

The background of the book cover is a vibrant, abstract composition of paint splatters and heart shapes. The colors are primarily blue, pink, yellow, and red, set against a dark, almost black, background. The paint is applied in a way that creates a sense of movement and depth, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall effect is one of energy and emotion.

BOOK ONE

UPTOWN
LOVERS

AUSTIN MITCHELL

Uptown Lovers-Book One

Austin Mitchell

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- **Brad Newman returned home and fell in love with Morgana Simmonds, who is engaged to the cheating Stewart Brown. Realizing just how hopeless his love for Morgana is, Brad drops his longtime girlfriend, Dania Reid, and pursues Jenna Marsden only to realize that all that glitters isn't gold.**
- **Rick Graham returned home to work in his father's firm. He falls for Morgana's equally fabulous sister, Beverly, but his long time and strong-willed girlfriend, Celia, will have none of it and is prepared to fight for her man.**
- **Morgana Simmonds thought she knew her fiancé', Stewart Brown, only to realize that he's a cheater. Morgana is caught in a quandary, should she stay and fight the competition, in the hope that he will change or should she move on?**
- **Stewart Brown, engaged to Morgana, but having affairs all over the place. He just loves to play the field. But the girls are waking up and they're making the right kind of moves and Stewart realizes that he doesn't like some of the moves they're making but can a leopard change his spots?**
- **Stan Lubsy is convinced that Morgana was responsible for his brother's death in that prison riot. If she hadn't pointed him out in that identification parade his brother would still be alive. He has sworn revenge on her and his former boss, Eric Bishop, whom he feels has set him up.**

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**Published by
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Prologue

August 11, 2001- Morgana Simmonds looked at her watch as Stewart Brown entered her home. He came up to where she was standing on the front lawn.

“Can’t you be early for anything? Imagine it’s my send off party and you have to be late. I can bet you were with April. No wonder you don’t want us to get engaged.”

“How many times must I tell you that April and I are nothing more than good friends? As for being late, I had to do something to my car.”

He reached for her hand, but she refused. Instead, she walked to the far corner of the lawn. Stewart followed her.

“Why are you behaving like that?”

“How should I behave? I’m so embarrassed when so many people have to be wondering where you are.”

“I told you where I was.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Why don’t you call April and find out if I was with her?”

“You know that we don’t speak to each other.”

They found seats on a bench in the garden.

“When you return we can get engaged, there’s no hurry. I’d like it to be as short as possible.”

“Just like you, I’m in no hurry to get engaged too. It’s only mummy and Aunt Sally, who think it might be best for both of us. They feel that it might make us feel more committed to each other. Anyway, I want to know why I called your phone last night and only got your voice mail?”

“I didn’t know my phone needed charging until around midnight. If you had called me before then you wouldn’t have gotten me. I didn’t see your message.”

Morgana put her chin in her hands.

“Here am I about to leave the island and I’m not sure what’s going to happen while I’m away. I could return to find you with some other woman or even married.”

“You know that won’t happen. There are lots of great looking women out there, but I’m not tempted.”

“Honestly, Stewart, I don’t know where our relationship is heading.”

“What are you talking about, Morgana? I thought the time we’ve been together would have meant something to you.”

“We’ve been going around for more than five years now, but I just feel that it means nothing to you. I think you’re still angry because I won’t spend nights or weekends with you.”

“Am I pressuring you to do that? Look how long we go sometimes without sleeping together.”

“Okay, so tell me, while I’m away who will you be sleeping with?”

“Why do you think I would want to sleep with any other woman?”

“I don’t believe you and that’s why I’m in such a confused state of mind. I don’t want to be over there and be constantly fending off rumors about you and other women.”

“You know that won’t happen. How about a compromise?”

She looked over at the dancing area which was in full swing now. She knitted her brows and seemed to be in deep thoughts.

“What do you have in mind?”

“You could come for the holidays, maybe Christmas and Summer.”

“Why do I get the feeling that you’re only after my body?”

Stewart stood up before sitting down again.

“If I was only after your body I could have left you long ago.”

“Why didn’t you?”

“Because I care about you.”

“If you behave yourself, I’ll come for the holidays and I’ll ask dad or his boss, Mr Norman, for a job to pay for my plane fare.”

They made their way to the pavement where the party was being kept and started dancing.

Morgana had finished her first degree and was off to complete her Masters in Business Administration at Mc Clelland International University. She had applied to that institution and had won a scholarship that would provide her with full tuition. It was several thousand dollars less than if she had done it locally. After she completed her degree, she would work for one year with her father’s cousin, Gordon Murdock’s management consultancy firm before returning home.

Stewart had wanted the party to be held at the Mountain Valley Hotel in Irish Town but she told him that her parents would prefer it to be held at their home in the Canrieves area of Upper St. Andrew. The two storey houses had been built in 1990 and had only thirty homes nestled among many fruit trees in the hills of this picturesque and sun drenched parish.

They had invited about forty people to the party and had hired a small sound system to provide the music. The family had gotten the services of a catering firm to do the food and drinks and prepare the party area.

As Morgana and Stewart danced she could feel the coolness of the night on her back and wondered if she should go inside for a sweater. She breathed a sigh of satisfaction as she saw friends and family members greeting each other and partaking in the feast. Some persons had brought bathing suits and were in the pool playing around.

Morgana saw her father, Byron, dancing with her mother, Monique, a woman at forty three, five years his junior. Her younger sister, Beverly, only nineteen, was dancing with her boyfriend, Rory Coombs. Rory and Bev had been going around for about two years now. Bev was two inches or so shorter than her but with a fuller figure. Rory was a tall, burly man and was twenty years of age. Bev was wearing a pair of blue shorts and a yellow long sleeve pullover.

Stewart went to shake Byron Simmond’s hand.

“Stewart, you’re going to lose your girlfriend for three years. Do you think you can manage it? I know if I was your age, I couldn’t. All I beg of you is not to break her heart.”

He shook Stewart’s hand and slapped him on his back.

Stewart felt a bit uneasy after speaking to Byron. He knew that Morgana had a lot of close relatives besides her immediate family and they were always looking out for her. He didn’t think he would do anything to make what Byron just said come to past.

Byron came from a family of fisherman. Although he now followed a different profession, he couldn’t resist the lure of the sea and had bought a boat. Stewart had gone with the family on a few fishing expeditions.

He went to greet Morgana’s aunt, Sally and her husband, Sid Strudwick. Sally was two years older than her sister, Monique and just as shapely looking, Stewart thought. Sid was a giant of a man towering over his wife and was probably a few years older than her.

“I hope you behave while Morgana is abroad,” Sally warned.

“You know I will, Sally,” Stewart replied.

Stewart knew that when he was in auditing he had often done stock taking work at Sid’s hardware. He was aware that the man had been suspicious that he had slept with at least two of his female employees.

“We know that he won’t,” Sid said and the three of them laughed.

After they had finished laughing, Stewart said.

“I know Morgana will leave me if I don’t stay faithful to her.”

“We’ll see, we’ll see,” Sid said as Morgana returned and she and Stewart started dancing again.

Chapter One

September 22, 2001-Bobbette Greene was at Rob's Wholesale this Saturday evening, ordering her groceries.

She went across the road and spent some time waiting for a taxi when the young proprietor unexpectedly drove up and stopped at her feet.

"Hi, you're still here. I've seen many taxis pass and didn't stop. So I said I'd come over and help you out."

"Thanks, apparently they are all full. I'm living in Arlene Gardens."

"That's just up the road."

He helped her into the car with her groceries.

"I'm Robert Parsons. Is this the first time you're shopping at my wholesale?" he asked her as they drove off.

"I started living here about six months ago. I've been getting my groceries there ever since but mostly on weekends."

"How do you like the service?"

"It's okay, I can't complain."

"Good, that's what I want to hear."

They had reached her house now and he helped her take her groceries out of the car and carry inside to put on her front patio.

"By the way, what's your name?" he asked as they stood at the gate.

"I'm Bobbette Greene."

"Okay, next week then," he said getting back into his car and driving off.

She was renting half of a house, working at a government loan agency and going to evening classes.

Robert made it his duty to serve her each time and to drop her home. They soon became friends and lovers as Robert was now sleeping at her house and spending most weekends there. She no longer went for her groceries as he would bring them to her. Bobbette thought Robert was at least fifty pounds overweight and was a hulk of a man and would be a clumsy lover but he proved her match in bed.

She learned that he owned a chain of wholesale stores, plus at least three petrol service stations. His father, Jervis had died six months ago and his mother, Carmeta, had divorced the old man from Robert was a toddler and migrated to the United States. He was an only child.

Bobbette had lived most of her life in Washington Gardens before going on her own about two years ago when she started working with the loan agency.

During her high school years there were stories circulating about her and numerous guys because of her body, an object of envy from other women, and a source of admiration from men. Her mother, Merryl, a senior nurse at a private hospital in Kingston, had even called her a slut and a tramp, labels, Bobbette firmly rejected. Instead, she told her mother that they were her friends and they liked talking to her. Her father, Castel, a taxi operator, didn't share his wife's opinion and felt that the boys were only hanging around his second child because they wanted to date her. Nevertheless, he had always warned her to be careful.

Three months into the relationship she learned that a woman by the name of Jenna Marsden had a child for him about six years ago and he was supporting her. He denied that he was still seeing her, but Bobbette was apprehensive that the relationship was still going strong. Maybe it was because of his reluctance to say how much money he was giving her for the little boy.

They were in bed one Saturday night when Jenna called. Jaimie, her son, was feeling ill and she wanted him to see a doctor immediately. Bobbette felt less than pleased that he had to leave her and get his son to the doctor. She didn't make a face or anything like that. She wondered if it was a ploy the woman was using to see Robert. He returned at almost four o'clock that morning saying that the boy was okay now and that his fever and coughing were now under control, having received medication from the doctor. Bobbette didn't make any adverse comments as she didn't want to sound callous.

"I'm glad he's okay. I was a bit worried about you being out at this time of the morning, darling."

"I know you would, honey. When you have small children, especially Jaimie's age, these are things you can expect."

He came into the bed beside her.

Robert liked spending time at her house because he couldn't get enough of her cooking. She fed him lots of vegetables, lean meat, fruits and cereals. Most weekends she would go with him to his various business locations, especially if it was in the rural areas. Sometimes if it was too late to get into Kingston they would stay at a guest house or hotel.

"Try and get some more sleep. I know you have to be up and about first thing tomorrow morning. Are you going out to the country?"

"I'm staying in town. I'm dead tired after spending last night with you and then taking Jaimie to see the doctor."

They always had a vigorous session of lovemaking. Robert was never satisfied until she had multiple climaxes. Bobbette soon had to get a sturdier bed, one that could withstand her lovemaking. Robert got up and turned off the light and Bobbette threw her arms around him. It didn't take long for both of them to fall asleep again.

February 20,2002-Bobbette was still going to evening classes and studying way into the nights and even on weekends in order to get into college to pursue a degree. She was pursuing these courses on campus as some college students had started an evening school to help with their own living and tuition expenses. Robert said that some of those courses would be helpful to him, especially those dealing with business. All that he knew about the subject was what his late father had taught him. He now wanted some formal training, but had no time to attend classes. He had dropped out of school at seventeen when his father said he wanted more help in the business and couldn't afford to hire it. They searched out some courses on the internet and he got enrolled in a few of them.

Robert's businesses were generating so much money that it enabled him to open two more meat shops and a fast food franchise. Several of her friends were encouraging her to hook him good by even proposing to him and let him buy her a big house in somewhere like the Canries or Hershire Heights. She told them that she didn't want him to feel that she was only after his money. She would take her time and he would eventually do all the things they were telling her about. Sometimes she wished he didn't have so many businesses. Or if he did, they weren't spread over such a wide geographical area. Whenever they were out of town she would always take along her party clothes and do her hair and nails, hoping to hit a party scene. Robert was dead tired most of the times and only wanted to sleep.

It was more than four months now since they were going steady. She had moved from Arlene Gardens to an apartment in Constant Spring. Robert's father had owned the apartment and it came into his possession upon his death. Bobbette was prepared to fight off any other woman who tried to intrude in their relationship.

They were relaxing on the front balcony of their apartment having just eaten dinner. They had a view of Mona, Jacks Hill and the Canrieves and the magnificent homes in those places. Bobbette knew that if she stuck to this man she would soon be living in one of them.

“Darling, I wish you’d lie down in one of these couches and put up your feet like I’m doing.”

She knew that Robert had been working on his weight. He had cut out those fast food meals, but complained that he couldn’t get time to do some walking or go to the gym. His father had fought a losing battle against obesity and had died suddenly from a massive heart attack.

“I’m taking it easy. Remember that I’m still young. I want to get one of those houses in the hills and move from Vineyard Town.”

“Up there is cool and the soil is fertile. I’d like to plant some fruit trees and a garden instead of these.” Bobbette pointed to the few plants, they had on the balcony.

“It will be done in good time, darling.”

Bobbette went inside for some more orange juice. When she returned, he said.

“At some point I want to get involved in politics.”

“I see those people on television and they’re always shouting at each other.”

“I’m thinking of starting in local government first before moving up. I want to help out this country. No matter what you hear, people go into politics to serve and not to stuff their pockets full of money as is always rumored.”

“If that’s what you want, I’m not going to stop you.”

“Later, when you see the benefits you’ll know that I made the right decision.”

“Can we go out later on for some dancing at Brenton’s place?”

“Sure, why not, but I can’t stay too late though. I have to go to Mandeville first thing tomorrow morning. There’s a guy down there who’s putting up a wholesale for sale. I want to have a look at it before I make him an offer.”

Although Bobbette tried to persuade Robert to slow down in pursuing his business dreams, she knew that was what had helped his father to buy this upscale apartment. She only made furtive complaints sometimes.

There was a tall guy on campus whom she took a liking to, but she was scared to cheat on Robert. His name was Stewart Brown and she had seen several girls around him and knew that he was popular with the women. Sometimes when Robert was out of town she had thought about him, but she knew she had to be careful. There were many women who envied her and weren’t above going to Robert with a story that she had a lover.

“Do you think you can manage so many businesses alone, darling?”

“I have good managers plus my accountants are first class. I have my internal auditors checking the books on a regular basis.”

“Let’s go and have a nap before we go up to Brenton’s place.”

“Sure, it’s not more than that?”

“Robert, after last night, I would be greedy to want more and so soon,” she said as they relaxed a little more before going inside for a nap.

September 27,2002-Bobbette was sitting on one of the concrete benches on campus going over some of her notes. She was now pursuing a two year certificate course in Management Studies. She was doing the certificate course first, then take a break before moving on to do the degree. Normally she studied with a group of friends, but she wanted to talk to Stewart alone. She and Stewart became lovers three months ago and it was as if they couldn’t get enough of each other. While she wasn’t neglecting Robert she made every effort to be with Stewart.

Robert was in Miami on a business trip this weekend. She loved Robert in a special kind of

way, but Stewart was something else. He took her to parties, nightclubs, stage shows, sports bars and other entertainment venues, things that Robert was hardly interested in. Whereas she was sure of Robert she wasn't sure about Stewart. She knew about two of his women, April English and Morgana Simmonds. She knew Morgana was away in the States but she knew that he had other women. She saw him coming towards her. He was tall and good looking with a lean athletic body. He sat around the bench opposite her.

"So how's it going, Bobbette?"

"Everything's okay. Robert is in Miami and won't be back until Monday."

"We can spend the entire weekend, clubbing, baby and some real hot nights," Stewart told her. There was nobody sitting near them to eavesdrop on their conversation.

"We have to be careful though. It's a good thing I only have a cell phone. If he calls me and I'm not home, he won't know. We should probably go to one of the less popular clubs like Reasons. A lot of people know Robert and they know that I'm his woman. I don't want them to see me out with you and tell him. It's a good thing I live in an apartment where everybody minds their own business."

Robert was financing her university studies plus he had bought a car for her.

"By the way, Morgana sent me an email. She said she heard that I was seeing you so she was breaking off with me."

"Imagine that I caused you and Morgana to break up. Me, a girl, from a humble district like Burnley. We don't even have running water or electricity there. This woman from the Canaries, where only rich people live, is accusing me of taking away her man. That's a laugh."

"I don't see what's so funny."

"Because I think she isn't being truthful. Maybe she has found some other guy over there."

"Found some other guy, she's just been there a little more than a year now," Stewart said. "She had to return in July for her father's funeral. Before that her uncle-in-law was shot dead, but she didn't come for his funeral."

Stewart took up a pebble and threw it into some bushes.

"Isn't that enough time? Don't forget that I know her. When I first met you, I didn't know that you were her boyfriend."

"What would you have done, leave me? Anyway, I never liked her all that much. Before she went away, her mother and her aunt wanted me to get engaged to her but I turned them down."

"How long did she spend out here when she came to her father's funeral?"

"About a week."

"That should have given both of you enough time to re-ignite your relationship."

"She told me that she had heard the rumors and that she was going to write me."

"Maybe if you had gotten engaged to her she would marry you once she was finished with her studies."

Stewart looked at Bobbette. Although she was dressed in her office uniform she still looked exotic. She had on a grey pants suit and her hair was straightened out and she had in big earrings.

"That wouldn't have stopped her breaking off with me when she heard about me and you."

"I hope you aren't accusing me of being the cause of you and Morgana breaking up."

"Nothing like that, I would only marry a woman who was as loving as you. I only went around with Morgana because her mother begged me, but I couldn't get her to spend weekends with me or even a sleepover."

"I told you that I know her. I thought she would have become a nun the way she used to behave."

“Maybe it was I who changed her mind. I was the first guy for her. She used to feel uncomfortable at first when we did it, but after a while she started loving it. I even threatened to leave her, but she said that her parents would be angry if she ever spent a night with me much less a weekend.”

“I can bet that if I went around I would find quite a few girls willing to admit that you were their first lover.”

Stewart laughed.

“Morgana is the only girlfriend, I’ve ever had.”

“What about April? I don’t want to be in anymore fights with her over you. Is she your sweetheart now? I need to know. At least I know that I’m not your steady girlfriend.”

Stewart looked around. All the benches were now occupied with students doing one thing or another. He and Bobbette were now talking in low tones to prevent themselves from being overheard. Stewart stabbed his toe at a small stone.

“Morgana was my unofficial fiancé, but now that she has broken off with me, I don’t have a main woman. April knows that, so why would she be trying to pick a fight with you over me?”

“I have a man whom I’m cheating on with you. I know that April doesn’t have a steady guy. I think it’s reasonable to assume that she believes that you are her boyfriend. Didn’t she and Morgana fight at least two times over you?”

“I’ve never spent enough time with her for her to think that way. As I said we’re nothing more than good friends. I’ve never told her that she was my main woman.”

“I’m not that naïve, to believe that a woman would behave that way over a man unless she was in an intimate relationship with him.”

“Be honest with me, are you and April lovers?”

But Stewart shook his head.

“Morgana believed I was sleeping with April and went to fight her. Now you believe the same thing just because of who April is. Both of us love to be around other people and that’s why we are always making friends.”

“The way I heard it, is that it was April who was always picking a fight with Morgana and she’s the one who is always quarrelling with me. Anyway, I’m not going to press you about her anymore. I knew that you and she were friends, but I never knew she was like that or else I would never have gotten involved with you. I’ll never let you make love to me without protection.”

Stewart didn’t know what she meant by that last statement. He found it curious because April wasn’t a girl who ran around with different guys. He was one hundred per cent certain that he was the only guy she was seeing. All of the women he had slept with had insisted that he use a condom and he had always complied.

Bobbette was one of the most careful girls he had ever met. She had bought one of the best brands of condoms for him. She said she didn’t want them to burst and she get pregnant or pick up any sort of sexually transmitted disease. And since Robert wasn’t sleeping around, he would know where he got the disease from and her whole world would come crashing down.

He looked at a guy and a girl sitting at a nearby bench. The guy was short and thick while the girl was tall and thin. They were talking very animatedly to each other, but in low tones. He didn’t know either of them; maybe they were from other faculties. It was obvious that they were lovers who were perhaps having a falling out.

“When next I see April, I’m going to tell her to leave you alone. You’re the only woman I have any time for,” he tried to reassure her.

She nodded, but he wasn’t sure if she believed him.

“So what time are you coming by me?”

“About eight o’clock, I’ll just go home, have a bath and eat some food.”

“Okay, so I’ll see you then,” she told him. They shared a short embrace. Both looked around to ensure that there were no spies nearby. Even when Stewart went to sleep with her he had to park in another parking lot as Bobbette would know some woman having an apartment who didn’t have her lover over for the night.

November 16,2002-Stewart was feeling a bit drained this last weekend. He had been with Bobbette, April and a new girl, Haydee Clementson, introduced to him by his friend, Jose Maragh. April was calling herself his official woman based on the email he’d received from Morgana, breaking off their relationship. Despite Bobbette’s misgivings he didn’t try to stop her. He had spent Friday night partying with her and she had spent the rest of the night with him. Saturday night he had been with Bobbette but she told him that she had to leave by ten o’clock as she expected Robert home and he had left to sleep with Haydee and he’d spent Sunday with her too.

He was in his office that Monday morning when his cell phone rang. April’s number came up.

“Stewart, how are you? I tried calling you both Saturday night and then last night and only got your voice mail.”

“That’s strange; my phone was on all the time.”

“Maybe you had that girl, Bobbette, with you; that’s why you didn’t want me to call you.”

“Why didn’t you just come down to my apartment?”

“I wasn’t sure if you’d be there and I was sort of feeling tired after Friday night.”

If she was feeling tired he didn’t know why she should be calling him.

“So what’s up now, April?”

“I want to come and see you this evening.”

He made a quick check and realized that he didn’t have a date for this evening. Bobbette mostly stayed at her apartment. He only went there when Robert was abroad or staying in the rural areas.

“Sure, baby, why not. Want to do anything special?”

“I heard that they have a new place opening up on Dumfries Road. I want to go and see it.”

Stewart had heard about it. He told her that he would take her there, whereupon she ended the call. Fifteen minutes later and he was going through some notes when his cell phone rang again. Bobbette was on the line.

“Stewart, why did you desert me like that, last night? There I was trying to get you, but all I was getting was your voice mail.”

“I didn’t turn off my phone, Bobbette. So I don’t know what could have happened.”

“I can bet that you were with April and didn’t want to talk to me.”

“I would have stayed with you, but you told me that Robert was coming back Saturday night. I figured that he would have been there yesterday too. I was waiting for you to call me.”

“He came back and we went out and he was here all day yesterday. I was calling to warn you that he was here.”

Stewart didn’t comment as he knew that she was well aware of the arrangements between them. Robert was now practically living with her. She got her groceries, free from any of his stores, plus she filled up her car for free at any one of his service stations she chose. Stewart knew that he couldn’t match that. Maybe Bobbette was just using him because of his lover-boy image and she wanted some amount of romance in her life which Robert wasn’t at the moment supplying. Many women were like that. They liked to be spoiled and to be entertained. They loved dressing up and going to parties, or nightclubs and to all sorts of entertainment venues to enjoy

themselves. Judging by some of the outfits he had seen women at some of these events wearing he wasn't sure whether they were dressed up or down. He had to admit that anything some of them wore they looked good in it.

"Will you have lunch with me tomorrow?"

"Yes, I will, Robert is going to Trelawny."

"Okay then, how about Lowe's Cafe?"

"I'll be there. Would one o'clock be okay?"

"Sure, I'll see you then," he said and they both ended the call.

April 15, 2003-Stewart was dining with April. During the week they had been to Jimmy Chang's sports bar as well as most of the night clubs. He had taken Bobbette to Jimmy Chang on a few occasions also. He and April had spent last year Emancipation Day weekend in Portland. They were at the Doyin's entertainment complex in Liguanea. He had heard that Morgana was seeing a guy over there. Good for her he thought, he didn't miss her as he had Bobbette and April and several other women.

They were finishing their crayfish soup when the waiter came with the menu. Stewart ordered garlic shrimps and festival while April ordered curried lobster and bammy.

"This is a great place. Do you come here often?"

Because of the status in his life that she had now given herself, he knew what her next question would be.

"Maybe once before, but that was a couple of years ago."

"I love dining out and this place looks pretty affordable. It seems that it's a place for lovers," she said. April's words could be true as there were only couples dining. There were about eight couples there, ranging in age from mid-twenties to mid-fifties. The age range in the dining room surely was no indication of the age where romance started or where it ended.

The waiter brought their food and surprisingly, Stewart asked April to bless the food before they started eating.

They were halfway way through their meal when April asked.

"How did you find out about Morgana and her new guy?"

"Jacinth La Croix told me about them. She said that she saw them in a nightclub in Miami, they seemed like lovers to her."

Jacinth was an agent at Stafford Life and General Insurance Company. This was the company, Stewart worked with.

"I hope she settles down with that guy, because she isn't going to get you back. At least she has broken off with you, so if and when she returns you'd better let her know that you're off limits."

"She was just throwing herself at me and claiming that she was my main woman and her mother wanted us to be friends. They were saying that if we got engaged before she went away then as soon as she was finished with her studies and return we could get married but I turned them down. She emailed me saying that she heard that you were practically living with me so she was therefore ending our relationship."

"Did you love her?"

Stewart looked her straight in the eyes.

"Maybe I did, but after I met you, it's just you I love and not her despite her sticking to me," he told her. They continued to eat their food. Stewart thought that what he had just said was only partially true. He had in fact met April before Morgana but the former wouldn't have known that. She wouldn't have known that he was sleeping with her before he started going out with Morgana.

“Sometimes I feel like leaving you. Morgana has gone away and I thought I would have you all to myself, but you have this girl, Bobbette Greene, who claims that she and you are lovers. Everywhere she sees me she wants to pick a fight.”

“That girl is Robert Parson’s woman. Do you think that guy’s woman would have anything to do with me? I know her, but we’re just good friends.”

“Maybe, Robert isn’t doing his work and she has you to help him out.”

“It’s nothing like that, whatever she says. I get enough loving from you. I don’t want anymore from any other woman.”

The entertainment complex had a dancing hall and already couples were on the dance floor. Stewart had been thinking of going up to Brenton Walker’s place in Gordon Town but April said that it was a place for older couples. April chose apple pie for her desert while Stewart had fruit cake. He paid their bill and then took April to the dance floor.

Chapter Two

June 16,2004-“Your former girlfriend will soon be returning home,” April said to Stewart. They were at his apartment in Morris Mews. Stewart jumped up out of his chair at April’s surprise announcement.

“What did you say?” he asked. “I can’t believe it. You must be joking or something.”

“Morgana is returning home next month,”April repeated.

“That’s news to me. The last I heard was that she had found some American guy over there and they were going steady,” he declared and sat back down in his chair.

“I told you already to warn her off. You don’t belong to her again.”

“Doesn’t she have a boyfriend now? I don’t see what you’re worried about. She isn’t coming back to me and I don’t want her back.”

April went inside for some more fruit punch and refilled their glasses.

“You know Stewart, my mother always warned me that I was wasting my time with you. I think Morgana’s return will prove her right or wrong.”

“Miss Camille knows that I care about you. I don’t know how she can be saying that. She has always been complimentary to me so how can she be saying those things behind my back?”

Stewart drank some of his drink as did April.

“Maybe she doesn’t know about your wild side, but she’s a sensible woman and has probably sized you up as a man who likes to have lots of women.”

“I don’t have lots of women and you know that too.”

“I know you’re sleeping with sexy Bobbette as they call her or why would she be so hostile towards me?”

“You’re imagining things between me and that girl.”

“Why can’t you just settle down with me alone? Why do I have to share you with any other woman? Don’t I give you enough loving?”

“It’s just you alone I have now.”

“I’m going to watch and if you go back to that girl, Morgana, I’m going to leave you.”

“Go back to Morgana, are you crazy?”

“I’ll be here watching your every move,” she said as they sat in their chairs feeling the cooling effect of the breeze blowing down from the hills. After a while, both of them became sleepy and fell into a short nap, no doubt sleeping off the effects of the heavy meal they’d just had.

Stewart kept shaking his head after Sunday with April bantering him about Morgana and now Bobbette sending this urgent text that she wanted a meeting with him. He thought he had to dig deep into his mental faculties as to how to appease both women. They were to meet at Edith Chin’s bar and grill in Manor Park. When he arrived, he saw her seated on a stool outside shaded by one of those patio umbrellas. She was dressed in a blue strapless dress and had on a pair of leather slippers. She had a scarf tying down her hair. He parked his car beside hers, locked it up and came to sit opposite her. He gave her a kiss on her right cheek.

“So how is the woman with the shapeliest body in the world, today?”

“Am I that woman you’re talking about? I don’t know about that. What I can say is that maybe I’m not very smart or else I wouldn’t let you get away with some of the things you do.”

He ordered an energy drink for himself and one for her too.

“I know you’re a very smart woman.”

“Your former girlfriend is returning home next month,” she said and when he gave her a blank stare she continued as their drinks arrived.

“Don’t stare at me with that blank expression on your face. You knew she was returning. Are you planning to go back to her?”

“Morgana and I are finished and I told you that she was seeing somebody else. She has her life to live and I have mine,” he told her and took some more swallows of his drink.

“Is she returning to a job out here? You told me that after she finished her degree she would get a job with a cousin of her late father. You’d think that with a job over there and her boyfriend also over there she’d be in no hurry to return home. If it was me, I would be staying, unless I had something better to return to and my boyfriend and I weren’t all that friendly anymore.”

Stewart again gave her a blank stare.

“I’ll admit that she was my woman, but since she sent me that email breaking off with me, I just sort of forgot about her. I didn’t even know that she had finished her studies. I knew that once she finished them she was going to work for Gordon but I thought she would have stayed longer and get some more experience before coming home. Maybe she’s just homesick, I don’t know.”

“That guy and her, are they still friends?”

Stewart took some more swallows of his drink. He took out his rag and wiped his forehead.

“I haven’t heard from Morgana for almost two years now. As I said, I have no knowledge of what she has been doing during that time,” he replied. They finished their drinks and Stewart ordered two more.

“That’s how it is, Bobbette. Maybe she’s even engaged to this guy, or they could be planning to get married soon, I don’t know.”

“If you go back to her I’m leaving you.”

“You have nothing to worry about, as that won’t happen.”

Bobbette finished her drink and stood up.

“Stewart, baby, I have to leave. Robert is nearly home by now and I don’t want him to reach home and I’m not there,” she told him and gave him a small kiss before going to her car. Stewart watched her reverse out of the parking lot and drive away, but not before waving goodbye to him.

What the hell did all those women want from him? Morgana had agreed to be friends with him again. Voluptuous Bobbette and hot April had vowed never to sleep with him again if he befriended their arch enemy. He didn’t believe them and would go right ahead and be with Morgana. He would get engaged to her as soon as she returned home.

June 30,2004-Stewart and Morgana were at her home in the Canrieves and they had agreed to be engaged. It was Morgana's welcoming home party and Stewart had attended the dinner consisting of platters of meat, locally produced food, vegetables and several bottles of champagne. He had then announced that he and Morgana would be engaged in September and probably get married a few months later depending on how the engagement worked out. After the dinner, they had retired to one of the concrete benches in the spacious garden to talk.

“Stewart, you shocked mummy and Aunt Sally by announcing that engagement.”

“I nearly lost you when I heard that you were seeing that other guy. So I had to do it.”

Morgana hadn’t changed much. She looked more mature and her face looked a bit paler but it could have been due to the fact that she had spent such a long time in a colder climate.

“Didn’t you miss me?”

“I didn’t come for the first Summer or Christmas holidays, that I was over there. Then dad died and I came out and heard that you were misbehaving and you know what happened.”

“Let’s put those things behind us and move on. We have the future ahead of us and I’m really sorry about Byron and Sid.”

“Every time I think about it, I feel sad about that gunman pumping all those bullets into Sid. I couldn’t come for his funeral because of my studies, but I have apologized to Sally. Then we’ve not up to now found daddy’s body or those of the other men. Mummy and the other widows have been having a memorial service every year since the tragedy. They plan to continue until they find their bodies and each year it’ll be at the church where one of them used to worship.”

Stewart had heard rumors that at least one of the men on the boat was involved in drugs and all of them had been killed and their bodies dumped at sea and the boat captured. He didn’t think it was Byron, but their killers probably didn’t want to leave any eyewitnesses hence the wholesale slaughter of everyone on board.

“It was really tragic. I hope nothing like that ever happens again. I don’t think I’ll ever go on a boat again. I’m so glad that mummy dumped up our pool.”

Stewart didn’t agree with her about the dumping up of the pool but he didn’t want to sound unsympathetic.

“I’m so glad that we’re going to be engaged. I hope that everything will be all right and we can get married shortly thereafter. But hear me talking about marriage and I’m not even working. Do you think you could support a stay at home wife?”

“Of course I could, but talking about work, I know you’re interested in working with a bank or some big firm. I know this firm that you could check. Their name is Newman and Graham and they’re management consultants.”

“I’m getting my resume together. You can give me their address or email and I’ll send them an application plus my resume. I gained real first world experience working for Gordon. I was thinking of staying another year or two and he was down on me to extend my stay. Then you called and I just decided to come home to be with you again. I hope that it was the right decision.”

“Newman and Graham is a professional firm and they’ve been around for a very long time. I’m sure if you get a job with them you won’t regret not staying longer with Gordon’s firm.”

“Lots of people told me that I had lost you forever, but I always knew that one day you’d come back to me. I’ll do my best to make sure that you won’t regret your decision to return home to be with me again.”

“Let’s see, if you behave yourself, we can take things from there.”

Stewart had made sure to turn off his cell phone. He knew that neither Bobbette nor April was aware that he had plans to get engaged to Morgana. At least he hadn’t told them, but they were bound to find out, maybe some weeks after it happened. That would give him enough time to come up with some plausible explanation.

“So how is the entertainment scene doing these days?”

“I’ve not been out much, with you not around. I’ve been keeping a low profile.”

Morgana laughed.

“You, keeping a low profile, you know what, I shouldn’t have told you when I was returning and then visit Corners and see you in action.”

“Corners would look strange to me, it’s been so long I haven’t been there.”

“If you want we can go there tomorrow night.”

She told him that she wanted to go, whereupon they returned inside to find Sally and her new man, Vernon Hanlan as well as all of the guests gone. Morgana’s mother, Monique’s new man, Val Williams, was also gone but the rest of the family was watching television. Stewart bade them all goodbye and went his way. He turned on his cell phone and checked for missed calls and realized that both April and Bobbette had called him.

He decided to call April tonight and Bobbette tomorrow.

Stewart noticed the tone of April’s voice the moment she started speaking and he didn’t like it.

“Stewart, I want to know why you haven’t called me? Is it because of Morgana? Is she back on the island? Is she the reason why I’m not hearing from you?”

“Morgana is still abroad, but she could very well be on the island. I don’t know and I don’t care.”

“As I told you before if I had a number for her I’d call and warn her off.”

“April, you’re making a fuss over nothing. Why would I suddenly take up back with Morgana after I’ve spent all this time with you?”

“You know the saying about old lovers, but we’ll see how it works out. But I’m not going to simply lie down and take it. I want to come and look for you tomorrow evening.”

Stewart hesitated a bit.

“No, not tomorrow, I have a meeting with our unit manager that could go up to ten o’clock.”

She agreed to come the day after tomorrow.

The next day he called Bobbette.

“Stewart, what’s really going on? Why didn’t I get you when I called last night? Your phone just kept ringing and sending me to voice mail.”

“I don’t know what could have happened. Maybe I dropped off to sleep.”

“I heard that Morgana has returned home.”

“That’s news to me. Are you sure about that?”

“I got it from a very reliable source.”

“I don’t have a number for her, but I’ll call Monique and find out if it’s true.”

“I want to know about your next move if it’s true that she has really returned home.”

“What do you expect me to do?”

“I think you and her are going to rekindle your friendship. I am almost one hundred percent certain you will soon be sleeping with her again.”

“You forget that she has her boyfriend in the States.”

“Maybe she has left him to come out here and be with you.”

“You’re just speculating. Morgana and I will be nothing more than social friends, if and when she returns.”

“I’ll never share you with her. And just a piece of advice, I don’t sleep with married men.”

Stewart took another swallow of his malt beverage as he thought about the threats from April and Bobbette. After she sent him that email breaking off with him, Morgana had sworn never to talk to him again. He just had to play his cards right. He didn’t think he had made a bad situation worse by announcing that he wanted to be engaged to her. He could always pass it off as her mother and aunt demanding that before they allowed her to talk to him again.

August 14,2004-April looked with incredulous eyes at what Stewart was saying to her. She was his apartment, having gone straight there after hearing the rumor of his impending engagement Morgana.

“That guy just messed her up. I don’t know if he promised to get married to her. What I do know is that they were to be engaged and he just went and found another girlfriend, leaving Morgana out in the cold.”

“Monique called me and said Morgana was blaming me for what happened, because if I’d gott engaged to her she wouldn’t have been friendly with any other guy. She said that Morgana w crying a lot and getting hysterical. She told everybody that she wanted to be engaged to me. I to Monique that I couldn’t help her. Then Sally called and I turned her down too. After that, Eloi Nembhard, Morgana’s aunt on her father’s side, called and begged me and I just changed my min I don’t even know if I’m going to go through with it again.”

“What an incredulous story and you expect stupid me to believe that?”

Bobbette had shouted and screamed at him when he told her that Morgana had begged him to get engaged to her. He had told her that Morgana had offered to buy the ring and her mother would pay for the engagement party.

“It will begin to sound more incredulous because Monique has already bought the ring and she will pay for the engagement party.”

“I suppose that her dear daughter has returned, looking for lost love and you’re only too willing to oblige. Maybe if she had brought back a child or was pregnant, you would have been only too willing to accept paternity.”

“You don’t have to behave that way.”

“I must be a real idiot to sit here and listen to all that crap from you. I know people who’ve seen Morgana out and there’s nothing wrong with her.”

“You can’t look at a person and know that everything is okay with them. Why do people change suddenly?”

“I’m no doctor, how’d I know? Anyway, I’m warning you that if you ever put a ring on Morgana’s finger, don’t ever come near me again,” she said and took up her bag.

“Where are you going?”

She looked at him and Stewart thought that she wasn’t going to answer him.

“To my home, where else? Do you think I’ll stay with you after what you did or are planning to do? Maybe Bobbette will but I won’t. I was just warming Morgana’s bed for her, but she can have it back, full time now.”

“Morgana wasn’t on the island fully before you were ready to take up back where you left off with her. What was I to you then, just something to be used and tossed aside?”

She flung open the front door and stormed outside.

Stewart heard her calling a taxi and didn’t move. Presently he heard when a taxi stop, a car door slam and the car drove away.

She had passed some remarks about Bobbette. It just continued her line of thought that he was sleeping with that girl. It showed that despite his many efforts, he hadn’t been able to convince her that he and that girl weren’t lovers.

Stewart went and took a beer out of his refrigerator. He drank some of it and thought about his women. Had he made a mistake in telling both women that Morgana had broken up with him? He shouldn’t have said anything bad about her to them, thus making them feel he was no longer interested in her. He should have maintained Morgana as his main woman even though she was abroad. Now that she was back they would know where they stood with him. The danger there was that after she started seeing the new guy, word would have gotten out that he and she were no longer friends. Maybe he shouldn’t have told Morgana that he wanted to get engaged to her but just string her along just as he was doing with April and Bobbette. He had only formalized a situation that he had left hanging before she went away and of course to get into the good books of both Monique and Sally.

He knew that Bobbette would soon come around, but he knew what her latest warning meant. He knew how hopeless it would be to try to convince April that his pending engagement to Morgana meant nothing to him as the girl would be convinced that he was planning to marry her arch enemy

January 21, 2005-Stewart and Morgana were dining at the Drummond Court Hotel on Mountain View Avenue. They were having their appetizers before the waiter came to take their orders. They were planning to go clubbing later on. He and Morgana had become engaged last

September. Many of their mutual friends and close relatives were there congratulating them and hoping that they would tie the knot in a matter of months. As he had predicted, Bobbette had come around to his way of thinking and was sleeping with him again. April had gone away, swearing never to have anything more to do with him.

Both of them ordered fish. Morgana took slice fish and rice and peas while Stewart had his with locally produced food. They had just started eating when Stewart asked.

“You were saying that these two guys are to join your firm next week. What are their names?”

“Brad Newman and Rick Graham.”

“I know those two guys.”

“I didn’t know that. What do you know about them? Are they good people?”

“Rick is okay, but Brad is a show off type of guy,” he replied.

“I’m surprised you don’t know them. Brad and I used to do holiday jobs at Caswell’s former firm.”

“Maybe I’ve seen them before, but their names don’t ring any bells.”

They were halfway through their meal. Since Morgana had been back, she had begun sleeping with him but wouldn’t spend nights with him and was again complaining that she wanted to save it up until after they were married. Stewart’s mind kept flashing back to April; he was beginning to miss her.

“Why did April migrate?” Morgana asked.

“How would I know? I’ll admit we were friends, but contrary to what you might think, only social friends.”

“And she just got up and left the island and didn’t even say a word to you. I find that hard to believe.”

Stewart scratched his left leg. He put down his knife and fork, took up a servette and wiped something from his mouth.

He took up back the knife and fork.

“Why do you think she left the island so suddenly?”

“We weren’t friends so I would be the last person to know.”

They had now finished eating and Stewart was drinking a beer while Morgana was having a glass of lemonade.

“My aunt, Eloise, told me that I would have a hard time holding on to you. She said that you were too smooth a talker and you have the lover-boy looks.”

“She isn’t easy. I remembered dancing with her at your send off party and she told me that I could have her if I wanted. I knew she was joking of course, as her husband is only a few years older than I am.”

“She’s like that, Mark would have knocked you flat,” she remarked and Stewart laughed as her husband, was a huge giant of a man.

The waiter came and Stewart paid him, plus giving him a tip.

“Let’s go to Corners and really enjoy ourselves,” Stewart told her and the two of them left holding hands for his car.

Chapter Three

“So, Morgan, you haven’t told us about those two new vice-presidents who’ll be joining your firm tomorrow,” Beverly Simmonds requested of her elder sister.

They were seated around the supper table on their back patio. Neither of the girls was going out nor was their mother, Monique. Seventeen year old Darren had taken his supper to have in their living room and watch the news. He was perhaps the only one in their household interested in the mundane and sometimes turned off events, masquerading on television as news. At least, that was the opinion of the other members of the household. Darren only listened to the news because sometimes he got quizzed about it in class.

“I don’t know anything about them except their names,” Morgana replied. “Stewart knows them, although he wasn’t able to tell me much.”

“Is Rory coming for you, Bev?” Monique asked.

“Not tonight, mummy. I told him that I have some late night studying to do.”

“So what are their names, Morgana?” Monique asked out of curiosity.

“Brad Newman, that’s Mister Newman’s son. He’s about twenty six. Rick Graham is Mister Graham’s son. He’s probably the same age as Brad and probably a bit shorter.”

“Are they attached and are they good looking?” Bev asked.

“Sure you don’t think I would know if they’re attached, but I suppose they’ll have girlfriends over there if not out here, oh I don’t know. Yes, Bev, they’re good looking, based on the pictures that I saw.”

