

A romantic scene between a man and a woman in a kitchen. The woman, with long dark curly hair, is wearing a white tank top and grey jeans. The man, with short dark hair, is wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt. They are embracing, with the man's hand on the woman's head. The background shows a kitchen with wooden cabinets and a microwave.

Destiny Wallace

*Two
of a
Kind*

Red Rose Publishing

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by

Destiny Wallace

Dedication

*To my husband, who believes in
me and continues to encourage me.*

*Thanks for being my perfect match
and my not-so-silent partner.*



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Chapter One

Sanai Jenkins hugged herself against the cold, brisk November wind. She was five feet from the stoop of her brownstone and felt like she wasn't going to make it. Cold weather was never her best environment. She grew up in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and moved to New York because the job market was so much better. After six years she was still not used to the sudden and drastic drop in temperature after summer's end. She let out a breath of relief when she got in the door and was a lot more comfortable by the time she reached her apartment at the top of the stairs on the second floor. Once inside, she dropped onto the couch and turned on her television. She could still catch the last half of Sports Center while she relaxed. She wouldn't be hungry for another hour and she was happy to rest her feet.

Work had been hell. She was behind on all her paperwork. If it wasn't done by Friday, her boss would blow a gasket. He was bald and turned beet red from his thick neck to his well-receded hair line whenever his temper flared. She worked in billing at the Central Headquarters for an integrated network of hospitals throughout the tri-state area. If Sanai fell behind on her paperwork, some doctor was going to have a delay in payment...God forbid!

When Sports Center was over, Sanai grabbed the phone on the end table

and dialed a familiar number.

“You’ve reached Sean’s phone. Leave a message when it beeps.”

Sanai sighed. She hated leaving messages. “Hi, honey. It’s me. I was just calling to say hi. You’re probably still at work since you’re on California time. Well, I miss you. Call me.”

She pushed the END button and sighed again. Her thumb automatically went into her mouth and she began to chew the nail. Sean had been in California for almost three months. The hospital had traded him to a clinic out there for four months. He’d said he’d known nothing about it, but she suspected he’d volunteered.

They had been dating for almost two years when he left. Sean was fine. He was tall, dark, and handsome. His skin was on the darker side of brown and flawless. He had doe brown eyes and large, perfectly kissable lips. She missed him more than she cared to admit. He was a little stand-offish, but she could tell he cared about her. He always brought her coffee and donuts when he visited her at work. He let her control the remote when they watched television. Plus, he always let her pick the movie they went to see. Sanai didn’t need a shout it from the roof tops-type romance. It was really the little things that mattered most.

The first month he was gone, he called every day. He’d call her at work in

the mornings then she'd call him at night. It was comfortable. He stopped calling her altogether weeks ago. When she'd get him on the phone, he barely held up his half of the conversation anymore.

Sanai felt sick to her stomach so she dialed her sister's phone number.

"Natalie," Sanai breathed when she answered. "I have to talk to you."

"So talk," her older sister said.

"I just called Sean and I got his voicemail again. He hasn't returned any of my calls this week and it's already Wednesday."

"Uh-huh," Natalie said slowly.

"I can't imagine why he's hasn't called me back." Sanai began to chew her thumb nail again.

"Of course you can imagine why he won't call you!" Natalie snapped. "He's probably with some Cali girl with fake boobs, fake lips, fake hair, fake nails, and a fake nose. He's not thinking about your black ass." Natalie was nothing if not direct.

"I don't believe that," Sanai said quietly.

"Well, you should. You know doctors are high commodities. Don't you remember mom's speech about marrying a doctor or a lawyer? 'That's the only way to know your future is secure.' I know you remember that!" Natalie's imitation of their mother was dead on.

“She never gave me that speech,” Sanai said. “I don’t think mom saw me as the marrying type.” She plopped backwards into the couch cushions. “I’m starting to think the same way.”

“Of course you’re the marrying type,” Natalie assured her sister. “Before you know it you’ll be picking up after some grown man. Then you’ll be picking up after his damn kids.”

Sanai smiled. Natalie always bitched about being a housewife, but she wouldn’t change her husband, Tyrese, or their children, T.J. and Latoya, for anything. She was the best mom Sanai knew. She mocked their mom, but she was married to a damn good lawyer and had the nice house and Lexus to prove it.

“Whatever you say,” Sanai said with a light sigh. She heard the familiar clank of plates being taken from the cupboard. “I’ll let you go so you can eat dinner.”

“Why don’t you come over?” Natalie asked quickly. “We’ll wait for you.”

Sanai laughed. “Have you seen gas prices? I’ve been taking the subway to work for weeks now. There’s no way I’m using a half a tank of gas to drive all the way out to the ‘burbs and back just for dinner. Tell the kids I love them, though.”

“Okay, hon. Did you send T.J.’s card yet?”

“I sent it yesterday and there’s a gift card for Spins Music in there.” She’d promised to send her nephew something for getting straight A’s on his last report

card.

“Thanks.”

“I’ll talk to you later, Nat. I love you.”

“I love you too, hon.”

Just as Sanai put the phone back in the cradle, there was a knock on her door. Who could that be, she wondered. She hoped it was Lisa, her best girlfriend, coming over to visit. She could use the company.

Sanai was surprised when a tall white guy was on the other side of the door. He had blonde hair that fell into his face when he looked down at her with bright blue eyes. His face was rounded giving him a childish look, but she could tell from the body under his t-shirt that he was a full grown man.

“Can I help you?” she asked quizzically.

“Is this your apartment?” he asked slowly.

Sanai nodded. His eyebrows shot up in a look of surprise.

She was officially insulted.

“What’s so shocking about that?” Sanai snapped.

“It’s just that...I mean...never mind.”

“Oh no. You’re not going to give me the high brows and then not answer me when I ask you why.”

The guy blinked. “High brows?”

“Uh-huh. The surprised eyebrows. I know you haven’t had botox, so what’s so surprising about the fact that I live here?”

“I’m not surprised that you live here. It’s just that you are the prettiest black girl I’ve ever seen in my life and you just happen to be my new neighbor. I guess I was just thinking I’m lucky as hell.”

Sanai rolled her eyes. “Not that lucky. I have a serious boyfriend.” The words felt like a lie after they came out. Was Sean still her boyfriend after three days of non-communication?

The guy shrugged. “Of course you do. I just came by to ask for use of your phone anyway.”

Sanai frowned. Didn’t serial killers use that line? “How do I know you really live in the building? You could be some psycho.”

He nodded, his blonde hair falling further into his eyes. “Do you want to watch me unlock my door?”

“Give me your key and I’ll unlock your door.” If he tried something funny in the hallway, she’d scream fire and he’d be done when the rest of the building ran out on their dinners to witness whatever he was doing.

She accepted the keys he held out. “Wait here.” She scurried to the open apartment door down the hall, locked it, and pulled it shut again. She slipped the gold key in the lock and the door opened easily.

“Okay,” she said when she returned to where he stood in her doorway. “You can use my phone.”

He followed her inside and accepted the black cordless she put in his hand.

Sanai sat back on the couch and picked up her coffee table book. It was a biography of some politician she’d promised her dad she’d read but never did. At the moment she gazed at the words, trying to give the impression that she hadn’t been loafing in front of the tube for the last hour or so. In reality she was listening to her neighbor’s conversation.

With her head buried in the book, she didn’t see his eyes roaming her body while he talked.

“Yeah, I got all my stuff already. I know. No. It’ll be a while before the place is ready for company. No, this isn’t my new number. It’s my neighbor’s phone. Okay, I’ll call you when I’m settled. Bye.”

Sanai accepted the phone from him.

“Thanks,” he said, shoving his hands into the pockets of his jeans. “Hey, can I use it one more time to order a pizza?”

“Sure.”

“Would you come over and help me eat it? We’d have to sit on boxes and I haven’t unpacked any plates or silverware yet.”

“I don’t think so,” Sanai quipped. “I’m the kind of girl that eats pizza with a

knife and fork.” That was definitely a lie.

“Damn. That’s really too bad. How about we just go to Mama’s Pies on the corner and eat there. They probably have plates and everything.”

“I’m not hungry,” Sanai fibbed.

Her stomach instantly grumbled the opposite. He’d planted pizza in her brain and her stomach wanted some.

“It sure sounds like you’re hungry.” He crossed his arms.

Sanai glared at him. “I don’t even know your name.”

“I don’t know yours either.”

“I don’t go out with strangers.” She said putting the book in her lap back in its place on the coffee table.

“I’m Jake Miller...no longer a stranger.”

“I’m Sanai Jenkins, and it would be inappropriate for me to go on a date with you. I still have a boyfriend.”

Jake shrugged. “It’s not a date. It’s just a couple neighbors getting dinner together.”

“I guess I could eat,” Sanai sighed. “I’ll have to change though.” There was no way she was going anywhere in the beige business suit she’d worn all day.

“I’ll be back in twenty minutes.”

Sanai shut the door behind him and rushed to shower and dress in twenty

minutes. She was starving by the time Jake knocked on the door. She pulled on her fur lined coat and rushed out the door.

“Let’s go.”

Jake followed close behind her as she hurried down the street. Her hands were buried in the pockets of her parka. It was even colder than when she’d walked home earlier. Jake was almost panting by the time they pushed into the small pizzeria.

Sanai ordered two slices of cheese pizza, and Jake ordered pepperoni. They were awkwardly quiet until they started eating.

“I thought you ate pizza with silverware,” Jake said.

Sanai looked at the slice she held in her hands, and swallowed the bite in her mouth.

“I lied.”

“I couldn’t tell.” Jake gave a little laugh and began eating his own slice.

The truth was: Sanai wished she was the kind of girl that ate pizza with a knife and fork. Maybe if she was more refined, she’d already be the wife of a doctor. Not the “out of town girlfriend” of Dr. Sean Brown.

She wasn’t giggly, flirty arm candy to show off at hospital personnel parties. She was a laid-back chick who liked to watch sports and just hang out. What was so wrong with that? So she wasn’t perfect, but no one could be perfect...unless you

asked her mother. Her mom had always expected perfection. Natalie had come pretty close, but Sanai fell far short of those expectations.

Sanai felt a lot more comfortable with Jake by the time they got to her door.

She leaned against it while he shuffled his feet in front of her.

“Thanks for the warm welcome,” Jake said softly.

“Thanks for the dinner invitation.”

Jake reached up and pulled one of her black corkscrew curls straight. “You have beautiful hair.”

Sanai wrinkled her nose. “Are you flirting with me?”

His face flushed bright red at being called out.

Sanai couldn’t help but laugh. “I’ll see you later.” She opened her door and quickly stepped inside.

“You definitely will,” Jake said as she closed the door.

Sanai put her forehead on the door and smiled. Having dinner with her new neighbor wasn’t supposed to be a date, but she felt like she’d just come home from a first date. She was excited and wanted to go on another non-date with Jake soon.

Sanai had been in bed for an hour when the phone on her nightstand started to ring.

“What’s up?” Sean asked when she answered.

What a greeting, she thought.

“Why haven’t you called me?” Sanai snapped.

Sean groaned. “I’ve been busy, Sanai. I don’t have time for games.”

Sanai fell back against her pillows. “I’m not playing games. You can’t give me the courtesy of returning my messages?”

“Damn it. I just got off work. I don’t need this grief. I just wanted to relax and talk to you for a minute before I pass out.”

Sanai didn’t want to be so annoyed with Sean, but she hated the way he dismissed her feelings. He wouldn’t even acknowledge the fact that he’d ignored her all week. He just expected her to carry on some meaningless conversation to appease his boredom.

“I miss you, Sean.”

“You know what they say. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.”

“Or colder,” she mumbled.

“What was that?”

“It’s getting colder here. How about I come visit you for a while?”

“I don’t know why you’d spend all that money to fly out here. I’ll be back in five weeks.”

Sanai frowned. That was the wrong answer. “Look, I’m really tired. I have to get up early to catch the subway so I’m going to let you go.”

“Sure,” Sean grumbled.

Sanai put down the phone and snuggled into the bed. She’d have to forget about Sean and his bullshit if she was going to get a minute of sleep.

Chapter Two

Thud. Thud. Thud.

Sanai groaned and rolled over. She was dreaming.

Thud, thud, thud.

It had to be a dream. There was no way someone was knocking on her door on a Saturday morning. That would be cruel and wrong.

She sat up. The knocking was still echoing down the hall from her front door.

Sanai jumped out of bed and cursed.

“It better not be a Jehovah’s witness,” she muttered. “I’m not trying to go to hell for cussing somebody out.”

She didn’t bother looking through the peep hole. Her bed head and puffy, unhappy face would be enough to scare off any predator.

“Hey,” Jake said.

He was smiling a toothy white grin. Sanai stared at him for a minute before she realized she hadn’t actually vocalized her question.

“What the hell are you doing here?” she croaked.

Jake’s smile grew. “I was just wondering if you could show me around the city today.”

Sanai sighed. "Today hasn't started for me just yet." She swung the door shut and turned to go back to her bedroom. Immediately she realized that she wouldn't make it back into the bed before she'd be too awake to doze back off. She took a sharp right and fell onto the couch.

"Wait," Jake called sticking his foot in the jam to keep the door from closing. "How about I make you some coffee?"

Sanai groaned and felt around for the remote. If he wasn't going to let her sleep, at least she could watch television. She didn't like talking to anyone first thing in the morning. That was one of the nice things about waking up alone. There was no one there to ask about breakfast, daily plans, or what to have for dinner. There was only a serene quiet while she slowly woke up and got ready for the day.

Jake walked into the kitchen and Sanai settled further into the couch. He was mistaken if he assumed she would tell him where she kept the coffee, filters, or anything else. He'd have to find it himself and hopefully he wouldn't make too much noise.

Sanai had actually drifted back to sleep when Jake brought in a large black mug filled almost to the top. He put it on the coffee table and shook Sanai slightly. He noticed that she wasn't wearing a bra underneath the blue camisole top of her pajamas. Her heavy breast shook with his jostling.

“There’s your cup,” he pointed to the coffee table.

Sanai nodded and slowly brought herself up to a sitting position. She gingerly picked up the mug and blew slowly on the steaming liquid.

“Do you want any cream or sugar?”

Sanai shook her head. “I like coffee strong and black...like my man.”

Jake shrugged. “Maybe you should try light and sweet sometime,” he said. “You might like it.”

Sanai chose to ignore the obvious double meaning behind his statement. She took a long sip and sputtered. It tasted awful and some of it had actually gone down her throat.

“What the fuck is this?” she said shaking her head hard. “Are you trying to kill me?”

Jake shrugged. “I don’t drink coffee so I don’t know how to make it.”

Sanai groaned. “Well, I do drink coffee and this shit won’t cut it.”

Jake sighed. “We’ll go straight to Starbucks as soon as you get off the couch.”

“Starbucks? Are you shitting me? I don’t drink coffee from the monopoly coffee shop. You seriously buy into that establishment?” She placed the mug back on the coffee table and frowned. The sour stench still lingered on her tongue.

“I don’t drink coffee, remember? I just assumed all you caffeine heads get your fix at Starbucks.”

“Get out of my house,” Sanai muttered.

“I could just watch TV with you until you’re ready to get up.”

“Fine,” Sanai snapped throwing off her cover. “I’m up. I’ll go get ready. Just wait here.”

She took a long, slow shower. Sanai tried to forget that someone was waiting for her, but for some reason Jake was stuck in her brain. He was so cute the way his blonde hair fell in his face and how he shrugged his broad shoulders, as if to say, “Whatever. It’s cool.”

Her shower took a turn for the dirty when her fingers reached her pussy. She closed her eyes and leaned against the shower wall. She imagined Jake in there with her, his hands on her breast, behind, and replacing hers on her pussy. She bit her lip and sunk lower against the wall. Her fingers rubbed her clit and dipped into her hot cunt.

He would turn her around, put his large hands around her waist and slip his dick into her pussy, doggy-style. Sanai wondered how big his dick was, she was sure that stereotype about size wasn’t true. All the black men she’d been with hadn’t had giant dicks. So all white men couldn’t have pencil dicks.

Sanai put one leg against the shower wall and aimed the massaging shower head at exactly the right place. She imagined his fucking her up the shower wall until she came and he emptied himself into her. Sanai finger fucked her pussy quickly, using the heel of her hand to rub her clit.

She orgasmed with her imagined self. Her pussy clenched against the two fingers she had inside and she had to put her foot back on the floor to keep from falling. Her head spun, until her orgasm was over. She moved the shower head back to its proper position to finish her shower. By the time she turned off the water, the bathroom was filled with steam.

Sanai wiped the water from the mirror over the sink. She looked at her reflection and smiled. Her hair fell in tight corkscrew curls to her shoulders. She remembered in the late 90's when all the sisters were under hair dryers for four and five hours getting a straw set. That was the only time her naturally curly hair wasn't a pain in the ass. She hadn't felt the need to blow it straight for over a year.

Some girls accused her of hating when she told them that no one had done her hair, it was like that when she got out of the shower. They'd try to cuss her out for not telling them her hairdresser's name. Sanai shook her head.

God forbid someone whose skin was dark as a Hershey Bar actually have "good hair". She hardly straightened it anymore. She decided to give up trying to fit into the stereotype and take the path of least resistance.

Sanai rubbed anti frizz serum in her hair and ran a comb through it before she got dressed. She pulled on a very dark pair of Baby Phat jeans and a shirt with a deep v-neck and long sleeves. She was still putting on her Nikes when she went back into the living room.

Jake turned around on the couch to face her. "Are you okay?"

Sanai finished pulling on her shoe and stood straight. "I'm fine, why?" "There were some really interesting sounds coming from the bathroom. What the hell were you doing in there?"

