



To Have and To Hold (Seven Wives for Seven Brothers #1)

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Category: Romance

Description: Colin and his brothers only have a year to find love and marry, or else they lose their grandfather's inheritance.

He didn't want or need the money. Colin worked hard to build up his own path in life away from the Norris empire, but his grandpa knew that Colin had an Achilles heel and could get him to fall in line.

Colin would do anything for his brothers, and in order for them to inherit Grandpa Norris's fortune, he had to find himself a wife and get married within the year. But that didn't mean he needed to stay married...

Total Pages (Source): 30

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

“Jacob is the divorce now final?” Colin questioned his older brother as he shifted in his seat, trying to get comfortable in his grandfather’s decrepit excuse of a chair.

A loud, boisterous laugh from one of his younger brothers distracted him; he turned to see them swiping and jostling each other at a comment or possible joke one of them had made.

His half-brothers Rafe and Bronson sat on each corner of the long couch in Grandfather Norris’s private office, with Matt, Abbott, and Dyson squeezed tightly between them.

They all looked similar. Jacob the eldest brother had brown hair, cut to shoulder length; he was sporting a small trim beard and was the tallest out of all the brothers, with broad shoulders.

Abbott and Matt, identical twins, were the third oldest after him, both with strawberry red hair.

Next was Rafe, lightly tanned with dark brown hair.

Then Dyson, who had reddish brown hair in locs, and Bronson, the baby, had curly blond hair that looked white in the sun.

Other than Dyson, who had dark brown eyes, they all shared a similar shade of arctic blue eyes that they inherited from their father and grandfather.

Jacob and the twins were his full brothers from his parents before his mother passed

away, and Rafe, Dyson, and Bronson resulted from their father working through his grief of losing the love of his life by bedding every type of woman possible.

His half-siblings were very close in age with Rafe and Dyson being a couple of months apart at age twenty-five and Bronson at twenty-four.

Grandpa Norris had brought them into the fold for all of them to grow up together.

They had all been blessed with their father's good looks and ability to charm women.

The one good thing about their father was when he found out about his other children, he had a vasectomy to make sure he didn't continue making that mistake.

Colin and his siblings were close, and he was grateful for his grandfather being a male figure in their life when their own father could not.

That is why when Grandpa Norris called for them to come home, they came without question.

Now, all his siblings sat in his grandfather's office, waiting to find out why Grandpa Norris wanted them all to meet today.

Jacob turned to him, his gaze cold and distant, his posture stiff. "Yes, she signed the papers. I was able to serve them to her before she'd left the hospital."

He decided to change the subject because he knew that his brother was not in a good place with everything that happened during his marriage to Sierra. The accident, and him almost losing their child, Kaitlyn, had scared him. He blamed himself for not dealing with his ex-wife sooner.

An image of Kaitlyn, came to mind, and made him smile.

She was so energetic and curious about life; he could see she was going to grow up to be a beauty.

She also inherited the Norris signature red hair but her skin color and her eyes, a dark brown, were like her mother.

“How is my niece doing, is she excited for her first year as a big girl now and going into kindergarten?”

A smile finally graced his brother’s dower expression, turning his grim look and lighting up his face with love and affection for his daughter. “Yes, she has already started to pick out her outfits, even though school is months away. We still have the summer to get through first.”

Colin suddenly noted the worried look that crossed his brother’s face. “What is it? What’s wrong?”

His brother looked grim again. “I’m not sure, but Kaitlyn has been tired a lot lately and has lost weight.”

“Is that cause for concern, or is it because maybe she is going through a growth spurt and losing her baby fat?”

Jacob dipped his head. “God, I hope that is all it is. We are due to see the pediatrician tomorrow and he is going to run some tests on her.” His brother’s icy blue eyes held fear and Colin’s gut clenched.

His normally unflappable brother looked like he was trying to keep it together, and the only other time he saw this type of fear on his brother’s face was when he was sitting at Kaitlyn’s hospital bed side willing her to live.

“Don’t say anything yet to the rest of the family. I don’t want them worried and pestering me until I know what is happening. Besides, it is probably nothing, exactly what you said; she will be five soon and is becoming a big girl.” Jacob gave him a weak, hopeful smile.

Colin grimly nodded his head. He understood what his brother meant; he would get no peace if the Norris clan found out. Every uncle and aunty and their brothers would be on his doorstep trying to help him out.

“Why are the two of you looking so serious over there?” He glanced over to see Rafe focused now on them. The rest of the brothers, who were engaged in conversation, quieted and now regarded them with speculation in their eyes.

“Noth?”

“Good, you are all here.” The booming voice of their grandfather announced his entrance into the room. Grandpa Norris was going deaf but refused to admit it to himself and his family and had resorted to shouting as he thought that no one could hear him.

His cane made a tap-tap sound as it hit the dark, rustic linoleum floor in his office. He was a tall, burly man, with white hair and beard that used to be red that he inherited from his Scottish mom and his height and build that was like his father.

He sat behind his desk as all eyes in the room turned to him.

He nodded and smiled at the Norris men in the room, his eyes alight with love for all his grandchildren.

But Colin noted his robust features looked tired and his ruddy color seemed pale.

He felt his brother Jacob stiffen and knew he saw it too; Colin glanced at his brothers and caught that they all looked serious now instead of sporting their easygoing smiles.

His grandfather was so full of life that Colin always felt he would live a long time, but he was getting up there in age, celebrating his 90th birthday next year.

He suddenly had a feeling they were running out of time.

First concerning news about Kaitlyn and now this.

His grandfather was about to drop a bomb.

Grandpa Norris took in a deep breath. "If you all want to inherit the Norris fortune, then you all have a year to get married. You will get bonuses if you give me great grandbabies within the following year or even before, if God is willing. I want to celebrate my 90th birthday with all my grandkids and their spouses. If not, you all will get nothing."

All the air got sucked out of the room.

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Coco walked through the halls on her way to the locker, excitement running through her.

She couldn't stop smiling because today was a special day.

School was almost done for the year, and prom was happening in two weeks.

Coco just knew she was going with Colin to the prom and would be the envy of all her peers.

Even though they hadn't come out as official yet, Coco knew it was only a matter of time.

She'd only been going to Ryerson since late last year now that her parents were now US ambassadors for Barbados, but so much had happened.

Her parents being ambassadors had her travelling a lot and going to school in different places.

She loved travelling but hated having to always start over; most people in high school knew each other and had gone to elementary school or began forming friendships as freshmen.

All of Coco's friendships would solidify, then it was time for her to go.

She was looking forward to graduating this year and going on to college or university and staying put while her parents moved to their next assigned destination.

This year, she promised to hold onto the friendships she made at Ryerson High.

Jackie was the first, asked by the principal to show Coco around the school and she kept her in stitches from that moment until now.

They shared most of their classes together.

She had thought Jackie must be popular at school with her outgoing personality and dry wit, but was saddened when she found out that other than her, Jackie really didn't have any friends.

Her razor tongue was Jackie's defence mechanism at school, as she been made fun of because of her weight.

Coco was surprised by this because to her Jackie was a beautiful, light-skinned girl with brown and amber locks, and a small scattering of freckles along her nose.

And Coco noticed that she'd caught the eye of many of the males' students at the high school.

Just like Coco had noticed one particular boy on her first day at Ryerson High whose name she later found out from Jackie.

Coco didn't even have to ask about the boy, Jackie had caught her up on the hierarchy of the school, with the Norris brothers—Colin and identical twins Abbott and Matt—being at the top of the popular boys for their money, good looks, and athleticism.

Colin was known for breaking hearts and after finally meeting him, she could see why.

She turned the corner and played with her scarf, making sure her neck was covered.

Her smile widened when she saw Zahara there waiting, who smiled in return when Coco approached their row of lockers.

Zahara shifted on her sneakers, wearing her signature overalls and t-shirt, as she pushed her glasses up onto her nose and tossed her curly dark hair behind her.

Zahara was the youngest student in Coco's chemistry class.

She was highly gifted, fifteen to her eighteen, and was one of her best friends, along with Jackie.

Even though Zahara was young, they let her hang out with them during school hours and sometimes on the weekends when they were having a PJ-and-Pamper night at Coco's place.

As she approached Zahara, the young girl vibrated with excitement. "Are you ready for our chemistry exam this afternoon?"

Coco showed her the chemistry textbook as she spun the dial on her locker combination.

Both Coco and Zahara loved chemistry, and they had bonded over the fact that they wanted to produce skin care products of their own for women and men.

Coco especially wanted to produce more skin and hair products for people of color especially because there were not that many products out there created by black people for black people.

"So, my mom was at me again yesterday." Zahara sighed. Her sneakers squeaked

against the linoleum floor as she dragged her feet.

“Still wants you to study medicine? Have you told her you want to apply to take chemical engineering when you graduate from here?” Coco shoved her book in her locker and grabbed an extra pen and pencil for her classes.

“I have been trying, but she is not listening.” Zahara’s voice sounded hurt.

Coco glanced at her friend and pulled her into a loose hug. “Keep trying, don’t ever give up on something that you want.” She gave Zahara a squeeze and felt her return the gesture, before pulling away and tugging at the scarf.

“Thanks Coco. I am, but my mom and dad are determined that I become a doctor, I would be the first in the family and I don’t want to let them down.

Maybe if I do what they want, they will let me find my older sister, Selena.

Have you seen the latest picture of her?

I wish I looked more like her; she is so beautiful.

” Zahara took out a picture she’d tucked into the pages of her textbook, waving the torn page of the magazine High Fashion in Coco’s face.

Coco took the torn-out page and studied it.

She regarded the beautiful black model with hazel eyes staring back at her, peeking over the name-brand sunglasses she was wearing while on a deck chair, next to a shimmering pool, a gorgeous male model leaning close to her, offering her a drink in his hand.

Zahara was right, her sister was a stunner, but Coco knew Zahara would be too one day, once she fully developed into the body that Coco could already see was going to be voluptuous. Just like hers, except Coco had a lot of junk in her trunk to go along with a respectable chest.

Zahara grabbed the paper back and sighed again.

As she ran her similar hazel eyes over the picture, she then glanced at Coco, eyeing the outfit she was wearing today: a pressed white-button, long-sleeved top and pressed jeans, with a blue and orange scarf around her neck and orange low-heeled flats.

On her face was pressed dark powder for her skin tone, mascara, and orange lipstick.

The makeup she had put on while taking the bus to school.

Her parents were strict and didn't think she needed to wear makeup until she was twenty.

"Both you and my sister have impeccable taste and style when dressing. While I always look like I threw on whatever was in my closet."

Coco smiled. "Because that is exactly what you do."

Zahara returned the smile, then her eyes widened when they glanced at a spot on Coco's neck, where her scarf was supposed to be covering.

"What?" Coco moved to the mirror that hung in her locker. Just as she saw what Zahara was seeing, the girl blurted out, "Is that a hickey!"

"Hush-hush." Coco rushed to move the scarf into a better position to cover the dark

mark on her already dark skin.

“Is that from Colin?” Zahara moved closer to her friend. Looking at her like she was a god.

She flushed as she remembered how she got it.

They were supposed to be studying as she was his tutor, but instead of studying science and anatomy for his final exam, Colin had wanted to study her.

As usual, she couldn't stay focused on their lessons when Colin took off his shirt and his muscles rippled in front of her; her knees would go weak when he flashed his dimples and looked at her longingly with his deep blue eyes.

The curly red hair sweeping across his forehead that she loved to run her hands through, and she loved to dance her fingertips along the freckles on his shoulder blades.

He was tall and thick and played defence for the Ryerson High hockey team, and will also be trying out for his last year in triple A division when school was done, but right now he was getting low marks in his courses, especially science and English.

Everyone thought Colin's first and only love was hockey, but during their study sessions he opened up to her and said he really wanted to become a chef, that he'd discovered his passion when he'd taken a home economics course at school.

He began to take private cooking lessons in his downtime and loved to bake and try out new recipes on her and his siblings when they were at his grandfather's home instead of the library.

Colin had baked homemade Cinnabons for their study session and when she took a

bite and the moans emanated from her throat, Colin pounced.

Studying had gone out the window as they'd fooled around in the basement where they used for privacy from his older brother who was barely home to the twins that worship their middle brother.

She even met his half-brothers that would come to visit on the weekends.

They were seven sons' born to Brock Fairchild Norris II, the last three being from different women.

Colin had told her about his father's broken heart and that when his mother died shortly after giving birth to the twins, it had destroyed his father, and his father had checked out from caring for his older children and seemed to want to forget or find his deceased wife in the bed of others.

His voice sounded bitter as he talked. The hurt in his expression made her want to take all the pain away.

His father was barely at home, and they had a live in-house assistant that took care of them during the school year. They all spent their summers with their grandfather and grandmother at the cottage or in the Hamptons.

On the outside, it looked like the Norris's had it all, but you never knew what someone was going through at home and she felt lucky that even though her parents could be strict at times, she came from a loving and caring home.

When they would finish working on his homework together, she would just relax in his arms and watch TV with him.

She'd never felt this close to someone and their make-out sessions always made her

wet and wanting more, but she'd didn't want to give up her virginity until she was sure about it and when the time was right for her.

She'd even thought about saving it for marriage.

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Last night, she had almost given in, Colin had her so wet as he fingered her and sucked on her clit.

She would allow him everything except for penetration.

She had orgasmed and then he'd moved up her body to her neck as she gripped and pumped his hard cock until he came into her hand.

He had been sucking so hard on her neck; she'd come again a second time.

He'd pulled away and help to clean her up and kissed her all the way to the door, where their driver was waiting in the driveway to take her home.

When she got home, she checked her phone, as he liked to leave her messages that had her blushing or her heart melting. She felt they were getting closer and closer, and she knew he was falling hard for her as she was for him.

Coco had been surprised when no messages were sent to her phone and assumed he must have been tired and crashed when she left his house.

That night as she lay in bed, Coco had come to the decision that she wanted her first time to be with him and would let him know after he asked her out for prom, when they officially became boyfriend and girlfriend.

The only concern was them going to different schools once they graduated, but she felt they could work together even long distance.

“Shush, mind your business.” Finally letting go of the memory of last night, Coco gave Zahara a soft smile; Zahara shrugged.

“When are you both going to make it official?”

“Hopefully when he asks me out to prom.” Coco grinned and looked at herself in the mirror, freshening up her makeup and fussing with her braids.

“Oh, there’s Jackie.” Zahara straightened up from leaning on the locker and when Coco glanced at Zahara, she could see a frown now gracing Zahara’s young features.

Coco turned to see her other best friend moving quickly toward her but with a furious expression on her face.

A sense of foreboding washed away the happiness and excitement of before.

“Coco, I am so sorry, that ass—” as Jackie reached her, Coco glanced over her shoulder and her heart stopped in its tracks.

There he was, walking with his arm around Belinda, one of the strings of entitled beautiful girls around the school.

Coco felt her breath catch in her throat, pain rippling through her.

Belinda not only had Colin’s arm around her, but she was wearing his hockey jersey, the captain’s “C” adding further insult to injury.

The one she’d hoped to be wearing after prom.

Her eyes followed them as Belinda giggled and stared up into his face with adoration as he guided her down the hall.

He turned his blue eyes on her, the expression in them blank with no form of recognition in them.

As if he could see right through her; then, he turned his gaze away.

She noticed the twins trailing behind him and caught the eye of Abbott, who stared back and mouthed, Sorry, before shrugging his shoulders.

Watching in shock as they turned down another hallway toward class, her gaze blurred.

Both Zahara and Jackie were talking to her, she could see their mouth's moving but she couldn't hear what they were saying, they sounded underwater.

Then a sudden rap-rap sound cut through her musing.

She was no longer in high school, lost in thoughts about her past but yanked back into present day.

Coco jumped and let out an expletive when she heard the sharp rapping again on the window glass wall of her office; she lifted her head up from staring blindly at the papers in front of her to see Jackie leaning up against the glass.

“Still thinking about the sonovabitch and what happened in high school?” Jackie asked as she came further into the office.

Coco raised her fingers to her temples where she could feel a mild throbbing going on, now paying the price of going down a painful memory lane.

“Here.” Jackie walked over to her desk and grabbed a tumbler, filling it with water from one of the bottles in her small office fridge in the office. Next was the bathroom,

and Coco heard the cabinet squeak open and closed. Jackie then returned with aspirin for her to take.

“Stop thinking about that ass; we will figure out a way to get back your shares of the company.” Jackie said with a tight pinch look on her lips.

Her best friend from high school, and sorority sister when they both went off to the same college, had slimmed down in appearance.

She was still bigger than what society expected of women, but Jackie had come to love all her curves and said that was how mother nature intended her to be.

She now worked for Coco as her office and marketing manager, taking care that the company and staff were happy and running smoothly, leaving her to concentrate on her products and developing new ones.

“I’m not thinking of him.” Coco denied as she swallowed the pills and the water, feeling embarrassed now for thinking of the man that broke her young heart.

Jackie snorted. “Tell that to the pulsing vein along your temple. I swear it developed the day we saw Colin coming down the hall with Belinda in his jersey. You know it might help after all these years to talk about what happened when you confronted him.”

“Nothing to tell, just male bullshit as usual.”

“Okay, if you say so.” She took the glass and put it in the sink.

“Thanks for going to get my parents in the morning.” Coco decided to change the subject.

“No problem, I know how you get when you are working on a new idea. Just don’t stay too late. I will bring them here for you to say hi in the morning before taking them to the hotel to check in.”

Coco nodded and got up from her desk, donning her lab coat and following Jackie out.

Locking the door, she waved to Jackie, then headed back down the hall to her lab.

She paused for a second because there was something else she was supposed to do and forgot.

When she was in work mode, her personal life got left behind.

She shrugged. “It will come back to me soon.” She muttered.

A few hours later, frustrated with the outcome of what she was trying to produce, Coco decided to give it a rest, find some food, then come back to try again.

She’d just taken off her lab coat when something hard hit her side.

Digging into her pocket, Coco found her phone.

Usually when working, she left it in her purse.

Then memory hit. She’d meant to call Ambra all day to warn her that Michael was on his way there.

She’d told Zahara thinking she wouldn’t say anything, but Zahara explained that she happen to accidentally let it slip not realizing Michael was there.

This now bringing about her ex now having shares in her company and her walk down memory lane today.

“Shit.” Coco flung her coat onto the reception desk and dialled her parents’ house in Barbados. Hoping she got hold of her in time to tell her to run.

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Colin approached the glass doors of his ex-girlfriend's company, his favorite work chair gripped in his hand as he pulled it behind him.

His heart kicked up a beat when he heard Coco's husky tones talking on the phone, her slight accent coming out when he heard his name said in irritation.

He grinned. Things were about to get interesting because Coco was unaware that her life was about to change in unexpected ways if he had anything to say about it.

The shares Michael dropped in his lap were an unexpected surprise that he was using to his advantage. He now only had eleven more months to woo Coco and get her to marry him.

His hand was on the handle when he spotted her sitting against the receptionist desk, her cell phone cupped in her hand and her head tilted down as she spoke.

He took her in, admiring her unconventional beauty.

Coco was sporting blond braids that she had pulled in a high ponytail, exposing her dainty ears with teardrop gold earrings, and on her neck sat a gold choker necklace.

He ran his gaze her cute button nose, her high forehead, her round face and cheeks.

Glancing down, his breath caught as he fixated on her bountiful breasts, encased in a fluorescent pink business dress that fell to just above her knees.

The bright color complimented her darker skin.

The dress was molded perfectly to her cinched waist and even though she was sitting on it, he could visualize her firm but ample buttocks that he remembered getting to grip when they were dating in high school.

Her physique was almost the same but a little fuller now with age.

His eyes shot to her plump lips that were too big for her round face but that he remembered loving to suck on them.

He shook his head as past memories of their brief time together rushed in, before he'd broken up with her in high school.

His gut clenched as he recalled how he decided to end it between them and told her since she would not put out, he wanted to continue playing the field.

He could not forget her expression of hurt and shock when he ended the conversation by saying, at least he did this before he ended up cheating on her instead, and he finally broke it off.

Like that would make it all palatable to her.

He had been an utter ass in high school.

He frowned when he suddenly heard her say.

“Hi Ambra, it's Coco.”

Then he heard Ambra's response through the phone as Coco had put it on speaker.

An image flashed in his mind of the day he met Ambra when Michael had hired him to prepare a romantic dinner.

The woman was tall and stunning, but even though she had been half naked, she hadn't stirred him in the way that Coco was doing right now fully clothed.

"I'm really sorry Coco; I didn't know that Michael would come after you that way. I—"

"You picked a real SOB to tangle with, Ambra. But a man in love will do crazy shit," Coco interrupted, her voice now sounding irritated.

She lifted her fingers to her nose and gave it a little squeeze, as if trying anything to relieve a headache.

He recollected about the headaches she used to get in school and how he would massage her neck and shoulders as he rained kisses down her neck to make her forget the hard day she'd had at school or a knot in her neck from her head bent from studying that would trigger them.

"He's not—"

Coco lowered her hand and Colin watched as she rolled her eyes to the ceiling for patience as if Ambra could see her and continued, "Uh huh. Even I saw the sparks at Zahara's wedding."

"Coco, he is not in love with me. The Brooks family is just wired a little differently than most, and I know they can be bastards—"

He turned, suddenly feeling eyes on him.

A security guard stood by the elevator, eyeing him suspiciously.

Colin moved away from the glass door, flushing slightly, knowing how it must look

with him practically pressed against the glass, caught like a peeping tom gawking at a woman in her office.

When the security guard moved to pull his walkie-talkie from the belt on his hip, he knew that was exactly what he thought.

Colin nodded in greeting and pointed at the door, then tried pulling on it to only feel resistance and realized Coco had it locked.

He rapped lightly to get her attention, while giving the security guard an innocent smile and the guard paused from calling, watching him now with a cautious expression.

“Hold on a sec.” He heard her say, then turned back to the door at the sound of heels striking the marble floor.

She didn’t see him standing there at first because she was focused on the phone, automatically unlocking and pulling the door open.

She finally glanced up and a look of surprise crossed her features before it twisted to anger.

Her eyebrows snapped down to a furrow. “Oh hell no. What do you think you are doing?” Coco seethed.

“Moving my things in,” Colin said sardonically and reached by the wall near the door, tugging his favorite chair next to him.

She gave him a look that said, “ Are you serious ,” before trying to block him when he took a step across the threshold. She snapped, “You and that thing you call a chair can go back out to the dumpster where you both belong!”

Feigning a hurt expression but trying not to laugh as he continued to walk past her efforts to bar his entry. “My shares in your company says otherwise,” Colin gloated.

“I—hey, don’t come any closer. Girl, hurry up and come back.

I am going to need someone to bail me out of jail.

” She growled into the phone before hitting the end button.

Furious, she shoved her shoulder into his chest, leaned her hips away from him, and dug her feet into the ground, but the marble floor caused her to slide.

She almost fell down his body to the floor, but he released the chair to grab her arm, pulling her back up and against him.

She tried to pull her arm away and he was about to let go when he heard “What is going on here? Release her now.” A heavy hand fell on his shoulder, which he shrugged off and turned with her to face the security guard from outside.

“Should I call the police, Miss Hunt?” The guard raised the walkie-talkie again.

“Yes, please call the poli—” He pulled her even closer, and Coco stopped mid-sentence. After a pause, she tugged again on her arm, pressing her hand on his chest to push against him.

He released her but then quickly snaked his arm around her waist.

“Now, Honey, I know that you are still mad at me over last time but is this any way to greet your fiancé? Especially since I’ve been away for so long,” He drawled his words for emphasis.

She paused in her struggle and threw her head back, leaning so far that her back was arched over his arm.

“Fiancé? You issa madman or wuh? Yuh piece ah idiot!”

He felt his body stir at the low huskiness of her outraged voice, but grinned because when she was thrown off or upset, she would speak with an island accent that he found out later was Bajan dialect, as her family was from Barbados and clearly, she still did it.

He found it cute even though he could not make out a lot of the words she would drop on his head when she was mad at him, like now.

“Yes, your fiancé, darling, the one who also has shares in your company.” He leaned over and gave her a kiss on her cheek.

“If you don’t play nice and tell him to go away, I will keep these shares for a lot longer than I planned to.

” He whispered against her cheek before pulling back and smiling down at her.

Coco glared angrily back at him, her eyes spitting fire before she fixed her angry expression and began to smile along with him.

She cleared her throat. “It’s okay, Ken.

This is my fiancé, Colin. Who likes to play around too much.

Let me go now, darling .” Her voice now sounded like she’d eaten shards of glass.

Then she gave him a punch in the arm, pretending to be a playful fiancé.

That stung, but he didn't release her, just pulled her tight against him.

"Behave." He muttered against her cheek as he rubbed it against hers, hoping the beard he now sported felt like a stinging bristle against her skin.

