

A So Sophisticated Publication

WHEN I'M LOVING YOU

K. Lowery Moore



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Adult Literature with a K*1*S
(Keepin' It Sophisticated)

So Sophisticated Publications
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Author's Note

Although this is a work of fiction, some of the characters and situations presented in this book were inspired by actual people and events. Most of the situations were embellished for an extra dramatic appeal. All parties presented in the book have been notified, however, the names were changed to protect the innocent, as well as the guilty.

All poems included in this novel are original works by the author and may have been edited from its original creation to fit in within the story.

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*This book was written in loving memory of my mother
Ernestine Lowery Moore
(1941-1983)*

For My Mother

Today and everyday I know you are smiling down on me
And I hope you are proud of the woman I've turned out to be
All that I've done and all that I do
Mama, is in the honor of you

You are the source of my strength to keep me striving for the best
I admired you so, you made motherhood seem effortless
Never complaining, putting your children's needs in
front of your own I just wish you were here to see
how we have grown

These past 24 years have been so hard without you here
Especially on Mother's Day, I just wish you could be near
Your picture hangs on my wall to soothe me when I'm sad
Plus your grandsons can see what a beautiful mother I had

But again, I know you're in Heaven smiling down
I would just prefer to have you around
Mama, sometimes I need you especially when the
world is not so friendly
But I always live by the values you've instilled in me

To always be strong and walk with my head held high
Carry myself like a lady and never be afraid to cry
To always have dignity and a sense of self respect
Because when all else fails that's all you have left

So, Mama, as you can see, your baby girl is okay
In my heart you will always stay

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I have to thank God for my existence. Those who know me may not know that on August 8, 2004, I almost became a memory. I was struck by a stray bullet that missed my spine by less than an inch. Since then, I have been living my life to the fullest and have stopped saying, “I’m going to do this tomorrow” because tomorrow may never get here. That incident gave me the push I needed to pursue my dream of being a published author.

I want to thank my mother and guardian angel, the late Ernestine Lowery Moore, for having me. Mama, I know it was probably a hard decision because you were already trying to survive as a single mother raising three other bad kids (smile). Although you are not physically here, I know you are here watching over me. I hope I make you proud.

To my father, Herman Sr., I know you don’t feel appreciated, but, Daddy, I am very grateful for the things you have taught me throughout the years. I was actually listening to you.

To Mary, you are the best stepmother a child could possibly have. You were there for me as if I was truly your own birth daughter and you are still here for me although I am an adult. I can’t begin to express the love I have for you.

To my siblings: Judy, Angela, and H. Marcellus Jr. This world would be a lonely place without you. We have all struggled

with the loss of our mother but we have managed to become wonderful adults when we could have very well turned out to be drug addicts or something worse. Marcus, though we only share a paternal parent, you are still one of us. You can't escape the Moore curse. Just kidding!

I know we aren't supposed to have favorites in our family. However, to my cousin Courtney, you are more than family to me; you are one of my best friends. Keep being a Diva, you've earned it! Thanks for reading my manuscript, in advance, and giving me honest feedback.

To my nephew, Trovon, who is more like a brother to me; keep striving for greatness. I know you have it in you, because you are related to me (smile). Follow your dreams!

To N. Brackett, I pray for your safe return from Iraq. You mean more to me than you will ever know. I'm still mad that you decided to go into the military in the midst of a war. However, I understand that you were fulfilling a dream of your own. I'm so proud of you!

To my friend and mentor, Yonder, what can I say? How is thank you, thank you, thank you? God brought you into my life at the perfect time. Our God is always on time. Thank you for believing in my ability to get this done. No matter how discouraged I became, you kept me focused, always having something positive to say. Check out this author on www.myspace.com/whatidoistaboo.

I want to give an extra special thank you to one of my editors and literary advisor, Jessica Tilles. You have been a very critical part of my dream, and I am forever grateful. Please check out this ESSENCE best-selling author at www.jessicatilles.com.

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Last, but of course not least, my sons Antonio and Andray. I love you guys more than anything else! Discover your purpose and expand on your abilities. Life is full of endless possibilities.

*My world was once so limited
Now my horizon has been expanded
I have experienced so much
In all the places I have landed*

*Once moving slowly through life
Unsure where the road would lead me
Now I can travel to some of the highest places
I thought I would never see*

*I used to be afraid to venture out
Thinking I could be crushed along with my dream
Now that I've shed my old skin
I've developed into the most beautiful thing*

My life is that of a Butterfly

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the strong, black women who have survived and prospered even in the midst of all kinds of adversity. A special dedication goes out to all the caring, black men that hung in there when we strong, black women seemed emotionally unavailable. This book could not have been written without the positive, black male presence I have in my life. Remember sistas and brothas, we are in this together. Black love is alive and well; all we have to do is just pay attention.