Sanai's face felt hot. "You heard me?"

Jake nodded. He'd been trying to keep a straight face, but he couldn't fight it. He knew exactly what she was doing in there. It took everything in him not to pull out his dick and jerk it to the sexy moans she was making on the other side of that door. His erection was threatening to come back just thinking about it, especially the way she was standing there with her mouth open like that.

Sanai was mortified. He'd heard her, she hadn't even heard herself. Now, he was sitting there with a big grin on his face trying to get her to admit that she was playing with herself in the shower while he listened. She was admitting nothing.

"You just pretend like you didn't hear anything, Jake. Let's go." She went to the closet and pulled out her jacket.

"You won't need that. It's actually sunny out."

Sanai tossed it back in the closet and pulled out her purse. She fished for her keys while Jake walked past her and opened the door. He waited patiently for her to lock the door and she followed him down the stairs.

“Where’s the nearest coffee shop?” Jake asked when they stepped onto the stoop.

Sanai glanced up at the sky. There were no clouds and the sun was indeed warming her, even though the temperature couldn’t have been over fifty-five.

“There’s one two blocks down.”

They walked in silence for half a block before Jake finally spoke. “So, who’s this serious boyfriend you talk about? Why isn’t he around?”

Sanai rolled her eyes. “He’s out of town. He’ll be around soon enough.”

Jake nodded. He watched her face from the corner of his eye. “Out of town isn’t very good for serious relationships.”

“No shit,” Sanai said quietly.

She didn’t want to think about Sean at the moment. She just wanted coffee.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have said anything.”

“I’m sorry,” Sanai apologized. “I’m just cranky without my morning fix.”

“It’s alright. I’m just being a nosy neighbor.”

Sanai laughed. “That’s cool.”

“I mean, I’m not stalking you through the peep hole or anything. I’m just

curious.”

She glanced at his profile. “I said it’s cool.” They walked a bit further. Both had their hands jammed in the pockets of their jeans and their pace matched perfectly even though he was taller than her. His eyes met hers and she quickly looked away.

“So, what do you do?” she asked, breaking another silence.

“I’m a columnist for the Times.”

Sanai was impressed, but tried not to show it. “What do you write?”

“Sports. I get a four paragraph blurb mostly, but maybe one day I’ll get the front page.”

“That’s really cool. I’m one of those girls that actually watch sports.”

“You should come over and watch with me some time.”

“I don’t think so,” Sanai laughed.

“I have a satellite.”

“In that case, maybe I will.” How could she resist satellite feed of any game she wanted to watch twenty-four hours a day? She could watch David Beckham bend it anytime she wanted!

They reached Casa Caffeine where they roasted and brewed the best Columbian beans. Sanai got a tall black coffee with one sugar and they were back on the street.

“So where are we going?” she asked as they walked away from the coffee shop and further from their building. They were starting to be swallowed up by the streets. They were slowly surrounded by other pedestrians and the wall of cars became thicker.

“I just wanted the newcomer’s tour. Maybe some must know information and the best places to eat, drink, or just hang out. I want to look like I fit in here.”

Sanai nodded and they began their walk around the city. She showed him a few spots where she liked to eat. There were a couple other coffee shops she offered as peaceful places to write his column. They got a subway map and promised to study it. By noon, Sanai was starving.

“Let’s go see Nick,” she said.

“Who’s Nick?”

“My favorite Greek.”

She grabbed his hand and ran across the street. They were jaywalking, but Jake didn’t care. He was staring at her slender fingers laced in his own. They were black and white, like a classic chess board. Sanai came to a screeching halt in front of an aluminum stand with a red umbrella over it.

A short, stocky man with black stubble and a faded blue Mets cap stood behind it.

“Sanai,” he said loudly, as they approached. “My beautiful kyria, tell me you

are hungry!”

“I’m famished, Nick.” Jake watched her smile grow bigger. “Look! I brought you a new customer!” Jake couldn’t help smiling when she glanced up at him. Her whole face lit up with that smile. Maybe one day he could be the reason she smiled that way.

Over the past few days, Jake found himself almost obsessing about Sanai. He wanted to know what time she left for work, so maybe they could “bump into each other” in the hall. He wondered with surprising jealousy who the mystery boyfriend was and why he was never around. He hadn’t seen any pictures of the guy while he walked around her place.

Jake usually didn’t obsess about women, but Sanai was stuck in his head. Ever since she opened the door to let him use the phone, he was taken with her. It wasn’t just because she was the most beautiful black woman he’d ever met. She seemed like a lot of fun. He saw pictures of her with what must have been her dad at ball games and she was usually giggling into her cell phone when he did see her in the hall.

“Lamb, chicken, or beef?” Sanai asked pushing her shoulder into his arm.

“Uh...what?” Jake blinked at her. Nick was standing with his thick arms crossed and a smirk on his face.

“Gyros,” Sanai explained. “Do you want lamb, chicken, or beef?”

“Chicken,” Jake answered quickly. He moved to pull out his wallet and realized their fingers were still interlocked. Sanai noticed at the same time and quickly pulled her hand from his.

“Sorry,” she muttered.

Jake insisted on paying for both gyros and Cokes. Nick accepted the money with a stiff nod and knowing smile.

“See you soon, Sanai,” Nick said with a wave.

Sanai waved just before taking a huge bite of her lamb gyro. The two ate and walked silently. They finished lunch about a block from their brownstone.

“So,” Jake said after throwing his cup and paper in a trash can. “Why is Nick your favorite Greek?”

Sanai smiled. “He makes a kick ass gyro and he’s always so happy to see me.”

“I would be too,” Jake mumbled.

Sanai ignored the comment. “It’s like I’m not just a customer.”

Jake nodded and pushed the crosswalk button. “That *was* a damned good gyro.”

Sanai laughed and walked quickly across the street. She unlocked the front door and headed straight upstairs. Jake followed her to her door.

“Thanks for showing me around.”

Sanai nodded. “Thanks for lunch.”

Jake stared at her. She looked so serious standing in the weak yellow light of the hallway. “You’re turning out to be a pretty good neighbor.”

She smiled weakly. “Thanks. I’ll talk to you later.”

Jake watched her retreat into her apartment before heading to his own.

Chapter Three

Lisa stabbed a piece of chicken on Sanai's plate with her fork. They were sitting in one of their favorite places, near Lisa's midtown apartment.

"What the hell are you thinking?" Lisa asked when she swallowed.

Lisa was a perfect size zero with long black hair and olive skin. She was mixed Italian and black and drop dead gorgeous. Her nose was thin, like her white mother, her lips were full, from her African American side. Her green eyes were almond-shaped and her cheek bones were impossibly high.

Sanai had told her best friend about her hot new neighbor.

"You can't go to his house on Saturday."

"We're just watching a fight," Sanai said with a slight shrug.

"Alone?"

"This guy he works with may or may not be there."

Lisa put down her fork. "You can't be serious."

"What's the problem, Lisa?"

"You like him. You know you like him and he obviously likes you. You can't go to his house to sit on his couch and watch sweaty muscular boxers duke it out. Your boyfriend will be back in less than a month; just wait."

Sanai groaned. "Sean hasn't called."

Lisa frowned. “What do you mean?”

“We had this stupid sort of argument about him not calling a couple weeks ago. He hasn’t called me since and I haven’t called him. So...”

“I don’t know hon. I think you guys will be okay when he gets home.” Lisa patted Sanai’s hand and gave her a warm smile.

“Thanks,” Sanai said blinking back tears.

She wanted to believe her friend’s encouraging words, but they didn’t seem realistic. It was like a birthday wish, made in the moment and gone in a puff of smoke.

Two days later, Sanai knocked on Jake’s door. She had decided to ignore Lisa’s protests and watch the fight. She held out the chips and beer she’d bought when he opened the door.

“Thanks,” Jake said. “You didn’t have to bring anything.”

Sanai shrugged. “It seemed like the neighborly thing to do.”

“Come on in.” Jake stepped aside and let her walk into his apartment.

Sanai glanced around. Jake’s floor plan was exactly the same as hers. His furnishings were worn, kind of like an oversized dorm room.

“That’s Lionel,” Jake said nodding toward the black leather couch.

A thin white guy with mousy brown hair and large glasses stood up and turned to greet her. Sanai shook his slightly sweaty hand.

“Hi, Lionel.”

“You must be Sanai,” Lionel said pushing his glasses up on his narrow nose, which made his gray eyes look huge. “I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Really?” Sanai glanced toward the kitchen, but couldn’t see Jake.

“Fight’s about to start,” Lionel said gesturing toward the flat plasma screen television on the wall in front of the couch.

The three of them watched the first five rounds of the boxing match with Sanai in the middle of the two guys on the couch. Lionel wasn’t as vocal as Jake and Sanai about the hits or ref calls, but he did contribute a couple comments between rounds.

“Hey. I’m going to get some more beers,” Jake said, gathering some empty bottles from the coffee table.

“I’ll help,” Sanai said quickly picking up some bottles herself.

She followed him into the kitchen and put the bottles in a blue bin, following Jake’s example.

“Having fun?” he asked.

“I really am,” she said leaning against the counter.

“I’m glad. Thanks for coming over.” Jake glanced at the refrigerator, but turned back to Sanai. She was standing there, in his kitchen. He couldn’t stop himself. He was across the kitchen and standing right in front of her before he

knew it.

Sanai straightened, obviously uncomfortable. “What are you doing?” she asked crossing her arms.

“Nothing,” Jake put a hand on her cheek and watched as she dropped her eyes and bit her bottom lip.

Sanai lifted her brown eyes to look into Jake’s. They were still blue, but dark now, and distant, as if he was somewhere in his thoughts. He licked his pink lips.

“Jake,” Sanai said putting a hand on his chest. “Don’t.”

“Please,” he whispered stepping closer, their hips were almost touching. “Let me do this, just this one time.”

Sanai couldn’t deny that she wanted Jake to kiss her. She wanted his lips and hands on her. She felt herself nodding. “Okay.”

Jake leaned down and lightly grazed her lips with his. They were warm and soft. He saw Sanai’s eyes flutter shut and pressed their mouths together firmly. Her mouth opened with a little probing from his tongue. Her tongue met his and they teased each other.

Jake moaned against her mouth as Sanai wrapped her slender arms around his neck. Her breasts were crushed against his chest and his dick was getting hard feeling her firm globes against him. He put both hands on her waist to stop his

hands from seeking them out. She had agreed to the kiss; he didn't want to offend her by copping a feel without being invited.

Sanai's breathing had become shallow, as their kiss became more and more intense. She put her slim brown fingers into his blonde hair. She could feel his erection pressing into her hip. Her pussy was getting wetter by the minute.

Jake pulled Sanai off the floor and placed her gently on the kitchen counter. She immediately opened her legs and Jake settled between them. He ran a hand up her back and plunged deeper into the kiss. It was so hot, so wet, and he could faintly smell her arousal through her jeans.

Sanai opened her eyes, but didn't stop kissing her neighbor. He looked so sexy with his head tilted up to her, his eyes closed. He squeezed her ass and she moaned. Her conscience immediately screamed at her to stop before it went any further.

Sanai pressed her hands to Jake's chest and slid off the counter when he stepped back.

"I shouldn't have," she said shaking her head. "This was...I'm so sorry. I've got to go."

Lionel was still sitting on the couch when she rushed into the living room.

"Are you leaving?" he said jumping to his feet.

"Yeah, uh, I'm going to my sister's tomorrow and I should get up early. It's a

long drive. It was nice meeting you, Lionel.”

She didn’t hear him say, “you too”, while she hurried out the door.

Jake still stood in the kitchen, his forehead pressed against the cabinet door. He squeezed his eyes shut trying to feel Sanai again. He licked his lips and tasted her watermelon lip gloss.

“Fuck,” he whispered banging his head lightly against the cabinet. He hoped he hadn’t fucked everything up.

Sanai threw her keys in the bowl on the end table beside her door and rushed to the phone. She punched in Sean’s number with shaky hands.

It didn’t matter that he hadn’t called her. She would be the one to relent their waiting game. Maybe she could make up for kissing Jake by having phone sex with Sean. There was no answer and Sanai decided not to leave a message.



Sanai opened the door. Lisa stood there with her hair pulled back in a long braid that hung down her back like a Native American princess.

“Are you ready?”

Sanai had agreed to go to yoga class with her friend after work that Monday.

Lisa had chastised her when she’d called her that Sunday. She was driving to Natalie’s house and needed to talk about what had happened on Saturday night.

“I told you,” Lisa sang. “You should have listened to me.”

Sanai shook her head. “You’re a kindergarten teacher; you should be used to people not listening to you.”

“You’re not in kindergarten, Sanai. You should be the one that does listen to me.”

Sanai giggled. “I should, shouldn’t I?”

When Sanai returned home that night, there was a message on her machine. For a fleeting moment she thought it was Sean finally breaking his silence. Jake’s voice was the one that spoke when she pushed the button.

“Hey Sanai, it’s Jake. I think we should talk. Give me a call.” Sanai sighed and pressed delete.

Now, after work on Monday, she was going to work out her frustrations in yoga with her girl.

“Just let me grab my coat.”

Sanai was pulling on her coat when she heard voices in the hall. By the time she grabbed her gym bag and entered the hall, Lisa was deep in conversation with Jake and Lionel.

“I’m ready,” Sanai said after a quick wave to the guys. She avoided eye contact with Jake. “Let’s go.”

“What’s the deal with your neighbor’s friend?” Lisa asked after they left Sanai’s building.

Sanai had thought Lisa looked distracted. “Lionel? I think he’s Jake’s editor at the paper.”

Lisa nodded slowly. Her breath came out in small white clouds as they walked to the subway. She didn’t say anything else until they were past the turnstiles, waiting on the platform.

“Can you get his number?”

Sanai groaned. “Are you seriously going to make me talk to him?”

Lisa bumped her shoulder against Sanai’s. “Come on, girl. You can do it for me.”



Later that night Sanai stood in front of Jake’s door. She had been in her pajamas for over an hour already, but she knew she had to get that number for Lisa that night or her phone wouldn’t stop ringing tomorrow. She knocked lightly on Jake’s door, holding her plush yellow robe closed at the neck.

“Hey,” Jake said, obviously surprised to see her.

She took a moment to appreciate his toned arms in the sleeveless black t-shirt.

“I know it’s almost midnight, but my friend that you met earlier really wants Lionel’s phone number.”

Jake turned his blue eyes to the ceiling. “How does he do it?”

Sanai shrugged.

“Oh geez,” Jake sighed. “I’m sorry. Come on in and I’ll write it down for you.”

She followed him into the apartment and paused before the door, almost afraid to go further into the apartment. She felt like she was returning to the scene of the crime.

Jake walked around the apartment, obviously looking for something to write with and write on.

“Lionel and I went to college together. He’s always been able to get the hottest chicks to fall for him. I don’t even think he’s even trying most of the time. Lucky bastard.”

Sanai laughed. “Sounds like someone is jealous.”

Jake pulled out a drawer in the end table beside the couch. There was a pad of paper and a pen in there. He scribbled down the numbers and chuckled.

“Damn right I’m jealous. Here I am trying my best to get some play from the girl next door and he runs into her friend in the hall for all of five minutes and she wants his number.”

He tore the paper off the tablet and Sanai took it from his outstretched hand. He dropped the tablet and the pen back into the drawer, then pushed it shut with his knee.

“Maybe you’re barking up the wrong tree,” she said putting the paper into the pocket of her robe.

Jake shoved his hands into the pockets of his blue plaid pajama bottoms and bounced on the balls of his feet. He watched her robe slip off her shoulder and sighed. She had on a pale pink tank top with spaghetti straps.

“I really don’t think so.”

Sanai pulled her robe back up and held it closed again.

“You never called me back,” Jake said with a sigh.

Sanai stared at the hardwood floor under her feet. “I’ve been busy.”

“Uh-huh. Well, can we talk now?” Jake wasn’t one to give up easily.

“I guess so,” Sanai muttered. She was trapped. Damn Lisa and her stupid favor. She’d have her ass in a sling for this.

“Do you regret it?”

Sanai finally lifted her head and met his gaze. “No.”

“Really?”

She shrugged. “I’m a big girl, Jake. I make my own decisions and I don’t regret them. I don’t think that was the best thing to do, but I don’t regret doing it.”

“Not the best thing to do, huh? Here I thought I was a pretty good kisser.”

Sanai smiled. “You’re a great kisser.”

“So, why did you run out of here like your feet were on fire? Then you gave that lame excuse...”

“Wait a minute,” Sanai interrupted. “That was the truth and I didn’t run anywhere. I just removed myself from a potentially volatile situation.”

“It was just a stupid kiss,” Jake muttered, dropping his eyes.

“That’s not true. That kiss could have led to some serious shit. Then, I’d be a cheating girlfriend and you’d be a home wrecker or whatever.”

“I thought you were a big girl.”

“What does that mean?” Sanai said with a gasp of insult.

“That kiss might have led to more, but so what if it did? We’re both adults. We can handle it.”

She groaned. He was right. Damn it. “Even so, we should just stay friends.”

Jake hated the f-word. “I don’t want to be friends, Sanai.”

She didn’t say anything. Both stood in silence staring at each other. Jake was waiting for an answer or at least a response. Sanai was hoping to avoid having to say another word.

“Did you hear me?”

Sanai groaned. “Yes, dammit, I heard you. You don’t want to be friends. I can’t control what you want, but I can control what you get...at least from me.”

“So, that’s it?” Jake frowned.

“Yup.”

“If we’re going to just be friends, can I get a long kiss goodbye?”

Sanai laughed at the devilish look on his face. “Friends don’t kiss, not like that.”

