

What Kind of Fool

by

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Prologue

Samaria

My heart nearly pounded out of my chest as I said the words. “Yes, I’ll marry you.”

Mekhi Johnson slid an enormous princess cut diamond ring onto my finger and the room that was filled with more than one hundred people we didn’t know erupted into a deafening applause. I released the air in my lungs, smiled and leaned forward to kiss Mekhi on the lips.

Familiar music began to play in the background; Mekhi stood from his down-on-one-knee position and pulled me from my chair to my feet. The recording artist, Ne-Yo, stepped onto the small stage near us and began to sing one of his older songs, “Stop This World.”

“Time for a dance.” Mekhi swept me onto the floor. Ne-yo’s voice massaged the words to his hit song, and I fell into step with Mekhi. He lowered his lips to mine and kissed me hungrily, almost too hungrily for the public. Our lips parted. “Surprised?”

He knew I was. We hadn’t talked about getting married. Not really. We’d just reconciled a few months ago after being separated from each other for eight years. And there was the matter of my pending trial and prison term.

“You know I’m surprised.” I raised my hand and placed it on his shoulder.

“But you don’t look happy.” Mekhi leaned away from me a little. “You look stressed, baby.”

I was stressed, more stressed than a ring from Tiffany’s could help. The light hit my diamond, and it caused a rainbow hued sliver of light to slice the air in the room. I had to admit, the ring was a good effort. He had paid a fortune for this monstrosity. It had all the four c’s and then some.

“Sammie.” Mekhi pulled me closer and whispered in my ear. “What’s wrong?”

Truth. Mekhi and I had made a solemn vow that we would always tell each other the truth. Aside from fidelity, it was the only promise we’d made, and yet less than five minutes after he asked me to become his wife I was going to lie to him. “I ate some Chinese food today and my stomach has been bothering me.” His brow furrowed, and I changed the subject. “You must be some big shot getting Ne-Yo to sing for us.”

We both looked at the singer. *Happiness like this can never last, can never last.* Ne-Yo nodded at us and smiled.

“I’ll be an even bigger shot if I can get him away from his label,” Mekhi said and I almost laughed at the thought that he could steal Ne-Yo from Def Jam, but even the joke couldn’t pull joy from my soul.

I looked out at the smiling faces in the crowd. My family, which consisted of my mother and two cousins, had come out, as had Mekhi’s mother and brother and a few of our friends from high school. The rest of the audience consisted of Benxi, Mekhi’s multi-platinum recording star, the only star on his fairly new, but quickly rising record label, the *Real Housewives of Atlanta* and every other celebrity and wanna-be celebrity that called Atlanta home. I should have been thrilled. This was the life I had always wanted. Money, jewelry, parties, celebrity...but I wasn’t. It was happening at the wrong time. This party was happening on the wrong day.

“I need to go to the restroom.”

“Now?” Mekhi frowned. We were the entertainment for our guests, and I knew the least I could do was finish the dance, but I couldn’t. I was going to throw-up.

“Now.” I pulled away, just enough for him to know it couldn’t wait.

“Okay, baby.” He let go of my waist. I smiled at the room full of people and quickly made my way to the ladies’ room.

“Restroom break,” Mekhi said and I could hear laughter above Ne-yo’s crooning. *I’ve never felt a love strong enough to stop this world from spinning...*

I closed the door and turned the lock. My world was spinning, but not in a good way. I went to the sink and turned the faucet for cold water. I splashed some on my face and in my mouth; pulled paper towel, wet them and wiped my chest and neck. When I

was done I dropped my upper body against the counter. My elbows rested on the porcelain lip of the sink, and through wet hands I choked back tears. Mekhi had done everything in his power to make tonight wonderful for me. He knew the stress I'd been under. Waiting for a trial that would likely send me to prison for stealing and distributing prescription drugs was hard, especially when I was guilty, but he couldn't make what I learned today right.

My doctor opened a file on her desk. "You're eleven weeks pregnant."

I sat back in my chair. The breath I'd been holding escaped my lungs.

She looked down her nose through aqua blue reading glasses before she removed them. "You're not surprised? You took a home pregnancy test."

I stood to my feet, walked on shaky legs to the huge window adjacent from the chair I'd occupied and peered out at downtown Atlanta. The hustle and bustle of traffic was at its mid-day high, but my world had just stopped. "I thought I had a period a few months ago."

"You likely had some bleeding from implantation, not a menstrual cycle."

"Eleven weeks." I turned away from the window to look at her. "I can't be that far along."

"But you are. The sonogram confirms it."

I shook my head, felt nausea engulf me.

"Samaria. Is there something wrong?"

A knock sounded at the restroom door, pulling me from my memory. "Samaria," I heard my cousin Ebony call. "Mekhi asked me to check on you. You okay in there?"

I returned my gaze to the mirror. I was not okay, as a matter of fact, everything was wrong. I placed my hand on the tiny mound that had raised my abdomen just enough for me to notice a change. The diamond on my finger caught the light and reflected off the mirror in front of me. Mekhi loved me, but he was marrying me, because I was pregnant. I knew that. He'd said we'd do it eventually, but there was no point delaying it since the trial was pending and the baby was coming. What he didn't know, was eleven weeks ago, I'd slept with not only him, but my ex-lover, Gregory Preston, and I had no idea which one of them was the father of this baby.