“Oh gosh, I can’t wait to meet them. Are you sure you’re telling me the truth?”

“Of course, why would I lie to you?”

“So what are you going to do about Rory and Glen?” Monique asked.

“I have my fiancé; I have no interest in those two guys.”

Morgana flashed her engagement ring.

Bev pouted her lips and rolled her eyes at Morgana.

“You’re a cruel sister, Morgan. Mummy, Rory is my boyfriend and Glen is just a friend, plus he has his girlfriend.”

“Girls, be careful, that’s all I can say. I only hope they’re the decent type. They won’t come out here and lead some local girl on and then spring a surprise on her when the wife or girlfriend suddenly shows up.”

“Oh my, maybe I’d better curb my enthusiasm,” Bev moaned.

“Maybe you’d better stick to the evil you know, little sister.”

“Let’s go and look for Sally. Maybe we can play some dominoes and ludo with her and Vernon.”

All three women agreed to go and visit Sally leaving Darren at home. He said he was okay and would probably play some computer games or watch some movies.

Brad Newman arrived at the offices of Newman and Graham Limited, management consultants, that Monday morning, at eight o’clock. Brad had returned to the island on Friday after completing his Master’s degree in finance from Grantham Metropolitan University and would take up a position as a vice-president with the firm. Rick would also be a vice-president and both would report to Blake Morrison. Both men saw nothing wrong with that, they could learn a great deal from Blake. The man had spent several years in the United Kingdom before returning home to work with the government on several multi-million dollar projects. He had left to work as a consultant with a multi-national corporation. Blake had only joined the firm after much

persuasion from Caswell Graham, his former schoolmate.

Brad had also learned about Morgana Simmonds, a manager, employed by the firm in September last year. From all the reports, he had received, she was a real good looking and he was eager to meet her. He also understood that she had gotten engaged to Stewart Brown a week after she began working with the firm. He knew Stewart when he used to get holidays from university and would get a job at Caswell's former firm. Stewart, who was attending university, was doing holiday jobs there too. Even then the man used to go around with a whole host of women. He wondered if he had changed or maybe he was just using his engagement to hide his various cheatings. Any girl courageous enough to be engaged to Stewart must have an interesting personality, Brad thought.

Rick Graham drove to work that morning from his parent's home on Crawford Avenue in Arcadia Gardens. When he arrived, he was introduced to the staff by his father, Caswell, Russell Newman and Blake Morrison. He understood that Brad had arrived before him and had already been introduced to the staff. He was intrigued by one of the managers, Morgana Simmonds. He thought she had an excellent figure. She was probably about five feet eight inches tall and drop dead gorgeous with dreamy eyes.

Morgana wasn't overly enthusiastic about management consultancy and would have preferred a job in general management. She was only here based on Stewart's advice. He sold life insurance for Stafford Life and General Insurance Limited. He had started out in auditing before switching to sell life insurance.

Gordon had told her that should she fail to find a suitable or challenging job in Jamaica she was always welcomed back at Bryant, Murdock and Webbley.

After the excitement in the office over the arrival of the two vice-presidents had died down; Morgana resumed work on some assignments she had to complete before the week was out.

Minutes past lunchtime, Rick pushed his head into her office.

"Hi, care to have lunch with me?"

"I'm okay, I'm having lunch with my fiancé."

"I've been away for so long that I thought maybe you could fill me in on some of the happenings around town."

"I've just returned also, so I have to be asking my way around too."

Alex de Pass joined them. He was in the information technology section.

"You won't be luckier than I, Rick. I've been trying my luck with her, but I haven't passed first base yet."

"You, Alex, every girl is going crazy over you and you want me to fall in line, no sir, not this girl."

Alex laughed.

"Those are just rumors."

"I've seen you in action, myself," she said and Alex laughed again.

"You're really doing me bad, Morgana."

"It's true, I'm telling."

"I'm off, tell me that I'll be luckier another time," Rick requested.

"I'm not making any promises that I can't keep."

"You can't say that I didn't warn you, Rick," Alex said as he joined him going down the passageway to the cafeteria.

Beverly Simmonds got into her Honda Civic hatchback motor car on campus that afternoon. After she dropped off her two friends, Jovita Dorman and Melissa Donegal, she would be going down to her sister's office. She had two parties to attend this weekend. Her boyfriend, Rory Coombs, was home on vacation. If she had followed him she would have partied all week, but her studies came first and she couldn't afford to repeat any of her courses. She wanted to meet the two guys who were supposed to join Morgana's firm today.

The rest of the working week found Morgana fending off invitations from both men, to lunch and to the various sports bars and the hottest nightclubs around town. They seemed not to care one bit that she was engaged to someone they both knew. They seemed to find the idea of her being engaged to Stewart quite intriguing to say the least. She had to spend a great deal of time defending him and to announce that for their information her engagement would soon culminate in marriage to Stewart.

Morgana knew that Blake was having a party at his Red Hills Heights home that weekend to welcome her, Brad and Rick. She had heard that Rick was seeing Celia Donaldson, who had been a year behind her and one year ahead of Bev in high school. She had also heard that Brad was seeing Dania Reid, who had attended the school across the road from her school and was probably the same age as Celia. When she confronted both men with this information, they were very evasive. She told them that she would find out everything at the party.

Her mother and aunt had accepted Blake's invitation and would be attending. It would be a welcome night out for them both, what with the tragedies of the last few years, Morgana thought.

Sid's untimely death in November 2001 just as he was locking up that Saturday evening had threatened to put Sally's life in a tailspin.

She had to give up her job, where she worked as a volunteer administrator with the Downer Foundation, a charity in aid of needy children and go and run the business full-time. The hardware was her only source of income and she had a son and daughter finishing up college in the United States. It had been bad news the following year too, when Byron Simmonds had been lost at sea with four of his friends.

Monique, her sister, had been heartbroken, but she was more fortunate than Sally. As managing director of Palmer and Gold Limited, the giant Jamaican pharmaceutical importers, Byron had a large life insurance policy. The death benefits would enable Monique to live comfortable for the rest of her life. Sally was sure that Monique would rather have Byron by her side than the money. Upon realizing the value of Byron's insurance proceeds, Monique resigned her job as a senior secretary with Alrick Wright Insurance Brokers, one of the largest on the island. She went and took over the charity which Sally formerly ran. It had failed to find a replacement for her. Morgana and Beverly both borrowed money from their mother to buy cars, promising to repay her when they reached the stipulated thirty years of age at which time they could begin withdrawing from their trust fund. Morgana had in fact postponed the purchase of a car until she returned home last July.

Morgana had told Stewart that she would be coming to the party along with Monique and her man, Val and that she would see him there. She didn't know what to think when she reached there and found that he was nowhere around. She went to be introduced to some of their clients, whom she hadn't met as yet. She danced with Blake and was dancing with a client when she spied him. When the song finished she cried her excuse and went over to him.

"Where were you?" she asked. "I thought you would have been here before me."

“I had to do a rush thing with a prospective client,” he told her, taking her hand and leading her to the dance floor.

“How about us going for a spin later on?” he asked as he held her close.

“I came with my mother and Val. This party was put on in my honor as well as those two other vice-presidents. What would my boss think if he asked for me and heard that I’d already left?”

“They won’t miss you and we can return before the party’s over.”

“I just want to party, so anything else you have in mind for tonight, you had better put on hold.”

“Why not spend tonight with me? We could go to my apartment after the party.”

“Stewart, behave yourself, you know I’m yours, so just enjoy tonight,” she said and held him tighter.

Monique saw several of her friends at the party. She greeted them and had a chat with a few of them. She was now taking a breather while Val talked to a few of his friends. She had met him in July 2003, almost a year after Byron's death. He understood when she told him that she was still mourning the loss of her husband of twenty four years.

He had been content to wait on her. He was going through a divorce from his wife of twenty two years. The girls would have preferred to have their father around but didn’t want to see their mother get lonely and had encouraged her. She had gone out on a few dates with him, after which they started a relationship.

Monique wasn’t sure about a second marriage, although Val was confident that his divorce would soon be finalized. Val was a tall man who surprisingly at fifty only had a few gray hairs and didn’t carry much of a paunch. He was the investment manager for a leading building society in Kingston.

Monique saw Sally dancing with Vernon Hanlan, who had been her constant companion since they first met in August 2002, giving her solace, especially with Sid no longer around. Vernon was probably five years or so younger than Sally and was a medium sized man in sharp contrast to the giant, Sid. He was a building contractor. She saw Morgana dancing with Stewart and Bev dancing with Rory.

Darren had gone to another party with some of his friends. She had put a curfew on him so that he had to be home by ten o’clock on both Friday and Saturday nights. Tonight for example, she had asked one of her neighbors to note the time he got in as she and her husband wouldn’t be going out. He was now a senior having passed eight subjects with four distinctions and two credits in his high school leaving examinations.

She had to be constantly lecturing him about girls, and making it a rule that he introduce all his girlfriends to her. She randomly did a midnight inspection to ensure that he was in his room and an early morning one too.

Brad Newman and Dania Reid arrived at the party in separate cars and were now dancing together. Dania was wearing a baby doll dress while Brad was wearing jeans and a sports shirt. Blake and his wife, Leila, and teenaged daughters, Veronica and Sophia, were doing a splendid job as hosts, Brad thought. Blake and Leila were there to welcome the guests and had in fact opened the dance floor. He saw his father, Russell and his mother, Daphne, dancing. Rick’s father, Caswell, was dancing with their company secretary, Stacy Lewis. Rick’s step-mother was seated in a chair and watching the proceedings. Rick was dancing with Celia.

He saw Morgana dancing with Stewart. He had to admit that she was one of the most

beautiful girls, he had ever laid his eyes on. She was wearing a party dress that was just above her knees. Her hair, which was normally down to her shoulders was pinned up. He thought that even without the makeup she now had on she would still have looked glamorous. Her sister's beauty rivalled Morgana's but she had broader hips and her breasts were fuller. Maybe it was Morgana's eyes Brad thought, which simply lit up her face. Bev's eyes were big and bold. Bev was wearing a short pants suit and her hair was canerowed fine.

Dania saw him looking at Morgana and said.

"From we reach here, you haven't taken your eyes off her."

"Who's that?"

"Morgana, all of you guys seem to be going crazy over her."

"She's good looking, I'm sure you don't have anything against me for saying so."

"I'm here with you and you're paying me scant attention. If you want to go and flirt with her, that's your business," she said, pulling out of his arms and going into a corner.

Out of the corner of her eyes Morgana saw them arguing, then Dania stormed outside with Brad going after her.

She saw Stewart looking at Bobbette Greene. When the song finished, Morgana and Stewart went to have a seat and he excused himself. Two more songs played and Morgana seeing that he wasn't returning, went in search of him. She saw him in a corner with Bobbette. They seemed to be arguing very animatedly. She didn't stop to hear what it was about, but returned to the party area. As she entered, Brad came up to her.

"I wondered when I would catch you alone."

"You have me now," she said and laughed as he took her hand and led her to the dance floor. She saw her mother, sister and aunt looking curiously at her, but she wanted to have a good time. At least Stewart would realize that he wasn't the only good looking man around.

"I hope you aren't going to deny now that Dania is your girlfriend. You've spent most of the night dancing with her."

She decided not to ask him why they had been quarrelling or of Dania's present whereabouts.

"We're just good friends, but it's you I like. Anybody ever told you that you're the most beautiful woman alive?"

"You're just flattering me," she said and laughed. "I wonder what Dania would say if I asked her about you?"

"She would tell you just like I did."

"Anybody who saw you two at this party would say that you're lovebirds."

"If you say that to Dania, she would say that it was I who told you so and nothing could be further from the truth."

"Brad, you're impossible, but you can't fool my woman's intuition though."

"I think that maybe it just got fooled," he replied and she laughed.

Dania had re-entered the party and was looking at them dancing so also was Stewart.

When the song finished, Morgana left Brad and went over to Stewart.

"I saw you and Bobbette arguing. It seems as if you were having quite a spat. Is she here alone and where is her boyfriend? By the way, who is her boyfriend these days?"

She remembered that Bobbette and Dania had been in the same class in high school. It was the first time she was seeing Bobbette since returning to the island.

Stewart only grinned and said.

"Oh, it was nothing; it's just something I said to her. I don't know where her boyfriend is. Maybe he's on his way here. I never asked her. Her boyfriend is Robert Parsons. He's gotten big since you've been away. I don't think you know him."

Morgana shook her head.

She had never heard about Robert Parsons and couldn't remember who had been Bobbette's latest boyfriend before she went away.

"I've heard things about you and her. Maybe this is the time to ask you about them."

"What kind of rumors did you hear?"

"That while I was away you used to go around together."

"I used to go out with several girls, but they were just my friends. I never slept with any of them. And what about you? I saw you dancing with Mr. Bigshot, Brad Newman. I suppose Rick Graham will want his dance too. The two of them are always in a competition to see who can beat the other. I suppose you'll be the next prize they'll be fighting over. I've never asked you about that guy you had while you were in Florida."

"Stewart, stop it!"

Morgana stamped her feet and stormed away.

Dania pushed past Brad but he followed and caught up with her.

"Why did you return?"

"You wanted to get rid of me so that you could continue your pursuit of Morgana. Is that it, Brad? I just decided to turn around my car and return to see how well you were doing," she said and laughed.

"You're too jealous. Why do you think I would be pursuing her when I had you waiting for me all these years?"

"You know it's you I love, so stop acting silly. Remember the great times we used to have before I went away."

"It's that Morgana, since she returned, she's just showing off and behaving as if she's any beauty queen."

"Oh come off it, she's not better looking than you. Come, let's return to the party," he told her, taking her hand.

Rick saw when Morgana storm away from Stewart and went after her. He caught up with her on the front patio. From there they could make out just a few people playing around in Blake's pool. Celia had decided to take a breather and was having some refreshments while talking to some of her friends.

"Don't tell me you've stopped dancing for the night and I've not even had my dance yet."

"I'm really tired, Rick, and I'm not in the mood right now."

"Maybe we could sit and talk."

He took a seat opposite her.

She didn't answer at once, but after a while she nodded.

"You know when I returned I was thinking of finally settling down in Jamaica and help to turn the company into a powerhouse, but now I'm not too sure. I got a lot of offers before I returned and I kind of miss up North and my friends."

"I thought you were already settled. You should be able to make it out here. What are you afraid of?"

"I've never been afraid of anything. I know I can make it, but I'm not sure about the country. I just don't like how they run things out here anymore."

They continued talking with Rick continuing to express his disappointment at the bureaucratic bungling that was simply holding back developments in the country.

Stewart spied Morgana and came over.

"Rick, what's going on? Morgana, I'm leaving, are you coming along?"

"No, I'm waiting for my mother and sister."

She was looking around trying to see if she saw Bobbette but she was nowhere to be seen.

Stewart saw her looking around and probably guessed the reason for her discomfiture but remained nonplussed.

"Okay then, I'll call you tomorrow. Rick, you take good care of her for me," he said before walking away.

"Celia must be waiting for you, Rick," Morgana told him.

"I'll soon go to her."

"I'd better go and see how mummy, Bev and Aunt Sally are doing," Morgana said, getting up.

"What about that dance you promised me?"

"I've told you that I'm tired, maybe some other time," she said as Brad came over.

"I saw your fiance' leaving," he stated.

"I'll soon be leaving too," Morgana said, not wanting to be the source of any conflict between the two men.

"Celia must be looking for you, Rick."

"I could say the same thing about Dania."

Morgana wanting to get away from them spied Beverly and beckoned her over and she complied.

Again, both men started gushing over her and Morgana excused herself saying that she was going to look for her mother.

Driving back to his apartment, Stewart saw Bobbette's blue 2001 Suzuki Swift hatchback motor car ahead of him going down Red Hills Road. He blew his car horn and she stopped the car. He pulled up beside her.

"I thought you would have reached there by now."

"I was waiting to make sure you'd gotten away."

"Okay then, let's go," he said, letting her continue ahead of him.

Bobbette left her car at her apartment and returned to Stewart's house in his car.

When they were inside his bedroom, she asked.

"Do you think she suspects anything?"

"After she saw us talking, she asked me about you."

"And what did you tell her?"

She had finished undressing now and came into his arms.

"I told her nothing, except that I knew you from university days."

"Stewart, we shouldn't be doing this to her," Bobbette said as they started kissing and Stewart drew her towards the bed. He had also taken off his clothes except for his shorts. He stopped kissing her and then started sucking her breasts.

He caressed her body using his fingers to play with her most sensitive areas. Bobbette kept undulating her legs in this the oldest dance of all.

"Stewart, please."

"Please what?"

"You know what I want."

Later as they lay in each other's arms, still savoring the joys that the joining of their bodies had just given them, Bobbette remarked.

"That second orgasm was mind boggling."

"You didn't want it to stop."

"It nearly knocked me out."

She hit him in his chest.

"Why did you leave Morgana alone with Rick and Brad?"

Stewart laughed.

"I asked her if she wanted me to drop her home, but she said she would go with her mother. She's safe; her whole family is practically there."

"You can say that again, no wonder you didn't want to dance with me," she said. "I wonder how she let you go, knowing that I was around."

"Who says I didn't want to dance with you? Of course I wanted to but I knew it would cause a fuss. As for wondering where you were, when I told her I was leaving, I saw her looking all over the place for you."

"We've done a lot of terrible things to that girl. Wake me up at the usual time so that I can go home. Although none of the neighbors are nosy, you can never tell," she said, dropping off to sleep almost immediately.

Stewart wondered where Morgana was. Maybe she had already left the party. It served her right for not wanting to spend nights with him. He wondered what she had been thinking about when she was looking all over the place for Bobbette and didn't see her. The only way that she could know that he was sleeping with her would be to come to his apartment anytime from now until she left in the morning. He knew that Morgana wouldn't be doing any such thing.

He wondered why she had been asking him who was Bobbette's boyfriend these days. He had to be careful because these girls knew a lot about each other. The only boyfriend, he knew about was Robert. He didn't like to dig into a woman's past.

Stewart got up to set the alarm on his cell phone for four thirty that morning. Almost none of her neighbors would be up at that time. It would allow her about three more hours of sleep at his apartment plus what she would get when she went home. He went and took off the condom before returning to the bed beside her. Shortly he too was snoring, after recounting the night's events.

Morgana had reached home now. As she lay in bed, she knew she had made a mistake in not having Stewart take her home. But she reasoned that he could have taken her home and gone back to Bobbette's apartment to sleep with her. She had to find out if they were lovers. She had no doubt that they had been quarrelling over something and maybe it had to do with her. Maybe he hadn't told her that she would be at the party. Bobbette may have come to the party expecting to spend the night in Stewart's arms only to find her there.

She was sure that Bobbette had left the party before him. So that was something they had planned. She should have realized that once Bobbette was there without her boyfriend, something was up.

She regretted not driving her car to the party. It would have been easy to trail Stewart to his apartment and have a confrontation with him and Bobbette if as she suspected she was there. In any case if she was mobile he wouldn't have risked it with Bobbette. As it was she had come with her mother in Val's car and it would hardly have been appropriate for her to have asked him to take her down to Stewart's apartment. Nor would it make sense for her to get into her car and go down there at this time of the morning. She felt like calling Stewart, but he had only a cell phone and even if he was with Bobbette the only way she could find out would be to catch them in the act. She felt sleepy and finally dozed off.

Rory had driven Bev home from the party and they were seated in his car, talking. Friday night they had been to Melissa Donegal's mother's birthday party in Cherry Gardens.

“So how’s it going to go after I go up, Bev? Like I said I won’t be back in Jamaica until next year.”

“We can phone each other and write or send emails.”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you? We just phone and write or send emails, that’s all?”

“What else can we do? I’m going to college. I don’t see how I’ll get time off to visit you plus I don’t think I can afford it.”

“You could make a commitment that you won’t see anybody else while I’m away.”

“You’ve been away for more than three years now and you’ve only been back about half a dozen times and I haven’t been seeing anybody else. You know that I want to come over there to do medicine.”

“You could live with me. It would be just like old times.”

“I would only live with you if we were married and besides, I don’t want to get married yet.”

“Who’s talking about marriage? We don’t have to be married to live together.”

Bev yawned, feigning sleep as she didn’t want to pursue the argument with Rory any further.

“I want to sleep,” she said, kissing him and opening the car door to get out, but Rory drew her back into the car and kissed her harder but Bev pulled out of his arms.

“I told you that I wanted to sleep.”

“Come home with me.”

“You know I can’t do that,” she again protested. “I know that mummy or Morgana must be waiting up on me so I’d better go.”

Rory watched her go without any further argument. Brittany was pressuring him about the baby she was having and he had just come out to get away from her and to see some more of Bev. Bev had asked him about her but he had denied that they were friends. It must have been Roxanne who told her about Brittany.

Brittany’s mother, Martina, was also down on him as was his own mother, Cecile, to stand by Brittany. Martina said that Brittany came from a very respectable family. Her father was a pastor and didn’t know about her pregnancy as yet, but as soon as he found out the pressure would become almost unbearable. He wondered why was it Brittany and not Bev? At least Monique wouldn’t be so insistent on him marrying Bev to give her some respectability. She would know that he wasn’t in a position to support a wife and might not even have insisted that he support the baby. Rory started the car and drove off.

Chapter Four

On Sunday Morgana went to church in Havendale. Monique and Bev said that they were too tired to attend and Darren was fast asleep. She had to look twice to make sure it was really Brad and Dania who were there. She had never seen them there before. They seemed to have made up. They looked like the ideal couple. He was tall and muscular and she was of medium height. Both of them were good looking people and maybe would soon get married and start a family.

The church was packed as it usually was whenever Bishop Nugent preached and chairs had to be put on the outside of the church hall. She joined in the shouting and clapping. She was sure that Brad's parents attended a different church so maybe he and Dania were just visiting. All the Simmonds' children had been christened in this church. Morgana had attended church regularly before she went away but this was the first time since she returned home that she was attending. Maybe she should get Stewart to start coming with her as part of the preparations for them setting a date for marriage.

She looked at some other young couples sitting together. She knew only a few of them, but for them this was the first few months of married life. She thought about her own situation. Here she was engaged to this man and didn't even know where he was or what he was doing. She put all thoughts of Stewart out of her mind and concentrated on the service. When church was over she went and greeted some friends and Brad and Dania before driving home.

Rick had taken Celia to visit her mother, Velma, in Runaway Bay and was driving her home. They had agreed to live together and Celia would be moving into his townhouse on Kings Avenue off Hope Road before the week was out. They had been lovers since high school and they both could remember the love letters they had written each other and how passionate their lovemaking had been. Rick had negotiated the rental of the townhouse before he returned home and had finally tied up the deal a few days ago.

Morgana was having some coffee and her office door was open when she saw Brad going past and she called to him.

"Brad, I have to congratulate you and Dania. You looked the ideal couple. Did you remain after the service for counselling?"

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm asking you about Dania. I'm sure you'll soon make her your wife."

For a moment Morgana wondered if she was talking out of turn, but in the short time that she knew Brad she felt that he wouldn't be offended.

Brad laughed.

"You're teasing me, Morgana. That's a giant step to take and I'm not ready yet."

"Just asking, but the two of you looked like a husband and wife team that I'm sure I'm not the only one harboring those thoughts."

"I thought I would have seen you and your other half there as part of the preparations for your marriage celebrations."

Morgana bowed her head and Brad thought that maybe he had said something wrong.

"He's not the church going type, but I suppose I'll try to get him to go a few of these Sundays."

"I believe I'll see you more often in church, then."

"I'm not a Christian, but if I find the time I'll definitely go."

"I'm going down to the cafeteria to have breakfast so I'll see you around," he said going out of her office.

Monday evening, Rory came to visit Bev and they were talking in the garden of her home.

“Rory, I’m sorry, but I don’t think this long distance relationship is going to work.”

“I hope you aren’t thinking about Glen. I saw him looking at you the whole time we were at the party on Saturday night. He must have danced two times with Leona. If I wasn’t there he would have abandoned her for you.”

“Glen is just my friend and he has his girlfriend as you know. I’m sure he danced more than two times with her. But let me ask you a question. I’ve asked you about this girl, Brittany and you’ve denied that she and you are friends, but you’ve been in the States a good while now. Are you sure you don’t have a woman over there?”

“I don’t like American girls, so you don’t have to worry. Brittany is just a girl living in my block. Sure, I talk to her, but we’re nothing more than social friends,” he assured her.

Bev wanted to ask him why he didn’t like American girls, but she couldn’t be bothered or to ask any more questions about Brittany.

“There’re thousands of Jamaican girls over there.”

“But when they come over here they get Americanized and behave like the locals.”

“How’re you sure that when I come over there I won’t behave like those American girls?”

Rory laughed and hugged her.

“I know you too much. I know you would never change your accent and that’s why I want you to come over there so that we can live together.”

Bev pushed him away from her.

“I told you that I can’t live with you. Why should I live with you when we would be seeing each other regularly?”

Rory wished that she didn’t come to the States. It would be better to have Brittany over there and she down here so that they wouldn’t know about each other. If only Brittany hadn’t refused to take any of those morning after pills and waited until it was too late and then refused his offer to do an abortion everything would be all right.

“It would make it easier for us to get married. At least we’d know everything about each other.”

He didn’t want to sound like he didn’t want her to come over there.

“But then if I live with you, you might just decide that you know too much about me and move on to live with another woman.”

Without giving him a chance to reply, she continued.

“Rory, I don’t know why, but you’ve never asked me how I’m coping with university and all that and with you so far away.”

“Why do you think I came out here to look for you?”

“I’m always happy to see you. I’m glad for the times we spend together, but sometimes I get really lonely, especially when I call and don’t get you.”

“Maybe I’m in a meeting. At some of these meetings they insist that we turn off our cell phones.”

He drew her closer to him and kissed her.

“Suppose somebody sees us,” she protested, but made no attempt to pull out of his arms.

“That’s nothing, couples kiss on campus all the while.”

“So aren’t you jealous? Your classmates and co-workers are playing around. What about you?”

“I just think about you and that’s why I want you to come over there.”

Bev looked at her watch and saw that it was after eight o'clock.

"Remember I told you that I have an exam tomorrow."

Rory stood up.

"Remember that Wednesday is a holiday. Let's go clubbing tomorrow night and we can go to the beach the next day. I can't believe it's Friday I'm returning home."

They took up their chairs and walked back to the house.

"That would be great and I'll come to see you on Thursday," Bev told him.

Rory said his goodbye whereupon Bev departed to her room to study.

Rory was at home that Tuesday evening and he had his hands under his chin. Sooner than later he had to let Bev know the truth about Brittany if Roxanne didn't beat him to it. So far he had enjoyed having two women in different countries being in love with him. But as Brittany's belly got bigger, things would begin to get more complicated. His mother had called her sister, Sydonne and told her about Brittany.

She also told her about her eldest son, Lance's behavior. Lance was twenty seven and was in the States for twelve years now. He had dropped out of school and only occasionally got a job, but for the past two years he had been involved in gang violence. Rory knew that his mother was deeply worried about Lance. He went inside to get ready to go for Bev.

Robert Parsons arrived from Miami on Wednesday evening and immediately headed for Bobbette's apartment. Now he was stretched out on a couch in their bedroom after another passionate session of lovemaking with her. She had promptly dropped off to sleep. As he watched her naked body on the bed, he couldn't help wondering. Did she have another lover besides himself? One of his female employees had told him that she saw her talking to a guy by the name of Stewart Brown on campus. When he asked her about it, she told him that they were just good friends. One Saturday afternoon he had come home earlier than expected and caught her talking to him in the car park. He had warned her about what would happen if he came and saw him down at their apartment again.

He remembered how quickly she had sent the guy she had at the time, packing when he told that he wanted to be friends with her. Come to think of it, try as he might he couldn't remember the guy's name. She had told him about two other ex-boyfriends and why she had broken off with them and he believed her.

He loved her body, which was in great shape. At twenty four Bobbette was a real bombshell. She had a slender waist, but wide hips and firm breasts.

"Robert, I feel so tired, you've really worn me out," she said as she opened her eyes.

Robert's face lit up and Bobbette could see his broad smile. He always beamed with pride whenever she said things like that to him.

"I'm going to have a bath."

"Want me to come and soak you up? Your body is so big and thick that I don't know when I'd finish."

"You love riding it though."

"Go and take your bath. I know if I go into the bathroom, you are going to want to do it with me again."

Robert laughed and asked.

"Don't you love the ride?"

"One session with you is enough. I feel like sleeping until tomorrow afternoon."

Robert laughed again and went to have his bath. When he returned, Bobbette asked.

"Why don't you spend the night with me, honey?"

"I can't, baby, I have this early morning meeting with some suppliers."

"I feel bored being alone in this big apartment and it's only on weekends that I see you and occasionally during the week."

"I keep telling you all the time that you should have a baby," he said as he finished dressing.

"And who's going to give me that baby?" she asked, hugging him as she fixed up his shirt collar.

"Me, who else are you thinking about?"

She moved away from him.

"If you want to give me a baby, you have to marry me first. It seems to me, that you want to have two baby-mothers at the same time."

"You have a son with that girl, Jenna Marsden. I didn't even know until it was too late. I should have stopped talking to you."

"I keep telling you that it was a mistake. I just give her a monthly allowance. You know that she had Jaimie before I met you."

"Are you sure she wasn't trying to trap you?"

"Of course not, I don't know why you should think so."

Bobbette didn't reply.

"I'm leaving now, but I'll come to see you tomorrow evening. I would gladly spend the night with you, but for those meetings," he said, drawing her to him and kissing her.

Stewart drove his 2002 Suzuki Baleno motor car into the parking lot of Bobbette's apartment complex and saw

Robert's 2005 Honda Integra motor car parked behind her car. He reversed out and drove away. He had to do something about that guy. But what to do had occupied his thoughts ever since he first met her and learnt about Robert. The man had spoilt her with his generosity. Some of his friends had even wondered why she would have any time for him. He knew that he shouldn't have been here so he had nobody to blame but himself.

As it was Ash Wednesday he had spent the whole day sleeping. Why hadn't Morgana called him? On these short holidays they normally didn't plan anything but if she had called him, they would have gone to a nearby beach, probably Hellshire. It showed that she had something planned and didn't want him to know about it.

When he reached her home her car was in the driveway so were her mother's and sister's cars. He parked on the sidewalk and got out. As he got out of the car, Monique came out. Both Morgana and her sister got their facial features from her, he had always thought.

"Hi Stewart, Morgana went out for a drink with Brad. Apparently she didn't know you were coming around."

"Oh, well, tell her that I came."

"Won't you come in for a drink, Stewie?"

"That's okay, Monique," he said as he made his way back to his car.

He wondered what was really going on. How could Morgana have gone for a drink with Brad without telling him? When next he spoke to her he would lay down some rules as to how he wanted the relationship to work. What the hell was Brad trying to do? He wasn't worried, because try as that guy and others might, they stood no chance of taking away Morgana from him. They must have seen how easily she returned to him on her return from the States.

As she hadn't told him where she was going he didn't want to call her on her cell phone. Should he return to Bobbette's apartment and find out if her boyfriend had gone? The danger

there would be that maybe she wouldn't entertain him since she hadn't sent him her usual invitation.

He decided to call Sadie Mc Intosh. He had met her through his friend, Jose Maragh. They had gone to bed several times before her boyfriend returned from England and she told him that it was too dangerous for them to continue their twice weekly meetings. She had come to him half a dozen times after that, mostly at his apartment, but once at one of those guest houses on the Port Henderson Road.

Sadie was tying a scarf over her hair when he called. She was expecting her boyfriend, Chester Binger, to come in from the country for a night of some passionate love making. At the ringing of her cell phone, she picked it up.

"What's going on, Sadie? Aren't you longing to see me?"

"Stewie, is that really you? Your voice sound so sweet that if Chester wasn't coming to look for me, I would just come down to your apartment and spend the night with you."

"So when is he returning? You have to make some time to get some of the good loving."

"Mind you make me get into trouble."

"Just hold tight and try to enjoy it. Call me when you're ready for me to send your body wild with some good loving," he sang into her ears.

"Go away Stewart, you're too bad. You wait until I catch you," she said, laughing as they both ended the call.

He called Yasmin Weeke's number. Yasmin was a tall, leggy girl, whom he had met again through Jose. She cursed him for waking her up. But the memories of what Stewart had done to her body the more than a dozen times they had been together, started flooding her thoughts. She knew she couldn't resist another night in bed with him and invited him over. Stewart smiled to himself, he had hit the jackpot at last. Damn Morgana for going out and not telling him where she was going.

Brad Newman decided to try his luck. At six feet one inch tall, he considered himself a good looker. Wherever he went women were always casting admiring glances at him. On his last visit to his doctors he had been given a clean bill of health. He had played hours of squash, badminton and lawn tennis in the States to maintain that regime. He guessed Morgana to be at least twenty five years of age. He had told her that he wanted her to go out for a drink with him and she had agreed. She told him that she hadn't been impressed with their behavior during that first week. He told her that for his part he had been overawed by her looks to the extent that he couldn't take his eyes off her. They had a few drinks, but she refused his initial request for a dance, but later relented and showed him again how good a dancer she was.

They were at the Doyin's complex in Liguanea. Brad had on a white sports shirt and jeans. Morgana was also wearing jeans and a blue blouse. Her hair was pinned up and she had in a pair of huge earrings. She was wearing brown lip gloss.

"Why did you decide to go out with me?"

"Because I wanted to know more about you. I've heard so much about you and Rick that I was very curious to meet you both. Everybody at the office believes that you two guys will take the firm into the twenty-first century."

"More like Rick will and I'll be the one to destroy it."

"I don't think I heard it quite that way."

They got up to dance again.

When they returned to their table, Brad asked.

"Are you and Stewart still together?"

"Sure, we are, remember he's my fiancé. We may have our differences, but we always make up in the end and he's a great guy. What about you and Dania? Both of you looked so smug in church the other day that I couldn't help but ask those questions."

"She's very jealous, if she ever saw me and you here, she would probably go ballistic."

"The same could be said about Stewart," she replied looking at her watch.

"I don't want you to believe that this is a date. As I said before, I just came to know what type of person you are. I'll probably go out with Rick too, just as good friends and seeing that all of us have our own special person, I don't see what's wrong."

At the mention of Rick's name Brad opened his mouth to protest, but thought better of it.

"Wow, what a girl you are. I wouldn't expect anything less from such a lovely girl as you."

"I'm a very frank person and a loyal one too. If I found out that Stewart was two-timing me, I would dump him immediately."

Brad thought that Stewart must be very smart to be hiding his various cheatings or Morgana was very naïve.

They got up to dance again. When the song was finished Morgana looked at her watch. It was twenty minutes to midnight.

"Brad, it's way past my bedtime. I don't want to sleep in the office tomorrow, so we had better go."

"Remember, you're a manager so what are you worried about?"

"I like to get my sleep and besides, I don't want mummy to miss hers waiting up on me."

"Wait, I didn't know you had to get your mum's permission to go out."

"It's nothing like that," Morgana said as Brad paid the bill and they got up to leave.

That morning, Rick drove into the company's car park just as Morgana was getting out of her car.

"Did you enjoy yourself last night? He phoned me, boasting that he had gotten a date with you and that I had no chance."

Morgana slammed back the car door and sat there fuming. Finally, she opened it again.

"I don't believe this. Did you say Brad phoned and told you that I went out on a date with him?"

"He wasn't exactly boasting, but I called him last night and didn't get him. So when I called him this morning he said he had been out with you."

Both of them had finished locking up their cars now.

"I don't have to explain who I went out with to anybody," she flung at him.

Rick jerked back his head at her remark.

"Did I ask you anything?" he asked, as she stamped her feet and walked away.

Brad, who was returning to his car, saw everything and came over to Rick.

"What have you done to annoy Morgana?"

"I didn't even open my mouth. Maybe she's still ecstatic after that date with you."

"Who said I went out on a date with her?" Brad asked as he opened his car trunk and took out the things he needed.

"Listen, I'm going up," Rick said and disappeared up the steps.

Morgana had just put down her bag and car keys when the telephone rang. It was Stewart.

"How was your date last night?"

"What date are you talking about?"

"Oh come on, you know what I'm talking about. I slept the whole day yesterday. Why didn't

you call me or come down to my apartment?"

"Don't be ridiculous. I just went out for a drink with a colleague of mine, there's nothing more to it. And just like you I slept the whole day too."

"Why didn't you tell me that you were going out for a drink with Brad?"

"Brad is a colleague of mine, I don't see why I should seek your permission to go out for a drink with him."

"I don't want my fiancé going to have any drink with that guy. Suppose any of my friends had seen you two together?"

"What could they have said? Why are you so uncomfortable about me working with both Brad and Rick? Remember, it was you, who encouraged me to apply here for a job."

"I'm not afraid of those two guys. It's just that they don't have good reputations with women."

"I don't see why you're worrying so much. I can take care of myself."

"I'm not worrying. I'll come up to your house this evening," he told her and hung up.

Morgana sat back, thinking. Had she made a mistake in going for that drink with Brad? Maybe she shouldn't have danced with him. She got up and made her way down to the cafeteria to have a cup of coffee and some pastries.

The rest of the morning passed off without further incidence. At lunchtime she ordered from the cafeteria and ate it at her desk having refused Brad's invitation to have lunch with him.

Stewart put down his lunch tray on the table where Bobbette had just started eating her lunch. The girl looked at him, but continued eating.

"Am I interrupting something? It seems strange to see you here alone."

"I could say the same thing about you. Where's your fiance?"

"She must be at her office. I heard that she was out last night with Brad."

"You can't be serious, and what are you going to do about that?"

"I'm cool, that guy is just trying a thing, but my woman won't fall for his tricks."

"So what about me? Here you are worrying over her. You know how many lies I have to be telling Robert about us."

"Not enough, I passed by and saw his car parked at your apartment last night."

"Stewart, Robert is my man just like how Morgana is your woman. You want me to give him up, but you aren't prepared to give up Morgana. And I want to know why you were coming to my apartment when you know how we've always operated?"

Stewart looked at some other patrons having their lunch. He didn't try to meet Bobbette's eyes, but looked down at his plate. He hoped she didn't think that she was the only woman apart from Morgana, with whom he was sleeping. He decided to ignore the question.

"I just don't like the guy, that's all."

"And I'm supposed to treat Morgana like my long lost sister?"

"Maybe we shouldn't have started this in the first place," he said.

"What are you trying to do, dump me?"

"Who said anything like that?"

They continued eating in silence. When they finished, Stewart asked.

"Can I buy you a drink?"

"I'm okay."

"Listen, I'm late for a meeting. I'll give you a call later on."

Bobbette watched him go before getting up and returning to work.

Rick and Celia were lunching that afternoon at Dodd's restaurant on Trafalgar Road.

"I heard that Brad went out on a date with Morgana," Celia said.

"So he told me, seems as if he can't get over it. I saw him smiling to himself."

Celia burst out laughing.

"I wonder what Dania would say if she found out?"

"I'm not even sure of what's going on between them."

"I heard that a lot of guys on campus are going crazy over Bev. At least that's what my friends tell me."

"I'm not one of those guys going crazy over either of them. The only girl I'm crazy about is you."

"Maybe they'd like to try after you, but they know too much about me to even think about it."

"Both of those girls have their boyfriends. I don't see them stealing another girl's boyfriend."

They continued eating in silence. When they had finished Rick paid their bill and then dropped her back at work.

Brad was playing six-a-side football that afternoon in the Constant Spring six-a-side football competition. Rick and Alex were also on the team. They had beaten the opposing team. Morgana and several other staff members went to watch the match and to cheer on the team.

Brad took Dania down to Bob's entertainment complex later that evening to have drinks. There was space for dancing, in the complex. Dania wore shorts, a tank-top and slippers. Brad wore jeans and a blue sports shirt and sneakers.

They danced several times and were now back at their table.

"Up to now I don't understand what you and Morgana went out to do. You'd better tell me what's going on between you and her and don't let me have to ask her."

"I just went out with her to get a better understanding of what's going on in the firm. I thought I told you that already."

"Morgana has just joined the firm. You are new too, so what could she know about the firm that you don't know? You're treating me as if I don't have any sense."

"Let's do some more dancing."

They had just returned to their table when Rick and Celia entered the sports bar. Celia was dressed casually in a white pants and pink shirt and slippers. Rick wore a short jeans pants, a sports shirt and sneakers.

"Brad, what's going on, hello, Dania," Rick said, greeting them.

Brad sensing an opportunity to end the argument that Dania had started and continued on the dance floor beckoned them over.

"Why not share our table, how about it, Dania, Celia?" he asked.

It was about eleven o'clock that night when both couples left the entertainment complex.

Bev and Rory were lying in bed enjoying the afterglow of their lovemaking. They were at Rory's aunt, Cydonne Ambrose's house where he was staying. Bev had gone there right after classes that afternoon.

"After what we do to each other that's why we shouldn't stay apart for long."

"I'll always love you. That's why I'm not interested in any other guy."

Rory held her in his arms.

"I've told you hundreds of times how I feel about you." He tried to kiss her but Bev pulled her

face away.

“Rory, not again, after what we just did. I want to lie here and relax and talk to you before taking a bath and go home.”

“See what you’ve been missing by us being apart for so long.”

“I suppose you see what you’re missing, by staying away from me for so long,” she said looking up into the ceiling of the room.

“Bev, you look so stunning that sometimes I worry that I’ll lose you to one of those campus money guys, especially Glen, who would be around you all the time. He must spend all his spare time on campus with you.”

“How many times have I told you that Glen is my friend? If you must know, I’m in love with you, not Glen. Let’s concentrate on us.”

“I don’t see why you should be so worried about Glen when I’m here lying naked beside you and we’ve just made love.”

Rory didn’t reply immediately.

“You’re the only girl I know anything about. Maybe there are girls over there who want me to be interested in them, but I always turn them down. That’s because I know I have you out here waiting on me. I know I’d be doing something wrong if I went with one of those girls. I want you to be mine and only mine.”

Bev threw her arms around him and started kissing him and Rory responded and their lovemaking started again. When it was over, Bev said.

“You tempted me and I told you that I was finished after we did it first.”

“I know you weren’t finished and I think you enjoyed it the last time better than the first.”

“The amount of passion that we stir up in each other, can’t you stay longer with me? At least you could stay another week.”

“I can’t, remember that I have to go back to school plus work.”

“We’ll have to make love over the phone,” Bev said and Rory laughed.

“That wouldn’t do anything to a hot blooded woman like you.”

Bev didn’t reply at once. She and Rory had been friends since high school. They had made love on countless occasions. She didn’t know how much longer she could deal with his absence. She didn’t want him to return home and to her when he needed a woman. She felt she needed a full-time man.

She and Glen were very close and could have started a relationship had she wanted. But although she liked him she was afraid of his rich kid’s image plus he had his girlfriend.

“Rory, if you know how passionate I am then you wouldn’t stay away from me for so long. Don’t forget that in another few months I’ll be over there with you. That’s when we’ll really have to begin to take things seriously.”

“As I said I’ll be glad when you come up. At least we’ll get to see a lot more of each other.”

“You’ll always be my man but I don’t want to come over there and get jilted.”

