

SEDUCE

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To the Peepal Tree Family, one love and respect to all.

Dedicated to my mum, who keeps giving me life and to all the lives within.

DESIREE REYNOLDS

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P E E P A L T R E E

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DI CAST

Time: Some time ago, before yuh barn.

Place: Church Island, a two-bit rock off di mainlan

In order of appearance

Hyacinth Collins: Pastor Collins' mumma, good lady of the church, guardian of everybody's morals, a nosey ole bat.

Alfredo: Town postmaster, a black man, married to dat brown woman, Clementina.

Clementina: Wife to Alfredo, a self-righteous woman, too conscious of she status.

Mikey: Ole Rasta, ole soljah, Seduce lover; him spend time ah foreign.

Glory: Seduce darta, yellow woman who tink she betta dan odda people.

The Lampis: Seduce good fren an sistahs in faith. Women who cook a fish call lampi, which use to get nyam all over di worl but nobody want it now. Many a Lampi had to turn prostitute to live. Dey keep di ole ways alive. Dem outside Seduce house, for Glory don't want dem in dere.

Pastor Collins: Hyacinth Collins' pickney, a minister. Him have him own church dats respectable an too quiet. Him don't believe in di ole ways.

Seduce: Jus dead. Glory mumma, Loo an Son granmumma, a onetime Lampi.

Marshall: Head of police roun dese parts. A brown man, him fight in di firs worl war. He tink him hol' all di power roun ya. Him no know how him feel bout Seduce.

Loo: Seduce grandarta, Glory darta and Son sistah. Her farda name Jono, a sailor from di mainlan. No one know what happen to him. Loo name afta Lucretia, a legend roun yah, from slavery time. Loo always talk seh we an us, for she have more dan one spirit in she body.

Honey Rock: Loo's name fi one ah dem back to Africa man, a smooth-skin, virgin politician, choosing Church fi free. She meet im at di rally outside ah di courthouse.

Son: Seduce grandson, Glory son an Loo brodder. Him a teacher pan di mainlan.

People not here any more

Big Pearl Before Swine: Seduce granmumma.

Likkle Pearl Before Swine: Seduce mumma.

Geno: Seduce los' bwoy pickney.

FIRST MOVEMENT

In and around Seduce's House

Beginnings

The day opens her legs to let the night in. It moves from a dark lilac to bottomless purple. You wait for a moment to adjust your eyes and against your skin is a smooth coolness. By the light of the moon, you can make out a large structure that almost blots out the horizon. You can't tell if it's a building or something more natural, a shadow, a greater darkness just recognisable against the blackness. Clinging to the edges you can see movement.

The souls sail around, chit-chatting and remembering nothing. Souls do that. Visiting so many places, so many people that they very soon forget where they have been. They only know where they are going, and when they are there have already started to forget. They wheel overhead and cry loud into the dark, feathers reflecting moonlight, sharp eyes watchful. They bustle and nudge each other, some getting angry about the lack of space. A few circle around, waiting for one to go back. Sometimes they nip and scratch. They know they are only there for a short time, so they want to make the most of it. Some are bigger than others, some are quiet but most are loud and, for those that can hear them, their squawking can be heard for miles. Their long claws grip tightly to the perches and their small eyes look as if they are trying to remember.

A gap on the branch becomes free and several souls race for it. A fight breaks out, as it often does at such times.

They wait. They never know exactly when it's going to happen, that strong tugging that takes them back. Through the

light and the dark, the cold and the heat, and finally again the cold. Like mothers, they forget the pain. A small one manages to beat others off the perch. This one has been waiting for the pull back. Wants to go. Looking, waiting, watching. Others are squawking loudly.

She pays them no mind, she has squawks of her own she's not ready to let go of. Sounds and trills. But she is tired and ready to get back.

Hyacinth

“Praise Jesus, our Farder, sweet Lord, in Jesus name, amen! What a sad time it is for all ah we. Here to bury di good sister. Now, we know dat *all* truths will be reveal before him. We are naked in di eyes of di Lord. All secrets will be reveal, amen! Let me hear an amen! When we walk in di light of God, we walk without sin, we walk in His righteousness. We will be flesh of His flesh, blood of Him blood. But if you sin, you will be cast out by di livin God. We not talkin bout di sun, moon an stars, like dem heathens outside. Close you eyes, close dem, feel God move in dis room, feel him, lock out di filth and wantonness outside dis house, amen. The Lord protect him sheep and let di evil doers be dash into di fiery pits of hell... Me an dis woman had our time, oh yes. It’s true. Dey may not have been any love lost but we respec each odda, yes dere was respect...”

