# Unfinished Business,

a romantic tale about old loves and new ones



Ву

B.L. Wilson

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Edited by BZ Hercules www.bzhercules.com Researched by B.L. Wilson I'm dedicating this book to wonderful 'Sistahs of the Spirit' that I met, and who helped me through the many difficulties on the road to my salvation.

B.L. Wilson

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new. ~Socrates~

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THANK YOU FOR READING!

LINKS TO MORE BOOKS BY BL WILSON

# **PROLOGUE**

"There's a very attractive Black woman waiting outside in the lobby. She asked me a lot of questions about you," Nellie told her boss.

"Oh." Jessie Henderson looked up from the mountain of paperwork on her desk to study her secretary. "And what did you tell her?"

Nellie shifted her weight from one foot to the other and cleared her throat. She could feel her cheeks redden. She looked above Jessie's head, avoiding her eyes. She was nervous. She hated admitting she was gossiping about her boss. "Oh, I said something like how you worked for the firm for ten years. I said you were one of the best bosses I'd ever worked for and you were good at your job. Then I said how I didn't want to work for anyone else."

Jessie studied Nellie. "I'll bet you said a lot more than that, Nellie." Knowing Nellie as well as she did, she could just imagine Nellie's conversation with the woman. She probably gave the woman her personal stats. She was single. She was about five foot five inches tall and weighed x number of pounds. She was in good health. She was single. She was dependable. She was extremely dedicated to her work and loved anything silk or cashmere. She was single, blah, blah, and she was single. It wouldn't be the first time Nellie had told a stranger her business in hopes of finding a mate for her.

"What makes you say a thing like that, Boss?" Nellie asked, barely containing her laughter.

"If the woman was as good looking as you said, you probably asked her if she had a spare man somewhere. Somebody — a brother, cousin, or ex-boyfriend — hanging around that would be perfect for me. Who the man was wouldn't matter because you seem to think that, at forty, my biological clock is running out. To paraphrase you, 'If I'm ever going to find a man and make babies, I'd better do it now."

Nellie's blue eyes twinkled as she pulled up a chair and sat down. "Humph, I'm not that bad, am I?"

Jessie sat back against her chair and put her hands behind her head as she studied Nellie. If Nellie wasn't such an asset to her as a secretary, she might have gotten rid of her long ago. Jessie frowned and then thought, *No, I wouldn't*. Nellie was a fixture at the firm. She was always willing to work long hours and bragged about Jessie's abilities to senior partners. Sometimes, on a light day, Nellie would bring in delicious little snacks she baked and entertain Jessie with tales of the company's history back in the day. She relied on Nellie's evaluations of her cases as well. There was no way she'd get rid of Nellie until she was ready to retire, whenever that happened. She chuckled at her secretary's question. "Aren't you the same woman who has been trying to set me up on blind dates ever since I've been here at the firm?"

"Everybody needs somebody, Jessie. Even you do. I'm just trying to help you find that somebody."

Jessie nodded. "Yeah, I know you are. But right now, I don't have time for love stuff. Maybe when I hit fifty or sixty, I will, but not now."

Nellie frowned, then ran a hand through short, graying hair. "Humph, you'll be too old for anything but sitting in a rocking chair ruminating about all the life you missed, Jessie. Mark my words. You'll see."

Jessie sighed and leaned forward to pull another report from the stack and began to review it, when Nellie interrupted her again.

"Oh, I almost forgot, the woman said to give this to you. Do you want me to send her in now?" Nellie handed Jessie a small, pale green envelope and waited expectantly.

Taking the envelope, Jessie opened it to pull out a matching pale green note and quickly read its contents. It read. *Meet me in the main lobby in 30 minutes. Ruth.* The woman signed the note using her first name. *Damn it. She was so confident I'd know her name, she didn't bother to sign a last name,* Jessie thought, rubbing her chin as she read the note again just to make sure she hadn't missed anything. She could imagine different scenarios for Ruth's appearance after ten years. Did she want to do that today?

"Jessie, do you want me to send her in or not?" Nellie asked, waiting to either be dismissed or told what to do.

"No, that's okay, Nellie. I'll be leaving in about thirty minutes anyway, after we finish this stack of papers."

