Diane Nelson

Curry for One

CURRY FOR ONE
A Short Story

By

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It's Anika's farewell dinner for her fellow grad students.
It's Tom's last chance to throw his hat in the ring.
But there's the niggling matter of cultural differences and family obligations.
And a bet on the line…

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DEDICATION

To the lovely women in my life.
You make my heart sing.

CURRY FOR ONE

There was something about curry. *Her* curry. She'd toned it down for us mortals, flashing a grin and a sly, demure flick of her wrists. Inviting us all to taste.

I could barely move. My jeans were tight and not from overindulging last night at Smokey's. Beer, ribs and hot-sauced throat scorchers. Now this…

A grad student's wet dream. Free food from an all-you-can-scoop buffet. Tom Holloway had just died and gone into lust.

Not for the first time, either. In fact, if I didn't grow a set right that minute, Anika Pradesh would be off to India to meet the intended, sooner rather than later. Forty-five, a professional—though exactly what he did for a living didn't make it through the rumor mill yet—and looking to wed and bed my Annie.

Annie… God damn, I have it bad.

He, that elusive he, had money, position and a hard on for my girl. All complements of her parents who thought a degree in materials science wasn't going to be worth squat, not when raising a family and supporting El Professional was at the top of the leader board for obligations owing the family back home. And they had found the dude through an ad in their local rag.

That wasn't arranged. That was goddamn deranged.

Shit, shit, shit.

I peeled my eyes from the bowls of temptation and watched out of the corner of my eye as she moved around the room. She'd gone traditional for us, her colleagues, with the sari and little oddments on her wrists and ankles. Jingly bits that elevated her movement to a symphony.

Silky, waist-length black hair got braided into something that had to have taken hours of effort. She'd kohled her eyes too. I had to look that up, not being exactly tuned into her culture. Black eyes outlined in sin, eyes that soul-sucked me from the get-go. Made me dry-mouthed. Inarticulate.

Yeah, there was a word that said it all.

Tom Holloway swallowed his tongue in the dining room with a Naan bread accompaniment.

I was so toast. Half drunk, half sick, half in lust … all in love. Nuts. When you're a political science major, what did I know from mathematics?

My roomie and best friend, Andy, said, "Pass me that light one, Tom, willya?"

I did so and glanced up. Annie was watching me, then she ducked her head. Was she blushing? She came around to Andy and explained, "This is called 'Pasanda.' It is very mild."

Unwrapping my tongue from around my brain stem, I jumped on the chance to get a word in, even if it was stupid.

"What's in it?"

She smiled. And oh my dear sweet mother, I swear the room lit up.

"This is made with heavy cream and coconut milk. Traditionally, almonds are added. Do you like it? Andy?"

Andy smacked his lips and nodded, then pointed to something red that screamed ER-ready-and-waiting.

"Um, that's…" *That* being Vindaloo, something I'd sampled on a trip to London, except I ended up in Hounslow with the second highest Indian population in the city surrounds. So I knew my shit when it came to food.

Other stuff, not so much.

Creases marred Anika's perfect features. She was concerned, overly concerned about my roommate. What I wanted was to have her thinking about me, not him.

Annie must have read my mind. "I think maybe you could help him select…" and she waved a dainty forefinger at a Korma, more almonds and coconuts, but it wouldn't send my roomie's esophagus into blast furnace status.

Though if she gets any closer, leaning over my geeky buddy, doing that incidental touch thing that's driving me batshit…

Manning up, I eased a bowl of steamed rice in Andy's direction, subbing that for the garlic laced concoction that had put hair on my chest and a spring in my step all those years ago. I might have gotten laid that night, but that had been during my experimental stage so details sometimes got lost in the recall.

And thinking about getting laid wasn't helping the situation.

As usual, I was the fifth wheel, the one who couldn't differentiate or fornicate symbols to save my sorry ass. The talk around the table was diagraming phases and doing the dirty with some concoction or other. The best I could do was dazzle them stupid with Hegel and Kant and a few forays into the economics of a global economy. And no one ever asked for my opinion on current events. With FOX news, who needed perspective?

Yes, I had friends in my own department, and yes, I had a coterie of slavering cute young things humping my modest swivel chair to sweet talk the teaching assistant into "special consideration for services rendered" and no, I did not indulge.