“You’ll always be my woman. You can rest assured that when you come over there you’ll find that I’ve not changed one bit,” he said, but Bev wasn’t listening. She had dropped off to sleep. Rory watched her fall asleep with some amount of anxiety. Tomorrow he would be returning home not sure when he would see her again. He was afraid of getting trapped in a marriage to Brittany. He would have to play his cards right, ensuring that whatever happened between him and Brittany, Bev was kept in the dark. But how would he do that with Roxanne around? Rory began scratching his head, but couldn’t come up with an answer and knew that he was in trouble in more ways than one. By five o’clock he had woken up Bev as Aunt Cydonne and her children were due home shortly from Hope Gardens. She took a bath and drove home in her car.

Friday afternoon Cydonne dropped him at the airport as Bev was still in class. He called her that night after he reached home and she told him that she was glad that he had a safe trip home.

That night Celia moved to live with Rick as they had agreed. She had been living with a friend in Queensborough Gardens. They agreed to share the rent and utility bills and Rick would give her a monthly allowance to maintain the house. Mrs. Donaldson, Celia's mother, warned her about the dangers that could befall her in living with a man who wasn't her husband. Celia told her that was what she wanted and the middle-aged woman resigned herself to the inevitable. She also told her that they were lovers and had been so since she was in her teens. Mrs. Donaldson wondered where she went wrong. Nevertheless Celia was now a big woman and capable of making her own decisions.

Chapter Five

Sunday, Rick and Celia were still busy fixing up their townhouse. The house had two bedrooms upstairs plus one downstairs with a walk in bathroom. A bathroom was also upstairs. The kitchen, dining and living rooms were also downstairs. Celia had brought down her things from Queensborough Gardens and Rick had bought some furniture and appliances from Friday and collected them at the house on Saturday. Both of them were so tired that they could hardly get out of bed that Sunday morning. They eventually got up to make breakfast before they headed up to Constant Spring to buy some plants. They also stopped at the nearby supermarket to buy some more foodstuff. Going up and coming down Constant Spring Road they noticed car and bus loads of people headed for the rural parishes of St. Catherine, St. Mary and Portland. Later, when they were having dinner, Celia said.

“Look how small our house is and the amount of work and expenses we had to put in to fix it up.”

“It isn’t all that small. I was thinking that maybe we should have gotten a one bedroom apartment. But it might come in useful if we have children.”

“Rick, we’ve just started living together. You shouldn’t be talking about children and we aren’t even married.”

“Yeah, maybe you’re right. I think I was getting ahead of myself there. But one of us could make a mistake and it happens.”

“If I felt that something happened that I didn’t want; I could always go to the pharmacy and get something for it.”

“Suppose I wanted it to happen?”

“I won’t be an unwed mother.”

“I hear you, madam. I’ll be doubly careful from now on.”

“You had better be, at least I know that I am.”

Their dinner consisted of rice and peas, baked chicken, curried mutton, both steamed and raw vegetables, mashed potatoes, sweet corn and fruit juices.

“I didn’t know you were such a good cook.”

“My mother made sure that my sisters, Loi, Zoey and I got equal time in the kitchen.”

“It shows, I’m thankful to her.”

“You haven’t told me how you parents feel about you going to live with a woman?”

“My stepmother, you know she’s deeply religious just like your mother. Goes to church every Sunday and gets involved in so many church activities it’s hard to count. She said I wasn’t setting a good example for Ruel, Shenton and Khadeen. My father, well you know how he is. He said I was old enough to go on my own.”

“I don’t know much about your siblings.”

“I’m the only child of my father and his first wife, Carline. She died of breast cancer when I was only ten. He married Marjorie three years later. Ruel and Shenton are still in high school and Khadeen will be doing her preparatory school leaving examinations this year.”

“Your father seems to like doctors. Your mother was a doctor and your step-mother is a doctor, a gynecologist at that.”

“I’ve never asked him, but maybe that’s the profession he wanted to pursue.”

They had finished eating now and both of them began to clear away the dinner table. Rick helped her in washing up the dishes after which they retired to the upstairs balcony. They left to go to Ruddy’s night club about eight o’clock that evening.

Brad was at his desk that morning. It was his third week on the job. The firm had been started twenty years earlier by his father, Russell and distant cousin, Caswell Graham. Caswell, a Certified Public Accountant, had resigned as one of the partners in the audit firm of Miles, Bowen and Company, to help Russell, a veteran management consultant of some fifteen years, set up the firm.

It was a lot of work and involved a lot of travelling around Kingston and going down to Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. They did management and internal audits, company valuations and liquidations as well as other consultancy services. The information technology section was mainly involved in setting up management information systems for companies as well as doing trouble shooting work. Rick headed that section as he was a computer specialist. Morgana headed the management and internal audit sections and he headed all other sections. Blake was the managing director and his father and Caswell were there as consultants. Russell and Caswell would probably stay on for another two or three years before retiring. There were twenty employees in all including two in the cafeteria, an office helper and a messenger. Lunch at the cafeteria as well as snacks and breakfast were sold at a concessionary rate.

Management meetings were held twice monthly. That meeting was where all managers and vice presidents reported on their section to Blake. All problems were ironed out at this meeting. Board meetings were held every two months.

There was also a sports club with most of the staff being members. Members made monthly contributions and Alex was president. Brad understood that staff outings were held on most holiday weekends and he was looking forward to the next one. There were also parties at the office where the sports club provided the refreshments, music and games. These were held every other month.

Every year on the first Sunday in October, they had a church service to celebrate the firm's anniversary. The firm was actually started in 1985.

Brad was glad that their offices were so far up Constant Spring Road and not in the bustling Half Way Tree or Cross Roads area. He might have preferred to be Downtown but wasn't sure when that area would suit businesses like theirs to operate from. Brad looked at his watch and realized that it was minutes to one o'clock and he had a lunch date with Dania.

Valentine's Day parties were all over the city. Stewart and Morgana were in Billy Dunn. Rick and Celia were in Zadio Gardens. Bev and her friends were at a party in East Kirkland Heights. Darren and his girlfriend, Bianca, were at a party in Papine. Monique, Val, Sally and Vernon were at a party in Belvedere Heights being hosted by the president of Val's company and his wife. Brad and Dania were also partying in Armour Heights.

Rick and Celia were having dinner that Tuesday evening.

"Dania told me that she's been encouraging Brad to come and live with her, but so far he's been resisting."

"I suppose he isn't ready for that as yet."

"I don't see why he doesn't want to. The whole time he was away she was out here waiting on him. It isn't as if he has to pay rent or anything. All she wants him to do is to help her with the bills."

"Maybe he doesn't want to get tied down."

"Am I doing that to you?"

"I didn't say that."

"Brad isn't religious or anything like that. If I was Dania I would stop sleeping with him."

“Why?”

“Because the girl has made him an offer; her mother isn’t going to say anything. As I said he isn’t a biblical type of person nor is he shy so it must be that he has other women.”

Rick looked at her. They were half way through their dinner.

“I know he likes Morgana, but she’s engaged to Stewart.”

Celia laughed. She drank some of her fruit juice.

“Rick, be sensible. She’s engaged to him, not him to her. Maybe Brad figures that they’ll soon break up.”

“I know that he and Bobbette are lovers. She was at that party in Red Hills Heights. While you were talking to Morgana, she just disappeared and not long after that I saw Stewart leaving. If he was my man I would keep a close watch on both of them.”

“So do you think he went to sleep with her?”

“Don’t be so naïve. We all know who Stewart is. April was so embarrassed when he decided to get engaged to Morgana that she had to run away to the States.”

“I bet she’ll soon be back and with him again.”

“She called me about three or four times and each time she swears never to go back to him, but if I know April she’ll be fighting Morgana and Bobbette for him when she returns.”

“I’m sure that Morgana isn’t going to let him go.”

“Some women are like that. They hate to be losers.”

They finished eating and Rick helped her wash up and tidy up the kitchen after which they left to go down to Randy Chin’s sports bar.

Bev was pacing up and down her room trying to control her anger. She had tried calling Rory and was only getting his voice mail. It was almost a week since he went up and apart from the night when he left she hadn’t heard from him since. She had borrowed Darren’s phone and called him, but got the same result. She had sent him an email, but it got bounced. Why wasn’t Rory calling her? She had gone down to his aunt, Cydonne’s home, but heard that she was in the States too and wouldn’t be back until July. She had left one of her middle-aged cousins to look after her three children as she and her husband were separated. Bev didn’t ask the woman anything about Rory, but left for her home knowing that she had wasted her time coming down here. She wondered if she was overreacting, but it wasn’t like a couple of years ago when you had to go through so many things to make an overseas phone call. All he had to do was to buy a card and put credit on his phone to call her.

“So how are you and your other vice presidents getting on, Morgana?” Monique asked as they sat in their living room that evening.

“They’re okay, I guess. They used to tease me about Stewart and they didn’t want to tell me who their girlfriends were.”

“Rick and Celia are living together and I understand that Dania is pressuring Brad to come and live with her,” Morgana continued.

“So is he going?” Bev asked.

“I don’t know, he wouldn’t tell me that. I saw them in church and they looked like the ideal couple. At the party up at Blake’s house, I danced with him and he said she wasn’t his girlfriend but when I went for that drink with him he said she was very jealous.”

“She looks like one of those women who doesn’t want her man to look at any other woman much less talk to her,” Monique said.

“Maybe she feels that she isn’t good enough for him,” Morgana put in.

“Talk about jealousy, I can’t get a word out of Rory,” Bev declared, throwing up her hands in the air.

“Did you see his aunt?” Morgana asked.

“She’s away and won’t be back until later this year. I don’t know the woman she left at the house so I didn’t ask her any questions.”

“Doesn’t he have any other relatives or friends out here you can contact?” Monique asked.

“He has some cousins living in Kintyre but I don’t have a number for any of them. He has another aunt living in Moneague, but I don’t have a number for her either.”

“What are you going to do? It’s only a week since he’s gone back up, maybe you should give him some more time,” Morgana advised.

“I’ve sent text messages and emailed him. My emails have all bounced and my text messages aren’t going through. I’m not going to do anything drastic until I find out what’s really going on.”

“Meanwhile you’re here scratching out your hair over him, he could be up there enjoying himself with another girl,” Monique opined.

“All the time he was over there we used to be in contact with each other. I feel it’s this girl, Brittany, who Roxanne told me about. I think they’re together and he doesn’t want anything more to do with me.”

“Have you tried calling Roxanne?” Morgana asked.

“I spoke to her yesterday but she said that she hadn’t seen him since he came up.”

“Maybe something’s really wrong,” Monique said.

“I’m going up to do some studies. I’ll see you folks in the morning,” Bev said and made for the stairs.

Monique and Morgana sat there talking for some time before each left for their respective room.

Stewart and Morgana were having lunch at Clive’s Great Eats in New Kingston. They had their appetizers and were waiting for their lunches which they had already ordered.

“I didn’t like how you behaved after I went for that drink with Brad.”

“Brad is my good friend, so I didn’t mean anything by it.”

Their lunches arrived. Morgana chose rice and peas and country style chicken while Stewart chose local curry goat and locally produced food.

Stewart had been wondering if she wasn’t going for a drink with Rick. Maybe she had thought better of it because of Celia. They were half way through their meal when he said.

“Everybody’s shacking up these days.”

“Who’s the latest? I’ve heard about Rick and Celia.”

“Judy Dawson and Vance Nation are now living together. I heard that Ducal Peat and Leta Weir will be doing the same thing as from next week. I also understand that Brad is on his way to live with Dania.”

“I heard about Vance and Judy but about Brad and Dania that’s news to me. I thought Ducal and Leta were already living together.”

“Maybe you and I’ll be the only ones still going around and not living together.”

Morgana laughed and drank some of her orange juice.

“You live with me or I with you. My room is big enough for both of us.”

“Why do you always treat these things as being a joke?”

“Because people can get out of these relationships by simply walking away.”

“Isn’t it the same way with a marriage?”

They were almost finished eating now.

“If I married you, I wouldn’t be letting you off that easily.”

It was Stewart’s turn to laugh.

“I wouldn’t give you any reason to want to divorce me.”

“I left you once before, remember?”

“It won’t happen again. I can assure you of that,” Stewart said as they finished eating.

“I could name several instances when had I been a different woman I might have been gone, but I won’t go there.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m already late and I’m still on probation so I’d better get back to work.”

“I thought like how you were a vice president you wouldn’t be on probation. Aren’t you there more than three months?”

“That’s what you think. I don’t have any godfathers at Newman and Graham and the probation period is six months,” Morgana said getting up.

“That’s long. Are Brad and Rick on probation too?” Stewart asked as they left the restaurant.

“I know I am. I don’t know about them, but I shouldn’t think so seeing that they own the business.”

Stewart dropped her at work and they made plans in the car to go clubbing that night and the next night and Morgana would spend Sunday with him.

Brad and Dania were stretched out in lounge chairs on her patio that Saturday afternoon. Brad had slept with her on Friday night and had taken her to the Coronation Market to buy her weekend supplies. Dania said that she preferred coming to the market as she could get any farm product she wanted at a lower price than on the streets or at other markets not to mention the supermarkets. They just had a cup of tea before leaving for the market but when they returned she cooked green bananas and callaloo. In the afternoon she made fish soup with king and turbit fish.

“That was one hell of a soup. I feel so much stronger after eating it.”

“It’s supposed to give you more stamina, though why you’d want more I don’t know. I’ll be the one to suffer.”

“But you’ll enjoy it, Dania.”

“Don’t you feel lonely sometimes, Brad?”

“You forget that I live with my parents.”

“Yeah, but when you go to bed, it’s you alone in that big bed of yours.”

“How do you know how big it is and you’ve never seen it?”

“Would your parents object if I came up there to sleep with you?”

“I know what you’re going to say, but Dania, be reasonable. I’m sure if Miss Beulah was in Jamaica she’d object to me coming here to sleep with you.”

“She isn’t objecting now and she won’t object if you come to live with me.”

Brad looked at her. It wasn’t the first time she was bringing up the subject.

“Maybe I’ll have to give it some serious consideration now that I’m back.”

“I hope you do.”

They soon switched to other subjects before deciding to go down to Randy Chin to play some games.

Stewart had to wake up Morgana that evening to have dinner. She had spent Saturday with him and they had gone clubbing. She had returned to spend Sunday with him and they had gone to bed. Stewart had turned up his air conditioning unit and they had made love for hours.

“I feel so drained, it’s like all my strength has been sapped out of me. I can’t believe that I let you make love to me for so long. You’ve always been complaining that I won’t spend a night with you. Can you imagine doing that and trying to get up and go to work the next morning?”

“You got some real mind blowing climaxes.”

“And you kept coming back for more.”

“I couldn’t resist your body.”

Morgana felt her belly.

“Stewart, I feel hungry. What did you cook?”

“Steam fish, bananas, dumplings, gully beans and okra.”

“You cooked that kind of food on a Sunday? Was I so fast asleep that you couldn’t wake me up and ask me what I wanted? Gully beans, what’s that?”

“Susumber, it’s good to cook with rundown.”

“What’s rundown?”

“You don’t seem to know much about country life. Anyhow the fish, okra and gully beans will help put back some of what you lost after that marathon session of lovemaking.”

“I’ll have some, but not much as I know my rice and peas and chicken will be waiting on me when I get home.”

Stewart brought her some of the food which she had, sitting up in bed. He had his at a nearby table. They continued talking before Morgana went to have a bath and drove home.

Bev, Melissa Donegal and Jovita Dorman were on campus that afternoon. They were sitting on one of the concrete benches and talking. Bev had her hands under her chin and her head was bowed.

“I know a girl who was dating a guy for a couple of years. He got a visa and went up and she never heard from him again,” Bev said.

“I’ve heard of it happening to several people, both males and females, but that’s not your case, Bev,” Melissa said.

Melissa was a tall girl with heavy breasts and was a year younger than Bev. Jovita was also tall and very pretty and had entered a few modelling and beauty pageants but had never won anything. She was a few months younger than Bev.

“It’s the first time he’s done anything like this. That’s why I’m highly suspicious that it’s that girl, Roxanne told me about.”

“So what are you going to do?” Jovita asked.

“I’m just going to wait. If he doesn’t contact me, I’m sure I’ll see one of his friends or I’ll just have to wait until I get over there to confront him.”

“You have a lot of patience,” Melissa remarked.

“I certainly do, hey, I think I’m boring you two to death so let’s do some more studying,” Bev said, to which the other two girls agreed.

“I used to tell Sid that I had no interest in business, but now I know what it is to have to meet a pay bill every week and to just keep a business afloat,” Sally said.

Sally had come to visit Monique and they were talking on the front patio. Morgana had gone to a tennis match and Bev was at Melissa’s house going through some notes with her and Jovita.

“We aren’t doing too bad lately ourselves,” Monique said.

“I’ve rearranged things and appointed managers to report to me. I’ve also appointed a financial controller and a purchasing and warehouse manager. I’ve also decided to set up a board of directors. I’ll be the chairman and managing director. I’m going to invite you and Morgana to

be board members along with Vernon. A lawyer whom I've known for years has agreed to be our company secretary."

"I thought Sid had these things in place."

"Sid was just a one man band. But I realize that I have to get other people's input and advice if I'm to successfully manage this business."

"I have to decline though, and ask Val. He has a lot of experience in the business world."

"Oh, I thought about him but I was thinking that maybe he'll be too busy."

"I don't think so, and besides it's just once a month."

"Okay, I'll ask him then."

"You seem to have everything planned, Sally."

Sally nodded.

"So what's the latest with Bev and Rory?"

"She can't get a word out of him."

"I warned her about these long distance relationships. They hardly work out. I just hope he hasn't committed himself."

"Roxanne told her about this girl who he's supposed to be fooling around over there."

"If I was Bev, I'd give him a couple more weeks and if I don't hear from him, that's it. What does he take her for? Anyway, Monique, I'm leaving. I'll probably drop by later this week."

The two sisters shared a short hug before Sally went to her sports utility vehicle and drove off.

Stewart and Morgana were at Corners that evening. They saw Brad and Dania. The dance floor was really crowded, Morgana thought as she danced with Stewart. About ten o'clock she looked over and saw Dania and Brad sitting at one of the small tables, talking. She was wondering why Brad hadn't asked her for a dance. Stewart wouldn't have objected, but Dania might have. She saw them getting up to dance and soon lost them in the crowded dance floor. Two hours later when she and Stewart were leaving she saw no sign of them. Maybe they had left already, she thought.

Stewart was just about to leave work that evening when his cell phone rang. Bobbette was on the line.

"Stranger, how are you?"

"Wait, Bobbette, what's going on, girl?"

"Robert is going to May Pen from Friday night. Says he won't be back until Saturday afternoon."

"Are you sure he won't be back before then?"

"What's this, Stewart? You never used to ask me any questions before."

"Just trying to be careful, that's all. Sure, I'll come, you know I can never resist that curvaceous body of yours."

"I want you bad. You make sure to come or else you'll never get this booty again," she warned before ending the call.

What did you do when a woman sends you that kind of invitation accompanied by veiled threats? The only thing was to go and give her what she wanted.

Brad had three hundred United States dollars and decided to change it out into local currency. He was in the building society that afternoon waiting in the foreign currency line when he saw a woman coming towards him. It was Jenna Marsden. She recognized him immediately and came into his arms.

She was a petite girl he had met before he went away to study. At the time she had a young son for Robert Parsons, an up and coming young entrepreneur. She was working and had just started a part-time business course at the university.

"It's been so long, Brad. So how's everything with you?" she asked, coming out of his arms.

"I'm okay, just been back, and certainly glad to see you."

"I work here, been here since I finished my associate degree. I'm certainly glad to see you. I can't stay long with you as those customers will start complaining."

They exchanged cell phone numbers before she returned to her work.

Stewart and Robert nearly got into a fight over Bobbette. Robert had driven to his woman's apartment late Saturday morning to see Stewart about to get into his car. Suspecting that something was up, he had immediately gone over and confronted him.

The two men faced off each other.

"Hey, guy, I don't want to see your car down at my woman's apartment again."

"But wait, mister, how do you know where I was? How do you know that I was visiting your girlfriend?"

"I know you, Stewart. Every time I ask Bobbette, she denies that you and her are friends," Robert said as Bobbette now summoned by a neighbor, came and saw the two men quarrelling.

"What's going on here?"

"I want to know what this guy's doing here?" Robert demanded.

"He's my friend, who came to visit me. So are you saying that I can't have any male friends coming to visit me, Robert?"

Robert stormed off; jumped into his car and drove away. Stewart and the two women watched his car roar out of the apartment court nearly colliding with an on-coming garbage truck. Stewart reversed his car out of the parking lot, but didn't drive off immediately. Bobbette didn't say anything to Stewart, but just went to her car and reversed it out of the parking lot and drove off.

Stewart drove off a few seconds later hoping to catch up with her. He didn't know what that guy, Robert, wanted with him. Maybe if he had seen him with his woman he would have had a stroke. It served him right for being always out there running down money while his woman was screaming off her head as Stewart made beautiful love to her. They had done it last night and then again this morning. She had climaxed both times, crying and screaming and digging her nails into his back as she rode out the waves of ecstasy engulfing her body. He had to cover her mouth with his hands each time in an effort to muffle her screams.

Stewart had nearly panicked when he saw Robert driving in just as he was about to drive out. He had to calm himself because to do anything rash would have alerted Robert's already suspicious mind. Based on what Bobbette had told him he was home almost nine hours earlier. He wondered if he had been trying to trick Bobbette. When he looked at his watch and saw that it was after nine o'clock, he knew that the time was almost right. Two hours or even an hour earlier and there could be no denying it on Bobbette's part that she had an overnight guest. He wondered why he had let her persuade him to have that morning session when he knew of the dangers it posed.

"Glad you're getting used to us living together, Celia."

"I don't have to tell you how mummy behaved, but I managed to persuade her that everything will be all right. Plus, she likes you."

"I hope I don't let her down."

They were relaxing in their living room before hitting the club scene later on.

“So how does it feel after three weeks. There’s a saying out there about being friendly with a woman and then living with her or it could be the other way around. So tell me what you think.”

“It’s too short a time. I’m glad that I’ve got my car. If I want anything I can always stop when I’m coming home rather than ask you to pick it up for me. Plus, I don’t have to take taxis or buses again.”

“Okay, I’ll give you some more time. I suppose we’ll have our difficulties later on. I’m glad that you got your own car now. All I ask is that you be careful on the roads.”

“You can trust me on that one. So how’s everything at the office?”

“Okay, I guess, I didn’t know it would be so much work.”

“So how are Brad and Morgana getting along?”

“What do you mean by that? I know that they aren’t lovers. Remember that Morgana is engaged to Stewart and Brad’s along with Dania.”

“No, I was talking work wise. I know Dania was concerned after they went out for that drink, but I think she realizes that there was nothing to it. Although knowing Dania and her insecurities I’m not even that sure.”

“Hey, I’m getting bored, let’s go freshen up and hit the nightclub scene and I’ll be your passenger.”

“Okay, but I want to return home before midnight so that I can get a good night’s sleep.”

“Yeah, I think we deserve a rest, we’ve been at it for nearly the entire week.”

“My body deserves some rest, not yours. You could go the entire week without a break. I hope that’s not why you wanted me to live with you.”

“Of course not, maybe that’s why we should start having children.”

“I’m not lonely and I’ve told you under what conditions I’d get pregnant for you.”

“Don’t think I’m rushing you. You don’t have to worry, baby, in another couple of months I’ll set everything right.”

“I hope you do, I don’t have a long time to wait.”

They went to freshen up before locking up the apartment and going to party.

Bobbette was in tears after Robert left her apartment that Saturday night. He told her to choose between him and Stewart. He pointed out that this wasn’t the first time he was warning her about not letting him come to visit her at the apartment.

She knew that he was suspicious that she and Stewart were lovers. Saturday morning had been a near miss and it was all her fault. Stewart never stayed with her past four o’clock any night he came to sleep with her, but she had been too greedy and she knew the dangers it posed. He hadn’t been able to get a parking space in the other two apartment courts across the road because both of her friends, Arnella and Rachel had their boyfriends staying over.

Robert had threatened to evict her from the apartment and cut off her grocery and petrol supplies as well as take away the credit cards from her. She had vehemently denied that she and Stewart were lovers and told him that he had brought a book to lend her. Robert had scoffed at her explanation and had put her on notice that if he ever came and saw Stewart down at the apartment again she was out. She decided to call Stewart. She hoped that he was alone and could talk to her. He answered her in his usual manner.

“Stewart, I’m in trouble. Robert has threatened to evict me from the apartment and cut off everything.”

“Why? What have you done to him?”

“Because he came and saw you down at the apartment this morning.”

“So what? I asked him, how did he know that it was you I was visiting? He said that each time he asks you, you’ve always denied that we’re lovers.”

“What are we going to do?”

“He hasn’t said he’s leaving you. All he did was to threaten you.”

“I won’t be able to see you again. That’s what I’m afraid of.”

“It doesn’t mean that. It just means that we have to be extra careful.”

“I suppose so, I’ll give you a call one of these days and we can talk some more.”

After she hung up Stewart was left thinking. Being with

Bobbette was like being with a married woman. Their life was so complicated and they could only be with you at times convenient to them, not to you. If any married woman thought she was in a relationship with a man apart from her husband and that she was the only woman in that relationship she had another guess coming, Stewart thought. While Bobbette didn’t have any children he knew that Robert always came first. Sometimes women stayed in the relationship because of what it offered them. In Bobbette’s case it was material wealth and who could blame her. A guy like Robert Parsons could give her anything she wanted. She didn’t even have to work. He was sure if they got married and she started having children, he would stop her from working. He knew that if such an event ever happened, he would be dumped and forgotten and in a way he felt used.

He knew that men pursued such women for egotistical reasons, but sometimes it was the pursuers who ended up with the bruised egos. He would wait until she called him again and if what she was saying wasn’t what he wanted to hear he would tell her that they should stop seeing each other. In the future, he would try to date women who were unattached.

Nevertheless, he thought that he hadn’t been blameless for what happened this morning. His car was parked directly behind hers and Robert knew his car. So he should have made his getaway at his usual time and resist her attempt to keep him in bed for some more love making.

Chapter Six

Stan Lubsy read the newspaper report on the prison riot in early December last year in which his brother, Talbert, had been killed. Talbert had robbed a woman and was escaping when a security guard accosted him. He had fired several shots, one of which killed the guard. He had been captured two weeks later by the police. The woman had pointed him out at the identification parade. Talbert had given him a good description of the woman that he had gotten from the day of the robbery. But before he could come to trial, he had been killed in the riot. Three men had been killed and nine injured after prisoners attacked warders over the quality of the food they were being served and the generally bad conditions existing at the Remand Centre. He had done a sketch of the woman based on Talbert's description. Had she not turned up at the identification parade, Talbert would have walked free so she was responsible for his death.

He fingered the Taurus revolver in his pocket. He would ask around and find her. Stan bowed his head; Talbert had been buried by the prison authorities when nobody showed up to claim his body. He didn't have the kind of money needed to give him a decent funeral. To make matters worse, their parents were dead and their relatives were few. Most of them were living below the poverty line.

He would make that woman beg for mercy before he killed her. Stan lit a cigarette as he thought over where to start looking.

Such a good looking woman as Talbert had described her would hardly go unnoticed. He would start his search tonight. He would cruise the nightclub circuit with Natalie as he had enough money on him to buy their drinks.

Linton Marsh arrived in Kingston that Saturday morning and took a taxi to his mother, Madeline's home in Hughenden. Actually, she had asked him why this sudden home. He had simply told her that he was beginning to miss home, friends and family members. He had applied for and gotten a job with a government owned loan agency. With a Master's degree in finance, Linton had no problems in getting this job. But Linton was back in Jamaica for one reason and that was to get even with a woman he felt had dumped him.

He had been friendly with Morgana Simmonds for about a year and she had left him, telling him that she had her boyfriend in Jamaica to return to. Though he had kept other women with her, he didn't expect that from her. He could see the smirks on the faces of some of his friends when he turned up at one or two parties after that, not with the drop dead beautiful Morgana but with plain looking Wanda Edmonds. He, Linton Marsh, was being made the butt of many jokes because Morgana had dumped him for some guy back home in Jamaica.

He would take his time to find out what he didn't already know about her, her family and her boyfriend. He knew where she lived as she had told him and he had spoken over the phone to her

mother and sister a few times.

Monday morning when Linton arrived at his job, some of the girls were all too ready to swoop down on him. That evening when he turned up at the most popular hot spot in town, Corners nightclub, some of them were there already. He showed off his dancing skills and danced with a few of them and struck up a conversation with Flavia Mc Queen. She worked at a small insurance brokerage in New Kingston. They agreed to have lunch the following day.

Morgana didn't sleep well that night. She kept twisting and turning and didn't fall asleep until after midnight. When she reached her office that morning she felt sleepy and kept nodding off. She went to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee and some pastries.

She had just brought them back to her desk and had settled down to eat when the telephone rang, it was Stewart.

"Hi, Morgana, I hope I'm still in your good books."

"What have you done now, Stewie, not to be in my good books?" she asked, laughing.

"How about us having lunch this afternoon?"

"I have to go over to Portmore to work with one of our clients."

"Okay, I'll come up and see you later, then."

"Yes, that will be okay."

As they hung up, Morgana was wondering about him. She had told him about her relationship with Linton and of why she had broken up with him. She had complained about the type of friends he kept.

They were the flashy type, they wore the latest clothes, drove the most expensive cars and had the most glamorous girls with the latest hairstyles. She loved ambitious men, but there was something unreal about his circle of friends and their value systems as most of the times they were always turning up with a different girl. She had complained that she didn't want to go out with them any longer.

Linton had asked what she wanted him to do and she told him the obvious. Since he wasn't prepared to give up his circle of friends she had broken off with him. He had called and given her an ultimatum. Either she resumed their friendship or be prepared to get some parts of her broken up. She had told him that if he called her again, she would report his threats to the police.

She remembered two crew members in Omer Jordan and Steve Deans, calling her, looking dates, but she had turned both of them down.

One month later, Lister Pettigrew, another crew member, called, inviting her out for a drink but she had turned him down too. After that the calls ceased. Male crew members would simply greet her and move on. Female crew members wanted to know what had happened between her and Linton. She told them that it was just a case of them not being compatible anymore. A few of them had encouraged her to try and patch up things with him. But she told them that their relationship was beyond repair.

For the rest of her time in Florida, she didn't keep a boyfriend. Then Stewart called her and asked if they could resume their friendship. She told him that she was three months away from completing her contract with Gordon's firm and would be coming home at its conclusion. They agreed to wait and so she came home to be with him again. Were there any changes in him? She hadn't noticed and her opinion hadn't changed since returning home.

She thought about the incident that had happened to her. She had gone to Cross Roads to deliver some films for cleaning when she was accosted by a man, who grabbed her phone and ran. A nearby security guard, alerted to the struggle, had rushed to her aid and had accosted the gunman. The gunman had fired several shots, one of which hit the guard in the left side of his

chest. He had died on the way to hospital. She had to get tranquilizers from her doctor to calm her nerves.

Her mother and sister had to accompany her to the identification parade after the alleged murderer had been caught. She had successfully pointed him out. She didn't know how to react on hearing of the man's death in that prison riot. She felt that she had been relieved of a lot of anxiety, knowing that she didn't have to go to court to testify against him. She felt that the case was now closed.

Stan Lubsy was sitting in his car in the parking lot of the Corner's nightclub in New Kingston when his cell phone rang. It was Eric Bishop, his heart began to beat faster.

"Who's that?"

"Stan, it's me, Bishop, listen I have some work for you. I have your favorite stuff here too."

"What kind of work do you have for me?"

Bishop laughed, you could trust Stan to behave like an innocent five year old kid.

"It's your favorite kind of work. You don't want it? It's ninety thousand dollars you'll be getting plus I might take some money off the pile you owe me. You want me to send Mister Whylic to come and check you?"

Stan knew Whylic as a collector. The man must be some six feet six inches tall and weighed close to three hundred pounds. He normally beat his victims to a pulp. He collected mostly gambling debts and any other that the creditor was afraid to put through the courts or needed someone to persuade a reluctant debtor that he was serious.

"Okay, tell me what you want me to do."

"I want you to get rid of two men for me."

Stan considered for a moment.

"All right, where should I meet you?"

"Just relax, Stan, I'll call and give you the full details when I'm ready."

Wednesday evening Linton took Flavia to Corner's nightclub. They danced, greeted their friends and colleagues. Linton had no doubt that some of the girls envied Flavia, the way they were looking at her.

"Where did you learn to dance like that, Linton?"

Linton laughed and drank some more of his light beer.

"Before I went away, I could hardly move my feet on the dance floor. Most of the girls I knew refused to dance with me. I kept losing girlfriends because of my lack of dancing skills. When I went to the States I took dancing lessons and watched my friends dance."

"I'm not going to allow you to dance with anybody I don't know."

Linton considered for a moment. He had just met Flavia on Monday and here she was claiming him already.

"You don't have to fear. You know how girls are. Some of them, if they come to the club they'll only dance with guys they know, but sometimes a girl who's not shy will spot a guy who's a good dancer and will dance with him."

"You must get a lot of offers."

"I just dance with them. I like to make the first move."

"I hear that American girls are quite forward. You must have had a lot of girlfriends over there."

"Surprisingly, all of the girls I dated in the States were Jamaicans."

They got up to dance again. When they returned to their table, he said.

“I’m glad I returned home. At least I wouldn’t have met a beautiful girl like you.”

“I’m glad you think I’m good looking. But are you sure that you aren’t just flattering me?”

Linton knew he was at a disadvantage in not having a crew. Flavia was a good looking girl all right. He guessed her height to be about five feet six inches and she had a good figure.

She was probably one of the most attractive women in the nightclub. In such a situation he could have compared her to crew member’s women. If she could get a passing grade, she would stay, if not he’d dump her. She had told him that one month ago, she had broken up with her boyfriend of two years. Linton told her that before returning to Jamaica he and his girlfriend of three years had broken up because she was pressuring him to marry her and he wasn’t ready to settle down. Of course he knew he was lying, but he wouldn’t disclose why he had returned to Jamaica to any of these girls until he met Morgana. In fact, he had dropped Wanda after the two times he had gone out with her. There were girls on the fringes of the crew and he had gone out with some of them before he came home.

He and Flavia left the nightclub at twelve o’clock that night as she said that she had a very important meeting to attend in the morning.

Glen Norman was a medium sized guy. He was twenty four years of age and finishing up a Master’s degree in accounting after which he hoped to complete his Certified Professional Accountancy examinations in the United States in another two years. His father was a director and major shareholder in several of Jamaica’s leading companies. Glen knew that he didn’t have much time after completing his examinations before taking over some aspects of the business. His father had spoken to him many times and that’s why he had chosen to do business rather than law or medicine. His mother, Verna, was a pharmacist and businesswoman owning a couple of pharmacies around town. His older brother, Vantry, suffered from polio and had to use crutches to help him get around although he drove his own car. His elder sister, Sanya, was married to Brett Burton, who owned two medium sized hotels on the North Coast. His younger brother, Daryl and sister, Debra-Lee, were at school in the United States.

Glen thought Beverly Simmonds and he had a compatible relationship. They had never really had any disagreements. She was a lovely girl. They had virtually grown up together. He had gone to parties and nightclubs and they had always danced together but that was all. He didn’t like encroaching on a friend or colleague and her boyfriend, Rory, had been his classmate. His own girlfriend, Leona, was also on campus majoring in computer science, but he felt they were drifting apart. They had been going together for more than three years now. Since recently, she had been asking him for a monthly allowance and he had told her that he wasn’t working. They didn’t speak to each other for a week but she had reversed her decision after she realized that he was serious and wasn’t going to back down. He knew that it was her friends who were encouraging her, probably hoping to help her spend whatever money she got. Several of his friends had encouraged him to just go wild and splurge his money on women willing to sleep with him. In his late teens and just out of high school he had worked at one of his father’s companies for a year. He had a fast car and was earning his own money so he had lived a fast life. But since he resumed studying, he realized that if he wanted to complete his courses he had to put those activities on hold. He had been warned by his father that he was being irresponsible. He remembered that he hadn’t seen Bev on campus for two days now and decided to call her to find out if everything was okay with her.

Bev was studying for an examination when Glen called. Thinking that it might be Rory she

picked up her cell phone. The number wasn't an overseas one but local with which she wasn't familiar. She pressed the call button. It was Glen Norman.

"Bev, how're you? I missed you on Wednesday and then today. I just called to find out if everything was okay with you."

"Everything's okay, Glen, thanks for calling. I appreciate your concern very much," she told him. "Have you got a new cell phone?"

"I seem to have mislaid mine, so I just borrowed Vantry's."

"How's he?"

"He's okay, sometimes he goes around to some of the pharmacies and try to help out as best he can."

"That's good, I hope he keeps it up."

"I'm sure he will."

"I have a really important test on Monday."

"So I'll see you then, but will you be in Ocho Rios for the Easter weekend?"

"Sure I'll be down there with my sister and her fiancé."

"So can I dance with you?"

"You'll have Leona with you. I don't want her to feel that I'm intruding in your relationship. I don't think she was all that pleased when we danced together at that party in Red Hills Heights."

"She'll be coming, but she can't stop me from dancing with you."

"I'll see you on Monday and we'll talk some more."

"Okay then, and thanks for talking to me," Glen said as they both ended the call.

Bev knew that several persons, including her mother and sister and even her aunt, Sally, felt that there was something going on between her and Glen. She knew his girlfriend, Leona, and although they weren't friends, she didn't want her to feel that way too.

Bobbette wasn't in the welcoming party for Linton on Monday evening. She had been introduced to the tall, good looking senior manager. Bobbette felt that she had her own problems with Robert and Stewart to be vying with those other girls for this new man's attention. Friday morning she greeted Linton as he passed her desk.

"So how is the lovely Bobbette this morning?"

"I'm fine, thank you, Linton," she replied. It had been customary at the Small Companies Loan Bank for everybody to be on a first name basis.

"I heard that all the girls at Corners were going crazy over you."

"They liked the way I danced, that's all."

They were on the second floor of the company's offices on Trinidad Terrace in New Kingston.

"When I first saw you I thought you were one of those shy guys, but the sophisticated type."

"I don't know if shyness and sophistication mix any at all. Of course I'm shy, but I like to be around glamorous women, and because of my dancing skills women think that I'm a real extrovert."

"You must have a lot of girlfriends and maybe you left some of them in the States."

Linton laughed.

"Actually, I lost my girlfriend before returning home and I've just returned so I don't have a girlfriend as yet."

"Don't worry, I hear that quite a few of the hot girls have you in their sights. As for your girlfriend, was she afraid that you'd find a girl out here and dump her?"

"I don't know about any hot girls having me in their sights. My last girlfriend, she just got up and left because I wouldn't propose."

“In other words you wanted to enjoy life as a single man.”

“I’m a very responsible person. I’m not one of those guys who goes around with a lot of women,” Linton said. “Hey, how about some lunch later on?”

“Sure, but when you hear my story you’ll know that I’m so tied up it’s not funny.”

“Okay, see you at lunch.”

“Where will it be?”

“Make it Jenny’s Kitchen,” Linton said before leaving for his office.

Jenny’s Kitchen, upstairs the New Kingston Shopping Centre, was always full at breakfast and lunch time. It had gobbled up two small restaurants nearby and was now the largest one operating in the plaza. Bobbette and Linton were halfway through their meals when Bobbette looked up to see Stewart ordering a take away meal. She waved to him and continued eating.

“Who’s that guy?”

“A friend of mine, actually he’s my insurance agent. I might get you to buy some insurance from him.”

“I have a lot of insurance in the States.”

“Are they valid in Jamaica though?”

“I’m sure they are. So where’s your main guy?”

“He’s right here in Jamaica.”

“I haven’t seen you out since I’ve been back,” Linton stated.

“I’m so busy helping Robert with his various businesses plus he has so many of them running. When we get time we do go out or sometimes if he’s too busy I go with friends,” she replied as they finished their meals.

Their dessert, which consisted of apple pie and ice cream, came. Linton declined to eat his but Bobbette dived into hers with relish.

“Are you afraid of putting on weight?”

“No, it’s you I should be worried about. Women are always afraid of gaining weight.”

“I have an exercise machine plus on weekends and some evenings I go for walks on the playing field of this high school near to my home.”

The waiter came and gave them the bill just as Bobbette finished her dessert.

They paid the bill and went back to work.

Leona Marcus couldn’t help but let everybody know that she was Glen Norman’s girlfriend. She had seen the looks her girlfriends gave her and knew that they wouldn’t mind being in her place. Hershire Heights, where Glen’s family had their home was just above Coopers Hill. She had heard rumors that he and Beverly Simmonds were friends.

“Leona, be careful that Bev doesn’t take away Glen from you,” one of her batchmates, Shermaine Cooper, warned her.

“Why are you saying that, Shermaine?”

“Because every party I go and see them, they are always together. It’s like you are nowhere to be found.”

Leona thought over what Shermaine said.

“Her boyfriend lives abroad. I just hope that she doesn’t have her eyes on Glen.”

“I think she does. I’ve never attended a party where both of them are and they don’t dance together. I think you should watch her.”

That was a piece of advice she would heed, Leona thought. She had heard that since Rory

returned to the States in February, Bev wasn't hearing from him. She was keeping a close eye on Glen. She had searched his phone without his knowledge and had seen Bev's number. She hadn't seen her name in any of his emails, but was watching. She knew that before she met Glen he used to go around with a lot of girls. He and his previous girlfriend, Sammantha Eccleston had broken up when she decided to dedicate her life to the Lord. He had told her about how taken aback he was at her decision as she was usually the life of a party, nevertheless he had congratulated her and wished her the best.

She didn't see what Bev had over her. Sure she was good looking but so was she. She was probably an inch shorter than Bev and her body was curvaceous with all her curves in the right places. She knew how to fix up herself and wear trendy clothes and Bev couldn't dress better than her. She had to have her nails done every other week and she changed her hairstyle every week. She was wearing a jeans skirt, a light blue blouse and slippers today.

Leona was due to meet Glen at Leta's hideout in Half Way Tree this evening. When she got there she saw his Honda Prelude motor car parked in the customer's parking lot. She parked her Mitsubishi Lancer in a space beside it, locked it up and went over to where he was seated under a guango tree on the spacious premises.

"Hello, Leona," he greeted her with a hug and a kiss. "What can I get you?"

"I'll just have some apple juice."

Glen called a waiter over and ordered her drink and an energy drink for himself.

"Let's go to Corners tonight."

"I need some money to get my hair and nails done," she said as their drinks arrived.

Glen took a sip of his drink before replying.

"Have you asked your parents?"

Leona took some more of her drink before replying.

"I'm asking you. You're my man. They always tell me to ask you whenever I ask them for more money after I've used up my allowance."

"I'm not working. I only get an allowance from my parents each month," he replied.

"Why don't you sell your car and let me take you around?"

"Sell my car! Are you crazy? So how would I get around? I don't want to depend on anybody," she scoffed. She knew he had money. She had only decided to talk to Glen because she knew he was rich.

"Your parents drive, I drive, your brother, Carvel, drives. So I don't see why you can't depend on us to take you around."

