

In Place of Love

Ariel Williams
Developing New Worlds
Full Sail University
August 4, 2019
Mark Pursell

Story Premise

D.C.'s become home to Ronnie, a single mom working two jobs to make ends meet. As a bartender & singer at LuJo's, the hottest bar in town, she recognizes this place as her leading source of income & pain. It's where she fell for her son's absent father, Arthur. Now it's where she's fighting the growing attraction to Lenny, a Caribbean business man with a complicated past. The moment Ronnie lets Lenny into her heart, Arthur resurfaces with a loving vengeance for his family. Torn between the two, Ronnie rediscovers why she moved & makes the ultimate choice.

Historical Background Information or Timeline

The move from Jacksonville, Florida to D.C. wasn't a small feat, but Ronnie Thorpe knew leaving her hometown was imperative. With her father dead and abusive stepfather afoot, siblings scattered, and her mother emotionally unavailable, college couldn't come soon enough. There, she learned how to adapt and survive in a world her beloved father warned her about.

Ronnie's father suddenly died in her last year of middle school, where he also worked. Her death was one she'd never come back from but learned how to fight through as her mother was unhelpful during the events. Ronnie was neglected and abused by her mother's boyfriend and soon-to-be step father, with no recompense from her mother.

Jacksonville quickly became a place Ronnie treasured to a place she despised. Everything good about the city reminded her of her father, which hurts even more. Her escape from the city is what she thought necessary to end the internal pain.

What she appreciates most about her mother is that she lightly taught Ronnie about spirituality and magic. In fact, these sessions were the only time they got along, but they were short lived.

Ronnie noticed a pattern in years of her life that ended in 3s. At age 13, her father died. At age 23, she nearly lost everything after being arrested for running a "companionship" operation. During the time of this story, she is months shy of her 30th birthday, which is daunting as she believes her 33rd birthday will be. Ronnie remembers those lessons from her mother and begins studying on her own, without distractions and negative commentary. It is then that she learns how to communicate with her father, heal her suppressed trauma, move past her failed relationship with Art, and allow new love into her life. Most importantly, Ronnie reconnects with her creative and artistic adolescent roots, thus changing the trajectory of her life.

Main Character

Rhondra Thorpe, 29, is learning how to be as patient and honest with herself as she is with everyone else. A single mother working multiple jobs to make ends meet, her greatest desire is to boldly live her truth and dreams for the world to see. Now, 10 years living in a faraway city, she's discovering how to return to herself in life, love, and virtue.

Born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida, on June 8, 1990, Ronnie is a creative girl child who adores her father, Peter Thorpe. Her parents' second child together, she often craves attention as typical Gemini children do. Patrice, her mother, rarely realizes her daughter in the ways she needs, and is jealous of the relationship she has with her father. While he encourages her to sing and dance, Ronnie's mother believes academic success is all she's good for.

The highlight of Ronnie's days always come at the end when she and her father have bonding time in his backyard work shed. The duo makes hand carved objects from wood for their and other people's home, as this is her father's passion. In the middle of Ronnie's eighth grade school year, Peter suddenly died at his job, which also happened to be Ronnie's middle school. He was the Lead Sanitation Manager at the middle school.

Her father's death forced Ronnie to deal with unstable emotions, while realizing that she dislikes her mother. Their relationship suffered further when Patrice became pregnant soon after Peter's death, thus revealing the fact that she'd cheated on him while married. Patrice's new beau verbally abused the household, which caused Ronnie to spend her high school years searching for colleges across the country.

The girl who once loved song and dance pushed her creative dreams to the side to pursue Women's Health in D.C. Once carefree and light, Ronnie's forced to learn life as an adult on her own.

The last ten years in Chocolate City haven't been the easiest. Now, the 5'6 plus size woman with brown eyes, brown, and full lips is returning back to her roots as she heals from years of trauma and pain while mothering a son named after her father, Peter.

Supporting Characters

Tangela Jackson is Ronnie's best friend. The two met in college, though they are from the same area, and instantly fell for each other. They briefly shared a dorm until Tangela found an offsite apartment. Tangela is pursuing a career in the medical field and chooses her major accordingly. She is tall (approximately 5'8), dark skinned, and resembles classic model Naomi Campbell. Her favorite things to do are dressing up, shopping, listening to music, and reading. Men love her and she often uses them for attention, money, or gifts. Tangela is very well groomed and keep her nails and toes done. She looks like a Barbie doll – it is safe to hide behind this persona, but she is deeply flawed and wants to be seen.

Arthur Robinson is Ronnie's first true love, ex-boyfriend, and father of her son, Peter. Ronnie met Art soon after she began working at LuJo's. They immediately fell in love and began dating soon after. The two spent nearly every waking moment together and were certain they'd get married...until Ronnie became pregnant. Art began to have second thoughts, which ultimately led to infidelity and the demise of their 7-year relationship. Arthur is tall (6'1), brown skinned, and sports an afro. His teeth are straight and white, and he has a chiseled jawline. He has several tattoos and muscles. He loves playing basketball in real life and via video game. Arthur works at an electronic store part-time.