“How about a quick kiss goodnight, then?”

Sanai laughed again and opened the door. “Bye, Jake.”

He held the door open and watched her walk down the hall. “Bye, buddy.”

Chapter Four

Sanai pulled her suitcase behind her with quick steps. She had landed at LAX at nine p.m. She'd decided to visit Sean over the weekend. If all went well, she'd stay for the whole week. She had put in for two weeks of leave, but that was hopeful. She expected a week at the most. She'd be bored out of her mind in his hotel room for two weeks while he tried to fit her in between twelve hour rotations at the hospital.

She couldn't shake the feeling that she was running away from Jake. Sanai had avoided him all week. She left for work early and didn't take his calls. She had told him they'd be friends, but she was doing a shitty job of holding up her end.

After their talk that Monday night, she felt guilty and it wasn't about the kiss. She actually felt guilty about the way Jake's face had fallen when she said the word friends. He looked so dejected she almost wanted to kiss him again. That night she decided to fly to California and surprise Sean. Her friend that worked with him at the hospital at home told her which hotel he'd been put up in.

She had called Sean a few times, but he didn't answer and she didn't leave any messages. She would just surprise him. They'd have a nice time together and she'd return home to continue to wait for him. It would be a cool memory to talk

about later.

Everyone around her in the airport looked so distracted. They rushed by, talking on cell phones or just staring blankly in any direction. She was used to ignoring the people around her, but this was different. It wasn't like these people were ignoring each other, it seemed as if they had no idea there were other people in the building.

Sanai caught a cab and told the driver to take her to the Sheraton. It was about forty minutes from the airport and she couldn't help feeling excited when they pulled up in front of the hotel.

"I'm a guest of Sean Fisher," Sanai told the small white man behind the massive desk in the lobby. "Could you give me his room number?"

"Nine-fifteen," the man said after a few strokes on the keyboard in front of him. "The elevators are that way."

Sanai nodded and walked in the direction the man had pointed. She tried to straighten herself up as she ascended in the elevator, but the five hour plane ride had done nothing for her hair and the wrinkles weren't going to come out of her satin shirt. She was wearing an angora sweater over it when she'd left home, but she didn't need it in LA. It had been stuffed into her suitcase during the taxi ride.

Sanai knocked hard on the room door and waited. She heard rustling and mumbles. She was nervous, but excited; she put on her best smile when the

doorknob turned.

“Surprise!” She almost screamed when Sean opened the door. He looked great. He was wearing white linen pants and no shirt or shoes. His brown chest was defined from his pecks to the six-pack just above the waistband of the pants.

A confused look settled onto his face. “What are you doing here?”

Sanai’s smile wilted. “Did you not hear me say surprise?”

He nodded. “Oh, I heard that, but I thought I told you not to come here.”

Sanai hugged herself against his cold words and frowned. “Why are you talking to me out here in the hall like I’m some kind of stranger?”

“I’ve got company right now.”

Sanai’s anger flashed. “Company?” She pushed past her boyfriend into the hotel room and immediately headed in the direction she assumed the bedroom would be.

“Damn it,” Sean muttered behind her. She heard the door click shut.

There was no one in the bedroom when she flung open the door. Was she hiding? Sanai went back into the hallway just as the bathroom door was opening. A small woman, around 5’2”, stepped out wrapped in a plush white towel. She was looking down, straightening the towel, and didn’t see Sanai at first.

“Sean,” she called in a light, airy voice, “Let’s go to Black Jack’s tonight. The deejay is supposed to be...” She stopped when she saw Sanai standing there.

“Who are you?”

Sanai’s throat burned. She wanted to cry, but there was no way in hell she was going to let that happen.

“This is Sanai,” Sean said with a sigh. “She was just leaving.”

“No, I’m not,” Sanai snapped. “Who are you?”

The little woman frowned. “Amber.”

“Are you fucking him?” Sanai stabbed a finger toward Sean.

Amber’s green eyes widened and her jaw dropped.

“You don’t have to answer that!” Sean instructed.

Sanai looked back and forth between the two. Sean towered over her, tall and dark; his face was distinctively African American, with a wide nose and thick lips. Amber was looking up at her, thin and pale. She was black, maybe mixed because she was so light-skinned, not to mention that white name. Her nose was narrow, but her lips were plump and her jet black hair hung long and straight down her back.

Sanai rounded on Sean and pushed him backwards. “You’re fucking this bitch! You’re out here fucking this bitch and I’m waiting for you like a fool. I don’t believe you, Sean!”

He shrugged, but didn’t meet her glare.

“Oh my God,” Amber mumbled, covering her mouth with her petite hands.

“And you,” Sanai screamed. “You fucking whore!”

Amber’s eyes filled with tears and she shook her head. Her hair swung wildly, which made Sanai even angrier, it was the exact opposite of her own tight curls. How dare this light, bright, next to white bitch fuck Sean.

Sanai let out a primal scream and grabbed Amber’s hair. She wanted to rip it all out by the root, but she just tossed her to the floor. She was all of ninety pounds so she couldn’t put up any resistance. Sanai flung into a rage, on top of her, fists flying. Amber was screaming and crying, but even the sight of her blood didn’t appease Sanai’s anger.

Sean grabbed her waist and pulled her off the smaller woman, who was crumpled in a heap holding her bleeding nose.

“Get out!” Sean yelled pushing Sanai toward the door.

She stumbled, almost falling from the force he’d used. She leaned down, hands on her knees and breathed heavily. “Sean,” she whispered. “Why did you...” She couldn’t finish the question. Her breathing refused to regulate and blood was rushing in her ears. Sanai had never been so angry in her life.

She stood suddenly and gave him an open hand slap across the face. He stepped back and his eyes filled with tears. Sanai’s palm stung, but she balled up the same hand and punched him as hard as she could in the jaw while he was dazed. Pain shot through her hand and she walked to the door.

“Fuck you, Sean!” she screamed as she left, slamming the door behind her.

She grabbed her suitcase from where it had toppled in the hall and walked as quickly as she could back to the elevator. She pulled out her cell phone and tried to figure out who to call. She didn’t want Natalie’s condescension or Lisa’s sympathy. Her mother would have a fit and her father wouldn’t be the least bit interested. There was only one number in her address book that she was willing to dial.

The doorman caught her taxi and she dialed once she was in the back seat.

“Hello,” Jake grumbled into the phone after the tenth ring.

“Jake, it’s Sanai.”

He immediately woke up. “Shit, are you okay? Do you need me to come over?”

He thought she was still at home. “No, no. I’m sorry to call you at two in the morning.”

“It’s cool,” he said settling a bit.

“I’m in California right now.”

Jake didn’t say anything. He’d heard from Lionel that Sanai’s boyfriend was in California. The information came from Lisa. The two had already gone on two dates that week. “So how’s your visit going?”

“Not so good,” Sanai said leaning against the taxi door. “He was busy.”

“What?”

Sanai didn’t want to tell of her embarrassment, but it all poured out. Jake listened silently as she rehashed the scenario and didn’t say anything until she finally stopped crying.

“I’m so sorry, Sanai,” he whispered into the phone. “What are you going to do?”

“I’m flying back home tonight,” she said. “I don’t want to spend another minute here.”

“Five hours, right back here? You just got off the plane. Maybe you should spend the night.”

Sanai shook her head. “If I stay here, I’ll go back to his hotel and finish what I started. I’m not getting arrested in California.”

“Fine,” Jake said. “I’ll pick you up from the airport in the morning, just let me know when your flight lands.”

Sanai sighed. “You don’t have to do that. I’ll get a cab home. I just wanted to talk to someone.”

“That’s what friends are for,” Jake mumbled. “I’ll call you tomorrow.”



Sanai pulled on her coat. It was Tuesday and she had to get back to work. A breakup didn’t constitute as a legitimate reason to use up her sick leave. She felt

like an idiot. She'd trusted Sean and he'd completely betrayed her. She wondered if he was planning on coming back to her when his trip was finished.

Would he have pretended that he'd been faithful in California and carried on their relationship? Or would he have broken up with her? She had hidden in her home all weekend but she finally had to leave the house. She was running low on groceries and had to go back to work so she'd have a way to make money to buy more.

The day dragged as she avoided Lisa's calls on her cell phone and on the office line. She didn't want to talk to her best friend. Lisa was starting this new exciting relationship with a really nice guy and would want to talk about it. Sanai couldn't handle that right now.

She'd already told her sister, Natalie, about the fiasco in California. It was bad when it happened, worse when she thought about it, but the worst was talking about it. Natalie had listened and "tsk"-ed at the appropriate times, but it was still hard.

"Fuck that Tyson Beckford-looking son of a bitch," Natalie had snapped when Sanai finished.

"That's not helping," Sanai groaned.

"Sorry hon, but he does look like Tyson."

"Nata-leeeee," Sanai whined.

“Okay, okay. Just let me say the sisterly things before you hang up.”

“Go ahead.”

“Look, he’s a bastard. You deserve better than that asshole. You’ll find the right guy.”

“Thanks, Nat.” The words hadn’t made Sanai feel any better, but it was nice to hear them.

“Oh, and if you get back with him, I never said any of that shit.”



Sanai pulled on her gloves when she stepped out of her office building that evening. She’d agreed to go to a bar with a couple coworkers. She was all for drinking away that past weekend. The bar was only a short walk up the street and was full of other office dwellers that had just gotten off work. Sanai felt like she was in a sea of guys with mediocre suits and women with massive shoulder pads. She had tossed back two shots of tequila before a guy approached her.

“Hey, he said sitting on the stool beside her. “You work at Morris and Washington, right?”

Sanai nodded at the mention of her firm.

“I used to work there,” he said as he waved over the bartender.

Sanai turned to look at the guy. He was cute. He had light brown skin, but not too light, kind of Mario Van Peebles’ color. His black hair was in a tight fade

and he had kind, warm brown eyes.

“Why don’t you work there anymore?”

“I got a better offer at Burke, Levinstein, and Norris.”

Sanai nodded. The guy ordered a beer and another shot for her. “I’m Devin,” he said turning back to her.

“Sanai.” She shook his hand and giggled. She was starting to feel the tequila.

“That’s a beautiful name,” he said with a smile.

Sanai was usually not the one-night-stand type, but she was known to do stupid shit when she got emotional...and drunk. “You want to finish our drinks and get out of here?” she asked pointedly.

Devin almost dropped the drinks the bartender was handing him.

“Uh...sure.”

Sanai took her shot in one gulp and watched him take about three drinks from his beer before she announced that she was ready to leave. He nodded and paid the tab. She followed him out of the bar and to the parking garage across the street. He drove a black Mercedes-Benz E550. She was sure that car alone got him laid on a regular basis.

She directed him to her house and he parked across the street. Sanai grabbed his hand and led him to her apartment. The best way to get over an ex is

to get some new dick, she thought as they climbed the steps. Who had told her that? Her college roommate, maybe.

“Wait,” Devin said when they reached her door. Sanai hadn’t even gotten the key in yet. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

Sanai pressed her back to the door and sighed. Why did he have to be an actual nice guy? She just wanted to get laid. “Come here,” she said pulling the lapel of his coat so he stepped closer to her. “Kiss me.”

He nodded and bent down to kiss her. It was tender at first; she could still taste the beer on his lips, then on his tongue when she let it into her mouth. Devin placed a gloved hand on her door and the other on her slim waist. Sanai closed her eyes and slipped her arms under his coat and suit jacket and around his waist. She pulled him even closer and cupped his erection in her hand. It grew and she could tell he was big.

“Ahem,” they both jumped when they heard Jake clear his throat. He’d just arrived home from work himself to find Sanai in the hall with some guy all over her.

“Oh, Jake,” she said, her breathing heavy and lipstick smeared. “This is my neighbor,” she explained to the guy. “Jake this is uh...”

“Devin,” the guy said quickly, his face was turning red.

“Yeah,” Sanai said after a moment of uncomfortable silence. “So, I’ll see you

later.”

Jake nodded and mumbled goodbye to both of them. He was so pissed. Was he so far in the friend zone that Sanai would have sex with a stranger before even considering him? He watched them stumble into her apartment before he continued to his own. He knew she was upset about the break up, but what the fuck was she doing? He was fifteen feet away if she wanted comfort and that sure as hell included rash, meaningless sex.



“Can you come over?”

Sanai sighed and looked at the clock on the VCR. It was after nine and she was already dressed for bed. It would probably hurt Jake’s feelings if she refused, and she was still a little embarrassed at him catching her in the hallway with Devin.

“Yeah, just give me a minute.”

Jake left his door open and Sanai walked in without knocking. He was sitting on the black leather couch flipping through channels at breakneck speed.

“What’s up?” Sanai said falling onto the couch beside Jake.

“What’s up with that guy?” Jake put the remote on the coffee table and turned to face her.

“What about him?” Sanai didn’t look at him, just stared blankly at the

television.

“Did you sleep with him?”

Sanai groaned. “Do I really have to answer that?”

“Hell yeah,” Jake said, still staring at her.

“Fine,” Sanai grumbled. “I didn’t sleep with him.”

Jake let out a breath of relief. “Good. I mean, you didn’t even know his name.”

Sanai covered her face with both hands. “I know.”

“So what happened?”

“He kept talking.”

Jake laughed. “Talking?”

“Yeah. He kept asking if I was sure. I guess he was just a nice guy, but his talking killed the mood. I told him I changed my mind and asked him to leave.”

“So are you going to see him again?”

Sanai wrinkled her nose and frowned. “I can’t see him anymore.”

“Why’s that?”

“He either thinks I’m a whore or a tease. In either case, I can’t see him again.” Sanai slumped against the arm of the couch.

Jake shrugged dropping his eyes to her hands clasped together on her lap. He wanted to hold them. “His loss.”

“So do you think I’m a whore now?”

Jake rolled his eyes. “Is that a loaded question?”

“No, it’s just a fucking question.”

Jake turned off the television and moved closer to where she sat. “Look, you called me from California and I could tell you were hurting. People deal with shit in their own way. You were upset that you waited for this guy and he didn’t do the same for you. If you want to get back at Sean for cheating on you by sleeping with someone else, it’s on you.

I’m not going to judge you for that.”

Sanai closed her eyes and bit down hard on her bottom lip. She was so relieved to hear that Jake didn’t think less of her.

“Hey,” Jake said pulling on one of her curly tendrils. “If you want revenge sex, I’m right here.”

Sanai laughed. “I thought we were friends.”

Jake nodded. “We are, but we could easily upgrade to fuck buddies.”

She laughed again. “And with that, I’m going home before you take this any further.”

“Damn it,” Jake groaned. “You’ve really got to stop doing that.”

Chapter Five

Sanai put her plate in the dishwasher and wiped down the kitchen counter. She'd just finished a whole wheat bagel with low fat cream cheese. She poured the cold coffee out of her mug and down the sink. Before she could put it in the dishwasher, there was knocking. Sanai turned off the television on her way to the door. She didn't know if she wanted whoever was on the other side to know that she still watched Saturday morning cartoons.

"Hey," Jake said when she opened the door.

"I should have known it was you," Sanai said with a shrug. "Don't you ever sleep in?"

Jake laughed. "I only sleep in when I've done something to make me tired the night before."

Sanai stepped aside so he could enter the apartment. "I'm not walking around the city with you today. I don't think I'm up for it."

Jake sat on Sanai's tan couch, tossing aside one of the chocolate brown throw pillows. He watched her pull at a lock of her hair, still standing in front of the door. Her deep brown eyes were set on him and there was still a hint of sadness on her beautiful face. Damn, Jake thought, that Sean guy had really fucked with her head. "That's cool. I just wanted to hang out."

Sanai frowned. She had planned on spending the weekend alone. She called Natalie the night before to tell her that she wouldn't drive up that Sunday. She just wanted some time to herself.

"I don't think I'm up for that either, Jake." Sanai pulled on the bottom of her pajama top. Actually, it had been Sean's. He'd left a set of pale blue pajamas in her hamper. She'd been in the mood to wallow in her misery the night before and slept in his shirt.

Jake stood up and studied his neighbor. She cast her big brown eyes to the floor and fidgeted with her shirt. She shuffled from one foot to the other. Her long legs were a beautiful brown. He'd never seen them before, usually she had on pants, but he was making up for it now. The pajama top stopped mid-thigh.

"So you don't want to go out, but you don't want to hang out with me. Should my feelings be hurt?"

She rolled her eyes. "No. I just want to be alone."

Jake grabbed Sanai's hands so suddenly she never had a chance of pulling away. "You don't have to be alone."

She smiled and his heart jumped. It wasn't the beautiful grin she had given Nick, the gyro vendor, but it was his. The corners of her mouth turned up and she was looking only at him.

Jake is so sweet, Sanai thought as she looked up at him. He studied her with

those bright blue eyes and pulled her close.

“Do you really want me to leave you alone?” Jake let go of her hands and placed his palms gently on her cheeks.

“No,” Sanai answered honestly.

Jake smiled. “Good.”

The kiss was just as hot as their first. Jake held her against him and rubbed the small of her back. Sanai stood on her toes to get deeper into the kiss. His tongue felt so good, not to mention his hands gently caressing her.

His erection pressed against her stomach. She cupped it through his jeans and Jake groaned. He picked her up off the floor and she automatically wrapped her legs around his waist. He could feel her hot pussy through her panties and his t-shirt. He grabbed her ass in both hands and pressed it harder against his stomach.

Jake took a step forward so Sanai rested against the door and used one hand to unbutton her shirt. While Sanai pulled his shirt off and tossed it in the direction of the couch. It landed on the television.