The two women reduced the huge stack of papers into two piles.

Jessie stood up, stretched, then put on her new jacket. She smoothed her pants down, loving the feel of cashmere against her hand. She looked down at the paperwork on her desk and asked Nellie to go through it with her to select the ones requiring her signature. They worked in silence until twenty minutes passed. Jessie signed the paperwork while Nellie sorted.

"Send the first ten to Mr. Gibbs for his signature before you send them to accounting and mail the others out right away," Jessie said, pointing to the papers piled up on her right. "I'll be in early tomorrow morning to write memos on the last of the bunch." She pointed to another stack on her left. "Go home as soon you finish. Okay, Nellie?"

"Thanks, Boss. See you tomorrow." Nellie gathered the two stacks and hurried out the door. She was so relieved Jessie didn't lecture her about discussing her personal affairs with a stranger that she forgot to ask Jessie why she was leaving early.

Nellie's lack of curiosity surprised Jessie and she almost revealed her innermost thoughts. She stood up, then stretched and casually checked her watch. "Not a minute to spare," she muttered. "If I hurry, I can catch the elevator before the six o'clock crowd gets on. I'll have the elevator to myself to figure out what I'm going to say when I meet Ruth James."

The elevator was crowded, so Jessie barely had room to breathe, let alone practice a speech. She stepped off the elevator and turned around to walk by the revolving door, when a movement caught her eye. Ruth James was standing with her profile facing the far elevator. Nellie was so

right. She was very attractive...no, correct that. She was gorgeous.



**R**uth James had always been a good-looking woman. Over the years, she'd learned to dress in unique clothing that emphasized her mixture of Native American and African-American roots. Today, she was stunning. Being the sole heir to the James fortune allowed to her afford such luxuries as custom-made, one-of-a-kind designer clothing and shoes. Looking at Ruthie hurt Jessie's heart so much, she wondered if she could spend time with her and not regret it. So many bittersweet memories flooded her mind that she almost left before she had to face Ruthie. Something in Jessie's gut told her to not to leave. She exhaled deeply, still debating whether to leave or not. Now, it was too late to leave. Ruthie felt her presence and had turned around to face her.

Jessie sucked another deep breath, sighed, and then walked toward Ruthie. As she ventured closer, Jessie realized Ruthie looked different. She was as beautiful as ever. The long, ravencolored braid gently swayed as she stepped forward to meet Jessie. How Jessie remembered that braid. Her thick braid was tightly restrained now, but it was completely different at night. Her hair was gloriously wild and thick. Oh, how good it felt to run her hands through it. The wondrous heavy, silky texture of it against Jessie's skin when it fell over her face like a soft, midnight curtain was an erotic experience.

When they were in bed and Ruthie wanted to torture her, she'd unbraid her hair, then lean over. She'd let the silky ends brush ever so lightly along the full length of Jessie's body from her collarbone to her toes. The feel of Ruthie's hair against her skin was indescribable. She sighed. She could feel her nipples harden when she thought about those nights so long ago. She steeled her spine. She didn't have time for this. She had to exercise iron control and will herself to focus on a little paint chip on the wall above Ruthie's head to keep those feelings from showing.

"Damn it! Why now?" Jessie muttered, trying not to focus on the beautiful woman standing a few feet away.

She'd had other lovers over the years, but they never quite measured up to Ruthie James. Tonight, Ruth, the name she preferred to be called, seemed different. She was wearing what Jessie called "casual urban." Instead of the loose, flowing, caftan-like garments in earth-colored tones she favored, her outfit was a simple, tasteful pale green silk blouse tucked into faded designer blue jeans and covered by a blue-gray, tweedy cashmere blazer. The blouse made her hazel eyes appear more green than brown in this light. Ruth knew Jessie's favorite color was green and how much she loved the feel of silk or cashmere. If Jessie didn't know better, she'd swear Ruth was giving her a sign about something.

Was it in those brown-green eyes of Ruth's or the clothes she wore? Something was different about her tonight when she turned around to face Jessie. Jessie could see the indecision on her face. Ruth couldn't decide how to greet her. She could read the debate in her eyes. Should she hug

her or simply shake hands? How did one greet an ex-lover? On the other hand, Jessie was praying she wouldn't try anything. Any physical contact was likely to set off sparks.

