

*T. A. TERRELL PRESENTS*

*The J. A. White Series*

Volume I

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*T. A. TERRELL*

**“I CROSSED THE LINE”**

*The journey begins...*

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# 1

Reclined in her first-class seat, she mentally prepared for the meeting. The Vandicamp brothers would enter the conference room as she sat confidently at the head of the long table ready to charm them. When the meeting began, she would be impressive and unstoppable, displaying charts, graphs, and answering all questions without hesitation.

“Good morning, this is your pilot speaking. It’s 9 a.m. and National Airport is under a blanket of fog. Expect a delay of at least fifteen to thirty minutes.”

“Damn it! This is just great. I’m tired, I have a meeting later today, and now I’m stuck in the sky circling this airport because the pilot can’t find the runway. At this rate, I wouldn’t be surprised if we run out of fuel and plunge into the river.”

The large jumbo jet gradually ascended through the misty sky into a holding pattern.

The flight attendant smiled and gave her the cordless phone from her jacket pocket.

“Thank you,” said Jacks as she dialed her office.

“J.A. White, may I help you?”

“This is Ms. White. Is Peter or Derrick in?”

“Derrick is with a client, but Peter is available.”

“Could you ring his office for me?”

Jacks impatiently tapped her hand on the armrest as she waited for Peter to answer the phone.

“Peter Carlton. May I help you?”

“Hi, Peter, this is Jacks. I’ll be landing in about twenty minutes. Could you please send the car?”

“Jacks, I’m glad you called. The Vandicamps have moved their meeting time up to noon.”

“Who okayed that?” she said as she quickly changed from her relaxed seating position.

“Derrick. I tried to stop him, but he wouldn’t listen. He said if you didn’t return in time, he would handle the meeting.”

“Thanks for the update. I’ll be in the office as soon as I can.”

The stadium-sized airport was congested with weary travelers.

The long lines at the ticket counters obstructed the walkways. Parents were trying to hold on to their luggage as they struggled with their excited children. The place appeared unorganized, as if no one knew where to go.

Jacquelyn White’s five-feet-six-inch hourglass frame stood like a Beverly Hills store. Her outward appearance was the storefront—beautiful, inviting, and intimidating to those who didn’t feel wealthy enough to enter. However, once you dare to enter, you felt welcomed and would discover an abundance of valuable and unique items.

Jacks’ black Chanel purse swung against her cherry-red double-breasted suit as she impatiently tapped her foot. Deep in thought as she waited for her luggage to appear, she tried to think of a way to reprimand Derrick. She couldn’t believe he would go behind her back and do such a thing. He knew that this meeting was important to her. He knew he didn’t have the authority to change her appointments without her approval. He must be reprimanded, but how?

Her black luggage appeared around the corner. Releasing some of her frustration, she snatched it up. Weaving her way in and out through the crowd, she dashed toward the exit to wait for her limousine.

Standing in front of the airport, she watched the parade of cars

and cabs. Her black limousine emerged through the crowd, license plate number JAW 62. The trunk sprung open as the limousine stopped in front of her. The handsome driver quickly made his way around the limousine to assist her with the luggage.

Relieved that he finally had arrived, she said, “Thank you, Miles. This had been an enjoyable trip until I called the office.” She ducked her head and slipped into the car.

Miles placed the luggage into the trunk and ran back to the front of the car. Winded, he positioned himself behind the wheel, checked the rearview mirror, signaled, and slowly merged back into the flow of traffic.

“I need a drink,” said Jacks as she reached toward the small bar.

Miles glanced at her in the rearview mirror.

Miles was a streetwise man in his early thirties. His olive complexion, dark brown hair, hazel green eyes, and thick eyelashes gave him an exotic islander appearance. To Jacks he was like a convenience store, always open and nearby. A weight lifter, his physical appearance resembled a boxer, toned and muscular. His boyish smile was charming, alluring, and ignited thoughts of passion.