Sanai buried her fingers in his blonde hair as they continued to explore each other's mouths. He separated their lips and kissed down her neck. The shirt she wore hung open and her 34C breasts were completely exposed to his mouth. They were beautiful chocolate brown with dark nipples that stiffened under his tongue.

“Oooh,” Sanai moaned letting her head fall back against the door. That’s when the buzzer rang. “Damn it,” she said as her eyes snapped open.

“Don’t answer,” Jake whispered between kisses. “They’ll go away.”

The buzzer rang again. Jake groaned around the nipple in his mouth.

It buzzed twice...then a third time.

“Damn it,” Sanai snapped again. She patted Jake’s shoulders. “Let me down.”

He obliged and placed her back on her feet. Sanai turned to press the call button beside the door. “Yes,” she called.

“Hi, hon. Let us up!”

Sanai cringed at her sister, Natalie’s, voice. “Us? Did you bring the kids?” She glanced at Jake. He looked so damn sexy, standing there with his chest bare and his jeans unbuttoned. His hard dick pressed against the front of his pants. She couldn’t help but lick her lips.

“No, dear. It’s me.”

“Mom?!?!?” Sanai almost screamed. Jake stood straight and a look of panic settled onto his face.

“Buzz us up already. It’s freezing.” Natalie called.

“I’ll just come down,” Sanai offered trying to button the pajama top.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” her mother said. “It’s before noon on a Saturday. I

know you're not dressed yet." Jake snickered behind her. "Just let us up, already."

"Okay," Sanai muttered. She pushed the button and swung around to face Jake who had finally finished buttoning his pants and was headed for his shirt on top of the television. Sanai finished her buttons while he flipped the shirt right-side out. He had just pulled it over his head when her family knocked softly.

Sanai wanted to tell Jake to hide. She didn't want her mother and sister knowing that she had been well on her way to fucking this white guy. She couldn't believe it herself. Her mother would have a fit and Natalie would give her so much shit.

Sanai glanced around the room as if looking for a good spot, but Jake hiding wouldn't make any sense. They would probably be there a while and there would be no way to sneak him out once they were in the apartment. She didn't understand why she felt like a fifteen-year old who just got caught with a boy in her room. She was an adult.

The knock came again and Sanai quickly pulled open the door. "Surprise!" Natalie said immediately hugging her. Natalie and Sanai looked very much alike.

Both had medium brown skin and curly black hair. At one point they had both been thin as rails, but having kids had given Natalie hips and an ass that wouldn't quit, so she had gotten breast implants to balance her out. They were a hefty 36DD. They both had their mother's nose, obviously African, but not

overpowering. They also shared full lips and almond-shaped doe brown eyes. The main difference in their appearances was Natalie's crow's feet. She was almost ten years older than Sanai, but still beautiful.

"What are you doing here?" Sanai breathed. She felt like Natalie was crushing her into her massive breasts.

"I wasn't going to let you be alone another weekend, not after what happened last weekend."

Sanai's mother took her turn hugging her daughter. Sanai had to lean down since her mother was almost a head shorter than her. Their mother was a small, thin woman. Even though her facial features were strongly African-American, she had a creamy café au lait color and could have passed for mixed race.

"I'm sorry about the surprise, dear. Natalie insisted on it. I would have preferred to give you time to straighten up for our visit."

Sanai rolled her eyes. "It's okay, mom."

"Who is this?" Natalie asked, finally noticing Jake standing in her sister's living room.

"Oh," Sanai said peeling herself away from her mother. "This is Jake. He's my, uh, neighbor. He's a sports writer for the Times." She turned to Jake. "This is my sister, Natalie, and my mother, Beverly."

Jake walked over to the group of women and shook hands with the older

two. “Nice to meet you,” he said politely.

Sanai’s mother glared at her younger daughter. Her eyebrows shot up when she noticed that Sanai’s shirt was mis-buttoned and Jake’s face was almost beet red, plus his hair looked like he’d just had a fight with a blow-dryer.

“You, too,” Natalie said warmly. She had also noticed her sister’s disheveled appearance, but tried to pretend that she hadn’t, at least until their mother wasn’t around.

Beverly Jenkins was not happy. In that moment she wanted to throw Jake out of the apartment, but it wasn’t her home. Sanai should be trying to salvage her relationship with Sean.

This unshaven, badly in need of a haircut, supposed writer had no business doing whatever he had been doing to her daughter. Did he prey on her because she was brokenhearted? She studied his blonde hair and blue eyes. He was probably just trying to fulfill some plantation master/slave girl fantasy he had going on in his perverse mind. How dare he use her daughter, especially when she was in such a delicate state!

Sanai watched her mother’s features darken and panic set in. She had to get Jake out of there before...

“So,” Beverly said slowly. “You’re a sports writer?”

“Yes,” Jake said with a smile.

“Did you know Sanai is dating a doctor?”

“Mom!” Natalie snapped as Sanai gasped loudly.

Jake’s smile faltered. “Actually, I was under the impression that...”

“Oh no,” Beverly interjected. “They’re going to try and work things out.”

Jake glanced at Sanai. She looked like she was going to be sick.

“He’s the best man Sanai’s ever brought home,” Beverly continued. “He makes a very good living. Sanai’s father was a doctor and she grew up in a certain lifestyle. I expect she’d like to continue living with that lifestyle. She was lucky to find Sean.”

Natalie grabbed Sanai’s hand and squeezed it. “Please mom,” she said loudly.

Beverly ignored her older daughter’s plea. “Yes, she was damned lucky. She was a bit of a wild child. Did you know she got pregnant when she was sixteen?”

“MOTHER!” Sanai and Natalie yelled at the same time. Sanai couldn’t believe it. Her mother had spoken the thing that she’d vowed never to mention again.

She’d forced Sanai to get an abortion and called her all sorts of names for weeks afterwards. Then, she told her daughter that neither of them was to speak of the shame she’d brought on their family ever again.

Now, here she was telling Jake that she’d been a pregnant teen. Beverly had

been damned sure that Sean hadn't gotten that information.

Jake put on a polite smile. He couldn't believe the venom that small woman had spit at him. She was so short and looked so frail, but she glared up at him like he was a fly in her soup. "Well," he said. "We all make mistakes, Beverly."

"You can call me Mrs. Jenkins," Beverly said with a huff. She walked around Jake further into the apartment, passing her daughters and ignoring their fierce glares.

"I'll talk to you later, Sanai," Jake said opening the door. She couldn't say anything back. She just nodded as he backed out of the door.



"I still can't believe she did that," Sanai said to her sister that night over the phone. Natalie had called her to tell her that they had made it back home okay.

"I know," Natalie said. "She went from zero to bitch in less than sixty seconds."

The two had spent the day shopping with their mother. Beverly hadn't apologized for what she'd said to Jake. Instead, she bought her daughters each a beautiful necklace with a diamond heart charm on it. Sanai accepted hers politely, but didn't know if she'd ever be able to wear it. Her mother had a special way of hurting her and buying her something as an apology. She had never heard her mother verbally apologize to anyone and that necklace felt like salt in a wound

that never healed.

“Just go over there and apologize,” Natalie said with a sigh. “I’ll call you tomorrow. I love you.”

“I love you, too.” Sanai put the phone down and decided to follow her sister’s advice.

Jake opened the door after she knocked a couple times. He didn’t really look happy to see her. She stepped into his apartment and he closed the door behind her.

“I just wanted to apologize for what my mother said this morning. She was totally out of line; she was rude, and insulting.”

Jake shrugged. “It’s okay. You can’t control your mom. She can say whatever she wants.”

Sanai noted the way he wouldn’t make eye contact with her, instead staring at the floor.

“Okay,” Sanai said slowly. “I guess I’ll go.”

“Wait,” Jake said quickly. “I just want to know one thing.”

“I had an abortion,” Sanai answered automatically.

“Not that,” Jake said shaking his head. His blonde hair fell in his eyes as usual. “Are you really trying to work things out with Sean?”

Sanai laughed. “Hell no. My mother wants me to marry a doctor. Nat’s

husband is a rich lawyer and my mom's final goal in life is to marry me off to a rich professional. She only thinks I should work it out with Sean because of what he does, not who he is. I can't ignore what he did to me. His bank account doesn't matter when it comes to shit like that."

Jake finally looked into her eyes. He hated the sadness that was in them. "I'm sorry," he whispered. "I shouldn't have asked."

Sanai shrugged. "After what almost happened this morning, you have every right to ask."

"Almost is such a dirty word." Jake said stepping closer to her.

Sanai blushed. "It's getting late," she fumbled for an excuse.

"It's barely ten," Jake muttered touching his forehead to hers. "It's nowhere near my bedtime."

Sanai closed her eyes. "You're right. We've got plenty of time."

Jake gave her a light kiss on the lips before taking her hand. Sanai followed him through the living room and down the hallway to his bedroom. She sat on his king-sized bed. Jake knelt between her legs and smiled up at her. "I don't want to fuck you tonight, Sanai."

"Then what are we doing in your bed?"

Jake unbuttoned her jeans and pulled down the zipper. "I just want to taste you."

Sanai's heart thudded. "Okay," she whispered as she lifted her hips so he could pull down her pants.

Jake licked his lips. He could smell her sex through the black lace panties she still had on. His dick was hard at just the smell of her pussy.

He didn't want this to be some one time fuck session that Sanai would write off as a momentary lapse in judgment. He wasn't going to use her to relieve the stiffness in his dick. He was going to make her cum tonight and hopefully she'd be back for more soon enough.

He pulled the panties over her narrow hips and smiled at the sight of her pretty brown pussy. The lips were fat and already a little wet. She had a Brazilian wax and her aroma smelled like heaven. Jake urged her legs apart and Sanai fell back on the bed, with her legs open. Jake put them over his shoulders and pulled her closer to his watering mouth.

He snaked out his tongue and caressed her pussy lips. This elicited a small moan from Sanai. "You taste like candy," Jake said before licking her again. He worked his tongue between her lips and found her clit. He rubbed his tongue firmly against it and Sanai moaned again, louder this time. He continued his long hard strokes for at least ten minutes. Jake was lost in her pussy, but noticed when Sanai began to gasp.

"I'm going to cum," Sanai said loudly. Her hands pulled Jake's blonde hair.

Jake stopped his assault on her clit and tongue fucked her, putting his thumb on her abandoned button.

Sanai gave a small scream and moaned long and loud. Jake caught the juices that flowed out of her hot snatch on his tongue. “Mmmm,” he moaned. “Like candy.”

Sanai’s whole body shook with her orgasm. She bit her lip hard to remain relatively quiet, but couldn’t stop the convulsions rippling through her. “Oh, God, Jake,” she moaned weakly when her orgasm subsided. She had never cum like that before in her life. She let go of his hair and watched him stand.

“Here.”

Sanai accepted her panties from him, but gave Jake a confused look as she sat up.

“You really don’t want to have sex?” she asked staring at the black lace things in her hand.

Jake grabbed her empty hand and placed it on his erection. Sanai could feel how hard and heavy his dick was through the denim material. “Of course I want to have sex with you,” Jake answered, “but I can wait until you tell me that you’re ready for that step.”

Sanai opened her mouth to speak but Jake shook his head. “Don’t tell me you’re ready now. I don’t want that.”

“Then what do you want?” Sanai asked pulling her white t-shirt over her naked thighs.

“I want you to spend the night with me. I want to know what it’s like to hold you.”

She rolled her eyes. “I didn’t realize you were that corny.”

Jake put a finger under her chin and tilted her head up so she met his gaze. “Will you stay over anyway?”

Sanai nodded. The truth was, at that moment she wanted to fuck the hell out of Jake. She hadn’t gotten any dick in four months and he was there, willing, and very able. He’d already granted her sweet release once with his tongue. Now, she wanted to cum with him inside her.

However, Jake was right. Sanai had just broken up with Sean exactly a week before. It wasn’t fair to make him the rebound guy. Those relationships rarely worked out. She almost wished she had fucked Devin earlier that week. That way, he would have been the rebound guy, leaving her open to this thing that was forming with Jake.

Sanai climbed under the covers and fell asleep listening to the sounds of Jake getting ready for bed.

Chapter Six

Jake rolled over and rested his hand on Sanai's flat brown stomach. She sighed in her sleep. He slowly opened his eyes and watched her sleep. She was flat on her back, her breasts rising and falling with each breath. She had kicked off all the covers and her t-shirt had ridden up to her waist. The black panties he'd taken off her the night before clung and he could see her pussy through the lace pattern.

Sanai's curly black hair made a halo around her beautiful face. Jake was growing painfully aware of his morning wood. He still had on his jeans and his swollen cock was pressed against the zipper.

"Hey," he whispered as Sanai stirred. "I'm going to pick up some coffee for you."

She nodded, but kept her eyes closed.

Sanai was out of bed when Jake returned from Casa Caffeine.

"Where are my pants?" Sanai grumbled. She was in the kitchen, leaning over, her elbows and forearms flat. He took a moment to appreciate her curves. The white t-shirt gathered at her slim waist, allowing him full view of her beautiful round ass. He shook his head slowly and handed her the large cup of coffee. She attempted a tired smile and took a sip.

“They’re under my bed,” Jake said pulling orange juice out of the refrigerator.

“Good to know,” Sanai said between sips. “I have to get home.”

Jake frowned. Maybe he hadn’t made as big an impression last night as he’d thought. He’d hoped she’d say the word and they’d stay in his bed all day Sunday.

Sanai noticed the disappointed look on Jake’s face. “I just have to get cleaned up,” she explained. “Why don’t you come over later?”

Jake nodded. “Dinner?”

“Sure. Thanks for the coffee.”

Jake watched her walk to his room before he poured himself a tall glass of orange juice.



Sanai let Lisa in and glanced down the hall at Lionel walking into Jake’s apartment. Lisa called after Sanai had gotten out of the shower that morning.

“Let’s have dinner,” Lisa piped over the line.

“Tonight?” Sanai asked.

“Yeah, why not?”

Sanai thought about her invitation she’d given Jake for dinner. She was actually looking forward to seeing him. “No reason.”

Lisa laughed. “You are the worst liar. I’m with Lionel and he’s talking to Jake. Why don’t all of us have dinner together?”

Sanai smiled. "That sounds good."

Lisa and Sanai planned the menu and decided to do it at Sanai's apartment. Hers was the most central. Lionel actually lived just a couple blocks over. Lisa would spend the night at his place if she didn't make it home.

"Did you make the lasagna?" Lisa asked when she got to her friend's place that evening.

Sanai nodded and took the salad bowl from her.

"Did you have sex with him?"

Sanai glowered at Lisa. "Not really."

Lisa laughed loudly. "That is such a bullshit answer. Either you did or you didn't."

Sanai put the salad in the refrigerator. "I didn't do anything."

Lisa frowned. Sanai was holding on to those details too hard. She knew something had happened. Her friend was actually blushing.

She didn't get to pry any further because there was a knock on the door. "I'll get it."

Sanai put on her oven mitts and bent down to pull the lasagna out of the oven. When she stood up again, Jake was staring at her. He leaned on the door jam that separated the kitchen and very small dining room.

"You scared me," Sanai said as she set down the pan. "What are you doing?"

“I’m just enjoying the view.”

“Whatever. Do you want a beer or should I go ahead and open the wine?”

“I’ll just wait for dinner.”

Sanai nodded. “Why don’t you go watch TV with Lionel while Lisa and I put this stuff on the table?”

Jake walked further into the kitchen and stood beside Sanai as she searched for a spatula in the drawer. He pulled one of her curls straight. He loved her hair; it seemed he couldn’t help touching it. “I don’t think Lisa will be in here any time soon. Lionel’s got her on the couch. They can’t keep their hands off each other.”

Sanai laughed. “They’d better try. If there are any suspicious fluids on my couch, one of them is paying for it to be spot cleaned.”

Jake laughed. “I’ll help you set the table.”

Lionel and Lisa showed up to help in the kitchen and the four sat down and had dinner. The two couples talked and laughed while going through two bottles of wine. They didn’t leave the table until almost eight o’clock.

Lisa pulled Sanai into the bedroom and hugged her. “Thanks.”

“What are you talking about?” Sanai said when her friend let go.

Lisa’s green eyes filled with tears. “I think he’s the one and I wouldn’t have found him without you.”

“Oh my God,” Sanai whispered. “THE ONE?”

Lisa nodded.

“The guy you’ve been waiting for?”

Lisa was still a virgin. She was raised by strict Christian parents that imparted their virtues on her. She had decided in middle school to save herself for the right person...not necessarily marriage. She knew that she didn’t want to give her virginity to any perverse high school boys, she didn’t want to be a notch on some frat boy’s bedpost, and she didn’t see herself losing it to some guy she had gone on a few dates with.

Her stance scared off more than a few men who didn’t feel up to the task of proving themselves to her. Sanai had always admired her best friend for her courage and strength. She couldn’t imagine it was easy being twenty-something and a virgin.

“How do you know?” Sanai asked slowly. In her head Lionel wasn’t the type of guy that made an impression as being “the one”, but she wasn’t the one dating him. Obviously, Lisa had been attracted to him from the beginning, even with the geeky exterior.

“He’s so good to me,” Lisa started. “He always thinks of me first. He returns my calls, and calls me. He’s smart and ambitious. He’s the youngest editor the Times has ever had. He makes me laugh. He visited me at school and brought Sunday comics for all the kids. He listens and always respects me, and he doesn’t

get all bitchy when I say no.”

Sanai nodded as her friend talked excitedly. “So are you going to do it tonight?”

Lisa shrugged. “I don’t know. I’m going to spend the night at his place, so I guess we’ll address the issue then.”

“I’m so happy for you, hon,” Sanai said giving Lisa another quick hug.

“What about you and Jake?”

