

Smoldering Flames by Kimmie Ferrell

Short introduction: Angela and Daniel have not seen one another in fifteen years and are meeting for the first time since Angela disappeared without a trace.

“Would you mind signing a couple more autographs?”

Daniel sat with his head lowered on the table. The sight reminded her of a child during rest time in elementary school. She fought the urge to smile and to touch the sprinkling of fine hair covering his forearm and a tattoo. She leaned closer to get a better look and smiled. *Chef knives.*

He grunted, but made no attempt to move. She wondered if everything were alright and thought to ask, but instead replied, “It’s for my parents and my best friend, Kristen. My parents, Oliver and Janet, are huge fans of yours. They would’ve come today, they’re attending the anniversary dinner of close friends.”

The mentioning of her parents’ name apparently got his attention.

His head slowly raised. Dark, bottomless eyes, eyes she couldn’t help but remember when they stared at her glazed by desire, bore deep into her, then lowered further into thin slits. Intensity radiated from them. The marker he held slipped from his grasp and hit the table with a soft plunk, before it rolled towards the edge. He made no move to catch it, allowing it to spiral freely towards the heavily stained, beige carpeted floor.

Angela gulped. Felt her blood pressure increase along with the beating of her heart against her chest cavity. She took a step backwards, her skin sizzled underneath the slow perusal of his eyes.

Were they always darker than night and daunting?

She needed to break free the trance they held her caught in or she would surely splinter into a million pieces at his feet. She bent over and grabbed the marker, using the second to gather her bearings. Once composed, she straightened and placed the marker back on the table. The gesture caused Daniel to sit back in his chair and fold his arms over the massive span of his solid chest.

A puff of air escaped her lungs in the form of a sigh. Her throat constricted. *Damn.*

“I’ll sign the books for you, but first, I need you to do one thing for me, *Angela.*”

The sound of her name falling from his full lips caused her to cringe. The amount of disgust and disdain dripping from it, should’ve shocked her, but it didn’t. Her name almost sounded rotten in the way he spoke it and the sight of his wrinkled nose and his body recoiling did nothing to help her fleeting confidence.

“Alright, what is it?”

She didn’t need to ask. She knew the answer from the way tension gripped his shoulders, the smug expression on his normally handsome face, and in the uneven spurts of his breathing. Squaring her shoulders, she waited for him to speak, instead Daniel stood to his towering six foot four inch frame and walked around the table. He stopped in front of her.

Heaven help me!

His long, curly black hair hung loosely around his shoulders, giving him the look of an untamed jungle man. The white V-neck, pull-over shirt, hugged his

upper torso, boldly showcasing every dip, twist and turn of his chiseled chest and the broad muscles of his arms strained against the fabric. With his rich toffee colored skin, he epitomized the perfect blend of African American and Italian.

“Tell me the truth. Where have you been for the last fifteen years, Angie?”

Editor Critique:

This is a great first meet, it really captures the reader's attention compelling us to immediately enter the worlds and conflicts of Angela and Daniel, intriguing us about them and making us want to know more about their backgrounds, and what happened to separate them.

You've really conjured a great intensity and piqued the reader's curiosity. We can't wait to discover what happens next and indeed why Angie disappeared 15 years ago? What has happened to her since? What they were to each other back then? What happens next?

So this meet is well on its way to being truly compelling. It might be good to learn a bit more about them as characters, or perhaps we learn this in the story prior. Eg, Your hero is a celebrity, is a chef?

We have good insight from Angela's point of view, though one of the things I really wanted to know was why she is putting herself into his presence now after all these years? And certainly throughout the scene we get her apprehension about seeing him again, though do think that this is something that could really come through in the entry to the scene, too. At the moment when she approaches, Daniel seems comparatively relaxed, so this doesn't quite give us the insight and anticipation that matches the rest of the scene. It would be good to feel that apprehension for him as she approaches him. She must know that it will be a shock for him to see her again, and her own fears of how he might react, giving perhaps that bit more of a hint into what happened.

A greater sense of the chemistry between them would be good. Certainly from Angela's point of view there are indications, that her skin sizzled, etc... and that she is finding him almost overwhelming, but it is not entirely clear whether this is fear of his reaction, actual physical chemistry or both.

While we have very much the heroine's point of view, and much of it is compelling, it could be good to have some more of the hero's, too. It could be great to see from both their points of view that recognition when their eyes first

meet and more of their feelings and awareness, the juxtaposition of their conflicting emotions:

From Angela – her apprehension, pain? Emotional longing, pleasures, sensual awareness etc.

From Daniel – what is he feeling - a mixture of relief? Anger? Sexual recognition?

By heightening that awareness of your characters, their conflict, motivations, chemistry and myriad emotions a bit more, you could really lift this already well-crafted first meet to the truly compelling. Can't wait to read more, Kimmie.