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CHAPTER 1

NATASHA

I FELT THE STREAM OF TEARS fall down my cheeks as I taped the last box of things I packed so far. It had been six months since I buried my only child and the pain was too much to bear. Every room in my four-bedroom townhouse reminded me of my sixteen-year-old daughter whom I would never see alive again. Therefore, I knew that it was best for me to move. It was a hard decision, but I decided to sell my house and move into a small two-bedroom condominium that was for rent in a nearby neighborhood. From there, I planned to figure out exactly what my next move was going to be. I worked so hard to get this house and to maintain it that it was actually heartbreaking to move. In the beginning, I struggled to make ends meet, but I tried not to complain.

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When my daughter, Aisha, was two years old, her dad decided that he was not ready for a family. He preferred to run the streets, get drunk, and smoke weed with his boys. I guess a part of Tyrone hadn't grown up, but I didn't have much of a choice when Aisha was born. I was determined to remain strong and not let his running the streets affect Aisha. She was my priority and I was going to make sure that she had the best of everything. When I suspected Tyrone was selling marijuana, I decided that I should prepare to move out on my own. I was only nineteen years old, so I wasn't sure how I was going to make it, but I knew I would have to figure it out along the way.

I contemplated taking advantage of public assistance, but that wasn't really me to accept handouts. Being in a foster home was one thing; I didn't have a choice where I ended up in the system after my parents died. I was now an adult, so I did have a choice. Tyrone's mother, whom I called Ma Price, helped me apply for a federal government job where she worked at the Department of Education. I really wanted to work in a clothing store, but it didn't pay enough money for me to pay bills and take care of Aisha. I was extremely excited when I was hired for the Administrative Assistant job I applied for. Soon after I started working, I moved into a spacious one-bedroom apartment close to Ma Price's house. The apartment had plenty of room for my baby girl and me.

Tyrone and I weren't together anymore, but his mother was still there for me like when I lived with them. Tyrone resented my relationship with his mother because he thought that was my way of making sure I kept up with what he was doing. In a way, he was right, but I loved his mother. Ma Price was a mother

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to me as well. She took me in after I told her one of my foster brothers, Bobby, wanted me to have sex with him. He kept saying it was okay since we weren't related by blood; however, I still considered him my brother. Since I was almost eighteen when I found out I was pregnant with Tyrone's baby, it was arranged for me to live with Tyrone and his mother. My foster mother said I could continue to stay with her, but I couldn't do that after Bobby kept trying to touch me even after he knew I was pregnant. I was afraid he would try to force himself on me one day. I didn't tell my foster mother what was going on with Bobby because I didn't want to cause any problems for her. I knew she needed the money she was getting for him and the other kids. I didn't want to risk them being taken away from her.

Ma Price died from complications after having a stroke a year after I moved out, and that was when Tyrone's smoking and drinking became worse. I knew he was hurting from the loss of his mother, but he started living a very destructive lifestyle. He would wake up and smoke a blunt before he even brushed his teeth. When he would come to visit Aisha, I could tell he was high. I couldn't continue to watch him destroy his life. Therefore, I decided to move from Riverdale, Georgia to Suitland, Maryland since I had friends who lived close to that area and it was affordable. I felt it was necessary for me to leave Georgia in order to avoid running into Tyrone. I needed to move on with my life; I was deeply in love with him and it pained me to see what he was becoming. I had to get over him somehow and focus on being a mother to my daughter.

My job was able to transfer me to the Department of Education headquarters building in Washington, DC. After I settled into

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my new apartment in Suitland, Maryland, I enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree program for Education at the University of Maryland, University College Campus. Tyrone promised he would support Aisha, but my pride would not allow it. I was so stubborn and determined to make it on my own; I didn't want his help. He would try to give me money, but I would never accept it. One day, he mailed me a check for \$500 and I mailed it back, shredded! I thought it might have been "fast" money from selling drugs and I didn't want it.

Tyrone claimed that he was not ready to commit to a relationship around the time I left Georgia, but that soon changed. He married another woman when Aisha was five years old. That was only two years after I left and I was crushed. I would try to visit Georgia at least two or three times a year so Tyrone could see Aisha, but after his marriage, I stopped going to Georgia. Needless to say, it was the last time Tyrone saw her, except in pictures, until the day of her funeral.

