



On A Dare

NADIA AIDAN

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

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by Nadia Aidan

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

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Dedication

To my mother

Trademarks Acknowledgement

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Chapter One

"If you want to really drive him crazy, purr softly into his ear as you gently rake your nails across his chest." Dylan Jacobs arched a single brow, his expression incredulous. "You can't really believe this junk?"

His best friend and roommate, Selena 'Lena' Coleman, plucked the magazine from his hands, her brown eyes flashing with annoyance. "How many times have I told you about reading my mail?" She flipped the magazine around and jabbed her finger at the cover. "You see this title? It says *Today's Black Woman*. Last time I checked you weren't a black woman of today."

He folded his arms across his chest and snorted. "No, but if all the *black women of today* take that ridiculous advice there are going to be a whole lot of angry men in bed. That crap would only work if you were a tiger who likes to be mauled by your woman."

She shot him an irritated look and hopped off her breakfast stool to empty her coffee mug in the sink.

While her back was still turned, he reached across the counter and grabbed the magazine again. He flipped back to the page he'd been reading. *Twenty Never Before Seen Moves That Will Have Him Begging For More*. He bowed his lips into a frown.

"Begging for more. More like begging for a doctor," he muttered as he zeroed in on another tip.

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"Slip your tongue inside his ear and then blow softly. The tingling sensation will leave him breathless." His eyes shot to her face which was now scrunched up in annoyance. "Lena, that's just ridiculous. You're blowing in his wet ear. How is that a turn on? Seriously, where do they get this? Certainly not from any man I know."

He stretched his arm high above his head to hold the magazine out of reach when she lunged for it. At six foot five, Lena's five foot three frame was no match for him, not even with the shiny black pump stiletto heels she had on.

Her dark chocolate brown eyes pleaded with him. "Dylan, give me back the magazine."

He smiled down into her pretty heart shaped face that now glowed with exasperation. Her smooth cinnamon complexion appeared flushed in the early morning light and he could see tiny splotches of red darkening her cheeks.

When she realised he wasn't about to return her magazine anytime soon, she released a long sigh, folded her arms across her chest and leaned back against the breakfast bar. "You know what? Now that I think about it, I really don't believe those suggestions are as ridiculous as you're making them out to be. That column is written for black women and black men. There are obviously cultural differences which is why *you* don't think these tips can work—"

He couldn't even wait for her to finish before he burst out laughing. What she was suggesting was ridiculous. She pressed her lips into a tight line and he laughed even harder, but when she shot him a chilly glare he covered his mouth with his fist until his chuckling slowly died.

"Like I was saying before you so rudely interrupted me. The target audience may be different from your experiences."

He snorted rudely. "Black, white, Asian—men are all the same." He gestured toward the page he'd been reading. "You try this crap on *any* man and I can tell you he won't be begging for more. He'll be begging for mercy."

"So, you're going to tell me that *no* woman has ever done any of those things on you?"

He quickly skimmed the four pages of the article, before returning his gaze to her face.

"Nope."

"Ah ha," she smiled triumphantly. "You proved my point. *You're* not the target audience."

He lifted his lips into a cocky grin and shoved the magazine at her. "Okay, if that's true then read through it and tell me if you've done *any* of these moves."

She snatched it from his hand and lifted her eyebrows, her eyes full of challenge. He covered his mouth with his hand and coughed loudly in an effort to hide his smug grin when a dark scowl crossed her face.

She flipped the pages back and forth, frantically searching for at least one thing that she'd done in order to prove him wrong. A full minute passed and she was still skimming.

"You're *Today's Black Woman*. Come on. You haven't done at least *one* of those moves. Where you been, Lena?" His eyes twinkled with mocking laughter.

She rolled her eyes at him. "It says *never before seen* moves—"

"Oh come on. You know no man in his right mind would enjoy any of that stuff, which is why you haven't done any of these so called tricks. I bet your girlfriends haven't either."

She pursed her lips into a frown, folded her arms and propped her hip against the counter.

"No, I'll admit it. I haven't done any of them, but who's to say they aren't worth trying." She shrugged. "They're a little risqué, but not unusual. I bet some of them would even be fun."

He stilled at the challenge in her eyes. He'd seen that look many times before. They'd been best friends since their freshman year at the University of Florida. That look had gotten him into more trouble than he wanted to remember.

He shook his head. "Oh, no you don't—"

"What?" She asked and her brown eyes grew wide with a deceptively innocent look. "You've never had any of these moves done on you, so you don't even know if you would like them. And I've never done them either, so I don't know if they work." She quirked her lips into a wicked grin and rubbed her hands together like she was making a wish. "I feel a wager coming on."

He hung his head as a groan escaped his lips. That had always been their line when they were about to make a stupid bet that would land them in huge amounts of trouble. "Lena, we're too old for this."

"Oh no you don't." She wagged her finger in front of his face. "You started this. So now let's make a bet."

How had a round of good natured teasing ended up turning into another one of their infamous bets? He knew he was going to regret this.

He folded his arms across his chest. "What do you have in mind?"

Lena curled her lips into a Cheshire grin.

"I believe these tips you call ridiculous actually work, so I want us both to try them—all of them. I say we have two weeks to complete them and whoever finishes first wins."

Dylan stiffened. "What?"

"Whoever finishes first wins," she repeated. Dylan scowled. It wasn't like he couldn't hear her. He'd heard her just fine. He just couldn't believe what she'd said. This wasn't the first time they'd made a ridiculous bet involving sex, but it had been many years since their last escapade. Long before they'd both been married and divorced. They were too old to be acting like college co-eds again.

"Don't you think we are too old to be doing this?"

Lena's eyes flashed with indignation. "Maybe you're old, but I'm not. We are both newly divorced i.e. newly *single*. I don't know about you, but I am ready to have some fun."

He didn't miss the slight catch of her voice when she said the word 'divorced'. They'd both had a rough year, with the failure of their marriages coming just months apart. She was right. They could use a good dose of *fun*.

"Alright. I'm in, but if we're going to do this, we're going to do it right."

A spark of mischief lit up her face. From the look in her eyes one would think she'd won a small victory.

"Okay. I'm listening."

He felt his own devilish nature rising. This could be fun after all.

"All right. So I like the idea of the bet but I just don't see how it could work. If we pick up some stranger to have a fling with for the next two weeks, then how do we *really* judge each other? I could say it didn't work and you could say it did. It's just too subjective."

She pulled her lips into a frown. "I see your point, but there's just no practical way around it—" She abruptly stopped in mid-sentence, her mouth falling open as if a light bulb had just gone off in her head. Her expression was wary when she finally spoke again. "I was wrong. There are *two* ways around that, but you're not going to like either one of them."

"I'm listening." He hedged when she didn't continue.

She waved a dismissive hand in front of her face, and stared at some imaginary spot behind his head, refusing to meet his gaze. "You know what? Forget it. You were right. It was a stupid idea anyway."

He stepped in front of her to block her path as she tried to exit the kitchen. "I never said it was stupid. Just tell me."

She nibbled on her full bottom lip, while her gaze darted about the room.

They had done a lot of insane things and made a lot of insane bets so it couldn't be that crazy, could it?

"Come on, just tell me. It can't be that bad."

Her eyes snapped to his face, but she still wore a hesitant expression.

"You wanted to have fun Lena, but I can understand if you want to back out." He stifled the grin that threatened to spread across his face when she narrowed her eyes to tiny slits. That had always been their problem—they could never back down from a challenge.

She arched a single eyebrow and tilted her lips into a tiny smile that said she knew something that he didn't.

"Okay, wise guy, let's see how daring you *really* are. Now, this is the real bet. You agree to the deal *before* I give you our other two options. If you still want to go through with it then fine, but if you back out then I automatically win."

He frowned down at her. "That's not fair. I should win something if I go through with it."

She tipped her head to the side as if she were calculating some extensive mathematic problem. As soon as she got her answer she focused on him. "All right. If you back out then I automatically win, but if you go through with it then you get an extra two days to complete the assignment."

He frowned harder. "You know that's still doesn't make it a fair bet. She shrugged her shoulders, her expression saying that she was at a loss then. He scratched his head as he considered how to even out the odds. He snapped his fingers in triumph when he came up with the perfect solution. "I got it. This is how it's going to work. You have secret conditions, so if I go through with the bet then it's only fair that I get secret terms. That means I get to reveal what I want if I win at the *end* of the two weeks, but you will still have to tell me yours up front."

She shrugged. "All right, that sounds fair. I can do that."

She wore a smug grin of satisfaction and he knew she thought she'd already won. But she was wrong. No matter what she said next he wasn't backing out.

"Okay, so now that that's settled, what are our options?"

Her eyes flashed with amusement and she smirked at him.

"In order for this assignment not to be subjective, there are only two ways to handle this—"

She paused for dramatic effect and he gritted his teeth to keep from snapping at her to hurry up already.

She pinned him with an intense stare and he held his breath as he waited for her to speak. When she finally did he felt as if the ground had fallen out beneath him.

"To make this as objective as possible we can either sleep with the same person, or we can skip the middle man and just sleep with each other."

She blinked her eyes at him, stunned. "What!"

"I said since neither one of us is bisexual then I'll take option number two," he repeated and stepped around her to dump his empty glass in the sink. She spun around to stare at his broad back that filled out his grey suit to the inch.

"Are you serious?" He couldn't possibly be serious. She was the wild one, the daredevil. He *sometimes* went along with her crazy antics, but most times he was the voice of reason. She'd been sure he would back out.

"Dead serious," he glanced absently at his watch as if he hadn't agreed to be her lover for the next two weeks.

She chuckled nervously. "Dylan, seriously. It was just a joke. You really don't have to go through with this."

His eyes snapped to her face as a lazy smile tilted the corners of his mouth. "Too late. We already made the bet." He grabbed his briefcase from the kitchen counter. "I have to work late tonight, but tomorrow is Saturday. The assignment begins tomorrow morning, and I expect to hear your terms by then." He crossed the room in four easy strides to open the door. She thought he would just breeze right through, but instead he turned around to meet her still shell shocked gaze. "Oh and don't forget to bring the magazine, *tiger*." He flashed her a wicked grin and then he did breeze out the door, with the soft click of the lock signalling he was in fact gone for the day.

She slumped down on her bar stool and fanned her face. *What the hell had she just done?*

She'd known Dylan for close to fifteen years and she'd never known him to be outrageous. He was reliable and steady. The sensible one. While she was wild and a little out of control he was the one that reined her in. Even from day one, when she'd been all over the place, he'd still been calm and composed.

Like the superwoman she pretended to be, as a freshman moving into the dorms she'd been dragging more than her sturdy, but compact frame could handle up the three flights of stairs. Unable to hold everything, her cumbersome laundry hamper had broken free of her grasp and tumbled right into Dylan nearly knocking him over. She'd glanced down at him expecting to see a furious look on his face, but instead he'd smiled at her and joked that he'd never known a hamper could be a dangerous weapon and helped her carry the rest of

her things to her room. They'd been friends ever since. And with the exception of two kisses—one, the drunken night of Dylan's twenty-first birthday and the other on her wedding night when she'd discovered her husband was a lying, cheating snake *after* the wedding—they'd never been intimate in any other way. Yes, they both enjoyed flirting with each other, but it was harmless. Nothing to take serious. But if Dylan could be believed, tomorrow all of that was going to change.

She shoved a hand through her loose curls. "What the hell is he up to?" She muttered softly. If he was trying to prove the point that he didn't back down, he didn't have to go to such lengths. They'd both just escaped two nightmares called their marriages. And while she wasn't Dr. Phil, she was pretty certain that jumping into bed with your long time best friend was not the best way to deal with one's post traumatic stress.

Lena blew out a deep breath and swung her gaze toward the clock on the microwave. *Shit*. She was going to be late to work if she didn't hurry. She grabbed her suit jacket off the back of her chair, and her briefcase.

As soon as she settled inside her Lexus Sedan and buckled up, she was already feeling much better. Dylan was the reasonable one of the two of them. Surely, he was just joking. He probably just wanted to stir her up and let her stew for the rest of the day. When they got home he would surely laugh it off as nothing more than a silly prank. She relaxed in her seat at the thought. That's exactly what Dylan would do. She was sure of it.

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Chapter Two

If Dylan could have heard Lena's thoughts at that very moment he would have laughed because the only thing he *was* sure of was that he refused to back out of their bet. He'd spent most of the years of their friendship battling his growing attraction to Lena, only to watch her walk down the aisle, in a moment of impulse, with her creep of an ex-husband, Jason Wells. He'd tried to tell her that her husband was an asshole, but stubborn as she was, she hadn't listened.

A bitter chuckle escaped his lips.

"She wasn't the only stubborn one," he muttered to himself.

Lena had warned him that Michelle was a gold digger and a user, but he'd been so blinded by his fury with Lena over her hasty marriage that he'd made one of the worst mistakes of his life and married his sweet and pretty assistant. It hadn't taken him long to realise that she was about as sweet as a viper and he'd brought a quiet end to his disastrous two year marriage. Lena hadn't been far behind, filing for a divorce three months later.

He ran a hand through his close cropped jet black hair and leaned back into his leather chair. For him, this bet was a Godsend. He'd spent the last two and half years of his life realising that what he felt for Lena wasn't just an innocent mix of friendship and attraction, it ran deeper than that. Unfortunately, he hadn't figured that out *before* they'd both jumped into two bad relationships. He knew Lena felt it too,

maybe before he even realised what was happening between them. Yet for some reason she'd chosen to ignore the latent current of attraction between them that pulsed just beneath the surface.

A noise caught his attention and he glanced up at the sound of his office door opening and then closing shut, instantly jerking him back to the present. Barging into his office was none other than his best friend, and business partner, Chad Buchanan, who leaned against his door, with a broad grin plastered across his face.

"So how's life with your sexy roomie?" He crossed the room to plop down in one of Dylan's chairs.

Dylan twisted his face into a frown. Chad was a mutual friend of his and Lena. Had she called him up and revealed their bet?

"Fine. Why do you ask?" His voice sounded strained to his own ears.

Chad's grin grew wider. "Ah. I know that look. Something happened between you and Lena. I knew it would only be a matter of time."

He glanced down at his desk and shuffled several stacks of papers into neat piles.

"I don't know what you're talking about." He continued to organise his desk, trying his best to avoid Chad's searching gaze.

"This must be big. You can't even look me in the eye."

His gaze instantly snapped to his friend's face.

Chad smirked. "You know you don't fool me, man. I know something's going on."

Dylan rolled his eyes. Chad always had a way of sniffing out dirt when it came to his relationships. It made it hard to keep a secret from the man. "What? Did Lena call you or did you just happen to *sense* that something was going on?"

He shrugged. "Neither. I just asked a question and when I saw the look on your guilty face I knew I'd hit my mark. So are you gonna tell me or do I have to go digging for gold with Lena?"

He snorted. "Good luck with that. You've never been good at prying information out of her." Deciding to just tell him, he blew out a long breath, clasped his hands behind his head and leaned back into his chair. His gaze was serious as he stared at Chad. "I made a bet with Lena..." he started. When he was finished, he had to bite his tongue to keep from laughing out loud at the stunned look on Chad's face.

"Are you going to say something or just sit there staring at me," he said after the silence stretched on for several long moments.

"What is there to say? You're crazy. Both of you are." Chad pinned him with an incredulous gaze. "How could you make a bet like that with her? I expect that crazy shit from Lena, but I thought you were the sane one. Usually she's dragging you into nonsense like this, not the other way around."

Dylan hunched his shoulders into a slight shrug. "You know I've been interested in her for a while now. When she issued the challenge, I just saw this as an opportunity for me to get her to see me as *more* than a friend."

Chad's eyes rounded. "By sleeping with her on a dare? What is wrong with you? Why don't you just tell her how you

feel and skip the part where you risk ruining a friendship of close to fifteen years?"