“A drink this early! Are you having problems with the business?” he asked.

“No, I just have a problem with Derrick. He has overstepped his line of authority by changing a very important meeting,” she said as she took a big swallow of her rum and Coke. “Oh, I created this monster, and one way or another, I’ll put him back into his cage.”

Jacks reached for the phone and dialed Peter on his direct line.

“Peter Carlton.”

“Peter, is Derrick done with his meeting?”

“If you don’t mind waiting a minute, I’ll check.” Peter laid the receiver on the desk. The line went silent for a few minutes, and then there was heavy breathing. “Yes, I saw him sitting at his desk.”

“Please tell him to be in my office before I get there. I’ll be there in about ten minutes.” She switched on the radio and began to listen to a talk show.

It was 10:30 a.m. in Washington D.C. Even though the rush hour was winding down, the streets were still congested with traffic. Jacks looked out of the window at the city. It was a sunny day in Washington, and the Washington Monument seemed like a pencil pointing in the direction of the fluffy white clouds. Jacks loved the city’s architecture, because the detailing on the buildings always took her breath away.

As the limousine approached the White Towers, Miles pushed the remote control button to raise the steel gate for the underground parking garage.

The rectangular glass fifteen-story White Tower glistened in the sunlight like a diamond. Her firm had designed and constructed the recently built glass and white concrete building, which was a testament to her business’ success.

The executive offices and conference room covered the entire penthouse floor. When you step off of the elevator onto the plush blue-gray carpet, the receptionist, who is sitting behind a mahogany desk with a gold three-dimensional W behind her, will greet you. And it was obvious Jacks spared no expense in the decorating. The reception area had several large gold-framed abstract collectible pictures. The glass in the room sparkled and the fine grain wood shined.

The two smaller offices in the middle were vacant. One of the offices was being used as a storage space for Jacks’ personal files. It was always locked, and Jacks had the only key. Her two assistants, Peter Carlton and Derrick Smith, occupied the other offices. Their offices were on the opposite ends of the hall. Both entrance doors were glass with blue-gray mini-blinds that matched the walls. Being corner offices, each office’s entire outside walls were made of glass. Both offices were

equipped with a small conference table, a sofa and chair, a cocktail table, a private bathroom with shower, and a surveillance camera that had a view of all angles of the room.

Jacks’ office was equipped with the same conveniences as her assistants, except it had an adjoining suite that made a night at the Ritz seem like the Holiday Inn. There was a sunken living room area with a black marble fireplace. There was a bar area for entertaining. There was a small walk-through kitchen with stainless steel appliances. The kitchen led to the entrance of the bedroom. The bedroom had an oak four-poster bed located in the middle of the room. The bed was covered with white lace linen. The mirrored ceiling tiles over the bed had a hidden video camera behind them. In the bathroom, the sink, commode, and sunken whirlpool tub with an adjacent two-head shower were made of tan marble with gold fixtures.

Miles maneuvered the limousine into the reserved parking space.

Jacks emerged from the car and stormed to the private elevator.

She pressed the elevator button.

“Miles,” she yelled. “Could you please bring my bags? I do not have enough time to go home and change, thanks to Mr. Smith.”

“I’ll do it only for you, my love. Only for you.”

As they rode up the elevator toward the penthouse floor, Jacks began to give Miles her agenda for the day.

“I have a meeting that will start by noon, if things go well I should be done by one; if not, then by two.” She stepped off of the elevator like a prizefighter ready to duke it out in the ring.

Jacks walked up to the receptionist desk like she was a visitor.

“Good morning, Ms. White. Here are some of your messages.”

“Thank you Dotti, and could you please call downstairs to the cafeteria and have the cooks prepare lunch for my twelve o’clock meeting?”

Jacks flipped through her messages as she stormed to her office.

Trying to keep in step with Jacks, Miles walked behind her carrying her luggage.