I had standards, and every night I took one out, one very special one, and gave it a good going-over just to remind myself to keep my eye on the prize.

The prize that was rapidly turning into the one that got away. Although, how my walking dream girl could get away when I never had her in the first place was a moot point. Logic was something you saved for massaging numbers, not real useful when it came to matters of the heart.

The cushion next to me was an open slot in the seating plan. There was another opposite the low oblong bench. We had a no-show. I looked at Mei and inquired where her boyfriend was, mostly using semaphores. Mei's English was restricted to smiling and nodding, lifting her literacy level to stellar compared with the live-in, Hui. "Hoy" to those of us in the know.

In truth I didn't give a rat's ass about where Hoy had gotten to. What had my undivided was where Annie was going to park her luscious curves. I had a fifty-fifty going, not bad odds, except Andy intervened and whispered, "Five says she doesn't."

The red curry, the Vinda-hot tamale-loo, was doing something unnatural to my prick as it exercised along the rungs of a zipper doing a heroic job of containment. If Annie sat next to me, there weren't enough napkins to hide the fact I was happy to see her. Squirming wasn't helping. In fact it was drawing attention from Zack who had a man crush on both me and Andy.

And that little factoid put me at the apex of a triangle because Andy made no bones … God, did that term ever resonate … no bones whatsoever about his feelings for *moi*. My gay roomie was a chick *and* a dude magnet: built like a Greek god and oozing sex and pheromones.

I had sometimes given a thought to satisfying my curiosity, but once Anika entered my life … well, that sealed my fate and cooled my jets for the other team. Andy understood, though he

still teased and tempted me, mercilessly. Yet another reason to throw my hat in the heterosexual ring. I was horny, overworked, underpaid and … horny. It wouldn't take a lot to kick the rudder to port and fill the sails on a nice broad reach.

Polishing off a respectable helping of chicken and veggies, I eased back and extended legs that weren't meant to curl like a pretzel, not with a thirty-four inseam and a linebacker build. Searching through the shirt pocket, I inadvertently collided with a nipple gone granite, sort of a mini-cock sticking out from man-boobs that Annie's diminutive frame came in at tongue level.

Oh, gods-be-damned.

That reminded me of the first time we met. I nearly came on the spot. She was in my very personal space, looking up with those midnight eyes, licking her lips and soft-singing something about being pleased and how nice and we should get together… The "get together" was directed at me, not Andy who was her partner in crime in the lab.

So every-damn-time she had a gig, it was me and Andy, Andy and me, and for sure I was thinking… Crapola, she thinks I'm gay, that we, me and Mr. Adonis, are getting it on. So, of course, she included both of us. Why wouldn't she? She was just being polite.

She doesn't like you, idiot. She's just being … nice.

Except she kept looking at me. Or a spot over my left shoulder from her seat opposite the bench-cum-table. I had lost the bet and owed Andy five.

He leaned over and whispered in my ear, "If you're short on cash, I could take a blow job instead."

That made me wiggle away, blushing, my face going furnace hot, clear to the tips of my ears. The only one who noticed was Annie. She had that little gleam in her eye that told me she thought we were cute—really, really, gushy-girl kind of cute. There was a quirky uptick to her full lips and I wanted nothing more than to fondle and tease and nibble and, oh my fucking god, suck on them until they swelled up and she moaned for me to explore…

Crap. I wanted to die, except she was fulfilling the one little fantasy-slash-hope I had for the evening. She was looking at me.

But was she *seeing* me?

The noises of thank you's and lets-do-it-again's chimed and echoed and it should have been a clue but it wasn't. I sat there, not moving.

Andy murmured, "Don't wait up," and stood to leave with Zack.

Huh, looks like Andy's getting a blow job tonight.

I nodded, happy that somebody was going to score, because it sure as hell wasn't me. Not that all I wanted was sex with Anika.

That was a lie. Of course, I wanted sex. Who was I kidding? Except, for once in my life, I wanted to maybe just hold hands first, bump elbows, let a smile caress me instead of taloned nails raking my back…

Standing was a challenge. I was stiff—stiff in the joints, stiff with uncertainty, stiff with hesitation and … just plain hard-as-a-steel-rod stiff.

The chimes on her ankles and wrists took me to a new level of awareness, cluing me in that Anika was clearing dishes and tidying up. I was the last one to leave, towering over the table and shuffling my feet, left, right, left, hands jammed in my pockets so that the thumbs hocked a feel on my swollen prick whenever Annie turned her back.