"That's just not on. I like to drive myself around. I'm sure you've seen a lot of female students up here, driving."

Glen ordered another drink for himself and one more for her.

"Have you tried finding out how they finance themselves?"

"Most of them have a man to support them if their parents can't or won't."

"Listen, after I get my allowance from my parents I can't go back to them asking for more money."

"Okay, so I can't go out with you then. I'll see you around," she said, finishing her drink and walking out.

Glen didn't try to stop her from leaving. He was getting a bit tired of her depending on him for money because she knew that his parents were rich.

From the time he and Leona had started going around,

he had tried to help her as best he could. Her mother, Donnette, was a banker and her father, Wayne, operated several businesses. He knew that she got a generous allowance from them but spent it off on frivolities and was depending on him to help her out. He finished his drink and decided to go home. He would probably give Bev a call later on tonight.

The first social of the Newman and Graham Limited sports club for the year was on. The majority of the staff were there. A lot of table games including dominoes, ludo and cards were being played and people were also dancing to a large component set brought by Alex de Pass. It was scheduled to go on until midnight. Food and drinks were on sale at a concessionary rate to club members, but at full price to outsiders, many of whom turned up as friends of staff members of the firm.

Stewart's air conditioning unit was still going at full speed as he and Morgana relaxed in the afterglow of their lovemaking. They hugged each other repeatedly still savoring the joys of its aftermath.

"You love what I did to you, baby?"

She nodded and ran her fingers through the hairs on his chest.

"You're a great lover, Stewie. Oh God, it was so wonderful. I feel as if my body has been remade, and you are the creator."

Stewart smiled to himself. That was why he was still angry with her for going for that drink with Brad, although he had told her that he didn't mind, and for sleeping with that guy in Florida.

It seemed that the guy had taught her a few things. Before she went away she had allowed him to have his way with her. But now each time they made love she had been insistent on getting her pleasure.

"I'm going to take a nap. Wake me up at about two o'clock so that I can look after some lunch for you."

"We can do it again after you wake up."

Morgana looked at him and laughed.

"I don't know who you're going to do it with. I am going to sleep now, maybe when I wake up if I'm in the mood."

Stewart got up and went to the bathroom to dispose of the condom. When he returned, she was fast asleep.

As Stewart looked at the naked form of the woman on his bed, he wondered if he loved her. Her face looked so serene and there was a smile on her lips. Maybe she was daydreaming about what had just taken place, he thought.

Still, there would always be problems with Morgana.

She hadn't said anything about how she was getting on with Rick and Brad. He was glad that she didn't have to go to court to testify against the gunman, who had tried to rob her last year. Sometimes he wondered if he should stick to Bobbette alone. But she didn't want to leave that rich guy, Robert and he certainly wasn't going to leave Morgana. He had seen her having lunch with a guy. He had phoned her the next day and short of telling him to mind his own business; she told him that he was one of her colleagues. Stewart lay there thinking and didn't even know when he dropped off to sleep.

When he woke up Morgana had fixed their lunch of chicken soup and had put pumpkin, carrots, turnips and yam plus kneading some flour to make dumplings. She had also taken a bath. As they ate, she said.

"See how I've fixed up your lunch."

"Why don't you do it more often?"

"Stewart, we need to talk about us. We aren't getting any younger."

"Look who's talking. If it was I alone, we would have been married months ago."

Morgana looked at him. She didn't want to share her husband with any other woman. They continued eating in silence.

Stewart in turn looked at her as they finished their lunch. How would Bobbette react if he told her that he was now planning to marry Morgana? After the engagement she had refused to sleep with him and had only changed her mind when he told her that the engagement meant nothing to him. He also told her they hadn't set a date for marriage.

"You want me to propose?"

He burst out laughing.

"We should live together for a certain time, that way we'll know if we can get along if we were married."

"Any man I live with has to be my husband, darling."

He came up and hugged her.

"Why don't you spend the weekend? We could go clubbing tonight and tomorrow we could go to the beach."

"You know I can't. What would mummy think? Remember that Bev and I'll be going down for the holiday weekend and I'll come to sleep with you most nights."

"Easter is almost three weeks away. Monique knows you can trust me. She knows that you have nothing to fear while you're here with me."

"The times I spend with you isn't enough? Or is that why you have to be pursuing Bobbette?"

"Me pursuing that girl? You just believe that something happened between us after the party. If you had checked me that night you would have found me in my bed fast asleep."

As if to divert her thoughts, he said.

"I understand she's going out with one of her co-workers. I saw them having lunch the other day."

But Morgana seized on the opportunity to get on the subject of Bobbette again. She wanted to clear up some unanswered questions about Stewart and that girl, which had been bugging her ever since she returned to the island.

"I just can't understand you and Bobbette being so close and not going to bed. I can't imagine Bobbette being in a relationship with any man unless it was intimate."

Stewart felt like she wanted to trap him.

"What more do you want me to tell you than what I told you at the party?"

"I've told you that I had a man while I was in Florida and I was sleeping with him. I left him because he was using me as a sort of trophy to show off on his friends. You want me to believe that the whole time I was away you were sleeping alone?"

"Okay, so I slept with some women after we broke up. But since you returned it's just you alone."

"So where does Bobbette fit in? Is she one of those you slept with? Stewart, stop trying to treat me like I'm an idiot. Of all those women I can bet that Bobbette must have looked the sexiest and yet she was the only one with whom, you never went to bed."

"I didn't say that, there were other women with whom I was friendly and didn't go to bed with. What do you think I am, some kind of a playboy?"

She ignored his sarcasm.

"I don't think you told me the truth as to why she and you were talking to each other so loudly at the party. Why was she there alone?"

"I can't remember what I said to her and she became angry," he replied and laughed.

"I don't run this woman's life. How am I to know why she came to the party alone?"

"So where was her boyfriend? Isn't he the partying type of person, why she was there alone?"

Stewart wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

"All I know was that he wasn't at the party. I don't know where he was."

"Maybe she wanted you to dance with her. Why didn't you?"

"I know you don't like her and I didn't want the two of you to start quarrelling."

"At my boss's home, are you crazy?"

"Most of the times her boyfriend, Robert and I meet, we greet each other and shake hands. So you're the only one, who is having a problem."

Morgana felt there was no use to them prolonging the argument as they were getting nowhere. She stood up and took up her bag and car keys.

"You don't have to worry, it's you alone, I care about. There's no other girl out there but you."

She nodded, not sure whether to believe him or not. He opened the door for her and watch her drive off before sitting down in one of the patio chairs.

Let her go on not wanting to spend nights and weekends with him and believe that she could stop him from sleeping with Bobbette, Yasmin, Sadie and the others. Nevertheless, it was a close call and she had nearly trapped him with some of those questions. He had to be extra careful from now on.

Chapter Seven

Brad was at home that evening. He had eaten his dinner and was sitting in an armchair on his balcony. His mother had gone to a meeting at her church and his father to a lodge meeting. He decided to give Jenna a call.

When Brad called her, Jenna had just finished clearing her dining table for her young niece, Kailen and her son. She was doing the dishes while Jaimie watched television and Kailen did her homework. Jaimie got to watch television as he didn't get any homework.

"Hello Jenna, I just thought I'd give you a call. It's been a long time. I was really glad to meet you at your workplace."

"Brad, I'm happy to hear from you. It's certainly been a long time."

"I'm back in Jamaica for good. So if you want I'll keep in touch."

"I thought you would have been married a long time ago and forgotten about little me."

"You should know that I went away to study, not to get married. I've returned to help my father run his company."

"I knew you were friendly with a girl. I can't remember her name now."

"That's Dania Reid, but it's going nowhere. We're on the verge of breaking up."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I don't like to see people break up, especially if they've been in a long term relationship."

"I know what you mean. It's just that she has this jealous streak in her. She gets all upset if I talk to another woman."

"Some women are like that."

"I'm sure you're not that way. Dania has an exceptional bad streak of jealousy."

"I think I'd better keep my distance from such a jealous woman."

Brad laughed and Jenna joined him.

"I knew you had a son. How's he?"

"He's okay, he'll be six years in November and my niece, Kailen, also lives with us."

"My credit's running out, Jenna but I'll give you another call maybe later this week."

"Okay, Brad, don't forget to call me now," she said before they both ended the call.

Tuesday night Brad took Dania to Reason's nightclub. They danced to several songs and were now back at their table.

"Rick and Celia are living together now. Maybe we should do the same thing."

"We've talked about it before and I told you I would have thought about it. I can't say I've made up my mind as yet."

"I don't see what's preventing you, unless it's some other woman, you're thinking about."

A deep scowl could be seen on Brad's face. He pushed back his chair.

"You're always imagining things. Some other woman and me and yet you can't call any names," he scolded her as they saw Stewart and Morgana enter the nightclub. They came over and shook hands with Brad and Dania before going to their table.

Brad and Dania resumed dancing. When they were back at their table and having some drinks, Brad looked over at Stewart and Morgana. Dania saw him looking in their direction. They got up to dance again. When they were back at their table, she said.

"I don't know what to do. I think before long you and Stewart are going to be fighting over Morgana."

Brad looked at her and the scowl returned.

“What are you talking about?”

“Everywhere we go and you see Morgana, I get tossed into the background as far as your mind is concerned and she comes in to fill that void.”

Brad took some more swallows of his drink.

“Let me ask you something. If you saw a good looking guy enter the nightclub; aren't you going to admire him? So what's wrong about me admiring a good looking girl? It doesn't mean I'm going to jump into bed with her.”

“Maybe the admiration is mutual,” she said.

“I think Stewart's a good looking guy, but you don't see me looking at him and then staring into space as if I'm lost.”

“That's what you see me doing with Morgana?”

“Of course, that's why I have to complain all the time.”

“God, you're jealous. Let's do some more dancing.”

Brad and Dania didn't leave the nightclub until a few minutes after midnight. Stewart and Morgana had left a half an hour before them. Brad would have spent the rest of the night with Dania but for her constant jealousy of Morgana.

Linton was thinking about his old crew. Most of the guys and girls were from the Hughenden, Red Hills Road, Meadowbrook and Havendale areas. He had won a track scholarship to the Florida Institute of Athletics. His specialty was the four hundred meters races. Before he went away his popularity was based on his prowess on the track. There was a group of them who usually hung out together. Linton could remember a few names. The majority were involved in track and field. They went to parties together and even to the same church. An only child, he had never felt lonely as there were always friends calling on him.

In the United States he had kept in touch with the crew. He had come home a few times, visited the old school, and caught up with friends who were still in Jamaica. But as his interest in athletics faded so he lost contact with them. His interest faded when he realized that he wasn't going to be the star four hundred meter runner he had dreamt of himself to be because of injuries and a lack of motivation. He took up with a wholly American crew and got integrated into their culture.

On Sunday Linton was at home sitting in a chair on his balcony when he heard somebody calling his name. His mother had gone to church and he had promised to go with her next week. He went to the gate to see who it was. It was Serena Leon. She was short, slim and petite.

“Linton, I didn't know you were back and you didn't even come and look for me. I live at the same address.”

Linton embraced her. He remembered Serena. She had been his classmate, Elton Patrick's girlfriend.

“Why don't you come inside? Why aren't you in church or don't the young people go to church again?”

“Of course we do, but I have to go on campus. I might go to the night service.”

They were now seated on the patio. It was nearly midday. Linton knew that his mother's church would not be over until about two o'clock.

“You want something to drink, Serena?”

“No, I'm okay, so are you cooking for Miss Madeline? And how long have you been back?”

“No, she does all the cooking. she cooked before she went to church. I did a lot of cooking

when I was in the States, but she won't let me go into the kitchen. I just returned last week."

"I can't stay with you long. As I said I'm going on campus. I'm completing my degree. My boyfriend should have come to pick me up, but I haven't seen him yet. His phone seems to be turned off so I said I'd walk to the bus stop and get a bus to Half Way Tree."

"I'll drop you up there. So is it still Elton?"

Serena burst out laughing.

"Since Elton went to Canada I haven't heard a word from him. He hasn't phoned or written me. The last I heard was that he had gotten married to some Canadian girl."

"You can fill me in about members of my old crew. People like Bunny Eason, Betty Carew, Denise Pearson, Shanalee Perrier, Douglas Ledgister, Neville Singh and the others. We can talk when we're in the car," he said going inside for his keys.

Stan felt parched, Bishop hadn't called. He wanted some marijuana, but he didn't want to go down to the little wholesale and hold up the old Chinese couple again. He had done that last month and two months before. He called Bidey Samuels and Linford Sanderson but both men told him that they had no hits for him. Both men were underworld figures, crime lords to be exact and they always had somebody they wanted to get rid of. Stan had killed two men for Bidey and two men and a woman for Linford.

He had been held twice by the police on murder charges but had been released when witnesses failed to point him out at the identification parades. He had always tried not to attract too much attention by not spending money freely or dressing too flashy. As a rule he never wore jewelry.

Stan reflected on the number of hits he had made for Bishop. It was about five if he remembered right. The biggest one was the hardware merchant in Papine. Try as he might he couldn't remember the man's name. To do those hits he would steal a car and abandon it the same day.

Surprisingly, as he looked at his cell phone it started ringing. Bishop was on the line.

"Stan, I have everything ready, one third of the money plus some of your stuff. You see how generous I am to you."

Stan didn't reply, he was still thinking as to why he let this man have so much power over him.

"I'll meet you in the parking lot of Mister Fisher's bar on Molynes Road."

"What time should I reach there?" Stan asked.

"Come at about nine o'clock."

Stan's hands were still trembling. He wasn't sure if Bishop wasn't leading him into a trap. He could just turn up at the meeting place to find Whyllie and his boys waiting to beat him up. Or it could be Bishop's police friends coming to kill him. He decided to take his gun along.

When he reached the bar, he didn't see Bishop's car, but then as the owner of so many vehicles the man could very well be here and he didn't know. He had just come out of his car when he saw Bishop coming out of the bar.

Bishop was a big beefy man in his early fifties and was a former policeman turned security consultant when his enlistment contract wasn't renewed some ten years ago.

"Stan, I'm glad to see you. Come into my car and let's talk."

Stan went to Bishop's car. Bishop took a parcel and gave him. He opened his briefcase and took out a large envelope and handed it to him.

"Everything you want is in these parcels. If you ever mess up this job here, they won't find enough of you to bury."

Stan wanted to draw his gun and shoot the man there and then, but he knew that even if he killed Bishop, one of his bodyguards would be sure to get him as the man never travelled alone.

Bishop told him the names of the two men he wanted him to kill. He wanted the hits to take place before the Easter holidays started. That meant he had to steal two cars in less than two weeks.

Returning home Stan cut open the parcel. The pictures of the two men were there. Weston Nelson worked in New Kingston while Oraine Chen operated a business on Red Hills Road. He had to begin his stalking from tomorrow. That way he would pick up the men's habits as he began to plan his kills.

He dipped into the parcel again and took out the bag of marijuana. It was only half-full. Damn Bishop, he thought, for trying to trick him. He opened the envelope and took out its contents, thirty thousand dollars, he counted it again. He then examined the notes to make sure they weren't marked and checked for special markings on them to make sure they weren't counterfeit.

He took out some paper and made a marijuana cigarette. He lit the cigarette and began smoking. He counted the money again. He would smoke a couple more cigarettes tonight and probably try and let the marijuana last him a couple more days.

Natalie had gone to the country to look for her mother and young daughter and wouldn't be back until the morning.

He had told her that he was due to get some money soon, but she had told him that she couldn't wait. It was more than two weeks now that she hadn't seen her mother and daughter. She had borrowed the money she needed, from a neighbor.

Linton had just dropped Flavia home and was relaxing in his room. His mother had gone to bed. Since he returned to the island he knew that he should get a spread like the one he had in Miami. It would allow him a lot of freedom and he could bring women there whenever he wanted. He just didn't like going to guest houses or motels some of which simply stank. He would arrange for his mother's sister, to send one of her daughters to stay with her. He had identified an apartment off Mannings Hill Road and was due to inspect it on Wednesday. The agent had given him the price and it sounded reasonable and was in a good neighborhood.

He had heard about a crew that he wanted to join. They were mostly guys under the age of thirty who had money to spend, drove an expensive vehicle and had a stunner for a girlfriend. They would leave for Ocho Rios, Negril or Montego Bay on Friday evenings, book into a hotel and then party on both Friday and Saturday night. He and Flavia were now going steady. He had also bought a Ford F-150 pick-up.

He thought over the lunch, he had with Bobbette Greene. He had since learned that her boyfriend operated a couple of petrol service stations and several wholesale stores among other things. One of his female colleagues had whispered to him that she had another boyfriend. Linton wasn't in the habit of sharing with anybody. Flavia while not being in Morgana's class could do for the time being while he hunted a stunner to match the leggy beauties his friends were parading with around town. In all this he hadn't forgotten Morgana. He wanted to see her face when she saw him out here with someone younger than her and even better looking.

Stan knew that Oraine Chen lived in an apartment in New Kingston. Houses in these areas had twenty-four hour security. He had seen the man's wife and young daughter driving out that Wednesday morning. He now knew that Oraine normally left for work by the latest eight thirty in the mornings. Most business places Uptown, didn't open until ten o'clock so maybe Oraine

wanted to get in early to check up on stocks and other things before they opened up to the public. Stan was behind him that morning when he turned off and drove into his business place. Stan looked at his watch as he continued driving and realized the time was nine o'clock.

Stan went into Oraine's business place at five o'clock that evening and saw him about to get into his vehicle and realized that the man was armed. Stan was tempted to shoot him there and then, but realized that he didn't have the advantage of surprise so he just went into the shop and asked for something he knew that they didn't sell. By the time he came out, Oraine was gone. Stan knew that he had to surprise Oraine. He couldn't give him any time to go for his gun. He also noticed that Oraine didn't have any security which was even better.

Jenna was lying in one of her couches and she was thinking about Brad. She was thinking of giving him a call as she hadn't heard from him for more than a week now. She had actually taken up her cell phone to make the call when she thought better of it. If he was having difficulties with his girlfriend she didn't want to add to their problems. When next he called her she was going to politely tell him not to call her again. But when she did a re-think she realized that would be the wrong thing to do as she had always liked him. She would, however refuse to get into a relationship with him while he was still along with Dania.

Friday and Saturday Stan got the final lowdown on Oraine. He also knew where to get the car he was going to use. For two nights now he had followed an illegal taxi operator to his yard, observing the man's method of securing his vehicle. For ten thousand dollars an associate had agreed to go with him for that vehicle. So that was that. They would take it away on Sunday night. Whatever cash that was found on the taxi-man belonged to Bully. Stan decided to hit Oraine on Monday.

Stewart and Morgana were at Edith Chin enjoying some snacks. They were drinking energy drinks and snacking on potato chips. They had agreed to meet there this Saturday evening.

"Bev will be going with her friends. Mummy, Val and Darren are going to Port Antonio. Sally and Vernon are going with them."

Morgana was talking about their plans for the upcoming Easter holiday weekend.

"Bev and I'll be staying in the same room," Morgana said and laughed. Stewart laughed too.

"It's supposed to be a romantic weekend. You can't do that to me. I suppose Glen will be coming too."

"Leona will be coming down too, but Bev will be with her friends so she'll be all right."

"So I'll be alone in that big bed?"

"I didn't say that, I'll be staying with you. I'm only sorry for Bev. Rory hasn't even sent her a card for her birthday. She likes Glen but Leona isn't going to let him go anytime soon."

"So maybe she has to forget Rory and look a new boyfriend."

"She can't hear from him and then Roxanne told her that a girl was pregnant for him."

"What! I didn't know Rory was like that."

"Imagine, she's over here trying not to get involved with any other man and to hear that kind of news."

Stewart hoped that she didn't get on his case again, especially with Bobbette. For the three years that she had been away he had always spent the holiday weekend with April. He had told Bobbette that it was a family custom that he spend those weekends with them. She had accused him of being with April but

he had always denied it. He knew that she and Robert would be holidaying in one of the resort towns so he had always found out where they would be and then go somewhere else.

“It’s the first time I’m going to spend a weekend in a resort with a man. I know I’m going to enjoy it. We always came down during the holidays but it was always with family and friends.”

“But now you’re going to enjoy it not just with any man but your fiancé. It’s going to be fantastic.”

“We can spend the whole time in our room and just order room service.”

“It’s just after seven o’clock. Why don’t we go down to my apartment and spend some time?”

Morgana laughed.

“I know what you want, but you’ll get that this weekend.”

Stewart laughed.

“Why don’t we just spend the week down there? We can even go to Negril and Treasure Beach.”

“Stewart, you’re lucky, you can take time off anytime you want. I have to work. I won’t be getting any leave until later this year.”

“Let’s go down to Randy Chin and play some games with Brad and those other guys. By the way are those guys and girls from your office headed that way too.”

“All the members of the sports club will be down there. Brad, Rick and guys like Alex are members.”

“It’s going to be one big party, all weekend.”

Stewart went to pay their bill and the two of them headed out for Randy Chin in their separate cars.

Sunday, Stan drove past Oraine's business place three times. He stopped twice to wipe his windshield and the other time to take something out of the car trunk. This gave him time to make a quick survey of the area and to know where he should park the stolen car while he waited on Oraine. Bully would control his car for him.

He drove over to Washington Boulevard and came off the road before stopping. He mapped out in his mind exactly what he would do and his method of attack would give Oraine no chance to go for his gun. He wondered again why Bishop wanted the two men dead, but that was no concern of his. He had a job to do and he had to do it well in order to collect the rest of his pay. It was dangerous work, but just as deadly and far more profitable than holding up lonely business places or snatching other people’s valuables. Stan left and went to a bar on Whitehall Avenue to have a few malt beverages before going home to sleep. Later tonight he would pick up Bully and go for the taxi-man’s car.

Linton stood for a long time looking at his new apartment. He and Flavia had inspected the furniture. They looked brand new; some of them still had the manufacture’s label on them. The appliances looked okay, like they hadn’t been used. He had been told that he was only the second tenant for the apartment and that the complex was little more than a year old. They had gone out to buy things like curtains, bedroom and bathroom fixtures and carpets for the floors. It had cost him more than twenty-five thousand dollars to make the apartment hospitable. Flavia was even saying that maybe it would have been cheaper to have rented an unfurnished apartment. Yet Linton knew what he was doing. He hadn’t made up his mind whether he was returning to the States or staying in Jamaica.

He and Flavia were now lying on their backs and admiring the apartment.

“I have to thank you, Flavia. I don’t know one thing about some of the things we bought except that they were necessary.”

“Can you cook?”

Linton laughed.

“I did some of that when I was in college, but I’ll mostly eat at my mother and you said I can come by you so that should take care of my cooking.”

“What about breakfast? It’s the most important meal of the day.”

“I eat oats most mornings. So I’ll just add a cup of coffee to that plus an egg and maybe some butter and toast and some fruit juice.”

“That should be enough.”

“I’ve joined the crew, I told you about. They’ll be going to Ocho Rios for the Easter weekend.”

“Who’re they, though?”

“They’re mostly guys and girls under thirty, money guys and their girls. They’re party animals and extroverts. They’re on the Noth Coast nearly every weekend.”

“That’s what I’d like. Being in Ocho Rios, Negril, or Montego Bay and what about Portland and places in St. Elizabeth like Treasure Beach but I can’t afford it. I can’t go, so it seems as if you’re on your own.”

Linton sat up.

“At the rates they’re charging only the very rich could afford to vacation down there every weekend. They only go down there once a month. I was joking when I said every weekend.”

“Oh well that seems more affordable. But what caliber of guys and girls are we talking about though.”

“Most of them are bank managers, top of the line insurance executives and other guys earning top dollars. The women are mostly former beauty and fashion model contestants. Let’s go and meet some of them.”

“Wait before you go. That means I don’t qualify.”

“Of course you do. You’re better looking than a lot of them.”

“You’re flattering me.”

“Of course not, come, we’d better go and get ready.”

Flavia had brought a change of clothing so it didn’t take them long to dress and head out to cruise the nightclub circuit.

Oraine Chen drove along Red Hills Road on Monday morning. He looked at his watch and saw that the time was nine o’clock. He hoped that Mrs. Dinnal had arrived early to let in the staff. The wholesale was always crowded on Mondays. When he arrived he saw that Mrs. Dinnal had done her usual. He was pressing the buzzer to go inside when he saw a tall man running towards him with a gun. Oraine made a desperate grab for the gun in his waist, dragged it out and fired a shot. He heard another loud explosion before everything went black.

Stan saw when Oraine drag the gun out of his waist and got off a shot. In the same instance he had triggered his gun twice, one bullet hit Oraine in the left side of his chest and the other in his belly. The bullet from Oraine’s gun flew harmlessly in the air.

As Oraine fell, Stan ran up to him and took up the gun which he had dropped when hit by his bullets. He heard the workers inside bawling for murder, but he didn’t pay them any mind. He took up Orane’s briefcase, then jumped over the nearby wall and went to the stolen Nissan Sunny motor. He drove to an empty lot on Washington Boulevard, parked the Nissan and locked it up. He then put a ‘For Sale’ sign on the car along with a fictitious telephone number. He took off his

driving gloves and pocketed them. He then took up the briefcase and walked to a nearby taxi stand and chartered one to where Bully was waiting for him. As he drove away in his car, he began planning the other hit.

By late Monday afternoon Stan was able to figure out that Weston Nelson, his other target had lunch brought to him. He hadn't seen him leaving the building to go to any of the nearby restaurants during the normal lunch period which was between twelve and two o'clock.

He left work at ten minutes past five that evening. Stan followed him out to Trafalgar and Waterloo Roads and down South Avenue. Bishop had said that he lived in Leas Flat. Stan wasn't thinking of killing him at home or on the job as both would be risky. He didn't know what type of security the man had at home. But most of those top executives were wired up to one of those big security companies. Stan turned down Constant Spring Road. Tomorrow he would follow him again. He wondered if the man was a member of any clubs or lodges. Did he have children still attending school? Did he have to drop his wife at work in the mornings and pick her up in the evenings? He didn't like messy kills or leaving witnesses to identify him. If Talbert had put a bullet in that girl she wouldn't have turned up to point him out at that identification parade. Stan drove down to Leta's Hideout to relax and have a few malt beverages. Later on he would pick up Natalie and probably go to Crystals or Reasons.

Stan was now convinced that Weston Nelson simply came to work in the mornings and went home in the evenings.

It seemed odd to him. That evening, Weston drove down to Oxford Road and went across Tom Redcam Avenue and picked up a woman at the library. He wondered if she was his wife or girlfriend. More likely a girlfriend as he hadn't seen her in his sports utility vehicle this morning. The man turned on Arthur Wint Drive and drove up Old Hope Road and into Mona Commons. Stan went home. He went to the secret compartment in their bedroom and took out some of the marijuana. He took out some paper and made a marijuana cigarette. Natalie soon joined him, making a marijuana cigarette for herself. Stan never told her anything. All she knew was that he worked for Eric Bishop who owned a security firm.

"How was work today?" she asked.

They lived on Latore Crescent in Swallowfield.

Okay, I guess," he replied as he built another marijuana cigarette.

"Have you ever been to the North Coast before?" he asked her.

"Only once, but that was when I was smaller but don't forget that I come from that way."

"I'm talking about Ocho Rios. We can go down there this Friday night."

Natalie told him that she wanted to go to the corner shop and get something to cook and he gave her some money.

As she made her way to the shop Natalie thought to herself. A few months ago all she could think about was her prison cell and the smell of the mattress she had to sleep on every night. Now she was giving all that up to spend a weekend in a hotel with a man. She had at first thought that he would be the last person she'd ever spend time with in a hotel.

Natalie had spent four years in an English prison before being deported back to Jamaica. She had gotten through safely the first time, but the money she made, ran out soon after she returned to Jamaica and not wanting to go on the streets again, she had decided to take up another load and they had held her at Heathrow Airport. In jail she worried the whole time about her only daughter, Sienna, who lived with her mother in St. Mary.

On the first night after she returned she met Stan and though the money he gave her wasn't

much she was able to send some of it to her mother to help with Sienna. Sienna's father was also out of prison and surprisingly, helping her. Sometimes she wondered if she wasn't in danger. Stan was violent and prone to easily get angry.

Often he complained of not having any money, but would leave in the morning and return later with a pile. What she knew was that he wasn't in any regular nine to five job, nor was he a security guard or a consultant and she thought she had a fair idea of the type of work he did.

She knew that she had to get into his confidence some more. That would only come with time. As he gradually learned to trust her he would reveal more secrets to her and even tell her more about his boss. She had seen some of the rewards being offered and they were pretty small. What she wanted was some money to set up her mother and Sienna so that if she wasn't around they would be comfortable and not have to be in need of anything. In all this she hadn't forgotten that Stan had a gun. He had never shown it to her, but she had opened his pouch, one day and saw it. She knew she had to be careful around him and not do anything that might arouse his suspicions.

Bev was in her room and she was thinking about Rory.

Last week she had heard some very disturbing news from her friend, Roxanne, who had attended the same high school as his girlfriend, Brittany. According to Roxanne, Brittany was now pregnant for Rory. Bev now saw that as the reason she wasn't hearing from him. He had denied that he and the girl were friends when last he was out here. Tonight some of her friends had tried to cheer her up by celebrating her birthday with her at Ruddy's nightclub. But it all seemed so empty without her boyfriend.

Glen had called to congratulate her. He probably wanted to be there, but Leona may have persuaded him not to attend. She knew that she had taken too many things for granted. Several persons, including Sally had warned her about long distance relationships. She felt that she had been a bit over optimistic that her relationship with Rory would have borne some fruit. Why couldn't she have been friendly with a decent guy like Glen?

She had her reservations about him, but at least he wasn't snobbish. She knew that when he was younger there were stories about him and various women, both younger and older than he. But he seemed to have settled down with Leona after Sammantha's sudden about turn. In a way she was glad she was going up after university. That would give her a chance to thrash out things with Rory and his girlfriend. She wasn't going to fight Brittany for him. If it was true and she was really carrying his baby, then she would encourage him to support her but she would break off with him.

Some of her friends had encouraged her to forget about Rory and look a new guy. But it was hard for her to just walk out of a relationship that she had put so much into. Since Rory first went up she had always been there for him each time he came out. She just couldn't get into another relationship and she didn't know what was happening to the other half of the one she was in. She wouldn't keep a boyfriend until she sorted out things with Rory. She wasn't even too sure about going to Ocho Rios for the Easter weekend, but would go and try to enjoy herself. Bev got up and made her way downstairs to get a snack before going to bed.

Weston Nelson reached the intersection of Constant Spring and Red Hills Road at a quarter to eight that morning. This morning he had a woman and a teenaged girl in the vehicle with him. He dropped the woman off at a preparatory school in Half Way Tree before taking the teenaged Cross Roads. Stan was tempted

to finish him off there and then as he waited at the stoplight at Tom Redcam Drive and Old Hope Road. Stan was in the lane going up Old Hope Road. He knew that he would get the lights before Weston got the go ahead to go across Oxford Road. So as he drew abreast of the man he could shoot him, but then he heard a police siren and relaxed in his seat. He would have to get him this evening. Stan hoped that he would be alone in his vehicle. It seemed that the police were less alert in the evenings than in the mornings.

Chapter Eight

Morgana and Stewart drove down along with their friends. Bev was riding with Jovita and her boyfriend, Tim Ledley. Melissa was riding with her boyfriend, Kirk Overton. A lot of college students were also going down too. All along the Bog Walk Gorge and leading out of it they saw an assortment of fruits put out for sale. They stopped at Faith's Pen and had jerk chicken, bammy and festival. Friday night they partied non-stop and Morgana had gone to sleep with Stewart.

On Saturday morning Morgana came across Bobbette. Morgana was down by the hotel's pool when she came down. Bobbette had on a light blue bathing suit. Morgana was lying in one of the beach chairs.

"Look who the wind just blew up, little Morgana Simmonds."

Morgana had to laugh at Bobbette calling her little. She knew that it was a demeaning word. She was taller than Bobbette and probably outweighed her by at least twenty pounds. Bobbette might have broader hips and bigger breasts, but that was all. She certainly couldn't match her in looks and she knew that she had a great figure. In her dark blue bathing suit Morgana knew she was attracting the same amount of attention as Bobbette.

"I don't see what's so funny, Bobbette. I hope you're not down here alone."

"Listen girl, you don't have to worry because I'm not going to take away Stewart from you."

"You've tried many times already and failed," Morgana shouted.

"You go to hell, Morgana. Anytime I want Stewart I can get him," Bobbette shouted back as she moved away.

Morgana spied Stewart and beckoned him over.

"I just had a quarrel with your friend, Bobbette. She's too feisty for my liking."

"I don't know why you two girls can't get along," Stewart said as he came over to where she was. Comparing the two women now, he had to agree that Morgana was better looking than Bobbette but both women had great bodies. He was sleeping with two of the most gorgeous women around so why spoil it.

"She said that anytime she wants, she can get you. I want to know what she meant by that."

"I don't know what she's talking about. Maybe she's just teasing you."

"From I've returned home that girl has been giving me a hard time every time she sees me. It reminds me of how April used to behave towards me."

"I hope that Bobbette isn't giving you the wrong impression. You know it's only you I have eyes for. As for April I'm glad she's away. Since she went away I haven't heard from her and we were only social friends," Stewart said, hugging her.

"Let's go for a drive around Ocho Rios. Maybe we can go to Dunn's River Falls." He scooped her up into his arms.

Brad and Dania were also partying in Ocho Rios as were Rick and most of the members of the sports club of Newman and Graham Limited. Morgana had come across both men down there. They were all so very busy in the office that it was hard for her to keep track of what jobs they were working on. It seemed as if both men were going steady with their respective woman. She was glad, at least none of Stewart's predictions had come true.

Stan Lubsy had also come down too. He had killed Weston Nelson as he drove home on Thursday evening. As the man waited at the intersection of South Avenue and Constant Spring Road, he had ridden up and fired three shots at him. He saw when he slumped over the steering-

wheel and the now out of control vehicle slammed into the car in front of it which in turn slammed into another car causing a small pile up of traffic. He had ridden away and returned the motorcycle to its owner after paying the balance of the five thousand dollars rental fee. He then got into his car and drove to Leta's Hideout. While there he heard the news flash and learned that the man's name was really Winston Nielson and not Weston Nelson. Stan showed no sign of emotion, he simply finished his beer and left the bar.

Now he was down in Ocho Rios partying with Natalie. He had collected the balance of the money from Bishop and decided to enjoy some of it. They had their supply stashed away in their room.

Bishop was also down in Ocho Rios partying and meeting some clients. He had a woman with him, Dawn Lunan, who was his steady these days.

Stan thought he knew the tall guy dancing with the good looking woman of medium height. It was Linton Marsh, but the man pretended that he didn't know him, brushing past him both at the nightclubs in New Kingston last month and now here. He knew Linton because sometimes he and other boys used to come and play football and other games with them in Maverly. He and Natalie were taking a breather and watching the happenings around them. One of the main reasons why he had come down was to see if he could get some money off one or two rich persons. He observed the jewelry the girls were wearing and was disappointed. He had a good eye for expensive jewelry. He shouldn't really have expected to see the girls wearing a lot of jewelry as they normally wore them on more formal occasions.

Sometimes if he didn't get any work he would go on the plazas. He would identify his victim from early, then he would begin to stalk them and then make his move.

He looked over at Linton again, his girl only had on a watch and he couldn't see if she had any rings on her fingers. Linton didn't have on any jewelry. He could swear that he had seen him wearing chains and rings at Corners. Maybe he had left them in Kinston or in his room down here. In any case he wasn't ready for Linton yet.

He would watch and if there was no improvement in his behaviour towards him he would hold him up one of these nights probably marking up his face just as a reminder not to show off on him. He would make him give him all the jewelry he had plus pay him to spare his life.

Robert Parsons reached Ocho Rios and headed for the hotel his woman was vacationing in for the weekend. He was entering the hotel's lobby when he saw her coming towards him in her bathing suit. He took her in his arms and kissed her.

"How was last night, Bobbette? Sorry I couldn't make it again."

"I tried to relax and didn't leave my room. I tried watching television, but got bored and went to bed."

"I got held up in town. I just couldn't make it out here after that meeting. Let's go to the room and talk."

She put her card into the door, turned the lock and they went inside. She turned on the air-condition unit.

"You want me to order something for you?"

"I'll have a beer."

She called room service and ordered his beer plus a glass of orange juice for herself.

"The whole of Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Catherine is down here. I've run into so many

people I know.”

“It shows that people are getting richer that they can afford these types of holidays. Ever notice the type and quality of vehicles on the road.”

“You can say that again. My car seems ancient compared to some I saw when I was coming down.”

“If you behave, very soon you’ll get new wheels.”

She came up to him and hugged him.

“Haven’t I been a good girl, darling?”

“I want you to keep it up.”

Their drinks arrived and they were having it.

“So have you gone into the water?”

“I’ve been down by the beach and been in the water, but I didn’t go far.”

Robert knew that like himself Bobbette was a good swimmer as they had swam in friends’ pools and when they went to the beach.

Robert climbed into his bathing trunks and finished drinking his beer and Bobbette finished her drink.

“Let’s go and have a whale of a time, Robert.”

“Yeah, let’s go and really enjoy ourselves.”

Bobbette closed the door behind her and the two of them left for the beach.

Brad entered the nightclub and saw Morgana dancing with Stewart. Her curves were out of sight, he thought as he and Dania started dancing. His interest in her had waned somewhat. He didn’t think he had tried to romance her enough to be a serious rival to Stewart, but he would work to put that right. She could really dance, not that Dania couldn’t dance.

Brad saw Rick and Celia enter the nightclub, hell he thought the whole of the sports club must be down here. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw Bev dancing with a guy. It was Glen Norman. He saw Glen’s girlfriend, Leona, sitting in a corner and watching them. He didn’t think Glen was making a play for Bev, not with Leona around, although he too had heard the rumors about them. That gave him an idea, if he started pursuing Morgana, Rick would almost certainly try to dip in. Why not get him to start dating Beverly?

"I know where your mind is, Brad. Why can't you concentrate on us?"

"What do you see me doing except dancing with you?"

"I'll go to my room and pack. Don't forget that I drove myself down here."

Brad didn't want to get angry, but if she wanted to go she could very well go. He felt for a showdown with Stewart over Morgana. He knew that it would be a difficult task to woo her away from him. Nevertheless, he knew of women who had been in love with a man and had been wooed away by a persistent suitor. That’s all it took, Brad thought, persistence.

As the song ended Morgana saw them go. She had seen them quarrelling and wondered what it was all about. She had heard that Brad was seeing other women, but doubted if it was true. Stewart left her to refresh himself and she saw Rick coming over.

"It seems like the whole office is down here. So how are you?"

"I'm fine, I think that most people are down here, trying to enjoy themselves."

"All the members of the sports club are down here having a whale of a time."

"I hope you and Stewart are enjoying yourselves."

"We are and I'm sure you and Celia are too."

“We are. I saw Bev and some of her friends partying last night. Is her boyfriend still abroad and is she seeing Glen now?”

Morgana didn't know the reason for the questions and wasn't willing to give out more information than necessary, said.

"He's still overseas, and she and Glen are only social friends."

To Morgana's relief she saw Stewart coming over.

Rick greeted him and went over to Celia and they started dancing.

"What were you and Rick talking about?"

"It's nothing important."

"How do I know it's not important?"

"Because I said so," she said sharply, grabbing him and they started dancing.

Stan and his woman were at the same nightclub as Linton. They had used some of the marijuana and would finish it off before they returned to Kingston on Monday evening. They were really dancing. This was the life, Stan thought. He would try to do this maybe every other month.

Linton and Flavia were dancing up a storm. All around them were steaming bodies on the dance floor. The crew was also down in Ocho Rios. They had booked en-bloc in the same hotel and had gotten a big discount. Some crew members had gone to other nightclubs, but Linton and some others had agreed to go to the hotel's nightclub. In bed Flavia hadn't been shy although she told him that she didn't have a lot of experience he being only the third man she was going to bed with. Linton had taught her a few things he had picked up in his many sojourns in the bedroom with North American women.

Sunday, Morgana and Stewart climbed Dunn's River Falls. They saw Brad and Dania. Rick and Celia were also there as were Robert and Bobbette and a host of college students including Bev and her friends. Glen and Leona plus other members of the sports club of Newman and Graham Limited were also there. Morgana got some cutting glances from Bobbette. In the evening it was non-stop partying.

They decided to come into Kingston on Easter Monday and attend some carnival events, although the real carnival was slated for the coming weekend. Even Bev was beginning to smile again showing that she was happy after the ordeal she had undergone with Rory.

Bev was at home that Tuesday evening and she was considering Rick's proposal that they become friends. Celia had returned to their hotel for something and they had danced together and she had given him her number. She knew she wasn't in need of a boyfriend now. She had made that resolution. All she wanted was somebody to talk to. She knew she had a sufficient amount of people to pour out her troubles over Rory to. Rick had told her that he and Celia were breaking up. She also understood that Brad and Dania were having problems. She knew that Brad liked Morgana and maybe Dania was jealous of her.

She had told Rick that she didn't want to get into any fracas with Celia over him. From that first visit to Morgana's office when she had first been introduced to Brad and Rick she had taken a liking to Rick. But she had her principles and didn't believe in casual sex. She had once read in a book where women didn't talk to men unless they were formally introduced. She had been formally introduced to Rick but he belonged to somebody else. She would talk to him, but only go

so far with him until she heard from Rory and he did something about Celia. And what about Glen? They had danced together in Ocho Rios and once again Leona wasn't pleased, but she felt it would be unethical of her to fight Leona and take Glen away from her.

Brad was at home sitting on the steps of his balcony. He had encouraged Rick to start talking to Bev seeing that the girl was lonely. He was now ready to fight Stewart for Morgana. He had danced with her in Ocho Rios. He couldn't say that he hadn't enjoyed himself with Dania. But her jealousy was driving him against a wall and he felt that Morgana liked him. Why had she not found out about Stewart's various cheatings? At the party up at Blake's house there had been a big rumor that he had gone to sleep with Bobbette. A lot of people at the party and some of those who knew about their relationship were whispering it about the place. Even when they had been down in Ocho Rios he had heard that last year, Stewart had been down there with April. He wasn't sure where they had gone the previous two years that Morgana had been away. He'd probably talk to her one day next week. He wouldn't tell her anything about Stewart. She would have to find that out for herself.

Morgana was sitting in a chair on Stewart's patio. She had spent the whole day Saturday with him just talking and lying around.

"I'm glad we can relax like this and not have to jump into bed every time I come down here."

"Live with me and you'll find out everything about me."

Morgana laughed.

"Stewart, you're very persistent. How many times must I tell you that I can't live with you unless we're married?"

"Suppose I left all the marriage arrangements to you."

Morgana laughed again.

"I suppose you're still happy about what you got last week."

"You got it good too, baby."

"But seriously though, why are we engaged?"

"Because we love each other and it's the usual thing to do before getting married."

"You know how much time has passed since we got engaged. I'll soon become a laughing stock."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because here I am sleeping with you and you wouldn't mind if I could live with you. I'm just wearing this piece of diamond and I don't know what your intentions are."

