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A romantic couple embracing at night. The woman has long dark hair and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The man has dark, slightly messy hair and is leaning in towards her. They are both shirtless. The background is a blurred cityscape at night with warm lights and a dark sky. The overall mood is intimate and sensual.

# Diamond's Seduction

SERENITY KING



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# *Seduction*

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# **Diamond's** *Seduction*

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# Chapter *One*

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“It looks like tonight’s event is going to be a success,” Asia Carrington whispered to her cousin, Diamond Shaw, as they watched one of the most sought-after fashion designers in the United States take the stage and work the crowd like the professional that he was.

“It sure does,” Diamond answered as she waited behind the curtain with the other models, waiting for their cue to go on. “Pierre knows this business inside out. He’s already raised about seventy -five thousand in ticket sales alone. It seems like a lot of people want a preview of his new line, and it’ll be great for the Children’s Cancer Foundation,” she commented before listening as Pierre announced the models.

One by one the models sashayed onto the catwalk showcasing a Pierre exclusive. The crowd went wild. They whistled, catcalled, and clapped. The noise was deafening.

“Rowdy crowd tonight, huh?” Diamond said to Asia.

“No kidding! Seems like it’s mostly that group of men sitting out in front. Wonder where they came from?”

“No idea, but you would think the women with them would calm them down.”

“Not likely—they look like they belong in a club for teens.”

“Duty calls. Let’s go, girl. Let’s go do our thing,” Diamond said as she strutted out onto the catwalk.

As Diamond and Asia reached the center of the platform, all hell broke loose.

“What the hell?” fellow model and longtime friend Tabitha asked, as the group of young, rowdy—and apparently drunk—businessmen stormed the stage and attempted to pull some of the models off the platform.

A young man tried to grab Diamond’s ass, and she instinctively reacted. Punching the asshole in the nose, she knew that she’d probably broken it from the way he crumpled to the ground and by the amount of blood that came gushing out.

Hearing a high-pitched scream, Diamond turned around just in time to see Asia roundhouse kick a guy off the platform in a move that would’ve made her karate instructor proud.

It didn’t take long before the place was in a total uproar. Models and guests alike were screaming. Someone must have called the police because the place was suddenly swarming with uniforms who began arresting people.

“You can’t arrest me...she broke my nose!” the young man yelled, pointing at Diamond.

“Yeah, well she should have broken your ass. You can sleep it off downtown. You’ll have an opportunity to plead your case to the nice judge in the morning,” the officer said, putting handcuffs on him and reading him his rights.

“You’d better be glad this was for charity, or your ass would be in a coma right now,” Diamond said to the bleeding man.

“Did you hear her, officer? She threatened me!” he said pointing at Diamond.

“No, sir I didn’t hear a thing,” the smiling officer winked at her as he led the bleeding man out.

The guy Asia had kicked off the platform was still on the ground. Another officer helped the disoriented man up off the floor, read him his rights, and escorted him and his buddies out of the building to the waiting police cruisers.

Asia came over to join her. “Where’s Pierre?” Diamond asked.

“On the phone,” Asia said. “Apparently one of the sponsors of tonight’s event is a good friend of Pierre’s and has offered to fly us back to Atlanta on his jet.”

“Thank God! Let’s get our things together and get outta here,” Diamond said.

“Okay.”

The next morning, Diamond reflected on the trouble at the fashion show the night before. What a mess! At twenty-eight, she was tired of even doing occasional modeling assignments. Asia could have it. Although, she had a feeling Asia was finished with modeling as well considering she had other outside business interests.

Thankfully, she only had one more show to do: a swimsuit layout for Joslyn London of JL designs. Not only were Joslyn’s layouts *hot*, she was a good friend, which is why she’d agreed to do this one last promotional show as a favor. After the swimsuit shoot, Diamond was going to concentrate on building her new baby—Distinctive Investigations. Distinctive Investigations came into existence due to the combined efforts of her, Asia, and Alayna. Deciding that they’d wanted to go into the investigation field, they’d gotten together a business plan, taken training and pooled their resources. They’d all trained for two years, doing everything from serving subpoenas to chasing down leads, and three years later, Distinctive Investigations was a reality.

Though her family owned several business ventures, Diamond had taken an interest in their investigation business much to her parents’ dismay. If

she was going to do it she was going to get the best training. For two years, she had trained under the best there was in the business—her brother, Chad. For the first full year and a half she'd been nothing more than a glorified secretary, even though she had the training to be much more. Alas, her days of taking orders from Chad were now over.

The only bright spot in working with her family was the hot male who helped Chad out on difficult cases—Raferty Carmichael. Besides being Domino Longhorn's right-hand man, "Rafe" was also *one fine hunk of a man*. Rafe was six feet, three inches, two hundred and fifty pounds of man with goldish-tan skin and wavy, black, shoulder-length hair, which he usually tied back. His long, black lashes covered a pair of the deepest blue eyes she had ever seen. The man was simply gorgeous. If she hadn't caught him staring at her on more than one occasion she would've thought that he didn't know she even existed. Nothing had come of his occasional staring though—at least not yet.

Asia's voice pulled her out of her Rafe-filled fantasies. "Are you as tired as I am?" Asia asked as she plopped down in the chair in front of Diamond's desk.

Diamond started at the sound of her cousin's voice. "Ugh! I need a gallon of coffee. I can't believe we were there that long because of those fools. Imagine

coming to a charity event only to act like idiots,” Diamond seethed. “And that jerk who tried to grab my ass! I should’ve broken more than his nose.”

“Girl, that was the most ghetto show I’ve ever done. Pierre was flapping around like a chicken with his head cut off saying, ‘Omigod! Omigod!’ For a minute I thought ‘Omigod’ was the only word he knew. And I thought Fredriko’s modeling gigs were bad. We’ve never had anything like that happen at a show before.” Asia said, wiping tears from laughing so hard.

Diamond joined in on Asia’s laughter. “And I’m glad for that. Though I enjoy New York, I’m glad to be back in Georgia. Speaking of chaos, you, cousin, are one seriously twisted individual. Why the hell were you asking the cop for his handcuffs, Asia?”

Asia wiggled her eyebrows and smiled. “Trust me. Every girl needs a solid pair of handcuffs. Now if I could just find a man to go with the handcuffs, I’ll be just fine.”

Diamond shook her head at her cousin. With her exotic looks, she often wowed the Paris and New York runways. Like herself, Asia was very selective when it came to men. People automatically assumed that if you were a model, you were fast and loose, on drugs, or both. Not the case with Diamond and Asia—their parents had taught them both values and morals. The

saying, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything” had stuck with them.

Diamond shook her head at her cousin. “Girl, you are too much. All of your gimmicks are going to get you into some serious trouble one day.”

“Me? Hmmm, I saw at least two of those cops slip you their phone numbers,” Asia commented. “As a matter of fact, I saw a few of the patrons slip you their numbers—women as well as men.” Asia laughed. “It’s the boobs and that butt of yours, girl—gets them every time.”

Diamond gave Asia a look of disbelief. “That is so not funny, Asia. Besides, you already know who I’ve set my sights on.”

A male voice cut in. “No, it’s not funny at all. You both could have been seriously hurt. Where was security? And just who have you set your sights on?”

Diamond let out a gasp of surprise at the voice...*his voice*. She was very familiar with that voice, but not as familiar as she wanted to be. The deep timbres of his voice held her spellbound—a voice that spoke of satin sheets, silk scarves, and the two of them tangled together. She spun her head around and stared at him standing there in the middle of her office doorway, wearing worn jeans, a black t-shirt stretched tight over a solid muscular chest, and sneakers. She couldn’t speak to save her life. *Wow. Just wow.*

“Rafe,” she whispered, her voice so low she could’ve been speaking to herself.

“That’s my name. Now answer the question, Diamond,” he commanded.

“Which question, Raferty?” Diamond asked, stressing his name. Composing herself, she sat down quickly in her swing-back desk chair and looked up into his deep blue eyes, cutting her cousin, Asia, a quick look from the corner of her eye. As usual her cousin had her toothpaste smile on her face. Rafe walked towards her desk, sat on the edge, and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Both of them,” he responded, gazing up at her.

“As for the security, I have no idea. As for the other, that’s for me to know and you to find out, Raferty,” she smarted, trying to hide her nervousness by giving him the same intense look that he was giving her.

“Don’t worry, I intend to,” was his reply before he turned to acknowledge Asia. “Hello, Asia. How are you today? Oh no, don’t answer that. I know how you are. You were in New York being pawed by a bunch of sex-starved drunks with your cousin Diamond,” he said sarcastically.

Asia didn’t take offense. She just laughed at his hand and face gestures. “I’m fine, Rafe. How are you, Handsome? Catch any bad guys lately?”

"I'm good, Asia. And I'm also aware of what you're trying to do, young lady," he informed her with a smile.

Asia quirked her brow. "Really? Just what am I trying to do, Rafe?"

\* \* \*

Rafe sighed at the two cousins. They both knew full well what he was talking about but were trying to avoid answering his questions. Lord, trying to keep track of these two was going to give him heart failure. He turned back to Diamond. "Well, once your brothers find out about what happened last night, they're going to feel much better about their sister running an investigation company. You two need bodyguards yourselves—how are you going to guard someone else? Part of an investigator's job is to protect your client; which may include being his or her security."

"I don't need a bodyguard," Diamond replied.

"I say you do," Rafe replied in a controlled voice.

"And I say I don't. But if I did, are you volunteering for the position?" she shot back, head tilted to the side, the challenge evident in her eyes.

Rafe gave her a bold stare. "Is that a challenge, Diamond? Be very careful what you ask for, sweetheart. You just might get it."

Hot damn! She hadn't expected that. Smiling up at him, she flipped her head, sending her neatly trimmed hair in a seductive wave across her shoulders.

"Oh really, when?" was Diamond's blunt, yet seductive reply. She was challenging him and they both knew it. How far she could go had yet to be determined. At least she had gotten a reaction out of him. And his reply was getting a reaction out of her. An, "I may have to go home and change my panties" reaction. Shit yeah! She was being bold, but she had a feeling that he was worth it.

Blue eyes challenged light brown eyes. Rafe watched her for a second more before he leaned across her desk and whispered in her ear. "If you play with fire, Brown Eyes, you're bound to get burned."

His seductive voice sent a command directly to her clit, which started to pulse like a heartbeat. Diamond turned her mouth towards his ear and murmured, "Are you fire, baby? Or are you just blowing a lot of smoke?" Then she swiped his ear with her tongue.

"Wow! You two need a hose," Asia fanned herself as she rose from her chair. "Should I leave and come back?" she asked, smiling.

Rafe was the first to recover. Hell, he'd forgotten that Asia was still in the room. "No. I came by to make sure that you two were all right. I have to get going. I'll

stop by later in the week.” He sat up and slid off Diamond’s desk. “To answer your question, Brown Eyes, I’m a hot-blooded, Native American man. I don’t blow smoke—I make it happen.” He winked at her.

Rafe’s words excited Diamond even more. She tried to hide her anticipation as they continued to stare each other down, neither conceding. Diamond’s breathing was rapid. Rafe appeared as calm as ever.

From the look on her face, Asia was finding the byplay very amusing. Asia gave her cousin one of her famous *I got you* looks. “Well I guess that settles it, then. I hate to tell you this Rafe, but Diamond and I won’t be here the rest of the week,” she said.

