

Chapter 1

“Hmm. I know that look.” Nia groaned as she looked at her reflection in the mirror. Her almond-shaped eyes had become red and puffy and a face covered with sadness stared back at her.

Nia shook her head with disappointment. She shut off the bathroom light and went back into her room. Nia moaned as she got underneath her covers and reached over to her nightstand to turn off her lamp. Coltrane’s “Spiritual” eased through the CD player while her eyes adjusted to the darkness.

She sighed heavily as she felt her eyes well up with tears again. Her throat began to close which forced the sadness to fall from her eyes. She put her hand on her heart and closed her eyes. *My heart can’t take this anymore*, she thought.

Tears ran across her face forming a wet puddle on her pillow. Nia had begun to become too familiar with hurt and that scared her.

Nia opened her eyes to the sound of her ringing phone. She wiped her tears with her hand and turned to look at her caller ID. It was her best friend Kyla. Nia tried to regain her composure and reached for the phone.

“Hey, Ky,” she said in an unsteady tone.

“What’s wrong?” Kyla asked, hearing the sadness in her friend’s voice.

They had been friends for about fifteen years, since they were in grade school. They could tell each other’s moods, problems or issues after the first sentence of their conversations.

Nia sighed, “It’s happening again, Kyla. That’s all.”

“What’s happening, Nia?” Kyla hated when her friend spoke in circles and she felt a circle coming on. She hoped a direct question

would get a direct response.

“Sean and I had *the talk* today and let’s just say he didn’t seem too receptive.”

Kyla sighed, “Well, what exactly happened, Nia?”

“Same as always. Last night we were doing a lot of kissing and I just knew that it was time to talk to him.” Nia fell back on her pillows and pulled the covers over her face. “I really liked him, Ky.”

“I know you did but just because you two had *the talk* doesn’t mean it’s over. He may surprise you.” Kyla wanted to reassure her friend. She knew how difficult it was to date and be celibate. It was her battle too. She hoped that Sean would be different. If not for Nia, for her own sanity. Since she made the choice to be celibate herself, she realized that the already slim pickings became even slimmer.

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that, Kyla. Judging from his reaction, I doubt that he’ll be an exception to the rule.”

“Well, what were your exact words, Nia?” Kyla knew that Nia had a penchant for abrupt wording at times.

“This afternoon. I told him flat out. ‘Look! I am celibate. I made a promise to God that I would wait until I was married. I have been doing it for five years now and I like you but I’m not trying to break a promise with God, okay?’” Nia rolled her eyes and reached over to turn on the light. The darkness was beginning to irritate her. It made it too easy to form mental pictures of his face and what she thought his reaction could have been. She also reached over to turn down the CD player and took a glance at the clock. 10:12.

“Did you tell him like that? ‘Cause...”

“No I didn’t,” Nia interjected, knowing where Kyla was headed. “I left a message awhile ago for him to call me back and he didn’t. Kyla, that man always, I mean always calls me back.” She leaned back in her bed and pulled the covers over her head and stopped talking.

“Nia?”

“What?” Nia whined.

“Tell me what he said.” Kyla hoped for words to use to redeem Sean. Nia had a tendency to blow things out of proportion and Kyla

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had to fish for things to put together a proper picture.

“He gave me the same ole spiel about him having to respect that and how wonderful he thinks it is.” She rolled her eyes again.

“Okay, so what’s wrong with that?” Kyla inquired.

“Nothing, I guess, if it’s genuine but if it isn’t it is just the same crock-of-crap I’ve been hearing for the past five years. ‘Oh, you’re so wonderful! Oh, that’s so good! Oh you’re the kind of woman I could marry!’ I am tired of that! Half the men I tell just out of respect but they couldn’t get anywhere near that close ANYWAY! Kyla, it’s like I’m setting myself up over and over again. They act like this is something simple.”

Kyla laughed at her friend. Nia had gone from sadness to anger and Kyla’s welcoming ear was all she needed to vent her frustrations.

“Ky, he was the one calling me every cotton-picking minute, telling me how good of a catch I am, and how he wanted to be with me. Now look at him! See what I’m saying?”

Kyla sighed on the other end of the phone. Nia paused, lay back on her pillows and stared at the ceiling. “I...I just thought that he was different,” she said softly. “He told me,” she said, pointing to her chest, “that he was a good Christian man. Hmph, the rules don’t seem to apply to everybody. Ky, the Bible doesn’t say ‘only women, nobody else, but women, honor your bodies for your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.’ Shoot! I need to see the gender reference. Show me the gender reference dog-on-it.”

