

# Sadie's New City

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It was late in the day. I was sitting alone on the front steps of my apartment building, the cold cement numbing my ass and sending a chill down my legs. The wind blew and in the midst of the rattling autumn leaves I lifted trembling fingers to my mouth and drew deeply on a smouldering cigarette. Acrid, smooth smoke filled my lungs, triggering the release of endorphins. I paused a moment before exhaling slowly, the white cloud that flowed over my lips disappearing into the hungry wind before I had a chance to breathe. "Isn't it a little cold to be sitting out here alone? With no jacket?" asked a male voice behind me. I hadn't heard the heavy glass door opening. I turned my head, recognizing him as the tenant of the apartment down the hall from my bachelor suite. He wasn't too bad looking. One of the first things I had noticed about him was his thick hair, black like the espresso I drank every day at work. His eyes were chips of polished Mayan obsidian. When he sat down beside me, I could see my reflection in them. I wanted to reach out and touch his corded sweater, press my fingers into its softness, find resistance in the firmness of the muscle underneath. I sat on my hand instead, letting the other one remain occupied with its cigarette. He looked out across the street, eyes lost in the lingering green of the park across the way, the grass resembling the slimy walls of the old canal, or a stray bit of Ireland. He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a fresh pack, tearing it open. The sound of crumpling plastic was lost in the skitter of red leaves across the pavement at our feet. He felt himself for a lighter. I handed him my cigarette and he nodded his thanks, pressing its tip to his own. I watched his mouth, the concentration in his eyes as he took a long drag, cheeks concave planes above an angular, cut jaw. His addiction flared to life, the eye of Satan on the staff of evil. At least, that's what my mother called it. He had an arousing air, an obvious masculinity, his subtle strength falling way to an easy charm that was so disarming. And he probably wasn't even aware of it. If he decided to turn his attention to me, I wouldn't be able to think straight. But yeah, like that would ever happen. Why would he, him with his coffee hair and Mayan eyes, languid body and unconscious grace, be attracted to a thirty-something, tired old thing like me? After years as a workaholic, spending more hours than not in the office, pouring my life into projects I was probably taking too close to heart, my skin was powder pale, I was thin from the diet of coffee and nicotine, and my dark eyes, rarely seeing the light, were a smouldering black. Some would have called it a dangerous beauty. I called it lack of vitamin D. "You're the one that just moved into the single down the hall, right?" He glanced at me, a flicker of black flame. There was a smile hidden somewhere on his face, felt like the taste of snow in the air before the first fall. "Yeah," I nodded, "that's me." "Are you from

around here?" Smoke curled over his lips in a calm lull. The wind picked up and ruffled his hair like a raven ruffling its feathers. I shook my head. Something about the way he was looking at me made my blood to quicken. I felt another stirring deep inside. "I'm from outside the city. My company decided to transfer me to the branch here and I figured, what the hell. Why not. I've got nothing to leave behind." "Oh?" A coal eyebrow went up at that. "I'm Mark, by the way." He offered a hand. "From apartment 306." "Sadie, 310." I took his hand. "Practically neighbors." There was that hint of smile again. "Practically," I agreed. "Hey, I have to get going. If you ever need anything, just knock. Nice meeting you!" He stood, tossing his cigarette to the ground, rubbing it out with his toe. "Yeah, thanks. Nice meeting you too." I waved at his back as he started off down the street. He turned only once to flash a grin at me. "And get a jacket on!" he called back before disappearing around the corner. I smiled. Taking a final drag, I let the remainder of my cigarette fall from my fingers to the dirty sidewalk. I watched it sizzle for a second in a tiny puddle as a car swished by on the wet pavement. Standing up, I drew the autumn air into my lungs until they wouldn't expand any more, taking in the smell of wet and earth, the mustiness of the city after a rain. I went inside to where there were still boxes left to unpack. Mine was a life half in motion. A home half displaced. I didn't see Mark again that day, but I thought of him that night while I was laying on my little pull out bed, hand between my thighs and fingers sliding along my wet folds. Though he might not be attracted to the petite and pale type like me, I was certainly attracted to him. I imagined his solid body pressing against mine, our forms moulded together, moving not quite as one but in harmony. Thoughts of him straining beneath me, every fibre pulled towards the chance to take his pleasure in me while I rubbed my clit for him to watch, filled my mind like a picture show. I remembered his spicy, clean scent from when he had sat beside me on the step, and I imagined the taste of him on my tongue. When I finally fell over the edge and shuddered in the sublime electricity of an orgasm the type only women can give themselves, I could have sworn I heard him moan my name. Afterwards I lay in the silence of my apartment, feeling empty and untouched. I sighed, turning over, and tried to go to sleep. It was always that way, of course. No amount of imagination could replace the real deal. I didn't see Mark all that week either, but I was so busy settling in and getting to know my new office and colleagues, drafting new projects and revising old ones, that I could have passed him in the street or on the stairwell of our building and not known it. At least, that's what I told myself. A part of me was wondering if I would see that black Mayan firelight again. A new day dawned particularly miserable and grey, and by the time I got home that night, habitually late, rain was pouring down. And as though that weren't enough to complete the unhappy weather, thunder had begun to drum, lightning cracking through the bowl of the sky. I sat outside my apartment door in the dimly lit hall, sipping a beer and avoiding the crashing light show. Ever since childhood, storms had terrified me. I couldn't tell you why. Out in the hall where there were no windows, especially windows that still had no curtains like mine, my back was pressed against the door, my eyes squeezed closed, it was almost as though the storm didn't exist. I couldn't see the lightning and the thunder was a faded murmuring. I tried to relax a little. The door to 306 opened. "Hey!" I looked up to see Mark looking down at me, amusement in those deep eyes. "Locked out?" I couldn't help but smile, sheepish. I must have looked pretty strange, sitting out in the hall with nothing

