

## ***When A Sistah's FED UP (Excerpt)***

***By Monica Frazier Anderson***

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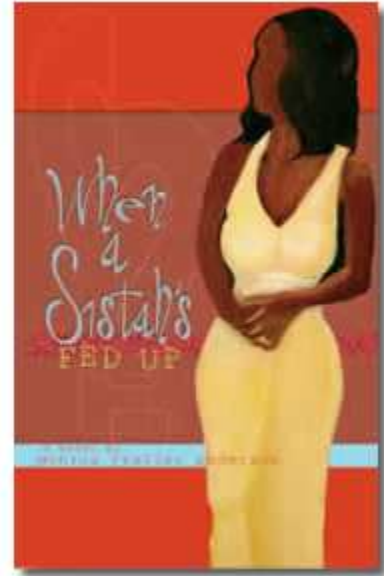
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Faith made a beeline for the small bar in the den and poured herself a stiff drink. She never drank alcohol in public, but she kept a few bottles of wine and a little Jack Daniels around the house. The wine was for the nice candlelit dinner she and Preston never had anymore. The Jack Daniels was for the other nights. There seemed to be a lot of those lately.

Preston was at church. She was glad to have a husband who shared her values: a man of faith. She loved to hear him pray. Sometimes he talked to God so fervently and sincerely she imagined the angels in heaven paused to listen. But lately, it seemed the church was the only thing he cared about. He was there, or so he said, four and five nights a week. Tonight, it was Wednesday night Bible study. He'd be in the front pew, nodding his big head, and waving the right hand of fellowship. It would be nice if he'd bring some of that passion home.

She downed the last of her drink and poured another one. She went into the kitchen and spread peanut butter over club crackers for dinner. She added a box of raisins for her fruit serving. After eating, she felt much better. "I need a nice hot bath and a good nights sleep," she informed the empty kitchen. She glanced at the family calendar on the side of the refrigerator. Trey was meeting with his chemistry study group at Tiffany's house. Good.

Upstairs, she undressed and brushed her teeth. The strands of hair falling into the sink as she brushed her hair troubled her. Her hairline was thinning around the edges, too. The daily dose of vitamins and leave-in conditioner had not stopped the shedding. Her doctor said it was caused by stress. If that were the case, she'd be bald soon.



She tuned the radio to the oldies station, 97.9 FM, and stepped into the shower. Feeling refreshed, she donned a sexy, black negligee. Maybe she could relight the home fires with Deacon Henry tonight. Their sex life had become a series of brief, unfulfilling encounters during the wee hours of the morning before they rose for work. She accepted part of the blame because she was often so exhausted she rebuffed his advances. But he did the same thing to her sometimes. What happened to their wonderful, hot romantic relationship? Maybe they could turn things around with a little mutual effort.

She lit a few candles and crawled into bed to wait for him. She must have dozed off because she was awakened by the sound of running water in the bathroom.

“Preston?”

Her husband walked into the bedroom brushing his teeth.

“Hey, baby. I didn’t hear you come in.”

“Yeah. You were knocked out. I tried to be quiet.”

“No. I was waiting for you.” She turned down the radio’s volume and openly admired his physique. He still had the body of a high school All-Star basketball player. He had on a pair of tight, white boxer briefs. She loved his long legs and chiseled abdomen. She threw back the covers to display her negligee.

He returned to the bathroom. She didn’t know what to think. A few minutes later, he came back wearing pajamas and his robe. He hadn’t worn pajamas in so long she’d forgotten he owned any. He sat in the armchair near the king-sized, four-poster bed.

“Why didn’t you come to church tonight?” he asked curtly.

She groaned and pulled the covers up. “I had a long day, and I was tired. Is church attendance mandatory now? I guess I didn’t get the memo.”

“Let’s skip the sarcasm, please. No, worship is not mandatory, but you didn’t make it on Sunday night because you had to get ready for work. You couldn’t go last night because you had a meeting, and tonight you couldn’t come because you’re tired.”

“And?”

“And you need to get your priorities straight. I’m a leader in the church.”

“Good for you. And in case you’ve been too busy to notice, I’m a leader in this community,” she shot back.

“Well, I’m the head of this house.”

