and forth until she whispered, “I’ve kept this secret for over sixty years. Maybe that’s long enough.” She opened her eyes and smiled at me. “Don’t look so worried, child. I’m not going to scold you.” She sighed and closed her eyes.

A few more moments passed until she added, “It never occurred to me that after all these years today would be the day.”

I waited until she looked up at me again before I asked, “The day for what, Auntie?”

“Achimwi, Danny. In Lenape, it means to tell a story, one that happened a long time ago. This book is the story of an Indian boy who dared to do what one Caucasian girl’s father deemed unforgivable.”

“Did you know them, Auntie? Did you know the Indians in the picture?”

“Yes. Yes, I did. When I was a girl a Lenape tribe lived not far from here. They still have a large cooperative farm that they own and operate today.”

“Lenape? Is Mil-tey-wok-en Lenape? In the book, it said Mil-tey-wok-en.”

After a long pause, she uttered the name Miltëwakàn and paused again. As she opened her eyes, she turned her head and looked at me. “The Lenape never say his name.

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He was the Chief's son."

"Is that him in the picture?"

"Yes." She paused and, holding the photograph so I could see, she pointed to the young man. "Yes. That's Tey. Everyone we knew called him Tey."

"Is that the Chief, and the lady, Auntie? Who is the lady?"

"Yes. That's Tey's father Aihàm or Chief Golden Eagle. And the lady, Danny, well, the lady is—she's—she's called Charlotte."

"Did you know her, Auntie?"

"Yes, I did, Danny. I knew her very well; seems like a lifetime ago." She paused and as she traced the face of the young man her eyes glazed, and her voice softened. "Chulëntët. That's what Tey called her. It means little bird. She loved watching the mourning doves bill and coo. She thought it was a beautiful thing to see. He said she billed and cooed when she was with him, so he called her his little bird. Chulëntët. And she called him Tey. When they were alone, she called him Tey eholàk. He taught her how to say that. In Lenape, it means Tey, the one I love."

"Their story, Auntie, will you tell me their story?"

"Their story," she said and looked at me for several moments until a warm smile parted her lips. "Oh child, their story, well . . ." She paused, settled into her rocker, and closed her eyes. I sat down cross-legged on the rug in front of her and waited for her to speak.

"Their story begins—" Auntie hesitated as she opened the black book. She leafed through until she found some loose pages tucked in it. I watched her eyes as they skimmed over the pages; then, she smiled.

“Their story, Danny—their story begins in 1883 when a Caucasian girl named Charlotte and a full-blood Lenape Indian boy named Miltēwakàn meet in . . .” She hesitated and closed her eyes for a brief moment. “You see,” she said, “their relationship was forbidden because he was Indian.” She stopped, lowering the pages, and looked at me.

“Do you know anything about the Lenape Indians, Danny?”

I shook my head no. “I never heard of them.”

“Well, you must. Your mother is part Lenape. So are you. Did you know that?”

“Me? Well, no. I knew she was part Indian but not me.”

“Your mother's a quarter and that makes you oneeighth Lenape.”

“Were there lots of Indians living around here when you were a girl, Auntie?”

“Yes, there were. They were known as the Delaware Tribe, Danny, because they lived along the river. That's how they got their name. They were once a part of the great Algonquin Nation. There were tribes in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, too. They were peaceful, friendly tribes and they trusted the settlers to trade equitably. Then they discovered the settlers were duping them. They realized they signed away their valuable lands in exchange for worthless trinkets. And they got angry.”

I sprang to my feet and imitated someone pulling back on a bow to shoot an arrow. “Then they went to war. They scalped them,” I said, “like Cochise and Geronimo did. Didn't they, Auntie? I read about the Indian wars in my encyclopedias.”

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“No. Not like that, Danny,” Auntie said as she took hold of my arms. “Now sit back down and don’t do that again.” “Why, Auntie?”

“Because the Lenape would never do that. Not without provocation. Not without cause or a good reason.”

“But you said the English settlers took their land. Isn’t that a good reason?”

“Well, yes. Actually, it was the reason why the Lenape, and the rest of the Algonquin Nation, sided with the French in 1755. They went to war to get their lands back.

Unfortunately, that war didn’t end well for the Lenape. They were defeated badly.”

“Then they went to Little Big Horn. Didn’t they, Auntie? They fought Custer, didn’t they, Auntie?” “No, child. That happened many, many years later. After the French War came our revolution. We expelled the British from America. Then some brilliant men drew up the Constitution, and a new government was born. And that is the government that makes the laws we live by today. Unfortunately, Danny, some of those laws are good and some are quite bad. One of the worst laws ever enacted was the Indian Removal Act of 1830. That law gave the white man the right to force Indians off their property. Then they relocated them out west on unsettled, barren lands called reservations. I’ve heard a few of the elder tribal members say these ‘reservations’ resembled hell here on earth.”

Auntie paused. She tilted her head, first to one side then the other. She sighed then pursed her lips. “What inhumane things man does to man.” She said and she shuddered. “That law angered the Indians.” She

continued, “And every time it was enforced, they became angrier. And many waged war against the white man.”

“At Little Big Horn?”

“Yes. There too. But some of the Lenape tribes didn’t fight. Some of them never fought in any war. They hadn’t spilled one drop of blood. So those clans had the choice to stay or go to a reservation. If they chose to stay, they had to swear allegiance and abide by our laws. If they did, they could keep their hunting and fishing rights. And they could stay on the lands they once owned. Some refused and were sent to reservations. But some remained. Their settlements were near here and in Pennsylvania, too. Tey’s clan was one of them. They built their own town and still have a lovely community a few miles down the pike from here. In 1883, they were unique because they were citizens of the United States.”

I jerked my head back and stared into Auntie’s eyes. “Wait a minute. Citizens?” I asked.

“Yes. Citizens. Why?” Auntie said, questioning me.

“They were already, weren’t they?” I said, cocking my head to the side and scrunching up my brow.

