

Fight Against Fate
By Deatri King-Bey

The wheelchair's breaks were set, the waist high parallel bars ready and waiting, even Sophie's patient anxiously awaited taking his first steps since a severe car accident two years ago. According to the experts, Tony had a 1% chance of walking again. To Sophie, that tiny percent meant the love of her life would walk again. The other ninety-nine percent crushed Tony's spirit and led to Sophie's heart being broken.

Tony held the arms of the chair as he slowly stood. "Roll the chair to the other end, please."

"Are you sure?"

A soft smile tipped his lips as he looked over his shoulder. "It's okay, you'll see." He winked.

The last few months, Tony slowly became his pre-accident self, all the way to his playful flirting, but Sophie hadn't gone back to herself. Though glad he would have a full recovery, she had to protect her heart from further pain. At the opposite end of the parallel bars, Sophie's breath caught as Tony lifted his left foot and took his first step. *Steady, steady*, she thought and reached forward.

"Don't worry. I have the best physical therapist in the world." Hands to his sides for balance, he took a timid step. "I've known you'd be my wife since we were in grammar school. It's fate." He managed another step. "It just took a few years to convince you."

The master of distraction had struck again, leaving Sophie completely discombobulated. Only twelve at the time, she hadn't appreciated anyone claiming her as his, but secretly agreed with him. Times had changed and so had they. Turned out they were both wrong; they would never marry.

One step away now, he said, "I love you with all my heart." He grasped the bars and took the final step, then lowered his forehead to hers. "When will you forgive me?"

Backing away, she said, "I don't know what you're talking about." She stood behind the wheelchair. "You've been cheating haven't you?"

He settled in the chair. "I may have practiced a little at home."

"A little?"

"A lot." He took her by the hand, pulled her around and onto his lap. The shock caused her to squeal. Being held in his strong arms felt too good, too much like old times, times that were long gone and would never return.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered. "Forgive me."

"I don't know what you—"

"Why do you think I broke off our engagement?"

Choked up, she could barely say, "Because you didn't believe in me or the strength of our love." Drained emotionally, all she wanted to do was avoid this conversation at all cost, but she couldn't run away. She needed closure; they both did so they could go their separate ways. The thought of life without Tony brought tears to her eyes.

"Why did you continue being my therapist after I broke our engagement?"

"Why are you asking all of these questions?"

"Because the smartest thing I ever did in my life was ask you to marry me. Care to guess what the dumbest was?"

"So now that you'll be able to walk the wedding's back on?" she snapped.

"I should have never broken the engagement. I have always and will always love you. I want for you to be my wife."

She wanted to be his wife but... “If I were in an accident, would you walk out on me? If you have a setback, will you push me away again?” She fortified her defensive shields with past pain.

“Why did you continue being my therapist after I broke our engagement?”

She blew out an exasperated sigh. “I couldn’t leave you in the care of people who didn’t believe you’d walk again. No matter what, we’ll always be friends.”

“You stayed because you love me as much as I love you. I didn’t refuse your care for the same reason. I wasn’t thinking logically. I believed in you, in us, but I didn’t believe in me, and I didn’t want you burdened with a cripple husband.”

“I never saw you as a burden.”

“But that’s how I saw me, and I couldn’t do that to you. I love you too much.”

“Well don’t love me so much.”

A nervous chuckle escaped him. “But it wasn’t love, it was self pity.” He held her close. “Please forgive me.”

How many of her patients had done the same thing to their loved ones? Too many to count. But being in the situation... “There’s nothing to forgive.”

“I’ve known you’d be my wife since we were in grammar school. It’s fate. Will it take another fifteen years to convince you?”

“Who am I to fight against fate?”

He pressed his lips to hers.