She put her finger in her mouth and made her cheek pop. “Whopty doo. Is that like being a big corporate honcho who never goes to work? You haven’t clocked in many hours around here lately, boss. What has gotten into you, Preston?” She threw up her hands in frustration. “Why is your position in this house an issue now? You’re the deacon, not me. I don’t think anyone expects me to be there every night of the week like you. I cannot do everything. I get up at 6 AM or earlier every weekday. I work nine hours on a short day. I have to rest sometime. And I’m helping people, too, Preston. There are ministries outside the church, you know.”

“Oh, so you’re *Reverend* Mayor, now? Well, fellowship with other Christians helps your spiritual growth. Maybe if you got into the Word and spent more time in prayer, our family wouldn’t be having all of these problems.”

Her patience was shedding like her hair. “Excuse me? I know you are not implying I was shot because I don’t read the Bible every day! You have lost your mind, Preston Henry!” She was stunned. He had never questioned her commitment to their family or the church before. She had always put the welfare of him and the children first, no matter what else was going on in her life.

“Yes!” they both shouted in response to a knock on the door.

“Mom? Dad? Is everything alright?”

“Yes, Son,” Faith said. “I’m sorry we disturbed you. I didn’t realize you’d made it home. Your father and I were just talking.”

“Uhm, Mom could you help me with my history essay? I need you to edit it before I type it up.”

“When is it due, Trey?”

He opened the six-panel door looking sheepish. “Tomorrow.”

Faith moaned. “How long is it?”

He wrinkled his nose. “Five thousand words.” Preston snorted.

Faith threw a pillow at him. He ducked and smiled. “Boy, why have you waited until the last minute to do this? It’s ten o’clock at night,” she chided. “You know how slowly you type. What were you thinking? You’ll be up all night.” Trey shrugged. “Go turn on the computer and printer,” she said.

Trey went to the bed and hugged her. “Thanks, Mom.” Preston glared at his son.

“Don’t thank me yet. You are going to sit there while I type this paper.”

“Yes, ma’am. I’ll go make some of that chamomile tea you like, Mom.”

“You do that.” Faith got out of bed and put her robe on, too. She went into the walk-in closet and got her slippers. Preston touched her arm as she walked by him on her way downstairs. She swatted his hand away.

“Faith, I don’t want to argue. We’re running in different directions, and I want to get back on track.” For the umpteenth time, he wished his wife were more like his mother. His mother would never speak to his father with disrespect. That was why his parents’ marriage had lasted over forty-two years.

“On track? You want things to be like they were, Preston? You want me to quit college during my junior year because I’m pregnant, marry you, and move to Maui where you have a job and I don’t even have a car to drive to the market? And I suppose you want me to raise two children almost single handedly while you spend every spare minute golfing or at church. Oh, and let’s not forget how I helped you with your career for eight years before you finally agreed to let me go back to college.”

“Faith...”

“Oh, and I just know you want me to go to law school again and take five years to get my law degree because I’m so busy being everything for every damn body. Right? Is that the track you were thinking of? Because that track is closed--permanently.”

He knew she’d go there. She always acted as if she was the only one who had made any sacrifices in their marriage. She seemed to forget he gave up a chance to tryout for a pro basketball team in the European league. Even though he wasn’t drafted into the NBA, he had a lot of potential. He might have made it to the NBA if she hadn’t gotten... He opened his mouth to protest.

“Let me finish. I guess you want a submissive, doting wife following you around, toting your halo and wings.” She got in his face. She saw her reflection in the whirlpool of his eyes. “But I read in ‘the Word’ that you’re supposed to treat me like your own body. You’re supposed to love me and treat me like Christ loved the church. Did you read that part of the scripture, Deacon? I did. It’s in Ephesians, chapter 5.”

He wanted to treat her like a gnat and squash her for getting in his face like that. How dare she quote scripture to him? The only time he saw her open a Bible was on Sundays at church when the voters were watching.

Until a few years ago, he was the sole breadwinner, providing her and the kids with a life of luxury she never complained about or thanked him for. Now that she was earning more money than he, she’d conveniently forgotten all that, he supposed. He was tempted to remind her, but all he said was, “Faith.”

“According to you, I don’t have any. Remember?”

She slammed the door on her way out.