Auntie nodded and smiled. “Well, Danny,” she said, “according to some they were, but not according to others.”

“I don’t understand. Why, Auntie?”

“Well, child, it’s complicated. It all boiled down to each person’s interpretation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. Countless bitter fights happened because of it. One side believed the amendment meant the Indians were citizens. But the other side vehemently opposed this interpretation. They believed that the amendment didn’t have anything to do with the Indians. They believed that it only gave citizenship to the freed

slaves born here. Well, for years the wars continued, both the physical battles and verbal ones raged. Attorneys filed lawsuits on behalf of the Indians. And advocates went to Congress to fight for their rights. Then, in 1924 the Indians were granted citizenship. That's when Congress finally passed the Snyder Act.

"All the while, hatred for them grew. Those opposed mocked and taunted the Indians. They called them horrible names and used atrocious slurs when referring to them. They couldn't stand the sight of Indians. And, Danny, unfortunately, Charlotte's father was one of those people."

"Her father didn't like them, Auntie, not any of them?"

"Not any of them, Danny, no matter what tribe they came from."

"Why not, Auntie?"

"Because of a horrible incident that took place when Charlotte's father was fourteen. His name was Tobias. And on this particular morning, Tobias was helping friends in a neighboring town. Back then people lived in constant fear of hostile renegade Indians. These Indians sought retribution from the white settlers who they thought stole their lands. So, they pillaged towns and murdered the innocent inhabitants indiscriminately. And on this day, a band of renegades raided the town where Charlotte's father lived. They scalped every white man, woman, and child in the town. And Tobias' whole family was among them. When he returned home, he had to bury his father, mother, two sisters and baby brother. So, from that day until the day he died, he sought revenge. He harbored a hatred for Indians so deep nothing could appease it. That's why he forbade Charlotte from associating with Indians.

And he was adamant about it. She could not associate with anyone who had even a single drop of Indian blood in their lineage. That included the peaceful Lenape.”

“Then how did she meet Tey, Auntie?”

“Charlotte met Tey on their first day in school. They were both seven years old at the time. Tey was allowed to go to the English School because his father was chief. So, his father brought him every day. Then, after Aihàm finished delivering his produce and goods to homes and businesses in town, he came for Tey. And every Tuesday, without fail, he delivered produce to Charlotte’s mother. After school let out for the summer Tey came along with his father to help. So, while Tey’s father conducted business with Charlotte’s mother, Tey and Charlotte were together.”

“Wait a minute. Didn’t you say that was forbidden?”

“Well yes,” she paused. She tilted her head and smiled.

“And, well, no, Danny, because Tobias never knew the children played together. Charlotte’s mother never told him. She didn’t think there was any harm in innocent children playing together. But buying produce from Tey’s father was permissible. You see, Tobias believed Indians were the lowest life form on the evolutionary scale. ‘It is,’ as he often said, ‘the natural order of things for God has ordained they grovel in the dirt for their daily bread.’ He had no problem with Charlotte’s mother doing business with the Indians as long as she kept them in their place. So, every Tuesday she bought produce from Tey’s father. And every Tuesday Tey and Charlotte were together. And as the years passed, the bond between them grew stronger and stronger. They became inseparable, and their relationship blossomed.

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“When Tey was old enough, he made the deliveries alone, and Charlotte knew on Tuesday she would see him, rain or shine. She looked forward to it. They were seventeen now and neither one went to school any longer, so it was hard for them to see each other. They would meet now and again on the sly but in those days, nice girls didn't do things like that. Sometimes they would plan to be at a certain place in town at a certain time. Still, as much as Charlotte wanted to meet him, she was always worried that her father would find out.

“But Tuesdays—they had their Tuesdays—and they looked forward to them. That was the one time they were sure that they had at least a few minutes together. Then baseball started again, and things changed.

“A new baseball league formed, and the Phillies came back to Philadelphia. Neither Charlotte nor Tey cared much for baseball. They only wanted to go to the Phillies game so that they could see each other. It was the perfect excuse. When there was a home game on Sunday, they could spend all afternoon together. So, when Tuesday came, they made plans to meet at the first Phillies game of the season.

“If I remember correctly, that Tuesday was. . .” Auntie opened the black book and turned pages till she found the one she was looking for. “Yes,” she said and smiled, “It was Tuesday, April 10.”

Tuesday, April 10 – Sunday, April 15, 1894

Charlotte Wickham watched through the front window of her house as his wagon pulled to a stop. He

jumped out of the wagon to the ground and walked around to the back. All Charlotte could see was his hat until he rounded the corner at the rear of the wagon. When he came into full view she chuckled with delight.

Tey was a tall, muscular young man with beautiful suntanned skin. He jerked his head sideways, moving his long, silky black hair from covering his black sultry eyes. He waved and smiled at her when he noticed Charlotte in the window. She smiled back and waved as her heart fluttered in her chest. He opened the rear gate and set to work unloading baskets of fruits and vegetables.

“He is the most gorgeous thing I think I have ever seen,” she whispered, forgetting where she was for the moment. The instant the words left her mouth she held her breath and glanced back, looking around the room. She exhaled loudly when she realized her mother wasn’t anywhere in sight and turned her attention to Tey once more.

“Charlotte! Charlotte! Do you hear me, Charlotte?” her mother called from the kitchen.

“Coming, Mother,” she answered, and she turned and walked through the house to the kitchen.

“Hurry, girl. Tey is here and we’ll have lots of canning to do.”

Charlotte stood in the doorway to the kitchen and watched for Tey through the window. When she saw the top of his head, she hurried around the table to hold the door open. He squeezed through the doorway with his arms filled with baskets of vegetables. When their bodies touched, he paused and caressed her with his eyes, then walked into the room and placed the baskets on the table. He turned to face Charlotte again and smiled. A slight

blush colored her cheeks, and she nodded her head in his direction.

“Good morning, Chu – ah, Charlotte,” Tey said as he nodded his head almost in a slight bow. “I brought beautiful asparagus and spinach this morning. It looks like we are going to have good crops this summer.”