“Miles, please place the bags in my bedroom.” Miles took the bags to her bedroom and threw them onto the bed.

Jacks stopped at her desk and placed her messages on it, and then she continued to her suite.

“Miles, what time is it?”

“It’s eleven-fifteen.”

“If you don’t have any errands to run right now, you are more than welcome to stay here and watch TV while I’m in my meeting.” She started undoing her white silk blouse in front of him. “Like I said earlier, I should be done around two o’clock,” she continued as her skirt hit the floor, exposing her black lace panties to him. She gathered her clothing and walked through the kitchen to her bedroom.

In her bedroom, she removed her black panties and bra. With her smooth golden-brown skin completely uncovered, she walked toward the bathroom, passing the bedroom entrance in Miles’ view.

Miles became aroused by the image of her moving flesh, but it was short-lived as the sight of Derrick strolling into the room changed the mood from lust to contempt.

“Miles old boy.”

Derrick was a dark chocolate Greek god with buns, abs, and thighs of sculptured perfection. He was in his mid twenties and was confident in his abilities to perform in and out of the bedroom. He had a boyish charm and a smile that would melt butter in a freezer.

“Where is Jacks?” he said, glancing around the room.

“I think she’s taking a shower,” Miles responded through his clenched jaw.

“Thanks, Miles.” Derrick patted Miles on the back as if he were a dog and walked toward the bedroom. Before passing through the doors, he stopped and swung around.

“I can handle things from here, old man. You are dismissed.”

“You sorry son of a bitch, I do not take orders from you.”

You are no more than a mildly intelligent architect who gives good tongue service. And one day that won't be enough to save your ass. Then you will be out of the door on it.”

“I guess then you think she will want your white ass. I'm sure you don't have enough dick to satisfy her sexual appetite. And if anyone is going to be out on their ass, it will be you. Because when I marry Jacks, you will be the first person to go.”

“If Jacks marries you, you won't have to fire me, I'll quit.”

“Then I guess you should start preparing your letter of resignation.”  
Derrick strutted into the bedroom and closed it behind him

Miles sat down on the sofa. “I'll be glad when she gets tired of him.”

The water gently massaged Jacks' caramel breasts as the pressures of the moment began to melt with every drop of the pulsating water. Suddenly, from behind, she felt two hands slowly begin to caress her erect nipples. She was startled for a moment, and then she realized that the probing hands belonged to Derrick. Gently his hands glided over her wet body.

“Here,” said Jacks as she reached over her shoulder and handed him a bar of soap, “make yourself useful.”

He took the soap and began to glide his large hands over her back. The soft slippery lather and the circular motion of Derrick's firm touch began to relax her. Derrick maneuvered around her and began to lather her breasts.

“That feels nice. You have gentle hands.”

Derrick used her words as a green light for passion. His lips caressed the back of her neck. Gradually he made his way down the small of her glistening back until he reached her round hips.

“Oh, Derrick, that feels good.” She leaned against the shower wall

and slowly arched her back so he could satisfy her burning desires.

Suddenly, she stood upright. "What time is it?" she demanded, shoving Derrick out of the way.

She hurried into the bedroom and glanced at the small round crystal clock on her nightstand.

"Damn it, I have ten minutes to get ready!"

The confused Derrick rushed into the bedroom wearing a towel around his waist.

"What is going on?"

"You are really pushing your luck. Not only did you take it upon yourself to change my meeting, now you are about to make me late." She picked up his clothes off of the bathroom floor and threw them at him. "Get dressed and make sure the conference room is ready for the meeting. And tomorrow I want to see you in my office, first thing."

Derrick flashed his smile. "I wasn't trying to make you late. I missed you this weekend. I just wanted to make up for lost time."

"Why are you still here? GO!"

Derrick bolted out of the bedroom. Miles observed the frustration on Derrick's face as his fleeing breeze brushed along his face. He smiled, because he knew Derrick didn't have a chance to complete his mission.

