

# New Dawning International Bookfair

Presents



An Interracial Erotic Romance

By

Dee Dawning

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A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace, kissing on a bed. The woman has dark, curly hair and is wearing a white bra. The man has dark hair and is shirtless. They are both looking at each other. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

*New Dawning Bookfair*

**Duped!**

*Dee  
Dawning*

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# DUPED!

## A Letta Storm Novella

### Prologue

*God, I love the way he eats my kitty.*

Jeannette wiggled her hips making the most of his probing fingers as they were buried to the hilt in her saucy opening, twisting and reaming her channel. Her heart pitter-patted a hundred miles per hour and her hips pushed her pussy firmly into his mouth when his long tongue flittered across her ultrasensitive clit. Her body hummed with need and little mewling noises escaped her larynx with every nerve jangling lick.

What a lover Max was! No one could make her feel like he did. She knew because even though they were still technically married, she'd sampled others and they fell woefully short.

Fidgeting and squirming, her hands gripped the headboard so tight her nails dug into the palm, while the fingers of her other hand closed firmly, around his tightly curled hair. Sounding anxious, she passionately bellowed, "Oh God, you make me feel so-o good, Max."

"That's because I love to eat and fuck your smooth, sweet, lily-white pussy, baby."

Jeanette snickered.

*And I love that big, black cock.* That's why, even though she'd kicked the bum out six months ago, she coaxed him into bed every time he came to see the kids. Of course, she didn't have to do much. Run her tongue over her top lip or bat her baby blues. Smile sideways and raise an eyebrow as she flicked a lock of her long, black hair away from her face.

Jeanette knew how to get men. She'd always knew how to get men. That's how she got Max.

Max began to mouth and suck on her sensitive, clitoric bud like a vacuum cleaner. As she writhed and thrashed her head back and forth, his free hand snaked up along her ribs. He squeezed her breast hard and when his finger and thumb rolled her hard jutting nipple, she arched her back and screamed her release. "Oh my fucking God, I'm coming, baby. Wrapping her legs around his back, she pulled him in tight, rocking side to side. "Jesus, baby. Oh yeah. Don't stop, Christ, I see rainbows."

He paused long enough to mumble, "I won't, baby, don't worry."

Jeanette reached down with both hands and pulled him back into her so tight he had to breathe through his mouth. "Oh yeah, baby. That's it. You are the absolute best."

"I know," he mumbled around her clit.

When her cli-Max, as she was fond of calling them, was over, he rose. Posing for her as he loved to do, he turned sideways so she could admire the hard, slab of throbbing black meat with which he was about to fuck her senseless.

She couldn't wait while he went through his muscle man routine, flexing his muscles, wrapping his fist around his cock and brandishing it at her. Crème ran out of her pussy and tickled when it ran down to the sheets. Even with his hand hiding half of his stiff organ there was still plenty left over. Max was a wonderful specimen. Too bad—except for sex—he was worthless.

"Don't you miss this, baby?"

"What's there to miss? Except when you're out of town, wherever you go, you fuck me once or twice a week." She licked her lips and spread her legs wide in anticipation. "Stop playing with that sausage and get your ass over here and slam that mutha home."

She admired Max while he dressed. Yes, Max was an eyeful. Even a year ago, three years into their marriage, she still considered him to be a catch, until her accountant pointed out that he was costing her a good portion of her yearly trust. How was she to know the man was a leach?

"How come you always have to run off so fast when we finish?"

"I just do. Aren't you going to get dressed?"

“No. I just feel real good lying here naked remembering the three fantastic climaxes you gave me. I might just lay here naked until dinner time.”

He chuckled and smiled mischievously. “You want me to send in the gardener for the second shift?”

“No, baby, he’s not as good as you.”

Max’s brows furrowed. “You and the gardener?”

Jeanette laughed. “I’m not that desperate. Don’t forget to say goodbye to the kids. And don’t flirt with the nanny.”

“I will. I don’t.” Max kissed her goodbye. “I’m going to be gone for a couple weeks.”

She threw a pillow at him. “Go on, get out of here.”

After he left, she made a call.

“James Law Offices.”

“Julius, it’s Jeanette. Do you know a good private eye I could hire?”

## Chapter One – The Call

**I'**d just installed my best customer, Sylvia Bernstein, under the dryer when my cell phone rang. "Hello?"

"Hello. Is this Mrs. Randle?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Maximilian E. Randle III."

"Yes, who's this?"

I heard a sigh. "This is Jeanette Randle. The other Mrs. Maximilian E. Randle III. The one in Bel Air with two young children."

A chill crept up my spine. "Is this some kind of joke?"

A careless laugh preceded her response, "I assure you, it's no joke. We are both married to the same man."

The chill turned into the hot flush of panic. My voice cracked as I screeched, "I don't understand."

That laugh again. "I know you don't. I'm having trouble understanding this myself. The bottom line is, I've been married to Max for four years and you have been married to him four months." This time the laugh sounded hysterical. "Lady, *you* have been duped!"

*My newlywed husband is a bigamist?* I felt dizzy. So dizzy, I sat in the customer chair. "We must get together to figure something out."

Her voice became cold, calculating, bitchy. "I'm afraid that's not possible—at least not at this time."

"Then wha—"

With an air of privilege, she said, "My attorney will be in touch."

"When?" I screamed, "How?" but the line was dead.

My God, could it really be? Could Max be married to someone else? Why am I not in shock?

*Because from the beginning, as he boldly took a seat at your table, and introduced himself, he seemed too good to be true.*

I hadn't heard from Max for four days and he hadn't returned any of the messages I'd left. He was ostensibly on one of his trips, trying to drum up business for his fledgling company. I punched in his number to call him again and confront him, but I only got his voice mail.

"You've reached Max Randle. I'm busy right now, but if you leave your name, number and a short message, I'll call you back."

*Sure, you will.* "Max, I just received a call from a woman named Jeanette, who claimed to be your wife and she sounded white. Is this a joke? I'm in a panic right now. Please call me so we can talk."

My lips trembled. My nerves had been stretched to the breaking point. I closed my phone. I felt hot and stifled. *I need to get out of here.* I removed and hung my smock walked on a hook and stomped to the reception desk. "Darla, something's come up. I just put Mrs. Bernstein under the dryer. When she's ready, would you have Sally finish her up? And while you're at it, reschedule the appointments you can and those you can't, spread out as best you can."

"All right, Ms Turner."

I left by the rear entrance of my salon. I wasn't in my car yet, but my mind raced two hundred miles per hour. Everything had started next door, at Sal's Deli. I had been eating lunch, when Max took a seat at my table. This Tyson Beckwith look-alike claimed he admired me. Mind you, on my best day, dressed to the nines, I might reach a seven and he was off the friggin' scale. I should have run the other way, fast as I could. But that old deadly sin, 'Vanity', seduced me, as surely as he did, three friggin' days later.

I wanted to get in my car, and, if I made it home without closing my eyes and driving into a freeway overpass abutment at a hundred miles per hour, get shitfaced drunk. But I needed to calm down first, so I scooted past my new Honda Accord coupe. *What a shame it would be to smash that beautiful piece of Japanese engineering.*

I walked into the rear entrance of Sal's Deli. Why? I had no idea, except Salvatore Costella, the owner, was a good friend of mine. As I walked through the kitchen, he

spoke to me, “Ah, Jamilla. You are early for lunch. We don’t serve for another,” he glanced at his watch, “fifteen minutes.”

“I know. Can I just get a cup of coffee and a toasted bagel with cream cheese?”

“For you, Princess, anything. Take a seat and I will bring it to you.”

I took a seat in the dining room. From the time I opened my salon, five years ago, when I was twenty-three, the one constant in my life was Sal’s friendship.

However, I remembered the call from wife number one as I realized I sat in the same place I was sitting, that fateful day, when my double-dealing future husband first talked with me.

“Excuse me.”

I nearly choked when I looked up and saw the ten-foot tall dreamboat who spoke to me.

“It’s kinda crowded in here. Would you mind if I joined you?”

Hunks never spoke to me—never—let alone asked to sit with me. Trembling, I glanced around to make sure he wasn’t speaking to someone else. Unable to talk, I answered his question with a shake of my head.

“Thank you.” He sat on the other side of the table, then offered his hand and the widest, whitest smile I’ve seen this side of a teeth-whitening commercial. “I’m Maximilian Randle, but friends and lovers call me Max.”

Despite his unmitigated gall at being so forward, I grinned and thought, *I’d like to be your lover.*

Regaining a tiny bit of self-control, I shook his hand. His touch made my nipples hard and my heart leap into my throat. “Jamilla Turner. Do you have many friends and... *lovers?*”

Still holding my hand, his eyes sparkled as he laughed. “More friends than lovers. However, due to my recent divorce, I’m working on that.”

I dipped my head. “Oh, you just got divorced?”

He closed his smile up to a tight-lipped grimace and nodded. “You know, you are a very attractive.”

