

Resolved Memories

T. E. Killian

Chapter One

Wayne Newcomb loved to play golf. He would play it every morning if his job would allow it, but, of course, it didn't. He wasn't like most golfers in the sense that he didn't like to watch others play. He only wanted to play, period. He knew he was better than average. His height and overall body strength allowed him to drive the ball far enough to get close to the green every time, providing his aim was accurate enough.

Wayne hit his ball and had the satisfaction of watching it travel straight down the fairway and stop rolling just this side of the sand trap.

He stepped back to watch the other guys tee off. They were all his friends and had been since their first week of freshman year in high school. They had all gone to Sycamore Academy, the local private high school. The other three were sons of prominent business owners in the valley. Wayne's grandfather owned a large company that operated eight new car dealerships in three states.

Carl Adams whose dark blond hair was waving in the wind, stood at his tee. He looked at the other two. "I think Wayne is taking unfair advantage of us, guys. He doesn't have a wife to make him do the nasty tiring stuff around the house, and he doesn't have kids to wear him down all the time either. He's just got too much energy for the rest of us."

The other two laughed. It was a standing joke among the others about Wayne being single while they all had families. This time Wayne didn't join in their laughter but none of the others seemed to notice.

Wayne was getting extremely tired of the same old jokes and teasing every Sunday morning. When he thought about it, though, he admitted that it had never bothered him before. He would just laugh it off and tease them about how he was free to do whatever he wanted and they weren't.

Why now? Why did it bother him now? If he were honest with himself though, he knew why. He now wanted what his three friends had. He wanted a family. It wasn't something that had sneaked up on him either. It had hit him almost two years ago.

He shook his head in frustration. He knew the very day that it had all started. He'd been in a restaurant having lunch with his sister, Kelly, when a group of police detectives walked into the place. Kelly, of course, only had eyes for one of the detectives, Grant Thompson who she married less than a year later.

But Wayne took one look at Grant's sergeant and had been totally mesmerized ever since. Sonia Nordstrom was simply gorgeous. No woman had ever affected him the way she did or as much as she did. At an even six feet, she had stood taller than all but one of the other detectives with her. That didn't bother Wayne since he was still four inches taller. She was just right! She was Swedish and had the most beautiful white blond hair he'd ever seen. It reached almost to her waist, but he'd only seen it that way a few times. She always wore it piled on top of her head while on duty.

"Hey, Newcomb, you going to finish this hole or not?"

With difficulty, Wayne brought his mind back to the present. The others had all teed off and were walking down the fairway toward their balls.

That had been the eighteenth hole and they were all soon in the clubhouse having a beer. The others began talking about their kids again and Wayne had to get away. He excused himself and all but ran to the restroom.

As Wayne was leaving the restroom, he almost bumped into another man before he realized he knew him.

"Hello, Wayne, how was your game?"

Wayne shrugged and said, "About normal, Dave. How are you? You don't play golf do you?"

Dave Robertson was the service manager at the local Newcomb Motors dealership. As general manager, Wayne was his immediate supervisor.

"Oh, no, I never could hit that little ball anywhere near the right direction, so I gave it up a long time ago." He laughed. "No, my wife wanted to come here for the brunch, so I packed up her and the kids and brought them here."

There it was again. More stories about someone else's family.

“Can you imagine how hard it is to bring seven kids into a place like this?” Dave laughed again. “Well, I guess I’d better get back before they get the best of Dottie.”

With that, Dave went back into the dining room.

Wayne stood there for a moment. Sure, he wanted a family, but that was ridiculous. He wanted a wife and a couple of kids, not a whole mob like Dave had.

When he sat back down at the table, the conversation was still on kids. Wayne had had enough. He finished his beer in one large gulp and rose again.

“Hey, Wayne, where you going? We’re just getting going here.” Bill called out with a laugh.

Wayne had to come up with something. They were still his friends, he didn’t want to tell them how bad they were grating on his nerves. “I’ve got to go home and get ready for my sister’s birthday party in a little while.”

Jake laughed. “You think she’ll make it through the party without having to go to the hospital?”

The others all laughed at that. Kelly was eight and a half months pregnant. Being a thin woman her stomach looked so big that she appeared to be overdue.

He laughed with them and left.

