

Prologue

The last place Will Tracy thought he would ever have to defend his manhood was in his own home with his wife. Will had been defending his manhood for what seemed like most of his life, starting as a child when the children taunted him by calling him, Miss Tracy. And even with his father calling him a sissy during his drunken name calling rages.

As Will looked down in to the big brown shining eyes of his newborn baby son, he knew he didn't want his son to ever have to go through the things he had gone through as a child. He never wanted his son to feel like less of a little boy because his last name was normally referred to as a girl's first

name. He nodded his head to himself as he vowed to never treat his children the way he and his sister had been subjected to as children.

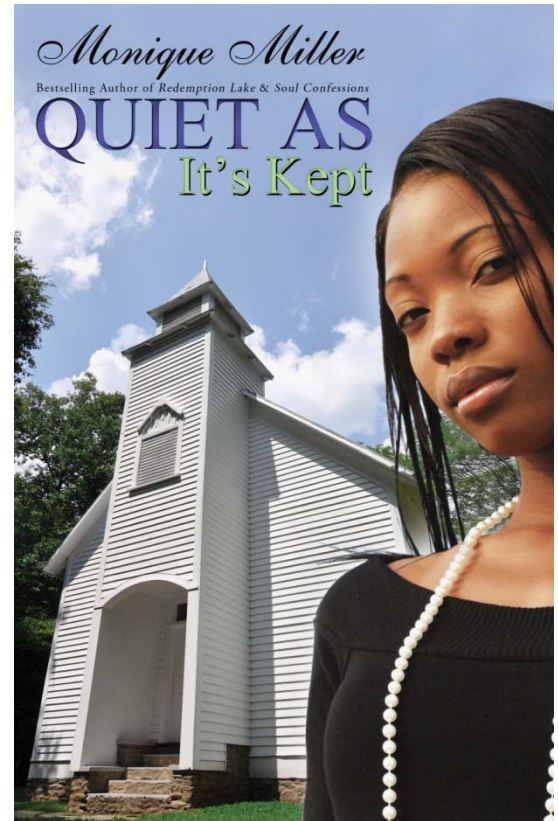
Will heard someone approach the hospital door and knock.

"Please tell me what's wrong with this picture?"

Will looked up hearing the unmistakable voice of his best friend Phillip at the hospital room door.

Will smiled. "Come on in."

Phillip stepped into the hospital room.



"Hey, man. What's up?" Will said.

Phillip nodded his head. "This whole picture doesn't look right to me."

Will looked back down at his baby boy as he sat on the edge of the hospital bed.

"I mean, you are in the hospital bed and holding the baby. Isn't that where your wife is supposed to be?" Phillip asked.

Will smiled again then chuckled. "I am sitting on the edge of the bed holding my son, not in the bed."

"Where's Morgan?" Phillip asked.

"She stepped out to get some fresh air. After being cooped up on bed rest for three months, she's glad to be able to get up and walk around freely again." Will looked up at the clock on the hospital's wall. Morgan had been gone for almost twenty minutes. "I am expecting her back here any minute now."

"So this is my little Godson?" Phillip asked as he peered into the blanket filled bundle in Will's arms.

"Yes, this is your little Godson." Will held the baby up so that Phillip could get a better look. "Isaiah William Tracy, meet your Godfather, Phillip Tomlinson."

"Man, he looks like a mini version of you already."

"I know. Morgan is a little mad he didn't take after her at all," Will said. "Especially after being on bed rest and going through twenty-three hours of labor."

"I don't blame her. The little guy could have given his mother a break." Phillip turned towards the sink in the room and washed his hands. He turned back around and extended his arms and hands toward the baby.

"Thanks for washing your hands first. Morgan has a fit when people don't," Will said.

Phillip looked at Will. "Lest you forget who I'm married to. Shelby had fits also. Believe me, I learned the hard way early on."

Will handed the baby over to Phillip.

Phillip looked down into the baby's face as he spoke. "Wow it seems like just yesterday, you were getting married."

"Humph," Will said, "that's because it was almost yesterday, forty-eight weeks to be exact.