Kyla waited to respond knowing that her friend had more to say.

“The thing is, Kyla,” Nia said, speaking with a shaky tone and tears in her eyes. “It always hurts. Always.” She sniffled and allowed a few tears to fall before she continued.

“I don’t know how much more my heart can stand. I am tired of the same thing happening to me over and over again. I know if I didn’t make this choice I would probably be somewhere married by now.”

Kyla sighed and responded, “Look, Nia, you told me yourself that your life probably would have been a mess. You may have been somebody’s baby’s mama by now. And you know that God knows it

isn't easy and what you are holding out for will be beyond your comprehension. And I know Sean is a Christian but he *is* a man. It is hard for them to choose that kind of lifestyle when women are so easy to have now days."

"But, Kyla, when will I be the better option? When will I be more important than sex?"

"When God sends you the right man who knows better. You have to deal with the coal before you get to the diamond. Have faith, Ni. You never know when God will bless you with that one. You know you may want to have faith in Sean too. He may be a jerk after all but faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen. He may surprise you. Look, keep holding on and stop jumping to conclusions. You always write these men off before they get a chance to respond."

"Yeah, but what has the response always been?" Nia asked.

"I know, Ni, but jumping to conclusions isn't helping the cause either. If you are going to have a crying fit, at least wait until you have a legitimate reason. Why cry before you need to?"

Nia laughed.

"Easier said than done, Kyla," Nia sighed.

"Okay, but it is worth trying out," Kyla responded.

They sat in silence for a few moments as Nia processed Kyla's words. "You're right. It just gets hard sometimes."

"Ni, you're preaching to the choir right now."

"I guess it all boils down to the fact that I have no choice but to hold on. I'm only twenty-five. I have the strength to do this...God given strength. Shoot, 'cause we both know that it's by His grace alone that I have made it this long. If it were on my strength, I would probably be running behind that big head ex of mine, Derrick. Probably in a house coat and flip-flops asking him for pamper money." They both laughed.

Nia sighed, "I love you, girl."

"Love you too," Kyla responded, now happy that her friend was feeling better.

"All right, I'll talk to you later. Oh, wait! Did you need

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something? What did you call me for, Kyla?"

"Nothing, just calling to check up on my girl."

"Thank you. I'll speak to you later."

"Bye, Ni. Oh," Kyla added, "give the brother a chance to explain himself before you go through the histrionics, please."

"Shut up, Kyla. Goodbye."

"Bye."

Nia looked at the clock as she hung up the phone. 10:52. She turned off her light, stared up into the darkness and whispered, "Thank you." Kyla had a way of bringing Nia back to reality. Nia had a history for being dramatic and Kyla knew what to say to reel her back in to the real world.

The buzzer from the alarm clock woke Nia from her deep sleep. She pulled her Bible off of her nightstand and opened it to the book of Romans 12:12. "Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer." She smiled and began to pray. "Thank you for whatever this experience is bringing to my life." She closed out her prayer by blowing a kiss up to heaven which she did since she first remembered praying.

Her mom kept her praying and reading her Bible as a child. While all of her other friends were playing house, Nia was playing church. She would be the preacher, the choir, and when it was time for offering, she would turn over her plastic tambourine and collect tithes and offering from her various stuffed animals and her mom who was an active congregant.

As early as she could remember, she feared God. To right a wrong without having to spank, Nia's parents would look her in the eye and say, "Tell me the truth and remember, God is watching you." That was enough to send Nia into a guilt-ridden frenzy. She would cry, blurt out the truth and go to her room and ask for forgiveness.

Though she always had the fear of God she became a little "experimental" in high school and college but no matter how far she strayed, she always came back for forgiveness. He truly was her friend and confidant. She spoke to Him with reverence but realism.

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She believed that God knew her and would not want her to sugarcoat a thing.

When she realized it was time to stop playing around and honor the temple God gave her, her body, she went down on her knees and put it plainly. “God, I’m not too sure about this but I know that it is right. But all I know is that I am going to need a whole lot of help.”

