

Welcome Home

Deatri King-Bey

“Aw man...” Georgia drawled as she checked the speedometer. Only going seventy-five in a seventy mile an hour speed zone, she knew the squad car quickly approaching must be after the van that had just passed her. She glanced at the blinking lights in the rearview mirror as the officer rode up behind her.

Totally disgusted, she eased the car over to the shoulder. Three months she'd been gone, and this was her welcome home party. She reached over to the glove compartment and took out the rental car's paperwork, then searched through her purse for her driver's license. *I'll bet he's only pulling me over because I have out of state plates.*

Anxious to get home to settle things, she forced herself to sit patiently for what seemed like hours. Movement in the rearview mirror caught her eye. *Oh my God, it can't be.* Her heart rate increased with recognition of the one man she would ever truly love. This was not how she wanted to see him, not in his territory, not with his rules, his terms.

Eyes closed, she stilled herself. He'd be just as shocked to see her as she was him. *I can do this.* She inhaled and exhaled deeply. *I can do this.* She let her window down.

“You were speeding a bit, ma'am...” Malachi trailed off as he bent low enough to see her, the excitement in his eyes quelled by pain.

Georgia knew pain. Leaving him was the hardest thing she'd ever done. At the time she didn't see an alternative. Now...now she didn't know if she'd made a mistake. She'd missed him so much, but could she live with...She shook off her thoughts. Now was not the time.

Food, glorious food, Georgia sang internally. After seven hours on the road, everything on The Country Kitchen's menu looked delicious to her. Unable to decide on a particular meal, she settled on the all you can eat buffet.

"I'm so glad you've returned," Etta, the waitress, said as she poured iced tea. "We've missed you around here."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I've missed you, too."

"I'm glad you and Malachi have finally stopped letting a bunch of nonsense come between you. I've never seen two people more in love."

Georgia didn't have the heart to tell Etta the nonsense was still alive and well in their relationship. "Do you think love conquers all?"

"No one said it would be easy, but yes. True love does, honey." Etta winked and went about her business.

During the course of her meal, several people stopped by to welcome her home and express their pleasure at her and Malachi's reconciliation. Why she thought she'd be able to slip in for a quiet meal in the small town was beyond her.

Two platefuls of cabbage, corned beef and mashed potatoes later, she thought she'd burst. After she ate a serving of peach cobbler with vanilla ice cream on top, she knew she'd burst. Fat and fluffy, she left a sizable tip on the table, then went to pay for her meal.

"Well look who decided to come out of hiding."

Though Georgia had only heard this woman's voice once before, she remembered it better than she remembered the meal she'd just eaten. She groaned internally and plastered on a smile as she turned toward the entrance. A few of the other patrons looked around to see what was happening.

“Hello, Brandy, nice to see you again.”

“Yeah right.” Brandy pulled her young son from behind her legs. “Go on over there and have a seat, Ronnie. Mommy has some business to take care of here.”

Jealousy and longing coursed through Georgia’s veins as she watched the little boy trot off to one of the tables along the wall. She had always wanted children, but when she was in her early twenties, she’d been diagnosed with uterine cancer and her uterus was removed. From then on, she only dated men who swore they never wanted children. Four years ago, she met, fell in love with and married Malachi. Four months ago, Brandy came to town and confronted Georgia, claiming Malachi was the father of her baby. Georgia knew Malachi would never cheat on her and told Brandy as much. Turned out, Brandy had conveniently forgotten to mention her “baby” was five.

Though leery of Brandy, Georgia had gone to her husband with the woman’s claim. Malachi had denied the child was his, saying they’d always used condoms. He had said Brandy was playing some sort of game and not to let her ruin what they had. And from the way Brandy had approached this “situation,” Georgia was inclined to believe Malachi. Then again, Brandy obviously liked to play games, so Georgia pointed out that she may have tampered with the condoms. In the end, Brandy wasn’t the problem. Not all Brandy, anyway.

Georgia watched Ronnie topple the saltshaker over. Etta rushed over to him and set a plate of chicken fingers and fries in front of him.

“He seems so sweet and is as handsome as can be,” Georgia said honestly.

“He’s getting more and more like his *father* every day. I hope you don’t think you can just walk in off the street and claim Malachi. He’s mine now and has a son to raise.”

Brandy had hit her mark, but Georgia refused to let on. Ignoring Brandy wasn't an option. The woman was obviously the type to force herself on people.

