

When can we see the stars together again?

by Chidalu E.

I hated the thought of leaving the home in which I had spent practically my whole life; I was born inside that house. I remember the warmth of the old house I used to live in way up in the northern states. My friends that I fooled around with all the time. Most of all, I remember the prejudice that my parents taught me. They hated black people. At the time, we were in a bad financial situation leaving us no choice but to move south to Alabama.

Later, I got used to my surroundings and my new home, gaining new friends everywhere I went. I felt at home again, but there was something that always bugged me. There was a girl that always sat on an abandoned hill next to my house every night. I was always curious of that girl and wanted to ask many questions like why she looked at the stars so much. One day, my curiosity got the best of me. I snuck out of my house even though it was past curfew. I remember the cold breeze that swept past me as I dashed up the hill where I wasn't supposed to go. That night, I felt like nothing was going to stop me. Like I was a free bird soaring through the night sky. The closer I got to her, the more I noticed something. She wasn't like me and I wasn't like her. She was a black person. I got a little anxious as I approached her that day. At that time, I cared about nothing else, and being a little hesitant, I greeted her, but there was no response. I remember seeing the scared look in her eyes like she was caught or something. I looked up in the sky and just said whatever crossed my mind. I remember the exact words I blurted, "You like constellations too?"

I saw her eyes sparkle as she began talking about the different constellations that could be found in the starry sky. Although her accent was different, she talked as if we'd known each other for years. We shared our different interests. That became a night to remember. She told me her name, and I told her mine. Her name reminded me of happy Christmas nights. Her name was Carol, and it had a nice ring to it. She was just one year older than me which was fine and the nicest and smartest girl I ever knew.

Years went by as my feelings for her grew. I knew that we could never be together, and if that happened, it would be in a million years. In 1954, I turned seventeen and heard the news of a civil rights movement that might occur. Not before long, it did. Carol said that she wanted to join the movement. I felt a deep pain in my heart, not wanting to let her go there to get hurt. I made the decision to go with her, and to be right there when she needed me.

The day came when the civil rights movement occurred. I didn't know when it would end. There were multiple casualties among the people in the movement. I watched as many blacks got injured after another by the cops that were trying to stop the ruckus. I remember the exact day that Carol got injured trying to protect one of her friends that was jostled by one of the cops.

It was the December of 1956. I remember being in shock and my heart rate went up real fast. I raced as fast as I could to get a hold of her and carry her to the hospital. As I carried her running, I confessed my feelings crying and shouting as loud as I could. I saw her lips move trying to tell me something at that moment, but the loud shouting of the movement was too loud to hear what she said. I bolted through the hospital door with my eyes swollen and red because of the tears that I shed on my way there. I got weird looks from the staffs that worked there but that didn't stop me for requesting immediate support.

To my dismay, the hospitals that were for the blacks couldn't do much. I waited months and days for Carol to get back, doing as much as I could for her as she was being treated at the hospital.

I spent more of my days in the hospital and found out a lot of things from those that visited and the staffs. The information that was most intriguing was the fact that she was younger than me and that I was the older one even though I've acted younger these years. I was one year older than her, and she'd been lying to me this whole time. I knew she had a reason for lying about it because she had it rough as a black person. When she woke up, my eyes sparkled like hers back then. I hugged her tightly. She said the words that she was trying to say back at the riot which was the phrase, "I love you" My eyes filled with tears as I shouted, "When can we see the stars together?" very abruptly.

It's been a decade since segregation ended after that accident, and I've been living peacefully with Carol in our own little house. Carol and I had married, and we became parents of two little boys. I became an astronomer and a father. Both our dreams came true except the fact that now that there's no segregation. I guess you could say we both got our end of a happy ending.