

*This is a work of fiction. None of the characters, events or organisations described in this story are real.*

I couldn't help myself. I had always had a thing about green-eyed girls, but this girl was nothing like the green-eyed girls of my imagination. For one, she was oriental. I thought Chinese but found out later that she was Korean American. Her mother was Navajo Irish and her father Korean. She was tall and slim, with a strong, quiet presence. I wanted to touch her; to see if she was real, but could hardly speak, never mind move. I think I gawped. She repeated her question twice before stepping back and turning away from me. I stumbled from the room and realised I was sweating. I didn't even bother picking up my tools, I just left. By the time I reached the bus stop, my head had cleared.

I returned the next morning early. The building was locked and I had to wait for the first staffer to arrive to let me in. I went into the office I had been working in. Somebody had swept the floor and all my tools were still there, lined up neatly along one wall. I worked quickly and had finished by ten. I put my tools into my wheeled lock-box and carried the remaining materials to the basement maintenance store, then went in search of a cleaner's cart so I could clean up. I felt bad about having left a mess for the cleaners the day before.

I found a cleaner's cart in a store room by the kitchen and was wheeling it out when two women walked out of the lift and came towards me. I froze in fear, one of them was the green-eyed girl. The other was Marjorie from Contracts. I felt myself starting to sweat and kept my head down as I backed out the cleaning trolley.

"Hi Ben," Marjorie greeted me, "This is Sue, she's a new intern in the survey department." She turned to Sue, "Ben does most of the maintenance around here, he should be finished with your office this week."

I felt myself going very red when Sue nodded and told Marjorie that we'd met. I tried to say I had just finished, but my voice got stuck in my throat. I coughed, then managed to gasp, "Excuse me," and waved as I pushed the trolley in the opposite direction and went off.

I wanted to bang my head against the wall. It took me a few minutes to stop shaking. I cleaned the office and returned the trolley to the store room, hoping, but dreading that I would see Sue again. I went down to contracts and handed in the job card. Marjorie was there but she was busy on the phone and had her back towards me, so probably didn't see me.

I didn't get any more work requests for a couple of days and then I got fifteen. I went in early again, and worked flat out most of Friday on the top floor. Usually I preferred to start at the top and work my way down. I caught a glimpse of Sue around noon; she was in one of the small conference rooms with a bunch of other people. All I saw was the back of her head and her cheek, but it made my heart race. I didn't understand it.

At four PM I handed in the job cards for the work I had done, just as the Contracts staff were beginning to gather their things to go home. Marjorie saw me and asked how I was doing.

"I'm good thanks Marjorie," I replied, "You got any races this weekend?"

Marjorie was a keen cross country runner. We had won a local team triathlon a few weeks earlier with a friend of hers doing the cycling, Marjorie doing the running and me doing the swimming.

"Just a fun run with Brian," she said, "So, you got a strong case of the hots for Sue McCormick have you? You and just about every other red-blooded man in this building." She laughed, "And some of the women."

I tried to smile and shake my head, but she patted my cheek, “Some advice kiddo - take a deep breath and ask her out. She’s new in town and lonely. What have you got to lose?”

She turned when someone called her name, then took hold of my arm and dragged me along, “Come with me, I nearly forgot.”

I followed her into an office where three people were in the process of putting things away and locking filling cabinets.

“I need an entry keycard and an authorisation form for the weekend,” she told one of the trio, “Queen Bee wants Ben to dismantle her old desk and assemble the new one over the weekend.”

I looked at the job requests, there was nothing there for the CEO’s office. Marjorie tutted at me and told me to wait there and sign for the keycard. She left and was back with a padded envelope and a work request before the keycard had been programmed. I signed for the keycard and then read the work request. The padded envelope contained keys to the CEO’s private elevator and office. Marjorie took me down to the basement and pointed out the crate containing the new office furniture then showed me how to access and operate the CEO’s private elevator before patting my cheek again and leaving in a hurry.

I dismantled the crate and checked whether I needed help or special tools and figured I could manage by myself with a trolley, I then went up in the CEO’s elevator and opened her office. I checked the desk and printer table that I was supposed to dismantle and get down to the basement. It took a while to figure out how to dismantle the desk. I would need some special tools and I would definitely need the trolley and some load straps to move it down to the basement. I locked up and took the stairs down to the reception.

Sue McCormick walked into the reception just as I did. She was pulling a bulky coat on and didn't notice me at first. When she did her eyes went wide, as if she was afraid of me.