"Are you sure, Miss Hunt?" He could hear the guard shifting on his feet as the soles of his shoes scraped against the floor. He squeezed her tighter and began to rain kisses along her jaw.

"It's Coco, Ken. It's okay to call me Coco. You don't have to be so formal." Coco said over his shoulder, as he moved to bring her closer to him and inhaled the fragrance she was wearing when she was finally flush against him.

She lifted her hands that had been resting on his arms when she failed to keep their bodies apart, and raised them onto his shoulders, where she began to rub them in affection like a dutiful fiancé, then slowly dug her nails in.

He groaned.

"Okay, well, yes, let me go and continue my rounds. Looks like you two have a lot of catching up to do." He heard the security guard say before pivoting on his shoes that continued to squeak on the floor.

"Leh me go do! Before I cuff ya down!" She hissed in his ear.

"What?! Never mind. Is he gone?"

"Yeessss, push offa me!" She whispered out angrily.

"No, not yet, until the coast is clear. Besides, you used to like these arms around you." She drew in a breath, and he knew she was about to curse and demand to be set

free again.

He turned his head and could see the guard watching again from the elevator and he turned and captured her protesting lips with his.

She stiffened in his arms and moved her hands up to his hair where she grabbed a fist full and pulled hard enough for the roots to feel like they were separating from his scalp.

In retaliation, he moved his hands from around her waist and down to her plump buttocks, taking both heavy globes into his hands and squeezing hard as he moved her flush against his hips, where his cock was beginning to stir from the feel of her voluptuous body in his arms.

He muttered against her mouth. "Open and respond to me."

"Leff me boy..."

He frowned because he couldn't understand what she was saying.

"Here let me say it properly for you to understand me. Not on your fucking life ." She growled out in frustration.

"Fine." He lifted up and turned his head again and saw the guard was gone and released her immediately. She stumbled back a bit and gave him a look that said if a gun was around, he would be dead now.

" Rasshole ." Colin heard her mutter under her breath in irritation.

He could tell that was definitely a swear word and bit back a laugh. "So where do I put my chair before you show me around?"

“Right here.” She said as she strolled past him. Grabbing the handle of the door, she opened it and, with a big flourish movement of her arm, indicated where he was to go.

Looking at her now, he saw a woman that rather do him bodily harm than marry him and that he couldn’t take the time to woo her.

But he had to just get her to agree with his plan; she deserved better than to be conned.

He grimaced because what he was about to do was going to get worse for her, but there was no choice in the matter.

He walked up to her and pushed the door closed, facing her now mutinous expression.

“We have to talk, and I know you are not about to like what it is I am about to say.”

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“NO.”

“Coco, you need to listen.” Colin loomed over her, trying to use his body as intimidation; he still had the thick, tall, heavy build of the hockey jock he used to be in high school, but Coco stood her ground.

Her ex from school was very popular with his peers and the women at Ryerson high.

She'd thought she was the luckiest woman in the world to be dating Colin Norris and not because he was touted to be an NHL hockey hopeful and heir to the Norris fortune, but because her crush had turned out to like her too.

Until he broke her heart without a second thought and no regrets.

Thank God it was the last year of high school and that she was going to leave for university, living in the dorms with Jackie as her parents moved to their new home in Canada as ambassadors from Barbados.

She leaned closer to him, pulling his ear down so that he could hear her better as nothing she said before seemed to get through to him.

“I said no, there is no way in hell that I am going to marry you. Now get out of my office and leave me in peace. I've had enough of you wasting my time and telling me what I need to do. ”

He stood firm, staring at her stubbornly.

Her blood rushed to her head. “Get out or I will call security back to escort you out.” She tried not to shout in anger.

Her voice was already rough from trying not to scream the walls down in aggravation.

She could not believe this was happening.

Misfortune was playing dirty in bringing her high school ex back into her life.

Coco pressed two fingers both on each side of her temple and began to rub as a way to distract herself, knowing that her migraine was coming on fast, and it was going to be a doozy.

She would have to stay in her office tonight because she would not be able to leave and face the oncoming traffic or the bright lights from outside.

She needed to take her medication and go lie down on the pullout couch that she had in her office for just this type of emergency.

Her office was also equipped with a shower and a change of clothes, because sometimes she was here late working in her lab or with her small staff coming up with ideas or marketing for her hair and skin product line.

She knew she didn’t have long to get rid of him before she was unable to function properly.

“Migraine coming on?”

She glanced up to see concern now in his blue gaze but now the lights were beginning to hurt her eyes, and she lowered them.

“Yes, so can you please go.”

“Coco, I—”

“Please, we can discuss this tomorrow.” She whispered now as a sharp pain hit the front all the way to the back of her skull.

She felt warm hands on her shoulder, then her body being guided to sit on the couch. She closed her eyes now from the intense light in the room.

“Where is your medication?”

She flinched because his voice sounded like he was shouting at her.

But knew he was leaning close to her because she could feel his breath on her ear, and she could smell the faint scent of mint candy that he still liked to suck on.

She remembered tasting it on his tongue when he’d kissed in school.

Others liked gum but his was always a mint.

“Top drawer in my desk.”

She heard him ruffling around her drawer before hearing the pop of her medication bottle top and the sound of pills being shaken out.

“Here.” She felt him gently take her hand from her temple and place the pills in her palm. Then the sound of him grabbing one of the glasses off her bar.

“Here’s some water to wash them down.”

She would have nodded but knew even that would send more shooting pain throughout her head.

She took the pills, then downed the water.

“Does this couch pull out?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, going to raise you up and pull it out, okay.”

“Yes” was all she could manage.

She stood there, listening to Colin move around, to the springs protest as he transformed the couch into a bed for her. He then helped lower her to the bed, and she felt his hands on her legs, tracing them all the way down until he took off her shoes. She stayed on top of the covers.

“Please turn off the lights and lower the blinds. Keys to lock my office and front doors are also in the drawer. I will get them from you tomorrow and thanks.” She whispered.

She didn’t see him leave but heard him moving around in her office, rolling the blinds closed and plunging the room in darkness.

Though she opened her eyes to slits, she closed them again with a sigh before she heard her door lock.

She pulled the covers up around her; even though she felt the weight of her clothes, she couldn’t move just yet and lay in the quiet until the medication began to work.

How she was going to get Colin out of her life for good without having to give into his demands, Coco didn't know, but she hoped tomorrow everything would be different and he would come to his senses.

She dropped into a restless sleep where her past relationship came back to haunt her again.

She cursed as that day in the hallway appeared and morphed to the last night they spent together.

He was between her legs but instead of a young Colin, it was now the man he'd become.

She could feel the rough bristles of his reddish-brown beard, scraping the sensitive skin of her thighs.

She shivered and moaned at the slow slide of his tongue between the wetness seeping from the slit in her pussy.

Passing over the swollen flesh until she came with a low moan.

He moved over her and she heard him say, "Having a wet dream of me, are you? Does that mean you will agree to my proposal?" Colin sounded amused.

"Huh?"

"Or we can make that dream that you are having a reality. It has been a long time since I have tasted the sweet nectar of your pussy." She felt the press of his lips on her neck and the heavy weight of his chest on hers and woke up with a start, her eyes closing and then opening to slits against the weak sunlight seeping through her office window.

“Shit.” She pressed her hands against his solid chest and pushed hard. Colin grunted as he tumbled back and almost off the sofa bed.

Coco rose, sitting up from the bed, pushing the sheets off her, then wrapping them back around her quickly. That’s when she realized she was only in her bra and panties. Panties that were also wet.

She turned back to Colin when she heard him chuckle and say, “Good morning, Fiancée.” And then he stretched, his chest bare, except for the reddish-brown hair that lay across his upper chest and tapered down to his abs that rippled as he breathed in and out.

She followed that path of hair down to his boxers, which showcased the early-morning erection he was now sporting, then noticed the defined muscles of his thighs, calves, and ending her gaze at his big feet and toes that wiggled in greeting to her.

Her eyes rose to see the merriment in his, but also there was a banked flame waiting to ignite and she swallowed before her eyebrows met in a frown.

“What are you doing here, Colin?”

He rolled to the side to face her. “Taking care of my duties as a fiancé.”

“Stop calling me that, you know fully well I said no, and I meant it. You can’t walk into my life after ten years and bully me into getting what you want. And why me? You have so many women from your past to choose from.” She said sarcastically.

“You kept up on my dating life.” He grinned.

She growled through her teeth, exasperated with his cavalier attitude. “I won’t agree to this.”

“I have shares in your company that you want back, and I need a wife for a short period of time to appease the whim of my dying grandfather.” Colin sat up in the sofa bed, discarding the facade of using his charm and good looks to coax her.

He shed that image like a second skin to reveal the cold, calculating businessman when needed.

Coco wasn't surprised; she'd seen this cold side to him the day she confronted him over their severed relationship.

It had all been about the sex with him. She wanted to wait and he didn't, so he moved on to someone else that did.

She was the new girl at the school and had only been a challenge for him.

She stood there in the empty hallway of the school as he looked down at her with cold, blue eyes, then she'd turned and walked away.

Coco had been glad in that moment she'd not given her virginity, but hurt and rage filled her up as she put distance between them, not giving him the satisfaction of seeing how much he'd hurt her.

Thoughts of revenge had filled her but when she'd gotten home, her parents revealed her grandmother had fallen ill and that they were going to fly home to take care of her.

She'd finished the last of her studies for high school while staying in Barbados, returning for her graduation with her parents, sister, grandma, and new boyfriend cheering her on.

When she walked off the stage to head back to her seat, her glance met Colin's

intense stare; she felt her face flush with heat, then went cold when a bored expression crossed his face.

She'd wondered briefly what that intense look was about but soon forgot when everyone was done with their diplomas, and she went back to her parents' place with Jackie and Zahara to celebrate.

Now she couldn't believe she was faced with the man from her past that should have stayed there.

"I don't have time for this, Colin. Just give me back my shares.

They mean nothing to you, and I have worked very hard to get this company going and where it finally is today.

" He shrugged, his face set and fuelling her to anger.

She spat, " This will never work; I loathe the sight of you and your touch, and my expressions will give it away."

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Colin moved fast; she was flat on her back with his chest pressing her down into the mattress and his hard cock, making a home between her now open thighs.

His rocked against her core and she had to suppress a moan, he smirked knowingly.

“How about I sweeten the pot? You agree to marry me, after we are seen out in public dating for a bit and then I will propose. I will not only give you back your shares as a wedding gift, but I will also invest money into this company. You are having a bit of a cash-flow problem, my dear fiancée.” He announced this like a cat that swallowed the canary.

Coco groaned internally because he not only had the shares that she’d needed to give away as collateral, but he also knew of her small financial problem.

She’d recently sunk a lot of her profit that she made up last quarter into the new line of children care and hair products she was trying to launch but there had been some delayed issues with getting the testing done and the product ready for market.

Her company would be back on track in a couple of weeks when the new line went to market.

She had written up a new business proposal and was going to the bank to see if she could get another business loan or extend the amount of the original one.

She decided she needed to extend herself with this money right now to pay him out and get the shares back.

“You went through my drawers in my desk.” She accused him, trying to push the beast off her.

In response, he rocked his hips from side to side, the press of his hard cock rubbing against her clit and she had to bite back another moan. Of course, Colin was playing dirty.

“Listen, we dated for a brief time a long time ago and went our separate ways. I don’t know you and you sure as hell don’t know me, and the first time I marry, it won’t be to an asshole of a stranger. Now get off. I will give up my company before I. Marry. Your. Ass.”

Despite the force of her voice, she balked when she realized what she’d just done. She was known for being stubborn and would not back down; she pushed her chin up, biting her lower lip to keep it from quivering and for him to see her regret and pounce again on her weakness.

Because now instead of giving her the shares back, if he invested his money into her company, he would have a greater leverage of getting what he wanted and could interfere with the direction and growth of what she had planned for the next couple of years.

She could not believe that a twist of fate had Colin owning her shares and that Michael, Zahara’s brother-in-law, had acquired them from the bank when he took over her loan. Passing them off to Colin as some sick revenge on her for trying to help Ambra out.

Coco learned the hard way that the Brooks family could be ruthless when they wanted to be, as was the Norris family, especially Jacob, Colin, and the twins.

Jacob and the twins were known for their business acuity and making waves in the

corporate sector, and Colin for his restaurants and culinary skills.

He gave her a look that said she was being melodramatic, and she narrowed her eyes. Squinting so hard to try and make him disappear from her sight and bed.

He sighed, his voice now sounding cajoling. “Please, I need your help. This is important. I wouldn’t have come to you if it wasn’t.”

“What, why do you need my help for? Seriously. And can you get off me?”

He rolled off her and looked up at the ceiling, his jaw clenching back and forth. Sadness etched into his face as he stared; she turned to face him, suddenly not liking seeing him this way. The arrogance she could fight, but a sad Colin was always her downfall.

“My grandfather has developed a degenerative disease that will take his life within a year or two, depending on how long treatment can slow it down. He wants to see us all happy and married, settled with someone we love, and who loves us in turn. My grandfather is an old-fashioned romantic and thinks that marrying someone, somehow, will complete us.” He snorted, but then turned to look at her, his eyes dark and serious.

“I love that sentimental old man, and I want to give him that; my brothers want to give him that and we will do whatever it takes to make it happen. Because we owe him everything.” He now was close to her again.

“Help me to make that happen and in turn, I will help you get this company of yours to a level you only thought of in your dreams. You will also have the Norris name, which will open doors for you and for your sister. Who I know is trying to get into a fellowship program with Harvard Medical School.”

“My sister doesn’t need any help—her accreditation, references, and GPA speak for themselves.” She moved away, fed up with him.

He shrugged and just pulled her close anyway.

She blew air out in a huff; for someone so cold, he was always touchy-feely.

The man took getting into character on a whole new level.

He nuzzled her neck and with his voice sounding deeper from emotion.

“Please, I promise it will be over soon, and you can go your own way at the end when he is gone.”

She couldn’t believe she was even contemplating it now. “I don’t want to sound heartless, but you said a year and that is all you get.”

“I said a year or two. So, you agree to do it?” A smile spread across his lips.

“I didn’t say that either.”

“Yes, you did, just now even though you didn’t verbally say yes, but I can tell you are agreeing, and you can’t back out now. You said early that we don’t know each other, but you were wrong. I know once you say you will do something, you keep your word.”

Her lips firmed.

“I know how smart, determined, stubborn, loyal, and caring woman you are. And that hasn’t changed since high school. I also know that you haven’t seen anyone in a while as you have been busy working on building your brand and company.”

Her eyebrows rose in surprise. “So, you see you’re not the only one that kept tabs.” He teased.

His eyes were darkening in color, and she began to lose herself in their depth as he continued.

“I remember how soft your skin felt.” He dragged his finger down her cheek, and she shivered at the friction of his finger pad across her skin.

“I remember your accent would come out during times of stress or anger.” His lips quirked up.

“I remember the feel of these luscious lips against mine. And I remember the taste of your sweet pussy on my tongue and lips.” He moved, his head lowering and she wanted to give in and sink into the kiss she knew was coming, but if she did, she would be lost and heartbroken again when it all ended.

She lifted her hand, pressing her finger against his lips.

“Fine, I will go through with this farce of a relationship and marriage, but it ends after a year and no sex or PDA except when absolutely necessary.”

He frowned, a look of displeasure now on his face.

“And we tell my parents the truth and get their permission. I won’t lie to them and won’t put them through thinking this is real. And listen to me now, I will not go through with this unless they are on board.”

“Coco. This is—”

They froze when they both heard Jackie’s feminine voice filling the office.

“Sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt, she must have slept here last night after a migraine came on. Why don’t you have a seat, and I will just go into her office, or you can just follow me.” They could hear her grumbling in exasperation of Coco’s parents not listening to her.

They both turned as the door to her office pushed open and the light switch was turned up higher, illuminating the room and the occupants on the sofa bed.

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“Nooo, Daddy, wait!”

“Linnel, wait!”

Colin tossed the rest of the comforter around Coco as he jumped into the legs of the loose pair of jogging pants and donned the t-shirt he brought with him when he returned to watch over Coco as she slept.

He saw from the corner of his eyes as her imposing father came around the corner of the sofa bed at a rate of speed only an enraged overprotective father could do.

Colin put up his hands. “Sir, let us exp—”

Colin was a tall and broad man but Linnel, Coco’s father, grabbed him by the front of his t-shirt and lifted him onto his toes, not breaking a sweat.

He saw Mrs. Hunt round the bed followed by Jackie, and Coco stood on top of the sofa bed, making her way over to his side.

“What do you think you are doing with my daughter?” Her father then tried to shake off his wife, who was pulling on one of his arms.

“Linnel. What do you think you are doing? You are going to put out your back!” Mrs. Hunt shouted.

Jackie took hold of his other arm. “Mr. Hunt, please—”

“Nothing happened, sir. I just stayed the night to make sure my fiancée was going to be okay and wanted for nothing while the medication helped with her migraine.”

“Colin! Gezuz Christ, man.” Coco snapped out.

Her father loosened his grip in surprise.

Everyone else froze in place before he felt a sting on his shoulder.

Wincing, he glanced up to see a furious Coco.

She looked like an angry Greek goddess standing over him with the sheet wrapped around her.

Her braids were loose from the ponytail she’d worn yesterday.

Linnel turned to his daughter, a look of disbelief and confusion gracing his brown features.

“Coco what is this man going on about?”

“I’m sorry. Dad, Mom, I, we—”

“Mr. and Mrs. Hunt, how about we discuss this in Coco’s boardroom. Coco and I can finish dressing. Jackie, can you take them and order us coffee—”

Coco’s father head whipped back around to give him an ice-cold stare. “We are not going anywhere until my daughter answers my question.”

“Coco is this true?” Colin looked toward the concerned Mrs. Hunt. Her dark brown eyes swept between him, Coco, and her husband.

“Yes, Mom and Dad, I agreed to marry him.” Coco said into the tense silence. Colin saw her begin to rub her temples again.

Colin tried again. “Mr. and Mrs. Hunt, let us take this discussion into Coco’s boardroom and talk about this.”

“I cannot believe—” Her father started.

“Linnel, let’s go to the boardroom and cool down. We can get our answers once they have finished getting ready.” Mrs. Hunt’s voice was subdued; she did not look at Colin.

“I—” Linnel opened his mouth a look of stubbornness reflected on his face, a reminder of where Coco got it from.

“Coco’s rubbing her temples, love.” Mrs. Hunt gaze was on her daughter, a look of concern on her face.

Everyone’s eyes now turned to Coco, and she gave them a weak smile.

Linnel took a deep breath; his burly chest expanded, and he nodded.

“This way.” Jackie, who had been quiet during the whole exchange, finally spoke.

Both Hunts turned to follow, but then Mrs. Hunt walked back to Coco, who leaned down and embraced her mom, giving her a kiss. “Hi Mom.”

“Hi sweetheart,” she said warmly, but also sounding tired to Colin’s ears.

Then her eyes met his; she looked at him assessingly before returning to her husband and taking his hand. They followed Jackie’s lead, and passed her at the door.

Once her parents exited, he felt the cold fury of Coco's best friend and once his eyes met hers, she threatened, "I don't know what the fuck is going on, but Coco, you know I have your back and will help you bury a bitch if I have to."

"Noted." He said with a chuckle.

She made a face of disgust and rolled her eyes.

"You are going to have to go out and get coffee, Colin, and green tea for Mrs. Hunt. Cafeteria is closed as it is a Saturday." Her grip on the door handle tightened.

"I will leave you a list on my desk on what to get for the Hunts, myself and Coco. You can grab it off the reception desk when you are finished getting dressed."

Colin's eyebrows rose at Jackie's bossy nature, but he wasn't surprised; she was like this in school too, always giving orders during assignments to her class partners.

Jackie finally left them alone to guide the Hunts down a corridor. Before they left his sight, he turned back in time to catch Coco in his arms. She'd tripped on the sheet trying to move off the bed.

They both uttered a small grunt when she hit his chest. Colin's arms wrapped around her, holding her warmth against him.

He could feel his body reacting again to the feminine curves against his muscles.

And when she wiggled to get free, he lowered his mouth to hers and gave her a gentle kiss, pulling back to see her eyes widened in surprise.

"What was that for?" She asked, her voice now raspy.

“For saying yes. You will not regret this.”

She scowled at his reminder.” Well, we will see when we tell my parents.”

He nodded grimly and released her. “Go take a shower and I will get breakfast and coffee and maybe something stronger to drink for me and your parents.” The last part he kept under his breath.

He was going to use this time to think of something that would allow her father to agree to all this. How hard could it be?

He got his answer after coming back to Coco’s office and sitting across from her and her parents.

For the second time that day, Coco’s dad came at him like an angry bull.

“Linnel!”

“Dad!”

Coco turned her angry expression on him as she rose to get in between the two of them.

Okay, maybe trying to bribe him wasn’t the way to go because not only did he piss off Mr. Hunt but also Coco; he could see from her expression that she was ready to tell him no again and back out from the obvious anger from her parents.

“I am sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt. I should not have said that, and I know better.” Colin adjusted his approach, keeping his tone contrite.

“From what I know of you both, you are an accomplished and admired family in

Barbados and that Mr. Hunt is recognized for his past playing cricket professionally.”

Colin admired that Mr. Hunt had set up a boy’s junior cricket team for the youth there and raised money every year to keep the club open. He continued, “I just thought donating money would help to continue to grow your charity work and the club.”

“Except it is not a donation but a damn bribe. Not at the cost of my daughter’s freedom!” Linnel countered, standing back at the behest of his loved ones. Colin raised his hands in a peace gesture.

Mr. Hunt then turned to his daughter. “You said you would only go through with this as long as I agree to this.”

Colin felt a knot in his stomach and in his head, his thoughts shouted, No I’m so close to getting what I want .

“Linnel, wait, let’s go outside for a second. I need to talk to you.”

“What? You want to talk now about what, Vye?” Linnel stared at his wife, hard.

“Watch your tone with me, Linnel, or you will be on the couch in the hotel room tonight.” Mrs. Hunt narrowed her eyes at her husband.

Colin sensed something passed between them without Mrs. Hunt saying a word.

It seems his sense was correct, as Mr. Hunt nodded, glared unhappily at Colin, then followed his wife.

He turned to look at Coco in surprise.

“What just happened?”

“You are witnessing a couple that have been together for thirty years and truly love each other that they can communicate with just a look.” She smiled and continued.

“I hope to have that one day with my husband.” Her eyes shining, then dimming when she took in his expression, remembering that she’d just agreed to marry him without being in love with him.

“Coco—”

Her watch beeped and she glanced down.

“Oh good, Jackie has my mother’s suitcase from the airport and is on her way back.”

“Oh goody.” He said, voice dripping with sarcasm.

He’d been glad when he came back from getting breakfast, coffee, and tea for Mrs. Hunt and found out the reason that they’d come to the office early looking for Coco before checking into their hotel was because one of Mrs. Hunts suitcases had not come off the conveyer belt.

Jackie brought them here to see Coco while she returned to go and find out what happened to it, but all was forgotten when they came upon Colin and Coco in her office.

“What is your beef with Jackie?” Coco bristled in defence of her best friend.

“Nothing. You need to ask her what her beef with me and Abbott is.”

Coco raised her eyebrows. “What happened when I left high school to go be with my grandmother?”

“Nothing as far as I know; she had a couple of choice words for me, and I didn’t deny it. She tried to make my life a living hell but then stopped abruptly and then she would just glare at me instead until we graduated.”

“Hmmm, surprised she didn’t dig a hole for you to fall into.” Coco grinned, then tilted her head in question. “What do you mean by beef with Abbott?”

He shrugged. “I happened upon them one day in the hallway, with her in the process of pushing him away. She glanced up and saw me, then walked away in a hurry with her books. Abbott stepped to follow her, and I called him to see what was going on. I asked about it and he said it was nothing. He claimed he was trying to find out how you were doing and your grandmother.”

Colin moved toward her. “How is your grandmother doing now?”

Coco’s face softened at the mention of her grandmother.

“She is doing well now; the scare we had was that she wasn’t taking care of herself and her insulin and almost lost her foot and sight.

It finally made her realize that her diabetes was serious.

She has changed her diet and now runs the sunup walking club for seniors and they keep each other accountable and check in on each other every day that way. ”

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“Good. I was glad to hear she’d been doing better and was out of the hospital when you left during the school year to go and see her.”

She now looked at him with a dawning expression on her face and he froze. “It was you that sent those flowers every day to the hospital for my grandmother.”

She continued, her face now etched with surprise.

“My grandmother was a beloved teacher in Barbados; we just thought it was someone from her parish or past student. But it was you and you remembered that she loved *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* and then had it planted in her garden when she returned home.”

“That was you?” Her father said, also sounding surprised as he re-entered the boardroom.

“Yes.”

“Why?” Linnel looked at him suspiciously.