"You know I've tried to give her subtle hints, but she always just brushes my comments aside as teasing or a joke. I know once we cross that line we can't go back, but I'm willing to take that chance because I think she might just feel the same way—"

"And if she doesn't?"

He scrunched his face up into a scowl. Why did Chad always have to be the voice of reason? "I hadn't considered that."

Chad stood to his feet and exhaled a long suffering sigh as if to say *are you an idiot?* "Well I think that's the first thing you should do, because if this backfires then you'll lose Lena—for good."

Chad shot him another look of disbelief and shook his head before he shuffled out of his office.

Dylan's mood grew sour as he mulled over his friend's parting words. He'd been so certain that Lena had feelings for him, beyond friendship, and all she needed was a little coaxing, that he'd never considered the alternative. What if she only thought of him as just a *friend*? Was he willing to risk the real possibility of ruining his friendship with her just to find out?

* * * *

"Girl, are you insane? No scratch that. I know you're insane, but I never thought you were stupid. What on earth possessed you to issue a challenge like that to Dylan?"

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Lena pulled her lips into a tight frown and held the phone about an inch from her ear, while her sorority sister, Maia Lee, screeched into the receiver at what sounded like the top of her lungs. Even with the phone separating them she could clearly see the light caramel complexion of her half black, half Korean friend blazing red with fury. She was sure steam was coming out of her ears at that very moment. Maia had a feisty personality and was not one to mince words, which is one of the things she both loved and hated about her. She knew she would hear the truth from Maia even if she didn't want to—like now. When she didn't answer, Maia took that as her cue to continue her rant.

"Selena, seriously. I told you after the two of you divorced to let Dylan find his own place. The man has plenty of money. He can afford a new house. But no, you felt bad that he had to give Michelle his home in the settlement and you didn't want to live in your big, empty house, alone, which I told you to sell by the way—"

"I know. I know. I know, Maia. We've gone over this before—"

"Obviously not enough because you two have only been roommates for three months and already you've found a way to drag him into your bed—"

Lena immediately blanched at the image Maia painted of her. "Hey," She protested. "You make it sound as if I made this bet and forced him to go along with it. It was actually the opposite. I never thought he would accept."

The phone crackled as Maia sighed against the mouthpiece. "Lena, this is me you're talking to. And you know

you're not fooling anyone but yourself. You *wanted* him to accept the bet. I'm amazed that Dylan can't see that you're half in love with him. I know you want him, but honey, this is not the way to go about it—,"

"But—"

"Uh, uh. Let me finish and then you can speak your mind. Seriously, Selena this smells like a rebound affair, which is not something you need right now. And Dylan is certainly not someone you rebound with. You love him as more than a friend, but he doesn't know that and when this is all over and he walks away thinking this was just a bit of fun and a harmless dare with 'wild Lena' you're going to be heartbroken, and worst of all you're not going to be able to go back to being just friends. He may, but not you," she said softly.

Lena closed her eyes and shoved her free hand through her hair in frustration. She knew Maia was right. She'd told herself the same things over and over all day. And yet, she couldn't seem to find the strength to call Dylan up and call off their bet because deep down she knew that she really didn't want to.

"I know Maia, but Dylan is always hinting at taking our friendship to another level. I always thought he was joking, but what if he was serious?"

"Then you *ask* him."

She tugged on her bottom lip with her teeth, something she always did when she was nervous. "But what if I do and he laughs at me for taking his words seriously when he was just joking?"

"Wouldn't you want to know that *before* you sleep with him?"

Yes, she would, but she was too big of a coward to ask. She held the phone against her ear saying nothing.

Maia sighed again. "Okay, girl. You have a lot to think about and I can tell you that nothing is going get solved during my lunch break. But before I go I just have two words for you to help you remember the last time you made a decision on impulse: *Jason Wells*."

Lena scrunched her face into a deep frown. "Ugh. Trust me I haven't forgotten. But Dylan is *nothing* like Jason.

"True. But it doesn't mean that this can't end up just as bad as your last rash decision." Maia released a long sigh and then there was the distinct sound of paper rustling as if she was balling up her lunch and throwing it away. "I really better go, but I'll call you letter. Promise me you will think about what I said, okay?"

"I will," she muttered and quickly said her good-byes before she disconnected with Maia.

Lena swivelled her chair around to stare out at the bustling Midtown Atlanta lunch traffic from her newly decorated expansive office at Taylor & Associates, courtesy of her recent promotion to partner. Even in the midst of her crazy divorce she'd managed to make senior partner in the premier sports and entertainment law firm, hence the brand spankin' new cushy office.

She dragged a hand through her hair and closed her eyes as the events from the past two years replayed themselves in her head like a slideshow. When she got to the period of her

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marriage and divorce she wasn't surprised that she felt nothing. She supposed thinking about Jason Wells and her divorce *should* make her feel sad, but it didn't. She'd never loved Jason, so she was relieved to see him go. She just wished he could have left without being the biggest bastard cheater in all of Atlanta. It had really stung her pride, but not because she cared that he cheated, just that everyone seemed to know and they all felt sorry for her. It was humiliating. And her only regret was that she hadn't left sooner.

Maia had been right. She'd married him on impulse. He'd reminded her so much of Dylan. Physically they shared the same towering, muscular build, spiky close cropped jet black hair and charming smile. But that was where the similarities ended. Jason lacked the fundamental qualities that made Dylan who he was: kindness—respect—integrity.

From the moment they'd met on the stairwell in college she'd been attracted to him. She couldn't count how many times she'd made a crazy bet or taken an outrageous dare just to get him to notice her as a woman and not just his buddy—his friend. It was embarrassing to think just how long she'd pined over him only to have him grab beers with her and confide in her like the best friend she was. After awhile she came to accept that to Dylan she would always be just a friend.

So when Jason walked into her life, with his gallant ways that promised to sweep her off her feet, she'd jumped at the chance to finally rid herself of her ridiculous and futile crush. Dylan was never going to look at her the way she wanted him

to so she figured it was time to move on. It was for the best anyway. It wasn't until *after* she married Jason that Dylan revealed just a tiny part of himself to give her a spark of hope, but by then it was too late.

* * * *

Two and a half years ago

"What the hell did I just do?" Lena asked herself as her Chanel heels dug into the plush carpet of the fifteenth floor of the Westin. She balled the skirt of her silk chiffon dress up a few inches just so she wouldn't trip as she stomped angrily toward her suite.

She couldn't wait to get out of her wedding gown.

This was a mistake. She repeated over and over in her head. She fished her key card out from where she'd hidden it in her bra tucked beneath her strapless gown and let herself in.

In minutes she was out of the smothering gown and in a complimentary silk robe the hotel had provided for the *newlyweds*.

"Some fucking newlywed I am." She grumbled and plopped herself down on the lovely burgundy and gold king sized bed that was beautifully decorated with red rose petals. At the sight of the romantic picture a sob tore past her lips and she dropped her face in her hands, finally allowing herself to cry.

How could Jason do this to her? She'd caught him just minutes ago fucking his damn secretary in the women's bathroom right where their reception was going on, right

where anyone could walk in and catch him—just like she had. Thankfully he'd been so engrossed in shoving his dick into the woman that he didn't even hear her come in or notice when she'd immediately left.

At the sound of an insistent rapping against her door, she lifted her tear stained face from her palms. She thought Jason hadn't seen her, but maybe he had. She was not in the mood to face him just yet.

"Go away you asshole," she shouted at the door.

"Lena's it's me. Open up."

"Dylan?" She whispered, instantly perking up. She glanced into the mirror and frowned. She couldn't let him in. She looked like the love child of a raccoon and Medusa. Two black tracks of massacre ran down her cheeks and several strands of her freshly pressed hair stuck out from her bun where she'd ripped off her tiara and veil. "I—I'm not dressed. Come back later."

"I followed you, Lena. I saw Jason in the bathroom with that woman. I just want to make sure you're alright."

She closed her eyes and sighed. *Oh, God this was humiliating.* Dylan had told her not to marry him. He'd told her he couldn't be trusted but she hadn't listened and now he could say *I told you so* and he would be right in doing so. "I'm fine Dylan. I'll talk to you later."

"You don't sound fine. So you can either open this door right now or watch me while I break it down."

She shot an angry scowl at the door and stood to her feet. She knew he would do it too.

"Damn it, Dylan. Fine." She shouted moments before she twisted the knob and wrenched the door open to reveal a furious Dylan.

He stomped in and she slammed the door behind him.

"See. I'm fine," she said bitterly.

He rounded on her and grasped her by her arms, his green eyes flashing with anger. "Don't ever shut me out like that again. I love you Lena and if you're hurting I want to be there for you to lean on."

She dropped her gaze to the floor, feeling ashamed by her childish behaviour. Dylan was not the enemy. He was her friend and he'd done what any good friend would do. "I know and I'm sorry." She lifted her eyes to his face. "But I really am fine."

He swiped at the moisture on her cheek with a single finger. "Then why are you crying?" He said with a wry smile.

She pinched her lips into a tight frown. "I know what it looks like but I'm not upset because I love him. It's because I feel like a fool." A dry chuckle escaped her lips. "I guess you could say he hurt my pride more than he hurt my feelings."

A dark look flashed across his face and his eyes rounded in disbelief. "Are you out of your mind? What do you mean you don't love him? Why the hell would you marry Jason if you didn't love him, especially after I warned you not to?"

Again her gaze slid from his face in embarrassment. How could she tell him that she'd married Jason because she'd given up hope that *he* could ever love her the way she wanted him to?

"B—because he was charming," she muttered weakly, hoping he wouldn't probe much deeper into her blatant lie.

His expression turned furious and he stared down at her as if she'd lost her mind.

"Because he's charming, Lena? Now I know you're out of your mind. You don't marry a man for just his charm. What were you thinking? There are plenty of men out there that are charming. Hell, I can be charming. You could have married me if that was *all* you wanted," he snapped angrily.

She narrowed her eyes at him, her own temper igniting. The fucking nerve of him to criticise her decision. Men were not banging down her door to propose to her—him included.

"I didn't see you jumping through any hoops to ask me Dylan. He *asked* me to marry him."

Dylan jerked back slightly, his eyes wide with shock as if she'd just struck him with her fist.

"So what he asked. I didn't know you were so hard up to walk down the aisle."

Anger coursed through her at his derisive tone. "I want to get married, have children. You have a problem with that—"

"Only the part where you tell me marrying a guy you don't love is a great idea. That's your problem, Lena. You don't think things through. You just act—"

Fury boiled in her veins as she stared up into his angry face. She hated when Dylan got on his soapbox and started preaching like he was her damn father.

"Dylan, I don't need you to tell me how to live my life. Men aren't lining up to marry me and if you hadn't noticed I'm not getting any younger. Jason asked me to marry him and so I

made a decision—and it was *mine* to make so you're just going to have to accept it."

Hi expression hardened as his hands tightened around her arms. "I still can't believe you jumped at his offer so quickly. You didn't even wait a month after saying 'yes' before throwing this sham of a wedding together—,"

She gritted her teeth together to keep from screaming at him for the insults he kept hurling at her. Why the hell was he so angry with her anyway? Didn't he see she was fuckin' distraught? She'd just caught her new husband cheating on her for chrissakes!

"What was the point in dragging this out? I knew what I wanted—"

"Really? That's what you wanted? That bastard husband of yours who can't keep his hands off anything with a skirt? Is that who you envisioned spending the rest of your life with when you dreamed of getting married as a little girl?"

Tears shimmered in her eyes as she stared up at Dylan, whose face blazed red with naked fury. He would never know how deeply his words had just cut her. No, that wasn't how she'd imagined her wedding would turn out in a million years. "No," she choked out on a hoarse sob as she hung her head, unable to bear the onslaught of his anger that glowed in the depths of his gaze.

Dylan exhaled a ragged breath and reached up to cup his hand behind the bun that held all of her hair together. With deft fingers he removed the pins to release the bun so that her locks fell in soft waves to her shoulders. He tangled his hand in her hair and tugged gently, forcing her to tilt her

head back so that she could meet his gaze. What she saw in the depths of his eyes made her heart stop.

"God, Lena. Why did you have to marry him," he whispered brokenly, his voice matching the sorrowful look in his eyes. She barely had a moment to figure out what everything meant, before he lowered his head and crushed his lips against hers.

Heat sizzled across her skin at the first brush of his lips against her mouth. She closed her eyes as her nipples tightened and wrapped her arms behind his neck, drawing him closer to her. The feel of his hard body against hers caused her to moan and when she opened her mouth he seized the opportunity to slip his tongue between her lips, deepening the kiss. She could taste the champagne on his lips and she shuddered, her body becoming limp and as wobbly as jelly. Her hands slid up his neck to tug at his hair as she clutched him to her tightly.

He groaned against her mouth, and reached down to cup her ass in his large hands, grinding his now stiff erection into her belly. She shivered at the feel of his hard cock. God, she wanted him so bad. She slid one hand down his body to stroke his dick through his tuxedo trousers. She pressed harder when he sucked in a sharp breath. With her other hand she clumsily fumbled with the belted knot of her robe, but stopped when he abruptly pushed her away.

She stared at him with shocked eyes. He panted deeply, and his sun-bronzed face was flushed with a red glow.

"What are we doing?"

She shook her head, unable to speak. She knew what they were *trying* to do before he stopped them.

"This is wrong, Lena. You're married now." He dragged a hand down his face and backed away from her toward the door. "I—I'm going to send Maia up here to stay with you," he said in a rush and scurried out of her room before she could even form a protest.

That was the last time Dylan had allowed himself to be alone with her—at least it was the last time while he was still single. The next time he'd met with her alone it had been to announce that he was engaged to his bombshell, redheaded Angelina Jolie look alike assistant. When he'd left after his big announcement, Lena had locked herself in her bedroom and cried for the rest of the night. What little hope she'd had that he actually harboured deeper feelings for her instantly died. She resigned herself to the grim reality that they would never be more than just friends.

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Chapter Three

Dylan turned the page of his newspaper and smiled at the sound of footsteps coming from upstairs. Lena.

She thought she could avoid him all morning, but she had—he glanced at his watch—about thirty more minutes to come downstairs before he went up after her.

Fifteen more minutes passed by before he heard her hushed footsteps along the staircase.

He set down the paper and reached for his cup of coffee to hide his knowing grin when he saw her.

Most Saturdays Lena was up and out by ten am dressed in something body hugging on her way to the gym. But today was different. She'd skipped the gym entirely and hovered in her room until close to noon and instead of tight spandex pants and a low cut tank top she now wore baggy sweats with the word *Gators* plastered across the chest and down one pant leg.

He set the cup aside to fold his arms across his chest. If she thought her 'battle armour' would work, she was sadly mistaken. He hadn't forgotten about their bet and her choice of clothing certainly was not a deterrent.

He lifted a single brow. "Nice outfit."

She blinked at him like a deer caught in the headlights. She'd obviously thought he wouldn't figure out what she was trying to do. She cleared her throat. "Um, so how was work last night."

He smiled at her attempt to change the subject, but he let her get away with it. As the co-owner of Jacobs & Buchanan PR Firm, his job involved planning and hosting a lot of marketing events for large sports corporations and their sponsored athletes. Dylan did more of the planning and Chad was more of the host, but with Chad having to fly out to New York for another event, Dylan had no choice but to attend the Nike party for the launch of their new athletic shoe, with NBA star Dwight Howard as the face of the new product. "It was fine," he said and stood up from the couch to cross the room to the kitchen and empty the remains of his morning coffee into the sink.

"G—good. That's good," she stammered.

He grinned at her stuttering words. She was nervous. With his back still to her he finally said what had undoubtedly been on both of their minds since yesterday morning.

"Have you had a chance to come up with your terms for the bet?" He asked and turned around as he was drying his hands on a small dish rag.