I puckered my lips and narrowed my eyes. “Baby, I know a line when I hear one. I’m not that attractive and you know it.”

He dipped his brow and shook his head energetically. “I know no such thing. Today is not the first time I’ve seen you. I saw you yesterday and admired you, so I asked the guy taking orders, “Who is that sister?” Are you beautiful in the conventional sense? Probably not, but you *are* pretty and I like women to have some meat on their bones. What’s more, you’re a strong, successful, businesswoman. I find the whole package, attractive and very intriguing.”

My mouth opened to answer him before my brain thought of a response. I didn’t know what to say, so I stared at him open-mouthed, when he floored me.

“Would you have dinner with me tonight?”

Sal interrupted my reverie. He set my coffee and bagel on the table and sat across the table with his own cup of coffee. His head cocked to the side, he gazed at me. “Why the long face, doll?”

I blotted the tear that meandered lazily down my cheek with a napkin. “Oh Sal. I think I screwed up royally.”

Sal shifted in his seat and frowned. “Tell me what happened, my sweet.”

I took a deep breath. “I got a telephone call about a half hour ago from Jeanette Randle.”

“Your mother-in-law?”

I shook my head, but before I could explain, he went on. “Your husband’s sister?”

I spoke quickly to preempt any more guesses. “His wife.”

His confusion was palpable. “I don’t understand.”

Before I could respond, my cell phone rang. I held Sal off with a finger. “Hello.”

“Is this Jamilla Randle?”

“Yes, who’s this?”

There was a slight pause. “This is Julius James. I’m helping Jeanette Randle out.”

“Oh yes, I’ve been expecting you to call. When can we meet?”

“Are you in a hurry?”

I glanced toward Sal. He looked confused. “Wouldn’t you be? Yes, I need to find out what’s going on.”

“I guess so. It’s ten-forty-five now. If you can make it to my office by noon, I’ll give you fifteen minutes before I go to lunch.”

Studying my watch, I wondered aloud, “Is that enough time?”

“It should be. My address is 1714 Eastwood Drive, suite 6A, in Long Beach.”

“Hmm. Clear across L.A. If I’m going to be there by noon, I better leave right now.”

After disconnecting, I apologized to Sal, and jogged to my car.

It was a fifty-mile jaunt, but fortunately my salon was near the freeway, rush hour was over and no highway patrolmen saw fit to pull me over for driving over ninety in a sixty-five mph zone.

I pulled in the small parking lot, of the equally small office building at eleven fifty-seven, raced into the building and found 6A, right near the entrance. The sign on the door read, Julius James, Attorney at Law. I stepped through the mahogany door and was surprised to find a middle-aged man half sitting on what would be a receptionist’s desk, if there had been a receptionist.

“You are Mrs. Jamilla Randle, I take it?”

“I am, and you must be Mr. James.”

He nodded. “That’s me. You made good time.”

“Yeah well, I guess all the patrolmen were on break.”

He laughed. “You could have gotten a five hundred dollar ticket.”

“That’s a drop in the bucket, compared to what I stand to lose if your client spoke the truth.”

“Really? Why don’t we step into my office?”

I followed him into his office.

“Please be seated.”

I sat in one of the two chairs that fronted his oak desk. I looked around as he took a seat. The wall behind his desk held the requisite framed degrees, endorsements and certificates. A matching credenza rested below the official looking documents.

He straightened up and stared at me. “Now, Mrs. Randle, what can I do for you?”

“I have a zillion questions, but first, I’d like to know why your client thinks my husband is her husband.”

“Perhaps if I showed you some photographs of Jeanette’s husband, you could tell me.”

“Please do.”

He reached in his coat pocket and pulled out a handful of snapshots. The first one revealed a pretty woman with long, dark hair in a wedding dress standing beside a tall, handsome, African American man in a tux. It was him, all right.

I glanced over at James. “Your client is gorgeous.”

“Yes, she is.”

The second picture showed Max with his arm around the same woman as she held a newborn. The third photo, showed him holding a mixed race toddler and she, a newborn. The fourth photo was similar except the newborn was older and the toddler posed in front of them. “Wait a minute. I bought that shirt for Max not more than a month ago. What gives?”

The lawyer shrugged. “I don’t know what to tell you other than he *is* the children’s father.”

“Yeah.” I said, not quite understanding. I didn’t see any reason to continue punishing myself, so I handed the stack of photos back to Julius. “Okay, I’m convinced. Your client *was* married to Max, but he told me he got divorced six months ago.”

Julius’ brow furrowed in confusion for a few seconds. “I have been Jeanette’s attorney for several years. I assure you, there is no divorce, therefore, you are both married to the same man.”

“Are you sure?”

“As sure as I am that we’re all going to die.”

I closed my eyes and shook my head. “I had no idea. I hope your client doesn’t hate me.”

“Of course not. You did nothing wrong. Jeanette kicked him out over six months ago. If anything she feels sorry for you, turning your life upside down.”

“That looked like a pretty nice house in the last picture. Jeanette mentioned Bel Air. Is that where it is?”

“Yes.”

“Did Max buy the house for her?”

Julius seemed to get kick out of that, chuckling as he spoke, “I shouldn’t laugh. No, Max, never brought much to the marriage. Jeanette Randle is fortunate enough to come from a wealthy family. She had the house when they got married. Max was a one-man moneypit. To my knowledge, Max never worked a day in the four-and-a-half years they’ve been married.”

I felt my heart sink at that news. “How did she find out we were married?”

He shrugged. “Jeanette asked me for a private investigator recommendation a week ago. I understand the investigator discovered a marriage at a wedding chapel in Las Vegas. She called me couple hours ago and said she’d called you. She asked me to call and talk with you and you know the rest.”

“Yeah, sucker me, I know the rest.”

He chuckled. “Don’t kick yourself over it.”

My nose and lips scrunched. “Easy to say. What do we do now? Go to the authorities?”

Julius shook his head in earnest. “No, we don’t want to do that. For obvious reasons, my client doesn’t want Max to go to prison.”

I felt my eyebrows arch. “I’ll bite. It’s not so obvious to me.”

He sighed. “She doesn’t want the father of her children to be a felon. Do you have a lawyer you could consult?”

“Not for anything like this.”

Julius raised his hand, his forefinger extended. “I have a couple of lawyer friends. Let me make a call.”

“By all means.”

He cast a perfunctory smile and dialed. “Oh, hi, Zeke. It’s Julie.”

After chuckling at whatever Zeke said, he went on. “What was the name of that divorce lawyer you called an African American nightmare the other night, at the roast for Jimmy G?”

“Spell that for me.” He began writing on a tablet. “Got it. Thanks, pal. I’ll see you at the poker game Tuesday.”

He ripped the top page off and handed it to me.

I read it. "Letta Storm." I glanced up at him. "A woman?"

"Uh-huh, and a very good barrister according to Zeke."

"I'm confused, is she a friend of Zeke's?"

Julius snickered. "God no! Zeke hates her guts. She made him look like an idiot in a nasty divorce case, a month ago and he wasn't the first one she's made a fool of. If anyone can help you out of this mess, it's her."

"She sounds like my girl. How do I get a hold of her?"

He shrugged. "Beats me."

I got home around one-thirty. I tried and failed to find Letta Storm in any of the phone books. Frustrated, hurt and angry, I snatched a glass from the cupboard and opened the door of our small liquor collection. Not much of a drinker, I selected a liqueur I was familiar with—crème de cocoa and poured a couple ounces in a short tumbler, then headed back into the family room.

Back on the couch I took a sip of the chocolaty liqueur. the friendly warmth in my stomach was welcome. Perplexed, I didn't have the slightest idea of what to do.

After another sip, I turned on the TV settling on one of the ubiquitous, inane, afternoon talk shows. I Lifted my glass for another sip, and realized, I'd emptied it. I was slowly getting angry and fought off an urge to shatter the glass against the wall in favor of filling it to the top.

With my filled glass, I headed to my home office to check the emails on my computer. I was surprised to see Max had emailed me not thirty minutes previous.

*The coward couldn't even call.*

I opened Max's email with shaking fingers.

*Dearest Jamilla,*

*I was shocked by your message. I tried to call you back, but the signal was compromised, so I'm emailing you as the fastest way to get in touch with you.*

*I can't believe Jeanette did that. Yes, I was married to her. I told you I got divorced. I will explain everything when I get back.*

*I miss you terribly. I thought I would be able to return next week, but the Emir of Dubai wants to see me about investing in my company, and possibly building a wind farm in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, so it will be a while longer.*

*Don't worry, I will let you know. In the meantime, don't do anything rash. It could compromise the business and my ability to pay our loan off.*

*I love you and dream of making love to you hourly.*

*Max*

I may have been naïve enough to marry Max, but I wasn't naïve enough to believe this crap. Printing a copy of the email, I was now even more determined to get in touch with Letta Storm, so I tried googling her and came across her bare bones web site asking the reader to fill out a form and send. Finally, I had a way to get ahold of her. I celebrated by filling my glass. I was about to fill out Letta Storm's form, when the doorbell rang. *Who, the eff, could that be?*

## Chapter Two – Sal

I was thrilled to see Sal when I opened the door. “Sal. What are you doing here?”