Jacks slipped into a transparent white silk blouse, a mini cherry-red power suit, and a strand of long pearls. She was brushing on her blush when the telephone rang.

"Yes."

"There's a man here to see you, a Mr. Stone," said the lobby receptionist.

"I do not know any Mr. Stone. If he wants an appointment, give him the number to one of my assistants. And why are you calling me on my private line? This line is only to be used in emergencies."

"Ms. White, I know this is not an emergency. I tried to reach your

assistants, but no one is answering their phone, and the gentleman says he has your luggage."

"That's impossible. I have all of my luggage. It's sitting on my bed. I'm busy. Now get rid of him."

Mr. Stone listened to the receptionist's side of the conversation and became frustrated. He grabbed the headset from the receptionist. "Ms. White, this is Mr. Stone."

Jacks snapped impatiently, "I don't know what you want, but I know you do not have my luggage. And if you do not give the phone back to my receptionist, I'll call security."

"Look, lady, before you call your rent-a-cops, look at the name tag on the bags."

Jacks switched the phone onto speaker and reluctantly walked over to the luggage on the bed. She examined the nametags on two of the bags. "Like I told you, Mr. Stone"—she flipped over the final bag—"the name tag clearly says . . . Winston Stone."

Embarrassed, she began to apologize. "I'm so sorry, Mr. Stone. I was so preoccupied at the airport I must have picked up your bag by mistake. I'll have one of my assistants bring your bag to you in a minute."

Annoyed by this interruption, she called out for Miles, but there was no answer. She hurried to the bedroom door and called out again for Miles. Irritated, she called Peter's office. With each unanswered ring of his phone, Jacks could feel her blood pressure increasing.

"You have reached the voice mail of Peter Carlton. I'm unable to take your call right now, but if you—"

Jacks slammed down the receiver. She called Derrick's office; still no answer. Jacks was almost to the boiling point. She called her receptionist and drilled her like a military sergeant. "Where's Derrick?"

"He went to the copy room to pick up some papers."

“Where’s Peter?”

“He went to lunch.”

“And Miles?”

“He took Peter to lunch.”

“Thank you.”

Jacks frantically finished her makeup and grabbed Mr. Stone’s luggage. She marched to the elevator and proceeded down to the reception area.

The first floor lobby was like an old grand hotel with state-of-the-art equipment. It had large white marble columns near the entrance, burgundy carpet, and gray furniture. The half-moon-shaped reception/security desk was positioned in the middle of the lobby. Behind the large desk sat the receptionist and a security guard. The desk was also equipped with a TV monitor and a fifty-line telephone switchboard.

She glanced around the elegant lobby until she spotted the man with black luggage similar to the one in her hand.

She approached him with an apologetic smile. “I guess you are Mr. Stone. I’m—”

“Save it! I have been waiting here for over ten minutes.”

Mr. Stone stood to make the exchange. Jacks looked upward at the lean six-foot-six-tall man as he towered over her. He had dark bedroom-brown eyes, high cheekbones, a small cleft in his chin, and hair so black it looked wet. His flawless dark brown complexion and chiseled good looks caught her off guard for a moment.

“Obviously your boss thinks she’s the only person who has things to do today. That’s what happens when you give women power, it goes to their head. I bet she’s a real bitch to work for. I know that she can’t read.”

“I find her to be a very good woman to work for.”

Mr. Stone smiled as if he were looking at a juicy steak.

“I bet she’s not as attractive as you.”

“I wouldn’t know. I don’t look at women. Here is your luggage. Now, if you will excuse me, I have a meeting to attend.”

Jacks returned to the penthouse floor. As she stepped off the elevator, the receptionist called to her.

“Ms. White, the Vandicamps are in the large conference room, and Derrick is with them.”

“How long have they been in there?”

“Only a couple of minutes.”

“Thanks.”

