



*A Little  
White  
Lie*

*Aliyah Burke*

*Red Rose Publishing*



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**A Little White Lie by Aliyah Burke**

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## Dedication:

This book is dedicated to all the angels who helped me. You know who you are. And of course, the real life Jake.

# A Little White Lie

By

Aliyah Burke

## Chapter 1

“I have a date, thank you very much!” the angry screech filled the phone line. “I don’t need, nor want your damn sympathy.” Tahnee Madison sank down onto a stool at her breakfast bar and readjusted the phone against her ear.

Her light brown eyes took in the morning sight of Elliot Bay. Unfortunately, this time it didn’t relax her or put her at ease, for on the other end of the phone conversation was her sister.

Her conniving, manipulative, sneaky bitch of a sister. Topaz Angel Madison. A sister who had taken her fiancé away from her. And was now lording it over her that the two of them had since gotten engaged and would be together at the wedding of their only brother. Not that she gave a damn, but seriously, how shitty was that?

“I just don’t want you to feel awkward around Javon.” Topaz paused before adding in a spiteful tone, “Especially since we both know you *don’t* have a date.”

Tahnee narrowed her eyes as she picked up a knife and pretended to stab her sister. “I don’t give a damn about him! Who says I don’t have a date? I just told you I did.”

“Javon. He says he’s never seen you out with anyone. And let’s face it, hon, you aren’t exactly drop dead gorgeous.”

Her eyes shot daggers. *That man shouldn’t be paying me any attention now.* “Tell that bastard *fiancé* of yours to stop snooping in my life. He gave up that right when he slipped his dick into you. He doesn’t know

anything. For your information, I am seeing someone,” she lied for the second time since she had picked up the phone.

“Really?” Topaz asked in a doubt-filled tone.

“Yes, *really*. He is the most wonderful man.” *What the hell am I doing?* “So I don’t care that you and Javon will be there together. This man of mine puts him and his memories to shame.” Click. Tahnee hung up the phone before her sister could ask anymore questions.

Slamming the phone back onto its charger, Tahnee swore, “Shit! What the hell did I just do?” *Made it seem like you had a date for this wedding. And a handsome one at that*, her brain taunted.

She grabbed her purse off the spotless, white marble countertop along with her keys and headed out the door. The uncommonly clear skies of Seattle, Washington did nothing to improve the dark mood her sister’s call had enveloped her in.

With sure steps she walked to the familiar bus stop. A grin crossed her dark face as she nodded at the people she shared her morning commute with. Frank, who owned a deli next to her coffee shop. Dolores, she had a small ice cream parlor. Then there was Dallie, he had a flower shop on the other side of her coffee shop.

“Morning everyone,” she chirped, trying to remain cheerful.

“Morning.” They all replied as the bus pulled up and stopped before them. One by one they climbed on the bus and took their normal seats. As Tahnee moved toward the back she passed a man whose appearance caused her to stumble.

Her eyes flashed over him quickly and then back to the smirking face of Dallie who was waiting to share his seat with her. *Dear Lord, that man is fine*. She glowered at Dallie as she sat beside him.

The stranger was sitting alone and appeared deceptively relaxed. The body may look it but there was no doubt he was well aware of his surroundings. His dark blond hair tapered to his collar in a neat pattern. As she passed him, his eyes had grabbed a hold of her; they were a brilliant meadow green and shone from his tanned face with an intensity that shocked her. Whatever he did for a living gave him one beautiful body, for it rippled with muscles. The kind of physique that if it was wrapped around you, "safe" would be the only word that came to mind.

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Jake smiled as he watched the woman do a double take and almost stumble as she looked at him. He was used to that reaction, what he wasn't used to was the one he had towards her.

His eyes were extremely severe in color and emotion. He had become used to women and men halting to take another look at them. But this woman, this woman was different. He had noticed her when they pulled up to the bus stop. She was standing with a group of people but her expression told him she was not as happy as she pretended to be.

All of her curves nestled beautifully in her five-six frame highlighting the sensual side of a woman and ignoring the extra pounds she carried. Size had never been an issue for him. What attracted him was how a woman carried herself. And this one...did so beautifully.

She had cocoa skin and dark brown shoulder length hair that had a slight wave in it. As their eyes met, he had been immediately drawn in by the honey-brown of her gaze. Her heart-shaped face had blushed slightly as she stumbled but she recovered quickly and moved on.

Closing his eyes he mentally formed her image in his mind instead of trusting his baser instincts and turning around to gaze at her. The way her

kiwi green shirt offset the richness of her skin. The form-hugging way her black sarong wrapped around her curves, bringing his attention to the African designs embossed in the material. Jesus, she was magnificent.

He couldn't help but turn his head when she got off at her stop and follow her easy movement with his eyes. *Man, I would love to have five seconds with her.* Until she swayed out of sight, his gaze locked onto her backside as it moved. Back and forth, a very gentle swing came with each step. A very natural motion for her, he could tell.

Jake climbed off the bus at the next stop. As he made his way down to Pier 56 he shook his head over the absurdity of the fact that this one woman wouldn't leave his subconscious. Waving to some of his coworkers, he moved onto the pier and headed to the ship he was welding on. Slapping on his hardhat, he grabbed his tools and began to work.

Around noon he took an hour off for lunch. Walking up Pike Street, Jake took in all the happy couples wandering throughout Pike's Market. Moving on to First Ave, he noticed a small coffee shop called, *Tahnee's Coffee House*. He had walked this street before but had never really noticed the sign before. It was a wooden carved sign that hung out over the street. The African designs on it reminded him of the skirt that had so lovingly caressed the woman on the bus.

With an easy shrug, he walked inside the shop. There were about eight tables in the establishment and they were all full of people. The floor was a gleaming wood and the walls covered in African art. Smooth jazz played throughout the building and the people kept the sound at a low murmur.

His nose was assaulted by rich, aromatic smells of coffee and muffins. His first impression...subliminal message in the aroma to cause

this urge in him to grab a cup of coffee. Making his way to the counter, Jake smiled at the woman who stood back there. A very attractive black woman.

“What can I do for you today?” the woman asked.

“I’d like a cup of coffee please.” He looked her in the eyes and noticed how she took the normal double glance at his eyes.

A gentle grin filled her round face. “Of course, just coffee for you? No mocha or latte?”

Jake shook his head. “No, coffee is fine.”

“What kind can I get you?” she questioned as the bell over the door rang drawing her attention back to the person who had entered. “Hey, Tahnee,” she said loudly.

“Hey, Anna,” the woman responded.

That voice startled Jake; it did something strange to his insides, it was husky and yet satiny, flowing over his body like a mix of velvet and silk. He turned to face the person who belonged to that voice and froze. It was his woman from the bus this morning. She stood there with a smile on her face, the light from the day shone upon her dark beauty in an amazing way.

His knees went weak and he had to swallow rapidly to give himself the small opportunity to talk. Slowly he turned as she walked by him and into the back of the small business. He met the highly amused gaze of the woman he knew now to be Anna.

“Make a decision, hon?” she asked.

“Blue...Blue Mountain, please,” he managed to mutter.

“Coming up,” Anna said with a knowing smile.

## Chapter 2

Tahnee leaned against the counter in her back room. Her body trembled with shock as she realized the man out there in the shop was the same one she had seen this very morning. He was tall, muscular and he looked oh so delicious in his faded blue jeans and white tee shirt.

“Get a grip, Tahnee,” she muttered to herself as she pushed back through the door to enter the main part of the shop. Her eyes locked onto him the second she pushed through the swinging door.

He was sitting at one of the tables facing the counter. His eyes roamed over her body, making her wish she was more svelte and appealing.

Still, his eyes set up trembling as they moved easily over her body. Standing next to Anna, Tahnee did her best to ignore the hunk of male flesh drinking coffee in her shop. Tried and failed.

“So, are they coming by today?” Anna asked as she slid a triple shot mocha across the counter to a customer.

“Yes,” Tahnee hissed. “They feel the need to swing by and make sure that I am doing okay.” She paused. “You know, since Javon and I broke up,” her words were sarcastically polite as she waved one hand around in the air, her voice unintentionally rising.

“I wish there was something I could do for you,” Anna said apologetically.

Tahnee laughed. “You don’t have a handsome man around that you could lend me for the weekend, do you?”

Anna shook her head. “Sorry, doll. I can only tell you that you probably shouldn’t have told your sister you had a very handsome date for this wedding. A man who idolizes you.” She began to laugh. “I can’t wait to see what you come up with.”

