

her arm and swung her back to me. Her eyes change from chestnut to fire. She leaned into my face. “I know one thing. You better not put your hands on me again. There are people here watching me tonight, so if you make a scene, you will get your feelings hurt.”

## CHRISTIAN



*“Would you like something to drink?” Nona asked.*

“Sure,” I replied. “Surprise me.”

“Oh, I’m planning on doing that.”

Her condo was very nice. I hadn’t previously been inside, but liked what I saw. There was a doormat shaped like the continent of Africa at her front door. She told me that coming back home was like returning to the “Motherland.” She had a point. Her place had a positive vibe that made it a relaxing reprieve from the hustle of every day life. It was a sanctuary, filled with candles and exotic scents, designed to soothe the soul. I felt lighter just being here.

“Here you go!” Nona handed me a Patron margarita on ice.

“Was a sistah paying attention?” A good woman knew her man’s preferences.

“Of course!”

“I’m impressed.”

“Well, I wished I’d known it was that easy. I wouldn’t have bothered planning the rest of the evening.”

I grinned like a Cheshire Cat. “What else you got planned?”

“Why don’t we focus on the entrée before you start moving to dessert?” She reprimanded.

“Okay. I like that . . . I like all of that.” My eyes roamed up and down the landscape that was her physique.

“Anyway!” She brushed off my leer. “So, is Dorian okay? He seemed a little upset tonight.”

“That’s a long story.”

“Well, I know that... woman he was talking to?”

“Is that right? How do you know each other?”

“Now that’s a long story. And I’m not trying to interrupt this mood we got going on.” She waved her hand back and forth.

“That’s sounds like a plan—Oh, no! Tell me that isn’t what I think that is.” I walked over to the bookcase and grabbed what looked like a photo album.

“Hey! You didn’t ask if you could look at that. I might have something in there that I don’t want you to see.”

“What’s the old saying? ‘Possession is nine-tenths of the law.’”

“But it’s my album!”

“Well, hey, I found it on the shelf, didn’t I?”

“Okay, Christopher Columbus. Remind me to go outside to your car and ‘discover’ your stereo.”

“I’m glad you understand the concept, but don’t ever joke about a Black’s Man radio.”

“Don’t even try it. This is not ‘Rush Hour’ and you’re not Chris Tucker.”

I flipped open the cover. “Just consider this research.”

“Humph! Who knew you were so nosy?”

“Not ‘nosy’. ‘Safety’. A brotha’ can’t be too cautious nowadays.” I shaped my index and forefingers into the form of scissors, making a cutting motion in the air. “Too many surgeries these days. A cat’s gotta’ be certain that what’s advertised is what he’s getting.”

“You’re so wrong for that, but that’s cool. If you would rather look at pictures than the real thing, go right ahead.”

“I have a choice?”

She disregarded my question. “There’s one condition. You have to

promise not to laugh at the ‘ugly duckling’ phase. I wasn’t always the diva you see in front of you.”

“Agreed. As long as you promise not to laugh when you see the Jheri Curl phase.”

“I can’t see that on you. You’re kidding, right?”

“No, but don’t be scurred!”

## NONA



*Christian and I revisited the memories of my life. He saw my mother when she could barely stand because her womb overflowed with me. He checked out the little girl that was Shirley Temple cute. He glanced at pictures from the era when I taxed the tooth fairy like the IRS.*

I wanted to skip the shots from my middle school years, the age of awkwardness. I was tall to the point of being gangly. As if towering above my schoolmates wasn’t enough, my boobies had already started to come in. In one school photo, the thick, supportive straps of the old-fashioned training bra showed through my preppy white blouse. Moms still owed me an apology for that one.

Anyway, if you throw in braces for good measure, it was definitely nerd central. One thing I can say for myself back in those days, I was definitely a brave soul. In this same picture, I smiled hard like it was two for one in the government cheese line that day. *Where did that innocence go?*

“Damn, Boo! Was that really you?” He asked, as if he’d sighted a UFO.

“Uh, Yesss!”

“Did you have any friends back then?”

“You think you’re funny, don’t you?”

Christian placed his arm around my shoulder. “Baby, I’m just teasing. You were beautiful even when you were ugly.” He broke into laughter. You would’ve thought Dave Chapelle was in my living room, telling jokes.