"Dag man, you haven't even had the chance to celebrate your first anniversary yet."

"Don't remind me." Will shook his head.

"Are you sure you and Morgan didn't . . ." Phillip let his voice trail off.

Will knew exactly what his friend meant. "No, we didn't sleep together before we got married. I assure you. I saved myself for my wife, and she did the same for me."

"I'm just saying. Everything has happened pretty fast. Come on now, this is me you're talking to," Phillip said.

"And this is me you're talking to. You know me, I'm not lying. My wife was the first and only woman I've ever been with, just the way God intended for it to be," Will said.

Phillip shook his head. "It still blows my mind. You are a strong man."

"I'm human. I won't say it was easy turning down so many advances from all those girls and women, but you know me. I wanted to wait for the right woman."

"Shall I quote, 'I want a good, God fearing, saved woman,'" Phillip mimicked his friend.

"I said it so much that you can quote me word for word?" Will asked in utter disbelief.

"Yep." Phillip nodded his head. "And you kept the faith. You finally got what you wanted. I have to tell you, there were many times when I thought you were just plain crazy. There were a few of those women that you turned down back in the day that I would have gladly spent a little time with."

"I just bet you would have," Will said.

"I probably did." Phillip laughed.

Will laughed also.

"But don't remind me. It is truly by the grace of God that I turned out the way I did." Phillip shook his head, looking up toward heaven.

The baby began to squirm in Phillip's arms, a little at first, but then he began to squirm more and cry. "What's up, little man?"

Will looked up at the clock on the wall. "He's probably hungry."

"Well, little guy, I can't help you in that department."

Phillip handed the baby back over. Will took his son back into his own arms, feeling like everything that was happening to him was a dream. He couldn't believe the little blessing he was holding in his arms was actually here.

The baby calmed for a moment then started squirming again. Will stuck his pinky finger in the baby's mouth for him to suck.

"Ah man, you are new at this aren't you," Phillip said. "When the baby's hungry, you are supposed to feed him." Phillip looked around the room. "Where's the bottle? I'll feed him."

"I am new to this, but I'm not stupid. I went to baby classes and watched God knows how many DVDs about babies and parenting," Will said.

Phillip looked at him skeptically.

"Morgan is breastfeeding," Will said. "Duh. You of all people should know about that."

"Oh yeah, my bad." A true look of relief washed over Phillip's face.

The finger in the baby's mouth seemed to pacify him for a moment.

"So, how have you been?" Phillip asked.

"All right," Will said, not wanting to talk about the subject Phillip was broaching. And he could read Will like a book. The man was like a brother to Will, the blood brother he'd never had.

"Really? Are you and Morgan going to be okay, I mean financially?"

Will had just gotten laid off his job three weeks prior. The thought of being jobless and having a newborn baby on the way had been weighing on him like a relentless hurricane, sure to make landfall off of the Atlantic Ocean.

"Yeah, I should be able to collect unemployment and we have a little money stashed away."

Even though Will said the words, he didn't feel too confident. He hadn't checked the unemployment office yet to see what he would be eligible for. And Morgan had been on bed rest for

the last three months of her pregnancy. She wouldn't be going back to work and getting a pay check for at least another three months, so things were going to be extremely tight. And the worst part about it was that Will hadn't been able to tell Morgan about being fired. Her pregnancy was high risk, and even on a good day she normally got pretty high strung out about some of the smallest of things. At first he pretended to go to work, then he'd told her that he was taking time off of work to be with her if she needed anything while on bed rest. He hated to think about how she was going to react to his getting fired.

Will heard the sound of footsteps coming into the room. Morgan stepped in looking refreshed from her walk.

Phillip turned and greeted her with a hug. "Congratulations, Mommy,"

Morgan gave Phillip a slight hug back. "Thank you, Phillip"

She pulled away from the hug and headed for the bed. Will stood up allowing her to sit. The baby started to cry once the finger was taken out of his mouth.

"Oh Will, hand him here," Morgan said.

"I think he's hungry," Will said.

Morgan looked down into her baby's face. "I think you're right." Then she looked back up at Will and then at Phillip as if waiting for something.