Sanai didn’t feel like discussing Jake at the moment. She felt like she needed to get more footing on what was going on between them before she talked about it. Sure they had messed around a couple times, but she didn’t think it warranted a confession. It might turn out that ‘messing around’ would be the sum of it. “We’ll see,” she said carefully.

Lisa gave an excited squeal. “If we marry best friends, we can live near each other, be pregnant together, and take vacations together!”

Sanai wanted to laugh, but she didn’t want to hurt Lisa’s feelings. “Back it up, hon. Neither one of us is getting married to these guys any time soon so put that fantasy back in the box.”

Lisa rolled her eyes. “It would be so great. We could move to Natalie’s neighborhood and...”

“Oh geez, Lisa,” Sanai said with a groan. “I’m getting out of here before you

put up the white picket fences.”

“Fine,” Lisa said pushing Sanai who was already out the door. “You can bust a bubble like no one else.”

“It’s what I do. It’s why you love me.”

Jake and Sanai said good night to their friends in turn. Sanai stood staring at the door after they had gone. She crossed her arms and bit her bottom lip. Her perfectly arched eyebrows drew together.

“What’s up with you?” Jake asked from the couch behind her.

She shook her head and rehashed her thoughts. “It’s just that they seem so happy together. They finish each other’s sentences, and laugh, and...” She didn’t confess the rest of her thoughts and was surprised when Jake said it for her.

“It’s like they’re perfect for each other,” he said turning back to the television. There was a football game on, but Sanai didn’t feel like watching it. She went back into the kitchen to find something to clean. To her dismay, it was already spotless.

“So,” Jake said from the door causing her to jump. “You’re in the kitchen, alone, again.”

She smiled. “And you scared the shit out of me, again. Seriously, we’ve got to get you a bell or something. I was just straightening up.”

“Looks pretty damn straight to me.”

Sanai shrugged. "Yeah."

Jake frowned at her distant gaze. "What's going on with you tonight? You've been kind of distracted. If you want me to leave, just tell me."

Sanai shook her head. "It's not that. I'm just thinking."

Now Jake was really worried. Had the sight of a happy couple made Sanai want to get back into couple-hood with her ex? Was she thinking she'd made a mistake last night?

Sanai answered his silent questions after an embarrassed huff. "Do you think there are perfect couples...ones that are meant to be together?"

Jake smiled slyly. "Of course, there's peanut butter and jelly, biscuits and gravy, burger and fries..."

"Forget I said anything," Sanai snapped turning back to wiping the clean counter with a sponge.

"I'm sorry, Sanai," Jake said quickly. "I'm being an idiot."

"No shit," she mumbled loud enough for him to hear across the kitchen.

Jake watched her drop the sponge into the sink and walk toward him. Her intention was to brush past him, but he caught her arm to stop her quick strides.

"I do think there are perfect couples."

Sanai looked up into his blue eyes and her anger subsided. "Why?"

"Don't you think so?" Jake asked.

“I don’t know. I’ve never felt perfectly matched. I’ve never been part of a couple that looks the way they do from the outside.” She pointed at her front door. “They just fit.”

Jake nodded. “I don’t think I’ve ever been half of a perfect couple either.”

“Shit, I’d settle for half of a happy couple.” Sanai stared blankly at one of the eggshell buttons on Jake’s pale blue button up shirt.

Jake wanted to hug Sanai. Every time she made that sad face, he wanted to hold her. He wanted to kiss her. How would he ever get one of those intoxicating smiles from her if she was always sad around him? He watched her eyes shift down to the floor and frowned again.

“Why don’t we try?” he said in almost a whisper.

Sanai pushed him lightly and smiled sadly. “Shut up.”

“Don’t do that,” Jake said, his voice taking an authoritative tone.

Sanai was surprised at his words and took a step backward. “Don’t do what?”

Jake pushed his hair away from his face and licked his pink lips. “Don’t dismiss what I’m saying like that.” He waved his hand slightly. “I’m fucking serious.”

Sanai didn’t know whether she wanted to laugh or cry. Jake wanted to try and be a happy couple with her. The idea was so odd; she didn’t really want to

think about it. She had assumed they'd just fool around, be "fuck buddies" like he'd said before. After last night, she was totally up for that. He'd eaten her pussy with fervor and made her toes curl.

However, she couldn't see them being the kind of couple that Lisa and Lionel were. She didn't see them in whispered conversation, holding hands as they walked down the sidewalk. She saw them hanging out.

"Sanai?" Jake said loudly. Her silence was scaring him.

"I don't know, Jake. I don't think we have the same thing as..."

"That's bullshit and you know it." Jake stuffed his hands into his khaki pants pockets and started for the door. His pride was officially wounded.

"Damn it, wait!" Sanai said grabbing his sleeve. "I'm just saying...our thing isn't a 'perfect match forever-and-ever' thing. It's a 'neighbors that are kind of attracted to each other' thing. Why are we going to try and make it something it's not?"

Jake rolled his eyes. She could be so damn stubborn. "We wouldn't try to make it something it's not. I'm talking about making it something it could be. And what are you talking about 'kind of attracted to each other'? You wanted me since I knocked on that fucking door and I know it because I wanted you too." This time Jake jabbed a finger at Sanai's front door.

He's right, she thought. She had thought he was hot from jump. Who was

she kidding? “So you want to be my rebound man?” she asked slowly.

“Hell no,” Jake snapped. “I want to be your man. No rebound. I don’t give a shit about Doctor Sean. That was weeks ago. This is now.”

Sanai nodded slowly. “Okay,” she whispered, “but if we have a bad break up, you’re moving out of the building. I was here first.”

Jake narrowed his eyes and pulled her into his arms. “We’ve been dating fifteen seconds and you’re already planning the breakup?”

Sanai inhaled deeply. He smelled like fabric softener and Cool Water Cologne. “Will you spend the night?”

“Ah,” Jake mumbled into her hair, “that’s more like it.”

Chapter Seven

Jake sat on Sanai's queen sized bed and looked around her bedroom. It was his first time in there and he felt an inexplicable need to memorize every detail. This was by far the most personal space in her apartment.

The living room and dining room were standard; couch, table, chairs, television, and various somewhat miss-matched art pieces throughout. A Jackson Pollack print was posted in the living room, mere feet from a somewhat generic painting of a beach. Not to mention the kitchen: that was mostly functional; a giant coffee maker seemed to be the only appliance that hadn't come with the apartment. Her bedroom was a different story.

The bed had a light purple comforter and bed skirt. There was a white vanity with more perfumes, lotions, and powders than most retail stores could boast. There were countless family photos hanging all around the walls and on the dresser. There were pictures of her parents; he recognized her mother's stony glare as she stood beside a tall, dark-skinned man with salt and pepper hair...the same one in the living room picture that depicted Sanai and him at a ball game.

There were a lot of pictures of Sanai and Natalie and some of two teenagers that somewhat resembled the sisters, a boy and a girl. In a picture of a pretty large

group he spotted Sanai and recognized Lisa. It must have been college he noted, glancing at the bar scene in the background.

On either side of Sanai's bed were oak colored night stands. The right one had an out of place stained glass lamp and a worn paperback copy of Pride and Prejudice on it. The other held even more lotions and creams that either couldn't fit on the vanity, or were placed closer to the bed for convenience.

There was a full length mirror on the back of the bedroom door with post-its sprinkled across the top. He didn't bother trying to read what the yellow slips of paper had on them. He wasn't that interested even if he had been close enough to make out the words.

Jake glanced at the closet door and noticed a few shoes and pants were strewn, half in and half out of the closet. It was as if they were trying to escape, or hadn't quite made it back home. The small trail ended just before the edge of the enormous rug that almost covered the entire bedroom floor. Only inches of hardwood were visible around the edges of the pink, purple, and yellow flecked rug.

Jake wondered how it was Sanai's bedroom was so decidedly feminine when so far everything about her had been the exact opposite. She walked around in jeans and a plain oversized t-shirt most of the time. She wore mostly pants-suits to work with moderate heels, no stilettos. She watched football, baseball, and

boxing without batting an eye. She was a tomboy; if that term applied to grown women, it would definitely apply to her. By the time he noticed the cream-colored lace curtains, it was almost too much.

Sanai walked into the bedroom and noticed the confused look on Jake's face as he stared out her window.

"What's up?" she asked. "What are you looking at?"

"The lace curtains, they're so...this room is so..."

"Girly?" Sanai finished.

Jake nodded hoping he hadn't offended her.

Sanai rolled her eyes and pulled back her cover to reveal lavender sheets and a pillow covered in white satin. "Did you expect I'd have black bed sheets over the windows like you?"

Jake blushed.

"Look, I can sit through any game I can find on the tube. I can argue the ramifications of putting today's 'roid raging players on the record books with players from thirty, forty years ago. I can understand any points system out there, and I can probably kick your ass in pool." She paused for effect. "Most guys think that shit is cool...but let's face it, the one place you wouldn't want me to do all those things is in here." She motioned at the off white walls around them.

"You make a good point," Jake muttered. He kicked off his Nikes and stood

to pull down the part of the comforter where he'd been sitting. "I was just surprised."

Sanai smiled and fell back onto the pillow. "I'm so tired," she muttered turning to watch Jake unbutton his pale blue shirt and drop it on the floor.

"Yeah," Jake mumbled, "Me, too." He pulled off his belt and dropped it on top of his discarded shirt.

He hadn't assumed that Sanai's invitation to sleep over was an automatic proposal for sex. She hadn't said that she was ready for that; besides, at least one real date, outside of the building would be an appropriate lead-in to a night in the sack.

"What time do you get up?" Sanai asked her voice heavy and slow.

"Just wake me when you're leaving," Jake said sliding into the bed. "I'm not going in until ten."

"Must be nice," Sanai growled turning on the alarm on her clock radio.



Sanai shoved her gloved hands into her coat pocket as she stepped out of the subway and onto the sidewalk. There was brown slush on the sidewalk that almost caused her to slip. The traction on her heeled boots wasn't made for hiking on half-frozen sidewalks.

Her eyes filled with tears after two minutes walking in the bitter cold. She

pulled up her hood and quickly shoved her hands back into her coat. Her face became even colder as the tears in her eyes spilled over. She felt like the moisture was freezing on her skin, or freezing her skin; either way it hurt like hell.

A shudder coursed through her body as she hit the warm air in her apartment building. She felt like she'd been shocked back to life as pin pricks traveled over her ice cold cheeks and nose, which was the only skin that had been completely exposed to the brutal cold. The pin pricks attacked her toes as she stomped up the stairs to the second floor.

"I am so ready for vacation," she muttered to herself. Thanksgiving was two days away and she would have a few non-commuting days where she could stay in the warmth of the house. Unfortunately, it was going to be her parents' house. The whole family was gathering at "home" to celebrate the holiday.

The thing that sucked was the fact that her parents' house was no longer in Florida. They had moved years earlier since both of their daughters and grandchildren were up north. Her mother's parents had willed her their house.

Her parents had made it a rental property, but decided to move into it when they sold their house in Fort Lauderdale. She'd tried to tell them they were doing it backwards. Everyone was supposed to visit them in Florida. Why would they leave that weather? Who the hell wants to shovel snow in their retirement years?

The main problem was the fact that Sanai wasn't sure if she'd be able to

handle her mother for three days. After the incident with Jake, she'd avoided her calls and ignored her messages, but Natalie had let her know that she was expected to show up for Thanksgiving. Who was she to buck the tradition of spending a traditional holiday with her family, pretending not to be miserable?

She didn't want to go back out in the cold, but she had promised Jake they would have a real date that night. It was Tuesday, two days since they'd officially started dating and they hadn't been face to face since they parted on Monday morning. She had two hours to get dressed and ready for dinner that night. It would be a small miracle to pull it off, considering she couldn't just shower and get dressed. She had to be perfect because tonight was the night that she would finally get some dick. She wanted to jump up and down at the thought of it. She was borderline giddy.

Sanai was trying to decide what to do with her hair when Jake knocked. She wanted to pin it up and let some curls fall around her face, but that would mean no hat or hood all night and it was just too cold for that too work. She frowned at her reflection and threw the brush into the sink. She didn't look like herself. She was dressed up and stressed out.

She wore a sheer cream colored Dolce and Gabana blouse and a black pencil skirt; she couldn't pronounce the designer's name, but it looked Italian. She had fished the only heels she owned out of the back of her closet and said a small

prayer before she put them on.

“Please don’t let my feet give out on me before I’m able to take these things off,” she muttered. The heels were at least four inches and razor thin, in other words, they were torture devices.

She toddled to the door and gasped when she pulled it open.

Jake had his hair slicked back with some kind of product. His square jaw was prominent and smooth from a recent shave. His dark blue suit seemed specially made to make his blue eyes look brighter. He had a gray and white checked tie on over a white starched shirt and black shoes, possibly alligator. Sanai would have swooned if she thought she’d be able to stand back up without the assistance of a crane.

Jake handed Sanai the bouquet of pink roses he’d brought and smiled. “You look beautiful.”

“Thanks,” she said turning on a narrow heel and going into the kitchen for a vase. She sent up another prayer that the zipper on that impossibly tight skirt wouldn’t split when she reached under the sink for a dusty crystal vase.

Jake jumped up from his seat on her couch when she got back into the living room. “Are you ready for our first official date?”

“Let’s go,” Sanai said pulling her coat out of the closet and yanking open the door. “This outfit isn’t going to make it past midnight...maybe eleven.”

Jake laughed. "I'll be sure to make the most of it while I can."

Sanai was thankful that Jake was able to get a taxi almost as soon as they hit the sidewalk. *The luck of a white man*, she thought to herself. Who else could get a taxi in the freezing cold, well after dark, without batting an eye?

Dinner was amazing. Sanai had never eaten Thai food before, but the place where Jake made reservations had an interesting mix of seafood, noodles, and sushi. They had drinks at a random bar that just happened to be on the way home. Sanai glanced at her watch. "It's almost eleven," Sanai whispered to Jake who sat on the stool beside hers. "I've got to get home if I'm going to get these shoes off without a crow bar."

Jake conceded and they caught a cab back to their building. Sanai grabbed his hand as they walked up the stairs. Partially, for the warmth of skin-to-skin contact, partially to do something that was undeniably affectionate, and partially to keep herself from falling as she climbed each step. There was nothing sexy about snapping an ankle.

"Will you sleep over?" she asked when she unlocked her door.

"Of course," Jake said following her inside. He watched her pull off her coat and shoes and sling them into the closet before she trudged to the couch and collapsed. Jake took off his own suit coat and placed it on an empty hanger in the coat closet.

“I’m never wearing those shoes again,” Sanai said as she rubbed her feet.

Jake sat beside her and smiled. “I appreciate the effort. Did I tell you how beautiful you look?”

“About ten times,” Sanai said.

“Come over here,” Jake said extending his arm.

Sanai moved as quickly as the pencil skirt would let her and tucked herself against his chest. He smelled like cologne and made her head swim. The smell of a man always seemed to overtake her. It comforted her and turned her on at the same time. She moved her head to kiss him and found him waiting for her to do just that.

Jake pressed his lips against Sanai’s. She sighed audibly and opened her mouth to let his tongue inside. Their tongues caressed lightly for a few minutes before she backed away.

“Let’s go to bed,” she whispered just before running her hand over the crotch of his pants. They both felt his dick stiffen.

Jake followed her down the hall and into her oh-so-feminine bedroom. He wanted to laugh at the small quick steps she had to take because of the form-fitting skirt she wore.

“Help me out of this thing!” she exclaimed as soon as she opened her bedroom door.

He nodded and unbuttoned the back skirt. Sanai glanced back at him with a grateful look when he pulled down the zipper.

Jake glanced around the now familiar room and noticed that there were a half-dozen purple candles that had been placed around the room. Sanai pulled a lighter from the top drawer in the vanity and lit each candle while she unbuttoned her shirt.

Jake sat on the purple comforter and began to undress. He was down to his gray boxers and nothing else. When he looked up, Sanai stood in front of him in black lace boy shorts and a black half bra. Sanai was beautiful.

She was thin, but not painfully thin, she had a small waist that blossomed into narrow hips, but they were there. Her breasts seemed a little large for her slight figure, but they didn't seem a problem as they rested in their cups, the light brown tops almost pouring over.

Jake was face to face with her perfect belly button and her flat stomach. He could see the slight definition of her abs. He touched her stomach lightly, trailing his finger along the brown line that was her happy trail.

"You look beautiful," he mumbled forcing his hand to stop at the waistband of her underwear.

"You've been telling me that all night," Sanai said pushing him backwards to lie on the bed. She climbed onto the bed and straddled him. She could feel his

dick getting hard under her panty covered pussy. “Why don’t you show me?”

Jake nodded and pulled her head down into a kiss. His tongue pushed past her lips almost violently and explored her mouth. He held her waist with one large hand and gripped one ass cheek in the other.

Sanai moaned softly as Jake kneaded her ass. He moved his hand between her legs and worked his fingers inside the underwear. His finger rubbed her clit a few times and Sanai moaned again. Jake held her close, still kissing her deeply. Their tongues danced slowly even when Jake pressed his middle finger into Sanai’s pussy and she gasped.

He finger fucked her slowly at first, curling his finger so it hit her g-spot dead on.

“Ohhh,” Sanai moaned. Her pussy was getting wetter by the second. Jake’s finger alone made her pussy cream. She couldn’t wait to feel what his dick would do to her. Sanai climbed off, forcing his finger out of her and stood beside the bed. She quickly pulled off her underwear.

Jake pushed his boxers down and threw them. He didn’t see where they landed. He immediately grabbed his rock hard dick and glided his fist up and down.

Sanai stood beside the bed completely naked, watching him pump his cock.

