

Personal Business

by Isabel Baptiste



BROWN SKIN
BOOKS



BROWN SKIN
B O O K S

First published 2003 by Brown Skin Books
Pentimento Ltd
PO Box 46504
London N1 3YA
info@brownskinbooks.co.uk
www.brownskinbooks.co.uk

ISBN 0-9544866-0-9

Copyright ©2003 Isabel Baptiste

The right of Isabel Baptiste to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Book and cover design: Renée Michaels Design
Printed and bound in Finland by WS Bookwell

Distribution in the UK and Europe by
Airlift Book Company
8 The Arena
Mollison Avenue
Enfield
Middlesex EN3 7NJ
Tel: 020 8804 0400
email: info@airlift.co.uk

He hadn't called, and by the end of the second week, Ruby's supply of delicate hand-wash-only underwear was close to depletion. How could she, a woman who single-handedly funded the entire lingerie department of Harvey Nichols, have failed to make good use of her collection?

Inevitably, Ruby dissected what she might have done wrong but eventually concluded that it was Austin who was to blame. Not just him, but the whole damned fucking planetful of them. Men!

What Ruby lacked in stature, she made up for in stiletto heels and big hair. Standing only five-feet, two inches with generous curves, she described herself as 'more than a handful' for any man and her spirit was certainly willing to rise to any challenge. So how come she had spent the last God-knows-how-many days waiting for a man when she should be beating them off from her door? Ruby Wright, she berated herself, time to pull yourself together and sort yourself out. You not getting any younger. You have to get some sense in your head, as Tasha would tell you.

Idly, she leafed through her old diaries and address books, a gleam of optimism kindling as she reviewed her romantic history and hoped to find previously unearthed nuggets of gold in discarded partners. Of course, there was also fool's gold, but no need to consider that now.

Conrad had had a slight problem with bodily odour and a bad case of acne, but then he'd only been fourteen and she'd been a year older. Maybe he'd matured by now. Why kid herself? Boys never matured.

Now, Richard had definitely been mature—some would say ripe enough to be her father—and he'd wanted to give her a home and family. Trouble was, he'd been addicted to families and had several scattered across the African and European continents. Ruby thought of tracking him down, but he'd probably be worn out and in a rest home by now and what she needed was some healthy, energetic action. Of course, he might be rich... but then it would have to be shared with all those kids and baby mothers.

Then there was Ray. They had made such a handsome couple, so everyone had told them. She and Ray had been together for, what? Three years? Ray. Ray who had been her friend, confidant, lover and so much more. He'd

adored her and made her body sing with his lovemaking. Even now, thinking of Ray, Ruby shivered.

She'd first noticed him in A&E because he was covered in blood. She'd gone to him offering assistance, but it turned out that he'd only brought in one of his students who'd had a playground mishap, which wasn't, in the end, serious. Ray had obviously been in shock and she'd sneaked him a cup of hot, sweet tea, against hospital rules. He'd come back the next day and offered to buy her a more palatable drink. She was attracted from the start, and accepted without hesitation. Since when did Ruby hesitate when she wanted something? The first time they made love was a whole three weeks after they first met, by which time she'd given up, convinced that he was gay or getting it somewhere else.

Then one warm Sunday afternoon, they walked hand in hand from the pub, chatting comfortably about nothing at all across the common, past the pond, to his flat in Battersea. They threw open the French windows, collapsed with the Sunday papers on Ray's comfortable, battered, old, leather sofa and exchanged interesting news items from the broadsheets and salacious titbits from the tabloids. He casually draped an arm around her shoulder as they read and Ruby would always recall that, as they laughed over the unexpurgated antics of an ageing DJ, Ray turned towards her, looked into her eyes and kissed her lips, stopping her reply in mid sentence. His lips gently nibbled her own until she groaned and opened her mouth to his exploring tongue as he pushed her gently back onto the sofa. They'd kissed before, but this time was like the first. Ray's exploration was deliberate and at the same time tentative and questioning, as if needing an answer. Ruby's response was, at first, uncharacteristically shy, nervous and curiously innocent. Then sudden arousal made her wrap herself around him, pulling his body towards hers, wanting there to be no space between them, needing to feel all of him, to know that he wanted her, to pin him to her, suddenly frantic to keep the outside world out.

He gently stroked the line of her cheekbone, pulling back to gaze at her face, as if unsure of what was happening between them. She smiled up at him and he kissed her eyelids, the tip of her nose, her ears, before settling on the vulnerable spot at the base of her neck, before progressing to trail a gen-

tle caress along her collarbone. She held him there, stilling his movement, savouring the tenderness and intimacy while her fingers massaged the silky sensuousness of his hair, the gentle strength and vulnerability of his neck, kneading gently. Inevitably, she felt his penis begin to swell. He raised himself to unbutton her shirt and admire the sheen of her skin, the heavy, round breasts, the puckering of her dark nipples as she held her breath, in awe of the hunger that narrowed his blue-green eyes. One finger traced a path to her hard nipple, circling it with a barely-perceptible touch before he took it between hot lips, licking gently. She shivered though warmth spread through her body, right up to her scalp. She pulled his shirt loose, wanting the heat of his skin against hers. For a moment they lay together, silent, unmoving, holding back time, needing, but not wanting to progress any further, uncertain of what was to come, of where they would be taking each other.