The fish-or-cut-bait mantra wasn't a motivational winner for me, but it did raise awareness that if I came in my jeans I was going to regret being so disrespectful. Humiliation wasn't even a consideration. With my tongue dragging on the floor, I gathered up an armload of plates and

followed the object d' lust into what passed for a kitchen. It was wide enough for Annie, not for both of us, so I stood back and handed off the cargo while she did the rinse step and stacked in obsessive, neat rows. Silverware aligned forks first, then knives and spoons. Big plates got topped with smaller plates and the bowls nested with military precision.

Annie was studying something oddball like crystals, so her obsession with organizing things just so made a lot of sense. Just watching her set everything precisely, using her small hands to manipulate and position the bits and bobs from our meal, had me in a tizzy. A gut-wrenching, groin-pounding, shoot-my-wad at the first stroke kind of head space where air was at a premium and I was dying of slow suffocation. *That* kind of tizzy.

"Can I help with that?"

Choking out a "Y-y-yes," was me being honest, owning my feelings. Except I didn't know what she was offering to help me with.

At least … not until those dainty little digits, two of them to be exact, nipped at the zipper pull, tugging gently at first, then with a sense of urgency. Though that might be me, given the state of my nerves and the raw, unfiltered desire coursing up and down my spine. It was enough to look down and see the slow progress, the *bump bump bump* along the ridges, each mini-contact shooting lightning into my cock and causing delicious rasps of near pain as exposed flesh aired on the side of lust.

I had gone commando. At Andy's insistence. Bless him, damn him. The jury was still out on that one.

With a bad tendency to over-analyze, I let the moment go in favor of contemplating how this was going to work, losing myself in the mechanics simply because I had yet to accept that my dream was coming to life right in front of my eyes.

Her hair was so soft and silky all I wanted was to run my fingers through it, draw it out strand by strand. Wrap it around my cock, my waist…

She palmed the denim to my ankles, kneeling and nudging until I lifted one foot, then the other and stood there in all my glory awaiting her pleasure. My pleasure.

The nail was blunt but the feel was saw-tooth sharp, razoring between thighs gone to mush, the skin tremoring even when I braced both hands on the counter and tried to control my body. I was losing it, fast. She pressed my legs apart, military stance, take the position, using it to expose my agony, my need.

Wanting to watch, not daring to… When her tongue flicked at the pre-cum beading at the slit, I crouched and begged with words that came guttural and sharp and needy. I spoke them dirty and welcoming, and I nearly collapsed as she suckled and swallowed me as deep as she could, a bad, bad girl doing bad, bad things in a fantasy I didn't deserve.

"God, Annie…"

It was a prayer of thanks, of supplication. *Please, please, don't let this end, don't let us end.*

Balls tightening, nerves firing from a spot deep inside, shooting out my prick, detonating hot and thick and wondrous as she took it all, suckling past the point and leaving me drained and grateful and filled with hope.

I sank to my knees and cradled her lush body, marveling at the soft swell of her breasts pressed against my chest. Rocking her to and fro and crooning sweet nothings, hoping she understood that I was beyond words at that point.

I love you Anika Pradesh. Please don't leave. Stay with me. Please.

I uttered the first words that came into my head. "Please don't go."

How she knew what I meant was a miracle I will never fathom. But she answered me softly with a question. “Why do you want me to stay?”

Why indeed. How do you tell a woman you’ve known nearly a year, for the entire time you’ve been grad students, that you’ve fallen head-over-heels and you never had the balls to approach her, to talk with her, to ask her out for a coffee.

Mumbling into her hair, I told her, “I think you’re smart and beautiful. You can cook. And I love when you smile and how you walk and…”

Pulling away, Annie gave me a sly look and said, “I know all that. I’ve known forever how you feel.”

“But why didn’t you…”

“Say something?” She took a deep breath, one of those female aggravated things to let me know she’d made me from the get-go and had just been waiting for me to locate my spine.

I said as much, then added, “If I was able to find some backbone as easy as I find my dick, I wouldn’t have waited a year to tell you.”

And then I blushed. I knew that for a fact because she looked at me with the devil in those coal black eyes and my ear tips actually burst into flame. That was the problem being a redhead. We tended to ignite under very little provocation.