“They look delicious, Tey,” Charlotte said. She walked to the table, picked out a stalk of asparagus and lifted it to her nose to smell its earthy freshness. She chuckled and looked at Tey.

“Best we’ve ever grown,” he said, smiling at her.

“They’d better be,” Miriam said. “Or your father will hear from me.”

“Yes, ma’am, Mrs. Wickham. I’ll tell him.”

Miriam Wickham was a robust woman in her early forties. She was inches shorter than her daughter with graying brown hair she tied back in a bun. Her gold wire-rimmed glasses were always askew on her nose and lent a benevolent glint to her sky-blue eyes. She seldom smiled in public because of her chipped front tooth. And she always spoke in a stern, authoritarian manner that put those who didn’t know her on guard.

She reached into her apron pocket and retrieved an envelope. “Make sure you do and give this to him. Tell him I expect nothing but the best. You may go now, Tey.” And she handed him the payment envelope.

“Yes, ma’am,” he said and bowed. He turned and looked at Charlotte. He smiled, touching his tongue to his lips as if he could taste the air around her. “Charlotte, you are going to the game Sunday, aren’t you?”

“Wouldn’t miss it. It’s their first Sunday game this season,” Charlotte’s voice was full of excitement. She knew she’d be spending Sunday with Tey. She turned to

watch her mother. “Everyone will be there, Mother. Everyone.” Miriam looked at her daughter. She studied Charlotte for a moment. Then she turned her attention to the vegetables on the table. “Tey,” Miriam said. “Remind him he owes me one bushel of sweet corn. And a peck of tomatoes from last season. And next week I’ll need strawberries, peas, and whatever is ripe as soon as you pick them.”

“Yes ma’am, Mrs. Wickham. I’ll have them on the wagon. You can choose whatever you like. Will that suit you?”

“That will be fine, Tey. Don’t forget to remind him about the tomatoes and corn.”

“Yes, ma’am, I will.” Tey nodded to Mrs. Wickham and looked at Charlotte as he hid his gloves beside the boxes of vegetables. “See you there, Charlotte.” He nodded his head, turned, and left the kitchen. He walked to the street where his horse and wagon stood waiting. He leaned against his wagon, watching the empty walkway on the side of Charlotte’s house, and waited.

Charlotte sighed and moved toward the vegetable baskets. She touched Tey’s gloves lying on the table. “He forgot his gloves, Mother.” She picked them up and ran through the kitchen door and around her house before her mother could stop her. She hollered to Tey and he smiled at the sound of her voice. As she approached, he stood straight with his shoulders back. He grinned and walked to meet her.

“Your gloves, Tey. I’m sure Mother is wise to this,” she said as she reached him.

“Thanks, my Chulëntët. I guess we’d better think of another way . . .” He hesitated. “Sunday, Charlotte, I can’t wait till Sunday.” He gasped to catch his breath as he

looked into her eyes. Charlotte's almond-shaped, green brown hazel eyes always dazzled him. When she smiled, he fought the insatiable urge to kiss her full red lips. He longed to touch her silky golden-brown hair that fell in soft curls to her shoulders. She was tall and slender and reached his nose when she stood next to him. And her complexion was creamy white, unblemished, and perfect. She was the prettiest thing he had ever seen. He'd been in love with her since grade school.

Charlotte extended her hand, holding the gloves. Tey reached for them. For one moment they clasped their hands, lingering as their eyes locked together.

"Charlotte! Charlotte! Do you hear me, Charlotte!"

"Yes, Mother. I'm coming." She shrugged and smiled at Tey. "Must go. See you Sunday, Tey. That's all I'm thinking of too. I can't wait, so don't be late." She turned and walked along the sidewalk that led to the kitchen.

Miriam Wickham studied her daughter as she walked through the kitchen door.

"That ploy stops now. Do you hear me? Charlotte, I don't like the way you look at that boy. And I don't like the way that boy looks at you. He needs to know his place. Your father will not allow such a relationship. Do you understand me? Your father forbids it. You know that. No fraternizing with Indians. Your father has warned you again and again."

"I know, Mother, I know. But . . . Mother, I intend to be nice to them whether you and Papa like it or not. I don't see any reason to hate them. Tey is free—as much a citizen as me—or you. His people, Mother, God created them—like you and me. They can't all be bad no matter what you say. They can't be. Tey can't help being Lenape any more than I can help being English."

“Charlotte, how many times do I have to tell you to stay away from him? Getting involved with Tey will only bring you grief. Why would you consider relinquishing your station in life to be with him? What's the attraction? What's your infatuation with that boy? Why can't you get interested in one of your own kind? Why don't you like Henry Tomlinson or Theodore Benedict? Nice boys with futures. And Teddy; Charlotte, there's a boy who adores you. He follows you around like a lovesick puppy. Why won't you give them a chance?”

“Because I can't stand them, that's why. They . . . they . . . why do you and Papa think just because you like their families, I should like them too? I can't stand the sight of Henry. He spits at me when he talks and . . . and Teddy, Teddy is so dull. He's nice enough but, Mother, he is as dense as that wall. He . . . Oh, Mama, why won't you understand? I'm nutty about him.” Tears ran down Charlotte's cheeks as she put her face in her hands.

Miriam walked around the kitchen table and took her daughter in her arms. “But I do, Charlotte. I do understand. I was once seventeen, you know, and in love like you.”

Charlotte lifted her head and looked into her mother's eyes. Miriam sighed and whispered, “There was this boy—I thought I would die if I didn't have him.” Miriam hesitated, closing her eyes. For a moment, her face changed. She trembled as if she had remembered something long forgotten. “But, Charlotte,” she said, turning to look into her daughter's eyes. “I knew I had to do what was right; what was expected; what was respectable. Getting involved with an Indian boy is asking for trouble. I don't care how handsome or smart he is or how much in love you are. I like Tey. He's a fine

Lexy Duck

boy, but a relationship with him is forbidden, as forbidden as the fruit in Eden. So, stop this nonsense. Right this minute. We have work to do.”

