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MY
GRAND
EPIPHANY

CINDY K. GREEN

My Grand
Epiphany
by
Cindy K. Green

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My Grand Epiphany

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I peered into the hazel eyes of my best friend, Dean Perry, utilizing every last ounce of my beseeching female wiles. I even thought about batting my eyelashes, but I'm certain that would have only induced laughter instead of compliance. Maybe I was going about this all wrong. *Probably*. It wouldn't be the first time. *Or the last*, I reminded myself. *Prayer*. Yes, I needed to spend some definite time down on my knees.

Hello, God it's me, Tonya Hammond. Again. I could sure use a little TLC at the moment and a 'yes' from Dean wouldn't be too bad either.

I glanced back to Dean. He'd firmed his mouth and pulled it to the side.

Uh-oh! He was going to turn me down. My very best friend and he was going to tell me 'no'.

He tilted his head down to my eyelevel with his dark wavy hair tumbling over his forehead. "Tonya..."

It was his chiding but understanding voice, but at the moment I didn't want to be chided. Or understood for that matter. I only wanted him to agree. I knew I was asking a lot, but what are friends for if you can't ask them to pose as your imaginary boyfriend at dinner with your annoying cousin Christine and her perfect GQ fiancé, Brian.

"Listen, Dean, I need you."

"You need me?" His brows pulled back and he grinned.

I grabbed onto his soft t-shirt and pulled him

close with a smile on my face. “Now’s not the time for games. This is serious.” Yet all I could do was smile at him.

“I gather from your request that you told your cousin you already have a boyfriend.”

“Of course, I did.” I started to pace around my small living room. “I mean what was I supposed to say when she started into her pityingly, insensitive tone about ‘poor cousin Tonya’ and then spouts on and on about her fiancé Brian who’s obviously the next Hugh Jackman.”

Dean blocked my path not allowing me to continue my aimless trek. He stood tall and solid before me, his mouth forming a resolute expression. “You could have told her the truth.”

Look at him standing there appearing all tough and cute at the same time, his gorgeous hazel eyes examining me fully. He just didn’t get it. Or maybe he did from the slight smile emerging in the corner of his mouth.

I swiped a hand from my forehead down past my eyes and then fell back onto my old, worn-out couch. “Oh, you’re right. As always.” I leaned over my lap and blew out a breath of air.

Dean took the seat beside me and set his arm around my shoulders as we both sunk into the cushions behind us. I rested my head on his shoulder. “What’s wrong with me? I should be happy she’s happy.”

“Tonya, you should just be happy. Period. *‘Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.’*”

He was quoting Scripture at me now, touting his unbelievable knack of pulling out a pertinent Bible verse at a moments notice.

He squeezed my arm. “Something’s been bugging you for awhile now and I want to know what it is.”

I snuggled closer to him and covered my mouth

as I repressed a sob. Why was I reacting so emotionally? There wasn't anything wrong with me. Was there? No, it was just Christine and the way she always treated me.

"I'm fine." I rasped out. Yeah, that was real convincing. I sat up from under his arm. "Really, just peachy." Had the word 'peachy' just escaped my lips? Now he'd know without a doubt that something was definitely wrong. And I didn't even know what it was.

I shot out of my seat. "Just forget it, Dean. It was a ridiculous idea. I never should have fallen into Christine's trap. In fact, what I should have done is invite them to church with us." I moved to the fireplace mantel and started to finger the small crystal clock set there. "Besides, who would really believe us as a couple anyway?" I tried to laugh, but I couldn't quite muster it especially when he looked at me with his disapproving eyes.

He joined me and stood at the other side of the mantel. "You don't think we could pull it off, huh?" His eyes were like steel. There was no laughter in his voice. And I felt like dirt. Had my assumption hurt his feelings?

"I mean, sure we could...we could pull it off." I staggered through my answer feeling like an awkward teenager with one too many pimples.

His hand reached out for mine and when our fingers locked I felt a little tingle travel down my arm and hit me straight in the heart.

"Yeah, I think we could too." His eyes took on a strange hue. Deep and swirling. Intense. What was wrong with Dean? I'd never seen him act so strange. And why had I never realized until now how deep and masculine his voice sounded. I shivered when he spoke again.

"Let's say for one minute that I might actually accompany you on this farce tonight."

"Okay, let's say you do."

He still held my hand as he pulled me closer.