Diamond frowned at her cousin. “We won’t?”

Asia shook her head, “No, Diamond, we won’t. Did you forget we have to be in Louisiana, by Thursday?” Asia gave Diamond a conspiratorial wink.

Diamond gave her cousin a questioning look, but played along anyway. Of course, Asia had something up her sleeve. Asia wouldn’t be Asia if she didn’t. “Of course I didn’t forget. I’m already packed and ready to go when you are,” Diamond replied.

Rafe watched the two of them. “What are the two of you up to now? What’s in Louisiana?” Diamond gave Asia an anxious look. “Ah...ah—.”

“It’s a skip trace. We were hired to locate someone. We got a tip that he may be in Louisiana,” Asia said in a hurried voice.

“He— as in a man?” Rafe questioned.

“Yes, why?” Diamond responded.

“Is he dangerous?” Rafe asked.

Diamond shrugged, trying to appear nonchalant, although on the inside she was very excited. Rafe was sounding all protective-like. “Could be, since he skipped after being charged with spousal abuse,” was her flippant reply.

Rafe looked at Diamond through half-closed eyelids as if she had lost her mind. His customary frown was more prominent as he spoke in slow, even tones to Diamond. “So let me get this straight. Two supermodels gone private eye plan on traveling to Louisiana to locate a wife beater. Is that about right, Diamond? If it is, you can bet your sweet ass that neither you nor Asia will be traveling to Louisiana alone.”

Diamond’s heartbeats accelerated. She had never witnessed this side of Rafe before. He looked like he was getting ready to go into full pissed-off mode. Diamond didn’t skip a beat. “That is the plan, Rafe. It’s what we do, you know. We’re investigators. Investigators investigate. And who’s going to stop me

and Asia from going to Louisiana? Surely not you,” she said in a bored tone. *Come on, big guy! Go for it.*

“Damn straight. Give me the guy’s name.”

“No,” was all Diamond said. “This is Asia’s and my case. If I give you the name, you’re going to try and work it yourself.” Diamond hoped he wouldn’t question her further. They did have a skip trace in Louisiana, but he wasn’t a wife beater. He was wanted on insurance fraud in a civil lawsuit being handled by her sister, Dominique. But hell—why not Louisiana? She would just give Dominique a call to let her know that they would take it and to get the particulars.

\* \* \*

Rafe sighed. “Listen, Diamond, if this guy beat his wife, he won’t think twice about hitting you or Asia. Not only that, but this sounds like an intentional skip. If this guy doesn’t want to be found he’s not going to take kindly to being found. Be wise—give it to one of Chad’s men to handle. I’d do it myself but I’m working something else. You and Asia are not trained enough to handle these kinds of situations. They can go bad real fast,” he pleaded, in a final attempt to make her see reason.

“Your concern is noted. We will take care. Thank you.” She gave Rafe a dismissive nod before turning to

Asia. "Are we leaving from your place or mine?" she asked.

"Yours. Now I need to get out of here. I need to get some work done before we head out," Asia replied. Walking over to the door where Rafe still stood, Asia stood directly in front of him and whispered, "Way to go, big guy. You pissed her off. Move it or lose it." Stepping around him, she left Diamond's office.

Rafe stepped aside, bothered by Asia's words. He didn't want Diamond thinking he didn't believe she could do the job. He gave Diamond a quick glance. Yep, she was definitely mad. He could tell by the tight lines around her beautiful full lips. *Well, hell.* He needed to do something. "Diamond—"

"Goodbye Raferty," she said, cutting him off.

Not wanting to upset her more, he turned to leave, calling over his shoulder, "I'll speak to you before you leave, Diamond. Be sure of that, hon."

Diamond snickered. "Now, why would you do that?" she whispered, then looked up at an empty doorway.

\* \* \*

Rafe walked out of Diamond's office right into Asia and Alayna. The secretary Valerie must have gone to lunch because she wasn't at her desk. Looking at the

two of them, he wondered why three beautiful women wanted to be private investigators? It was beyond his comprehension. There were real creeps out there, and gorgeous women would be an added bonus for some pervert's pleasure. He'd been secretly keeping tabs on them from the day their doors had opened. No one but Domino knew that he had taken it upon himself to look out for the ladies.

Rafe knew that if he had told Chad or Asia's brothers about the dangerous assignment, they would've tried to close the girls down. He didn't want that. Rafe wanted them to succeed—just not to take on a lot of dangerous cases. Nor did he want to see any of them hurt.

"So, Rafe, did you convince Diamond not to go to Louisiana?" Asia asked.

Rafe looked at the smiling Asia and then at the equally smiling Alayna. "No. And why do I have the feeling that this was your idea, Asia?" Rafe asked her.

"No, it wasn't my idea, Rafe. We run a legitimate business, whether you want to acknowledge it or not. We have clients who hire our services. If we take their money, then we have to provide the service; and if I must say so myself, we are damned good at what we do. Simple as that," she informed him, still smiling.

"That's right, bud. We are legitimate business women," Alayna piped in, and added some eye rolling

and a twist of her neck, for special effects. "So deal with it, Bubba."

Rafe's lips twitched as he tried to hide his smile at Alayna's antics. Asia had no such problem. She let out a full-bellied laugh, then mimicked Alayna's actions.

"Real mature, you two, real mature," Rafe said. "I'm totally convinced now that all of you need to be under lock and key, not out and about chasing bad guys. So are you two going to give me the name of this guy, or do I have to find out myself?" Now he was the one doing the smiling. They both knew he had his own way of finding out things.

"We don't scare, Rafe," Asia said. "Besides we already got someone to accompany us on our trip. So take that, Mr. I-Spy," Asia retorted.

"You got somebody to accompany you since you left Diamond's office?" he asked. "Yeah, right."

"Nope, it was before. Diamond just didn't tell you about it because you would want to protect our virtue and all. Trust me, Rafe, Diamond and I will be in very capable *hands*," Asia said with a suggestive smirk.

"What capable hands?" Rafe asked, not liking this turn of events. If Asia was referring to Diamond and another man, they could both forget it. That wasn't happening in this lifetime or the next.

The outer door chimed and a tall, well-built, handsome Hispanic man walked in. Rafe, curious, sized him up.

\* \* \*

Asia knew she had to talk fast lest George blow her cover. “Hey, George! What’s up? You’re a bit early, aren’t you? We aren’t leaving until early tomorrow morning. Is Raphael with you?” Asia rushed on, not letting George speak. “Where are my manners? George, let me introduce you to Raferty Carmichael. We call him Rafe. Rafe, Geor—”

Before the man could utter a single word, Rafe chimed in. “Tell Diamond I’ll pick her up from her house. She’s riding with me. I’ll give her a call in a bit.” Turning to George, Rafe looked the man directly in the eyes. “I don’t know what Asia’s doing, but Diamond’s riding with me. If you value your health, you won’t go near her.” With that he turned on his heels and left, muttering to himself in his native tongue on his way out.

Asia and Alayna looked at one another and cracked up laughing.

“Well, damn,” Asia said.

“Why do I have the feeling that you two just did something bad?” a very confused George commented.

“Who was that dude? And why was he threatening me about Diamond? What are you two playing at?”

“Oh, nothing,” Asia said.

“Asia, your nothings always mean something. What’s up?” George asked Alayna.

“You, cousin, came in at just the right time,” Alayna said.

George gave them both a suspicious look. “For what, exactly?” he asked.

“Never mind. What’s up?” Alayna asked him.

“Nothing. I was in the area and wanted to see if you wanted to have lunch with me,” he said.

“Shame on you, you know how much I love food. Of course, I want to have lunch,” Alayna said. “Just let me get my bag.”

“I know how much you love *free* food. Leave the bag—you won’t need it. Asia, are you joining us?” he asked.

“Not this time, George. I have some planning to do with my cousin. You guys enjoy. Thanks for the offer.” Asia turned in the direction of Diamond’s office to let her know about the latest change.

Asia walked into Diamond’s office without knocking. “Di, I have to—” Asia stopped short at the raise of Diamond’s hand. Diamond was on the phone with a huge grin on her face. Asia walked in and sat on

the edge of Diamond's desk and waited for Diamond to finish her call.

"No problem. Yes, I hear you. I'll be ready when you get there. Five is good. Bye," Diamond said and hung up the phone. "You'll never believe what just happened. That was—"

"Rafe," Asia finished for her. "Yeah, I figured as much. A little competition works every time. George walked in and I kind of hinted that he'd be taking us to Louisiana."

Diamond was barely able to contain her excitement. "So that's why he kept going on and on about George," she said, shaking her head and smiling at the same time. "You are so bad, Asia. Thanks, cuz! I owe you one. Now, all I need to do is call Dominique, to make sure the case is still open." She'll have a million questions once I tell her Rafe is going with me and make sure he doesn't find out that it's not as dangerous as we made it out to be."

"Girl, work that man like you worked the runway, and he won't have time to worry about that or anything else. By the time he figures out what's going on, he should be good and whipped. Whoosh," she said making whipping sounds with her mouth."

"You are too much, Asia. I feel sorry for the man that you sink your hooks into. Anyway, I'm leaving early to go pack and get a waxing. I can't seduce a guy

with a bush down below, now can I?” Diamond laughed at the disgusted look on Asia’s face.

“Ewww! That’s just nasty, Diamond. Didn’t you get a wax for the show last night?” Asia retorted.

“No, I didn’t. I wasn’t modeling a bathing suit, so I didn’t bother.” Diamond grabbed her handbag from her desk drawer. “Anyway, I’m out of here. Call my cell if you need me.” Getting up out of her chair and moving from behind her desk, Diamond walked to her door to leave.

Asia gave her cousin a sly look. “I’ll stop by your house tonight when I leave here. I have a bag of goodies for you.”

“Oh my goodness, Asia! Should I be scared?”

Grinning, Asia commented. “No, girl. I have the perfect thing for *Diamond’s Seduction*. We got a *Diamond’s Seduction*. Hey, it’s *Diamond’s Seduction*.” Asia started singing Diamond’s Seduction, snapping her fingers and dancing around Diamond’s office.

Diamond couldn’t help but crack up laughing at Asia’s actions, and she started singing with her. Diamond was still singing Diamond’s Seduction all the way to her car. She’d decided to wait until she got in the car to call her sister.

Taking out her cell phone she dialed her sister’s number and opened her car door and got in.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Dee,” Diamond said, using her sister’s nickname. “It’s Diamond.”

“I know who you are sister dear. What’s up?”

“Is that case with the skip still available?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Because I want it.”

“What made you change your mind?”

“Raferty Carmichael.”

“Huh? What does Rafe have to do with anything? I mean other than you having the hots for him?”

“Well it’s like this...” Diamond went on to tell Dominique everything that had transpired earlier in her office.

“Lordy, Diamond, you couldn’t just ask the man out on a date? In any event, I’ll send the particulars to your home fax. I only have the civil part of this and that’s all I want you to handle. Share it with Rafe.”

“You got it. I’ll be home in a little while. Love you sis. Talk to you later.”

“Love you too. Be careful and keep detailed reports. Talk to you later.”

“Okay,” Diamond said and disconnected the call.

\* \* \*

In the parking lot of Distinctive Investigations, Rafe got into his Yukon, took his cell phone off the clip, and placed a call.

“Speak.”