He thought he’d cum for sure when she slowly licked her shiny red lips, but

he didn't. Instead he sat up, his feet firmly on the floor and watched her drop to her knees on the rug. She gently removed his hand from his red cock and took it into her hot mouth.

"Oh fuck," Jake whispered as her warm mouth traveled down to cover more and more of his dick. She trailed her tongue up and down the underside of his dick and moaned.

Jake buried a hand into her tight black curls and bit down hard on his bottom lip. She bobbed steadily on his cock, almost choking once when it hit the back of her throat. Jake's cock was long and thick.

Sanai had thought it was beautiful when she'd seen it standing free after Jake tossed away his boxer shorts. It was pale, she could see the blue veins running along it just beneath the surface, and the domed head was a little red. She had wanted it in her mouth and now that she had it, she was enjoying the helpless groans Jake elicited above her. Sanai slurped and licked his cock gently.

"I'm close," Jake muttered his voice husky and deep. "I'm so close Sanai."

She pulled her mouth off his cock and smiled up at him. "You can cum in my mouth."

Jake's dick jumped at those words, but he shook his head. "No, I want to cum in your pussy."

Sanai nodded and accepted Jake's hand to pull her up. She climbed back

onto the bed and straddled him again. This time she was naked, so she lowered herself onto his stiff dick, still shiny from her saliva. “Ohh,” she moaned as he impaled her. Her cunt stretched around him and she moaned again.

Jake grabbed her hips and waited. It wasn’t long before Sanai starting moving up and down on him. “Ungh...ungh...ungh,” she chanted every time she bottomed out.

He watched her breasts bounce wildly and concentrated on holding off his orgasm. It wouldn’t be long before her tight snatch milked his cock, especially after that blow job she’d given him. He closed his eyes and thought about how she’d looked up at him with those big brown eyes as she bobbed on his cock...and the way her curls had tickled the insides of his thighs. Jake moaned loudly. Those thoughts weren’t going to keep his orgasm at bay.

He opened his eyes when Sanai stopped moving on his cock. Her head hung backwards and her body shuddered as she gave a guttural moan. Jake knew she had cum again. He placed his hand on her hips and began to fuck her as she climaxed.

She began to scream and shake again from a second orgasm, just as Jake felt the familiar clench and release in his balls. The two came together and Sanai crumpled until her cheek rested on his sweaty chest. His dick slowly deflated and left her as they lay together.

Jake wrapped his arms around her waist in a hug. “That was amazing,” he mumbled into her hair.

She looked up at him and grinned. “I know.”

Jake’s heart practically skipped a beat. There was that smile he’d been waiting for, the one that he’d wanted her to give him since that Saturday they had walked through the city. It wasn’t polite or apologetic. It was a genuine, happy smile. The only one he wanted from her.



“So what happened?” Sanai asked Lisa the next day. They had met for drinks after work. Lisa had insisted on telling her friend what had happened on Sunday night face-to-face, even if it had taken days for their schedules to match up.

“I told him that I had never...” Lisa’s voice trailed off. They were, after all, in a public place.

Sanai nodded. “What did he say?”

“He said that he had suspected as much since we had never...” again Lisa dropped the last part of her sentence.

Sanai nodded again.

“So, I told him that I thought I was ready to take that step and I wanted to do it with him.” Lisa’s pale cheeks flushed a little. She wasn’t completely

comfortable talking about sex, even with her best friend of many years. She took a sip of her Cosmo and sighed. “Then, he says, ‘I’m honored that you’d give something like that to me, but...”

Sanai gasped. “But? But what?!”

Lisa took another sip and smiled. “He said he would wait. He said that if I’ve saved it this long, I should wait for marriage. He said that he’s in love with me and when the time is right, we’ll get married and do it the right way.”

Sanai didn’t know what to say. She blinked hard for a few seconds before asking, “So what did you say?”

“Well,” Lisa dropping her voice. “I gave him a blow job.”

Sanai laughed. “Nice. Is it big?”

Lisa nodded.

Impressed, Sanai finished her Appletini and pushed away the glass. “Still, it’s kind of strange for a man to turn down sex. You don’t think he’s getting it from somewhere else do you?” There was no accusation in her voice, just concern.

“No,” Lisa said quickly. “We’re always together, unless we’re at work. He calls me every night before I go to sleep and sends me flowers at least once a week.”

“You’re right,” Sanai said nodding. “That would be way too much effort if he was getting some on the side. That’s so great, Lisa.” Sanai patted her friend’s

hand.

“I know. Now, what’s up with you and Jake?”

Sanai hesitated, but decided to go ahead and tell Lisa that she’d slept with Jake. Lionel probably already told her anyway. Men were worse gossips than women sometimes.

“We slept together last night,” she confessed.

“How was it?” Lisa asked.

“It was so perfect,” Sanai said, her eyes glazing over. “I didn’t think he’d be so...”

Lisa smiled. “He’s perfect for you.”

Sanai blinked back into reality and stared at her friend. “What?”

“I said, ‘he’s perfect for you!’”

“Why would you say that?” Sanai asked slowly. “He’s the opposite of almost everything I look for in a guy.”

Lisa rolled her green eyes. “Just because he’s white?”

Sanai shrugged.

“So he’s not a rich black professional,” Lisa said rolling her eyes again. “He’s nice and he really likes you. Isn’t that all that matters?”

Sanai nodded. “I guess it should be.”

Lisa smiled and finished her drink. “It will be.”

Chapter Eight

Christmas was loud, rushed, and hectic, as Christmas with the family should be. Natalie's kids were up by eight, loudly waking everyone else.

Sanai thought back to the past two mornings when she'd rolled out of bed close to noon. Christmas morning was a different story. She had known that when she decided to stay at Natalie's. She couldn't take another frigid holiday at her parents' house. Thanksgiving had been damned near torture. Besides, her mother had booked a cruise minutes after Sanai had told her she wanted to spend the next holiday at Nat's house, so she couldn't have gone there if she wanted.

Tyrese, Natalie's husband was already pouring coffee into a large green mug when Sanai stumbled into the kitchen. He was tall and very light-skinned, almost the same color as Beverly, her mother, but less pale and more golden. He kept his head shaved bald because he didn't like the fact that his hair was dark brown and not black. He had a narrow nose and round, brown eyes, set in an oval face. His features were surprisingly delicate for such a large black man. Tyrese had broad shoulders that led down to a narrow waist and the shorts he wore in the summer showed large, powerful, muscular legs with brown hair. He was also a real live nice guy; one of few Sanai had come across.

"Good morning," he exclaimed with a toothy white grin.

Sanai silently wondered how he could greet her with that booming voice so damned early. It reminded her of Jake who was in Connecticut with his family for Christmas.

“Thanks,” she mumbled accepting the steaming mug. “Merry Christmas.”

“Come on, dad!” Latoya called from the living room. “Mom’s got the camera set up!”

Natalie was borderline obsessive when it came to capturing precious memories. She had boxes and boxes of pictures of their family through out the years. If there was anything going on Natalie was the first to say, “Let me get the camera.”

Sanai walked down the hall, her socked feet sliding along the highly polished wood floor.

Natalie’s house was spectacular. The two story tudor had five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a massive deck, and a now empty kidney shaped pool with all the bells and whistles. Her sister had hired a decorator, one of the best on the East coast. Sanai couldn’t remember his whole name, just the fact that his first name was Leslie. The house was immaculate, with Turkish rugs, stone tile, high pile off-white carpeting, crown molding, and glass topped surfaces everywhere. The aesthetics were amazing, but Sanai sometimes thought the house didn’t look

“lived-in”...certainly not lived in with two kids.

She sat on the red brick hearth in front of the fireplace and watched T.J. and Latoya anxiously waiting for their father to enter from the kitchen. Both kids were sienna-brown, not as dark as Natalie, but darker than their high-yellow father.

Latoya had jet black hair that hung in soft curls to her shoulders. Her eyes were brown and slightly slanted, just like her mom and aunt. She also shared their full lips. T.J. was tall, like his father and stocky, in a muscular way. His black hair was also curly and he looked almost exactly like his father-just a little darker.

Natalie perched on the couch looking gorgeous in a white satin gown and matching robe that was cinched tight at the waist with a conspicuous red sash. Her hair wrapped in a red silk scarf and her foot bounced with a white slipper threatening to fly off at any moment. She blew her sister a kiss and mouthed ‘Merry Christmas’. Sanai blew a kiss back.

As soon as Tyrese finally joined Natalie on the overstuffed paisley-print couch, Christmas began in a flourish of wrapping paper and ribbons. Sanai had gotten a pair of leather gloves, sent from her parents, and diamond earrings.

“They’re to match your necklace,” Natalie said when Sanai held up one drop earring that was shaped like a heart. The diamonds glinted with the blinking colored lights on the tree beside her. Sanai smiled.

Natalie was the best. Any doubt in wearing the tainted necklace was gone now. The negative connotation had been neutralized by the warmth and jest that came along with the earrings she was holding. “Thanks, Nat. They’re perfect.”

Her sister nodded and went back to watching T.J. open Sanai’s gift. “Cool! A signed Tony Hawk skateboard! Thanks!”

Natalie glared at her sister. “A skateboard? Why didn’t you just get him a motorcycle or a bungee cord?”

Sanai shrugged. “I could have gotten him the electric skateboard. They were basically the same price.”

“Really?” T.J. said with a hint of disappointment in his voice.

“That would never happen!” Natalie snapped at her son. “Just make sure you wear your helmet when you’re on that thing.” She wagged her finger at the offending gift.

“Cool!” T.J. cried again.

“Ohmigod!” Latoya squealed from under the tree. She waved the envelope that she’d just opened. “It’s a three hundred dollar gift card from Saks on Fifth! Thank you, auntie.”

Sanai threw up her hands at the exasperated look Natalie gave her. “What are you doing to me?” she whispered fiercely.

“What?” Sanai mouthed.

“I’ll be in Saks for hours with her trying on three hundred dollars worth of clothes, Sanai!” Natalie shook her head. “Three hundred dollars?”

Sanai rolled her eyes. “Their presents had to be the worth the same amount.”

“That skateboard cost three hundred dollars?” Natalie moaned.

Sanai shrugged and glanced at Tyrese for help. He smiled and nodded. “Come on, Nat,” her brother-in-law cooed. “Let her spoil her niece and nephew. It’s Christmas.”

Natalie visibly relaxed and shrugged. “Fine, but you’ll be in Saks with me.” She gave Sanai a pointed look.

“Fine, I’ll go to Saks with you,” Sanai said. “Then, we’ll stop by Bergdorf’s to spend your Christmas present. Yes, Bergdorf’s, in the envelope, right over there. You’re welcome. Now, I’m going upstairs to make some calls.”

Natalie waved her away as she reached for her own envelope under the tree.

“Merry Christmas,” Lisa mumbled into the line when she finally answered her cell. Since she was an only child, Christmas at home with her parents was a quiet, dignified affair. Not the raucous chaos that had been the last hour of Sanai’s life; therefore, she was not yet out of bed.

“Merry Christmas, Lisa.” Sanai wished they didn’t have to spend the holidays so far apart. Lisa was currently in Newark which seemed like a world

away from Natalie's upstate, upscale suburban dream house.

They chatted a few more minutes before they said goodbye and Sanai called Jake.

"What are you wearing?"

Sanai laughed. "Is that how you answer the phone?"

"Hell yeah. That's what the caller id is for. Now, what are you wearing?"

Sanai glanced down at her tattered gray pajama pants and wife beater.

"Uh...a black satin negligee."

"You're so full of shit," Jake said with a loud laugh.

"I know. I just wanted to tell you Merry Christmas. I'll let you go before your family gets up." His younger sister and her college boyfriend were joining him at their parents' house in Hartford.

"What makes you think my family isn't up already?" Jake asked.

"You're talking dirty over the phone in front of your parents?" Sanai was embarrassed, even though she hadn't been the one doing the naughty talk.

"No," Jake answered quickly, "Just my dad."

Sanai felt her face flush. "I'm going to let you go."

"Wait," Jake said loudly in case she'd already taken the phone from her ear.

"What's up?" Sanai said shaking her head.

"Where will you be on New Year's Eve?"

Sanai thought a minute before answering. “I don’t really have any plans yet.”

“Then, you’re spending the night with me. We’ll ring in the New Year in bed.”

Sanai blushed again. “Okay, fine.”

“Just so you know; we’ll be doing a hell of a lot more than kissing at midnight. Merry Christmas, baby.”

Sanai groaned. Was he really sitting beside his father saying that shit? “Merry Christmas, Jake.” She shut the phone and dropped it onto the bed. If she ever met Jake’s father, she wouldn’t be able to look him in the eye.



Sanai closed her eyes and bit hard on her bottom lip. She could faintly hear the countdown as the ball dropped on the television in the living room. She was at Jake’s apartment and he was between her legs. Sanai ran her fingers through his blonde hair as he slowly licked her clit and plunged two fingers deep in her pussy. “Eight, seven...”

“Oh God,” she moaned. “Oh God, Jake.”

“Four, three...”

Jake worked a third finger into her wetness, stretching her pussy to the limit. He curled his fingers upward and hit her g-spot.

“One!”

Sanai let out a scream and then a whimper as her orgasm tore through her. She dug her nails into his shoulders and watched the stars fall. They probably rivaled the fireworks that were being set off at that exact moment outside the window.

Jake repositioned himself, pulling her lean thighs against his muscular ones. Sanai moaned loudly as she felt the head of Jake's dick press against her slick cunt lips. She was barely finished cumming when he slid inside her. His dick pushed into her and it was his turn to moan.

"Damn, you're tight."

Sanai lifted her hips off the bed, silently urging him to go deeper. "More," she whispered with a pout.

Jake roughly pushed his blonde hair from his face. He wanted to see his pale rod between Sanai's fat brown pussy lips. It was so fucking hot. He bit his lip and pushed further into her hot wet cunt.

Sanai watched Jake's face as he move further into her. The sweat was beaded all over him with a couple beads trickling from his temples to his square jaw. They hung there for a second, but when he slammed himself completely into her, they fell onto her stomach. She couldn't feel the cold drops though because she was taken with the feeling of him filling her completely.

She parted her legs even further and sighed. "Fuck me," she whispered

looking into Jake's crystal blue eyes. "Please, fuck me."

Jake nodded and pulled his dick out until the head was the only thing in her. He slammed back into her and smiled when Sanai's eyes rolled back and her toes curled against his back.

"Aaah," she sighed.

He pistoned in and out of her tight pussy, his balls slapping against her ass with each thrust. Sanai began to whimper and claw at his back, but her nails weren't long enough to cause him any pain. He continued to fuck her, making her tits bounce roughly. He caught one in his mouth and tongued the stiff nipple.

Sanai put a hand into his hair again as he nibbled on her. "Oh, Jake," she whispered closing her eyes and concentrating on how good he felt. His big dick was plowed into her roughly and she could feel the tingling of her orgasm begin at the base of her spine.

Jake loved the way Sanai mewled when they fucked. She sounded so sweet as he had his way with her beautiful brown body. She was the best sex he'd ever had. She would drop to her knees and suck his dick without warning, swallowing his cum every time like it satisfied some hunger in her. She had a box of toys under her bed that she would play with as he watched. It was the sexiest thing in the world to watch her play with her beautiful pussy, but he couldn't watch for long. He'd have to replace whatever dildo or anal beads she was playing with as soon as

he saw that look of pleasure come over her face. He wanted to make her eyes roll and her mouth contort in satisfaction. She was definitely a sex kitten and he loved it.

Sanai cried out under Jake and his eyes popped back open and he released her nipple to watch her. Her back arched off his bed as her eyes eased shut. Her body shook hard as she came, once and then again. Jake watched as she was overcome, he gently rubbed her swollen clit and she moaned softly as she came down from her sexual high.

She slowly opened her eyes again and gave him a lazy smile, her lids still half shut. Jake drove himself deep inside her pussy that was somehow even wetter now. He watched her eyes travel over him slowly as if taking everything in for a mental picture. She tucked his hair behind his ears as he continued to fuck her.

“God, Sanai,” Jake moaned leaning closer to kiss her full lips. Their tongues touched briefly before Jake pulled back. “I love you,” he whispered just before his balls erupted, filling her with his cum. He kissed her hard and rolled over to stare at the ceiling.

Sanai moved to bury herself under the covers before she got cold and stared at a spot on the wall. The three words Jake had just whispered were on her mind. She had heard him right. He’d said it, but she wasn’t about to say it back. Nothing a man said during sex could be taken seriously. Just because he said he loved her

while he was cumming, didn't make it true. It wasn't fair to hold him to that. She sure as hell wasn't going to embarrass herself by saying it back because she would mean it. That was the wrong place to put her heart on the line: naked and in bed.

Jake was rubbing her back. She wanted to turn around and face him, but somehow, she couldn't. He kissed her shoulder and whispered a good night.

Sanai muttered something back and squeezed her eyes shut, but she knew she wouldn't be able to sleep.



"Well, do you love him?" Natalie asked the next day when Sanai called her.

"I don't know," Sanai mumbled. She sat on her couch watching a football game.

"That's bull," Natalie said. "You know if you love him or not."

Sanai crossed her arms and frowned. Of course she knew. "Okay, yeah. I do love him, so what?"

"So why don't you tell him?"

Sanai hated how Natalie made things sound so damned easy. "So next time we're in bed, I should just come out and say it?"

"No!" Natalie snapped. "Do it when you're both standing and clothed."

Sanai shrugged. "I don't know if I want to put myself out there like that."

Her sister sighed. "Didn't you just tell me that Lisa got engaged last night?"