Lucas Jones is the owner and operator of LuJo's, urban D.C.'s hottest sports bar. He is bald headed, light skinned, tall (6'2), and has light freckles on his face. Lucas moves and speaks very fast and has an uncontainable energy. He met Ronnie in a basement laundry room and offered her a job on the spot after accidentally hearing her sing while folding clothes. The two balance each other out, with his personality strong and hers calming when necessary. Over the years, Ronnie and Lucas developed an unshakable bond and friendship that Arthur secretly is jealous of. Lucas adores Ronnie's son, Peter.

Peter Robinson is Ronnie's son. He is the best parts of his mother and father. Ronnie often calls him Peter Jr., as he is named after and reminds her of her father. Peter Jr. attends his local elementary school and is among the brightest in his class. He loves animals, art, and being social with his friends. As Peter ages, he longs for a closer relationship with his father, Arthur, who is still afraid to be the best father he can be. Every night he prays for his parents in hopes that they will get back together to be one happy family again.

Lenny St. Clair is one of Lucas' best friends. They met in college and remained close afterward. Lenny is from the Caribbean and still has an island accent. He works with numbers and is well off. Lenny resembles actor Lyric Bent, with a muscular build, doey brown eyes, low haircut, and medium brown skin. He has full lips, clean nails, and always smells good. He is engaged to longtime girlfriend Samantha but is not sure he's still in love with her. Lucas invites him to a business meeting at LuJo's – this is where he meets Ronnie for the first time and is drawn to her. Lenny forgets about his homelife and returns to LuJo's as much as possible to spend time with Ronnie.

Locations

Jacksonville, Florida is one of the largest cities in Florida. Tourists visit the city throughout the year to indulge in shopping, college and professional sporting events, festivals, Jacksonville Beach, and so much more. The city is home to the state's third largest seaport, Port of Jacksonville, thus attracting military members and their families. There is lots of water, trees, and wildlife here that make this city special. Natives and tourists also enjoy its southern charm, as rural roads are lined with homegrown goods such as oranges, peanuts, honey, collard greens, etc., from farmers and other specialists. Large, loud, bold, and easy to get lost in, Jacksonville is the quintessential town for transplants, tourists, and middle to upper class families. With all the city has to offer, Ronnie hardly gets to benefit from what's happening in her backyard due to the trauma she began to experience in her own home.

Once dubbed "Chocolate City" for its rich black history, culture, and community, D.C. is another popular city overtaken by gentrification. Designated areas such as Georgetown, Chinatown, Downtown, Foggy Bottom, etc. – many of which were neighborhoods for affluent Blacks decades ago – house tall skyscrapers, overpriced apartments and restaurants, and corporate jobs. D.C. is loud, fast paced, and expensive no matter your desired side of town. Heavy traffic and political movements, whether on street corners, or in the White House, make the city feel compact, congested and overwhelming. There is, however, a thriving nightlife that tourists and locals equally enjoy, including college students from Howard University, Georgetown, John Hopkins, and more.

Howard University is a 4-year HBCU located in Washington, D.C. College campuses are often their own cities within cities, hence this distinction. Howard is a hubbub of (young) black excellence, giving its students the tools, resources, and confidence to explore their identities, heritages, and thrive in spite of society viewing those things negatively. Like many buildings in D.C., the campus dorms and buildings are cathedral and old worldly. Stained glass hangs in campus chapels. The campus is surrounded by bright green grasses and trees that change colors in every season. Upper Quadrangle, now called The Yard, is a favorite for outdoor activities and comingling of students and alumni. Students do not have to leave campus often, as it has conveniences available to them.

Additional World Information

My world is set in Jacksonville, Florida. The story takes place in more than one neighborhood in Jacksonville, across multiple sides of town. This is notable because Jacksonville is a large city that is clearly defined by its sides: North, South, East & West. Each side of town signifies class and socioeconomic status. My character, Ronnie, is from the West side, which is predominantly African American. She lives in Cedar Hills and attended surrounding schools.

Though Ronnie eventually moves across country to Washington, D.C. for college, it is critical to capture her childhood in Jacksonville, as it sets the tone for her personality, ideals, and beliefs. Her traumatic adolescent experiences force her to leave her friends and family for a fresh start as the person she's always wanted to be.

There are several different races and languages spoken in Jacksonville, Florida. My character is Black and speaks English, so my story will focus on those two elements. Ronnie is from the lower middle class and was taught in the public-school system. Her and community's personalities are Black. Their religion is Christian. Their rituals include prayer, worship, and outreach, while their traditions are church on Sundays, family and communal gatherings, and dance.

Florida is notorious for its high percentage of sexually transmitted diseases and infections, such as HIV, AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, chlamydia, etc. I am not sure if this story will cover these diseases, but they are worth mentioning since my character will move across country for college. I am unsure of the STD and STI percentages in D.C., however.

