

A romantic couple embracing. The man is shirtless, and the woman is wearing a red spaghetti-strap top. They are in a close, intimate pose, with the man's arms around the woman. The background is dark and out of focus.

A BROTHERS IN LAW NOVEL

*My Way
to You*

A decorative white flourish consisting of symmetrical, flowing lines that curve upwards and outwards, resembling a stylized 'X' or a pair of wings.

LYNDELL WILLIAMS

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MY WAY TO YOU

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My Way to You by Lyndell Williams

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*For all the interracial couples struggling against bigotry and
intolerance to be in each other's arms.*

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[Illegible header information]

SIMON'S CHEST SWELLED as he let the box of books hit the wood floor with a loud thud. He surveyed his new digs; although the Brooklyn Heights apartment was not the same as his mother's sprawling house in Jamaica Estates, it was good to be officially a New Yorker again. He achieved his goals in Boston, but his longing for home nagged him the entire four years he'd resided there. He also couldn't wait to get away from the pain and bad memories.

There wasn't much left to do in the apartment. Save for a few boxes and pictures leaning on the walls where they were to be hung, he was pretty much set. All the furniture was in place, the handiwork of his mother, who oversaw the deliveries like a drill sergeant. Alice Young had gotten straight to business. She made certain that her son's new abode was as comfortable and organized as his childhood home. Getting his bearings at the new law firm that recruited him after his first summer internship was challenging, and the last thing he had time for was to supervise painters and handymen. *I have to do something nice for her as soon as things settle down at work.*

He reached for the buzzing phone on the counter. “Hi, Ma.” Simon pressed the phone against his ear and began stocking small jars from a bag on the floor into the empty refrigerator.

"Hello, Simon. Are you all settled?"

“Yes.”

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“Did you put the kimchi in the refrigerator?”

“I did.” The last jar rattled against the rest. “Thanks for making them for me.” He closed the refrigerator and rubbed his growling stomach. As good as his mother’s *kimchi* was, he had a hankering for something else.

“Of course. Let me know when you want more.”

“Will do.”

“I packed the rest of your things here. I can have them mailed to you.”

“No, Ma. That’s okay.” Simon grabbed the keys off the counter and shoved his wallet into his jacket pocket. “I’ll get them the next time I come out there.”

“I’ll leave them in your old room then. Have you eaten?”

“That sounds good.” Simon stood in front of the entryway mirror, combing his fingers through the top of his hair, still amazed at how intuitive his mother was. “I’m going to get somethin’ now.” The soft click of the apartment door’s lock echoed down the hall as he headed for the elevators.

“Eating out? You know you can’t live like that, Simon. It’s not healthy.”

“I know, Ma. Don’t worry. I’ll go grocery shopping tomorrow. Lots of fruits and vegetables. I promise.” He endured his mother’s subsequent lecture about proper nutrition all the way to the subway platform, injecting the requisite yeses, confirming that he was dutifully listening. “Ma, I gotta go. I’ll call you tomorrow?”

“I’m sure you will.” Alice’s tone conveyed the perfect combination of sarcasm and warning. *“But I’ll be busy getting ready for my trip, so we can talk when I get back. Love you.”*

“Okay, ma. Love you too,” Simon shouted into the phone, unsure if she heard him over the screeching sound of the train.



Simon weaved through the rows of tables, then sat and inhaled the glorious mixture of aromas wafting around him. He typed *I’m here, man* before setting down his phone. The tapestry of

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people testified to the popularity of Sylvia's Tiny Kitchen and proved that it was worth the subway ride from Brooklyn to dine. Sitting in the middle of the soul food restaurant reminded him of days spent travelling on the train across the city with his dad, who was a hard-core fan of the cuisine and passed it onto his son.

He raised his hand to catch the attention of a waiter. After weeks of newness, it was finally time to enjoy something that solidified that he was truly home. Just like the traditional Korean and Irish dishes served at the Young residence, the steaming plates at the Harlem landmark represented a staple of his life. He scanned the menu to see if the catfish was still available.

"Welcome to Sylvia's. What would you like today?"

He opened his mouth to order, but was interrupted by a voice from across the crowded restaurant. "Simon!" He turned, and his gaze fell upon two men weaving towards him. The tall, muscular man led the pair. His eyes flashed recognition; the corners of his mouth pulled back exposing polished white teeth. Simon bolted out of his seat and gripped the broad forearm.

"Hey, man." Familiarity fueled Simon's excitement at the sight of his best friend Marcus Kent. He wrapped his free arm around the brawny man, giving as firm a squeeze as he got. Marcus stepped back, keeping one hand on Simon's shoulder.

"You look good, man. Did you have an easy time findin' the place?" Marcus's hand came down on Simon's shoulder in a few hearty pats.

"Please," Simon gave Marcus's bicep a playful jab, "I've been coming to Sylvia's since I was a kid. You're the Long Islander.

Marcus belted out a baritone laugh. "True. I hope you don't mind, I brought my intern." Marcus slapped the back of the young man next to him, whose head towered over even a man of his stature. "Simon, meet Jeremy Stacks. He's pursuing a future in law as well."

"Absolutely."

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The waitress cleared her throat. Simon looked over to the woman standing, tapping her order pad. “So, that’ll be three?” Her tapping moved from her pad to the floor with her foot.

“Yes, thank you,” said Simon with a sheepish smile. The men sat and quickly ordered before returning to their conversation. Simon read his phone.

Missy: *How about we chill tonight?*

Simon: *Sure, I can’t come until later tonight though.*

Missy: *I’ll wait up.*

He smiled at the sexy picture that appeared on his phone.

“So,” Marcus leaned back in his chair and smirked, “you still have the women fallin’ all over you and that sexy Asian game of yours?”

Simon let out a soft chuckle. “I do aight. How’s Toni?”

“She’s good. Her practice is thriving. Now, let me guess, you’re at that big law firm that was sniffing after you?”