I held my hands up, "I'm not dangerous!" I said, trying to keep my voice low and slow, "I'm just a moron."

She gave me a quizzical look and a half smile.

"You are the guy that fixes things, right?" she asked.

I nodded and looked down, "That's me. You are Sue. I am Ben."

"My office is great thanks," she said, "You did a good job."

I nodded, "Thanks...I hear you are new in town and I was wondering ... I could show you around, I mean I know the area quite well. Show you ..." I felt faint and had to grab hold of the edge of the reception counter, "Oh boy!"

"Are you OK?" asked Sue. I looked up at her face and immediately looked down. I shook my head.

"Sue, can I ask you a favour?" I said, slowing my voice down, "Could you just move away a little and not look at me. I know it sounds weird ... it is weird ... but I feel sort of light headed when I look at you..."

She laughed, "Oh wow, this is a new one. Are you hitting on me?"

"No! I mean, yes, I'd like to but seriously... Just give me a minute to get used to this OK?" I felt myself starting to sweat, though I felt cold, "Maybe I'm sick?" I gripped the counter with both hands and took some deep breaths, keeping my eyes closed. I prayed she didn't leave.

"What did you just say?" she asked.

“Nothing, nothing, just don’t leave,” I asked.

“OK, but I’ll get mad if I miss my bus,” she said.

“Can I get you a coffee or something?” I asked, “I promise to help you get another bus, I know every bus stop, route and destination in this city. There’s a really good cafe close by here. Two minutes walk maximum.” I started to feel faint again. I heard her say OK, it sounded like it came from a great distance.

I was better when we were walking. She walked on my right and I kept my eyes in front of me. She told me she took the 34A bus to the end of the line, it was a short walk to her rental. That was on the southern outskirts of the city. I lived on the eastern edge, about the same distance to travel.

There was only one table left at Megan’s Cafe. I asked her to hold the table while I queued. She wanted strong black coffee and after a moment’s hesitation asked for a cheese, lettuce and tomato sandwich in a go bag, handing me a twenty dollar note.

I sat down facing her then changed position.

“I can’t look at you,” I told her, “I just can’t. God I sound weird.” I heard her moving her chair.

“OK, I’ve moved, you can look at your food now, before you knock it off the table. What is that?”

I risked a glance at her. She was sitting with her back to the wall, looking down at her sandwich. I slid her change across the table.

“Coffee is on me. You get free refills,” I told her.

I had a cappuccino, I probably shouldn't have, and a fried egg and bacon bagel.

"It's a breakfast bagel," I said, "You want half?"

"No, I don't eat meat," she said smiling, "Why are you having a breakfast bagel now at six PM?"

"I'm hungry. Actually I'm not," I pushed it away and lifted my cup, "I didn't even want coffee, I just wanted a chance to explain why I am such as Idiot."

"OK, I'm listening ..." she replied.

"You are much nicer than I expected," I said and wished I hadn't.

"Gee thanks."

"I didn't mean that, well..." I forced myself to slow down again. "What I mean is that you are being much nicer to me than I deserve," I said, "I've been a complete idiot every time we met. Thank you for being so nice about it."

"What can I say ... I am a nice person," she said. I glanced at her and looked away quickly when I caught her eye.

"I've never felt like this before," I told her, "I always feel a bit nervous near beautiful women, but usually I can at least look at them when I talk to them."

"So you think I am beautiful do you?" her voice sounded a bit flat.

"Stunningly beautiful," I said, "But why can't I look at you without getting light headed. What's wrong with me?"

“Maybe we should go,” she said, “I have no interest in having sex with you so you can drop this crap.”

I shook my head, “No please, don’t go yet? Finish your coffee? I shouldn’t have said what I did, though it is true.” I could feel her looking at me, her eyes boring into me.

“Look at me, at my face,” she demanded.

I turned and looked at her, putting my cup down and gripping the edge of the table. She stared into my eyes and I looked right back. After what seemed like an eternity she nodded and looked away to take another sip at her coffee. I slowly toppled off my chair and saw a look of horrified surprise on her face before I blacked out.

I woke up as I was being loaded into an ambulance. There was a mask over my mouth and nose. I tried to sit up but found myself strapped down. A face appeared above mine and the mask was removed.

“Just relax, calm down. Take a few deep breaths,” a voice spoke.

“I’m OK,” I said, “You can let me go now.”

