

3 Guys Later
by
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CHAPTER 1

"Sophia Monique Malone."

Hearing my name announced over the loud speaker was one of the greatest moments of my life. I scanned the audience filled with people-and found my family and friends cheering behind the gate that separated the class from the onlookers. The smiles on their face illustrated that they were just as excited as I was.

I brought my hands up to my hat to make sure that it was adjusted perfectly, before I took that big step across the stage. I was smiling, deep inside, as I walked across and shook the university President's hand. I posed for the camera with my diploma in my hand and then I followed the rest of my classmates and went back to my seat.

My hard work, dedication and struggles finally paid off. This day was destined to happen, because I was determined to make it-no matter what. The day that I gave birth to my daughter, Simone, changed everything. She brought new meaning to the word, "will power." Accomplishing my goals meant so much more to us than just this moment. Now, we could go on to have more of what life had to offer.

Finally, I heard the words I had been waiting four long, hard years to hear. "Congratulations to the class of 2003." A few classmates threw their hats into the air, while others sprayed string confetti all over the place.

Quickly, I made my way through the crowd of crazed classmates, who were screaming hysterically as if they had won a million bucks. A few members of my family had tears in their eyes, especially my Mama.

"Oh baby I'm so proud of you."

I smiled and gave her a big hug.

"Hey Princess! Congratulations," Daddy said, as he handed me a bouquet of flowers.

"Thank you Daddy. Grandma, you made it?"

"Now you know I couldn't miss my little Sophie's graduation."

She snatched a warm, crisp one hundred dollar bill from underneath her beige colored shirt. Grandma always kept money tucked neatly under her bra and she never carried chump change either.

"You haven't changed," Mama said turning to Grandma while shaking her head.

"Where's Simone?" I asked, changing the topic before tempers started to flare.

"Oh your sister took her to the bathroom."

Someone came behind me and placed their vanilla scented hands over my eyes.

"Guess," the voice said.

"That's not too difficult Carmyn."

The hands were lowered. "How did you know?" she asked jokingly.

Carmyn is my best friend who graduated a year ago. She looked really nice in the black pants suit she wore, along with a red silk dress shirt. Her attire really complimented her five-foot seven-inch frame. Her makeup was flawless, yet it gave her a very natural look. She often let her shoulder length, brown curly hair flow naturally, but on this occasion she straightened it and twisted it into a bun. Having a career as a store manager for Nordstrom and extra money allows you to pamper yourself and have a more sophisticated look. Being away from college elevated her to another level, it appears.

Carmyn's smooth fair skin, her delicately placed beauty mole near her mouth and well-rounded curvaceous rump, made her a hot number with the guys around campus. She used to juggle men like a clown in a circus show. I don't know how she remembered the names of the men, but I assume receiving nice gifts won't let you forget a name. All she had to do was switch her hips, bat her eyelashes and men would fall to the waist side. I had it like that too until I met Robert, Simone's father.

"So where is the graduation party?" Carmyn asked, finally.

"It's at the Doubletree hotel," I said.

"It's picture time," Nina said walking up and carrying Simone.

I pulled my parents, grandmother and cousins together so that we could take a group picture. I picked up Simone and gave her a big kiss, as I held her for the picture. It was my night and I was going to live up to the true meaning of celebration.

"Congratulations," Andre said approaching me.

Andre is someone I dated when I arrived at college. I was crazy about Andre, but things didn't work out. We continued to mess around until the creeping got old. He had a girlfriend named Andrea, who didn't like me at all, but my motto was, 'no play and the man will stray.' I lived by that motto until I met Robert and then it bit me in the ass.

"You are looking good girl," Andre continued grinning from ear to ear. This man is still sprung, five years later, and you could see it on his face. "So where's the party?" I told him, as I continued to chat with more people.

Everybody wanted to know if I had any job offers and what I was planning to do. I informed them that I had a job lined up in Houston and that Carmyn and I were going to share an apartment.