“Well, it’s too late to try to butter me up. I’m not *YOUR* friend, anymore!”

“Sweetheart, I don’t mean any harm. It’s kinda’ cool seeing you so vulnerable.”

“Yeah, well, wait until it’s your turn.”

“Bet”, Christian says. Then he planted a kiss on my cheek.

As if cueing us to downshift this little groove we had to smooth, my mp3 switched from Mario to Boney James. I turned the page ‘cuz I was in a hurry to get to the college years. That’s when beast started turning into beauty. We came upon a group shot from the early high school years.

“Who are all these dudes in this picture?”

I love my sistahgirls, but in high school, as I discovered myself, it was easier to get along with the opposite sex. Of course, some of my male friends had ulterior motives. Some things never changed. Men were going to be men, even when they were still boys. But my male friendships lacked the cattiness I experienced with some of my girls.

“Those are the homeys from the neighborhood,” I told him.

“So, where are the pictures from when you played ‘hide & go get it’? Did we miss those?”

“What?”

“You heard me!”

“Christian, you’re flippin’.”

“Don’t try to avoid the issue.”

Did I say that my friendships were easier with men? Maybe I should scratch that. “I was then and am now a good girl. I didn’t play that game.”

“That’s too bad.”

“Humph! Speaking of playtime, what are you trying to do right here?” I swung my forefinger back and forth between us. From the mp3 docking station, Boney tried to help smooth my jagged transition.

Okay. There was probably a better way to ask a man about his intentions, but I wasn’t going for cool. Like my show, CSI, I was only interested in “the facts.”

“Damn! What happened to that shy girl?”

“Oh, I’m still shy. But you know what they say, ‘a closed mouth doesn’t get fed.’”

“So we’re being serious right now?”

“As a heart attack.”

“Aw’ight then.” He shrugged his shoulders. “I’m trying to have as much of you as my heart and hands can hold. What ‘chu think about that?”

*Whew. Who could think? I was too busy trying to breathe. His answer caught me off guard. It’d been a long time since words touched my soul like that. Maybe too long.*

For that matter, it’d been a long time since I opened up to anyone. But that’s exactly what I’d done with Christian. First, my home. Then, with this trip down memory lane, I opened up my life. The only thing left was my heart. And that’s when I knew. I wanted to share that too. So I told him.

“That sounds cool to me.”

We stared into each other’s eyes for a moment. Then Christian put his hand on my leg. Electricity surged between us again. His touch had moved from acquaintance to familiar to belonging. I had the sensation that what we were getting ready to share was as real as real could get.

I wanted my new man inside my heart . . . and other places as well. This seemed as good a time as any for my first game of “hide & go get it” . . . without the hiding.

I got off the couch, walked to the center of the living room and

faced Christian. He watched silently, not certain what was going on. He started to speak, but I put my forefinger to my lips. “Don’t worry, baby. I’ll show you where we’re going.”

I let my dress slide to the floor, but kept my heels on. I also slid my thong off over my shoes. Now I basked in the glory of my birthday suit. Then I curled that same forefinger toward my body, inviting him to join me.

“Ouch,” Christian said after bumping into the edge of the coffee table. His eyes were focused elsewhere. We stood in front of each other.

“You seem a little over dressed for the occasion,” I told him.

Christian slipped his shirt over his head. His slacks dropped to the floor, revealing Rocawear briefs. He made a slow production of removing these.

I soaked in his entire splendor. Umph! Ain’t nothing like a little eye candy before I get my swerve on. My eyes dropped down to his member. “Is that for me?” I asked.

“That’s ALL for you.”

I smiled at him to let him know that I was a happy gurl!



*The man sat in a parked unmarked, dark sedan a couple hundred feet from the security gate of Nona’s condo community. He was pleased with himself. Tonight’s efforts yielded very fruitful pictures of Christian and Nona. The candid shots revealed a lot about the nature of the lovers’ relationship, especially the last shot he took of the couple just before they pulled into the entryway. He looked at the LCD screen of the digital camera. Though Christian’s head was turned while focusing on the security guard, she stared directly at him. Her hand stroked*