He could only shrug. “Seemed the right thing to do, knowing how important Coco’s grandmother meant to her.”

“Oh really, especially after breaking Coco’s heart the way you did.” Linnel scoffed in disbelief.

Colin clenched his jaw because he would have to go into why he broke up with her. It

had been a serious decision for himself at the time, but he didn't want to go into it now nor in front of her parents. He already was a deficit in their eyes right now.

“Well, okay, I can see you don't want to talk about it right now and we can revisit the breakup later.” Vye glanced down at her watch. “We have to get checked in and also grab lunch with friends in town before attending the welcome party for Keith with Coco.”

“Who is Keith?” Colin questioned stiffly.

“The new High Commissioner from Barbados. We are attending his welcome party tonight.” Vye explained.

“Is this a black-tie affair?”

“Yes, why?” Linnel frowned.

“Then I better go shopping after to get my tux for tonight.”

“I don't think that's a good—” Coco tried to interject, and he turned facing her, his mood darkening suddenly.

“My fiancée is not attending a party without me.” A feeling of possessiveness surged through him.

“Now listen here—” Linnel spluttered out.

He saw Vye elbow her husband and another look passed between them.

“Fine, you can attend but no announcement of you being her fiancé at this party. We want this engagement... marriage business between you to be low-key, the less

people that know the easier it will be for her to get it annulled once she leaves and less questions.”

The possessiveness shifted to sudden elation instead.

“Dad, what are you saying?”

Linnel looked at his daughter with sadness, anger, and love. “I will agree to you being his fiancée and marrying him on a couple of conditions.”

“Name it, sir,” Colin enthused. A sense of victory was within his grasp now.

“You do not announce you are getting married to anyone except our and your families. It’s done in front of the justice of the peace and annulled as soon as possible.” Linnel moved into Colin’s face for this one. “And you leave my daughter’s virginity alone.”

Colin’s body stiffened in surprise, and he glanced at Coco, whose face gave away nothing.

She met his look with one that said it was none of his business.

He knew in high school that she’d wanted to wait, but he didn’t think that once she left high school that she would still be serious about it and would one day meet someone to give it to.

Was it possible she was a virgin or as usual a father’s wishful thinking of his daughter?

But to Linnel, Colin said nothing, his jaw clenched tight.

“Well, do you agree?” Linnel stayed in Colin’s space, pushing for a response. Both Coco and her mother tensed. He knew Coco knew that he didn’t like ultimatums.

Her mother cleared her throat and Linnel’s spine stiffened. “Oh, look at the time, we must hurry, Linnel. Remember we, uhh ,have something to do before getting ready.”

Her father and mother shared another look, then her father suddenly looked excited.

“We will continue this discussion later.” He gave Colin another hard glance before turning to Jackie.

“You’ve done so much for us already, but do you mind calling us an Uber, Jackie, to take us back to the hotel?

We have taken up enough of your time and thank you for picking us up at the airport and bringing us here to see Coco. ”

“I can take you back to the hotel, Mr. Hunt, it’s no problem.

I need to head home to change and get ready for later this evening.

Thank you for including me in the invitation to meet the High Commissioner from Barbados.

” She paused to address her friend and boss now.

“Unless Coco still needs me to stay and help her in the office until she’s ready to go?
”

“No, I think I’m all set to go home and relax before getting dressed for tonight too. I will lock up and head out soon.”

“In that case, then we can all head out together; we can wait until you’re ready to go too.” Jackie offered.

Colin caught the look of dismay on her parents’ faces. Wait did they want to...

He turned to Coco, her eyebrows rose, and her lips twitched and he suppressed a grin. Jackie was about to put a spoke in their plans to have some alone time together before going to the event tonight.

“Jackie, Mr. and Mrs. Hunt must be tired and need of rest. I’ll stay with Coco and help her to finish up here, and then I will drive her to her place before heading to mine to go and change for the welcome party.”

All eyes turned to him.

Coco’s father bristled and opened his mouth to argue, but snapped it shut when he heard.

“Linnel, remember what we discussed.” Her mother gave her father a frown and a hard stare.

His glare back at his wife said, I don't like this, but I will go along with it for now . He let out a sigh when her mother continued to give him that look. “Fine I’ll make some calls and let them know we have a plus one with us tonight.” Soon after, the Hunts left the boardroom, following Jackie’s lead.

When Vye had pulled Linnel from the room and down the hall, he and his wife got into a heated discussion over their daughter.

“Vye, what do you think you are doing? Let me escort that rasshole idiot out the door and out of Coco’s life.

Hurting her the first time was enough for me.

Telling her she wasn’t good enough for a Norris and now he’s here thinking that he can wave money, and we will just agree.

In fact, I am tired of hearing him.” Linnel slapped his hands together and took a step.

“Linnel, remember the first time we met.” Vye picked at an imaginary piece of fluff on his light blue sweater and light beige lining pants and gave him a smile that always caused an indrawn breath at the beauty of it. Vye’s smiles always came from her soul.

He paused and his gaze softened, and his mouth kicked up at the corners. “Of course, my love. I met you at the CPL cricket clubhouse after my team’s winning cricket match against Trinidad and Tobago.”

Vye scowled, not looking pleased. “And what happened when we met?”

Linnel felt his face flush with heat, feeling guilty and chagrined. “Now Vye, why do you always bring that up when you need to make a specific point?”

Vye just gave him a knowing look and waited patiently for him to respond. He grumbled, not liking the memory of the time they met and he’d caused her pain.

He recollected the day he met Vye; she’d drawn his eyes to the bar.

He’d noticed her lush ass first and cinched waste.

When she turned for a second, looking for someone, he’d taken in a breath.

Her hair was pressed straight with loose curls that fell to her shoulders.

She was darker than him, but her peach lipstick emphasized her lips that were so plump he wanted to suck on them.

She was wearing matching eyeshadow, but it was put on light and not heavy like some of women liked to wear.

She had a reddish-brown color on her cheeks and gold studs in her ears that peeked out from her curls when she turned her head, tracking people in the room.

When their gaze met, it seemed like everyone else faded into the background and then she smiled; he walked over to her.

And he never wanted someone so much and to strangle them at the same time.

He grinned because she'd had the audacity to humble him, saying he was slow on the field at catching the ball and making his runs, but he made up for it in his batting skills.

This further irritated him when she told him she preferred Ramy on the team.

Ramy was the worst player out of all of them.

He'd kissed his teeth and was going to take his Banks beer with him, but then he caught the twinkle in her eyes and her lips trying not to twitch.

They broke out laughing together. She had the most infectious laugh, and he grinned when at the end, she let out a snort.

"The day spoke at the bar, and even though we struck up a conversation and there

were sparks between us, we argued about my cricketing skills.” He frowned, still miffed.

He then swallowed because now came the sensitive part. “We were having such a good time, but when your friend Denise appeared at your side, I ignored you after that and turned all my attention and interest to Denise instead and asked her out later that night. I know I hurt you and I apologized—”

Vye gave him an annoyed look. “That’s not all, Linnel.

You freaked out because I told you that we would one day get married and have kids.

You just delayed the inevitable and wasted poor Denise’s time until you came to your senses and began to pursue me.

” She scowled, then her features softened at his contrite expression.

She nodded and raised up to give him a soft kiss on the mouth and he pulled her against him, sinking into the familiar taste of his wife’s mouth and his body began to stir.

She pulled gently away, and he made a sound of protest.

Vye giggled, her features softened in happiness and her dark brown eyes sparkling mischievously back at him.

“We go back to the hotel to shower and change; we can shower together.” She bit her lip, knowing he loved when she did that because it focused his eyes on her lips and he growled low and dipped his head down again, but she stopped him when she said.

“So, trust me when I say that Colin is going to be our future son-in-law.”

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Coco moved Colin's hand from off her lower hip and up to her waist. She knew better than to try and break free of him, she'd learned the hard way; he would just latch onto another part of her body, claiming his stake for all the delegates, senior officials, and elite Barbadian expats.

A lot of them knew her parents and grandparents from Barbados; she was sure some could also be related as Barbados was a tiny island.

All here socializing while attending the welcoming party for the new commissioner of Barbados, Keith Wallace.

Keith Wallace was actually one of the youngest High Commissioners to date, being just thirty-nine and fine.

He was tall with broad shoulders, proportional to his slim athletic frame with short locs and smooth brown skin, complimented by a trim beard and mustache.

His brown eyes were penetrating, and his voice had a soothing timber to it with a combined accent of Bajan and British as he'd finished his political science and Bachelor of Commerce in the UK.

When you spoke to him, he gave you his undivided attention.

He was charming and quick-witted, and Jackie, when she was introduced, was already enamoured.

Her father and Colin, after arriving, had gone to get their coats sorted and her mom

had pulled her and Jackie along when she'd spotted one of her friends who now lived in Boston and was there attending with her husband.

Jackie had excused herself to find a bathroom before she had the chance to be introduced to Keith.

Coco had extended her hand in greeting, which was then enveloped in his warm one.

His gaze then travelled over her, a look of interest in his eyes, and Coco forgot Colin and everyone around her as she gazed back, taking in his form and features, finding him very handsome.

His sudden smile piqued her interest into wanting to get to know him better.

Colin's tan hand shooting out in front of them and his other wrapping around her waist and pulling her tight into his side broke the spell of the burgeoning spark of attraction.

Keith eyes were guarded now as he took in the two of them and reached out his hand to Colin, where they both shook hands quickly before releasing.

"Colin Norris, and welcome to Boston."

"Thanks." Keith smiled in warmth as her father appeared on the other side of her.

"Linnel, pleasure to see you again." Coco could see her father side-eyeing Colin and his hand on her waist, his lips firming unhappily before he focused on Keith and his hand reached out to shake his.

Her father's face broke out in a warm smile, and he clasped Keith's hand in both of his.

“Hi Keith, how are you settling in?”

Keith brown gaze rested back on hers for a second before he answered Linnel.

“It has been busy, but I appreciate the warm welcome I have been receiving since taking up residence here and look forward to working with and getting to know the Bajan community of people here.”

His father nodded and released his hands. “You have met my daughter, Coco.”

“Yes, you have a beautiful daughter.” Coco glanced between her father and Keith, who were exchanging a look.

“Yes, and she has a single, just-as-beautiful friend named Jackie. And on cue here she is.” Colin pulled Coco to the side, making room for Jackie and before she knew it, she was being led further and further away from Keith. If she wasn’t so annoyed, she would have laughed.

And since then, he’d not left her side, She heard him make displeased rumbles in his chest. But she didn’t care; he was taking his role as fiancé too seriously.

Persistently at her side with his hand on her.

His possessive touch was driving her nuts, and so were the feelings it was stirring inside of her, aches she didn’t want to feel and thought were long gone.

She was still attracted to the man, damn it.

Colin in casual wear, joggers, and t-shirt was a sight to behold, but him in a tux was sin walking.

And his cologne, she wanted to bath herself in it.

His cologne reminded her of the axe-me commercial—she was sure she caught a couple of women and men sniffing him throughout the night.

Even her own mother had taken a long breath when they'd shown up together at the hotel for a drink with her parents before getting into the hired car Colin reserved for them.

And she could have laughed at her father's expression and the hard slap to Colin's shoulder every time he introduced him as her boyfriend to friends and colleagues at the event.

Her dad, even though he smiled, his eyes were still angry and held no warmth for Colin.

That is why she was still surprised now and when her parents had both come back into the boardroom, her father face drawn in tight and anger in his eyes and her mother hugging her, holding her in her arms as she regarded Colin, her look accessing.

But both agreed to give her their support in getting married and getting her shares back in the company.

"A glass of red or white wine?" A server interrupted her thoughts. She nodded and took a glass of white.

"Thank you."

"Sir?" He raised the tray to Colin.

“No, thank you.”

The server turned and addressed a couple standing next to them.

“Not a wine drinker?” she questioned as she savoured the fruity flavour of the sweet wine.

“No, not normally. I like the hard stuff when I am out socializing.” He lowered his head to hers to be heard over the crowd.

The richness of his voice in her ear caused her heart to flutter and she took a breath, needing space but not wanting to give him the satisfaction of knowing he was affecting her with his nearness.

“Remember that time that I let you try one of my brother’s girlfriend’s fruity coolers in the fridge. It hit you so hard and fast after just a few sips. You were giggling and talking a mile a minute. You looked so adorable trying out your first drink.”

He leaned closer, his lips grazing the upper shell of her ear. “Then you wanted to slow dance as you never had done that either and I got to hold you close, moving your body against mine. Hearin—”

“Yes, and I puked all over you not long after.” She grinned gleefully, remembering the look of shock and horror on his face.

She’d pulled back, suddenly not being able to keep her balance and began feeling sick from him swaying her from side to side.

Colin pulled her back into his embrace to steady her, and she’d looked up at him, her mouth parting and he’d taken it as a sign she wanted to be kissed by him, just as his head lowered, her stomach emptied.

She'd never seen his eyes open so wide, and then he jumped away, making a gagging motion, turning away from her as he took in deep breaths.

Colin gave her one of those ha-ha looks that said she was not amusing. "Yes and took care of you afterwards." He reminded her.

She thought he would have been angry, but he picked her up and took her to his bathroom, where she let out more of her stomach contents, waiting patiently and holding her hair, making soothing noises and kissing the top of her forehead, until she was done.

He stepped out to let her take a shower and washed her shirt and jeans, bringing her some of his clothes to wear, then called for his driver to take her home.

Holding her in his arms until she'd left.

She'd been so embarrassed when she got home and climbed into bed before her parents returned from an evening event they'd been attending; she pretended to be fast asleep when her mother came to check on her.

She woke up off and on when he would send her message, checking in on her and making her feel cared for and she thought, now feeling bitter, loved.

"Why don't you go to the bar and get yourself a drink?" She suggested, changing the subject to get away from the sweet memory of them together that he'd brought up.

He eyed her, gloating. "Why, is my presence affecting you?" But then his look turned serious as if searching for something.

"No, but this taking hold of me, staking your claim, is getting to be a little too much. I think everyone now knows we are an item." She said sarcastically.

“That is the whole point, Coco. Remember our deal, this is what a couple in love looks like, always touching, kissing, and wanting to be together. Just be glad I am not staking my claim here in public by kissing you senseless.”

She bared her teeth at him in a semblance of a smile. “Senseless, in your dreams. Try it and your lip will come out bloody and swollen from my teeth.”

He chuckled. “So, bloodthirsty now. Shall we put that to the test.” His gaze dropped to her lips and back to her eyes, letting her know he was relishing the challenge.

“More wine, ma’am.” Another waiter appeared at her side. Coco smiled, glad for the interruption and avoiding a scene that was about to erupt.

“Saved for now, but don’t test me, Coco.” He warned.

She glared and turned to hand the waiter her empty wine glass before taking another.

“Sir, wine?”

“No, thank you.” Colin declined again.

“Would you like something from the bar?” The waiter hovered.

She groaned, internally calculating that he would eventually have to leave her side to go and get himself a drink and she would get to escape for a bit.

He grinned, knowing her plans had been thwarted.

She turned determined to just ignore him now as he spoke to the waiter, but he was making it difficult with his finger rubbing her skin through the light purple and floral-print dress that she wore with matching pumps on her feet.

That small caress made her feel warm and her thoughts began to scatter.

“Fish cake?” A female server stopped at her side.

Just from the spicy scent, Coco’s mouth watered in anticipation of biting into the deep-fried salt fish cake, skewered on a toothpick; she picked it up and dipped it into the complimentary sauce.

The sweet heat of the sauce built slowly in her mouth.

She enjoyed that it was light and help to finish off the tasty treat.

She moaned when the savoury flavours hit her tongue and she enjoyed the crisp, baked flour done right, not too soft or hard to bite into, flaking off into her mouth along with the taste of the seasoned fish inside.

She heard, “God damn, this is good. Baby, what is this called?”

Warmth spread through her at Colin’s voice holding admiration and the term of endearment that slipped past his lips so easily.

She turned to see his eyes alight with discovery as he took another bite and then it was gone.

She uttered a sound of outrage when he took the last of her piece and popped it into his mouth.

Chewing and then closing his eyes. “Not a lot of ingredients, but the perfect amount of onions, parsley, thyme.” He frowned. “Hot pepper. The batter is just right. Not heavy or greasy.”

His eyes opened and looked down at her expectantly. “It is called a fish cake.” She grumbled, eyeing him icily.

“What? I am sure there will be more of it.” He sounded hopeful and craned his neck, watching the waiters pass by with the cakes, but anyone knew that if you didn’t take enough by the time they came around again, it would be all gone.

“Flying fish and Cou Cou, Ma’am.” Another waiter stopped at her side with a baked, Cou Cou stuffed flying fish roll and once again before she could finish it, Colin helped himself to hers.

She growled low in her throat, and he grinned.

“What? I don’t want to come across as being greedy by taking more off the trays.

Now that was flying fish.” He looked at her as if she should be proud that he recognized one of the many popular fishes in Barbados.

But the demon wasn’t letting her eat and enjoy them too.

Now if they came around with bite-size macaroni pie and he tried that shit, he would be leaving here in a body bag.

He finally left her side to go and talk with the chef when they came out with the breadfruit stuffed with fish filling.

She was able to snack on the bite-size macaroni tidbit in peace when it came around.

The food was doing what alcohol could not—get an immovable force to finally move and she smirked.

Coco sipped on her drink as her eyes scanned the throng of guests, looking for Jackie.

She smiled when she spotted her at Keith's side, then turned to see where her parents were.

They appeared to be engaged in conversation with a circle of older men and women, and she grinned because she could see they were finishing each other's sentences.

They tended to do that when they were excited or upset with you.

She thought it was a beautiful and weird quirk they had and couldn't wait to see how her and her husband had the same mannerisms or speech like other couples she'd met.

Even her friend Zahara and her husband just needed to share a glance and they would gravitate to each other when on opposite sides of the room.

Her friend Ambra and Michael had a weird cat-and-mouse game going on that seemed to work for them but getting involved had earned her the wrath of Michael, bringing Colin back into her life.

Her thoughts turned to Colin and she was surprised to realize she missed his warmth beside her; even though it was fake, it felt nice to have the attention of a man and to feel him holding her protectively.

Coco shook her head to dispel the sadness and loneliness descending on her suddenly; for just one fleeting second, she'd dreamed of this being reality, but Coco had always been practical and she had to get through this trial for now.

Later, she would begin to untangle herself from the mess, but for now what was done was done.

Placing her empty glass on another tray, she moved through the crowd in search of the washroom.

Her head was starting to feel fuzzy, and she was flushed after consuming those two wines.

Coco was still a lightweight when it came to alcoholic drinks, and though one or two glasses was normal for her if she drank at all, she'd been drinking on an empty stomach and was starting to feel the effects.

Spotting the signs for the ladies' room, she turned down the corridor and was nearly knocked off her feet by a woman in red.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Colin popped another piece of the bite-size macaroni pie in his mouth and chuckled when he kept thinking of the deadly look that had graced Coco's face every time he took her food away from her, but he couldn't help himself.

The food had been so good, so he'd headed in search of someone who looked like a harassed event planner.

Eventually, he found the man instructing the staff out in another hallway that belonged to the event space rented for tonight.

It was a huge mansion on an estate that owners would rent out while they were away travelling.

He'd been excited to meet the chef at tonight's event and now had his contact information. He agreed to come to Colin's kitchen and teach him some of the recipes in exchange for Colin recommending him to some of his clients for their events.

But he wasn't kidding himself thinking it was the only reason he wandered off; he used it as an excuse to get away from her for a moment.

The moans she'd uttered when she'd eaten the appetizers had been so hot.

He fought the urge to be the reason for those moans escaping her, to have her tasting him instead.

His gut had clenched when he wanted so bad to lick and suck the little shimmer of juice from the fish on her lips; all common sense went out the window.

But he'd caught the eye of her ever-watchful father, the man leaning all the way back until it seemed he might fall over next to his friend.

Even across the room, Colin could read the look: don't make me come over there and beat sense into you in front of everyone because I will, try it.

He'd straightened up and gave her some space because he wanted this to work and not blow it by angering her parents, even though he felt for some reason her mother was on board with all of this. He needed this to make his grandfather happy.

He and his brothers had been furious and still were but when their grandfather told them about his condition, nothing else mattered to them but trying to grant his wishes, even if they thought it was insane for him to try and get them to pull this off in a year.

They'd all met and discussed trying the best way to go about this without hurting someone or themselves in the process and wondering who they could approach with this insane idea.

Coco had popped into his brain and the image of her in a wedding dress and walking down the aisle next to him had stirred something in him that he'd thought he buried a long time ago.

He squashed that idea immediately, but once he'd thought it, the image of her being the one to marry took root and wouldn't let him go.

Not like he hadn't thought of her off and on throughout the years.

Hell, he'd even checked in on her to see what she was up to.

Finding out that she'd graduated and had her diploma, deciding to settle and start her business in Boston, staying within reach of him.

He wasn't home that often as he travelled around as a chef and had gone to Switzerland to cook for Michael Brooks and the date who won his romantic getaway package.

Later, he found out it was his female best friend.

She was a beautifully stacked woman in all the right places, what she wore—the revealing and barely there red lingerie fit her perfectly, showcasing all of her assets for Michael's pleasure and viewing.

It surprised Colin when he found out who she was because they didn't look like friends when he happened to be there.

The sexual electricity flowing between them had even excited him, and he wasn't a eunuch.

Ambra was a gorgeous woman and she'd stirred his interest when he'd laid eyes on her sitting at the table, but he knew from the possessive way Michael watched the woman that if he even tried to make a move, he would find himself in a hospital.

That didn't stop him from having a little fun and poking the bear a bit.

It was a coincidence that Coco knew Ambra and helped her out by hiding her when she needed to disappear from Michael, earning his wrath and landing her in the hot water and her shares in his lap without him having to even try to convince her to help him.

He felt his phone vibrate in his jacket pocket; he paused in the hallway, hearing the sounds of guest conversing and the light sounds of instruments playing in the background as the guests continued to mingle before they were to head outside on the lawn for an outdoor dinner.

He glanced at the number and his stomach tightened; he answered it immediately.

“Jacob? What happened? Is everything okay with Kaitlyn?”

“She’s fine. Resting upstairs in her bedroom.” His brother’s deep baritone sounded tired and worried at the same time.

“Did you get the results?”

“Yes.” His brother’s voice sounding strained.

He knew it wasn’t good. “And?”

“None of you are a match.” He said, sorrow deepening his voice and Colin’s shoulders slumped down. His world was spinning on its axes. He now felt helpless and knew his brother must be feeling much worse because as her parent, he could not help her. He’d come back negative as a match too.

The whole family was rocked last month when they got the news that Kaitlyn need a bone-marrow donor.

“Tell me everything, what did the doctors say?” He moved and rested his back against the wall. He ignored the curious glances from the staff and men and women who happened to wander into the hallway, focusing on his brother and what he had to say next.

“Just what I told you, that no one on our side of the family is a complete match for her. And they also searched the donor bank to see if anyone else was and so far, it’s come up empty.”

He shut his eyes, and the image of his laughing niece appeared, her smile so beautiful

it lit up the whole room and made idiots out of her uncles, who wanted to keep her laughing and smiling around them that they did whatever it took to make her feel happy, safe, and loved.

They'd almost lost her once and wouldn't let it occur again, but now it looked like the decision was going to be taken out of their hands.

Because now it seemed they didn't have what she needed the most to keep her smiling and laughing.

He felt anger and sorrow pour through him.

His knuckles struck the wall behind him and he swore.

He missed what his brother said next. "What? Repeat that." He straightened up.

"They asked me where her mother was and if she was still alive."

Colin swore, not liking where this was going. "And?"

"I have to try and find her?"

"You haven't heard from her since she was released from the hospital and signed the papers.

It's been a while since the court was backlogged to the point you had to wait several months until the court finished processing the papers.

So, what, it has been a year now?" He questioned, teeth grinding in frustration at this new development.

“No. not a word. She kept her promise to not reach out to me ever again and to forget she had a daughter.” His brother said coldly.

“Could she be dead?”

“No.”

Colin’s eyebrows rose at the quick response. “How do you know?”

“I just do.” His brother gave him a short answer, his voice terse. And Colin knew enough about his brother’s tone to not continue that line of questioning right now.

“Do you know where she went?”

“No, I will have to search for her. ” His brother swore loudly after his comment.

“Have you spoken to the Senator?”

“Yes, he doesn’t know where his daughter is, and he doesn’t care.”

Colin nodded in understanding. Sierra’s father disowned her after the accident; almost losing his granddaughter had been the last straw for him with his only child and her addiction to drinking.

“Have you asked him to come in for testing?” Hope burgeoned in Colin’s chest; maybe the Senator would be a match for his granddaughter, and they could leave Sierra out of it.

“Yes, he is going tomorrow to the hospital to be tested, but I have a feeling he won’t be a match.