“You’re going to hospital for a check up. No arguments.” It was Sue’s voice, “You scared the Hell out of me.”

There was another voice and then the ambulance was moving. I spent three hours in the hospital being tested before I was allowed to leave. There was no sign of Sue anywhere. I had to sign some papers and had a very long walk before I could get a bus to take me home. It had rained while I was in the hospital and the air smelled fresh and clean.

The next morning I was at the office before six. I dismantled the CEO’s old desk and printer table, carried them down to the

basement in sections and then carried each piece of the new desk and printer table up. Assembling the new desk was really hard work by myself. By the time I had finished I was soaking wet with sweat. I cleaned up and took all my tools down to the basement and spent another hour wrapping the old desk and table in the wrapping that had come with the new one and carefully reassembling the crate. I locked my tools away and took the standard elevator up to reception. Sue came down the stairs into the Foyer just as I left the elevator.

We stared at each other in surprise, I opened my mouth to speak and blacked out again. When I awoke this time, my head really hurt. I was in an ambulance and it was moving, the siren wailing.

“Don’t move, you have a head injury. Keep still.” I didn’t see a face or recognise the voice. There was an oxygen mask over my mouth and nose. I passed out again.

The next time I woke I was in a hospital bed and felt very nauseous. I tried to sit up and an alarm went off. It sounded really loud. I felt someone holding my shoulders and heard faint sounds. Someone telling me to lie down. I started retching and was soon puking into a shiny metal bowl.

The next time I woke up it was dark. I could see well enough, there were lots of green and red lights. I lay very still realising I was still in hospital and wondering what was wrong with me. I moved my hands first, and then my feet. I heard someone else move and turned my head as a face appeared. It was my brother.

“How you feeling Bro?” he asked, “You look like shit.”

My voice sounded weird when I replied. “I’m OK. What happened, where am I?”

“You are in hospital. You cracked your skull. The police are waiting to talk to you. They arrested a young woman who says you collapsed in City Realtor & Legal’s down town office block.”

“Arrested her for what?” I asked, “I fell over.”

He shrugged as a person in a pale blue came in and asked me to sit back. Apparently an alarm had gone off because my heart rate had increased.

“I need to talk to the police!” I told her, “Please? It is important!”

It felt like hours but my brother said it was only about fifteen minutes later two uniformed police officers came in. The man took notes while the woman asked questions. I explained that I had just fallen over, it was just an accident and not the fault of Sue McCormack.

The officer listened and waited till her colleague had written everything down. She told me they would have to investigate as I has been admitted to hospital the day before after collapsing at a cafe. The same person, Sue McCormack, had called emergency services both times. I begged them to let her go and got no answer. They left.

The hospital would not release me till the surgeon had signed off on me. The nurse said that might happen the next day. I fell asleep trying to explain to my brother what had happened. I was woken by a commotion the next morning. Sue had come to see me with the police. Stan got up and asked them to quieten down. The police woman looked up at him and apologised for waking me, then asked him not to interfere with police business. She came in with Sue and a man wearing a lab coat who turned out to be a doctor. Sue looked tired and concerned, but also quite angry. I tried not to look at her.

“Is this the woman you were with when you collapsed Mr. van Dyk?” asked the police woman.

I nodded and she asked me to look again and answer clearly. I looked at Sue and said, "Yes, I was with this person, Sue McCormack when I collapsed." The police officer and the doctor went outside, Stan came back in.

"Don't look at me Ben," said Sue, "Your pulse is racing and your blood oxygen is dropping."

"Crap," I muttered, looking away, "I finally find the woman of my dreams and I can't look at her without having a seizure. We'll never be able to have sex."

She laughed and I heard Stan introducing himself and thanking her for calling an ambulance for me. I must have passed out again. Stan was snoring in a chair when I woke. I was desperate for the toilet, I managed to get there before a nurse came in and ordered me to get back into bed. I declined and locked myself in the toilet. She opened it somehow and glared at me. I glared back and asked her to excuse me while I pooped.

I was discharged a week later, after all sorts of tests. They couldn't find anything wrong with me. Sue McCormack had gone back home. She brought me a present before she left - a bicycle helmet and an egg and bacon bagel from Megan's. She told me she had got an internship with Abernathy, Holtz and Wulfsohn in Irvine, California. It was on the other side of the country.

It took me a while to find someone to take over my contracts. Stan agreed to take me to Irvine in his truck, which meant I could take all my tools.