... Me come fi mek sure di ole bitch dead. Me never like her – dutty, filthy woman. Mek me sick. What all dese women doing here? No decent law-abiding woman should be sullied by attending dis travesty and disgrace. Me? Like me seh, me hear dat she get tek, an me come fi mek sure she gone. What is wrong wid my boy? What to do? Him shoulda refuse to do di ceremony. Him should perform some kinda test. Mek sure di ole whore pass. Me not sure. You hear bout dese people? A lie she could be lyin. Look! Me swear her eye dem a trimble. Watch her, watch her now. People eatin di food, eatin! How can you eat wid dat filth in front of you. Me no know why di coffin not “Y”-shape, mek me tell you. Too much cocky track in she! God forgive me mout. Me hear seh even on di mainland everybody know bout she – one of di most well known Lampis

ever. From when me did firs see her twitching she tail wid di odda Lampis roun town, me know dat she was trouble.

“We can only hope dat in her last moments she found di Lord.”

... Hear dem a mek noise outside. Drinkin, laughin. Ungodly. What’s wrong wid dem ole whore fren of hers? Me know Glory didn’t invite dem! Dey want to drown out the word of di Lord. Glory bes be careful, dem woman deh, dem Lampis – evil! Evil as di day long. Killas dem. Whores, ole higue, all ah dem, witches wid hearts as black as dem face. Dat is really where di bitch in di coffin belong. Wid dem. Dutty heathen!

Look at me chile, watch him nuh! Him ah do me proud, til me heart goin burs! Show di heathens how it go. Show dem, show dem! Praise God di day you come to me. I know him feel bad; dat will soon pass. It did before. Him wife seh she catch him in dat ole bitch house. Being a man of di Lord him shoulda know betta, should not be fraternising wid dese people, but him won’t lissen. You would tink dat di Lord woulda give him di strent to resist, to see di devil in all him guises. Is a shame. Is him heart, as big as di open sea out yonder. But is shame, is shame his wife catch him under di house. Dat is where him use to hide when him a pickney. Is him sof nature, jus like him modder. But dat ole whore? She ent have no shame. Still a tek man to her bed at she age. Maybe dat is what kill her; she screw sheself to death. She a burn in di fiery depths of hell. Praise Jesus!

Glory look so sad, cyant look at her, cyant let her catch me eye. She should be glad. I am. God forgive me. Now maybe every god-blessed husband in dis place will be where dem suppose to be. She was di reason mine lef me, I swear pan me pickney life it was. Dat ole hussy bruk up many a marriage on dis island. Man fool so still. Chupid. She come along wid crocodile eyes, tail twitchin, an man tink woman mus be like dat all di time. Glory – likkle, quiet, yellow child. Now, she’s a funny woman. Quiet, quiet, not like she modder. I used to see her sometimes, waiting outside di shops or in town. Never smilin. Me memba seeing her outside a shop, sad eyes, playin

in di dirt wid a stick. She look so small an helpless, so in need a God, me want hold she, look after she, give she everything that ole whore could not, show her di light. But she fine di Lord an mek him she only judge, praise Jesus. Glory goin need all she strength today.

And look Mikey, dat ole fool cryin in he rum. Him a fool fi she, long years. He bring down him family. He was di only one a dem educate, an him turn fishaman. Imagine dat. Ah she, she bring him dung to her level. She bring we all down.

Alfredo and Clementina

“Good marnin, good afternoon and goodnight. Hehe, well, we are here, dat is for sure. Hehe. I wanted to seh... Clementina, stop pullin me! She don’t want me mek ah fool of myself. Anyway, mek me seh... Is good to... ahm, well dat’s it, I’ll sit down now.”

“Yuh ole fool, yuh did mek a fool of yusef. You come here to mek speech? Like di shame is not enough, Jesus God!”

“Sshh. My love, people will hear you.”

“Don’t shush me! Why *are* we here, Alfredo?”