He knew I needed a friend...and a drink. He handed over two bottles of my favorite wine.

“Come in.”

After getting comfy on the couch, he asked, “I’m here to find out what’s happening. How could you get a call from Max’s wife when you are his wife?”

I shook my head and shrugged. “Apparently Max doesn’t play by the rules. Have a seat. I’ll pour us some wine and tell you what I know.”

In the kitchen, I opened bottle number one. Then I brought it and two wine glasses into the living room. I filled both of our glasses and sat back on the couch, wondering how to explain what I’d gotten into. “Sal. I’m in deep trouble. Apparently, I married a man, who lives off women. Wife number one threw him out six months ago after he’d sponged off her for four years. Then he found me. The only difference is, she could afford to have him sponging off her, I can’t.”

He swallowed his wine in one gulp. “Honey, what’re you saying?”

I could feel tears welling in my eyes. “I’m saying I could lose everything I’ve got. Everything I’ve worked for the last five years.”

Sal’s nostrils flared. “Just divorce the son-of-a-bitch and be done with him.”

“It’s not that simple. I not only married him, I got a loan for him.”

He stared at me, moved beside me, and wrapped an arm around my shoulder. “Princess, I love you like a sister. I have money saved. If you need it, it’s all yours.”

What a sweetheart he was, offering me his life savings. Why couldn’t Max be like Salvatore? “Thanks Sal, but I couldn’t.”

He shrugged. “If you need it, it’s yours. I can always make more.”

“Right now, what I need is a good lawyer.”

“We’ll beat this thing. My sister-in-law’s sister was married to a bastard and swears by her lawyer.”

A glimmer of hope seeped into my mind. “Who is it?”

“I’m not sure. She’s some black woman with red hair. I’ll call my brother and ask him.”

Sal called his brother, Carlo who asked his wife Marcy, who didn’t know either. She gave Carmelita’s number to Carlo who gave it to Sal, who then called Carmelita, who didn’t speak English well. And Sal, a second generation American of Italian decent, didn’t speak Spanish, hardly at all.

We finished two glasses of wine during the ten-minute conversation in bastardized Italo/Spanish.

I understood practically nothing.

He hung up and smiled at me. “Her name is Letta Storm.”

Excited, I bounced up and down on the cushion. “That’s her! Someone else recommended her. Did you get her phone number?”

He shook his head. “Carmelita didn’t have it, but she said she was *mucho grande*. Her lawyer gave her ex-husband so much grief, he moved back to Mexico.”

I scratched my head. “How do I get ahold of her?”

“She said information has her number.”

“Oh, good.” I picked up my cell phone and punched in 411. I nodded at Sal when the computerized voice read off a number and said, “I will connect you now.”

The phone rang six times, and a recording came on. “Hello, this is Letta Storm, Attorney at Law. Please leave your name, reason for calling, a phone number and if you have one, an email address. Or if you prefer, you may write me at perfectstorm (one word) at lstorm dot com. I will respond within twenty-four hours.”

I chuckled. Perfect Storm. *I like that*. “Hello, Ms Storm. My name is Jamilla Turner Randle. I need a miracle and a good attorney. You came highly recommended from two sources, so I would love to meet with you and discuss my situation. I will also fill out and send the form on your website. My phone number is 213-555-2323. Please call or write as soon as you can.”

Shortly after I left the message for Letta Storm, Sal said, “I’m sorry to leave you like this, but only Raul is at the restaurant and I need to get back to prepare for the dinner rush. We hugged and cheek kissed. He said, “Call if you need anything,” and then left.

\* \* \* \*

Still parked across the street from Jamilla's house, Sal pulled his cell phone out and called his cousin Tony.

"Hello?"

"Tony, it's Sal."

"Hi Sal. What can I do for you?"

"It's not what you can do for me. It's what I can do for you."

"What're you talking about?"

"Jamilla, remember her."

"Oh yeah. What about her?"

"I just left her. I'm not sure of the details, but she told me her marriage is unraveling. This could be your chance, cuz."

"Fantastic, back to plan one."

"She's put on a few pounds. Does that matter?"

"Naw. Just figure out a way I can meet her and I'll take it from there."

"What about the barbeque I'm having Saturday night?"

"Is she coming?"

"Not yet, but she and I are tight. I'll get her there."

"Thanks, Sal. I owe you one."

"If you get anywhere. Just be nice to her. That's all I ask."

\* \* \* \*

I hadn't had any lunch and my stomach let me know by turning into knots. It was only a quarter after three, so I plucked a skimpy lean cuisine dinner—barely a snack in my opinion—from the frozen wastelands of my freezer and shoved it into the microwave.

I took my snack/dinner—yum, yum—to my study and got on my computer. I intended to fill out the form on the mysterious Letta—perfect—Storm's website, when my cell phone rang. An electronic voice instructed me, "Check your email," followed by a dial tone. I clicked on my email bookmark and discovered an email from perfectstorm@lstorm.com.

*Dear Mrs. Turner Randle,*

*For me to consider your case, you must provide the following information so I can perform a preliminary check on you.*

*Please furnish your full name, date of birth, social security number, last school you attended, and the grade you attained. If you will, I also would like the same information on your husband plus his title/occupation and the name of the attorney representing him.*

*Upon receipt of this information, if I am interested in representing you, you will hear from me within twenty-four hours. If you do not hear from me within that time, I suggest you look for another attorney.*

*Regards, L*

Needless to say, I was disappointed. I responded with all the information I could, explaining the situation as best as I understood it. I sent my response, and speculated if I'd ever hear from Letta Storm, again.

Receiving that ridiculous email from my two-timing husband, then putting up with Letta Storm's nonsense had caused my perfectly crummy mood to ripen into full-fledged disgust. I was fed up and wanted to hurt someone—*Maximilian*. I couldn't just do nothing, so I set up an appointment at four-thirty for a key specialist to change all the locks. Then I rushed to the U-Haul moving center about a mile away and bought a dozen boxes and packing tape.

Back home, while the locksmith changed the locks and the garage door opener codes, I started throwing everything that belonged to Max in the boxes and taped them shut.

To my amazement, the key guy handed me a bill for two hundred and fifty bucks. *Two hundred and fifty smackeros for twenty minutes?* "How come so much?"

"I had to put a new fifty-dollar lockset on the front door and there was a hundred dollar service charge for same day service."

I shrugged and wrote the check. I had to admit he was fast and efficient. As I handed him the check, he handed four new keys to me along with the recoded garage door remotes. "Thank you, ma'am. If you have any problems within ninety-days, give us a call."

After he left, I went back to loading the rat's things into boxes. I called a charity to pick up the boxes, but they couldn't get there for a week. The next one didn't pick up in my area at all. The last one asked me to bring the donations to them. Christ, I couldn't even give away expensive and I mean *expensive*, men's clothes and accessories. I gave up. Screw them.

I stuck the boxes in the garage. Maybe I'd have a garage sale next week. I could even get my kid brother, who was going to college and could use the money, to help.

I felt a lot better. He wasn't out of my life yet, but at least he was out of my house.

I was exhausted. I must have fallen asleep on the couch. The doorbell woke me. I forcing myself up and ambled toward. The front door when it rang again. "Coming," I yelled a second before jerking the door open. Sal was back holding a Styrofoam container that smelled suspiciously like beef brisket.

He held the container out to me. "Here, I knew, under the circumstances you wouldn't feel like cooking, so I brought your favorite, beef brisket and cottage fries."

"Oh, thank you. You're a lifesaver. All I had all day is one of those Lean Cuisine thingys."

Sal's bushy eyebrows dipped. "Really? Are you trying to lose weight?"

"Ah, in a word, yes! Since I've been married to the bigamist, who's been gone more than he's been here, I've drowned my misery in food and added ten pounds to my already overweight frame."

Sal shrugged and smiled. "Whatever. You know me. I like my women a little zaftig. If I wasn't twenty-five years older than you, I'd find a deserted South Sea island and take you away from all this."

I laughed. "You always say that. It doesn't bother you that I'm black?"

Sal shook his head with gusto. "You always ask that."

I realized I was being rude. "Come in, please."

“No, I can’t, I need to get back to the store.” He pushed his forefinger on my nose the way he does when he’s about to make a point. “We’re all something. It’s what inside us, not outside, that matters. And you, dear Jamilla, have the right stuff.” He sighed. “Ahh, if I was younger, I would show you how good an Italian lover could be.”

I laughed.

“You laugh, but it’s true. I was good, still am, but I’m too old for you. Which brings me to the other thing I came here for...”

I believed he was, and probably is still, good in bed. I pushed my forefinger against his hefty nose and smiled. “And what is that lover boy?”

He laughed. “You have the personality to go with your great looks.”

I started to protest, but he held up a hand and continued. “Nuh-uh, we’ve had this argument before, too. Just because you don’t think you’re attractive, doesn’t mean I and the rest of the rest of the world can’t think you are.”

