

Clyde Harrison

just haven't been able to take it but so far. I'd like to see where it could go, maybe after the merger is done, I'll have some time to do that."

"Well all work and no play is not good, you know what you used to say when I was younger, 'drive yourself now so that you can have a chauffeur later', or something like that." She smiled and stood to go upstairs.

"That's not exactly it, Punkin, but I get your point, I'm not getting any younger."

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Cynthia Nettles was efficient in the kitchen. She had the coffee brewing on the counter and steak and eggs cooking on the stove. Hash browns were almost done and the wheat bread in the toaster was about to pop up. She was singing an old Negro spiritual, happy that she and Martin had a good night in. Her deep alto voice reverberated throughout the first floor of the brownstone, "...*people keep a comin and da train done gone...*" Martin walked into the kitchen, stood behind her, wrapped his arms around her chest and gave her a bear hug. He gently squeezed her breast in the process and said, "Ooo girl, don't get me started before breakfast."

"Sugar anytime you can get that motor started, I say let's go for a drive." She said while turning to face him, deliberately giving him a little grind in the process.

"Girl, you know you're crazy." Martin took a seat at the small table in their kitchen. It was an antique, very simple and rectangular in shape, with a distressed, dark mahogany finish. It looked as though it came from an old farm. The house had a large dining room, but they usually took their meals in the kitchen when they ate alone. Cynthia filled Martin's plate with steak, eggs and hash browns and placed it on

the table in front of him. She carefully extended her reach so as to brush her breast across his shoulder.

“Girl, I keep trying to tell you, if you get me hot I’m gonna fuck you.”

Cynthia laughed; she knew how to push his buttons. She turned to face him, untied the sash to her silk robe exposing her lean tight body, and put both hands on her hips, protruding her lower torso.

“You want a piece of this?” she asked seductively. Martin hesitated for a long moment. The Chinese food from the night before had long been digested and he was now hungry again. He had to decide which appetite he would, or could, satisfy.

“Girl, I don’t know why you mess with me like that. You know how weak my flesh is, and you know I’m starving after the way you worked me last night. Sit down and eat, we have all day, I’m canceling all my appointments.”

Cynthia retied her robe, smiled, and sat down to eat. They hadn’t spent this much intimate time together in quite a while, she was just as thirsty for him as he was hungry for her. She picked up her knife and fork and sliced a small piece of her steak, placed it in her mouth and started chewing slowly while keeping her eyes glued on the love of her life, savoring them both.

“Would you like to take in a show today?” Martin asked.

“I’d love to, do you want to catch a matinee or an evening show.”

“Let’s get dressed up and catch an evening show, we can have dinner afterward.”

“That sounds like fun to me Sugar. Is there anything in particular that you want to see?”

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“Well the last time we went to the theater we saw Chicago. But you know, I have to be in the right mood for a musical, is there a drama playing somewhere?”

“Coz said that he and Carley saw an off Broadway drama called “Perfect Crime”, and they enjoyed it...you want to try it?”

“Sure, that sounds good to me. Speaking of the Coz, how did it go the other day at your lunch?”

“Lunch was fine, and the small talk was good. But once he started running down the poor people in the community, the conversation got heated. We went back and forth for about forty-five minutes before we laughed and decided to agree to disagree.”

“Well it’s too bad that I wasn’t there, he would have had somebody to catch his slack. You know good and well that you’ll wear a good man down.”

“Listen Martin, the only good man that I wear down is you. Now if you and that fool Coz want to place all of the blame for the problems in our community on the poor people who don’t know what’s going on, that’s fine, but I’m not going to stand idly by and let you do it.”

They had finished eating and Cynthia was clearing the table. She rinsed the dishes they had just used and put them in the dishwasher. She took the carafe from the coffee maker and emptied it into their cups, rinsed the empty pot and placed it into the dishwasher. Then she sat down to finish her coffee, and her conversation.