As he drove to his house, he thought about his little sister. He couldn’t help remembering that he’d told her countless times while they were growing up that he would always take care of her no matter what. Well, he couldn’t really do much of that anymore. Her husband, Grant, was a police detective who was more than up to the job. In spite of that, she was still his little sister.

That was another constant reminder of what he didn’t have. She was married and starting a family. Even her husband’s little sister, Alison, was also married and expecting any time. In fact, Kelly had told him yesterday that Alison was already a few days past her due date. Not only was he the only one of his group of friends without a family, now he was the only one in his extended family without a family of his own. Even his stepmother had remarried. At their frequent family gatherings, he was the only single person there. Great!

Those thoughts stayed with him through getting ready and driving the rest of the way up the mountainside to his grandparent’s estate.

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Sonia Nordstrom was off duty but she was about ready to call dispatch to report the crazy driver ahead of her. It didn’t look to her like he was paying a bit of attention to his driving. Either that or he was drunk. Either way, she needed to get him off the road.

What a beautiful car though. It was her dream car, a Mercedes Roadster, a convertible even. She loved that shiny burgundy paint job too. You would think that anyone who had a car like that would love driving it so much that he’d always pay attention to his driving.

She could see him gesturing with his free hand. Maybe he was talking on his cell phone. Even if he was using Bluetooth, he wasn’t paying much attention to his driving.

She was reaching inside her purse for her cell phone when the Mercedes turned up the private road leading to the Newcomb estate. That’s where she was going, so she pulled her hand back out of her purse and followed the guy. He drove around the circle drive and through the garage type door into the inner parking court. She followed him. After all, that was where Kelly had told her to go to park too.

Sonia was surprised or maybe not so surprised when she pulled up next to the car and saw Wayne Newcomb sitting behind the wheel. She should have known a rich partier like him would drive a car like that.

He wasn’t getting out. He was just sitting there staring straight ahead. She could tell that he was talking to himself. Okay! What next?

She didn’t like the guy. She’d had several run-ins with him over the past couple of years. No, that wasn’t quite right. He was a pest. He was always hitting on her so bad that it was embarrassing.

She thought about sitting there and waiting him out, but that probably wouldn’t work. She’d be better off if she got out and tried to make it to the house before he caught her.

Just as she was closing her car door, Wayne looked up and saw her. She almost laughed and almost felt sorry for him at the same time. The expressions on his face were easily readable. First, there was surprise, then pleasure, then fear. Fear? Why was that? Was he afraid of her?

That rooted Sonia to the spot. She couldn't move away from her car. Their eyes were locked and he wasn't moving either. Finally, she was able to break away and start walking toward the back entrance. Wayne jumped out of his car and rushed after her.

When he was next to her, she kept her eyes straight ahead, continued walking, and said, "Good afternoon, Wayne."

He smiled and said, "Good afternoon, Sonia, how are you today?"

She almost said she had been fine until she ran into him, but she didn't though. After all, he was Kelly's brother and Sonia didn't want to upset her friend by being rude to her brother. "I'm fine, thank you."

When they reached the door, Wayne opened it and stepped aside to let her enter ahead of him. "Sonia, I wanted the opportunity to apologize to you and to tell you that I'm thoroughly ashamed of the way I've acted toward you in the past. And I also want you to know that I will always treat you the way you want to be treated from now on."

When she didn't answer, he said, "How would you like for me to treat you?"

She turned to look into his eyes and couldn't stop herself from saying, "From a distance."

With that, she walked on through the patio and into the great room beyond. Wayne was still standing at the outer door with his mouth open. Good! She'd finally made the right impression on him. Maybe now he would leave her alone.

As soon as Sonia entered through the back door into the great room, Kelly and Alison both called out to her to sit with them. Kelly was sitting in a recliner that looked out of place in that room filled with overstuffed sofas and armchairs arranged into four large conversation pits.

Sonia knew that the recliner was there for Kelly only. Kelly had been in a terrible car wreck when she was twelve that had killed her mother and left her partly crippled. Her left ankle had been so shattered that even after many operations, she still had to wear a brace to be able to walk at all. Sonia had grown to love Kelly. She was the sweetest and the most refreshing person Sonia had ever known.

Alison, though, was another story. True, Sonia liked Alison well enough but she was the opposite of Kelly. Alison was a real estate broker who owned her own realty. She was an in your face type of person who seemed to be very good at her job.

