PAMELA MOORE

Chocolates for Breakfast

A NOVEL

FOREWORD BY
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P.S.
INSIGHTS, INTERVIEWS & MORE...
Spring at Scaisbrooke Hall was clearly the most beautiful time of year. All the alumnae said so as they remembered the apple blossoms in the quadrangle, and the grass growing long and fresh beside the brook, where illegal Cokes were placed to keep them cool for clandestine drinks before the evening study hall. In spring the sweaters that were always too big and the matching blue skirts and the sturdy Oxfords were shipped home, to be replaced by the blue dresses and the saddle shoes of the spring uniform. Scaisbrooke had been founded sixty years ago on the pattern of English public schools, and its high-beamed halls were dark and heavy with tradition. This was the time of year when the students exchanged the winter pallor of studies and indoor basketball for early sun tans, and they looked scrubbed and healthy as they walked about the grounds and laughed in groups in the shadowed courtyards.

The windows of Courtney Farrell’s room were opened to the lush Connecticut spring, and her roommate, Janet Parker, was
lying with her clothes off in a patch of sun across her bed. Courtney was a slim, dark-haired girl of fifteen, with the pale skin and high coloring of the Irish. Her eyes were almost green, and deepened under the sunlight. They were large, rebellious eyes, with a coldness that a girl of fifteen should not have known. Her face had already lost most of its childish roundness, and as she puzzled over her translation of Caesar her strongly molded chin was thrust forward in characteristic defiance and determination.

The soft afternoon crept in through the window and curled about her on the bed, and she sighed deeply as the season got the better of her studies. Courtney put down the textbook and closed the Latin dictionary. She took a banana from the tin box beside her bed and threw it to Janet, and peeled herself another.

"I feel so relaxed," Courtney said. "I never appreciate school so much as after a vacation."

"I don't appreciate school any time," Janet said. "Especially after a vacation. I really had a ball this spring," she said reflectively. She turned to her roommate. "You had a pretty good vacation too, didn't you? I mean, staying with your mother at the Plaza and all?" She grinned. "Even though the vacation was delayed a couple of days."

"Oh, I didn't mind that," Courtney said with a mouthful of banana. "Mummy was awfully upset, and blamed the whole thing on Daddy—she said she assumed Daddy was coming back from the Virgin Islands in time for my vacation. Of course, Daddy wrote me a long letter saying that he had assumed Mummy knew he still had a week of his vacation to go—you know, all about how he was up to his ears in his publishing work even on vacation, and how he needed the rest. But Mummy wasn't working on any picture, so the studio let her come in from the Coast right away. She was awfully upset that I had to stay at school two days of the vacation, but I didn't mind."
“I don’t know what you’re complaining about, then. You seemed to be living well when I saw you—the Plaza is certainly an improvement over Scaiserbrook.”

“Well,” said Courtney, “it’s just such a strain. You know, Mummy and I used to be so close, and now we aren’t, of course, but I have to pretend we are.” She turned suddenly to Janet. “Tell me—why do we have to pretend to the parents?”

“Hell, I don’t know. Self-defense, I guess. I know if my father knew that I made out with boys and occasionally got tight and all he’d kill me. I guess that we just get into the habit of pretending so that we don’t upset them. I don’t know. You ask the damndest questions.”

Courtney let the answer suffice and they were quiet again.

“Oh, by the way,” Janet broke in, “I forgot to tell you that Miss Rosen came by while you were sun-bathing. She wanted to see you about something.”

Courtney looked up, suddenly interested.

“Did she say what it was?”

“Wld didn’t ask her.”

Janet threw the banana peel across the room into the wastebasket. She picked up a mirror and began to pluck her eyebrows. Janet was sixteen, spontaneous, gay, attractive if usually too heavily made up, and loathed by women of any age. At Scaiserbrook, where lipstick and fur coats were prohibited, she made a fetish of looking unattractive, in a wrinkled uniform and shoes barely clean enough to pass morning inspection. She had just come from New York and a round of sub-deb parties and night clubs, however, and she plucked her eyebrows by inadvertence.

“I don’t dig this thing that you two have,” she went on. “You know, I was up in Alberts and Clarke’s room before lunch, and they were talking about you and Miss Rosen. I’ve been meaning
to talk to you for a long time about her. I've gotta stretch first, though. Arm yourself with another banana or something.”