“Pretty much. As I recall, the headhunters were chasing after you big time too. Did you choose a firm?”

Marcus shook his head. “Nah, man. I decided against churning in the legal machine. I launched a small, multi-service not-for-profit. I want to make a direct difference for folks catching hell around here.”

The waitress returned with drinks and bread. Simon bit pensively into a roll. “You always said you wanted to get involved in community organizing. I just thought it would be after you established a legal career.”

Marcus took a long drink from his glass before setting it down. “Well, there are more than enough lawyers ready to work for rich folks. It’s the poor who struggle for justice. Now I’m helping them with that struggle.” The playfulness vanished from his eyes. “I remember when that was important to you as well.”

Simon shifted in his chair. Marcus always shot straight from the hip and made no apologies. His former college roommate was particularly careful at making sure he didn’t stray too far from his humanitarian commitments while he pursued success. “Yeah,

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it still is.” The waitress placed the hot plates on the table. Simon reached for the pepper and sprinkled his catfish. “I haven’t forgotten how important it is to give back. Didn’t I always volunteer with you?”

Marcus grinned while he cut into the chicken in front of him. “Indeed, you did.” He lifted the forkful of food and pointed it at Simon. “You stayed committed to whatever needed to be done. So, what are you doing to give back now?” The fork disappeared into his mouth.

A pang of guilt grew in Simon’s stomach. “I haven’t found an endeavor of interest,” he said before putting his glass to his mouth.

Marcus’ brows shot up. “Really? I find that surprising that no organization wants to avail themselves of someone as shrewd as you.”

“Yeah, go figure.” Simon chomped down on his fish. He shifted his gaze to Marcus’s young companion, who he’d forgotten was even there. *Does he even talk? What am I gonna do? With this busy schedule of mine, I never considered volunteering anywhere, but Marc is right.* “Maybe,” Simon raised his eyebrows at Marcus, “there’s something I can do for you?”

Marcus lifted the napkin from his lap and wiped his fingers. “We do offer free legal services. Would you be interested in volunteering?”

“Definitely. Where are you located?”

A card appeared from Marcus’ shirt pocket. “Harlem.” He dropped it on the table next to Simon’s plate. “We’ve a committee that meets once a month to strategize about initiatives and funding. I think it would be a good idea for you to come and sit.”

“Sounds good.” Pulling the wallet from his jacket, Simon shoved Marcus’ card in before retrieving his. “But I’ll need two or three weeks before committing to anything. I’m still gettin’ my bearings at work.”

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Marcus flipped Simon's card front and back before placing it into his shirt pocket. "Uh-huh." He jabbed at his plate until his fork was refilled. "You were always organized and quick on the uptake. Unless things have changed, I'm sure you already have your bearings." The last mound of food disappeared and Marcus signaled for the check.

Simon rubbed the back of his neck. Marcus made it obvious that he would not be put off and expected a shorter time frame for his friend to join him in the cause. "One week?"

Marcus slammed his hand on the table as he rose, rattling the plates and glasses. "Great. I knew you still had it in you. We're meeting this Thursday at 7:30."

"That's not one week."

"The address is on the card." Marcus thanked the waitress and grabbed the check.

"No, Marcus. I got it." Simon attempted to take the small slip from his friend, but it was moved out of his reach.

Marcus surveyed the check, then pulled a bunch of bills from his wallet. "Too late," he smiled at the waitress, "Keep the change."

The waitress's eyes lit at Marcus's generosity. "Thank you, sir." Enjoy your evening."

Stuffing his wallet into his back pocket, He looked down at Simon with a smug grin. "I plan to."

Jeremy reminded the men of his existence by rising and standing behind Marcus. "It was nice meeting you," the young man said pushing his glasses up his nose. Was this the future of law? His face was so smooth, it indicated that shaving wasn't even necessary.

"So, Simon. I'll see you on Thursday?"

Simon raised his hands in defeat. "I'll put it on my schedule."

Marcus clamped down onto the back of his neck like when they were in college. "I knew you would. Great seein' you, bro." The two men weaved their way out of the restaurant and disappeared into the street.

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Simon asked the waitress to put the rest of his meal in a to-go container, and headed for the subway. A series of notifications—each containing an image of his *friend* in fewer clothes—reminded him that he wasn't going straight home to Brooklyn and needed to take different train.



The following morning, Simon strode through the maze of cubicles. His black leather backpack flung behind his back, he navigated the twists and turns while balancing not one but two coffee cups. It only took a couple of weeks for him to devise a system to efficiently navigate through the entire building, which involved walking past the right offices while avoiding others.

“Good morning, Agnes,” Simon smiled at the executive assistant for one of the senior partners, tilting his coffee in celebration of the day.

“Morning, Simon.”

The matronly-dressed woman's smile revealed a set of highly-polished dentures. Simon was always generally cordial to people, but he made it a special point to charm the firm's staff. It never hurt to have them on your side.

He turned a corner. His assistant, Corella was working at her desk.

“Good morning, Corella.” His face beaming like a school boy with an apple for the teacher, Simon presented a coffee cup to her. “Two creams, no sugar.”

Corella pulled off her reading glasses. “Thanks, Simon.”

He dipped his head. “You're welcome.” He stood in front of the desk, immobile, while his assistant checked out the caffeinated morning libations.

Corella's nose crinkled a little. She sniffed, carefully took one sip and smiled “You didn't have to.”

Simon turned on his heel. “But I did.” He strutted into his office.

She was the best assistant the firm had to offer. Years working with attorneys from associates to senior partners not only meant

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she had tons of experience but knowledge the firm's inner workings. She knew where the bodies were buried. As a result, many feared her, but more so, they respected her.

She was valued enough at the firm that she could choose her own assignment. Simon was fortunate. Corella had tired of working with the last attorney and was looking to team up with another when he started. She selected him after a 10-minute conversation in his office. She was smart, organized, and efficient, and he did his best to make sure that she knew he appreciated her hard work.

