

LIZZETTE GRAYSON CARTER

Across
THE COLOR LINE

CL Press

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Dedication

For my beloved family members who've passed:

*Aunt Christine, Uncle Charlie, Uncle David, Gail, Aunt Mary,
Aunt Bertha, Uncle Shack, Sue, Derrick, and
Great Grandmother Ethel.*

Acknowledgments

My Heavenly Father, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I thank You for everything that you've done in my life and allowing this ambitious and momentous project to come into fruition. For with You, Lord, nothing shall be impossible. Thank you for keeping me humble.

Thank you...

To my husband, Michael. I praise God for your love and devotion.

To my beautiful daughter, Brienna. You are truly Heaven Sent and I love you.

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To my mom, Emaline Creamer, and step dad, Gregory Creamer, for your belief and care.

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To my aunts and uncles: Martha Ann Paden, Faye Shackelford, Julia Leonard, Jane Hayward, Lucille Blakey, Shirley Golden-

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My first time out as an author with my novel, *The Color Line*, was a dream come true and it has blossomed into a glorious experience, because of all who are mentioned above.

Again, I say, thank you.

Blessings,

Lizzette Grayson Carter

April 11, 2008

Mathews County, Virginia

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Chapter 1

Lacie

Who'd have thought I'd fall in love with a white man?
Me? A sista, with a white dude? Huh, never in a million years,
I thought.

That is, until I met Tony.

I glanced over at him sleeping peacefully and smiled. It was nine o'clock in the morning, the first day of the New Year and also our first official day as a couple. It already felt as if it was going to be a good year.

An idea suddenly came to mind and I got out of bed quietly. I grabbed his shirt from off the bedside chair and smiled, remembering the last time I'd worn it.

After freshening up in the bathroom, I went into the kitchen and looked in the refrigerator. It was well stocked with all of the ingredients I needed. I took the ingredients out and went to work while I pondered the events that had transpired in the last twenty-four hours, as well as the past four months.

So many positive things had changed in my life. After years of dissention and strife between us, Mama and I had finally made peace with each other. We were communicating better and there no longer seemed to be a wall separating us. The anger in

me was gone and I felt her every effort to change and become a better mother.

My little sister, Reneé, was now engaged to Danny and the happiest I'd ever seen her. She was steadfastly attaining a remarkable sense of maturity and confidence, which in me, had been absent at her age. Despite being a pregnant teenager, she was all the more determined to continue her education, be a good mother and marry her man.

Then, of course, there was Tony.

The moment we met, it was electric.

The problem? He was my boss and white. Those two reasons alone were taboo. Yet, the attraction and the chemistry we shared was too magnetic and I enjoyed being around him.

I shook my head, recalling my futile attempts at denying my feelings for him. I had all of these preconceived notions and ideas running around in my head, constantly telling me the consequences of even imagining being with him. Still, I couldn't shake my feelings for him. The issue became more problematic when we shared our first intense kiss in Washington, DC. That's when I knew I was in trouble and had to put a stop to whatever was going on between us.

So I started dating his friend, Joe—that had to be stupidest thing I'd ever done in my life.

Black, rich and devastatingly handsome, Joe was, in essence, every black woman's idea of the perfect black man. I knew Joe was the one for me, but my attraction for Tony kept pulling me

into his direction. It should have been clear when I slept with Tony.

But my penchant to make it work with Joe was resolute. So still confused and torn, with an odd sense of obligation, I continued my relationship with Joe and even accepted his proposal. It didn't suppress my feelings for Tony, however. In fact, they intensified, especially when Simone came into the equation.

Simone was a very beautiful model and Tony's ex-fiancée. She was also a thorn in my side. Jealous knots would develop in the pit of my stomach whenever she was around, which was ironically and equally met with her jealousy. I mean, the girl had issues.

Simone immediately let me know that she didn't like me. She also had no problem telling me that she'd come back into Tony's life, and was ready to get him back, at any cost. Hey, I was fine with that, I thought. I was with Joe and I was engaged to him. It wasn't going to have any effect on me.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

It was a Saturday night, during a Christmas party, when the tension between Simone and I finally came to a head. It was also the beginning of an agonizing affirmation for me. Heavily intoxicated, Simone had followed me into the ladies room after an argument at the table, spewing out accusations. Then, she had the nerve to call me the n-word. Oh, how I had wanted to kick her butt! Fortunately, on her behalf, my good friend, Robert, interrupted me from giving her a beat down and took me home.

Tony came over my house a while after, seeking an explanation of what had happened between us. He had picked the wrong time. The nerve of him to question me instead of blasting her out! I was already disturbed and emotional from the argument with Simone, and jealous from seeing him dance so intimately with her at the party.

My defense mode came on immediately and that started an argument. Essentially, it was merely a lover's spat because we were both frustrated and jealous of both of our significant others. We were in love and it took that spat, along with both of our emotional and strong confessions of love toward each other, for me to realize the truth. That's basically what did it.

I had been in love with Tony all along but had been foolish and afraid. It was a pivotal, but bittersweet, moment to acknowledge our feelings for each other because other people were involved and were bound to get hurt. Undoubtedly, there was going to be drama.

It came, too.

My decision to break up with Joe was agonizing, but I had already wasted enough time for both of us and didn't want to prolong my engagement with him any further. I had to tell him and when I did, Joe took it hard. When I told him I was in love with Tony, he took it even harder.

Life at home wasn't so great, either.

Mama was incensed and strongly voiced her disapproval, which complicated my relationship with her even more. She was

angry because I had screwed up a perfectly good relationship with Joe—a successful black man—for Tony, a white man. In response, I, full of years of anger and resentment, lashed back and ridiculed her for her irresponsibility toward me when I was growing up.

That scare of Renéé being rushed to the hospital was the only thing that finally knocked us into our senses. We realized that we had to reconcile and forget about the past and work on our future as mother and daughter. Once that happened, it got a little better between us.

Everything and everyone around us seemed to fall into place. Danny had popped the question to Renéé; Joe forgave me; and eventually, and somewhat reluctantly, Mama gave her blessing for me to be with Tony.

I smiled and started to hum, *You and I* by Stevie Wonder, while I flipped the omelet over and thought about how happy I was, to finally be with Tony. I'd done the right thing.

Tony was handsome, respectful, easygoing, confident, ambitious, and had a way of crooning out *You and I* by Stevie Wonder that I'd never heard a white man do before. He was the coolest white man I'd ever known and he had a great spirit. That could have been why I'd fallen for him so easily, but it wasn't. It was much more.

Much more.