Courtney looked over at her roommate as she stretched languorously in the spring sun, wrapping her arms around the pillow behind her, twisting her legs and contracting and releasing her body, deriving a relaxation that only the very young can get from such a simple action. She had a lovely young woman’s body, athletic and lightly tanned around the bathing-suit marks.

“Put a cover over yourself or something,” Courtney said.

Janet grinned. “What’s the matter, do I get you oversexed?”

“All right, all right. Go ahead and talk.”

“Well, granted everybody in these psycho boarding schools has a crush on some older girl or staff member. It’s a kind of idolizing, okay. But you’ve gone overboard, so that you’ve cut yourself off from the rest of the girls and bound most of your life here up in Miss Rosen. The girls resent it, you know. They feel that you're snubbing them.”

“I am.”

“But, sweetie, if you were like me and had men and social life separate from school, it would be okay. But all you have is your mother and her friends. You ought to try to make a life here, because whether you admit it to yourself or not, offices and all that crap and acceptance by the clique mean a lot to you, because you haven’t anything outside of school. I know that you want to be editor of the Lit Review, and you ought to be because you can write circles around everybody here. But you know that offices aren’t awarded by merit. They’re kind of badges of social approval. So you ought to admit to yourself that you want to be accepted and stop escaping into this relationship with Miss Rosen. If you don’t watch out, sweetie, you’re going to find yourself kind of queer. Alberts says that you’re in love with Rosen.”
“What business is this of theirs, anyway? Sure, she has even told me that she loves me, but she loves all her friends. I mean, she uses the word in the Biblical sense.”

“Oh, sweetie, don’t pay any attention to this social-worker crap that she picked up in the University of Chicago. From all you’ve told me, she sounds queer as hell to me. All this bit about you going over there every night to talk about literature or something.”

“What do you think we do!”

“You don’t need to get so mad. I don’t think you make love or anything. I don’t even think you know how.”

“You’re making something grubby out of this.” Courtney lay back and put her arms around her head. “She’s a tutor. She knows that the English bores the hell out of me, so she gives me books like *Finnegan’s Wake* and T. S. Eliot poetry and stimulating reading that I don’t get ordinarily, and in the evenings we discuss them in a kind of a bull-session, that’s all.”

“She’s more than an English teacher, and you know it. I’ve never seen such a change as what’s happened to you this year. In the beginning of the year you were moody and selfish and bitchy once in a while like everybody else, but now you’ve got some idea that you’ve got to be the modern saint, and love the masses and all that University of Chicago crap that she’s filled you with. You’ve become all drawn into yourself so you don’t get mad any more, but bury it somewhere, and you’ve become critical and superior as hell. You know, you’re not like that, and you can’t possibly escape into her world, absorb her nature. You are two entirely different people, from different social and intellectual backgrounds.”

“Oh, dammit, Parker, you don’t understand at all. I didn’t like myself, do you get that? And then I met this new teacher, who had a kind of calmness and seemed to like herself, and I had
never known many people like that. So one day at lunch we got to talking about some book, and she offered to lend me another book that she figured I’d like. So we talked about that book then, and I got to know her, and I started to talk to her about some things in my own life, because she had a good mind and I could somehow talk to her.”

“Look, Court, you don’t need to get so belligerent. I’m only trying to help you because I am a year older than you, even though we’re in the same class, and I can see that you’re throwing away your life here, to invest it in this escape. That’s all it is. Remember, there are a couple of things I’ve learned in a year that you don’t know.”

Courtney took an orange from the box and threw it across the room. It splattered on the wall with a very satisfying effect.

“Court,” said Janet patiently, “sometimes I remember that you’re only fifteen. That was my orange, too.”

“Here we go with the Mama Parker routine. I’m going for a walk. Save me a seat at dinner.”

Janet sighed and resumed plucking her eyebrows.

In the hall, Courtney passed the headmistress.

“Hello, Farrell.”

“Hello, Mrs. Reese.”

“I heard that you got another conduct for having an unpermissioned book,” she remarked.

“Yes, Mrs. Reese. It was a James Joyce book, Finnegan’s Wake, and I assumed that Joyce was on the list of permissioned authors, so I didn’t bother to get it okayed by anyone.”