I will have to get her mother involved.” His brother spat out the word like it was poison and, in this case, he was right.

Sierra had been nothing but poison to his brother and a selfish mother to Kaitlyn.

It wasn’t till the accident that she realized the traumatic and physical destruction she’d caused and thought she could make amends, but by then it was too late, the damage had been done.

He and the family had been happy when Jacob finally got her out of his life and the life of their daughter.

But now Kaitlyn’s illness was going to drag her back in.

“When you find her, do you think she will come back to take the test for Kaitlyn? Jacob, she hasn’t even checked on Kaitlyn since she has been gone.

If she ever cared about her daughter, she would have fought and not given up so easily.

” He needed his brother to understand that this wasn’t going to be an easy fix.

“She didn’t have a choice.” His brother continued. “She only needs to come and get tested and if she is a match, give some of her bone marrow to Kaitlyn. She won’t get to see my child or come anywhere near me.”

“What are you going to do if she says no.”

“Drag her back here whether she wants to or not.” His brother vowed. “I will dance with the devil one last time to get what I need for my daughter.”

“Yes, and let me know what you need from me to help find her. With both of us looking, we should be able to find her faster and then I can go and talk to her and make sure she comes back peacefully.”

“Thanks, but I can handle it. Appreciate it.” Jacob said gruffly.

“Don’t worry, I doubt she will put up much of a fight.

Money is a great incentive especially since she didn’t walk away from all of this unscathed.

Sierra was hurt badly in the accident and is scarred now for life.

Her being vain about her appearance—this was a blow to her vanity.

I am sure she is starving by now for a little semblance of her old life. ” His tone shifted to mocking.

Colin suddenly heard through his phone when his brother paused, “Daddy, I had a bad dream about the accident and now I can’t sleep.” His eyes closed again at hearing the pain in his niece’s speech and listened to the low murmur of his brother’s voice trying to soothe his daughter.

“Colin, I will have to call you back later.”

“Yes, don’t worry. Go take care of Kaitlyn and tell her, her red teddy bear loves her.”

“I will. Night.” His brother sounded tired, and Colin suddenly wished he wasn’t raising his niece alone and had that special someone else there to help and give him moral support.

Jacob had his brothers and grandfather, but it was different when you had your best friend and lover be there to help you carry the burden day and night and vice versa.

His grandfather's idea was now starting to have some merit.

But Colin and his brothers were scarred and had their father to thank for that. He did not want to end up like his dad. Quickly, he brushed thoughts of his father aside and strode down the hall heading back to Coco, his mood soured by the news his brother just gave him.

When he reached the sea of faces, there were two missing from the room and Jackie was giving him a very satisfied smirk. Colin's mood darkened further.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Coco's hand flew out and she braced it on the wall to keep herself from skidding on the slippery floor. The small red figure she had collided with now gripped her arm tight, trying to not fall along with her.

The pressure released and she felt the woman's hand slide from her arm. Then she heard a breathless voice say, "Sorry, still trying to walk in these goddamn man-trap heels."

Coco straightened to glance down at a short, older woman in tall high heels that could be considered hooker shoes. She bit back a snort of laughter because you could see from the woman's expression that the shoes were paining her.

Coco smiled. "It's okay, all good, we are still standing on this slippery floor and that is a plus."

The woman smiled back, softening her features even more. Coco thought the woman to be in her late fifties and she had the most beautiful curls that she kept short, but on closer inspection, Coco could see that there was some gray blended with her brown coloring.

She was again surprised when the woman moved toward the end of the corridor and peeked around it before rushing back.

"Do you know if there is another exit out of this hallway other than the bathroom. The woman gently took her arm and moved her down the hall with her.

"I don't know the place, why?" Coco's curiosity piqued.

“Trying to lose my jailer.” The woman muttered as she walked past the women’s washroom and opened another door before closing it and then a couple more, muttering as she moved along quickly. “This could work, but no he will figure that out.”

“Nope, too obvious.” She continued to mutter.

Coco’s eyebrows rose up. Now what is going on here?

The woman looked like someone’s trustworthy aunty and not a jailbird.

Then she heard “Ahh!” and noticed that a security guard was now making his way toward them. Then, she saw the woman rush to where he had just come from and opened the door.

“Perfect.” The older woman grinned and let out a twinkle of laughter.

Coco realized she must have a weirded-out look on her face.

The woman came back and grabbed her hand, shaking it.

“Maxine is my name, and if you are ever in need of a private investigator...” The woman fished through the little clutch purse that Coco just noticed was on her other wrist and pulled out a laminated black business card.

On the front read, “Private eye Max Holden”.

“Everyone calls me Max for short. Listen, if a very tall, grumpy ex-cop-looking man with a voice that sounds like he chewed broken glass for a living comes down this hallway looking for me, you never saw me.”

And just like that, the energetic woman was gone, leaving Coco staring down at the card wondering what just happened.

She shrugged and tucked it into the pocket of her dress before she heard the heavy tread of feet behind her.

She turned and her eyes widened as she gazed up.

Damn, Max wasn't kidding. The man was imposing and looked very uncomfortable and irritated at the same time.

His suit was well cut to fit his tall and heavy frame.

Her neck craned back when he stopped in front of her, silently assessing her with his dark eyes.

"Where did she go." She had to suppress a grin because the man didn't pose that as a question but a demand.

"I di—" She closed her mouth abruptly when the man gave her a look that said don't even try lying.

He strode past her, and she watched him go down the hall not even bothering to stop at the women's washroom or the other doors in the hallway but stopped at the very door Maxine had just disappeared into, opening it and peering inside.

Curious as to how he knew that was the door, Coco called out. "Sir." And he paused, looking back at her.

"Umm, how do you know that is the right door?"

“I can smell her atrocious perfume; it stops here.” Then he walked in, closing the door behind him.

Coco let out a laugh and made her own way now to the ladies’ washroom; nature was now hammering at her door, and she needed to relieve herself.

She could hear the flushing of the toilet behind her going as she washed and then dried her hands. Giggling from the memory of Maxine and the man, who Maxine referred to as the jailer, heading down and out through the same door and wondered fleetingly what they were up too.

She giggled as she opened the door and her heart raced at the sight of fury on Colin’s face before she could utter a word, she was forced to back up when Colin took a step inside, using his body against hers. His eyes were cold as he turned and locked the door.

“Wuh you feel you doing yuh big waaater buffalo?” She snapped out, surprised and incensed that he had her trapped in the women’s washroom, watching her like a crazed ex-lover.

“Where is he?” Colin accused.

Coco frowned. Now what in the hell was wrong with him.

“Where is he, Coco?”

“Who? Are you talking about?”

“Keith.” He pushed past her and started pushing in the stall doors.

“Keith?”

“Yes, the man that couldn’t take his eyes of you and had you giggling in here just now.”

“Oh, for the love of God, Colin. He is for sure in here with me in a women’s washroom.” She rolled her eyes, voice dripping with annoyance.

He paused, shooting her a disbelieving look, which sent anger through her. “Hold on and let me get him for you.” She followed him to the rest of the stalls and pushed them open before he could do it himself.

He stood there with his arms crossed as she cupped her hand to her mouth and sing-songed at each door she opened.

“Keithy? Nope, not in here. Keithy, no, not here either. No Keith. Keithy .” She drawled out the name when she finished at the last door. Then she turned with her hands palm up by her shoulders and an expression on her face that you gave a child when their toy magically disappears.

Colin moved fast and had her body pressed flush against his before she knew it.

“You think you are so funny, let’s see how amused you are after this.” And his head lowered, slamming his lips against hers.

She pushed hard against his shoulders, turning her head away. “What do you thin—”

“Making sure you never forget who you belong to.” His lips dragged across her cheek. She stretched her neck as far as it would go to avoid him.

“Colin, this is a fake relationship and will be a fake marriage. You are acting like an overbearing and jealous man.” She tried to reason with him and then she gasped when he sucked hard on her neck.

And she pushed against his chest hard, creating space and moving her neck out of his reach, stopping him from marking her.

Earning herself a small victory over their struggle.

“Be as it may, you promised to do your part and I am going to make sure that you act like the devoted, loving girlfriend, fiancée, and then wife.

And whatever was going on between you and Keith before ends now.

I think since we are in this bathroom that we should get some practice in on the loving part.

“You can go to the devil—”

He smothered her words when his hand turned her jaw for her lips to meet his. Silencing her in his domineering, punishing kiss.

This was new to her, and she felt a rising fear come over her.

For the short time, she and Colin had been in a relationship, he never tried to force her to do something she didn't want to.

Even the last time they kissed she could tell he wasn't serious with his kiss when he'd come into her office, but now this was a side she didn't know of him or like.

She pushed her lower body away from him, her hands planted on his chest as she tried to leverage herself off him and hopefully break the kiss, her angry gaze locked with his, but Colin snaked his hand around her waist, pulling her up and hard against him.

He shifted his head, and his lips moved over hers trying to gain entrance.

Coco tried to fight but eventually knew it was futile, so she just stiffened in his embrace, riding out the tide until he came to his senses.

His kiss changed, becoming desperate in his need to get her to respond and she suddenly felt something was wrong.

She sensed behind his domineering kiss was pain and his eyes lost their icy look, replaced with sorrow.

Her gaze widened when she began to see tears fall, pooling first in the blue depths, then falling down his cheeks before mingling with their joined lips.

She opened hers with a gasp and he groaned, shutting his eyes from her as his kiss softened and moved across hers.

She could taste the saltiness of his tears and moved her hands from his chest now into the thickness of his hair, her fingers running through it, then onto his scalp, massaging.

She began to return his kiss, offering him solace in the storm he was going through.

Wanting him to know she was there with him, and he was not alone.

His grasp around her waist tightened and he delved further into her mouth, tasting and taking what she had to give.

His tears stopped falling, and he lifted his mouth off hers.

His eyes were damp and miserable as he looked down at her.

“What’s wrong, Colin? Is it your grandfather?” Coco stayed in his embrace, her hands still moving through his hair. He closed his eyes for a second, then rested his forehead against hers.

“I’m sorry for how I acted just now, did I hurt you?” He said, gazing at her swollen lips now.

“No, not really. But you did scare me there for a minute.”

He blinked again, slowly, raising his hand and caressing her cheek. His thumb gently swept against her bottom lip.”

“I am sorry that I scared you. What I did was no excuse and I promise you I won’t do that again.”

She stared searching his face and seeing the sadness still there. For himself, but also for what he’d just done.

She nodded. “But what happened Colin to make you upset?”

He sighed and pulled slightly away from her.

“It’s not just about my grandfather; my brother Jacob just delivered some bad news about my niece Kaitlyn.

” He turned, walking away from her, his hands balling into fists and she followed, her hand on his shoulder for support.

He unclenched a hand and lifted it up, placing it over hers.

She’d seen in the press that his brother had married a senator’s daughter and had a

child with her. She didn't know anything else about the situation.

His voice sounded hoarse with renewed emotion. "Kaitlyn has a form of leukemia, and she needs a donor. My family and my brother are not a match for her."

"Oh my god, Colin, I am so sorry to hear that. What is going to happen next. Is her mother a match?"

Colin stiffened under her hand. "We don't know if her mother is a match yet." The way he said mother with such distaste, she knew there was a story there but it was for a later discussion.

"Does this change everything with your grandfather, now that everyone needs to focus on Kaitlyn?"

"No, he doesn't know yet and we want to keep him out of it for his health too." Colin turned and gave her a bitter smile. "So, the agreement between us still stands."

She frowned. "Colin that is—"

They were interrupted when someone tried to push on the locked door, then they tried the knob.

"I thought they said this women's washroom was open." They heard a female grumble under her breath, then the person tried the door again.

Both Colin and Coco stood there, silent. Coco hoped the woman would go away, not wanting to get caught and people at the party finding out she was in the bathroom with Colin; her father would have a cow.

"And I need to pee. Shyte." Coco smothered a laugh at the grumpy last word, the

voice sounding like her grandmother. Then they heard the heavy press of heels heading down the hallway.

When all was quiet, Coco opened the door and peeked outside, confirming the hall was empty.

“Let’s go before my father finds out and wants to wring your neck.” She gave him a soft smile that he returned.

She took his hand for a second as they exited the washroom.

“Whatever you need and whenever you want to talk, I am here for you.”

He nodded. “Thank you and from here on out I will be on my very best behaviour. Scout’s honor.”

She rolled her eyes. Colin was never a scout.

“No, seriously. Thank you for giving me comfort and being there for me.”

She nodded, then they headed down the hallway and back to the event. The music seemed to be muted a bit and Coco glanced at her watch, noting that guests probably started migrating toward the lawn where supper was going to be served.

She turned as a male voice addressed her.

“Oh, there you are. Coco, can I talk to you for a second before we sit down for dinner. Colin, you don’t mind, do you?” Keith gave them a smile. “I will escort her to dinner. You can follow the guests heading out.” Coco froze and turned to Colin, her mouth opening.

“Yes, I do mind. My fiancée is not going anywhere to talk with you.” He didn’t hesitate at all, just as the music stopped to allow the person with a mic about to announce something. The guests that were still in the room stopped talking and all eyes turned to them.

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Colin glanced up from his desk in his office and stared at Coco striding past, ignoring him. Then he sat back when Jackie followed but instead of ignoring him, she stared daggers until she was out of his eyeline.

He sighed. He was in the doghouse with Coco and her father, but he was hoping to change all that. He planned on taking all of them out for dinner, and afterward for a game of mini putt to try and break the glacier that had formed when he'd recklessly blurted out their engagement.

He remembered Coco had mentioned during one of their study sessions that their family liked to have fun and go mini-putting, where her father would have them all in stitches because he always liked to cheat and would try to be sneaky and feign innocence when they called him out on it.

Her laughter as she would tell him stories would have him laughing along with her, but also feeling a bit jealous that she had both her parents with her.

His mother was deceased and his father was off drinking, travelling, and bedding the next woman he'd meet.

He couldn't remember a time where they all went out and had a good laugh together. He wished he'd had that.

His phone buzzed and he glanced at the message, his mood picking up. He left to go downstairs to the main doors of the building.

What he just brought back up would hopefully make her day. He wanted private time

with them and to see what it was like to be around her and her parents.

When she walked past again, he got up and followed her into her office.

“Coco, stop giving me the cold shoulder.”

She sat down and pulled her papers toward her.

“Coco, I mean it.”

She glanced up, giving him a glacial stare, then continued to ignore him.

“Okay, I am sorry about how I handled things with Keith.”

She snorted and then said in a snarky voice. “Scout’s honor, Coco.”

He swallowed a laugh. She was so cute when she was angry with him. “Yes, well you know fully well I was never a scout.”

Her glare sent him to be buried somewhere.

He pulled a paper bag from behind his back and held it out to her as a peace offering. He’d contacted the chef from that night and requested he prepare her favorites, hoping this would pacify her a little and also for what came with the gift.

She eyed him and the bag suspiciously, but when he opened it in front of her, Coco’s face lit up. Delighted, she took one of the salt fish cakes out of the bag and had it to her mouth when her eyes met his. Then she lowered it.

“What is this for?”

“A small peace offering from what occurred last weekend. I am really sorry the way it came out at the party. But Coco, it would have come out eventually.” He rationalized.

She handed him back the bag.

“All right, I am sorry. Let me make it up to you and your parents tonight. I will take you all to any restaurant you want to go and then we can go and play mini golf.”

Her eyebrows rose. “You remembered they liked to play?”

“Yes, I remember everything about our time together.”

A look of surprise crossed her face, and she opened her mouth to say something but then looked like she thought better of it.

“I don’t know if my parents want to see you right now, especially my father. He got an earful from my grandmother when she heard from the woman that she buys her fish from about us being engaged.” Coco sighed. “That’s why we wanted to not tell anyone yet; she should have heard it from us.”

Colin winced. She was right and he needed to not be so hot-headed around her. But for some reason with her, he acted the fool sometimes.

He was known for his cutthroat ways in business with his brothers.

He was calm under pressure when running his restaurant and cooking for the elite and his cool distance with the woman that had been in his life, but with Coco, he felt possessive and admitted to himself after the bathroom scene he wanted her again as his own.

He could keep fooling himself that after all this he could walk away but this time she was different and so was he and he didn't think that would be possible now.

Every minute in her presence exposed a new facet that he found endearing and fascinating, and he wanted her so bad he could taste it.

The need to kiss those lips and enter her sweet body kept him up at night.

Just the scent of her perfume or laugh had his body stirring.

His brothers would laugh and tease him if they saw him right now. He thought he had the game in the bag, but he was steadily losing.

Colin had a feeling that he was not going to let Coco go after all this and knew he was going to have a fight on his hands. He had a lot to make up for in the past and he wasn't making a good impression on her with his heavy-handedness.

"Why are you looking at me that way?" Coco frowned.

"What way?"

"So intense."

"Because you are beautiful and I like looking at you, always have."

She got up and walked around him, then pinched his cheek, pulling the skin slightly away. "Okay, what did you do with the real Colin?"

He laughed and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close and giving her a kiss. She leaned away in surprise. "Just in a good mood. Got you to finally talk to me." He smirked.

She made a sound with her teeth and pulled out of his arms.

“What was that?” He laughed again.

“It is called steupsing. It’s a sound of extreme annoyance.” She gave him a look of warning.

He grinned. “Seriously, can you call your parents and see if they will go out with us for dinner and the mini golfing?”

“Us?” Coco lifted a brow as she sat back down.

“Yes, they will come if they know you have forgiven me, and this invitation comes from both of us. We don’t have time for your family and you to stay mad; my grandfather has requested to meet you all.”

She nodded and went to pick up her office phone.

“And after you are done, I made an appointment for us to look at rings.”

The phone hung in the air.

“We are engaged.” He pointed out.

“Yes, but we can just get bands, no need to spend money on a ring that I won’t wear after the annulment.”

“My grandfather would expect it.” He said as his stomach clenched from her mentioning the annulment.

“I—”

“You can keep or if you don’t want it, I can return it or give it to someone else.”

He stopped when she scowled, then quickly wiped the expression off her face.

Hmmm, didn’t like that part, did you? His mood lifted again.

“Okay, fine, it’s your money to burn. Let me speak to my parents. What time is the appointment?”

He glanced at his watch. “It is for 2 pm.”

She nodded and hit the button on the keypad of the phone, beginning to call her parents, dismissing him. He turned, but then she said.

“Where do you think you are going with my peace offering? Bring them back here, NOW .”

He moved and handed the bag over as she cupped the top part of the phone between her ear and neck, her hand now busy reaching in and pulling out a fish cake. He tried to take one and left her office with a stinging hand instead for his trouble.

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Coco glanced down at the ring on her engagement finger.

The gaudy diamond was surrounded by so many smaller diamonds that you could barely see the thin gold holding it up.

The ring was a show piece and not one picked out of love.

It was ugly as hell and that is why she chose it, because if he was going to give it to someone else, she wanted the woman to know Colin had bad taste.

She grinned, but then sadness came over her.

As they were searching, a simple, elegant diamond engagement ring had caught her attention.

It was a heart-shaped diamond with two gold prongs on each side looking like hands holding it up in the center with the band continuing around the back.

The ring symbolized to her the love and unity between a couple, and it would have been her ring if she was with the one she loved.

She pretended to give it a cursory glance so that Colin wouldn't buy her the ring she liked and then end up giving it to her in the end, making it meaningless, or to someone else.

Coco turned at the sound of her mother's voice, as she gently lifted her hand and peered down at it. "That is one god awful ring, Coco, but definitely shouts engaged."

Vye said, sounding amused and appalled at the same time.

Her father had glared at it, not saying a word when they all went out for dinner. Conversation had flowed between her mother and Colin while her father responded with terse comments.

She grinned. “And overpriced too but wouldn’t do much in the way of hitting his pocket.

” When she’d picked out the ring, Colin had a funny expression on his face because she knew he thought it was hideous too and what it would look like when his peers, family, and friends got a look at it.

She was going to show off this ring to everyone they met so that all could see that her fiancé had bad taste.

Petty but so satisfying. People, upon seeing it, couldn’t take their eyes off it and the whispers and smirks had been fantastic.

She made sure that everyone that saw it, knew who her fiancé was, Colin Norris, the famous chef and an heir to the Norris fortune.

Her mother turned to her and gave her a hug, pulling her into her warm embrace and Coco nestled there like she used to as a child. They’d made it to the mini putt course and things were going better than she expected.

“Thanks Mom, I needed that. You always know when I can use a good hug.”

“You’re welcome.” She smiled and cupped Coco’s cheek affectionately.

“Mom, why did you agree to all this? I know this is all you because Dad would have

refused until the end of time. Even now he is still struggling with it.”

“I don’t know, I think he is starting to like Colin.

Look at him, putting his arm around his neck.

” They both laughed because he looked like he was trying to strangle him at that angle and when Colin moved slightly away, eyeing the older man, they knew they were right.

Then it looked like her father stumbled and hit the ball, accidentally sending it flying and not into the hole inside the mountain.

They both laughed again because her father was once again playing dirty, and Colin was scowling now, catching on to her father’s games.

Her mom turned to face her with a serious expression gracing her features so similar to her own.

“To answer your question, if I didn’t feel this was right for you or he wasn’t right for my daughter, I wouldn’t have given him my blessing.

This might seem fake, but I don’t think it is.

There is unfinished business between you and him.

You still have feelings for him. Just like I know when you need a hug.

I know my own daughter and the way he has been acting when he is with you says that he has feelings for you too. And deep down, you know it too.”

Coco shook her head no. “You’re wrong about Colin.

It was so easy for him to walk away the first time we got together, and he is only here now because he needs me to help him grant his dying grandfather’s wish.

If it hadn’t been for the shares from my company falling into his lap at the perfect time, he never would have thought about me and getting me to help him. ” She said bitterly.

“I would have thought the same way, but I see how he looks at you. I don’t think that is the only reason he came.

The day we saw you two together. He looked like a man protecting his woman.

And I know once the two of you realize that you are still in love, then he is going to make my baby the happiest woman alive. ”

Coco just shook her head again.

“Yes, I know you can’t see it now with all the hurt he caused you, but maybe think of giving him a chance and opening up more to him.”

“Mom, he hurt me so bad and now with this. Even if he suddenly asked me to take this seriously, I don’t know if I could give him another chance.”

She nodded in understanding. “I never told you or your sister that there was a time where I was so mad at your father that I didn’t think I could forgive him either.”

Coco stilled, and her eyes searched her mother’s face. She gave her daughter a sad smile and Coco was shocked to hear that her father had done something to hurt their mother.

“It was in the beginning, when we met. You both know that we met and then he went after my best friend, Denise. But what you didn’t know is that he slept with her.”

Her mom turned, facing slightly away from her.

“I fell in love with him the first moment our eyes met and thought he felt the same way too. I just knew we were meant to be together, but then I was shown I was wrong. When Denise showed up and his interest turned to her, I was hurt that he’d then asked my friend out.

But I was devastated when I learned from Denise that they’d slept together.

So, when your father came knocking saying he made a mistake, I slammed the door in his face, prepared to never think of him again.

But your father is so stubborn, he refused to give up and let me go. ”

She then glanced at Coco. “The man learned to grovel like nobody’s business before I would even let him into the same room with me and it took time for me to forgive him, but I did.

And look, I have two beautiful, amazing daughters to show for it.

” She held Coco’s face in her hands. “Forgiving someone when they hurt you sometimes does not make you weak; it can show how really strong you are. Just give it some thought, okay? I am here for you no matter what.”

Coco wiped away the tears on her mother’s cheeks and her own, and they smiled.

“Now, let’s go and join the men before your father accidently trips and kills Colin.”

Her father, of course, won the mini-putting that night, but she didn't play as well as she used to.

The conversation with her mother kept playing over and over again in her head.

She found herself watching Colin take in a deep belly laugh when her mother teased him or his frown of confusion when her father got something by him, but he didn't know what.

To a look of happy contentment on his face when he was watching all of them play together.

Either he really cared about her and her parents, or he was a very good actor because he'd fooled her pretty well into believing he wanted to be with her.

Back in high school, they'd started talking about plans together and then in a snap, it was all gone as if she were nothing.

Should she take that chance and open herself up to Colin, in the hopes that he felt more for her than just a means to an end?

If she did that and he walked away for a second time, Coco didn't know if she could come back from that. Because not only would he have had her body but her soul too.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Colin laid there in the darkness of the room with the ceiling fan stirring the cool breeze coming from the meshed window close to the side of his bed.

His feet dangled over the edge of the mattress as his tall frame was too big for the queen-sized mattress in the guest room of Coco's grandmother's house in Barbados.

This being the room where her father grew up and where her sister lived before finally heading off to school in the UK.

Coco's youngest sister was flying in tomorrow to come and meet him and his grandfather, who when finding out that they were coming to Barbados to visit Coco's grandmother, had wanted to come along.

He'd been here once with their grandmother and they'd both enjoyed vacationing here.