“Something’s come up. I need to take a few days. See if Tristan or Sinjin are available to finish the assignment,” Rafe growled into the phone, still livid at the thought of Diamond traveling in a car with “pretty boy George” and whoever the hell Raphael was.

“Oh.”

There was a long pause on the other end of the phone. Rafe knew that Domino was waiting for him to give him more information. There had never been a time when he hadn’t completed an assignment. After all, he was Domino’s right-hand man—but more than that, he was his brother. No one knew this, and Rafe preferred it that way. Domino had enough to deal with as it was. Gossips and tabloids were always looking for something on rich people, and especially on those who society considered minorities.

“Rafe, you still there?”

Rafe pulled himself back to the issue at hand. “Yeah, I’m still here. I’m on my way to Louisiana,” was his blunt reply.

“Oh?”

“Yes, Oh. Diamond and Asia have it in their heads to track down a wife-beater who’s supposedly in

Louisiana. And Diamond is under the assumption that she's taking a long road trip from Georgia to Louisiana in the close quarters of a car with some characters named George and Raphael. I met George and he's not going anywhere near Diamond. Neither him nor this Raphael person."

Rafe heard laughter on the other end of the phone. Deep laughter. *What the—*"You want to fill me in on the joke, Dom?" Rafe asked.

"Man, you had me thinking...never mind," Domino said, the laughter still evident in his voice. "So you got a wake-up call where Diamond is concerned, huh? Does Diamond know you're driving her to Louisiana?"

"Yeah, I just called her to tell her I'd be driving her, and surprisingly, she agreed. I thought she was pissed off with me. I told her she's not going anywhere with that George guy," Rafe barked. Every time he thought of George, he wanted to hurt somebody. That guy was too damn good looking.

"I can see why you want to get close to Diamond, Rafe—she's some looker! I know you've been keeping tabs on the three, but I have yet to meet Asia and the other one."

"Diamond and Asia are similar in appearance, only Asia's features are more exotic. Unfortunately, Asia is an extremely gorgeous brat who doesn't realize

the affect she has on men. I can see why her brothers are so protective of her. She still hasn't told them that she's not modeling full-time anymore, but is now playing cops and robbers with the bad guys. So keep it under wraps. Alayna is beautiful as well, and a little more level-headed than the two cousins, since she's on the track training most of the time. She's sort of a silent, but active, partner. Now I have to go pack for my little excursion to Louisiana. Keep your cell handy; I might need bail money if George shows up," Rafe replied.

"You have money, Rafe. You and Diamond be careful and let me know if you need my help with anything."

"Will do."

"Talk to you soon."

"Bye," Rafe said disconnecting his call.

## Chapter Two

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Diamond woke with a start to the ringing of her telephone. She glanced over at her alarm clock: 5:45 a.m. on Wednesday morning. “Oh shit!” she said quickly picking up the phone. “Hello.”

“I’m on my way. I should be there in about ten or fifteen minutes,” Rafe informed her.

“Okay. See you when you get here,” she replied and hung up. “Shit! Shit!” she cried, as she raced to the shower. She had ten minutes to get showered and dressed. Thank goodness she was already packed. Asia had come by and helped her pack, dropping a bunch of lingerie in her Luis Vuitton carryall. She had also put a bunch of kinky sex toys in there that Diamond had no intentions of using. She had no idea what some of that shit was, but leave it to Asia to know. That girl worried her sometimes.

Diamond showered and moisturized her body in record time. She quickly pulled on some sexy panties, her lace support bra to hold her D-cups, a pair of cut-off blue jean shorts, two tank tops, and a pair of slippers. Diamond was pulling her shoulder-length hair up into a ponytail atop her head when she heard her doorbell ring. “Ta-da! Ready in record time. Modeling

training does come in handy,” she whispered, giving herself a quick once-over. “Okay, Diamond’s Seduction 101 coming up. Yippee!” She yelled out, “Be right there!” as she went to answer the door.

Diamond pulled open her door and was met by the handsome face of Rafe. Dang! The dude was *hot*! His hair was hanging long around his shoulders. She had never seen him with it loose, and it took all of her willpower not to walk up to him and run her fingers through the long, wavy strands. Pulling herself out of her reverie, she said, “Hi, come on in. My things are in my bedroom. You can have a seat in the living room while I get them.” She stepped aside so that he could enter her home.

“I’ll get them. Just show me where they are,” he replied.

*Yes!* she thought. Her plan was starting to work. There was a reason why she had worn the cut-offs—they accented her full hips and long legs. When she walked in front of him toward her bedroom, she made sure she put an extra wiggle in her hips. *Deal with that, handsome!*

\* \* \*

Rafe was floored when Diamond opened the door, her mocha skin flawless, sans make-up. Her long

legs in cut-offs seemed to go on for miles and miles. *Lord have mercy!* When she turned around and presented him with a full view of her gorgeous backside in those tight shorts, a groan slipped past his lips and his cock began to swell. He hoped she hadn't heard him. He looked down at the front of his jeans and whispered, "Down, boy...all in good time."

"I'm sorry, did you say something?" Diamond turned to look at Rafe.

He quickly recovered. "Yes, I wanted to know if there was any particular reason why we're driving to Louisiana and not flying."

"I did so much flying when I was modeling full-time that now I prefer to drive where I'm going if I can. Besides, I like the scenery," she said with a smile, then glanced over him from top to bottom, noticing the bulge in his jeans, before discreetly turning away. Mm hmm. *Check.*

"Well, let's get going. We have a long ride ahead of us," he said. "Do you want to get coffee before we get on the highway?"

She turned her head back to look at him again. "Yes, please. I haven't had any yet this morning."

"Neither did I, sweetheart," he responded with a double innuendo.

Oh goodness. He is so mine. "Oh, really?" she smirked.

“Yes, really, and we have to go, you little she-devil. We have a long drive ahead. Where are the bags?” he asked as they came to a stop in her bedroom.

“Over there by the bureau,” she advised him.

He gave her room the once-over. “Nice room,” he said, taking in its serenity.

“Thank you. This is my sanctuary. I think it’s the best room in the house. It feels good after living from hotel to hotel. I feel like I’ve finally established some roots.”

“Grab a sweater. It might get chilly in the truck from the air conditioning,” he suggested.

“I have a lightweight jacket...I’m ready,” she said, as she grabbed her jacket and garment bag from her bed.

“Hold on a second, Diamond,” he said from behind her.

She turned around to face him. “What’s wrong?” she asked, puzzled that he had placed her bags on the floor again.

“This,” he said, as he pulled her into his embrace and captured her lips in a passionate, yet brief, kiss, before pulling away and picking her bags up again. She was breathing hard, trying to get some air back into her lungs, when he pulled away.

“Wow! What was that for?” she murmured.

“Just a little taste of what you’re in for if you keep teasing me. Don’t think I didn’t notice that extra pep you put in your step in the foyer. After you,” he said with a smile.

\* \* \*

Diamond set her alarm and locked up her house while Rafe put her bags in his truck. When she finished, he was standing at the passenger door, holding it open for her. “Thank you, sir,” she sassed.

“You’re welcome, ma’am,” he tossed back as he helped her into the truck, then walked around to his side of the truck, got in, started it, and pulled out of her driveway.

“Any particular place you want to get coffee from?” he asked her.

“Doesn’t matter, as long as it’s decaf,” she replied.

“You’re in a hurry to get fake coffee? Unbelievable,” he said, shaking his head.

“It’s not fake coffee. I’m just used to a certain diet. Granted, it’s not as regimented as it used to be. Still, old habits die hard. One of the things that I hated about modeling was not being able to eat certain things. I’m a southern girl all the way and I love my food, but I do watch what I eat. I run a five-minute

mile three days a week, work out in the gym, and I have a private instructor in martial arts. Asia and I, Asia's sister, Alisha, and my sister, Dominique, all studied Tae Kwon Do.

Rafe whistled through his teeth. "I'm impressed."

"You should be. I'm the hotness," she teased.

And he laughed. "What made you want to start your own agency? Why not stay and work with Chad?" he asked.

"Because I wanted to learn the business. Most PIs are former military, cops, or at least bodyguards. Chad had me pushing papers for a year. I did learn a lot about the business working with him, but he would never let me do any real gritty investigative stuff. Although Chad trained me well, he was far too protective of me. I was more afraid that he would get shot or something worrying about me. Forget about letting me handle a case on my own. Asia and I learned the business hands on by going on stakeouts with some of our cop buddies. I already knew how to handle a gun. Being a country girl I've handled one since my teens. I went to the shooting range every chance I got to perfect my technique. Now I'm as good a shot as Chad."

"In the modeling business I learned to be independent. You grow up fast in the business. I was

traveling too much to sit in a traditional classroom, so I took classes online, taking my laptop with me everywhere I went, and graduated with a degree in criminal justice. Then I went on to get my master's, all done online."

"Wow, I'm impressed. You've accomplished a lot. Even taking classes online, it still had to be hard on you physically and financially," he said.

"It was tough, but I pulled it off. My family supported me when I first began to model, but ever since I started making my own money, I've been taking care of myself financially. I love my brothers, but I love my independence as well. I love being my own boss," she replied with a smile.

"I can understand that. How in the world did you get Asia and Alayna involved?"

"I applied for my PI license with Dominique's help, developed a business plan, presented it to Asia and Alayna, and they both signed on to back me as well as work in the business. Since we're all financially stable, we didn't have to get a loan. And that, as they say, is history," she replied.

"Wow, you're one amazing woman. Beautiful and intelligent. I just wish you would've focused on a different career. This can be a dangerous business at times. It's not at all like the television shows where the PI has a bummed-out office and basically does

nothing. I know some of the things you and Asia have been doing, and all I'm saying is, be selective with your clients and be careful. I'm serious, Diamond, 'cause if anything happened to you, I'd fucking kill somebody," he said seriously.

"Oh."

"You want to stop up at the diner to get coffee?" he asked.

"My goodness, we've been driving for an hour already. No, that's okay. The conversation is so good, I don't need the coffee," she said.

"Sure?" he asked.

"I'm sure. Let's keep going. I can drive some when you get tired, you know."

"We'll see. If I get tired, you can drive. Deal?"

"Deal."

Rafe drove another three hours before stopping to fill the truck with gas. She got out to stretch her legs. Leaning against the truck, she released her hair from her ponytail and shook it loose. She ran her fingers through her hair, massaging her scalp in the process.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing. I just feel a little headache coming on," she said.

"You're probably hungry. There's a restaurant not far from here. We'll stop and get something to eat," he said.

"Cool. I am hungry." Her stomach growled in confirmation.

Rafe laughed at Diamond's horrified expression. "That settles it. We're going to get some food."

"How embarrassing," she said, as she got back into the truck.

"Not at all. You're hungry. I should've stopped sooner. I'm sorry. That was thoughtless of me," he apologized.

Rafe drove another half hour or so before he found a place he thought was good enough to take Diamond into. He had informed her that he wasn't taking her into any old dive. They stopped at a mom and pop type place called Odella's. He parked the truck and turned to look at her. "It doesn't look like much, but it's really good. I've eaten here several times while traveling. The food is good and the service is excellent."

"Hey, I'm fine with it. Let's go eat. I'm starved," she told him, and went to open the door to get out.

"Hold on, Diamond. I'll help you out."

"I can get out myself, Rafe."

"I know you can. Just wait right there, okay. I'm trying to be a gentleman, so let me."

“Okaay,” she sassed, but waited for him nonetheless.