Her throat pushed out as she swallowed hard. "Um. Yeah. About that." She cleared her throat and let out a nervous chuckle. "Seriously, Dylan this bet is not a good idea."

He shrugged. "Feel free to back out, but if you do, then I win and you still don't know my terms."

She released a long, drawn out breath. "I—I'm not backing out. I—"

"Good. So what are your terms then?"

She pursed her lips into a frown and shot him a hard look. He ignored it. If she wasn't backing out then he wanted to

hear her conditions, not how this was a bad idea. He'd already heard enough of that from Chad, who'd called him from New York that morning to remind him just how big of a mistake he was making.

She crossed her arms over her breasts and stood up straighter. "Okay. Since we're both in—," She paused to look at him with questioning eyes that said she was giving him one last chance to reconsider, but he just nodded his head, urging her to continue, much to her obvious displeasure. "—then these are my terms."

She held his gaze as she listed her conditions. "If we find pleasure out of any of these—," she hesitated, "*tips* then we have to be honest—"

"I think our physical responses to them should be honest enough." He struggled to hold back his laughter when her eyes widened and her cheeks flushed a deep red.

"Y—yeah, right. But still if we ask each other how something was then we must tell the truth if this is going to work."

"Okay. Fair enough."

"You said the tips don't work, but I said they did. The winner will be determined by how many that worked compared to how many that didn't."

"All right." He shifted against the kitchen sink. "What else?"

"If I win then I become the official owner of your new 2008 BBC G.T.X."

He stood up straight. "My bike?" He scowled when she nodded. That was *all* she wanted was his stupid bike. He

wanted to shake her. They were about to spend the next two weeks as lovers but instead of demanding something of *true* value from him, she chose his stupid bike. He tamped down his frustration with her and nodded his head. If she wanted his worthless bike then she could have it. He on the other hand wanted more—far more.

"That's fine. Anything else?"

She nodded. "Yes. I have just one rule and one rule only." She chewed on her bottom lip for several seconds before she spoke again. "This is just for fun so when it's over you must promise me that we go back to being the same friends we are right now."

He clenched his jaw tight as fury rushed through his veins. He really wanted to shake her now. She was putting up a wall. Keep him at arm's length as a friend and nobody gets hurt. But it wouldn't work, not this time because *everything* was about to change.

He gritted his teeth together and nodded stiffly. "Promise," he bit out tightly as he crossed two fingers together behind his back. If he had anything to say about it, friends would be the last thing they would be when this bet was done.

Lena reached behind her back and pulled the infamous magazine from the waistband of her sweats. She tapped it against her hand with false bravado. "Okay, so when do we start?"

"Now." He walked past her to grab his coat and shrug it on.

She spun around to face him. "Where are you going?"

He grinned. "Where are we going? Get your coat, and bring the magazine."

In a trance, she dragged on her coat and let him usher her from the house. She settled into the passenger seat of his black Dodge Durango and buckled up. When he got in beside her she finally let her curiosity get the best of her.

"So where are we going?"

He flashed her a smile as he turned the ignition over. "You'll see soon enough," he said and backed out of the driveway.

They headed down 85 away from Buckhead, past Midtown. When they got off on Metropolitan Parkway, Lena shot him a curious look then glanced at the magazine. They were headed to East Point. How were sex tips involved in their little excursion?

When they pulled into the parking lot of *Chateau Desire* Lena finally understood. She sat there frozen as she stared at number six on the list—*Next time you're at a strip club together get up on that pole and strip before the entire club. Men love to see their women strip, but what they don't tell you is that it gives them a rush to see you do it in front of other men too!*

She lifted her gaze to his smiling face. "Number six?" she croaked out.

His smile grew wider. "Yep."

Lena barely registered piling out of the truck or that sensing her nervousness he held her hand as they walked toward the front door. She glanced around the parking lot. With the exception of about five cars, it was empty.

"One of my clients threw a party here so I know the owner. She's allowed me to let you dance here. Marie is going to help you get dressed herself."

Her stomach turned over and she lifted startled eyes to his face. "Dressed? Dressed in what?"

He knocked his fist against the door three times before he leaned down and whispered in her ear. "Baby, you're going to strip for me and as cute as you are in those sweats I think we can come up with something better."

She shook her head and opened her mouth to protest when a beautiful middle aged black woman swung open the door.

"Dylan," she said warmly, stepping aside. "Come in." Lena walked in behind him and froze as soon as she entered. The place clearly catered to an upscale clientele. Soft white and red silks draped the walls, and lights that flickered like candles glowed in the background. There was a raised stage with three poles and a large mirror that took up the entire back wall of the stage. The décor was gorgeous with plush red velvet chairs that surrounded tables covered in pristine white tablecloths topped with a single red rose in a crystal vase. In a word, the place was elegant.

"Ah, you must be Lena," the woman who she figured was Marie said. "You are even more beautiful than Dylan described." Beautiful? Dylan had described her as beautiful? She turned her shocked gaze toward him, but could not make out his expression with the muted light.

He tipped his head at them then. "I will leave you in the very experienced and capable hands of Marie." He winked at

her. "I can't wait to see what you come up with," he grinned and turned to walk toward the bar located in the very back of the club.

"Dylan! Dylan!" She called after him, but he either didn't hear her over the music or he chose to ignore her.

"Come along, Lena. Let's get you ready for your handsome boyfriend."

Her eyes snapped to Marie's face as she allowed her to drag her to the dressing room backstage. "Dylan's not really my boyfriend."

Marie lifted her lips into a gentle smile. "Maybe not right now, but from the way he talked about you on the phone earlier it will only be a matter of time before that changes."

Lena furrowed her brow and started to shake her head to tell the older woman that she was mistaken, but before she could open her mouth she was being plopped down in front of a vanity and outfits, the likes of which she'd never seen, were being thrown at her.

Marie fussed with her hair and make-up for almost thirty minutes, before finally settling on a casual style that framed her face and a rosy blush and matching lipstick that went nicely with her lavender eye shadow. She admired her reflection in the mirror and had to admit, Marie was good at what she did. She met the woman's eyes in the mirror.

"So what do I wear?"

She couldn't believe she was actually doing this. But she'd made the bet so now she had to go through with all of the insane tips covered in the infamous magazine.

Marie arched her eyebrow and gave her a long look. "What do you feel most comfortable in, honey?"

Lena scrunched her face into a frown as her gaze darted about the room and then down at the items still piled high on her lap. She wanted to say there was *nothing* in that room that made her feel comfortable.

She had done some wild things in her lifetime and she certainly wasn't shy, but this was Dylan they were talking about. He alone made this experience that much different. She shrugged her shoulders in a helpless gesture. "Dylan's favourite colour is black." She said it with such uncertainty that it could have been a question.

"But what's *your* favourite colour? You're gonna be the one out there dancing, not him darlin'."

"Well, my favourite colour is red and I do like lingerie," she offered hesitantly.

Marie snapped her fingers as her eyes lit up. "I have just the thing."

Fifteen minutes later she was dressed in a red satin and lace strapless corset with a matching g-string and garters. Her toned legs were encased in sheer black thigh high stockings and black stiletto platform heels framed her small feet.

She ran her hands down her figure and smiled at the woman she saw staring back in the mirror. She was gorgeous. In general, she considered herself nice looking. She ate well, worked out regularly and tried to take care of herself. She wasn't obsessive with it, but she enjoyed dressing up and looking nice whenever she could.

She spun around and hugged Marie. "Thank you. I love what you did with me." She beamed

She waved her hand. "Oh, honey it was nothing. You were perfectly lovely without my help. Now as soon as you're ready just step around that corner onto the stage and the music will begin," she said pointing in the direction behind Lena's head.

Lena froze. "Music?"

"Well, honey you *are* here to strip for Dylan."

"Y—yes, I know. But I thought you were going to teach me some moves or something before you sent me out there." She could feel herself panicking again. She could not go out there and just dance in front of him. This was insane.

Marie's quirked the corner of her mouth into a lopsided grin. "Well Dylan told me that back in college you used to win all of those local amateur strip contests so I thought you would be fine—"

"That was years ago, Marie." She gasped. "And besides I never took off all my clothes then."

The older woman patted her face and smiled. "It will all come back to you, I'm sure. I get the feeling you're a natural." And then she leaned in closer as if she had a secret to tell. "And honey, I don't think you'll have any problems taking off your clothes for that man out there. Good Lord, if I were just twenty years younger." She patted her face again and sauntered out of the dressing room. "Good luck honey and just remember to *have fun*," she called after her and then disappeared around the corner.

'Right. Fun." She repeated to herself as she ran her sweaty palms down her sides trying to calm her jittery nerves. She

closed her eyes and exhaled deeply. She could do this. She'd done it many times before. And Marie was right, she was a natural. She still popped in to pole dancing classes at her local gym every now and then just to see if she still had it. And you know what? She did.

She snapped her eyes open. "I can do this," she said finally and strutted around the corner onto the stage.

As soon as she stepped out onto the stage she stilled. She'd forgotten just how blinding the spotlight was. The music came on at the same time her eyes finally adjusted to the light. Her eyes darted around the club, searching for other patrons, but the only person she saw in the room was Dylan. She glanced down at him and grinned when she recognised the tune that now blared from the speakers. *Let's Ride* by Montell Jordan and Master P. She'd danced to that all the time back in the day. Her heart skipped a beat at the smile on his face. He'd asked Marie to play it. She felt tiny butterflies flutter in her stomach as she walked forward and grasped the middle pole with her left hand. That is what she loved about Dylan. He always remembered the little things that no one else seemed to. Tiny things that others missed, he never did.

Then as the music washed over her and the euphoria of being up on that stage with Dylan, and whoever else was in the room watching finally hit her, she pushed all other thoughts from her head.

Almost in a trance she moved her body to the rhythm of the music that pulsed around her. She held Dylan's gaze as she grasped the pole firmly and swung around it three times before releasing it to freestyle to the beat.

She did this throughout the entire song, alternating between executing moves on the pole and dancing around the stage, whipping her feathery soft hair around her head as she rocked to the rhythm of the beat.

At the sound of the cd changing she stopped as if the spell was broken. She met Dylan's gaze at the same time *My Body* by LSG came on. Another favourite. He quirked his finger at her and mouthed the words *come here*. She walked to the end of the stage and stepped down the three small steps. Dylan sat in the very front and she made her way to him.

She stopped at the table where he sat and held his gaze. Her nipples tightened at the desire that smouldered in the depths of his eyes. A tiny thrill of pleasure slid down her spine. He wanted her. That much was clear and it gave her a small bit of confidence as she stood there half naked and humming with energy from her erotic dance.

"Come closer."

She stepped closer, but stopped short of walking in between his legs.

"Closer," he whispered.

She took a single step and stopped when her thighs brushed against the hard bulge between his legs. She let out a gasp and started to move back, but couldn't when Dylan reached out and cupped her ass with one hand to stop her.

He ran his hands over the full globes that were completely exposed. She shivered as his hands caressed her bare flesh.

"That was a nice show, but now it's time for you to strip for me."

She opened her mouth to protest, but instantly snapped it shut. That was part of the bet, and she knew it.

"I'll help you," he said when apparently she didn't move fast enough. He reached behind her and one by one he undid the tiny eye hooks until finally the strapless corset would have fallen to the floor had she not held it to her with both hands.

Annoyance flashed across his face as he covered her hands with his own. "Let it go, Lena," he said softly and again like he'd done with the hooks, one by one he pried her fingers from the top until it finally did drop to the floor.

She sucked in a breath at the same time he let out a low hiss.

"God, you're beautiful," he whispered reverently.

She glanced down expecting to see him staring at her bare breasts but was shocked when their eyes met. She gulped deeply when a current of electricity pulsed between them.

Her eyes never left his when he lifted a hand to tweak one nipple and then the other between his fingers. At the first touch of his lips against her stiffened peaks, her eyes slid closed and a breathy moan escaped her lips. He palmed the weight of her full breast in one hand while he gently suckled at the other. When he drew her hardened flesh deeper into his warm, wet mouth and nipped gently she felt the cream from her pussy gush out to stain her g-string.

"Dylan," she cried out hoarsely and dug her nails into the back of his head when he lifted her breasts, pushed them to together and worshipped her nipples with his mouth and tongue. Heat began to pulse at the centre of her core and she

swore she would have collapsed to the floor if it weren't for the strength of Dylan's arm that shot out and wrapped around her waist to steady her.

With one arm still draped around her, his hand at her back, he released her breast from his other hand and let it slowly skim down the side of her body. When he reached the thin scrap of fabric that was her g-string, he hooked his finger beneath it and tugged it down her legs until it fell to her ankles. She stepped out of it and stood there before him, completely nude.

She wanted to wrap her arms around her body to shield herself from his gaze. In all their time they'd been friends Dylan had never once seen her naked, not even an *accidental walking in on her in the bathroom* scenario. She stared down at the floor, suddenly feeling shy and nervous.

Abruptly he stood to his feet and switched positions with her. She shot him a puzzled look.

"Sit down," he said and gestured to his empty chair behind her. She sat down, holding her legs pressed together with her palms against her knees.

"Open your legs," he whispered, his eyes boring into her.

She swallowed hard and slowly parted her thighs. At the sight of her juices glistening along her slit, she dropped her gaze to the floor, mortified.

"Look at me," Dylan rasped out tightly, a tiny muscle in his jaw jerking beneath his skin.

She held his intense gaze and followed his every movement as he dropped down to his knees and hooked her legs over his shoulders.

"Dylan," she said in alarm when she realised what he was about to do, but he ignored her. Instead he buried his face in her cunt and she nearly shot out of the chair at the first brush of his tongue along her moist folds. When he wrapped his lips around her tiny nub and sucked hard, she could no longer hold back. Tangling her hands in his hair, she held his face between her legs as he ate her pussy.

"Yes, oh yes," she moaned over and over again. She clenched her eyes shut and groaned loudly when he pushed his tongue inside her and fucked her with his mouth. When he pushed deeper and curled his tongue up she nearly shattered right there.

The blood rushed to her head and pounded in her ears as she felt the pulsing vibrations of her impending climax begin to pump harder inside her.

When he reached around to shove two fingers into her wet sheath at the same time he fastened his lips around her clit and nipped gently, she instantly exploded.

"Dylan!" She cried out on a long moan as her legs shook violently and her sticky cum gushed from her pussy. He kept sucking at her clit and fucking her with his fingers as she rode out the last wave of her orgasm. Her entire body felt boneless, and she relaxed her hold in his hair at the same time her legs loosened around his head.

She stared into his eyes, and shuddered again when he swiped his tongue through her slit one last time and licked his lips.

He stroked his callused hands up and down her thighs for several lazy moments before slowly standing to his feet, and tugging her up with him.

He sat back down and pulled her into his lap to face him so that she straddled him.

"I said I was going to wait until we got home to make love to you, but I don't think I will manage to get very far as long as I have the taste of you on my lips," he said hoarsely as he absently stroked her back.

Lena shivered at his touch. She couldn't believe what they'd just done, in public no less, but she had to admit it felt damn good. Without saying a word she leaned forward and kissed him, letting him know that it was alright to lose control right then and there. He groaned against her mouth and deepened the kiss, twirling his tongue with hers. She shivered again at the sweet taste of herself on his lips. It was such an erotic feeling to drink her cum from his mouth.

She cupped her hands behind his head and held him closer. God, she wanted him to make love to her. She couldn't wait either. She barely registered the sound of him sliding his zipper down to pull his cock from his pants, until she felt the tip bump against her belly. She stared down at his large erection and licked her lips. She wanted to taste him. She started to move off of him, but stopped when his hands clamped around her hips. She lifted her lustful gaze to his face.

His face was flushed red and she could tell by the way his lips twisted into a frown that he was struggling to hold onto his last bit of control. He shook his head at the question in

her eyes. "I am so turned on by you right now that I wouldn't last a second if you wrapped those pretty lips around my dick," he choked out.