I rested my hands on my hips and pursed my lips. “Whatever. What’s the other thing you came for?”

“Remember the barbeque I had last spring?”

“You mean the one where I drank so much I passed out and slept it off in your guest room?”

He smiled and nodded. “Ah-huh.” He snapped his fingers. “My one chance to tap that lovely body and I didn’t.”

“And that’s one of the reasons we’re good friends. Because I can trust you. What’s the thing you came for?”

“I’m having another barbeque Saturday night and I want you there.”

I shook my head. “I don’t know.”

He frowned. “I insist. You’re too tense, you need to relax. Don’t make me kidnap you.”

I did want to forget about my problems, even it was only for one night. “Okay, on one condition.”

His frown deepened. “What?”

“That you don’t tell anyone about how I passed out last year.”

He grabbed my free hand, pulled me into an embrace, and kissed my cheek. “It’s a deal.” Turning to leave, he exclaimed, “I gotta go. Be there by six.”

### Chapter Three – Antonio

**I**t was still dark the next morning, when I jerked my eyelids open to the funky melody on my phone. Raising up on my elbows I rubbed the detritus from my eyes and squinted at the clock. 6:11? I reached for the object of my distress. *What the f...who could this be?* “Hello?”

“Mrs. Randle?” the electronically modified voice asked.

I knew from before, it was Letta Storm. “Damn, Ms Storm, could you call me any earlier? What do you want?”

If the robotic sounding voice was weird, the robotic sounding laugh was bizarre. “Sorry, they wake me up early here. I want to work for you.”

I calmed down. “Fantastic. When can we meet?”

“That’s a problem right now. I’m in the middle of a weight reduction program up in Ojai.”

“How much longer will you be there?”

“Until I lose thirty pounds. About ten more days.”

I couldn’t help but scrunched my nose and mouth up. “I really would like to see you sooner.”

“I’d like to see you sooner, too. Could you possibly come here?”

“What and where is Ojai?”

“It’s a small town about eighty miles north and west of your salon.”

“I guess so. Is Sunday morning soon enough?”

“Sure, that’ll be good. They have us doing less on Sunday. I’ll email you directions.”

I did a dance. Letta Storm was going to represent me.

Holding the phone out, I stretched my arms and yawned and my jaw cracked. “Yoww!” *Damn that hurts.*

It was too early to get up, so I slept for another hour.

When I woke again, I reluctantly swung my legs out of bed and headed to my office and turned on my computer. While it booted up, I padded to the kitchen to make coffee. When I came back, a few minutes later, a cup of coffee in hand, I went to my computer and, as she'd promised, found Letta's email.

*Hello Jamilla,*

*I apologize for dragging you up to Ojai. I think at least for starters, I can operate from here.*

*I've completed a preliminary investigation and have discovered some interesting things. I promise to make your trip worthwhile.*

*Take Interstate Highway 5 north to State Route 126 east to Santa Paula, then take State Route 150 north to Ojai.*

*You will find me at The Spa at Ojai. I am in suite seventeen. If you have any trouble call me at 213-555-1110.*

*I look forward to meeting you.*

*L*

I turned on the shower, slipped my night shirt over my head and stepped on the scale. "Eeek!" I'd gained two more pounds.

Hmm. Letta's at a weight reduction retreat. I could sure stand to lose a few pounds. Who am I kidding? Sal was being nice. I could stand to lose a slew of pounds. I wonder if they're any good.

I punched in the number Letta had given me. "Hello."

"Hi Letta, What no robot voice?"

"Jamilla?"

"The one and only."

I heard a chuckle from her end. "The voice mod works on my other phone. There are a lot of angry ex-husbands floating around so a lady can't be too careful. What can I do for you?"

Hearing her real voice seemed weird. It was midrange, but distinctive—perhaps with a slight warble.

“I was thinking, I have a weight problem also and I wondered if I should think about checking myself in. Is the place you’re at any good?”

“I’ve been here for two of the three weeks I signed up for. Can you afford to be gone from your business for a period of time?”

“Not unless I plan around it. If you’ve been there two weeks, how’re you doin’ so far?”

“I’m pleased. So far, I lost twenty-one pounds, but you always lose more at first. I’ll tell you what. When you come up Sunday, I’ll introduce you to my instructor. After speaking with her, if you think you can lose some weight here, make arrangements to come back.”

“That’s a great idea. I’ll see you around ten or eleven Sunday morning.”

After my call to Letta, the day normalized, except for Sal coming in for a haircut. I was booked solid as I usually am on Fridays, but I squeezed my dear friend in.

“Thanks for doing this for me. I wanted to get my hair cut for the party tomorrow night, but my normal barber was rushed to the emergency room with a kidney stone. You’re a lifesaver Princess.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“You know how to cut it?”

I smiled. “Oh, I think I’ve known you long enough to figure it out.”

“Still coming tomorrow, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, I said I would, didn’t I?”

“Good, there’s someone I want you to meet.”

I sensed my brow dipping. “Who?”

He smiled, but wouldn’t say, “You’ll see.”

\* \* \* \*

I arrived at Sal’s quaint, 1960’s ranch style home, in Los Feliz, at six-thirty. There was a note on the door instructing guests to follow the brick path around the left side of the house to the back yard.

When I got there, I surveyed the back yard. There were about twenty guests. Some I knew, most I didn't. Sal, standing at the barbeque under an open gazebo, grinned from ear to ear when he saw me. Handing the barbeque utensils to a bystander, he rushed over and embraced me in a firm, bear hug that squeezed the breath out of my lungs.

Arm around me, he waltzed me around the yard introducing 'his good friend, the lovely and talented, Jamilla Randle.' No wonder I loved the guy. I corrected the Randle/Turner flap though. Then he took me, around the free form swimming pool, to a solitary man, sitting at a small table off in the corner. "I saved the best for last, sweetheart."

I wouldn't have been surprised if my eyes bugged out of my sockets when his beautiful sea green eyes gazed up at me. He smiled and butterflies fluttered in my stomach. I'd never met this man, yet I was sure I knew him.

*He is Gorgeous!*

*What the f... you haven't even got rid of one back stabbing s.o.b. and you're ogling another. A white one, no less.* My pessimistic side informed me.

*Ah-huh. He's hot isn't he?*

*I guess, for a white guy.*

"Jamilla, this is who I wanted you to meet."

On second glance, I decided he wasn't conventionally handsome. But he really appealed to me. Every square inch of my skin tingled. I'd never felt like this, even when I first met Max.

He rose. He was tall...at least six feet and well built. He had a thick mop of brown almost black hair and looked to be in his early thirties. His nose was oversized and a bit crooked, but not unattractive. His lips were full and smile winsome. The heavy eyebrows on his narrow face almost overshadowed his deep set, penetrating eyes, lending him a brooding look that exuded pure sex. I squeezed my quivering legs together.

"This is my cousin, Antonio Castanza. Tony, this is my dear friend Jamilla. Oh!" Sal's eyes grew wild. "The steaks. I'm sorry. Tony could you keep this lovely lady company while I check on dinner."

Tony enfolded my outstretched hand in both of his hands causing a tiny ember to ignite in my core and smolder. His lips formed a wall to wall smile. "It would be my honor to look after Jamilla."

As Sal literally ran back to the barbeque grill, Tony led me to the other seat at his table. "Please, won't you have a seat?"

Tony inquired, "I see you're drinkless. Would you like something?"

"I'd like that. What do they have?"

"Beer, soda, wine, water, and spiked and unspiked lemonade."

"I'll try the spiked lemonade." As he walked away, I couldn't help but admire his well formed, rear-end.

While he was gone, I tried to clear my head. The man had a mesmerizing effect on me. I managed to calm to nearly normal until he returned and our fingers touched as I took the lemonade. Then it seemed as if little critters pattered up my spine and my heartbeat sped up once again.

I took a sip of lemonade. It was strong, but good.

Sitting opposite me, Tony, leaned forward, and crossed his arms on the table. "So, I understand you and my cousin are neighbors."

It took a second to realize he meant business neighbors. "Yes, Sal's Deli is two doors down from my shop."

"Sal said you gave him a hair-cut yesterday."

I reached in and pulled a peanut from the bowl of snack mix. "Yes, he didn't have an appointment. It was an emergency and I squeezed him in. I was kind of rushed so I'm afraid I didn't do a very good job."

Tony seemed to get a kick out of that. "Well, Sal seems to have a divergent opinion. He claims it was the best haircut he's ever had and you should have been cutting his hair all along."

I cocked my head. "Divergent opinion?"

"I'm sorry. I usually go back over my writing and simplify the uncommon words, but in speech, you're stuck with the first word that comes out of your mouth."

"Actually, it was refreshing. Most people would have said different, but different doesn't mean opposite. No, divergent was the correct word. What do you do?"

Tony fidgeted in his seat, slightly and gave me one of those sideways looks. "I'm a writer...a screen writer."