My new job began in mid June as a marketing coordinator. It was a salaried position that paid \$42,000 a year. I was so excited when the company flew me out for an interview. I was there for two days, while I interviewed with the human resources manager and met with the supervisor of my department. I was a sista who had her stuff together. I walked into the interview wearing my powerhouse navy blue suit, while carrying my black leather briefcase and told them what I could do for the company, when hired. They must have been really impressed because they had huge smiles on their faces as they jotted down notes in their notebook. It took them two days to offer me the wonderful position.

"Are we ready to get this party started or what?" Mama asked eagerly.

"I'm ready," I said.

Nina took Simone and I decided to ride with Carmyn to the hotel.

"I am so excited that you're moving to Houston. Did you get the fax for the lease?"

"Yeah. I filled it out yesterday and faxed it already. Are the three-bedrooms nice?"

"Yeah it is. I have some guys who are going to help me move in a couple of days. So that's why I'm leaving in the morning."

"So what are the men like?" I asked out of curiosity.

Carmyn eyes lit up like Christmas lights. "Oh my God girl. They have jobs. You know that's a plus and I love the fact that they have their shit together unlike these broke men while you're at college. We were lucky to get happy meals on dates. You just wait and see. A couple of my friends and I get together on Friday nights and have drinks. It's so much to do and I love it. So how does Robert feel about you moving?"

"He could care less, as long as he has that white girl Emily dangling on his arms

like she's a damn prize," I huffed. "I'd love her too if she was taking me shopping, paying half of my rent and giving me money. He can keep getting her money as long as he brings it to me and Simone."

Carmyn chuckled. "You are too much."

"She had the nerve to call me at midnight last week looking for Robert, while I was studying for finals. I told her I am not Robert's keeper and do not call my house any more. Then she started apologizing."

"She's just insecure Sophia."

"Well, I'd be insecure too if I had to compare myself to this."

"Oh, it's so hard to be Sophia Malone. I'm so privileged to be sitting next to you," Carmyn teased.

The intense hot pink, yellow and orange decorations were festive and screamed, "party," as my eyes wandered around the banquet hall in awe. The DJ was setting up his station, whom I might add was very attractive. I must find out his name before the end of the night.

I left Carmyn's side to go to the bar to request a rum and coke with a twist of lime. I took a sip. Mmm, just the way I like it. I winked at the bartender to let him know he made it perfect. Just as I turned around, I noticed Mama, Daddy and Grandma walking in, along with a few of my friends and cousins. I walked over to greet my friends and told them that I was glad that they could make it.

People were arriving by the dozens. The music was bumping now and pulsating right through my body. Each beat was making me want to shake what my Mama gave me. Lord knows I had a lot to shake back there. It could make a grown man cry. I kept making eye contact with the DJ, hoping to catch his attention. It was something sexy about him. Was it his smooth chocolate skin? Or was it the mystery surrounding him that urged me to know more? His dreadlocks hung in his face as he bent over to grab another record. I decided this was the right time to approach the booth.

"Hey," I said.

"What's up?" he asked, not really amused one way or the other of my presence.

"So what is your name?"

"Naeem."

It was like pulling teeth just getting him to converse with me.

"So Naeem, how long have you been a DJ?"

"Three years." I saw him tear off a piece of paper, began to write something and then handed it over to me. I expected to see a phone number, but instead he wrote, 'come back in fifteen minutes.' I just turned around and left. He had another thing coming if he thinks I'm gonna waste my time and come back to talk to him again. He had an opportunity and he blew it.

I went to the bar to get another rum and coke, when Carmyn seized my arm.

"Two shots of tequila please," she said to the bartender.

"What? That's not what I wanted."

"It's your graduation girl. I know you're not gonna sip rum and coke all night."

"I might."

The bartender handed Carmyn two tequila shots, while she held onto one and handed me the other.

"On the count of three," Carmyn said.

She slowly counted to three and I took the shot glass and pressed it to my mouth. I took one big gulp of tequila and swallowed it as fast as I could. My chest felt warm on the inside, as it sashayed down the lining of my stomach. Carmyn began laughing because I was squinting my eyes and fanning my face. While I continued to fan my face, I saw a figure, that looked like Robert walking towards us. I knew my eyes weren't playing tricks on me when I saw Emily walking next to him. Her auburn hair hung past her shoulders and her petite body was so close to Robert that they looked like conjoined twins. The man looked like his personal space was being invaded, but they both smiled as if they were the happiest couple on the planet.