"I'm not forcing you to sleep with me. But as I said nothing ever comes before its time."

"I'm not going to wait much longer though and there won't be another sexy weekend between us until you make things official."

"I hear you, madam. Everything will soon be all right."

"I hope so, I'm going home. I'll probably call you tomorrow."

They shared a short hug before she went to her car and drove away.

Flavia Mc Queen couldn't say that she wasn't enjoying Linton's company. The Easter weekend trip to Ocho Rios had opened her eyes to some of the things Jamaica had to offer to visitors from home and abroad. They went clubbing with the crew almost every night that they were down there.

She had moved some of her things to Linton's apartment. She had, however heard some

disquieting rumors

about the crew. Evette Argyle and Kimmesha Walters had left the crew and their boyfriends, Denson Rivers and Malcom Senior had brought in new women in Debbie Dixon and Reva Lloyd, to replace them. She had heard that the two women got the boot because they weren't fashionable enough. She had to agree that both women looked out of place. Jackson West had also left the crew when he lost his job at the bank and his girlfriend, Suzanne Alfred, broke up with him. She had heard that ex-crew members were to be shunned. She had told Linton that she had a meeting that evening and couldn't go clubbing with him. She was therefore taken aback when her cell phone rang and his number came up. It was the Monday of the second week following the Easter holidays and of course Carnival.

"You'll have to cancel the meeting you have for this evening."

"Who says? Linton, are you crazy? When I lose my job, who is going to employ me?"

"I want to go clubbing tonight."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but you'll have to go alone."

"No, I don't think that will do, but I'm putting you on notice that the crew won't look favorably on any crew member attending any function alone."

"Why did Evette and Kimmy leave the crew?"

"Their guys dropped them, they said they simply weren't measuring up. I think it's the right thing they did in bringing in those two girls to replace them."

"What about Jackson West?"

"Jackson lost his job and his woman simultaneously. He was due for the boot, but he left before he got it. Look at it this way, Flavia. When the crew goes to a resort we have to pay for our food and accomodation but we men share the liquor tab. It would be hard to expect a guy who's not working to do likewise."

"So you aren't going to change your mind?" he again insisted.

"No and if that's what it takes to get booted from the crew, so be it."

Linton smiled to himself. In the crew it was the men who did the booting.

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow then," he said and they both ended the call.

Flavia knew now that she couldn't afford the crew. It was simply too expensive and time consuming. She had other things to do besides partying every night and suppose she was going to school. Linton had his degrees and she didn't even have one. She didn't think she wanted to stay around the crew anymore. It seemed to her that you were always on a slippery slope.

Morgana was busy at her desk that Monday afternoon when her telephone rang. It was Bev on the line.

"Hi, Bev, is everything okay?"

"I guess so, I left before you for campus, but I feel a bit tired after that hectic weekend and then last week I don't think I got enough rest with Carnival and all that."

Morgana had told Bev to put her partying on hold until she finished her studies and if she partied during the holidays to make sure she got home in time to get a good night's sleep.

"Rick from your office called me. He wants us to start seeing each other."

Morgana tried to digest what her sister had just told her. So that may have been the reasons why he had been asking her all those questions.

"What did you tell him?"

"Honestly, I don't know. Ever since Rory went back up, I've been feeling so lonely and it's even worse because I'm not hearing from him. We met when we were down in Ocho Rios for the Easter weekend. Last week he kept calling me, but I kept putting him off."

"Do you know that he is living with Celia?"

Deep down, she was wondering if this was one of the cards the rivals were playing, she and now her sister.

"He told me that they were breaking up."

"Listen, Bev, tell him no and that you don't have time for any boyfriends now."

She doubted if Bev would take her advice. She couldn't remember how many times in the past she had heeded her advice.

Bev hung up after telling her that she would think over what she had told her.

She had hardly hung up the phone before Brad pushed his head into her office.

"I heard you giving advice to some forlorn lover."

"I was just discussing something with my sister."

"You know ever since that time we went out for that drink, I can't seem to get it out of my mind that maybe that was the best thing that ever happened to me."

"As I told you before, it was no date and judging by what my fiancé said to me afterwards, maybe I shouldn't have gone."

She didn't want to tell him that Stewart had backed down from his earlier objection to her going for that drink with him as she didn't want to give him any further encouragement.

"No harm was done, and I don't see why I can't invite you out again, after all we are all colleagues."

"I don't think that would be wise."

"I'll keep trying and if I see you out with Stewart, I hope he won't mind if I buy you a drink and invite you to dance with me."

"I can't read Stewart's mind, but he's a very level headed guy."

"I'm off, I probably won't get off work early but I'll see you first thing in the morning," he said and disappeared down the corridor. Morgana was left thinking, was this a plan to move in on her and her sister at the same time?

She had to warn Bev not to get involved with Rick. She knew that the girl was very vulnerable as her friend, Roxanne, had phoned to tell her that Rory had reconciled with his pregnant American girlfriend, Brittany.

Except for that unpleasant encounter with Bobbette, Morgana felt that she had a fantastic weekend. She and Stewart went partying every night and in several clubs too. They had returned to their room and made love for hours, not waking up until after ten o'clock sometimes. Stewart told her not to scream so loudly, but she told him that the walls were sound proof. He told her that he wasn't so sure. She told him that she was glad that Bev wasn't next door. In any case, even if she was and heard her, she would only tease her about it. She was only sorry that the girl had to come to Ocho Rios on such a weekend and be by herself and the two men who she wanted to be with were with other women.

After her exertions with Stewart, Morgana knew that she had to go home early and get some sleep. Her mother had teased her about what she and Stewart had done as if she hadn't had a great time with Val. Still Morgana knew that her mother would have frowned at her and Bev spending a weekend or night with any man while still unmarried. Monique would have realized that although both girls had rented a room together, Morgana would have left to sleep with Stewart.

Stewart was at his apartment relaxing when his cell phone rang. It was Bobbette. Maybe she wanted him to come and spend some time with her. They greeted each other as usual.

"Your fiancé was trying to pick a quarrel with me when I was down by the beach during the Easter holiday weekend."

“She told me that you and she had a small quarrel.”

“So what are you going to do about it?”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Warn her to leave me alone. Imagine I’m helping her out and she wants to fight me. She should be thanking me. Tell her not to fool around me or else I’m going to tell her some things she won’t like.”

“Like what?”

“That whether she likes it or not I’ll always be a part of her life.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Oh, so you’re becoming ungrateful too. I saved you for her. Has she ever asked you about the whole time she was abroad who was servicing her man? As I said you’d better warn her to leave me alone or else she’s going to get a shock at some of the things she’s going to hear from me.”

Stewart didn’t know what she was talking about. She didn’t know anything about him that Morgana didn’t know.

He didn’t think that she would confess to Morgana that they were lovers.

Her pride just wouldn’t allow her to do it. Nor did she knew anything about his other women that Morgana would be interested in hearing about.

“Why are you so quiet?”

“Because I’m thinking.”

“You go on thinking. Oh, did she stay with you when she was down in Ocho Rios the other day?”

“What did you expect her to do?”

“Oh, I see, so you’re trying to be difficult. It’s all right.”

“I don’t see why you have to be asking those sort of questions.”

“We’re in a relationship. If there is somebody else in the relationship, I have to ask about them.”

“I’m not asking you about Robert.”

“Because he isn’t trying to make a fuss with you every time he sees you, except of course the other morning when he came and saw you down at the apartment. Anyway, I’m going to finish now. I’ll probably call you again this week,” she said and ended the call.

Morgana reached home at six thirty that evening. She asked Monique for Bev but apparently the girl hadn’t reached home as yet. Monique left soon afterwards to visit Sally. Morgana went to eat her dinner and when she was finished she washed up the utensils she had used.

She was looking over some work she had brought home when Bev’s car drove in. She heard her knocking on the grill door and went to open it for her.

"Where are mummy and Darren?"

"Mummy's gone to visit Sally and Darren's over by Gareth doing some homework."

"Is everything all right with Sally?"

“Sure, she's okay, but is everything okay with you?”

Both girls were in the living room now. Bev put down her books, bags and car keys on a table. She sat in one of the couches opposite Morgana.

"Everything's okay, Morgan."

"Are you still seeing Rick?"

"We're still friends."

"Have you asked him about Celia? He lives with a woman. Maybe you should think about that. I don't see how you can be prepared to share a man with a woman, he lives with and will

probably marry.”

“We're just good friends. I won't be going any further with him until I know about the true state of his relationship with Celia, if that's what you're driving at.”

Morgana nodded.

“Rick and Brad are my associates and they are very ambitious. Don't forget that they both have steady girlfriends. Any other girl who chooses to get involved with either of them is asking for trouble.”

She was relieved though to know that her sister was bring sensible about her relationship with Rick.

“As I said, I've told him that I'm not prepared to go any further with him until he does something about Celia.”

“I'm going to have a bath and eat my dinner and we can talk some more later on,” Bev said and took up her things and went up to her room.

“Yeah,” Morgana said as she made her way to her room to complete the work she had brought home.

Stan jumped up, had he been dreaming? The radio was on; beside him Natalie was fast asleep. He turned over on his back, he was wondering if Bishop had tricked him. Could it be that he had been set up? Bishop hadn't told him why he wanted the two men dead. He had never told him why he wanted him to kill anybody except maybe that hardware merchant in Papine. He couldn't remember anymore occasions. Suppose the men were rich and their families were prepared to offer millions for the capture of their killer or killers. Bishop could just arrange for his police friends to kill him and share the reward with them. Did he know that he had the Chinese-man's gun? He had found one hundred thousand dollars in his briefcase. He had burned up the rest of the documents he found in the man's briefcase. But all the police had to find to pin a murder on you was the dead man's gun. He would sell the gun one day this week. He rolled over and got up to smoke some more marijuana.

Brad drove into his home late that night, he was coming from Randy Chin. He wasn't sure he wanted to continue his relationship with Dania. He had spoken to Jenna two times since he'd been back. She'd shown some interest, though she had been cautious about it, especially when he told her how jealous Dania was. He knew that she and Robert had broken up a few years now. She had told him about another guy, but that had broken up too so he knew that at the moment she was unattached and available. He'd probably call her one day this week if she didn't call him.

There was Morgana, try as he might he couldn't get her out of his thoughts. Damn that womanizer, Stewart, whom she was engaged to. Why did a girl like Morgana go around with a wild guy like Stewart when guys like himself were available? He had heard about the boyfriend she had while in Florida and how she had broken off with him. She had been cool to him and would probably not be willing to share him with two girls. He would call her later.

Brad had a bath and then a light meal. His mother and father had gone to bed. He went to his room and dialed Morgana's number. Morgana was sleeping when the phone rang. She picked it up and listened. Brad was on the line.

Morgana was puzzled. Why would Brad be calling her at this time of the night?

“So your little sister is seeing Rick.”

“Is that what you wake me up at this time of night to tell

me,Brad?"

"You know how I feel about you. Why can't we be friends?"

"I'm sure we're friends. I don't have anything against you."

"Can't we go out for a drink? I don't think Stewart will be angry."

"Go out with you again. I don't think that would be a good idea. What would Dania say if she knew that I went out with you again?"

"We're breaking up, she's too jealous. I don't know if I want to continue in a relationship with her."

Morgana threw her hands up in the air in exasperation, her sister and now her. She just didn't want to get into any relationship with Brad while he was in one with Dania and she engaged to Stewart. She would have to break off with Stewart and he break off with Dania. Which was just not possible at this time and she wasn't prepared to cheat on Stewart. She was a one man woman.

She picked up the phone and wondered if she should continue the conversation, but she knew that he would be very hurt if she cut him off.

"I'm sure you and Dania can work things out. I just don't want to get involved with you and complicate things."

Brad thought to himself, she was trying to put him off. But he wasn't giving up. He had gotten rid of Rick when he went and got himself besotted with her sister. Now it was him against Stewart Brown.

"Well, okay then, sweet dreams, but don't forget my invitation. I'll see you in the morning," he said and hung up.

Brad smiled to himself, he felt he was getting through to her. Rick could have Bev, he wanted Morgana. Based on what she had told him she had left for the States a year before him and a year after Rick did. He wondered how she had been Stewart's girlfriend and he had never met her before she went away. But knowing Stewart maybe the man wanted to keep her away from those who knew of his other women and might let slip bits of information to her although that wouldn't have applied to him, Brad thought.

He also wondered how he hadn't met her while living in Florida. There had been lots of parties for Jamaicans living all over the State and he had attended some of them. Apart from those parties there were other events which he had attended along with different groups of Jamaicans. There were Jamaicans there from the great trek of the 1970s and even before that and new arrivals were coming to the State for one reason or another.

He went and took a beer out of the refrigerator and drank a quarter of it when the telephone rang.

It was Dania. He wondered what she wanted.

"Dania, what's up?"

"I'm feeling lonely," she said. "Can't you come over?"

What the hell, Brad thought.

"I have to go to work in the morning," he said. "I was just going to bed."

"Your phone was busy. I'm almost sure that it was Morgana you were talking to."

Brad was feeling a bit exasperated. What the hell was Dania getting at?

"Listen, just stop your foolishness and get some sleep, at least that's what I'm going to do now," he said and hung up.

He finished drinking his beer and went to bed.

Chapter Nine

Rick decided to phone Bev before he went to work as Celia was down by her mother.

"What's up, Bev? Can I see you this evening?"

Bev hesitated a bit, she was glad she was in her room so Morgana couldn't hear her.

Rick, I have a lot of school work doing. I'm not sure I'll have the time."

"We could stop for a drink, how about it?"

"Okay then, but I don't have a lot of time."

A smirk nearly escaped Rick, he would make her have lots of time.

"Okay, about eight at Bob's complex," he said and waited for her answer before hanging up.

Brad was just coming out of his car that morning when Morgana drove in.

She came to park near his car.

"You know you're a bad guy."

He laughed and couldn't help but admire how exquisitely dressed she was this morning. She had on a floral dress with a sash around her shoulders and one tying her waist. She had on a pair of brown shoes and stockings to match.

"It doesn't mean that I'm a bad guy just because I refuse to take no for an answer."

"It will have to be that for the time being from me, Brad."

"I won't stop trying and you know that too."

"You know, for a moment, apart from her jealous streak, which you've complained about. I think that you and Dania are having other problems and maybe you don't want to tell me about them."

"Now what makes you say that?"

"Because when you first met me you were a real flatterer. Then you seemed to have gone back into your shell. But now I just can't understand what has suddenly come over you."

"Maybe it's you, who has affected me," he said as both of them took the stairs up to the office.

"You look so glamorous; your lips look so rosy. You want me to stop loving you. Look at that dress, you must have a special date with your fiancé?" he asked, looking at her.

"As I said I don't know what is happening to you. And for your information I do have a date with my fiancé but it's nothing special."

She saw Rick coming towards them and for a moment

Morgana thought of calling him over and talk to him about Bev but decided against it.

"Hi, Morgana, how is it going, Brad? Hey, Morgan, I hope he isn't making a nuisance of himself."

"Everything's okay," she replied and didn't know if he noticed the tension in her voice. Brad looked at her, but she cried her excuse and went to her office.

"What have you done to annoy Morgana?" Rick wanted to know.

For a moment Brad thought, had he made a mistake? Maybe he should have pursued Bev; at least Rick wouldn't be looking so smug and confident.

"I just told her the usual. I don't know that she's upset or anything," Brad replied before going into his office.

Although she had told him that she had a date with Stewart he was still annoyed later that day when he came to take her to lunch. Maybe Stewart was going to propose to her, he thought. Jenna Marsden phoned to say that she would buy lunch, but he refused. He was relieved when Morgana returned and didn't make any announcements. Later Dania phoned to tell him that some of her friends were going to hang out at Bob's entertainment complex and if he wanted to come along.

He wanted to refuse, but she begged him and he agreed to come. He had already apologized to her for his abruptness on the phone last night.

Rick and Bev were there much to Brad's surprise. He wondered where Celia was. He danced with Dania and chatted with some of her friends. He saw Rick and Bev leaving. Dania saw them too.

"That girl is Morgana's sister. I must tell Celia that I saw her and Rick, and let her warn her to leave her man alone."

"Why don't you let her find out about them for herself? Suppose you tell Celia and she creates a fuss or something like that. How are you going to feel?"

"I don't care. All those two girls do is flaunt their bodies around to entice away other women's husbands or their boyfriends."

"I'm still here, they haven't got me yet," Brad said.

"As for that Morgana, I heard that she was with a guy in Florida and she just dropped him as if she heard that he had some kind of disease or something. The guy hasn't gotten over it. I hear that he's out here looking for her."

Brad was wondering if Morgana was in trouble. This wasn't what he had heard, maybe Dania was twisting it to make her look bad.

"What is he going to do if and when he finds her?"

"What kind of question is that?"

"That guy must be crazy to have followed her out here. How do you know he's out here?"

"One of my friends pointed him out to me. He's tall, about your height, but a little bit heavier. I understand that he was a former athlete, but I can't seem to remember him. She said lots of girls were pursuing him."

"That doesn't sound like a guy, who is still recovering from the love blues to me. What's his name anyway?"

Dania told him.

Brad flipped through his memory; then shook his head.

"I don't remember that guy. Maybe he was before my time or he didn't achieve much."

They got up to dance again.

Rick and Bev had driven to her home in their respective cars. Rick parked on the sidewalk and waited until Bev parked her car inside and returned to talk to him.

"Aren't you going to invite me inside to meet your mother?"

"And what would I say? Mummy, meet my new boyfriend, Rick Graham."

"Rick, you're Celia's boyfriend. I don't know if I want mummy to know that I'm seeing you."

"I told you that we're breaking up. I hope you aren't listening to Morgana. Just listen to me and believe what I tell you."

"She's my elder sister and she hasn't said anything bad about you. Maybe we shouldn't rush things. Remember, I haven't officially broken off with my current boyfriend."

"That won't be a problem. Like you said I'm not going to rush things, but I just want us to continue seeing each other."

"I have to go back inside, remember I haven't eaten yet."

"What about that good night kiss, you promised me?"

"Are you crazy? I shouldn't even be out here talking to you like this," she said as he took her hand and looked into her eyes.

"We can't do it here. I'm not sure if mummy isn't inside watching us."

He let go of her hand, she turned and went to open her gate and waved him goodbye.

Rick got into his car and drove home.

Brad and Dania were in her bedroom still relishing the aftermath of their lovemaking. A huge electric fan was blowing on them trying to lower their body temperatures. The room was in total darkness and soft music was coming from the component set in the living room.

Dania had always complained about his refusal to wear protection.

"Does it feel better than when I wear a condom?"

"If I didn't trust you I wouldn't have done it with you without one."

Dania wondered if all the months turned into years of self-denial would in the end be worth it for her as she waited on Brad. She knew that whether or not Celia realized it both of them were in danger of losing their men to the Simmond's sisters.

Brad knew that Dania wanted a lot of loving to make up for what she had to give up for the time she was waiting on him. Since his return and except for the times of her inconvenience they had been trying to make up for lost time.

"God, Brad, you're going to let me get a seizure or something like that one of these nights with those powerful orgasms."

"You really can throw your body around though, Dania. You really worked me hard."

Dania laughed.

Both of them then decided to take a short nap. Dania woke up before Brad. When he woke up, she said.

"I told Celia about Rick and Bev."

Brad groaned. He used both hands to cover his face.

"What! I don't believe you. How could you? You know the type of girl Celia is."

"She's my friend. I'm sure she would have done the same for me."

"I can't believe that you would have done something like that. We aren't even sure that they were on a date."

"I don't think it's the first time he's seeing her. It wouldn't surprise me if they're lovers," she replied. "Maybe I might take it lying down, but not Celia."

She got up off the bed and went to the bathroom.

Brad turned over on his back and closed his eyes. When she returned to the room she simply went to her side of the bed. Shortly he heard her snoring. He felt like getting up and giving Jenna a call.

When Rick reached home, Celia was sitting on the front patio with a glass of cherry juice in her hand.

"So you're coming from her. You don't want me again, Rick? I always knew that you were that type of person. I don't know why I ever agreed to live with you."

"So is that what you've been waiting up all this time to tell me, Celia?"

"I'm not leaving, and if that little girl believes she's going to take you away from me, she has another guess coming."

"Who the hell are you talking about? Just because I come home late doesn't mean that I was out with a woman."

"You were out with Bev, so don't try to play me for the fool. I'm not going to stay here and play no maid for you while you run around with your sweetheart."

It must have been Dania or Brad, more likely Dania, who told her that he had been out with Bev.

"Listen, I'm going to eat something," he said and moved off to the kitchen.

"So you aren't going to deny that you were out with her?" she flung at him.

"If I went somewhere, saw her and talk to her, does that mean that I went out with her?"

"Bev and Rory haven't officially broken up. I'm sure she wouldn't have been there unless she was invited. You take me for a big fool. As for dinner you can look after it yourself."

"If this is going to be your attitude, maybe we should go our separate ways," he said and went into the kitchen to fix something to eat, seething at the fact that Celia hadn't prepared dinner.

She came into the kitchen after him where he was fixing up some vegetable sandwiches.

"My body doesn't excite you again, is that it?"

"Listen, I talk to a girl and you get all excited over it. I don't know who phoned you to say they saw me talking to her. You get so carried away that here I come home and you're taking it out on me for just talking to her by refusing to look after dinner. I can do without this."

"I'm here looking after your clothes. Look how many things I'm doing for you and to find you running around with that girl," she shouted, retreating from the kitchen.

Rick stayed in the kitchen and had his meal. When he went out to the living room Celia was curled up in one of the couches. He took a bath and went to bed. He was snoring when she came to bed.

Linton thought that Flavia was a passionate girl. They had made love several times now. She had spent time at his apartment and he at hers. They were going around for almost a month now. She had called and told him that she couldn't go to Ocho Rios with him this weekend. He couldn't go alone and he knew she had been complaining about their hectic lifestyle. He knew that non-stop partying was a way of life with most crews. If he had a woman and she couldn't keep up, he just had to shunt her aside. On this Thursday night he was sitting on his balcony having brought home a restaurant cooked meal. He didn't do any cooking, if Flavia didn't come to stay with him he would go down to his mother or if he couldn't bother he'd just get some fry chicken and chips. Flavia was a young woman so what could be wrong with her. She wasn't introverted or anything like that so maybe he'd better have a talk with her before he dropped her.

So that Friday evening Linton and Flavia went to Betty's Hideout in Eastwood Park Gardens. He ordered a malt beverage for himself and a soda for her.

"You must know that I don't like how the crew is going to Ocho Rios this weekend and I can't go."

"I can't go, not you."

Linton's countenance changed. The creases in his forehead deepened and he was biting his lips.

"You want me to go to Ocho Rios alone while all those other guys are parading down there with their women."

"So what's wrong if you take a weekend off? You're behaving as if your whole life depends on the crew."

"So what do you want to do? Monday night you hopped out from going to club with us because of some meeting you had. Are you telling me that you don't want to go out with the crew anymore?"

"I didn't say that, it's just that I like to choose how, when and where I party. If I have important business to attend to, you want me to put the crew before them?"

“Maybe you don’t want to party with us anymore?”

“Everything you guys do is so monotonous. We go to the same clubs, listen and dance to the same music and drink the same liquor. We mingle with the same people every night. I want a break, there are other fun events taking place around town. Why do we have to stick to the crew all the time?”

The conversation had reached a tipping point. The crew was a focal point for him. Through them, he knew where the best clothes could be had, the latest and best model cars and the best jobs plus your woman knew where to get the latest fashion, jewelry and hairstyles among other things.

“I’m going to drop you, Flavia.”

“It’s I who am going to drop you, Linton. You know what I believe. You guys just use the crew to compete among yourselves to see who can drive the latest model car, sport the best looking girl and wear the trendiest clothes. That’s why I know I look good or else you would have dropped me already.”

“That’s why I’m dropping you.”

“You go to hell. I could have slept with other crew members if I wanted.”

“So what good would that have done to you?”

Flavia drank some more of her soda before replying.

“You’re just looking for a woman to show off on your friends. To you guys a woman’s just like a car or the expensive clothes you wear. I want more than that. I’d like to see you twenty years from now, still pretending that you’re under thirty.”

“I’m young and I have my life to live. You guys are playboys. At the end of being your playmate, what will I have? What will any of those girls have except the memories?” she asked and stood up.

“Tomorrow I’ll phone Axel Goss and tell him that I’ve broken up with you and I’ll call Valda Forbes and inform her too.”

Axel Goss was the unofficial leader of the crew while Valda Forbes, his beauty queen sweetheart, was looked upon by crew members’ women as their fashion icon. She had won some beauty queen contest, but Linton couldn’t remember what it was or the year.

“What! You wouldn’t dare,” Linton said, standing up.

“Try me, goodbye,” Flavia said and went to her car and drove off.

Linton sat in his chair, shaking his head, still trying to come to terms with what had just taken place. He wondered if he should do some amount of damage control. He decided that once he got a woman to replace Flavia it would mitigate any damage she did to his reputation. He would talk to both Axel and Valda later on as to the reasons why he had dropped her.

He would try to get a date with Kedija Parkes. He had seen her admiring him and knew that her boyfriend, Caple Bucknor, had migrated to England a few weeks aback. He hadn’t overstayed his time with Flavia. The average time crew members spent with a woman was a month if she didn’t measure up. To crew members women weren’t getting younger, they were getting older all the time. After a month if the woman didn’t make the cut, it was time to move on. Linton ordered some more malt beverages and tried to rearrange his seating for a more comfortable position.

His mind wandered back to Morgana. Now there was a girl who deserved more than three months, maybe even a lifetime. Bobbette Greene was another, but she was out of reach so he had better set his sights on Kedija. He wondered where Morgana was and how he had never seen her at Corners or in any of the clubs. Maybe she had gotten married and was making a baby. He finished drinking his last malt beverage, paid his bill and headed for his van, intending to go home and get some sleep.

April was in her room in New Jersey. She had weathered the snow, but was feeling homesick. She was only now getting used to conditions in America. Everything for her was different. In Winter you had to wear so much clothes and then you had to put those away when Spring came around and the season would again change when Summer and Fall came around. She was reading a book, surprisingly about Jamaican attractions. Reading this book had made her interested in tourism and of course returning home to pursue a course in this field. It would allow her the opportunity to know all parts of the island. Her cell phone rang and she picked it up.

“April, how are you? This is Stewart, just calling to find out how you are doing.”

April took the phone from her ear. Her pulse was racing, she put the phone back to her ear.

“How did you get my new number?”

“I got it from Anniesha.”

“I told her not to give it to anybody and not to you of all persons.”

“I hope you won’t be angry with her.”

April thought she should end the call because of what he had done to her, but she couldn’t bring herself to do it. Nor did she feel that Anniesha had let her down. She and Anniesha had been classmates in high school and had remained friends after leaving school.

“I’m okay, I wonder what’s the reason for this call. Your girlfriends aren’t treating you well and suddenly you remembered me.”

“The only real girlfriend, I ever had was you and you know that too. I told you that Morgana meant nothing to me even though I was engaged to her.”

“What do you mean that you were engaged to her? Isn’t that still the situation between the two of you? And what about Bobbette?”

“Why do you think I never set a date for marriage? It’s because I never loved her. Imagine, I told you why I became engaged to her and you didn’t believe me. As for Bobbette, we were only good friends and I’ve told you before that she has her rich boyfriend.”

When she didn’t reply, he asked.

“When are you returning?”

“About the first week of next month, I’m going to stay far from you though.”

“We can’t stay far from each other and you know that too. It’s only because you’re so far away why we aren’t together.”

“When I return I’ll just live a single life,” she told him and almost uttered a sob.

“You will be living a single life, that’s impossible.”

“Okay, we’ll see,” she said and both of them said goodbye and ended the call.

Bobbette and Stewart were having a heated conversation. He had called her thus breaking their existing arrangement.

“How come you’re seeing so much of your boyfriend these days?”

“He pays the bills and puts food on the table.”

“I see, so that’s why he has to be at your house practically every day. I can’t even get time to visit you again.”

“You know what he does for me already. I can’t schedule the times when he visits me or else he’ll become suspicious. Plus, I told you what he told me after he came and saw you down here. He’s very serious, so I have to be very careful.”

“Maybe we should end our relationship.”

Bobbette had to bite her lips in an attempt to control herself.

"Just so, after you've slept with me, I can't count the number of times, you just want to walk out on me like that. Let me tell you something, it isn't going to be that easy."

"So how will the relationship work when I can't come and see you?"

"You just have to be patient. You know when you get me, I give you everything I have to give."

"I know, baby, we don't have to go to bed every time we meet."

"Okay, but stick around for my calls and don't be so impatient."

"He's suspicious about us. But he can't prove anything."

"You are repeating yourself. I don't think he needs proof to evict me from the apartment or to cut off my grocery and petrol supplies."

"I'll tell you when you can come," she finished the call.

Damn her, Stewart thought. He hoped that he wasn't leaving her, not for now anyway. She would blame him for everything and he couldn't take on anything like that now. One thing was certain and that was, Bobbette was scared and might not want to continue their relationship but he would see.

As Bev's car was at the garage she begged Rick to come for her after classes.

"Rick, I shouldn't be doing this, asking you to come for me. I'm not even sure if my mother approves."

"Does she know about us?"

"She asked about the guy she saw me talking to. When I told her it was you, she said that she didn't think it was such a great idea seeing that you were living with Celia.

"Celia and I live separate lives. You don't have to worry about her; everything will soon be all right."

"I don't know, that's what you men say all the time. I just don't know how far I want this relationship to go."

"Why not leave it to your feelings? Maybe you don't know, but I know how far I want it to go."

"How far?"

He was about to answer when she said.

"Please don't tell me. I would prefer to see it from your actions."

"You know how I feel about you, I tell you to trust me. I'm not going to let you down," he said as they reached her gate.

"You want me to come for you tomorrow?"

"I'll be getting my car back in the morning before I go to school."

"How about us going dancing tomorrow night?"

"I have a lot of school work to catch up with, not this weekend."

"Well, okay then, but call me if you change your mind," he said as she came out of the car, said thanks, waved him goodbye and went into her house.

Monique and Morgana were in the living room watching television.

"I can see the glow on your face, Bev," Monique said. "If it's Rick then I'm sure that you're taken with him."

"Mummy, we're just good friends."

Morgana was showing a keen interest in the conversation, but didn't want to intervene. She moved closer to Bev.

"I sincerely hope it's just that. I don't want you and Celia, to be in any fights over Rick."

For a moment Bev wanted to tell her mother that she wasn't afraid of Celia but she thought better of it.

"Mummy, do you think I would get into a serious relationship with Rick knowing that he was involved with Celia?"

Deep down Bev was thinking, if she wanted Rick she would have him, whatever Celia might say or do.

"That sounds sensible to me. I always knew that you had a good head on your shoulders, girl."

"I'm starved. Morgan, what's up?" Bev asked her sister.

"I'm just relaxing. Did Rick say anything to you about Brad and me?"

Monique gasped, Bev whirled around, putting her hands over her mouth.

"What's it with you and Brad?" Monique asked.

"Ever since I went out to have that drink with him, he's been saying that he can't take his mind off me."

"I told you it wasn't a good idea. Maybe he's fallen in love with you."

"I told him that he has Dania already and they don't seem to be getting on all that well. I have Stewart, what am I doing with another man. Plus I don't want to complicate things between him and Dania."

"I think you told him the right thing. I hope he understands."

"I don't see why he shouldn't," Morgana said.

Monique felt pleased with her two gorgeous daughters.

Both girls were showing some amount of maturity in handling their love affairs. She had been worried about them even before Byron's death, but now she could almost put that worrying on hold.

"As I said before, I'm hungry so I'm going to have dinner," Bev said and went into the kitchen.

Brad dropped Dania home from Reason's nightclub the next night. Stewart and Morgana were also there and Brad danced two times with Morgana while Stewart and Dania stood around and watched them.

"Why did you have to go and dance with Morgana?" Dania asked as they sat in her living room.

Brad stood up.

"What the hell's the matter with you, Dania?"

"Brad, don't shout in my house."

"Oh, I see, so you're telling me what I can and can't do just because I'm in your house."

"All I want to know is, why are you and Morgana so friendly? Are you seeing her?"

"I don't know what to do. You want me to treat Morgana as a complete stranger and yet we work for the same company."

"There are guys and girls who work together and yet they don't behave like the two of you do. It's like I'm cast aside. I don't know about Stewart, but that's the way I feel."

Brad sat down now. Maybe it was time to call it quits as the relationship was going nowhere.

"So where do we go from here. Your jealousy is putting a strain on our relationship. Tonight it may well be Morgana, but tomorrow night it might be another woman."

"I sacrificed a lot for you and look what you're doing to me with that girl. I think you'd better go."

Brad got up.

"Get a hold of yourself and stop your foolishness, that's all I can tell you," he said and left.

Just as Brad was leaving his office that Wednesday evening his telephone rang. Dania was on the line.

“Brad, I’m breaking off with you. You’re now free to pursue Morgana. I suppose because Rick is trying to be friendly with Bev, you want to get in on the act by going after her sister.”

“Dania, you’ve been rubbing me the wrong way with all this talk about Morgana. Can’t you see that you’re scandalizing the girl?”

“I don’t think she minds the attention you’re lavishing on her and now that I’m no longer in the picture it will be even more.”

“I could go off and accuse you of breaking off with me because you have another man but that’s not like me. All I ask is that you reconsider your decision.”

“As for there being another man you know that it has only been you. The problem is that I’m not sure that it’s me alone and that’s why my decision is final.”

“If that’s how you want it, it’s okay with me. So it’s goodbye then and best of luck.”

“Thanks and all the best and no hard feelings now,” Dania said as she hung up.

Brad sat there, thinking. In a way he was getting a bit tired of Dania and her bouts of jealousy. Dania was a lovely girl, but he couldn’t understand her being jealous about him talking to Morgana. Maybe she was just envious of another good looking woman. He would try to start dating Jenna. He wondered if she felt anyway over his refusal of her invitation to lunch. Deciding that he would give her a call tomorrow he went home and after eating his dinner and watching some movies on television, decided to have an early night.

Thursday evening as Jenna was about to leave work her telephone rang. She wondered who it could be. Brad was on the line.

“Hi, Jenna, how are you?”

“Fancy hearing from you, I thought I wouldn’t hear from you again or maybe not for a long time after you turned down my invitation to lunch.”

Brad put his hands under his chin. Maybe he should have called her the same evening and apologized.

“I’m sorry I should have called you and apologized.”

“You sounded so upset that I wondered if you and your girlfriend were having problems.”

“Since we last spoke we’ve broken up. I just couldn’t deal with her bouts of jealousy. I think that only women who want to control their men can be as jealous as she.”

“As I said, I’m afraid of those jealous females.”

“Will you go out with me tomorrow night?” You don’t have to worry about her.”

“I don’t know. Are you sure that she and you have broken up? I don’t want any woman to accuse me of intruding in the relationship between her and her man.”

“You don’t have to worry. Everything is finished between me and Dania.”

“I’ll call you later tonight and tell you about my decision.”

“Okay then, I hope you’ll say yes,” he told her.

He could almost feel himself begging. He wondered if he had to stoop to such lows in order to get a date with a girl.

Celia finished listening to Dania telling her of her decision to break up with Brad. She took another swallow of her drink. She found it hard to believe that Brad would agree to break up with Dania after all the sacrifices the girl had made for him.

“All I can advise you to do is not to do it. I know that what you told me about Rick and her sister is true, but he denies it, but I’ll find out one of these days.”

They were in Celia's living room. Dania had gone there right after work that evening. She had actually marked some work her students had given her and prepared her lessons for the next day before leaving for Celia's townhouse.

Rick and Celia weren't on speaking terms, although she still cooked for him and got out his clothes for their helper to wash and iron. Celia didn't know where Rick was. She suspected that if he wasn't with Bev he was at Randy Chin playing dominoes and hanging out with his friends.

"I don't think I can bother. Everywhere we go, she's there. That's why I just feel that they have something going on."

"So what about Stewart? He has so many women and of course there's Bobbette."

"Maybe if you warn her off, she'll leave him alone."

"What can I do?"

"Now that Brad is no longer seeing you, maybe he'll just rendezvous with her. So what we should do is follow him around tomorrow night and threaten to do her something if she doesn't leave him alone."

"I don't want any violence."

"Morgana isn't like Bev. She isn't going to get into any altercations with you."

They talked some more before Dania left for her home convinced that she had a foolproof plan to drive a wedge between Brad and Morgana.

Chapter Ten

Friday evening of that week couldn't come fast enough

for the party animals. Stewart and Morgana were at Reason's nightclub in New Kingston. Robert and Bobbette were at Solid Mix nightclub, also in New Kingston. Celia left by herself telling Rick that she was going to find a man to party with. Glen and Leona went to Eason's nightclub on Constant Spring Road.

Brad was at Ruddy's nightclub on Half Way Tree Road with Jenna. They had danced to several songs when he saw Dania enter the nightclub followed by Celia. Brad was over by the bar as the waiters were quite busy and some patrons had come up to the bar to take their drinks back to their table.

What happened next shocked Brad as Dania had doused Jenna with beer. Jenna jumped up and threw some water at her. Brad raced from the bar as both women wrestled with each other.

"Leave my man alone, you hear girl," Dania shouted at a wide eyed Jenna.

Brad parted the two fighting women as a crowd gathered to look at the two drenched women.

A waitress ran to summon the manager.

"What's happening here?" he asked upon entering the area.

"Those two women were fighting."

The waitress pointed at Jenna and Dania.

"Where the hell are the guards? If you weren't women, I'd have you thrown out of here. Two of you girls get them cleaned up and out of here."

"I don't want anything like this to happen again. You two women are lucky I don't call the police or bring charges against you."

He wheeled around and made for his office. Both women were shown the bathrooms where they could get themselves cleaned up.

Brad looked around wanting to ensure that nobody he knew apart from those women were there.

You're a dirty liar, you told me that you and she were no longer friends," Jenna shouted at Brad as she emerged from the bathroom.

"That's what he told you," Dania shouted at her as she too came out of another bathroom.

"Shut up Dania, you should be ashamed of yourself. Celia, you'd better get her out of here. I know that it was you who instigated this. You wait until I see Rick," Brad shouted in Celia's direction.

He took Jenna's arm, but she flung his hand away.

"Don't accuse me of anything, Brad. See your girlfriend there, you ask her," Celia shouted back at him.

"I'll take a taxi home," Jenna said.

"I brought you here so I feel responsible for seeing that you get home safely."

"Well, okay, if you say so."

The fight now having ended, most patrons returned to their previous activity. Brad helped Jenna to his vehicle while Dania and Celia went to their respective cars.

Rick was playing dominoes with some of his friends. He left the game at twelve o'clock that night after getting Brad's call about the fight between Dania and Jenna.

When he reached home, he didn't see Celia. He tried getting her on her cell phone, but it was turned off. He decided not to wait up on her, but went to bed.

He had his breakfast and was reading the morning papers when she drove in. When she came to the patio he shouted.

"Where the hell have you been?"

"As if you care, I was down by Dania," she shouted back.

"After the way you behaved, I know you didn't want to face me. I can bet you are the one who put Dania up to it."

"Dania is a big woman, she knows her own mind. I'm only sorry that it wasn't Morgana. As for that little sister of hers, you watch me and her," she responded and stormed off into the house.

"I don't believe what I'm hearing, Dania. You went to fight a girl over Brad. That's not how I brought you up," her mother, Beulah, shouted into the phone.

"Mummy, I'm sorry I just didn't know what I was doing."

Beulah's face was contorted and Dania would have known how she felt by just looking at her. She had lost her job with Town and Country Developers Limited, a real estate firm, when they decided to close down and make the staff redundant. It was a job she had held for some fifteen years. When she failed to find another job and realized that she couldn't survive on her redundancy check alone, she decided to migrate. She had a United States Green Card and decided to use it up. So she had come up and stopped with one of her sisters, but things didn't work out as Beulah would have hoped. Now she was on her own and doing two jobs in order to have enough money for her retirement when she returned home.

Brad and Dania had been friends since high school, but Beulah was a bit apprehensive that the relationship might not work out and even moreso when Brad went abroad to study. She knew that several eligible guys had come around, but Dania had been willing to wait on Brad. Now he had returned and her daughter had to be fighting to keep him. She and Dania's father had divorced two years before she migrated.

So what's the end result of it all? Is the girl all right? Did you get injured?"

"None of us got injured, as no weapons were involved."

"Was Celia there?"

Dania hesitated, whoever told her mother that she had been fighting would have told her that Celia was there too. Try as she might, she couldn't remember seeing anybody at Ruddys last night who knew her well enough, that they could call her mother and report that she had been fighting except it was Brad and that was completely out of the question.

"Yes, she was there. But she had nothing to do with it."

"I've warned you about Celia. That girl isn't a good person."

"Celia is my best friend and I've told you that she had nothing to do with the fight."

"Okay, but you see how far away I am. You're a big woman now and quite capable of making your own decisions. I only hope that from now on they'll be the right ones."

"I know they'll be."

"I just hope so, goodbye," Beulah said and hung up.

Dania sat down, fuming. Of all the nerve and she didn't know who had phoned her mother to inform her about the fight. She had also heard that the girl was thinking of bringing a case against her but Dania didn't care. This talk with her mother had done it for her. She was now free of Brad. She vowed never to make the type of sacrifices she had made for him, or for any other man again.

Eight years ago and sixteen year old Dania, while studying for her examinations at the Caldwell's Private Library on Half Way Tree Road, had spotted nineteen year old Brad Newman. He soon came to sit beside her and they started talking. They would have lunch and walk to the

bus stop together. They would call each other and he would visit her at her house. Then one Saturday they were playing around in her room and they ended up making love.

Brad went to university while Dania was at teacher's college, but they were still together. Then he went away and she decided to wait on him despite other eligible guys coming around. Now it was over because she just felt that he wanted to see other women and she wasn't going to stand for it. Dania decided to get a good night's sleep, vowing that any man who wanted her body again had to be prepared to marry her.

Stan was on the plazas looking for work when his cell phone rang. It was Bishop. Stan felt his heart skip a beat.

"Stan, where are you? Listen, I want to talk to you about a little contract I have for you."

"What kind of job?"

"I'll tell you when I see you. You still have that thing there? You see how good I was to you. How much money did you get out of Oraine Chen's briefcase?"

"What thing are you talking about? And I didn't take any money from his briefcase."

"All right, but you still have his gun though?"

When Stan didn't answer at once, Bishop said.

"Easy man, I'm not going to tell anybody about the gun. Come and check me around eight o'clock at Nully's bar on Dunrobin Avenue."

From the moment Bishop mentioned Oraine Chen's gun, Stan knew he was in trouble. His hunch had proven correct. He had been set up. Bishop had answered his trick question. He ran to his car. He would go to his house, but then he realized that Bishop might have the place under surveillance. He couldn't go back there. He still had twenty thousand dollars of the money on him. He would have to go down to the country to thaw out for a while.

That Saturday evening Rick phoned Bev but she told him that she was still busy with her studies. He and Celia were in the living room, watching television.

"I thought you would be going out with your sweetheart," Celia remarked. "What happened, she turned you down?"