but a bottle of beer. "Just avoiding the storm," I admitted, pushing myself up a little straighter against the wall. Mark's physical proximity made me nervous and exited. He'd been in the back of my thoughts all week long, where I'd been toying with fantasies of what I would do to him if I ever got him into my bed. I hadn't been too busy for that at least. "Storms make you nervous?" A tinge of sympathy stained his voice. I nodded. "I'd rather not experience certain of Mother Nature's wonders," I admitted dryly. "What's with the cup?" I eyed the measuring cup in his hand. He laughed. "Would you believe I was coming to borrow a cup of sugar?" I let him into my one room bachelor suite and directed him to the cupboard where my sugar was stored. I stayed in the hall, listening to him admire my wall hangings. "So what do you want with a cup of sugar at this hour?" I asked, watching him from the door. The play of lightning on his features was ghostly. I wondered if he was really baking. "I'm trying to make a cake," he replied. "It's a last minute thing. Someone found out it's the secretary's birthday, and she doesn't like store bought cake." "Oh." He came back out. "Where is it that you work?" I asked. "I do oversight for Innertech. You?" Wow. Innertech was a big name. "Project coordinator for CASB." Another big name. His eyes widened appreciatively. "Hey," he started tentatively. "Maybe you could give me a hand with this. I'm not really much of a cook... and this way you'd have some company to wait out the storm with. I can draw the blinds for you." To my surprise I was nodding. My smile came slowly but surely. "But I can't promise that I'll be any better of a cook," I grinned. His apartment was tasteful, the furniture an eclectic mix of leather and hard wood frames with plush cushions. Very masculine. There was a large cabinet filled with glasses and various bottles of imported alcohol. He saw me notice it. "Can I fix you something?" he asked. "Another beer? Cider? Hot cocoa? I've got practically everything." I said yes to the cocoa. We went to work in the kitchen, where his previous efforts were scattered about in crushed eggs, toppled bake ware and poufs of spilled flour. I was barely able to suppress my amusement. He saw that. "Well now you get a chance to try, too!" He laughed, a bit sheepishly at himself. And we did try. For the next two hours we worked hard to make a cake worthy of presentation. We laughed at each other, each enjoying the others misfortunes when something spilled or a new batter had to be made when a wrong ingredient was found, each enjoying greatly the others company. "Okay, I think we've done it!" I stood back from the oven, eyeing the dubious tins of batter that had just been placed within it. Behind me Mark had opened a bottle of wine. He handed me a glass. "To our success!" he toasted. We clinked. "Let's hope it doesn't burn." I was only half kidding. We cleaned up, sweeping and scraping the remains away, then sat down on the sofa to wait for our creation to emerge. The smell of spices, cinnamon, ginger, clove, filled the warm interior of the apartment. I sipped my wine, enjoying the rich palate, taking a moment to roll the liquid around my tongue. It was a good bottle. "So tell me about being a project coordinator," Mark asked, leaning into the cushions, facing me. I shrugged. "What's to tell? I refine and improve other people's work." Damn, it really was a good bottle. I sipped my glass again. "Tell me about the projects you do, then." His eyes were curious and intent, interested. "They're mostly community projects," I said. "We're currently trying to find the funding to restore the old Brooke Theater downtown, and starting to draft the plans for a new sports center out near Maplewood." "Wow." He whistled. "You sound pretty important. Things like that affect a lot of people's lives." I