Nia had just broken up with the second love of her life, Paul when she made the decision to wait until she was married to have sex. They started dating at the very beginning of her freshman year of college. He was a senior and a cutie. They fell in love and three months later they began to have sex. Her logic was that in college relationships, things move faster. She saw him more than once every day. She also learned that what starts fast, usually ends fast. She and Paul broke up eight months later. After Nia realized that he had cheated on her with some bi-sexual girl named Veronica. That is when it all hit. She never experienced that type of hurt before. Her heart literally hurt. She realized that too much was at stake. Her heart and her health. God only knows what could have happened. The more she thought about it, the more she prayed about it. That year she joined the Gospel Choir on campus and began to read her Bible like never before. She had always grown up in church but this time she wanted more than to be just acquainted with God. She wanted to know him as best as any human person could.

She realized that in order to get to know Him better, she would have to do more than read about Him. She would have to live it. She spoke to God and promised Him that she would wait until she was married to have sex again and five years later, she stood with her promise kept. It wasn’t easy and plenty of times she almost fell from grace. Quite frankly, plenty of times she wanted to fall from grace. But God kept His part of the deal. He helped her. When situations began to get hot and heavy, He would always give her a way out. Either she would be hit with sudden, strong conviction or her mother would call. One way or another, her promise remained in tact while some brother wasn’t.

As she walked into her closet to pick out her suit, she thought of

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her expectations. Most of the guys she dated were not Christian so she would find it easier to rationalize their various forms of departure. Some would accept the challenge to tough it out with her but eventually would fade out. Then there were those who swore they could break her but when they couldn't wait any longer, they would fade out too. The third group she respected the most. These were the men who told her they could not hang from the minute she told them. They usually told her something about "needing" sex. Nia would always think to herself, "You need air, you need water, and you need sleep. Sex is an extra-added bonus to life."

She chuckled as she took her burnt orange suite off of the hanger. She flopped on her bed and sighed. "Sean should have been different. Lord, he knows you. All about you," she said, looking up at the ceiling.

As Nia entered her office building, she noticed a group of men in their Brooks Brothers suits eyeing her as she strutted to the elevator. She laughed to herself, *If they only knew they couldn't do anything with the body that they are undressing.* The elevator door opened and she got in and faced the front. As the mirrored interior doors closed she saw a reflection of a smirky grin on her face. She quickly adjusted, put on her serious work face but she smiled on the inside. *My life is incredible,* she thought as she entered the office of McDuffie and Associates Consulting Firm. She walked over to her office, greeted the clerks, went in and closed the door.

Placing her briefcase by her desk, she realized that there was one yellow rose on her desk. She hung her suit jacket over the back of her chair and sat down. Nia opened the card and in script it read "*Have Faith.*" Nia leaned back in her chair smiled and said, "You're my girl, Ky."

At about 11:30, Nia was sitting at her desk amid files. She had just been on a two-hour conference call with her boss who was away on business in England. Exhausted and tired from the work she had to do before the call and the thought of the work her boss had given her,

Nia decided that she needed an extended lunch.

“I’ll be here until eight anyway,” she mumbled to herself. But before she ran for the door, she looked at the yellow rose she had sitting in a small vase on her windowsill.

“Faith, huh?” She inhaled deeply, looked at the phone and thought, *If I call him and he doesn’t want to keep this thing going, I am going to hear it in his voice. I’ll be pissed off for the rest of the day.* She sighed, sat back in her chair and swiveled away from her desk to face the window.

She looked outside of the window to see the bluest sky she had ever seen. She looked across the street into the other offices with busy workers and then across to the bridge with cars going to and from Manhattan. “Lord, if you can control all of this, you can control my situation. I’m just going to call and say ‘hey,’ that’s it, just ‘hey.’”

Nia turned her seat around to search for his work number in her cell phone. She couldn’t remember anyone’s number by heart anymore. Between her cell phone, which doubled as her organizer, she had no need to. Sean Baker. She paused and slowly picked up the receiver. She dialed the first three digits slowly. Then with all her nerve gone, she slammed the receiver down. Shaking her head, she picked up the receiver again and began dialing.

“Hey, Ma.”

“Hey, baby.”

Nia sighed as she realized that she was not ready to talk to Sean. She needed comfort and she knew that it was guaranteed to come from her mother.

“What are you gonna do for lunch?” Nia asked.

“I was going to order in and stay in my office; do you want to come up?”

“Yeah. I’m in the mood for Chinese. Is that okay?” Nia asked.

“No problem. Hurry up, baby.”

“Okay.”

Nia grabbed her suit jacket and briefcase and ran out of the door. She stopped by her co-worker’s office to let her know she would be taking a half-hour more for lunch and walked to the elevator.

