

Linger

Linger

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What will you do for a chance at real love, what would you do for a chance at real happiness.



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Linger : Chapter 1

Ricardo Alders walked into the café I frequented with a radiant smile. He's a year from fifty, with a touch of gray at his temples, dark smooth skin and dark dreamy eyes. Ricardo seemed younger dressed in brown khakis and a blue shirt. At the sight of him, my heart jumped with glee. Even after all these years, Ricardo was still the most handsome man in the room.

The first time I laid eyes on him, Ricardo stood at the café's counter trying to order a coffee from an impatient young clerk. Although Ricardo spoke English, his thick West African accent impeded the clerk's understanding. I stood behind him hearing their exchange and having had spent a year in West Africa with the Peace Corps. I decided to intervene.

"Two coffees please," I told the clerk to both of their surprise, "one with milk and cinnamon and a regular."

Ricardo stared at me and smiled. It was a wonderful handsome smile. One I ever noticed on a man.

"Please I shall pay," he said. I accepted with a smile of my own. "Join me yes?" he asked smiling again.

How could I decline such a gracious offer and his smile?

We sat at one of the tables near the window and talked for several hours about everything from politics to the World Cup. Enthralled with his good looks and winning charm after talking with Ricardo, I realized he's very intelligent. "I am here in America, on a College visa. The doctor from my village sponsored me. He said to me as a child, 'you are smart boy.'" He smiled again, and I knew I had fallen.

I've never meet anyone who got me, but Ricardo had. He understood my dry humor and even laughed at the punch line. He knew when a subject sparked a fire inside me and often took my side of the argument and strange as it seemed, I knew him too. Knew he preferred chaos to order which could be glimpsed everywhere. A quiet militant by nature, Ricardo saw the beauty in which chaos brought. It was as if we had known each other for years.

When the café began to get crowded, with the evening rush, we decided we should leave, yet not wanting the day to end.

"Will you walk with me," Ricardo asked.

"Yes."

He took my hand and light turned to sparks.

In the park across the street, we walked to a bench near the lake to watch the ducks and talk. The sun stared its descent while we partook of an early dinner. Afterwards, a drink back at my place with things leading to another. Finally, we ended the night making love.

We met everyday for lunch and for a year; we lived in complete bliss, until the day of the incident when everything changed for us.

He just stopped coming by the cafe. This happened four years ago to the day.

Observing him walking through these doors after many years, I had to admit, surprised me. Regardless of the reason for his return, I'm very happy to set my eyes on Ricardo Alders.

I smiled back at him, intending to wave while hope abound for me to, once again bask in the warmth his eyes, his allure, and his masculine charisma. But my hopes of a long-awaited Reunion, collapsed when his eyes shot passed me seating at the table by the window.

I strained to follow his gaze in this crowded room and because of the lack of windows in the back of the café. Even with the poor lighting, I saw her seating there, an attractive middle-aged woman with a smile as bright as the sun and eyes of blue. She waved to him with the enthusiasm of a blissful lover. Ricardo's smile and those amazing eyes, sought a new face among this crowd, someone I've never glimpsed before. I'm shocked. I understand I shouldn't, not after all these years.

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Yet, I still thought if he saw me, I might have garnered a look if not a smile. I hadn't put that look on his face or the glow in his eyes and that saddened me. The pain of knowing he's found someone else and that he brought her here, to our place, hit me as if my soul drowned.

Ricardo rushed past patrons, tables and chairs with that smile. His eyes never leaving hers, he hastened his stride to reach her. He didn't gaze in my direction, never even bothered to look at his once consort sitting alone in the usual spot near the new bay windows of the cafe.

Distraught, I watched their warm embrace. Ricardo gave this woman a passionate kiss on her red lips and my lips burned. Always gracious, I watched as he waited for her to take her seat before taking his happily. Their open show of affection torn me to my core, how had this happened, when? Had Ricardo dated her while he was with me? This can't happen it's not real; I try to convince myself. Yet I'm too distraught and dismayed to move

Although, years have passed since I held Ricardo in my arms, however witnessing their embrace still split my heart in two.

They gazed into each other eyes as lovers often do, chatted in low tones while I watched heartbroken in a daze. I gawked at the natural way in which Ricardo coiled his fingers with hers and the effortless sensual flow of them. Absentminded, they rubbed knees while ogling at the menu, as though second nature. I remember we were natural. A soft moan escaped me at the ease of them, how open and loving. I wished he was still mine, wished the hand of time could turn back so we could forgo the incident.

What is a lovesick woman to do? I could walk over there and having it out with them for the world to see. It would just lead to my embarrassment. Ricardo is no longer in love with me. I should just go away quiet, without him noticing and let them have their time together without causing a scene. I'm aware it's what I should do, but I haven't moved nor have I taken my eyes off them.

Chapter 2

I watched while the server took their lunch orders. Reluctant, they pulled away, to merely pick up again after she left. Staring at how simple it was for them to snub the crowded room, eyes gazing, cocooned in a makeshift world of self-made bliss. I strained to hear their conversation above the haze of the crowd's buzzing and only garnered small snips of their cozy happy whispering.

Horror struck when Ricardo took her hand to kiss while placing a ring on her finger. Its brilliance burned in the late afternoon light while scorching my soul. She received the gesture with an endearing smile and a long hard kiss on his full lips.

A bone deep ache over took me while the crowd cheered for them. I doubled over in real physical pain. I wanted to scream gazing at them and their open display of affection, while a sad dream hung on my mind.

I remembered he held me once body, mind, spirit and soul. I gave Ricardo all of me; then he moved on with his life. I call to mind a vow once holy, a union once shared, but this picture of life anew made it void. Now it's a shadow of what once existed, I'm left to muse over a life once full of love now lost. The incident crossed my awareness and I remembered for the first time.

My world changed on a bright sunny day. The day he proposed, we sat at our table here near the window inside the café. He surprised me going to one knee while he held up open a small black box. I had an idea he would propose to me. Sudden without warning, a car crashed through the building killing me instantly. I took the brunt of the impact saving Ricardo's life. He spent a year of his life in a coma and another remembering how to walk.

Gripped with this truth, I'm no longer Ricardo's focus; he's found another to fulfill his dreams, his life and his bed. I had become a distance memory, a whisper in the breeze, a lost soul that hung back. I stayed where all our hopes and dreams began, where our bright future started and where my life ended.

I've stayed in this spot at the table by the window for four years waiting for Ricardo to return. I held on to wants and desires that he can never meet. I've stayed here because I'm a lost soul, a spirit still in love with the living.

I once had the love of a man who loved me. My love for him lingered, hopeful, but watching Ricardo with this woman and their love for each other. I realized there's no need for me. I drifted over to the loving couple, watching them this close I discern that I could never give him what he needed. I'm just a lost soul, now glad to have loved. I planted a soft kiss on Ricardo's cheek. He smiled and I believe it's for me.

It's right for me to move on, to fade into the eternal bliss. I looked to the light so bright near the window luring me. With a sigh, I drifted back realizing there's no longer a need to defy the strong pulling of infinite and glory that called upon me.

I turned to look one last time at Ricardo's happy face. It's genuine happiness I felt for him. Turning back toward the bright and mysterious radiance with the understanding there's no more time for me here. I took my first step into the bright light happy to enter the peaceful rest; bone weary from my time spent lingering.

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