“You can’t assume,” she said coldly, “you should know.”

“I realize that, Mrs. Reese.” How she hated to be polite and prostrate herself before staff members! “I realize that I was wrong.”
“Well, you’ll be more careful next time,” she said more warmly. Self-abnegation always made staff members warmer. “For a bright girl, Farrell, you get too many penalties. I had hoped that you would help straighten out your roommate this year, but instead the two of you get into trouble.”

“Yes, Mrs. Reese.”

With relief Courtney walked out to the quadrangle, and as soon as she was outside she began to run because she was fifteen and it was a wonderful spring day. She ran across the hockey field and jumped across the little brook on the far side, where hockey balls always landed. As she cleared the brook, she fell into the long grass from her effort, and she laughed at herself and got up. She ran up the little hill onto the cinder track that skirted the tennis courts, the track that she ran around before breakfast as a part of hockey training. When she got to the second hockey field she stopped, because that was as far as she could go without entering Mrs. Reese’s grounds, which were out of bounds except for seniors when they went to her house for tea. She was out of breath and she fell on the grass, which had just been cut and smelled very fresh and young. Grass smelled hot and wet in the summer, but in the spring it smelled properly young, which was a relief from the old and dead smell of Scaisbrooke’s corridors.

She turned on her back and smiled at herself and looked up at the sky. The sky was terribly vast. In the summer she sometimes floated on her back in the Pacific and tried to convince herself that the sky was really shapeless and she was on the edge of a round world. The Rubaiyat said that it was a “great inverted bowl,” and secretly she agreed with it. Scientists try awfully hard, she mused, to convince us that things which are obviously so really aren’t, and try to convince us of the minuteness of marvelously big things like the sky and mountains by breaking them
down into little atoms. She had never seen an atom and never wanted to, because the idea of mountains and people being just different arrangements of things of the same shape was disagreeable to her.

The sound of the warning bell for dinner carried very softly across the hockey fields and interrupted her thoughts. She had to hurry because she had to change into her dinner uniform and there was a penalty for every minute of lateness.

All through dinner Courtney looked forward to seeing Miss Rosen. Courtney always felt comfortable and secure when she was in Miss Rosen’s room, and it was a nice walk through the courtyards to get to the faculty house. After she passed through the two courtyards she went along a walk beside the chapel, a walk that was flanked by tall trees in spring green and some which had blossoms on them. The evening was early yet, and the chapel was silhouetted against the light sky. Sometimes she would go into the chapel, and though she was Catholic and it held little religious significance for her, it was a quiet and shadowy place where she could think, and pretend that she was in Hollywood.

But tonight she passed the chapel, because she was looking forward to talking to Miss Rosen. Under her arm was the copy of *Finnegan’s Wake*, which she really didn’t understand although she puzzled over every abstruse paragraph, and whose possession had cost her three hours’ work and two weeks of being campused. She climbed the dingy stairs and at the top of the second flight turned left. The door was a little open, and she could hear that Miss Rosen had her Bach records on. Somehow Bach was always playing in her room, and the solidity and sureness of his music was as closely connected in her mind with Miss Rosen as her shelves of wonderful books. Years later, when Courtney
heard that music, the picture of that room and the warm feeling that she had when she was in it would come back as strongly as though she were again climbing those stairs which she knew so well.

Miss Rosen was a tall woman in her early twenties, short-waisted and somewhat round-shouldered. Her eyes were large and brown and intense. She was not an attractive woman, yet she had an intensity and a warmth which caused people to overlook the defects in her face and body when they had spent a few minutes with her. She was engaged to a scholarly young man whom she had met at the University of Chicago and who was now an instructor in philosophy at Harvard.

She smiled when Courtney came in, and motioned to a chair. Courtney sat down and took off her blazer while Miss Rosen made a notation on an English paper that she was correcting. She put the paper down on her cluttered desk.

“How are you coming with James Joyce?” she asked pleasantly.

“Not awfully well,” Courtney confessed. “What is he trying to say with all this stream-of-consciousness gibberish?”

Miss Rosen picked up the book from the table beside Courtney and thumbed through the pages Courtney had been reading.

“What he is talking about in *Finnegan’s Wake*,” explained the English teacher in her precise, analytical manner, “is the eternal conflict between parents and children. He presents the parent as the figure who must be conquered if the child is to gain independence and identity.”