Sonia sat on the sofa next to Alison after leaning over each of the other two women so they could hug her, which wasn't easy since both women were huge from their advanced state of pregnancy.

Sonia still had trouble getting used to receiving affection from anyone. After all, she'd grown up with just her dad and three older brothers who were all far from affectionate toward her. But she was beginning to feel comfortable with these two loving women.

Sonia remembered why they were gathered together today. "Happy birthday, Kelly."

"Thank you." Kelly giggled and pulled her long black hair back over her shoulders. "I'm having a difficult time believing I'm actually thirty years old now. Not too long ago, I thought thirty was ancient."

They all three laughed. Sonia liked laughter. She hadn't done enough of it over the years, and it felt good.

Kelly had leaned forward in her chair and was massaging her left ankle through the brace. She looked up at Sonia and said, "I've had a terrible time with swelling in both my feet, and especially this one." She patted her belly. "I'll sure be glad when this little one decides to make his or her entrance into the world."

Sonia smiled. "That's right. Neither of you wanted to know ahead of time whether you were having a boy or girl."

Alison giggled this time and shook her head causing her long blond hair to swing back and forth. "No way, we wanted to be surprised." She patted her belly. "But I can tell you this one has to be a boy. He's been so ornery for the last nine months . . . and three days."

They all laughed again and stood when Mr. Newcomb, Kelly's grandfather, called them all into the dining room for dinner.

The three women had barely made it into the marble tiled hallway when Alison yelled so loud that Sonia jumped then stepped over to grasp her by the elbows.

Alison shouted again. "Stan!" She was looking down at her feet where a puddle had appeared. "Stan! Now!"

Stan Becker, Alison's husband was there quickly, picked her up in his arms, and rushed toward the back door. Grant, her brother was holding the door open for them.

Kelly turned to Sonia and said, "Sonia, would you please drive me to the hospital so I can be there for them? I don't want to get in their way right now. I'd just slow them down. And I haven't been doing much driving for the last few weeks."

"I would be happy to, Kelly. Do you need any help?"

"No, I'll be okay. As long as I move slow and use this dreadful cane. I sure will be glad when I don't have to use it all the time again."

Wayne appeared at his sister's side. "I'll drive you to the hospital, sis."

Kelly smiled up at her brother. "That's okay, Wayne. Sonia is taking me. I think I can get in and out of her car much better than yours."

Sonia muttered under her breath, "She wants to get there in one piece too."

Kelly tried to laugh and Wayne just stood there with a puzzled look on his face.

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Wayne decided to join the others at the hospital. If nothing else, it might give him some time with Sonia. He really needed to prove to her that he was going to treat her right from now on, if only she'd just give him a second chance.

He was directed to the delivery waiting room on the third floor. When he entered the large room with plastic seating, he expected to see only Kelly, Grant, Stan, and Sonia. But he was surprised to see everyone who had been at his grandparents' estate earlier sitting or standing around the room.

He looked around until he found Sonia. Jealousy burned through him. Jealousy? Kelly was sitting on one side of Stan and Sonia was on his other side. They both had their arms around Stan and were talking softly to him. Wayne suddenly realized how badly he wanted to be the one Sonia had her arms around. Man! What was he going to do? What could he do?

He sat down in the nearest chair and began to brood again.

Grant began pacing back and forth in front of Wayne. He looked up and said, "Hey, man, you're making me nervous."

Grant just grunted but kept walking and didn't slow down. When he turned around at the other side of the room and headed back toward Wayne, he said, "That's my little sister in there right now."

Kelly hobbled over and grabbed her husband by the arm. "Grant, if you don't calm down at least a little, we're never going to be able to keep Stan calm."

He stopped and hugged his wife, Wayne's little sister. That was still difficult for him to get a handle on. Kelly had never even been on a date in her life before she met Grant. Now, she was married and would soon be in there where Alison was, having a baby. That just added more confusion to his already befuddled mind.

Kelly looked down at Wayne and motioned for him to stand with them.

When he did, she laid her hand on his arm and said, "Wayne, Sonia told me you apologized to her for the way you've come on to her in the past."

He nodded and she continued, "Did you really mean it?" He nodded again. "Are you going to follow through with treating her right from now on?"

