



AFTER DENMARK

by David Robson

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# **After Denmark**

By  
David Robson

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“I am what time, circumstance, and history have made me.  
But I am also much more than that. So are we all.”

James Baldwin

Characters:

TED

*White male, thirties or forties*

LYNDON (LYN)

*Bi-racial male, thirties*

EVE

*White female, twenties or thirties*

MAN

*Black male, fifties or sixties*

CHARLOTTE

*White female, fifties or sixties*

CHANTE

*Black female, thirties*

BARTENDER

*White male, forties*Time and Place:

The Present; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Charleston, South Carolina

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

(Lights rise on an office. LYNDON and TED are hanging a plaque. LYNDON, hammer in hand, holds a nail to the wall and gives it a try.)

LYNDON

We need better nails.

TED

Office supply's for shit. Give me a try.

(LYNDON hands TED the hammer. This time, TED gets it. He straightens the plaque.)

TED

There you go.

LYNDON

Not bad.

TED

“American Association of Textbook Publishers best editor award is presented to Lyndon D. Sykes.” Pretty sweet. I hope you're proud of yourself.

LYNDON

It's a textbook, Ted. How much competition can there be?

TED

Let's see, in the Astronomy market, well, this year there was the Brown and Philips and the Tufts, Chandler, and Carr. But in the market as a whole, I don't know, maybe a hundred books. That's pretty damn good, I'd say.

LYNDON

Sure, but I'm thinking, shit, where does all this fit in, you know? I'm sitting here busting my hump over heavenly bodies, nebulae, red dwarfs—but I'm still trying to figure out...

TED

What?

LYNDON

I don't know...

TED

Dude, I still can't find the Trader Joe's in my neighborhood. Now, come on, take a look at that sitting up there. See it?

LYNDON

It does look kind of sweet, doesn't it?

TED

What do you say? Ten years 'till you replace Emily as publisher?

LYNDON

I'd settle for your job in the meantime.

TED

You backstabbing little fucker!

(EVE enters carrying a box of doughnuts and a tray of coffee.)

EVE

Look what I brought!

TED

Sweetie pie, you shouldn't have.

EVE

Hands off! Lyn picks first.

(LYN picks a doughnut, grabs a coffee.)

TED

Hey, Lyn, can you give Wagner a call about the solar system illustration? He's three days late with it.

LYNDON

Sure thing.

EVE

(To LYNDON)

Are you still taking orders from this guy?

LYNDON

Yeah, that plaque should give me some special privileges, don't you think?

TED

In your dreams, my nigga.

(TED grabs a doughnut and leaves.)

EVE

What's with the "my nigga"?

LYNDON

What?

EVE

Does he always call you that?

LYNDON

I don't know—didn't notice.

EVE

You didn't notice.

LYNDON

We give each other shit.

EVE

He's using it.

LYNDON

He's my friend.

EVE

He's your boss. And he's not black.

LYNDON

I noticed. Hey, thanks for the doughnuts and coffee.

EVE

My pleasure. You deserve a little attention once in a while, especially after last night.

LYNDON

Yeah, it was a nice ceremony. We still on for tonight?

EVE

Sure.

LYNDON  
You sound enthused.

EVE  
It's not that.

LYNDON  
What is it?

EVE  
I still don't think she likes me.

LYNDON  
Why wouldn't she like you?

EVE  
What cha readin'?

(She picks up a book from his carrying bag and flips the pages.)

LYNDON  
Hey, it's illegal to go through somebody's stuff, you know.

EVE  
...Looks interesting.

LYNDON  
Give it.

EVE  
Who is Denmark Vesey?

LYNDON  
Just some guy. Now, give it to me.

EVE  
What made you pick this up?

LYNDON  
Why does it matter?

EVE  
It matters 'cause you don't want to tell me.

(He grabs the book; a letter falls out. EVE picks it up.)

LYNDON  
May I have that please?

EVE  
Only if you tell me what's going on.

LYNDON  
Okay, I will.

EVE  
You promise?

LYNDON  
Yes.

(EVE hands him the letter.)

LYNDON  
Thank you. I got this a couple days ago.

EVE  
From who?

LYNDON  
There's no return address.

EVE  
What's it say?

LYNDON  
You want to read it.

EVE  
Maybe.

LYNDON  
Bullshit maybe.

EVE  
Only if you want me to.

LYNDON  
Take it.

(EVE takes the letter and reads.)

EVE

“Dear Lyndon:

(Dim lights rise on a MAN. He’s illuminated from the neck down; his face remains in deep shadow.)

MAN

You’ve made your way in the world. But do you know who you really are? Do you know where you come from?

LYNDON

Keep reading!

EVE

“You are the last descendant of the man who...”

MAN

...Led this country’s largest slave rebellion. *His* blood courses through your veins. But for more than thirty years, you’ve lived as a man without a past. How you use this knowledge is up to you, but...

LYNDON

“...Without it you will remain forever lost.”

EVE

It sounds like a fortune cookie.

LYNDON

Did you see the signature?

EVE

There’s only a “D.”

LYNDON

What do you think it stands for?

EVE

What—you think it stands for Denmark or something?

LYNDON

I don’t know.

EVE

What about the post mark?

LYNDON

Can't quite make it out...

EVE

Maybe it's like a distant relative or something.

LYNDON

I don't know of any distant relatives. My Aunt Connie maybe, but she's dead.

EVE

So this guy Denmark led largest slave rebellion in the country's history?

LYNDON

That's what it says.

EVE

I thought it was that slave guy who murdered those people back in the 1800's. What's his name? There's a novel about him. Um, written by the guy who wrote *Sophie's Choice*.

LYNDON

Styron. William Styron. Oh, you're talking about Nat Turner.

EVE

Nat Turner, right!

LYNDON

Denmark had him beat apparently. Check this out (He reads from the book):  
"In 1822, Vesey led a slave rebellion with the goal of burning down the city of Charleston, South Carolina and murdering the entire white population, including women and children."

EVE

Oh, shit.

LYNDON

"But the plot was found out, and Vesey and his fellow conspirators were executed for their crimes."

EVE

And you're his last descendant?

LYNDON

It seems a little far-fetched.

EVE  
How can we know for sure?

LYNDON  
I guess we can't, unless...

EVE  
Unless what?

LYNDON  
Unless my mother knows something I don't.

## SCENE 2

(LYNDON and EVE sit at a table. Bowls and plates of food surround them. They're not eating.)

CHARLOTTE (Off)  
Shit, I always forget the rolls.

LYNDON  
Don't worry about it, mom.

CHARLOTTE (Off)  
I went to the trouble to make them, so I might as well put them out. You two go ahead and get started.

(EVE and LYNDON don't move.)

EVE  
Everything looks delicious, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE (Off)  
The meat isn't overcooked, is it?

EVE  
Oh, no, it looks perfect.

LYNDON  
(To EVE.)  
You want more wine?

EVE  
Hit me.

(LYN pours.)

Mom, more wine? LYNDON

Okay. Ow! Damn! CHARLOTTE (Off)

Need some help in there? LYNDON

(She enters.)

No, here they are. CHARLOTTE

They smell great. LYNDON

They're a little burned on the bottom. CHARLOTTE

I like them black. EVE

Okay, do we have everything? CHARLOTTE

We have plenty. EVE

That's not what I asked. CHARLOTTE

Can you relax, mom? Sit down. LYNDON

(CHARLOTTE sits.)

It really does look delicious. EVE

I hope everything's good. I'm no expert when it comes to cooking. CHARLOTTE

You're great, stop. LYNDON