Simon sat at his office desk. It was a small but respectable workspace. One wall hosted built in shelves and a closet, where he kept extra clothes. His L-shaped desk held his computer and a few drawers. On one side of the desk was his chair and opposite it was another for clients. It was a lot better than being stuck in the maze of cubicles, and there was a huge window that let in plenty of light.

Simon hung his jacket on the back of the door, sat at his desk and rolled his sleeves.

"Simon?" Corella called from the doorway, concentrating on her tablet screen.

"Yes, Corella?"

Without looking, she glided to the front of his desk. "I have an email you sent me yesterday. You need to clear part of your afternoon schedule one Thursday a month?"

Oh boy, Marcus. Simon scratched his head and swung his chair back and forth. "Yes, I'm going to be doing some pro-bono work for an organization in Harlem."

Corella's groomed brows drew close together as she looked up from her tablet.

"It's important. I just need to switch my schedule around to accommodate leaving an hour early on some Thursdays."

"Okay." Corella returned her attention to the screen. "That can be arranged. What's the name of the organization?"

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Simon stood. He pulled out and searched his wallet. Retrieving Marcus's card, he held it in front of himself and tilted his head.

"May I see the card?" Corella held out her hand. "I'd like to enter the information in your contacts."

"Sure." Simon smiled and took a deep breath. "Thanks."

"You're welcome." Corella slowly disappeared behind the closing office door.

Simon reclined in his chair and stared at the ceiling. *Good thing Corella reminded me about Thursday. There's no way I would ever flake on Marcus—not after everything he's done for me. Besides, it's high-time I started giving back again.*

He punched the numbers on the desk phone to cease the red light flashing on it. He stiffened at the high-pitched saccharine voice in the first voicemail.

Hi, Simon. He peered at the wall hanging of a black figure brandishing a swivel chair like a sword. *I'm in New York, and I was hoping we could catch up.*

A knot twisted at the base of his neck and his heart raced out of control. Shutting his eyes, he hit the erase key and inhaled until the beating settled.

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IS TONI AWARE OF THIS LITTLE MAN-CRUSH you got goin' on?" Regina couldn't hold her tongue any longer. She'd watched her brother patter around for the last 10 minutes talking about the mythical Simon Young. "I mean, really, should we sacrifice a virgin or somethin' to commemorate his arrival?"

“Ha, you really think you’re a riot?”

Reclining in big brother's office chair, Regina fluffed her coils and smirked. "Yup."

“Look, Gina, Simon and I weren’t only college roommates, we had each other’s backs when it came to dealing with some of those white, privileged assholes around campus.” He pulled freshly-printed paper out of the machine. “*And* he and I did some pretty significant things together in the surrounding area.” Marcus motioned to the wall behind him, where a multitude of award plaques he’d earned while in law school hung. Regina briefly skimmed the wall before inspecting her nails for any manicure flaws. “He’s smart and dedicated. He may have forgotten for a minute, but now he’s here, and we’re damn lucky to have him.”

Regina snickered and continued needling her brother, a skill she'd honed over the years. "Yeah, yeah. I'm sure he walks on water and all that." She glanced at the clock next to the Afrocentric poster of Martin Luther King, Barack Obama, Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela and Bob Marley on the wall. She was irked at the reminder of how sexist pro-black culture can be

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but decided to continue to test Marcus' patience than go into a debate about the cross-cultural erasure of black women. "So, where's your wunderkind? I thought he was on time all the time?"

Marcus caught his bottom lip between his teeth and looked down at his watch. "He'll be here. Let's just go wait in the conference room. Trust me. You're gonna be impressed."



Simon hiked the strap of his black backpack further up his shoulder and raced up the subway steps. He zigged-zagged between pedestrians at a hurried pace, stopping only to scan the bustling street, searching for the "large red brick building" Marcus described. He glanced down at the GPS on his phone and let out a sigh. The center wasn't far, but even at break-neck speed, he was going to be at least 3-5 minutes late. *I'm gonna to have to leave work even earlier and make up the time.*

He saw the same numbers on the business card Marcus gave him brandished on the brick building across the street. He switched his gaze between it and the little red man on the traffic light. The speed of the cars made jaywalking a hazardous endeavor. Simon's constructed apologies in his mind with each flash of the red figure until its white counterpart appeared. He raced across the lanes. Entering the glass door, he was greeted by a young woman with a bright smile.

"Hello. How can I help you?"

"Hi, I'm here to meet with Marcus Kent. My name is Simon Young."

The receptionist gave him a once over, wheeled her chair closer to the desk and took the phone receiver in her hand. "Sign in please." She flipped her long curly hair and pointed to a clipboard with a flirty smile. "I'll let him know that you're here."

"Thank you." His backpack made a quiet thump on the floor. Instead of exploring the woman's obvious interest like he normally would, Simon paced the small welcome area lined with resin chairs along the windowed walls and focused on calming

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his panting. It was nothing like the large complex maze of floors that comprised the massive law firm, but it was someplace that offered him a chance to do more than acquisitions.

It's going to be great working with Marcus again. They'd managed to get their degrees and pass the bar while helping the high-needs communities surrounding their law school. They founded two after-school programs in Boston that were still operating after their own departures. They assisted legal teams that helped liberate at least five unjustly imprisoned people. It was all fulfilling.

"You can go in, sir." The receptionist twirled a curl around her finger. "Just go down the corridor to the conference room. It's the last door."

"Thanks." The conference room was already full of people standing and chatting in clusters as well as a few who sat sipping from paper coffee cups. Simon searched for Marcus' familiar face. He noticed the young man from the restaurant, whose head loomed over everyone else's. *There's—what's his name—Jeremy. The way he stuck to Marcus at the restaurant, he has to be in here somewhere.* Marcus's wave caught Simon's attention.