“Shut up, Anna. I was pissed that she would imply I couldn’t find a date. So sue me, I lied.” Tahnee rolled her eyes and helped another customer. “I just wanted to shut her up, so I conjured up this gorgeous man who was totally devoted to me.” Laughter bubbled out of her. “Guess you’re right. It is kind of dumb. And now, come seven tonight, my sister will stand here and tell me just how useless and pathetic I am.”

“It will all work out, Chile. Trust me.” Anna sent her a smile and got back to work.

Jake swirled the last of his coffee in his mug. Could he have misunderstood? That beautiful woman had to lie about getting a date? What would make that happen? A smile crossed his tanned face. *Guess I will have to be here around seven to find out.*

Sliding back from the table, he walked back up to the counter and leaned against it. His green eyes sparkled with good humor as he smiled at the one called Anna. “One refill for the road, please.”

*Jesus, he has a voice that belongs in a bedroom.* Tahnee deliberately kept her back to him and focused on the wall in front of her. Her lips were dry and her panties were damp. Damn, she was a mess.

Jake paid for his drink and walked out of the door and headed back to work, knowing full well he’d be seeing her again. A pleasing grin crossed his face as he walked back to work, drawing stares from the women he passed.

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Tahnee gritted her teeth for the umpteenth time that evening. Her family drove her to distraction. She loved them, but they could really annoy the hell out of her. She stood behind the counter watching her brother, Tyrell, dance with his fiancée.

Her shop was full of the members of the wedding party. The second the door opened and her sister and ex-fiancé walked in, Tahnee knew her night had just been shot to shit. *Why did he have to come? And why does he still have to be so beautiful?* Javon Brooks was gorgeous.

Javon had a great body, smile, everything. A tall, lean, yet muscular swimmer's body appeared dipped by dark chocolate. His eyes were dark brown and they used to be able to melt her heart with just a look.

Tahnee felt the sting of tears in her eyes. She had been so in love with him. It still hurt like hell to see her ex-fiancé with her sister. And knowing that her sister and he had planned the whole thing, made it even worse. What kind of sibling planned for a man to ask you to marry him and then was there at his side when he left you?

Slipping out from behind the counter, Tahnee headed over to meet them. She may want to, but she wasn't going to act like she wanted to run and hide. "Evening, Sis," she said in a polite voice. *Oh, I want to beat the hell out of the both of you.*

Topaz Madison was stunning. She was tall with a model's body. Everything seemed to fall into place for her. Never a traffic ticket, all she had to do was bat her big black lashes. A smile from her could bring men to their knees.

"Little sister. Hello," Topaz cooed as if trying to console a petulant child.

"Hello, Javon." A slight nod was all she afforded him.

“Hello, Tahnee,” he drew out her name just like he used to suckle on her breasts, long and heated. And the reaction he got from her was the same, she began to feel her body grow damp.

“So,” Topaz began. “Where is this man you claim to have?”

Leave it to her sister to forgo the niceties and get to the meat of the matter. Ignoring that horrid tossing in her stomach at having to admit to her sibling that she had lied, Tahnee opened her mouth to speak and froze as the door swung open revealing that handsome man from earlier.

He stood in the doorway dressed in a dark charcoal gray suit with green accents. Green that only enhanced the intensity of his eyes as they found and held her gaze. He stepped through, allowing the door to close behind him and strode with unwavering purpose directly toward Tahnee.

Only when he got inches from her, did he slow. One arm reached for her and tugged her close into his broad chest. His free hand cupped her soft face and held it in place as his mouth lowered to land upon hers.

*Dear Lord, this man can kiss.* Tahnee felt her knees buckle at the pressure of his lips on hers. It was like she was a fine wine and he was all into the art of wine-tasting. His tongue traced her full lips before descending into the warmth of her mouth.

With a mind of their own, her hands entangled themselves in the lapels of his suit coat and pressed her body closer to his hard one. Her eyes drifted closed as moisture swept through her like a raging river. The wetness he created in her made Javon’s seem like the Kalahari Desert.

Her nipples were taut and crying out for his touch. She wanted to remove his clothes and see if his chest was as hard as it felt. Oh my God, it was heaven being in this embrace.

Slowly he drew back from her luscious mouth and sent her a bone-melting grin. "Sorry I'm late, baby," he said in a deep seductive voice. "I didn't think work would run that long." One arm slid around her waist tucking her securely into his side. He turned his attention to the couple before him. "You must be the sister I've heard so much about."

Dark brown eyes narrowed as they looked upon him. "You can't be serious. Are you trying to tell me *you* are the handsome man she is dating?" The voice was full of skepticism. "He's white!"

Jake laughed. His rich voice like music to Tahnee's ears. "I don't know about the handsome bit, but I am the man lucky enough to be part of her life. And yes, I am, glad we got that bit out of the way." His lips brushed against Tahnee's forehead, immediately calming her.

Topaz frowned. This man next to her sister was so handsome, it made her wet wishing he was going home with her. Someone like that was not meant to be with her sister. No, she was the beautiful one, not Tahnee. "And what is your name?" she purred reaching for his hand. Why would a white man want Tahnee, when Topaz was more than willing to offer up herself?

"I'm Jake. Jake Hutton." He shook her hand and immediately dropped it to reach for the man who stood next to her. "Nice to meet you."

The dark hand reached out. "Name's Javon. How long have you and Tahnee been together?" His dark eyes narrowed as they raked over the sight of this man standing next to Tahnee.

Jake forced back a growl. He hated the sound of his woman's name rolling off that man's tongue. Especially since he discerned he must be the one who dumped her. If that was the case then he shouldn't be allowed to look at her at all. "That's not really any of your business. Excuse me, I need

a private word with my queen here.” Gently, yet firmly, he guided Tahnee into the back of the establishment.

Once the door shut behind him, all thoughts of talk fled as he pulled her back into his arms, desperately craving the taste of her again. This time, his hands slid into her hair and pulled her in even closer. They both groaned and leaned in to one another diminishing the distance that separated them.

Jake trailed his hands over the body before him, the curvaceous form that had tempted him from the second he first laid eyes upon it. His mouth nibbled Tahnee’s lips as his hands caressed her derriere.

He slid his tongue deep into the recesses of her mouth. The taste that assaulted his senses made his erection twitch in his pants, painfully. Sweet Jesus he wanted to be buried balls deep inside her hot body.

## Chapter 3

*This is insane. I don't even know this man.* Regardless, Tahnee didn't pull away from his intoxicating caress. Her body arched against him, telling him without words just what she was craving.

His hands moved to the hem of her satin shirt and slipped under it settling against the smoothness of her skin. Callused hands ran over her sides as they inched higher and higher up her body.

Drawing heavily on his lower lip, Tahnee poured everything she had into the kiss they were sharing. She wanted to feel his naked skin against her body. Wanted his hands to touch and caress her all over. Wanted that thick cock she felt against her slipping between her thighs and taking her to plains of pleasure she knew she had never been to before.

The sound of a voice clearing jolted them both back to reality. Topaz and Javon stood there in the back staring at them like they were insane. Jake released her lips reluctantly and tugged her back to his body so she hid his erection.

"What?" Tahnee rasped as her wobbly hands tightened on the material of his coat.

"We were wondering what you two were talking about back here," Javon said as he took in the glow that surrounded Tahnee.

Jake brushed his hard penis against Tahnee's softness delighting in the responding shivers she exhibited. "We got carried away, but then I seem to do that around her. Sorry. We will be out in a moment." He sent them a look expressing 'leave.'

Topaz had to drag her fiancé away from staring at the sight of Jake's lighter hand against the dark skin of her sister. For the first time in her life, she was jealous of her younger sister.

When they were finally alone again, Jake gazed down at her. Her eyes still smoldered with desire. Full lips were swollen from the force of his lips upon them. She looked delectable and he wanted to strip her naked and feast upon the bounty before him.

Slowly, realism settled into her eyes. "I remember you from earlier today, but I still don't know you. Who are you?" her question was quiet even as she removed his hands from her sides.

"Your fiancé...Jake. I overheard your predicament today and figured I could help you out." He refused to let go of her hands, opting instead to put them on his chest and covering them with his own.

Her mouth moved but nothing came out. *I must be going crazy.* Finally she found her voice. "What are you talking about?" Tahnee cut her eyes over to the door, expecting to see her sister there gloating. "Is this some trick my sister cooked up?"

Grabbing one of her hands, he placed it over his rock-solid erection. "Does this feel like a trick to you? For all intents and purposes, I am your fiancé and while I would love to lay you across that counter behind us and drink of the nectar of your body, we have to go out and mingle with the guests. I will however, be deep within your body by the time this evening is over."