"That's nice. Have a great day." She turned and waited in line to pay for her order. She'd been gone three months, but knew Malachi hadn't strayed. He wasn't that kind of man, and instead of the warm welcome she had received when she arrived at The Country Kitchen, people would have been more conciliatory. The mark Brandy had hit was the child. Malachi's son. She'd seen pictures of her husband when he was five, and the little boy across the room dipping chicken fingers into ketchup looked just like him.

She cleared her throat and moved up a position in line.

"What are you doing in town anyway?"

"Not that it is any of your concern, but this is where I was born, raised and plan to die."

The cashier giggled as she took the sales slip from Georgia.

Brandy *tsked* and rolled her neck. "Listen, from what I've learned, you're a good person. It's just I have to do what's best for my child. Make that my and Malachi's child. He needs his father in his life, and thanks to you, Malachi has had time to grow to love his son. You need to do the honorable thing and just step out of the picture. I won't have your infertile ass taking your anger out on my son."

"Brandy!" Malachi snapped.

Everyone in the restaurant jumped and looked toward the entrance.

Ronnie flung his arms in the air and ran across the room. "Daddy!"

The rage on Malachi's face morphed to love as he picked up his son. "Hey, little man." He hugged him close to his body.

Overjoyed and heartbroken at the same time, Georgia wasn't sure how much longer she could hold off her tears. She had known Malachi would be a fantastic father if he only gave it a chance. That was one of the reasons she'd left town—to give him time to bond with his son.

“Go on back to your table and finish your dinner.” He set the child on the floor, and Ronnie skipped back toward his seat.

“I've given him what you never can, a child,” Brandy said smugly.

“Shut the hell up,” Malachi bit out under his breath, trying to keep Ronnie from realizing what was actually happening.

Georgia was through with this hateful woman. She set her payment on the counter and walked out as quickly as she could while Malachi continued chastising Brandy. Everyone in the small town knew Georgia couldn't bare children, but no one had ever used that fact to attack her.

By the time Georgia crossed the rock covered lot to the car, her legs were ready to give out, and she was about to crumble.

“Georgia, wait!” Malachi called out.

Tears streamed down her face, and her body quaked. To make matters worse, she couldn't find the car keys in her purse.

“Baby.” Malachi grasped her by the shoulders and turned her toward him. Worry, pain, sympathy and fear darkened his face. He drew her into his arms and held her close. “I love you so much, baby.”

She felt secure enough in his arms to break down. The purse dropped to the ground, and her whole body went limp as she cried.

“I’m so sorry this is hurting you, baby. I want to make the pain stop, but I don’t know how.” He rocked her gently. “I promised never to hurt you, but...but...I feel like I’ve failed you.”

He continued to hold her as she finished sobbing. Soaking in the love that surrounded her, time passed, yet stood still. This was a place she could stay forever.

“I love you, baby,” he murmured. “If you give it a chance, I know you’ll grow to love Ronnie.”

Another onslaught of tears poured from her eyes and drenched his shirt. “That’s the problem,” she said shakily. “I will fall in love with him. In my heart he will be my child.” She looked into his eyes and saw hope burning. “Then every time I have to give him back, it will be like someone taking my child from me and my heart will be broken again. And don’t get me started on that...that...woman who had him. You know she’ll remind me every chance she gets that he is not mine. That I can not have a child as wonderful as he is. That I’m less of a woman. That she has given you what I never can, what I want to give you.” She shook her head and tried to back away, but the car stopped her. “I don’t know...It hurts...It hurts so much.”

A couple hurried past them to their car. Georgia didn’t even care who listened. This was her life on the line.

“I’m hurting, too.”

“I know. You’re in one wicked catch twenty-two.”

He rested his hands on the car roof, trapping her between the car and his body. “Do you know? I’m losing the love of my life.” He thumbed the tears from under her eyes. “I’m not letting you walk out of my life again, Georgia. We’re in love. I don’t know the answer, but this separation isn’t it.”

He reached down and retrieved her purse. “I’m taking you home. Get in on the passenger side.” He began searching through her purse.

“I need some time alone, Malachi.”

“I’m not letting you drive when you’re this upset. I’m dropping by the house for a change of clothes, then *we’re* going to the fishing cabin.” He pulled out the rental car keys and handed over her purse. “Get in the car. I’ll have one of my men pick up the squad car.”