It took Will a second but he finally got the message. "Oh baby, I'm sorry. Phillip, let's step down the hall for a few minutes so Morgan can feed Isaiah."

"Oh, it's okay. I've seen women breastfeed before, Shelby has done it twice," Phillip said.

Morgan smiled. "That's really nice, Phillip, but all of us can't be like Shelby; all open to exposing ourselves to the world." She'd said it with a seemingly sweet voice. But Will caught the undertone, and wondered if Phillip had caught it also.

For some reason Morgan and Shelby, Phillip's wife, had gotten off on the wrong foot. The two women weren't like oil and water, like similar ends of a magnet that just wouldn't come together no matter how hard you tried to combine them. Because Morgan and Shelby didn't mesh, Phillip was the Godfather of his baby boy and one of Morgan's co-worker friends, was the baby's Godmother.

As Will ushered Phillip out of the room, he said, "Baby, I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Don't take too long, I need you to run to the store for me."

"What do you need?" Will asked.

"I'll tell you when you come back. Just don't be long."

Will stepped out of the room and shook his head. He joined Phillip in the hall. They walked down to the waiting room.

"I'm going to be on Morgan's bad list now, huh?"

Will didn't know what Phillip was talking about. "Huh?"

"The whole breastfeeding thing, I guess some women are a little more sensitive than others when it comes to their bodies and breastfeeding."

"Oh, that. Don't worry about it. She'll be fine." Will thought about his wife's mood swings that had started soon after they got married. He attributed it to pregnancy hormones. She had still been a

little snippy after the birth of the baby, but he also figured there must have still been some lingering hormones in her system.

“Morgan seems to be taking your job loss pretty well,” Phillip said.

Will shook his head. “That's because she doesn't know yet,” Will admitted.

“What do you mean? You haven't told her?”

“No, I couldn't. She was pretty bad off these past few months, her blood pressure was doing some wacky things, and you know how she can get sometimes, so animated about some of the littlest of things,” Will said, making excuses.

Phillip nodded his head. “So what are you going to do? When are you going to tell her?”

“When we get home and settled I'll tell her. I hope to find something else before I have to say anything.” Will's stomach churned as he thought about the whole situation.

“Well, you know you can always come over to the dealership with me. I know this guy who just might hire you, that is if you are reputable,” Phillip joked.

“P.T., man I can't expect you to do that.” Will had reverted to calling Phillip by the nick name he used when he was in college. Most people knew Phillip as P.T., especially the men in their fraternity.

“I'm just saying, if you need a job, I'll hire you, plain and simple,” Phillip said.

“Don't be silly, I know the car industry has been hit just as hard as so many of these other industries lately. And you just told me last month that you had to lay off a few people.”

“True, but I could still work some things out. I am not going to sit by knowing you need a job and I can offer one. Plus, you've got not only a wife to look after, but now a son as well,” Phillip said.

“And don't I know it.” Will sat in one of the waiting room chairs and put his head down into his hands. “Just be glad you left the company before they fired you. You know they had another round of layoffs in your old department.” Will lifted his head.

“God knew what was best. I didn't want to leave my job, but when my dad got sick and needed someone to run the company, I knew it was time for me to take my rightful place as the head.” Phillip made a motion acting as if he was cold. “I shudder to think what would have happened if my brother had gotten his hands on the company.”

“You're right, God does know best and I have to believe that if He has closed this one door, then He will open another,” Will said.

“Amen to that my brother,” Phillip agreed. “God is going to work it all out, just you wait and see. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

Will nodded his head. “Thanks I needed that little reminder.” In the past Will was the one always giving Phillip words of encouragement and scriptures to read. Now the tables had turned and it was Will who needed uplifting words of inspiration. He was glad he'd been able to help Phillip out for so many years, and now was even happier that his friend was now able to do the same for him.

Phillip gave Will a hearty pat on the back. “Everything is going to work out. You just need to trust and believe.”

Will didn't have any doubt that he would be able to trust and believe in God. He just hoped Morgan would feel the same way. But somewhere in his gut, he just couldn't muster the faith that that was going to happen.