They simply stood in the well-lit lobby, staring at each other and looking awkward.

Shaking her head, Jessie glanced down at her watch and realized Nellie would be making an appearance shortly. Against her better judgment, she touched Ruth's arm and decided to guide her toward the exit at the rear of the building. Occasionally, she used the secluded exit to escort clients who didn't want the world to know they hired people like her to sift through their lives. As soon as Jessie tapped Ruth's arm, she felt a surge of excitement. She realized Ruth felt it too when she turned to look at her with alarm and pulled away.

Jessie found her voice. "My secretary is about to leave the office for the day. She'll be coming through the lobby any minute. Could we leave by the back way? I'd rather she didn't see me here with you."

A hurt look skittered across Ruth's near perfect features, but she allowed Jessie to guide her to the rear exit.

"My secretary doesn't really know much about my personal life. I'd prefer to keep it that way," Jessie added as an explanation.

"She doesn't know you're gay, does she, Jessie?" Ruth asked. She was curious to see whether Jessie had changed after all these years.

Jessie shook her head as she led the way to the rear exit. "No, she doesn't. There's no need to tell her either."

Ruth frowned. "She seems to know everything else about you. I'm surprised you haven't told her. She likes you a great deal. I don't think it would matter much to her what your sexual orientation is." She stopped walking suddenly and turned to study Jessie as she made the last remark.

Jessie released her elbow quickly and avoided looking at her. She hoped Ruth would just let the matter of who she bedded fade into the sunset. After several seconds, she risked a peek at Ruth's face. Ruth shrugged beautiful shoulders, issued a rueful smile, and then she allowed Jessie take her arm again. Jessie was surprised by her acquiescence and kept walking. She didn't say anything. Given enough time, people changed. Maybe Ruth had too. Jessie certainly hoped so because this was one of the reasons they had broken up.

After their break-up, they began to exchange long, interesting letters about their lives. Jessie found it easier to write about her feelings than to talk about them in person. That much hadn't changed over the years. As time passed, their letters dwindled down to cards on birthdays and holidays with short, handwritten notes inside or postcards from exotic locations. Eventually, the postcards stopped coming. It had been a long time since Ruthie James had been in touch with her. She wondered why Ruth wanted to see her now. Seeing her tonight reminded Jessie how they first met.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

T ime slipped backwards. It was fifteen years ago. Jessie was auditing courses in the Criminal Justice Program. She'd seen Ruthie James in the graduate library several times but didn't know her name. She was interested enough to ask about her at the student lounge. That was when she discovered Ruthie sometimes volunteered at the graduate library. She found out because Ruthie had developed a protective circle of friends at the student lounge and that was all they would tell her.

After watching from a distance for months, she and Ruthie finally bumped into each other at the library late one evening. Ruthie was sitting at the information desk as Jessie entered the library. Jessie halted at the library's entrance to study the attractive woman. "It's now or never," she muttered softly. She sucked in a deep breath, letting it out slowly. Then, with a thundering heart, she decided to approach Ruthie. She strode to the information desk and told a tiny white lie. She knew exactly where the book section was. She just wanted to meet the stunning librarian sitting at the desk.

"Hi. I'm looking for a particular book. My professor said it might be here. How do I find the criminal justice section?" Jessie dug through her papers to find the title of the book. "I need it for a course I'm taking. Here's the title." She shoved the paper at the librarian.

Ruthie hid a small smile as she read the title. She was hoping the woman standing in front of her might need something. She'd been watching her for weeks whenever she came to the use the library. She never spoke other than to nod to her. She always went back to reading whatever book was in front of her. She studied the paper for a few seconds. "Hmm, this is a tough one to find. Let's take a look."

She settled in front of her keyboard and typed in the title, then read from the screen. "We have only one copy here. The other two are in the main branch. The criminal justice section is over..." Ruthie looked up into twinkling dark eyes and cleared her throat. "Why don't I just show you? Please follow me." Ruthie escorted Jessie to the section, located the book she requested, and then surprised her with the offer of a cup of coffee.