"Congratulations," Robert said.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

"Damn, Sophia can I show my face? I just wanted to congratulate you."

"A card would have worked."

"You've met Emily haven't you?"

Emily looked like a California beach girl with her golden bronze tan. She smiled and extended her hand as if I were actually going to shake it. I couldn't help but look at

her as if she had shit on her face. By this time, I was beginning to feel the effects of the tequila mixing with the rum and coke, causing my stomach to burn even more than ever. Their presence was enough to make my skin boil. I felt like I could say anything at this point and it wouldn't be censored.

"Don't piss me off Robert. Why don't you go home? And take Barbie with you."

"Maybe we should leave," Emily said softly, looking into Robert's brown eyes.

"That's right...leave," I pointed my finger to the door. "I don't know who told you it was okay to bring your ass in here in the first place." Then I focused my attention on Robert again. "You've got a lot of balls bringing her to my party. I don't know what your intentions are, but my night would have been just fine, had you not showed up."

"You're just mad because we're not together."

I stepped closer to Robert and looked him dead in his eyes. "You're right, we're not together and I'm sure as hell not mad about it. What I don't appreciate is you bringing that bitch to my party with my family and friends here. If you're proud of that and want to show her off that's fine, but don't do it on my time."

"You're acting like a bitch," he mumbled.

I couldn't believe the word that just came out of his mouth, as it ricocheted off my eardrums. I smacked him without giving it a second thought. My uncles came over right away and escorted Robert outside before he could do anything. Robert's lack of respect was one of the reasons why I left him, along with his flagrant cheating.

I grabbed a chair and sat down, so that I could gather my thoughts. I stretched my arms across the table and lowered my head.

"I know you are not crying over that asshole!" Carmyn shouted, as she folded her arms across her chest.

CHAPTER 2

I ate, danced and tried to have a good time once Robert left, but his cocky attitude always managed to drive me up the wall.

He and I broke up, shortly after Valentine's Day, a year ago. His creeping around had taken its last toll on me. For a year and a half, I suspected he wasn't being faithful, but I could never catch him. I guess being a basketball player and being on the road made his lies easier to cover up. I noticed that he would be gone hours at a time without calling to let me know his whereabouts and then there were the groupies lingering around after the games. At first, I thought it was cute because I had something they wanted, but then it became very annoying once the unsolicited gifts started arriving. I really became suspicious when I found a letter from an unknown female stating that she thought she was pregnant and asking him when was he coming to visit her. With a little investigation of my own, I discovered she attended another college about three hours away. It wasn't long before pieces of the puzzle began to come together. I broke up with Robert for about a month, that's when I found out that I was pregnant with Simone. At first, when I told him that I was pregnant, he seemed happy. As time went by, he became distant. Once Simone was born, we got back together hoping to work things out, however, nothing ever changed. He was always lying about where he was going, what he was doing and whom he was seeing, but little did I know, in time, the truth would be revealed.

I remember getting out of class early that day and going by his place. When I pulled into his driveway and saw an unfamiliar car, I knew that something was wrong. I walked up the steps and quietly opened the door. I sat my book bag by the door as my ears tuned into the noise from the television and my eyes became fixated on the pair of ladies jeans that were lying on the floor. I stepped closer in the direction of the bedroom and noticed a periwinkle laced bra and matching panties on the floor as well. I braced myself for what I was about to see. A big, thick, heavy lump arose in my throat, as I tried to fight back the stream of steaming hot pulsating tears that began to flood my face. I wiped my face with the back of my sleeve and opened the door to see a lean, trimmed, caramel complexion woman with wavy dark brown hair amid honey blonde highlights riding the night away on Robert. She looked terrified when she saw me standing in the

doorway and bellowed out a loud gasp and yelled, “Oh my God!” as she rolled over, pulling the sheet up to her chest.

“Shit!” I remember Robert yelling in disbelief, as if the floodgates of a levy had broken.