Jacks straightened her clothes, ran her fingers through her black bobbed hair, and proceeded to the conference room. She approached the conference room and was about to make her grand entrance when she heard Derrick’s voice. Observing Derrick for a moment as he explained to the Vandicamps his floor plan for the new site, her jaw tightened.

“As you can see, gentlemen, by placing the walls here you maximize your space and save money.”

Derrick noticed Jacks standing in the doorway. “Ms. White, I was just showing the Vandicamps the building for the new plant in West Virginia.”

All eyes turned toward Jacks as she entered the room with confidence.

“I’m sorry I’m late; an emergency on the second floor. You know how it is when you own a business. Some people just can’t make a decision without you, and others do not know when not to make a decision. If I could only find more people like my driver Miles. He is perfect. He does what he is paid to do.” She glanced over at Derrick like he was a child caught with his hand in the cookie jar. She sashayed toward the head of the conference table where Derrick had perched himself. Derrick leaped from her chair and moved quickly to the right side of her. “I hope my assistant kept you entertained. I apologize again for my tardiness.”

The Vandicamp brothers John and Alex were from an old family in upstate New York. They wore expensive Italian suits and Rolex watches. Both men were playboys, and Jacks planned on using their weak spot as her backup plan.

“So, gentlemen, did you read my proposal I sent to you?”

Alex shuffled paper from side to side. “Well, Jacquelyn, I can call you Jacquelyn?”

Jacks smiled and gently placed her hand on top of his. “No, we are going to be business partners. Please, call me Jacks.”

Alex responded to Jacks’ flirtation with a smile. “Okay, Jacks. We have to do a little more research on the site you want to build on. Are the people willing to let you build in their community? We tried to give those rednecks jobs a couple of years ago. We were going to build a sewage treatment plant, but they put up so much opposition it wasn’t worth it. What did they say, John, that it would destroy the environment? Like the place doesn’t already stink.”

Jacks leaned back in her seat and crossed her long shapely legs. “Well, as you know, my plant won’t have hazardous materials. Yes, we will be using chemicals, but the dyes and paints that we will be using are safe.”

“Well, we still need to do more research and run the numbers by our accountants,” said John.

“As you can see by the numbers, your investment of a million dollars will double within three years.”

“That’s what your numbers say. But the fact remains that you have never run a plant,” said Alex, folding his arms and leaning back in the chair.

Confident, Jacks said, “That is true, but I won’t be running the plant. That’s what employees are for.”

Alex, still not convinced, said, “To be perfectly honest, Jacks, we do not think an interior decorator could have enough business

experience to make the leap from decorator to furniture maker. We feel you just do not have enough know-how to pull this off. But you do have a great pair of legs,” he said, gawking at her legs.

“Well, Alex, John, this so called interior decorator runs a million-dollar-a-year business that employs hundreds of people. And if I’m not mistaken, your building on “I” Street was designed and decorated by our firm.”

Both men glanced at each other and smiled.

Jacks realized the sexist head games were going nowhere, so she gathered her papers. “If you have any other questions, I’ll be more than happy to answer them. You can call me here or at my home. I think I gave you the numbers. Derrick will show you the way out.”

John and Alex shook Jacks’ hand as Derrick waited to show the men out.

“Oh, Derrick, don’t forget about the meeting tomorrow morning.”

Jacks took a deep breath and then went out of the conference room through the side door to her office.

It was now 1:45, and she was exhausted. She flopped into her desk chair and took a moment to listen to her messages. She began to doze off. The phone rang. Annoyed by the break in her nap, she glanced at the ringing machine. Briefly disoriented, she tried to focus on the caller’s name on the telephone display screen.

“Jacks, it’s Peter.”

“Yes, Peter.”

“I passed Derrick in the hall. How did the meeting go?”

“They know I have a good idea, but because I’m a woman, they’re dicking me around.”

“Don’t let them get to you. You have had to deal with men like that before. They don’t stand a chance against your charm.”