They talked for hours in a little coffee shop a block away from the campus.

Ruthie said she was going to work with developmentally disabled children after graduation. She eventually wanted to open an office as a child psychologist.

Jessie decided not to tell Ruthie she was a cop. When most women learned she was a police officer, they stopped seeing her. It didn't matter how much they enjoyed each other's company, having a cop for a girlfriend put a big damper on a relationship. She told Ruthie she intended to go into law school next year, so she was auditing some courses in criminal justice. It wasn't a lie

exactly. She planned to attend law school when she first became a beat cop three years ago. She knew the police union would help pay for school, which was good. She couldn't afford law school any other way, so it worked out well.

Her father and brother were cops, so it seemed natural she'd become one too. When she told her father that she planned to become a cop, he hit the roof and said, "No daughter of mine is gonna be no damn cop!" Bad enough his only son and three nephews had followed in his footsteps, but he drew the line at his only daughter becoming a cop. "Over my dead body, you'll be a cop!" Jessie remembered him yelling, then storming out of the house to his car.

If she'd known some coked-up, punk-ass kid was going to kill her father four weeks after he made that bold statement, she might've waited to apply to the academy. Life was a matter of timing, wasn't it? Her father's murder made her reconsider her career choice. She'd work two years but no more than three on the police force and go to law school at night. Her plan sounded great, but she failed to recognize how much she loved police work.

Part of her attraction for police work was its unpredictable nature. She never knew from one day to the next what was going to happen on the streets that she patrolled. One day, she rescued the proverbial kitten stuck in a tree, while the next day, she directed traffic on South Street. Two days later, she delivered a bouncing baby boy. Somewhere in the city was a cute little Mexican kid named Jesse Henderson Garcia. The mother was so grateful, she named her firstborn son after the newbie female cop who delivered him. Oh yeah, she loved being a cop.

The two women had finished their coffee and said good night when Jessie realized she wanted to see Ruthie again. She loved hearing Ruthie's voice and seeing the way her eyes sparkled when she described her classes in child psychology. Her eyes were hazel with tiny spots of gold and green around the iris. When Jessie looked into Ruthie's eyes, the golden specks turned to green, making her eyes appear as dark bottomless pools of green.

They were sitting in the booth, when Jessie took a deep breath and then asked, "Would you like to go to a Luther Vandross concert this weekend?"

Ruthie issued a delighted laugh, placed a hand on Jessie's arm, and then leaned over to whisper, "You see? That wasn't so hard, was it? I was hoping that you'd ask me out. If you didn't, I was going to ask you. I've seen you watching me for two months. I heard from several friends how you asked about me at the student lounge. I did some checking on you too, but everyone I spoke with said you didn't have any friends on campus." She sighed. "You keep pretty much to yourself. Why is that? Most women would find you very attractive. I know I do."

"Oh." Jessie flushed and started packing up books. She was too nervous to think of a good comeback line, which was unusual because she commented on everything. According to her big brother, Wendell Jr., the topic hadn't been created that she couldn't expound on for at least ten minutes. She was Silent Sam that night. Ruthie James had that effect on her.

Ruthie touched her arm to stop her travels. She thought Jessie was upset about what she'd said. "You're not angry with me, are you?"

Jessie felt something surge through her. It felt like an electric charge. Ruthie's touch disturbed her so that she dropped all the books in her arms. She took one look into those big green orbs and

wondered what their date Sunday night would be like, if a thing as simple as a touch set off such feelings. She considered canceling their date, but Ruthie seemed as disturbed by the situation as she was. She figured Ruthie wouldn't allow anything to happen on their first date. She watched Ruthie's hand quickly drop away from her arm as if she'd touched a white-hot poker.

"I... I mean, no, I'm not angry with you. I'm just... I mean, that I..." Jessie cleared her throat. "Look, if you don't want to go with me on Sunday, it's all right."

Ruthie looked puzzled at her words. "Of course I want to go. Let's meet in front of the concert hall at seven. Okay?"

Jessie smiled. "Okay, I'll meet you Sunday night in front of the concert hall at seven o'clock." Neither woman mentioned the jolt of electricity they both felt that night.