The thought that she'd brought Dylan to the edge of his legendary restraint caused a tiny flutter of warmth to spread inside of her. She stroked her palm down his cheek and smiled. "Next time."

He returned her teasing smile. "Definitely." Then as quickly as his smile came it disappeared and he seized her hips in his hands and lifted her slightly off his lap.

Lena held onto his shoulders and waited for him to join them. This was it. This single act would change everything between them, but she didn't dwell on that. They were here now and there was no turning back.

"Fuck me, Dylan. I need you inside me," she whispered seductively, still holding his gaze.

Then with their eyes still locked, he settled her above his ramrod straight cock, and with aching slow movements, slid her down onto his rigid flesh, and pushed his dick passed the clenching muscles of her tight, wet heat to bury himself deep inside her cunt.

"Dylan!" Lena screamed at the same time he groaned out her name. She tightened her muscles around him trying to adjust to his large size.

"Lena. Shit," he hissed out when she clamped her muscles around him again. "Oh, God, Lena if you keep that up, I won't last much longer," he warned and clutched her full hips in his hands to slowly pump her up and down his hard shaft.

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

She closed her eyes, leaned her head back, and settled her hands against his shoulders to just enjoy the ride.

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Chapter Four

"Oh, God, Lena," he rasped against her ear as he jerked her down on his cock with rough strokes. He clenched his eyes shut and gripped her hips tighter. He wasn't going to last much longer.

He groaned loudly and savoured the feel of her tight pussy gripping him with each powerful thrust. Her molten heat surrounded him and he revelled in the feel of her slick warmth every time he thrust his cock up inside her. He knew it would be like this between them—hot, explosive, intense.

He reached around to grip her ass, forcing her to ride him harder, faster.

"Dylan," she gasped as he pumped her ass down at the same time he surged his cock up into her.

He opened his eyes and buried his face between her lush breasts.

"I love your tits, you know that?" he murmured against her chest as he released her hips to squash the full mounds together and suck on her hard nipples with loud slurping noises.

"Uh, uh," she moaned in a half hearted attempt to answer him as she took over setting the pace and slammed her pussy down on his hard rod over and over again.

He hissed when his cock ploughed deeper inside her, nearly filling her to the hilt.

"I love your tits, your pussy," he mumbled between sucking at the now glistening wet peaks of her breasts. "God,

you feel so good wrapped around my dick. Fuck me harder," he growled as he abruptly released her breasts and gripped her hips to once again drive the pace of their fucking.

This time he ploughed his cock into her with hard furious strokes as he pumped her hips down so that she could take his hard length at a frenzied pace.

"I'm so close. Faster," she demanded and her nails dug deeper into his shoulders.

Tiny spasms began to rocket through her at the same time her pussy clenched hard around him. He glanced up to see her head thrown back, eyes closed, with her mouth open.

Suddenly she screamed his name at the same time her body jerked and she bounced wildly in his lap, her tits slapping against her rib cage.

The sight of her coming was the last straw. Her cunt clamped around his hard flesh like a tight fist and he felt his balls tighten. His cock twitched inside of her and moments later it violently exploded.

"Lena," he roared out as his climax washed over him and he dumped jet after jet of his white hot seed into her spasming cunt. "That's it baby, milk my cock with your wet pussy," he rasped as his semen continued to erupt from him and pour into her waiting sheath.

"Dylan," she whispered hoarsely before she leaned forward and collapsed against his chest, to rest her head against his shoulder.

He stroked her back that now gleamed with tiny droplets of sweat. She panted softly against him, her breasts teasing the coarse hairs on his chest every time she took a breath. He

held her while shudders continued rack both of them until finally their breathing returned to normal.

He tilted his head to the side and placed a gentle kiss against her forehead, still stroking her back.

"You know that was actually three tips," he murmured lazily.

She chuckled against him. "Really? What were the other two?"

"I think this counts for tip thirteen—*ride him in a public venue like a theatre or movie.*"

He felt her smile against his shoulder. "I'll give you that one. What's the other?"

"Tip seven—*if you can't get to a strip club, put on some stripper heels, fire engine red lingerie and give him a lap dance.*"

She laughed again. "So, we're gonna call what we just did a lap dance now?"

He shrugged and smiled. "We don't have to. It just means you have to give me a lap dance later. You know I'm all for that," he teased.

She finally lifted her head to look at him, her eyes twinkling with laughter. "No, you were right the first time. We'll count it."

He laughed at her as he leaned forward to press a long kiss against her lips.

When he finally drew back, her eyes were slightly glazed with desire, and she wore a wicked grin.

She took her finger and traced her nail down his chest. "You know what this means, right?" She said seductively.

He shot her a puzzled look and shook his head. "No, what?"

Her grin grew wider. "This means I'm winning."

* * * *

Dylan pulled back onto the highway and smiled to himself. *Yes, she was indeed winning.* Those tips had certainly worked, but he knew there were a fair share on that list that he was *not* looking forward to trying.

He flipped his signal to get over into the far left lane and was about to speed down the highway all the way home, but froze when something curled around the bulge in his jeans.

He glanced down to see it was Lena's hand and then looked up at her to see a twinkle of mischief in her eyes.

He gulped deeply and his foot nearly slipped off the accelerator when she started to massage him slowly though his pants.

"Lena, I'm on the highway. This is dangerous," he warned.

She tugged her lips into a naughty grin. "But it's tip number four—*do him at 70 miles per hour on the expressway.*"

He shook his head. "Let's just skip that one." He sucked in a breath when she undid the zipper to pull his growing erection from his pants.

"Uh, uh, we have to do *all* of them." She leaned forward then and he nearly slammed into the back of a white BMW when she drew the tip of his dick inside her mouth.

"Lena," he hissed out in warning, but she ignored him to take more of him inside her mouth.

A hoarse groan escaped his lips when she cupped his balls in one hand, and pumped his now hard as a rock shaft with the other, while she slid her tongue inside the tiny slit at the head of his cock.

White hot lightning shot down his spine when she stroked her tongue back and forth, lapping up tiny droplets of precum, before she circled the crown along the ridge of sensitive skin.

"Shit, Lena," he said on a tortured moan, his hands clinging to the steering wheel for dear life. He didn't know how he did it, but somehow he managed to cross three lanes in order to settle in the far right lane. He set the cruise control to 50 and let his right foot slip from the accelerator, that way he hopefully wouldn't hit anything. He kept his left foot poised against the brake just in case.

His gaze darted between focusing on the traffic in front of him and Lena's bobbing head.

Still holding the wheel with one hand, he slid the other to the back of her head to tangle in her hair.

If he hadn't been driving he would have closed his eyes and savoured the warmth of her mouth gliding up and down his dick. He thrust his hips upward meeting her stroke for stroke. She sucked him faster, her one hand applying gentle pressure as she massaged his balls in her palm while she tightened her other fist around his rigid girth to jerk him off.

"Lena," he croaked out when he felt the growing tingling sensation building at the base of his spine. His hand gripped the wheel tighter and his toes curled when she took him all the way to the back of her throat. She deep throat him

several more times until he stiffened. His breathing became laboured at the same time his orgasm surged inside of him. For a moment he did close his eyes when he shot his first load into her mouth.

He roared out her name in climax and his body jerked with tremors as he pumped his seed down her throat. She worked her lips up and down his shaft, sucking him dry until he was spent. He started to relax but was jolted to attention when a burning pain zoomed from the head of his cock all the way to his toes.

"What the fuck," he yelped as he quickly yanked his cock from her mouth. He stared at her in alarm. "What the hell was that for? You just bit my dick." He frowned when instead of apologising she smiled.

"That was tip number twelve—*a playful nip along your man's package will send him over the edge in the middle of fellatio.*"

He stared at her in horror. "Over the edge, straight to my death. Trust me, that tip does not work."

He shot her a dark scowl when she threw her head back and laughed as he slipped his now limp cock back inside his pants and zipped himself up. How dare she laugh when he could still feel a slight twinge of pain at the tip of his dick?

"Okay, so tip twelve didn't work, but four sure did." She grinned.

"I don't know if you should even get full credit for four; you were supposed to *do me*. Besides it says 70 and I was doing 50 all the way," he said with a teasing leer.

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Oh don't be a sore loser. You know it counts."

He shook his head and launched into a long protest. They spent the rest of the trip arguing over one point until they finally settled on half credit for each.

* * * *

It was close to three when they arrived back at the house. As soon as they entered the door, Lena headed straight to the bathroom to grab a quick shower. She ran the rose scented bar of soap over her tingling flesh and scrubbed hard. When she dipped it between her legs a moan escaped her lips as images of Dylan eating her out flashed through her head.

She shook her head, pushing the thoughts aside.

"I can't do this to myself," she muttered, hating the dejected sound she heard in her voice. "He doesn't see you as more than a friend, so don't start with the stupid fantasies," she told herself so she wouldn't forget the rule she'd laid down. This was just light-hearted fun, nothing more. As long as she remembered that she would be fine—she hoped.

She stilled at the sound of her bathroom door shutting. With a soap covered hand, she pulled back the shower curtain and peeked around its edge to see Dylan in all his nude perfection sauntering toward the tub sporting a very eager hard on.

"Is there room for two?" He grinned and stepped inside.

The two times they'd been intimate earlier in the day, he'd been fully clothed so she took her time drinking in the sight of his perfectly chiselled, muscular body. She slid her gaze

across his broad torso that was corded with hard muscles, only slightly hidden by a small smattering of dark chest hair. She followed the trail of hair down his taut abs to his hard cock, which jutted out eagerly from its nest of dark curls. While she fixated on his cock a tiny droplet of cum beaded at the tip and she licked her lips in anticipation before she reluctantly dragged her gaze back to his face.

He wore a knowing grin. "Turn around," he whispered over the din of the warm water cascading over their bodies. "And brace your hands against the wall."

She turned around, bent over and laid her palms flat against the wet tiles. She peered at him from over her shoulder. "What tip is this?"

He pushed her legs wider and stepped behind her to position his cock at her entrance. He met her questioning gaze. "It isn't a tip," he said in a husky voice and dipped the head of his dick inside her.

She closed her eyes and released a low moan.

"You're already soaking wet. What were you thinking about before I came in here?" He groaned as he fed her his dick, inch by inch. She wanted to scream at him to enter her fully, but found it hard to find her voice.

He pushed another inch past her tight muscles and stopped. "Were you thinking of what we did earlier?"

She nodded. "Yes," she cried out on a broken sob.

He shoved himself deeper inside her, almost to the hilt, but not quite.

"Which time?" He panted.

She saw the image flash in her head and moaned loudly.
"W—when you ate me out," she stammered.

"You liked that?"

She nodded. "Yes, yes. I loved it."

"I'm glad," he said as he gripped her hips and surged forward, seating himself fully inside of her.

She screamed at the feel of him stretching her. Pleasure, the likes of which she'd never known, unfurled in her belly and pulsed through her veins.

He dug his fingers into the flesh at her hips and pumped his hips forward, thrusting his cock inside her, back and forth, over and over again.

She threw her hips back at him, trying to keep up with his pace, but eventually the pleasure became too intense and she couldn't focus on anything but the throbbing need that pulsed from her core.

He slammed into her on rough strokes, his balls slapping against her pussy, echoing in the small space of the shower over the sound of the streaming water.

"Fuck me," she cried out as his strokes grew deeper and harder. When he reached around with one hand to finger her clit she nearly slipped to the tub floor. Her pussy began to quiver with tiny spasms and she knew she was close to coming.

Bracing her hands firmly against the wall, she pushed back into him to slam her cunt against his cock.

"Harder. Fuck me harder," she moaned.

"Get on your knees," he said in a gruff voice.

Still joined, they slid to the floor together and he pushed her knees apart, to spread her legs wider. He then pushed her head forward so that she had no choice but to rest her head against her hands.

Lukewarm water splattered across their bodies and dripped into her eyes, but she ignored it. With her ass high in the air, her body hummed in anticipation.

With one hand between her legs, still toying with her clit, he placed the other against her upper back, between her shoulder blades to hold her down. He then rocked his hips against her to pound his stiff pole inside her. He rode her hard, with brutal strokes.

She balled her hands into fists as tiny gasps tore past her lips with each stroke. His hips pistoned back and forth as he pumped his cock deep inside her while he rotated her tiny nub between his fingers.

His thrusts grew harder and faster, matching the rhythm of his fingers at her clit. She clenched her eyes shut and opened her mouth to scream but nothing came out. Instead her body twitched wildly as tremors quaked from the centre of her core across her entire body. Somewhere in her euphoric haze she found her voice and screamed Dylan's name at the top of her lungs as molten juices gushed from her pussy to drench his pounding dick.

She knew he was right behind her when he abruptly stiffened and called out her name on a low growl. He slammed his hard rod deep inside of her with a rough thrust. Moments later, with his cock buried inside her, hot liquid flooded her cunt.

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

"Aahhhh," he roared loudly as he pumped his seed inside her until it seeped from her hole and trickled down to the tub to be washed away by the water.

They held themselves still in the same position for several long moments as they struggled to calm the wild beating of their hearts. Dylan was the first to recover. Despite her protests he slid his dick out of her and stood. He grasped her hips in his strong hands and lifted her to her feet to plant her down in front of him. Without a word, he quickly cleansed them of any evidence of their lovemaking, rinsed them, and shut off the water.

With the utmost gentleness, he dried her off with her towel and wrapped it around her, before reaching for a spare towel to do the same to himself. He ushered her into the bedroom, laid down across her queen sized bed and pulled her on top of him, to hold her in his arms.

She closed her eyes and settled into his embrace as he stroked her wet hair. In moments she drifted off to sleep. Although, somewhere in her subconscious she knew he remained awake, stroking her hair long after she'd fallen asleep.

* * * *

She stifled a yawn and stretched her arms out but stopped when her hand brushed against a hard object. The events of earlier instantly came flooding back and she whipped her head to the side to see Dylan's smiling face.

"Hello, sleepy head," he joked.

She returned his smile. "What time is it?"

"Almost six."

Her eyes rounded and she shot straight up in the air. "Six? I can't believe my Saturday is almost gone." She really couldn't believe she'd slept throughout the entire afternoon. She never indulged in a lazy Saturday.

Dylan rolled out of bed and stood to his feet, and to her utter disappointment, with his towel still firmly in place.

"Well it's not completely gone. What do you say we go grab some dinner from that new Thai place around the corner?"

As if on cue her stomach growled. "Sounds like a plan," she grinned sheepishly.

He chuckled. "Great. Then I'll let you get dressed. I'll meet you downstairs in about thirty minutes," he said just as he slipped out of her room.

It was early spring in Atlanta so the air was still a little chilly at night. With that in mind, she threw on some jeans, a form fitting bone coloured turtle neck and matching boots with low heels. She slipped in some gold hoops, pulled her hair up into a simple chignon and applied just a light dusting of makeup. She checked her reflection in the mirror—simple, but elegant—her signature. She grabbed a small purse and a cream Cashmere sweater just in case it got colder and glided out of her bedroom. She bounded down the stairs to meet Dylan, who sat on the couch waiting for her.

"Sorry, I'm late."

He checked his watch. "You're not late, I was just early." He glanced down at himself and grinned. "I didn't do much, but you—you look lovely."

She smiled at the compliment and muttered a soft 'thank you.' "You look handsome yourself." She actually wanted to tell him that his idea of not doing much was still more than enough. Like her he was dressed in jeans. Over his jeans he wore a gray blazer, with a white dress shirt beneath it and a black and gray tie at his neck. Only Dylan could make jeans look distinguished. He looked like he belonged on the cover of GQ or Playgirl, whichever imagination one decided to use at the moment.

She shook her head and steered her thoughts back out of the gutter, for now. At least until they made it through dinner. After that, she would let them go wherever they chose to wander.