“Yes,” Sanai said briefly thinking about an ecstatic Lisa shrieking that information into her ear when she called first thing that morning.

“She’s known this guy almost as long as you’ve known Jake.”

Sanai shook her head hard. “That’s different, Nat. Those two are fucking perfect for each other. It’s unreal. You should see them.”

“I’m sure I’ll see them at the wedding, but I’ve seen you and Jake, sis. I know you really care about him. You call me all the time just to talk about him. You need to come off it and just be honest with yourself and with him.”

Sanai hated when Natalie was right. “What about mom?”

“What about mom?” Natalie almost yelled. “She’ll be okay. She’ll get over the fact that he’s white and a writer. If he’s as good a guy as you make him out to be, she’ll have no choice.”

“Fine,” Sanai mumbled. “Thanks, Nat. I’ll talk to you later.”

“I love you,” Natalie said. “See how easy that is?”

“Shut up,” Sanai snapped. “I love you too, heifer.”

Later that evening, Jake came over for dinner.

Sanai had ordered Chinese; she wasn’t really in the mood to cook.

Jake swept her up into a hug and kissed her as soon as she opened the door.

Sanai caught her breath when he put her back on her feet. “The food is on its way.”

“Sounds good,” Jake said holding her hands and kissing each in turn. “Let’s go make out on the couch.”

“No, no,” Sanai said thinking about what Natalie had said earlier...standing and fully clothed. “I have something to tell you.”

Jake’s mood immediately sobered. “What is it?”

Sanai tried to swallow the lump in her throat, but it didn’t move. “I...uh...I think I need to tell you something.”

“You already said that,” Jake said. Now he was getting nervous.

Sanai felt like an idiot. “Damn it,” she swore, mad at herself for stumbling over those three stupid words. “I love you,” she spat out finally.

“I love you too, Sanai,” Jake said. “That’s what you had to tell me? Why are you so nervous?”

She rolled her eyes, feeling even more idiotic. “I didn’t know if you’d say it back.”

Jake put a hand on her cheek and smiled. “Of course, I’d say it. I told you I loved you last night.”

“That didn’t count,” Sanai said shaking her head. “That was in the middle of sex.”

Jake laughed. “Okay, so maybe I picked the wrong time to say it, but I was saying it to you, not your pussy.” Jake covered her mouth with his in a smoldering

kiss.

“Good to know,” Sanai whispered when they separated. “Now we can go make out on the couch!”

Chapter Nine

Sanai wrapped her plush white towel around her and shut the shower door. She stood in her bathroom dripping onto the worn linoleum floor and smiled. It was Easter Sunday and she was going to her parents' house for church and their traditional meal afterwards. She had called her mother after the first of the year to make amends, one of her many New Year's resolutions.

A few others were go to the gym more often, spend more time with Latoya and T.J., skip a game every once in a while so she could show her face in church, and try to be more honest with herself and Jake...no stupid games. The truce with her mother was the most easily achievable goal on the list.

She wasn't smiling because she was happy to spend the day with her parents, though. She was smiling because Jake was going with her. She couldn't wait to see the look on her mother's face while she was being force to be a polite hostess to this guy she'd stomped under her heel months before. She was sure her mother would be polite this time. She refused to say one word in acknowledgment of the relationship Sanai was carrying on with Jake. That was a good sign. That meant she knew it was real, and so serious that she could not talk shit about it.

Sanai quickly toweled off her hair and walked out of the bathroom, around

the corner, and into her bedroom. She watched Jake, asleep in her bed. He was so gorgeous.

He had cut his blonde hair, just for her mother, so it was no longer hanging in his face. He looked more business man, less surfer dude. She had told him that it wasn't necessary to cut his hair for one day with her mom, but he had insisted and she was glad.

Deep down, she really did prefer the shorter hair. It was easier to gaze into those beautiful blue eyes now that she didn't have to tuck his hair behind his ears first. Jake's broad chest rose with a heavy sigh.

He'd been in Orlando for Spring Training for the past week and gotten an unbelievable tan. He looked like he'd been on the beach in Maui for months. His skin was bronze and the darker color really brought out his muscular form. Jake only slept in boxers so she could see all his glory, including the morning wood that was barely contained in his underwear.

Sanai dried herself and pulled on a small pair of pale pink panties before sitting at the vanity to put on lotion. She spread the white cream along her brown skin and glanced at Jake as he sighed and began to roll around. He was waking up.

He tossed a muscular arm over a stray pillow and pulled it close. Sanai's mind drifted back to February, when he'd told her that he played football in high school and college.

“That explains the muscles,” she had said squeezing one of his biceps, “And that thick-ish neck.” She waved a finger under his chin and laughed. Jake rolled his eyes. “I really didn’t take you for a jock though.”

He pulled her closer in their subway seat and kissed her cheek. “What did you take me for?”

Sanai traced lazy circles in the blonde hair on the forearm that lay in his lap. “You’re a reporter. I thought you were more of a sideliners than a participant.” She smiled slyly. “I thought you were Clark Kent, but you’re telling me you’re Superman.”

“I’m no Superman,” Jake said kissing her again. “I used to be.”

Sanai tucked her head against his chest and slipped her slender hand into his larger one. “You’ll always be Superman. Once you’re that guy, you’re always that guy.”

Jake laughed. “Well, I’ll be that guy just for you.”

Sanai put down her now shiny right leg and began to work on moisturizing the other. Everything is finally working, she thought to herself. Her stomach did a quick flip.

She was a pessimist, suspicious that when everything in her life was going well, something would come along to fuck it up. That’s usually how it went. That was just her luck. It had taken months for her to accept the fact that she was

happy, and happy with Jake. It was as if she could pretend it was nothing to keep the happiness going, but she gave up. She was missing it by trying to push it away.

She'd been full on lovey-dovey and happy for months and she wanted to bask in it, but she was still nervous.

She thought about Lisa and Lionel. They were planning a lavish June wedding in which she was the maid of honor. Sanai was excited for her friends. Lisa was enjoying her happiness and that had actually shown Sanai how to do the same. The two of them would peruse bridal magazines for hours while the guys played video games or watched sports.

Sanai was happy for her best friend. She felt like Lisa deserved everything she was getting. That woman was the best friend, teacher, and person on the planet. She deserved the huge rock she hauled around on her left hand and the wonderful man that had put it on her finger.

Lisa had followed her parents' wish by keeping her virginity until marriage, so her father better pay for anything and everything his daughter wanted on her wedding day...including the whitest dress that could be made by human hands.

Lisa's wedding was going to be pretty big. She had invited at least seventy people, not including her students and their parents. Only a few of the children's parents had returned an RSVP. The first was the Chavez family. The family had recently moved from Puerto Rico. Lisa had spoken Spanish to their daughter

Maribel for the first two months of school; just until the little girl had caught on to the English language. Then, she proceeded to teach Maribel to read and write in English. Lisa was literally, the best, Sanai had thought when her friend called her to excitedly tell her that Maribel had written a story in perfect English with no mistakes.

A saint, Sanai had thought about her friend. She's a fucking saint.

"Hey," Jake croaked from the bed.

"Good morning," Sanai said. "You picked the wrong morning to sleep in; we have to leave in an hour."

Jake moaned and tossed a pillow at Sanai. "You wore me out last night." His voice was hoarse with sleep.

Sanai picked up the pillow and walked it back to the bed. "You weren't complaining last night," she said with a wink. "Don't start now."

"Mmm," Jake groaned rolling over onto his back. "You look hot in that outfit."

Sanai rolled her eyes. "I haven't gotten dressed yet."

"I know," Jake teased. "Those panties are enough of an outfit for me."

Sanai watched his cock jump under the boxers. "Don't start that, Jake." She rushed to pull the pale blue Chloe dress she just bought from the closet. She wrestled off the dry cleaning bag and fumbled with the tiny buttons.

Jake sat up and laughed. “Don’t worry. I’m not going to make us late. Your mom would take a hit out on me.”

Sanai smiled and shook her head. “Good. Now, get your ass in the shower so we can get on the road.”



Sanai stood on the large white veranda that wrapped around her parent’s house. Her mother was in the kitchen making a giant ham and her father had taken Jake to his office so they could play cards. Jake hadn’t taken any time getting in her father’s good graces.

After a polite introduction, they talked baseball, and just like that, Erick Jenkins considered him a new friend. Sanai had been tinkering on the piano in the living room when she had heard a car pulling into the driveway and rushed outside to see who was visiting.

She smiled when she recognized Natalie’s new BMW in the drive and ran to greet them.

“I didn’t know you were coming,” she said before Natalie gave her a crushing hug.

“The kids spent Spring break with Tyrone’s parents. We had to pick them up today, so we just came early and went to church with them. Now we’re here for dinner with my family.”

“I didn’t see you at church,” Sanai said, confused. Tyrone’s family ran in the same social circles as theirs and Sanai knew they went to the same church.

“We were in the balcony,” Natalie explained. “Tyrone’s mother likes to see what every one is wearing without craning her neck.”

“Oh,” Sanai said grinning. “You mean the way mom does?”

“Exactly!”

They laughed and ushered everyone into the house.



Jake watched Sanai laughing and whispering to her niece as they sat on barstools at the island in the gigantic red and white kitchen. Mrs. Jenkins and Natalie were at the stove talking quietly and stirring various pots. Sanai shook her head and her dark tendrils bounced wildly.

The dress she wore was so sexy. It was a color somewhere between white and blue, closer to white; it had a deep v-neck and the sleeves were just triangles that hung on to her narrow shoulders. The skirt was long, it stopped around the middle of her calves and he noticed that she had taken off her heeled sandals so her feet were bare. He caught a glimpse of the pink paint on her toes and sighed.

A heavy hand rested on his shoulder and he almost jumped out of his skin. He turned around and smiled at Tyrese. The two had met before; Sanai had taken him to Sunday dinner at her sister’s house at least four times already that year.

“What’s up, man?” Tyrese said patting Jake’s shoulder again.

“Just watching,” Jake said glancing back into the kitchen. Sanai and Latoya had stopped chatting and were watching them now. Sanai smiled at him and Jake’s heart skipped a beat.

“What are you watching?” Erick Jenkins asked as he turned the corner from his office to join them in the hall.

“The women,” Tyrese said nodding at the scene in the kitchen. He winked covertly at his father-in-law.

“Just mine,” Jake said his voice was dreamy and detached. Sanai had hopped off the stool and was walking towards him. He was mesmerized by the way her hips moved in that flowing dress. She was fluid and sexy as hell. She slipped her hand into his when she reached the spot where he was standing.

“Come on,” she said quietly.

He followed her down the hall, past the staircase that led to the second floor and left into a sun room that was filled with plants and wicker furniture.

“Where are we going?” Jake asked.

“Outside.” Sanai led him out of the sunroom, through the stained glass doors that opened up to a patio. “Look,” she said pointing to a tree a few yards away. It was large, obviously old, with pink and white buds all over.

Jake glanced at the spring blossoms that moderately covered the immense

branches and nodded. “It’s a tree,” he said slowly.

“I used to climb that tree every day when we’d come here to spend time with my grandparents,” Sanai said tightening her grip on his hand and leaning her head on his shoulder. “Every summer I would climb up there and read for hours.”

“Wow,” Jake mumbled. The tree was high, but he could imagine a younger Sanai scurrying up the branches and nesting in a shady spot.

“My mother would freak out whenever she caught me up there,” Sanai continued softly. “I didn’t care, though. That tree was my place. It was more private than my room, since I knew no one else would climb up there to bother me. Then, one year, my mother hired these men to cut off the bottom branches. I was so mad at her. I wouldn’t come out of my room for days. I felt like she’d taken away something and she didn’t even understand how important it was. I told my grandfather I was going to run away and live in the tallest tree I could find.” Sanai laughed to herself.

“Then, he told me that mom was just trying to protect me. She didn’t want me to fall out of the tree and get hurt. I was too stubborn to stay out of it, so she took matters into her own hands. He said she would have had the whole tree cut down if necessary.”

“Ah,” Jake said gazing up into the twisted branches. He understood what Sanai was trying to explain. The tree incident defined the relationship Sanai and

her mother shared. Mrs. Jenkins was the ultimate protector. She'd alter the landscape of her parents' immaculate lawn to keep her daughter safe. Now, she was willing to hurt feelings by being cold and disapproving to any man she didn't find worthy, as long as she could protect Sanai from getting hurt. She was just being protective and Sanai had spent her whole life fighting it.

Jake pulled away from Sanai and placed his hands on her slight shoulders. He let them travel down her slender arms and captured her hands. She gazed up at him and gave him one of those smiles. "I love you," he said simply.

She smiled even brighter and stood on her toes to kiss him. "I love you too."



Beverly Jenkins stood on a stool in front of the kitchen sink and gasped. She was watching Jake and Sanai on the patio. She knew exactly what he'd just said, she'd read his lips. So he loved Sanai; at least that was what he'd said.

"Stop spying, mom," Natalie said from her stool beside Latoya who was stirring cake batter.

"I'm not spying," Beverly said quickly, but she couldn't stop watching the scene in front of her. Jake had Sanai in his arms and they were kissing. She hoped the neighbors couldn't see into the side yard. That would be just perfect, trying to explain that at the next neighborhood committee meeting.

Natalie was standing beside her now. "You are spying," she snapped.

“Leave them alone.”

Beverly gave a humorless laugh and stepped off the stool. “They’re the ones carrying on in my yard.”

Natalie crossed her arms and smiled, watching Jake’s hand squeeze her sister’s butt. He probably thought they were away from the family and therefore had privacy. That was certainly not the case in this house. “Just leave them alone, mom,” she said before she drew the curtains over the small window.



Sanai glanced into the living room at her niece and nephew watching something on television. She recognized the orange blob on the bottom of the screen that meant the show was on Nickelodeon.

“Hey,” she said to the back of two curly heads.

They both turned.

“Where is everybody?” The house was eerily quiet.

“Dad’s in the kitchen. He’s doing dishes or something. Mom went with Gran and Gramps upstairs.” T.J. turned back to the television after giving his report.

“Have you seen Jake?” Sanai interrupted again.

“No,” Latoya said quickly before she too went back to watching the show.

Sanai went to the bottom of the staircase and looked upstairs. Why had

everyone gathered up there? Where the hell was Jake? She had barely seen him after dinner. She'd cleared dishes and he'd disappeared. It was almost five and getting dark. They had to get on the road back to the city soon or she'd be too tired to get up the next day.

She started up the stairs, but halfway up, her mother came rushing down. Sanai saw wetness on her mother's pale face even though she was holding a handkerchief over it.

"Mom?" Sanai said slowly.

Beverly didn't respond, just continued down the stairs. Sanai pressed herself against the wall so her mother could get by. She glanced up and saw Natalie peeking down. Natalie gestured towards their mother's retreating back and Sanai nodded. She'd have to follow her, figure out what was wrong, and try to comfort her.

Sanai hurried back down the stairs and caught up with her mother in the kitchen. Tyrese wasn't in there like the kids had told her.

"What's wrong, mom?" she asked unsure of what else to do or say. "Why are you crying?"

Beverly wiped at her face roughly leaving behind fierce red patches and smudged mascara. Her voice was weak when she finally spoke.

"I'm sorry, honey."

Sanai stepped back. Had her mother just apologized to her? And for no apparent reason? “What are you saying, mom?”

Beverly touched her hand to her forehead dramatically and sighed. “I’m sorry. I’ve been pushing you to do things that weren’t right for you. I wanted you to get married to a certain kind of person. I wanted you to be more like...well...more like me. I haven’t been fair to you and for that, I’m sorry.”

“Where is this coming from?” Sanai almost shrieked. “What’s happened? Are you dying?”

Beverly laughed as fresh tears spilled down her cheeks. “No, I’m not dying. Just go to the living room with the kids. I’ll be right there as soon as I get myself together.”

Sanai nodded and turned to leave her mother alone in the vast kitchen. Her head was swimming with the concept of what had just happened. Something strange was definitely going on.

That feeling increased ten fold when she saw that the kids were no longer watching television when she entered the living room. Everyone was standing around the room with Jake in the middle.

“Where have you been?” she asked staring at him quizzically. He stood with his hands in the pocket of his blue chinos and smiled.

“I was upstairs with everyone else.”

Sanai stared at him through the fog that had settled around her head. She wanted to ask what he'd been doing upstairs, but instead she said, "What did you say to my mother?"

Jake shrugged. "I'll tell you later."

Sanai realized that everyone was staring at her. Her father was sitting in his favorite recliner with an unopened book on his lap. Natalie and Tyrese were holding hands standing beside the recliner and their kids were just behind them. She heard her mother sniffing and glanced back to see her standing in the doorway.

Her confusion melted away when she looked back at Jake.

"Oh!" she exclaimed when she saw him on one knee. "Oh my God." Her eyes filled with tears and a lump rose in her throat.

"You," Jake began, "are the most beautiful, intelligent, fun woman I have ever met. I spent so much time trying to figure out who I was, and with you, I know exactly who I am, or at least who I want to be."

Sanai's mouth hung open as she stared down at him. Jake pulled a blue velvet box from his pocket and opened it. There was a gold ring with a substantial princess cut diamond on it.

"I love you and I know you love me. Sanai Marie Jenkins, will you marry me?"

Sanai nodded and felt the tears slide down her face as she bobbed her head. “Yes,” she whispered. Sanai faintly heard clapping and talking after Jake stood, but all she could concentrate on was the way he held her. His arms pinned her to his chest as she sobbed into his white polo shirt.



Sanai leaned against the door of her apartment and gazed at her new engagement ring. The square diamond glinted even in the weak yellow hallway light. She could barely believe how big and pretty her ring was. She continued staring at it as she heard Jake bound up the stairs. He’d parked her car in the garage two blocks away after dropping her at the stoop.