"Okay everyone," called out over the chatter Marcus, "please sit. We're going to get started."

People began to circle the long conference table to sit in what appeared to be predetermined seating. The air rushed out of Simon from another firm handshake and hug from Marcus, who then turned his friend to face the seated crowd.

"Everyone, this is Simon Young. He's agreed to do some pro bono work for us. He is a brilliant attorney. I thought he would be a good addition to the advisory board."

A chorus of welcomes filled the room. Simon adjusted the strap of his backpack and stood in a confident stance. "Hello, everyone. It's great to be here, and I'm excited at the prospect of engaging in some substantial work with all of you." He noticed that Jeremy was not yet seated. The young man strolled around the table, landing his lanky frame next to an extremely stunning

woman. Her heart-shaped face framed full lips, a Nubian nose and sparkling upturned russet eyes. An explosion of black coils crowned her head, and her flawless brown skin glowed.

“Just grab a seat anywhere, man. You can introduce yourself to everyone after the meeting.” Marcus took his place at the head of the conference table, right next to the woman, who cast a radiant smile at him.

To his chagrin, Simon realized that the only seat available was at the far end of the conference table, probably the furthest from the beauty. He walked around the room, unable to keep from returning his stare to her, making it necessary to issue multiple apologies as he hit the backs of chairs along the way. His awkwardness caught her attention along with everyone else’s. Her eyes sparkled with amusement, and she pursed her full lips as she and the rest of the room watched him make his way to his seat. *Great. I’ve managed to look like a complete idiot.* He glanced at Marcus, who stared at him with a cocked eyebrow.

Marcus squinted at the sheepish grin Simon offered. “Okay, I was recently made aware of a new grant opportunity.” He flipped through a stack of papers in front of him as he spoke. Simon struggled to keep track of what was being said. His attention remained doggedly stuck on the woman. She sat regally poised in the chair, taking notes as Marcus talked, drumming her pen on the pad at pauses.

“It’s highly competitive, but I think we have a shot at getting it if the proposal is really tight with a dynamic narrative. Regina, your flair for prose will be a great asset.”

So, that’s her name? How appropriate. I heard it before somewhere but where? Get a grip. She’s not the first pretty face you’ve seen.

“Maybe you can lead the proposal writing team?” Marcus stretched his arm, passing the grant description papers towards Regina.

She ceased drumming her pen, took the papers and scanned them. The pensiveness on her face made her even more striking,

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if that was possible. Simon chided himself inwardly. Why was she having such a strange effect on him?

“I can contribute some content, but there are a ton of specifics that require a level of technical writing that is beyond the scope of my abilities. I’ll need someone with the right skill sets to execute this proposal.”

“I think I can help with that, Regina.” Confidence burgeoned in Simon’s chest. He was quite proficient at grant writing. He had a chance to redeem himself from his earlier buffoonery.

Regina shot him a wary gaze across the table. “Are you sure you want to jump into a project like this on your first day volunteering? It can be overwhelming and requires a lot of commitment.”

Simon sat straight and smoothed his tie. *She may be gorgeous, but I’m not gonna sit here and let anyone impugn my abilities.* He opened his mouth.

“This is definitely in Simon’s wheelhouse, Gina,” Marcus interjected. She fixed her doubtful stare on him; her tapping resumed and quickened in cadence. “It’s similar to proposals we completed to fund projects in Boston, so his expertise on the team will raise the potential of us getting it.” The beating sound dominated the room. It was obvious that no one would dare impose their opinion on the duo staring each other down as if they were about to draw guns at high noon.

“Fine.” The grant description papers glided across the shiny wood. Simon stopped them before they flew off the table. Her accuracy at aiming the papers so they reached him without breaking her stare-off with Marcus was admirable.

“But you know how important this funding is,” said Regina with undertones of warning.

“I do, and I’ve every confidence that you two will produce exactly what we need.”

Simon raised an eyebrow. The strain in Marcus’ voice was unusual. He was not one to tolerate being traversed, especially when he was in charge. It was surprising how he handled Regina

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challenging his judgement with so much reserve. She was indeed an intriguing woman.

Simon scanned the room. Some people continued to watch the showdown while others shot him a sympathetic glance.

Jeremy's long fingers settled on Regina's arm; she turned her head as he leaned in to whisper quietly in her ear. An irrational pang of jealousy poked at Simon.

"I can help with the content edits and proofing, Marcus." Jeremy's crackling voice grated Simon's nerves even more than before.

"Looks like you've got your team, Gina." Marcus lunged from his chair, ratcheting the tense atmosphere. "Email me your timeline, and let me know when you want to organize a review panel."

While the board members were clearly on pins and needles, Regina seemed unfazed by Marcus's imposing physique towering over her. "Of course. Will there be a dining budget, or do you just want us to pick a few leaves from the trees out front?"

Marcus's lips formed a thin line. "Submit the receipts to Graciella," he quipped before heading towards the door. It wasn't until it closed behind him that anyone dared move and the room quickly filled with voices as people began emptying into the hall.

Simon set his backpack on the table and began to stuff the papers into it when a voice came from behind him. "Hello, Simon." He turned; a short, balding man stood with an outstretched hand. "Harold Reynolds, it's nice to have you on board." Simon peered over the man's head and spotted Regina hooking her handbag in the crook of her arm and walking behind the row of chairs. She stopped briefly to respond to someone while eyeing her phone and the doorway. She passed the two men, not even acknowledging their existence.

Simon grasped Harold Whoever's forearm and shook. "Thanks. Will you excuse me?" He turned and made a beeline to

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Regina without waiting for a reply. “Regina?” She stopped and waited for him to reach her.

“So, you’re Simon?” She crossed her arms and sized him up. “I have to say you’re not at all like I pictured,” she jibed while resuming her progress out the door.