"What makes you believe that girl and I are friends? I just talked to her and you flew off, accusing me of being friendly with her."

"From you started seeing that girl, things haven't been the same between us."

"Listen, why do we have to sit here tearing up each other? I'm going out, are you coming?"

"No, because I'm not sure if we meet your girlfriend, I won't be cast aside."

"Suit yourself, but I just can't believe you'd be willing to play second fiddle to anybody," he said before going to his car and driving off.

Celia went inside for an ice-pick and put it in her bag, locked up the house, got into her car and drove off. Fifteen minutes later she was in the Canrieves and passed by the Simmond's house. She didn't see Rick's car outside. She went further up Hobbs Avenue and turned on a side road and came back down the avenue. Only one car was parked in the Simmond's driveway. It could mean that Rick maybe had a rendezvous with Bev, but where? She could not guess. There were so many places around town where they could be. She stopped the car twice to vent her frustration at not finding Rick's car at Bev's home. She didn't want to pass by Randy Chin's sports bar on Westminster Road, where he and Brad hung out sometimes playing dominoes. She stopped again and called Dania and told her she was coming to see her.

When Celia reached Dania's home, she was watering her garden.

"What's up, Celia? I thought you would be out with Rick."

"Rick and I are just about in the same position as you and Brad," Celia replied before going to the porch and taking a seat.

"I'm following my mummy's advice. I'm giving up Brad."

"You're too easy going, Dania. What happens if you find the man of your dreams and some girl wants to take him away? Are you just going to let him go like that?"

"I thought Brad was the man of my dreams but now it all seems to have turned to ashes."

"Rick is still the man of my dreams and I'm not about to see it fizzle out into nothing."

For a moment Dania wanted to ask her why fight when she and Rick weren't even lovers anymore? She decided not to tell her about the call she had received from her mother since she had been very disapproving of Celia.

"Seriously though, do you think we made a mistake in attacking that girl? After all it was Morgan, we went there for."

She and Celia had gone to Bob's entertainment complex and for the first time in her life Dania found herself drinking more than a pint of any alcoholic beverage in the two beers she had consumed. She had only taken a few sips of the third bottle before dumping the rest on Jenna.

"She deserves a beating, look how many sacrifices you had to make for Brad. As for me, I never said I wasn't involved with someone else when Rick was away, but you were so loyal to Brad and look what he has done to you."

"You can say that again. I could have been partying the whole time he was away, but I'm willing to learn from experience."

"I still have Teddy bothering me to leave Rick for him, but I realized after I broke up with him that he's just not worth it," Celia said, taking the ice-pick out of her bag.

Dania gasped on seeing the weapon.

"What were you going to do with that ice-pick?"

"I wanted to puncture Rick's car tires if I saw him parked at Bev's home."

"Are you sure that's all you wanted to do and did you see him?"

"No and that's why I'm so mad. I'm going down to Teddy's house. I don't know why I'm bothering to talk to him after what he did, but I'm so angry with Rick," Celia said and went to her car.

Brad kept beating his fists into the sofa. Imagine Dania phoning to tell him that she was breaking up with him and they had agreed to end the relationship. He wasn't the one who wanted them to stop talking to each other. There was no logic in her coming to fight Jenna. She didn't even know the girl. He felt that his earlier theory was correct. Both Dania and Celia had come believing that he was out with Morgana and were going to embarrass her. He decided to call Dania.

"Dania, what the hell's the matter with you? You called and broke off with me and then I find another woman and you came to fight her. Are you crazy or what?"

"Brad, I'd rather not talk to you. I don't see what we have to talk about seeing that we're no longer in a relationship."

"Oh, so you're not prepared to tell me why you came to fight Jenna. You don't know the girl or if I'm in a relationship with her."

"As I said I'd rather not discuss it. I'm sorry for what happened and for that I apologize if I cause you any embarrassment."

"I know it wasn't you who started anything. I'm warning you about Celia. I'm not saying that

she's a bad girl. But she'll use you to fight her battles for her."

"She isn't using me to solve any problems for her and as I said I've got to go now," she said and ended the call leaving Brad still fuming.

Dania burst into tears as she came off the phone with Brad. Her mother had quarrelled with her and now she was getting it from Brad. She had practically chased him away from her. They never expected to see Brad there with a new woman. Now that she thought about it, she realized how foolish she had been. She had virtually surrendered a man she had been in love with because she believed that he was infatuated with Morgana. She should never have given him up like that and even if she got proof that he was having an affair with Morgana, she should have been prepared to fight her for him. She had to lay it down to her own naivety and inexperience. But she had learned and as she got ready for bed, she vowed never to make the same mistake again and she would stick to those resolutions she had made after her mother had called her.

When Celia reached home, she saw that Rick wasn't home as yet. She made some supper and was having it while watching television when he drove in. After locking up his car he came into the living room where she was.

"Where did you go? I forgot something and by the time I returned for it you were already gone. Don't bother coming up with the Dania excuse again. You're going on as if I'm the one who is straying, when you know what you're doing."

"I was with Dania. You can call and ask her."

"How many boyfriends did you have while I was away?"

Celia started prancing around the room. She went and put down her tray in the kitchen. She returned to the living room and sat in one of the couches opposite him.

"You heard that I was sleeping around and all this time you never asked me about it?"

"I could have gone on real bad about what I heard, but I just decided to give you a chance."

"Since you heard so much about me, why did you want me to come and live with you? You wanted a maid, a comforter, isn't that it? You were just using me, probably trying to get back at me for what you heard?"

"I was giving you a second chance and now you're doing your best to blow it."

"Giving me a second chance, I don't need any second chance from anyone. You know what, I'm going to bed," she said getting up.

"You still haven't told me about what I asked you and the guy you were out with tonight."

"I don't have anything to tell you and I wasn't out with any man tonight if that's what you want to know," she flung at him.

Rick watched her go. Should he give her another chance and give up on Bev? He wondered. That he knew would be too easy for Celia. He wanted to call Bev but he wasn't sure Celia wouldn't be listening. Brad had told him that he would be trying to persuade Jenna not to press charges against Dania and probably Celia.

Brad had returned home from playing dominoes with Rick and some other friends. His parents had gone out. Why not he thought, let them enjoy themselves. They would probably be surprised to see him at home at this time on a Saturday night.

He put through a call to Jenna. The girl was still insistent on pressing charges against Dania and probably Celia.

"Hi, Jenna, what's up?" Brad greeted her.

When she didn't answer at once he thought something was wrong.

"I'm going to bed. Why did you call at this time?"

"Because I wanted to find out how you are doing. I still want to apologize for the other night," he said. Brad felt that it was probably the third time he was doing it, damn Dania and Celia.

"I'm doing okay."

Brad felt a coolness in her voice.

"What have you decided to do about what happened last night?"

She didn't answer at once. He thought she must be doing a lot of thinking.

"Honestly, I don't know. It's not even the girl, who threw the beer at me, that I want to punish but the other one. I feel that she was real instigator."

"What are you going to charge her with? She was just an eyewitness and she so happens to be my distant cousin's girlfriend."

"I'll give it some more thought. I have to go to bed now, so I'll see you."

"Sweet dreams," he told her before hanging up. He wondered if Dania and Celia had messed up things between him and Jenna.

The tall woman dancing with the equally tall man could be mistaken for a model. She was thin and had her hair blown out. She wore a huge pair of earrings and had on a pair of blue jeans and a white blouse. The man was also wearing jeans and a pink shirt. The time was ten thirty and they had been going around for a couple of days now. When the song finished playing they returned to their table at Crystal's nightclub.

"I know the crew will like you, Kedija. You seem to be a fun loving girl."

"You've been saying that since we started talking. I've met some of them and they seem to be nice people."

Immediately after dumping Flavia, he had gone in pursuit of Kedija and without hesitation the girl had agreed to go out with him the first time he asked her.

"I saw you looking in my direction several times so I knew you were interested in me. Flavia, my last girlfriend, was more the homebody type. She didn't like the limelight. I hope you aren't like that."

"I'm a fun loving girl and I like to party. That's what I like about you. I was just about to drop Caple when he went away. He said he was going to study but I found him boring. It was like he was studying all the time. He just didn't want to take me anywhere."

Linton knew what she meant. He had put in some serious studying to get his degrees, but he had found time to party and was never afraid to tell a girl that he was studying. He knew that women as a rule didn't like men who seemed to live in the books.

"So are you saying that Caple is no longer a part of your life?"

"I'm going to call him tonight and break off with him," she informed him.

That was the spirit, Linton thought. He liked women who could make up their minds.

"If he's a bore, you should send him packing and if you find me that way you know what to do."

"If I thought you were like that I wouldn't have agreed to date you. I've seen you and know your style. That's why I didn't hesitate when you asked me out."

"That's it. You and I could go places, girl," Linton told her. He wondered if she knew that she was on borrowed time. If she didn't measure up to other women in the crew he'd give her the usual time and if she failed to make the cut he would dump her.

They talked some more, got up to dance again and then did some more drinking before leaving the nightclub at minutes past twelve that morning. Linton was ready to announce Kedija to the crew as his new woman.

Brad went jogging that Sunday morning. After he returned home and had breakfast he decided to go over to the beach at Hellshire. When he was on the Causeway, he saw two persons waving to him. They were Stewart and Morgana, coming from the beach he guessed. Stewart was really a lucky guy to have a girl like Morgan being so much in love with him. He had to think so as she had turned down all of his advances.

He was on the beach talking to some friends when his cell phone rang. It was her.

"Hi, Brad, I saw you alone in that big vehicle of yours. What happened to your girlfriends?"

Brad drove a Honda CRV while Rick drove a Nissan X-Trail.

"My luck seems to have run out. Everybody seems to have deserted me. You and Stewart are really smug these days. I wish I was as lucky as he."

"I heard about that incident. That's why I was so careful."

"It was nothing. I just hope nobody blows it out of proportion. Where's Stewart?"

"He's around, but maybe I would have been the one, who would have gotten mixed up in that incident," she told him. "You won't hear anybody say that they heard about it from me."

"You don't have to worry. Stewart won't get you mixed up in anything like that."

"I can't be certain, you men are all the same," she commented.

"Oh, what has Stewart gone and done now?"

She didn't answer at once, but after a while she said.

"I'll see you in the morning."

He was left in suspense after she ended the call. He didn't even know why she had called him.

Stewart was reclining in a chair on his balcony that evening when his cell phone rang. Bobbette was on the line.

"Stewart, we have to talk. It's very important that we meet."

He wondered what it could be all about.

"What is it, Bobbette? Why can't you just say it out loud?"

"I don't want to say anything to you yet. It's a shock to me and it'll be to you too."

Stewart wondered if it had something to do with Robert. Maybe he had shown her evidence that she was cheating on him and was leaving her. Although he would be glad to have her all to himself, he knew he couldn't support her and the lifestyle she was used to.

"You want me to come and see you this evening and you can tell me all about it?" he asked.

"No, you can come tomorrow evening and we'll talk."

"Okay, baby, I'll do that," he said and they both ended the call.

Stewart wondered if he shouldn't just drive up to her apartment. She had been behaving a bit strange of late. She had even told him that Robert was now around nearly every day. He didn't believe that the guy was around that much, not when he had so many businesses running. Nevertheless, he would go up to her apartment tomorrow evening to find out what the big puzzle was all about.

When Brad reached work that morning he had no idea whether anybody else apart from Morgana knew about the fight. He went into her office.

"I'm declaring myself free, single and disengaged," he announced to her.

"How long do you think you'll be able to remain that way? I'm sure that even if you wanted to, the girls wouldn't let you be."

"Dania has broken up with me and then I just take this girl, Jenna, out for a drink and before you know it she's in a fight with my ex-girlfriend. To make matters worse, she was

threatening to bring charges against Dania and possibly Celia but this morning she phoned to tell me that she didn't think she would bother again."

"You've had quite an adventurous weekend, Brad. So why not make up with your two women?"

"Dania is acting on her mother's advice. Can't say I blame her and Jenna says I'm trouble. Dania and I agreed to break up. Actually, it was she who suggested that we break up so I can't think of any reasons why she should have come to fight Jenna over me."

"Maybe you should get married."

"Morgana, remember I've just returned from my studies, I haven't settled down yet. Plus, I'm still living with my parents."

"Maybe you should have a steady girlfriend again."

"I'd only have one if it was you."

"I have to say no, I don't want to hurt Stewart."

"I want you to give it some serious thoughts, though," he said getting up to leave.

"Okay, I'll try, but I'm not making you any promises," she said as he made his way out of her office.

Monday evening Stewart went up to Bobbette's apartment to hear the big news that she couldn't tell him over the phone.

When he reached her apartment it was about seven-thirty. She was in the living room watching television. She was dressed in a pair of blue shorts and a yellow t-shirt. Her breasts were straining against the t-shirt and her nipples were threatening to bore holes into it as she wasn't wearing a bra. He drew her to him and kissed her.

"Where is Robert?"

"He went down to Ocho Rios today. He's not returning until tomorrow."

"So we have this big apartment and the whole night to ourselves. Why not make the most of it?"

He reached for her again.

She evaded him and said.

"That's not why I called you here."

"Okay, what is it then?" he asked. He noticed the tone of her voice.

"Robert has asked me to marry him."

Stewart's ears were ringing, he thought he had heard a bomb drop.

"What! Repeat what you've just said. Robert has asked you to marry him? So what did you tell him?"

"You tell me. I told him I would give him an answer by Sunday of this week. So tell me what I should do because if you can't come up with a suitable answer I'm going to tell him yes."

"Tell him no."

"It's only that you can say. Goodbye, you've given me an answer to give Robert."

"Why do you want to marry a guy like that?"

"I'm sure you didn't come here to discuss Robert. I'm marrying him because he asked me to, and I believe he can provide for my needs."

"You'll have to stick to your fiancé. You'll never get this sexy body again. Remember how you like raving about it. Is your little wallflower as good as I am?"

"Stop it, Bobbette. You know that Morgana isn't like you."

"I know all about her. She had a convent education, still lives under her mother's roof. I bet her mother doesn't know that you're lovers. Maybe she didn't even know that you slept with her

over the Easter weekend."

"You've gone back to that again. Like you said, we aren't here to discuss either Robert or Morgana, so let's discuss us."

"Okay, you said I should tell Robert no. If I do that he'll leave me for another woman. We'll still have each other, you'll still have Morgana. I'll be the one losing out."

"I can't see what you'll lose by not marrying that guy."

"Marrying Robert will give me security. He's a very generous man. His businesses are prosperous and he plans to go into politics next year."

"Is that all you think about in a marriage?"

"Of course, here I am doing the work Morgana should be doing. In the end, I know I'll end up without even thanks from you while she gets the ring. I'll probably drive past to get a glimpse of you and your lovely bride."

"All I say is that you'll be making a gigantic mistake in marrying that guy."

"And up to now you haven't given me an alternative but you have until Saturday or else you'll never get this booty again."

"I'll think of something," he said and left.

As he left the apartment, Stewart's steps were faltering. The girl was putting him in a spot and he wasn't sure of what to tell her.

Bobbette had expected a proposal from Robert, probably later on in the year. Now it caught her by surprise and knowing of her relationship with Stewart, she didn't want to give an answer right away. She had a lot of feelings for Stewart, but felt that she was being used. She was also getting tired of quarrelling with Morgan each time they met. After she married Robert, she would see what kind of stuff Stewart was made of. Whether he would marry Morgana or look another girlfriend to go around with. She had heard that Brad was pursuing her.

She had also heard that Celia and Rick were still at odds with each other. She wasn't sure about him and Bev. She knew that Brad and Dania had broken up after the incident at Ruddys. She wondered if Brad knew that Jenna was the mother of Robert's son. She could just see Stewart in his car agonizing over what to tell her as if she didn't already know. She decided that she had a lot of things to do including helping Robert with some of his businesses.

She was suspicious that she and Morgana weren't the only women Stewart was seeing. There were times when she called his apartment and he answered her in a voice which suggested that he had been doing some sort of physical activity. When she questioned him about it, he told her that he had been doing pushups. Sometimes she felt like doing some investigations, but she remembered that he wasn't her man and what curiosity would she be satisfying by discovering him with another woman and what would she do if it was Morgana? So she had quickly dispelled any such notions from her thoughts.

She remembered how she had reacted one day last September when he confessed that he had slept with his helper, Miss Imo's two daughters. Chloe was twenty and Noelle, eighteen and he had confessed that he had first done it with them on successive days and several times thereafter. Even up to the day they left with her for New York, Miss Imo was confident that her two daughters were virgins. He had lived in mortal fear for Miss Imo walked with a short dagger in her bag, swearing to damage any Jamaican man, who took her daughter's virginity as their father, had left her suspicious about Jamaican men.

Miss Imo was glad that her daughters were going to the States. Chloe was getting married the

same week to her American fiancé, while she hoped Noelle would find a nice American man over there.

Stewart had been relieved when they left. It wasn't even the amount of time he had to spend satisfying their eager bodies, but the fear of Miss Imo finding out about him and them.

Stewart had told her that it was Miss Imo's sister who had filed for them. Chloe's fiancé hadn't done the filing as Miss Imo's sister had started that procedure a couple of years before. Miss Imo was only going to the wedding and maybe spend another week or two as she couldn't stand the cold.

Bobbette felt she was getting a bit tired of Stewart and his various escapades. As for April English she didn't even want to think about that girl and the numerous battles they had fought over him. When April went away shortly after Morgana returned she still had to be sharing him with her and no doubt countless other women. From her understanding April would soon return so there would be a lot of fights. Bobbette hissed her teeth, it was time for her to put that behind her as she planned to enjoy married life.

Driving back to his apartment Stewart was thinking of how to stop Bobbette marrying Robert. Could she be tricking him, forcing him to play his hand with Morgana? Should he give up Morgana for her? He thought about the two women, he knew he didn't have a long time to make a decision. April had said that she was returning, but he wasn't sure what frame of mind she'd be in or that she'd want them to rekindle their relationship.

As he got out of the car his cell phone rang. He took it up and pressed the call button. Sadie was on the line.

"Stewie, I catch you at last. How come you're so busy? I've been trying to get you from yesterday."

"Working, Sadie, it's just that I've been doing, sweetheart."

"I know what you've been doing with Morgana and Bobbette. They're keeping you so busy that you don't have any time for me."

"How do you mean I don't have any time for you? You know I always find time for you. Come and get some of the good loving, baby."

"I'll soon be there," she said and ended the call.

He didn't know why he was feeling any way over what Bobbette told him.

Chapter Eleven

Stewart and Sadie were resting after two intense sessions of lovemaking. She had marveled that he was ready again so quickly after their first session. She had told him to wait until in the morning but he wanted to get as much as he could out of this big boned woman's voluptuous body. Her face was still tear stained and her chest had just stopped heaving.

"I should have bitten you when I was climaxing this last time here."

"The amount of licks and scratches you gave me. And the amount of crying you did."

"I must give them to you and I have to cry after you make me feel so nice."

Stewart laughed.

"I can bet I'll sleep all day at work tomorrow," she said.

"How do you manage, Stewie? It's a good thing that it's sales you do. Sometimes you don't feel tired when you're driving?"

"I drink lots of fruit juices and tonic."

"That's why you're so good in bed. I'm going to sleep," she said, getting up off the bed and going into the bathroom.

When she returned, she simply flung herself down on the bed and threw her arms around his belly.

"I saw some marks in your back. It seems as if somebody was using a small shovel to scoop out some of your flesh."

"It's you who did it."

"I never wear long fingernails. It must have been Bobbette. Her nails are incredibly long. I can just imagine how she must have felt."

"It's just a birthmark."

The two of them then started to cuddle each other.

"Aren't you going to sleep?"

"Yeah, Sadie, let me go and take off this thing here," he replied, getting up off the bed and heading for the bathroom.

Brad felt some amount of responsibility for what had taken place between Jenna and Dania at the nightclub. As he told Morgana, he just couldn't understand why Dania and Celia came to fight Jenna. Could it be Morgana, they were after? Dania had made no secret of the fact that she didn't want him to have anything to do with her. Come to think of it, it seemed ridiculous since everybody knew that Morgana was Stewart's fiancé. He had just gone out with her once to have a drink. Maybe it was Celia, who had set it up, trying to get back at Bev for her friendship with Rick. He had called Dania and she had been blank to his queries and didn't even want to talk to him.

He decided to call Jenna and ask her for a date. Jenna had just finished helping both Kailen and Jaimie with their homework when her telephone rang. Brad was on the line.

Jenna was still upset and angry over the incident with the two girls. Brad had called her a couple of times to apologize. The last time he called was Sunday night. She had decided that she wouldn't pursue any action against the two girls.

"Hi Jenna, how are you?"

"I'm okay, fancy hearing from you. I thought after you called me on Sunday, you had reconciled with your girlfriend and everything was okay between you now. I keep telling myself that I don't want to be blamed for the break up of your relationship."

"I told you the truth. She phoned and broke off with me. I don't know why she acted like that. I spoke to her after the incident and she couldn't give me an explanation," he appealed to her.

"I don't like to date men I can't trust. I was really embarrassed by the whole incident."

"Jenna, it's like this. There's this lady at my office, she started working there about four months before me. I went out for a drink with her and Dania can't bear to see me near her. If I go anywhere and see her and so much as talk to her she gets all upset. The woman is engaged so I can't understand her."

"Maybe you've done something to make her feel that there is something going on between you and this other woman."

"The woman will be getting married in a matter of weeks to a former colleague of mine. Dania is just being foolish and paranoid and so we've parted."

"She doesn't act as if she's somebody willing to give you up. Maybe you've left her, but she hasn't."

"What can I do to prove to you that we're no longer together?"

"I wouldn't risk going out with you again. I know that's why you called."

"That's true, but judging by what you're saying, Dania is scaring you away from me."

"It's not because I told you that I was scared of jealous females. that I'm going to be afraid of Dania. It's because she's your long time woman, I just feel that I'm intruding."

"I don't have any papers to show you that we've broken up. But I can assure you that if you go out with me nothing like that will take place again," he sought to assure her.

"I'll think over your invitation and I'll give you a call one day this week."

"Okay then, I'll be listening out," he said as they both hung up.

Brad arrived at the office early, he had hardly settled down when Alex walked in.

"Brad, the girls are rushing me bad."

Maria Dwyer from the finance department made her way into Brad's office.

"I wonder who those girls are though?" she asked.

Brad knew Maria before he went away when she used to work for an investment firm on Trafalgar Road. Her boyfriend, Ron Jenkinson, worked at a stock-broking house in New Kingston.

"Last night I was at Corners and I danced with a whole host of different girls," Alex stated.

"You are the man around town, you have all the girls," Brad said.

Morgana had joined them now.

"Alex, what were you doing at Corners with so many girls?"

Morgana had gone to Corners. She was waiting for Stewart to turn up there, but he was a no show. Realizing that he wasn't going to show up, she had danced with a few male friends and spent time talking to some other people.

"I bet he didn't get any of them to take home with him," Maria remarked.

"I have a time when it's just dancing I'm dealing with, another time it's pure girls. Well, last night it was just dancing."

"You certainly can dance though, Alex. You know how many girls I saw lining up to dance with him," Morgana said.

"How old are you, Alex?" Maria asked.

"Old enough to take care of any business."

"He's just twenty-three," Morgana said." I didn't know that he was so young. I don't want any man younger than I am."

"Brad and Rick can't be much older than Alex. They behave as if they're mature men," Maria

remarked.

"We've been on our own for so long that we can't help feeling that way," Brad said. "But, Morgana, Stewart is young too."

"If Stewart and I should break up I would date a much older man."

"My boyfriend is in his thirties and I'm twenty-five," Maria said going out of the office.

"I'm going to get something to eat," Morgana said.

"I'm going to get something to eat too, so I'll be seeing you, all," Alex said going out after Morgana.

That evening Stewart and Morgana went to Bobs. Morgana didn't feel like dancing, but enjoying the ambience around her. She had heard that next year Bob would be developing it some more, probably into a nightclub.

"Stewart, is something bothering you? You don't seem yourself these days."

"It's strange that you should say that. Everything's all right with me. I don't have any problems."

"I had to ask you to take me here. I could have come with some friends and now that we're here you seem so glum. Last night I was at Corners waiting for you and you didn't show up. Maybe you'd better tell me if you're having a problem with me."

He didn't answer, but beckoned a waiter over and ordered some more drinks.

"Let's do some more dancing," he said as the waiter brought their drinks and they took a few sips.

Reluctantly, Morgana went on the dance floor with him. As Stewart danced with her he was worried as to what to tell Bobbette and he dare not tell Morgana about her impending marriage to Robert.

"Do you feel better now, darling?" Morgana asked, taking some more sips of her drink. They had just returned to their table.

"I told you that everything was okay. I don't know why you feel that something is wrong with me."

"Let's do some more dancing, or else we'll just sit here arguing and it's getting us nowhere."

They danced to a couple of songs before returning to their table.

"I've never seen you like this before. You were so stiff on the dance floor and you hardly wanted to move your feet."

"What's the matter with you?" he snapped.

"Take me home," she requested. "I don't know why I ever asked you to bring me here. I'm sorry I didn't drive my car."

Stewart got up and both of them left the sports bar after he paid their bill.

When they were outside Stewart said.

"I don't know why you're asking me so many questions."

"You're my fiancé, and it's because I care why I'm asking."

"Okay, I hope I've answered all of your questions."

"I still don't know what's wrong with you," she replied as he opened the car door for her.

The ride back home was uneventful. He didn't even bother to kiss her good night or to make sure that she reached inside her home safely. He just drove off as soon as she got out of the car.

Rick reached home around ten o'clock after his rendezvous with Bev. Celia had made some chicken soup and he threw out some of it in a bowl. He had brought some fruits and some juices. He and Celia were now cordial to each other. He wasn't sure about Bev anymore and was

thinking that maybe he had made a mistake in trying to romance her.

Maybe it was because he had seen Brad going after Morgana why he had tried after Bev. He thought she was more enthusiastic at first, but now he wasn't sure. She kept insisting that although she and Celia weren't friends she didn't want her to think that she was intruding in her relationship. In other words she was telling him to choose between her and Celia.

"Rick, I want to know what to do. I don't want to come home and see my things thrown outside and you move your girlfriend in here."

Rick ate some of the fruits he had brought home before he went to have the soup. He washed up the dish before coming to sit opposite Celia in one of the couches.

"Every day it gets more ridiculous. Ever since Dania said she saw me talking to Bev, you've been malicing me. You've never seen me with the girl, but you're quite prepared to believe that I'm seeing her."

"I think you're lovers. Rory is abroad and if I know him well he'll have girlfriends over there so I think Bev is trying to start something with you."

"So you're willing to stand aside and look while she takes me away from you?"

"You know how bad I can go on. But I believe that if I'm with a man and I give him all the love and affection I can and he still walks out and go and look another woman then maybe he doesn't want me again."

Rick went and opened an energy drink and took a swallow.

"Have you ever considered that we sleep in the same bed every night. If I was seeing Bev then I'd be out there partying with her. Dania might have convinced you that because Brad was trying to be friendly with Morgana I was doing the same thing with her sister."

"People have been known to sleep in the same bed and yet are carrying on affairs behind each other's back. I'm going to bed. It will take a lot to convince me that you and that girl, aren't lovers," she said and got up and went upstairs.

Bev had been reluctant to say anything about Rory, but as Celia said the man was bound to have a woman over there. Maybe Bev had found out and had withdrawn into her shell or it could be that her mother and Morgana had advised her not to go any further with him. After all, Celia and Dania had actually gone to fight Morgana and were rather taken aback when they saw Brad with a woman they didn't know. That hadn't stopped Dania from dousing her with the beer. Rick knew that his relationship with Bev was ending and it was time to mend fences with Celia. He took up the television remote control and began to switch channels, finally finding one he could watch. He didn't feel sleepy and maybe wouldn't go to bed until after midnight.

Morgana reached work early that morning. As she sat in her office thinking over last night's episodes between herself and Stewart, Maria came in.

"I saw you and Stewart at Bobs last night. Both of you seemed to be arguing all the time."

For a moment Morgana wanted to tell her that everything was okay between them, but she knew that the girl was only expressing her concern for her.

"I don't know what has come over him of late, but he certainly doesn't seem himself these days."

"Maybe you should give him some time. I'm sure he'll come around."

"I'm thinking of doing that and thanks for the advice," Morgana said as Maria made her way out of her office.

Jenna had backed down from her decision not to go out with Brad and agreed to go to Bobs with him that evening. She was dressed in a strapless blue dress and slippers. Brad had on a blue

pants and a white sports shirt.

"So is everything okay with you, Brad?"

"Sure, so far so good, I was kind of surprised when you agreed to go out with me. You know nothing like that will happen again," he told her. He was referring to the incident with Dania and Celia.

Jenna nodded, sure that he knew that it would be curtains to any relationship between them should there be a repeat of such an incident.

"You know that I have a son for Robert Parsons. We get good support from him. I was in a relationship with him for more than a year after I had my son. But now he has a woman whom he's planning to marry."

"Are you planning to do anything about it?"

"We broke up and I was seeing Sean and then I found out about her. But she wasn't the reason for our break-up. It was another girl, but they broke up and he's seeing Bobbette now."

"Throughout all this Robert still supported Jaimie. But I've explained all of this to you already. With his intended marriage, I'm not sure of that support anymore."

They had not danced yet, but he was content to listen to her.

"He's a young and dynamic businessman. I'm not sure that he'd want you to drag him through the courts to support his son."

"I suppose you didn't invite me here to listen to my problems, so let's dance."

"No, that's okay. I am always willing to sit and listen and if possible help a lady in distress."

Jenna laughed.

"You're quite romantic, but we've done enough talking for one night so let's go and enjoy ourselves."

Stewart was at Jimmy Chang's sports bar on Holborn Road. He didn't know where Morgana was, maybe she was still angry after Wednesday night. He had drunk two pints of beer when the proprietor came over. He had known Stewart for a couple of years now as a regular patron of the sports bar.

"How's it going, Stewie? What happen to the women? I am always glad to see you because you bring some girls here who simply light up the place."

Stewart laughed.

"Jimmy, I want a straight answer from you because you are a man in this business longer than I. You see the girl, who you were always admiring. The one I brought here sometimes; she gave me an ultimatum. This businessman has proposed to her and she wants me to tell her what to tell him."

"Tell her not to marry the guy and there ends the story."

Stewart laughed and Jimmy soon joined him.

"If it was as easy as that I would have done it already, but the guy is rich with a lot of businesses and he'll leave her unless she marries him."

"Oh, I know what your problem is, but don't you have plenty more girls? What's happening, you aren't getting enough from them?"

"Sometimes it's several weeks before I see the other girls. Most of the times it's this girl who helps me out."

"You are out of luck because short of agreeing to marry her yourself, I don't see what else you can do," Jimmy replied, moving away to help out with the serving of the customers.

"I'll see you around and tell you how things went," Stewart said as he got ready to leave the sports bar.

Friday evening Morgana took up her cell phone at least two times but put it down again. She hadn't heard from Stewart. She had exchanged pleasantries with Brad and he told her that he was taking Jenna to Corners later on that night. She felt a stab of jealousy and wondered if it was because of her own problems with Stewart.

When she reached home her mother had left a note that she had gone out with Val and Bev wasn't home as yet. Darren phoned to say that he and his current girlfriend, Bianca, had gone to the movies at the Carib Cinema in Cross Roads. After she had her bath and ate some food she decided to call Stewart.

"Hi, Stewart, I haven't heard from you since Wednesday. Why are you shunning me?"

Stewart wondered, what the hell, he wasn't even being given time to think.

"Did you hear what I asked you?"

"Sure I did, I'm not ignoring you, but I've been so busy that I hardly have time to call you."

"You aren't showing much interest in me these days. Sometimes I wonder where in your life do I fit in. Should I go my way or stay and beg you to pay me some attention? I think you have some problem that you don't want me to know about."

"Listen, I don't have any problems. I'll try to make it up to you, not this weekend, but one day next week we can go clubbing."

"Okay, we'll see," she replied and ended the call.

She had a feeling that his uneasiness had something to do with Bobbette but she would one day find out about him and that girl.

Linton took Kedija to Corners that evening, the crew was there and they partied until about one o'clock that morning. The crew would be staying in Kingston this weekend and cruise the nightclub circuit. Several night club managers had called influential crew members to express their disappointment at their absence from their clubs over several weekends when they had been on the house party circuit.

Glen and Leona had just reached home after partying at Mass Camp on Oxford Road. Her car was parked up at his home. Glen's parents had given him this one bedroom self-contained flat on their property and Leona had spent lots of time up there with him. Leona still wasn't pleased that he was refusing to give her a weekly allowance and was only willing to give her some money now and then. She had told him that she wanted to move and live with him but he had refused. Glen's parents would have been liberal enough to have let their second son live with his woman even if they were unmarried and still attending college. Glen however, felt that it wouldn't do since both of them were still attending college and neither was working.

"I don't see why we can't live together."

They were on the steps leading to Glen's flat. After returning from Mass Camp they had gone for a swim in the pool. Both had robes around them to keep away the morning chill.

"How would we spin that, Leona? Both of us are going to school and not working."

"You have your own flat and your parents don't object to me staying here with you. I know other couples attending classes who live together. Decarla Wright and Carson Kent live together and so do Celestine Waugh and Carlton Reid. They only became lovers since attending university and they aren't married or working."

Glen knew both sets of couples.

"I have to pay my utility bills and maintain my vehicle out of the allowance my parents give

me. I wouldn't have enough left to buy food and other things for both of us. You aren't even sure if your parents would agree with you living with a man and you're not married and still attending college."

"You don't worry about them. They are cool about me staying with you. They never raise a fuss or anything. My mother says I'm a big woman now and capable of making my own decisions and my father feels the same way," she told him. Glen put his arms around her waist.

"Why do we continue to argue all the time? You have your own room on your parent's property. It's a nice place, I can't understand you not wanting to live there anymore."

"Living with you will enable me to get to know the type of person you are."

"Aren't you going a bit too fast there. After I finish up here I'll be going up to complete my certified professional accounting examinations. You still have one more year in college. See the impossibility of what you're talking about."

Leona knew of his intentions to go away.

"They do those courses out here. I don't see why you have to go abroad to do them."

"I want to finish quicker and I think the lecturers over there might be better."

"When you go up you'll just leave me alone to wait until you return," she complained putting her head in his lap.

"Let's go to bed, it's almost daylight and we aren't getting anywhere with this argument," he told her, taking her hand and leading her up the steps to his flat.

Stan had fled to a district in St. Catherine called Hepburn Grove. The old landlady and her husband, were charging him five thousand dollars per month for the one bedroom board house. Stan knew that the twenty thousand dollars he had on him wouldn't last long after he paid his rent. He drove to Linstead, almost five miles away to buy things for his room. He resisted using his bank card to access the almost one hundred thousand dollars he had left in his account. They lent him a small bed and he had bought a kerosene oil stove. There was an outdoor kitchen and a pit toilet. The first night there had been hard for Stan and he was bitten all over by mosquitos.

Stan knew he couldn't afford to sit idly by and do nothing if he wanted to eat and pay his rent. He had been tempted to run his car as a taxi, but it hadn't been insured for years. The fees for the license and fitness hadn't been paid for the same amount of time, plus he didn't know which policemen, Bishop had given pictures of him. Already he had done some trips for people in the little district and for both of his landlords, but he knew those were small pickings and he didn't want to rob anybody in the district. Then a thought struck him. He had vowed to carve up Linton's face so why not find out where he lived in Kingston and hold him up and get some money from him. Linton was a man who loved the nightclub scene. All he had to do was to find out which club he was in and trail him home and then hold him up. He would threaten to kill him if he didn't give him a certain amount of money to spare his life. Stan set about planning how to hold up Linton. He remembered that was what he had been thinking about in Ocho Rios over the Easter holidays so it was now time to put those plans into action.

Chapter Twelve

Brad went shopping at the Constant Spring Mall along with Jenna. Kailen and Jaimie also came along. He saw Rick and then Celia separately cruising the Mall. Bev and Morgana went up to Sally's hardware to help out with some stock-taking she was having.

Stewart drove to campus that Saturday morning for his rendezvous with Bobbette. He parked his car and went over to the agreed spot. She was there already, sitting on one of the concrete benches. She was dressed in a tank-top and cutoff jeans shorts which showed off her well toned legs. Both her fingernails and toenails were painted green. Stewart didn't know the color lip gloss she was wearing, but it made her even more desirable. She had in big earrings and her cane-rowed hair was tied up.

He took a seat beside her.

"You look good enough to eat, baby."

"Thanks, Stewie and you look so handsome and well groomed."

Stewart laughed and Bobbette offered a wry smile.

"I suppose these benches take us a far way back."

"That's why I still believe it's a mistake you're making in agreeing to marry Robert."

"I haven't agreed to marry him yet. Remember you're the one who'll have to tell me what to do."

"What can I tell you? I can't match that guy. I can't ask you to marry me because I can't give you the kind of support he can give you."

"You know what, you're thinking about that girl, Morgan. I know I have only my hot looking body that you could always get rid of your frustrations in. How many times have you slept with her since she returned to the island?"

"You expect me to tell you that? I've never asked you about Robert."

"Why should you? You know I'm his woman. You've always been complaining that you weren't getting enough from her. I suppose that's why you sought me out."

"Why bring up those things again? Anyway, it's you, who are telling me what your husband to be, can give you."

"You've never even hinted at marriage. You think I like to pass Morgana on the streets or go anywhere and see her and know that I'm sleeping with her fiancé. Remember, it was because I threatened never to sleep with you again why you didn't get married to her."

Stewart remembered but didn't reply, she continued.

"You don't want to hurt her. I would have been the one, who got hurt. I just invited you here to find out your true character. I bet you never marry Morgana. You'll still be pursuing younger and sexier girls than her in an effort to preserve your youth," she flung at him.

"We shouldn't be parting this way. I can't understand you. I should be the one who is grieving. Morgana and I aren't even speaking to each other."

"I'm sure I'm not the cause of you and her not being on speaking terms. You know something, I should be crying when I remember the things we've done together. As I said I'm marrying Robert because he can help me. I suppose I'll grow to love him later on."

"I'll miss you, Bobbette, but I wish you the best."

"Stewart, if you had just given me hope, that someday I would wear your ring, then I would be willing to stick around. So it's goodbye and thanks for coming."

She came into his arms and shed a few tears before pulling out and going to her car.

Stewart watched her drive off.

He beat his fists on the stone desks a few times hoping that nobody saw him. He felt like a big hole had been punched into his life. He would call Yasmin for her to come and sleep with him or he could go up to her house.

Damn Morgana, she was never around when he needed her. Meanwhile, he would go down to Randy Chin and probably play a few games of dominoes and drink a few malt beverages to help him relax. He went to his car and drove off.

Brad went to Fort Clarence beach on Sunday with Jenna and Jaimie. Kailen also went with them.

Kailen and Jaimie were in the water frolicking and Brad and Jenna were lying on their backs on the beach.

"You have a great body, Jenna."

"Thanks, and you have a great one too. You must do a lot of exercise to keep in shape, Brad?"

"I play a lot of sports like six-a-side football and when I was in college, I used to play a lot of games."

"Where is that girl, what's her name, Dania?"

"You are aware that we broke up. I understand that she is planning to migrate."

"If I'm to start a relationship with you I want to know everything about you."

"I thought you knew everything about me, what more is there to know?"

"I'll know when I'm comfortable with what I know about you."

"I'm not seeing anybody else and Dania and I had broken up before she came to fight you."

"I'm sorry for calling you a dirty liar."

"That's okay, maybe I deserved it," he said as Kailen and Jaimie came towards them."

"Is everything okay, Kailen, Jaimie?" Jenna asked as they listened to the music being pumped out as a show was going on.

"Let's go buy some food," Brad told them as they made their way out to where they were selling food.

Rick was at home on Sunday afternoon. Celia had cooked breakfast and dinner. They had eaten both meals around the same table without uttering a word to the other.

Later, as he was relaxing in one of the lounge chairs, she came and stood over him.

"Aren't you going out? See, I'm not a bad girl after all. I've been cooking your breakfast and dinner all this time although we aren't speaking to each other."

"I live in a house with a woman and we sleep in the same bed for more than a week now without touching each other. Me a hot blooded male, here she is accusing me of being unfaithful to her. You're just tempting me to go out and look another woman," he said, taking her hands and she fell on top of him.

"Rick, let me go. Go and look for your girlfriend."

She tried to wriggle out of his hold, but he held her tight. Rick began to kiss her and fondle her breasts, which had fallen out of her bra. She started to protest, but when their tongues met and he cupped her breasts and began kissing her nipples, her hands fell to her side. She made one last attempt to pull out of his hold, but he refused to let her go. Finally, she gave in to his caresses.

"We can't do it here, not at this time of the day."

"Nobody will see us," he said as he tried to feed more of her breast into his mouth.

"Are you crazy?" Celia cried. Her voice made Rick realize how turned on she was.

She jumped up, took his hands and led him into the spare bedroom. They undressed each other, both falling on the bed with Rick on top of her. Rick's muscular body was in sharp contrast to Celia's bottle-shaped body Her skin was flawless and her breasts well developed for such a slim woman.

Rick continued where he had left off and they shared hot kisses. He then began licking her nipples and playing with her most sensitive areas. Celia kept moving her body in a slow dance to his caresses. Finally, she pushed his hand away and took the condom and roll it onto his member.

Later Celia and Rick were lying in each other's arms, enjoying the afterglow of their love feast. They were wondering at what had kept their passions bottled up for so long.

"What's to become of us?" Celia asked as she rolled over to her side of the bed.

"We'll have to try and work things out if we don't want to go the way of Brad and Dania."

"Yes, Rick."

That was all he heard her say before she dropped off to sleep.

Monday evening Stewart took Morgana to Bob's entertainment complex. Morgana noticed the change in him. He asked her about her mother and about Bev and the problems she was having with Rory. They spent most of the evening dancing. They were having some drinks at their table when Morgana said.

"I can't believe you've changed so much in one week. Last week you looked a shadow of yourself, but now you're looking like the real Stewart, the man I fell in love with."

Stewart beamed with pride as he looked at his woman declaring her love for him.

"Everything's all right now. I always love the way how you stick it out with me, it's nothing, darling," he assured her.

"Okay, Stewie, I'll take your word for it," she said as they headed for the dance floor again.

Tuesday morning as Celia was getting ready to go to work after another night of some intense lovemaking with Rick, her cell phone rang. Rick had left before her as he could hardly awake.

"Celia, Teddy here, what's happening? It looks as you want me to come up there and do that guy something."

"Teddy, I told you not to call me here. As for threatening Rick, I told you to stop it. I don't know why I ever got involved with you in the first place."

"Remember when your man was away, I was the one taking care of you. Listen, I want to see you this evening. You'd better come to Betty's Hideout," he told her and ended the call.

Celia finished dressing for work and went down to her car. As she reversed out of her parking lot she nearly collided with an oncoming cyclist.

Rick was in his office Tuesday afternoon when Bev called him.

"Hi, what's up, Bev."

"Rick, we have to talk. Can we meet this evening? I'm leaving campus early."