He wanted to come and go and see the places they'd been to when she was alive.

Colin was happy his grandfather was here with him and that they got to spend more time together. He had received the all clear from the doctor before they booked a private jet.

He gave a slight jump when he heard a creaking sound. His eyes, now adjusted to the dark, scanned the room, and seeing nothing he relaxed.

The past week had been a firestorm of activity for the both of them as he took Coco to meet his grandfather and his brothers that she'd met before.

Jacob was away from the family dinner, and he'd received a text from him saying that he had a lead on where Sierra had gone and was heading out to a remote area in Maine.

He was going to a place called Matinicus Isle.

What she was doing there was a mystery and Colon was waiting to find out from his brother how she ended up from Boston to an isle.

And then Coco trying to get one of her products to the finish line.

She worked late hours with her staff, rolling up her sleeves and working alongside them.

The marketing of her product to helping with getting her formulas just right.

He helped out where he could with making sure she and her staff were fed or sitting her down and giving her a massage to loosen the tension in her neck when something wasn't going right.

He had been so amazed to see how she worked.

She was quick thinking with solutions when problems arose and was patient with her staff when they would ask her questions.

He was proud of her when she gained herself another customer after having a pitch meeting that was pencilled in last minute because the potential distributor was in Boston on business. Now her hair care and body line were going to be featured in another store across the US.

At night, when they would have dinner in her office, she would talk to him about her

dream of when she finished launching this new product.

She had set her sights on another distributor in Canada.

Coco's goal was to become internationally known and he wanted to help her do that.

She would listen attentively to what he had planned.

He was also busy working on opening up another restaurant and had been working with the architects this week to get the concept design down on how he wanted his restaurant to flow and look like.

He would bounce ideas off her, and she would give him her suggestions.

They were falling into a routine and she no longer tried to chuck his favorite chair out the door.

She even allowed him to order and bring more stuff into the vacant office he'd commandeered from her.

He loved having those quiet moments with her.

They were becoming his favorite time of the day.

The girl he dated in the past was now being replaced with the woman she was today, and he wanted her, mind, body, and soul.

When he pulled her into his arms and kissed her, she felt like a needy drug to his soul.

She melted into him and responded so beautifully but before it could go too far, she would pull away, leaving him craving more.

He began wanting this to become real. He wanted all of her and hoped that coming here and being in this tropical paradise that he would be given the opportunity to show her that she was beginning to mean more to him than just someone to play at being his fiancée.

He won her heart once and he was determined now that he could do it again.

His thoughts scattered when he heard the floor outside his door creek again and cursed; he was having trouble sleeping not only because he was thinking of Coco, but also because of all the ghost stories her family and his grandfather had talked about on the plane ride here.

He did not believe in ghosts and was shocked to hear his grandfather say that he'd heard some stories from the locals at one of the bars down in Bridgetown.

Here he thought he would be regaled with more stories from her father about cricket and his cricket days as a youth before he got into becoming a diplomat for the embassy and travelling around the world.

But no, they talked about ghosts and haunted places for most of the plane ride.

Colin was sure they were pulling his leg and that his grandfather was a part of it.

His grandfather loved a good joke, especially at his grandsons' expenses.

Coco's father was having a little bit too much fun with his stories, especially telling him that his mother's place was haunted.

"I remember the night when Mommy said she saw Miss Birch in her nightgown floating down the street, and then another night she came to the house for a visit. Mom just asked her if she wanted some tea." That was the first time he heard Linnel

laugh without daggers in his eyes aimed at Colin.

“What about the Reverend looking scared when giving the sermon saying if Mr. Baxter had been of a godly nature, he would not have been cocked up dead between a woman’s thighs that was not his wife’s when they found him, and suddenly letting out that high pitch scream when Mr. Baxter’s coffin lid flew open.

And then he claimed it away with the springs not working properly. ”

Colin had turned and his gaze connected with Coco’s, hers holding amusement, then she added her tale of floating teeth in the air. He couldn’t take it anymore and put on his headphones to tune them out and pretended to sleep for the rest of the plane ride there.

And now every damn creak or sound had him believing that Miss Birch was coming for a visit.

He turned in bed, deciding it was time for him to get some sleep before meeting up with everyone at Coco’s parents’ house tomorrow where everyone else was staying.

The house was full with Coco and his grandfather staying there and the extra bedroom was for her sister who was arriving soon.

He got the impression that Linnel didn’t want him under the same roof as his daughter and out of respect he decided to not make a fuss and was going to make reservations at a hotel in Barbados but one call from Linnel to his mother, Coco’s grandmother Celia, had refused hearing that he would stay in a hotel and prepared one of her rooms for him.

He froze when he heard the knob turn slowly.

His heart racing now, he sat up in the bed and squinted in the dark to see the door but all he could perceive was dark shadows.

Suddenly there was a low light highlighting the door that opened, and he could peer into the semi-dark of the hallway.

He almost screamed when he saw a woman in a white nightgown float in, her white hair sticking up in disarray, the only other color he could see in his dark room.

She was coming closer and he was about to leap from the bed when his eyes finally adjusted and the ghost stepped from the hallway glow into the room.

He realized, foolishly, that it was grandma Celia staring blankly back.

“Mrs. Hunt, are you all right?” His voice came out as a squeak and he cleared his throat, embarrassed now.

She didn’t say anything, just continued to watch him eerily and he found himself reaching for the covers as if that could protect him somehow from who he thought was Granny Celia, but he wasn’t so sure now because she wasn’t saying anything to him.

“Mrs. Hunt?” When he was about to repeat her name a third time, she turned around and headed back through the door, closing it behind her.

Colin sat there for a second, wondering what the hell just happened.

He went to go and grab his phone off the small night table in the room, ready to hit the dial button and call Coco, but he saw that it was 3 am in the morning and put the phone down.

He could not wake her; he was sure she was sound asleep now and he was feeling foolish about what he just experienced.

He fell asleep with the light on.

When he was finally able to meet up with Coco and her family after having breakfast with Granny C, the family had made their way down to the beach from the house and had taken a dip in the ocean, leaving him and Coco to finish getting the towels and chairs sorted with the umbrella for his grandfather and her grandmother, who now seemed to be in deep conversation as they sat at one of the benches near the shade of the tree.

He felt foolish again for now having to bring this up but needed to know he wasn't going crazy with what he had seen last night.

Because this morning when he mentioned it to Granny Celia, she just stared at him blankly until he felt silly for asking.

He just tucked into the hearty breakfast she had prepared for him.

She smiled happily when he went back for seconds, especially for the fried plantain.

It was hard and juicy at the same time with the flavours bursting on his tongue.

“Coco.”

She glanced up at him as she unfolded another chair, then her attention was caught when her mother let out a shout of outrage followed by a girlish laugh as her father splashed his wife and went in for a wet kiss.

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She smiled and straightened up, luring his eyes to her enticing cleavage that was teasing him through the black mesh in a V that trailed all the way to her belly button.

The bottom half on her one-piece suit was covered in a patterned sarong that was tied at the waist and fell down her legs.

Her braids were piled on top of her head in a top knot and her skin glistened, all ready for the rising heat of the sun.

“You were about to ask me something?” She rested her hands on her hips as she now gave him her full attention.

She then bent and grabbed her bag, pulling out sunblock and poured some into her hand.

She suddenly walked up to him, her feet making indents in the sand.

She dropped the bottle onto the chair he had placed and then her warm hands touched his flesh; he felt on fire from her touch.

“You’re starting to burn.” She glanced up as she began to smooth her hands across his clavicles, then glanced back down as he stared at her and lost what he was going to talk to her about.

He could see her nipples begin to peak against the material and he groaned. He raised his hands and rested them on her hips to stop himself from cupping the plump flesh in his hands.

She shivered and her tongue peaked out moistening her lips.

She cleared her throat. “What were you going to tell me before?” She continued now down his pecs to the sides of his chest.

“Right now, all I can think about is how much I want to taste you.” He grumbled. His thumbs rubbed against the flesh covered by the bathing-suit material. He wanted to strip it slowly off her and expose her skin to his eyes, running his fingertips across the smooth flesh there.

He barely heard her when she said in a husky whisper, “Turn around so I can get your back.”

He squeezed, wanting her to look at him but when a second passed and she didn’t comply, he turned and released a contented rumble.

Having Coco’s hands on his back made him feel taken care of and he liked her hands there too.

As the lotion spread lower, he could feel himself begin to stir.

His muscles flexed under her touch when she moved her hands over his shoulder blades to his arms and then down to his hands.

He was pleased that when the lotion was all rubbed in, her hands still traced his shoulders and upper back as if she could not stop herself from touching him and he held his breath, not wanting her to stop.

The only time she would voluntarily touch him is when he held her hand.

He was the one always touching a part of her or having his arm around her.

Colin made another rumbling sound in protest when it ended. "Can you do your own legs now; I am going to take a dip with my parents."

He sighed. Then he sat on the lounge, spreading cream on his legs quickly as she flicked out her towel onto her chair and kicked off her sandals.

She turned now, fully shutting him out and he wanted, needed her attention, so he blurted out, "I saw a ghost or a ghost that pretended to be your grandmother last night."

She looked over her shoulder, her gaze watchful but it also had a slight twinkle of amusement in them. "What happened?"

She moved closer to him as he continued to rub the cream on his upper thighs. Her eyes flicked to his ministrations and caught there for a second and he grinned, he was doing this purposeful to make her take notice of his body and get a reaction from her.

Her lips parted when he began to rub his inner thighs and moved his hand upward toward his cock, encased in his swim trunks; he was also getting excited and knew that if he didn't stop, he would make a spectacle of himself in front of their grandparents and her parents.

He spoke huskily; her eyes shot to his, their depth now darker. "The door creaked open and then your grandmother floated in and watched me from the bottom of the bed. I called out to her, but she didn't answer. Was that the ghost?"

Colin could have groaned because the mood was now broken. Coco looked at him with widened eyes, then she broke out laughing. "At least she didn't do the floating dentures at the opening in the door. I don't know how many friends she has scared that way."

“So there no Miss Birch.” His eyes narrowed.

Coco laughed harder. “Yes, there is a Miss Birch, and she can be seen walking down the street late at night or showing up in your house. But she is still alive, just likes to sleepwalk sometimes at night and her sister would usually catch her or come get her.

“But Granny loves to pull late night scares on unsuspecting guests and us when we are home. It means she likes you.” Coco stuttered with laughter.

Colin was fighting not to laugh along with her.

She had such an infectious laugh, and you couldn’t help laughing as well, even if you didn’t want to.

Her face was alight with humor and her eyes danced, creasing at the corners; she looked carefree and finally relaxed since the day he walked back into her life.

She was now holding her stomach, and, in that moment, he could no longer resist the need to taste her.

His feet ate up the distance between them.

She glanced up in surprise as he stood over her before he reached for her arms and pulled her up and into his chest, bringing his mouth down to hers.

Her mouth had parted in a gasp, and he wanted to delve in but needed her to invite him in and so he contented himself with nibbling and tasting her plump lips.

The taste of strawberry hit his tongue, and he realized that was the flavour of the lipgloss she was wearing.

He continued to nibble and suck until he felt her relax in his embrace.

Tenderly, he slid his tongue along her parted seam, back and forth, retreating to come out and play again until she began to seek his tongue for herself.

Hers finally met his, and she sucked him into her mouth; he groaned from the enticing sensation.

He angled his head and parted his lips moving them over hers, as his tongue danced back and forth with hers.

She parted her lips further and he delved in now, taking and tasting what was being offered, pulling her now into an all-consuming need, showing her what she did to him.

He cupped the back of her head while his other hand lowered to her hip, pulling her snug against him.

He lifted his lips off slightly and she followed, uttering a sound of protest. He wanted her to open her eyes and look at him, longed for her to see how much more this was to him, tracing his lips alongside her cheeks and over her closed eyelids.

She let out a sigh, and he moved his mouth back over hers to capture it.

Drinking it in. He bent his legs to pick her up and heard in his ear.

“Now, son, this is not the time or the place, and if you don’t want her father rising out of the sea like Neptune, you will let her go until you can find a private moment with your fiancée.

” His grandfather’s voice was firm but amused.

Colin chuckled through the haze of passion and groaned.

He didn't want to stop but upon hearing his grandfather's voice, Coco had frozen in his arms and he could feel her hands pushing against his chest for release.

He lifted his head from her, but he hoped his look said this was far from over.

The widening and narrowing of her eyes told him she got the message loud and clear before she pushed once again off his chest.

When she was finally released, he watched her go to her chair and unclasp the sarong from around her waist, dropping it onto her lounge chair. She then strode against the hot sand to her parents in the water, her lush glutes flexing as she walked had him groaning again and he went to follow.

He stopped when he felt a hand on his arm.

"That little scare I gave you last night was a little taste of your reality to come if you hurt her again. I promise I will haunt you for the rest of your life after I die." Granny C's brown gaze held the promise of her words, and he nodded, not desiring last night's encounter again in his lifetime.

He ran to cool off in the ocean, which looked more inviting than the father scowling at him from the blue-green depths of the water.

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Coco stood outside on the deck, letting the ocean air cool her heated skin. She was at the end of the boat, hidden slightly in a nook away from some of the other couples and people on deck. Mostly everyone was on the lower levels, sitting and eating or enjoying the music.

She just been dancing up a storm on the Bouncey J that was having a soca fete on the water.

Her parents had netted the tickets last minute and they'd all caught a taxi to the dock and boarded the boat.

Grandpa Norris had stayed behind to keep Granny C company at the house until they arrived back later.

Everyone was having a good time and Colin was blending in with her family so well; it was if he'd been around them for years instead of a few months, especially the way he treated her grandmother with care and love.

It was going to be hard when they went their separate ways because she knew from her family and friends that they liked Colin.

Tensing, she squashed the stray thoughts.

It would also be hard for her, especially with the amount of time they were spending together.

Her resolve kept weakening. She wanted to open herself fully to him and her desire

for him was growing.

The man looked fine before but with this new tan, the man was gorgeous.

And his body, all those hard planes and muscle. Goddaamn.

She felt Colin behind her before he spoke and handed her a brownish-yellow liquid in a cup.

She took a sip of the rum punch, the heady concoction hitting her throat on its way down to her belly.

She shivered when he leaned his head closer to her ear and whispered, “Have I told you how beautiful you look tonight in all white?”

A feeling of elation flowed through her at his compliment.

Coco glanced down at herself; her hair was down now, loose and hanging down her back and over her shoulders, covering some of her white handkerchief top.

Her short white denim skirt and tan sandals completed her stunning look to match the all-white soca fete theme.

The lights on board were dim as music blared from the DJ spinning some old tunes.

At the moment, it was an old Black Bird tune and she could imagine her parents dancing on each other.

She had just finished dancing with family and friends to Fire Infinity and Colin had offered to go and get her some rum punch while she went on deck to cool off a bit.

The sweat still beaded on her forehead and pooled into the middle of her throat. Her body temperature rose when Colin pressed himself against her back and his arms bracketed around her.

“Colin.” She warned huskily.

“Shh, just drink your rum and let me hold you.”

Her protest died in her throat because she would be lying to both of them if she continued to deny the chemistry between them.

Especially knowing she was enjoying the feel of his hard body pressed into hers.

His cock nestled as if it belonged there in the crease of her ass.

His hard outline sparked heat to spread between her legs.

They stayed like that until he began to slowly move against her to the rhythm of the music playing.

Colin had picked up fast on the beat of the Soca music and the dance and whining up.

He looked so good and relaxed when he was having fun.

The blue of his eyes were now a bit brighter because of the tan he was now sporting and his reddish-brown hair and beard having blond highlights to them.

She felt the scraping of his beard against her neck, followed by the press of his lips as he continued to move against her.

She swished her hips in time to the music.

Coco became lost in the feel of him, and her nipples were hard against the material of her top.

She craved his touch against her sensitive tips.

As if reading her thoughts, his hands moved off the railing and onto her bare stomach, gently raking across her exposed skin.

Coco leaned back against him, the cup in her hand forgotten.

She could feel the rise and fall of his chest against her back and knew he was just as affected as her in this moment.

She tilted her head back and met his lips that were waiting there for her; at the same time, he cupped her heavy breasts.

The rough abrasion of his palms skimming over her nipples had her moaning in his mouth.

He squeezed her flesh, and his fingers played with her nipples.

She arched herself into his hands and pressed her ass against the rising cock in his pants.

He groaned and his kiss deepened with his tongue delving into her mouth.

Her hand moved from the railing onto his hard thigh, maneuvering it behind her to cup him in the palm of her hand, squeezing him gently.

He began to pinch and rub her nipples hard; she clamped her legs together as her pussy throbbed and she could feel moisture began to coat her insides and run down

onto her panties. She made a mewling sound, wanting his hand to relieve the ache between her legs.

Colin separated his lips from hers, his irises dilated with desire for her. “Do you know how much I want to fuck this sweet pussy?” He cupped her before his hand delved into her panties, seeking her hot center, his fingers trailing across her now wet slit.

“Gezus woman, what you do to me.” He muttered huskily before he dipped his finger into her and used his thumb to strum across her clit.

She arched back on her toes, all sense of caution gone.

He slammed his mouth back on top of hers and slid his hand back and forth against her tips, working his finger into her tight sheath.

He made a sound as his mouth consumed hers and he thrust his hard cock into her waiting hand; through her haze, she moved to feel the length of him. He was thick and long, and she groaned.

He broke off the kiss again. “I can’t wait to take this sweet pussy.

I’ve been denied too long. You are so wet and tight.

” Then he inserted another finger inside of her, stretching her.

It hurt but felt so good at the same time.

“I am so hard right now and ready, and I’m not even sheathed inside you yet.

See how much you do to me, how much you have always affected me.

” He thrust his cock hard into her hand.

“I need you so bad, baby.” He whispered.

“Please.” She begged, turned on by his words and needing to come as he continued to run his hand across her sensitive nipples; she wanted them in his mouth, pulling on them hard like he used to when, instead of studying, they were discovering each other’s wants and needs without having to go all the way.

“Okay, baby.” He removed his hand from her breast and panties and Coco protested, her body throbbing and her thoughts completely scattered.

“We’re still a little too exposed for what I want to do to you.

I want to taste your sweet berries and lick your cream until you come hard in my mouth.

” He whispered in her ear, turned her around, pressing her hard against the length of his body.

He moved her closer up against the wall, his body and the shadowed alcove giving them better protection from prying eyes.

The music changed and a slow song came on.

Colin, looking deep into her eyes, dipped his head and sank into another kiss with her.

He pulled slightly back and moved his knee in between her legs, his hands now on her waist and he moved in closer, pressing her back as he began to move his hips and leg in a slow dance to the beat of the music.

She raised her arms and tucked her hands on the back of his neck as they grinded together to the music.

She thought she could not get any wetter, but the hard press of his thigh against her clit and her nipples rubbing against his chest was causing small tremors in her pussy.

Her breath increased and she gripped the back of his head as she bit his lip and slid her tongue over it.

She suckled his tongue the way he liked it and heard him let out an excited rumble.

She could feel the press of his hard cock against her thigh and wanted it between her legs.

The hands on her hips squeezed gently before he lifted her up and lowered so that he was bent underneath the bottom of her shirt.

She felt the slow slide of his tongue against her aching nipple and gave a low moan.

He flicked it back and forth before pulling it into his mouth, sucking on it hard until she bucked against him, then he moved onto the next one giving it the same attention.

She could feel the tightening between her legs and knew she was about to come.

She squeezed and rubbed herself against his leg.

He slid his tongue against both peaks before lifting her higher. He was so strong, holding her up effortlessly. She gripped his hair when she felt his breath on her thigh.

“Move your panties to the side for me.” Colin demanded his voice raspy. And as she did, he began to explore her with his teeth and tongue raking against her sensitive

flesh.

“You taste so sweet. I could never get enough tasting you and I still can’t now.”

He sucked her pussy lips into his mouth, delved his tongue between her slick folds.

His upper lip now stroking against her clit as his tongue did sinful things to her pussy.

She raised her hand, biting down on her finger to keep herself from screaming out loud, alerting anyone that was nearby to what they were doing in the corner of the boat.

If his hands weren’t holding her still, she would have fallen down to the floor.

He plunged his tongue in and out, twirling it inside, running the tip against her swollen flesh his nose and upper lip moving sharply against her clit.

She exploded, letting out a silent scream as her thighs shook from the force of her orgasm.

She could vaguely hear his chest rumblings as he continued to eat her out, licking and sucking the wetness from her until she pushed gently on his shoulder, shaking every time he continued to pass his tongue along her flesh, tremors following in its wake.

Colin stopped when he was satisfied, as her feet touched the ground, he rose up like a god, his hair a mess, his lips swollen, and his eyes dark.

He cupped her head, bringing her lips to his for her to taste herself on his, and she groaned when he pressed his hard tip against her opening, feeling him through the wetness of her panties and in that moment, she would have let him take her.

He stood back, his gaze now possessive and intense. “I won’t be keeping my promise to your father because after tonight, this sweet pussy is now mine.”

And she knew he was right.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Colin laid there on the lounge chair at the beach, staring into the ocean where Coco and her sister were having fun splashing each other.

His thoughts swirled because he'd thought after the boat ride that everything would have been made clear to Coco that she belonged with him.

But the next day, she'd kept her distance and had seemed to pull away from him again.

He was used to women falling at his feet but not Coco. She'd never been that way, even in high school.

She thought the first time he ever noticed her was during their tutoring meet-up at the library, but that wasn't the truth.

He'd been intrigued by the new student coming into their high school.

When he saw her standing at her locker talking to the principal, she had smiled at something the principal was saying to her.

Her whole face lit up with warmth, drawing his eyes to her plump mouth.

She had kissable lips, and she wore a gloss over them, highlighting their shape.

Her smile was so engaging, then she laughed; the huskiness of the sound had his heart racing.

He took in the rest of her with her short braids and her well-put-together and pressed outfit.

She was slightly taller than the girls at his school and she had a very nice body.

A natural beauty who didn't need makeup, and her dark brown skin glowed.

He had only dated the popular white girls in his school before then, but he was also open to dating other ethnicities.

There was something about her that drew him in.

For the first time, he had felt captured by her dark gaze when their eyes met.

She'd paused what she was saying, then returned her attention to the principal, not giving him a second look.

He became now more intrigued by her than ever; he knew he was good looking and the girls at the school fawned over him, but he had a feeling she would not be the same.

He planned on introducing himself to her, but a family emergency had pulled him away from school a lot that year and also into the next.

His grandmother had fallen ill and passed away at the beginning of his last year in high school, leaving him, Abbott, and Matt playing catch up.

When he finally came back and saw her again in the hallway with friends, he knew he needed to talk to her and when he found out she was a tutor, it fit perfectly into his hands.

He at first thought it would be a game and an easy conquest to end his high school days with, but she quickly became more to him than just a notch on his belt.

She was his best friend, then the most important person in his life as he began to develop real feelings for her.

All that came crashing down one night when his father finally came home for a visit.

He heard someone sit down next to him and the light scent of perfume hit his nostrils. He turned to smile at Vye.

Vye was beautiful and he could see why Linnel was besotted with her.

She was an amazing and loving mother; smart, witty, and funny; always teasing everyone including her husband; she was generous and intuitive.

He could see a lot of Vye in Coco and knew when Coco gave herself to someone she loved, she would guard that love fiercely like Vye and Linnel did.

“How are you liking being in Barbados so far?” Vye set down her bag and took out a little fan, turning it on and giving him her undivided attention.

“This island is beautiful and so are the people. Helpful and welcoming.”

“Also, nosy too.” Vye laughed and so did he because he’d gone to one of the banks in Bridgetown and had stood in line for several hours. When he finally got a teller to take out money, he was engaged in conversation and before he knew it, he knew about the teller’s life and they all about his.

They were at a different beach that day and the ocean seemed calmer. Tomorrow he was going on a drive with her father and some of his friends around the island. He

was looking forward to seeing more of Barbados but not too keen on the inquisition he was sure he was going to face.

“And the ride tomorrow with Linnel.” She grinned, knowingly.

He made a grimace. “Yes, that too.”

She laughed and he smiled. “Don’t worry, I think he is coming around and it won’t be too bad. He will bring you back in one piece,” She teased.

Nearby men’s voices raised excitedly and they saw Linnel sit back in his seat happily with the three other men playing dominoes and drinking beer, slamming them down onto the table as he won this round.

He faced forward to see Reena trying to push Coco under the water and he smiled.

He liked Reena; she was cute in a studious Bahamian way, and she had her big afro braided, her hair coming down to the middle of her back, wet and weighed down by the water.

She’d quizzed him like a drill sergeant before giving him a hug and settling on the couch with a book in her hand and a pad of paper to scribble notes on.

Reena was highly intelligent, but she was a slob.

Her paper, wrappers, shoes, and socks were all about the house in the short time since she arrived.