There was to be no turning back. Without warning, the ache in each of them exploded and they frantically struggled to tear off each other's clothes. For a moment, Ray cupped her breasts in both hands then slid down her body to his knees, the ends of his silky hair tickling her thighs as he lowered his face towards her eager, moist pussy. Gently feathering his tongue around her clitoris, he lapped at the juices flowing from her soft, fuzzy mound. He loved the smell of her, the feel of her, wanted to taste more of her. She tilted her hips, urging his tongue towards her throbbing clit that now ached for him. As if on cue, he hit the spot, licking, nibbling sucking, lighting a flame that soon raged out of control. She arched her back like a hungry cat, begging, gasping, 'Please, Ray, please...'

And then he was above her, resting his ready prick at her entrance, holding back, prolonging the agony until she could resist no longer and thrust upwards, forcing his hard cock deeply, violently, inside her. They held their breath. She giggled suddenly and he joined her in soft laughter, releasing the tension of the moment as they rested, remaining still while his penis, as if of its own volition, a separate part of him, grew even bigger inside her. They both were motionless, not wanting to end this sense of delectable anticipation, knowing that they wouldn't wait long, caressing each other, holding back for the right moment.

Then as if on cue, when she felt she couldn't wait any longer, Ray rose and began to thrust rhythmically as he reached for her breasts, clutching at them, squeezing hard as her desire rose, rippling from her pebble-hard nipples down to her vagina. She wrapped her legs around him, steadying his rhythm, forcing him to slow when she could hardly bear any more sensation. He bit her nipples hard as his fingers stroked her wet clitoris. Without warning, she was at the point where she could hold back no longer and she felt the waves that couldn't be controlled, lapping, rising, flooding to the surface until her enflamed pussy clenched around him, holding him tighter and tighter as he drove into her, pounding her until her body surrendered to his and she became lost inside this experience, inside of Ray.

He held her, still inside her, as he extricated bits of crumpled newspaper from beneath them.

'Hey, I haven't read that bit,' she laughed, grabbing for a shred of newsprint. The movement made him wince.

'You need to be careful that it doesn't shrivel up inside me like your toes do in the bath.' Ruby joked.

Ray laughed and covered their bodies with their discarded clothing. They explored each other's eyes, not speaking, smiling for no sensible reason. Now Ray took the time to look at this woman, naked underneath him. She was all that he'd dreamed of. Gentle, deep, mischievous eyes, soft, dark brown skin that contrasted sharply with his own, glorious hair that seemed mysteriously to change shape, texture, length or colour every few weeks, and a generous, voluptuous body. What more could he ask for? He'd been relatively sure that she wanted him: she'd given enough hints in the last few weeks and he'd known how much he wanted her. But he'd also wondered whether he could be enough for her, whether he could give her the same kind of pleasure that he hoped to take. Now that he knew, he wanted to give her more, to hold back his own desire, forever if necessary, as long as it took to satisfy her. Today, this first time, would be her day. He wanted this experience together, to be imprinted on her memory, in case there should ever be a time when they would part.

So they spent the afternoon, evening and most of the night together with Ruby experiencing delights she hadn't thought possible and when,

eventually, she left, every pore of her body tingling with heightened sensation, she felt almost bereaved, dazed away from his touch, exhausted, reeling, shocked that she'd been able to tear herself away from him when her body still cried out for more.

Making love had never been the same again. They'd both striven to re-discover the heights reached on that sunny Sunday afternoon. Without ever admitting it to each other, they'd surpassed themselves on that day, excelled, given too much of themselves and found nothing left to build on.

So when Ray was offered a new job in Liverpool, he asked Ruby to come with him, but she knew that he was asking half-heartedly, out of familiarity, because they'd become as comfortable with each other as that old sofa and they were both apprehensive and tempted by the lure of the new. But wasn't that exactly what they'd been trying to recapture? The new? Ruby often wondered whether that's what had attracted them to each other in the first place. He was the first white guy she'd been with. Initially, it had been exhilarating and they'd been able to pretend that it was them against the rest of the world. But the battles to be fought had become fewer and fewer as they adapted and learned to avoid uncomfortable situations. And then they began to learn that the other was essentially not that different. Ruby had dreaded the day when he'd tell her that she was just like a white woman after all. That's how she felt about Ray: he wasn't that different to the black guys she'd known. Then, like adrenaline junkies, they'd begin to seek out situations that weren't just uncomfortable, but madly risky: pubs, cinemas, hangouts in British National Party territory. The time was right for them to part. She'd never heard from Ray again.

Later, there had been Carlos, her flamenco teacher who'd lost his sense of rhythm—and humour—before they'd even got as far as the bedroom. And Kamau the consultant in Gynaecology who'd shown a little too much professional interest in her anatomy, even wanting to take photographs for his next publication. The no-brainers who'd turned her down flat. Plus a number of once-only dates that she'd discarded for a variety of reasons: too eager, too laid-back, too short, too fat, too boring—reasons that now seemed trivial as she pored over the tattered address book and made copious notes.