“I know, but it is so frustrating to continually have to prove myself to assholes. I’m tired, so I’m going home. If there is an emergency,

like a bomb threat, call the bomb squad.” Hanging up the phone, she dialed the number to Miles’ cell phone.

“Miles, I’m ready to go home. How long will it take you to get here?”

“I would say about thirty seconds.” He appeared in the suite entrance.

“Now, could you please bring my luggage? It’s on the bed where you left it. I’ll meet you downstairs in the garage.”

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# 2

Jacks leaned impatiently against the limousine as she waited for Miles, who was once again struggling with her luggage.

“What took you so long?” she bellowed.

Releasing the luggage, they dropped to the garage floor like missiles. Ignoring her question, he unlocked the trunk door, threw the luggage into it, and slammed the trunk door closed. He casually walked over to where she had perched herself against the door lock. “Do you mind moving over? I need to get to the lock,” he said as he gave her a slight shove.

They got into the car and prepared for the trip to Virginia.

“I’ll be glad when I get home, Miles.”

“You must have really had a rough day. Judging by the time, I guess the meeting with the Vandicamps didn’t go so well, but that doesn’t give you the right to talk to me that way. I’m not the enemy. I’m a friend who happens to be your employee. It seems that you have forgotten that fact.” Miles made a quick check of the mirror alignment.

“Thank you for the reminder. I’ll try to keep my emotions under control next time. But those damn Vandicamps make me so mad. They are nothing but two pigs dressed in expensive suits.”

“But they are rich pigs.”

“Yeah, and if I want to open this plant in West Virginia, they will be my only hope. With the economy the way it is, the banks aren’t lending money, especially to a black woman.”

“You can always call your mother.” Miles glanced into the rearview mirror for Jacks’ reaction.

Jacks became hostile. “Don’t make jokes, Miles. My mother told me to leave, remember?”

“That was ten years ago. Things change. People change. She’s older now. Maybe she’s seen the errors of her ways.”

“She turned her back on me,” she said with uneasy resolve. “I can forgive her, but I cannot forget how cruel she was.”

“She just wanted to keep her family close to her.”

“No, she wanted to keep her family under her total control.”

As her feelings of resentment and abandonment began to surface, Jacks tried to maintain her emotional composure by staring out of the window at the city traffic.

“You know, Miles, this day started off wrong at the airport. I picked up the wrong luggage.”

“The wrong luggage? It looked like all of the rest.”

“Well, it wasn’t. It belonged to some arrogant man named Winston Stone. He was livid because I made him wait for about ten minutes. Poor baby. Come to think of it, he was a very cute baby.” With a playful smile, Jacks laid her head on the seat. “Yeah, Miles, it has been a rough day. Unfortunately, it’s not over. I have a dinner meeting at six with the Hawkins Group. They want to buy a large block of stock in an architectural firm in Atlanta, and for some reason they want me to be in on it. Steven Hawkins and I are old friends; maybe he just wants to let me in on a good deal.”

“Are you going to do it?”

“I don’t know. Steven hasn’t given me a lot of background information on the company. I’ll have a better idea after dinner tonight.” Jacks yawned. “All I want to do right now is sleep. So, if you will excuse me, I’m going to take a catnap.” Jacks pressed the button to raise the black partition between her and Miles.

## FOURTEEN YEARS EARLIER

Jacks sat intently watching the images on the television evening news. Suddenly her father interrupted her.

William White was over six feet tall. His skin was like dark chocolate. His deep-set brown eyes and wavy black hair reminded her of a movie star. He was an even-tempered and fair man with a kind soul.

“Hey, I was watching that,” she said in playful protest.

“You watch too much TV.”

“It was the news.”

“In your eighteen years of life, have you ever seen a black man in handcuffs or black uneducated women with their hair undone and babies in each arm?”

“Well...”

“Look around you.”