After I learned of Tyrone's marriage, I felt a sense of rejection. I wondered if I wasn't good enough for him to commit to me. Was there something wrong with me? Eventually, I convinced myself that I was too good for him, so those insecure thoughts faded. I kept telling myself that things don't work out the way we plan them sometimes. Moreover, I realized that we were too young for marriage at the time Aisha was born.

Although Aisha grew up without her dad, she became a promising young woman. I was so proud of her. She was quiet and shy, but she had many friends. She made A's and B's all through high school and in her junior year, she started applying to colleges. She was getting letters from various universities to

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visit their campus. However, from the time she was in junior high school, she had her heart set on going to Princeton University. She often thought Princeton was out of our financial reach, but ever since Aisha was five years old, I had been saving \$500 per month toward her college education. My federal government job paid enough money for me to be able to save \$250 per payday.

I purchased my first home in the community of Kettering in Upper Marlboro, Maryland when I reached the GS-9 level. Therefore, with any promotion I received after that, I could save the net difference. After I received my Master's Degree in Education, I managed to work my way up from an Administrative Assistant - GS-9 - to a GS-14 position as an Education Specialist, still within the Department of Education. Although I was making close to \$100,000 a year, I made sure I lived within my means in order to live comfortably and to prepare for my daughter's future. I managed to save roughly \$75,000, with all the interest accrued, to put toward my daughter's education. As expensive as things were now, that would have only covered about two years of college, if that. It didn't matter because I believed the rest of the money was going to come.

Aisha was as beautiful as she was smart. I hated that boys were calling on the telephone for her, but the way things were these days, I was glad she was interested in boys and not girls. I remember the day when Aisha came to me and asked if we could talk about sex. I wanted a hole to open up and swallow me, but on the other hand, I was glad she was comfortable to come to me. The first thing she said was, "Mom, I am not having sex yet, but I am curious about it." I kept looking around for that hole to appear. I knew what she was going through because I was in

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the eleventh grade also when I became curious about sex. I felt I didn't have anyone to turn to and that's how Aisha got here.

When Aisha's high school arranged a tour of colleges for the top students in their junior class, I could not have possibly told her she couldn't go. She would have never forgiven me and I needed Aisha as much as she needed me. Who would have thought that putting my only child on a bus to attend a college tour would be the last time I would see her alive? The thought of her last few moments being in fear or in pain, deeply saddened me. Apparently, the driver of an eighteen-wheeler fell asleep, crossed the median into oncoming traffic, and collided with the tour bus my daughter was on. When I received a telephone call that night, I thought it was Aisha letting me know that she arrived safely at the first college location. I could not have been more wrong because they never made it to the college tour. It was one of the school administrators calling to notify me of the accident. Many of us lost our children on that day. As painful as it was, I had to continue living without my child. However, the question was *how*?

The sound of the doorbell ringing interrupted my thoughts. I knew it was that damn Tyrone. I didn't turn him away this time because I knew he was hurting over the loss of Aisha, too. A lot of his hurt was due to his guilt of not being around for Aisha, which I will admit was partially my fault. I agreed to meet with him since he was in town for a business trip. About a year after Tyrone's mother died, he managed to enroll in college at Georgia State and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting. His mother left him a substantial amount of money and he used it for his college tuition. She would be so proud of him today.

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“Hello, Tyrone,” I said, as I opened the door, avoiding eye contact.

“I don’t plan to stay long, but I wanted to see you before I left town,” Tyrone uttered, as he tried to hold back his tears.

“What is this about, Tyrone?” I tried to sound as if I didn’t care, but I did, I just couldn’t let him know it.

Before today, the last time Tyrone and I spoke was at Aisha’s funeral. My foster mother thought it would have been cruel of me not to let him know about the accident. I couldn’t understand how he could act as if he cared when he didn’t watch her grow up. I knew that was probably not a fair thing to say since I was the one who picked up and moved to another state, keeping Aisha from him. I just didn’t want him in and out of her life like some kind of revolving door. Kids don’t understand why Daddy didn’t show up and then Mommy has to spend the next few hours consoling a crying child trying to explain what happened. I wasn’t having it. Call me stubborn, but Aisha was too important to me to see her hurt, period!

When Aisha was about twelve years old, she started asking about her dad, so I decided to let her call him. I didn’t want her hating me for keeping her from him. Tyrone sent her calling cards and they established a long-distance bond. She was so happy. She would have me snapping pictures all day so she could send them to him. I thought that was too cute of her to want to do that for him. She loved her daddy although he wasn’t physically there. I would have done anything to make sure my daughter was happy, even if it meant dealing with that damn Tyrone.