It took less than ten minutes to travel to the restaurant and be seated. Lena drank in the rich and vibrant colours of the restaurant Thailand inspired décor before she settled into her chair to study the menu. After maybe ten seconds she closed it.

"What?" She asked when she saw the grin on Dylan's face.

"Let me guess—shrimp pad thai."

She huffed out a breath and stared at him with mock irritation. "I can't help it. It's my favourite."

"I know," he said quietly and returned his gaze to his menu.

Silence descended on the table, at the same time a current of electricity arced between them. Those two simple words held a wealth of meaning. Without a doubt, he knew more about her than any other man on earth and she was sure she could say the same for him with regards to a woman. They

were best friends, but they were more than that. *Especially now*. Even before today their friendship had been grounded in something deeper, something she put into words, but was there nonetheless.

"What are you thinking?"

Startled, she dragged her gaze to his face. She hadn't realise he'd placed his menu aside to stare at her. She struggled with the decision to make up something or tell him the truth.

"You know I can usually tell when you're lying," he said as if reading her mind.

She narrowed her eyes and pinched her lips into a frown. There were rare times she hated that Dylan knew her so well, but this was certainly one of them. She blew out a breath. *Truth it is.*

"I was just thinking that although I made the rule for nothing to change between us, things are going to change anyway," she said quietly.

His green eyes darkened and something flashed in their depths but before she could put her finger on the emotion she saw there, it disappeared.

"They are, but that may not be so bad," he whispered.

Her heart quickened in her chest at his words. There was something about what he'd just said and how he said it that made her wonder if maybe she wasn't alone in her attraction. She chuckled to herself. Well from the experiences of the day she knew she wasn't alone when it came to the attraction, but what about more? Could he see her as being more than just his friend? The answer to that was what held her back, so

instead of asking what she really wanted to ask she threw the ball back into his court.

"If that's true then how would you like for things to be between us when these two weeks are up?"

He steepled his fingers together and leaned back in his chair, with a smile on his face.

"If I told you that then I would be revealing my terms for the bet?"

She arched an eyebrow, now curious. "Your terms?" Something clicked inside her head and she tensed. "That would mean they're not material."

He started to answer but stopped when the waiter reappeared. They gave their orders and before the man had barely turned his back she broached the question again.

"I'm right. Your terms aren't material?"

He held onto his smile, but his eyes were serious. "Nope."

"Can you give me a hint?"

"Nope." He grinned.

The rest of dinner and the ride all the way home were spent with her fishing for hints, but it wasn't until they were upstairs about to part ways to their separate bedrooms when he finally gave in.

She parted her lips to say good night but didn't get a word out when he seized her small hand in his, dragged her down the hall to his bedroom and tugged her inside.

He kicked the door shut with his foot and pulled her into his arms. Of its own volition, her body melted into his and she sighed as she twined her hands behind his neck.

"I'll give you one hint," he whispered and she shivered at the seductive caress of his warm breath along the sensitive skin of her ear.

He backed her across the room and when her knees connected with the mattress she leaned back and they both tumbled to the bed, with him on top of her. Holding himself poised above her, he skimmed his fingers down her cheek.

"My terms—they involve you," he said softly, his expression completely serious.

"Me?"

"Yes, you," he said and that was all he offered before he lowered his head and pressed his lips against hers.

Her pussy hummed to life as if she hadn't come three times already that day. She moaned softly when his tongue slipped between her lips to taste the inside of her mouth. With his body pressed against hers, she pushed off his jacket and undid his tie. The buttons to his dress shirt proved to be slightly more difficult as she clumsily fumbled with them. Somehow she managed to undo every single one until finally she could tug off his shirt and send it flying across the room where his jacket and tie now lay.

She stroked her hands across the hard planes of his chiselled back just savouring the feeling of his muscles bulging beneath her fingers.

A sigh escaped her lips when his hands skimmed along her bare stomach, and past her ribs to pull off her turtleneck. Despite her neat bun, some of her locks got caught in the tight fabric and she knew by the time he got her shirt off her hair was in wild disarray. She didn't care. She kicked off her

boots with her heels and shimmied out of her jeans while he did the same.

No sooner had their clothes disappeared, they were back in each other's arms.

"Open your legs," Dylan murmured between placing tiny kisses along her neck and collar bone.

She eagerly spread her thighs so that he could settle between them. With his face still buried in the crook of her neck, he hooked his arms behind her knees to spread her wider and leaned forward to brush the tip of his cock against her now dripping hole.

"Dylan," her voice hitched slightly when he dipped the head of his dick inside her only to pull it out.

She clenched her eyes shut and thrashed about against the bed as he did that over and over again until she finally begged him to stop.

"Please, please. Stop teasing me," she pleaded.

His warm breath fanned against her neck as he chuckled. "Tell me what you want and I will."

He stroked his tongue against her neck and her back arched off the bed.

"I—I want you," she cried out.

He laughed again. "I know that, but what do you want me to *do*,"

She groaned in frustration. She couldn't believe he wanted to play games when she was so close to losing her mind. "I want you inside me. I want your cock inside me. I want you to fuck me," she babbled, hoping one of those was the right answer.

He moaned against her neck and inched his way inside of her. "God, you turn me on when you talk dirty," he said and then jerked his hips forward to bury his cock inside her on one hard thrust.

She let out a hoarse scream and locked her ankles behind his back.

He pumped his hips back and forth to shove his cock inside of her. The sound of flesh slapping against flesh echoed in the room.

Lena scraped her nails down his back when he rotated his hips as he slammed his cock deeper inside her. Her legs began to tremble and shake as she struggled to keep them wrapped around his hips. Suddenly her cunt tightened around him as tiny contractions exploded from somewhere deep inside her.

"Dylan! I'm coming," she cried out as she threw her hips up at him. Flashes of light exploded behind her shut lids and she clung to him like he was her sustenance as wave after wave of her climax crested inside her. Hot juices poured from her pussy to coat his dick in its sticky warmth as it trickled down and stain the sheets beneath them.

"Shit, shit," Dylan groaned before he sucked in a sharp breath. He pounded his cock inside her on deep, stabbing strokes, and she held him tight.

His thrusts became rough, primal even as he rode her with hard, vigorous thrusts.

"I'm sorry, Lena. I can't be gentle. I can't stop it," he grunted against her neck where he still had his face buried.

"I'm yours Dylan to fuck how you please. It's alright, just let go. Come inside me," she whispered as she tunnelled her fingers through his sweaty hair. She wrapped him in the cocoon of her embrace as he fucked her wildly with frenzied strokes.

"Shit, Lena," he hissed and slammed his dick inside the tight grip of her cunt one last time before he abruptly tensed.

"Lena," he grunted hoarsely. Seconds later she felt his cock grow harder and then a gush of warmth flooded her sheath. "Mmmm," he moaned against her neck, his hips rocking back and forth on a lazy rhythm as hot jets of cum continued to spurt from his dick.

She clenched and unclenched her pussy around his spasming cock.

He hissed. "That's it baby. Milk my cock with that tight pussy of yours."

She worked her muscles until she was sure he'd emptied his balls of every last drop of cum and his dick softened.

"God, Lena you have such good pussy. You don't know how good it feels when I'm inside you," he murmured softly as tiny tremors continued to rock his body.

When his climax finally subsided, he released her legs, but still remained on top of her. She stretched them out along the bed, wincing at the slight soreness in her thighs.

He rolled off of her to drape her across his body. "I'm sorry if I hurt you. I don't know what happened. I kind of just lost control."

She lifted her head from his chest to stare into his apologetic eyes. She touched her fingers along the stubble at

his chin and smiled. "I think I like it when you lose control," she said softly and leaned her head back down on his chest to snuggle deeper into his warmth.

She ran her hands up and down his chest, through his coarse hair. "What tip was that?" She asked sleepily, letting her eyes drift closed.

The deep rumble of his laughter bubbled up from inside his chest to vibrate across her body. "As far as I know that wasn't a tip. Just good ole fashioned lovemaking."

She yawned softly. "That's good to know. The way we were going earlier I think we will probably run out of tips in three days."

She fell asleep to his rich laughter, dreaming about all the things they had left to try.

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Chapter Five

"Sooo, how did the weekend go?"

Lena lifted her lips into a secretive grin. "It was nice." She thought back to how she and Dylan ended up spending Sunday hiking across Sweetwater Trail, just outside the city limits. They couldn't keep their hands off each other. They'd barely made it back to his car before they were ripping off each other's clothes. "Very nice," she added after giving it a second thought.

Maia rolled her eyes and sat back in her chair at Fune Sushi Bar, a trendy restaurant off of Peachtree, in the popular Midtown Atlanta district, where they sometimes met for lunch. "I can tell by that goofy, dreamy look on your face that it was better than nice. So what did you do?"

Lena's eyes flashed with mischief. "The question is, what didn't we do?"

Maia chuckled softly and shook her head. "All right, lady. I can tell I'm not going to get much out of you," she said as she leaned forward to shove a forkful of sashimi salad in her mouth.

"There's not much to tell. We're enjoying our time together, and as I knew it would be, the sex is amazing."

"So, did you talk about what would happen after the bet was over?"

Lena pursed her lips into a tiny pout. "No. I'm not trying to spoil our time together. We're supposed to be having fun."

Maia let out a deep sigh. "Okay, Selena but—"

The sound of Lena's phone ringing halted Maia's next words. "Give me just a sec," she said pulling her phone from her purse. Her shocked expression must have been pretty evident when Maia asked, "What's wrong? Who is that?"

She lifted her gaze from her phone screen. "It's Jason," she said with a note of disbelief in her voice. She hadn't spoken to him in months.

Maia shook her head. "Girl, do *not* answer that phone."

She instantly pressed the end button to silence the incoming call. "I wasn't but I wonder what he wants." She shoved her phone back in her purse.

"Let him leave a message and then you'll find out."

Lena started to launch into asking Maia about *her* weekend when as if on cue, Maia's own phone buzzed, signalling an incoming text message. Maia's face remained impassive as she scrolled through the message. When she was done she slipped her phone back in her purse and opened her wallet to throw down a twenty dollar bill on the table.

"Where are you going? Who was that? Was that Jason?" Lena accused.

"Hell, no. That creep knows better than to call me to try and get to you," she snapped.

Lena narrowed her eyes. "Then who was that?"

"I'll tell you later," she said and stood to her feet. She grabbed her coat and leaned down to place a quick peck against Lena's cheek. "I gotta go, but I'll call you later." And with that she whisked out of the restaurant door and was gone.

Lena stared after her friend with suspicious eyes. Maia had been acting strange during the entire lunch. She'd wanted to ask her about why she seemed so nervous and jumpy, but before she could, her phone had gone off.

Lena suspected what was up, but she hoped she was wrong. The only time Maia acted weird and secretive was when she was involved with Chad again. Chad was a great guy and individually, he and Maia were wonderful friends, but Lena always had her reservations about their casual relationship. For some reason they shared an intense and undeniable physical attraction to each other, but neither of them understood the value of commitment or compromise which were essential components to a *healthy* relationship, something they'd never been able to manage.

The sound of her phone vibrating drew her attention and she glanced down at where it was nestled at the top of her purse and flipped it over to look at the screen. She had a new message. She released a ragged breath and pressed the voicemail button. What on earth could Jason possibly have to say to her after all this time?

* * * *

Chad was sitting behind his desk when she sauntered in. The first things he noticed were her devil red heels and matching pencil skirt. She wore a white blouse tucked inside the high-waisted skirt that showed off her slim figure to perfection. His gaze lingered for an extra second in the area where he knew her small but firm breasts were encased in a

lacy red bra before finally travelling to her face where her light eyes blazed with annoyance.

"You cannot just summon me like a genie. I was at lunch with Lena—" Maia said shutting his door.

"Yes, Dylan mentioned as much—"

"Where is Dylan? If he sees me here he's gonna start with the questions. You know he thinks we're bad news for each other and—"

Chad shifted out of his chair to come around his desk and lean back against it, with his arms and ankles crossed.

"Relax. Dylan has a lunch meeting, which is why I called. For the rest of the day I am all booked up in meetings so this was my only free moment without him being here."

"What was so urgent that I had to rush straight here to your office? I could have just met you at your house after work."

Chad instantly stiffened at her words. He held her gaze, his blue eyes turning icy cold. "You made it very clear the last time you were there that you didn't plan on ever returning."

She drew her lips into a tight frown and crossed her arms over her chest. "That's not how I meant it and you know it. I just asked that we slow down," she said quietly.

"No, you asked that we go back to being just friends—*again*." His voice was harsh when he spoke and he knew he'd struck a nerve when she dropped her gaze to the floor. "But you don't get to have it both ways," he said in a low voice.

Her eyes snapped to his face, anger brewing in their depths. "Is that why you called me over here? To talk about us?"

"There is no us," he said quickly and turned around to fumble through some papers on his desk, hoping she wouldn't see that he believed his words no more than she probably did. Maia was still convinced that he would come around, but he was no longer cut out for the roller coaster relationship ride she had them on with her inability to make a decision about whether she was his lover or his friend. One minute she wanted sex and the next she wanted a platonic friendship. This had been going on for years between them and it had been fun when they were younger, but now he found he was getting too old to play these games with her.

He continued to rummage through the stack of papers until finally he found what he was looking for and turned back around. He stared down at the single paper, not meeting her eyes because no matter what he saw in them right now it was going to affect him, and when it came to Maia he had to at least *try* to keep his distance. "I actually called you to talk about this." He shot his arm out to hand the paper to her.

She quickly skimmed over it before lifting her head, her eyes filled with shock.

"How did you get this?"

He shrugged his shoulders with casual indifference.

"Friends."

She rolled her eyes at his cryptic tone and set the paper back down on his desk.

"What's interesting is that Jason called her right before you sent me that text. I bet his call has everything to do with what I just read."

Chad stood up straight. "Do you know what he said?"

She shook her head. "Lena didn't take the call." Then her face darkened with fury. "What an asshole. Why can't he just leave her alone so that she can be happy?"

"That's why I called you over here. You have to tell her to stay away from him and let her lawyers handle everything—"

Suspicion flared in her gaze. "Why don't you tell her yourself? You don't need me to do it—"

"First off, I'm not even supposed to know about this. I can't be connected to this in any way or else I could lose a client who just happened to let this information slip. And besides, you know Lena hasn't gotten around to exactly trusting me again sine I'm the one who introduced her to Jason in the first place—"

"So you want me to do your dirty work?"

He narrowed his eyes at her. "I don't see what your problem is with this. Lena is your best friend. I would think you would want to tell her what is going on before she gets blindsided or worse yet, before Jason has a chance to weasel his way back into her life—"

Her eyes flashed with indignation. "Lena's not going to fall for Jason's bullshit."

"But Jason can be very persuasive—"

"She's not a fool, Chad—"

He abruptly reached out to grab her by the arms halting her next words. She wasn't listening. "I know she's not a fool, but if she's still in love with him then his tricks will work." He'd seen more women drop like flies when it came to Jason's charm, and even Lena hadn't been immune to his appeal,

since she'd fallen harder than most and married the notorious player.

Maia struggled to escape his grasp, but he held her firmly. "Trust me. She is not in love with Jason." She shot him an angry look when he didn't release her.

He relaxed his hold on her to skim a single finger across her lower lip. "Well then use this pretty mouth of yours and tell her to stay away from him until her lawyers can straighten everything out. Don't let her think she can handle this all by herself."

He felt her shiver. "I—I will t—tell her," she stammered in a breathy voice.

Her eyes slid closed then and she tilted her head back slightly. As if on cue his head began to lower toward her welcoming mouth, but his common sense returned to him at the last second and he stopped. He abruptly released her and retreated back to the other side of his desk, struggling to calm his wildly beating heart. What was it about Maia that drew him like a moth to a flame?