“What did you say to my mother?” Sanai asked after he caught his breath.

Jake shook his head. “Are you still on that?”

“When we were in the car, you said you’d tell me when we got home. Now, we’re home.”

“Okay, okay.” He took a deep breath and began to recant what had happened in spare bedroom in her parent’s house.

“I asked your sister to help me get your mom and dad upstairs to ask for you hand and...”

“Hold up,” Sanai interrupted. “Nat knew about this?” She waved her left hand wildly.

Jake nodded. "I told her a couple weeks ago."

Sanai frowned. "Why didn't she tell me?" she mumbled to herself.

"I asked her not to tell," Jake answered.

Traitor, Sanai thought.

"So," he continued, "we were all upstairs and I told them that I wanted to marry you. Then, your mom got this look on her face like she was going to rip my throat out with her bare hands. So I told her that I would never be a doctor or anything like that and I may never be rich. I said, I'm just a journalist who may or may not end up at the top of the New York Times bestseller list, but I'd give you all I have and I'd work every day of my life to give you and our kids everything you could ever want."

"That's when she ran out crying?" Sanai asked her eyes wide with wonder.

Jake nodded. "Like a bat out of hell. Natalie tried to stop her, but she was fast. I don't know how old that woman is, but she can still move."

Sanai laughed. "So, how many kids do we have in this fantasy you fed my mom?"

Jake shrugged and ducked his head shyly. "As many as you want, I guess."

Sanai wanted to cry. The idea of having children had never really crossed her mind. She was happy with Latoya and T.J. and now Jake wanted to give her the opportunity to love a child of her own...his child. She pushed her key into the

lock and opened her door. Jake followed her inside.

Jake caught a glimpse of the red blinking "01" in the darkness before Sanai turned on the light. "You've got a message," he said gesturing to the phone on the end table. The same one he'd used the first night they'd met.

"It's probably mom calling to take back everything she said earlier," Sanai said rolling her big brown eyes. "How much do you want to bet?" She gave Jake's rib a quick poke and grinned.

"I wouldn't bet against that," he muttered searching for the remote in the couch.

Sanai pushed the PLAY button on the small black box and waited. Her stomach dropped when she heard the playback.

"Hey, Sanai. It's Sean." Like he really needed to specify, she thought sinking onto the couch. "I was just calling to see how you're doing and...shit." There was a five second pause before the message continued. "Look, Sanai. I fucked up." *No shit, asshole*, she thought hatefully. "As soon as I got back here, I realized that. I keep going to our places and expecting you to be there, waiting for me, but you're not. I thought I'd get over it, but I haven't." Sanai heard something strange in his voice, it was strained. Sean was confident, strong, and cocky as hell. This was the first time he didn't sound that way. "Just...call me...please. You know my number." BEEP!

Jake stood stock still beside the couch. He stared at Sanai throughout the whole message. She sat on the couch back straight, stiff as a statue with an apathetic look. She was trying to seem disinterested in the message, but the pained look on her face when the message started had betrayed her. She spun her engagement ring around on her finger and chewed her bottom lip. *Perfect*, he thought bitterly. It's just perfect that on the day he thought he finally had her...all of her, that asshole would call. Surely he hadn't been leaving these pathetic messages for the past five months.

The silence that followed the conclusive beep at the end of the message was disturbing. The only sounds were the muffled sound of traffic outside and a ticking wall clock in the dining room a few feet away. Sanai continued to fiddle with her ring, using her right index finger to push the stone so the ring swept around and around. She seemed lost in her thoughts and on the verge of tears.

"I'll go," Jake said, his voice cut the uncomfortable silence like a sharp knife. "You probably want some privacy for that call." He hadn't meant the last part to sound contrite or jealous, but it did. He started for the door.

"No!" Sanai practically shouted.

Jake stopped and stared at her. She'd jumped up from where she had been perched on the couch and ran to the other end to stand beside him. She grabbed his hands and gazed up at him, her eyes pleading.

“Don’t go,” Sanai said so softly he almost didn’t hear it over the incessant ticking of the clock in the next room.

There was a lump in Jake’s throat that wouldn’t allow him speech.

“I don’t want to call him,” Sanai said tightening her grip on his hands.

“Don’t go.”

Jake glanced at the answering machine.

“I’ll erase it,” Sanai said putting her head on his chest.

Jake sighed heavily. This was supposed to be one of the happiest days of his life. He felt the cool band of the ring on her left hand press against his knuckle and groaned. “I think you should call.”

“No,” Sanai said flatly, like a spoiled toddler.

“Just tell him you’re engaged now and that he should stop calling.”

“You don’t understand,” Sanai said stepping away from Jake to look into his big blue eyes.

“What don’t I understand?” Jake asked, his voice strained with impatience.

“If I call him, I’ll be doing what he’s asked. I don’t owe him any explanation. I’m not calling him; that’ll hurt his precious pride a lot more.”

Jake felt himself getting upset. “Why do you care? Why is it so important that *you* hurt *him*? I thought you were over him, evidently you still have feelings for him.”

Sanai rolled her eyes. “Were you thinking hate, disgust, and loathing? Those are the only feelings I still have for him. Don’t make this into a thing.”

“It’s already something,” Jake muttered gazing over her head at a spot on the blank white wall. “Six months later and I’m still competing with him.”

Sanai let go of Jake’s hands and walked quickly to the answering machine. She pressed the DELETE button and smiled at the resulting beep. “There’s no competition, Jake. I love you.”

Jake stood silent at his end of the couch, but his features softened. Her words had obviously soothed him.

Sanai walked back to his side. She stood on her toes to kiss his cheek. He leaned in to her slightly and put a hand on her hip.

“Let me show you how much you mean to me,” she whispered before sinking to her knees.

Jake gasped in surprise as she made quick work of his belt, button, and zipper. His pants fell in a heap around his ankles and Sanai quickly pulled down his green boxers. His dick was already getting hard as she wrapped her hands around his pole.

Jake groaned at the sensation of her warm hand wrapped around him. “You don’t have to...”

It was too late. Before he finished the sentence, Sanai had taken his

stiffening prick into her mouth and moaned. Jake's knees threatened to buckle and he grabbed the arm of the couch.

He stared down into Sanai's brown eyes which seemed to be begging him for some kind of sign that he wasn't angry and he wanted her to do exactly what she had sunken to her knees to do.

Jake put his hand on the back of her head and moaned. "That feels so good," he whispered.

Sanai got the message and pulled her head back, letting her tongue trail the bottom of Jake's dick. She could only get some in her mouth, so she wrapped her hand around the bottom.

She took him back into her mouth and began bobbing on his pole. Her saliva glistened as she pumped her hand in rhythm with her head.

She moaned slightly when her lips touched her hand and Jake would tense at the vibrations from her throat. His hand was buried in her curls before long and his eyes and head rolled backward.

Sanai dropped the hand from around his cock and opened her mouth wider to force him further into her mouth. She slowly devoured his hardness until her nose was tickled by his coarse blondish-brown pubic hair. She closed her eyes and moaned again, opening her throat for him.

"Oh shit," Jake hissed. Sanai had never deep-throated him before and her

suddenly swallowing his dick like a porn star felt amazing. She moaned again and Jake felt his orgasm boiling in his balls. He lifted his head to look down at his lover. Her eyes were closed and her full lips were clamped firmly around his pole.

“I’m close,” he whispered loudly. Her eyes fluttered open and she pulled back, freeing him from her throat so she could suck him faster. “Ugh,” Jake grunted loudly when his first shot of cum erupted into her mouth.

Sanai swallowed the wad and the next three spurts, only losing a trickle from the side of her mouth. She pulled off Jake with a loud pop, used her finger to gathering the leaking cum and licked it off like the remnants of a most delicious meal.

Jake pulled up his pants and sunk onto his knees beside her. “You’re the fucking best,” he murmured as he gathered her into his arms.

Sanai smiled and took her now clean her finger out of her mouth. “I know. That’s why you want to marry my black ass!”

Jake smiled and kissed her cheek roughly. “It’s only one reason,” he said giving her another squeeze. “But it’s a damn good reason.”

Chapter Ten

Sanai fussed with the yellow and white daisies pinned in her upswept hair.

Her corkscrew curls framed her face, falling from where they had been pinned on the top of her head. Two tendrils grazed her shoulders. She smiled at the vanity mirror, loving her reflection. She looked like a Barbie doll she'd gotten for her tenth birthday.

The tops of her breasts peeked out of the fitted white bodice covered in delicate cream-colored lace. Her full skirts were impossibly heavy on her knees and she almost regretted the fact that her new ice-blue Faragamo heels were not visible under them. If she had to wear heels, she'd like to be seen in them and get some credit.

"You look beautiful, Lisa," Sanai said turning to face her bridesmaids...or co-maids of honor.

"This dress fit fine yesterday," Lisa moaned incessantly smoothing the satin over her bulging stomach. Her dark eyebrows were drawn together causing a faint wrinkle between them.

"Oh, honey, you're pregnant," Natalie said softly, "That baby is growing by the hour. You're lucky I got that dress zipped at all."

Lisa groaned and pushed her hair forward, over her shoulders. The long

black tresses, fixed in giant barrel curls looked like they belonged on a porcelain doll. She pushed the sleek curls around to position them over her ample cleavage. Her swollen breasts protruded over the top of her dress.

Natalie rolled her hazel eyes and pushed Lisa's hair back behind her shoulders. "Don't hide those things. They might be gone once you have that baby."

Lisa blushed hard, red obvious in her olive complexion. "Everyone is going to stare at them."

Sanai smiled. "I told you before you got married that you were going to be in my wedding. No one told you to get knocked up on your honeymoon."

"I know. I know," Lisa sighed. "But I really wasn't thinking about you while I was on my honeymoon!"

Sanai stuck her tongue out at her best friend and turned back to the mirror. "Maybe if you were doing something other than making that baby, you could have sent a sister a postcard or something!" she retorted over her shoulder.

"Ten minutes!" her mother trilled as she swept into the bride's room in a flourish of burgundy silk. She smiled broadly at the three girls and made a beeline for Sanai. Beverly cupped her daughter's face and sighed. "You look perfect," she whispered fiercely.

Sanai patted her mother's tiny hands as her breath caught. Beverly's eyes

were brimming with unshed tears and intense emotion. “Thanks, mom.”

Beverly stood quickly and breezed over to where Nat and Lisa stood side-by-side. “Oh, Nat, don’t drink too much of this,” she said taking the flute of champagne from her older daughter. “You have to be able to stand through the *entire* ceremony.” Beverly turned to Lisa who instinctively took a step back. “Oh honey, you are glowing and just beautiful, and these are coming in nicely!” She cupped Lisa’s full breasts, gently lifted them, and let them drop again.

Lisa’s mouth fell open and her face flushed crimson. “Thuh-thuh-thank you, Mrs. Jenkins.” Lisa’s hands crept over her recently assaulted chest and stayed there like a protective barrier between her and Sanai’s giddy mother.

“Now, I’m going to take my seat and watch my baby get married!” Beverly disappeared through the door leaving a trail of Chanel #5 and three shocked women staring at the door.

Natalie blinked first. “I think she’s the one who needs to lay off the champagne.”

They all burst into riotous laughter.

Natalie helped Sanai stand up from the chair in front of the vanity and hugged her. “I know you have your new wedding dress and your blue garter and shoes. So I want to let you borrow something old.”

Natalie pulled out a navy jewelry box from her big black “mom” purse.

Sanai gasped when she opened the box. “Are these...”

“Great-grandma’s pearl earrings.”

“I can’t wear these! She willed them to you.”

“I know she willed them to me. That’s why you’re *borrowing* them. Now put them on before mom comes back in here to count down the seconds!”



Jake grinned wickedly when they tumbled into the back of the limo. Sanai’s dress billowed between them as she tried to settle.

“I can’t wait to take this damn thing off,” she grumbled pressing the skirts down.

“I thought you’d say something like that,” he said reaching for a dark blue gym bag on the seat across from them. She unzipped the Nike bag and laughed.

“You brought me clothes!”

“I sure did!” Now, let me help you out of that dress,” Jake said wiggling his dark blonde eyebrows.

Sanai swatted his hand mid-reach. “Don’t even think about it!”

Jake groaned. “It’s too late. I’ve been thinking about *it* for the past week.”

Her mother had insisted they stay apart before the wedding...saving something for their wedding night. Sanai had stayed with Natalie for the week, which wasn’t so bad since Lisa and Lionel had just moved in down the street.

Jake, however, had a tough time of it. He'd called her every night to hear her voice before he went to bed, but it just wasn't the same as having her nestled in his arms. He'd finally resorted to sleeping in her apartment instead of his own so he could at least smell her lotion and shampoo in the bed.

"So you missed me?" Sanai teased.

"Hell yeah! I had to sleep at your place just to be able to fall asleep without you."

"That's really...sad," she said leaning forward to kiss him. Jake took the opportunity to grab her waist and pull her onto his lap. He buried his face in her neck and inhaled...her perfume, her lotion, and shampoo; the combination made him instantly hard.

Sanai could feel it even through her dress and his pants.

"We'll be late for the reception," she mumbled. Jake knew from the husky tone her voice had taken, that her resolve had weakened. Her fingers teased the black of his hair and neck.

"It's our party. We can be late if we want." He kissed her neck and moved to her cheek.

"My mother will be so pissed."

"We'll just tell her that we were held up working on her grandchild."

Sanai's eyes were closed and she nodded. "We have to be really fast, Jake."

He kissed her roughly before she slid off his lap.

“Take the long way,” he barked into the phone before pressing the button to close the partition between them and the driver. His long fingers made quick work of the buttons down her back without popping even one.

Sanai pulled the dress off as he pulled off his tuxedo and threw each piece onto the gym bag. When they were both nearly naked, they collided in a fervent kiss and he pulled her on top of him. He loved to enjoy their love making so if she wanted it quick, she’d have to be in the driver’s seat...so to speak.

Sanai didn’t know if his coaxing had turned her on or if her body had missed him for the past week, but she was more than wet enough and ready to ride. She lowered herself onto his stiff pole and moaned as he filled her. “Fuck,” she hissed into his ear.

Had he always felt that good? Maybe there was something to that whole waiting for it idea...but she couldn’t possibly wait any longer. She began moving on his lap, up and down, back and forth. Jake’s thick, pale fingers dug into her hips as though he was holding on for dear life.

“You feel so good, baby,” he said through clenched teeth. He turned to look out the window for a moment and caught sight of the pine trees passing slowly by the tinted window.

Throaty moans from Sanai made him shut his eyes and try to regulate his

body. It didn't matter how quick this round was, he wasn't getting off until she got off.

Her breaths became choppy and he could tell by her increased rhythm that she was close. With another squeeze and a rough slap on one ass cheek Sanai came with a shudder, French tips dug into his shoulders but he didn't feel anything but the eruption. His seed surged out of him and filled her.

"Fuck," she mumbled again opening her hazel eyes to his steady blue gaze.

Sanai glanced out the window and frowned. They were passing the college campus which meant they'd be at the country club in two blocks. "Shit!" she hissed launching herself off her husband. "Where are my panties?" she practically shrieked searching through the satin and lace pooled on the floor of the limousine.

The only piece of clothing on her was the pale blue garter on her thigh. Jake took a moment to admire her naked brown body before retrieving his own clothes to put himself back together.

Sanai found the white satin thong and pulled it on. She rooted around in the Nike bag and found her clothes. She pulled on the light-colored jeans and was about to pull on the white t-shirt when she noticed the bold black letter on it. The front read, **JUST MARRIED!** in some fancy calligraphy. She smiled and turned it around to see the back. In bold block letters was, **"NOW GET OFF MY BACK!"**

She snickered as she pulled the shirt on, completely forgetting about her

hair that had been coifed for so many hours that morning. She pulled on a pair of white sandals and threw her arms around Jake who had finally gotten himself redressed, without the bow tie.

“Thanks for the shirt. It’s perfect.”

Jake pulled her close and Sanai noticed his cheeks were still a bit flushed. “It fits,” he whispered, “Just like we fit.”

Sanai nodded and attempted to put some of the stray locks falling across his damp forehead back in order. “Oh, by the way, did you get the Wimbledon tickets? We’re spending a month in Europe. All I want is to see the Tour De France and Wimbledon.”

“We’ve got all the tickets, don’t worry. We’ll spend our honeymoon watching Serena play.”

Sanai smiled. “You better not watch her too hard!”

“Look who’s talking,” Jake huffed. “The only reason I agreed to the honeymoon in Europe is because Beckham moved to California!”

“Don’t start talking about Beckham or we’ll have to go a couple more times around the block,” Sanai said with a wink.

Before Jake could respond there was a sharp rap on the window.

“Where the hell have you been?” Natalie practically yelled at the window even though she couldn’t see them through the dark tint.

Jake shook his head. "Are you ready for this?" he asked.

"Hell yeah!" Sanai said clamoring over him and pushing open the door. She began to fuss at her sister for daring to chastise her on her wedding day.

"What does that shirt say?" Natalie shrieked as Jake got out of the car.

"Mom is going to freak!"

All Jake could do was laugh. His new wife shoved her sister aside, looped her arm through his and rolled her eyes. "Let's make an entrance already. Wimbledon waits for no one...or their wedding reception."

"Here I thought I couldn't love you any more," Jake said as they walked into the country club.

The End

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SHORT AUTHOR BIO:

Destiny Wallace grew up in North Carolina. She's been writing stories since the first grade. After graduating, she spent four years in the military. She currently resides in Florida with her husband and children.

Destiny is sure to have more books come out so watch for her books.