shrugged again, somewhat embarrassed. It had always been just my job and I was used to receiving praise, so why were his words making me blush? "I'm one of the best," I admitted. "But I'm not perfect." "You said before that you had nothing to leave behind when you moved." He was watching me closely. "Does that include no one?" Before I could reply, there was a knock at the door. Startled from our conversation, Mark rose to answer it. I glanced at the small timepiece on the end table. Who would be calling at 11:00 at night? In strode a leggy blond. "Hey babe, what's cooking?" She sniffed the air. Seeing me on the couch, she paused. "Kristie, this is Sadie, my new neighbor," Mark introduced. "She was kind enough to talk me through baking that blasted cake I was telling you about. Sadie, meet my girlfriend Kristie." My chest slowly caved in, crushed beneath some invisible weight. There was a sinking feeling inside. Not that I'd really ever had a chance, but this totally blew away any hope I'd secretly harbored for myself. I had been right before – this decidedly masculine type preferred model material. Kristie laughed. "You need all the help you can get!" Her white pearl teeth seemed a little too far bared in her grin. "The storm's over, I'm going to head back." I stood. "I have to be in early tomorrow for the final cost analysis of the arena." Was it my imagination or did Mark look a little disappointed around the edges? Kristie had already bounced like a bubble into the kitchen to see what was in the oven. I eyed her silk legs, her dauntingly short dress. There was no way I could compete with that. My heart fell a little more. I went and opened the door. "No use letting this go to waste." Mark handed me the wine glass I had set down on the coffee table. "Enjoy it – it was a good year. I'll get the glass back later." He smiled apologetically. Back at my own place, I set the glass down on the floor beside my little tv and heaved a sigh. Sadie strikes out again. I pulled out the sofa bed, flipped on the television, and sank fully clothed into the blankets. God, I felt like crap. After a moment I slowly unbuckled my pants and reached down to touch my lonely clit, imagining Mark's hands for the last time. One final fling. No need to torture myself over what I couldn't have. There was a knock at the door. Surprised, I re-buckled my pants, swearing, and went to look through the peep hole. Mark was standing in the hall, hands in his pockets, looking unusually uncomfortable. It didn't seem like him to be ill at ease over anything. I had to take a moment to breathe and calm my body down from what I had just started with it. I opened the door. "Sorry to bother you again..." he started. I stood aside on impulse and, gratefully, he came in. "What's wrong?" I asked, sitting on the edge of my rumpled bed. He joined me, and the t.v flickered over us both. "I don't know what to say..." "Girl trouble?" "Yeah." He chuckled ruefully. "Why...how... is it girls always know?" "Let me guess – she dumped you." "Not quite..." He took a deep breath. "Start from the top, work your way to the bottom of it." I leaned back into the pillows, propped up on my elbows. The guy just needed a shoulder to cry on. I had no problem with that. It would do him a world of good, even if he hardly knew me. Besides, I really wanted to hear what happened to him and Legs. Mark lay back beside me, arms folded beneath his head, staring at the ceiling, eyes unfathomable in the darkness. "She threatened to leave me if I started fooling around with you," he said, his words a sigh like the heaving of wind over waves. "She's always been jealous. She gets upset over the smallest things. 'Where've you been? Who did you see?' I swear, sometimes... But tonight... No. She started in on me again and something just snapped. I heard my voice in my head, as though I were speaking to myself but it didn't feel like me

