

When Summer

Lingers

By:

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An All Authors Publishing House Approved Short Story

When Summer Lingers, A Short Story
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Dahna sat on the bench farthest from the school yard. It was the oldest of them all—cornflower blue with erratic splashes of rust. No one bothered her here. It was the perfect time to paint her nails. With the arrival of summer just a couple of weeks away, Dahna had stopped at the Dollar Tree that past weekend to pick out her signature colors. This year, it was Golden Paradise and Ocean Breeze.

Dahna's nail painting had become a ritual. She would always put on the clear—nicknamed Double Duty. Double Duty served as both base and top coat, which was one of the main secrets to a long lasting manicure. That, along with not doing any heavy manual labor. After allowing the first coat of Double Duty to dry, Dahna would alternate with colors. The next nail would be the opposite color of its predecessor. She had just finished the funky pattern on the fingernails of her left hand when a shadow blocked her light. Dahna looked up and squinted her eyes in annoyance.

“What do YOU want?”

“You missed a spot.”

The comment threw her off. Dahna looked carefully at each nail but couldn't spot the error. As if he could sense her confusion, the guy sat down in front and gently grabbed her thumb. Then, he dipped the nail polish wand about a quarter way in the bottle. With one quick movement, the guy covered the small area Dahna had missed.

“Um ... I don't know what to say.”

“How about 'Thanks'?”

Dahna couldn't quite fathom whether he was being a smart-ass, sincere, or a bit of both but she thanked him all the same. He nodded his approval and rose from the weathered bench.

“Wait!” Dahna called. “You don't have to go just yet if you don't want to. Besides I didn't even get your name.”

The guy grinned and that's when Dahna first noticed his dimples.

“My name is Carr. And you are ...”

“Dahna.”



Dahna no longer had the bench to herself. She did not seem to mind. Carr served as her magnifying glass, pointing out any slivers of nail that lacked polish. After a while, he volunteered to paint the ones on her right hand. To Carr, it just made sense because Dahna was heavily right handed and using her left hand to paint her nails was always a hassle.

When summer was transitioning into fall, Dahna invited Carr to go with her to Dollar Tree. She had used up the last of her Double Duty and she wanted new colors to coincide with the changing of the seasons. Carr was happy to go along. His favorite flavor of Mystic was always sold there.

While Dahna strolled to the familiar beauty aisle, Carr grabbed the Mango Mania Mystic and paid for it on the spot. With receipt in hand, he opened the bottle and began to chug the savory liquid. He called out Dahna's name but she didn't answer. After a few minutes, he spotted her placing shades of red orange and dark violet alongside Double Duty. Carr frowned and yanked the new selections out of the green basket and returned them to inventory.

“Carr what are you doing?”

“Dahna I like the yellow and blue. Summer is my favorite season. As long as they are on your fingertips it can last forever.”

Dahna thought he was joking around but when she saw Carr's expression, she knew he felt strongly about his conviction. Usually Carr was the one always willing to bend. Dahna would not disrespect his stance no matter how silly it sounded.

“Very well Carr.”

The lines from Carr's forehead vanished and he wrapped his arms around her. They had exchanged hugs before but this time it felt a bit different. Carr's hold was a bit tighter, and Dahna's senses became full of him. The smell of the Axe Peace deodorant and matching body spray that grazed his skin. The mixture of light brown streaks against his jet black hair, and the pulsating against her thigh that was too low to be either one of their heartbeats.

Just as Dahna was mentally preparing for what was next, Carr broke the contact. “I need to get some more Mango Mania Mystic for the road. Meet you at the counter.”



For many seasons Dahna and Carr were inseparable. Outsiders weren't sure what to make of them. *Were they friends, lovers, or somewhere in between?* Dahna and Carr were both high off the guessing game and would do variations of their scenarios.

Although summer was Carr's favorite season, there was one thing about him that had Dahna baffled. Swimming was one of the best activities to indulge in, yet Carr avoided it every single year. He wouldn't even entertain the possibility. This saddened Dahna because she loved to feel the cool water against her skin. She wanted Carr to experience the same exhilaration.

Dahna remembered when things shifted between her and Carr. She was anxious to show off her new bathing suit. It was in Carr's favorite colors: yellow and blue. He had never seen her in a two piece. Dahna hoped that if Carr saw she was willing to be a bit riskier with her attire, he would meet her risk with experimentation.

Carr went the extra mile *all right!* He had seen this new sketching technique on YouTube and secured watercolor pencils and a sketch pad—with Dahna as his subject. Other times, Dahna would be thrilled but her preoccupation with Carr's handicap drove away that emotion.

“Carr what the *hell* is wrong with you?” Carr twisted his lips as he tried to conjure something to say. “Don't you see I'm wearing a new outfit?”

Carr smacked his head with an open hand. “I feel like such a ditz! The colors are nice. They go along with the butterfly bellybutton ring.”

Dahna snatched the sketch pad from Carr's right hand and flung it on the sand. Carr got to his feet. He was unsure what to do. Dahna had never been this disgruntled. Before he could conjure a response, Dahna was pulling him forward, leading him towards the water. Carr began to backpedal but she grabbed him more forcefully. The momentum catapulted them into the water's edge. Carr recoiled and crawled back to land.

As Carr wrapped the spare green towel around his shivering body, Dahna's eyes blazed in disappointment and fury. She scurried and proceeded to grab her things.