Rafe opened the door and let her walk in ahead of him. They were met by a very attractive woman who looked to be in her mid-forties. Her dark skin was flawless, as was her toothpaste-white smile.

“Hey there, stranger. Haven’t seen you around here in a while. Now I know why,” she said giving Diamond a sly smile. “Are you keeping him busy, sugar?” Not waiting for an answer, she said, “Come on, you two. I’ll sit y’all in a booth towards the back. We’re about to get our lunch crowd and they can get a little rowdy, especially if they see a pretty lady, and I don’t need you incitin’ no riot in my place. Pretty thing like you should be a model.” she said to Diamond.

“Why, thank you.”

“Yep, you look just like that Jasmine woman I saw on the cover of Sasha’s Glam magazine.”

“And this guy,” she indicated Rafe with her thumb. “This scoundrel always gets the ladies fired up when he comes in here. Just about had to fire one of my waitresses last time he was here—did more flirting than she did waitressing. Here you go. Somebody will be over to take your order in minute. I’m Odella, by the way.”

"I'm Diamond. Nice to meet you, Odella," she said, meaning it. The woman was nice—very outgoing and friendly.

"Same here, sugar. Enjoy. I'll see you two when you check out. Trina will be over to take your orders." She placed their menus in front of them and walked away to help another customer.

"She seems like a nice lady. I hated not telling her that I'm Jasmine. I don't use my real name when modeling. Thank you for not saying anything," Diamond said, looking around the eatery. "How did you find this place?"

Rafe nodded his head. "I was involved in a case close to here and found this place by accident. A very close friend and business associate of mine, Maximillien Toussaint, lives in Louisiana. I've driven down this way on more than one occasion. It's a nice joint. Like she said, it can get kind of rowdy, but all-in-all, the people are pretty friendly." Picking up his menu, he asked, "You see anything you like?"

Giving him a sly glance, she murmured, "Hmmm, do I ever." She grinned, then winked at him.

Rafe's blue eyes turned dark, smoky, and full of promises. "Stop playing, Diamond. Trust me, I don't have a problem with taking you to that ladies room over there and giving you what you're asking for," he

whispered, indicating with a head nod the restroom located at the far end of the eatery.

“Promises, promises,” she sassed back.

Rafe leaned over the table to get directly in her face and spoke softly against her lips. “Last warning, Brown Eyes. Either you cool it, or the only thing you’ll be leaving this building full of is this big fucking Native American’s cock. Now if that’s what you want, then let’s go. I’ll put it on you so hard and so good, you’ll be walking bow-legged for the remainder of the week or not at all. I don’t have a problem with carrying you out of here. But make no mistake about it, you will be well and truly fucked, and everyone in here will know it. If that’s okay with you, lead the way. Let’s do this,” he said with a quick kiss on her lips, then leaned back in his seat, his eyes holding hers captive, and a smirk on his face.

Diamond’s eyes stretched wide from the shock of his erotic word and his sexy voice, all husky and full of promise. A promise, she knew, he had every intention of following through with. Hell, she didn’t feel threatened by the seductive words—she was turned on. She was fiery hot down below, like molten lava, in a volcano, ready to explode. She did a quick perusal of the place, noticing that it was packing out. As much as she wanted to take him up on his offer, she knew she’d

better decline. But, damn, it sure was tempting as all get out.

“What’s it going to be, Diamond. Do we order? Or go to the ladies room?” he asked with a smirk.

Diamond pulled herself back to the issue at hand, gave Rafe an unladylike snort, looked at her menu, and quickly called off her order. “I’ll have the cheesy grits, turkey bacon, two eggs over easy, an order of hash browns, and wheat toast,” she replied rather loudly.

Rafe chuckled under his breath. “I think you should wait for the waitress, darlin,’ but I’ll make sure to tell her what you want when she comes over.”

As if on cue, their waitress sauntered over with a ready smile. “Hey, how y’all doin’ today? Name’s Trina...what can I get for ya?” she asked.

“We’re good. How are you, Trina?” Rafe answered.

“Oh, can’t complain, can’t complain,” she said with a smile and turned her gaze upon Diamond. “What’ll you have, sugar?”

Diamond called off her order. “And I’ll have a decaf coffee and large OJ with that,” she said.

“Sure, sugar. It’s lunchtime, but I’m sure Harvey can fix this up for ya,” Trina replied.

“Oh no. I’ll order something else. Don’t go to any trouble on my account,” Diamond said.

“No trouble at all, sugar. Don’t worry yourself none,” she shooed Diamond’s protest and turned to Rafe. “What’ll be for you, big guy?” she asked.

“I’ll have the chopped barbeque dinner, with a side of sweet potato pie and an iced tea to drink,” he called off.

“Coming right up,” she said, took their menus off of the table and walked away.

Diamond and Rafe talked up until Trina brought their orders out. Diamond took hand sanitizer out of her bag and gave Rafe some. Then the only sounds were of the other patrons and her and Rafe eating their meal.

Diamond finished eating and sat back and rubbed her stomach. “Man, that was awesome. I’m so full I could burst,” she exclaimed.

Trina came over to them. “Can I get y’all something else?”

“Just the check, please,” Rafe said.

She ripped off their check and put it on the table in front of Rafe. “Y’all come back again.” Trina looked at Diamond. “Sugar, anybody ever tell you, you look like that there model on them there fancy magazines and television?”

“Uh...Ms. Odella did. Wow. I guess the saying is true, we all have a look-alike out there,” Diamond answered, lowering her head. She hated lying to

people about her model status, but she didn't like the attention that came with modeling. You never knew if people liked you or your status.

"Well, sugar, I think you're much prettier than her, anyhow. Yessiree, I do," and made to leave. Rafe stopped her.

"Here you go, Trina. Thanks," he said and handed her a twenty-dollar bill as her tip.

"Why thank you kindly, sir. Y'all have a good one," she said and walked away.

"Rafe, I'll meet you up front, I need to go to the ladies' room."

"Hold on, Diamond. I'll walk you back there. I have to go to the men's room anyway," he told her, and got up to escort her to the ladies' room. Truth be told, once she stood up, he saw how some of the men looked at her ass, and he didn't like it. Rafe walked with Diamond to the restroom, advising her to walk in front of him. She protested but he insisted. He walked behind her, shooting killer glares at anybody who dared to look at her behind. He used the restroom with a quickness, then came back to stand at the ladies' room door to wait for Diamond.

"See, honey, I can do potty all by myself," she taunted, when she came out of the ladies room and noticed him leaning against the wall waiting for her.

“Stop being a smartass, Diamond,” he said, grabbing her by her bottom, pulling her into him, and kissing her soundly on the mouth before releasing her. “Let’s go.”

Diamond cleared her throat. “Umm. You wouldn’t happen to be marking your territory would you, big guy?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” he proclaimed, taking her by the hand and walking towards the front to pay the bill.

Odella was at the register when they went to pay the bill. “You two leaving now?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” Rafe answered, handing her the money for their bill.

“Uh huh. I see you holding onto her real tight-like,” Odella said with a giggle. “Don’t blame you at all. Y’all done caused quite a stir amongst my patrons. Saw you give a warning too, Handsome, with that smoldering kiss you planted on her.”

Diamond looked at Rafe and blushed. That had Odella cracking up at her. “No need being embarrassed, honey. Your man means business,” she said, while giving Rafe his change. “Y’all be sure to stop back by here next time y’all are in town.”

“We will, Odella. Thanks. It was very nice meeting you, and the food was outstanding,” Diamond said honestly.

Odella beamed at the praise. "Why, thank you, ma'am. Glad we could please you. See y'all later. I got some customers to take care of."

Rafe and Diamond walked hand and hand to his truck, passing a group of young men, who tripped all over themselves when they spotted Diamond. She was totally oblivious to their attentions. Rafe chuckled under his breath, shaking his head in the process.

"Are you going to let me drive some?" Diamond asked, taking her Gucci shades out of her handbag and putting them on, to shade her eyes from the hot sun. The sun was bright and blazing this time of day and she was thankful that she had worn her tank tops and cutoffs. "You have to be tired," she said.

"I'm good, Diamond. If I get tired, I'll let you know," he said.

"No, you won't. Men and their stupid macho pride," she commented, then shook her head. "Rafe, we only have about three and a half more hours of driving time anyway. Just when are you going to let me drive?"

"Get in the truck, Brown Eyes. You can drive the next time we stop for gas," he said, reluctantly.

"For real?" she asked, as she got in the truck.

"Yes, for real."

## Chapter *Three*

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Two hours later, Rafe pulled into a service station, got gas, and handed the wheel over to Diamond.

“You are too much, Raferty Carmichael. Jeez, a whole hour and a half, lucky me,” she said as she switched places with Rafe in the SUV.

Rafe hated his decision the moment Diamond pulled onto the freeway. She drove like a bat out of hell, and he was holding himself back from saying anything. Rafe kissed the dashboard when they came up on the exit for Halverston, a city right outside of Louisiana. His relief was short-lived as Diamond took the exit like she was an Indianapolis 500 race car driver.

“Dammit, Diamond!” he yelled, and sent up a prayer to the master of breath, God, and even threw in a couple of Hail Mary’s. He would have to have a serious talk with her about her driving. He was not going to be worried about her every day of their lives together because of her driving. Wait a minute...where did that come from? He didn’t know where it came from, but he could deal with that. Diamond was his woman, whether she knew it or not.

“Shit! Diamond! This is a truck, not a car. You want us to flip over?” he shouted.

“Oh, stop your bellyaching. We’re here now,” she said, pulling into the Halverston hotel parking lot.

“Thank you, Jesus!” he said, opening his door and jumping out of the truck. “Remind me, in case I forget, to never let you drive me anywhere.”

“What! We arrived safely didn’t we?” she commented.

“Barely! Who taught you how to drive anyway?” He walked around to the back of the truck, grabbed their bags from the trunk, then walked around to where Diamond was standing by the truck and swatted her butt. “You scared the shit out of me, woman.”

“Ouch! The hell!” she screeched. “What was that for? Or are you just kinky like that?”

“To answer the first question, for adding more grey hairs to my head, and yes, I can be as kinky as you need me to be, sweetheart,” he said. “Come on. Let’s go check in. I need a shower.”

“I need a shower, a nap, and food. And in that order.”

“Lead the way, Brown Eyes,” Rafe said.

They walked into the plush lobby of the Halverston hotel, which held all the amenities you could want: restaurant, boutique, fitness center, and indoor/outdoor pool. Halverston was definitely a nice

place to live. If she didn't love her home in Savannah so much, she would've loved to live here.

"Are we checking in, Brown Eyes, or what?" Rafe asked.

"Sorry. This is such a beautiful town. The hotel is magnificent! I can't wait to explore!" Diamond's excitement showed on her face.

"I can't wait either. Now can we please check in? I'm tired as hell."

"Okay, okay, old man," she teased.

"Humph, I got your old man," Rafe grumbled under his breath.

"Whatever, old man. Either put up or shut up," she tossed at him, as she made her way to the concierge desk. Well almost. She almost made it.

Rafe dropped their bags, turned to face her, and grabbed her so fast she almost lost her footing and would have fallen, had Rafe not been holding her by the head and ass. She gasped, which gave Rafe the perfect opportunity to tilt her head back, cover her lips with his, and thrust his tongue into her mouth, kissing her like a man possessed. Diamond wound her arms around his waist and kissed him back just as passionately. They became so caught up in the kiss they forgot where they were. Time and places were a blur.