Miriam stepped away from her daughter and dropped her arms to her skirt, smoothing her apron. “There’s canning to do. I need help putting up these vegetables before your father comes home. Charlotte? Are you listening to me? Charlotte. We’ve got work to do.” Charlotte nodded, and Miriam turned and walked to the sink.

Thoughts flooded Charlotte’s mind as she walked to the sideboard to get an apron. Why, Mother, why must I? Why must I do what’s right, what’s expected, what’s respectable? Why can’t I do what’s right for me? She felt her anger percolating. It’s the same old argument every time. Obey your father’s commands. Do what your father says. But Father says no Indians because they are savages barely tamed from wild beasts. He distrusts Catholics because they are Papists and answer to no one else, not even God. And he refuses to even consider my befriending a Negro or Jew. Charlotte closed her eyes and heard her father’s words echoing in her head. “A good, white skinned, God-fearing Protestant boy who knows the Bible and keeps its laws. That’s what you need Charlotte.” I hate it! she thought and slammed the sideboard drawer shut. How many times have I heard that? But nothing they say satisfies my heart.

* * * * *

On Sunday, the Philadelphia Phillies were playing their first home game in Camden. The stringent

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Pennsylvania Blue Laws forbade many things and playing sporting games of any kind happened to be one of them. So, the city of Camden was happy to accommodate the Phillies and the revenues that the games brought in. The city fathers had the old Camden Merritts' ballpark redesigned for the "New York" style game. They added new seats and renovated the enclosures. They built new concession stands and landscaped the lawns. And as the improvements took shape the excitement grew. When Sunday came, Phillies fans squirmed in their pews in anticipation of the first pitch of the season.

After church services, fans from miles around flocked to the ferry dock. They cheered as each vehicle containing a Phillies player rolled off the ferry. And they walked alongside the carriages all the way to the ballpark. Once at the ballpark, the fans took their seats or spread blankets on the lawns. At 12:45pm the high school band marched onto the field. The band accompanied a local vocalist or glee club as they sang a medley of patriotic songs. Then at 1:00pm the Mayor walked onto the field and took his place midway between the mound and home plate. He gave a short speech before throwing out the first pitch. Finally, the Phillies took the field, and the crowd roared their delight. The umpire behind home plate hollered, "Play ball!" and the game began.

After church Charlotte hurried home to pack her picnic basket to take to the ballpark. When she finished, she joined her mother in the front room to watch for the first carriage to arrive. Charlotte's house was the favorite meeting place. It was closest to the ballpark and had facilities for the horses and buggies.

When the first rig arrived, Charlotte and Miriam went out to greet them. As each rig arrived, the boy escorted his date to the front porch. After he secured his rig in the portico on the side of the house, he joined the girls. Miriam and Charlotte served lemonade and cookies to those waiting. When the last buggy pulled up, Charlotte excused herself. She went to the kitchen to get her basket. A few moments later her mother followed her inside.

“Charlotte, where’s your escort?” her mother asked. “By my count, you are the sixth girl and there are five boys outside. You packed such a large basket I was sure someone I’d approve of would be escorting you, but I see no one. Who are you meeting at the park?”

“Meeting at the park? Mother, Millie never packs en...” Miriam turned her daughter toward her. She lifted Charlotte’s chin so she could stare into her eyes. Charlotte felt her cheeks burn and she turned her head in embarrassment.

“Don’t even try to lie to me, Charlotte. If your father finds out...”

“Finds out what, Mother?” Charlotte asked defiantly. “That he was at the game too? What’s wrong with that? Tell me, Mother, what’s wrong with that?”

Miriam shook her head from side to side. “You are hardheaded and strong-willed. So much like your father.” Miriam took hold of her daughter’s arms and shook her. “I should forbid you to go right now.”

“Are you, Mother? Are you going to forbid me? Go ahead, I’ll find another way. I will see him, Mother. I will. You know I will.”

“Don’t do this, Charlotte. Please listen to me for once in your life. If your father even thinks your escort is Tey, that lad is in deep trouble. He will make Tey’s life

miserable. You know that's true. Don't do this, Charlotte."

"Mama, he won't find out."

"I won't lie to him; not even for you."

"I know that, Mama. I know that." Charlotte kissed her mother on the cheek and started for the front door. "Please don't worry," Charlotte said, turning to face her mother. "It's my friends and me enjoying the ball game and he happens by. That's all, Mama. That's all Papa has to know. Mama, that's all he needs to know."

"I hope you are right. Charlotte, remember that you leave this house a good girl. My daughter, I beg you, come home that way."

Charlotte smiled and opened the front door.

"Charlotte!" her mother shouted.

"Yes, Mother. I understand." She turned and looked at her mother. "I promise. I will." She blew her mother a kiss and joined the group, and they walked from the house toward the ballpark.

* * * * *

Charlotte and her friends found a nice spot on a rise behind third base and spread their blankets. They were a close-knit group who had known each other since first grade. They often kept secrets between themselves that their parents never knew. They never tattled on each other. For them that was unthinkable.

After the group settled in, the girls passed around the delicacies they'd made. While the girls talked about the new dresses and shoes they saw in Philadelphia, the boys discussed the rules for the New York Style of play and who was in the game's starting line-up.

Lexy Duck

The Providence Grays were playing the Phillies. The Grays were a formidable team, but the Phillies fielded a Hall of Fame outfield. The trio, Ed Delahanty, Billy Hamilton, and Sam Thompson were considered the best in the league. Jack Taylor was the starting pitcher and he was a strikeout artist. And Tuck Turner was on the bench for backup if needed. The boys agreed the Phillies couldn't lose.

Charlotte looked around as the top half of the first inning was ending. She worried that Tey wasn't coming to the game. Seeing him was the reason she was there.