Hmm, even though I lived and worked in movieland, I'd never met a screen writer. I was impressed. "Really? How long have you been doing that?"

He pursed his lips as his eyebrows rose. "My whole adult life. About nine years. I started while I was still in college."

*Hmm. That would make him thirty or thirty-one. Perfect.*

*What are you talking about? Is there something wrong with your eyesight? He's white.*

*You sound like mother. Butt out. I remember how great you thought Max was.*

*How was I to—*

*Stifle! And I mean it.*

Sipping my lemonade, I set the glass down. "So have you had any success?"

He laughed. "That depends on your definition of success. I haven't won an Oscar yet, if that's what you mean."

"But you've had success?"

His head bobbed slowly up and down. "Yeah, I've sold a few screenplays."

"Name one."

"The last two I sold are in production. The last film that was released was *Carpenter's Folly*."

Surprise arched my eyebrows. "You wrote that? I loved that movie. What others?"

"The Applesauce Caper."

Suddenly, it seemed as if I forgot how hard he pushed my buttons. Instead, I became excited about how talented he was. "Another goody. What's your favorite?"

He smiled, "That's easy, my first one, *Mixed Couples*."

My jaw fell open on that one. "Oh, my God. You...have...got...to...be... kidding. That is my all-time favorite movie. I own the DVD, and must have watched it fifty times."

Tony grinned. "Really. You just made my night. What did you like about it?"

Waving my hands, as I do when I get excited. "Everything, but I really loved the couple, Shana and Nickolas. Even though she was black and he was white, they fit

together. It was like they were made for each other. They were incredible. You should be proud, that was a fantastic..." I gasped. "I just remembered, *Mixed Couples* was up for an Oscar and when it didn't win, the audience booed."

"Yeah, I'm afraid they did. It wasn't very nice of them."

I straightened in my seat. "Why? You should have won."

"Maybe, but it didn't make me feel any better. And it made the lady who won feel like hell. It was insensitive."

I realized he was right. "I guess it *was* rude."

"But you were right. Shana and Nickolas were made for each other. I sensed it when I wrote it."

"It was an adorable story."

"Since you liked my story so much, I'm curious. Have you dated Caucasian men?"

I shook my head. "No, no white man to whom I've been attracted ever asked me out and the ones that did, didn't appeal to me. Besides my mother would have a fit."

He cocked his head to the side. "Your mother thinks it's a bad idea."

It was phrased as a statement, but it was really a question. I shrugged. It wouldn't matter to me, but old ideas die hard. Tell me, why was *Mixed Couples* your favorite?"

His smile deserted. "It's kind of personal. When I get to know you better, like I hope to, I'll tell you then."

Curious, I forced myself not to pry by changing the subject. "All right then, tell me what school you attended?"

"Right here. I went to UCLA."

I straightened up. "We have something in common. I went there."

Sal interrupted by setting plates with a huge porterhouse steak, fries and ranch house beans in front of each of us. "Everyone else is half finished. Since you two seem to have shut the world out, I brought these over so they don't get cold. Bon Appetite."

He was right. I hadn't even thought about the goings on after meeting the dashing and talented screenwriter.

We spoke sparingly while eating, but Tony managed to ask, "What did you major in at UCLA?"

I swallowed my mouthful of beans. "Business and English. And you?"

“Film and writing.”

“That makes sense.”

By the time everyone had finished their dessert, it started to get dark so Sal turned on the party lanterns. When a DJ began to play music, I looked around and noticed that at least another twenty guests had arrived.

While nobody moved during the first song, a brave couple broke the ice when Kelly Rowland’s bouncy, *When Love Takes Over* played. Others followed and soon the improvised dance area overflowed with gyrating bodies. Tony glanced over and wagged his bushy eyebrows. “What do you think? Are you ready to shake your booty?”

I laughed and rose. “I have plenty booty to shake.”

When Tony and I began to make our moves on the dance floor, the song had nearly ended. When it was over, the DJ played a slow romantic song. I thought we’d sit down, but Mr. Hot Stuff had other plans. Tony’s left hand took my right hand, while his right arm snaked around my back, coming to rest in the sway of my back. After just a few steps he drew me in close. My breasts pressed against his chest, feeding the smoldering ember in my core. The feeling of familiarity grew stronger the longer he held me. Little by little, my breathing slowed as his hand slid slowly, but surely down from my back to the top of my derriere. An eerie feeling came over me that this was not the first time his hand had been there. In fact I had the peculiar feeling this man’s hands had been over every inch of my body.

His lips lowered to my ear, which gave me chills and prickled my flesh. “I hope you don’t take this wrong, but you have a real nice body and it feels wonderful against me.”

I didn’t take it wrong, but my body seemed to. Relaxing as we swayed gently to the soft romantic sounds, my eyelids lowered. Then something rigid pushed into my abdomen. The image of the long, pale, male organ pressing against my abdomen filled my mind as if I’d seen it, held it.

My eyes zinged open, but not until, I foolishly and instinctively pushed back, causing the smoldering ember in my womb to burst into a flame. When he shoved again, my stomach felt like it leapt into my throat.

The fact was, I found this sexy white guy extremely attractive, and since my bigamist husband hadn’t been around much to take care of his quasi-husbandly duties,

Tony was looking better and better. The developing situation could have easily spun out of control, so while my body was ready for the ultimate pleasure, my mind and my pessimistic side said no, no, no, you just met him.

*Did I? Then why this familiar feeling?*

Trying to get Tony's mind off of where it surely was, I asked him, "How about you? Have you dated any African American women?"

"Yes, I dated a lovely girl, in college. You remind me of her."

I swallowed. "Me?"

"Very much so."

I don't know if he would have continued, but the song stopped and so did he. Another song—a fast one—started, but I wanted to hear more, so I took his hand and led him back to our table. When we both were seated, I pressed him, "You were saying?"

He didn't seem to want to talk about it. His sad eyes looked even sadder. "I went with a black girl during the last semester of my junior year."

When he didn't continue I prodded, "And?"

He reached across the table and grasped my hand. Unlike when I met him, it was cold. "I'll tell you when we go out."

I did a double take. "Are you asking me out?"

His sad eyes seemed to implore me. "Yes, dinner and dancing or anything you want tomorrow night. Are you game?"

"Yes, but not tomorrow. I have to meet my lawyer."

"When then?"

"I'm not sure. I'll have to call you."

## **Chapter Four – Letta Storm**

**W**ith Tony's throbbing manhood, positioned at the rim of my crème-filled channel, he kisses and fondles me. Gradually, he enters, gliding deep into my lubricated

haven. When he's fully inside me, he moves languorously in and out, slowly picking up tempo until his shaft thrusts into me in a driving rhythm, soothing the carnal itch within.

"Ooh!" I suck in a deep breath. "Deeper, baby, fuck me harder." The walls of my pussy, which all-night have been screaming for friction, finally purr like a happy pussycat. "Oh yeah, that's it, baby, that's it. Give it to me. Don't stop!"

While his cock invades and ravishes my pussy, his long tongue, swirling to and fro, overruns my mouth. Moaning as he captures my tongue, my sharp nails fight back, digging into his unprotected back. "Ooh, you're still a fucking wildcat."

As his powerful thrusts keep coming, relentlessly pounding my pussy, my legs wrap around him. With ankles locking on his ass, guiding him, blood simmers just below my skin. I'm so fucking wet my juices drip down my ass. My clit and cunt ache for release and he knows it. "You like this don't you?"

"Ah-huh."

"I knew you would, just like before." Tense fingers dig into my flesh as his hefty cock continues to pound me harder and faster. I groan as Tony's warm wet lips suck and nibble on a chocolate colored nipple. I squirm as his hand finds my other nipple, pinching and circling it's nub with a finger and thumb.

The sweet torture, seems endless, but with every nerve jangling thrust of his hot cock, twittery, feathery sensations spread through me. Delightful tingly impulses follow, enveloping me in massive orgasmic adventure. "That's it, baby. I'm coming. Oh, my God! It's a big one."

As I begin to squirm and move erratically, Tony yells, "Ohhh, oh! Oh yeah! Sweet Jesus, I'm gonna to cum, too."

Anchoring his hands on my hips, Tony rises up and drives into me hard, wagging sideways and trapping my clit against his pelvic area in a carnal embrace. My pussy grips his cock, milking him, holding him tight as I ride out wave upon wave of erotic sensations. As he spasms, spurting thick semen into me, I reply, "Fuck, baby. Shoot your hot cum into my pussy." While my hungry pussy sucks the fluid from his testicles, I take every inch of him and beg for more, violently crushing my saucy snatch into his pubic bone.

As mind numbing spasms slowly dissipate, pleasure shudders follow. Never have I experienced such a concentration of pleasure As Tony rolls off me I feel his cum ooze out of me, but I am too tired to...

I woke and jerked up with a start. A sexy dream with Tony! It seemed so real, I even came. What a climax! I didn't know whether to be concerned or revel in the visions of the dream. A glance at the digital alarm clock on the nightstand told me it was 6:30 a.m. My gown was soaking wet as was my pussy. I flung the covers aside, and padded to the bathroom.