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Mrs. Brandon, Nia's mother, worked on the 28th floor of Nia's building. Nia's mom was one of the big wigs in another company that shared the same building. She had a corner office with a huge view of Manhattan. Mrs. Brandon heard that the consulting company downstairs was looking for someone and pulled some strings. It was ideal for her to have her oldest baby right downstairs from her.

She loved her babies. Nia, her oldest, and Audreen, her youngest, were Mrs. Brandon's joy. She liked them close so she would know they would be okay.

Nia opened the door to find her mother on the phone. Her fine, black hair was pulled back in a bun and her fair complexion was still firm and smooth.

Mrs. Brandon was a sharp older woman. She was highly intelligent and beautiful. Whenever they went out together, a comment regarding them looking like sisters would always come her way.

"Hey, shuggabooga," Mrs. Brandon said as she hung up the phone. "Shuggabooga" was one of the nicknames Nia despised and the harder she despised it, the more often her mom used it.

"Did you already order the food, Ma?" Nia said as she walked around her mother's office to look at the pictures she had seen a million times before.

"Yes, I already ordered. They said they would be here in ten minutes and that was ten minutes ago," Mrs. Brandon answered, looking at her watch.

Nia picked up a picture from when she was 14 years old with an awful haircut. "She needs to take this down," she mumbled to herself. She looked at her mom and made a face of disgust as if pleading for her to take it down. Her mom waved her off.

On her mom's work shelves were a chronicle of the different awkward phases of her life. There were baby pictures from when she was chunky, a couple of elementary school pictures with a different missing tooth in each, a picture from the summer when she suddenly grew hips, her high school graduation picture with her asymmetrical haircut and the most recent college graduation picture.

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“What’s wrong, Nia?” her mother asked.

“Why do you think something is wrong?” Nia turned her attention from the pictures.

Her mom swiveled around to look at Nia’s face. “I know my baby, so sit down and stop looking at those pictures that aren’t coming down and tell me what’s wrong.”

Nia sat down in one of the chairs across from her mother’s desk. She crossed her arms on the desk and put her head down and a muffled whimper came through.

“Mom, this is hard,” she quietly said as she raised her head.

“What is?”

“Celibacy, Mommy! Okay, I am completely conscious of the fact that I am a child of God; therefore, I must do the things that a child of God should do. I know that I should trust God for the person that will honor that but, Ma, with all of these hoochies running around or just regular women who just happen to have sex, what am I supposed to do?”

As Mrs. Brandon began to answer, her secretary buzzed in to announce that the food delivery had arrived. She went to the door to pay for the food. She sat back in her plush leather chair and as she opened her wonton soup, she said simply, “Trust God.”

“Hmm?” Nia responded.

“Pray,” Mrs. Brandon said, reaching for her daughter’s hand. Nia and her mother joined hands and prayed over the food.

“You have to trust God, baby. I can’t imagine that this is easy at all but if you are doing this for Him, then He will honor that. It is important that you extend your faith past the thought that He is real. You have to acknowledge His power and just do it. He’ll take care of you. And don’t worry about the hoochies, men will respect you, they won’t respect the hoochies.”

Nia took a bite of her chicken and laughed as she listened to her mom say “hoochie.”

“But, Ma, what do I do about now? It gets so lonely. It’s not so much the sex, it’s more about the relationship and men don’t want a relationship without sex. So that leaves me out there. Alone.”

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“But, baby, those aren’t men, those are horny little boys.”

Mrs. Brandon reached over her desk to steal a piece of Nia’s chicken and smiled at her.

“So, what is this all about anyway? Who dunnit?”

Nia swallowed then leaned back into her chair.

“Sean.”

“That sweetheart? What happened? Isn’t he a church boy?”

Nia nodded. “He and I had ‘the talk’ and after it was over he said the he would call me and didn’t. So I am assuming that is his way of telling me that it’s over. Kyla told me to have faith in him but that is pretty difficult when he doesn’t call. But whatever,” she said as she stole one of her mother’s broccoli sprouts and smirked, “it’s what it is...what doesn’t kill me, makes me stronger.”

“He’ll call.”

“Whatever.” Sounding agitated, Nia decided to change the subject. “How’s Dee?” referring to her younger sister.

“She’s fine. A complete teenager, she talks on the phone with her friends for hours. Your father and I can’t even get a call through. All she does is giggle on the phone. I haven’t gone through this in years. But anyway, Sean has been raised in the church, he knows what’s right.” Her mom had a wonderful way of making you believe she was off the topic but still she always found her way back.