I charged at the both of them like a raging bull, tearing into Robert by pummeling my fists into his head in a mad rage. I went for home girls’ wavy dark brown, honey blonde highlighted hair and ferociously dragged her to the floor. She was kicking her legs, flailing her arms and tugging for the sheets all at the same time, but that only made me tighten my grip more. Robert grabbed me, but I still had my hand deeply entrenched in her long gorgeous dark brown hair.

“Tell her to let go of my hair!” she screamed.

“Baby, let go of her hair,” Robert pleaded.

“Oh now I’m your baby? I wasn’t your baby when you were fucking this bitch was I?”

“Robert, you told me you guys weren’t together anymore,” she said.

“I guess he failed to mention that we have a two-year-old daughter!” I yelled.

“Alissa, I can explain this to you.”

“You are a worthless piece of shit!” I screamed at him. “I’m sick of your lies. This shit is over you dirty bastard and don’t call me unless it concerns your daughter.”

I finally let go of Alissa’s hair and with the same force that I had grabbed her, I shoved her into Robert’s dresser and she went tumbling backwards like an out of control gymnast, knocking over the pictures and a trophy that was resting on Robert’s dresser. But I wasn’t finished yet. I grabbed Alissa by her leg and tried to drag her out of the room, but somehow she gripped her hands on the posts of Robert’s bed and wouldn’t let go, even as I tugged harder.

“Fine bitch, have it your way.”

I grabbed the lit candle and poured the hot melting wax on her and spat on her, as she squirmed in pain.

On my way out of the bedroom, I knocked his favorite stained glass lamp to the floor and it shattered in to tiny pieces. I felt like a destructive tornado, as I hurled anything that dared crossed my path. I picked up my book bag that was sitting on the

floor by the door and continued outside to Alissa's car. As if I had not done enough damage, I kicked the driver's side door and put a nice, deep size dent in it. I was grinning, but on the inside I was tearing up. As I drove away, I thought to myself, never in a million years did I think I would have to raise my daughter alone. I knew Robert and I had problems, but I thought we would work through them. What happened back there? How could he be fucking another bitch, while we're still together? He knew better. How could I ever think that he could remain faithful in a committed relationship? I was so shaken and hurt that I sat in my car trembling with fear. Reality had kicked me in the face and I realized that I was definitely on my own and about to become a single mother.

Two drinks later, and the party was over. I thanked everyone for coming out to share my evening with me. Carmyn told me she was headed to the hotel to get some rest. It was about one o'clock in the morning and I remembered telling Amber that I would pick Simone up in the morning. I eyed the DJ packing up his equipment. He had placed me on the back burner nearly four hours ago and made no attempt to make up for the shitty note he had passed to me earlier. How inconsiderate, I thought.

I gathered my graduation gifts and headed toward my car. I placed them neatly in my trunk, when I heard a sexy, melodic voice uttering something from behind me.

"Hey, I'm sorry if I seemed a little rude back there, but when I'm dee jaying I'm really in the zone. So what is your name?"

"Sophia," I said dryly, still positioning the gifts in the trunk.

"So tonight was your big night?" Naeem asked.

"Yeah."

I closed the trunk and it made a big thud. I was hoping this would signal that I was trying to leave, but of course it didn't.

"What are your plans?"

"You know I was interested in talking to you hours ago," I snapped. "And you passed me this shitty ass note..."

"Look, I apologize. I want to make it up to you. The night is still young. Do you want to go to Club Screammers?"

"I don't know. It's kind of late."

"It's cool," he said softly.

“All right I’ll go, but I gotta go home first.”

“Do you want to meet there?” he asked.

“Yeah, I’ll be there at two-fifteen.”

“I’ll look for you.”

I got into my car and headed home. As soon as I walked into the door, I kicked off my shoes. I scurried to my bedroom to find my yellow dress and placed the yellow sandals on my bed. I gave myself twenty minutes to pull it together by jumping in the shower and washing off as fast I could. I went to my drawer and pulled out my black-laced thongs and black-strapless bra. I sprayed on perfume and slicked my hair into a ponytail. I added some extra hair for fullness and looked in the mirror for one last approval before heading out the door.