"Yes, well I have a lot of work to get done, but I'll call you later." He then pulled out a folder, his gaze glued to the paper inside, although his eyes didn't read a single word.

"Whatever," she snapped angrily before she stormed out of his office, slamming the door behind her with a loud bang.

He blew out a long breath and flopped down in his chair. He knew she was pissed that he'd pulled away, but he had to. He'd made a promise to himself and he was determined to stick to it.

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

He and Maia had years of unresolved business between them, but until she admitted the truth of some things to herself he had to stay away from her—he glanced down at the bulge in his pants and grimaced—no matter how much it pained him.

* * * *

Maia gunned the engine of her BMW 3 Series red convertible toward Buckhead where she owned her own contemporary art gallery. As soon as she got on Route 400 she let it rip, knowing Atlanta cops never frequented the corridor leading to the most affluent neighbourhood in the city.

She frowned at that thought. Somehow it just didn't seem fair that the hardworking people who probably needed every bit of money they made were the ones targeted for tickets and not the people who could actually afford to pay them.

She gave her head a quick shake, momentarily pushing aside her thoughts of the injustices in the world to focus on her own sense of injustice—the one where Chad got to play her like a yo-yo on a string. She glowered into her rear view mirror. *Okay, to be fair she was the one who'd been trying to play him until he flipped the script on her.*

They'd started hooking up every now and then since their senior year of college and then later over breaks during grad school. It had just been about having fun. Chad seemed to understand her inability to commit because he too had the same problem, so no one got possessive or jealous and no feelings were hurt. It had been a perfect arrangement.

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

When she moved from New York to open her own gallery in Atlanta two years ago they'd somehow fallen back into their same routine, but before she'd realised it things were moving from casual to serious at lightning speed. Chad hadn't taken it so well when six months ago she'd put the brakes on their affair. He'd accused her of being a coward, which was partly true. She was afraid of falling in love. She had no desire to be vulnerable to any man ever again, and when it came to love there was no way to avoid it. Not if you truly gave your heart.

Chad was the only man she'd allowed in her life on a consistent basis and she knew if she looked harder at herself she'd find that there was a reason why no matter who was in her life, she always ended up drifting back to him. The realisation that she could possibly fall for him had freaked her out and so she'd done the only thing that had made sense at the time—she ran.

But of late she was having doubts about not facing up to what was going on between them and the more she saw him the more she missed him. But Chad wasn't making this easy for her. He'd made it clear that if she wanted them to be lovers again then she was going to have to make a serious go at the relationship part, which was something she wasn't sure if she was prepared to do.

She groaned aloud when she braked at a light and felt sticky wetness coat her panties. Christ! Just being in his presence for five minutes had left her wet and aching. That was one of the reasons why this wasn't going to work. When it came to him, he made her feel needy. Which was

something she didn't want to feel with any man, but especially not him because it transformed what used to be purely physical into an emotional connection.

Chad was just going to have to realise that what they shared in bed just didn't translate well into a relationship. When the light changed to green she pushed down on the accelerator and glowered when more wetness seeped out. Now if only she could get her wanton body to accept the decision her mind had made.

* * * *

"Shit Lena! This thing is not coming off!"

He heard her giggle from her bedroom. "You have to be completely soft," she yelled back.

His eyes shot daggers in the direction of the open door. *He was soft.*

Five minutes later, after some serious deep even breaths and a good amount of Vaseline, he'd managed to remove the cock ring. He hurriedly cleaned off and walked back into the room.

"Tip number twenty works, but it's hell trying to get it off." He slipped into bed beside her and pulled her into his arms.

"Oh, tip twenty definitely *works*. We must have gone at it for two hours." She purred softly into his ear. "We have to do that one again."

He stiffened. "Hell no. It took me fifteen minutes to get that thing off and I thought I would never be able to father kids during that entire process."

She lifted her head from his chest and smiled down at him. "We'll try a bigger ring next time."

He frowned up at her. "Maybe we can find a compromise on that one."

She placed a quick peck against his lips and bounced off of him. "That was the compromise," she said and scurried off to the bathroom to clean up.

He chuckled after her. She was insatiable.

His smile slowly disappeared then and he leaned back against the bed, his hands behind his head as he tried to beat back the apprehension that had begun to steadily grow in the pit of his stomach. They'd just finished their last tip tonight with three days left on their bet. Lena kept hinting about doing some of the tips again, but thus far she hadn't expressed any inclination that after their bet ended they would take their friendship to the next level. Like him, she was having fun, but he knew he wanted more when the time on their bet came to an end. He couldn't say the same for Lena and that's what had him on edge.

The sound of the phone ringing interrupted his thoughts. He glanced toward the bathroom where she was taking a shower. Then he looked at the phone. They had separate phone lines in the house that went directly to their rooms. It wasn't his place to answer her phone, but he couldn't silence the voice that nagged him to peek at her caller id. Just one quick look. It was probably Maia anyway. He leaned over and glanced down at the flashing green back light of the caller id at the same time the phone stopped ringing. He froze when he saw the name flash across the top. *Jason Wells*. What the

hell did that bastard want—he looked at her bedside clock—at ten at night?

He didn't know why he did it but he erased the incoming call and rolled back over just in time to see Lena saunter into the bedroom wearing a white towel wrapped around her body and a sexy smile. When she dropped the towel all thoughts of Jason instantly vanished.

* * * *

He pushed out his last set of bench presses, re-racked the bar and stood up from the bench.

"What's gotten into you? You've been a maniac all day," Chad said as he laid down to start his set.

Dylan waited until he pushed out the ten reps before he answered. "Jason called the house last night."

Chad froze in the middle of sitting up and whipped his face around to stare up at him.

"What did he want?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. Lena was in the shower when he called and he didn't leave a message." He averted his gaze to the floor. "And I kind of erased his name from her caller id box."

Chad stood to his feet, wiping the sweat from his brow. "Why'd you do that?"

He let out a quick sigh. "Man, I'm not sure. I guess I don't want that jerk coming around her right now when we're just starting to get somewhere."

They grabbed their water bottles and headed toward the locker rooms. "So, are you going to ask her why Jason is calling her?"

He shook his head. "For the moment, no. I trust Lena. And right now that is enough."

"I don't know man. If I were you I would be careful with the whole Jason situation. They have history, you know."

His nostrils flared in anger and he turned his back on Chad to open his locker. Something in his friend's voice told him that Chad knew more than he was letting on, but he didn't press it. Chad was entitled to keep his secrets, besides he knew if it was that important he would tell him. They'd been friends for too long and Dylan knew he could trust him. Just as he knew he could trust Lena. It was Jason who he didn't trust.

He closed his locker harder than he intended and turned around to face his friend. "So, what's up with you and Maia? I haven't heard you talk about her in awhile." He asked, needing to change the subject. Enough about his relationship problems when Chad had plenty of his own.

Chad's face instantly transformed into a blank mask. "That's because there's nothing to tell," he said simply and turned around to open his own locker.

Dylan narrowed his gaze at his friend's back. Something was up. "So, you two are done hooking up then?" He hedged.

Chad shrugged. "Yep."

"And you're cool with that?"

He abruptly slammed his locker shut and spun around, his expression hard. "I have to be," he said brusquely and stalked off toward the showers.

Dylan's wide eyed gaze trailed after him as he stood there in shock. Normally women didn't get to his friend. Chad was a notorious player who enjoyed the chase until he bedded his newest conquest and then he would move on. Unfortunately, Maia was just like him and he was sure that in this case like attracted like. It seemed that those two always ended up coming back to each other somehow. Dylan had shared with them both that he thought their situation was more than a little dysfunctional, but for a long time the relationship had seemed to be what they both wanted, so he left it alone. But Dylan knew Chad was growing weary of the relationship and he sensed his friend's feelings for Maia had somehow changed. Now it seemed every time her name came up he couldn't change the subject fast enough. Dylan shook his head as he strolled toward the showers with a smug grin on his face. It was high time Chad found a woman who could bring him to his knees and he knew Maia was just the woman to do it. But he had a feeling Maia was going to learn to humble herself in the process. His grin grew wider. Those two, in all their dysfunctional glory, truly deserved each other.

* * * *

Lena chewed anxiously on her bottom lip as she struggled to focus on her case file that lay open before her. Last night

they had finished the final tip on their list and she was a little on edge. She frowned. *Okay, a lot on edge.*

She'd had a lot of work to do so she'd left before Dylan had risen for the day. But so much had been left unsaid between them. Technically, he'd won by half a point on the bet, but right now that seemed so unimportant. She was eager to hear his secret terms, but she would rather just hear how he felt about her. *Then ask him!* Her conscience screamed at her. *Easier said than done!* She yelled back. She reached for her phone to call Maia. She would know what to do.

It rang twice before she finally picked up.

"Girl, I was just about to call you. We need to talk."

She frowned into the receiver at the serious note she heard in Maia's voice. "This sounds important. What's up?"

"Has Jason called you again since the last time we were together for lunch?"

Her frown grew deeper. Any mention of Jason was always serious. "Just a couple of times on my cell. He left messages saying to call him, but he never says what he wants—"

"Did you call him?"

"No, of course not."

"Good."

"Maia, what is this about?" A tiny knot of uneasiness began to tighten in her stomach.

"Like I said honey, I wish I could tell you everything, but I can't because I'm really not supposed to know anything. All I can say is do not speak to Jason without a lawyer present."

Lena fought back an ironic chuckle. "I am a lawyer."

She heard Maia let out a frustrated sigh. "Damn it, Lena you know what I mean. Seriously, this is not a joke. Remember, your ex is a selfish bastard who never does anything without some ulterior motive."

She opened her mouth to say that she hadn't forgotten when her cell went off. If it was Jason again she was going to curse him out.

"Maia, let me call you right back, okay?"

"No, it's alright. I have a client coming in five minutes. Just remember what I said."

She promised she would and hung up her phone at the same time she reached for her cell. She thought her voicemail had gone off but realised it was her text inbox instead. She opened the file with baited breath hoping it wasn't a nasty message from Jason. A smile curled the edges of her lips and tiny little butterflies fluttered about inside her stomach as she read the message.

Meet me at the house for a quickie.—Dylan.

She shot up from her chair and grabbed her purse. Just what she needed to get her mind off of the whole Jason drama.

As she hurried toward the door, she realised that she hadn't had a chance to get advice from Maia about her relationship with Dylan, but she considered it a good sign that the end of their bet hadn't brought an abrupt end to their time as lovers. She locked up her office and sent him a text on her way to the elevator. *I'll be there in ten.*

* * * *

Lena pushed open the front door and gasped. Pink rose petals littered the floor from the front door through the living room and up the stairs.

She followed the trail to the staircase. "Dylan?"

"Upstairs."

A giddy smile crossed her face as she bounded up the stairs. The petals led her down the hallway into his bedroom.

When she turned the corner into his room she stopped. She lifted her hands to her gaping mouth. "Oh, Dylan, it's beautiful."

He turned around from lighting the last candle with a grin on his face. "You got up here fast."

Dozens of white candles burned brightly around the room, their fragrant vanilla scent tickling her nose. His bed was covered in white with pink petals scattered across the plush comforter.

She walked further inside to step into his arms. "I love it. How on earth did you get all of this together before I got here?" She asked, wrapping her arms around his neck to pull him closer. She inhaled deeply, savouring the rich, masculine scent of his aftershave.

He smiled down into her face. "It's a secret. I'm glad you like it," he whispered, dipping his head to capture her waiting lips.

Bolts of lightning shot through her at the first taste of his mouth. It was always like this between them.

They tugged at each other's clothing, heedless of the ripping sounds that some of their garments made as they were flung from their bodies.

She let out a giggle when they tumbled onto the bed in a tangle of arms and legs. Their lovemaking was frenzied as they quickly discarded the last of their clothing.

Lena skimmed her hands down Dylan's back and locked her legs around his waist, holding him against her while he rained tiny kisses across her face. At the first touch of his lips against the soft spot along the curve of her neck she released a low moan and arched her back off the bed.

"Roll over," he whispered against her ear, sending tingles racing down her spine straight to the simmering heat that throbbed between her legs. He lifted off of her and she rolled over onto her stomach.

"On your knees," he commanded and she raised up to rest her body weight on her hands and knees. She whipped her head around to catch a glimpse of him from over her shoulder, her hair brushing gently against her arm. She had to bite her lip to keep from moaning again. Dylan was the embodiment of masculinity, from the broad width of his torso, to the bulging muscles in his arms, even the light sprinkling of hair that ran down the middle of his abdomen. And yet, he was never cocky or arrogant about his handsomeness. Quite the opposite, actually, to the point that he seemed oblivious to just how impressive he truly was.

Her gaze slid up his body to his face when he rubbed his hands across the full globes of her ass. The sensual massage ignited a fire inside of her that up until that point had already been burning pretty hot.

She dipped her gaze to watch him grasp his stiff erection in his hand and position it at the opening of her dripping cunt.

"Look at me," he rasped. "Look at me as I enter you."

She met his intense gaze and held it, even after the pleasure of him stretching her, filling her up, nearly became unbearable to the point that she wanted to weep.

"Dylan," she moaned when she could no longer maintain eye contact and dropped her head forward, her eyes shutting.

He surged into her on one powerful thrust, seating himself fully inside her tight sheath. Tiny tremors rocked her. She couldn't believe she was already close to coming.

She snaked her hand down between her legs and fingered her clit with rhythmic strokes at the same time he leaned his chest against her back and rocked his hips against her ass, propelling his cock deep inside her.

He placed his hands on either side of her head and angled his hips so that his thrusts went deeper inside her. She sucked in a sharp breath and clenched her eyes tighter, her finger tracing frantic circles around her clit.

With one hand still planted flat on the bed, he reached beneath her to cup one of her breasts in his hands and massaged gently. When he tugged at her nipple she nearly lost it.

"Dylan," she cried out as she threw her head back, her hips jerking against him in a grinding motion seemingly of their own mind.

He tucked his head against her neck and groaned out her name. She glanced down to see one of his hands gripping the sheet tightly, crushing small pink petals in his grasp. He was close too. His thrusts became deeper and harder and sweat trickled from his body to coat the soft skin of her back.

The sound of bodies slapping and sliding against each other echoed off the room as the musky scent of sex wafted around them. Lena revelled in the heady combination and stroked her clit harder.

"Dylan, Dylan. I'm coming," she panted as she strummed her clit wildly straining to reach that pinnacle where she would completely shatter.

Just as she felt tiny spasms gather at the centre of her cunt and spread throughout her entire body, Dylan released a hoarse shout and his cock swelled inside of her, becoming hard as a rock. Seconds later, warmth pooled inside her pussy and he jerked violently against her, his cock slamming into her with brutal thrusts. She screamed his name again when her orgasm exploded inside of her right before she collapsed against the bed, while tiny shudders racked her body. Dylan followed her down to the bed, his heavy weight pressing her deeper into the soft mattress. She didn't care. She simply closed her eyes and sighed as the last of her release began to subside.

They lay there, Dylan on top of her as they struggled to drag in even breaths. When his heartbeat finally settled back to normal, she felt him roll off of her to settle beside her. She turned her head to stare at him as she stuck out her hand to play with the short hairs that dotted his chest.

He turned his head toward her and smiled, then he seized her wandering fingers and brought them to his lips for a quick kiss before he allowed them to fall back to his chest.

A curious warmth settled around her heart at the intimate gesture and Lena had to blink her eyes several times to keep

from tearing up. If she closed her eyes she could almost imagine that they were real lovers—*almost*.

"What are you thinking?" he asked, running a single finger along her cheek.

She met his searching gaze and wondered if she should tell him the truth. That she didn't want their time together to come to an end. That she was in love with him. That she wanted to be more than friends. She knew none of those declarations would work so she settled on a half truth instead.

"Just wondering when you plan to reveal your terms since you won the bet."