“Ahem. Ahem. I think you two had better hurry up and check in, or we might have to start charging a fee for the show,” the woman behind the concierge desk said. Diamond jumped, released her lips from Rafe’s and tried to break free of his embrace, but he was holding her too tight. “I’ve told you about playing with fire, Brown Eyes,” he whispered against her lips.

Diamond blushed and looked around to see the lobby filled with people smiling at them, then turned back to face Rafe. “You got me this time, lover boy. Payback’s a bitch, though,” she giggled inwardly. “Oh yeah, you are definitely going to pay for this one.” She loosened his hands from her hips and sauntered over to the check-in counter.

Rafe howled in laughter and followed behind her. “Hmmm, sounds promising. Should I be scared, Brown Eyes?” He laughed again.

“What do you think?” she responded, then turned and smiled into the friendly face of the woman behind the desk, a tall, dark-chocolate skinned woman with dreads. “Hi, Ada, is it? Do you have a room ready for me? My name’s Diamond Shaw.”

“Hold on a minute and let me check.”

Ada typed a few strokes on her keyboard before looking up at Diamond again. “Ah, here we are right here. Yeah, looks like two rooms were booked together

on the fifth floor. The rooms connect,” Ada smiled up at Diamond and handed her the keycard.

“You’re correct. There were two rooms booked. Asia had to go out of town on other business,” Diamond said, taking the keycard from Ada.

She gave Rafe a sly smile. “I’ll transfer the other room to your name then, sir. It is?” she asked.

“Raferty Carmichael,” Rafe said handing the woman his credit card. “I’ll pay for both my room and Diamond’s.”

“Here’s your keycard Mr. Carmichael. The rooms have already been taken care of by Distinctive Investigations. Your room is next to Ms. Shaw’s,” she smiled, then whispered. “Although from the looks of things, you two probably should’ve just shared a room and cut down on the expense.”

“Thank you ma’am,” Rafe said to the smiling Ada. “And, I’d appreciate it if you’d still put those rooms on my account.”

“Rafe, come on it’s a business expense,” Diamond said.

“It’s not debatable, Diamond. The rooms are going on my card.” Rafe said handing his card to Ada.

“Honorable as well as handsome. A woman couldn’t ask for better than that,” Ada said as she swiped Rafe’s card and handed it back to him. “Have a nice stay.”

“Thanks, Ada, we will,” Rafe replied.

“Not a problem, handsome. Just you and Ms. Shaw here don’t be causing no trouble in this here hotel.” Ada winked at Rafe, which sent him into peals of laughter.

“Bye, Ada,” Diamond said in a feigned huff as she walked towards the elevator, with Rafe right behind her, still chuckling at Ada’s remarks. At the elevator, Diamond turned to Rafe, “

“Tonight, I’m going to go over to the jazz bar called *Sistah’s*. They have dinner and dancing. You want to come?” she asked him as the elevator door dinged opened.

Rafe didn’t answer until they had entered the empty elevator. Diamond reached over and pressed the button for the fifth floor. After the doors closed, Rafe dropped their bags on the floor of the elevator, quickly embraced Diamond and whispered against her lips. “I want to come, Brown Eyes, but not at a jazz bar.” He grasped her ass, aligned her hips with his, and ground his erection into her.

“Oh,” was the only word that formed on her lips before Rafe took them in a scorching kiss. Diamond felt Rafe’s hands as they slid across her body down to the round globes of her bottom. A soft moan escaped her lips as he squeezed her ass firmly and pulled her more tightly against him.

Diamond wound her arms around Rafe's neck, deepening the kiss and tangling her fingers in the long strands of his silky, black hair, the soft waves smooth to her touch.

Diamond felt her feet leave the ground but didn't quite comprehend what was going on until Rafe had her pinned against the cold wall of the elevator, still holding onto her hips, with their tongues still tangled together. A shiver coursed down her spine from the coldness of the wall and the feel of Rafe's cock pressed firmly between her thighs. He pushed forward, gyrating his hips against her. She cradled his hardness between her thighs and pressed down. The fullness of him caused her center to throb and pulse against him.

They both jumped as they heard the ding of the elevator. "Dammit!" Rafe growled against her lips, disengaging himself from Diamond just in time to press the stop button to keep the door from opening.

Diamond was breathing so hard that her heartbeats sounded thunderous to her ears. Her lips swollen from Rafe's kiss, she tried to pull herself together but was finding it hard to do with Rafe standing in front of her, his piercing blue eyes centered on her.

Rafe leaned his forehead against Diamond's. "You okay, Brown Eyes?" he asked, barely holding onto what little composure he had left.

“Yeah, I’m okay, but I think you’d better release the button on the elevator. Sounds like people are waiting to get on, and this is our floor anyway,” she responded, still breathless from their encounter.

“Well then, they won’t mind waiting a few minutes longer,” was Rafe’s reply. “I didn’t mean to get so carried away with you, Brown Eyes. You bring out the beast in me. Remember that, Diamond.” He turned to press the release button. The elevator doors swished opened, and a couple was standing there waiting to get on.

\* \* \*

“I guess we have you to blame for the wait,” the man said around his chuckle, taking in Diamond’s disheveled appearance. “You two going up or down?” he asked.

“Neither. This is our floor. Stupid thing must have gotten stuck. Hope you weren’t waiting long,” Rafe said, as he picked up their carryalls, then waited for Diamond to move in front of him.

Maximillien and Alexis laughed again. “Uh huh. Got stuck for us just this morning,” Maximillien said, smiling at them.

Diamond blushed.

Rafe turned and grinned at Maximillien, then followed Diamond off the elevator. Of all people to run into, he had to run into his best friend, Maximillien Toussaint, and with his ex-wife. Hmm, interesting.

Once they'd reached their rooms, he took Diamond's keycard and opened her room door, stepped in before her and placed her luggage on one of the queen-size beds.

"What time do you want to meet for dinner?" he asked.

"I don't know, really. I was supposed to call Dominique once I got here. Is eight, maybe nine, too late for dinner?" she asked. "It will give you enough time to rest up, but if you want to go a little earlier, that's fine by me."

"Nah. All I need is about an hour's sleep and I'll be good. I need to catch up on some things with Domino as well. Nine o'clock is perfect." he informed her.

She nodded her agreement. "You want me to meet you in the lobby?" she asked.

"Hell no. I'll knock on your door and we'll go down together." He turned, went to the door, and opened it. "See you in few hours, Diamond."

After Rafe has closed the door behind him, Diamond jumped up, pumping her fist in the air. “Yessss! Yes! Yes!” She did a little jitterbug with her feet. Slipping off her slip-ons, she took her cell phone from her handbag and called Asia. Asia picked up on the first ring.

“Hello cousin. If you called me, that must mean that you and tall, dark, and handsome aren’t doing the nasty yet,” Asia said.

“Very funny, cousin. How are you doing in New Mexico?”

“*I’m* doing?”

Diamond frowned at Asia’s comment. “Asia, everything’s going well, isn’t it? You and Alayna aren’t having any problems, are you?”

“No, the case is coming along nicely. We should be finished in no time. Now stop stalling and tell me what’s cooking with you and your good-looking Native American.”

“Gurrlll, let me tell you what’s happened so far.” Diamond began to go over the day’s events, which took ten minutes longer than she intended because Asia kept interrupting with her squeals of laughter. Diamond disconnected the call with a promise to call her in the morning. She then called her sister to let her know that she had arrived safely.

She still needed to make some phone calls on the new leads she had on Sameer Thibodaux. Hopefully, the new leads would pan out.

Diamond took out the folder she had on Thibodaux, then settled down at the desk provided by the hotel and began to make her calls. After the third call, she had found someone that thought they knew Sameer from the description she had given, but wasn't sure. Diamond ended the call with the woman agreeing to meet with her tomorrow morning.

"Yes!" she shouted, excited that she'd made contact with someone.

Taking her little red dress out of her garment bag, she hung it up in the closet and began to strip on her way to the shower. "Shower first, then a nap."

\* \* \*

Back in his room, Rafe let out a deep breath as he dropped down on the king-sized bed. "Damn! That woman is going to be the death of me," he said out loud. With a heavy sigh, Rafe sat up and ran his hand across his face. Just thinking about Diamond had him rock hard and ready. Rafe looked down at his dick through his jeans. "Down boy, down. Soon, but not yet." He got up and headed for the shower.

In the bathroom, he stripped off his clothes, turned the cold water on full blast, and stepped in. “A cold shower is definitely in order,” he said, then began to wash his body, letting the cold spray of the shower wash over him, hoping against hope his cock would go down. Of course, it didn’t. Dang woman had him so worked up he was beside himself. Tired of waiting for his erection to go down, Rafe fisted his hand around it and pumped up and down. Thinking of how good Diamond had felt against him, he began to pump even harder. Just the thought of her luscious ass in the palms of his hands sent him over the edge. Rafe let out a loud, hoarse cry as he released into the shower. “Fuck! I’m not going one more night without being inside of her,” he groaned. Rafe washed himself again and exited the shower, dried off with one of the hotel’s fluffy white towels and left the bathroom.

Rafe set the alarm on his watch to wake him in an hour’s time, then got into bed, closed his eyes, and quickly fell into slumber.

## Chapter Four

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Diamond awoke from her nap feeling refreshed. She walked around the room in the kimono Asia had bought for her on one of her many excursions. After brushing her teeth, she applied Asian Lily Body Butter to her skin. She preferred the light smell of the body butter to perfume. She had flat-ironed her tresses to a layered bob, her gold highlights lighting up the shimmery mass that lay against her shoulders. Diamond lightly brushed blush across her cheekbones and applied wine-colored lipstick to her lips. She removed the robe and pulled on a sexy little, lace, low-cut bra and a pair of matching red thong panties.

Even at night Louisiana was hot, so she decided against stockings. Taking the red dress from its cushioned hanger, she slipped it over her head, careful as not to smudge her makeup or get any on the dress. The soft silk of the dress slid effortlessly down her body. “Wow, this dress is gorgeous. This is definitely one of my better choices,” she said running her hands down its smoothness. “Joslyn did her thing with this creation.” The style was perfect for what she needed. The bodice cut was a little low, but it could still be worn as an after-eight dinner dress or party dress,

depending upon the accessories. Diamond retrieved a pair of three-inch red and gold high-heel open-toed sandals. She'd just finished lacing the straps of the sandals around her calves when she heard the knock on the door. "Yes! Just in time."

Diamond strode over to the door, opened it, and looked into the stunned face of Rafe. "Come on in. I just have to grab my handbag and we can leave," she said to the wide-eyed Rafe.

"No, I don't think I'll come in, Diamond, because if I do we won't be going anywhere but to bed. If I didn't think I'd be depriving you of food, I'd throw you on that bed right now and give you what we've both been aching for since we started this little trip. I suggest you retrieve whatever you need and let's go now."

Diamond smiled and batted her eyes seductively at him. "Why Raferty, are you afraid of little ole me? Why, I'm just a li'l ole harmless girl from Savannah, Georgia," she remarked in her best southern accent.

Rafe shook his head at her. "Stop playing, Diamond. I'm already on edge and that little piece of material that you call a dress is not helping matters. Let's go to this jazz bar called *Sistah's*. The sooner we leave, the sooner we can get back here and I can explore what you don't have on under that thing," he

said, as she walked out of the room, closing the door behind her.