I placed a piece of gum in my mouth, as I approached the club. There wasn’t a sign of the tall, sexy, chocolate honey with dreadlocks-who mesmerized me earlier. My mood suddenly shifted, as I thought, what if he stood me up? I was going to be pissed. In reality, I could be angry all that I wanted, but there was no way for me to verbalize my disgust without his number. How stupid, Sophia.

Suddenly, someone appeared in the door way wearing charcoal slacks, a crisply, starched white shirt, black dress shoes, along with a black silk head scarf to match. As I move closer toward the door, I realized that it was Naeem.

His eyes traced my body from head to toe, as if he was intrigued by what he saw. I knew I met his approval, as he began to smile.

“Damn, you look fly,” he said.

“Thank you. You too.”

He took my hand and led me into the club. He asked me if I wanted something to drink and I nodded, “no.” I realized that I had been drinking earlier and had reached my limit. We took a seat at a table next to the bar and began small talk. I learned that Naeem had moved here from L.A a year ago to get away from baby mama-drama. He has a three-year-old daughter, whom he doesn’t see very much, because her mother won’t allow him too. If Naeem is anything like Robert, then sista girl might have a valid reason for not allowing the child to be around her father.

I asked Naeem if he had been in a relationship, since he moved here and he

replied, “no.” I said, “you’re such a liar,” and then I asked, “When was the last time he had been intimate with someone?” And he replied, “A month ago.” He asked the exact same questions of me and my response was four months ago. Hearing myself respond to his questions made me realize that I had been depriving myself of some good ol’ loving.

The last guy wasn’t worth calling back-not even out of desperation. I remember lying there and thinking: I can’t believe this. I told him he had to get his things and go. He was angry with me for putting him out like that. Hell, I was angry with him for burning out on me like a pair of cheap batteries.

I followed Naeem to the dance floor, he placed his hands around my waist and pulled me closer to him, making my heart race. I put my arms around his neck and moved my hips to his rhythm. Having his body close to mine ignited urges within me that had been quietly tucked away. The more we danced, the more enticing the scent of the cologne on his neck became. When he placed a hot, juicy, wet kiss on my neck, I quickly pulled away because the temptation was much too great and he was turning me on. Naeem pressed me even closer to him and made sure that I felt his bulging package. He pressed his package against me-hard. By now, my hormones were racing and it was beyond extremely hot in here. I was two seconds away from ravaging Naeem, right here on the dance floor. But I knew I had to maintain my aching passion that was screaming for attention.

CHAPTER 3

The moon peaked through my bedroom blinds casting a ray of light, which allowed me to see the white tennis shoes that Naeem tripped over. The neon green digital clock sitting on my nightstand read three-thirty.

I sat down on the edge of the bed and looked up at Naeem with his crisp white starched shirt gaping open revealing his defined chest and stomach. His abs were tight, letting me know that he invested time in the gym. I pulled him close to me and proceeded to pull off his shirt slowly with intense anticipation.

“Are you honest about what you have to offer?” I asked.

“Huh?” he asked, with a surprised look on his face.

“Can you play the game like it’s supposed to be played?” I asked, hoping this time he would see what I was trying to get at.

“Oh...why don’t we let you see for yourself?”

I gently scooted backwards so that I could see what Mr. Naeem was working with. I did not want to be disappointed and have to squirm my way out of this situation. As he slid his pants off his waist and let his boxers drop to the floor, I was quite pleased. I smiled and tugged at his hand encouraging him to join me on my bed.

He kissed me deeply and passionately, as he slowly unzipped my yellow dress. It was as if his thick full lips were made just for my mouth. The first indicator of how a man makes love can first be felt in the way he kisses and touches you. If his touch and kiss is sloppy, then chances are that’s the way his lovemaking will be. But if he can make you scream, “Oh my God!” and curl your toes all at the same time, then he’ll have you handing over the keys to your car and inviting him to move in.