Rick wasn't sure he wanted to talk to her after what happened on Sunday night. He and Celia had spent half of Monday night making love. Things seemed to be back on the level between them again.

"Okay, but what's it about though?"

"How can you be asking that? You don't want to see me again, is that it? You never used to behave that way. It's about us," she said and ended the call before he could answer.

Rick didn't know what she meant about us. They had shared a few kisses. She had let him

fondle her breasts, but had pushed him away when he tried to caress her legs.

Rick drove to campus and parked. He saw her talking to some friends; presently she came over to him.

"Hi," he said. "You look great."

"Thanks and you are looking so good."

They stood a moment appraising each other.

"Rick, I don't want to keep on seeing you. I've heard a lot about you and Celia. I even heard that she and Dania went to fight a girl they thought Brad was fooling around."

"What did you hear about me and Celia?"

She waved his question away.

"I'm going to be honest with you. I've known Celia for a very long time and I don't want to be the cause of any break-up between the two of you."

"Are you afraid of Celia, or that she might attack you?"

"I like you a lot. I only wish that we had met under different circumstances, but you can always call me and we'll talk."

"I don't know how to take this, but I always respect a woman's wishes. I'll see around."

He took her hand and shook it before going to his car.

The music at Betty's Hideout was pumping away when Teddy drove in, parked, locked up his car and came over to where Celia was seated and fidgeting as she waited his arrival. He came and sat opposite her.

"What's happening, Celia? Aren't you glad to see me? I don't like how you're living with this guy, Rick. I'm sure that I'm a better lover than that guy plus I have more money than he. Are you still holding the fact that you caught me in bed with Carrie against me?"

He called the waiter over and ordered some drinks without even asking her what she was having.

"I don't know why I ever agreed to come and see you."

"Why did you come down to my house the other day? You and your boyfriend were having problems, but now everything is peaceful between both of you, you don't want to see me anymore," he said as their drinks arrived and he took his and push hers towards her.

Celia didn't touch the drink. She was still wondering how she got involved with this guy.

"What's happening? Aren't you going to have your drink?"

"Drink up; I've rented a room for the evening."

"You've done what?" Celia asked, taking up her bag.

"I don't have to take this kind of treatment from you and you can phone Rick and tell him about us," she shouted before pulling up her chair and going to her car. Teddy shouted at her, but she ignored him and drove off.

Wednesday afternoon Bev was sitting on one of the concrete benches studying when Liam Jacobs came up to her.

"Hi, Bev, how's everything these days?"

Liam was a final year economics student from Barbados, hoping to qualify as an economist in a few years time. He was a tall guy probably around twenty five years of age and reasonably good looking, Bev had always thought.

"Everything's okay Liam, I haven't seen you around lately."

"I've been around, but maybe you aren't looking in my direction. You know I always thought

you are the most beautiful girl on campus.”

Bev laughed and Liam smiled.

“There are lots of girls up here, who are better looking than I am.”

Liam was rumored to have a lot of women. It was even being said that it was one of them who was paying his tuition fees and had bought a car for him.

“How about going to Corners this weekend with me?”

“I really have to study all weekend. What about your girlfriend, Shakira? I’m sure you’re still together.”

“You’re probably the only person on campus who doesn’t know that we’ve broken up.”

Bev wasn’t taking him up though. A lot of guys had been coming on to her, especially since they heard that she wasn’t hearing from Rory.

“I’ll give it some thoughts, but I have a lot of studies and I doubt if I’ll have the time.”

“Yeah, I’ll call you tomorrow.”

Bev looked at him going towards his car. She shook her head; no matter how many times he called he would always be getting a negative answer.

On Thursday evening Celia drove into Betty's Hideout and went over to where Teddy was waiting on her.

“I’m going to stop meeting you if you don't know how to behave,” she said before taking her seat.

“What have I done now?”

“I told you not to call me at home and you still insist on doing that. Plus the last time we met you ordered drinks and didn’t even ask me what I wanted and then you rented a room and probably wanted to order me into it.”

“What I'm peeved about is you going to live with that guy, Rick, after I told you not to.”

“I don’t take orders from anybody and you know that too,” she said. “Listen, I'd better go.”

“Suit yourself, but you could be in a lot of trouble.”

Celia couldn't understand, it seemed that Teddy had changed. She didn’t know what he wanted from her and she wasn’t prepared to sleep with him again, now that she had found out the type of person he really was.

“Bye, Teddy,” she told him and made her way to her car.

Bev was home, lying down on a sofa in her room. Liam Jacobs had called her about going out with him, but she had turned down his invitation. She hoped that he had gotten the message now that he didn’t stand a chance with her. He was simply not her type. She was still trying to digest what Roxanne had told her about Brittany. In her estimation the girl was now at least six months pregnant. She had tried calling Rory again, but was still not getting through. She was glad that her short lived romance with Rick was over. She had never felt comfortable knowing that he was Celia’s boyfriend. She wanted to jump on Rory and claw at him for lying to her. She had given her body freely to him on so many occasions and now he had let her down. She felt like crying, but she told herself that she had no time for self pity. She desperately wanted to find out if it was true, but knew it was as Roxanne wouldn’t lie to her. It was she who had told her about Brittany and him in the first place. Maybe when he was coming the baby hadn’t begun to show or Roxanne would have told her then.

Bev wondered if it would be better for her to concentrate on completing her studies and forget about men for the time being. There was Glen, but he belonged to Leona. She knew that at one time she used to see him with a lot of girls. He seemed to have put that behind him ever since

he resumed his studies.

He had always been polite to her every time they met. He would greet her with a hug and a kiss and wanted to know if everything was okay. She had gone to parties in Hershire Heights and met both of his parents. She had seen the smiles on their faces and nods of approval whenever she danced with him and wondered if Leona saw it too. She was just getting up to go downstairs when her cell phone rang. She picked it up and pressed the call button. She recognized the number. It was Glen's number. He had indeed found his phone.

"How are you, Bev?"

"I'm fine, Glen. I see you've found your phone."

"It was in the back of the car. So have you heard from Rory?"

"No, he still hasn't called. But as it is I don't want to hear from him again."

"I thought you two were in love. I don't mean to pry, but you know that Rory is my friend and I consider you a friend too, and I always wished both of you the best."

"He has this girl over there. Brittany is her name and you know Roxanne. She called and told me that the girl was six months pregnant. He has always denied that he and the girl are friends. Now I understand that he's being pressured to marry her."

Glen knew that something like this was bound to happen with Rory being abroad. While he had settled down early with one woman, Rory wasn't the type of guy to do that. He knew that Bev was making a mistake in going steady with him while he was still over there. Even out here when she and Rory were going around, he had other girls, but she wouldn't be hearing about that from him, Glen thought.

"I've heard about him and her, but I never believed any of it. Are you sure that it's true?"

"I can't get him on his cell phone, all I get is his voice mail. I saw one of his friends, Strats Grey, the other day and I asked him about Rory and he said everything was okay. If he knew about Brittany, he wouldn't have told me. You know how men are, and I didn't ask."

Glen knew Strats as he had been in the same class with him and had called him before he returned home.

"I told Strats to tell him to call me or even get his phone number if he was using a new one and let me call him but I haven't heard from Strats. I think Strats gave him my message, but he doesn't want to call me because he is afraid that I've found out about Brittany's pregnancy."

Glen felt he was at a disadvantage. He didn't want to criticize Rory as for all he knew he and Bev hadn't officially broken up.

"So what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to break off with him and concentrate on my studies and forget about men for the time being."

"Men will always be trying to date you. With your looks I don't think you can stay single for long."

"Try me, after what Rory did, any other guy wanting to date me had better come with something good."

Glen knew that she liked him, but it would be foolish of him to try to fill the void and he still had Leona and it would spoil things between him and her.

"If you still love Rory it would be good for you to find out the facts."

"I told you already that I trust Roxanne. So why hasn't he called me or give Strats a message to give me? I'm going to have a cup of tea and a sandwich and then go to bed. Thanks for calling," she said and ended the call.

Friday, Stewart called Morgana about spending some time with him on the weekend.

"Are you coming by me on Saturday?"

"I don't think so, Stewart."

"How about Sunday, we could go to the beach and to Corners."

"There are still a lot of things we have to settle. I agree that we might have made up, but I'm not in the mood for any loving right now."

Stewart put his left hand under his jaw. He had to blame Bobbette for his present predicament. In the past, he had her to go to. Damn the two of them anyway, he would look a new girlfriend.

"Okay, how about me coming to take you to Corners tomorrow night?"

"That's okay."

He hoped she didn't complain when he didn't have much time for her. He didn't know what she meant by falling in love with him. If she was really in love with him she would be willing to spend a lot more time with him.

Brad and Jenna went to Corners that evening, they saw Stewart and Morgana there. Brad remembered what he had told her. He greeted both her and Stewart.

Morgana said hello to Jenna but she didn't know why she felt an instant dislike for the girl as she watched her dancing with Brad.

Rick took Celia to Solid Mix, Alex was also there with twin sisters. Maria and her boyfriend, Ron, were there too.

Darren took his girlfriend, Bianca, to his friend's birthday party. Sally and Monique and their respective beaus were at a party put on by Sally's association at one of those New Kingston hotels. Bev went along with her mother.

Stan lay relaxed and looking up into the ceiling. As he listened to a nearby sound system he didn't feel hungry and he had a lot of energy. He got up and started dancing to the music. He remembered about Bishop and the girl, who had lied on Talbert. Talbert would never do a thing like that and she had pointed him out and caused him to die. He needed money to buy some more marijuana and liquor as the money he had on him was his rent and food money. He wasn't getting enough work as there were other cars in the district and some of the drivers were youths barely out of their teens, Stan thought. He'd probably hit Linton one day next week. He wasn't going to touch the money he had in his bank account. Stan didn't know where Natalie was. She must have found the money he had hidden in the room. He knew that she would have moved to somewhere else where he couldn't find her. He had furniture and appliances valued at over two hundred thousand dollars and Bishop had caused him to lose it. Stan lay thinking about three persons, the girl who had pointed out Talbert, Linton Marsh and Eric Bishop and didn't know when he dropped off to sleep.

After Brad dropped her off at her apartment that night Jenna decided to give Bobbette a call about her and Robert's forthcoming marriage. She had a two bedroom apartment and she stayed in one while her niece and son stayed in the other. Brad could have slept with her if she had wanted, but when he brought up the subject she told him no. She didn't want to give in to him as yet, until she was sure where the relationship was going. She was still in consternation about Robert's decision to marry Bobbette and what it meant for her and her son. She would be needing his support as Jaimie got older, so she thought she had better clear up certain things with his intended bride. Bobbette had just retired to bed when Jenna called. She answered the phone and Jenna introduced herself.

"And what can I do for you?" Bobbette asked. This girl had a nerve to be calling her at this time of night.

"My name is Jenna Marsden, I have a son for Robert. I understand you're going to be married to him."

"I don't see what that has to do with you. I can't understand why we're having this conversation. Seems to me that the person you should be having it with should be Robert and not me."

"You go to hell, girl. I know all about you and that tall guy with the flat top hairstyle. Robert is a fool to be marrying you, but he'll come to his senses one day."

"And you go to the devil. You don't know anything about me and you had better not try to dig any further into my personal affairs. You were only trying to trap Robert by having a baby for him and yet he didn't want you, it's me he proposed to."

Bobbette ended the call not sure the girl heard her last words. She thought she ought to call Brad and complain about his girlfriend, no wonder Dania and Celia had gotten into that fight with her. Bobbette went to bed as images of Stewart and Robert flashed through her mind.

Jenna kept thinking about her conversation with Bobbette as she prepared for bed. Maybe she had made a mistake in calling her. Even if she told Robert about Stewart, she doubted if he would believe her. Her son and niece were already snoring. Finally, she went to bed, her mind on Brad and worrying about how Robert's marriage would affect the maintenance of her son.

Brad was drinking some champagne and watching television. Jenna had refused his request to spend the night with her. Somehow he had expected such a reply from her. It showed that he still had some more work to do. Morgana must be enjoying herself with Stewart. He would stick around Jenna. If he dumped her and looked another woman, Morgana would say he was a womanizer. Damned it, what did he care what she wanted to think? She had her man and he didn't even have a woman. He finished drinking his champagne, turned off the television and went to bed.

Kedija had moved some of her things to Linton's apartment. She had seen some women's items there and when she asked him about it he told her that they belonged to Flavia. They had been quickly shipped back to her. Now she was sitting in his living room, drinking some champagne while she waited for her man. They were due to go out for dinner this evening before going down to Ruddys. Despite Linton's assurances she was feeling a bit uneasy about Arlene Martin, Ceda Dennis and Cosmore Ryan leaving the crew. Linton had told her that it was a customary occurrence in most crews but she wasn't satisfied. Arlene had broken up with Cosmore and he just got angry and left the crew. Ceda's boyfriend, Fitz Bethune, had complained that she wasn't measuring up before dropping her and getting another woman, Sabrina Littlejohn, to go around with him. She had asked Linton about crew members' women getting pregnant, but he said he didn't think anything was wrong with that. She heard his van drive in and in no time he was inside the apartment. He kissed her before taking off his jacket. Linton always wore a suit to work and she had asked him about it, but he said that it was part of the dress code for senior positions like his.

"There are two more casualties in the crew. Sheena Britton and Waldo Masters had a falling out last night and both of them have left the crew," he informed her. She knew both Sheena and her boyfriend, Waldo. She had heard the rumors that Waldo was very jealous of Sheena.

"Sheena and her sister, Ayisha, share their apartment. Waldo went there and saw Ayisha's boyfriend, Duane Bembridge and his brother, Lerone, talking to them and he just got mad and

trashed their living room. The two guys wanted to beat him up so they had to call the police. Sheena called me and was crying because he smashed up a television set and other equipment belonging to Ayisha worth more than half a million dollars.”

“What! How’s he going to pay for all that damage?”

“I don’t know. He’s in custody right now.”

“I’m sorry to hear,” she said and wondered how long she and Linton would last.

She mixed a drink for him and he joined her on the back patio. He would cool off, take a bath before they headed out to dinner.

“These things happen in the best of organizations or groups.”

“I suppose so, but I keep wondering about us. Why am I with a man who is a non-resident of this country?”

“Relax, Kedija, I’ve cut all ties with up North and you can call me a returning resident.”

“I think I need to know more about your life in the States.”

“What more is there to tell? I won a track scholarship and didn’t follow it up, but I was successful in getting those two degrees in finance.”

“What about your girlfriends?”

“Why are you so curious all of a sudden? I thought I told you about all of my girlfriends.”

“You know why I had to drop Flavia and Morgana and I broke up soon after we both returned,” he replied. “Come, let’s go and get ready.”

They both went into the bedroom to change off and then have a bath before heading out.

Chapter Thirteen

On Sunday, Sally visited Monique, Bev had gone to study on campus and Morgana had gone to the beach with Stewart while Darren was asleep in his room.

They had eaten dinner and Monique was tidying up the kitchen when Sally broke the unexpected news.

"Monique, Vernon has asked me to marry him and I've said yes."

Monique couldn't hold back herself at the news. Her daughters and several friends and neighbors had been willing to take bets as to which of the two gorgeous young widows would revisit the altar first. Sally had won that race and fittingly so, she being the elder sister and the first to get married.

"Wow, I don't know when I'll recover from this shock," Monique shouted, hugging her sister.

"I always said that after Sid's untimely death that Vernon was the right man for you, sis," Monique said as they pulled apart.

"I've phoned Tania and Billy and they couldn't be happier," Sally said, referring to her daughter and son, who were grown adults although she had no grandchildren despite the fact that both were married.

"I'm sorry we can't make it into a double wedding. I don't know what Val's waiting on."

"His divorce isn't final as yet and I'm not sure about getting married again."

"I'm sure more wedding bells will be ringing soon, especially for Morgan and Stewart," Sally said.

"Maybe you know more than I do, but I'm not sure we're going to hear those bells anytime soon."

"Morgana is such a lovely girl, any young man would be rushing to get married to her. You let Stewart stay, he's going to lose her," Sally warned.

"But you haven't told me the date and of your wedding plans."

"It's next month, it'll be a private ceremony and we'll have a reception afterwards. Vernon wants us to go on vacation afterwards, but I'm not sure what I'll do with the business."

"You go on your vacation; you forget that I used to help you run it. I'll get Morgana, Bev and Darren to help me."

"So is Bev still seeing Rick?"

"Everything seems to have cooled between them. I figured that Bev maybe felt that she was the cause of the fights between Rick and Celia. I'm relieved because I just didn't want any trouble between her and that she devil. Somebody said that one night she came by here circling around, apparently believing that Rick was up here."

"I'm not sure that Celia would have an easy time of it if she took on Bev, but I think she did the right thing. At least if they break up, Celia can't blame her," Sally said, looking at her watch.

"I don't think that either Morgana or Bev should have a man whom anybody can accuse either of them of stealing from them," Monique opined.

"Monique, I'm leaving, Vernon must be home by now and I haven't started dinner yet," Sally said and the two sisters embraced. Monique followed her to the gate and watched her drive off.

The woman was about five feet six inches tall and was twenty five years of age. April English was returning to Jamaica for good. She had gone to New Jersey in August last year. She had broken up with Stewart Brown, her lover of nearly seven years. She had now gotten over the hurt she felt when he told her that he was going to get engaged to Morgana Simmonds. She and Morgana had an enmity going back to high school days. When Morgana went away she thought

she had him to herself only for Bobbette Greene to intrude in their relationship. April had been determined to fight her for him.

She was therefore quite deflated by his announcement about Morgana and they had a big quarrel. She had left the island to get away from Stewart and the embarrassment of him leaving her and getting engaged to her arch enemy. Now she was back in Jamaica and wanted to be with him again. She had heard that Bobbette was getting married shortly. She knew that Stewart had no intention of getting married to Morgana.

She didn't think that either Bobbette or Mogana could make love to Stewart the way she could. There had been nights of endless ecstasy that it was a wonder they had survived the ravaging heat and fire that had consumed them both. So why had he left her and gotten engaged to that frigid girl while hot April had to run away to get over him.

April didn't think she wanted to be married anytime soon. She just wanted to have fun and enjoy life. She didn't want to have to look after dinner or have kids hanging onto her skirts. That would come later in life and it had to be with a rich man. Somebody who had money like Bobbette's soon to be husband. Like Bobbette if she found such a man she would immediately forget about Stewart. After all, she would have everything to her comfort so why spoil it? April hated introverted guys, they were so predictable. She preferred the bold, unpredictable types like Stewart.

She knew that she didn't have a lot of money. She only planned to spend a week at her parent's home before getting a comfortable apartment in an area that wasn't too expensive. Her mother felt she was wasting her time with Stewart and the two of them had quarrelled on numerous occasions.

When the plane landed and stopped taxiing and they got the go ahead to leave she took down her bags and went through immigration without any problem.

Upon coming outside the airport, she saw a taxi man she knew from Prembroke Hall. The two of them agreed on the fare and the driver helped put her bags in the back of the car and she got in. She was glad to be back on Jamaican soil again.

As April sat in the back of the taxi going up the Palisadoes Road she knew that she would stay in limbo for the rest of the week before she made any moves or contacted anybody. She would try to get a job. April did freelance secretarial services. She had thought that she wanted to get some money to upgrade her associate degree into a first degree in business administration but had changed her mind and wanted to pursue courses in hospitality management. Her parents lived in Patrick City and she knew that Stewart lived in the Red Hills Road area. It was hard to imagine that the whole time she was away she had only spoken to Stewart twice after he called and apologized. Apart from him she had spoken to no other man except her sister, Melody's husband.

April stopped thinking and tried to stretch out her legs in the taxi. She just wanted to reach home and get settled into the local life again.

Monday morning, Rick was in his office looking over some information systems reports when his telephone rang. He picked it up, Teddy was on the line.

"Rick, is that you?" the voice on the line asked. Rick answered in the affirmative.

"My name is Teddy, you remember that," the man said and hung up.

Rick sat there still digesting what the man had said and didn't even realize that he hadn't hung up the phone. He didn't know anybody by the name of Teddy and he knew of no reasons why anyone should be threatening him. He wondered if he should call the police and report the threat. He decided he would wait and if the man called back, he would definitely report it.

Over lunch he told Alex, Brad and Maria about it and they were as perplexed as he was. They

all agreed that if the man called back, he should go to the police.

That afternoon Dudley Chen was about to leave the island after attending the funeral of his brother, Oraine. Oraine had been the only brother left in Jamaica and now he was murdered. Dudley had put up a five hundred thousand dollar reward for information leading to his brother's killers. The other members of their large family had put up a similar amount. Dudley knew that it was probably one of the largest rewards ever offered on the island and he hoped that it would lead to the capture of Oraine's killers.

That evening Celia and some friends went to Ruddy's after work jam. Rick had gone to Randy Chin to play some dominoes. Brad, Alex and some of their friends were also there.

Celia was talking to Yola Price, one of her colleagues when a thickset man of average height came over to their table. It was Greg Sharpe. He had been one of her classmates at primary school.

"Hey, Celia, what's up? It's a long time I haven't seen you," he said, hugging her as she stood up to greet him. She introduced him to Yola.

"So when did you return, Greg?"

"Only last week, I came by your mother asking for you, but she told me about the big move you'd made," he told her, obviously referring to her decision to go and live with Rick.

Yola excused herself and went to talk to some other friends.

"Cho, Greg, you know how it goes."

"So can I buy you a drink?" he asked as she invited him to sit at her table.

"Sure, why not, but I want something light, maybe some apple juice. I have to drive home."

"What! You all driving these days," he congratulated her as he called a waiter over and ordered their drinks.

Their drinks arrived and they were having it when Greg noticed a change developing in Celia's countenance. He saw a man approaching her with a serious expression on his face.

Teddy came up to where Celia and Greg were seated.

"Mister, that's my seat you're occupying," he said to Greg.

Greg looked at Celia for some guidance. He knew Rick, maybe this was a new boyfriend Celia had. Nevertheless, Greg wasn't the type of man to run away from anything or anybody. He thought the man's behavior was uncouth to say the least.

"Who's he, Celia?" Greg asked, still seated as some of Celia's colleagues were looking on apprehensively.

When Celia failed to answer, Greg turned to Teddy staring him straight in the eyes.

"Hey, guy, that's not how you operate. I don't know what you and her have going on but you came and saw me talking to her. It seems as if you want to scare me or stop me from talking to her. If I saw my woman talking to a stranger that's not how I would behave. I don't scare that easily, so you'd better think again."

"I'm going over by the bar to buy some drinks and if you're not gone by the time I return, watch what's going to happen."

Greg sprang up out of his seat and faced off with Teddy.

"Don't go over by the bar, make it happen now. See me right in front of you."

Celia at last got over her shock and found her voice.

"Greg, Teddy, don't bother with it here."

Teddy moved away from Greg.

"You're a lucky guy, it's because she's begging for you," he said as he moved outside.

"Beg for what? I'll do this guy something."

Celia was tense all the way home after assuring Greg that she could drive herself. She made two unnecessary stops, one at a petrol service station for them to check on the car and the other at a supermarket. She didn't need the items she bought at the supermarket and the car had already been checked out at another service station this morning.

She was glad that Rick wasn't home as yet; he must still be at Randy Chin she thought.

Later, as they were having a light meal for supper, Rick asked her.

"Do you know anybody by the name of Teddy?"

Celia nearly dropped the glass she was drinking some wine from.

Rick didn't seem to notice her nervousness or if he did, he gave no indication.

"No, I don't know anybody by that name."

"Strangely, some guy called me today and told me to remember that name."

"Are you sure it wasn't a crank call."

"That's what everybody is saying. If he calls again, I'm definitely bringing in the police."

"I'm sure you should," she replied. She wasn't sure in her mind after this latest episode with Teddy whether or not to get a restraining order put on him. Calling Rick was the last straw, she had to do something about Teddy fast or say goodbye to her relationship with Rick.

Later on that night after they retired to bed, Rick began to caress her legs but she pushed his hand away. He noticed the tension in her body.

"I'm tired, I want to get some sleep, maybe in the morning."

Rick rolled over on his back, but didn't say anything, only watch her fall asleep.

Tuesday evening Bobbette was at home when her cell phone rang. Stewart was on the line. They greeted each other as usual. Bobbette knew that it was all right for Stewart to call her at home as Robert was in Old Harbour and wasn't expected back until after nine o'clock.

"What's going on, Stewie? I still want us to be good friends even if we can't be lovers anymore."

"You know how I feel about you."

When she didn't say anything he continued.

"I want to let you know that I'm still concerned about you marrying Robert. I believe that you're marrying him for all the wrong reasons."

"Why are we going over that again? There's nothing anybody can say to me that will make me change my mind."

"Well, what more can I say?"

"You should know that I'm a very ambitious girl. I want my children when I have them, to go to the best schools and to provide them with all the comforts they'll ever need. If I make this opportunity pass me, I'll only be playing second fiddle to Morgana, hating her every time I see her because she won't let you go so that I can have you."

"You can have me anytime you want, why lose me now?"

"You belong to Morgana, don't stay too long and don't marry her or else you might lose her."

"So you've become a marriage counselor now?"

"Robert and I have to be going to church for counselling. The pastor asked us some questions that if I hadn't made up my mind already, I wouldn't bother with it."

"I know I won't be facing anything like that anytime soon."

"Stewie, I'm tired, tell me sweet dreams because I might dream about some of the good times we used to have."

"All the best and if you don't hear from me again, I'm wishing you a happy marriage."

"Thanks," she said before ending the call.

Wednesday morning Morgana was having some breakfast in her office when Brad came in.

"How are you this morning, Morgana?"

"I'm fine, Brad."

"How come you've never cooked anything and bring it to the office so that I can taste your cooking?"

She laughed and replied.

"I'm in such a hurry in the mornings that I don't have time to prepare breakfast."

"They say that not all gook looking women are good cooks. I'm sure you're one exception."

"I have a wedding to invite you to. Sally is getting married, I'm sure she's sending you an invitation. So I'll cook something for you."

"There seems to be a lot of weddings about the place. My girlfriend, Jenna, says that her former boyfriend, Robert Parsons, is getting married to Bobbette Greene.

"What did you say? I can't believe it, Bobbette is getting married."

Morgana wondered if she was shouting.

"Isn't she your friend? I suppose you'll be getting your invitation soon."

"You know the type of girl Bobbette is. I never expected anything like this so soon," she told him. "As for an invitation to her wedding, I'm not sure about that."

"What are you and Stewart waiting on? If he doesn't want to propose, why don't you? And why wouldn't she invite you to her wedding? I don't understand."

"To answer your first question, I'm not proposing to any man. And Bobbette and I, we don't get on too friendly these days."

"I don't know what's the matter with you girls," Brad remarked. "I'll see you around, Morgana."

"Wait, before you go. So it's official now, Jenna is your girlfriend now. You see how wicked you are. I could never get you to admit that you and Dania were anything but good friends and you and she just broke up overnight."

"Looks like you're pleading for her. She was the one, who broke up with me."

"I know that you're capable of breaking a woman's heart. I want to keep mine safe from men like you."

"I'm sure it's safe where it is," he replied, laughing as he left her office.

Bobbette was getting married to Robert! Morgana felt like calling Stewart. Could it be the reason for his unusual behavior? Yet she didn't know why she felt that way when Brad called Jenna his girlfriend. She had seen them at Corners last week. Nevertheless, she had to have some serious discussions about her future relationship with Stewart. She was sure that the change in his behavior, especially when they went to Bob's place week before last was due to Bobbette's forthcoming marriage.

On Thursday Celia agreed to have lunch with Greg. Rick had gone to work in Montego Bay.

They were at the Guango Tree restaurant in the Clock Tower Plaza. They were having their appetizers, having already ordered lunch.

"So is everything okay with you, Celia?"

"Yes, things are fine. I have no problems to speak about. Rick had to go out of town today."

"I'm glad you decided to have lunch with me. At least we can talk about old times. I still don't like the way that guy was treating you. You have to do something about him before he hurts you. I

can see that you were very embarrassed.”

Their food arrived and both of them started eating. Greg had ordered fried fish and locally produced food while Celia was having curried chicken and rice and peas.

"I made the biggest mistake of my life when I got involved with that guy. He called Rick at his office and virtually threatened him."

"What! I don't believe you. I think that guy is crazy. I'm sorry for repeating myself, but you've got to do something about him."

"Short of going to the police, I don't know what to do. Rick will kill me if he finds out that I was involved with him."

Celia then, despite Greg's protests, went on to explain how she became involved with Teddy. Apparently a year after Rick left for the States she became extremely lonely. She met Teddy at Reasons nightclub one Friday night in August 2002. He was charming, drove a 2001 Toyota Camry motor car and had plenty of money to lavish on her and her friends.

He told her that he liked her and some of her friends encouraged her to get involved with him. They had broken up in July 2004 when she caught him in bed with one of her friends. But Teddy still hung on issuing one threat after another. Then this last time when she and Rick were having this bust up, she had sought him out. They hadn't gone to bed, but apparently he thought she still cared about him in seeking him out in her time of distress.

Greg was nodding as he pushed away his plate. It wasn't the first time he was sitting in, listening to a girl telling a distressing story like this.

"I hear you, Celia. Still, I know that you're a strong woman and you'll overcome."

Celia finished eating and pushed away her plate. She drank some of her fruit punch. Greg had finished his beer.

"I was so ashamed the other day. So many of my co-workers were there and saw him behave that way. You must have seen when I didn't say anything. I was wishing that I could have been somewhere else."

Greg looked at his watch.

"I have to go now, but thanks for coming and listen anyhow I run into that guy again, I'm just going to tell him to leave you alone. Anywhere you go and see him, just ignore him."

Brad visited Jenna that evening and they were sitting on her patio. She had her head in his lap. Kailen and Jaimie were watching television in the living room.

"Brad, you make me feel so good, just being here with you."

Their relationship had taken time to heal from the wounds inflicted on it when Dania came to fight Jenna. They had learned a lot about each other and felt that with time their love affair could go where they both wanted it. Brad took a sip of his wine.

Jenna had good skin tone. He thought that she used a lot of body washes and oils to keep her skin looking so healthy. She had on a pair of white shorts and a tank top. Her legs were well toned and her breasts, very firm.

"You look ravishing, Jenna. You must have the greatest legs in the world."

"You make me feel so nice and comfortable," she said snuggling closer to him. She took another sip of her wine.

"We ought to spend more time together."

Jenna laughed and took another sip of her wine.

"You should rent an apartment. That way I could come and look for you whenever I want."

Brad knew that he had thought of that. Rick had done that a few weeks after returning

home. Dania lived at her mother's house. She practically had the whole house to herself as she was an only child. Maybe if they hadn't broken up, he would have done just that. Now that they were no longer in a relationship he wasn't sure if it was such a great idea after all.

"I've been thinking about it for a long time now. It's just because it's only my parents who are at home. You know my little sister, Nicole is at school abroad and my brother, Xavier, at boarding school in the country."

"I'd really like you to get somewhere where we can have our own privacy," she said and laughed.

"Why did you laugh?"

"I am a very passionate woman. I like to express myself, especially when I'm with a man like you," she said getting up and going inside.

Presently she returned and said.

"Jaimie and Kailen are fast asleep. We have the whole house to ourselves."

Jenna had taken both of them to their room and made sure that they were comfortably tucked in their beds before returning to Brad.

"Maybe we should start from inside the living room," he told her, taking her into his arms and kissing her.

"What did you mean by expressing yourself?"

She laughed and said.

"Keep on doing what you're doing and you are going to find out. But I don't want to start anything out here. We might wake up those kids," she said and led him into her bedroom.

Brad could see from her candle lit bedroom that she had set it up for a night of lovemaking.

Brad began kissing her, playing with her most sensitive areas. Jenna's hands were all over his body and she was making small sounds. Finally, she reached for a condom and rolled it on to his member.

Later as they lay in the afterglow of their lovemaking, she said.

"I wanted to scream but I knew I would have woken up those kids."

"Now I know what you meant when you were telling me how passionate you can be," Brad said as he lay beside her.

"Oh, Brad, you make me feel so wonderful. You have to stay with me tonight," she said. "I want to sleep in your loving arms."

Brad knew that it was probably the happiness she was feeling from the huge amount of satisfaction she had just received.

"You forget that we have to go to work tomorrow. I certainly don't have a change of clothing here and what would Jaimie and Kailen think if they knew that we slept together?"

"Okay, but spend some time with me. I want to fall asleep in your arms."

"Yeah, honey, you're one hell of a woman," Brad complimented her. Jenna was smiling.

"It's you, who are tremendous, the things that you did to my body," she congratulated him.

"We might as well go to sleep if we want to go to work in the morning."

"Yes, darling," Jenna replied before dropping off to sleep.

"I can't understand it, Maria, he looked so sad and now I've heard about Bobbte's intended marriage, I feel that this was the reason.

They were talking in Maria's office over an early morning cup of coffee. Morgana had arrived early and had gone to talk to her about her problems with Stewart that had kept her awake all night.

Maria thought over what she said, carefully. Before she knew Morgana, she could swear that

she had seen Stewart in several nightclubs with several girls, but most of the times it was with either Bobbette or April.

"If you confront him he'll just deny it. I suppose now that she's getting married, she'll be forced to give up Stewart."

"I know Bobbette; we use to attend nearby schools. She used to run around with boys from very early. They were all kinds of stories about her just swirling about the place and yet every time I confront him about her, he denies that they ever had or are having an affair."

"Like I said, Bobbette will in all probability stick to her husband and forget about Stewart."

"A man, who cheats on you once, will continue doing it, especially if he believes you don't know about it. I don't intend to let Stewart get away with this one even if it means breaking up with him," Morgana said as Brad pushed his head into the office.

"It seems like a big conference is going on. Am I invited?"

Brad came into the office but didn't sit down.

"No, you're not, but Brad, you look absolutely happy these days. I suppose your new girlfriend is really looking after you," Morgana remarked.

"Yes, Brad, Jenna is really taking care of you," Maria added.

"I'm still the same person. I don't see what has changed."

"You leave it to a woman, she can always tell when a man is being looked after by a woman," Maria said.

"I think you're in love. That girl is certainly doing a lot of things to you," Morgana said.

"She's just a nice girl. Anytime I'm in love with a girl I'll come here and say it out loud."

"But you've got to be in love at some point in your life," Maria told him.

"There's a girl, who I would dearly love to fall in love with me, but try as I might I can't get her to."

"Do I know that girl?" Maria asked.

"I wonder who that could be?" Morgana in turn asked.

"I don't think you do and I'm not calling any names."

"I think he knows that we're telling the truth. He's just saying those things to make us think that we don't know what we are talking about," Morgana said, getting up.

"Seriously though, she's just my girlfriend for the time being," Brad said going through the door.

"Are you saying that she's not your permanent girlfriend? I don't believe you?" Morgana said, hitting him in the back as they went through the door together.

Stewart had met April's former classmate and friend, Anneisha Mc Phail. The girl had refused at first, but later changed her mind and told him that his former girlfriend was now back in the island. She had also given him her cell phone number. April was going around getting herself familiar with the happenings around town. On Wednesday she had lunch with Anneisha and her husband. Anneisha had filled her in on the gossip going on around town. She was planning to start hitting the nightclub circuit as a single woman. She would probably go out this Saturday night and enjoy herself. Therefore, when her cell phone rang, she thought it might be Anneisha or her mother because they were the only ones who knew her new number. It was Stewart and a smile came to April's lips.

"Imagine you're back in Jamaica and you never even called me?"

"I told you that I was going to live as a single woman."

"I won't let you. You're too hot for that."

"By the way, how did you get my number?"

“I hope you won’t be angry if I told you that I got it from Anneisha.”

“I came home on Sunday and heard that there are a lot of stories out there.”

“Like what?”

“Bobbette is getting married and you’re running all over the place trying to stop her.”

“Why should I? I’ve already congratulated her. She has invited me to the wedding. If you want, you can come with me.”

“Knowing how Bobbette and I feel about each other, I don’t think that would be such a great idea. You have a fiancé, why don’t you take her?”

“Like I told you when I phoned you last month, that girl and I are miles apart.”

“I just don’t know why you started dating her again and then got engaged to her. Maybe she isn’t prepared to perform any wifely duties for you until you put on the other ring.”

“It was a huge mistake. I really goofed big time. Even if I was married to her I don’t think she would change. So can we go out later on tonight?”

“Stewart, don’t bother with that again.”

“What is it, April?”

“I want some more time to think.”

“Okay, I’ll give you as long as you want. So long as when you’re finished, you have a positive answer for me.”

“You know I won’t.”

“I’m sure you will.”

“I can’t make it tonight, how about tomorrow night?”

“All right then tomorrow night, see you then,” he said as they both finished the conversation.

The fact that she hadn’t taken up with another man meant that she hadn’t started building up defenses to his overtures. She could well have found a boyfriend over there, but he knew April. She wouldn’t be afraid to tell him that she had a man.

Chapter Fourteen

Rick had returned from the country saying he was tired and he and Celia stayed home that evening. Stewart went to Corners alone.

Saturday evening Kedija called Linton to announce that she was feeling stuffy and didn't think she could go to Corners with him again. Linton felt that he needed a bit of socializing and decided to go alone. He knew crew members would be there and he would just tell them that Kedija was ill.

Linton greeted crew members and danced with some of Kedija's friends, but decided to leave a bit early. He said goodbye to members of the crew who were there and went outside to the parking lot where his van was.

He was opening the van door when something hard jammed him in his back.

"Don't move, make one sound and you're dead."

Linton was sure that the voice was familiar.

"I don't have any money on me."

Stan took Linton's pick-up keys from him and opened the van door.

"Jump in," he ordered and Linton got into the driver's seat.

Stan came around and got into the passenger seat and threw the keys at Linton.

Linton caught them but did nothing. Stan pushed the gun muzzle in his side.

"Hey guy, who do you believe killed Oraine Chen and the banker guy, Winston Nielson last month? You'd better drive if you don't want to get what they got."

Linton started the pickup and they drove off.

"Where are we going?" he asked Stan. He had been hoping that one or two crew members might have come into the parking lot, but there might have been nothing they could do as none of them were armed as far as he knew.

"Just drive out to Knutsford Boulevard. I will tell you where we are going when we get there."

Linton was sure he recognized the voice, but he couldn't remember the man, even though he had a good look at him. They were about the same height, though the gunman was thinner than he. Both of his eyes looked funny and Linton thought it could be from substance abuse. They drove down Holborn Road and went around the corner from the shopping center before Stan told him to stop. Linton thought he knew the avenue they were now on. It was Chelsea Avenue and he had heard that it was a dangerous place to be on late at night.

"Give me your wallet and take off your chains, rings and your watch too."

Linton handed him the wallet and took off the two chains he had on plus the chain he wore on his hand and the two rings he had on his fingers and his watch. They were worth more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Stan put them in his bag. He counted five thousand dollars in local currency plus five hundred American dollars. Stan took out the man's two bank cards and asked him if both of them were working. Linton told him that both of them were working. Good, Stan thought, that meant that he could get at least one hundred thousand dollars.

Stan had seen Linton's shoes and knew that they were English made and looked expensive. He remembered that he had only one pair of shoes as he had to leave the half a dozen he had plus sandals and sneakers at the house and Natalie would have sold or given them away.

"What size shoes do you wear?"

"Number ten," Linton replied. It was the same size Stan wore.

"What brand are they?"

Linton said he couldn't remember. He took off his right shoe and gave Stan.

Stan looked inside the shoe. He saw the name, Randall.

He had heard about the brand. It confirmed his earlier suspicions.

“Take off the other foot.”

Linton took off his other shoe and Stan put them in the bag he had with him.

“We are going down to Cross Roads to the machine just after you pass Eureka Road, now drive.”

They reached their destination and Stan told him to park as near as possible to the front of the building.

e going to bring me one hundred thousand dollars.”

“I don’t have that kind of money in my account,” Linton said and found a knife at his throat.

“How much do you have?” Stan asked, realizing that these big guys lived on credit cards and didn’t carry around large amounts of cash.

“Fifty thousand.”

“All right, go and get it.”

“I can’t go out there in my socks alone.”

“Hey, guy, don’t joke with me. I will push my knife in your side. Just go and get the money. I am watching you and if you try to run away I am going to shoot you. Anyway at this time of night a guy like you wouldn’t last long on these streets.”

Stan opened the van door and pushed Linton out.

When Linton returned with the money and Stan had counted and pocketed it, he returned Linton’s wallet to him.

“You are going to drop me so that I can pick up my car. Where do you live?”

Linton told him that he lived in Smokeyvale. Stan considered for a moment. He knew that Linton was lying. Most of these single professional guys chose to live within easy reach of the popular hot spots plus rents were also cheaper. Maybe he should have trailed him home before he made his move.

Linton dropped Stan where his car was parked on St. Lucia Avenue. He then drove to the Cross Roads police station to report the robbery. Driving home, he stopped several times to make sure that he wasn’t being followed.

Stan had thought of trailing Linton home, but knew that with so few cars on the road the man would be a fool not to realize that he was being followed.

He was going home almost ninety thousand dollars richer plus Linton’s valuables which he estimated might be worth more than a hundred thousand dollars. He would make Linton his feeding tree eventually finding out where he lived and going there to rob him.

Brad and Jenna went shopping that Saturday morning, Downtown, Kingston. Jenna revealed to him that it was the first time she was coming Downtown in years. She felt that the place was too crowded, the people too loud and prone to violence and some streets and lanes simply stank. That night they went to Corners, they saw Rick and Celia there.

Glen was searching for a reason for Leona bantering him about her desire to live with him. He just wasn’t ready to take up the responsibilities of a live in lover. His parents might evict him from his flat, cut off his allowance and tell him to go and work to support her. They only allowed her to stay with him sometimes because they knew that she was his girlfriend. So why couldn’t she understand that? He thought she was also unreasonable in wanting him to give her a weekly allowance. She had never complained about his lovemaking. He was always careful to use protection as she refused to go on the pill or use any other form of contraceptive. He was waiting for her at Lydia’s Lounge. She should have reached there by five

o'clock and by his watch it was almost five thirty which wasn't unlike her. He ordered a malt beverage and was drinking it when he saw her car drive in. She took another five minutes to lock it up and come over to where he was.

"Hi, Glen, how are you?" she asked hugging him.

"I'm okay, for a moment I thought you had another appointment," he replied as they pulled apart.

"You know how the traffic is sometimes and I was looking for something in my bag and couldn't find it."

He drank some more of his malt beverage and ordered a canned soda for her.

"I thought we should meet to try to settle some of our differences."

"I quarrel with you all the time because you're so tight with money. I told you that we should live together and you threw it out of the window."

"Would your parents agree for me to live there with you? I think not; my parents agree for you to stay up at my place as much as you want. But you want more, you want us to actually live as man and wife when you know I can't afford that."

"Okay, so I no longer want to live up there with you, but every time I ask you for money you refuse to give me. You only give me when it suits you and it's never enough."

"Because I don't have it to give you. If and when I give you anything, it's based on my budget."

"I give my body freely to you. Have you ever thought about that? Look how you behave as if that's nothing."

Glen was at a loss for words. Men and women living together were making sacrifices. A woman had needs just as a man. It wasn't fair for the woman to always remind the man that she was satisfying his needs but he wasn't doing likewise. But Glen didn't go there.