“You know me?” He followed her, struggling to respectfully refrain from ogling her plump, round bottom as she walked in front of him; it was tough. *Eyes up! The last thing you want is to come off as a lecherous creep on top of being a dork.* He quickened his pace and walked beside her as soon as they were out of the corridor.

“My brother has mentioned you quite a bit over the years, more so in the past week. He’s been excited about you joining the advisory committee.”

Simon held his forehead. *That’s where I’ve heard the name.* “You’re Marc’s little sister.”

“Younger sister. I guess he hasn’t mentioned me to you nearly as much.” Simon gently caught her arm. They stood in the middle of the waiting room, eye to eye, with people buzzing around them.

“No, he has. You’re a writer. You work at a newspaper.” Simon stared at the ceiling as if the name he was searching for was there. “The—”

“Not any more. I’ve my own blog now.”

His gaze returned to her face. “That sounds great.”

“It is.” Regina tilted her head as she smiled. She put a hand on her hip. “Marc tells me you work for a large firm.”

Simon stuffed his hands into his coat pocket and rocked on his heels. “Yeah. I just started.”

“So, this,” Regina said waving her arm, “must be a stark difference.”

“It is, but this,” Simon mimicked her motion, “is nothing new to me. I’ve done a lot of work in underprivileged communities.”

Regina’s eyebrow shot towards the ceiling. “Slumming?”

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“Not as far as I’m concerned. I like to help people.” Simon grinned. “Are you slumming? I’ve been to your parents’ home. You were definitely not brought up in the hood.”

Regina opened her mouth and then clamped it shut “That’s a fair enough observation, Young.” She pulled her phone from her handbag and slid one manicured finger across the screen as she moved closer to him. “Why don’t you drop call my number so we can arrange for our first meeting?”

A flowery smell from her springy coils wafted into his nose and fogged his mind. He shook his head and retrieved his phone from his suit pocket. No way he wanted to be caught off guard around this woman again. “Sure.” Simon took a step towards Regina, accidentally bumping his arm against hers. He felt the warmth rushing up his neck. “When would you like to start?”

“Well, we still need to coordinate with J.”

“J?”

“Jeremy.”

“Oh, yes. Jeremy.” Simon plugged the numbers on Regina’s screen into his phone. Their hands brushed, sending an electric charge through his arm and body. The goosebumps he spied bursting on Regina’s arm made him want to see where they ended.

He called the new number. Regina stared at him. “What?” He flashed a self-assured smile.

“You’re all red.”

“Am I?”

“Yeah.” Regina leaned to one side of his head. “Especially around your ears.”

Simon rubbed an earlobe and grunted. “I guess the heat here is a little too high.”

“Yeah, I bet that’s it. You know,” Regina said with a mischievous glint in her eyes, “we won’t really need Jeremy’s help until we’re at the editing stage, and having to arrange schedules with one less person will make things easier.”

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As if on cue, Simon noticed Jeremy emerging from Marcus's office down the hall. *Oh, not now, man.* "I agree. Why take him away from Marcus until it's absolutely necessary?" He pressed his palm against Regina's upper back and guided her towards the door. "I'm sure the two of us can get things done."

Not wanting to take a chance that Jeremy would find them, he guided her a little down the block before waving for a cab. "How about dinner?"

"We could stay here and order in. Marcus gave us a food budget."

He saw Jeremy peering over the heads of the passersby, searching up and down the street. *Come on. What, did he put a GPS implant in her or somethin'?* To his relief, a cab stopped in front of them just as they were spotted by Stretch. "I would prefer a nice restaurant." Simon opened the door. "We can make it a workin' dinner. I know a great place."

"That sounds good."

"Regina!" The sound of Jeremy's bellow drifted into the cab just as Simon slammed it shut.

"Is someone calling me?"

"I didn't hear anything." Simon threw an arm over the back of cab seat. "What's up man," he said to the driver while tapping the headrest, "let's hit it." He watched with satisfaction as Jeremy's tall body shrunk in the distance. There was no shaking his attraction to this woman, and he was going to do whatever it took to explore it further—without a third wheel.

His gut flipped when the traffic light switched from red to yellow. *There's no way he'll catch up to us.*

"Regina!" Her name seeped through the windows. The couple gazed out the back in unison. Simon clenched his fist. There Jeremy was, running towards them.

"Look, there's J." Regina sighed. She waved in the back window.

Jeremy reached and banged on the trunk of the cab after only a few strides of his long legs.

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You've gotta be kidding me. Simon's blank stare hid the irritation stirring inside him.

Jeremy approached the passenger door. Simon rolled down the window just a crack.

"Hey guys. Where're you goin'," Jeremy panted. Beads of sweat dripped down the sides of his head and disappeared into the wetness of his dress shirt.

"Dinner."

"Are you talking about the grant proposal? I can join you." Before Simon could tell him just where he could go, Jeremy jumped into the cab's front passenger seat.

Simon read the text message that chimed on his phone as the cab moved past the greenlight.

Regina: Some other time ☺?

He glanced over to her and was greeted by sympathetic eyes. He then peered at Jeremy's head bobbing in the front seat.

Note to self. Use faster cabs.

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SIMON LEANED IN THE HIGH-BACK executive chair at the head of the boardroom table, glowering at Jeremy, who stood over a seated Regina. She was so deeply engrossed in proofing the grant proposal draft that she didn't even notice how closely Jeremy was positioned next to her, but it wasn't lost on him.

For the past three weeks, Simon spent every free moment working with her and the ever-present intern. Regina's schedule clashed with his, so finding time to do anything other than research and writing the proposal was impossible. He'd hoped that there would be at least one time that he could meet with just her, but unlike the two of them, Jeremy's calendar was overly-accommodating.

Uptown or downtown, neither was an issue for the young man. His class schedule didn't even present a problem, and no matter how hard Simon tried, Jeremy managed to be the one sitting next to Regina. If he was late, the urchin would already be there. If he was early or on time, the pest arrived with her. He would have to respect the boy's game if Lurch wasn't such a thorn in his side.