Diamond walked out in front of Rafe, his words causing a quiver to race through her. Rafe placed his hand on her waist and escorted her to the elevator.

“You’re trying to give me a heart attack, aren’t you?” he asked her with a frown as they waited for the elevator.

“No. Why would you say something like that?” she said as the elevator dinged its arrival. They got into the elevator, selected the lobby level, and waited for the doors to close.

“You and that damned dress are going to be the death of me, and will probably get somebody else hurt,” he said.

Diamond’s frown deepened. “What somebody else? What are you talking about?” she asked.

“Yeah, ’cause if anyone of the male persuasion looks at you wrong, or too long, there’s definitely going to be a problem,” Rafe said, placing his hand at the curvature of her spine and moving down to rest on her backside.

“Hmmm, you have a fascination with my ass, don’t you?” Diamond asked, feeling a tingle in her clit from his touch. He had already gotten her riled up from his actions in her hotel room.

“Damn straight, woman, and I can’t wait to show you how much when we get back to the hotel room tonight,” Rafe said, as the elevator stopped on the lobby level. When they got out of the elevator, Rafe held on to Diamond as if he was afraid she would disappear or something. True to his word, as they walked through the lobby towards the street, Rafe gave the evil eye to every male, young or old, who dared look at Diamond. He didn’t ease his hold on her until they reached the awaiting carriages at the street.

“You want to take the carriage over to the restaurant, or the truck,” he asked.

“A carriage ride would be fun.”

“Carriage it is,” he said as he directed her towards one of the waiting carriages.

Helping Diamond into the carriage he then got in himself and directed the man where to take them. “*Sistah’s* please.”

The man smiled at them, nodded his head in affirmation, and set the carriage in motion, all the while humming a song to himself.

“This place is so festive. It’s a gorgeous city,” Diamond said, enjoying the night breeze. Turning to face him, she whispered. “Did I tell you how handsome you look tonight? Love the hair. You look like a warrior prince.”

“I don’t know about the prince part, but I definitely feel like I’ll be warring tonight,” Rafe replied, then turned to look at Diamond. “You’re exquisite, Diamond.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. But please do me a favor and don’t wear anything that revealing in public again. I like this place, but I seriously don’t want to get arrested here,” Rafe said.

“Why would you be getting arrested?” she asked.

“I told you earlier why. I’m serious, Diamond. One wrong move from anyone and it’s over,” Rafe whispered as he moved his lips within inches of hers. “As it is, Brown Eyes, it’s taking all I’ve got not to have him turn this cart around and head back to the hotel, where I’ll show you just how I’m feeling.”

“Talk is cheap, big guy,” she sassed, before latching onto his lips and kissing him thoroughly.

Rafe returned the kiss with fervor.

The kiss had just started to heat up when the carriage stopped. They had reached their destination.

Rafe was the first to pull back. Running his thumb over her full bottom lip, bruised from his kiss, he murmured. “We’re here, Diamond.” His voice was husky with arousal.

Diamond cleared her throat. “Yes, we are.”

“Come on, let’s go eat so we can get back. I feel as if I’m about to burst,” Rafe said.

Rafe helped Diamond out of the carriage then placed a fifty-dollar bill in the man’s hand. “Thank you,” he said to the man.

“No, thank you! Have a great night.” The driver smiled at them.

Diamond and Rafe walked into the restaurant, Rafe holding her hand possessively.

“Ah, Rafe, think you could ease up on my hand?” she asked.

“I’m sorry, baby. I don’t like the way some of these dudes are looking at you.”

Diamond giggled.

“Mind telling me what’s so funny?”

“You are. You said *dude*. Your southern drawl came out just then.” She laughed again.

Rafe was saved from answering by the sudden arrival of the maître d’. “Table for two, sir?” he asked.

“Yes, please,” Rafe responded.

“Dominique was right, this is a nice, place,” Diamond said, “Small and very intimate.”

“It is. I like it,” Rafe replied, scanning the place with his eyes.

Rafe noticed the stares that Diamond received while walking to their table. One man choked on his food, he was ogling her so hard. Diamond continued to

walk in front of him, seemingly oblivious to the stares. Hell, they were full-blooded males—no doubt he would've done the same thing had she not been with him. But he still didn't like it. His eyes blazed at anyone who looked too long.

Diamond was seated across from Rafe. The maître d' gave them their menus. "Someone will be here to take your orders shortly. Have a good evening," he said, then turned and walked away.

Once he was gone, Rafe looked across the table at Diamond. "Come sit next to me, Diamond," he said.

"Why?"

"I need you next to me," he said sincerely.

\* \* \*

Diamond was touched by his need for her to be near him. She quickly got up and moved her seat next to his. When the waiter came over to their table, they both ordered steak and potatoes and a bottle of wine to go with their meal. When the waiter left, Rafe reached his hand under the table and placed it on her knee. Diamond gasped at the contact. Rafe proceeded to glide his hand up her leg, pushing her dress aside.

"Rafe! What are you doing?" she whispered.

"Shush. You don't want to draw attention to us. Just act normal and carry on a conversation with me.

Now open,” he commanded, nudging her thighs apart. He moved her thong aside, granting him access to her moist center, then inserted a finger inside of her. She writhed and moaned, as her juices flowed.

“Oh, damn! Easy for you to say act normal—you don’t have someone doing wicked things to you underneath a tablecloth,” she murmured breathlessly, wishing she could lie back and enjoy the wonderful sensations he was creating within her, sound effects and all, but to do so would alert others to what they were doing. She didn’t want that—it was feeling too good to her. For him to stop now would be torturous.

Rafe continued to stroke in and out of her with his finger, using his thumb to draw circles around her wet center as he pushed in and out.

Diamond moaned as sensation after sensation overwhelmed her senses. It felt so good she no longer cared who heard her.

\* \* \*

“Keep quiet, Brown Eyes. Remember, we’re in a restaurant,” he reminded her in a strained voice. He wasn’t as unaffected as he was pretending to be. Her response was causing all kinds of havoc with his senses. Not to mention that she felt so good squeezing his finger with her pussy.

“I can’t...feels...so...good,” Diamond responded, closing her eyes and moaning again. Diamond jumped when she heard, rather than saw, their waiter placing something on their table.

“Hear you go, sir...ma’am. Your meal will be out shortly,” he said, placing a bottle of wine and a variety of dinner rolls and cornbread on the table. He turned to Diamond. “Are you okay, ma’am? You seem a bit flushed.”

Diamond quickly grabbed her water glass from the table and gulped it down. “I’m fine. Just a little overheated,” she said. Rafe snorted softly and continued to work her with his finger. Diamond pinched him under the table.

“Ouch!” he yelped, but kept his finger in place.

The waiter looked really concerned now. “Is everything okay, sir?” he asked Rafe.

Rafe scowled at Diamond. “Everything is fine. Been driving all day and I have a cramp in my foot,” he answered. It was Diamond’s turn to snicker.

“Oh. Well, if everything is fine, I’ll be out with your meals shortly.” The waiter gave them a strange look and left.

Rafe’s finger, still inside her, pushed further in and continued to stroke her. Diamond cried, “Sweet Jesus!” which gained them stares from the other patrons.

Rafe quickly removed his finger from her and brought it to his lips, then sucked her juices off it. "I can guarantee that this tastes better than that bottle of wine," he said licking every drop of her dew from his fingers.

"What the hell! Why did you stop?" she asked.

"Because you were getting all hot and bothered. Can't have that, now can we?"

"You snake! You just wait."

Rafe laughed at her frustrated look. Diamond didn't get a chance to respond because their waiter was coming back with their meals. "My, that was fast," Diamond said, as their food was placed in front of them. They both ate their meals in silence, listening to the house band. They rotated between Jazz, Blues, and R&B. The music was soulful and classy.

When the lead singer started singing, *I'd Rather Go Blind*, by Etta James, Rafe, asked her to dance.

"Come on, Brown Eyes, let' dance," he said taking her by the hand and leading her to the dance floor.

Once on the dance floor he brought her into the hollow of his arms, wrapping his arms around her waist.

Diamond laid her head on his shoulder, wrapped her arms around his neck and allowed the soulful music to pour over her.

They slow danced in place on the dance floor.

The final chords of *I'd Rather Go Blind* ended; the passionate tunes of *At Last* began.

Diamond held Rafe tighter. "I love this song," she whispered, her eyes fluttered shut as she started singing the soulful tunes along with the band.

She felt the softness of his lips against her skin. He rained tiny kisses against her temple and hair. His breath was whispery soft against her hair. Their bodies were close together as they swayed to the music. Both seemingly content with the peacefulness of being in each other's arms.

So engrossed in each other, neither realized that everyone on the dance floor had practically stopped dancing and were listening to Diamond sing to Rafe. Some by the looks on their faces were envious of the couple on the dance floor.

The singer of the band had stopped singing. She stood on stage smiling at Diamond as she sung in a way that could have rivaled Etta James herself.

The song ended amidst a round of applause that startled them both.

Diamond nervously glanced around and saw the crowd of onlookers clapping and whistling, and was mortified.

"Please tell me I wasn't singing out loud," she murmured.

Before Rafe could answer, the lead singer of the band, with mic in hand bellowed out. "Let's hear it for the lady in red. I don't know who you are sugar, but you sung the hell out that song. There can never be another Etta...but baby you did your thang."

Diamond blushed at the woman's praise.

"Ain't no time for blushing sugar. Why don't you come on up here and sing something for us."

The crowd of onlookers were clapping and encouraging her to get up on stage.

Rafe was shaking his head no before Diamond could say anything.

"Sorry, folks, but we're getting ready to go make our own music. Thank you. See y'all later," Rafe said, in his best southern drawl, and lead her off the dance floor. He stopped at their table and dropped enough bills on the table to cover their meals and a sizeable tip. They left, thanking the waiter and the maître d' on their way out.

Outside, Rafe, hailed a taxi. Take us to the Halverston Hotel as fast as possible," he told the cabbie.

They arrived at the hotel about ten minutes later. Rafe pulled off a few bills and handed them to the driver.

The cabbie looked at what was in his hand and grinned. "Jeez, thanks man."

Rafe didn't bother to respond just grabbed Diamond by the hand, "Your room or mine?"

"Yours," she replied. "Ah...wait a minute. I need something out of my room."

"Your room it is, then," he replied. "At this point I don't care—I just need a bed."

When they got to her room, Rafe pulled Diamond's dress up over her head and his eyes feasted on her full, perky breasts.

"Oh, my. Come here, my pretties." Rafe caressed her breasts, then bent down and latched onto one of her nipples with his lips, sucking the pebbled peak into his mouth.

Diamond threw her head back, sighing, and held his head firmly to her breast. "Ahh, that feels so good," she cried.

Rafe didn't say anything, just continued his assault on her nipples, taking his fill of one and moving onto the other one. He lifted Diamond off the floor, carried her to the bed, placed her on it, then crawled between her legs. Using his hands, he kneaded one breast while suckling the other. Diamond writhed and squirmed beneath him, holding his head to her breast. Rafe rolled the tip of his tongue around her hardened nipple, nipping lightly in the process.

"Oh, my god!" She was out of control, squirming around something fierce, her clit coming into contact

with his rock-hard abdomen as he rocked back and forth.