No sooner had she said the words, his jaw tightened and a dark look crossed his face before it quickly disappeared. She narrowed her eyes, puzzled. She'd known Dylan long enough to know when something riled him but she couldn't figure out why he would be upset with her for asking such an obvious question.

She opened her mouth to ask him what was wrong, but he never gave her the chance to speak. He dropped his hand from her face and abruptly turned his back to her. "I have to work late tonight, but tomorrow night I'm free," he said as he rolled out of bed and stood to his feet. His expression remained void of emotion as he gathered his clothing from the floor. "I'll reveal my terms then," he said curtly and without so much as a word or a last look back he headed to the bathroom, shutting the door firmly behind him.

Lena blew out a deep breath. For some reason her question had angered him, but she didn't know why. She toyed with the idea of going after him but when she glanced

at the clock she abandoned the thought. She would barely have time to grab a shower and change before she had to be back at the office for her one thirty meeting with a new client. She quickly bounced off the bed and collected her tattered clothing to rush to her room. Whatever she'd done to upset Dylan, she just hoped that the surprise she had planned for tomorrow, when he revealed his terms, would be enough to make him forget all about it.

Her lips curled up into a bright smile. It was going to be perfect.

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Chapter Six

Lena could feel the steam pouring out of her ears. She had left a perfectly wonderful mid-afternoon tryst with Dylan to deal with this asshole.

"Jason, what the hell are you doing here? I'm expecting a client at any moment. You need to go."

He plopped down in her chair and shot her his trademark cocky grin that she was sure worked on plenty of other women, but had lost its effect on her.

"I said get out," she snapped.

"I'm your one thirty appointment, darling," he drawled out in his slight Georgia accent. She stared into his hazel brown eyes and shook her head in disgust. What had she ever seen in him? Sure he was handsome enough with his bronzed complexion and onyx locks, but once you got past the looks there was nothing there but a selfish, arrogant and shallow man who'd never had to work for a single thing in his entire life.

As if hearing him for the first time, she glanced down at her appointment book. Her assistant, Marie, was out for the day and the only notes she had on her planner indicated that a new client wanted to discuss retainer fees. She sent him a furious look.

"You lied to my assistant."

His grin grew wider. "I did."

She itched to slap that smug grin off his face. "My time is money Jason so unless you have business to discuss you

need to leave." She reached for her phone to call security to emphasise her point.

"Tsk, tsk tsk, Lena. Don't be so hasty. I do in fact have business to discuss and I've tried calling you several times, both at your home and on your cell, but you never answered so I was forced to be more *aggressive*."

She bristled at the patronising tone of his voice. She wanted to point out that he'd never called her at home, but she had no desire to prolong her interaction with him by starting an argument.

She replaced the receiver and folded her arms across her chest. "You have five minutes Jason and then I'm calling security."

He picked at an imaginary fleck of dust on his custom made designer suit and shrugged before he finally deigned to lift his gaze to her face. "That's all I need." He then reached inside his briefcase to pull out a single piece of paper and place it on her desk.

She cast a furtive glance down at the paper and back up at him before she finally picked it up. If her ears weren't blowing steam before they certainly were now.

When she finished reading she snapped her gaze to his despicable face. "You know what, Jason? I liked your grandfather and I'm sorry to hear of his passing, but I don't care what his will says. I'm not taking you back." The nerve of him to think that he could walk into her office and try to charm his way back into her life. What a fool.

She could tell that he was gritting his teeth together by the set of his jaw line. She didn't know what he'd been expecting but it probably hadn't been that.

"You must have misunderstood. The conditions of the will are mutually beneficial. If you and I remarry then I receive his entire estate, to which you are entitled to ten percent. That is extremely generous."

Her eyes rounded in disbelief. Was he crazy? Must be, to think she would put up with him for anything less than Pluto on a silver platter. "So, what happens if we don't remarry? What happens to your grandfather's estate then?"

His eyes hardened. "Then it goes to another family member."

Lena shrugged absently. "It says here that you just need to get married and stay married for at least one year. I don't see why you just can't marry one of the many women you like to spend time with anyway."

She swore his eyes nearly bulged out of his sockets at her words. "Are you crazy? If I do that then one of those greedy bitches will not only get ten percent, but they are then entitled to half of my entire estate. With you, our prenup would still hold so—"

"So, I just get my ten percent and you keep the rest." She finished for him. She shrugged again and shook her head. "Sorry, Jason, but as nice as the offer sounds, I can't help you."

He let out a reluctant sigh and stood to his feet. She narrowed her gaze at him as he walked toward her door. Jason never gave up that easily, especially when it came to

money. He twisted the knob in his hand and moved to step outside when suddenly he stopped and turned around to face her. Suddenly he looked like the wolf she knew him to be.

"It's a shame you can't help me because that house of yours still sits on Wells land which you will lose if I don't retain control of my grandfather's estate."

Lena barely heard the sound of the door closing shut as she stood there numb with shock. She'd been right about one thing. She'd never known Jason to quit when it came to money, and this time he was pulling out all the stops.

* * * *

The day could not come to an end soon enough. She'd called her lawyer as soon as Jason left, but she'd told her what she already knew. The land and the house were two separate entities and in this case she didn't own the land. Her attorney had suggested she purchase it but she'd vetoed that idea. Jason wouldn't sell it to her and at this point she wasn't even sure he had the authority.

Jason knew how much her home meant to her. Nestled on two acres of land lined with pecan trees in the affluent suburb of Buckhead, it was her dream home. She'd had it built within four months after they married. Hell, if she was going to spend lonely nights waiting for her husband to drag his faithless ass out of some woman's bed, at the least, she could be surrounded by things that were comforting to her. As soon as it was finished, Jason had hated it but she'd loved it and she didn't want to lose it.

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

She opened the door to her beloved home, dropped her belongings on the couch in the living room and dragged herself upstairs. She passed her bedroom and entered Dylan's instead to curl up in his bed. He would be gone for most of the night and she would slip out before he returned. But for right now, just being in the space that carried his essence was comforting. If Dylan had been there he would have offered her words to cheer her up and make her smile. Yet she wasn't sure if anything could cheer her up right now. She was in a no win situation. She didn't want to lose her home but she refused to marry Jason. Just when things had started to look up for her, trust Jason to show up and screw her over yet again.

* * * *

It was well past two in the morning by the time he arrived home. He had a big account coming up and he and Chad were both putting in overtime to get it done. He limped up the stairs exhausted and paused at Lena's bedroom. He ached to slip inside, pull her into his arms and lose himself in the warmth of her body. Despite the overwhelming longing to do just that he pushed it aside and forced himself to put one foot in front of the other and walk to his own bedroom. He turned the knob to his door and entered. He stilled as soon as he was inside. He was probably delusional but he swore he could smell her scent as if she was standing right there in his room.

He crossed the distance to his bed and flopped down on it to lie on his back. As much as he wanted to see Lena, he was still furious with her from earlier that day. Everything had

seemed so perfect until she'd ruined it by reminding him that the fantasy he'd created was just that, a fantasy. Anger began to simmer in his veins at his own stupidity. He'd allowed himself to forget about the bet entirely, but that had been a mistake. Lena obviously hadn't, and as soon as he revealed his terms she fully expected to return to being just platonic friends. For Lena, this had just been a few weeks of fun, nothing more.

* * * *

Lena bustled around the table to put the finishing touches on the dinner by lighting two long red candles. She was nervous. She ran her hands down her fitted black dress that stopped just above the knees and plunged at the chest to reveal an abundance of cleavage. She glanced at her strappy black high heels in the corner. She would trade them for her slippers at the sound of Dylan's key in the door.

She glanced at the clock. The leg of lamb would be done roasting in five minutes leaving just enough time for her to prepare drinks and the salad before Dylan got home.

She hoped everything went as planned. She'd called Dylan earlier to tell him that she couldn't meet him tonight because she had to work late. She had then called Chad begging him to send Dylan home around 5pm.

"What am I supposed to tell him to get him to go straight home at five?" He asked helplessly.

"I don't know. Tell him that some important file is probably at the house. I don't know, Chad. Just come up with something," she'd argued before disconnecting the phone call.

She'd gone through hoops just to pull off the perfect surprise, from parking her car in the garage behind back so he wouldn't know she was home, to coming home super early despite her busy schedule to prepare an elaborate dinner, not to mention the new dress she'd picked up from *Belk's* that morning. Everything had been planned beautifully and she didn't want anything to go wrong.

Tonight was the night Dylan planned to reveal his terms for the bet, but she'd already decided that tonight she would reveal her *own* terms. All day she'd struggled with the possibility that her revelation could ruin their friendship, but she came to the conclusion that she couldn't go back to being just Dylan's friend. Maybe she could have buried her feelings and lived out the rest of her existence longing for him, too afraid to say anything, but not anymore, not after what they'd shared. She didn't want to lose Dylan's friendship, but she couldn't lie to herself or him any longer. If he didn't feel the tiniest bit of *something* for her then she would have to accept that, but she couldn't imagine living with herself if she continued to keep her feelings bottled up inside.

The chime of the doorbell startled her out of her silent musings. Her eyes darted between the clock and the front door, her expression puzzled. It was two minutes to five, but why would Dylan be ringing the bell. As if on cue the chime sounded again. Maybe he lost his key.

She flipped flopped in her slippers across the plush carpet to the door and swung it open with a wide smile on her face.

"Did you lose your key?"

Her voice trailed off at the sight of her visitor. Before she could slam the door in his face he pushed his way past her inside.

Not bothering to close the door, because he would be leaving soon, she spun around to face her unwanted guest.

"I can't talk to you right now, Jason. As you can see I'm busy."

His gaze swept over the lavishly decorated table laden with food, then took in the low lighting and finally settled on the stereo that carried the sounds of Luther Vandross in the background. He would have to be a moron not to know what she was busy with.

"Ahh, you're expecting company." He wheeled around to face her. "I won't interrupt. I just stopped by because you weren't at the office and your message said you would give me your answer today."

"Yes, over the phone, Jason," she snapped angrily. "Not in person and certainly not at my home."

He lifted his hands as if to say *how was I supposed to know that?* "My apologies. When you weren't at work I figured you wanted me to meet you here." The leer on his face made her skin crawl. "Maybe to rekindle that fire we once shared."

She opened her mouth to tell him *exactly* where he could shove his fire and his proposal but before she could speak the timer on her oven buzzed.

"Let yourself out, Jason. I will call you later with my answer." She spun around, effectively dismissing him and stomped back toward the kitchen. Hopefully, he would take

heed and actually leave because the last thing she needed was for Dylan to walk in with Jason still hanging around.

* * * *

Dylan pulled his SUV into the driveway of Lena's home and cut the engine. He was on the verge of strangling Chad with his insane request. He was sure he'd given Chad the profile sheet for each of the players for the Sports Authority event in a week, but Chad swore he didn't have it, forcing him to go home and get it when he couldn't find it anywhere in his office. Out of all of the things that Chad could lose, he'd lost the one thing that Dylan didn't keep copies of at his office, leaving him no choice but to make a quick trip back to the house.

As soon as he hopped out of his car the first thing he noticed was that the front door was wide open and that there was a black Mercedes in the other parking spot of the driveway. He instantly went on alert. Lena wasn't home, which was a good thing if they had an intruder. He could at least put any fear of her well being aside, knowing that she was safe. He pulled his cell out of his pocket and flipped it open in the event that he had to call 911 which was on speed dial. As he approached the door with caution, his footsteps were hushed as he made his way slowly up the steps to the front door. When he stepped inside he froze, his eyes full of shock. He'd expected to find the place trashed or possibly a burglar, but certainly not Jason Wells.

"What are you doing here? And how the hell did you get inside?"

"Ah, Dylan. Good to see you. Are you visiting?"

"I live here," he said tightly.

He saw Jason's eyes widen and he knew Lena's ex hadn't been expecting to hear that.

"You always did have a thing for her. You know your friendship with my wife ruined our marriage."

Dylan cut his eyes at the man, unable to believe Jason didn't realise he was the only person to blame for the failure of his marriage. "No, your cheating ruined your marriage."

Jason chuckled and he wanted to grab the man by the throat and shake him. What the hell was he doing in Lena's home?

"If you believe that, then you're dumber than I thought."

Dylan bristled at the jab but he refused to sink to Jason's level.

"I know you may find this hard to believe but I loved Lena when I asked her to marry me, but when she called out your name while we were making love one day, she kind of lost her appeal," he said dryly.

Dylan stared at Jason with probing eyes. The man lied almost as much as he cheated. He'd be a fool to believe a word Jason said out of his mouth.

"Again, I'm going to ask you what the hell you are doing here and how you got in here before I call the police."

"I'm here to see Lena, who let me in. She's in the kitchen if you don't believe me." He said and tipped his head in the direction behind him at the doubtful look on Dylan's face.

It was at that moment that he noticed his surroundings. He glanced at the romantic table setting for two, the soft music, candlelight.

He clenched his hands into angry fists as a crushing weight seemed to squeeze the air out of his chest. It all made sense now. She cancelled their plans tonight to spend the evening with Jason, never expecting he'd come home early. She'd been playing him all along. Even the phone calls made sense. Jason had wheedled his way back into her life and she had let him, because she wanted him there.

He was an idiot. Just like old times, and just like old Lena. Their bet had been just been a wild fling of fun and experimentation to her. She'd given him the rules, that they return to a platonic friendship after it was done because she had no intention of being more than that with him since she obviously still wanted her ex back.

He backed out of the room and stalked to his car without a word. He got in behind the wheel and slammed the door, tearing out of there like the devil was at his heels.

* * * *

"Jason, what are you still doing here? Didn't I tell you to leave?" Her eyes flashed with annoyance. Why couldn't he just disappear?

He shrugged helplessly. "I was trying to but then your boyfriend came in and nearly knocked me over—"

She gave him a quizzical look. "My boyfriend?"

He pointed his thumb over his shoulder. "You know. Your best friend who you pretend is just a friend when we all know he is more than that to you. Dylan."

She shot him a hard look at the note of sarcasm in his voice. "What did you say to Dylan?" Jason wasn't a jealous guy, but he did enjoy playing games with people. She had a bad feeling about this.

"To be honest, nothing. I know what you're thinking but I simply told him that I was here to see you and that you let me in. He seemed to jump to his own conclusions. That's what happens when you date dumb jocks. They lack the ability to reason," he said smugly.

She'd had enough of him. "Get out, Jason. Now," she snapped when he didn't move.

He bowed slightly. "All right, Lena. Goodnight, for now. I will await your call." He said and then slipped out of her house, closing the door behind him.

"Yeah, whatever." He already knew her answer, but she would call him with it because that's what she'd promised to do. If he were smart, he would marry one of his women. Half of something was better than nothing. Jason was no fool, she knew that would be his next step since she wasn't inclined to remarry him, even if it was temporary and in name only. At the same time she knew she would probably lose her home in the process, but she'd accepted that nothing on earth was worth the humiliation of walking down the aisle with Jason Wells again.

She reached inside her apron and pulled out her cell. If Jason and Dylan exchanged words then she needed to do damage control quickly.

She punched in his number and waited for him to pick up. At the sound of his voicemail message instantly coming on she twisted her lips into a frown and stared at her phone as if it were a foreign object. Dylan *never* turned off his phone—unless he'd pushed the ignore button to send her call straight to voicemail. She hung up and tried again. On the fourth try she went ahead and left a message.

"Hi it's me. Call me when you get this. I need to talk to you. Bye."

By eight she'd left two more messages similar to her first one. But by midnight she accepted that Dylan wasn't coming home and that she was going to go to jail if she saw Jason before she could straighten things out with Dylan. She blew out the candles that had burned down to stumps and curled up on the couch to go to sleep trying to keep the sadness that threatened to overwhelm her at bay.