His elbow resting on the arm of the chair, Simon hid his clenched teeth behind his hand, watching the pesky cock blocker gaze at Regina with puppy dog eyes. Of course, she didn't see his

game. To her, he was “J,” the office innocent with the boyish grin. Everything he did in her eyes was harmless or an accident, but he wasn’t fooling Simon. Jeremy was always hovering, and enough was enough.

While he managed to keep his upper body composed, his left leg shook incessantly.

“Everything okay?” Regina caught Simon’s attention and then cast her gaze down to his shaking leg.

Simon stilled his leg with his hand. “Dandy.” He bolted upright in his seat and folded his outstretched hands on the table. “We’ve proofread the proposal twice already. I think it’s time to call for a review committee.”

Regina stiffened her back and returned to examining the proposal. “If you’re in a hurry, you can leave. J and I can handle this.”

Jeremy gloated behind her, and it was all Simon could do not to jump across the table.

“No, staying isn’t a problem. It’s just been my experience that overworking a proposal can negatively affect the final presentation.” He rested his elbow on the conference table and held out his hand to Regina. “We don’t wanna overthink it. How about I ask my assistant to take a look? It’s always good to have a fresh pair of eyes.” He spread his lips into a heartening smile.

Regina gave Simon the papers and laid her hands on the table. “I guess we’re done here.” She pulled her shoulders back and pivoted her chair until her long legs emerged from under it.

“Great.” Simon stood and put the papers in his backpack. “I’ll talk to my assistant in the morning. How about I escort you home?”

“Thank you, but that’s not necessary. I’m a big girl.” She thinned her lips and shot him a piercing stare.

“Please.” Simon mustered a flirtatious smile. “Allow me. It’s late, and I’d feel better about it.” He picked up her purse with one hand and help his arm to invite her to stand.

My Way to You

Regina's gold hoop earrings swayed as she tilted her head to one side. Simon gleaned the twinkle in her eyes before she lowered them. "Okay." Her mouth curved into a slight smile. She stood and took her purse. "I'll get my coat."

Simon walked over to Jeremy, grabbed his hand and pat him on the arm. "It's been a pleasure working with you, Jeremy. You must be exhausted from all the runnin' around."

Jeremy flinched and looked at Simon like he was speaking gibberish. "It's been fine." He turned his head, following Regina. "I can still help with more."

Simon tugged the young man's arm, regaining his attention. "No, you've gone above and beyond here," he continued despite Jeremy's thin-lipped smile. "I'll have to make sure and tell Marcus how impressed I am with you." After throwing his backpack strap over his shoulder, he reached to put his arm around Jeremy's. "Now why don't you go have some fun?" *I'm gonna get you as far away from Regina as possible tonight. It's past time I had Ms. Kent to myself.*

Regina looked back at Simon talking to Jeremy. *I guess he is a man who knows how to take care of business.* The clumsy first impression dissipated around the erect Simon brandishing a confident grin. She walked towards the coat room but noticed light filtering out of her brother's cracked office door. His baritone voice drifted into the hallway as she approached.

"I'm gonna try and get home soon, sweetness."

Another late night? Is he trying to make things between him and Toni harder? She opened the door and leaned against the door jamb.

The heels of Marcus's shoes clicked against the hardwood floor as he paced the span of the room. "No, I won't be going to the gym." He fixed his gaze towards the ceiling, rubbing his head. "I already promised not to go until the treatments were over. Can't you just trust I'll be there?"

Lyndell Williams

Regina knocked on the door, making sure to smile. They were fighting about the fertility treatments again. Now was not the time to be flippant or contrary.

Marcus motioned her into the room before flopping in his chair. "Toni, Toni." He rested his arm on the desk and rubbed his forehead. "I know that Toni. I'm heading home in about an hour. Damn it, we have enough time. Hello?" Marcus slammed the phone in front of him.

Regina flipped the phone and checked the screen. "Toni upset?"

"That's putting it lightly. These injections make her crazy. I'm trying to be an understanding husband, but she lashes out for no reason sometimes."

"Oh, boo-hoo. She's the one going through all the procedures. Suck it up and stop makin' it about your ego."

"You're biased."

"Damn straight, and I make no apologies about it. I love you and Toni. You're the best couple I know outside of mom and dad. I don't want you guys messing things up because of crazy hormones."

"Oh, you think I do? I've dealt with all this shit during the first round of treatment, and now we're doing the same thing again. We never used to fight before. Now it's a sick cycle of anger and tears."

Regina's phone chimed.

Simon: *Did you leave?*

Regina: *No, I'm in the office with Marcus. I'm going to need a few minutes. You don't have to wait.*

Simon: *But I will.*

"Is that Toni? How mad is she?" Marcus began shifting stacks of folders on his desk.

Regina put her hand on her hip. "You really like taking advantage of the fact that your wife and sister are best friends."

Marcus snorted. "Trust me, it's more of a liability than an asset." He reclined in his large black executive chair.

My Way to You

Regina slipped her phone in her bag. “No, it’s not Toni.”
“Jeremy?”

Regina scoffed. “No.”

Marcus squinted and sat straight. “Who is it then?”

She bent over the desk. “Why are you in my business? You need to go home and handle yours.”

She flung the door open.

“See how easy it is to walk out? Try it. The woman you love is somewhere crying. Fix it.”

Marcus’ booming voice followed her into the hall. “You still didn’t tell me who was on the phone.”

“And I ain’t gonna.” She hurried back to the conference room. Disappointment ebbed at her when she walked into the dark emptiness. She sighed and pulled her purse strap further up her shoulder. *Simon must have run out of patience and decided I’m not worth the wait. His loss.* She pulled her shoulders back, poised her chin in the air and proceeded down the empty hall. She shook off the realization that she was looking forward to spending some time with him alone, even if it was just to take her home.