When the top half of the inning ended Taylor had held the Grays to one hit. Everyone in the crowd got to their feet and applauded the Phillies as they left the field. Charlotte was adjusting her skirt to stand up with the crowd when she heard a familiar voice. "Afternoon everyone." he said as he offered her his hand. She looked at the hand before she raised her eyes to meet his. Tey smiled. "Afternoon, Charlotte." His smile made his eyes twinkle and he nodded his head. "May I help you up?" He wore corduroy trousers and a woolen over-jacket the same as the other boys.

"Thanks, Tey. Where have you been? Are you hungry?"

"Charlotte," Millie Hertzog, Charlotte's best friend and confidante, said. "Your father just walked in. He's with the Mayor in the VIP seats. Be careful."

Charlotte looked toward home plate at the VIP seats and saw her father. At supper the night before, he'd mentioned that he hadn't accepted the Mayor's invitation.

He said he didn't think that he would be going to the game.

So, seeing him in the VIP seats made her angry.

“Damn,” she said under her breath.

“Easy, Chulëntët,” Tey whispered and a smile curled his lips.

Charlotte looked at him. A blush that started at the base of her neck colored her cheeks. “Yes. But he said he wasn’t coming. He’s spoiled everything.” After a moment she smiled. “Well, at least have a bite to eat, Tey. I made most of this for you anyway, so let’s sit down.”

By the top of the third, the Phillies were leading the Grays by five runs. Tey and Charlotte talked, laughed and held hands as they shared the picnic she had prepared. They rarely glanced at the game. Yet the whole time Tey watched Charlotte's father. Late in the inning, he leaned his head toward Charlotte's. He moved his index finger in the general direction of the VIP seats and whispered in her ear. “Looks like your Papa’s leaving. Once he does, will you take a walk with me?”

Charlotte looked toward the VIP seats and smiled. She turned to Tey. “Where? Any place special?” She laughed. He nodded and turned his attention to the VIP seats. “You think he’ll be back?”

“No. Last night he said he had a meeting about the old Cooper Mansion. They want to renovate it and turn it into a library and make the grounds a park. The city council wants my father to make the deal. Papa has a meeting with the heirs tomorrow so he will be busy for quite a while this afternoon.” Tey got to his feet and offered his hand to Charlotte.

Lexy Duck

“Let’s go see what they’re talking about. The mansion’s down there.” He pointed in the direction of the house. “It’s boarded up, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is but there’s a way to get in.” He turned and looked into her eyes. “It’s safe. No one will see us there. Will you come with me?”

Charlotte nodded in agreement and turned to her friend. “Mil?”

“Don’t worry; I’ll take care of your things. But Charlotte, be careful. And make sure you’re back before the game ends.” she said, motioning toward the group, “None of us want to face your mother if you’re not there. Please.”

“We will be. Thanks, Mil. Thanks, everyone.”

“You’re dotty; you know that, don’t you?”

“Maybe so. But Mil, I can’t be because this feels so right...” Charlotte shrugged. She smiled then turned away. She took a few steps and stopped. She turned back to face her friend and said, “If Papa comes by . . .”

Millie waved at her. “We’ll cover for you. We always do, so don’t worry. And don’t forget to be back before the game ends.”

* * * * *

Tey led Charlotte around the old mansion to a set of French doors in the rear of the house. He took out the knife he always carried tucked in his boot and pried open the door. The house was dreary and dark and smelled musty and old. Tey took hold of Charlotte’s hand and led her through a dank, dark, empty room. They walked through a doorway into a huge, sunlit, elegant front entrance foyer.

The sunshine streamed into the room through clear leaded glass windowpanes. The rectangular panes surrounded the massive mahogany front door on her right. And on her left was a sweeping central staircase with dark stair treads and white risers. It ascended to meet an intricately carved fretwork balcony on the second level. In the center of the foyer stood a large, round mahogany table on an Oriental rug. A huge crystal chandelier dangled from the second-floor ceiling above it.

“We’re going up here,” Tey said and started up the stairs. “Watch the third step. The boards are loose.” He looked at Charlotte and stopped. “Charlotte, are you all right?”

“I don’t think we should do this, Tey. We shouldn’t be here.”

“It will be fine, Charlotte. No one comes by; at least, no one has ever come in that I’ve seen. I come here a lot and, well, I’ve made a place here, a spot that’s ours. I was hoping I could show you. Please come upstairs with me. Please, Charlotte. Nothing’s going to happen. Please.”

Charlotte climbed the stairs and followed him to the second-floor landing. Tey took her by the hand. They walked toward a huge, circular leaded glass window at the end of a long hallway. They turned into a room as they neared the end of the hall. The room was bright and cheerful. There was a flowered down-feather bed and coverlet on the floor with feather pillows placed on it. He turned to Charlotte and shrugged. “What do you think?”

“You did this?”

“Whitewashed the walls and the floor and bought the pillows from Mrs. Havernathy for a penny. Got the

Lexy Duck

feather bed at Woolworth's and brought the blanket from the farm. I stay here a lot. Do you like it, Charlotte?"

"It looks so nice, Tey," she said, turning around, looking at what Tey had done. "Why do you stay here?"

"Nights I work at Esterbrook. They won't let me in the boarding house, and it's too far to walk home so I stay here. There's even running water."

Charlotte chuckled and turned to look at him. There was a hunger, a desire burning in her eyes, and Tey walked as close to her as he could until their bodies touched. Charlotte reached for his face and held it in her hands. She pressed her lips against his. Tey wrapped his arms around her, kissing her on the mouth and the neck as he laid her down on the coverlet. She stroked his hair and touched his cheek as deep thoughts clouded her eyes.

"What, Charlotte? What are you thinking?"

She sat up. "Oh, Tey. What are we going to do? We can't stay here. We can't stay anywhere. Last week when the Macasse's saw us I was sure they'd tell Papa. I want you so much, but we can't keep doing this; we can't. My mama knows, and Papa, Tey, I'm so torn. I don't want to deceive him but he is wrong and I am afraid of what he'll do if he finds out."