“How simply and clearly she puts it,” Courtney thought as Miss Rosen went on, quoting from the book and analyzing the selections to prove her thesis, “when the subject is so terribly complex. Teachers are a little like scientists in their way of breaking
down the magnificent vastness of life into small particles that can be analyzed, and thereby robbing it of its emotion.” She remembered the scene when her mother had said she could not spend that weekend with her father because she had too much schoolwork to do.

“You’re trying to possess me,” Courtney had accused her over the long-distance telephone. “You know that I have to have your permission for school because you’re listed as my guardian. You don’t want to give it to me, you want me to stay at school when I have a free weekend, because you’re so afraid that I might find one of these days that I really like Daddy.”

“Now Courtney, don’t be unreasonable. Your father is a very fine man and I should hope that you like him. You just wrote me that you have a term paper due next Monday and you didn’t see how you could get it in in time, and now you call me to see if you can spend the weekend in New York.”

“I’ll get the paper in late. It’s all right, because I have an A in medieval history anyway, and it won’t make so much difference. I don’t want to stay here when I have a free weekend. You’re trying to possess me, that’s all, and you’re using the paper as an excuse.”

“I couldn’t want less to possess you, and you’re always accusing me of it. My life would be a great deal simpler if I didn’t have you to worry about and take care of,” she said angrily. “I could run it the way I want to. I’d still be married to Nick now if it weren’t for you. I had to choose between my second husband and my child, so of course I chose you. You bitch up my life because I have a sense of responsibility for you, and now you accuse me of wanting to possess you. Go ahead and stay with your father, spend your life with him for all I care!”

Courtney had thanked her mother and hung up before she could change her mind.
“He outlines the overthrowing of the parent by the child who has come of age,” Miss Rosen was saying.

Courtney thought of Janet’s father when they had double dated with a beau of Janet’s and his roommate at Andover. Janet went out with the boy a great deal, and his roommate had driven them back from Jones Beach with Courtney in the front seat so that his roommate and Janet could “make out” in the back seat. When they went into Janet’s apartment on Park Avenue, her father had been sitting with a glass of Irish whiskey and had seen that Janet’s lipstick was smeared, and had been terribly rude to the boy, saying to him, “I suppose you have been necking with my daughter all the way back from Jones Beach!” Of course he had, but Mr. Parker made everyone feel so embarrassed that they left very soon and went to the Plaza instead. Janet apologized for her father. “Daddy was a little bombed,” she laughed, “and he always thinks that I’m being led into dissipation or something.” Janet even necked with boys that she did not like, and her father knew it and always blew up at her, cutting her allowance whenever she was even a little late.

“He completes the cycle,” Miss Rosen continued, “by showing how the child of that child will overthrow him in turn, in a primitive ritual which civilization has only disguised but not altered.”

“The cycle?” Courtney said stupidly.

“You haven’t been listening,” Miss Rosen chided. “You remember how I showed you that the very last sentence in the book is the beginning of the very first sentence, how they run together?”

Courtney nodded.

“Well, his book runs around in a circle, so to speak, because he is using even the form of the novel to indicate the parent-child-parent cycle of successive revolutions.”
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“I guess I see now, but I certainly never would have by myself. Gee, I have a pretty good vocabulary, but every fifth word is something I’ve never even heard of.”

“He invents a lot of words, like the famous sound of the thunder, and he also uses words in German, Gaelic and God knows what all.”

She smiled and handed the book back to Courtney.

“Try the next ten pages for tomorrow, and if you get discouraged, I have a Key to Finnegan’s Wake that you can borrow. It explains some of the references. I’d rather that you tried to get something out of it yourself, though.”

She got up and turned the stack of records over in the victrola, and then sat down and lit a cigarette.

“I haven’t had a chance to talk to you since spring vacation,” Miss Rosen said. “How did you and your mother get along?”

“We got on fairly well,” Courtney said. For a moment she resented the presumed familiarity of the older woman’s question. She always withdrew instinctively when she sensed that someone had slipped through her defenses. But then she remembered that Miss Rosen was a friend. “We always do.” She was still guarded. Both Miss Rosen and she knew that this was not true, but Miss Rosen waited patiently for the familiar flow of words from the girl, for when they were alone she spoke freely as she had never been able to speak to a woman. Courtney was a girl who had a whole string of what she termed “adopted fathers,” usually friends of her mother, to whom she told the worries and fears that a child can never relate to her own parents. Miss Rosen was the first woman whom she had trusted since she lost confidence in her mother at the age of six.