“I know I didn’t always do right by you or Aisha, but I hope that one day you will forgive me,” Tyrone said, handing me an envelope.

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“I told you I don’t want anything from you, Tyrone,” I snapped bitterly with both hands on my curvaceous hips.

“Please, for once stop being so stubborn and take it. You know, there was a time when I was in love with you, Tash, and I never stopped caring about you although our relationship didn’t work. Take this and you will never have to deal with me again, if you don’t want to.”

A part of me wanted to cry because he was right; there was a time when we were in love. I don’t understand what happened to Tyrone back then. I accepted the envelope. He kissed me on the cheek and walked out of my life and maybe for good that time, who knows? Inside the envelope were a letter and a smaller envelope. I put the smaller envelope in the Bible on my nightstand and unfolded the letter. It read:

Dear Natasha,

I’m writing this letter in hopes to make amends for hurting you for so many years. It was never my intention for things to turn out the way that they did because you were my first love. I guess I was too young to handle the pressures of a relationship and like a coward, I ran away from my responsibilities and started running the streets. I know sorry is not enough for all the pain that I’ve caused you, but I need to say it anyway. It has taken me six months to face you after Aisha’s funeral. I still can’t believe that she is gone. I owe you so much, but I know money is not enough to repay you for all that you have gone through raising her. I couldn’t handle that you didn’t need me. You were woman enough not to put up with my bullshit and to raise our child alone. For that, I deeply admire you. The day Aisha called me

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for the first time, I was so happy that you finally let her contact me. That filled a void in my life. Ever since you left Georgia, I put money aside each month to surprise the both of you when it was time for her to go to college. I knew she always dreamed of going to a prestigious university and I wanted to make her dream a reality. I know you would not have accepted it since you sent my checks back to me shredded. Therefore, I put the money in a money market account. Well, I guess I say all of this to say, the money is now yours. It's not much, but I wanted you to know that I loved our daughter although I didn't always do a very good job of showing it. Because of me, I know it has been hard for you to trust men and to fall in love, but rest assure; we are not all assholes. You deserve the very best in life, so let your guard down, please, for Aisha. She would often tell me that she wanted you to get married and be happy. However, she often felt like she was in the way. Love again, life is way too short not to.

Always,

Tyrone

This was the Tyrone I remembered and fell in love with in high school. I cried so hard, the words started to smear off the letter from my tears. I folded the letter up and placed it in the Bible along with the smaller envelope. I wouldn't find out until the next day that inside the envelope was the information for the money market account that Tyrone had opened for Aisha. The paperwork named me as the sole beneficiary. He actually loved his daughter more than I realized.

Tyrone wrote his cell phone number and the telephone number to his hotel room on the outside of the smaller envelope in case I

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wanted to talk. I wanted to see him one last time if he was going to walk out of my life forever. When I called, he sounded very happy to hear from me. I asked him if it was okay for me to stop by his hotel room so we could talk, there were so many things I needed to get off my chest. He agreed that I could come by later on that evening. He gave me the address to the hotel and his room number.



It was a beautiful Friday night and the drive to the hotel was very soothing. I was playing a CD by Kindred. I sang along with my favorite song on the CD. *“Far away from here, far away from here. I want to jump in a taxi cab, pack a bag, and get away fast.”* That was exactly how I felt; I wanted to get far away from here.

After parking my car, I called Tyrone to let him know that I was downstairs in the lobby and I would be up soon. I found Tyrone’s hotel room and knocked on the door. I wasn’t prepared at all for what was about to take place. When Tyrone opened the door to his hotel room, he was wearing a pair of basketball shorts and a T-shirt with the sleeves cut off. Damn, he looked good. He must have taken a shower before I arrived because he smelled fresh like Dove Soap and some cologne I couldn’t make out.

“What kind of cologne are you wearing?”

“Armani.”

“It smells good on you.”

“Thank you.” Tyrone smirked, as if he was surprised at my compliment. “Would you like a glass of wine?”

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“Sure, thanks.”

He poured me a glass of wine and we toasted to the good ol' days. We talked for what seemed like hours, but only an hour actually went past. I wanted to make sure he knew there weren't any hard feelings on my end and that I wanted to apologize for moving so far away and keeping Aisha from him. He assured me he never stopped thinking about us and asked me if I had opened the other envelope that he had given me. I told him that I would open it when I got back home.

