

PESHA RUBINSTEIN
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Re: TIME FRAME

2/14/91

Dear Contributor:

Thank you for thinking of my agency. Unfortunately, your submission was not right for me, and I wish you the very best of luck placing it with the best agent for you.

For a list of agents and publishers, look at the Literary Market Place, in the reference section of your library.

My best wishes for your success in your writing career.

Sincerely,



Pesha Rubinstein

Dear Ms. Holloway:

Your credentials are great, but this project, unfortunately, didn't click with me. Please keep me in mind for other projects.

As for submitting to several agents, I think it's best to be up front.

Best of luck,

Pesha R.

Glenna Holloway
913 E. Bailey Rd.
Naperville, Illinois 60565

Published: WESTERN HUMANITIES REVIEW; MCCALL'S; GEORGIA REVIEW; ATLANTA JOURNAL/CONSTITUTION SUNDAY MAGAZINE; SOUTHRN LIVING; THE NEW RENAISSANCE; WISCONSIN REVIEW; OVERTURES; LIGHT YEAR 87; INSIDE CHICAGO MAGAZINE; CHICAGO TRIBUNE; CHICAGO SUN TIMES; AMERICA; MODERN MATURITY; CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR; SATURDAY REVIEW; KIDS; CONNECTICUT RIVER REVIEW; CRAZY QUILT QUARTERLY; CHIMERA CONNECTIONS; POET LORE; THE LYRIC; BLUE UNICORN, many other literary journals and anthologies, etc.

Recipient 1987 Hart Crane Memorial Award, Kent State
'Best of the Best' Award, Chicago Poets & Patrons, 1987,
1988, 1989; \$1,000 Grand Prize, National Federation of State
Poetry Societies, 1987; 'Best of Best,' National League of
American Pen Women, 1990

Ragdale Foundation Fellow, 1989

TIME FRAME

Glenna Holloway

Nurses always appealed to Cliff. Possibly it had more to do with his old covetous feelings for the field of medicine than the usual male reasons. The present woman in white didn't grab attention but her smoky blonde profile and the lift of her lip stayed with him, insisting on confirmation in detail. Except for a nice pair of calves, her stiff smock hid so much he had to content himself with esthetic creativity and how her facial planes experimented with the light.

She took his ID form. "Have a seat in the first office, Captain Cunningham," she said, gesturing as he was half bent above the waiting room chair. In a few minutes, she came inside with a file and closed the door.

He stood up automatically. "Look, I can save you and the doc some time and paper work. I don't need a thing from here. Unless you'll have dinner with me."

She didn't stop reading his file. "Twenty-five years old," she murmured, brows raised. "This says your company suffered almost 30% casualties. It says they'd have been

clinical symptoms, I never felt this way in my life!"

"Why do you reckon you do now?" Her eyes moved closer. His poured their color over her, like being anointed with some rare melt-down of pale turquoise and spikenard.

"I honestly don't know. You're beautiful--but there are lots of beautiful women in the world. You've got a glossy, never-mind, non-malleable surface that doesn't invite a guy to try to get beneath but I want to. You're not what I'd call sweet-- more like gin and lime on ice. But I've sure acquired a taste for it.... You know what dovetails are? In carpentry?"

"You mean like drawer corners?"

"Yeah. I think all our projections and hollows, slots and flanges fit. Maybe mine recognized that in yours. If you'd listen, maybe yours will tell you the same thing. I think if we put them together they'll never come apart."

She kissed him, for the first time, at her initiation, her direction. She reached up and turned off the lamp without stopping. She pushed her breasts against him and stole his breath and held him like she was drowning.

"Feli, don't do this to me if I can't have you!"

He thought he felt her trembling but he couldn't be sure it wasn't his own, then she was saying "I love you" in his ear. "Darling, I love you, I want to be yours."

He untied her sash and unwrapped her front as he kissed

her face. He unbuttoned her pajamas and parted the placket. She opened his yukata, expecting the calming neutrality of a tee-shirt, startled by the sudden expanse of hot skin and the hard muscles of his chest.

Her breast passing over his made him groan. He covered the other pliant pyramid with his hand, skimmingly at first, feeling the almost smooth tip transpose to concentrated texture with an irresistible apex. The first nipple, changed before his mouth claimed it, turned bolder still as he kissed it. Finally, he pulled away a moment, took off his clothes then lay all his naked desire against her.

"I'll use a--"

She shook her head. "It's all right. My cycle is dependable. Oh, Cliff, I want you--"

His arms enclosed her trembling and she felt his words and his breath on the edge of his kisses. "I love you, Felice, oh God, how I love you!"

He entered her darkness slowly, a stranger, but it was a place of instant warmth and welcome. Before the forest of her hair muffled his cries, the last vestige of strangerhood vanished and he knew there were no more questions.

Morning striped her room through bamboo blinds. He was propped on one elbow, watching her when she opened her eyes. He kissed her forehead. "Feli--let's get married right away.

phrase of the war--"the meat grinder" --appropriate for the way men were mangled in foxholes and filth or broad exposure. In a millisecond a man could be a stain on the rocks. She knew there was not much in Ken's casket.