Releasing her breasts, he began raining kisses down her belly, then on down to the apex of her thighs. Parting her nether lips, he inhaled her womanly scent and licked her up and down, paying special attention to her little nubbin. “Ummm, addictive,” he said, inserting his tongue in the opening of her vagina and swirling it around inside of her. He alternated between sucking and licking her clit, drawing out cries of pleasure from Diamond. She was bucking so badly that Rafe had to hold her in place. He knew what she wanted—he just wasn’t ready to give it to her. He wanted this time to last. Rafe continued to sip out of her honey pot for a few more minutes, lapping at her womanly juices. He loved the smell and taste of her...both were invading his senses...so much so that he removed his mouth from her and sat up abruptly.

“The hell!” Diamond shouted.

“Hold on, babe...I need to get undressed,” he said, kicking off his handmade leather moccasins, unbuttoning his dress shirt and throwing it across the room. He went to reach for his belt buckle but Diamond beat him to it. She had his belt unbuckled and his slacks down his legs in no time flat. “Impatient are—? Ah shit, Diamond!”

Diamond had engulfed Rafe's cock with her mouth, and began to suck him up and down, stopping at the tip to lick at his slit and simultaneously playing with his balls. "Sweet Jesus!" Rafe cried out when Diamond began to suck the end of his penis as if she was sucking on a Popsicle. Rafe's balls began to draw up. Perspiration sheened his body. He was a man about to explode. He wouldn't do it in her mouth. When he came, he wanted to be inside her.

With all the skill of his agility training, Rafe pulled his cock from her mouth, creating a suction sound in its wake, flipped her around, and had her on her knees facing the headboard without incident.

Testing her readiness, Rafe slipped a finger inside of her, using her cream to spread over her anus area. "One day I hope you let me in here," he said, smacking her on her ass. "Your ass drives me crazy, babe."

"Uh huh," was all she could get out. She was so far gone. It was like that slap on her butt sent a signal to her clit. It was crying for release.

Rafe aligned his cock with her moist center and pushed in. With her backside turned up in the air and her pussy so wet, he was able to sink all the way in with one thrust. "Oh man...I'm in heaven," he roared, powering into her from behind.

“Oh God...Oh God!” Diamond cried over and over again.

She was sucking him in like a vacuum. The sensations were unbelievable. He couldn't get enough of her. Rafe pulled almost all the way out of her, only leaving the very tip in. Then flexing and rotating his hips, he drove into her again, hitting her G-spot. Diamond screamed.

“Yes! Right there! Give it to me!” she screamed. “So good, please don't stop...so good...been so long...so good,” she chanted.

“It's beyond good...it's outstanding, Diamond,” he said. Diamond was using her vaginal muscles to flex around his erection, creating all kinds of wonderful sensations.

Diamond yelped and pushed back against him, seeking more. Damn! If they got any closer they'd be glued together. He was so overwhelmed by his body's reaction to hers and how good they were together, he couldn't think or form a sentence.

“Diamond...Diamond...I...need...to...come...babe,” he murmured, in a frantic voice. He wouldn't come before her, she was so tight and wet around him, and boy, did she know how to use her inner thigh muscles.

Rafe felt a tingle on his cock and knew that it was from Diamond. Yes, she was almost there. “Come

on babe, stop holding back, let it come naturally,” he said. “I can feel you, Brown Eyes...stop holding back.”

Rafe took control of the body motions by holding tightly onto Diamond’s hips and pumping her up and down on his cock. He rode her hard and fast. Her moans of pleasure were louder, and her quivers were much stronger. He responded by thrusting up into her and grinding himself against her butt. She jerked against him. *Damn!* Every time she clamped down on him, he could have sworn his dick got longer and harder. She was milking him oh so good. He never thought he was an ass person, but her soft globes pressing up against him—wow! Rafe sucked in a sharp breath as he felt Diamond contract against him. “Uhhhhhhh!”

“Oh God! I’m COMING!” she shouted and let out a blood curdling scream as she shattered around him. The shock waves that went through her body sent Rafe over the edge.

“MERCY!” he thundered, and spilled his seed inside of her. Diamond was still convulsing around him and he was still coming inside of her. He had never come so long in his life.

Diamond’s knees collapsed and he fell flat onto the bed before he relaxed against her. They were both winded. Rafe was the first to recover, barely. Moving her damp hair aside, he kissed her neck. “Thank you!

That was magnificent, Brown Eyes,” he said in a breathless whisper.

“It was great! You sure do know how to make a woman feel good, big guy.” Still winded, she gasped every word. “Now could you please get off of me? You’re squishing me,” she giggled.

“I’m sorry, babe,” he laughed. He didn’t get off of her, but turned them both so that they could spoon, keeping himself still fully embedded inside of her. Rafe reached behind him to pull the bed spread across them. They had never gotten around to pulling the cover back. “It’s been a long day...get some rest, sweetheart,” he spoke softly into her hair.

Diamond was already half asleep. “K. Night,” she murmured before falling into slumber.

Rafe stayed awake for about fifteen minutes longer, basking in the realization of just how strong his feelings were for the woman he held in his arms. He’d been attracted to her for a while, but this was something that called from somewhere deep within him. He was still pondering his feelings when sleep finally claimed him. The words *I love you sweetheart* slipping softly from his lips.

## Chapter Five

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The next morning, Rafe awoke to the ringing of his cell phone. He was still buried inside of Diamond. She was still sleeping soundly in his arms. The phone finally stopped ringing. He breathed a sigh of relief only to have it short-lived as the ringing started again. Diamond began to stir in his arms and he began to stir inside of her.

“Ummm, nice,” she said, as Rafe fondled her breast.

Her phone started to ring, too.

“Let them ring. I need you now babe,” he whispered huskily, and moved on top of her, pinning her beneath him. He leaned in and captured her mouth while simultaneously moving within her. He slowly made love to her mouth as well as her body.

Every nerve ending he possessed was on full alert. A shiver of pleasure coursed through him, as she fisted his hair and wrapped her legs around his hips, bringing him deeper within her. He brought his hands under her hips and clasped her tighter, pushing deeper within her. He knew the exact moment he hit her G-spot. “Rafe!”

Like a man possessed he moved within her, claspings her hips yet tighter. He rode her hard. Pleasure washed over him like none other.

She shuddered just before she climaxed, bathing his cock with her dew. Yet he still pummeled into her. His balls drew up tight. His release was near. "Hold on," he said, coming to his knees and bringing her with him. Holding her hips steady he moved her up and down on his shaft. He came so hard he could only grunt out his release. "Ugh! Gv-ge-yu-hi a-ga-li-ha!" (I love you sunshine).

Rafe's breathing was labored as was Diamonds. Pulling in a deep breath, he shifted a little allowing his body to relax against hers. "Are you okay?" he asked huskily.

"Perfect."

Both their phones started to ring again.

"Hmmm, I think we better get those," he said, disengaging himself from her.

"Yeah, I think so."

Rafe got up, located his pants and took his cell phone out. "Hello."

Diamond got up and located her cell phone in her handbag. The phone had stopped ringing but she looked at the caller ID and dialed the number back. "Hello."

"Hi, Diamond. It's Dominique."

Diamond laughed. "I know who you are, Dee. What's up?" Diamond spoke to Dominique a few minutes more before disconnecting the call.

Rafe hung up his call just as Diamond was hanging up from Dominique. She noticed his frown and immediately became concerned. "Rafe, is something wrong?" she asked.

He walked over to her and pulled her into his arms. "Yeah. Can we wrap up what you need to do today? I need to head back now. Domino has an important case that he needs me on. I wouldn't leave, but it's urgent. And I'm not leaving you here alone, Diamond. Is it possible to send someone else to track this skip? I don't want you doing this anyway, Diamond. It's just too dangerous."

"That was Dominique on the phone. It appears that this case is turning into more of a criminal investigation than a civil one. She wants me to drop it. She said she had something urgent come up for her as well. She couldn't go into it now."

"Let me get dressed and we'll get some breakfast and leave afterwards.

"Get dressed, Brown Eyes," he said, as he appraised her naked form.

"Sure, big guy," she said, kissing him passionately.

They kissed for a few minutes more before he broke the kiss. "I need to get out of here so I can get dressed, Brown Eyes, or we won't be leaving this room. Pack your bags and leave them by the door. I'll take them down on our way down to breakfast."

"No problem. Give me twenty minutes and I'll be ready," she said. "I think you better put something on, big guy."

"Nah, babe, I unlocked the connecting door before I picked you up last night. I'll just grab my clothes and get out of here. I wish I had more time with you," he said. "Once I wrap this case up, it's just you and me, Diamond."

"You better believe it."

He gave her one final kiss and disappeared through the adjoining door.

Rafe met Diamond back at her room twenty minutes later. "Damn, Diamond! You're determined to give me heart failure, aren't you?" Rafe said, taking in her gold, sarong-type outfit with a split in the front of the skirt that showed off her shapely legs, and a white sleeveless bodice of the same silk-like material. She wore a pair of white espadrilles on her feet.

"What? I dressed for comfort, Rafe."

"No, you're dressed to give me a hard-on, Diamond. Shit! Let's go or we won't be leaving."

Rafe took the bags down to the truck. They had breakfast in the hotel restaurant.

As they exited the restaurant, Rafe and Diamond ran into Maximillien, again.

“Hey, man! This is the second time in two days that I’ve seen you. How’ve you been? Or should I ask? And who is this beauty with you?” Maximillien smiled, looking at Diamond.

Diamond blushed. She recognized, him, as the man from the elevator.

“You can cut that shit out, Max. Diamond’s not available,” Rafe scowled at Maximillien.

“Neither am I. Well, can I get an introduction?” Maximillien asked.

Rafe pulled Diamond close to his side. “Diamond, Maximillien Toussaint, also known as Max. Maximillien, Diamond Shaw.”

“Nice to meet you, Maximillien,” Diamond said.

“Nice to meet you too, darlin’. Please, call me Max. Don’t know why a beauty such as yourself would choose to hang out with this sourpuss,” Maximillien said, using his best Louisiana drawl.

“You better be glad Diamond is here, or I’d tell you where to get off,” Rafe said.

Maximillien roared with laughter. “I just bet you would.”

Rafe looked at Diamond. "Max is a long time friend of mine," Rafe said.

"Yeah, I'm probably the only friend he has," Max said. "I have to get back upstairs, I left Alexis sleeping. How long are you here for?"

"On our way out now," Rafe answered.

"Give me a call when you can," he said, giving Rafe a handshake. "Diamond, it was nice meeting you sugar. Take care."

"It was nice meeting you too," Diamond said.

"Talk to you later, Max," Rafe said as he turned with Diamond to leave.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier that you knew him?" Diamond asked. "It was embarrassing enough getting called out on the elevator but then you have to go and know the man. Goodness."

Rafe laughed again. "Well, they were doing the same thing earlier. Max said so himself. So, now we're even."

Diamond sucked her teeth and rolled her eyes at him. "They were doing the same thing," she mimicked. "Men!"

Pulling her within the shelter of his arms and placing his lips on hers, he whispered against her lips. "You're so cute when you're angry, Brown Eyes."

"I'm not talking to you," she muttered, trying to sound angry.

“Good. Don’t,” Rafe said, taking her lips with fierceness. The kiss intensified.

“Will you two get a room?” Someone shouted at them, laughing.

Rafe lifted his head and mouth away from Diamond’s and placed his forehead on hers. “We already have one, so turn around and be quiet.”