They’d had some pretty nice conversations between working on the proposal. Simon was smart and funny. *Tonight could’ve been a chance for me to get to know him better, but he obviously isn’t all that interested if he couldn’t wait a few minutes.*

Once inside the dimly-lit waiting room, Regina stopped. Her stomach fluttered at the sight of Simon leaning against the reception desk with his long, crossed legs extending from his full-length black coat.

He glanced from his phone and smiled. “Ready?”

“I thought you left.” Simon reached for her coat and held it in the air.

His arms enveloped her as she stepped into it. “I told you I would wait.” He slid his hands over her shoulders and down her arms.

Lyndell Williams

Regina trembled at his touch. “Indeed, you did.” She turned her head. Their lips almost touched and for a moment, time and her breath stood still. She lifted her lids; a slight redness blushed behind his light freckles. She’d never noticed them before. They invited her to smooth her lips across them. She concentrated on buttoning her coat before she gave into the temptation to do so as well as bite his luscious bottom lip. “Where’s Jeremy?”

“We’ll not have the honor of Mr. Stack’s company tonight.” Regina cast her gaze down and smiled. Simon leaned closer; the smell of his cologne drifted into her nose and titillated her already stimulated senses. “It’s just us. I hope that’s okay.” The promised mischievousness twinkling in his gorgeous angular eyes sent a charge of excitement down her spine.

She swallowed the lump in her throat. “I’m fine with that.” She quaked at the feel of his hand against the small of her back. She managed to appear composed despite the craving burgeoning inside her. He raised his hand towards the door and tilted his head. “Let’s go.”

THANKS SO MUCH FOR READING!

I hope you enjoyed the first three chapters of Simon and Regina's story.

Click [here](#) to order *My Way to You* at Amazon!

Please leave a review on Amazon and Goodreads so I can continue to bring readers stories!

CONTACT

I would love to hear from you.

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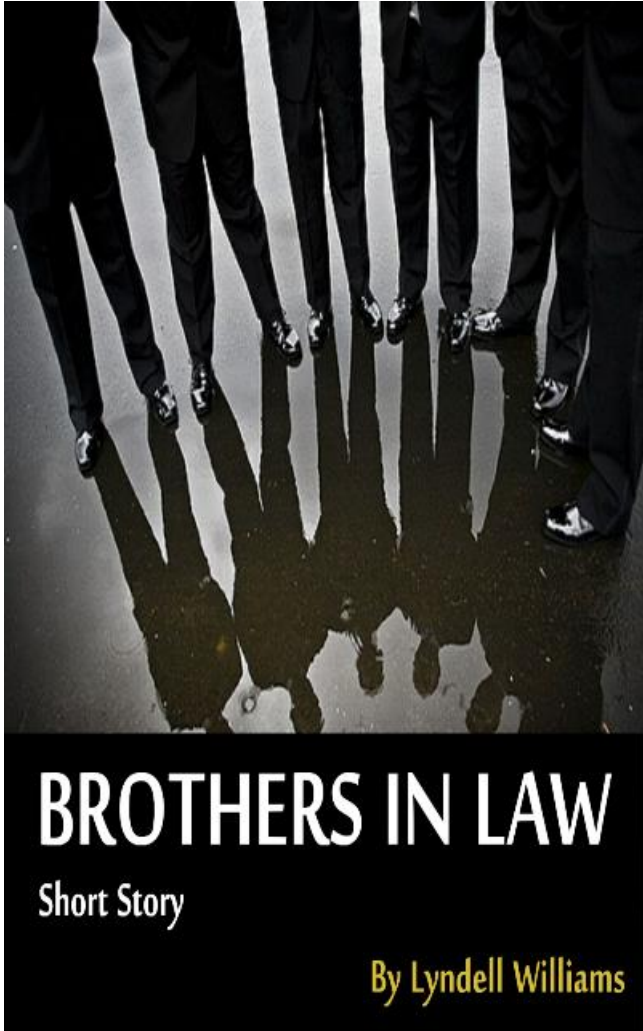
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SPECIAL BONUS

Start reading the *Brothers in Law* short story and learn how these 6 dynamic men met.



1 - DINNER

SIMON LOOKED AT HIS WATCH AND TAPPED THE DEWY BEER BOTTLE in front of him onto the table. “As usual,” he peered across at his law school roommate, “your boy, Adam is late. Where is he? I skipped lunch.” He waved the waiter away for the third time. Agreeing to have dinner with the unreliable Adam Kane was a bad idea.

“Relax man.” Marcus leaned back in his chair and scratched the black stubble spanning his brown face. “Have some more bread or somethin’. I think he’ll be a good fit for this next project. We need a lot of funding, and he’s great at getting money out of sponsors.”

Simon lifted a crust of dry bread and dropped it back into the wicker basket on the white tablecloth. “That may be, but he’s not the most dependable of people. We’re always waiting on him.” He pulled out his phone and responded to the text. “*Sorry, gorgeous. I’m tied up. I’ll be over soon.*”

“Yeah, but he comes through in the end.” Marcus glanced at Simon’s phone and looked at him sideways. “I bet this isn’t just about food. What? You got another woman all hot and bothered waiting for you?”

Simon smiled and reclined as he laid his phone face down on the table. “I do have plans for later.”

Marcus shook his head and let out a baritone chuckle. “The way you go through women with that smooth Asian game of yours.”

“It’s the eyes.” Simon passed a finger over the thick lid of his hazel eye. “Chicks dig ‘em.”

“You need to settle down.”

Simon raised his hands. “Hey, I’m happy that you found Toni, but I, for one, am not ready to be exclusive.” He examined his buzzing phone and raised an eyebrow at the picture his “date” sent. “Oh, yeah. She’s ready.”

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Marcus rolled his eyes and raised his hand. "There's Adam."