As I stood to walk toward the door, Tyrone stepped up close behind me and put his arms around my waist as if to say, “Don't go.” *What in the world*, I thought, but I couldn't move or say anything. Part of it was because of the four glasses of wine I had consumed and the other part was because I was, actually, where I wanted to be for that moment. Tyrone started kissing the back of my neck and gently rubbing his fully erect penis on my ass. Again, I couldn't move or say anything. Like a schoolgirl, I stood there and smiled. He turned me around and we started to kiss. *Damn*, I thought to myself, as I felt myself becoming instantly moist. *After all these years, he still turns me on*. I wanted him to stop kissing me, touching me, and grinding on me, but my body didn't want him to. Next thing I knew, my shirt was up over my head and my skirt was around my feet. Oops! I felt like the R&B singer Tweet in her song *Oops*. Unlike Tweet, I wasn't alone; I was in Tyrone's arms. Why did I wear this skirt in the first damn place? Too easy! Tyrone looked me straight in my eyes as if to ask for approval to continue. I blinked seductively as if to say, “Take me, I'm yours.”

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After I helped him out of his clothes, he picked me up and carried me over to the king-sized bed. He unhooked my bra with one hand and he then proceeded to pull down my thong with his teeth. He kissed and caressed my entire body until I couldn't take it anymore. My body hadn't had this much attention in a long time, so I wasn't about to stop him. I handed him the condom that he took out of his overnight bag. I don't remember him putting it on the pillow although I saw him take it out of the bag. I stroked his penis a few times to make sure he was nice and hard and then he slid on the condom. I was so ready for him that as soon as he climbed on top of me, I grabbed his erection and pushed him inside of me. Umm! I couldn't believe how good it felt. One passionate thrust after another from Tyrone made my eyes roll up in my head. We were sixteen again, but with eighteen more years of experience. After having a series of orgasms, I slept like a baby. I know Tyrone was satisfied because he was snoring before I actually drifted off.

The next morning, I awoke before Tyrone. I decided to get up, wash my face, and brush my teeth in case he wanted some morning "nookie." As I walked past the dresser that stood next to the bed, I noticed some paperwork, which looked like court documents, on top of a brown 9 x 12 envelope. I tried not to look at the paperwork, but I swear I couldn't help it. As I looked closer, it was a copy of signed divorce papers. "Damn, he's no longer married," I said quietly to myself, as the thrill of sleeping with a married man quickly faded. I decided to act as if I didn't see the divorce papers and proceeded to the bathroom. I guess I was making too much noise because Tyrone almost immediately joined me in the bathroom. He also washed his face and brushed

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his teeth. *Thank you*, I thought because I hated when a man tried to talk to me in the morning prior to brushing his teeth. He must have remembered me fussing about that when we were together years ago. When we were both done in the bathroom, we climbed back in the bed. I was hungry, so I was glad when Tyrone asked if I wanted him to order room service. After our order was placed, we kissed and cuddled. Our breakfast arrived about twenty minutes later. While we were eating breakfast, I remembered that Tyrone had a plane to catch back to Georgia.

“What time is your flight?” I asked, knowing I didn’t want him to go.

“I canceled it for right now,” he responded, grinning from ear to ear.

I asked him why he canceled his flight and he told me it was because he wanted to spend the weekend with me. *Lord, what have I done?* I said a silent prayer in my head for Tyrone not to hurt me again. I have always known that he was my soul mate and that was why it has been so hard for me to take other men seriously. A part of me has always wanted us to get back together, but he was so irresponsible back then. I didn’t know if I could trust him. A lot had changed in both of us, but I actually thought it was for the better. My thoughts were interrupted with the reality that I still needed to pack Aisha’s room.

“I have to pack Aisha’s things this weekend as hard as it’s going to be for me.” I could feel my eyes start to water.

“I’ll help you. You shouldn’t have to do this alone. You have been so strong through all of this and I want to be there for you.” He sounded very sincere as he hugged me.

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“Sure, why not. I’m sure Aisha would be glad to see us finally getting along.”

“Yeah, I’m sure she’s watching over us.”

“I hope she wasn’t watching us last night,” I said jokingly, trying to make light of the situation. Tyrone laughed and nodded.

Dianne and Lynda are going to have a field day with this when I tell them Sunday at brunch. They’re not going to believe that I had sex with Tyrone and great sex at that. Well, Dianne might believe it; she had pretty much already predicted it would happen. She gets on my nerves, damn know-it-all, but I love her dearly. I know I will have to hear a lecture from her ass as if she has never done crazy things. I hate that she has that PhD in Psychology. Wasn’t it bad enough that she would analyze everything when we were teenagers? *Now, Natasha...* I can hear her now.