“Carr I can't do this anymore. I thought we had the type of friendship where we could talk about anything. If we had fears: to work on them together. All of this is way too one sided for me and I don't work well with inequality. Is there anything you'd like to say to me?”

Carr kept his eyes on his two big toes sticking out from underneath the towel. He couldn't understand why Dahna kept making a huge deal out of this one thing that made him feel less than. The only answer that Dahna wanted to hear is that he would compromise. But Carr couldn't comply and he wasn't going to lie to her.

“So be it.” Dahna decided sadly and began walking away. Every once in a while she'd glance to see if Carr had looked back or attempted following her. But Carr stayed right where she left him.



The separation became the social buzz. For years, Carr had felt like a part of her body. Interacting with him was as easy as breathing. Now Dahna felt amputated but didn't know how to put the pieces back together. The Golden Paradise/Ocean Breeze manicure combination taunted her—an everyday reminder of the relationship she assassinated. She went to the Dollar Tree and stocked up on Midnight Black. It aligned with her mood perfectly.



It was late at the local gym. Different laminated sketches surrounded various parts of the swimming pool. The same rhythm was taking place—slight hesitation, deep breath and then the splash. With each repetition, the strokes were stronger and the kickbacks bubbled with more vigor. Once satisfied with the progress, the drawings were gathered and shoved into his backpack. He changed into his regular clothes and patted himself on the back. It had taken longer than anticipated but he finally felt that he was ready.



Dahna always liked to go to the beach when it was least populated. That was usually very early in the day or when it was close to sunset. Everything was so disjointed without Carr. She had brought a book to quell her desire for swimming yet couldn't get past page five. In fact, she had read the starting passage on the page three times.

"I should go." Dahna said to no one in particular. Mostly everyone had already started for home, with the exception of a few stragglers. Dahna was so focused on putting her sunscreen and book in her beach bag that she hadn't noticed Carr's familiar satchel a few feet away or the shuffle as he sped past towards the water's edge.

"Dahna!" Her head snapped up. *Was that Carr?* No, it couldn't be! He would *never* be that close to the edge. She stood and made her way in the direction of the voice.

"Carr? What are you-?"

"Dahna I did it! I've BEAT this. Come and swim with me."

Dahna's eyes fluttered in surprise as Carr frolicked around in the water. None of the horror from before surfaced. Clapping her hands with pleasure, Dahna whipped off her cover up and made her way to join him. The tide turned turbulent and the sky darkened. Just as Dahna was about to dive in, monstrous waves crashed against Carr and snatched him farther into the middle of the ocean.

Dahna dived and swam as fast as she could. She fought to keep the panic from paralyzing her movements. Dahna finally discovered Carr and pulled him out.

"I'm so stupid. I'm so friggin' stupid!" Dahna yelled as she did basic CPR. It wasn't working.

"Carr! Please come back! CARR!"

Dahna looked around. It was only the two of them. Her trembling fingers emptied her bag and dialed 911. Dahna continued to do her all she could: all the while praying for a miracle.



“Dahna, it's been a while since you've been here.” The Dollar Tree cashier greeted her while scanning the items: a small sketch pad, watercolor pencils, a Mango Mania Mystic, Golden Paradise nail polish and Ocean Breeze nail polish.

She never imagined that she'd come back to the beach ever again. *Not after what took place.* Yet after careful debate Dahna opted to take baby steps on the way to healing. She sipped on the Mango Mania Mystic bit by bit between episodes where she was drying her nail polish. Dahna had never sketched before but wanted to give it a shot. Carr had always enjoyed it, and she had been his favorite subject.

As she was pulling out the black pencil, a blue and yellow butterfly landed on her left thumb. Dahna swatted at it. As it flew away Dahna detected that she missed covering a small speck of nail.

~The End~



About the Author

Queen of Spades has been writing since the age of 11. She made her Internet poetry debut in the mid 1990's at Fireseek (later renamed Urban Poetic), then branched out to participate in International House of Poets as well as venture into spoken word with talents featured at Vocalized Ink, House of Ra, and Prismatic Dreams. She hosted a poetry collective, *Soulful Branches: Simply Words* with accompanying CD, *Soulful Branches: Words and Sounds*.

Her current works include: *Reflections of Soul*, the *Eclectic* collection (featuring *Skin Edition* and *Beyond the Skin*), *Spaded Truths: Themes and Proclamations*, and *Private Pain: Amidst These Ashes*. The older editions of *Spaded Truths* and *Private Pain* were retired in 2014.

Her works were featured in the poetry anthology *Words of Fire and Ice* by Durham Editing and E-books in late April 2014, which put her on the map as a Smashwords Best Selling Author. In May 2014, she also earned the title of Amazon Best Selling Author for *Private Pain: Amidst These Ashes*.

She was included in *The Sea of Conscience* with author M.J. Holman and the short story anthology, *Summer Shorts II: Best Kept Secrets* (hosted by Durham Editing and E-books) which came out in June 2014.

Recently, Queen of Spades took part in a short story collective, *Continuous Drips*, which debuted in electronic form November 2014, along with All Authors Publishing House's *Concordant Vibrancy* (short story anthology), released in January 2015.

Upcoming projects:

1. Paperback rendition of *Continuous Drips*
2. Inclusion in *Crackles of the Heart: Divergent Ink Anthology* by All Authors Publishing House
3. Life-O-Suction: Spaded Truths II

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