After taking a shower, I threw on a robe, made coffee, then I fixed and ate a bowl of Total. With coffee in hand, I checked my voice and emails in case Max or Letta Storm had tried to get a hold of me.

Next, I packed a small bag, then donned a pair of jeans, a blouse and running shoes. By seven-thirty, I was in my Honda, on the road to Ojai.

I pulled into the darling little town a little after nine a.m. I worried I might have to call Letta for directions, but The Spa was right on the main street, Ojai Avenue. I pulled in the parking lot, grabbed my bag and locked my car doors. About two minutes later, I knocked on the door to suite seventeen.

A round faced, mildly attractive, somewhat overweight sister with *bright magenta* hair opened the door and flashed a friendly smile. "Jamilla?"

I returned the smile and nodded.

"I thought so." Her cheeks rose as her friendly smile grew wider and she drew me into an embrace. "Thanks for coming. Come in, please. Would you like a drink from the refrigerator? They even have alcoholic drinks if you're in the mood."

I laughed. "I've been constantly in the mood since I got a call from the original Mrs. Maximilian E Randle III, but it's a little early."

A smirk formed on Letta's lips. "Which original one was that? The one in Jonesboro, Tennessee, the one in San Antonio, Texas or the one in Bel Air."

I felt my jaw fell precipitously. "Honest to God. I'm wife number four?"

"That's right."

I rolled my eyes and shook my head. "Now, I do feel like a drink."

"Come in and sit down. What can I get you?"

I took a seat at a corner table. "I don't suppose you have any coffee?"

"Wait here while I make some."

As I glanced around her room, Letta asked, "What do you take in your coffee?"

"Just a little creamer if you have it."

"Yeah. They have packets of the powdered stuff."

Letta returned after a couple minutes with two cups of steaming hot coffee. I picked mine up and sipped it. "Umm, hit's the spot."

"Yes, it does. So, which Mrs. Randle called you?"

"Bel Air. Her name is Jeanette. I even met her Attorney."

Letta's brows arched. "Really? That must have been interesting."

"It was. He showed me pictures of them together. They even have two kids. You must think I'm stupid."

She shook her head. "My job is to help my clients, not judge them."

"Well, I'm not stupid. In five years I built a tiny beauty shop into the biggest and busiest beauty salon in North LA."

Letta's head tipped slightly and she cast a tight-lipped smile. "I know. I checked you out, remember?"

I took a sip of coffee and shifted around. "This one time I *was* stupid and I knew better. It was like going into your favorite dress shop and this gorgeous two hundred dollar dress has been marked down to twenty dollars. You know something's wrong, but you want it so bad you go ahead and buy it anyway.

"Letta, I wanted Max so bad, I went ahead and bought him. Only he wasn't on sale."

Her smile straightened. "What do you mean, you bought him?"

"Max wasn't free and he wasn't cheap."

She frowned. "I'm listening."

I shook my head again. "Unless you can save my ass, I'll be dead broke in six months."

"I'm not a mind reader. Spell it out for me."

My throat felt dry. "Huh-hum." I continued, "Max told me he was starting a new business. Something to do with renewable energy. Wind farms in North Dakota. He

showed me some lease options and some graphs that showed once he got going, his company would be grossing a million dollars a month.”

“Go on.”

“Besides being extremely good looking, he is charming. The combination is deadly. He claimed he wanted to marry me, and it goes without saying, I wanted to marry him. But he said not until he got the small business loan he’d applied for so he could support me, or at least be an equal partner in the marriage.”

The sarcasm rolled off Letta’s lips like honey. “How noble of him. Let me see if I can guess the rest. His application was shot down, but if he could find a co-signer, or better yet, submit a joint financial statement with you as co-borrower, they would reconsider.”

“Pretty much. In addition he borrowed twenty-five thousand from me to tide the business over until the new loan application was approved, which the loan officer said should be no problem.”

“Did he get the loan?”

“Yes, soon after we married, four months ago. He took me to Vegas where we married and honeymooned for a week. A week after that the loan was approved and funded.”

“He didn’t pay the twenty-five grand back yet, did he?”

I pursed my lips. Explaining all this to Letta, made me see how stupid I’d been. “No, he said he would as soon as the business was in the black.”

Letta scrunched her nose. “Not surprising. Frankly, I doubt there’s a business. How big was the loan?”

“Seven-hundred and fifty-thousand.”

She winced. “Ouch! Three-quarters-of-a million! Girl, you really screwed up.”

“I know. What makes me mad is how I could fall in love with such a conniver.”

“Don’t beat yourself up. It’s what he does. He’s attractive and charming and there are lonely women around who need affection.”

“Humph! In my case, it was mighty expensive affection. I figure this little lapse in judgment cost me ten thousand dollars a fuck.”

Letta threw back her head and howled with laughter. When she stopped laughing, she said, "I'm sorry. I know it's not funny. You just hit my funny bone. Anyway, you're not the only one. I discovered three complaints against him where he bilked wealthy women out of thousands of dollars over the years. One was filed in San Francisco, just twelve days ago."

"That's terrible!"

"I know. I figure for every woman that filed a complaint there are five that are too embarrassed or not in a position to do anything."

"What do you mean not in a position?"

She tilted her head as her eyebrows rose. "Married."

I raised my hand to my mouth to cover the smile that played across my lips. "How embarrassing to be taken for a ride, in more ways than one, I might add, and be married."

Letta cracked up again. "Girl, you are funny. You ought to be a stand up comic."

I rested my fists on my hips. "I'll keep that in mind, if I lose my business."

"Well part of my job will be to keep that from happening. Tell me, Jamilla, what would you like to do about your situation?"

I shrugged. "I don't know. What can I do? What do you suggest?"

"Well, I'm sure I can get your marriage dissolved. Do you want to press charges against him?"

My gaze drifted to the ceiling. "I don't know. Would that help at all with the money we borrowed?"

"Nope, probably make it worse, because he'd have to spend the money on bail and attorneys."

"We don't need that. Jeanette's attorney said she didn't want the father of her children in jail anyway."

"Well, it's not really her call, is it? There are five other women besides you who have been victimized. What's more, if he isn't stopped, he will keep victimizing women."

"You're right. Can we talk about that later? Obviously, I want a divorce. Is there anything you can do about the loan and money situation?"

"Oh. I'll do something. I'm just not sure what yet. Let me think about it. In the meantime, I'm getting hungry." She rubbed her tummy. "Let me take you by my weight

control instructor so you can talk with her and then we'll grab some of that delicious diet food."

"Let's go."

"And while we're eating portions that wouldn't fill a small dog, you can tell me how this husband of yours conned a smart cookie like you into doing the dumb things you did."

## Chapter Five - Ojai

"One forty-eight and a half pounds, the instructor said, as I stood on the scale, The ideal weight for your height and build is one hundred and twenty-five pounds, which makes you almost twenty percent over your recommended weight."

"Hmm. Actually, that's not as bad as I thought. My scale must be off. So according to your figures, I'm roughly twenty-four pounds over weight."

"That's right." she said, "Give me twenty days and I'll take most if not all of those pounds off you."

I stepped off the scale, "Really?"

"Yep."

I thought about it and decided it was possible. "If I can work my schedule around, I'll do it."

"Good for you. Looking forward to it. In the meantime, here's our recommended diet and a booklet that describes a regimen that can help you lose weight."

"You mean I can lose weight, like Letta did, at home."

She smiled. "Sure, but not as fast. If you follow this program faithfully, you can lose two to four pounds a week. When you come back here we'll get seven to nine pounds a week off."

I got so excited I hugged her. "Thanks, I can't wait."

At lunch, I was glad to find out Letta exaggerated about the food. I got a salad with oil and vinegar on the side, grilled vegetables and some special kind of iced tea. For what it was, I enjoyed it. It was good and filling. I found out later, the served with the salad was wheat free, but I didn't even notice. After clearing our plates we ordered coffee.

Letta leaned forward, and crossed her arms on top of the table. "So girl, tell me how you fell for Max's line of bullshit."

I rolled my eyes. “I wonder that myself. He swept me off my feet, but the whole time I went with him, this little imp on my shoulder kept saying why me?” I laid my hand across Letta’s wrist. “He was like a movie star.”

Letta ran her tongue across her upper lip. “I know, I dug up a couple photos up of him. He *is* gorgeous.”

“Right, that’s why I was so distrustful, but once he proposed, I figured he was for real and all my reservations foolishly disappeared.”

“Have you had any contact with him since you talked to the other wife or the attorney?”

“Yes, but just by email. I hope it’s all right. I called him immediately after talking with the other woman. Of course he didn’t answer, so I left a message to call me. Instead of calling, the coward sent an email.” I dug a hand into my purse and pulled out the email he’d sent and handed it to Letta. “Here’s a copy.”

She unfolded it and started to read. Shaking her head, she started to snicker. “This guy is unbelievable. You didn’t buy any of this crap did you?”