And when he saw all this, he thought of his brother Matt, who never been the studious type.

Matt barely passed high school, then struggled in college but was ironically a clean freak and this mess would have him going ballistic.

A female voice interrupted his musing. “You care about my daughter, don’t you? Falling for her even.”

His attention refocused on Vye. Her gaze searched his, then she nodded and smiled, satisfied with what she saw.

“She won’t make it easy on you, you know. She’s stubborn like her mother. You are going to have to work for her love but when you do, you will be the luckiest man in the world.”

He didn’t know what to say. His emotions were in turmoil.

Because he did have strong feelings for her but there was also fear there too.

His father had taught all his sons a hard lesson on trust and falling in love, one that wasn’t easy to forget, especially with his younger siblings as a constant reminder.

Vye reached out, as if sensing his turmoil.

“Don’t let the past get in the way of you two being together.

It happened once, don’t let it again. My daughter deserves so much more, and you know it or else you would not have come back into her life.

You need to show her and yourself that you are going nowhere and that this is real for you both. ”

His shifted his gaze to Coco, deep in thought, and he smiled when she smiled at

something her sister said.

“Oh yeah, you definitely have it bad.”

“Who has it bad?” They turned when Linnel appeared at his wife’s side and bent down to give her a kiss on her mouth.

“Nothing, dear. How is the game going?” Vye said, a smooth distraction.

“I am beating their asses, of course.” He said proudly. The men shouted for him to come and play another game. He gave his wife another quick kiss and grabbed another beer from the cooler. He began to walk away when he rounded on Colin.

“How much do you know about cricket?”

“Not much, why?”

“Oh, because you will be playing at a father-and-son charity match with me on Sunday. We will talk more about it on the ride up tomorrow.” He returned to his friends without any further argument.

His eyebrows rose and he glanced at Vye, who was rolling her eyes. If he was invited to play cricket with Linnel, then the man was starting to like him. Colin felt more optimistic about tomorrow.

“Just make sure not to get yourself injured on the field.”

“Does that happen often?”

“Only if you don’t know what you are doing and the ball hits you.”

Well, that sounded promising.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Coco face made a grimace as the cricket ball flew toward Colin and he lunged but missed.

There were cheers from spectators but also heavy silence from all the men and the wives and families that had come to see the sponsored cricket match that included her father playing.

She could see her father giving Colin a look from across the field where he was on the other side waiting to catch the ball when it came his way.

So far, the charity game of Spartan against the Briar Hall players, made up of different cricket teams around Barbados, had Spartan in the lead, but if Colin kept missing the ball that lead would get eaten up.

Even if this was for charity, playing cricket was a serious business.

Colin shot up from the ground and quickly moved to get the ball, turning and throwing it toward the wicket as the batters were in the process of making another run, thinking that Colin would not get off the ground and have the ball in hand before they could finish this run.

But no one knew better than her what an athlete Colin really was and was not surprised when he got them out to the amazement of everyone.

The stand erupted in clapping and some vigorous shouting, and her father ran toward Colin. He clapped him on the back before making his way off the field, following his team.

Colin jogged up the stairs, giving her a quick kiss before heading inside to get ready to bat for the Spartan.

A happy smile escaped her lips before she could stop it, and she held it in place, keeping up the appearance of a besotted and happy fiancée.

Happiness, but knew that it wasn't real and just for show for his grandfather.

Since the night on the yacht, he hadn't tried anything on her but instead a part of her was beginning to wish this was real, especially the way Colin was now acting around her.

As if she meant something to him and that their engagement was real and that they were in a loving relationship.

After being bombarded about when the wedding was going to take place, Colin had convinced her that they shouldn't wait to get married and wanted to do it in two months' time, shocking her.

He pointed out that he wasn't sure how much time he really had with his grandfather and if they pushed it out, his grandfather could die, leaving him and his brothers with nothing.

She'd finally agreed after some convincing and a private chat with the Norris family doctor that let her know the situation was indeed dire, even without confidential specifics.

But it was hard for her to also believe especially when his grandfather looked healthy and happy arguing with her grandmother.

If she didn't know any better, she would think his grandfather had taken an instant

liking to her grandmother and the same with her.

She had never seen her grandmother this alive in a long time, and the way she kept reaching out her hand to give Bruce Norris a light slap when he would tease her, showed that her grandmother was taking a liking to the Norris men.

Planning of the wedding was supposed to start when they returned home from the trip; her parents would get the ball rolling and Coco was to begin dress shopping and looking at locations that her mother would send her.

One call to Jackie and she was already planning the bachelor and bachelorette parties, suggesting Vegas.

Colin had surprised her when he suggested that the wedding be in Barbados, surrounded by her loved ones. He wanted her day to be special for her and for them both to have memories of their big day.

Her head was spinning as everything began to spiral out of her control and the wedding that didn't seem real was now becoming a reality.

She hugged herself because deep down she knew she wanted it now to be true and he was making it difficult to keep reminding herself that this was just for him to get his inheritance from his grandfather and for her to get her shares back from him.

When they had been working in her office before coming to Barbados, she got to see how much he had changed since high school.

There was such a give and take that flowed naturally between them, as if the past never happened and that had frightened her because she forgot they were not a couple.

When coming to Barbados she'd hope to put everything back into perspective, but was failing miserably.

Because the way she felt his eyes track her in a room, it felt like a soft caress.

Or when their gazes collided, she either saw a heated or happy possessive look in his blue eyes.

He was always attentive to her needs, sometimes even before she knew them herself.

Her family and friends on the island were also liking him, and she felt that even her father might be forgetting that this situation was temporary as she heard him inside the team's room telling the other cricketers that this was his son-in-law.

She broke out laughing when her father announced that the winning round of alcohol would be on Colin.

She gave a small start from a sudden embrace and felt a pointy chin resting on her shoulder.

The husky Bajan mixed with a British accent of her sibling brushed over her ear.

"How do you not find these cricket games boring is beyond me. A hard ball flying in the air, men shouting and then running back in forth while trying not to get knocked senseless is a bit ridiculous. They need more protection than that especially if the ball hits them in an exposed area." She sighed her voice clearly sounding bored.

Reena had never liked going to the cricket grounds as a child and preferred being at home with one of her books.

"How much longer before we can slip away and head home?"

Coco laughed and grabbed the hands around her stomach, giving them a light squeeze and then a loving pat. “You just want to go home so you can bury your nose in one of your textbooks, Reena.”

Her sister gave her a long-suffering sigh and Coco turned to see her younger sister with a pout on her lips.

Her sister wore her hair in a natural curly big afro that covered her dainty face with hoop earrings and patterned tortoise glasses.

She could barely see without them. She was glad glasses had come a long way and were no longer big lenses that looked like coke bottles.

Reena was made fun of in school for not only being smart but for how her glasses were big on her face.

Where Coco had a fuller figure, Reena had inherited their grandmothers lanky frame with smaller breasts.

Her sibling was a lighter shade of brown than her and didn't bother with foundation or makeup like she did.

Reena thought if it took too much time to get put together that would take away from her time of studying, she didn't want it.

Coco was proud of her sister and that she'd gotten into fellowship program with Harvard Medical School.

But she also wanted her sister to have a little fun and not to be so serious all the time.

Her sister had her face in a book since she came out of the womb.

She didn't fault Reena for her one-track mind when it came to studying and reading.

She was proud of all her sister had accomplished at an early age and had worked hard for.

Now when she was able to finally take a small break, her sister was back reading her books instead of taking time off and being adventurous for someone of her age.

Even though their parents were loving and strict, Coco was still able to go out and enjoy going out partying with her friends or travelling on vacation with them.

Reena, even though she was an adult, seemed to still be very closed off and just wanted to spend time with her books.

Reena rolled her eyes and made a face that reminded her of when they were kids, and she would annoy her younger sister by teasing her or trying to hide her books.

“You're frowning, which means you are about to lecture me about my studying and not making time to get out and enjoy myself as I am young, blah, blah, blah.

Well, you will be happy to know that I did do that finally and went out with a group of fellow graduate students from the apartment complex I was in.

So, no need to keep worrying, big sister.

I have finally experienced life.” The last part sounded slightly bitter.

Coco straightened up and searched her sister's face.

Something was wrong. She'd noticed that Reena looked tired and drained lately and sometimes would stare off into space but had attributed it to her being preoccupied

with another one of the books she would bury her head in.

But now after hearing this, she wasn't sure.

“How did it go, Reena?”

Her sister gave her a bitter smile. “Not so good and I don't want to discuss it right now. We are here for you and to get to know that hunk of a jock I finally get to meet after all these years.”

Coco scowled, knowing her sister was deflecting and that she and Colin were faking it.

But as she was about to say something, one of the spectators walked past them with a container of pudding and souse, the scent making her stomach rumble with hunger.

She turned to her sister to see if she wanted to go inside and get a drink and something to eat.

But Reena's face blanched and then she flew past her, heading inside.

Coco scanned the people on the deck of the house, looking for her mother and spotting her talking to their grandmother and Colin's grandfather, then rushed in after her sister.

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Making her way to the ladies' room, where she could hear Reena retching over the toilet bowl.

She knocked on the door and her sister begged her to go away, that it was just an upset stomach.

Coco left and went to the bar to get some ginger ale and a damp cloth from the bartender, before returning to the bathroom and the silence coming from the stall her sister was in.

“Reena?”

“I’m okay. I think my stomach is now completely empty and nothing else to come out.”

“Okay, can you open the door for me? I have some ginger ale for you to sip on.”

“Sure.” She let out a sigh and Coco heard the latch undo.

She pushed the door slowly open, trying not to hit her sister who was down on the ground on her knees in front of the toilet bowl. She handed her sister the wet cloth and Reena cleaned her mouth and chin of any aftereffects of her being sick.

“Are you pregnant, Reena?”

Her sister stared at her with big brown eyes before tears began to pool in them.

“I think so or this is the longest stomach flu I have ever had.” She began to cry, and Coco worked her way down and pulled her sister into her arms. Her mind racing now on what this could mean for her sister if she was pregnant.

“Okay, so you haven’t taken a test yet. Reena, if you are, who is the father?” Reena shook her head. “Reena, you know you will have to tell him and the family who he is.”

She barely heard her sister when she said. “I don’t know who he is or what his name is.”

She stiffened; her baby sister had a one-night stand.

“Please don’t say anything yet to Mom and Dad. I don’t know because I was very intoxicated, and I think I met him afterwards.” Reena stared off toward the wall and frowned.

She glanced back at Coco as she continued. “Everything was a blur when I woke up in the hotel room with him. I just gathered my clothes and bolted, not waiting to find out who he was.”

“Was your drink spiked by him?” Coco’s stomach pitched at the thought that a man took advantage of her sister, and she wasn’t there to protect her.

“No, I can’t hold my liquor. It was my first time drinking and I only had one or two glasses before I was tipsy.”

“What happened to the people you went out with?” Coco spoke with rising anger in her voice.

“They wanted to go to another bar, and I decided I was going to go home because Dr.

Johnson's Medical Biographies arrived, and I wanted to get back to reading.

"She gave her sister a rueful smile. "I had called a cab when he sat down at the bar next to me." She sat down on the floor as she continued.

"I remember thinking how handsome he was and how sad at the same time and I decided to try coming out of my shell and stay a little longer, trying my best at flirting, especially since I had liquid courage. He was just there overnight, waiting for a connecting flight."

She frowned, her glasses sliding down her nose and she pushed them back up automatically. "I think he ordered us another round of drinks and I remember finding everything he said funny, or I was trying to be cute."

"Do you recall what he looked like?"

She pursed her lips. "The bar was dark but I think his hair was blond, and he had these mesmerizing blue eyes. That all I can remember now, everything else is still a bit foggy."

"The hotel?"

Her sister gave her a look "I can't remember, and I didn't stick around to ask the front desk questions or look to see what it was called. Just jumped into a waiting cab, glad I didn't have to call one to get me just in case he woke up while I left the hotel room."

"Is that all?" Coco had a sneaking suspicion her sister wasn't telling her everything.

"Yes."

“Why didn’t you go and get the morning-after pill?”

Her sister ducked her head and Coco groaned. “You’re kidding me. You went home and picked up that damn book.”

Reena just nodded and then they both jumped when they heard someone walk into the washroom. Coco quickly stood and closed the door, keeping them from any prying eyes.

“Hello.” They saw feet encased in sneakers approach the door and let out sighs that it wasn’t their mother coming to look for them.

“Yes, hello.”

They listened as the person moved slightly closer and knew they were pressing their ear against the door.

“Are you both okay?”

“Yes, just got my hair caught in my dress and my sister is here helping work it free.”

“Aw okay.” The woman sounded confused.

Then Coco spoke again. “We are good, thank you.” She repeated, hoping the woman would take the hint and go into another stall. Her sister needed to wash up at the sink and they didn’t need an audience.

They breathed a sigh of relief when the person moved on, and they heard the stall door next to them open and close. They moved out and toward the sink, where Reena cleaned the rest of her face and washed her hands.

Reena still looked a little pale and Coco took out her compact and put some of her shimmering powder on her to try and make her ashy look go away because if their mother saw her now, she would definitely know something was wrong. It was best to keep silent for now.

She hoped more of Reena's memory would come back because now both Reena and the unsuspecting father had decisions to make together.

She exited the bathroom with Reena, her mind now preoccupied with her sister's pregnancy and not on her up-and-coming wedding and hoped they could figure this all out before she walked down the aisle.

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He took a sip of the champagne that was waiting chilled for him and his passengers as they got off the private plane from landing in Vegas.

There were on their way to the V hotel run by the Brooks family with the oldest son, Carter, at the helm.

They were being giving the top suites at the hotel as Carter's wife, Zahara, was still best friends with Coco and was going to be a bridesmaid at her wedding.

Coco and her friends had gone ahead the day before to go for a spa day and visit with Zahara.

Zahara would not be attending the night activities with them as she was pregnant again and her husband Carter had business in New York the next day; both would be flying out in the morning.

Coco mentioned that Carter was probably keeping Zahara at his side because of what happened during their first pregnancy together and how he'd almost lost her when she'd finally gone into labour and the twins were born.

Carter booked them a joint dinner that night in their famous restaurant called The Jewel at his expense as a gift for the bachelor and bachelorette party.

His thoughts went to Coco and their last day on the island; they were flying out on different flights, as he needed to check in on one of his restaurants and she had to prepare for the launch marketing blitz for their newest product being sent out to stores, and the kits to the influencers to help drive sales.

He tried to find a private moment with her but with family being around, it was hard as they all wanted to be there on the last night in Barbados.

He noticed that Coco seemed worried and lost in thought, and he wanted to talk to her to see what was going through her mind.

He hoped she wasn't about to back out of their upcoming wedding, especially now that he wanted their marriage for good.

He knew that there was still chemistry between them by the way she reacted to his touch, but he wanted something more and was hoping over time she would fall back in love with him like she had been when they were in high school together.

He'd been pleased that night when instead of stiffening when he put his arms around her, she was leaning into him. As if being near him was giving her comfort and he felt a warmth spread through him at his thoughts.

When he was finally able to get them alone, he couldn't resist the temptation to feel her lips under his and leaned down, cupping the back of her neck and stared into eyes so dark, he couldn't tell what she was thinking.

But then, she parted her lips and he forgot everything else but finally getting a taste of her that he'd been craving all night.

Once they had parted, he'd spent the rest of the night thinking of her.

He missed Coco and was looking forward to seeing her tonight.

The guys had a day of golfing planned, then relaxing by the pool that was solely reserved for them for the afternoon.

Eventually they would be out in the club for drinks and celebrating with his brothers and friends after meeting up with the girls for dinner before parting ways again later.

His fiancée and her friends would be going to see a show that he suspected was a thunder down or a one-buck-or-two strip act.

He wasn't pleased that Coco would be exposed to another man's naked chest but what the girls didn't know wouldn't hurt them.

He made sure that none of the strip acts in Vegas would allow them to have any private dances or have any of the men walk through the crowd and acknowledge them.

And the last tactic was switching their seats to all the way in the back.

He only wished he could see Jackie's face when she found out what he did.

He wondered what Keith thought about her going to a strip club; the last he heard, both Jackie and Keith were getting serious and a huge part of him was glad that Keith decided to pursue Jackie instead of trying to go after Coco.

He couldn't blame the man, but she was his and would be his for good once they tied the knot.

He made a mistake when they were younger, but he was a man now.

He glanced around the limousine at all of his brothers.

His friends were in the other car. Even though his brothers were chatting and smiling and laughing, there was a deep tension running through them.

For each one of them, time was ticking, and they needed to find someone to complete their lives and walk down the aisle with.

He was lucky he was marrying Coco and Jacob decided to become engaged with the woman who had taken over his daughter's care after his wife exited the picture.

His niece loved her nanny and Jacob said that it was the best solution for both of them, but his brother was sitting in a corner of the limo, twirling his tumbler of dark liquid, alternating with staring into it.

He'd been happy to hear that Jacob had found his ex-wife and she was willing to help.

Surgery was scheduled when they got back from Vegas.

When he tried asking his brother about what went down, Jacob closed down on him and said he would discuss everything with him later.

Right now, they all needed to concentrate on his wedding to Coco.

He turned his eyes toward the younger twin when he heard him curse and scowl at his phone. "Nova still giving you a hard time?"

Matt looked up, his blue eyes flashing with irritation and hurt in them. "Yes, she is still not talking to me."

"Sorry bud, but she is right. You both have been together since you were sixteen and fifteen, but now you are proposing to her when she has been wanting this for a long time and the only reason is because of Grandfather's demand." Abbott pointed out.

Matt turned his angry gaze now onto his identical twin brother. "I was planning on

proposing; the time was just not right.”

“No time would have been right with that barracuda.” Rafe added and Colin grimaced. Nova was a sore spot with Rafe and Abbott, as both didn’t like her. Dyson was the only one of them who was laid back and easygoing and liked to keep the peace between all of them.

“Keep my fiancée’s name out of your mouth, Rafe.” Matt said through gritted teeth.

“Not your fiancée yet and what do you think you can do to me? Just telling the truth and we all know it. She is only with you for your name and money.”

Matt lifted off his seat and Colin put his hand on his brother’s arm, pulling him back down just as Rafe taunted him again.

“I see you have learned nothing from when you tried to swing on me like you did the last time, just remember how that turned out.” Rafe took a sip of the champagne in the flute and tapped his right eye where he had given Matt a shiner for his efforts.

“You know for the longest time I let slide all the snide comments from you, Rafe, but in fact I am now starting to believe you want my girlfriend all for yourself.” Matt gloated.

Rafe raised an eyebrow and scoffed.

“Guys, please, we are here to celebrate Colin’s wedding, not start a fight in a limo car.

” Dyson said, leaning forward to pour himself a diet coke.

Dyson was the only one that didn’t drink alcohol, choosing to keep his body fit as a

personal trainer.

Colin also suspected he didn't want to be anything like their father or Jacob's ex-wife, though she seemed to be clean now.

At least that was what he was able to get out of Jacob before he clammed up.

"Why are we doing this anyway?" Rafe questioned, then he turned to Jacob for answers.

"Jacob, were you able to talk to grandfather again and change his mind? This whole thing is ludicrous." Bronson asked.

Colin could understand Bronson's frustration.

He was the youngest of them all and was having fun while finishing college.

He wasn't ready to settle down and probably wouldn't be for a while.

His sibling liked to take his time with everything and didn't want to be rushed.

Bronson could sit and ponder in his head for hours, whether it was about a game, trip, or doing just about anything of importance.

Jacob broke out of his haze and his eyes took in the attentive faces waiting for his answer.

Colin secretly hoped his grandfather didn't change his mind. He wanted to marry Coco and knew that if his grandfather changed his mind, then he might lose Coco again. He felt his heart race and his fingers curled into the denim of his jeans.

“Yes, I tried, but grandfather is holding firm.” Jacob answered curtly and rubbed his hand through his dark tresses in aggravation.

There were new lines in his face from worrying about his daughter.

His brother was always put together and even in jeans and a t-shirt, but tonight his clothes were not pressed but wrinkled.

His hair had grown out a bit since his search for Sierra.

“Did you tell grandfather about Kaitlyn?” Dyson questioned.

“No, I don’t want him to worry about that right now. Everything is going well, and I will tell him once we have the date of the surgery.”

“Where is Sierra staying while you wait for the operation?”

“She is staying at a hotel for now at my expense, but then moving in with us while they both recuperate. She will use the guest house by the pool.”

“Is that a wise decision having her so close?” Colin questioned.

Jacob sighed. “It’s the least I can do, especially since she doesn’t have any money and can’t afford the physio that she still needs. She is walking now with the help of a cane.”

“Has she changed any?” Abbott asked.

“I don’t know nor care. The only thing I need from her is the marrow and then after she is well enough to travel, I will be sending her back where she belongs.” Jacob said coldly.

The rest nodded in agreement.

“I can’t believe we all have to get married.” It was Rafe’s turn to rake his hands through his curly dark locks. “And in such a short amount of time.”

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“Any progress other than just me?” Colin turned to look at his brothers.

Rafe shrugged, “We all agreed if we didn’t have someone, then we would give them some money and get them to sign an agreement that when the marriage was terminated, we would set them up for the rest of their lives.”

Matt frowned. “Yes, but that is cold, and grandfather wants us to find love.”

Colin nodded in agreement now with Matt before speaking, “Yeah, well grandfather believes in miracles, and I get why he wants this for us.”

All eyes turned to him. He shrugged. “I want my marriage to Coco to be real and hope that after all this, she will want the same as me.”

“Are you saying you have fallen in love with her?”

“I made a mistake a long time ago and grandfather has given me a chance to now correct it,” was all Colin offered. He didn’t want the first time admitting his love for Coco to be for his brother’s ears. He wanted her to be the first to hear it from him.

They continued eyeing him.

“Well, we don’t have an ex-girlfriend to fall into our lap like Coco. I always liked her as your girlfriend in high school. Glad it is working out for you.” Abbott reached over and patted his brother’s arm.

“If it could happen for grandfather a second time around, then it will happen for you

all as well.” He dropped a bomb on his brothers, surprising them.

“What do you mean by that?” The chorus of voices of his brothers echoed through the car.

“I think Grandfather is smitten by Coco’s grandmother.” Colin grinned.

“Serious?”

He laughed at the memory. “Coco had walked me out to head back to her grandmother’s house and when we exited, we heard a woman giggling and then the husky tones of Grandad Norris.

Requesting a kiss. Mrs. Hunt told him that he would need to earn one from her.

” He remembered the surprised look on Coco’s face and how she cupped her mouth to keep her laughter from breaking free and revealing their eavesdropping.

“So that’s why Granddad said he had to go away for business when I called, and when I asked him about what, he told me to mind my business.” Matt laughed.

“Which reminds me how did the business with Normack go in London? And thank you for going in my place. Did he consider working with us?” Jacob questioned.

“Yes, our law department is going over the contract that Normack sent over from London and I am due to fly out again in two weeks to discuss our next step if the contract is okay.”

“When did you go to London?” Colin asked because he didn’t know his brother had left the states and the times they had met up; he didn’t mention it.

This was unusual for Matt as he liked to talk business, now that he was working with Jacob and Abbott to help with the company, especially with their grandfather stepping down.

“Two months ago. When Jacob was searching for Sierra.” Matt’s face suddenly closed off, leaving Colin suspicious. Matt had been acting strange for the past couple of months, and he attributed it to Nova not agreeing to his marriage proposal and freezing him out.

“Did anything happen with the client, because how come we are now just hearing about it.”

“No, everything went fine.”

“Did anything else happen in London. You have been giving me weird vibes lately.” Abbott piped up.

“No, there was just one night when Nova was ignoring my calls. I started drinking at the hotel and then didn’t want to be alone, so I went to the nearest bar down the street from the hotel. Everything is a blur. I had too much to drink and I—”

The limousine came to a stop.

“We’re here.” Colin said, looking outside the window at the V hotel and admired the architecture; he spotted an attendant heading their way.

“We can talk more about this later.” Colin said as he reached for the door handle.

“Never mind, there is nothing else to discuss. I just drank too much and went back to the hotel to sleep it off.” Matt’s voice was clipped. Colin moved and glanced at him, but quickly became distracted when the door opened for him and the attendant stood

to the side for him to get out.

“Welcome to the V, Mr. Norris.” Colin went to the back to help the limousine driver get the carry-on bags out of the boot while his siblings exited the limo. The second car stopped next to theirs and Colin’s friends poured out.

Then he turned to face another attendant.

“Sir, Mr. Brooks wanted me to let you know that your suite is next to your fiancée’s.

And you have already been checked in. Here are your keys.

We will bring your bags up to your rooms, and here are some complimentary starter chips from Mr. Brooks for you to use in the casino. Enjoy your stay.” The attendant smiled.

