**How did she get here**

*The heat surprised me, and it wasn’t just heat, it was blisteringly HOT! It was so weird the way they just kept going, not paying any attention to the heat or the fact that water was running down their faces and their clothes were soaking wet. (free-write from 2/15)*

There he was, standing on top of several stacks of drywall sheetrock on a hot Saturday afternoon. It was the summer of 1988. The heat surprised me, it wasn’t just hot, it was sweltering and blisteringly HOT! It was so weird how he just kept going, not paying any attention to the heat or the fact that water was running down his face and his clothes were soaking wet. She saw him from across the room and for some reason their eyes met. She quickly turned her head because she didn’t know him but she did know of him. And what she knew of him, was that he was married. She walked closer in his direction, she remembered thinking…. Now that…. is one evil looking black man. Why would anybody look so angry, she thought. She walked right passed him to get to the pale of cement that she had be chosen to pour and she noticed his eyes on her body. She looked back and now her eyes were on his body. With no shirt on, she saw his chiseled body with rippling muscles and a six pack tummy…, all wrapped in a rich deep dark chocolate skin- just the way she liked. As he lifted heavy cinderblocks, the sweat ran down his glistening muscled arms, just as the drool ran down her mouth. To gain composure, she forced her eyes to look away and head directly towards the pale of cement as originally planned.

That Saturday afternoon, She remembered thinking…. it is way too hot out here to be doing this kind of work. The kind of dirty, sweaty work that she’d normally run from. Now don’t get me wrong, she was no slacker or lazy lima bean; in fact, she was quite the opposite, a liberated hard

working woman, with strong family values, who was quite successful in her career. But she hated her Saturday surroundings; the sheet rock, the plaster, cement and the yucky hammers and nails everywhere she looked. And now, to make matters worse… a distraction! A distraction of a man whose eye keep locking with hers. But she was no fool- she focused on the prize; after 2 years of construction and renovation she would own an apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. And even though the Lower East Side was a really scary place to live in the 80s, she knew, one day, the neighborhood would change and her apartment would be worth money. What she didn’t know, was along with that investment, would come the man who she thought she would spend the rest of her life with. But that same man became the man that made her stand back and ask herself the infamous question, “how did I get here?”

She had been in bed sick for 2 weeks and couldn’t get to the construction site. Someone rang the bell and when she answered it, it was him. When she asked him what he wanted, he said he had bought her some soup. She let him in, he stayed for a while talking with her. The next week they went to lunch together on their break at the construction site. One weekend he came over and they watched a movie. It felt so innocent and yet, it was weird. She was spending time with a married man. It went on for months, seeing each other every Saturday, then spending time together outside of work and soon it became official. They were officially having an affair.

The first time they made love, it was passionately magical, like a fantasy coming true. He had touched every inch of her body, inside and out, making it a beautiful memory to keep forever. Then reality kicked in. He got up and left! He had just slept with her and now he was heading home to climb

into bed with his wife and make her feel all the things he had just reserved for me. She felt sick to her stomach as he walked out the door. She ran to the bathroom and threw up. As she drastically embraced the toilet commode, she began questioning everything that had transpired. What was she thinking? What would mom and dad say about this? Why was she willing to hurt another woman? How could she hurt his children? Why was she belittling herself- it’s not like she was someone who lacked confidence or self-esteem and needed validation from some man. It just didn’t make sense. It was so out of character. She cried herself to sleep, promising never to do it again. But tomorrow came and she couldn’t wait to see him… AGAIN!

How did she get here? That was the sixty five million dollar question, and even she, couldn’t answer that question. Was it desperation or confusion, was it self-deprecation or the desire for passion? Was it the excitement of living on the edge and breaking the rules that she had always followed? Was it the idea of breaking her “good girl” image? She didn’t know. From the start, her integrity and morals spoke to her as plain as day, but she shunned them both. Scruples, morals, values, conscience, and honor, all warned her, but she hit the off switch so she couldn’t hear them. All those rowdy voices that seemed like the enemy blocking her happiness, were actually her friends trying to protect her from the pain ahead. Instead, she moved forward, heart in her hand and she gave it to him to hold on a silver platter. When he returned it, that same heart had been shattered into a million pieces, with no container to hold the fragments, no protective shield. Just pieces everywhere on the ground, still being picked up every day, one piece at a time.