"Oh my, Charlotte. I thought . . . I'm sorry. I don't want to pressure you, Charlotte, I love . . ."

"Don't be sorry, Tey. This place; what you did; it's . . . well . . . it's, it's just, I don't think I'm . . . Tey, I don't want to lead you on, to make you think that I would . . ."

He put his finger across her lips. "I don't. Charlotte, I don't. You didn't make me think anything. I want to love you with all my heart. Is that so wrong?" Tey watched her expression for a second before getting to his feet. He walked to the window. He stood there for a few moments.

As he turned toward her, he said, "I guess this is a bad idea, isn't it?"

Charlotte got to her feet and walked to him. "No, it isn't." She took hold of his hands and wrapped his arms around her waist. "Hold me, Tey. Please hold me."

He looked into her eyes and kissed her nose and lips. "We should go back," he whispered. Charlotte nodded, and they left the room.

They walked side by side, glancing at each other, not saying a word until they reached the ballpark. "Charlotte, do . . . do you think we could, ah . . ."

"Yes," she interrupted and turned to look at him. "Yes, we could."

"Would you, Charlotte? You'd meet me there . . . to be together . . . would you?"

"Yes, Tey, I would." A smile started at the corners of both their mouths and spread till they were beaming at each other. The crowd inside the ballpark roared their approval. "I guess we'd better go in," Charlotte said, and they walked to where their friends were watching the game.

It was the bottom of the eighth with one out and two men on, and the Phillies were leading eleven to two. Charlotte and Tey sat side by side, holding hands. They didn't care who won or lost. They only wanted the baseball game to never end.

Chapter 2

Mid-morning, October 21, 1951

Auntie sat up in her chair. “I’d like to stop for a few minutes, Danny. It’s time for a cup of tea and maybe some milk and cookies too. I made a batch of sugar molasses ones this morning. Are you interested?”

“Yes, please. I’m hungry. Mother was in such a rush I couldn’t finish my cereal,” I answered, springing to my feet.

Auntie laid the book and photograph on the table and went into the kitchen. I walked to the window and looked out. It was raining even heavier than it was when I arrived. I thought if it doesn’t stop, we wouldn’t be able to go to the firehouse.

I followed Auntie into the kitchen and sat at the kitchen table, watching her without saying a word. She moved with grace and barely made a sound as she brewed the tea and set a plate of cookies in front of me.

“This morning I baked a rhubarb pie for your mother. She loves rhubarb pie. It’s so seldom your whole family is here for supper I want to make a special meal. So, I’ll need your help getting supper together. How’s that sound?”

She smiled and sat down at the table across from me. She reached across and patted my hand. As she removed her hand from mine, she took hold of the sugar bowl that was in the middle of the table beside the creamer. She removed its lid and scooped one spoonful of sugar from the bowl. She stirred it into her tea and poured a tiny bit of milk from the creamer into the mixture. She lifted the

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cup to her mouth with her pinky finger extended and took a sip.

“Perfect,” she said, replacing the cup in her saucer. She leaned forward and put the lid on the sugar bowl before she again lifted her cup.

“Does that mean you won’t finish the story? About the Indians?”

“No, but what about the firehouse? I thought you wanted to see the new truck.” she said before she took another sip.

“It’s raining too hard to go.”

“And the Sugar Bowl? No ice cream either?” she asked as she placed her cup on its saucer.

“The story, Auntie. I want hear the story.”

“It’s quite long.”

“Please?”

She smiled and nodded her head. “Yes, all right then. Where were we? Do you remember?”

I shook my head yes. “He had shown her the place in the mansion and they went to the ballpark. Auntie? Did the Phillies play in Camden often?”

“Yes. That summer and fall anyway. I don’t remember when the Blue Laws changed.”

“Blue Laws? Who cares?” I interrupted, “I want to know about them. Did they go to the ballpark again?”

“Yes.” She chuckled. “Yes, they did. They went every Sunday that there was a game. Charlotte and her friends met at her house, and together they walked to the park. The group often went places together so Charlotte’s father didn’t suspect a thing. They always picnicked at the same spot, right behind third base. And Tey always wandered over and joined them. Charlotte’s friends knew she and Tey were in love, and they also knew how much

Lexy Duck

Tobias Wickham hated Indians. But friends trust friends to keep secrets, and this secret they kept well.

“So, while they were at the game Charlotte and Tey made no overtures towards each other. They patiently waited until they were sure they were safe from Tobias Wickham’s scrutiny. Then they’d leave the group at the park and walk to the old mansion. On the way, they were careful that no one would suspect they were together. Once inside they knew they were safe from prying eyes and they’d climb the stairs up to their secret place. But Tey

was getting impatient. He wanted an answer to his question so on Sunday, April . . .”

Sunday, April 22 – Sunday, April 29, 1894

As soon as they had entered the room Tey took Charlotte in his arms. His lips pressed against hers as he guided her to the feather bed and laid her down.

“I want to love you, Charlotte. I want to love every inch of you. Let me love you.”

“Tey eholàk. I love you so much. But we can’t. Not yet.”

He covered her lips with his and kissed her nose before rolling to the side. He lay beside her, breathing heavily for a few moments. “I love you, Charlotte. With all my heart I love you. When will you let me love you? Please, make up your mind and tell me when. I need to know. This limbo is impossible.”

“I know, Tey,” she said. “I love you too. But we can’t.

Not yet. Not until we wed.”

“I know. I know. You promised your mother.”

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Charlotte rolled on her side to face him and she touched his cheek.

“It has nothing to do with Mother. It has to do with us, Tey. What if we never can wed? What if it is impossible for us? Did I tell you that Teddy asked Papa if he could court me? I raised a ruckus when Teddy told me. I told Papa to stop imagining any relationship between Teddy Benedict and me, ever. Papa got so angry and said I’d better choose soon, or he would do it for me. He is threatening to send me to Saint Mary’s Convent School. I heard him tell Mother. He said they can’t take me until next fall. He told Mother that it’s unnatural for a female my age not to even consider seeing a boy like Teddy or any of the others. He thinks the Papists—the Papists! As much as he hates them, he thinks the Papists can ‘straighten out my thinking.’ That’s what he told Mother. Tey, he thinks I don’t like boys. He asked Mother if I did. Can you believe that?” She laid her head on his chest close to his shoulder and traced his mouth with her finger.