Tahnee closed her hand slightly over the thick rod in his pants. Her mouth watered, she wanted to taste him so bad. "I don't know you," she whispered.

“I’m here to help you. And I’m pretty sure that there is more than enough heat between us to make everyone believe we have been together for a while now.” He flexed his hips, driving his erection further into her touch. “I want to be buried deep within you.”

A devilish smile crossed her face. Her nails slid enticingly along the ridge in his pants. “And I want you deep within me. But we have a party to attend. We need to get going, our dinner reservations are at eight.” One hand reached around his neck, drawing him down for a quick but molten kiss. *I can’t believe I am acting like this.*

She let him go and walked ahead of him to the door. Jake shook his head and eagerly followed the black sarong covered in African designs out the door.

As they approached the rest of the people out there, Jake positioned himself beside Tahnee. She introduced him to her brother. “Tyrell, this is Jake.” She looked at him, almost hesitatingly. “Jake, meet my older brother.”

Jake flashed them a disarming grin and offered his hand. “It is a pleasure to meet you.”

Her brother took the hand and shook it as he sized up the man. “I didn’t know you were dating anyone, sis. What does he do?” Tyrell demanded.

“I’m a welder.” Jake easily understood the protective gleam in her brother’s eyes.

Tyrell nodded once and let it go. He wasn’t sure about the man next to his sister, but after the mess that Javon and Topaz put her through, he wasn’t going to say anything about race. He leaned in and kissed his sister

on the cheek one more time before Tahnee turned her attention to his fiancée.

Tahnee took a relaxing breath. Somehow, she knew this evening was going to be interesting and yet, she was going to be safe. *I was right when I assumed a person would feel safe with him.* “We need to get going to the restaurant,” she said as she hugged her brother’s fiancée, Kendall.

“He’s dreamy,” Kendall whispered in her ear as she returned the hug.

“I know.” The two women giggled like schoolgirls sharing a secret. Tahnee had always liked Kendall. The woman was smart, gracious and didn’t put on airs.

A smile teased the corners of Tahnee’s mouth as Jake settled his strong arm around her shoulders, enveloping her in a delightful mix of faint cologne and his own natural scent.

“Okay, everyone,” Tyrell announced. “We need to get going to the restaurant. Meet everyone there.”

Tahnee remained still as the people began to file out. Topaz stopped at the door and looked back. “Maybe I should stay with you, Tahnee, and ride with you and your *boyfriend* to dinner. We haven’t seen each other in a while and we could catch up.”

*I don’t want you anywhere near him, bitch!* “That’s okay, Topaz. I just have to lock up and we’ll be on our way.” With a pointed look at Javon, she added, “Besides, you should be with *your* fiancé, not mine.”

Her eyes narrowed but Topaz did walk out the door, closing it with a decidedly loud slam. Since she was the last one out, Tahnee moved across the room and locked the door after her.

Now she was suddenly nervous. She hit the lights so the only ones left were behind the counter and in the back room. Turning around, Tahnee found herself flush against the body of the man who called himself Jake.

“Oh,” she grunted as she hit against a solid wall of muscle. “Sorry about that.”

“Don’t ever apologize for pressing that luscious body of yours against mine.” His words were delivered in a silvery tone that flowed through her. Two hands reached out to settle against her shoulders.

“We need to be going. I’ll make your excuses for you. Thanks for helping me out.” Tahnee stepped back and moved around him, heading into the back where she reached for her purse.

A strong, tanned hand settled upon her purse pushing it further away from her grasp. “I’m not expecting you to make my excuses for me. I will be there the whole time, by your side.”

Tahnee looked over her shoulder at him. His eyes were such an amazing shade of green it took her breath away. “Why would you do this? You don’t know me.”

A mischievous glint appeared in the depths of his gaze. “You’re absolutely right. And I really should know my fiancée before we get to dinner.”

It didn’t take long and Jake had pulled her back into his arms. “What are you doing?” Tahnee stuttered, even as she felt her immediate response to his touch. How was it possible for something to feel so familiar and right when you were just new to the sensation?

“Getting to know my fiancée,” he rumbled in a dangerously sexy voice as his lips covered hers. His tongue slid between her lush lips. Fingers dug into the flesh of her butt as he pressed them closer together.

Tahnee shuddered. Her hands slipped beneath his coat and began tugging up the light gray shirt covering his muscular torso. The second her hands found his heated skin she purred with contentment. Flames of passion licked at her skin, teasing her, encouraging her, enticing her to follow her emotions to a place she had never gone before.

## Chapter 4

Jake lifted the gorgeous woman in his embrace. She felt so perfect in his arms he didn't want to let her go. Instead he placed her on the steel countertop and raised her skirt as he stepped between her legs.

His hands dug into her hair holding her still as his mouth plundered hers. He felt his cock press hard against the zipper in his pants. How he longed to uncover it and sheath it home in her wet box.

Tahnee whimpered into his mouth, a sound he devoured with total arrogance. One hand left her silky hair and opened the buttons on her shirt, a move that exposed her peachy silk bra.

Pulling away from her tempting lips, he gazed at the scene before him. Her bra lifted her full breasts up as if offering them to him. Offering them for his pleasure, his taste, and his enjoyment. The color was stunning against her skin.

With his thumbs he moved over the pebbled tips that poked through the material. His mouth turned up in a masculine grin as he caught sight of her, head leaning back, exposing herself even more to him. Her flesh rose and fell with each deep breath she ingested.

Taking two fingers, Jake trailed along the top edge of her bra, loving the contrasting difference in their colors. Her hands held onto his muscular sides as she quivered. "I want to be inside you," he murmured in her ear as he nipped the side of her neck. "I want to strip all your clothes off, lay you back and feast on you."

Tahnee whimpered. The erotic images his words stirred in her mind brought wave after wave of wetness to her lower body. "Please," her one word was faint, but echoed through his body with the force of a hurricane.

"Tonight, baby. I promise. But right now we have to get going." He looked down at her and swore, "Damn, I want you!" Stepping back, he held his hands out in front of him and bit his lower lip. "I can't touch you or I'm going to fuck you until we both can't walk."

Tremors rocketed throughout her body at his words. Licking her lips she relished the way his green orbs darkened with unconcealed and barefaced desire. "Don't make promises you can't keep," she said softly.

"I never do," he vowed. He tucked his shirt back in and within moments was just as put together as he had been the moment he walked in the door.

It took Tahnee a bit longer to straighten up her appearance. When she was finally ready, he was waiting for her. In all actuality he had never taken his eyes off of her, just kept his distance while his eyes told her what he really longed to do to her body.

In a daze, Tahnee followed Jake to his vehicle. She was silent as he held the door for her. "Where is the restaurant, baby?" he asked as he slid across the leather seat to settle behind the wheel of his Mazda M3.

"We're eating at the Space Needle. In the one that revolves." For the life of her, Tahnee couldn't pull its name out of her brain; it was muddled by the mere presence of the man beside her.

Jake smiled at her. It's not like SkyCity was a hard name to remember. He loved how discombobulated she was around him. In the space of a day, he had totally intertwined his life with this woman who took his breath away.

With ease he pulled into the Space Needle and parked his vehicle. “Let’s go, baby. I want to get you home as soon as possible.”

Her body trembled again at his words. “Well, then, we should get it over with.”

Helping her out of the car, he asked, “Don’t you want to go to dinner with your family?”

A spurt of droll humor erupted from her. “Oh yeah. What a wonderful evening for me. Sit at a table and listen to my sister tell me how fat, useless, and totally unattractive I am. And then she will get on about that’s why Javon left me and picked her instead.” Her voice got shrill with sarcasm and pain.

Immediately his arm settled around her body as they walked into the Space Needle. “I am so sorry they’re like that to you. I won’t let them do that to you anymore.”

*Oh, Jake. Words like that will make me fall for you quickly.* “I’ll be fine. I’m used to it. Besides, I’ve had many nights to figure out that I can face the fact that my fiancé left me for my model-like sister.” Her sigh was one of acceptance and resignation. “I’ll move on, it’s what I do.”

The sadness in her voice nearly took him to the knees. “Never again,” he pledged. “They won’t do that again.” He tucked her in closer to his side as they stepped into the elevator.

“I don’t need a protector, Jake, although the idea is very appealing.” Tahnee relaxed under his masterful touch.

“I want to protect you,” he murmured in her ear as his tongue traced the edge. “I want to do a lot of things with and *to* you.”

“Stop it, Jake,” she moaned trying to keep her body from responding like a wanton slut.

Walking into the restaurant he chuckled. "You won't be saying that later on, baby. I promise you that."