Naeem removed my black strapless bra and gently laid me back. His soft, moist lips grazed my nipples, and sent warm, tingling, sensations all throughout my body like mini-volts of electricity. The feeling of butterflies wrenched my stomach as my hunger set in to feel Naeem’s deep throttling motion. He feasted on my neck, but I motioned for him to stop because I didn’t want any visible signs. He softly kissed my stomach and every kiss made me grow hotter and hotter. His right hand caressed my hips, while the left hand pulled at the sexy, black Victoria’s Secret thongs that touched my bare body.

Naeem worked my secrets off gently with his hands and slowly moved his mouth and tongue near passion. He began to perform what few men of the new millennium-readily admit they like to do. My body quivered, as his mouth tasted of passion for the first time. Naeem worked his magic like a masterfully, crafty magician and I was in awe. Naeem heard my silent moans and slowly scooted to his knees, as he prepared to let his friend melt inside my passion. Is he nuts? I thought, "Are you crazy?" I blurted without hesitation. I jerked up and continued, "Don't you have a bomber jacket for your friend?"

"Yeah, but I wanna give you a genuine sample."

"Not at my expense."

A sample? Hmmp. Who does he think he is? I got a sample all right and she goes by the name of Simone. I remembered Robert saying that shit to me, and my entire life has taken a detour. As a result of sampling, I am responsible for my daughter. I wouldn't trade Simone for nothing in the world, but there will be no sampling here tonight. No sir. Been there, done that.

Naeem reached for his pants that were lying on the floor, and pulled out a condom. He examined it before he put it on. His warm body climbed on top of me and he slowly introduced his friend to passion. I exhaled because my passion was excited to have let a stranger in. I would have never thought that I'd be doing this; therefore, I quickly locked eyes with Naeem, so that my conscience would not ruin my experience. Lucky for him, I wasn't disappointed, thus far. His thrusts had me clawing my nails into his muscular, round backside. I was so caught up in the euphoria that I hadn't realized that Naeem was sucking on my neck again. I was enjoying every waking moment of this encounter. He rolled over and let me take control as he held on tightly to my waist. I went buck wild like a bull at a rodeo in Oklahoma. I rested my head on his chest as our ride finished. Our hearts were beating profusely from our, "romp fest," and then I slowly drifted off to sleep.

A vibrating sound awakened me, as I sat up both dazed and confused. Naeem was still asleep. The noise continued, as I looked around the room, and tried to regain my composure and figure out where it was coming from. I got out of the bed and saw that it was Naeem's cell phone lying on the floor. I looked back toward the bed before picking up the phone and walked quietly toward the living room. I was able to see the phone

number with the help of the dim light being cast through the window. I grabbed my cordless phone from the base and carefully dialed the number. Curiosity had gotten the best of me and I was getting ready to hang up when a female voice answered.

“Who are you?” I questioned.

“Who are you?” she shot back.

“Are you Naeem’s girlfriend?”

“Yeah, who the fuck is this?”

“That’s not important.”

“I’m losing my cool. Now tell me who the fuck you are. I do have your phone number on my caller ID, so how long do you think it will take for me to call 411?”

“Are you threatening me?” I yelled, my temper rising by the minute. “Please, don’t tell me you are.”

“Whatever bitch. You can have him anyway.”

She hung up on me and left me staring at the phone in disbelief. I couldn’t believe what had just happened. I still had Naeem’s cell phone in my free hand. I was beyond angry. I was livid.

I observed him standing in my door way undressed and looking baffled, before asking, “Why are you yelling?”

I threw the cell phone at him and watched it bounce off of his chisled chest and hit the floor.

“Why are you answering my damn phone?” he questioned, while bending over to pick up the phone.

“Why are you here when you have a damn woman?”

He sighed and rolled his eyes. “Are you talking about Veronica?”

“I don’t know her name and I don’t care. Just get your shit and leave.”

I followed him to my room to watch him gather his things. He told me there should be no hard feelings. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I thought. Just go. I opened the door and he walked out.

I pulled the sheets off of my bed and threw them into the closet on the floor. I jumped into the shower and allowed the warm water to drape over my brown-skinned body. I made sure every scent of Naeem washed down the drain, along with my anger

and disappointment. How can men be such jackasses? All I wanted was just a little piece and I get drama instead.