That weekend, it was Ladies' Night at Luther's concert. He dedicated the entire evening to all the women in the concert hall. He was his romantic best. He created a magical atmosphere that transformed the entire stage into a cozy little hideaway with just you, your lover, and his mood music playing the background, or so the reviewers said. Yet as good as Luther was that night, Jessie didn't think she or Ruthie heard much of his music. Both of them were too concerned with what might happen later that night. They sat far enough away from each other. Only their shoulders touched occasionally.

During intermission, the two women walked outside for some fresh air. Jessie stood close enough to see loose strands of Ruthie's hair that had pulled away from her thick, dark braid. When Jessie reached over to smooth the errant strands against Ruthie's head, she turned too quickly. Jessie caressed her face instead of her hair. Jessie could see the effect of her touch on her.

Time stood still for both women.

Ruthie closed her eyes for a minute and a low moan escaped her lips.

When Ruthie opened her eyes, Jessie could see the desire blazing in them. She didn't know how she looked to Ruthie, but if she looked anything like Ruthie did, they were in trouble. How could they have made it through the rest of the concert and out to Ruthie's car that night without taking advantage of Luther's suggestive magic? The crisp winter air helped to cool their thoughts. Perhaps it was the snow that kept them from consummating their desires that night.

By the time they left the concert, an unexpected snowstorm had left a couple of inches on the frozen ground. People were laughing and throwing snowballs at each other as they tried to dig their cars out. Ruthie joined in the festive atmosphere and threw a couple snowballs at Jessie but missed. In retaliation, Jessie ran over to Ruthie and tried to push some snow down the neck of her jacket, but her braid kept getting in the way.

They slipped on patches of snow-covered ice. The next thing Jessie knew, she and Ruthie were on the snowy ground, laughing. Ruthie was sitting on top of her. She was trying to make her eat snow. Leaning over her face, Ruthie suddenly stopped laughing as she pressed her hands above her head. Jessie noticed the change in her eyes when she moved closer and wondered what it meant. She didn't have to wonder long. Within seconds, Ruthie's mouth met hers in a sweet kiss filled with the promise of things to come. Her touch was electric, but her kiss was hellfire.

Both women pulled back in amazement.

Jessie could see Ruthie was as turned on as she was. Her eyes were dark green with excitement and smoldering with desire. Underneath layers of winter clothing, Jessie's nipples hardened. When Ruthie bent down to kiss her again, she tasted soft, full lips and felt the fire move down her belly until it reached into her core. She returned Ruthie's kiss and felt a sudden flare-up of intense, throbbing heat between her legs. Cold lips met warmer ones. The women's tongues snaked out to twist and chase each other in a mating dance.

Wham! Thump! Smack!

The three snowballs hit Ruthie's back so hard that her teeth clattered against Jessie's as they tried to kiss again. Laughing, Ruthie stood up quickly and reached down to pull Jessie into a sitting position. The magic was gone as quickly as it came. Jessie wondered if she imagined it all as they headed for a public ladies' room near the library.

After they found the restroom, Jessie watched in utter fascination as Ruthie preened in front of the mirror for the next ten minutes. Meanwhile, Jessie used the toilet, then washed her hands and finger-combed her hair. She was done in two seconds flat. As Jessie was brushing the snow from her clothes, she peeked at Ruthie to see if she was still excited but saw no evidence of the previous kisses they shared. Ruthie was acting as if the torrid kisses never happened. Jessie was mesmerized with Ruthie's casual performance in front of the mirror. She didn't know Ruthie's eyes held the secrets she longed to see.

Ruthie confided to Jessie later that had she looked closely at her eyes or even noticed her trembling hands, Jessie might have gone home with her. It would have changed things forever. Ruthie said she staged the mirror routine to get her own emotions under control.

When they left the restroom, Jessie offered to drop Ruthie off, but she refused, saying that she'd take a cab home. She leaned over to kiss Ruthie goodnight but thought better about it. She suddenly straightened up and muttered a quiet good night. She was afraid to take a chance Ruthie might reject her. After that, she didn't hear from Ruthie again. All her attempts to locate Ruthie met with a stony silence from her friends at the student lounge. She was reluctant to use her police influence to locate Ruthie, but she certainly thought about it. She didn't know what she'd done wrong, but it had to be something. Ruthie's friends made her feel guilty every time she'd ask for Ruthie. She visited the information desk at the library every night for the next month and still she couldn't find Ruthie. She was disappointed, wondering how someone could disappear so easily. She finally stopped searching for Ruthie, deciding to devote her full attention to her job first and her studies second.