Ronnie's experience with magic is beginner to intermediate. Though her mother is more advanced and lightly teaches her "the ways", they don't experiment with conjuring or spell work. Only exists within tarot and oracle card readings, numerology, crystal healing, incense/sage burning, cleansing, divination, and chakra work. When Ronnie becomes an adult, she remembers these teachings and begins to deepen her knowledge. She learns to use them to her advantage in certain endeavors, and eventually to seek messages from her deceased father.

Story Synopsis

RONNIE trades in her traumatic homelife for a scholarship to Howard University. An ambitious pupil with goals of conquering women's health finds a fresh start in D.C.

To celebrate the completion of her second year in college, Ronnie and friends congregate at a local hangout. A trip to the bathroom led to an assault that derailed her thoughts around sexual freedom. Ronnie channeled her anger by masterminding a companionship service between college girls and rich men. The operation ran successfully for one year before she was caught and kicked out of school.

TANGELA, Ronnie's best friend, bailed her out of jail and provided shelter. Ronnie kept this secret from her mother, whom she still secretly resents for cheating on her deceased father.

In a chance encounter in Tangela's laundry room, Ronnie meets LUCAS, the future owner LuJo's. Enamored with her "laundry basket humming", he offers her a singing gig at his new place. Ronnie reluctantly accepts and begins working at LuJo's six months later. There, she meets and falls in love with ARTHUR.

Ten years later, the single mom still resides in D.C. and works at LuJo's, a place that's been her leading source of income and pain. Now it's where she's fighting the growing attraction to LENNY, a complicated Caribbean business man, as well as Lucas' best friend and LuJo's regular.

Right as Ronnie decides to let Lenny into her heart, Arthur comes for his family with a vengeance. Torn between the two, Ronnie rediscovers why she moved to D.C. and makes the ultimate choice.

Story Excerpt

CHAPTER 4

I slammed my purse onto the counter. The drinking glasses clanged in the sink. Just because I was there didn't mean I had to like it.

I took out more dark liquors and warmed the fryer to make hot wings, the recipe for a Black man's kryptonite. When the buzzer went off, I pulled them out and slathered them with Capital City's mambo sauce, a true D.C. staple I've grown to love.

Dropping off the drinks to their table, I could feel Lenny's eyes burning a hole in every angle of my curvaceous body. He wanted me, and he wanted me to know it. The motherfucker was fine, but he seemed like more trouble than he was worth. I walked back to the bar and pretended to clean the already glistening counter.

Justin redirected the conversation back to business. Without him, Lu would be another lost pretty face.

I overheard Oscar and Lenny asking the Jones cousins about money and future plans. Friends or not, these men meant business first. Even though LuJo's was Lucas's business, Justin did most of the talking. I was determined to learn why later but chose to read Alice Walker's *Meridian* for the third time to pass time.

As I wrapped the sixth chapter, Lenny startled me with a request for a glass of water. He'd only taken a sip of the Crown Royal on ice he asked for earlier. Immediately, I knew this was a ploy for my attention, so I took my time answering him.

He had a boyish look on his face as I handed him an eight-ounce glass of tap water. I smirked and shook my head; we both knew he was up to something. Right as I continued reading, he quoted a line from *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women*, my favorite book by Alice Walker.

The lure of flower smells

The sun

Softly the scent of -

Softly the scent of flowers

And petals

Small, bright last wishes

Speechless.

I stared at him wondering what he would say or do next. My past is filled with weak men pretending to be macho in order to hide their insecurities and lack of knowledge in Black Women. The sheer mention of an iconic writer and womanist's name like Walker would usually end our conversations. They'd run away tucking their tails, insulted that I was too smart to be fooled

by misogyny. But Lenny stood in front of me hard pressed and well versed in her scripture. My intrigue was apparent.

"You seem surprised," he said. Lenny was happy he impressed me.

"I am. What do you know about Alice Walker?" I asked.

"See, I have three sisters. We were raised by a strong, womanist single mother. We're islanders but my mom collected literature for and by Black women all over the world. I guess her way of life transcended onto me."

"That's...interesting," I said while eyeing him seductively.

Lenny was sexy as hell, intelligent, charming, and a respecter of women. What's more, he had a darkness to him and while I should have probably run away, I wanted to give him some light. This darkness, I could sense, was less rooted in mayhem and destruction, but more so sorrow and sadness.

He caught my seductive gaze and assumed it was permission to walk towards me. With the bar separating us, he reached over the counter and softly touched my hand. He was forward to be a stranger. Any other man would have felt my wrath for such an intrusion. This time, I could only stand still, looking doe eyed as he approached me. As soon as I decided to live in the moment, my phone rang a special tone, bringing me back to reality: I'm at work and something's wrong with Peter.

References

Walker, A. (1973). *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women*. San Diego, California: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.