I awakened with a stiff neck, because I had slept on the sofa. I was so exhausted that I went to sleep without any pajamas on. I fell asleep wrapped in the bath towel that I had draped around my body after taking a shower earlier.

It was ten o'clock in the morning, at least that's what the clock read. I tried to massage the hard knot out of my neck, but it didn't help.

I needed to get Simone from Amber's house. Amber, who is Filipino, is my hair stylist and I love the way she hooks me up on my nails and she does the best French pedicures ever.

I put on my cut off denim fringed shorts and a baby blue t-shirt with a pair of black thong sandals. I grabbed my keys, walked to my car and reached for my sunglasses over the car visor. The spring air caressed my face and soothed me as I tuned in to a fine classic, "The Greatest Love of All," by Whitney Houston. As I hummed and swayed in my seat, I couldn't believe that I finally completed college.

I would be on my way to Houston next week and I was more than excited. Thank God for the \$1500 sign on bonus because I planned on doing a few things with it. My mother suggested that she watch Simone for three months, until I got settled and had time to find a daycare. I thought it was very sweet of her to make that suggestion.

By the time I arrived, Amber was sitting on the steps of her house with her daughter and Simone. From all indications, it simply looked like they were outside enjoying the weather.

"Hey," I said to Amber, as I walked up a few steps before sitting down to join them. Amber was only five feet three inches tall and very thin and petite. She had long jet-black hair, but wore red and orange highlights. I never imagined those color combinations would have looked right, but I guess when you're a stylist and work with different colors, you learn how to achieve compatible matches with various skin tones.

Simone came down the steps and I placed her on my lap.

"How was the party last night?"

"It was cool."

Amber snickered a little and I asked her what was so funny.

“Looks like there were other festivities after the party.”

She was pointing at the marks that were visible on my lower neck. Simone had rested her hand along the neckline of my shirt revealing the details of my secret rendezvous.

Just then my cell phone rang and it was Carmyn. Immediately, she rushes at me with, “Where were you last night? I tried to call you.” And being the loyal friend that I am, I blurted out that I was with Naeem. She paused indicating she was trying to remember who he was. I told her that he was the DJ and she laughed hysterically.

“What!” she shouted unbelievably. “I’ve never known you to sleep with a man on the first night. That tequila shot mixing with the rum and coke really did you in huh?”

“I guess so. I won’t be seeing him anymore anyway because he has a girlfriend.”

“Mm, Mm, Mm... Well, I want details...”

“I can’t tell you right now,” I hissed.

“Oh okay...we’ll talk later and I do mean we’ll talk.”

Amber was still smiling as she rose up from the steps and dusted herself off. She said that she was getting ready to make breakfast and we were welcomed to stay. There was no way I was gonna pass up breakfast-especially when she told me she was making omelet’s and pancakes.

I carried Simone into the house and took off my sandals at the door to avoid getting Amber’s white carpet dirty. It always took my breath away, whenever I visited, because it reminded me of serenity-with the white and all. The contemporary white leather furniture with the deep rich textured carpet really pulled it off creating a very stylish and classy living room. I never asked, but she must have hired an interior designer because red and black accented the space, from the different vases and rugs that were placed throughout the room. I was simply in amazement. I wished I had money to decorate, but I could only do so much on my fixed income.

I placed Simone on the floor so that she could play with Amber’s daughter. I went to the dining room table, picked up a day spa magazine and began flipping through it.

“Kayla and I are thinking about opening a day spa to go with our hair salon,” Amber said.

“Really? Sounds cool.”

“Kayla almost has her license to do hair and we figure that we could run the business. We’ll hire a few stylists and masseuses. Right now, we’re looking for a place that will provide the amenities that we need.”

“Too bad I won’t be here to see it.”

Amber placed the omelet and pancakes on the table, along with a pitcher of orange juice. It looked better than any IHOP entrée I had ever seen. The ham, cheese, sausage, bell peppers, onions and mushrooms mingled with my taste buds. My stomach was yearning for more, as I placed bite after scrumptious bite into my mouth. The pancakes were out of this world.

I was so full that I laid down on Amber’s sofa and fell asleep. Before I knew it, my cell phone rang, and I reached for it, which was lying on the floor.