“I agree that we have to take responsibility for our own destiny, every other group in this country had to fight for their position in the pecking order. The problem is that we have historically been casualties, collateral damage if you will, as they battled their way to respectability.”

“What do you mean?” Martin knew that Cynthia was a sharp thinker. He had learned a lot from her throughout their years together. It was her mental prowess that had seriously attracted him to her in the first place; she was no slouch.

“What I mean is that we served as the stepping stone for almost every “group” of people in this society.” She made quotation marks in the air when she said group. Martin took the last sip of his coffee, and Cynthia immediately stood to remove the empty mug from the table.

“You know the history of this country Sugar, from slavery all the way up through Hip Hop and the NBA. We’ve worked and served and created and performed and taught other people how to do what we know how to do with the expectation of being treated fairly and rewarded for our efforts.” Cynthia walked back and stood behind him, massaging his shoulders and neck. The Reverend slowly moved his head from side to side and back and forth, feeling tension that he didn’t know he was carrying slowly release. “But in most cases, they just took what they could and used it to reap rewards for themselves...” she continued, “...while we were lost in the process, like collateral damage in a war. And what do we do, we say our prayers and suffer in this life while we wait on our rewards in glory land.”

“Wait a minute, how did the conversation go from us being collateral damage to me keeping our people down? And don’t tell me that those NBA stars and rappers are not getting their manna from heaven...right now.”

“Of course there are lots of young people that are getting their just deserts, but there have always been that ten percent or so that do. You know Du Bois talked about the talented tenth. They were supposed to be the salvation for the race. But what happened? The tenth moved out

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of the neighborhoods to become CEOs, judges, cabinet members, media moguls and whatever. But the community is still waiting for the tenth to apply their talents toward substantive change in the community.”

Martin stood and they walked toward the stairway to go upstairs. Cynthia’s robe was loosely tied, showing more of her front than it was covering.

“Let’s not blame Du Bois; I think his position on the talented tenth has been misunderstood.” The Reverend was now sounding more like a preacher than husband and lover. “I learned a passage from one of his works when I was at Morehouse, and what he said was that unless we teach responsibility in the educational process, we’ll just have people that know how to make money or ply a trade, that they will be disconnected from whence they came and have no sense of duty to the broader community.”

As they reached the top of the stairs Martin segued into his oratory voice,

“If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools...”

Cynthia was enthralled by his ability to recall such an obscure passage at will. “*I guess that helps to make him a good preacher,*” she thought, smiling admirably at him, her robe now fully open, nipples erect.

“I remember you making that speech, it was part of why I picked you to be mine.”

“What do you mean picked me? I didn’t even know you then. I didn’t meet you until at least a year later at the Frat party. And anyway, I saw you first and I picked you.”

“Well Sugar, whatever floats your boat.” She said, walking into the bathroom and dropping her robe by the door. She leaned over at the waist and, keeping her legs straight and shoulder width apart, began running water into their large tub, making sure that Martin could see from the rear the soft tuft of hair at the top of her thighs. “Do you still think I’m ripe for picking?” she asked looking back over her shoulder.

“Girl you’re crazy” he said, ripping off his robe while darting for the bathroom.

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*(Saturday, 1:00 p.m..)*

It was quiet at the Colbert Company’s headquarters. Many of their offices are busy twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, but this location was for the top executives who would more likely be found on the links in Westchester County or Sag Harbor than on the east side of the Lincoln Tunnel, on a Saturday morning. Bob Miller was at his desk, studiously reviewing documents related to the Media Enterprises acquisition. The play had been made, as Cameron had instructed, to put pressure on Media by tightening their access to money. It seemed straightforward, but Miller knew that it wasn’t over until it was over. There was always the possibility that they could come up with the money and also connect the dots back to Colbert. Reginald Carter and company would probably not respond favorably to the tactic, but it was Cameron’s call, and now it was done.