

## Aphrodite's Stand

**Sandra Scott**

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*Aphrodite's Stand works across genre conventions, resulting in a romance novel with definite bite.*

An interracial couple is so enraptured with one another that they are blindsided by the unfolding sinister plans of others in Sandra Scott's *Aphrodite's Stand*, a page-turning romantic thriller.

Six months into their marriage, Andra Williams, an African American medical doctor, and Jayson Theonopilus, a Greek seminarian, fly to Athens, Greece, to meet Jayson's family. Their welcome quickly turns sour when Stefano, Jayson's older brother, and Sly, a longtime family friend, work feverishly to break the couple apart. Although their efforts seem to be in vain, there are other menacing situations that have the potential to destroy the whole Theonopilus household.

*Aphrodite's Stand* opens to immediate uncertainty in the midst of its romance, which sets the stage for the remainder of the book. Seduction and prejudice are the underlying themes that drive Scott's newest novel. Inferences of prejudice provide an ominous presence amid scenes punctuated with salacious moments. These themes are balanced within situations of personal trauma, healing, and resolution in a way that keeps the narrative consistently flowing.

The members of the book's colorful cast are used principally as foils to develop Andra as the lead. This wide array of personas ranges from warm parental figures like Jayson's father and Andra's mother to cynics like Andra's sister to elusive characters like Stefano and Sly.

The plot builds by alternating between character scenes. Writing is clean and mostly free of obscenities. Dialogue is engaging, wavering between evasive and confrontational. The story is heavily doused with uncertainty, reflected largely in Andra's thoughts as she is faced with unnerving situations, such as her individual encounters with Stefano and Sly.

The book sets itself apart in its highlighting of racial issues, which are balanced with elegance. Characters tell it like it is. Negative and positive opinions and perspectives are evenly portrayed from both black and white characters.

The text is lightly peppered with biblical quotes, giving it the flavor of a good-versus-evil story. The story contains hints as to how it will unfold, but there are also plenty of surprising plot twists. Character motivations remain elusive and add a mysterious element to the text. Chapter cliffhangers generate excitement, though subsequent chapters often provide only partial closure, prompting continued searches for more conclusive answers.

The narrative deftly moves from one scene to the next, each replete with intrigue, thought-provoking concepts, chilling elements, and sprinklings of romance.

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ANITA LOCK (February 27, 2018)

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