speaking, telling myself that I didn't need this shit. I was tired, I was through. The cons outweighed the pros. So I told her to leave. She looked at me like she hadn't understood, and I repeated what the voice in my head had said. She left. I don't want her back. I've had enough." At the end of his little rant, we were both quiet. What should I do? Tell him things would be alright? Tell him I knew a good dating service even though I didn't? But my silence was enough. "Thanks for listening." He turned his head to smile at me. "No problem. Everybody hurts sometimes." I tilted my head with a wry smile. There was an awkward silence. I didn't know what to do with myself. Was it right to make a move on a vulnerable man? Would he welcome it? Would we regret it in the morning? Mark shifted, then heaved a sigh. "You know," he ventured, as though unsure anymore if voicing his inner thoughts to a stranger were wise. "I kind of feel... a little freer. I didn't realize how much I was dreading the nights she would come over. I guess I have you to thank for that." He smiled at me, eyes warm like Mayan suns. "Sometimes you have to step outside the box before you can see what's inside it." I thought I sounded pretty wise. I wondered if he would buy that, or see through it and realize all I could really focus on at that moment was not ripping his buttons off in an attempt to get at his luscious skin. I hoped he wouldn't regret giving Legs the boot. The further she was from him, the luckier I was. Mark rolled over onto his side, propped on his elbow. He was so close, eyes holding mine. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't even blink. "Look at me, talking about myself like some self absorbed git," he said softly. "I should really be asking you how you've been since you've moved here. How are you finding it? Have you met anyone?" My heart was beating so fast I was sure he could see it was about to burst from my chest. I took a breath, a vain attempt to steady myself. "Met anyone?" I echoed. Yes, I had! I had met him! "Yeah, made any new friends. You said you left no one behind you when you moved. I wasn't sure if you meant friends, or something more." Oh. "It can be lonely in the city when you're new and by yourself," he said. Tell me about it. He reached out as though on impulse and traced the line of my cheek with his fingers. I leaned into the touch, unable to help myself. He licked his lips. In the space of one breath to another we were in each others arms, mouths pressed tight, hands searching for the quickest way to tear the clothing off each others bodies. Underneath my palms on his chest I could feel his pulse, a strong base throb that resonated through me. He was kissing along my neck, traveling the line down to my collarbone, then lifting my shirt from me, pulling it over my head and off my arms. He cupped my breasts, enjoying how my nipples were stiffening, rising to greet him. He bent his head, taking each one into his mouth, teasing with his tongue. Thrills of pleasure radiated from where his lips connected with my body. I had my hands on him at last, stroking through his hair, running over his shoulders. A part of me almost wanted to stop. What would the morning bring if we did this? But his mouth was traveling lower and any concern I had was blown away by sizzling fireworks in my brain. I couldn't believe my eyes. Here Mark was, naked in my bed. It was like Christmas and I had unwrapped my present. Now it was time to play with my toy. With the gentle pressure of my hands I guided him to lay back into the pillows. I wiggled out of the last piece of my clothing and straddled him, looking down. His eyes were burning, smouldering with lust and need, his cock nestled between my lower lips. I moved against him and the friction of him against the sensitive nerves of my clit made me arch my spine, pressing harder with a moan. He was watching

me, enjoying what he was seeing, his shaft swelling in response, well lubricated with the sticky sap that seeped from within me. I felt him shift below me, straining to angle for entry. I moved my hips to stop him. Who knew if I would have this chance again? I was going to make it last. I leaned over him and kissed his throat, teeth grazing his skin almost hard enough to hurt. He groaned, eyes closing, hips rising into me, seeking. My hands were mapping his body with their fingertips, exploring for sensitive places to waken with my lips and tongue. Each touch, each tease earned a responding twitch from his shaft where it remained snugly fit against my cleft, throbbing. I rearranged myself, moving to sit lower, and the sudden cool air on his cock made his eyes flutter open in a panic, but soon he was moaning again, thrusting himself into my mouth as I enveloped his stiff rod with my lips. I slid him down to my throat then pulled him back, tongue wrapping around the velvet smoothness of his head. "Oh my god, Sadie!" he gasped. "Let me have you!" He was sitting up, pulling me into his lap, hands on my hips, guiding me. I settled onto him, deliriously high as he filled me, pushing as deep as he could go. He was churning my insides; I rode him like a wave, tossed about on his rough waters. His hands were all over me, leaving no surface untouched. "You are so beautiful," he whispered between kisses. He must have felt me stiffen because he drew away to look at me. "You don't believe me?" I shrugged a little uneasily. This really wasn't the time to discuss my view of myself. "I didn't think I was your type," I said. "Why wouldn't I be interested in you?" He laughed in my general direction. "You're smart, successful, and I have to admit, I have a thing for dark beauties. I've been thinking about you since I met you on the steps..." Something inside me melted. Mark was moving again, taking away any chance I had to absorb his words fully. I was climbing higher, my body singing praises to the way his cock was splitting me apart, the way his hands were only just rough enough on my breasts to make them feel alive with raw pleasure. I was pulsing, becoming a palpitating sun, the fire behind my eyes blinding me as I came. He held me close, seemed to feed from my euphoria, the blood rushing through him as he stiffened and came in response to my orgasm. We lay together a while on my bed, my head on his shoulder. I traced a lazy circle around his nipple, watching with delight as it hardened, standing a little higher. I looked up at his face, those black eyes that I loved looking back at me. Did I really have a chance with him? My mind was turning in circles like the tip of my finger around his aureola. Legs was gone. He liked 'dark beauties'. Was it time for me to stop being alone? Only morning would tell. He smiled down at me, kissing my forehead and wrapping me tighter in his arms.