**Panting now, I couldn’t help thinking** about the eruption of clapping at Mitchell’s words as if he’d said nothing wrong. My mind retreated back to the crowd of dark suits and dresses rising in standing ovation, as I remained seated in a special state of confusion.

 *What? Who was he calling an amazing woman he could not live without? She did his dry cleaning? I did his dry cleaning and hand-pressed many-a-dress shirt. What was she doing touching his shirts?*

I sensed an obvious discomfort at my banquet table. The wife next to me raised her eyebrows and gave me an open-mouthed, super-smile, which said, “*Yes, that was inappropriate for him to say, and yes, we all noticed.”*

All the color must’ve drained from my face as I remembered locking eyes with Mitchell amid the applause before he darted behind the big black curtain. She was only his assistant, right? Was I overreacting? Was he genuinely indebted to her or was he purposely trying to disrespect me? My ears were ringing now and my head was going to explode. I’d had migraines before, but this was the mother of all migraines. I shut my eyes and splashed a little water on my face, trying to quell the fire in my head. When I opened my eyes I saw a woman.

 I wasn’t alone.