Jacks followed her father’s instructions.

“Do you see roaches or rats?”

Puzzled by her father’s tangent, Jacks answered, “Well, no.”

Jacks’ father sat down by his daughter and gave her a big hug.

“I work very hard to give you everything you see around you. My life growing up was tough and seemingly unfair. And the only difference between that young black man on TV in handcuffs and me is my attitude. I realized young that white people are not my worst enemy. A negative attitude is. If you think your life is crap, it will be. You see, honey,” her father sighed, “television is usually the white man’s view of the world. To them, reporting the sad state of affairs that plague the black race is news. They don’t realize that most of the black people captured on the news are like the white people on Wall Street who jumped off building ledges when the stock market crashed. People who can’t see a way out kill themselves. And suicide

is done in many different ways. All we can do is keep our black family strong for generations to come and set an example for those who need inspiration or exceptions.”

“Father, why are you telling me this? I was only watching the news to find out the weather.”

Mr. White chuckled at his daughter’s innocence. “Just store my speech in your memory bank. Your mother wants you in the dining room.”

Jacks was a high-spirited girl with a lot of big plans for her future. Seated at the dinner table, she watched her mother, Margaret, and her older sister, Maxine.

Margaret White was an attractive and very proud woman in her mid forties. She was never without her makeup, and her short dark brown hair was always in place, yet she seemed angry and hardly ever smiled. Forever competing with the neighbors, she shopped every day.

“Mother, will Father be joining us for dinner tonight? I want to tell him about the college I have chosen to attend this fall.”

“Your father has a very important meeting tomorrow. He is working on a building design.”

“He is always working on a building design.”

“If he doesn’t work, how do you expect to go to college? And what do you mean the college you have chosen? I thought we had already decided that you were going to a local university?”

“No, Mother, you decided that I was going to a local school, but Father said I could choose. And I’m going to Harvard. I have worked hard all through high school so I could attend a good university. So I want to go to Harvard.”

Margaret became annoyed by her daughter’s attitude. “Well, who do you think is going to pay for this expensive university?”

“Father, and there is not a damn thing you can do about it.”

Jacks’ mother slapped her across the face.

“How dare you use that tone and language with me. You are still in my home. And as long as you are in my home, you will show me respect.”

Jacks threw her fork down and pushed away from the table.

“Well, when I go to Harvard, I’ll not be in your damn home.” She stormed out of the dining room, leaving her sister and mother at the table.

Hiding her amusement, Maxine turned her face away from her mother’s view because she didn’t want to be subjected to her mother’s scorn.

Maxine was soft-spoken and a year older than Jacks. Her big brown puppy-dog eyes always looked sad, as if she had just lost her best friend. Her slender face wore signs of restless nights. Lately, she approached life as if it was a chore. And since her fall down the stairs last year, she hardly ever smiled. Maxine was Margaret’s favorite and made no attempt to hide it, so Maxine and Jacks were not too close. Because of the family structure, not really having her mother to lean on or a sister she could confide in, Jacks clung to her father. And her father adored her.

Feeling like she had just won a battle, Jacks marched into her father’s study. “Father, so I hear you have a big meeting tomorrow.”

“Yes, I do, but I always have time for my little girl.”

He laid down his pencil and became a captive audience.

“I’m going to follow in your footsteps, you know. Well, not exactly in your footsteps. I’m going to be an interior designer.”

“Well, honey, that is in the same field.”

“Yeah, I guess you are right. You will design the outside, and I’ll design the inside. So, when I graduate from Harvard, you can change the name of your company from White Inc. to White and White. Kind of catchy, don’t you think?”

Full of pride, he said, “I like it. So, you are going to Harvard.”

“I want to go to Harvard but—”

“Well, if my baby girl wants to go to Harvard, then Harvard she shall go.”

“But Mother said I can’t go. She said that I had to go to a local university.”

“Don’t worry; I’ll take care of your mother.”