“You are entirely too bossy.”

“Humph, that’s what you love most about me.” He escorted her around the car and opened the door for her. Once she was seated, he fastened her seatbelt, then gently cupped her face between his hands. “It’ll all work out, baby.”

Besides his call to the station, the ride to their home then cabin was quiet. She loved the quaint log cabin set a few yards from the lake—their lovers paradise.

As usual, he refused to allow her to help carry their bags in, so she sat on the porch swing and watched him work. He’d changed from his uniform to a dark blue T-shirt and shorts, but was still as sexy as ever. A smile crossed her face as she remembered how they’d met. He’d pulled her over and given her a ticket for speeding. It had taken him at least ten minutes to convince her that the posted speed wasn’t a “suggested” speed limit. Actually, she’d been stalling. She’d always been attracted to a man in uniform, and he wore his well. A week later, she’d bumped into the new police chief everyone had been talking about at The Country Kitchen, and he’d asked her out. Being the chief over nine officers wasn’t a big deal. The big deal was he was an outsider and only thirty-five years old.

He crouched down to lift the bags he'd taken out of the trunk and set on the ground. Such powerful thighs, she lamented. And his butt...She fanned herself. Four months was a long time to go without the good loving she'd become accustomed to.

She opened the screen door for him as he hopped up the steps.

"I felt you checking out my butt," he teased.

She covered her face with her hands and shook her head, then followed him into the house.

"It's alright, baby. Look all you want."

"I wasn't checking out your butt, big head." She closed the door.

"Of course you were." He set the bags down and gave her another fantastic view of his firm round behind and powerful thighs. As he rose, he reached back, grasped her wrist and pulled her close. "I've missed you, too," he said huskily and nibbled on her bottom lip until she opened up for him. Many have tried and failed to master the art of kissing. With just enough give and take, Master Malachi kissed her into oblivion.

His taste, his feel, his scent...*Umm, how did I stay away so long?*

He ran his hands along her bare arms. "Feel how much I've missed you." He pressed his hardness against her belly, causing liquid heat to pool between her legs. "I want to see you." He lifted her simple cotton top over her head and tossed it to the side, then meticulously stripped each article of clothing from her, leaving soul searing kisses everywhere he'd ventured.

Body tingly-hot, she could hardly wait for her turn. "Strip."

He looked up from the breast he'd been suckling and grinned. "And you call me bossy." He stood, slowly lifting his T-shirt, revealing a six-pack and expansive chest. Now this was her type of welcome home! She reached out to touch, but he stepped away.

“I thought you wanted me to strip,” he teased and dropped the shirt behind him.

“You’d better be nice to me,” she purred as she wrapped her arms around his waist and suckled along his chest.

“Umm, that’s it, baby,” he moaned, lifting her off the floor, drawing her against his hardness.

As she wrapped her legs around his waist, he fingered her feminine folds apart and lowered her onto his tip, which now poked over the brim of his shorts. First penetration...always so sweet...they both moaned. He held firmly onto her behind and helped her gyrate as he walked them to the bedroom.

He laid her on the bed, then quickly disrobed and joined her, suckling the tender flesh of her inner thigh. All troubles forgotten, she swirled in ecstasy as he made love to her with his mouth. Her back arched off the bed, but he held her waist and continued to delve deep into her as she climaxed.

Body quivering from aftershocks, she grasped at his shoulders. His talented tongue or tip of his hardness wouldn’t do this time. “Please, Malachi, I need you...”

“That’s my baby,” he said as he retook her mouth and positioned himself between her legs.

He lifted his torso and intently watched her face as he slowly penetrated her.

“Why are you torturing me?” she whispered as he filled her completely.

“I’m not torturing you,” he said huskily. She could tell by the slight tremor to his voice she wasn’t the only one having difficulty. “I’m loving you slowly, properly, as you deserve.” He moaned as he withdrew. “Oh God, baby, you’re so...” He bit his bottom lip and plunged in deep.

“I feel so guilty for denying you a child. I didn’t realize...Ronnie coming into my life has opened my eyes. I don’t care about blood. I want to give you the child you’ve always wanted.”

He brought his hand to his bare chest. “I want a baby Georgia.”

“Savannah.”

“Savannah it is.”

The smile that spread across her face radiated throughout her body.

“Welcome home, baby.” He kned her legs apart and entered her swiftly.

THE END