Adam dropped his helmet on the table with a thud and tugged at his lambskin biker jacket. "Hey, sorry, I'm late." He tapped the shoulder of the tall man next to him. "I ran into my man, Brandon, and we started talking. He graduated a couple of semesters back and passed the UBE and PA Bar and is already a junior partner at his firm. Brandon Hulse," he lifted his palm to the ceiling, "This is Simon Young and Marcus Kent."

"Hey, man. Congratulations." Marcus shook each of their hands as they sat. "You guys want a beer?"

"No, thank you," Brandon smoothed his tie between the manicured fingers of his umber hands, "I don't drink."

"Brandon is Muslim." Adam pushed up the sleeves of his gray Henley shirt. "That's what we were talking about. I'll take one though."

Simon jutted his chin at the duo. "That's fascinating. Can we order now?" He lifted the menu.

"You'll have to excuse Simon." Marcus signaled the waiter. "He's trying to satisfy his hunger and a bunch of urges tonight."

After a much-deserved glower at his best friend, Simon scanned the menu. "No more banter or distractions. There's a hot woman waiting for me to cool her off."

2 - BRAWL

MARCUS RELEASED A SATISFIED SIGH, tapped his belly and stepped into the evening Boston air with his three companions. It was a very productive meal—things were going just as planned. “Right, how about we meet again at the end of the week and see what progress Adam made with fundraising?”

“Don’t worry, Marc. I’ll get my mother on it.” Adam zipped his jacket and hung his elbow from Simon’s shoulder. “There’s nothing Vivian Kane likes more than a chance to dress up with her rich friends and throw money at a cause. It helps her feel like she’s making a difference.”

“Just make sure they’re doin’ a bunch of throwin’.” Simon set his lips in a thin line while tapping at his phone. “This can help a lot of people.” He was obviously still wary of Adam’s ability to come through—not without cause. Adam Kane was very privileged, which meant he didn’t really vest a lot of time or energy in anything—not even his studies. Everything just came too easily.

Marcus opened his mouth but closed it and turned to the faint sounds of grunting and scuffling. “What the—” He peered at the far end of the parking lot. A group of men surrounded another wearing a black leather jacket, jeans and sneakers. Their angry porcelain faces glowed from the light of the street lamp above them. They circled their prey like a pack of buzzards. Clearly, this was no quaint little get-together. They meant to do some damage. Marcus glanced at Simon; the pair stormed towards the scene.

“Why don’t you go back where you came from, terrorist?” A White guy shoved the light brown man from behind towards one of his fellow thugs.

Simon scoffed. “You’ve gotta be kiddin’ me. Do they ever get tired of this?”

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It was yet another pack of drunken White college students, who had decided to have a little “fun” by jumping a Person of Color unlucky enough to cross their path. It happened more frequently than a lot of people thought. They always chose a victim who didn’t appear to be much of a threat and easy to push around. Unfortunately for the crew of 10 knuckleheads that Marcus counted, they chose the wrong guy to mess with that night.

The tall man ducked a punch from the oversized jackass in a red baseball cap. The “victim” then delivered one squarely on the jaw of his attacker. The cap fell off the buffoon’s head as he hit the pavement.

Marcus raised his eyebrows. Impressive. He pulled at his zipper. *Definitely not a soft target, but the numbers are still against him.* He dropped his jacket and tugged up the sleeves of his cardigan. “Yo,” the collegiate riff-raff simultaneously turned to him, “leave the guy alone.”

A lanky blond stalked towards him with a scowl on his whiskerless face. “Who’s gonna stop us, coon?” Marcus struggled to keep the corners of his mouth from twitching. Wearing an Abercrombie and Fitch hoodie and designer skinny jeans, the “thug” did not cut an intimidating figure, which was probably why he needed his gang with him.

A rush of air brushed the side of Marcus’s face. Adam blasted past him and smashed his helmet against the guy’s head. “You like that, huh? You, racist asshole.” He tossed the headgear and balled his fists. Marcus shook his head at Simon. Adam was not one to let a good brawl go to waste, especially one where he got to pummel a bunch of bigots. It was his hobby of sorts.

Two more preppie hooligans charged at Adam. A stranger sprang out of nowhere, taking one of them down with a kick to the gut and an elbow strike while Adam decked the other. Fists clenched, he looked over at his new comrade. A street lamp shone on half of the tan man’s smug smirk that reached up to his angular eyes. “Yeah,” Adam stretched his neck from side to side and puffed his chest, “let’s do this.” Marcus, Simon and Brandon joined the affray.

It was time to take on hate.

My Way to You

Want to find out what happens next?

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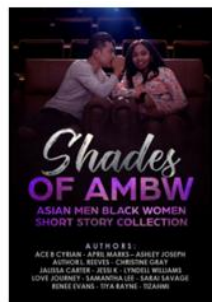
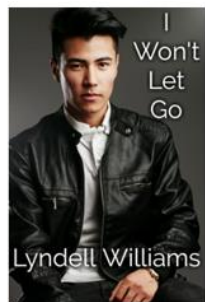
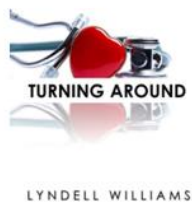


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ABOUT LYNDELL WILLIAMS

Lyndell Williams (Layla Abdullah-Poulos) has a B.A. in Historical Studies and Literature, M.A. in Liberal Studies, and an AC in Women and Gender Studies. She presently teaches history as an adjunct instructor. She's a cultural critic with a background in literary criticism specializing in romance.



She received 2017 The Francis Award from The International Association for the Study of Popular Romance (IASPR). Her peer-reviewed journal article -The Stable Muslim Love Triangle - Triangular Desire in Black Muslim Romance Fiction- is projected for publication in the Journal of Popular Romance Studies in 2018.

Lyndell has contributed to multiple anthologies interracial short story collections, including - Shades of AMBW and Shades of BWWM.