Tey laughed. “A convent! Don’t like boys? You? If he knew.” Tey rolled on his side and faced her. He furrowed his brow as he studied her face and seemed to be in deep thought for a few minutes. Charlotte looked into his eyes and asked him what was wrong.

“He should know, Charlotte. He should hear it from me. I want to talk to him. Please, don’t stop me. Charlotte, he might listen. I may be able to make him understand. I’ve been thinking about this a lot. I want to walk into his office tomorrow morning. If there are people around, he’ll have . . .”

“Have you arrested!” she interrupted. “That’s what he’ll do! Or he’ll have you thrown in jail! Or kill you on the spot! He hates you! He hates the thought of you. You

know that. He hates all Indians, just hates them. Listen to me, Tey. Please don't do anything rash. There is no talking to him about it. He won't listen. He told me he would kill any savage that dared touch even one hair on my head. And if I ever allowed it, he'd kill me along with him. I thought it bluster but it's not. He's heard something because two nights ago at dinner he asked me about you. He said someone saw us together and he said there were rumors. The look on his face, Tey, sent a chill up my spine. He grabbed my arm so tightly I thought he'd break it. Then Mother stepped between us and was almost cut by the knife he was holding. He shoved her aside and stepped towards me again. He clenched his jaw and said if he found out even one word of the rumor was true, he'd burn your village to the ground. Then he stared directly into my eyes and in a barely audible voice that was so menacing he said, "I'll see you in your grave first, girl!" Oh, Tey, he'll kill us both. I'm sure of it. He frightens me so. He's scared me before but not like this."

"Now don't you see? We have no other choice, do we? We must do it my way."

"I don't know. I'm so torn. How can I betray my father like that? And my mother, Tey, I don't want to hurt her. She's dreamed of giving me a beautiful wedding. I'm her only child; she's poured everything she has into me. Tey, there has to be another way."

"How, Charlotte? Do you have a better plan? How else are we ever going to be together? It works. Next week you will be eighteen, and you won't need his consent. If you want, we can wait until you are sure your father will be out of town for a few days to do it. If he's out of town, maybe we could convince your mother to come. We could ask. There's no harm in asking if that's what you want.

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Chulëntët, it's the only way. No one else will go against your father. Everyone in this town is afraid of him. My plan will work. Charlotte, it will work."

"How can it, Tey? I won't live a lie and I refuse to live in sin."

Tey got on his knees. He sat upon his feet and lifted Charlotte onto her knees, setting her in front of him. He took her face in his hands, and he looked into her eyes. "Charlotte, listen to me. Please listen to me. It works. Even in God's eyes it works. So, hear me out. Because my father is Chief, the state has named him magistrate of our community. He has the authority to do lots of things. He can perform weddings, Charlotte. He is the law by your rules and by ours: the leader, the elder who everyone looks to. I talked to him. He said he would marry us as long as we agree to marry in the ways of my people. He wants his son to have the full rite. I know you consider it heresy, but it's not. It's the only way. And once done, your father cannot change it. Once done we cannot change it. The eyes of God will see us. You and I will be one forever. What does it matter if the rite is Lenape? God is God, Charlotte. He is the same whether yours or mine. He will bless us. I love you. I want to marry you. Isn't that what you want too?"

"Yes, Tey, that's what I want too. I want to marry you more than anything else. But I'm so afraid to do it. I'm so afraid because my father . . . he will find us. No matter where we go, he will find us and . . . and he will destroy you. I won't let that happen. I'd rather give you up than have Father—" Charlotte flung herself into his arms and sobbed.

"Hush, Chulëntët, hush." Tey stroked her hair and rubbed her back until her tears subsided. He kissed her

forehead and said, "There's a game next Sunday. Think about it this week. And give me your answer on Sunday."

Charlotte looked into his eyes and nodded her head yes.

"We'd better go, my little bird. Are you ready?"

Charlotte sighed. "I love you very much."

"I know," he said and smiled at her. "You and I are one. I don't think anything known to man could ever change that." He leaned down, kissed her on the lips and burst out laughing.

"Why are you laughing?"

"It's the strangest thing. A picture of two little children flashed in my mind." He smiled at her and shrugged. As he got to his feet to offer Charlotte his hand, she pulled him down to the bed.

"Tell me. Tell me what you saw, Tey. Was it us?"

"Yes. Yes, it was. Do you remember the first day we met? We were seven years old. We stood across the room from each other. Do you remember?"

"Of course I do. You came and sat next to me on the long wooden bench in old Madam Tiller's room. You kept looking at me out of the corner of your eye. You didn't think I noticed, but I couldn't take my eyes off you either."

"You were so pretty. I finally got the nerve to hold your hand."

"What made you think of that, Tey?"

"From that moment till this and for the rest of my life there will be no one but you, Charlotte. There can never be. Let your father do what he must. He can never take you from me. Only God can do that. Don't fear what we cannot control. As far as I am concerned, whatever time we have together is worth whatever pain it costs. So, marry me, Charlotte. Let's choose a day, and I'll have my

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father make the preparations. Think long and hard this week, and please say yes, Chulëntët.”

* * * * *

All week long Tey worried that Charlotte would say no. Alone at night in the big mansion he practiced what he'd say to convince her otherwise. He wrestled with his feelings and the uncertainty that bedeviled him. But by Friday he settled his thoughts. He made up his mind she'd definitely say yes. Feeling confident, he focused on the questions and problems Charlotte would pose. He wanted to be ready with the answers and solutions that he knew Charlotte needed.

