

THIS MAGIC MOMENT



LANGSTON OLIVER HARRIS

This Magic Moment

Langston O. Harris

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This Magic Moment

The Psychiatrists

I'll Be Seeing You

(a sequel to *This Magic Moment*)

This is a fictional piece of work. The names of characters are not intended to represent living people.

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For Elizabeth,
I hope you love it.
Janet Oliver Davis
July 14, 1995

This

Magic

Moment

Dedicated to my mother,
Fern Augusta Boyce Harris—
You are an angel and a miracle worker.

Special thanks to my sons Devin and Russell for
giving me the will to live during the critical years.

Thanks, Dad, for being there.

Hi Carole, Hi Dennis, Hi Joyce

Thank you, Jesus Christ, Dear Lord God, my guardian
angel, my Holy Spirit, the holy heavenly family
and God-in-me Langston.

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A special thanks to the city of San Francisco for allowing me to see that the world is full of friendly, beautiful, interesting people of many nationalities, races and colors.

What a unique experience it has been to see white, yellow, red, brown and black people coexisting in individuality and color.

What an exceptional treat it has been to live and love among Asians, Europeans, Africans, South Americans, Central Americans, North Americans and Islanders in such a small area as San Francisco.

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PROLOGUE

Columbus, Ohio

1960

The year 1960 was the beginning of one of the most unusual, yet most glamorous periods in African American history. It easily equalled the spectacle and splendor of the Harlem Renaissance of the Roaring 20s. Our story begins in a most unusual setting in America, a city called Columbus, Ohio. In retrospect, it seems almost absurd that two great international players could have evolved from such a small, conservative midwestern town as Columbus, and if you were to travel to Columbus today, you would refuse to believe that it was once the Mecca for some of the greatest minds in African American thought in every field of knowledge and lifestyle; yet it was.

Mount Vernon Avenue and Long Street—today these two streets are nearly empty and deserted, but in 1960 they were among the most happening spots on the entire planet. A man named Tuney owned a gasoline station on the corner of Mt. Vernon and Champion, and Calvin Ferguson, age 28, was standing next to his brand new burnt orange Cadillac, talking, joking, and laughing with Tuney. Tuney,

27, was a brilliant businessman. His service station was a complete car maintenance center. Everybody bought their gas from Tuney—everybody, including preachers, doctors, steelworkers, gamblers, pimps, hustlers, ladies of the night, civil servants, school teachers, janitors, boosters, lawyers, church goers, cleaning ladies, barmaids and bartenders, storeowners, housemaids, politicians, off duty policemen, and the young crowd. Tuney's Sunoco Service Station was a meeting place for society; it was a happening.

Tuney had character, charm, charisma, knowledge, wisdom, honesty, dependability, and a lot of good game. In essence he was just a down to earth, decent, likeable guy who loved people and liked everybody. If he saw you once he remembered you, and every time you came by, he took time to talk to you to make sure you felt good and important. There was a pretty little girl sitting in Calvin's car. Well, she wasn't that little—she was about nineteen. Knowing that Calvin and Tuney might be talking for a long time, she decided to get out of the car in order to stretch her legs. She had those long, slender, pretty skinny legs, black, gleaming, and sexy as sin. Little ten-year-old Frankie Brown was riding past on his bicycle just as she opened the door and exposed her legs, which were hardly covered by a micro, micro, mini short cute dress. Frankie got an eyeful, was blinded and crashed into Calvin's car.

"Are you hurt, Frankie?" Calvin said as he picked up little Frankie.

"No, Mr. Ferguson, I didn't mean to look up her dress, honestly, it just happened." Calvin laughed. The girl with Calvin, who everybody called Slim, was fine as wine and ten times as sweet. She could make a crippled crab walk, a blind man see, and a dumb man talk. An old man would

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

give her his last dime, a young man would risk jail time and crime just to get next to her. Calvin understood why little Frankie had lost control of his bike. He didn't get mad at him for running into his custom-made Cadillac.

Slim helped Frankie get back onto his bicycle, and as she did, she gave him a soft kiss on the cheek and she rubbed her body innocently against his. Young Frankie rode off in a state of shock, joy, and bliss, made it to the next block and ran into the biggest tree on the street, but he never felt the pain. He just picked himself up and headed for home and crashed about four more times before he got there.

Tuney spotted Jerome walking down the street. He excused himself from Calvin and hurried over to greet Jerome. Jerome owned the hippest barbershop in town, three blocks down the street on Mt. Vernon Avenue. As usual, Jerome was talking a mile a minute, "Look Tuney, everything is set for Buddy's birthday party tonight. He still doesn't know that we are throwing him a party, but it's going to be a miracle if we can pull this surprise off. Somebody is going to slip up and tell him, I just know it." Tuney was thinking fast and hard. This was really going to be a great night of fun.

Buddy Williams was a player, a real popular player, a player's player, a man who played the game without backstabbing anyone, and he was generous. He gave away nearly all that he took in, and he took in a lot. He was a banker in the numbers game and a major fence of the finest men's and women's clothing. One of Tuney's workers called out to him that he had a telephone call. Tuney headed for the phone, looked back at Jerome and said, "Calvin and Dee Dee are going to pick up Buddy in about

half an hour. They are going to keep him company until it's time to go to the Cafe Society. I'll call you later."