He felt the firm grip of his friend’s Thomas hand on his shoulder. “Let the bachelor partying begin.”

Colin shook his head because he knew that some of his friends and siblings were about to get into some fun trouble. What was the saying? What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

He wondered which one of these crazy people was going to get a tattoo of some random chick or end up visiting Elvis in a chapel.

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Coco hung up the phone from her mother, relief pouring through her that now her parents both knew what was going on with Reena.

Her parents had hopped on the quickest flight they could get to London when Reena called, telling them she was sick.

Coco had almost cancelled her bachelorette party when her sister called crying that she thought she was losing the baby and she'd finally been able to convince her sister to tell their parents she was pregnant.

They'd been upset and Coco had heard an earful from her mother and father and rightly so, but now they were there for Reena when she needed them the most. Putting aside their shock, anger, and sadness over the fact that their baby was now pregnant and could possibly be losing it.

Her mother had just called, waking her up to let her know that they were back from the hospital and that both babies were doing fine.

The spotting was just her uterus adjusting to their growth.

Twins . Wow. She was happy and a little jealous because she thought she would be the first to marry and have children but running a business, she had put that behind her for a bit longer.

But now she was getting married, and it wasn't the real thing.

Coco closed her mind to that thought, but it was getting hard to ignore her growing

feelings for Colin, the ones she thought she'd buried.

Coco's mind drifted to the first time she'd spoken to Colin instead of seeing him pass her in the hallway with his arm wrapped around a different girl.

They had met in the high school library after school for them to talk about the subjects he needed tutoring for.

He had been at the table first with his feet propped on the table, chair arched back and resting on one of the bookcases.

She'd glanced at it, worried the structure wouldn't hold and he would fall back, but he didn't seem to be concerned.

She put her stuff down and offered him a gentle smile.

He'd eyed her for a second, then went back to looking into space, listening to his music and drumming a pencil on the table.

Coco stiffened at the rudeness and was about to walk out when she caught a glint of humor in his eyes.

She realized he was testing her, so she put her stuff down.

Notebooks labelled for each class were spread onto the table, then she grabbed two more for Colin and another girl she was tutoring.

Blue for him and pink for her other student.

She took her pencil and jotted down some notes in his book when a shadow fell across the white paper.

She sat back now that she had his full attention.

He grinned at what he saw on the pages. “You think I’m arrogant and lazy and going to be a waste of time, hmm.

And you will give me five more minutes before walking away.

” His blue eyes now focused on her had her sinking into them.

He switched his gaze to the watch on his wrist. “It is now six minutes, one minute past the time you said you would leave.”

“I give you a minute grace period.” She said, tongue in cheek.

He laughed. And she tried not to be affected by it like all the other girls in the school did when he walked by or laughed or talked.

He suddenly took his feet off the table and lowered his chair to the floor, standing up and Coco took it as a sign that he was going to be a pain and walk out.

No skin off her nose; she came here to tutor and if he didn’t want the help, then she was sure there was another student who wanted her help.

Not that she needed the money; it just felt nice to earn her own pocket funds that her parents couldn’t tell her what to spend it on or save for her to go to school with.

As she gathered her books, Colin pulled out a chair right next to hers.

“Where are you going?” he questioned as he sat down now looking up at her.

She sat down. “I thought you were leaving.”

“One thing you are going to learn about me is that I never give up on anything I want.”

She sat there for a second, feeling nervous and excited at the same time.

Having him so close was affecting her, especially the light cologne he was wearing.

She liked it; a lot of boys thought it was cool to douse themselves in heavy scents but if she was right, it was just the brand of soap he was using.

She tried to play it cool and not respond because she knew that all his life, he'd had everything easy and handed to him.

She didn't want to be one of those people that would let him get away with everything and planned on making him work hard for those A's.

The time was now as soon they would all have to start applying to universities and get their final grades in.

He leaned over as she opened her books, his face close to hers. She swallowed, her throat suddenly feeling dry.

“Do you need to sit so close?” She turned, facing him and if she moved an inch closer, their noses would be touching.

He stared, his eyes dropping to her mouth for a second before coming back up to meet hers. “I don't have my books here with me, I came quickly over after my shower when practice was done. So, I will need to share yours. You don't mind, do you?”

She had to smother a laugh. Colin was slick.

“Sure, I don’t mind, here.” She placed her English and science books in front of him.

He looked back at her questioningly. “I don’t need them.

I have my notes I can use as we go through all the troubled areas you need help with.

” She smiled and moved her chair away from him, turning it slightly around so that they were facing each other.

Colin grinned and shrugged his shoulders and every afternoon after classes in the library was when she learned Colin was more than he seemed, that he was actually very smart and not just your typical jock hoping to get a scholarship and move on into the big leagues.

She later learned that he had fallen behind in his courses because he’d missed a lot of school throughout the beginning of the year and that he and his younger brothers were being tutored as well.

She leaned back on the hotel pillows and a small smile graced her lips as she remembered the first time they’d kissed.

Coco was waiting for him in their usual spot in the library for him to come and tell her what mark he got on his science exam.

When he showed up, he looked all defeated and couldn’t look her in the eye as if he couldn’t bear disappointing her.

Coco had taken his hand, giving it a squeeze. “It’s okay, we will try something else, ask for an extra assignment and work a little longer to get your grades up in science.”

“Do you know that this is the first time you have touched me and all it took was

failing?" Colin had said, his voice low.

"Huh. What?" Coco had tried to not roll her eyes and went to release his hand, but he turned it around clasping it firmly in his warmth.

"Coco, there is something I want to say to you and it's about this exam."

Her shoulders slumped; she had never failed at getting her students to get the grades they wanted and was feeling out of sorts by what just happened to him. He was probably going to ask to be assigned to another tutor.

"I passed with an A, and it is all thanks to you." He whipped out the paper with the A on it and held it up for her to see.

She had rushed to him, giving him a hug and they both turned their heads at the same time, their lips accidentally brushing against each other.

They froze and then his mouth was on hers, tenderly moving over her lips before pulling away.

His eyes were dark now with a question, and she moved closer to him and pressed her lips to his, giving in to her feelings.

He had never made a move on her and treated her as a friend and tutor.

The only time he had been a bit flirtatious was the first time at the library and she had acted the same around him.

But the way his lips had moved across her own and his hand had put hers against his fast-beating heart told her a different story.

His heart was racing for her. His other hand went to cup her jaw, holding her in place and she made a small sound in her throat as Colin delved deeper into the kiss.

He pulled slightly away and groaned when she raised up on tippy-toes to continue the kiss.

He pulled further away and rested his forehead against hers.

“If we don’t stop and slow down, we are going to get kicked out of this library.” He had warned. She stared, her heart still racing alongside his, her breath catching as he continued to rub his thumb across her jaw and then over her mouth.

“Do you know how long I have wanted to do this?”

He had lowered his head, and his mouth began seeking hers again as if he couldn’t help himself, stealing her breath with the intensity of the kiss and she was the one to step away, turning her head.

“I won’t sleep with you if that is what you are trying to do.”

He then turned her face back around to his. “I won’t lie and say that it isn’t what I want but I can try to be good and respect your wishes until you are ready.”

She pulled completely away from him and was about to shake her head “no.” She knew he could easily weaken her resolve, and she wanted to be married or in a committed relationship leading to marriage first.

“How about we just start by going out to celebrate over a burger and ice cream and my getting an A and for you being an amazing tutor.”

She had run her gaze over his face, seeing him smile down at her, happiness over his

accomplishment shining over him and how proud he was.

“Please, I promise you will be safe with me. Come on.” He gave her a quick kiss on the lips and gathered her books, putting them in her knapsack while he chatted away about how grandfather was going to be proud of him.

She had stood there, watching him and then whispered low to herself, “What about my heart?”

Coco threw off the covers, tired of her thoughts bringing back bittersweet memories of their time together. She’d been right to be cautious, and she was right now to not give in to fantasy. This was not going to end like a fairytale for her. Despite how it looked to others on the outside.

She paused as she sat on the edge of the bed.

She had to admit to herself that the kisses back then were that of a young adult; the kisses Colin was giving her now were of a grown man needing his woman, cherishing his woman, loving his woman.

That he wanted and needed her touch, her nearness, that he treasured her laugh, her smile.

His eyes were always seeking hers across the room, standing near or close and he was capitalizing on all opportunities to touch her or hold her.

Damn it, she couldn’t fall for him all over again because she didn’t know what she would do if he walked away with her heart again.

“I can’t think about this anymore. I need a distraction.” She sighed and glanced at the clock. It was six in the morning and the others were still asleep; she made her way

over to her suitcase and spotted the bright pink band from the strip joint they went to last minute.

When Colin found them, he was not happy and had escorted them with the help of Abbott out of the club.

Jackie's face had been soured the whole ride back and she let the men have it in the taxi heading back to the hotel.

She could understand Jackie being moody because she thought she'd finally found the one and for her sake she hoped that Keith would come around and they could work out whatever it was.

Coco opened the door and paused because right across from her was Jackie trying to sneak in wearing the same outfit as last night.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Colin stood looking out of his window at the semi-quiet scene of the Vegas strip as he sipped his coffee in his robe.

His brothers and friends were still sleeping off the night's events and would not rise for a couple of hours.

There were people outside walking about, some making their way back to the hotel after all-night partying at the clubs.

He'd hoped to plan a breakfast for just him and Coco but she and the other girls were spending the morning with Zahara before she had to leave and catch her flight.

Colin turned when he heard, "Okay munchkin, Daddy loves you. Can I speak to your Mom for a second?"

His brother's eyes caught his, so Colin turned back to the window, pretending to give his brother privacy but trying to hear what his brother was saying to Sierra. However, he couldn't make much out as his brother's voice was low and at times whispering.

He was not surprised to see Jacob up this early and already dressed in jeans and a white polo shirt with his feet bare.

Carefully, Colin watched Jacob make his way into the kitchenette.

His hair was still damp from his shower, and he poured himself a cup of the coffee that Colin had put on that morning.

Jacob had always been an early riser as kids and as a businessman; it still held true even when he worked long hours and sometimes came home late.

He was still able to be up before anyone else would dream of rising.

“How is Kaitlyn doing?” He sipped his coffee, facing his brother again as he hung up the phone.

Jacob tipped creamer into his coffee and blew on the hot brew before taking a sip. “She’s fine, she was in good spirits today. Sounding like her old self.” A happy smile graced his lips, softening the harsh lines in his face and the worry in his eyes.

Colin’s mood lightened as well, hearing that his niece was doing good today and hoped that it would continue because she would need to keep her spirits up as she went into surgery.

“That’s good to hear. Next time let me say hi, please.”

His brother’s eyebrows rose. “You have a phone and can also use it, you know. She has been asking about how you are doing. And she is excited to meet Coco and about the wedding coming up; she wants to be a flower girl.”

Colin felt a pang of guilt. His brother was right; he was so busy going after Coco and making wedding plans, he’d not been keeping up with his calls to his niece. He planned on making it up to her soon.

“Sorry, you are right.”

“It’s okay, she understands.”

“I will bring Coco by to see her when we get back from Vegas before her surgery

next week. And about her being a flower girl, will she be okay to do that? I would love the munchkin to be there.”

“I don’t know, we will have to see how it goes after the operation and if she is up to flying.”

Colin nodded and they sipped their coffee in silence.

“So how is it going with Sierra, Jacob?”

His brother stiffened. “So far, so good. She has been keeping her promises, and she found a local benefactor to continue her AA meetings with.”

“And how is Kaitlyn handling her mother being home.”

He sighed and raked his hands through his hair in agitation.

“The truth is she has been flourishing now that Sierra has been back. It was hard trying to keep her away from her mother, especially under the same roof and Sierra tried to keep her distance but you know how stubborn Kaitlyn can be when she wants to be.”

“Maybe this is a good—” His brother shot him a furious glance and Colin swung up his hands in surrender. So, he tried another approach. “How is everything going with Marissa and the new situation at home?”

His brother grimaced but then said coldly, “Marissa is not happy about it, but I don’t pay her to be happy, just to take care of my child and make sure she is happy.”

“Are you still considering asking her to marry you?” Jacob shrugged and his face became distant, signalling he didn’t want to talk. His brother was so closed off

sometimes. Colin wished his brother could meet a woman who would open him up and make him happy.

He would table it for another time because time was running out for his brother to get married too, just like the rest of his siblings.

They both looked toward the door when they heard the churn of the locks to the door disengage.

Abbott opened the door and froze as his gaze connected with his two older brothers.

Colin stared in surprise as Abbott was still wearing the same clothes as last night.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Coco was amused when Jackie had announced a change of plans and that they weren't going to the strip joint she mentioned but to another one that was underground and were a little more risqué with their type of entertainment for women.

She'd not been pleased to go as this wasn't really her thing, not like it used to be when they were in college, but Jackie had convinced her saying she needed this for herself.

Jackie, since high school, had always had a vibrant, witty, outspoken personality but a couple of days leading up to them coming, she seemed a little deflated and hurt.

Coco didn't think it had anything to do with business as she worked for her or family because Jackie and her family were very close.

So, she cornered her one day to get answers.

Coco had been surprised to find out that Keith was becoming distant with Jackie.

"He won't tell me what's going on, says nothing is wrong but I know he is avoiding my calls and now he's always busy and can't even meet up for a cup of coffee.

" She looked at Coco, sad and dejected. "I thought he was the one for real this time. I know I've said that in the past, but he is everything I have been looking for.

Smart, driven, and has no baggage, and the sex was out of this world. " She gave Coco a weak smile.

“Maybe he is having a bad week right now and you should just give him his space.” Jackie had just nodded but didn’t look convinced.

Jackie tried to be in a chipper mood when they got on the plane to Vegas, but she kept checking her phone every five minutes and would walk away from the group to leave messages.

Coco was going to talk to her father when they arrived in Vegas to see if he knew why Keith was giving Jackie the cold shoulder.

Jackie’s mood soured further when they had arrived at the hotel, and she’d not heard from Keith checking to see if she got in okay.

When they went out for dinner that night, joining Colin and his entourage, she’d been a bit snappish to Colin but also turned her animosity onto Abbott, who was sitting next to her.

Coco could tell by the way Abbott was clenching his jaw and the slight flush along his cheeks that the two were sharing some heated words before Jackie got up to excuse herself.

Coco was going to follow when Zahara shook her head.

“Let her cool down. I will go talk to her. I have to pee anyways” Zahara grinned and patted her belly before getting up and making her way outside.

Coco turned to have words with Abbott, but she noticed his chair was empty.

Colin simply shrugged and they both were soon distracted when the waitress came in with a cake that said ‘Congratulations to the Happy Couple.’

They stood up to the loud calls of family and friends and Colin placed his hand over hers as they cut the cake, foreshadowing what they will have to do again in front of their guests as husband and wife.

Her hand shook and he gave her a gentle squeeze.

She saw emotion swirling in his eyes before he dropped his lids lower and leaned down, taking her mouth in a kiss that had her rising up onto her toes.

They broke apart to the loud cheering in the room and now feeling flushed all over, she cut the cake and separated from him, needing space because her resistance was melting away like butter the more time they spent together.

To distract herself, she made a big production of going around offering a piece to everyone at the table.

When Zahara finally came back in and sat down, Coco turned to her. “So, what happened, did you calm her down?”

“Huh?”

Coco gave Zahara a look. “Zahara, Jackie’s your friend too, remember? You went to go and talk to her.”

“Oh yeah, sorry. I had to pee so bad, I forgot about her. Where is she?”

“Wasn’t she in the bathroom?”

“No, I was alone. The other stalls were empty.”

She had risen out of her chair when Jackie came back into the private area of the

restaurant, her eyes bright with unshed tears and her mouth pinched in a way Coco recognized as a way to keep herself from crying. She looked quickly over her shoulder, then hurried over to Coco.

“I’m going back up to the room to change, are you almost ready to go?”

“Are you okay?” Both Coco and Zahara questioned her, Zahara reaching out and placing her hand on Jackie’s arm. She gave both of them a weak smile. “I will be, just need to get out of here and get the party started. Nothing like looking at naked men to cheer up your mood.”

Both Zahara and Coco knew that Jackie was not ready to talk about what was going on; her look was dark and pleading for them to let it go.

“Okay, I will be up soon. Just want to make sure that Zahara makes it home safe.”

“You don’t have to worry about me.” Zahara waved her off.

“Carter is waiting upstairs in a room for me. His parents are watching the twins since we will be away in New York, and we are going to use this time to be together without having screaming kids interrupting our quality time and I can scream as loud as I want. Pregnancy makes you so horny and wet and I love it when he sucks on my nipples; it helps me to lactate quicker.” She grinned.

They both grumbled. “Too much information.”

“Did it make you forget your troubles?” She turned to Jackie, who just gave her a look.

“I tried.” Zahara grinned. “Help me up and I will leave with you. No need for Coco to come with me.”

They both walked to the door, and she saw Jackie freeze and avoid looking at Abbott, as he stood right there in front of her.

She was talking to Zahara and acting like a grown ass man was not standing there.

Zahara's puzzled look as she glanced between the two of them had Coco biting back a laugh.

Something was going on between the two of them and when she got the chance, she was going to have a conversation about her beef with Abbott.

She found Abbott to be the sweetest out of all the siblings and couldn't understand what he could have done to get into Jackie's bad books that she kept a grudge against him since high school.

Colin had placed a hand on her leg, had her heart racing and her thoughts scattered.

Her focus snapped to him. He then ran his fingers over the skin on her exposed knee of the short dress she wore.

She jerked up and made a face because she was very ticklish.

He uttered a low chuckle, his eyes dancing with amusement and she gave him side eye, her hand grabbing his as he was about to try it again.

She squeezed, knowing that it would have little effect on him.

He grinned before he turned his palm around took her hand in his as he continued to talk to one of his friends, rubbing his thumb up and down on the soft part of her wrist. She tried to tug her hand away, but he held firm.

So she let him hold her hand, liking the rough texture of his skin against hers, making her feel cherished.

She later felt bereft, missing his warmth when she went upstairs with her friends to change for their outings.

Once they arrived back at the hotel, Jackie had exited the limo, with Abbott following after, then the rest of the party filed out.

Colin escorted her to her suite. His eyes had been dark as he stared down at her and she wondered what he was thinking.

He'd been irritated when he came through the doors of the strip club but seemed to calm down when he saw that she was at a private table surrounded by her girls having drinks and fun while the dancers did their thing in the back or on the stage.

Even Jackie who would have given the new men a look and even asked for a dance, stayed at the table with them, her mood pensive.

Until Colin and Abbott showed up. Seeing Abbot was like a match to a keg, he set her off again.

Colin had cupped her cheek, bent down and gave her a sweet kiss on her lips, waiting until she opened and closed the door behind her.

Making her all confused, her emotions swirling around her with the way he'd been acting lately.

She went to bed but couldn't sleep and when she finally got some shut eye, that was when her mother had called her, waking her up.

Now she was standing in her doorway in shock as Jackie froze on the spot after closing the door. “What in the hell, Jackie?”

Jackie burst into tears and blurted out, “I made the biggest mistake of my life last night. I got married.” Jackie held up the wedding band that shone bright on her left third finger.

She moved toward Coco and hugged her friend, needing comfort. Coco wrapped her arms around her in shock and heard her say, “What the hell am I supposed to do now?”

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Colin's mind raced with everything that happened during and after Vegas, leading up to his big day today. He was getting married to Coco in the next half hour at her family's church in Barbados.

He couldn't believe that Abbott had gotten married before him and was still at this moment trying to sort out everything with Jackie.

After the initial shock wore off, his brother had decided that being married to Jackie; he now didn't have to go to the trouble of searching for a wife.

He had one right now at his disposal and had settled into the idea of being a married man, but Jackie on the other hand was not playing along and was causing Abbott grief.

A smirk graced his features, he didn't envy his younger brother's predicament, Jackie was going to be a handful.

No one knew of the marriage yet but him, Jacob and Coco and if Jackie got her way, no one would.

But Colin knew his younger brother and his stubbornness, and the way he was looking at Jackie since arriving in Barbados, said she was about to be in trouble.

His mind turned to everyone that had arrived to support his and Coco's big day.

He was pleased that Shayla, Valentina and Iris, his half-brothers' mothers were here for his big day.

All three women had been a very important part in his life growing up, despite the fact they were not in good terms with his father and were tolerating him while he was here attending his wedding to Coco.

His father stood beside him as he adjusted his tie, the mood tense between them.

He'd lost the buffer of his brothers as they had all left to help usher in the wedding guests.

He still felt hot all over, unable to cool down even with the ceiling fan and AC going on in the church.

He stared at himself in the tall mirror and his eyes met the same blue of his father's.

His face looking like it was chiseled in stone and his mouth held in a sad smirk.

But there was something else on his face at this moment, that looked like regret.

He thought he imagined it because in a blink it was gone, and he stiffened when he heard his father say.

"So even after our conversation that night, you decided not to heed my words."

"I warned you, son, that you were falling in love with her the way I fell for your mother and that you will end up like me if something should happen to her. You will follow the same fate as me one day and will live in darkness when she is gone."

"It is not like that, Dad. I—"

His father gave a dismissive, short laugh.

“You’re lying to yourself, son, and you know it.

You went back to her because you couldn’t stay away any longer and when you see her walking down the aisle to you, then you will finally admit to yourself what she means to you.

When that happens there will be no going back. ”

His father shook his head and Colin froze inside, his head spinning because his father was right.

They’d always been able to read each other, and he knew that he tried burying his feelings for her over the years; why else would he have kept tabs on her and then come to her with a proposal of marriage.

A realization came over him and he felt at peace and joy with the sudden knowledge that it had hurt him badly the first time he had to let her go and he’d survived, but now, he had no plan of ever losing her.

Being with her these past months had grown into something more than what they had as young high school kids.

They’d grown while apart and experienced life, but being with her now, he’d never felt so alive and connected to another soul, even his family.

Her smile, laugh and teasing, lit a glow in his heart; her kisses soothed his soul; her body accepting his made him feel like he could conquer the world.

She was his lady, and he planned after today to make their marriage a reality.

He smiled with this vow and his expression changed to one of determination.

“Colin—” his father’s voice was harsh with warning.

But then there was a knock on the door and it opened to reveal Dyson’s mom, Shaya, standing there in a yellow jumpsuit.

She sported light blue pumps on her feet and a light blue clutch purse, her twists on top of her head, and big gold earrings in her ears.

Her eyes were done in yellow and blues, her already smooth face concealed by foundation and powder, cheeks shimmering with a light blush and her lips wearing a flesh-toned gloss.

Even at her age and having two children, her body had snapped back into the athletic shape from her youth as a track star. She now owned several gyms for women.

“Thanks, Shaya.” He said as he approached her and leaned down to offer a kiss of affection.

He loved each one of his half-brothers’ mothers, but had a soft spot for Shayla, who showered him with love but didn’t handle him with kid gloves because he had an absentee father.

Shayla wasn’t afraid to speak her mind if she thought you needed to be dealt with and humbled.

She pulled him into her, giving him a hug and kissed his cheek.

“So very proud of you and the man you have become.”

She pulled back with tears in her brown eyes and a happy smile on her face. Then she nodded and jerked her head for him to go. He strode down the short hallway to the

inside of the church, where his brothers were waiting along with Coco's bridesmaids, leaving his father behind.

Brock Norris went to follow his son when Shaya stepped into his path.

"His future is not yours, Norris." He grimaced in irritation because she'd always refused to use his given name, and it shouldn't matter to him but for some reason hearing his last name pass over her lips grated on his nerves.

"And he is not you either." He lifted his eyebrows at her pointed comment. "He is a lot stronger and open to love thanks to his grandfather teaching them what love looks like and moving on even if you lose that special someone, and to not abandon the living who need and love you."

"You don't know anything." He bristled, but a sense of guilt shot through him.

He had begun to realize how much he was missing when he saw his children all together hear in Barbados and how all grown up, they were.

The bond they shared with each other and their grandfather.

A sense of jealousy for his father had come over him before he acknowledged that he only had himself to blame.

"You stopped living and became a shell of a son and father; he won't.

Thank God it was only that one time and the only remarkable thing about that night was that we conceived our son.

” She snorted in disgust and then looked him up and down as if he was a bug in the room, then turned to walk away, but a sudden rage poured through.

Everyone had been making him feel guilty for loving the only woman that was his everything to him and he never wanted to feel that loss again so he’d distance himself from ever having feelings for another person and that included his sons and their mothers.

“Don’t you walk away from me.” He strode after her as she stepped to the door.

“Ha that crown is yours alone, I am going to go and watch your son get married to the woman that he loves, and the rest of them and our son will hopefully follow. And not—”

Shayla let out a small squeal of surprise when he pulled her around and then up against the wall. His knee pressed her legs apart and he pushed himself into her. His cock rose at the feel of her warmth against him.

“That wasn’t only the remarkable thing about that night, Shayla.” He chided.