He shook his head and snorted. "I would like to, but she just told me to stay away from her."

She handed her cane to Grant, grabbed Wayne by the shoulders, and looked into his eyes. "Where would I be right now if Grant had listened to me when I told him very much the same thing?"

Wayne tried to smile. "You wouldn't be pregnant."

She slapped him on the shoulder. "Don't make fun of me right now. Ask Grant how dangerous it is to make a pregnant woman angry."

With that, she took her cane back from Grant then limped and waddled back over to Stan who stood and made his way back to the room where Alison was. Sonia stood and stretched her long frame. What a picture that was! She sure was something all right.

Now was his chance. He had to do something. So, without a thought as to what he could possibly say, he tried not to rush over to where Sonia stood. She didn't turn toward him, so he just looked down at her beautiful face in profile, with that small upturned nose and the delicate cheekbones. He knew if he said anything, she would have a rebuttal, so he waited for her to speak first.

He could see that she was trying to avoid looking at him, but when he didn't go away, she finally turned and looked up at him. He smiled. He could tell she wasn't used to looking up to very many people.

"What do you want?"

He just kept smiling at her hoping she would mellow some. She started to turn away from him but turned to face him instead.

"Do you realize how bad you were driving going up to your grandparents' house before?"

There were many things he had anticipated her saying, but that one wasn't even close. It threw him for a moment and she was starting to turn away again when he was able to get his thoughts together.

"I'm sorry. I haven't been having the best of days today. I guess I was thinking about other things rather than my driving."

She placed her hands on her hips and glared at him. "Well, you need to be more careful and pay more attention to your driving. You could get a citation for driving like that."

He decided to place all his cards on the table at once. He knew she was a woman who only wanted the truth at all times. So he would give it to her.

She turned away again but he reached out and touched her arm lightly. "Don't you even want to know what I was thinking about that caused me not to pay attention to my driving?"

She turned back again but didn't say anything.

He shrugged his shoulders and grinned. "You!"

At first, there was no reaction. He could tell when the full implication of what he had said began to sink in. She blushed, and it made such a beautiful contrast to her white-blond hair that his whole body seemed go numb.

"What did you say?"

He tried to give her a reassuring smile. "I said I was thinking about you, Sonia. I want to get to know you so badly that it's affecting everything I do. I'll do anything you ask me to do, if you'll just give me a second chance."

There, he'd said it. He had stuck his neck out as far as he possibly could. He'd laid his feelings open to her. Would she continue to trample on them?

She stared at him as her face slowly regained its normal color. When she frowned, he was sure he'd gambled and lost.

She opened her mouth but closed it again. Then, after a few more seconds, she said, "Okay."

He waited as long as he could but when she didn't say anything else he had to find out what she meant. "Does that mean you'll go out with me?"

"No!" She said that so quickly that the hope that had begun to build up in him shattered.

"But I will spend some time with you so we can talk" Before he could reply, she added, "On neutral ground, of course."

He knew he must have been smiling like a fool then, because that's what he felt like. But he was a happy one at that.

"When?"

Just then, Stan burst into the room shouting, "It's a boy, and they're both doing great!"

Grant rushed over to his best friend and gave him a big hug. "You sure Alison's okay?"

"She sure is. She was already telling the doctor she wanted to get out of this place."

Grant laughed. "Yep, she's okay." He shook his head. "That's my little sister."

Sonia started to walk toward the two men, but Wayne reached out and touched her arm again.

She turned to him and looked down at where his fingertips were still on her arm. He jerked his hand back as if he'd been burned.

She looked at her wristwatch. "Okay, as soon as we leave here, we can meet at Denny's for a cup of coffee or a soft drink."

Wayne felt like jumping for joy and shouting his agreement, but forced himself to smile and calmly say, "That sounds great."

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Sonia parked her five-year-old Camaro at Denny's and sat there trying to understand what it was that had made her decide to give Wayne Newcomb a second chance . . . any chance for that matter. She realized that it had to be because Kelly had come back to her earlier in the hospital waiting room and said that she really thought that her brother meant to treat Sonia right this time. Otherwise, she wouldn't be here right now.