Diamond chuckled. “No, we don’t. We checked out remember.”

“Yes, I remember. It’s not my fault I can’t keep my hands off of you,” he said.

“I think we’d better get going. By the way, who’s Alexis?” Diamond asked as they walked to the parking lot. “She looked familiar.”

“She’s Max’s ex-wife, Alexis Toussaint. She’s an actress.” Rafe answered.

“Alexis Toussaint ...seems like I know that—“

Diamond gasped. “Shit! Rafe, that’s *the* Alexis Toussaint, the award-winning actress!”

“Yes. That would be Alexis.”

“Wow! I love her movies. She’s good. I remember reading that she had gotten divorced in the papers,” Diamond said, as they made their way to Rafe’s SUV.

“Yeah, they were both pretty messed up after. She was good for him. She kept him grounded. His family and hers had a lot to do with their divorce.

They've been divorced going on five years now...seeing them together yesterday was a shocker."

"Goodness! Well, maybe they're working it out. They looked happy to me. It's a shame how people let family and friends get in the way of their happiness."

"It is. But that can only happen if the people involved let them. In my opinion if you love a person enough you will fight with them and for them to make it work. Both parties have to be willing to put a hundred percent into the relationship in order for it to work, especially interracial relationships. Together we stand—"

"Divided we fall," Diamond finished.

Rafe smiled and nodded his head in approval. "Exactly," he said, as he pulled away from the Halverston Hotel.

Diamond had fallen asleep as soon as they hit the freeway. Glancing at her sleeping form, a surge of protectiveness coursed through his body. They had only stopped once to get gas and use the restroom. He'd waited outside the restroom door for her. Upon getting back in the car, Diamond had quickly fallen back to sleep. No doubt she was tired. They'd made love over into the night only to wake up this morning to both their cell phones ringing. They'd made love again before answering the calls.

Rafe looked at Diamond's sleeping form intently. Man, he needed this woman. He didn't know how long this assignment for Domino was going to take, and he hadn't told Diamond that it involved her cousin Alisha as per Domino's instructions. Plus if he told her, he and Dom both knew that she and Asia would go off half-cocked trying to help. Her safety was his responsibility and he would not put her in danger of any kind. The thought of something happening to her made him crazy.

Rafe was so caught up in his thoughts that he hadn't realized that he'd started to swerve into the other lane; the blaring of a car horn alerted him to that fact. "Shit!" he said righting the SUV.

The jerky movement of the truck startled Diamond awake. Sitting up straight in her seat, "Rafe, are you okay?" she asked.

"What? Yes, I'm fine, baby," he said. "Go back to sleep."

She gave him a look as if to say *I don't believe you*. "Do you want me to drive?"

"Ah...I love you, Diamond, but there's no way in hell I'm letting you drive me anywhere. In fact, I'm seriously thinking about hiring a driver for you. I can't be worried about you getting into an accident all the time. Your driving is hazard—" Rafe was saying, but

was cut-off by Diamond's squeal. The next thing he knew, she had her seatbelt off, her arms wrapped around his neck, and was kissing him soundly on the mouth.

"What the hell! Diamond, I can't see. You're going to make us crash," he said against her lips, at the same time trying to keep the wheel steady.

"Sorry! You love me, you love me, love me, Yes!" Diamond exclaimed, pumping her fist in the air.

Rafe sat momentarily stunned, opened his mouth to say something, then clamped it shut, not sure what to say. It was out there now. He did love her. He'd said so last night. *Didn't he?* He continued to stare at her.

"Watch the road Rafe."

"Huh? Oh sorry," he said turning to face the road.

"I love you too. You know."

Rafe did a double take. "You do?"

The smile that touched her lips was genuine. "Of course I do."

He smiled at her. "We're doing something about this when this case is over. Understood?"

"Understood," she nodded her affirmation.

"Okay, sleeping beauty, we're almost home," he said.

Two hours later Diamond was on her front doorstep being escorted inside by Rafe.

Once inside, Rafe, gently pulled her in his arms and held her tight. "I'll be back as soon as I can," he murmured.

"Okay." She whispered. "Be careful and don't forget to call me."

"Without a doubt," he said. "I have to go babe."

"I know," she hugged him tighter to her. "Go before I throw you down and have my wicked way with you," she muttered.

Rafe chuckled. "Not if I do you first," he responded. Rafe pulled back and kissed her passionately on the lips. "Stay safe until I return. Set your security alarm after I leave. I'll call you as soon as I can."

"You better," she said and with one final kiss he left.

# Epilogue

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*Four months later*

Diamond was happier than she'd ever been in her life. Rafe had come for her after being away for a week. They'd been spending as much time as they possibly could together, getting to know one another better. Rafe had explained the situation with Domino and how complicated it was. Domino had called and asked him to fly out to bring an important witness back and put her in an undisclosed place. He hadn't had a chance to explain exactly what was going on because he needed to get to her immediately, but had assured her it wasn't dangerous. Well, his part in it anyway.

All of this had transpired because some psycho was fixated on her cousin, Alisha Carrington, now Alisha Cameron.

Diamond was just pleased everything had turned out well. Alisha had married Tristan Cameron last week, here in Atlanta, having had one of the biggest weddings she'd witnessed so far. Her cousin seemed very happy and Diamond was glad for her. Diamond jumped when she heard her front door being opened. Rafe! She leapt up to meet him at the door. As soon as

he stepped through the door, she ran and jumped in his arms. He caught her mid-stride and she wrapped her legs around him and began kissing him.

“Wow!” he said as she rained kisses across his face. “I guess I was missed,” he laughed, embracing her closely to his chest.

“Of course, I missed you!” she exclaimed, aligning her lips with his and kissing him thoroughly.

\* \* \*

Rafe kissed Diamond with all the passion of his pent-up desire, after having been away from her for a few days. “Ummm, I need you, Brown Eyes,” he whispered against her lips.

Diamond felt the trembling of his hands against her body. “Is something wrong, Rafe?” she asked concerned.

“No. Everything is finally right,” his voice trembled as he spoke the words against her lips.

Diamond pulled back and looked up at him. “You sure? You got this really weird look on your face for a few minutes.”

Rafe didn’t answer, just bent his head and captured her lips in a deep kiss, tangling his tongue with hers. His body began to tremble as he kissed her. His mind was telling him this was not the place to be

doing this but his heart was saying something totally different. He wanted to keep her close. He groaned low in his throat before pulling back. He placed his forehead against hers. "Yes, well I need more."

Rafe didn't say anything else, just turned with her in his arms and pinned her against the wall, lifted her skirt above her waist, and ripped the little scrap of a thong away from her body. He put it in the pocket of his jeans. "I'm sorry babe. I swear I'll make it up to you, but I can't wait. Please don't ask me to," he asked Diamond in a pained voice. He wanted her so badly it hurt.

"Take what you need now, big guy. I know you'll make it up to me," she said with a passion-filled voice.

Rafe kissed her roughly against the lips. "You got it," he said unzipping his jeans, slipping them down a little and releasing his manhood. It was rock hard and ready, with pre-cum seeping from it slits. "Shit! Wrap your legs around me and hold on tight," he said, as he aligned his cock with her pussy lips.

Rafe pushed into Diamond with one swift push, then pushed even deeper. "Fuck, yeah!" he murmured, holding her hips in place, his eyes rolling to the back of his head.

"Uhhh, yesss!" Diamond cried.

"I'm not hurting you, am I babe?" he asked.

“No, bring it,” she whispered, wrapping her arms around his broad shoulders.

Rafe pulled back a bit and thrust forward, pushing to the hilt inside of her. He could feel her womanly dew. . Hot. Wet. Her scent was intoxicating. The low growl that escaped his lips was animalistic, an animal that had finally caught his prey and was enjoying it to the fullest.

“Oh, my damn!” she cried into Rafe’s neck.

“Exactly!” was all he said. Man, he didn’t know how much longer he could hold out. He could have wept when he felt Diamond’s pussy spasm around his cock. “That’s it, Brown Eyes, come with me.” Rafe thrust ferociously up into her. Diamond pushed back down on him so hard he almost lost his footing. Damn! She was giving as well as she got. *What a woman. My woman.*

“Oh God, Rafe, I’m coming!” she exclaimed, her tremors beginning from the tips of her toes to the ringing that had begun in her ears.

“Come!” he said, his body jerking and jerking as he released inside of her. “Fuck me! Shit...Ahhhh....Ahh!”

Diamond was still trembling when she felt the hotness of Rafe’s release. Rafe’s hold on her butt was so tight it would be a wonder if his hand prints weren’t imprinted on her ass cheeks. Diamond was speechless,

her breathing rapid, and her heartbeat accelerated. A slew of different emotions raced over her. Love! Happiness! She'd wanted him for so long.

"You okay?" Rafe asked, in a breathless whisper.

"Yes. Man, you do know how to make a girl feel good," she giggled.

"So you're not upset that it was against the wall?" he asked.

"Hell, no. that was hot!" she said.

Rafe laughed at her and lifted his hand to run his fingers through her layered tresses. "I have something for you," he whispered against her soft hair.

Diamond let her legs fall from around him and used Rafe as leverage to steady herself while adjusting her skirt, smoothing it out over her hips, then running her fingers through her hair, trying to bring some kind of order to the now wild mane.

"It's a good thing I had on a skirt," she remarked.

Rafe laughed, pulled his pants up, stuffed his cock back into his jeans, but didn't bother to zip them, because he couldn't, so he pulled his shirt down over them.

"Come on. We need to be outside in two-minutes," he said.

Diamond stood in front of him, rather anxious. His tone sounded serious. “What’s wrong?” she asked searching his eyes.

“Nothing’s wrong. Hopefully everything will be just right,” he answered, placing a quick kiss on her lips, grabbing her by the hand, walking outside, and placing her in front of him as he wrapped his arms around her waist. Her front was to his back.

“Rafe, what’s going—is that a plane I hear?” she asked looking up into the sky.

All of her neighbors had come outside to see what was going on and they were all looking up at the plane as well.

Running boldly across the sky were the words in all capital letters. “DIAMOND SHAW, I LOVE YOU, WILL YOU MARRY ME?!!!”

“OH MY GOD!” she shouted. Laughing, she began jumping up and down like a little girl. She was so happy. “Yes! A thousand times, yes!” she said again.

“I think that’s a yes young man,” one of her neighbors said. She didn’t know which one and she didn’t care.

Turning in his arms she kissed him soundly on the mouth. “I love you too, big guy.”

Putting a little distance between them, he reached into his front shirt pocket and took out a diamond and platinum ring. “I love you so much,

Diamond. Granted, it's quick, but I know what I want...I want you forever," he stated calmly, taking her hand and placing the ring on her finger. "I want to do this properly now. Will you marry me?"

Diamond gasped. The ring was absolutely gorgeous. Her other hand covered her mouth as the tears flowed freely down her face. "Yes." she said.

Rafe took her inside and directly to the bedroom where he proceeded to make love to her again.

**\*\*SK\*\***



# SERENITY KING

New author Serenity King has been reading romances ever since she was sixteen years old and her auntie first placed a Harlequin in her hands. Now King writes interracial/multicultural contemporary romance and erotica that feature her fierce devotion to resilient women and strong passion for family-oriented Alpha men who live, love, and fight for their women.

She currently lives in the New York area with her husband and children.

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