She knew he was trying to get her mind off the upcoming dinner. "Promises, promises." Her voice was full of tension but at least she was trying to make a joke.

Everyone was at the table when they approached. They were met with knowing and somewhat suspicious glances. "Sorry we're late," Tahnee began, only to halt at the slight caress of his hand across her ass.

"It was totally my fault," Jake interrupted.

"Really?" Sixteen pairs of eyes focused on them as Topaz asked the question.

"Yes," Jake answered.

"And what *were* you two doing?" Topaz asked snidely.

Jake winked in a manner that told Topaz more than she wanted to know. "Well, I wanted to announce to everyone that we are engaged but Tahnee said it was her brother's time and she didn't want to impose, so we argued about that and then had to make up." He flashed a brilliant grin. "So like I said, it's my fault we are late. And I am very sorry about that. I wanted to make a good impression on the family."

"Engaged?" The gasps were obvious as the couple sat down. "You two are engaged? I wasn't even aware she was dating anyone, much less engaged."

Tahnee wanted to sink into the floor. What was he doing? One arm settled around her shoulder, tugging her closer yet. "Yes, we are." He paused for a moment, his green eyes meeting and holding each gaze. "Why?"

Tahnee's parents remained silent but Topaz answered his question. "Well, we just assumed that after her first engagement went bust, that she wouldn't even consider getting engaged again. And you, well you are a surprise."

"Can we not do this please?" Tahnee questioned in a quiet voice.

Jake rumbled his displeasure at the flash of satisfaction in Topaz's dark eyes. As his gaze landed on the woman beside him, he controlled his emotions. Her face was drawn and pinched with tension and sadness. "I'm sorry, baby. I know you wanted to wait until later to announce the engagement. I just wanted to tell them why we were late." He leaned over, tipped her face to his and gently brushed his lips over hers. Then he looked up and was direct in his question. "Why am I such a surprise? I was amazed too, that I would be lucky enough to land a woman as special and unique as Tahnee."

"Well, no," Topaz said. "It's more because you are—"

"Topaz!" Their mother snapped. "There will be none of that talk in this family. You weren't raised to be so offensive." Topaz sat down, but only after an intense glare at her younger sister.

Dinner was a strained affair. Topaz continually tried to draw Jake into conversations about his and Tahnee's relationship. Every time they spoke he noticed how Tahnee tried to draw into herself. As she kissed her brother goodbye, Jake saw Tahnee watching him standing with Topaz.

Jake noticed the sad yet resigned look that filled Tahnee's face. He knew he and Topaz made an attractive couple, their heights fit well together and skin tones were complimentary to one another. However, he left Topaz and whatever she was blabbing on about to stride across the waiting room to haul Tahnee into his embrace. Before everyone there he

bent her backwards and plundered the depths of her mouth, until they were both panting and breathless.

## Chapter 5

One hand was on her leg the entire time he drove her home. Long, strong fingers drew tiny circles on the inside of her thigh. Simply touching Tahnee kept him in a state of arousal the whole car ride back to her place.

He pulled his white Mazda into a parking space and shut off the motor. His large frame turned to face her in the darkened interior of his vehicle. One hand reached out and pushed back the loose hair from her face.

His left hand clenched as he tried to control his raging emotions. Climbing out of the vehicle, Jake walked around the car and opened the door for her. Letting his hand rest on the small of her back, he walked her to the door, unlocked, and opened it for her.

Pulling her lush body in close to him, Jake covered her mouth with his and allowed her to feel his hard physique against her soft one. "Invite me inside," he commanded as his mouth moved back from hers a tiny bit.

"Please," she murmured.

"No," he said and stepped further back, allowing the cool spring night air to cool her heated body.

"No what?" Tahnee asked, suddenly hearing her sister's spiteful voice in her head.

"I want to hear it from your luscious lips. Invite me in," his words were heated and smooth like a snifter of warm brandy.

Looking over her shoulder as she swung open the door to her apartment, Tahnee sent him a shy smile. "Come in?"

“Make sure this is what you want, Tahnee. Once I cross that threshold, I’m not leaving.” Jake closed the distance between them. “Only invite me in if you mean it.” *And I’m not just talking about tonight, baby.*

Tahnee faced him as the faint glow from her apartment surrounded her frame. “I don’t want you to leave. I want you to stay with me.” *Forever.*

He gave a large growl of approval and swept her up into his arms. Long strides carried him into the apartment and he kicked the door shut behind him. “Bedroom?” His question came out in a strangled voice as his cock throbbed at the prospect of being deep inside this vixen in his arms.

“Down the hall, it’s the last door.” Tahnee allowed her fingers to trail along the back of his head, shivering at the feel of his hair against her skin. She kicked off her slip-on shoes as they moved down the hallway.

Jake pushed into her room and dropped her unceremoniously in the middle of her bed. His gaze skimmed around her room taking in the African theme. It was a very nice room and one he would love to learn more about, but right now...he had a queen to investigate.

Jake stood still and watched as the woman on the bed shivered under his stare. He wanted nothing more than to rip off both sets of clothes and ravish her. But that would be acting like an animal. Shrugging out of his suit coat, he let it fall to the floor with indifference. He wanted to see her reaction to his body.

Those kelly green eyes landed on her with so much passion, Tahnee swallowed.

Her hair was messy from the drop to the bed, but he didn’t care. He wanted to make her feel like the only woman in the world. And by the look on her face, he knew he was succeeding.

Her mouth grew dry as she looked at the gray shirt stretched impressively across his taut torso. She didn't, or couldn't tear her gaze away as he loosened the tie around his neck, before it too, descended to the floor. She never once allowed her eyes to release the hold they had on his.

His hands, strong and callused, moved to the top pearl-gray button on his silk shirt. Lean fingers unbuttoned them. One. Two. Three. And so on. Each move, slow and enticing, as with each release, more of his golden chest was exposed to her lustful gaze. It was like being witness to the world's best striptease.

Tahnee felt her body clench with longing. Her eyes left his gaze and fixated on his tapered fingers as they moved down his chiseled chest. She captured her lower lip in her teeth as she squirmed on the bed at the show before her.

With an easy motion he rolled his shoulders and the shirt fell away, divulging the magnificent marbled chest beneath. Jake let the shirt sink to the floor and for a moment he remained still allowing her to drink her fill.

A whimper escaped her mouth as she ran her eyes over his form. His upper body was spectacular. It was golden tan and covered by a medium dusting of hair, the same shade as the stuff on his head. She could see each defined abdominal muscle. Her gaze followed the tapering hair that led below the remaining clothing on his body.

Her fingers clenched in her bedspread as she shifted again, trying to slow the flow of wetness that coursed through her. She was occupied by the shiny black leather belt that was on his pants. Eyes normally light brown were darkened immensely by the desire that slammed her. She wanted desperately what was below his waist.

As if reading her mind, those fingers moved to the belt. Unhurriedly the belt was unhooked. Jake couldn't believe the raw lust he witnessed on her face. Her honeyed gaze zeroed in on his midsection like a wolf at a feast. Inside his pants, he could feel his erection throbbing with its own want.

He unbuttoned the single button on his pants and gradually lowered the zipper. He had already removed his loafers when he first dropped her on the bed. With a simple push, he let his dark gray pants slide over his hips and fall to the floor.

Jake almost lost control as he heard another whimper escape from her throat. Her hands were wringing the color out of her comforter and he could smell the scent of her arousal in the air.

His straining cock was pressed against his boxers, demanding he allow it to find some relief. Ignoring it, Jake stepped to the edge of the bed and held out his hand. "Come here," he ordered in a sensual tone.

He watched as she positioned herself on her hands and knees to crawl to the edge of the bed before placing her hand in his. Jake drew her up to stand before him on the floor. "Undress for me," he commanded her as he stepped back.

Tahnee didn't hesitate in following his order. Her fingers went to the top button of her shirt. She licked her lips before she slid the first button out. The answering flare of heat in his eyes spurred her on. Knowing his gaze was intently on her hands, she moved down her torso in a tantalizing slow way.

Jake bit back a groan. It was like watching a flower bloom, you knew that something beautiful was at the end, but you could hardly stand the

wait. As she undid each button, he was treated to her smooth brown skin and pale peach bra.

His body instantly covered in goose bumps as he watched the shirt fall to the ground and her hands settle on the side of her skirt. Each movement was drawn out, making him shudder in anticipation. Her French-tipped manicured fingers untied the knot at the side of her waist, allowing the sarong to be unwound from her curvaceous body.