“We can’t communicate, that’s all. She doesn’t know me very well, and she knows me less every time she sees me on a vaca-
tion. I’d talk to her if I could,” she went on, “but you know, you can’t talk to women. Their minds don’t run straight the way even yours does; I try to talk about something and prove a point and their minds have skittered off to some minor but vaguely related subject. Drives me crazy.”

“Don’t you think of yourself as a woman?” Miss Rosen said, amused.

“No, not really,” Courtney said thoughtfully. “I don’t think the way they do. Men always tell me that I think like a man. It would be a lot simpler if I were a man. I guess. But maybe it wouldn’t be. I probably would still dislike women, and it would be an awful mess to be a faggot.”

Miss Rosen laughed at her simplicity. “Would you really like to be a man?”

“Well, you know, since I can remember I’ve dreamt that I am a man. I hardly even notice now that in all my dreams I’m myself, but a man. I wonder why that is,” she mused.

“You said that your parents always wished you were a boy, and that your mother has you make drinks for her and take care of her the way a son would. Perhaps that’s why.”

“Perhaps.” She thought about that for a moment, but not long, because it wasn’t very important for her.

“You know,” she went on, “Mummy was awfully upset about my vacation being screwed up.”

“Don’t use that expression,” Miss Rosen said.

“Why not? I have used it since I was a little girl. What’s wrong with it?”

Miss Rosen did not pursue the matter further, but instead said, “You’re always a little hostile and defensive after you have been with your mother.”

“She’s a bitch,” Courtney blurted out.
“You know you don’t mean that,” Miss Rosen said gently.
“I know,” she answered petulantly.
“Then why did you say it?”
“I wanted to.”
“You’re too intelligent to talk like a little girl.”
“Dammit, I am a little girl,” Courtney said suddenly. “And
that’s what I hate about being with Mummy. It’s as though I’m
the mother. I have to soothe her when she’s upset about having
blown up at me, and I have to reassure her that she’s a good
actress—you know, I’ve only seen four of her movies in my whole
life, it’s enough to live with the parts—I wouldn’t know if she’s
any good or not, but I tell her she is because I like to make people
feel good. And I have to hold her hand when Nick periodically
leaves her—or did leave her,” she said remembering, “and I have
to fix her lousy drinks because she doesn’t like to feel she’s drink-
ing alone, and all that. I’m awfully sick of it!”

“Now, although I’ve never met your mother,” Miss Rosen said,
“I know that she’s a very immature woman, but you have to put
up with that and try to help her. She’s also a very lonely woman,
and you’re really all that she’s got—particularly now that she’s
divorced again.”

“You’re so damned holy,” Courtney said bitterly. “I mean,
you’re just like my father. You say all these things and it’s easy for
you because you don’t have to live them. This is all a lot of crap.”

Miss Rosen flinched. She got up and put her hand on Court-
ney’s shoulder.

“You don’t have to talk that way with me,” the woman said
gently. “You can relax when you’re here. You don’t need to strike
out in self-defense, through a fear of getting close to me.”

Courtney stared moodily ahead. She knew that if she looked
up at Miss Rosen while that hand was on her shoulder, she would
get that funny feeling that she sometimes had when she was taking a bath or about to put on her pajamas, as though a whole crowd of people were looking at her body.

“You told me once,” she said searching, “that you loved me.”

Miss Rosen took her hand away and sat on the bed facing Courtney.

“Yes, you poor child, I do. Why do you ask me again—don’t you believe that anyone can love you?”

“Not unless they want something from me.”

She saw the expression on Miss Rosen’s face and said, “Yes, honestly, that’s the way I feel. And don’t call me a ‘poor child’! I’m not to be pitied, not by anyone. Nobody needs to feel sorry for me, because I can take care of myself, and I always have. I don’t even need anyone to love me, because people don’t mean that much to me. I’m a cold person, and kind of selfish.”