Still, when Sunday's game time came his confidence faded. He hesitated as he approached the group searching for something witty to say. A hint of nervousness was in his voice as he tripped over his first few words before sitting next to her. *How beautiful she is*, he thought as he searched her eyes for some sign. He saw nothing. He reached for her hand. She pulled away and pointed to something in the distance as she spoke. She laughed and talked with everyone, rarely looking in his direction. She didn't say a word after they left the ballpark. Only a few stolen glances passed between them as they walked to the mansion. In silence they climbed the stairs and walked to their secret place. Anxious and agitated, Tey could no longer restrain himself.

“Did you think about it, Charlotte?”

“Of course! Nothing else.”

“And?”

She put her arms around his neck. “God is smiling on us, Tey. Your plan will work.” She leaned in and covered his lips with hers, lingering. They kissed several times

until she moved, kissing her way to his ear. "Of course I will. You knew I would..." she whispered, then hesitated. She moved back so she could look into his eyes. "Didn't you?" she asked.

Hot red streaks spread from his neck to color his cheeks. He shrugged, turned his head to the side and smiled. Charlotte smiled, giggled then laughed. "Did you think otherwise?"

"You ah . . . you had me wondering."

"Me? Why?"

"You were so cold. I thought that. . ."

"Tey. I was afraid . . . with everyone there . . . I was afraid I'd say . . . Oh Tey, I'm sorry if you thought . . . you silly goose," she said as she released her arms from around his neck. She took hold of his hands. She gently pulled him toward the feather bed. "I was afraid I'd tell you there because I'm bursting with good news, Tey. Everything seems to be falling into place. Father took on a new client. He told us all about it at dinner Friday night. He said his new client wants to build a plant in Chicago of all places. But he is having problems with water rights along the shores of Lake Michigan. He needs the water to cool his machinery, but the city of Chicago opposes it. So, Father has to go to Chicago once a week until he resolves all the issues. He said he must meet with the city officials at each step of the planning and building of the plant. Tey, it's an omen! It all works in our favor. He gave Mother a calendar with his travel dates marked on it and I copied it down. Now we can pick the date for our wedding."

They studied each travel date on Tobias' schedule. They counted and recounted the hours between his departures and his returns. Then they eliminated all trips less than two nights long. And they narrowed the

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remaining ones down to three. Out of those three dates they chose Tuesday, July 17, 1894. It was the perfect date, they thought. Tobias would board the train for Chicago in the morning at 9:37. And he would be out of town until the evening of the 20th, arriving home at 6:32pm. They'd have three days together before Tobias came back to town. They decided that Charlotte would see her father off at the station. Then, after his train left, she would take a cab to the clearing outside of town where Tey would be waiting. Aware that if Tobias Wickham got wind of this they would be in grave danger, they set a new plan in motion.

* * * * *

Charlotte walked ahead of Tey all the way back to the ballpark. It was the bottom of the eighth when they arrived. Charlotte stomped to her blanket and flopped down. A few seconds later Tey said his goodbyes and left the park.

Millie looked from Charlotte to Tey then back again as if her head were on a swivel. All the while she waved off the other girls' gestures urging her to find out what happened.

Bewildered she went to Charlotte's side.

"Charlotte?" she whispered.

"What!" Charlotte snarled.

"Calm down. I just thought you might want to talk. That's all."

Charlotte took hold of Millie's hand. "Sorry Mil."

"What happened?" Millie asked, "It might help if you talk about it."

Lexy Duck

“A beast, that’s what he is. I should have listened. Everyone told me.” Charlotte cried out as she put her face in her hands, pretending to weep. “How could I be so wrong?”

Millie put her arms around her friend. “It’s for the best

Char. You know that.”

Charlotte nodded her head and looked up at her friend.

“Yes. You’re probably right.”

* * * * *

Tey and Charlotte were not seen together after Sunday. They met in the old mansion when they could. Every moment of their lives was now cloaked in total secrecy. No one could know what they were up to, not even Charlotte’s mother. But Charlotte was having great difficulty with that. Escaping Miriam’s prying questions created a huge dilemma for her. Confiding in Miriam was inconceivable yet lying to her she found impossible.

Miriam knew Charlotte was sneaking out of the house and suspected she was meeting Tey. She confronted her daughter every chance she got, and she threatened to tell Tobias if she didn’t stop. Still, Charlotte was sure Miriam’s words were simply idle threats. *She knows I’ve been with him, yet she hasn’t said one word. Why would she tell him now?* she thought. So, when next confronted, she wrapped her arms around her mother’s neck. She whispered in her ear, “Mother, you don’t want to know. Not yet. I will tell you everything when it’s time. Please, it’s best you know nothing now, so let me be.” And she ran from the house and did not return for hours.

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Alarmed and frightened for her daughter, Miriam worried night and day. She felt she must stop Charlotte before she made the biggest mistake of her life. She worried that Tobias would hear rumors about Charlotte and suspect something. And she worried that she'd be the one that would let that something slip.

Miriam knew in her heart her child was on a path leading to much sorrow and pain. Still, she had raised her daughter to think for herself. From the time Charlotte was able to utter her first word, Miriam taught her to say what she meant. She told her to never fear speaking her mind. That's the way, she instructed her, she'd get what she wanted, and she should accept nothing less. She pounded into Charlotte's head that women were equal to men. She should never feel as though she wasn't as bright, intelligent, or important as the male of the species. "Someday women will have equal rights," she said. "But it will never happen if women of your generation don't stand together and demand it."

Miriam taught her well. She marveled at the ease at which Charlotte stood her ground and often went toe to toe with her father. But Miriam knew what Charlotte contemplated now was beyond the pale. Charlotte could never change her father's mind about interracial unions. That argument she would never win because his prejudice ran deep; so deep it scarred his very soul.

He harbored a vile hatred and she'd seen its handiwork many times before. She knew it was impossible for him to ever understand Charlotte's feelings. And she knew he would never accept it. Ever! So, Miriam prayed and prayed. She hoped against all hope that what Charlotte was doing wasn't what she was thinking. Still, deep down in her heart, she knew.