But, that still didn't answer why she was willing to meet any man, not just Wayne. She didn't date, ever. At least she hadn't been on a date in several years, and that had been a double date down in Phoenix. She had not dated anyone up here. But, this wasn't a date. Then she remembered Kelly telling her about how she had tried to convince herself that her first date with Grant wasn't really a date. That made her nervous.

She reluctantly climbed out of her car and walked toward the entrance. Wayne had apparently parked farther away from the entrance and watched for her. He was there at the door just as she was about to open it. He reached out and opened it for her.

Once they were seated on opposite sides of a booth, Sonia waited for Wayne to start the conversation. Why didn't he? He'd never been at a loss for words before. Maybe he was trying to change . . . for her. Ha! Even if he tried, he'd never be able to change enough. So, again she wondered what she was doing there.

She finally decided to say something. "I like your car."

He smiled and said, "Thank you, it's my pride and joy. It's the coolest car I've ever owned. Of course, I got a super discount on it, even though I had to go to L.A. to our dealership there to get it. It was worth it."

Well, she thought, that conversational well ran dry too soon. Now what?

Finally, Wayne spoke. "I guess it would be best if we started out by telling each other a little about ourselves."

She didn't want to start, so she nodded toward him, hoping he would get the message and start talking first. He did.

"Okay, here goes. You probably know quite a bit about me already but I'll give it a shot."

She nodded and even smiled a little . . . to encourage him to continue, of course.

"My parents divorced when I was eight and Kelly was six. Harry was a pilot in the Air Force and was transferred to Japan right after that. And, as it turned out, I never saw him again . . . alive."

She didn't know if she should comfort him or encourage him to keep talking but he went on without prompting.

"My mom was killed in a car accident when I was fourteen. Kelly was with her and that was when her ankle was damaged like it is."

He paused for a moment seeming to be in thought, so she sat and waited.

Just then, their server came to take their orders. She ordered her usual Coke and he ordered iced tea.

He laughed. "I grew up on iced tea. When mom died, Kelly and I went to live with our grandparents. They don't drink anything but iced tea or coffee. They're against alcoholic beverages and even carbonated ones too, for different reasons of course."

When she didn't respond right away, he chuckled. "It's refreshing to see a woman not drinking diet sodas."

The detective in her noticed that Wayne had trouble with empty spaces in the conversation. He seemed to need to fill them up. She made a mental note of that fact.

She smiled. "I don't have to worry like most women do. I have a strange metabolism that allows me to eat or drink whatever I want and not gain weight. My three brothers are the same way."

She was sure, by his lack of a reaction, that he already knew that she had three brothers. After all, for the last ten years she had dealt with people who were either withholding information or outright lying to her. She didn't get angry about it though. It could have been Kelly, Grant, or even Stan who had told him. But she would watch him carefully when she told him the rest to see just how much he already knew about her.

"You should see me when I'm hungry."

Now why did she say that? Was she starting to ramble too?

He laughed but continued, "Let's see, where was I? Okay. After high school, I went to ASU. Kelly and I both did. It was difficult for us to go anywhere else. That's where our parents and our grandparents met. I went on to get my MBA and Kelly got her accounting degree. You probably know that I'm the general manager at the dealership here and Kelly is the CFO of the whole company."

"Yes."

“Most of the rest, I’m sure you already know. Almost two years ago, Harry was killed in Afghanistan and my grandparents brought him back here to be buried. His widow, Sarah . . . you know Sarah?”

Sonia said, “Yes, I do.”

“Well, she came back here too, and I’m sure you know that she turned out to be Grant and Alison’s mother who has had amnesia since a car wreck shortly after she married Harry.”

He held out his hands palms up and said, “That’s about it. Did I leave anything out?”

When she shook her head, he said, “Oh, and I’ve never been married . . . not even close. Wait, I did ask a girl once a couple of years ago but she turned me down because she said I was only with her because she looked a lot like Kelly.”

“Was she right?”

He snorted. “Yes, she was, and Kelly helped me realize that. And that was just about the same time I first saw you. Do you remember when that was?”

Sonia searched her memory and could only come up with one possibility. “Was it when you talked to me at your grandparents’ home after the shooting there?”

He laughed and shook his head. “No, I saw you a week or so before that in a restaurant. Kelly and I were having lunch there when you came in with a group of detectives. Grant and Stan were two of them. Kelly only had eyes for Grant and I only had eyes for you.”