Her eyes smoldered and he could read the scarcely controlled passion as they lingered on his face. His jaw was clenched with his effort to be in command of his emotions. The sweat that covered him he knew was visible to her as well.

Jake couldn't control the groan that slipped out as the material of her sarong pooled at her feet, leaving her in nothing but her bra and matching bikini style underwear. How could he be so blessed as to be with such an enchantress?

"Tahnee," he purred as his hands reached out to her.

"Jake." Her response was sultrier than anything he had ever heard in his entire life.

## Chapter 6

Every nerve ending in his body was alive with electricity for this woman. One step brought their bodies back together. His chest pressed into her body as his arms swept around her. Nipping her neck, Jake licked away the sting, loving the tremors that raced through her.

One hand easily unhooked her bra, baring her full breasts to his wicked gaze. "Look at these. Dear God, I can't wait until I taste them." Tahnee whimpered at Jake's words.

Lifting her with an ease that bespoke his immense strength, Jake placed them both back upon the dark comforter. His mouth laved a path from her neck down to her large breasts.

The nipples were hard and pebbled as his mouth settled over one. Her response was immediate as she arched her back and moaned to the room. "Jake!" He refused to release the luscious breast he had in his mouth, so he hummed his comeback, vibrating her nipple.

"Please," she panted, her hands digging into his head, pressing him closer.

His other hand encircled the lonely breast. He rotated the tight peak between two fingers, gently tugging and pulling on it. Each roll and pull elicited a mewling from the back of her throat.

Dragging his mouth reluctantly away from the sweet treat he was indulging in, Jake lapped his way down the side of it, across the valley between them and flicked his tongue over the exposed stiff nipple between his fingers, before he took the whole thing in his mouth.

The cool air made her skin prickle and yet it was nothing compared to how this man suckling on her breasts made her feel. The slight stubble that lined his face abraded her skin and only made her more sensitive. The feel of his silken hair upon her hands and the coarseness of the stuff on his chest only added to the allure.

This time his free hand moved down to cover the juncture of her thighs. Embarrassed at how wet she was, Tahnee tried to clamp her legs shut. His teeth nipped her pebbled nipple as he growled, "Don't shut yourself away from me. Let me feel how much you crave my touch."

Her thighs relaxed allowing his muscular forearm to settle between her legs. His rough tongue wiped away any remaining sting of his bite, leaving in its wake nothing but pleasure. Tahnee was becoming delirious from his touch, scent and the expert way he made her body respond. Jake was making her body sing just for him, and he knew she had no idea he planned on keeping it that way for the rest of their lives.

The callused pads of his fingertips combined with the satin of her panties pressed against her throbbing clit, making her hips buck against his hand. "Jake," she blubbered. "Please." Her faint tone had become begging.

Moving his head back up to capture her lips, Jake allowed his large body to cover hers. Using one arm to prevent himself from smashing her with his weight, he kept his other hand pressed against her sopping panties, allowing two fingers to continually make a slow, gentle circle on her exposed nub.

Sliding his fingers under the edge of her underwear, Jake nearly cussed as he slipped his two lucky fingers deep inside her wet channel. "Jesus, you are so tight and wet," he moaned against her lips.

Tahnee tightened her legs around his wrist, imprisoning him there. As if he had a desire to be anywhere else. “J...j...j...” she garbled incoherently as her body came vehemently around his thick fingers.

“Oh baby, I need to be in you.” he pulled back from her mouth as he simultaneously withdrew his fingers coated in her thick cream. His face was millimeters away from hers as he put those two digits in his mouth and sucked them clean.

More mewls exploded from Tahnee. His lips slanted back over hers and he swept through her mouth like a raging fire that was out of control. She melted deeper into the bed as she tasted him intermingled with the taste of her own body’s pleasure. Who knew it could be such a heady taste?

He lifted his body from hers for a few moments until it settled back over her. This time, however, he was totally naked and had wedged himself between her thighs. The tip of his erection had slipped between the wet lips of her vagina.

“Jake, please. I need you.”

“I need you too, baby. I need you too.” His lips brushed over hers tenderly before he nestled his face into her neck.

With one hand, he gripped his swollen cock and slid it further into her body. Halting as soon as the enlarged head was completely encased by her velvet heat, Jake struggled for control. *Jesus, this woman is addictive, I am about to lose my cool and I’m barely inside her intoxicating heat.*

Tahnee stiffened at the intrusion. Her needs were first in his thoughts, making sure to take her slowly. Of course, no woman had stirred up his emotions this furiously before either. The sensations she evoked in him made him quiver. And he knew she wanted more.

Jake felt her body relax and then he pushed deeper into her. Inch by inch he slid until his entire rigid length had been swallowed up by her wet body. He had to stop and count to ten to regain his control. Tahnee was shaking with an orgasm that had blindsided her as he slid into her.

If he were to die now, he would be a very happy man. There was nothing further he could do, he was already in heaven. Gritting his teeth so he didn't explode at the feel of her muscles contracting around him, he began to move within her.

Out slowly and back in at the same unhurried speed, it didn't take long until the sweat had begun to bead upon his head. He was losing control, wanting desperately to slam into her. Mark her. Claim her. Make it so no other man would compare to his touches.

Tahnee was tossing beneath him, her cries increasing with every stroke he delivered. Her hands dropped from the back of his head to settle on his powerful shoulders. She dug her nails into his skin as her hips answered each thrust.

Her eyes were sluggish and heavy with need. Still she opened them and found his gaze waiting for her. His hands were on either side of her head as his hips kept plunging back and forth.

Tahnee lifted her legs and locked them around his waist, encouraging him to go deeper. A fire was burning within her and she desperately wanted to find a way to put it out. Understanding her silent plea, Jake pressed a quick kiss to her lips before he sat up, placed his hands on her full hips and increased the force of his deep strokes.

"Oh God!" Tahnee wailed as he slammed home in her body. *Home. It felt like he is home.* "Please, Jake. More. More. More!"

“Yessss,” he hissed in response as his speed escalated. “You feel so fucking good, baby. So good.” He blinked away the sweat dripping into his eyes. “Oh damn, I don’t know how much longer I can hold out, baby.”

“Harder, Jake. Please. Harder!” she screeched as her body tingled with the impending approach of a mind-blowing orgasm.

He grunted as he obliged. “Come for me, baby. Come all over my thick cock.” Jake could feel his balls tightening signaling to him he was just about to reach the explosion he knew was in store for him.

The words shoved Tahnee over the edge. She felt her body go off and shatter into a tiny million sparkly little pieces. Her thighs tightened around his waist as she felt his body jerk and spill his life-force deep within her as he came with a hoarse shout.

Jake collapsed on her, his chest heaving and his limbs shaking. “Are you okay?” When he received no response, he lifted off her body and looked down at her. “Baby? Are you okay?”

His heart swelled as he saw a content smile cross her face and she nodded. Jake pulled out of her and collapsed to lie beside her, gathering her into his arms and snuggling them together.

## Chapter 7

Jake woke alone. Sitting up in bed he glanced around the room. There were pieces of African art on her wall and statues and plants along the floor. It was simple and yet totally fit the woman he had become enamored with.

“Enamored,” he scoffed to the empty room. “Who the hell am I kidding? That woman has brought me to my knees.”

Swinging his legs off the bed, Jake stood up slowly and made his way to the door. Opening the closed door he stuck his head out into the hallway. He was assaulted with the aromatic smells of breakfast cooking.

Stepping back into the room, he slipped on his boxers before padding up the rich chocolate carpet. He halted at the end of the hall and looked at the vision standing in the kitchen. Tahnee stood there at the stove, flipping eggs.

Jake watched in silence. His eyes roved over her figure that was covered by a sapphire blue silk bathrobe. “Morning, baby,” he crooned in his sex-infused voice.

Tahnee hadn’t expected him to be behind her and it took a lot for her not to jump. But the way his voice reached out and caressed her made her knees tremble. Looking over her shoulder at him, she nearly dropped the spatula at the sight of him in nothing but his boxers.

“Morning,” she mumbled softly, turning back to the stovetop.

He moved to stand beside her, filling her senses with his presence. “Tahnee. Tahnee look at me.” When her gaze met his he asked, “What’s wrong?”

She shook her head silently. Jake didn't buy it for a second. Without giving her any time to think on it, he hauled her body up against his own and covered her mouth with his. When he pulled away, they were both panting.

Jake stepped in closer and let her feel his erection pressing into her. "Come back to bed," he said in a drugging tone.

"I can't," she muttered. "I have to eat and get down to the church. I have wedding issues to attend today."

"Well then, come with me back to my place so I can change." His hands deftly untied the fastening of her robe, slipping inside the material to run over her silky skin.