I needed to press her. I had to know if what happened was a one-off, a goodbye, thanks for playing reward for effort.

“I don’t have a right to ask you, but…” Swallowing hard, I wasn’t above begging. “Can you give us a chance first?”

Sadly she shook her head ‘no.’ “I have confirmed reservations for next week.”

“Fuck.” Standing up, I helped Annie to her feet and slipped my jeans on as fast as I could. “I guess that’s it then.”

“Not exactly.”

Hope blossomed. “But it’s all arranged.” It came out as a question, one laced with a soupçon of desire and unrealized potential.

Anika squeezed past me and went to the couch, sat and folded her tiny hands primly on her lap. I settled near her but left enough space so as not to crowd her.

“I will go home and meet with this man my father selected.”

“Oh.”

“And then I will tell my father that I appreciate his concern, but I must choose for myself.”

“What if he says no?” There’s no what if in my mind. It would be an unequivocal “no.”

“He will not refuse me.”

“Why not?”

“Because you will be there to convince him.” She stared at those hands, now clenched until the skin stretched thin over the knuckles.

Now I did swallow my tongue as my heart swelled to three times its size. I stuttered, “M-me.”

“If that is what you wish.”

I don’t recall sliding next to her or pulling her into my lap, or even carrying her to the bedroom. The only thing I do recall was asking, “Will you marry me, Anika Pradesh?”

She smiled and dug in a pocket. With a flourish she handed me a five dollar bill.

“What’s this for?”

“Andy said to give it to you.”

I mumbled, “Huh,” or something else and she continued, “He said to tell you that he was wrong. You won.”

I cradled her close, drinking in the scent of curry and spices and Anika.

I didn’t only win, I just hit the fucking lottery.

THE END

About the Author

Crossing boundaries, taking no prisoners.
Write what's in your soul.
It's the bass beat, the heartbeat, the lyrics rude and true.

* * * *

Nya Rawlyns (and her alter ego, Diane Nelson), has been writing for over fifteen years across a variety of genres – suspense/mystery, contemporary western, romance, romantic comedy, women's fiction, literary fiction and contemporary young adult fantasy.

A lifelong equestrienne, she has competed in dressage and distance riding. Her love affair with words began as a young child and continues unabated. She lives in Pennsylvania with her daughter, horses, cats, chickens and a family of friends and supporters who provide not just inspiration but absolute belief in her characters and stories.

Most days she can be found daydreaming and listening to the voices in her head.

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Love's Last Refuge: http://loveslastrefuge.com/

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Books by the Author

Ranch to Market Chronicles: Paranormal, gay suspense
The Reluctant Alpha
Alpha Framed
Alpha's Last Stand
The Reluctant Alpha Trilogy

The Snowy Range Mystery Series: M/M, M/F suspense, romance
The Eagle and the Fox
Timber Lake

Thunder Basin

Bad Boyfriends Series: M/M romantic comedy, suspense, crime
Curling Iron
Pumping Iron
Jerking Iron
Bad Boyfriends Box Set

The Crow Creek Series: M/M contemporary erotic western romance
Ash & Oak
Pulling Leather
Strapping Ash
Sorting Will
Flankman
Mending Fences

The Strigoi Chronicles: homoerotic lit, paranormal
The Holiday Toast Duo: M/M romantic comedy

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STANDALONE NOVELS

Nya Rawlyns:
The Wrong Side of Right: transgressive homoerotica
Good Boy Bad: transgressive homoerotica
Cole in His Stocking: M/M romance, Holiday novella
Acid Jazz Singer: transgender, dark urban fantasy
Roman (Saints and Sinners): dark urban fantasy
Dance Macabre: psychological, noir

Diane Nelson:
Points on a Curve: sports romance
The 90 Day Rule: sports romance, seasoned romance
Dragon Academy: YA, fantasy
The Conference: contemporary chicklit, short story

* * * *

AUDIOBOOKS

Curling Iron (Bad Boyfriends)
Pumping Iron (Bad Boyfriends)
Jerking Iron (Bad Boyfriends)
Bad Boyfriends Box Set
The Reluctant Alpha (Ranch to Market Chronicles)

Alpha Framed (Ranch to Market Chronicles)
Alphas Last Stand (Ranch to Market Chronicles)
Flankman (A Crow Creek Novel)
Sorting Will
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