I shook my head. “No, the love bug is gone. I’m clear headed now.”

She dipped her chin. “Good.”

“Letta?” I fidgeted in my seat

“Yes?”

“How long will it take to get divorced?”

She grinned. “You won’t need to get a divorce, honey. Your marriage is illegal. Therefore, it’s just a formality to get it annulled.”

I set my cup down. “That’s wonderful, but how long will it take?”

She shrugged. “It’s just a matter of going through the motions. What’s the hurry?”

Knowing she wasn’t going to like it, I grit my teeth. “I met someone.”

Gulping her drink, Letta started coughing then spit it out and. When she recovered, she flashed me a stern voodoo eye. Two octaves lower she admonished me, “What you talking about? You haven’t got rid of the bigamist yet. Christ, you only found out you weren’t legally married two days ago. Girl, you are certainly a fast mover.”

I stuck to the side palms up. “C’mon Letta. It’s not like I went looking for him. My best friend had a barbeque and introduced us. I sat and ate dinner with him and we danced. I like him and he likes me, so I told him I’d go out with him when I could. ”

She stared at me, her eyebrows barely above her eyelashes. “You didn’t sleep with him, did you?”

“Not yet, but frankly, parts of me wanted to and I don’t think I need to tell you which parts.”

Letta shook her head. “No, please don’t.”

I uncrossed and re-crossed my legs. “It was just too soon, and I thought I had to get a divorce.”

“What’s his name?”

“Antonio Castanza.” Once again, my surprise announcement caught Letta taking a sip of iced tea.

After she got control of her coughing, she blurted, “He’s white?”

“Ah-huh and I’m still getting used to the idea that he’s white.”

“So am I. Warn me next time you’re going to spring a surprise on me. Now, I’m glad you didn’t sleep with him this soon, but there would be no repercussions if you had. You are *not* married and it’s a mere formality to get the damned marriage expunged.

“Now, as for your new love interest being white, that shouldn’t matter. I have a couple of former clients who have found love and happiness with white men.”

“That’s nice to know.”

“It is, but let me finish. I know there’s a reluctance of sisters to socialize and date white men, but you’re twenty-eight. Before Max came along had you ever been seriously involved with a brother?”

“Only one, but that was nine years ago and we broke up when he went away to college. I’ve been so busy with my business that I’d only occasionally go on a date, and they’ve never led to anything much.”

“That’s my point. It’s not easy to find Mr. Right, because there’re so few of them in *any* race. So if one comes along who, as they say, pushes your buttons, you need to take a serious look at him.

“Now, before you get too serious, I want to size Mr. Antonio Castanza up. Can you arrange for me to meet him?”

The waitress filled our cups.

When she left, I answered Letta, “I can’t ask him to drive here.”

“I know. I can leave for a day if I have to. Try to set something like a luncheon up with him and I’ll meet you there. Now, I hate to bring this up, but I need to get a retainer from you.”

I reached in my purse to retrieve my checkbook. “I have my checkbook with me. How much?”

She shrugged. “Ten thousand will do it.”

It was my turn to choke and start coughing. I wasn’t sure what to do. In a whiny voice I pleaded, “Letta, I don’t have that much.”

Her brows rose. “Can you give me five, for now?”

I winced. “The best I can afford right now is two grand.”

“That’ll do. You can pay me the rest when Max pays you the twenty-five thousand he borrowed.”

I snorted. “Like that’s going to happen.”

Her brows rose even higher. “Oh, I’ll bet he’ll pay you now. He’s probably thinking it’ll throw you off balance and buy some time so you won’t report him to the authorities, just yet. Don’t be surprised if you get a check from him in the mail in the next day or two.”

I shook my head earnestly. “How would he justify it and why won’t I turn him in anyway.”

“He’ll say he closed the deal with an investor, so he can start paying you back. You’re unlikely to do anything if you think he can start paying you back.”

“I could sure use it if he did, but I’m not going to hold my breath.”

Letta smiled. “He may not, but I have a feeling. Before you go back to L.A. come back to my room. I want hear everything you know about Tony.”

Later, in her room, we settled in with a glass of red wine. I told her everything I’d found out about Tony, which at that point wasn’t much.

Letta laughed. "Gee Jamilla, you meet the most interesting people, bigamists, screenwriters."

I waved a hand at her nonsense. "Oh, be quiet."

She laughed. "That'll be the day. I know you're a successful businesswoman. Tell me do you have any goals? Anything you are shooting for?"

I flipped my hands out, palms up. "I'm so busy working nine to six, five and a half days a week. I haven't really thought about it. On a personal level, I suppose like most women, I wouldn't mind finding *that* someone and having a couple of children.

"On a business level, I wonder if it's possible to branch out and open a chain of Jamilla's Jamborees and maintain the quality and service we now offer."

"That's a capital idea. Do you have any employees that have more on the ball than the others?"

I thought for a second then nodded. "Yeah...a couple, maybe three. Why?"

Letta took a sip of her wine. "Just thinking. I'm always thinking. What if you opened a new shop, not too far away, but far enough to draw new customers? Say San Fernando Valley. You leave your second most trusted and capable person temporarily in charge, and then your best employee and you go into the new shop where you train her to be the manager."

I leaned forward and set my wine on the coffee table. "That might work."

Letta waved one hand around as she spoke. "I guarantee it would work if you give her a piece of the action...say twenty percent."

"Yes, I might just try it, but I have bigger worries right now. Unless you can think of a way to get me from under Max's three-quarter-of-a-million dollar loan, I won't have a business when the note comes due."

Letta shook her head. "I know, I've been thinking about it. I have a couple ideas."

Hopeful, I asked, "What? Don't keep me in suspense."

"I'm not ready to tell you yet. I need to research my ideas thoroughly."

I pursed my lips in disappointment. "Well do it quickly."

"Don't worry, I'm going to get on my trusty Mac as soon as you leave."

"Well, I better leave you alone then. I'm exhausted anyway."

"Before you leave I need you to write down the details of your and Max's loan?"

“Like what?”

“Bank, branch, loan officer, date and anything else you can think of.”

I'd already made a copy of the loan agreement. I snatched it out of my bag and handed it to her

“Great, and when you get home can you email me any information you have on Max's business?”

“Sure, I have that information in my laptop.”

“Wonderful.” Letta rose and we hugged.

Letta nodded and walked me to the door.

I wanted to get the information Letta wanted to her, so I booted up my HP and noticed I had an email that had Important! In the subject line. I clicked on the email.

Max had written me. I opened the missive and began to read.

*Dearest Jamilla,*

*I tried calling you but couldn't get through again. Aspen must be a bad place for cell phones. Anyway, I wanted to apprise you of my good news. I closed the deal with one of the investors I met with and now I can pay you back the twenty-five thou I borrowed. Expect a cashier's check for twenty-seven grand Monday, before noon. Thank you very much. The extra two thousand is for interest.*

*I love you and think of you every waking moment.*

*Max*

I shook my head. *Dammed, if Letta wasn't right.*

The promise of getting my twenty-five grand back woke me up, so I picked up my cell phone and called Tony.

My heart skipped a beat when he answered, “Hello?”

I couldn't help the sultry that crept into my voice, “Hi Tony, this is Jamilla.”

“Oh, hi. Are you ready to go out to dinner, yet?”

“Not yet, how about we start with lunch on Tuesday?”

“Are you sure?”

“Ah-huh. When we go to dinner, I want you all to myself.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I know you don’t. I’m bringing someone along to lunch who wants to meet you.”

“Who?”

“My lawyer. I’ll explain everything to you then.”

## Chapter Six – Letta Shows Her Claws

After I hung up with Tony, I called Letta.

“Hello.”

“Letta guess what?”

She laughed. “I’m not a bad lawyer, but mind reading isn’t one of my strong suits.”

“Don’t be so sure. Max wrote me and said he sent the twenty-five grand back, just like you said.”

“That’s super. Let’s hope he really sent it and didn’t just tell you that to keep you guessing for a few days.”

“I don’t think so. He said I should have a cashier’s check tomorrow before noon. I also called Tony.”

“Oh?”

“Tony will meet us at Houston’s on Santa Monica Boulevard, Tuesday at noon.”

“Good. I’ll meet you there.”

“Why don’t you meet me at my shop at eleven and we’ll ride over together?”

“You got it.”

\* \* \* \*

Jamilla didn’t know it, but Monday night I returned to my Van Nuys townhouse and began working on her case in earnest, retiring sometime after midnight.

When I awoke at seven-thirty, I made a call to Bel Air.

“Hello?”

“I’m looking for Jeanette Randle.”

“This is she, did you call about the nanny position.”

*Hmm. Nanny position.* “Yes, ma’am, where do I apply?”

“At the job location, 11212 N. Siena Place. It’s in Bel Air.” Haughtily, she continued, “Do you know where that is?”

“I think so. In the hills North of Beverly Hills, right?”

“Yes. You *do* have references?”

I rolled my eyes. "Of course."