Miss Rosen sighed. “No you’re not. Haven’t I taught you anything? I don’t know who or what gave you that idea, but you’re a very warm, impulsive girl, with the potential to be a fine woman if you give yourself a chance to love and to be a mature person.”

Courtney looked up at Miss Rosen, the defiance gone for the moment from her face, so that she looked almost like a child.

“Maybe I can be all that if you help me. When I’m here I feel that you have something I can hold on to. Since I’ve been with you I’ve seen that people can tell other people that they love them, and trust other people, without being afraid of being rebuffed or taken advantage of.”

Miss Rosen lit another cigarette from the one she was smoking because she did not like to say what she knew she eventually must say.

“Mummy said I was like a different person when I came to
Hollywood last Christmas,” she said proudly. “She said I was like somebody she didn’t know. I wasn’t so afraid of her, and I didn’t jump so much when she called my name. You did that for me,” she said, trying to draw a response from the older woman.

“You know, Courtney,” she said painfully, “I did have something I wanted to say to you. After all that you’ve been saying it’s going to be very difficult for me, because I do love you, but I feel it’s for your own good. Would you like a cigarette?”

“No, thank you, I don’t smoke. Gee, it must be something grim,” she smiled. “Staff members only offer cigarettes to girls who have tried to commit suicide, or whose engagements have been broken or something.”

The girl was trying to be flippant because she sensed that what Miss Rosen had to say would hurt her.

“I enjoy your coming over here very much. I like to talk to you, because you have a good mind and I’m very fond of you.”

Oh God, thought Courtney, don’t say what I am afraid you are about to say.

“But you know, you should spend more time with people your own age. There is a lot that you can learn from them, and there are girls here with fine minds who have read quite as much as you have.”

“I’m bored with people my own age,” she said desperately. “I’ve always grown up with Mummy’s friends, and I find it easier to talk to them. I find older people more interesting.” She searched the woman’s face for understanding. “You know that.”

“That’s just the point,” Miss Rosen said. “You’ve never learned to get along with your contemporaries, and Scaisbrooke gives you a fine chance to learn. That’s a more important lesson than you’ll ever get from me.”
Courtney stood up. She felt the way she had when she learned, through the *New York Times*, of her mother’s marriage to Nick Russell in Hollywood. Courtney had the same half-comprehending feeling now, a vague realization that she was losing someone whom she loved.

“You mean that you don’t want me to come over here in the evenings any more, and that you don’t want me to sit at your table or talk to you after class.”

“Yes, that’s what I mean,” the woman said helplessly.

“Then why don’t you say it? I can take it.” She threw the copy of *Finnegan’s Wake* on the bed. “I guess I’d better return this,” she said, and turned to walk out.

Miss Rosen stood up.

“Courtney...”

Courtney stopped and turned back suddenly by the door. Perhaps she had changed her mind. Miss Rosen walked over to her and looked down at the girl with a sadness in her eyes. She leaned down and kissed Courtney on the forehead.

“Please don’t be angry with me,” she said. “I had no choice.” Courtney was never to understand what Miss Rosen meant.

Courtney did not know yet how much she had lost, she only felt the pain of her loss and a numb sense that somehow her life would be different now. She ran past the chapel and through the courtyards because she had started to cry and she never liked anyone to see her cry. When she got to the main building she stopped and rubbed her face dry on the sleeve of her blazer, and she smiled to a committeeman on the stairs although she did not trust herself to speak.

Janet saw that Courtney did not want to talk, and so she wrote letters and did not intrude upon her roommate’s privacy. After lights out she heard Courtney crying into her pillow. For half an
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hour she lay in the darkness and listened, and then she reached over and turned a light on.

“IT’s after lights out,” her roommate murmured.

“The hell with that,” Janet answered. “I’d offer you one of my illegal cigarettes but I know you don’t smoke. But I have another illegal commodity that is exactly what you need.”

She got out of bed and picked up her silver perfume bottle.

“This has escaped every committee inspection,” she said proudly, and handed Courtney the perfume bottle that was filled with a very excellent Scotch.

“Goddammit, Farrell, you drink every drop, and appreciate it. There’s just about a shot in there. I don’t care if you don’t like Scotch,” she said in the harsh tones reserved for a roommate’s tenderness, “I plan to get some sleep tonight, and this will calm you down. You can tell me in the morning what that bitch said to you.” She turned off the light and rolled over.