* * * *

Dylan tossed the empty beer bottle toward the trash can and grimaced when it bounced to the floor instead, flinging several tiny droplets across the cream carpet. Thank God it was just beer. Chad would kill him if he messed up his floor. The man was a maniac about his house. He was just lucky Chad had to go out of town on business for a couple of days, that way he could clean up the mess before his buddy returned.

He sat up from the couch and reached for another bottle, popped the cap and took a long swig. He leaned back against the soft cushion and propped his feet up, just staring up at the ceiling. He twisted the bottle between his fingers and took another deep gulp. He was on his way to being drunk, but even after a whole pack of Heineken beer he still wasn't quite there yet, but he was certainly going to try.

The sound of his phone ringing caught his attention and he pulled his cell from his pocket to glance at the screen. *Lena—again*. He pressed ignore. Why the hell was she still calling? That questioned burned in his mind almost as vividly as the question of where the hell was Jason? The time on his phone indicated that it was midnight, much too early for a romantic dinner to be over, unless Jason was even more of a loser than he'd imagined.

At the thought of Jason with her, a wave of anger rushed through his veins as his gut clenched and fury ate away inside him. No matter how hard he tried not to, he kept seeing Jason standing there with smug satisfaction in the middle of the room, directly in front of the beautifully decorated dinner table for two. It hadn't taken him long to figure out he wasn't to be the second at that table. He balled his hands into tight fists, but relaxed his grip when he felt the bottle start to give way under the weight of his rage. Lena was free to date and sleep with whomever she chose, but the thought that she would jump into bed with another man so soon after being with him was too excruciating to even consider, even more so given who it was. Out of all of the men in Atlanta, why did it have to be Jason? He deserved her less than any other man

On a Dare
by Nadia Aidan

on the face of the planet and yet she took him back as if she'd forgotten all about the humiliation of his infidelities.

He drained the last of his beer and tossed it aside, this time not caring if it made it to the waste basket. He ran a frustrated hand through his short hair and closed his eyes. He wasn't lucky enough to be drunk, but hopefully it wouldn't be too hard to get to sleep. Although, he knew he was fooling himself, because every time he closed his eyes he could see in vivid detail, the image of a naked Lena entangled in that snake's arms, writhing and moaning beneath him, making him wish that he had stopped at the store and picked up something far stronger than beer.

* * * *

At the sound of the key jangling in the lock her eyelids fluttered open and she sat up ramrod straight on the couch, wincing slightly in the process. The couch was certainly not the best place to grab a good night's sleep.

She would have been lying if she said the first sight of Dylan walking through the front door brought her a flood of joy and relief, but that was a lie. She was spitting mad. Despite her busy schedule, she'd called in at work, stubbornly refusing to move from her spot on the couch until he returned home—she flipped her wrist over—at *ten-o'clock*. Her anger boiled to the surface. She didn't let the sight of his haggard face, rumpled clothes and five o'clock shadow weaken her either. He'd stayed out all night, ignoring her calls and then had the nerve to drag his sorry behind in at ten in the morning. Forget spitting mad, she was furious.

"I've been calling you all night," she said in a brusque tone.

He slammed the door behind him and walked toward the stairs, not so much as bothering to acknowledge her presence. Jumping to her feet, she crossed the room and stepped in front of him before he could take another step.

"Did you hear me?"

His face hardened as he stared back at her with expressionless eyes. "I heard you, Lena." He shrugged his shoulders. "What do you want me to say?"

Her eyes rounded. "What do I want you to say? Anything, Dylan," she snapped. "For starters, how about where you were all night and why you didn't answer your phone?" She knew she sounded like a jealous girlfriend but she didn't care, she deserved some answers.

"I stayed at Chad's because I needed some time alone. That's all," he said wearily. That *wasn't* all. She knew he was lying through his teeth.

"What the hell did Jason say to you to make you leave out of here and not return any of my calls? Of all people, you should know not to listen to him."

At her words, cold fury hardened his green eyes and she drew back from the onslaught of anger she saw burning brightly in his gaze. "Jason didn't have to say anything. I have two eyes, Lena." He waved his hand angrily toward the table that she hadn't bothered to clear off. "The phone calls, the dinner, cancelling our plans. It was obvious to me, Lena, and it's fine. The bet was all about fun and you're free to be with whoever you choose. No big deal."

Her head spun at his words. "You knew about the phone calls Jason was making to me? Why didn't you say anything?" She wondered how much Jason had revealed to him and more importantly *how* he'd revealed it. Trust Jason to make it seem like there was more to it than there actually was.

"It wasn't my place. If Jason wants to call his ex-wife then it's none of my business."

She blew out a tired sigh. "I don't know how Jason made it seem to you, but I refused to marry him again. After I kicked him out last night, I called and told him that this house wasn't worth the cost of marrying him again."

Dylan furrowed his brow, his expression puzzled. "What are you talking about?"

"His grandfather's will. The calls. I thought Jason told you everything yesterday and that's why you left." At the questioning look still on his face she gave him the quick and dirty version of why Jason had been at the house.

When she was done he just shook his head and said, "Jason didn't tell me anything, certainly not all that. I left yesterday because you cancelled our plans last night to make a romantic dinner for Jason and—"

Every muscle in her body tensed as a heavy weight settled in her stomach. "What? That's crazy. The dinner was for *you*, Dylan. I had Chad send you home early on purpose. It was supposed to be a surprise."

She could see the wheels turning in his head as comprehension began to dawn on him. "Jason called the house one day, and then when I saw him here..." His voice trailed off and he flashed her a sheepish look. "I might have

jumped to the conclusion that you two were getting back together."

"You talked to him? When did Jason call the house?"

"A few days ago." He ducked his head slightly, his expression guilty. "He didn't leave a message and I kind of deleted his number from your caller id."

Her nostrils flared in anger as she started to piece everything together. "I can't believe you," she railed at him. "What kind of woman do you think I am to believe that I would take back my trifling ex just *hours* after we'd been together? In your eyes, I must look like a stupid bimbo." She laughed bitterly. "I can't believe I went to all this trouble planning the perfect night," she shouted, gesturing wildly at the table over his shoulder.

"To think I—I," her voice began to choke up. She'd been prepared to tell him how she felt, but he wasn't ready if he couldn't even trust her to stay away from her asshole of an ex-husband. If he couldn't trust her period. They'd been friends for years and it was a hard pill to swallow, realising that Dylan apparently didn't seem to know her at all.

She shook her head, feeling like the biggest fool. "I really am stupid," she whispered sadly and spun on her heels to bolt up the stairs.

"Lena! Lena!" Dylan tried to grasp her arm but she easily shook him off to make it up the last five stairs, slam the door in his face, and lock it before he could say another word.

* * * *

"Go away, Dylan," she shouted from the other side of her bedroom door.

He leaned his head against the wooden frame in frustration and blew out a long breath. He was such a fool. He should have trusted her and talked to her before jumping to wild conclusions. He would never forget the look of pain on her face before she ran up the stairs, especially knowing that he'd put it there. He'd hurt her because he hadn't trusted in her judgment, but also because he hadn't trusted in her feelings for him. The pain in her eyes wasn't simply the disappointed look of a friend. It was more—much more.

"Do you want to hear my terms for the bet?"

His cheek smacked against the door, after what he figured was either her foot or her fist banged against it. "Shut up about that stupid bet. I don't care about that bet or your silly terms."

He lifted his lips into a lopsided grin. Well at least she was still listening and hadn't retreated into her bathroom.

"Okay, we can put the bet aside for the moment and talk about something else instead—"

"I don't want to talk to you, Dylan."

"Okay, but can you at least listen to me, if only to hear my apology." Silence. He took that as a good sign. She was still there and she was listening.

"First, I want to say I'm sorry for jumping to conclusions and running off like that. Not answering my phone and staying out all night was childish and I'm sorry. I should have trusted you." When she didn't say more he took that as another good sign and continued.

"I know you may not believe me right now, but I *do* trust you, because I know who you truly are Lena, probably better than anyone else."

He smiled at the inelegant snort that came from inside the room.

"It's true and you know it. I know when you're nervous you always chew on your lower lip and when you can't figure out a problem you call me, but if I *am* the problem you call Maia. Your favourite colour is red. You hate mornings. No matter how many times you stare at a menu in a Thai restaurant, you're going to order the Shrimp Pad Thai and you can't sing to save your life."

The sound of her chuckling softly warmed him from the inside out. He was getting somewhere with her. "I also know you never hold a grudge and you have a hard time staying mad at anyone for long," he said quietly.

He could tell he was chipping away at her ice, but she was still angry. He decided to try another approach to make her understand what he was *really* trying to say.

"You remember the night of my twenty-first birthday? The time we first kissed?" When she didn't say anything he tried again. "I need you to answer me on this, Lena."

"Yeah. I remember. We were drunk. So what?"

"You remember what I said to you?"

There was a pregnant pause before she finally said, "Not really."

"Yes, you do, Lena. Tell me what I said, Lena."

"You said you loved me, but—"

"That's not what I said. Tell me *exactly* what I said."

He held his breath as several moments ticked by, and in his mind's eye he could see her squinting her eyes searching her brain for his exact words.

"Um, you said something like you were in love with me—"

"That's *exactly* what I said and—"

"Who cares? That was so long ago and we were both drunk—"

He struggled to rein in his temper at her flippant attitude. "I wasn't drunk, Lena. I was completely sober," he whispered loud enough for her to hear on the other side of the door.

The silence that stretched between them was almost as tangible as the door that separated them. He knew she was mulling over what his words meant, but he didn't want there to be any doubt in her mind about the meaning behind them.

"Like you, I dismissed those words and convinced myself that what I felt was just a passing crush. You were my best friend. I figured I was confusing friendship love with romantic love. But I wasn't and I realised that on your wedding day, actually *before* your wedding day, to be exact, it was on the day you announced you were engaged to Jason. When you told me the news I felt as if my heart was being ripped out. I knew then what I felt for you went far beyond friendship. But I didn't reveal my feelings because you seemed so happy. When I saw how upset you got when I warned you not to marry Jason, I just decided that it was selfish of me to ruin your big moment out of jealousy, no matter how big of a creep I thought Jason was. I know now that I should have fought for you when you announced your engagement to him. It was a mistake to keep quiet. I only made things worse by

marrying Michelle." He balled his fists against the door. "Open the door, Lena. I'm trying to tell you that I love you but it's kind of hard with this piece of wood separating us."

Silence stretched between them for several tense seconds, before he stumbled inside almost knocking her over, when the door abruptly swung open.

"Oh, I think you did a pretty good job even with the door between us." She beamed.

Before he could say another word, she fell into his arms and kissed him soundly. They held each other tightly and he savoured the warmth of her body pressed against his. He reluctantly lifted his head from their kiss to smile down at her. "I love you."

"You said that already," she grinned. "Ouch." She jerked against him. "What did you do that for?" She complained as she rubbed her hand over the spot on her ass where he'd pinched her.

He arched a single brow. "I'm guessing you have something to say back to me?"

She curled her lips into a mischievous grin. "Maybe."

He palmed her ass again. His threat was clear.

"Okay! So, I do," she mumbled quickly as she tried to move out of his arms, but he held fast. She lifted her eyes to his face, all signs of teasing gone. "I think I fell in love with you from the moment that I met you. I know that's when my crush began." She dropped her gaze to the floor, her expression guilty. "I married Jason because physically he reminded of you."

He scrunched his face up in disgust. They really didn't look that much alike and he was just a little insulted that she thought so but he figured now wasn't the best time to tell her that.

"I spent so many years nursing what I considered a futile crush that when Jason came along I saw that as my opportunity to exorcise you from my system. But it didn't work. The more time I spent with Jason, the more I ached for you. After awhile being with him just became unbearable."

Something that Jason said chose that moment to resurface in his brain and he stilled. "Did you ever call out my name one night when you two were *together*?"

Her eyes rounded and her mouth fell open before she quickly recovered. She flashed him an embarrassed grin. "Jason told you didn't he? I should have never stayed with him after I discovered he'd cheated on me, but I thought we could make it work. I thought we'd get past that, but I realized, too late, he just didn't have it in him to be faithful. That's also around the time I came to accept my feelings for you and with that I realized I just didn't want anyone else touching me but you. By unspoken mutual agreement we didn't come near each other again after that night."

He knew he was a Neanderthal, but he wanted to beat his chest at that tiny bit of information. It was stupid, but when Lena married Jason he felt like he'd lost her to him. It was comforting to discover that even when she was with him, he still remained in her heart.

"Don't look so smug about it." She swatted him playfully against the chest. "You know to this day Jason thinks my infatuation with you ruined our marriage."

He snorted. "Tell him to get a clue. He was fool and he ruined your marriage all on his own, but I'm glad he did." He chuckled, tightening his arms around her. He rested his chin on top of her head. "Can I tell you a secret?"

"What you're not done?"

He lifted his lips into a smile. "You know Michelle was always jealous of you. She was convinced we were having an affair. One day she accused me of being in love with you and when I didn't deny it, she freaked—"

"That girl was always a little high strung."

"I felt guilty because I knew I married her for all the wrong reasons. I hated that I used her—"

Lena pulled back away from him to hold his gaze, her expression incredulous. "Did you ever look at your bank statements while you were married? Trust me, you didn't use that girl."

A grin spread across his face. "You have a point there. But I'm done talking about Jason and Michelle. They're both in the past, right where they belong."

She nodded and leaned back against him with a deep sigh. "Dylan?"

"Hmmm," he mumbled, stroking his hands through her soft hair.

"Promise me you won't get mad again, but I still want to hear your terms for the bet. You said it was about me and I can't help it but I'm still curious."

His hand stilled in her hair and he leaned back to stare down at her. "Are you sure?"

When she nodded enthusiastically, he smiled. "Close your eyes and open your hand."

She gave him a suspicious look, before she finally acquiesced.

He reached inside his breast pocket and pulled out the object. He'd had it on him since yesterday. When she cancelled their plans he hadn't bothered to take it out, especially since he had no place to put it anyway until he got home.

He placed the small item on her outstretched palm.

"Open your eyes."

"What!" Lena stared down at the princess cut pink diamond ring that sparkled from the black velvet box that sat in her open hand, not quite believing she heard Dylan correctly. Her gaze flew to his face.

"Dylan, you cannot be serious."

He grinned. "But I am."

"Let me get this straight. Since I lost I now have to marry you. *Those* are your terms?"

"Yep."

She stared at him open-mouthed. "You're crazy," she finally said. "Who does this? Dylan I wanted your bike—"

He shrugged. "But I wanted *you*. You can't blame me for having high standards."

She scowled at his choice of humour. "Okay, wise guy. You do know what this means? I've never reneged on a bet and I don't plan to start now."

"So I guess we're getting married."

She shook her head in disbelief. He was really serious. He'd said his terms concerned her, but she'd never imagined this. He was truly insane. She tried one last time to make him see reason.

"What are we going to tell our children when they ask how we got engaged?"

He snaked his arm around her waist and pulled her flush against him, his eyes twinkling with amusement. He was getting a kick out of this. "We'll just tell them the truth."

"That mommy lost a sordid sex bet to daddy and that he was too much of a cad to let her off?"

A frown crossed his face and he shook his head, his eyes still glowing with laughter. "No sweetheart, we don't have to be *brutally* honest. We'll just tell them we did it on a dare."

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Nadia Aidan lives, works and writes on the West Coast in the United States. Under her real name, Nadia holds a PhD in Political Science and Public Policy and by day she works as an Assistant Professor. She is the self proclaimed NEW FACE OF INTERRACIAL AND MULTICULTURAL EROTIC ROMANCE and writes across all genres, from historical, to fantasy/sci-fi to contemporary.

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Nadia loves watching, reading about, and writing about strong, assertive heroines which is why she is an enduring fan of Fight Girls, Xena, Buffy, American Gladiators—New and Old, and La Femme Nikita!

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