Sighing, Nia answered, “Yes, but what does that mean? He told me that he was saved but he’s not showing signs of that now, is he?”

“Nia, look this is a good time for you to see what he is really made of. If he is a true Christian man, then it’ll be okay. If not, he wasn’t good for you anyway. But, in the meantime, have a little faith in him. You never know. He’ll call watch and see.”

“Hmph,” Nia replied. “I won’t hold my breath.”

Nia came into her apartment and threw her keys on the table near her door. She turned on the lights, sat on the couch and took off her shoes. It felt like heaven. She always thought that whoever invented high heels was demon possessed.

She went to her bedroom and put on her lingerie of choice...Gap

sweatpants and a Gap sweatshirt. She knew that those were made by the hands of an angel. She put on her fluffy purple Gap slippers and laughed as she thought of how she should own stock in that company. She went into the kitchen with the hood from her sweatshirt on her head and opened the refrigerator door. “What do I want?” she asked herself. She saw leftover fried chicken, baked macaroni and cheese and candied yams. She entertained the leftovers for a quick minute then made up her mind. “I want Häagen-Dazs.”

She opened the freezer door and pulled out a pint of Vanilla Swiss Almond ice cream, her favorite. Nia got a spoon out of the drawer and went back into the living room. She put her ice cream on a coaster and went to the hall closet to pull out her blanket. It was her favorite blanket from college. She loved it because it was soft and comfortable. It was what she needed.

As she tucked herself under her blanket and reached for her remote control, she thought, *This is some pitiful mess. Why am I doing this?* But then she glanced at her ice cream and thought, *Screw it. I'll work out tomorrow.* She knew she wouldn't but she had to at least toy with the idea to make herself feel better.

She turned the channel searching for that perfect movie. Romantic but light, sweet but not too intense. She wanted to watch something good but wouldn't make her think too hard or reminisce. She flipped from station to station. Three hundred channels and not a thing on television. As she began to settle for Lifetime Television for women, she saw her favorite movie in the whole world. *Dirty Dancing*. It incorporated two things she adored most. Dancing and love.

She settled into her favorite blanket to watch her favorite movie and eat her favorite ice cream. She wiggled her hips under the blanket as if she were dancing with “Johnny and Baby.” She knew each step. When she lived at home with her parents and little sister, they would hate when the movie came on television. They knew that for the next two hours, they would have to endure Nia's dancing, singing and line mimicking. It was her absolute favorite movie.

As she rested on her couch and watched Johnny and Baby dance,

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she began to sink into the realization of her loneliness. “I’m young, I think I’m cute, I have a good job, no kids, good education, I think I’m pretty fun too but here I am, by my dog-gone self with a pint of ice cream and my remote! Lord, is it this serious? Is sex so serious that everything else about me is not worth having without it? Why is it that men love me until I say I’m celibate? I really don’t understand.”

Then while staring blankly at the TV, she realized that maybe it wasn’t for her to understand so much as for her to just live. She needed to be an example that it could be done. Nia had to trust that God will send her what she was waiting for, what she was being prepared for. Not because she deserved it or did something so wonderful because as a Christian she was doing what she was supposed to be doing anyway. She was trusting God and not taking His job in her hands. She wasn’t going to taint what God created as true courtship. A divine destiny called for her to love God enough to honor Him with her body and only someone that tuned into God’s will could hang in there with her. Only a true man of God could show how much he loved God by honoring his own body along with hers.

Nia felt at peace again. *Have faith in Sean*. She replayed Kyla’s words over and over in her head. “Okay,” she said aloud. “God let your will be done. Whatever happens, I’ll accept it as your will for my life.” She exhaled and looked at the pint of ice cream that she held in her hands. “Maybe I should put this away,” she told herself. “Nope, my sweats will have to stretch tonight, and she dug into her vanilla Swiss almond ice cream and watched her favorite movie under her favorite blanket.

As the music for the closing credits played in the background, Nia picked up her empty pint of Häagen-Dazs, threw it away and folded up her blanket. She shut the TV off and went into her bedroom.

She liked her bedroom. It was full of warm, earthy colors and soft hues. It was her sanctuary. It was where she prayed, where she cried, and where she rested. It was peaceful.