“Thank you. You’re the best.”

“I don’t know if I have ever told you this or not, but I’m proud of you. You have turned out to be such a beautiful and intelligent young lady; that’s a deadly combination that can work for or against you. You remind me so much of your mother. Your big brown eyes so full of hope, sparkling like rare jewels. And your smile that always warms my heart.”

Jacks gave her father a big bear hug. “I love you too. But wait a minute. Mother’s eyes are black!”

“Did I say your mother? I meant to say your grandmother. You are a sharp one. Maybe you should become a lawyer. You are going to do well at Harvard.”

While Jacks was in the office with her father, her mother was lurking at the doorway. She barged into the room as Jacks and her father embraced.

“Well isn’t this a touching scene. I guess Jacks told you of her plans. I’ll not allow it! If she wants to go to Harvard, then she can get a job and pay for it. I did without to help you go through school, but I’m not about to modify my lifestyle again so this ungrateful brat can go to Harvard.”

Trying to calm down his wife, he said, “Margaret, we can talk about this later.”

Margaret, determined to battle it out, said, “No, I do not want to talk about this later. We will talk about this now. I think it is time you had a reality check. When I met you, you were a waiter at

my country club. You lived in the crime-infested ghetto. I talked my father into setting up a scholarship for the underprivileged so you could concentrate on school and not work so much. And because of one carefree night in the park, I became pregnant with Maxine. I was disinherited and had to struggle to help you complete your senior year. I did without a lot, and I'll be damned if I'll do it again.”

William, trying to be a diplomat, said, “Margaret, I really think we should talk about this later.”

“I do not want to talk about this later. What's wrong, you don't want your darling daughter to know where you came from? Or maybe you don't want her to know that I was pregnant before we were married. That's probably it. You don't want your precious daughter to know that you aren't this noble king. She's old enough to know that you are a dog, just like every other man in this world. You make me sick,” she said with venom.

“Margaret, I do not wish to discuss this in front of Jacks.”

“I don't give a damn what you want. Because of you I lost my inheritance and my beauty.”

“Like I said, I didn't want to talk about this, but since you are determined to air your hostility in front of Jacks, I think we need to get a few things straight. Yes, it is true I worked at your country club, and I did live in the ghetto, but I was working during the day to pay for my night classes. You wanted me to stop working so much so we could spend more time together. You took it upon yourself to ask your father to set up the scholarship. And as far as Maxine is concerned, you were a willing participant. And you know the real reason why your father disinherited you is because you told him he could go to hell when he offered to let us stay in his home in upstate New York instead of buying you a new home in the area. If anyone is a spoiled brat, it is you. Like you said, Jacks is old enough to know.”

The room became silent for a minute. While retreating, Margaret

says, “We can discuss this later.” She left the room, taking the tension with her.

“Father, why do you stay with her? It is obvious there is no love left in this marriage.”

“I don’t know, honey,” he sighed. “And right now I’m wondering if there ever was any love in this marriage.”

Jacks gave her father a reassuring hug. “I’ll let you finish.”

As Jacks left the room, her father called out to her. “Don’t worry honey, you will be going to Harvard.”

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## *From the author*

I hope that you enjoyed the story! The JA White series is a continuing story about Jacquelyn White and the people that are a part of her life. There are deaths in the stories that are part of an ongoing murder mystery. The next book in the series is about Jacks' life without Miles and the history of Peter and Jacks relationship. Book three will be about Miles' past and his life with Maxine.

I invite you to join in the discussion on my discussion board. We can discuss the book and the issues brought up in the book.

Do you agree with the statement?

Life is a rocky journey filled with complicated decisions. Some decisions that we make when we are younger wouldn't even be considered when we become older. The character Jacquelyn White made decisions based on youth and desperation. Would you have made the same decisions that she made given the same circumstances, maybe, maybe not?

I value your opinion, so I invite you to join in the discussion.

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