When Sonia frowned, he added, “I’m not hitting on you right now. I’m just stating a fact. When I first saw you, you totally blew me away.” When she started to speak, he held up a hand palm toward her. “I’ll stop there . . . for now. I’m not trying to embarrass you. I just want you to know how much you have affected me since the first time I saw you. You might say that I lost my head, which caused me to do and say some dumb things to get your attention. As you’ve probably heard, I’ve always been what they call a smooth operator with women. But all of that went out the window the first time I saw you. That’s why I made such a mess of it before. I just couldn’t seem to say the right things.”

Their server came to refill their glasses and both remained silent for a few minutes. Sonia was thinking about all he had said about how she supposedly affected him. Could he be telling the truth now? She looked into his eyes and was almost certain that he was.

“It’s your turn.” Wayne smiled and when he did, Sonia realized that she’d never really looked at him very close before. She had to admit that he was quite handsome with the same black hair and blue eyes that she had admired in Kelly.

She tried to shake off those thoughts and concentrate on what she should say to him about herself.

“I don’t usually like talking about myself. I’m so different from other women that people make all sorts of assumptions about me based on my name, or the unusual color of my hair, or my height. Oh, and don’t forget the fact that I’m a police officer, a detective sergeant even.”

She waited to see if he would say something to that. She decided to wait until he did.

“I don’t think I’ve made any assumptions about you Sonia. The only thing I know for sure is that you’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever been around.”

That wasn’t what she had been fishing for. Her face was so hot that she knew she had to be blushing furiously.

She tried to go on without acknowledging that comment.

“As I said before, I have three older brothers.” She paused. It still hurt even after all the years. “My mother divorced my dad when I was three and moved back east with her new husband, and I haven’t seen her since.”

From his shocked look, she was sure no one had told him that bit of information. Good.

“I grew up with no female influence in my life at all.” She leaned back in her seat and watched him closely for his reaction to the next part. “My dad is a retired Phoenix P.D. Captain of Detectives.” No reaction. “My brothers are all detectives there too.” Still no reaction.

“My oldest brother, Sven, recently made captain, and my other two brothers, Lars and Bjorn also recently made lieutenant.”

That received a reaction. He shook his head and whistled. “That’s a lot of brass.”

She fought a smile. “You can’t imagine what it was like for a girl to grow up among all that male macho stuff. I was never able to date any boy more than once. One or more of my brothers would always intimidate the

poor guys so badly that they'd never ask me out again. And if they didn't do it, just meeting my dad is so intimidating that he drove off his share too."

He laughed loudly at that, drawing stares from other diners.

"You laugh but wait until you meet my dad." Where did that come from? He wouldn't be meeting her dad. She rushed on hoping he hadn't caught that little slip. "He's not like the rest of us. He is six four. Isn't that about what you are?"

When he nodded she continued, "And he weighs over two fifty. He can be rather intimidating. That was part of why he was such a good cop."

Wayne was only shaking his head and grinning. She was sure that he was thinking of her dad and how he wouldn't want to cross him.

"All three of my brothers went to ASU so naturally I went to NAU and that's how I wound up here. The chief is from Flagstaff and went to NAU also. He recruits from there quite often."

Sonia looked at her watch and exclaimed. "Oh, it's six o'clock and I need to get home and change. I'm helping one of my detectives with something tonight."

"Wait, what about your brothers? Are they all tall and have white-blond hair like you?"

She frowned. She didn't want to answer that question. But, to be fair, she knew she should. "My brothers all have hair like mine and they are six feet six, seven, and eight."

Wayne reacted to that by slapping his palm on his forehead and sliding down in his seat. "Man that's big!"

She didn't want to continue. "My dad has normal blond hair. I asked him once and he grudgingly told me that my mother had white-blond hair."

She didn't give him time to respond to that. She didn't want him to respond to it. She slid out of the booth and started walking to the front and he fell in beside her.

When he had paid for their drinks, they walked outside and paused.

He turned to her and said, "Will you meet me again . . . like this? Maybe for dinner?"

Even though she knew that was coming, she wasn't ready for it. "I need to think about it. Give me your card and I'll call you tomorrow."

She was afraid he was going to argue but after a moment of obvious struggle, he reached into his shirt pocket for a gold card case, pulled one out, and handed it to her.