“Maybe we should practice a little bit.”

“Practice?” What was he implying? I started to panic. What was he going to do? Kiss me? Oh, he wouldn’t dare.

Dean was just Dean. My friend, my rock, my companion. The first thing I thought about in the morning and the last before I fell asleep at night.

Dean!

It was like the cobwebs had crumbled from my eyes. Isn’t that what they say when you’ve achieved some kind of grand epiphany and clarity of mind? If so then I’d definitely attained that level of realization. Now I understood why I’d been so irritable lately.

Dean.

Mmm. I just loved saying his name. If that doesn’t sound like a girl in love then I don’t know what does.

Oh dear, Lord, I’m in love with my best friend.
Help!

I tried not to let my eyes look all swoony when I peered back at him. Maybe I wasn’t in love with him. I was just wishing I was because being thirty and single was getting old fast. If he kissed me I might know for sure. Would he really kiss me? The idea didn’t sound so outrageous anymore. I cleared my throat and tried to speak. Nothing. Not a peep.

Dean smiled. Did he understand the inner turmoil I was going through? And yet he smiles!

He squeezed my hand. “I’ve held you hand before. I’ve even put my arm around your shoulders.” He swiveled me around next to him and placed his arm around me. Then he tilted my body toward him. Our faces were only a couple inches apart. “But I’ve never kissed you.”

A lump formed in my throat that I had a hard time swallowing. “Um, maybe we should try that. You know for practice purposes.”

My Grand Epiphany

He moved his eyes back and forth while examining my face. "Right. Practice. We wouldn't want to look unpracticed."

His voice rumbled near my ear and made me feel warm all over. He inched his face toward mine and I almost lost my nerve and pushed away except now I had to know. What was it like to be kissed by Dean Perry? That's when we made contact and the fireworks started.

Oh yeah I was in love. Hallelujah, it had finally happened. Who knew how long it had been that way. Maybe always. I'd just interpreted it as friendship. But don't you want your life partner to be your dearest friend as well?

When we came apart, Dean searched my face just as he had before the kiss. Did he feel it too? Was his heart thumping like a brass band had taken up residence in his chest? Had his breath grown short and his skin begun to tingle from head to toe?

No, maybe it was just me. This was only a test. A point to be made about my horrible suggestion that he pose as my boyfriend. What as I thinking? I wasn't thinking. That's the problem. And I wasn't thinking now.

I pulled away and started for the other side of the room. I had to create some space between us. Boy did I feel stupid. "I guess you can pull off this boyfriend charade after all."

Dean's hand locked onto my arm and I turned back to him, a tear clinging to my eyelash. "It wasn't a charade, Tonya. I've wanted to kiss you as far back as I can remember."

"You have?" Another tear escaped and cascaded down my face.

Smiling tenderly, he caught the tear and wiped it away. "Yeah, I have."

"Do, you think you might want to do it again or have I totally turned you off. I know I can be a bit off-setting at times and you know how I bungle

everything up...”

And then he kissed me again, astutely shutting me up with a good long liplock. “Mmm,” I exhaled as the kiss ended.

“Shall we try for the best two out of three,” Dean kidded as he stroked the side of my face.

“I think that, maybe, in an effort for conscientious research that we just might have to.”

Dean’s chest rose and then dropped, looking like he had something important on his mind. “I love you, Tonya Hammond.”

“You do?”

“Yeah, I sure do.”

“I think I love you too.”

“You think?”

“Well, it’s all so new to me. Like a grand epiphany and yet I’ve always known.

With that, he kissed me again and I wondered how I’d lived all these years without having experienced Dean’s mind-altering kisses.

Dean and I arrived at the Parisian bistro where we were to meet Christine and Brian for dinner. Dean held my hand and its strength and warmth ignited a sense of assurance in me. Even if this was a horrible dinner, it would still be wonderful because he was here. And maybe I was all wrong about Christine and she was just looking out for me. She might be happy to know that I’d finally found love.

While approaching their table, Dean leaned over to me and whispered. “What are you grinning so much for?” His eyes took on a shadowy condition and the sadness rolled in. “You didn’t admit what you did this afternoon just for a date, did you?”

How could he be so insecure? That was reserved for me alone. “Don’t be silly, Dean.” I squeezed his hand. “I just remembered the verse from Psalms. *‘Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.’*”

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