Glen ordered a second malt beverage for himself and another drink for Leona.

"Why did you decide to talk to me?"

"Because I like you, I wouldn't talk to a guy if I didn't like him."

"I like you too, and so we're together. I give you money when I can but I'm on a tight budget. You could get a job at one of my mother's pharmacies."

"I could get a weekend job with my father, but I have too much studying to do."

"Cut down on your expenditures then. Do you make up a budget?"

"Sure I do, but it's always busted by the middle of the month."

She told him how much money she got which was a bit less than he got. He couldn't believe that she got so much money.

"Every day you eat at Chet's place which charges almost twice for lunch as the cafeteria so why don't you eat there?"

"I don't like their food," she replied and stood up.

"I'm leaving. I'll see you on campus on Monday," she said. She finished her drink and went to her car.

Glen felt that her behavior was strange. There were children of the rich on campus and maybe Leona was trying to be like them. He had never counted himself as one of them despite what people like Bev might think. Come to think of it, he hadn't talked to her for more than a week now. He would call her when he reached home. He finished his drink, paid his bill and went to his car and drove home.

Stewart and April were at Edith Chin's bar and grill in Manor Park. They had bought jerked chicken and festival. Stewart was washing down his food with a beer while April was drinking a

soda. It was minutes to six and the joint wouldn't close until way past midnight. April was glad to be out only in jeans and slippers and a blouse making up her outer garments as compared to the extra clothing she had to wear in the States to keep warm.

"First time you've been out since you returned?"

"Don't forget that I just returned home last week Sunday. I had lunch with Anneisha and her husband on Wednesday."

"It's nice sometimes to get out of town. I don't mean going on the North Coast but there are a few places out of Kingston doing some interesting things."

"Tell me about them. You should know everything that's going on around town."

"Remember before you went away we used to go to a few of them."

"We can go to Easons when we are finished here."

"I want to return home and go to my bed."

Stewart laughed and said.

"You want to go to bed so early on a Sunday evening. I'm sure you're not working."

"Talk about work, I'll soon have to be sending out my resume as the little money I brought home will soon be finished. Maybe I don't dig the late night scene anymore."

"You'll soon get used to it again. As for getting a job, they're pretty scarce, but you could still try," he told her.

They had now finished eating and he ordered another beer for himself and an energy drink for her.

"I really missed you. Now that you're back, I hope that nothing will come between us again."

"I hope so and that you won't let some woman break up our relationship, although Morgana is still out there."

"Out there is the operative word. She pestered me about Bobbette. We've held so many meetings about that girl. I'm glad that she's getting married."

"She's tying the knot with her millionaire boyfriend. Maybe Morgana will give you back your ring if she found somebody as fabulously rich as Robert."

"I don't know what Morgana wants. All she wants to do is accuse me of keeping women with her."

"I thought you would have married her. All the time I was over there I was listening out for wedding bells. I told myself that once I heard them I would know that I've lost you forever and it would be a long time before I returned to Jamaica."

They had now finished their drinks. He stood up.

"Let's go down to Easons. It's a relatively new establishment. If we don't like it there we can always go to Corners or Ruddys," he said. He paid their bill and they exited the bar and grill for Easons.

"Short of going to the police and telling Rick about it, I honestly don't know what to do," Celia declared to Dania as she sat on her patio that Sunday evening.

Rick had gone to watch a football match at Constant Spring. She had excused herself saying that she was going to visit Dania.

"That guy looks like he's crazy or something. Look how I told Brad that I was ending our relationship. He asked me to reconsider, but when I said it was final, he simply accepted it and moved on."

Dania didn't of course mention the fact that she had tried to get Brad back by going to scare off Morgana whom she thought he was infatuated with and ended up fighting Jenna. But then

Celia would have known all about that.

Dania knew that because Rick was an Uptown man, Teddy might feel that he was soft and easy pickings. But she doubted if it came to a fight Teddy could prove a match for either Rick or Greg both of whom were bigger than he.

"He's just trying to scare you. It's a pity Greg never hit him down."

"I feel I should have told Rick before and now he phoned him at his office and practically threatened him."

"Don't you have any police friends, you could tell? All they would have to do would be to talk to him. I'm sure Teddy would be too scared to bother you again."

"Why didn't I think of that before? Come to think of it, it's not a bad idea. Girl, you really have your head screwed on tight."

"I know a policeman, I'll talk to him tonight," Celia said getting up.

"If this doesn't work, you might have to talk to one of those Dons."

Celia laughed and said.

"I'll be seeing you, Dania." She made her way out to her car.

Monday morning Morgana phoned Stewart to announce that she wanted a meeting with him. They hadn't been seeing much of each other lately. Their lovemaking was practically on hold due mainly to her own reluctance to go to bed with him again until she found out the true state of his relationship with Bobbette. They agreed to meet at Lydia's Lounge off Hagley Park Road. Morgana would have objected had she not been there before with some friends.

When she arrived there was no sign of Stewart so she selected a secluded spot where they could sit and talk without being disturbed or overheard. She was wearing a navy blue pants suit and a yellow blouse with floral designs. As she took her seat she saw several men looking in her direction and prayed that Stewart would soon arrive so that she wouldn't have to spend time fending off unwanted attention. She ordered a fruit punch and was having it when she saw him coming over.

"Hi, sweetie pie, sorry to be late, this traffic thing is really getting to me. I was in Portmore and had to drive on the Mandela Highway to reach here. Anyway, what's up? You haven't called me or anything."

"I wonder which one of us is avoiding the other. If I hadn't called you, I probably wouldn't have heard from you again."

"How can you say that? I'm busy, that's all. I'm trying to make some money, remember I work on commission," he said as one of the waiters came over. He ordered a beer for himself and another fruit punch for her.

"Why didn't you tell me that Bobbette was getting married?"

"I didn't think you'd be interested. You and her are hardly friends."

Their drinks arrived and Stewart poured his beer into a paper cup. Morgana took some of her fruit punch through a straw.

"So is that why you've been behaving the way you have?"

"I'm not behaving any way different from normal. It's you who are imagining things. So she's getting married to Robert Parsons. When she told me I congratulated her."

"Has she invited you to her wedding?"

"Sure she has and you too, I have the invitations in the car."

"You're lying. Bobbette would never invite me to her wedding and why would she invite you, her ex-lover?"

Stewart drank some of his beer.

“So I’m her ex-lover now. You’d better stop spreading rumors about that girl and me. Suppose Robert hears you. Maybe you can tell me when I started and stopped being her lover.”

“Robert must be blind, deaf, dumb or something not to know that his dearly beloved is cheating on him with you.”

“Every time you see me, you are always talking about Bobbette. I can’t understand why you’re so jealous of her. If you want to know so badly, whether I was sleeping with her or not why don’t you ask her,” he shouted.

“I’m sorry the day I ever agreed to start dating you again. You can’t be trusted. I don’t even know who else apart from Bobbette you’re sleeping with,” she shouted back.

“You want to make this into a shouting match. Maybe you want to break off with me so that you can start seeing Brad.”

“I see Brad everyday and he’s just my friend and colleague plus he has his girlfriend.”

“You think I didn’t see you the other night we were at Corners. How you were looking so scornfully at that girl.”

“I’m sure we didn’t come here to discuss Brad and his girlfriend. As far as I’m concerned, we aren’t happy. I don’t know about you, but I certainly don’t want to be in a relationship with a man, whom I can’t trust.”

“I suppose you want me to trust you. Why did you have to date that guy, Linton Marsh, while you were in Florida?”

“I think you’re looking for some lame excuse for your own cheatings. What did you want me to do, keep myself pure for a man with whom I was no longer in a relationship? You were sleeping with other women, both while I was away and since I returned and even before I went away. Look, I think I’d better go. You can give Bobbette back her invitation if in fact she did give you one. Tell her thanks, but no thanks,” she said, scooping up her bag and car keys and going past him towards her car.

Stewart felt like hurling some bad words at her. Damn her anyway, he’d call Sadie tonight and arrange something. He would start checking out some of the girls he used to sleep with before she returned. He had dumped most of them, only keeping Bobbette. But Bobbette was gone now. He saw some men looking at him. He knew what they were thinking. They grudged him for being with such a woman whom they could only imagine being with in their dreams. They were probably laughing, believing that she had walked out on him. He would show her. He would leave her and laugh at her when she came running back to him.

He was ordering another beer when he saw Jose Maragh coming over. Stewart had known Jose for a number of years as a top salesman for Palmer and Gold Limited, the company, that Byron Simmonds, Morgana’s late father, once headed.

“So how’s it going, Stewie? I saw you and your fiancé in some heated conversation. It seems as if she left in a huff,” he commented before taking another gulp of his beer and taking a seat.

“You know how women are. It’s just a little disagreement we had,” Stewart replied before drinking some more of his beer.

“You know that she’s my late boss’s daughter though. What happened to her smaller sister?”

“She’s still around, going to university. So, Jose, what happen to the girls?”

Jose laughed and said.

“Two of them are supposed to check me here. I’m wondering how I’ve not seen either of them yet.”

“I’ll buy you a beer, but I can’t stay around as I’m going to check a girl.”

“Not so fast, Stewie, the two girls who, are supposed to check me here, are very nice. Hold on and maybe you can help me out with them. It’s because I know that you’re pretty sharp why I’m

asking you to stay," Jose said and Stewart laughed.

"I hope the wait will be worth it, but knowing the kind of girls you go for I'm sure it'll be," Stewart said as they saw a girl coming out of a taxi and Jose whispered that she was one of his dates. Stewart decided to wait, if the other girl looked anything like the girl coming over to them now his wait would be worth it.

Celia reached home early that evening and was relaxing. She had prepared a light dinner for herself and Rick. She was having a glass of champagne when the telephone rang. Corporal Bayliss was on the line.

"Celia, what's going on? Listen, I heard your complaint, but we can only talk to him. Has he ever physically abused you?"

"No, Corporal, but he keeps on pestering me. I was in a relationship with him and I told him it was over but he won't listen."

The Corporal understood what Celia was saying. At most police stations such complaints were regular and Constant Spring was no exception. He knew Celia and her mother, although he didn't tell her that the man she was talking about had a very big file. He couldn't understand why girls like Celia got mixed up with guys like Steadman Pryce.

"I'll try and see what I can do, but there isn't much as I told you before."

"Thanks for talking to me, Corporal," she replied before hanging up.

She had hardly finished talking to the Corporal when Rick drove in. After parking and locking up his car, he came into the living room.

"How was today? You're home early. Is everything okay?"

"I don't have any problems that I don't know about. Are you planning on going out later?" she asked.

"Brad, Alex and some of those guys are going to Randy Chin to play some dominoes," he said. "I'm going to take a bath and we can have dinner."

After they had dinner Rick decided to go to Randy Chin to join his friends in playing some dominoes.

Celia decided that she would remain at home as she had some phone calls to make.

When Rick returned at around twelve o'clock, Celia was in the living room drinking some cherry juice and watching television. She told him that she had made some sandwiches for him, but he told her that he wasn't hungry.

He sat in a couch opposite her. Celia had been wondering, his manner towards her seemed cordial to say the least.

"I'm going to repeat, do you know this guy, Teddy?"

"You have asked me already and I told you no. Why do you think I'd be hiding anything from you?"

"I keep turning around this thing in my head. Why would a guy I don't know tell me that I should remember his name unless he was issuing a threat?"

"As I said, it could be some crank. Maybe you should've reported it to the police."

Rick let the subject rest for the time being. If he found out that Celia was lying, he would break up with her. That was a promise he made. If that guy thought he could scare him, he had another guess coming. He had done a fair amount of boxing while in college and had also attended several self-defense classes.

"Are you planning on going to Bobbette's and Sally's weddings?"

"I'm sure about Bobbette's but not Sally's. I don't like what Bev tried to do and I don't want to be near her for a very long time."

Rick didn't want to get on the subject of his short-lived romance with Bev again. He and Celia had been over it several times even after it ended.

"I'm going up to bed. Are you coming?" Celia asked.

"I'll soon be there."

Jenna was marveling at Brad's stamina. For the past week they had been making love non-stop. Both had jokingly accused the other of being over-sexed. They had both agreed that this was the best sex they were getting.

Tonight both of them were lying on their backs after another intense session of lovemaking.

"You're going to get me pregnant."

"Aren't you on the family planning? Don't you trust it?"

"I don't like taking the pills and I worry that sometimes I might forget and then you don't want to wear a condom."

"I've done numerous HIV tests and all have proved negative."

"Why did you do a HIV test?"

"It was part of the medical before I was admitted to college and when I took out life insurance. It was also part of the medical before I got this job."

"I sometimes wonder where was a girl like you hiding all this time."

"Lord Brad, you make me feel so special. Maybe if you and I had found each other, Jaimie would be your son."

"Hush, baby, we can't turn back the hands of time."

"We can't, darling, but I just wished we had met earlier. Are you going to my ex's wedding?"

"I got an invitation, but seeing that you aren't going I certainly don't want to turn up there alone. I'll probably send Bobbette a present. She knows that I'm seeing you so she'll understand. But Morgana, this girl, who works at my office, her aunt is getting married and she invited us."

"That's the girl, we saw at Corners the other night with that tall guy with the flat top hairstyle. You should see the look she gave me when she saw me dancing with you."

"I don't believe you were seeing right, anyway are you coming? Don't worry about Morgana, I don't think things are on the level between her and her fiancé."

"I want to sleep. If she was more friendly, I could tell her some things about that guy that would simply shock her."

"What! I didn't know you knew Stewart."

She laughed and said.

"I'm a very discerning person, but if you want to hear, I'll tell you another time. I want to sleep."

Brad got up and went to the bathroom. When he returned Jenna was fast asleep.

Stewart returned from the bathroom where he had gone to let off some of the juices, he had consumed. Treena's naked body was stretched out on her side of the bed. She was a medium sized girl, probably an inch or so shorter than Bobbette but with a more compact body and with just about the same assets. They had made love for hours and she told him that it was a couple of months now for her. He told her that it was almost a year that he hadn't been with a woman. She had insisted that he use protection on her.

Jose had gone home with the other girl, Mylan, thankful to Stewart for helping him out. Sometimes Jose would make dates with women and get into all sorts of trouble as more than one

girl would turn up at the same time although he had given them different times to show up. It nearly always ended up in either the girls fighting each other or suddenly being enlightened about his womanizing ways and going their way. Stewart had been on hand on a few occasions to help him out resulting in his liaisons with Yasmin, Sadie and Haydee. Haydee had gone to the Cayman Islands. Last night Jose had driven away with Mylan upon sighting Treena, asking Stewart to take care of her for him. Stewart had duly obliged and they had talked, flirted, gone to a night club and she had decided to go home with him.

Wednesday evening Bev was studying with Jovita when Justin Ford on a 2004 Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle came racing over to where they were. Melissa had gone home complaining of a terrible headache.

"What's going on, Bev, Jovita? How are the studies going?"

Bev looked at him. Both girls had to wonder. Justin was so rich that it was surprising that he was even bothering to study at all. Some students couldn't understand why he wasn't at some prestigious university in the United States.

There were also rumors that his father, was a big drug Don and he was afraid of having any of his children in the States as he had enemies over there.

"I thought you'd be studying, Justin. Don't you have exams this week?" Bev asked.

"I'm okay. I can't wait for the year to be over so that I can go and enjoy myself. Still I have some good grades. What are you girls doing this weekend? There's a lot of things happening. You know that it's this weekend Budhoo holds his birthday bash over at Lobban's Lounge on the Port Henderson Road. Both of you should come, there's going to be a lot of excitement."

"I'm not sure what my boyfriend's doing this weekend," Jovita said, getting up. "I'm going to get a drink at the cafeteria."

Justin welcomed Jovita's departure. It would allow him to try to convince Bev to go with him to the party.

"So, Bev, you've never even given me a call. I've shown you how much I like you. You must let me take you out sometimes."

"I have so much studies doing plus I don't want to get into a fight with any of your girlfriends."

"What girlfriends, are you talking about? Most of the girls you see me talking to are just my friends. These people up here love to spread rumors. As they see you talking to a girl, they say you're lovers."

"You see what I'm talking about. I don't want to get mixed up in the rumor mill."

"I'd sure like you to go to Budhoo's party with me though. You don't have to worry because lots of security will be there."

"I don't think I can make it, not this weekend," she told him as they saw Jovita returning from the cafeteria.

"I'll be seeing you girls. It's being advertised on a lot of billboards around town," he said and started the motorcycle and roared off.

"I wish I was like him. He can drive a different vehicle to school every day and he seems to be in love with you, Bev."

"Justin is in love with every girl he sees and what about you? He's too wild for me and there are too many girls pursuing him."

"It's a long time I haven't heard you say anything about Rick. Have you stopped seeing him?"

"I know the girl he lives with, we were in school together. I heard that they were having a lot of quarrells. So I didn't want her to say I was the cause of their break-up."

"When I saw you with that guy, I felt jealous. No friend or schoolmate could make me give up a guy like that."

"He's a very good looking guy, but my mother and sister all encouraged me to stop talking to him."

"Did you like him?"

"I thought I was in love with him. It pained my heart to give him up. I don't think I've quite gotten over him yet."

"I would fight her for him; I wouldn't be giving him up so easily."

"I don't know about that. Sometimes you just have to realize that some things will never be yours. So you just have to leave them alone."

"I know what you mean. Hey, what did we come out here for?"

"What do you think about Glen Norman?" Bev asked.

"I know you like him too. I've heard rumors about you and him, but you'd have to fight Leona to get him and then he's so rich."

"You can say that again, even if he and Leona break up some girl is going to rush in to fill the vacancy."

"I don't think he and Leona will be breaking up any time soon."

"Let's get on with our studies, if it wasn't for that Justin."

Celia was at work Thursday afternoon when Greg called.

"Hi, Celia, what's up? How's everything?"

"I'm okay; I thought you had left the island. It's been a while since I've heard from you."

"I'm returning next Saturday."

"We have to meet before you leave. I really have to thank you for what you did."

"Have you seen that guy again?"

"No and I told a police Corporal I know about him, but he said they couldn't do anything unless he committed himself."

"Listen, Celia, I'm going now. I'll call you again before the week is out," Greg told her before ending the call.

Rick was at Randy Chin that evening watching a game of dominoes when his cell phone rang. Bev was on the line.

"Hi, Rick, how's everything?"

"Bev, it's been such a long time I haven't heard from you. So how are you doing? How are your studies?"

"Things are fine and my studies are coming along."

"I miss you, but in the end, like I said I always respect a woman's wishes."

"I believe it was the right decision I made. I hope everything's okay between you and Celia."

"Everything's sort of okay, but we have our challenges, you know how it is."

"Thanks for talking to me, goodbye," she replied and ended the call. Rick was left thinking about the reason for her call. He had to agree that he still had her in his thoughts. He had tried to romance her not because of anything between himself and Celia. Maybe he'd give her a call one of these days to explore their feelings for each other. He put away his cell phone and got ready to play a game against Brad and Alex.

Chapter Fifteen

Linton had told everybody about his encounter with the hold-up man. Some persons warned him that he shouldn't have gone to the automatic teller machine with the gunman. Linton had countered that the man had a gun and a knife on him and there was little more he could have done. He had thought of getting a license to carry a gun. Other people advised him that he would only be attracting more danger to himself as most times they came after the gun too, and was likely to kill you if they found out that you're the owner of one. So that afternoon he sat opposite security consultant, Eric Bishop, in the Haining Road offices of his firm, Cardinal Security Consultants.

"I remember who that guy is. He's Stan Lubsy. There were two brothers and they used to give a lot of trouble. I've checked around and heard that the other brother is dead."

What Linton had just said was music to Bishop's ears. He smiled.

"You said that the man boasted of having killed a banker and a Chinese businessman. I have an interest in those two cases as both men were clients of mine."

"You gave me a description of the man. You also said that he had a car parked on St. Lucia Avenue. Can you give me a description of the car and do you know what direction he went after he left you?"

Linton was only able to give him the color of the car, but couldn't give him the make, model or license number or the direction the gunman went.

"I'm thinking of applying for a gun license."

It wasn't the first time that Bishop was hearing a distraught hold-up victim vowing to get a gun to use on his attackers the next time they struck.

"I always advise my clients that they should have some expertise in using a gun before they start carrying one around. You said you were in the States. Did you carry one over there?"

"No, I never thought I would need one. Nothing like that ever happened to me."

They agreed terms. Linton would phone Bishop's headquarters any night he went partying and he would get two guards to escort him home. Once he was safely home they would do two or three sweeps of the area to ensure that everything was okay. A panic alarm switch was also to be installed in Linton's apartment.

After they left Crystal's nightclub Friday night Brad and Jenna decided to take a night off from their almost nightly session of lovemaking.

"So, Brad, when are you moving into your new apartment?"

"This Sunday, aren't you coming to decorate the place for me? It's a bachelor's pad."

"Who is going to cook for you and do your laundry?"

"Our helper, Miss Della, will continue to do my laundry and I suppose for dinner I could come by you in the evenings."

"I can't believe you'd love my cooking. I could help out with the laundry. Tell you what, you get them washed and I'll do the ironing."

"I'm having a little house warming party. It'll be mostly people from my office. It's nothing big and we'll just be talking and socializing. We won't have any music as we don't want to disturb my neighbours. You, Jenna, will act with me as co-host."

"Me, I possibly can't, you know how shy I am."

"I can't believe that you are shy. You're my woman so I expect you to stand by my side."

She laughed and said.

"I'm not your wife. Anyway, I'll come and get to meet all of your colleagues, friends and

relatives.”

“I’d certainly like to see those two lovebirds, that tall guy and that girl. Are they still together?”

“I don’t know. Come to think of it, I haven’t heard her talking much about Stewart these days.”

“That girl is a fool to be involved with a guy like that.”

“I think they have been together a long time. They’ll certainly have to work out things between them.”

“I want to go to bed now,” she said getting up.

Brad went home in the early morning.

“Glen, I can’t let my mother know that I’ve gone out with you,” Bev said. They were at Reason’s nightclub. Both of them knew that they would have been sure to be recognized had they gone to any of the other venues like Corners, Ruddys or Crystals.

They were seated at one of the small tables and having a drink. Glen’s relation with Leona was on a downward spiral and although they still talked they hadn’t gone out for a few weeks now.

They got up to dance again. They stayed on the dance floor, dancing to several genres of music. Bev had agreed to go out with Glen for the first time. She had gotten tired of staying home and worrying about Rory and she still hadn’t heard anything from him. She didn’t anticipate any problems with Leona as they weren’t on a date or anything. As far as she was concerned, it was just two good friends who had agreed to go out.

For a Friday night the crowd wasn’t all that big at Reasons but that was the way it was as probably most of them were at the other more popular nightclubs. Nevertheless the fans were dancing to the music and soaking up whatever liquor was available.

Glen wanted to steer the argument away from Rory nor would he talk to her about Leona.

Bev tried to put her uneasy feelings out of her mind but just couldn’t. First she had been stealing love with Rick, who was Celia’s boyfriend. Now here she was with Glen who was Leona’s boyfriend. Although she and both women weren’t friends, she would feel guilty if she ever went to bed with another woman’s man.

“I know how you feel, Bev, but let’s enjoy the night. We’ve danced together before, but it’s the first time we’re going out together”

“I called Rick last night. Jovita and I were talking and then Justin Ford rode up and was telling us about Buddho’s birthday party over at Lobban’s Lounge. After he left, Jovita and I started talking about guys and I suddenly got this inclination to call Rick.”

“It was nothing. I was just being foolish.”

“Would you like to go to Buddho’s party with me?”

“I don’t know. I wouldn’t want Leona to feel that there is something going on between us.”

“She has always felt that way. You’ve told me that your whole family feels the same way.”

“We aren’t doing anything to stop them from thinking that way.”

“Let’s do some more dancing,” he told her and they went on the dance floor again.

When they were back at their table, she said.

“Oh, I forgot to mention that Brad has his house-warming party next Saturday. Are you coming?”

“I didn’t get an invitation. So Brad has gone on his own now. I can’t wait, it’s sort of stifling living with your parents.”

“You could go with me and I don’t feel like you,” she remarked.

“As for Buddho’s party, we could go too but don’t forget that we have exams.”

“If my allowance could afford it, I would get an apartment and don’t worry, I wouldn’t fill it with girls, but just me alone and you could come and visit me anytime you wanted.”

“I’m glad that you’ll go to Budhoo’s party with me and I’ll go to Brad’s house opening with you.”

They did some more dancing and drinking before Glen dropped Bev home and then drove home.

Stewart and April went to Crystal’s night club. People were milling about in the club that Friday night. He knew that April would want to go to the whole circuit of nightclubs. He didn’t fear Morgana seeing him out with April. That might make her return to him faster, though he doubted it very much. His new girl, Treena, was sure to return for more of what she got Tuesday morning.

“You enjoying yourself, baby?” Stewart asked as they sat at their table.

“You know I always enjoy myself, especially when I’m with you.”

This was how April was before she went away. He was glad that she was no longer holding him in a negative light because of what he had done to her.

He ordered some more drinks for both of them. When they had finished drinking they returned to dancing.

When they returned to their table, she asked.

“Are you still living in Morris Mews?”

“Sure, I can’t afford to move more Uptown.”

“Somewhere like the Canrieves. Those Simmonds are really millionaires.”

“Their old man died and left a lot of money for them.”

“You’d be in the money if you had married her. You’d probably get to live in the Canrieves where everybody has at least a car, a swimming pool and everything else.”

“After Byron’s death, they dumped up the pool.”

“Oh, I didn’t know that.”

“What about the boat?”

“They never found it.”

“I wouldn’t marry a woman for her money,” Stewart said.

April laughed.

“Will you come by me tomorrow evening to spend some time and then we can go out.”

“I don’t know. I’ve not been back in the island two weeks yet and I get caught up with the man I wanted to avoid. When I was in the taxi coming from the airport, I said I would just take it easy and find out how things are before I made any moves.”

“Why didn’t you call me so that I could come for you?”

“As I told you before I wanted to slip in under the radar and probably catch you off guard.”

“I’ll get some champagne and some nuts.”

“I’ll come about ten o’clock,” she said and he nodded.

They returned to dancing not leaving the nightclub until after one o’clock.

Morgana felt confused as she lay on her bed thinking. She had confronted Stewart about Bobbette on so many occasions and he had always denied it. Now the girl was getting married to her millionaire boyfriend. She had heard of relationships where one party leaves and gets married to another person, but it is as if nothing has happened as they still maintained the status quo. Could it be possible in this case, but she doubted it. Bobbette was a very ambitious girl and she

doubted if she would risk her marriage and the millions of dollars she was coming into for a few more nights in Stewart's arms. Was he free now or was April returning? Would it be wise of her to tell him that she wanted to get married? Would being married stop him from having other women? She doubted it. In a way sometimes she blamed herself. Her mother knew that they were lovers so why had she been afraid to spend nights and weekends with him? That may have kept away Bobbette. But it may have driven him into other women's arms and she wasn't sure that he wasn't sleeping with other women apart from the two of them. There was even the possibility that the more time she spent in his bedroom the more familiar he would have gotten with her and probably get tired of her, eventually leaving her for another woman.

On the other hand, maybe when she returned and got engaged to him she should have set marriage as a condition for having sex with him again. She knew quite a few girls who had only lost their virginity in the marriage bed. Maybe that's what she should have done. Maybe it was her own eagerness to find out what sex was all about. Once she started, it was as if she needed it and Stewart kept pushing the lever and it was as if she was helpless to tell him no.

During their Easter weekend he had told her that when she was away, he had gone to Mandeville to spend all the holidays with his parents. She hadn't been fooled because he seemed to know his way around the hotel and some of the waiters were even nodding to him as if he was a regular visitor.

Marriage would mean commitment, but as far as she was concerned, all it meant was that he couldn't walk out of it as he pleased. Morgana lay there in the darkness in deep thoughts and didn't even know when she dropped off to sleep.

Glen and Bev went to Buddho's birthday bash over at Lobban's Lounge on the Port Henderson Road. Justin was there with four girls. This time he was driving a 2005 Toyota Prado. Jovita and her boyfriend, Tim, were also there as were Melissa and Kirk. It was a night of clean lyrics as most of the performers were only too aware of a strong police presence at the venue. Bev, Melissa and Jovita got a chance to tease Justin about his girls, but he denied that anyone of them was his girlfriend.

Stewart was sitting on a sofa in his apartment. Treena had come to him earlier in the evening. He hadn't heard from Morgana and wouldn't be calling her anytime soon. He had gotten an invitation from Sally but wouldn't be attending the wedding unless he and Morgana were reconciled before then. He went to take a stout out of the refrigerator and had taken the first swallow when his cell phone rang. April was on the line.

"Stewie, what's going on? I'll soon be there. I'm going to take a taxi down."

"Okay, I'll be here waiting for you," he replied.

She told him that she was going to get ready before ending the call.

April had always been a hot girl and Stewart remembered some great times with her both in and out of bed. While she didn't look as good as Bobbette, she could certainly hold her own. It was because he had this date with her why he had sent Treena away so early. He told her that his fiancé would be coming to look for him later on that night. She had left and he could see the sadness on her face, but he had already pointed out to her that he had a fiancé whom he had no intention of marrying.

He had explained to Treena about the circumstances under which he came to be engaged to his present fiancé. Both of their mothers were best friends. One day while he was a few weeks past his eighteenth birthday his mother had driven him to her friend's home. In the car she had

explained that her friend's daughter had a serious crush on him and she wanted him to meet her. Stewart wasn't overly impressed, but his mother and the girl's mother begged him and he finally agreed to be friends with her. They were engaged for more than seven years now and he wanted to break off with her, but their mothers were again begging him not to hurt her. He had further explained to Treena that they weren't in an intimate relationship at the moment, so he didn't know why she was coming to look for him. He thought that she was probably spying on him, hence her coming to his house at this time.

He had been going it over in his mind as to why he should still be willing to continue with Morgana. He was still angry with her for her continued bantering of Bobbette's character. The girl was getting married and would soon be out of their lives so why was she on this quest to find out if he had slept with her.

Stan was hiding behind a wall waiting to pounce on Linton and his woman. He wanted at least one hundred thousand dollars from them both. He looked at his watch again and realized that it was minutes past nine. He hoped that Linton and his woman came out alone as it would make holding them up much easier. He had taken Linton's watch, chains and rings when he held him up last week. From his hiding place where he was watching to see them going into the club he couldn't observe much because of the darkness. He hoped that Linton had replaced the things he had taken from him.

Three hours later Stan was shocked to see Linton exiting the nightclub with his woman and Eric Bishop! He pulled further into the shadows when two other men came out of the club and joined Bishop. Guards! Stan thought. A trap was being set for him and Linton was being used as the bait. He wasn't sure that Linton was baiting up himself to catch him or maybe he would have come outside alone. He saw Linton and his woman go to their vehicle and drive off. Two other cars containing Bishop and his bodyguards drove off after them. Stan crept out of his hiding place and went to his car. He had better get out of here fast as Bishop knew the type of car he drove and there was a possibility that they could have circled back and were looking for him.

Linton and Kedija had reached home now. Linton was all too ready to sleep, but Kedija wanted him to hear some of her grouses.

She kept asking him if he was going to stay in Jamaica and about his plans for the future. She also wanted to know how long they were going to continue going around together.

Linton was confident that Stan wouldn't try anything again. He wondered if he knew that there was a substantial reward being offered for his capture or killing. He had told Kedija about his experience with Stan and so they had to be guarded whenever they went out.

"Linton, I want to know what I should do? If I move in here with you full time, I want to know about the future."

"I don't know what you're worrying about. Don't I show you a good time? Aren't you enjoying yourself? You don't have to move in with me if you don't want to."

"We've been going around for more than a month now. When my parents ask me about you I don't know what to tell them. I'm not sure that you're staying in Jamaica especially after that ordeal you went through with that gunman. I don't want to give three months, a year, two years to any man and then he just packs and is gone and all I have left are the memories of the good times we shared."

"Come, let's go to bed, I'm sleepy; tomorrow we can discuss this some more."

"I won't be waiting around too long for answers," she stated as she came into the bed. They hugged each other close, as they tried to get some sleep, grateful for some rest after a week of

partying and some passionate lovemaking. After a while Kedija pulled away from him so as to show her feelings towards him.

Stan was passing a district called Laughingale when he spied a bar being opened. He stopped his car but didn't get out at once. It was about five miles from Hepburn Grove. Two men were sitting on bar stools drinking while another man was talking to the barmaid. Stan didn't see anybody else. He wondered why a bar would be open this time of the morning. He got out of the car and made his way into the bar and ordered a beer.

He wondered if robbing this bar would be worth his time. He had lodged most of the money he had taken from Linton but was feeling really disappointed at not being able to get some more money out of him. He called the bartender over and asked her where he could get some marijuana to buy.

"Lady, give me all the money you have," Stan shouted as he pulled his gun and pointed it at the barmaid. He was positioned so that the three other men were in front of him.

"You, men, empty out your pockets and take off your shoes."

"We don't have any money," the barmaid protested.

"I'll murder all four of you if I don't get any money."

The men did as Stan ordered and he thought he wasn't going to be lucky until he saw one of the men having difficulty pulling off the shoe off his right foot. Stan dragged off the shoe and deposited the man on the concrete floor. He put his hand into the shoe and dragged out some money wrapped in plastic. Stan pocketed it and turned to the others. The barmaid gave him a plastic bag and told him that it contained ten thousand dollars. Stan took cigarettes, liquor and an assortment of other drinks and put in his bag. He pointed his gun at the man whose shoe he had taken the money from.

"Anywhere I rob I always kill somebody there as a warning. Know anybody else around here who has money or marijuana?" Stan asked and when no one answered, he said.

"I'm going away now, you're all lucky I don't kill one of you."

Stan went to his car and just as he was about to drive off another car pulled up with two men in it. He didn't drive off immediately until the two men came out of the car and went into the bar.

When he reached home, he counted out the money amounting to almost twenty thousand dollars in all. He drank some of the rum and smoked some marijuana before he went to bed.

"Stewart, what's the matter with you? You wanted to make love to me the entire night," April shouted as Stewart rolled off her in the early hours of the morning. He flopped down on his back beside her naked body.

Stewart hadn't been able to get the goodies as he had promised. Instead, they had gone out to dinner at Lowe's Café and then dancing at Ruddy's nightclub before returning home to make love.

"It's just so long we haven't been together, that your body felt so strange to me."

"The way you were behaving. I have to say any woman's body would seem strange to you. Maybe Morgana wasn't doing her work. That's why you had to hold on to Bobbette for so long."

Stewart didn't want to get into any discussions about Morgana. Nevertheless, much of what April said was true. Before Morgana returned, he had several women to choose from to sleep with. He thought those three years abroad would have matured her into realizing that she was no longer a teenager just coming out of puberty.

But she was constantly telling him that she wanted to save herself for her husband and that was why she wasn't overindulging in sex with him. Except,

of course, one or two Sundays or Saturdays when they had marathon sessions of lovemaking and of course the last Easter weekend but those were not enough to satisfy him. He had gotten angry several times, asking her about the amount of times she went to bed with the guy she was sleeping with while she was abroad. She had retaliated and told him that if he was dissatisfied with the amount of times she was willing to go to bed with him, he could always go elsewhere. It seemed ironic that she should be complaining about his friendship with Bobbette.

“What are you talking about holding on to Bobbette? I don’t understand you.”

“Let’s not fool ourselves anymore. I was away and you were hardly sleeping with Morgana. It’s easy to assume that you were sleeping with Bobbette.”

Stewart didn’t know what to say. Before April went away, he had always denied that he and Bobbette were lovers. Admitting to it now might make him look like a liar.

“I only became her lover after you went away and Morgana was really treating me badly.”

“Hush, Stewart, I’m back for good, now. I love what you do to my body. I know that you are engaged to Morgana. I can’t stop that again. I want us to come to some agreement. I won’t get into any fights with her unless I come here and see her. Warn her not to come here while I’m around.”

“She hardly comes here again.”

“I won’t mind if she doesn’t come back.”

April knew that with Bobbette out of the way with her forthcoming marriage to Robert it was she alone dealing with Stewart. As far as she was concerned Morgana had already left him.

“What kind of bargain do you want us to strike?” he asked, getting up off the bed to dispose of the condom.

April stood up too, showing off her lush figure. She was well proportioned and her hair was cut low these days. April did lots of exercises to firm up her body and was in great shape.

“I’ll tell you what I want in good time. I’m going to take a bath and then you can drop me home.”

Rick celebrated his birthday at his parent’s home with a dinner at which only his father, step-mother, Celia and his siblings were present. Later on all of them went for a swim in the pool and the adults drank champagne and Celia helped Rick cut his birthday cake which she had helped Marjorie to bake. Rick’s younger brothers and sister would have gladly partaken in the champagne, but had to make do with fruit juices. Later on that night he and Celia went clubbing at Corner’s to celebrate with some of their friends.

Jenna, her son and niece helped Brad move into his new apartment on Renford Avenue. It was an unfurnished one bedroom apartment. Brad had bought his furniture from Courts, the giant multinational furniture and appliance conglomerate, that Friday and was there on Saturday to receive it from them. He had bought a bed, dresser, whatnot and component set all for cash. He got a lot of coupons to write up in their monthly draw. Jenna helped him fill them out. For each item he bought he got a gift, which he gave to her.

Sunday he moved in with the rest of his clothes. His mother had come down too. He knew that she would miss him now that he was going to live on his own. His father had few regrets, after all he would see Brad almost every day plus he could remember leaving his parent’s home almost thirty five years ago to live on his own. It was also the first time they were meeting Jenna and her son and niece and while they had been disappointed over his break-up with Dania, they loved Jenna and her effervescence and glib tongue. By eight o’clock that evening, Brad was just settling down. Jenna had put up curtains and arranged bathroom furnishings among other things. They

had also gone out that Saturday to buy kitchen utensils. Brad had also bought a stove and a refrigerator at the same store.

Brad's mother worried that he would forget about church. She was a devout Christian like Rick's step-mother and when she could drag Russell away from his various sports to go to church, she was very glad. Brad now sat relaxing and drinking some champagne.

"Don't drink too much, Brad. Remember, you have to drop us home."

Brad laughed and said.

"I could never drink enough of this champagne not to know what I'm doing on the road."

"I don't want anything to happen to you and you can't be certain these days. They have police speed traps in the most unusual of places and they might breathalyze you."

"Okay, I hear you, madam, and I'll cut down on my drinking. I suppose I can celebrate the real house opening on Saturday night. But you haven't told me whether you like my pad or not."

"Of course I like it, remember I was the one always encouraging you to get somewhere so I can get to spend more time with you."

"What'll you do with Jaimie and Kailen?"

"Kailen is a big girl, I'm sure if I told her that I'm going to look for you she'd be glad to stay with Jamie."

Jenna had hardly stopped speaking when Kailen came knocking on the door.

"Jaimie says he wants to sleep, Aunt Jenna."

Brad dropped them home and spent some time talking to Jenna before heading back to his apartment.

Monday evening Sally came by Monique to finalize plans for her wedding.

"I've sent out the full guest list and nobody has said that they can't make it," she told Monique.

Morgana and Bev were listening keenly to her.

"Are Brad and Rick coming, Morgana?" Monique asked.

"I'm sure they are. Bobbette is getting married the following week."

"That's something I want to discuss with you, but it can wait for another day. Let's get on with your marriage plans, Sally," Monique declared.

"We've been through our counselling sessions. Reverend Jamieson wouldn't marry us until we've been through it even though we protested that this was a second marriage for both of us."

"Vernon didn't want a church wedding, but I insisted. Of course, dear Morgan, has agreed to be my bridesmaid. Vernon's brother, Altimont, will be his best man," Sally continued.

"Old Uncle Tony will give you away, Sally," Monique said.

"I've asked Brad's father to toast the bride and he has agreed. Vernon says his former boss will speak on his behalf," Sally said.

"Mrs. Whitelock from Cherry Gardens will do the catering. She makes lovely wedding cakes," Sally continued.

"You seemed to have everything covered, Sally," Monique said.

"I always try to do that. This takes me back to when I married Sid. Girl, can you remember those days? We danced up a storm."

"I wonder who'll catch your bouquet of flowers when you throw it, Aunt Sally?" Bev inquired.

"I see three stunning young women before me, I'm certain there must be several men out there, dying to make one of them his wife."

"Not me, at the moment I don't even have a boyfriend," Bev declared.

"And my fiance and I are hardly on speaking terms. So it must be mummy," Morgana stated.

"Yes, mummy, Uncle Val will be feeling a bit jealous when he sees Aunt Sally and Uncle Vernon walking down the aisle," Bev opined.

"There you girls go again. May I remind you that a married man has to be divorced first before he can re-marry. As far as I know Val is still married."

"I hope he'll hurry up and get divorced," Morgana commented.

"I'm not sure I'm ready to get married again. Marriage is a tough decision, ask Sally," Monique told her two daughters.

"I'm getting them involved in every aspect of planning this wedding. The experience will come in useful when it's their time," Sally said.

"Talk about Bev, I don't know when I'll be walking down any aisle, not for now anyway," Morgana put in.

"I do declare, I've said it before and I'll say it again. Stewart is going to lose you if he waits too long. As for you Bev, I'm glad you're being sensible about this love thing. It will pay off in the end," Sally advised.

"Aunt Sally, how long have you known anybody to wear an engagement ring for?" Morgan asked.

"I've known women to wear it for years and never finally gotten married, but the longest I'd wear one for is six months and yours has passed that time. So if I were you, dearest, I would give Stewart an ultimatum. Either he sets a date or I give him back his ring, the nerve of him."

"I don't think she could get better advice than that," Monique agreed with Sally.

"I'm going now. Poor Vernon must be at home dying of hunger," Sally remarked, taking up her bag and van keys.

Monique followed her to the gate and watched her drive off. Returning inside she saw only Morgana as Beverly had gone up to her room to complete some school work.

"I'm going to a function with Val but one day this week I want us to have a serious discussion. I don't want any of what I see happening to you to go on any longer."

"Mummy, I can deal with it. You don't have to worry."

"Think about this, I saw April on the Mall on Saturday."

"April is back in Jamaica, I didn't know that."

"I'm going to get myself ready. Val is coming for me at around eight o'clock. Don't wait up for me."

Monique went upstairs to prepare herself. Morgana was left to think on the subject of April English.

She and April were the same age and Morgana could remember their first encounter. It had been a school fete and she had gone there hoping to spend the night in Stewart's arms only to find him in April's. Morgana had returned home in tears. Stewart had come to her with a story the next day that April had forced herself on him. She had chased him away and didn't speak to him for the next two weeks but they had finally reconciled. In June of that year she and April had nearly come to blows over Stewart.

With April back in town it meant that she had another fight on her hands in keeping Stewart. Was it worth it, she wondered? Stewart was good looking, fun to be with, good in bed plus he was making good money and drove a good car. He was well educated and she was never bored when she was with him. Should she go her way or try to reconcile with him? After her talk with her mother, she would give him a call and find out what was going on. She wouldn't ask him anything

about April.

Readers, please go on to read book two. Please also visit my blog at: stredwick.blogspot.com