"Look, I appreciate what you did for me yesterday, but I won't take up anymore of your time." Tahnee turned off the burner and gripped his arms as his hands teased her.

"Baby, I'm not going anywhere. I *will* be by your side. So we will stop by my place and then get you a ring before we go take care of what needs to be done."

Tahnee shuddered at the seriousness of his timbre. *What the hell am I doing? Why can't I let him spoil me for this weekend? I'll figure out something to say about the ring, if it really comes up.* "I would love to have you with me, if you can spare some time."

Shoving the robe roughly to the floor, Jake palmed her breasts in his hands and latched his mouth onto the side of her neck. "I have nothing else to do." He nipped her skin before licking the pain away. "Except make love to you." With one easy motion, he swept her up into his arms and took her back to the bedroom.

Tahnee stood in her shower letting the pounding of the spray ease away the soreness of her body. Jake had taken her in ways she had no idea would be shared between people. Her shyness over her body had been vanquished under his tender administrations.

“You okay in here?” a deep voice broke into her thoughts as rough hands settled on her shoulders.

Tahnee leaned back into his hard body and allowed his hands to run wherever they wanted to. “I’m fine. Sore, but fine.”

“Ready to go shopping?” he asked as his soapy hands lathered over her tender breasts.

“Well I was. But now I seem to be getting soapy again.” Turning in his embrace, she smeared the soap on him as well. “Oh my, you seem to be as well.” She felt his hard erection pressing against her.

Her soft hand grabbed his thick penis and held it. Swiping her thumb over the sensitive top, she dropped to her knees before Jake could blink. Tahnee settled her mouth over his rigid manhood.

Jake groaned as her warm mouth gave him the blowjob of a lifetime as she knelt before him in the shower. Somehow the pressure she exerted was just what his body craved. He watched as she knelt there between his spread legs, the warm water cascading down her gorgeous brown skin, hair plastered to her head, and her hands resting upon his paler thighs.

Her fingers on one hand drifted to lightly play with and fondle his scrotum. Her smooth nails grazing the sensitive skin pushed him quickly over the edge. He came with a loud yell as his semen ran down her throat.

Pulling her back up, he kissed her with a passion most people believed no longer existed in the world. When it ended he brushed one

hand against her cheek. "Let's go," he muttered in an extremely gentle tone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake had his hand settled protectively against the small of her back as they walked into the jewelry store. He had an idea of a ring that would be perfect on the hand of his future wife, but he wanted to make sure she liked it as well.

"What about this one?" he asked pointing to the one he envisioned upon her dark hand.

"Oh, Jake, it's beautiful."

The man working there approached. "Oh yes, he has wonderful taste. This one," he pulled the ring out of the case. "This one is a starburst cut in the marquise shape. The band is 18k gold." He flashed a grin. "Shall we try it on?"

Jake overrode her protest by picking up her hand and presenting it to the man waiting with the ring. It was a bit big and when he took it off her finger, Tahnee felt like she had lost something very important.

"I'll have this sized for you in just a moment." The man disappeared into the back.

Tahnee placed her honeyed gaze on Jake. "As sweet as this is, I can't let you do this. That ring is way too expensive for this sham. And while I'm sure whoever you end up with would love it, I doubt she is going to want a used ring, at least not one used by a fake fiancée."

Shaking his dark blond head he reached up and placed two fingers across her full lips. "Shush. I don't want to hear anything like that from you. Now come here and give me a kiss." His green eyes twinkled with good humor.

Ignorant of the others in the store, Tahnee walked into his arms and pressed her mouth to his, thrilled by the groan he emitted as his hips involuntarily bucked against her.

His hands were roaming over her jean-clad butt when a deep chuckle reached them. The man was back with the ring. "It pains me to interrupt," he teased as he reached for Tahnee's hand. "But this lovely woman's ring is ready." Pausing before he slid it on he warned her, "It will be a bit warm, but not hot."

He still didn't slide it on; instead he looked over at Jake. "Perhaps you should put this on her."

Jake didn't hesitate to take over. With the utmost care he maneuvered the ring onto her waiting finger. Once it was in the proper place, he pressed a kiss to the back of her hand. "Perfect," he voiced.

He never left her side the rest of that day. Jake was with her when they went to the church to double-check on the preparations for the following day. His charm and wonderful manners swayed her parents' decision to like him. The good sized rock on her finger didn't hurt anything either.

"I have to swing by my work for a minute," Tahnee said as he drove them through Seattle.

"No problem. We can grab a bite to eat if you want." A quick glance at the clock told him it was after two.

"Sure," she agreed. Tahnee was ravenous and she knew it was because of the intensity that Jake took their lovemaking to. "There is a great deli next to my shop."

"Sounds great." Jake smiled. Tahnee felt the tension that had filled her earlier at the church melt away at his easy consensus.

He pulled into the public parking beneath Pike's Market and got out first to open the door for her. "Thank you," Tahnee said gently.

"Want to walk or take the elevator?" His hand settled familiarly against the expanse of her back.

"Steps. Gotta work off my ass," she said as her gaze looked up the seven flights of steps she was about to tackle.

"I, for one, happen to love your ass just the way it is." His fingers grazed along the jean material holding the object in discussion. "But I am more than happy to walk behind you and stare at it."

Shaking her head and snorting her disbelief, Tahnee began to walk up the cement steps. As she went up the first five Jake remained stock-still and just watched the natural sway of her hips. Her stride was so instinctive to her it made it all the more attractive to him. Whatever her vibe was that she was exuding, it was running straight into his heart and entwining itself around his soul.

As they strolled through Pike's Market, Jake slipped his hand into the back pocket of her jeans. It was a natural act for him to do.

"Oh, your touch is making me shiver," Tahnee teased him as she slid her arm around his waist. Pike's Market had never been so much fun.

He pinched her ass through her jeans. "I'll make you shiver all right. Now stop flaunting your temptations before I have you for lunch."

She rested her head against his shoulder. The skies were clear again, surely a positive sign. It was turning out to be a beautiful day. "Just keep your britches on. We'll be at the deli soon enough."

Tipping his head to brush his lips over the top of her head, he whispered, "But you won't be on that menu."

“Stop pouting, perhaps later, I’ll give you some dessert,” she offered suggestively.

“Do I get to pick how my dessert is served?” he asked, pulling his hand from her pants and backing her into the wall of a shop using his large body to trap her.

A siren’s smile crossed Tahnee’s face as she tossed her hair and stole glances at the powerful arms that acted as her barriers. “If you’re a good boy, perhaps.”

“Give me the chance and I’ll show you just how good of a boy I can be. Well, more like a man, but you know I’ll still show you how good I can be.”

Her eyes flashed. “With whipped cream and everything?”

His gaze narrowed as his lower body melded against hers, pressing her more firmly into the store wall behind her. “You are making me crazy, Tahnee. Feel how much I want you. See how hard your naughty words make me.”

Grabbing her lower lip between her straight white teeth, she blinked once, slowly, languidly before she turned her sultry gaze back to his intense one. “I want you, too.” She shook her head. “Feed me.”

Dropping his head he gave her a quick but core-rocking kiss. “Come on then, let’s get you fed.” His body moved away from hers allowing her to get off the wall and begin walking. “Better eat hardy, ‘cause I damn well am going to make you sweat tonight.”

“I could use a good workout,” she sassed him as she lengthened her stride.

“Remember that,” he growled as he jogged after her.

As they walked into the small deli, the man behind the counter looked over the glass and his weathered face broke into a huge grin. Jake recognized him as one of the men that had been with her at the bus stop the morning his life changed forever.

“Hey Frank,” Tahnee said with a wave.

“Hey sweetie,” he returned as he handed an order across the divider. His eyes flared with amusement as they landed on the man beside her. “Whaddaya have? Your usual?”

“Please. I have to go next door, be right back.” Tahnee looked to the man beside her. “I’ll be right back, okay?”

“Sure you don’t want me to come with you?” Jake asked, not wanting to be away from her.

“I just have to check in with Anna and grab some forms. I won’t be more than five minutes.” She sent him a cheeky grin. “Don’t miss me too much.” Spinning around, Tahnee got to the door before a strong hand on her arm stopped her.

“I already do,” Jake muttered seconds before his lips descended upon hers, claiming her before all the witnesses in the deli.

## Chapter 8

By the time she made it back to the deli, Dallie was there with a smirk on his face as he stood behind the counter with Frank, staring at Jake. When his eyes landed on hers he raised a brow and looked pointedly at the man who waited for her.