Dee Dee sat on the front porch watching the kids playing in the yard. Charles "Dee Dee" Straughter was a man too pretty to be a man. His hair was gorgeous, his skin was gorgeous, his physique was superb, his smile was perfect, and he could dress like no other man in the world, except for maybe Calvin Ferguson, his best friend. Dee Dee loved children. He wondered if he would every have any of his own. Watching his little nieces was big fun and a source of constant joy. He took them everywhere with him. He listened to their stories, fed them, clothed them, protected them and made life wonderful and happy for them.

She knew this. It was one of the things she admired about him most. So she made up her mind that she was going to have him, even though she knew that most of the women she knew wanted him too. Her plan was to give him a baby boy.

Tony Choice was her name; love and romance were her game. She was truly a choice lady, the daughter of a minister who truly held the spirit of God. Her mother was as elegant as a Queen, and she raised young Tony to be a princess with a wild, untamed spirit, but also sweet, innocent, provocative, ripe and ready as a Georgia peach. To say that she was beautiful would be an understatement. To say that she was shapely would be saying too little. Let's just truthfully say she was a dying man's last request.

Tony drove her canary yellow Jaguar up to the front walk of Dee Dee's house, turned off the engine, got out of the car, and walked up to the porch where Dee Dee was

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

sitting. He had seen her before but had never met her. He looked at her astonishedly for a moment, and before he could speak, she spoke. "Hi, Dee Dee, my name is Tony—Tony Choice—and I'm choosing you."

She walked up the steps, took an envelope out of her purse and handed it to him. "Here's some choosing money." The envelope was stuffed with hundred dollar bills. Their eyes were glued to each other's. She broke the stare, turned, walked back to her car, and was gone. A player is a poor girl's dream, a rich girl's cream, but what had just happened was almost too good to be true. Dee Dee was ecstatic.

The telephone must have rung twenty times before Dee Dee was able to get up and answer it. Calvin was on the line. "Dee Dee, I'm on the way over to get you and then we can go pick up Buddy. Are you ready?"

"Calvin, you are not going to believe what just happened to me." Calvin was listening but Dee Dee had stopped talking.

"Dee Dee, I'm listening, don't keep me in suspense, talk to me, home boy."

"Man, come on over—I'll tell you when you get here."

It was nine that night when Calvin, Dee Dee and Buddy pulled up in front of the Cafe Society. Mt. Vernon Avenue was jumping. Everything was perfect. Friday night, June 29, and no other place in the world had summer weather like Columbus, Ohio. There were so many stars in the clear, warm early night that it was easy to become hypnotized into permanent stargazing. The Cafe Society was jam packed. The street out front was jam packed. Cadillacs were double parked wherever possible.

Langston Oliver Harris

The Detroit auto industry would have been astonished to see how their cars had been recustomized. Detroit never made cars these colors. Triple pink, burnt orange, mystic lavender, baby blue, crimson red, were just some of them, with interiors of mink, ostrich, alligator. What a sight!

The women must have spent the entire day getting ready—Ebony Fashion Fair looked like it had just arrived. Men's eyes were popping out of their heads. One fellow was drooling from the lips. Somebody was giving heart massage to an old man who had gotten caught between two big-butt women. Silk dresses, mohair and silk dresses, chantilly lace, long dresses, short dresses, barely no dress—Oh Lord! did they look good. Buddy wondered what was going on. "What's happening here," he said. Calvin and Dee Dee smiled at each other. "Happy Birthday, Buddy, this is for you." The crowd spotted Buddy and began to chant: "Happy Birthday Buddy."

In reality there are only a few times in life when a truly memorable occasion takes place. One like this comes only once in a lifetime—the right place, the right time, the right people, the right atmosphere, where everything goes right, nothing goes wrong, and everyone has a good time. There was some money spent that night. Champagne never stopped flowing. People never stopped eating. Have you ever eaten barbecue of which the meat fell off the bone before you could get it in your mouth and the sauce was so good that you soaked your bread in it and tried to make a meal out of the sauce and bread alone?

The old women had prepared the greens—not saying the younger women couldn't cook, for they could, but this was a special occasion, and the old women were called out to get down on the greens. And get down they did. In fact

THIS MAGIC MOMENT

it seemed they got down and in, and cooked them from the inside out. The greens were screaming.

There was so much food that it took two plates just to hold a little of everything. Somebody made a strawberry shortcake that ruined everybody's waistline. Three people nearly overdosed on homemade biscuits. Stomachs got so big that buttons were popping off tailor-made suits, and seams were splitting on expensive hand-stitched evening dresses. There was a party going on that night. It started at the Cafe Society, moved down the street to the Jamaica Club where Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions, Marvin Gaye, and the Temptations had been brought in to perform for this special occasion, and then the party ended up at Marty Melvin's club, The 502, where Horace Silver, Nancy Wilson, and Cannonball Adderly were rocking the house. Otto Beatty's club on Long Street was supposed to be the last stop, but most folks were unable to make it that far. Even the best of partygoers get laid out by food, drink, fatigue or romance—this was the beginning of the 60s, the decade of free love, and Cupid decided to work triple time this night.

Somebody had invited the sororities and fraternities from campus, and you have to give those college kids credit—they know how to party, and they make love anywhere and everywhere. Somebody invited the church people. They drank champagne like it was communion time, not out of small cuplets, but out of big crystal goblets. The more they drank, the holier they got. You have heard some good choirs sing, but you have to hear a righteously high choir get loose. God could not have been happier. Dee Dee ran into Tony Choice that night. Eight years later little Dee Dee was born.

BOOK ONE