“Sweetheart, darlin, sugar, it was, well, ahm, di right ting to do.”

“Right? Right?”

“Sweetheart, you didn’t have to come.”

“Of course I did! What you tek me for? I remember di times, Alfredo, cryin in me marriage bed, knowin where you was goin!”

“Baby...”

“Don’t baby me! Do not speak to me as if I was one of you whores! My poor parents, if dey only knew you was goin bring me so low.”

“Darling, please, you go antagonise yuhself.”

“Oh Holy Sweet Baby Jesus! We in di dead house, at di whore funeral! If you let anyone ah dem duppies follow we home to kill we in our beds cos you needed to come to dis whore funeral! Oh Lord, sweet lord, sweet baby Jesus!”

“Well it didn’t seem right not to come. Stop cryin, Clemmy, sweetheart, sugar, darling.”

“Alfredo, after everything you said. Look at our little post office. Do you know how many people would kill for what we have? What for do yuh want to throw it away?”

“But darlin...”

“Don’t darlin me! Comin home with her smell on you lips an her soul in you heart. Jesus Lord! Di depravity, di sickness. Is a miracle dat we have what we have, Alfredo. A shop, a post office, a house. Dem people would tink nothin of taking away all a dis. Why would you put it all at risk?”

“What dem doin? Peekin tru we windows?”

“Do not bring up you depravity in me face. Shame, Alfredo, have you no shame?”

“I just wanted to pay me respects...”

“Respects! Respects! You tink such as she deserves respect, an you God-given wife none?”

“No, sweetheart.”

“Den what?”

“Well, ahm... ahm... I would tink dat God would be pleased wid me, dat me was doin di right ting to... ahm...”

“Check she dead?”

“Exact. You know what dem say bout she and dis family?”

“Alfredo, how strong you tink me modder is?”

“Wha?”

“Me seh, how strong you tink she is?”

“Well... ahm... me no know.”

“Is how you tink me come out a me modder as if me born dis size? She would be dead. Well she not dead, Alfredo, an me not born yesterday.”

“Alright, alright, but what is di worry?”

“Di worry, di worry, what about di priest, di farders?”

“What, sugar?”

“Di farders. What would dey say, what if our church found out? Aren’t you feared for you soul, Alfredo? We have good standing here. Our little post office. It is everyting me modder an farder work for. And one day, twenty years ago, you roll in there like one a di saints almighty and you talked dem to give me to you, me an di post office. You owe me an dem.”

“And neither you nor dem go mek me forget it.”

“Is what you seh, Alfredo?”

“Nuttin, darling.”

“You always savin people? Don’t it?”

“I... I... what you mean?”

“Me hear say, Alfredo, me hear say. And you know di mail inspector is comin today, an we haven’t got di mail.”

“I go pick it up on our way home. What for I have anything to do wid di inspector?”

“Well he like everyting shipshape an he will be reportin dat we’re not in di shop.”

“What madness has taken over di worl when a man cyant come to a funeral? Well, me tink seh we set free.”

“Why you shoutin, Alfredo? People go hear.”

“Let dem hear, Clementina. Dem always hear, wherever we are, dem hear. Whateva we do, dem hear; you cyant poop an smady don’t hear!”

“Alfredo! Calm yusef!”

“Well, dem too blasted nosey. I’m goin outside.”

“Alright, me a come too.”

“Wha!”

“For you to go outside an drink wid dem ole whores – you drinkin buddy and sex fren? You mad! I’m not letting you outta me sight. For people to laugh at me? You lucky me here. Nobody can tell me me nuh know where me husband is. Shut you mout, Alfredo, you’ll catch flies. Dat’s right. Me a come. Get my hat an shawl.”

“But darlin...”

“Hush you lip, Alfredo and let we go outside.”

“Is di man me want to talk wid.”

“Oh, I see, relive di ole times? Laugh at you dirty ways?”

“Clementina, stay in here wid the ladies. What people tink? You out there wid di man dem and di Lampis, eh?”

“Maybe you have a point, but...”

“Yes, dumpling, you know me right. Stay here, in the kitchen. Glory has made some tea.”

“Don’t go into that room, Alfredo!”

“What is wrong wid you, Clementina? Di woman dead. You tink she goin to seduce me from di grave?”

“A you talk it Alfredo, a you talk it.”