Lifting her lip in a silent snarl, Tahnee ignored them and walked over to Jake. "Hey," she said.

Standing, Jake held a chair for her and brushed a kiss along the back of her neck as she sat down. "Your friends seem mighty interested in me," he whispered before retaking his own seat.

Picking up her sandwich, Tahnee smiled. "I know. They remember you from the bus. They are nosy but I love them." Taking a bite, she chewed and swallowed before adding, "I'd bet anything that Dolores shows up as well."

"And she is?"

"She owns that ice cream parlor we passed to get here."

"I do love ice cream," he admitted even as his eyes told her another story about what he'd like to do with it.

Shifting on her chair, she squeezed her legs closer together to try and stop the sexual appetite growing inside her. "I see."

"You will," he promised.

"Tahnee, babe. Introduce me to your friend here," Dallie interrupted.

Jake took in the way the handsome man draped his arm so familiarly across her shoulder before leaning down and pressing his lips to her cheek. A growl formed in his chest as he fought down his instinctive

reaction to pound that man in the face. A rumble of displeasure grew when she returned the kiss.

“Jake, I’d like you to meet Dallie. Dallie, this is Jake Hutton.”

Turning a free chair around, Dallie straddled it, bracing his arms on the back of the iron backrest. “And what are you to our Tahnee, Mr. Jake Hutton?” Dallie rolled his shoulders, showing off the muscles he had. He was in good shape and he knew it.

“Her fiancé,” Jake bit out, seriously disgruntled at the way Dallie had cozened up to his woman.

One brow arched in disbelief. “Really?” He reached across the table and picked up Tahnee’s left hand and expelled a low whistle at the sight of the rock on her hand. “Wow! That is a good sized rock you got there.”

Tahnee blushed and nodded. Hating that soon she would have to explain to them it had all been a ploy for her brother’s wedding and that Jake wasn’t going to be in her life.

“My woman deserves the best,” Jake assured him.

“Oh, trust me,” Dallie interjected without missing a beat. “I know what she deserves. I’ve known her long enough to have determined that.”

Jake’s green eyes narrowed. “Just how well do you know her?”

Half of Dallie’s mouth turned up in a twisted grin. “I don’t think that’s any of your business, just how well I know her.” Dallie smirked before continuing, “She was at my union ceremony; she’s one of my best friends. I was just pickin’ on you.”

Relief poured from his body as Jake visibly relaxed. Dallie shook his head in amusement. Tahnee had been right; Dolores showed up and joined them at the table. She only stayed for a short while, but it was long enough to extract a promise from Tahnee to stop by her shop for a visit.

Jake was amazed at how much her friends loved and respected her. It was extremely obvious to him as he witnessed them picking on her in total good fun. She glowed with a happiness that had been nowhere near her when they spent the evening in the company of her family. Most specifically her sister and ex-fiancé.

As they continued the fun-filled lunch, Jake couldn't believe how Javon could be stupid enough to leave this woman for her sister. Granted he didn't know her that well, but the vibe he got from Topaz was cold. A cold hearted bitch. Selfish, conniving, and all around duplicitous bitch.

Sure there was a nice package, but anyone with half a brain could see what truth lay beneath the skin. Vipers may shed their skins, but they were still poisonous.

Waving goodbye to Frank, Tahnee walked beside Jake as they headed out the door and to the right to go to the ice cream parlor. It was close to an hour later before they left that establishment. Tahnee had helped Dolores while they were there when a swarm of customers entered. Jake helped out by keeping the tables clean and the napkin dispensers filled.

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Jake noticed how quickly her good cheer left the moment they made it to the dinner with her family. Her affection for her brother was obvious, but her sister...that was another story.

Tahnee wanted to grind her fist into her sister's face. That damn hussy had been hanging all over Jake all evening. Even Javon looked irritated. The feeling in her stomach made her want to hurl. It was the same way it happened before.

She felt the sting of tears as she swallowed hard and walked outside to be alone. On her hand sat a ring. A ring that Jake had stood beside her and insisted she pick out. One that he slipped on her finger himself in the store. A true diamond engagement ring. And yet, the sight of her sister fawning all over him made her realize it was still nothing more than a farce.

Leaning on the railing of the restaurant's porch, Tahnee spun the ring on her finger. One more day and her life would be empty again. It was amazing how different her life was with a man named Jake in it.

"What game are you playing?" Topaz's sharp voice filtered through the calm evening.

"What are you talking about?" *I still want to beat her.*

"That man is too good for you. I want him in my bed and I *am* going to take him from you, just like I took Javon." The evil tone made her shiver.

"What did I do to you to make you hate me?" Tahnee wondered as she still looked out away from the establishment, not wanting to look at her sister.

"That man should have a beautiful woman on his arm, not some fat cow." Topaz spoke in a low tone, but the words were just as painful.

"I don't understand why you hate me," her words were also muffled but full of pain.

"It isn't of consequence. Just know this. I will have that man between my thighs. I will wipe away any worthless memory he has of you." Topaz's voice was razor-sharp, "I *hate* how proud daddy is of you!"

"That will never happen," a masculine voice broke in. Both women turned to see Jake as he materialized out of the dark. "You see, I want nothing you have to offer, Topaz. Your sister is my everything and there is nothing anyone can do to make me change my mind."

Topaz narrowed her eyes. It was not in her life to be turned down. “Are you saying you aren’t attracted to me?” she purred, moving toward him with a seductive sway to her hips.

Jake stepped beside Tahnee. His eyes moved over Topaz in a totally disinterested way. “You got that right. This woman right here makes my blood boil. And don’t ever use such words to describe her again; she is a stunning and gorgeous woman. Excuse us,” he said as he led Tahnee back into the relative darkness of the wraparound porch.

## Chapter 9

Once they were out of sight of a fuming Topaz, Jake tipped her head up for a kiss. “Are you okay?”

The sincerity in his voice filled her heart with hope. “I guess. I never understood why she hated me so much. Or hates, rather.” Tahnee allowed her body to sink against his hard one.

Jake lifted her up and sat her on the wide railing. His hands moved up under her loose skirt until they settled upon her thighs. “Don’t think about her.” Those hands trailed higher.

Tahnee whimpered. “What are you doing?”

“Do you not know? Was I so unimpressive that you forgot already?” his deep voice teased.

“Jake,” she moaned as his fingers slipped under the edge of her panties.

“That’s more what I want to hear. I love how my name sounds as it rolls off that tongue of yours.” He pulled on the edge of her underwear. “Lift up. I want these off.”

Helpless to argue, she did what he wanted. Using his shoulders for support, Tahnee lifted her butt off the railing and let him slip off her underwear. He shoved them in his pocket.

His lips brushed hers. “Good girl.” Those hands of his moved back up under the skirt, this time teasing the wet folds that rested at the apex of her thighs.

Stepping closer, Jake pulled her closer to him, using the extra material of her skirt to hide what his hands were doing. Moments later, Tahnee felt his thick manhood sliding inside her.

“Jake,” she protested. “What are you doing? We can’t do this now.” Her words were jumbled as she moved her legs further apart to allow him deeper penetration.

“I can’t help it baby. I see you and I want nothing more than to be buried deep in your lush body. You are making me into a horny old man.” He flexed his hips driving in further.

“Jake,” she moaned, rocking back slightly so he moved within her. “How old are you?”

“Thirty-four,” he admitted as his body pressed forward. “How old are you?”

“Thirty,” she breathed on a groan of pleasure. “Please, more.”

“Do you care we’re at a restaurant? Do you care that your ex is hiding in the shadows watching us?” Jake growled against her lips, he had seen Javon hiding when he had come out to confront Topaz. “Or do you just want me?”

Dropping her head back, Tahnee protested as he stopped moving. “I just want you, please, Jake!” Lifting her head up she leaned forward and took his lower lip in her mouth, biting on it hard enough to get his attention. “Make me come!”

“As my queen demands.” Jake flicked her clit with his finger as he pushed into her as far as he could go.

“Ahhh!” she cried softly as she buried her face into his shoulder. “Oh God, you make me feel so damn good.”

“I feel it too, baby.” Jake shuddered as his orgasm took over him.

For a moment they remained there connected where color, wealth, and creed didn't matter. Reluctantly Jake withdrew from her warm cocoon and put himself away. Then he just pulled her into his embrace and held her. "Lord knows, I feel it too." With a kiss to her forehead, he whispered, "Let's go home."

That night as Tahnee lay sleeping in his bed, Jake stood over her. She lay on her stomach. Slight snores emitted from her as she slumbered. "I am not letting you go, Tahnee."

