Maya Seymour





Gray Love is the story of Mathew Stephens, a white judge, and Hannah Collins, a black attorney, who accidentally meet at his private lake and fall deeply in love. Their relationship is complicated as Mathew struggles with his long held beliefs as the grand vizier of the local KKK. His fellow Klan members discover their relationship and vow to make both Mathew and Hannah pay for their 'forbidden' love.

GRAY LOVE: A Black and White Affair

by Maya Seymour

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Gray Love A Black and White Affair

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To my beautiful mother, Ruby

Chapter Seventeen

Hannah drove straight to Mathew's house, her mind a jumble of hope and fear. Even though his name had not been listed with the others, it didn't bolster her confidence. Maybe it was nothing, or maybe her woman's intuition was coming on too strong. Was it possible she was so much in love with this man that she couldn't see past the surface? What did she really know about him?

She thought back to the many conversations they'd had – she had shared so much, and he so little. Every time Hannah asked a personal question, he dismissed or evaded it. No matter how hard she tried, either teasingly or directly, he shut down whenever she brought up the subject of his personal life.

She pulled into the driveway of his large home and sat there, taking a quiet moment to reflect as she surveyed his property – a plantation run by a white master, with heaven only knows how many Negro slaves. Across the fields rippling with grain, she spotted two of the hired hands, their backs bent as they struggled with a piece of machinery. At least they had modern equipment to use.

The front door opened, and Mathew stepped onto the wide veranda. As he reached down to pick up the morning paper, he spotted her car.

"Hannah?" he called.

She opened the car door and swung her long legs out of the vehicle. As she stood up, he waved, a huge smile lighting his features as he hurried down the steps.

"Hey, what are you doing here so early on a Monday morning," he asked, circling her waist with his large hands and sweeping her off her feet.

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She looked at him, unsure of what to say. Wasn't this what she wanted? If she ignored what she felt, could she simply lose herself in this man's charm and never worry about whatever secrets he might be hiding? Deep down inside, Hannah knew that wasn't her way.

His smile dimming, he set her down and leaned back to look at her, a questioning look in his eyes.

"Okay, what's wrong?" he asked. "Surely it can't be all that bad, can it?"

"I need to talk to you about something that deeply troubles me," she said. "Can we go inside?"

"Sure." He looked perplexed as he led her into the house and down the hallway to the kitchen.

The aroma of freshly made coffee called to her, and, for a second, she lost herself in the tranquility of it before mentally kicking herself. No matter how much his answers might upset her; she had to know the truth.

"Would you like some coffee? I just made it," he offered.

"No, thanks, please sit down and take a look at the newspaper." She crossed her arms and waited.

Shooting another questioning look at her, he sat and pulled the paper out of its plastic wrapper. When he opened it, she saw a quick flash of horror and recognition sweep across his face.

"Oh, my God," he said quietly. He looked up at her with a sick expression on his face.

"It's true, isn't it?" she said. "Those men are alleged Klan members, and I saw by the expression on your face that you know them. They are the men in that picture upstairs. Am I right? Don't lie to me."

She could tell he was stunned by both the newspaper's headlines and her direct approach, but she had to know for certain. In a way, this was a test. Would he tell her the truth, or would he simply deny everything? She had no proof; all she had

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was a few offbeat statements he had made regarding blacks and her heart, telling her that this man, her beloved, was not all that he seemed.

He got up, moving to stand before her. "Yes, my love, I know these men. More than that, I'm one of these men."

She shuddered, her mind held in a tight blanket of numbing pain. "Why did you lie to me, Mathew? Why?" Her voice trembled as tears slid down her cheeks.

He tried to take her icy hands in his, but she snatched them away as if he had branded her.

"How could you be part of this... this lynch mob? How could I allow you lead me down the rosy path of so-called love while all along you were hiding this horrible truth from me?" Tears overwhelmed her with a violence that shook her entire body

"Hannah, please..." he tried again.

"Please what?" She lowered her voice, but the words came out harsh and angry. "Please let you make a fool of me? Please let you kill my family? I know that the Klan was planning on hitting my family next. What else could you possibly want from me?"

He didn't try to touch her again. He just stood there, close enough for her to touch, and she hoped he would move. Because what she really wanted was to rip out his heart, wrap it in her pain, and hand it back to him on one of his expensive china platters. Instead, she bunched her hands into fists and screamed a long primal wail of agony.

Still, he did not move as she vented her anger. After several moments, she finally stopped, exhausted by the emotional weight of his betrayal. Then he took her in his arms, pulling her close as he smoothed the flowing locks away from her tearstained face. Maya Seymour

"How could you? How could you?" she whispered, knowing in her heart that there was nothing he could say that would justify his actions, at least, none that would relieve the unbearable ache in her soul.

Finally, he spoke. "Hannah, I have no excuse for lying to you. I am so much in love with you that I allowed my emotions to smother my good sense." He had the grace to look away from her searching gaze.

"How can you say that you love me?" she said, her voice growing stronger. "How can love exist in a world of lies and hatred? Did you think I would never find out? Did you think I was too stupid to see inside to the person you really are?" She paused to take a breath. "What kind of relationship did you think we could possibly have? Did you honestly believe I would never know you were one of those cowards hiding beneath the white hoods and robes of the Klan? Or that your fellow Klansmen would allow such a relationship to exist?"

"I... I don't know what I thought," he replied, miserably.

She struggled out of his arms and moved away, turning her back. "I guess you thought I was nothing more than a black bimbo who couldn't see through the fog of sex I believed was love."

She hurried from the kitchen and out the door, his protests lingering in the air behind her. Jumping into her car, she threw it in reverse, and shot out of the driveway. A loud honk and screeching brakes got her attention, and she gasped as a UPS truck skidded out of control behind her. Shifting the car into drive, she jammed the gas pedal to the floorboard and got out of the way of the vehicle bearing down on her.

Scanning the road in front of her for traffic, she also kept an eye on the truck, which came to a lumbering halt against Mathew's fence. Keeping the gas pedal floored, Hannah sped away from the man she had thought she loved more than any

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other. A man who had made her heart flutter with joy. How could she have been so blind?



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