

Looking into his eyes, Nicole was intrigued by what she saw and felt. It was as if the sky had cleared, the sun was shining and she felt the refreshing breeze after a spring rain hit her all at once. But, she could see something else in his eyes that gave her pause. She could see a lingering deep despair that made her want to take him in her arms and tell him it would be okay. At 5' 8" with dark blond hair and brown eyes, she had always been a tomboy at heart and much preferred playing games outdoors to sitting inside and reading. She had never really considered herself a beautiful woman just merely average but she had never been swept off her feet or stopped dead in her tracks by meeting a man until now. Her athletic grace seemed to elude her anytime she saw something she may be interested in. Today had caught her by surprise. She did not see this tall stranger until it was too late and she was bumping into him with full force running to get something for her mother. Right now she was thanking God that she needed more ketchup for her fries. "It is a pleasure to meet you Dr. Montgomery" she said with a smile and warm tender eyes. Nicole had been alone too long. Yes she dated in recent years but it never lasted. She was looking for the one Mr. Right not Mr. Right now. She had always had a notion that romantic love, love at first sight was out there waiting for her and she would not settle for anything less. However, today she could not help feeling that maybe she had finally found her tall prince charming. "So, did you go to school here?" she asked.

"No I am a proud graduate of the University of Georgia." Lincoln said.

"Eww." Nicole said with a chuckle.

"So what brings you to Auburn? Slumming it with other schools?" She said mockingly.

“No, since Rob and I became friends, I have become almost as much part of the Auburn family as I am the Georgia Bulldog Nation. I like to give to the scholarship fund every year but unfortunately my seats usually go unused or given to friends and staff members. As a matter of fact I just auctioned off my luxury box at Georgia for the Auburn Georgia game last night at the charity event.”

“Well that was mighty nice of you. So why are you here and not in Athens today?”

“I prefer Rob and Erin’s company to the empty seats around me. It is so nice to have friends that accept me for what I am and not who I am or who I know.”

“Well then”, she said “you want to avoid that group over there. They only care about your bank account and whether or not they can get into it.” She said pointing at a group of women standing on the far side of the room. Lincoln laughed hard for what seemed like the first time in 3 years. He was suddenly feeling light on his feet as if the burden was being lifted.

“So what about you Nicole, do you enjoy your work and living in Atlanta?”

“I love my job. I am lucky enough to work with the best people in the business and the ability to see people regain use of their bodies and even walk again is simply amazing. I often find it difficult to put into words how I feel about it. Atlanta, well it is Atlanta. I grew up outside of Atlanta and lived there all of my life except for college and grad school. The only big change is moving to the Dunwoody area.”

“Really, I live over in the Dunwoody area as well. I wanted something close to work and to avoid the commute.” Lincoln said but thought *I am running away from the ghosts of my past*

*at my house. What would she think about me if she knew the truth.*” “Please do not think this is another line, but you look so familiar. I can’t help but feel that I have seen you somewhere this weekend.”

“Well unless you were out at the Grand National yesterday then it was not this weekend.” Nicole said.

“Wait. You were the woman I saw on the 18<sup>th</sup> tee box. I stood there and admired your grace and athleticism from afar. I was taken by your strength and beauty and the way you could drive a golf ball. I was surprised to see you playing from the men’s tees. I don’t mean that in a sexist way it is just most women play from the forward tees.”

“Well I suppose most women are not scratch golfers from the men’s tees.”

Suddenly flush with renewed vigor, Lincoln knew he had to spend more time with this remarkable woman. “Please don’t think that I am being too forward, but are currently seeing anyone seriously or not so seriously? I only ask because I would really like to take you to dinner or lunch so that we could get to know each other better.”

“Well Dr. Montgomery, this is totally unexpected, but no I am not seeing anyone serious or otherwise. I would not mind having dinner with you but my schedule is very busy and I have a difficult time getting away from work at a decent hour.”

Interrupting her Lincoln said, “Please call me Lincoln or Linc as that is what my friends call me. Sorry to interrupt please continue.”

“As I was saying, I do believe I can try to make some time.” Nicole was suddenly struck with the thought *why did I say yes to something so quickly. I know that I do not really have time, but there is something about him that intrigues me and makes me want to know him better.* Holding out her hand Nicole says, “Give me your phone and I will put my number in there then you can text me with yours. I am sorry to have to run but I need to get back to my family since they are done eating. We always like to get to our seats early so that we can watch Nova fly before the game.”

Unsure what to do, Lincoln held out his hand to Nicole but was surprised when she pulled him in for a quick hug.

“Just as good as I thought it would be Dr. Montgomery.” Nicole said with a slight flirtiness in her voice.

After their too brief hug, Lincoln stood there staring at Nicole momentarily shocked by her display of affection, he could do nothing more than smile at her and bid her goodbye. Lincoln was so excited he could not stand it.

Rob saw Lincoln and turned to Erin to point out the look on his face and eyes. “I don’t know what just happened” he said “but I don’t think I have seen him like this in years.” Rob laughed as he watched Lincoln walk towards them with an almost swagger in his step. He was shocked by the change of his demeanor today. Gone was the dark brooding Lincoln replaced by the man he knew so many years ago. Not sure what to make of what had just happened he was silent while he waited for Lincoln to tell him about the encounter.

Lincoln wanted to talk to Rob and Erin but he did not know what to say. What was he feeling? He had so many emotions running through his mind at this very instant that he could barely make sense of the ground moving beneath his feet. “Rob, I don’t know or even understand what just happened. I feel like every nerve ending is on fire.”

“Lincoln, I haven’t seen you like this in a long time. You look like the weight of the world has been lifted off of your shoulders.”

“I don’t know what to do. I feel so alive but I’m terrified all at once. How can someone I just met have this effect on me? I mean just looking into her eyes set my soul ablaze. I could see the sweetness and desire in her and it was just one touch and one long glance into her eyes.”

“Lincoln, I can’t pretend to know what you are feeling with all that you have been through, but I have known for a long time that you needed to connect with someone else and once you meet that person you would hopefully find that closure. Maybe she is that connection that you need.”