He stripped off his robe and slid into bed beside her. A grin covered his face as her body immediately molded itself to him. "Not ever." His green eyes closed as he, too, fell asleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

If Jake had looked good in a suit, well then he was to die for in a tuxedo. Tahnee could hardly keep from dragging him into a back room and letting him have his way with her.

She had felt the moisture pool between her thighs as he walked out of her bedroom, dressed to the nines. It was a tuxedo that had been made specifically for him. The way the fabric was cut to lay across his broad shoulders made her want to weep.

He had a certain flow to him, which surpassed any of her wildest expectations. He stood before her in the living room and spun around, arms out wide. "How's this?" he questioned as he stopped for a gentle kiss.

"Jake...you...you look amazing."

Taking her hand, Jake twirled her around to get a good glimpse of her dress. One inch straps seemed to barely hold up the material that was cupped around her full breasts. Her dress was rose-colored and fit her voluptuous form in a way that made his slacks tighten.

Her hair was left down and it looked like a cloud framing her face. Tahnee's makeup was light, and Jake loved that she didn't cake it on. Her beauty was so natural she didn't need it. Her lashes were long and thick, giving her a hooded, sultry appearance.

Her dress stopped below her knees around mid-calf. The back of the skirt part had a slit that allowed her to walk more comfortably. For Jake, it just served to stir his desire and lust for her even more. Being allowed to see the flashes of her stunning brown legs against the rich rose material did his libido proud.

"You, Ms. Tahnee, are so beautiful it hurts." Bowing low over her hand, Jake pressed a kiss to the back of it. The smell of her cocoa butter lotion made his cock swell even more. "And it is going to hurt all damn day." His eyes met hers and conveyed the message he didn't say.

She flushed. Jake had ways of making her forget she was supposed to be mature. Tahnee wanted to rip both of their clothes off and just go with their feelings. Unfortunately, there was a brother waiting for her to celebrate his special day. "Ready?" she asked backing away from the intensity of his unrelenting gaze.

"Five seconds around you and I'm always ready," he quipped. One more blatant scan of her body and Jake nodded. "I'm ready. Let's get going, or we're going to miss the ceremony."

Tahnee felt her pussy clench with desire. "Let's go then. I don't believe I would ever be forgiven if we were late."

Shrugging innocently, Jake moved to the countertop and picked up the keys he had left there. "After you, baby," he said swatting her on the butt as she moved past him.

Jake parked his car at the church and came around to help Tahnee out of the vehicle. They walked through the doors together, stopping to speak to a few people here and there.

“Sister-dearest,” Topaz said as she sidled up to them. “I was wondering if you were going to make it or not.”

“Why wouldn’t I be here for Tyrell’s wedding, Pазie?” Tahnee snipped.

“Don’t call me by that horrid name,” she hissed. Her perfect features smoothed out as she gazed at Jake. “You look delicious in that,” she purred. One manicured hand reached out to trail along his arm.

Jake raised an eyebrow and said as if discussing the weather, “That’s just what Tahnee said after we made love and showered before coming here.”

Topaz narrowed her eyes. “You don’t really expect me to believe that you want her. I mean really, if you’re going to explore your ‘jungle fever,’ then why not do it with a stunning woman. Not her...short and dumpy.”

Tahnee stiffened. Jake shook his head. “You know, that’s probably why you’re stuck with Tahnee’s leftovers. You have a horrible attitude. Your sister is so sexy I want to do things to her now that would make you blush. I’m insatiable when it comes to her; even watching her breathe turns me on. You don’t have a clue what it takes to grab a man’s attention, do you.”

Jake ran his strong hand down Tahnee’s side. The gesture gentle, yet at the same time possessive and loving. “You can’t even compare to the pure, raw sensuality this woman on my arm exudes. And she does so in spades. You work so hard at attracting a man’s attention, but they are naturally drawn to Tahnee.” Grabbing Topaz’s stare he finished with, “You could learn a lot from her.”

Without waiting for her to finish, Jake led Tahnee away and into the church where they took a seat on the groom's side.

The ceremony was beautiful. Jake held her hand throughout the entire service. When it came time for vows to be exchanged, Jake and Tahnee stared at one another, as if it were the two of them, up there before God and family. Although their mouths never moved, their eyes conveyed deeper feelings.

His green eyes were gentle as they stared into her honeyed ones. They drifted to her lips and back up to her eyes. *One day, it will be us up there.* He stroked the skin on the back of her hand enjoying the resulting tremors.

He never left her side the remainder of the evening. They sat together throughout the meal. Jake was extremely attentive but not in an overbearing way. The looks that he received throughout the night eased until they were all accepting, with the sole exceptions of Topaz and Javon.

Each of them was jealous of the couple for different reasons. Topaz because she knew her sister had truly found a man that doted on her. Javon for he realized he had been extremely stupid to let Tahnee go and would never again be lucky enough to have her back.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tahnee danced with her brother. The wedding had been so beautiful. As she spun around the room in his arms, she smiled up at him. "You seem so happy, Tyrell."

"I am, little sis. And I see that this Jake makes you happy as well. I hope you let him continue to do so."

Jake. Just the name made her body respond. It seemed no matter what, she couldn't get enough of his touch. Since he had kissed her in her

shop, she had made love more times than the rest of her boyfriends combined. *I would love for him to continue to do so, but I hardly think I am the type of woman he sees 'forever' written on.*

“I am happy with him.”

“That’s obvious. I can tell you love him.”

That gave her pause. Love? “We’ll see where it goes.” The music ended and a smile crossed her face as Jake was there waiting for her.

Tyrell nodded and kissed her goodbye. His dark eyes landed on Jake and he said, “Take care of my baby sister, man.”

“I intend to,” Jake vowed.

After the married couple left, Jake found himself dancing on the floor with Tahnee in his embrace. Her eyes were kind yet sad as she looked up at him. “I don’t think I can ever repay you for helping me out this weekend.”

He smiled down at her. “I was more than happy to help you with a little white lie.” The music ended but he didn’t move to the edge of the floor, just kept her in his arms right there.

“I will give you your ring back tonight.” Tahnee said, proud her voice didn’t crack.

“I don’t want it back.”

“Jake, you spent a lot of money on this. You should get it back.” She insisted.

“Let’s go home.” He led her off the dance floor and towards the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

He waited as she said goodbye to her parents. Jake grinned as she ignored her sister and totally avoided Javon. He noticed Javon seemed to spend most of the evening watching how he interacted with Tahnee. Almost voyeuristically.

Content was the only word that came to mind as he walked out to his car with Tahnee at his side. He ignored her comment about going back to her place and instead took her back to his condo.

“What are we doing here, Jake? I told you I need to get home. I have to work tomorrow.” Tahnee said as she followed him inside his place.

“We have to talk.” He led her to the couch and went to the kitchen to get some drinks. When he came back in, he was pleased to see she had removed her shoes and was sitting with her legs tucked under her on the seat.

Tahnee looked up at the godlike body that walked back into the room. He had removed the jacket to his tuxedo and had unbuttoned the top three buttons on the shirt. In each hand he carried a drink. “About what?” she asked as her hand accepted one of the glasses.

“Us.” That one word almost made her choke on the liquid. Setting the glass down beside her, she began to remove the ring he had allowed her to wear.

“No!” he blurted out. “Don’t take it off.”

Wide-eyed Tahnee looked up at the large man who had knelt beside her. “But...but...it’s yours.”

“I want you to keep it.” He took her hand and pressed a kiss to the back of it. “I want us to take this lie and turn it into the truth. I’ve fallen in love with you Tahnee. I want to marry you.”

*Any second now, Topaz is going to jump out and the jeers will begin.* “That’s not a funny joke, Jake.” Tahnee pulled her hand back and tried to get up off the couch.

“I’m not laughing. Nor am I lying to you. No, sit down.” Jake blocked her on the couch with his arms. “I just told you I loved you.”

“Why are you doing this to me?” she questioned in a tiny voice. The tears threatened to fall but she refused to give in. Tahnee sagged back against his couch acknowledging she wouldn’t get past him if he didn’t want her to.

“Because I want to marry you. I can’t imagine my life without you in it. I can’t imagine the thought of another man touching you. I don’t want to share you. Hell, I *won’t* share you.” His body went rigid at the thought of any man touching her.

Jake grabbed her chin in one hand. “I am so in love with you, Tahnee. I don’t want to face a single day without you in it beside me. Please tell me you will marry me.”

At that moment, Tahnee realized that what had started out as a little white lie had turned into something so much more. “Yes. Yes, I’ll marry you, Jake. I love you, too.”

**THE END**

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A Knight's Vow