He leaned forward, despite her hands bracing against his chest and he licked the side of her neck and suckled her ear into his mouth, remembering how she liked it. He could feel her shiver and her heart was now racing against his chest.

“I remember sinking myself into your juicy, wet pussy over and over again. Making you scream. The little hitch in your breath you would do when you were about to come still haunts my dreams today.” He bit her neck hard as if to punish her for that slight confession.

“ And I bet right now you are getting wet for me.” He whispered against her ear and chuckled when she groaned as he pressed his knee up into her and moved his leg back

and forth, feeling her hard clit through her clothes.

She was no longer pushing him away but now gripped his shoulder as he used his knee to bring her to completion.

Her breath hitched as he remembered, and he swallowed back his own groan as he almost came from her sighs.

He pulled back abruptly and lifted her face, so she was looking into his eyes. Her eyes were glazed now from the orgasm.

“I don’t usually revisit the women I have slept with after I decide to leave but for you, I am going to gladly make the exception.”

“You slick, arrogant sonabitch, you will never get to be this close to me again.” He gave her a hard kiss before he opened the door, seeing her stunned, confused, and furious expression as he strode past her.

“Never say never, I will see you soon.” He stopped again for a second when he saw Valentina standing outside the door, her dark brown brows rose over her green gaze and plump, bow-shaped lips opened in slight surprise.

His gaze took in another mother he’d bedded. She also fell on the voluptuous side.

Apparently, he had a type after seeing all three of his ex-lovers together in Barbados.

Valentina’s lime chiffon dress was a perfect counter against her tan skin and dark curly hair slicked back and secured in a big bun.

He nodded and stepped around her. The hot flame that had swept through them during their short time together had burnt away and he felt nothing for her despite the

fact she was a beautiful woman.

But Shaya, she stirred him every time he laid eyes on her, every time they'd spoken and seen each other off and on through the years when he would come to take their son to his father's home growing up.

The time he'd spent in Barbados for his son's wedding, it had been hard to avoid her and how she stirred him.

In this setting, everything was much different.

Maybe he was waking up to the possibility of caring again for someone else and he stiffened, not liking the idea as he carried on down the hallway to the sound of the guests talking as they waited for the music to begin the ceremony.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

Coco stood in the mirror, rubbing the last of the night cream into her face, a myriad of emotions pouring through her but the strongest being excitement.

Her glance took in the wedding rings on her fingers.

She was a married woman now and to Colin.

If anyone would have told her months ago this would happen to her, she would have laughed her head off and called someone to come and get the lunatic.

But this afternoon, she stood in the church full of family and friends and vowed to have and to hold and become Colin's wife in front of God and sundry.

When she'd made her way down the aisle, Colin had stared at her as if she was the only person in the room.

His eyes never wavered from hers and when she reached him, he took her hand after her father gave her away and pulled it to his lips, giving it a reverent kiss before pulling her alongside him.

The only time he released her was when they were presented with the rings.

He surprised her when he took off her gaudy engagement ring and replaced it with the one she'd been eyeing in the ring shop that day then placed the band that complemented the wedding ring.

She gazed up in surprise and he whispered, "I always pay attention to you, and I

always will.” Warmth spread through her and her hands shook as she placed his matching band on his ring finger.

When they were announced man and wife, Colin pulled her to him, his eyes alight with happiness and gratitude and something else that made her breath catch and he lowered his lips to hers, where he made promises with every slow sweep of his against hers, leaving her shaken.

The rest of the night had been a happy blur as they danced and mingled amongst the guests.

She’d wandered out of Colin’s arms for a minute when she’d gone to sit with her sister, who was alone watching the crowd of people dance.

Reena had been very quiet and pale since her arrival yesterday.

She’d been in London the whole time and had been cleared to travel.

They had her dress delivered to her and a seamstress in London had tailored it to accommodate her growing belly.

Her sister seemed to be looking at someone and Coco was surprised to hear her sister curse and mutter under her breath, “This couldn’t be, what are the fucking chances?”

Coco looked through the crowd to see who she was looking at and saw several men staring in her sister’s direction, including both Abbott and Matt, who were sporting twin scowls on their faces.

She glanced over her shoulder and saw Jackie and Nova behind at the bar.

Jackie was in a deep conversation with Keith and Nova was flirting up a storm with a

man at the bar, trying to make Matt jealous.

There never seemed to be a dull moment lately, everything was happening fast and at once.

Reena still didn't seem to have realized Coco was sitting next to her; she was too busy staring and now was twisting her birthstone ring around her finger in her usual, telling nervous habit. "What's wrong?"

Her sister swivelled her head around and stared at her blankly for a pause. "Hey sis, oh, nothing is wrong."

"How are you doing?" Coco prodded, not believing her.

Her sister smiled and touched her hand. "I'm okay, don't worry, this is your day and not about me. Go and enjoy yourself. Mom just went to go to the bathroom and Dad went to grab me something to drink. They have me covered." Reena joked.

Just then, the DJ announced that he needed the main couple on the floor for a slow dance.

"See, now go and start your wifely duties and go and dance with your man."

Before she could say anything else, she felt a gentle touch on her shoulder and Colin was by her side pulling her out of her seat and into his arms.

She had felt every part of his body through the material of her wedding dress.

The slow grind of his hips against hers made her forget everyone else in the room except for them and throughout the rest of the night, her senses had been heightened by every kiss, touch, and heated look from his eyes that held a promise for their

wedding night.

But what happened if it was all pretend.

She knew he wanted her physically but what about love? Did he love her?

She couldn't put it off any longer. She needed to know.

Decision made, she swung the door open to find him standing there. "Waaaah!" was all she could say as he wrapped his arms around her, lifting her off her feet and kissing her breathless. As if he were starving and hadn't been kissing her throughout the day and during the reception.

She began to drown, sinking into his consuming kiss. She pushed hard against his chest, fear of giving into him for only this not to be real. Erasing the haze of passion that had her sinking into him.

He released her, a surprised look on his face. Anger and hurt made her shake as she pushed harder, forcing him to step back. She pulled away from him, tears now streaming down her face. She wiped them away angrily.

"Coco, baby."

"No." She shook her head and then repeated. "No."

He stood there, looking confused with his hands at his sides and he took a step toward her as she tried to catch her breath and control the swirling emotions pouring through her.

"No." she again whispered out her hurt.

He raised his hands up but took a step approaching, making his way back to her.

She took a step back, her hand now out to stop him. The words suddenly tumbling out of her, giving him pause. “You don’t get to kiss me like I’m the air you need to breathe, like I mean something to you. That this right here is what you want and need.” She hiccupped, tears free-flowing.

She backed up as he took another step toward her, a dawning expression and a grim look to his face of what he’d done to her all those years ago and even now.

“You act like this is all you want and crave in life. Like this means something to you.” For each word spilling out of her mouth, he was eating up the space between them even though she continued to back away from him and hit the wall.

He was now in front of her, not touching and she tilted her head back against the wall, tired because he had her trapped and had kept coming despite her wanting space.

“Because you had it all and walked away and you will do it again.” She whispered in anguish, and he froze, and his body jerked as if she’d shot him.

He picked her up, wrapping her in his arms and carried her over to the bed, saying nothing.

He laid her down and then followed; she was now caged in his embrace, and he began to run kisses over her eyes and cheeks, soothing her as she cried and then her lips as she began to wind down and respond to his gentle kisses.

He cupped her face, looking down at her, his expression serious as he took in her pouty lips and her wet eyelashes.

She knew she probably looked a sight, with her nose red and running and he reached across to the nightstand, grabbing a Kleenex and wiping her nose before tossing it aside and cupping her face again.

“I was a fool once but not anymore. I am sorry, baby, that I hurt you the last time. I am not only going to show you what you mean to me now but also tell you for the rest of our lives.” He promised as he lowered his lips to hers, seeking her forgiveness and at first, she didn’t respond, her walls still up but he waited patiently, his kisses coaxing hers to part and with a sigh she did, letting him in and he made a happy grumbling sound in his chest.

He took his time, kissing her, his hand slowly moving over her, caressing every part he could reach without having to lift it from her body.

She began to run her hands over his bare back, her fingers trailing over his skin and he hummed, almost sounding like a cat making her want to giggle.

But she gasped instead when she felt his cock hardening and he bared down, widening her legs for him to nestle deeper against her.

His hands parted the front of the lace, short-body style negligée, exposing her breast to his waiting hands.

He released her lips to move down her body to suck her nipple into the hot cavern of his mouth.

The hard pull had her arching her back, and she lifted one of her legs to drape over his ass to use it to pull his cock harder against her wet core.

She was beginning to throb down below and withered in the bed as he continued to suck hard on her nipples, teasing them.

His other hand reached between them, and he cupped her wet pussy, his hand moving back and forth over the lace material, pulling it tight against her swollen netherlips.

The friction left her feet sliding back and forth against the sheets.

She lifted her head but dropped it back down on the pillow, unable to keep it up right.

She moaned when he pushed the lace aside and plunged two fingers inside of her.

He flicked his tongue back and forth against her nipple as his fingers stretched and he began to mimic what the hard press of his cock was going to do to her pussy.

Colin switched to her other breast, sucking the nipple and the flesh around it into his mouth.

The hard pull sent heat to her core, and she felt slick between her thighs.

He pulled his fingers from her and circled her clit with her wet essence before plunging them back inside.

His thumb now teased the hard button, slick with her juices and she was seeking to come, flexing her hips in time with his fingers as they continued to dip inside of her.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:28 am

He raked his teeth against her tight nipple, and she shattered.

Coco grabbed his hair as her body shuddered and she let out low moans.

He reached for the ties on the side of her negligée, practically tearing them off in his haste.

Exposing her now to his avid gaze. His eyes met hers and she could see that he could no longer wait to be with her, his patience used up.

“Beautiful, so beautiful and all mine.” He spoke his voice possessive and filled with reverence.

He moved up her body, taking her lips again before her body had come down from the ecstasy of her orgasm.

His head now at her entrance, he grabbed his base and took the head, rubbing it in her juices.

He notched himself at her slit and began to push himself into her slick core.

She was so wet that he was almost able to slide all the way into her without having to struggle.

He shifted back, pulling himself almost out but just the tip inside her entrance and with one thrust, he was buried deep inside of her.

She flinched as he broke through her hymen; the sting had her digging her nails into his shoulders and he froze above her.

Lifting himself off caused him to bury himself deeper and they both groaned.

He stared down at her, happiness spreading across his features at the gift she'd just given him.

He lowered his face down to hers, kissing her lips, her eyes, her cheeks until she adjusted to him.

Then he stared down, his gaze intense, a determined and possessive look on his face. "I really was a fool and made the biggest mistake in my youth, but now I have a second chance with you and this time I won't ever let you go."

He groaned and slammed his lips down onto hers and began to thrust. He took his time at first, his cock hitting her in the right spots that had her breasts bouncing and she reached behind her to grip the headboard as he slid her up and down the bed with the force of his hips against hers.

Her mouth opened and "Ah-Ah-Ah" sounds escaped her lips.

He lifted her legs, not missing a beat, and pushed them back so that they were pressing against her ears as he lifted himself up slightly and angled down into her.

Her cunt gripped his cock tight, squeezing as he filled her with his length.

She felt her juices slip past between them and could hear the sounds of their heavy breathing broken by his grunts and her groans that left her even wetter.

He tilted his head back, his features drawn tight, his lips swollen and slack as he

arched back, embedding himself impossibly deeper, his balls and thighs slapping hard against her.

She tried to lift herself up off the bed and away, the intense tremors raking her core made her want to scream and claw at something.

She felt herself squirt and he gave a grunt of satisfaction, his eyes now looking down into hers and he gave a cocky grin.

Then he groaned as her walls clamped down hard and tight on his cock, squeezing it now as an orgasm rushed through her.

He quickened his pace, his thick length driving her wild as it slid up and down her swollen sensitive flesh, and another orgasm hit her before the last one ended.

She shut her eyes and her whole body tensed; she felt him expand inside of her and then with a shout, he let himself go, his hot seed coating the inside of her walls that now sucked hard on his tip and length, wanting all he had to give.

He collapsed next to her, his semi-hard cock sliding out of her. Next, he pulled her close, his hand running over her sweaty wet skin, and he tucked her head against his shoulder, kissing her forehead as they caught their breath.

She froze when she heard “I love you Coco. So much. More than I ever thought possible. What I felt for you in high school doesn’t compare to what I feel for you now.

I know it will take time to trust me and what we have together before you can say it back.

But I will show with everything that I have how much you mean to me and this

precious gift gives me hope that you will give us another chance.

Me another chance and make this marriage a real marriage.

Because that what it is to me and has been since the day I walked into your office. ”

She flung her head back, looking at him now in surprise. He gave her a rueful smile, but his eyes were serious and open, hiding nothing from her searching gaze. She saw the love for her shining through and his promise to do whatever it took to win her love.

In that moment, she let go of the past and reached with both hands for the future.

A future with the man she'd been falling in love with again, even though she'd fought hard not to.

The tiny hope she'd carried with her all this time since he came back into her life blossomed in her chest and she let it this time.

She leaned forward, their eyes now closed together, so that he could see what was in hers but just in case he missed it. “I love you too.”

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The waves lapped at her naked chest and Coco gave a small whimper as Colin thrust up inside of her. His movements were slow so that she felt every inch of him inside of her tight sheath.

He was sucking hard on her neck and she groaned and giggled at the same time, knowing he was marking his territory and that she would have to cover her neck from prying eyes in the morning.

The cool of the water didn't distract from the heat of Colin's hands as he cupped her breast underneath the water, playing over the stiff nipples just the way she liked it.

"Are you sure that you are not sore, my love?" He whispered against her neck, and she wrapped her legs tighter around his waist in response.

She was a little sore from last night and this morning's love-making, but she found that she loved having him inside her and she needed her husband just as much as he needed her.

She braced her arms on his shoulders and lifted herself off him and then sank back down onto him. He groaned and his mouth traced the skin on her exposed neck that was above the water.

"Fuck, you feel so good baby. So tight." He spoke huskily near her ear and then he sucked the bottom part into his mouth before sinking his teeth lightly on it.

She shivered and raised herself up again, coming down on his length and swirling her hips so that his tip caressed her swollen walls, making them clench around him.

He let out a husky, pleased chuckle as she began using his cock to please herself and then he swallowed both their cries when he came inside of her as she held him tight, milking him through her orgasm.

He carried her back onto the beach, as well as the blankets and towels they carried down from their hotel room for a late-night swim.

The only light on the beach was from the hotels nearby, including the one they were staying in until tomorrow before flying back home to start looking for a home together.

Colin grabbed the towels and help to rub her dry, taking pleasure from her body's response to his attention and when she finished drying him off, she was wet and ready again and from the hard bulge in his shorts so was he, so he pulled her down next to him instead and tucked her against his body.

Her hand caressed his chest as she spoke, her voice holding sadness. For a moment in the water, she had forgotten about today's events. "I still can't believe this is our second night as a married couple and we have already attended another wedding."

Coco was still in shock to get the call from her parents that her sister was getting married and right now to Colin's younger brother Matt.

After they left the reception, apparently, they'd missed the fireworks of Matt and Reena realizing they were each other's one night stand.

Her mother had rushed through the details after getting off the phone with her early this morning.

Matt had demanded she marry him, and her sister was now also a Norris too.

He sighed and kissed her forehead. "I know, I wish this had been done another way, but it is for the best and maybe it will work out for them."

She leaned back and scowled. "Your grandfather and his damn request."

"Hey, he's your grandfather now too, and look I wasn't happy at first about it, but it brought us together and I can see why he wants my brothers to be happy."

My father did a lot of damage to me and my siblings and warped our idea of what love is or falling in love can do to you.

Leaving us all scarred." He said bitterly. "Granddad was just trying to fix it."

"Is that why you broke up with me?"

She went silent, watched him, waiting, knowing he had more to say. He looked down at her and then away.

"Yes, our last study session at my house that day. When I walked you to the door, I already missed you and went back to my room where you left one of your scarfs. I pulled it to my nose, wanting it to be you and realized I had fallen in love. I never missed any of my girlfriends when they were gone or texted them as much as I texted you. You had me wrapped around your finger and didn't even know it."

"Colin stroked a hand over her beautiful hands, underlining his point."

"I had begun thinking of going away to college but still seeing you after we graduated and was going to ask you at the prom to be more than just my girlfriend. I wanted more and was even willing to wait on having sex because I knew you wanted a committed relationship or marriage."

She was surprised and not surprised because she had felt he was falling for her, like she'd fallen for him and that he was going to say the words to her at prom. She'd been so sure back then and glad she was right that he'd wanted to get serious with her.

"I didn't know my dad was home from wherever he went when he was running away from his family. And I was caught off guard when he opened the door and saw me sitting there with a lovestruck look on my face and your scarf clutched in my hand."

Coco laid her hand on his chest, sensing he needed her touch, and he picked up her hand and kissed it before resettling it back on him, his hand now covering hers.

"He came into the room, his face all twisted, and told me what would happen to me if I ever let love for a woman into my life. He became unhinged and then he broke down in my arms crying because that day was also the day he lost my mother. I had forgotten she'd passed away from a blood clot a month after giving birth to the twins.

That day with you had been so special, I forgot about my mom.

He made me promise to move on from you and that it would be better this way.

He said he would stay longer this time if I would give you up and I did for my brothers.

I hoped this time around that if he stayed longer, he would not leave us again. " He gave a bark of angry laughter.

"When he took off again, it was too late; the damage between us had been done and you left to finish school somewhere else."

"I feel sorry for your father that he lost someone he loved. But Colin, your dad is a

sonuvabitch to manipulate you like that. He's lucky you told me now because—" She gestured wrapping her hands around someone's neck.

He chuckled and grabbed her hands, kissing them again.

"It's in the past now and he's lost his ability to say anything about what happens to his sons.

We all consider my grandfather more of a dad than him now.

We all still care for him despite the fact he has not been a great dad.

I just hope someday he finds peace and can let go of the ghost of my mom. "

She nodded and tucked her face into his neck, and he wrapped his arms around her.

"Have I told you lately, how much I love you."

She looked at her wrist and pretended to see the time there. "You're slipping with your husbandly duties. I haven't heard you say the words for at least an hour."

"Hey, cut me some slack, I was too busy being balls deep in my wife to think properly."

She laughed. "Speaking of those hands."

She grinned knowing what was coming next.

"Why don't you put them to good use and wrap them around my cock." He flexed his hips into her side, showing her that he was ready for her again.

She turned and purred into his ear. “These lethal weapons are at your service, sir.” Then she cupped him through the wet trunks, feeling the hard length of him.

She threw the blanket over them as she brought him to completion and then they hurried back to the hotel, where he had her hands holding onto his arms as he lifted her and fucked her from behind.

Her feet never touched the ground as she leaned over, her legs closed tight making his cock feel bigger inside her.

So tight, she was biting her lip, as his hard, quick thrusts had her breasts bouncing.

This time, they both hollered as they came together as one.

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Tears fell as Colin stared at the casket of the woman who became like a second grandmother to him.

Granny C was finally laid to rest as the coffin lowered to the ground.

His arms wrapped around his wife's shoulders as she sobbed.

The sounds of praying and sniffing and crying could be heard around him as the priest said the last rights for Granny C.

She was now being buried on top of her husband, Coco's grandfather from her first marriage.

Through the blur of tears, he looked at the casket of his grandfather and grandmother waiting to be buried next to Granny C and her husband.

They'd all discussed it and felt that it would only be right to have everyone together in the end and had bought the two areas for his grandparents to rest next to Coco's in Barbados.

Both Granny C and Grandpa Norris had found love for a second time.

Neither one had been looking but during the course of his first trip to Barbados the two had bonded and it blossomed into love for each other.

It had come as no surprise to the family that Granny C would pass shortly after their Grandpa Norris passed away.

It had been their time, and they had a wonderful life together even if it had been a short one.

He turned over the reins to his grandsons and moved back to Barbados until his final days with Granny C by his side.

He and his brothers had wished for more time but were grateful for the time they were given with the old man, and he believed that living in Barbados with Granny C's love and care for him had extended his life longer and he was able to enjoy meeting the next generation of Norris's being born.

Colin felt a heavy hand on his shoulder and turned to see Linnel next to him, giving him a flower to toss onto the casket and passing another one to Coco. When they did that, he turned and hugged Colin.

"Thank you, son, for organizing all this and setting up the catering for later." Colin nodded, getting more emotional.

It had taken some time, but he and his father-in-law were now very close, and he felt like he now had a father figure in Coco's father.

Linnel stepped back and wiped the tears from his eyes.

He hugged his daughter and then returned to his wife, holding her hand as the casket lowered into the ground.

The crowd moved closer, and he saw his father approach his grandfather's casket and rest his hand on top of it.

Tears of grief at his father's death, but then he turned and smiled at Colin and walked up to him, giving him a hug and Coco a hug before stepping back into the crowd.

His father was now trying to make amends with him and his siblings and told them that before grandfather died, he reached out and begged Brock to get help and that it was time for him to stop running or he was going to miss out on their lives and those of his grandchildren.

He didn't think that it was just a father's last words to his son but possibly a woman was involved too with his decision to make things right with his grandchildren and to go to counselling over his grief of his deceased wife. It was a time of love and healing now.

He looked at the sea of faces and even though they'd lost two of their loved ones, they had all gained so much more.

Their family was now bigger with new futures to look after.

Colin dropped his hand and caressed Coco's belly, feeling the life of his child moving inside of her.

He was sad that his Granddad Norris and Granny C would not be there to see their first child, but he knew they would be watching over the baby when he or she came.

"How are you holding up, my love?" He leaned down and kissed her forehead, then her lips.

"I'm doing okay." She gave him a watery smile.

He took out a Kleenex and took care of the tears and her runny nose.

"Ready to go?"

Everyone else had begun to make their way to the cars and head to the hall they had

rented at Granny C's church.

She nodded but then she moved away and bent down; he reached to hold her shoulders as she leaned forward and touched the ground where his grandfather was laid to rest.

“Thank you, you have given me back so much, making my grandmother happy again in the end, and for being there for all your grandsons and showing them unconditional love. I love you, Grandpa Norris. May you rest in peace and rise in glory.”

His grandfather had left one other surprise for them. He'd wanted his siblings to give their wives shares in the company and he'd done that without a thought. Now both he and Coco had shares in her company, his restaurants, and his grandfather's. They now shared everything in life together.

He picked his wife up off the ground and escorted her back to the waiting car, turning one last time, his gaze travelling over their graves and even though it was a sad time, they also were celebrating a new life, their child, and he knew that no matter what, their children would be surrounded by love from everyone in the family.

Their babies' cousins could not wait to meet her or him, especially Kaitlyn, who was eager to have more family to love and play with.

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Coco woke up out of a deep sleep with a start. Something was wrong. She waited until her eyes adjusted in the dark and listened carefully. Her head turned to look at the clock on the mantel and she frowned, worry suddenly pouring through her.

She'd slept through Samuel's feeding time and his angry cries of hunger hadn't woken her. She reached for the baby monitor and leapt to her feet, her heart racing as she charged to the wall switch to turn on the light.

"Colin! The b—" She swallowed the rest of her words as she noticed her husband had left the bed and went to go and feed Samuel to give her time to rest. Her shoulders loosened from the tension and she sighed, a grateful smile on her lips.

They'd had some sleepless nights since Samuel had a bad cold.

He'd needed constant comforting, and Coco had been taking care of him since Colin had been working and managing his grandfather's estate and will with his brothers.

But his cold seemed to be clearing and this would be the first time that she'd gotten a good night's rest.

She put down the monitor and walked to the closet to get a wrap because she was feeling a bit cold and put on her slippers, wrapping the sash around her as she walked out into the hallway.

She went to the baby's room, thinking Colin must have fallen asleep in the rocking chair in the room, but when she glanced inside, there was no one in there.

Frowning again, she made her way downstairs and could now pick up sounds coming from the TV.

Colin must have had it low not to startle the baby with loud noises.

She rounded the corner and stepped into the archway of their family room; at the same time, she saw what he was watching as he let out a shout.

“Cheese on bread! He ain’t mekkin no sport. Run, run.” Cricket was on the TV and the batter had hit the ball hard, sending it into the outfield and the cricketers began to run between the wickets.

Samuel gave a cry and Colin’s attention went to their son, who he pulled tighter into his chest and began to lightly rock his arms from side to side, kissing their child and humming soft sounds.

“Sorry son, Daddy will be quiet, but just so you know, I am going to shout this loud and proud when you decide to follow in your Grandaddy’s footsteps and play cricket too.

Yes, you will, because Grandma Vye said she had a feeling, and she is always right.

Isn’t that right, love?” He turned to her and even in the semi-dark room, lit only by the TV, she could see the love for her in his eyes. ”

She gave a soft laugh, shaking her head and turned to walk back up the stairs.