She got into her bed, pulled out her Bible and read her chapter for

the night. She started reading the Bible all the way through again. From Genesis to Revelation, three chapters a day. She read one chapter first thing in the morning, one chapter at lunch and one before she went to bed. She was up to the book of Exodus. She was reading about God's plans for the tabernacle. It amazed her how detailed the instructions were. God told Moses every single detail. She thought about that and how it related to her. If God was so detailed about the building, care and practices of the tabernacle, how much more would He be with her?

Nia closed her Bible, lay back in her bed and turned her radio to the jazz station to lull her to sleep. She turned off her light and got comfortable in her bed. She said her prayers then closed her eyes.

Nia grabbed for the phone as it rang and pulled the receiver under the covers to her ear.

"Hello," she said in a raspy voice.

"Nia? I'm sorry were you sleeping?"

It was Sean. The sound of his voice made her sit straight up.

"Hey, no, no, I'm up. I was just lying down." She was lying all right. Nia was deep in a REM cycle when Sean called. She looked at her clock. 11:26.

"Um, I'm sorry to call you so late but I needed to talk to you."

Needed? Nia's over analytical mind went buck wild. Why did he say "needed"? What is the urgency? Why need, why not choose another word like want?

"What's up, Sean? What can I do for you at 11:30?" Her tone was short.

"Well, first I want to apologize for not calling you back last night."

"Okay," she interrupted.

"No, it isn't. I said that I would do something and I didn't. You gave me something to think about and it just threw me off a little bit. It just made me think that's all."

With her tone still short she replied, "Of what, Sean?" Nia knew where this was going. Her stomach began to quiver. Butterflies.

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Nothing but butterflies.

“Ni.” She loved when he called her that. “After you told me what you told me, I really had to think. I mean, we don’t even know where this is going or if it would go anywhere. I had to really think if I was ready for this. I never had to deal with anything like this. I had to think about whether or not I could actually do it. Plus, if I couldn’t, I know that would hurt you and I don’t want to hurt you. That’s what scared me. I really like you and I don’t want to screw up and with you telling me this, it just makes me think that if I screw up, I may have more to lose. Am I making sense?”

“I think so,” she said, trying to process Sean’s words.

“Look, all I’m saying is that I like you and I don’t want this to end. God brought you in my life like this for a reason. There is something I’m supposed to learn, do or whatever. This is a test of my faith and I would be stupid to not be with you because of this. It’s what I am supposed to be doing anyway and I want to do this.”

Nia couldn’t believe it. As Sean spoke, she pleaded with God to make this real. She couldn’t go through any more disappointments.

“Nia? Ni, say something,” he begged.

“Well,” she inhaled and exhaled deeply, “don’t feel obligated because you don’t want to hurt me. That is why I am telling you now. Before it gets too serious. I’ve been through this before and each time I’ve gotten over it, Sean. I like you, I really do but don’t feel obligated. She felt like her insecurities were running out of her mouth like water. She tried to disguise it in the tone of her voice but her heart pleaded with him with each word.

“I don’t, Nia. This is for me just like it is for you. I know that I would be playing myself if I didn’t stick it out. I’m proving something to myself as well.” They sat in silence for a moment until Sean asked, “What would you have thought if I said that I couldn’t do it?”

“Do you want me to be honest?”

“Yes.”

“I would have appreciated your honesty but I would have thought that you would have needed to examine your faith and talk to God

about your relationship with Him. I would have thought that you were like every other average man.” She blurted it out so fast that she couldn’t believe what she was saying but she ~~could not stop~~ ~~could not stop~~. “I mean, it is one thing if you weren’t a self-professed ‘Christian Man’ but since that is what you called yourself, then there are expectations that would apply to you that wouldn’t apply to the average guy. The Bible applies to you just like it applies to me. That is what I would have thought, Sean.”

She pulled her cover over her head and thought, *If I didn’t scare him before, that should have done it.*

There was silence. Then Sean sighed, “You’re right.”

“Hmm?” she replied as she took the covers off of her head. “You’re right. You’re right, Ni. So, will you let me try this with you? You may be my future wife and that would be too good to give up.” He laughed softly.

She laughed with him. “Slow down, Sean, let’s get past this phone call and take it one day at a time. Okay?”

“One day at a time,” he replied.

“I know you were asleep, so go on back to bed and I’ll call you tomorrow.” Nia laughed.

“Good night, Sean.”

“Good night.”

Nia hung up the phone, turned off the lights and fixed her eyes on the dark ceiling. “Okay, God, it’s on you.” She closed her eyes and went to sleep.