## THANK YOU FOR READING!

#### **D**ear Reader.

Thank you so much for purchasing *Unfinished Business*, a romantic tale of old loves and new ones. I'm glad my novel captured your interest enough to purchase it. This time, I'm breaking a bit from tradition again as I did with another novel *Tiger Eyes*, can a woman change her stripes? Normally, this is the place where I'd ask my readers what they thought of my novel. Instead, I wanted to tell you the backstory behind this book.

I wrote this book in 2006 to challenge myself. I wanted to see if I could tell a decent suspense tale with a romantic bent. I needed inspiration to keep writing, so I named one of the main characters after one of my favorite play aunts from childhood. As happens sometimes in life, my play aunt grew older and developed dementia. In her later years, her children admitted her to an assisted living center for seniors.

The last time I visited my mother, we went to see my play aunt. She looked older, but she was still so beautiful, it nearly took my breath away. Unfortunately, her mind wasn't a match for her body and she didn't remember who I was. At the time we visited, my play aunt was concerned that her husband wasn't in the room with her and she was running all over the place searching for him. My mother didn't have the heart to tell her what the nursing staff had told my play aunt a million times; that her husband lived elsewhere in another assisted living center.

Her husband of nearly sixty years needed a wheelchair to help him get around. While his body had weakened over the years, his mind was still strong and sharp. He told my mother how much he regretted having to place my play aunt in a different assisted living center, but he couldn't take care of her once his body began to give out on him.

I wish I could say my play aunt got better and she and her husband were reunited in the same assisted center, but they weren't. He passed away first. My play aunt's condition worsened before she too passed on. As a writer and a believer in true love stories, I'd like to think they were reunited somewhere in the great beyond.

Now that I've revealed a bit of my thinking as I wrote this novel, I have a favor to ask of you. I'd love to hear your feedback. Did you love the book or hate it? What could I have done to improve your reading pleasure? Did certain characters stand out and become more real than others? Which characters did? What could I have done to improve them?

Last but not least, I have a favor to ask of you. I'd love to hear your feedback... loved the book, hated the book, or what I could do to improve it. As you might have figured out from my author page at Amazon, reviews are difficult to come by these days. You, the reader, now have the power to make or break a book. If you have the time to post a few words, I'd greatly appreciate it if you would.

Here is the link to my author page at Amazon to post your review: http://amzn.to/1y7Ncar

You can also subscribe to my blog to learn more about me, my latest books and events: <a href="http://wilsonbluez.com">http://wilsonbluez.com</a>

The final page has links to more of my books.

With a great deal of appreciation, BL Wilson

#### LINKS TO MORE BOOKS BY BL WILSON

BOOKS, BALLS and DOGS: <a href="http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B011YIFU5Q">http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B011YIFU5Q</a>

SINKHOLES Part1, love always finds a way: <a href="http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0108H64B8">http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0108H64B8</a>

SINKHOLES Part 2, love always finds a way: http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0108H5X06

TIGER EYES, can a woman change her stripes?: <a href="http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00WT1ZLMK">http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00WT1ZLMK</a>

BELLY FIRES, even death can't kill the flames of passion: http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00V2FKMEQ

SECOND CHANCES, at love and murder: http://bit.ly/1A4LoRN

BUILDINGS, a New York love story: http://amzn.to/1DOaNSy

SAFE HAVEN: http://amzn.to/1v9Pf

OLD MAN PETERSON, murder it's all in the family: http://amzn.to/18hZk1m

I'M YOUR BABY TONIGHT but what about tomorrow?: http://amzn.to/1xW5RVw

#### AND COMING SOON:

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MINK TOO

**DIVERGENT INTERESTS** 

**BAYOU BOUNTY** 

MUFFIN

**ADAM** 

LITTLE HELLION

**HORSEWOMAN**