Once, Ken said, "It's a wonder any man can keep his savagery out of his bed." Sometimes his lovemaking was selfish and afterward he would be apologetic and morose. She didn't want him to be. She understood. But he was so innately kind and caring, any departure from it bothered him. She was sure he wouldn't have been able to behave much freer with a whore. She regretted that she couldn't provide, or rather, he wouldn't quite take, everything he needed.

The Arabian responded to Cliff. He was as fast as the Appaloosa and they raced and rode hard all Sunday afternoon.

When they got home, Cliff sat on the floor in his towel, Felice sat on the sofa and massaged his shoulders. She could feel strain everywhere she touched him. Time was full galloping like the horses. Soon he would sling a rifle, go back to the front and all the strength in his beautiful arms and pectorals couldn't help him. Before he turned his back, he gave her a glance that would be deleted from an American movie. She kissed his temple, felt him jerk his breath.

"Lot of tension there," she said as she ran her palm over his scapular and up his neck. "Can't you relax?"

He grunted. "Thought I was."

"I noticed it last night, too." She dropped down beside him. "Darling---you're a considerate, gentle lover and--"

"I want to be gentle."

Her voice was soft as plush. "I know you do and I adore you for it. But maybe that's not always how you feel. Sometimes you put a curb bit on your drive." She was looking so deeply he thought she could see behind his eyes. "I trust you, Cliff. You don't always have to make it wonderful for me. And I won't break."

His eyes raked her, paused on her mouth then returned to her eyes as if to verify what he heard. He gripped the center of her terry wraparound, pulling her to her knees as he jerked it off. He dragged his hands heavily from breasts to buttocks, his tongue slurring over the grain of hers, the vault of her mouth. He caught her lip between his teeth as he plunged inside her after he took an instant to make sure he could slide without scathing her. She expected nothing but the satisfaction of meeting his need. Instead, his sudden explosion struck such a deep response, her long wail was as loud as his and he was afraid he had hurt her until her tremors and the way she clamped him made him realize what had happened.

Her breath came in sections. "I--I didn't think I'd-- I can't believe it! I only hoped to help you--"

"You did! Oh, you did! What a woman you are! Give me a

few minutes and let's make it last, let's do it right--"

She smiled against his ear. "Actually--it's never been any other way. Sometimes a man and woman just have something very rare together.... It's the dovetails, darling."

His orders didn't come through for five more days, along with his Silver Star. They had an argument after breakfast.

"But WHY won't you marry me?," he said impatiently. "You're not making sense!" He had never seen her cry. It took him by surprise. He rocked her in his arms. "Are you afraid it'll happen again? Is that it?"

"I just can't go through that again!"

"Honey--are you saying it wouldn't be a problem as long as you weren't my wife? Somehow that would make it easier?"

She looked up. "At least they wouldn't hand me your damn flag! Precisely folded three times. 'Here's your husband's whole life neatly triangulated. Put it in the bureau, get it out on Veteran's Day and sing 'Ari Rang.'" She hit his chest with the side of her fist. "You're the one with all the hero decorations! I never claimed to be brave!"

"Oh, yes you did! The first time you ever looked at me with those cool, competent eyes you proclaimed it to high heaven. All the odds you've overcome to get where you are--bucking the brass and the shit--still smelling like a rose--three cuts above all the rest." He spread his fingers

on her stomach. "You've got enough grits in that beautiful belly to fortify you and me both. I may damn well need to borrow some to tell you good-bye!"

Her eyes filled again. "Oh, Cliff--do you know what I considered doing? I almost-- I almost declared you unfit to return to combat-- I kept thinking about you--everything about you-- keen mind, perfect body-- that hideous term 'the meatgrinder'-- and I-- picked up a form and a pen and-- Oh, God!" She buried her face against his neck.

He held her a long time. "But you didn't. All the things that make you who you are wouldn't let you." He cupped her face between his hands. "Forgive me, Felice. A man has no right to put a woman through this. I barged into your life and--"

"And I opened the door. In my office that day, you said: 'Once we go to war, willingly or not, we forfeit the right to be shocked at what happens.' And I agreed. I've got no right to be shocked, much less the right to dodge personal consequences. I am your wife, physically and spiritually. Nothing can change that. I'm sorry my head's been so crazy. All wrong. Forget everything but yes!" She smoothed his collar. He gazed at her then softly kissed her. She slipped into the rest of her uniform. His bars flashed on her periphery as he buttoned his shirt.

"I'll be late tonight," she said. "We're flying out to set up a new MSU." They left arm in arm.

They saw the chaplain. Their wedding was set for Saturday morning. She got a quick call through to her brother.

Burk Payne arrived shortly before the ceremony. He stood beside Cliff. Once, he put his hand on his back. The words being said were a low monotone, prescribed formality, ritualized protocol.

The words still ricocheting in their heads were not compatible with the spoken ones: Heavy artillery. Direct hit on her vehicle. Our guns. Friendly fire. Two officers and an enlisted man killed. Her name, over and over.

Her flag was folded in triangles. White gloves handed it to Burk. A little later he gave it to Cliff.