I heard a sigh, "I have to leave at eleven and I'll be gone until five. I don't suppose you could come right now?"

Perfect. "I'll be there in twenty minutes."

After hanging up, I placed another call.

"Stratmore Bank. How may I direct your call?"

"Yes, is Dean Wilson in?"

"Possibly. Who's calling please?"

"My name is Letta Storm. I represent Jamilla Turner Randle."

A man answered and spoke with a mild, but insistent voice. "This is Wilson. In what way do you represent Mrs. Randle?"

"I'm her attorney."

There was a ten-second pause. "What can I do for you, Ms Storm?"

"I'd like to make an appointment to see you."

"What about?"

"Your loan to the Randles."

Another pause. "When would you like to meet?"

"After three, this afternoon?"

"Hmm. That could be problematic. I have appointments all afternoon."

"How about tomorrow?"

"I'll be tied up all morning and most of the afternoon in loan committee." He seemed to be thumbing through his daily calendar. "I do have an opening from eleven 'til noon this morning."

"I'll do my best to get there."

\* \* \* \*

The home was one of those magnificent estate sized homes with forever views including a glimpse of Griffith Park and the famous Hollywood sign. I rang the door chime, which proceeded to play a short version of Beethoven's, Für Elise. Seconds later, the door opened and a small, middle-aged Hispanic woman asked with a mild accent. "Can I help you?"

"Yes, I spoke with Mrs. Randle on the phone about the nanny position."

“Come in.” She led me to a drawing room and suggested I take a seat before leaving.

A short time later an attractive, dark haired lady walked in carrying what looked to be a one year old baby. “Hi, thank you so much for coming. This is Michelle the younger of two children you would be taking care of.”

I handed her a card. “My name is Letta Storm. I’m an attorney for Mrs. Jamilla Turner Randle.”

At first, she appeared confused then anger flashed across her face. “You didn’t come for the nanny position?”

I shook my head and smiled. “No, I love kids, but I’m terrible with ‘em. Michele is a cutie though.”

Her angry façade faded slightly. “I don’t know how I can help your client.

“I do.”

\* \* \* \*

I walked into Stratford Bank and was ushered straight into a small conference room.

An average, middle-aged, bank type individual strode in holding a pad of lined paper in his left hand and offered his right hand to shake. “Dean Wilson.”

I shook his hand and gave him my card. “Letta Storm.”

He sat across the table from me, a curious look on his face. “What can I do for you, Ms Storm?”

“I’m here to negotiate with your bank for my client.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You made a government backed, small business loan to Maximilian Randle for three-quarters of a million dollars. Is that correct?”

“Yes, to him and his wife.”

I handed him a copy of the note, Jamilla had forwarded to me. “Is this a copy of the note?”

He picked up the copy and examined it. “Yes. See your client signed right here.”

“What would you say if I told you, Jamilla Turner Randle, wasn’t married to Max.”

“That’s impossible. We have a copy of the marriage certificate.”

I whipped out my copy of Jeanette and Max's marriage certificate and handed it to Mr. Wilson.

"What's this?"

"That's who Maximilian Randle is legally married to, which means Jamilla Turner couldn't sign as Mrs. Jamilla Randle. Sir you have no loan and if you're not willing to work with my client, I'm going to advise her to walk."

Mr. Wilson rose and spoke with as much emotion as I've ever heard from a banker, "You can't do that! This is fraud!"

"Yes it is, but my client wasn't part of it. If you come after her, you will have to deal with me."

He snickered.

"I may not look like much, but your bank doesn't want to tangle with me. Check around." I stood, all imposing five three of me. "I have a luncheon engagement to go to now, so I must leave. If you work with me, you may get some of your money back. If not, you get nothing. I understand Mr. Randle keeps the proceeds from this loan in one of your accounts. For starters, suspecting fraud, I'd freeze his account." I pointed to my card in front of him. "You have my card."

\* \* \* \*

Letta waltzed up to my beauty station at eleven. "Nice, this is very nice."

"Thanks. I just had the place redecorated four months ago after you know what. Have a seat. I'll be done with this comb out in a minute."

Two minutes later, I removed my smock. "I hope you don't mind waiting another ten minutes, I brought a change of clothes with me."

She smiled. "No, go ahead."

As I headed to the restroom, I realized my stomach was jumpy. I suppose it had gotten that way at the idea of meeting Tony again.

I didn't feel the slightest bit guilty about going out on my husband, Max, because I knew our marriage was a sham and it wouldn't be hard to get it erased and get my name back.

I didn't want to give Tony the impression I was coming on, but I did want to show the good stuff—my legs and breasts—while de-emphasizing the bad stuff—my thirty-two

inch waist and oversized butt. That's why I decided to wear a short, beltless, low cut, salmon colored shift, which showed off my legs, breasts and coffee with light cream skin to maximum effect. To that I added a pair of, white, open toed, three-inch Manolo, heels, and my favorite set of pearl jewelry.

I'd already fixed my hair between appointments. Though I keep it straightened, I'd curled it and didn't comb it out. Instead, I used my fingers to rake and organize my ringlets into a random look, which looked as wild as I felt meeting a *white man*.

Make-up was another matter. Standing at the restroom vanity, I stared at my roundish oval face, wondering what to do. I shadowed the lids above my sienna eyes with a warm gray eye shadow matching the color of my jewelry. Next, I blended in coral shadow, which complimented my dress. I liked it. Then, I searched for and applied the salmon lipstick and added a warm blush to my cheeks.

I studied my reflection and smiled. I look good for an overweight hairdresser. Then I thought of Tony and my stomach turned over. My palms grew sweaty and even in my light summery dress, I felt stifled. I trogged to the refrigerator in the lunch room and poured an iced tea. It was time to face the music. Why did I feel so nervous? I never felt this nervous with Max.

*That's because you never thought your unlikely romance with Mr. Wonderful would go anywhere.*

I guess that's right. Even before he proposed, when he said he had something important to talk about, I thought he was going to dump me. I never had any confidence in our relationship, until I said 'I do.' Then I gave myself to the mother-effer entirely. *And* he was already married!

I gritted my teeth. Calm down girl. *You have a luncheon to go to.*

How odd. Thinking of Tony made me nervous before, now it calmed me down. I grabbed my purse and went back to the reception area where the other half of my luncheon date read a copy of Essence.

I stood before Letta and turned a circle. "I'm ready. How do I look?"

She smiled. "Very nice. Now, I look like a frump next to you."

"No you don't. You look the way an attorney should look."

In five-minutes. we were on our way to Houston's and our luncheon date with Tony.

"Nice car."

I glanced over. "Oh thanks. I love it. I'm curious, what made you want to become a lawyer?"

She snickered. "I didn't at first. Before I became an *attorney*, I worked as a policewoman."

Jamilla shifted her gaze momentarily to Letta. "Is that right?"

"Uh-huh."

"How interesting. Tell me more."

"I'd been fortunate to land a full scholarship at Cal State University, but when I graduated, jobs were so scarce, I went to work where I had an in at the Los Angeles Police Department."

"Really? What kind of in?"

Letta shifted around in her seat so she partially faced me. "My aunt was secretary to a precinct captain."

"Lucky you. How did you make the jump from cop to attorney?"

"Umm. I worked patrol for four years. Most of that time, my partner was a white guy. A veteran of twelve years named Dave Miller who took me under his wing and treated me like a kid sister. I love Dave, not romantically, more like...well like the kid sister he treated me like.

"Anyway, one night, working the night shift, we answered a domestic violence complaint and I almost got shot. Poor Dave, the rest of the night his hands shook. *I* almost got shot and he was more upset than *I* was. That night when we got off, he insisted on buying me a drink."

I glanced over once more as Letta paused. "Yeah, is there more?"

"Ah-huh. Sorry, I was just reminiscing about some of the shit we went through together. Anyway, he said I was too bright to waste my time as a cop. He made me promise I would do something else—something less dangerous, where I could make a bigger impact on people's lives."

"And did you go to law school?"

“Not at first. Thinking I could make myself more useful to the LAPD, and working nights, I took some criminal justice courses during the day, but after a short time I changed my mind.”

I sensed my brows dip. “Why.”

After a short pause, she answered emotionally, “Oh Jamilla, you have no idea. So many of the victims of crime are women, it’s disgusting. White, black, brown, it doesn’t matter. Women are equal opportunity punching bags and prey. Mostly domestic violence, but other crimes too, assault, larceny, rape, etc. That’s when I decided, as a woman, it was my job to help women. So after I finished that semester I switched to law, then two years later I graduated, and passed the bar. So far I’ve only taken women clients.”

Letta told me about some of her more interesting cases until I pulled into a slot in Houston’s parking lot and turned off my engine. “Here we are.”

Letta unbuckled her seatbelt. “Before we go in, how much of your marriage and financial predicament are you willing to tell Tony?”

The marriage everything. The financial problems, I won’t know until they come up. I’ll let you know if we start to go too far.

She smiled. “Okay fine. Let’s go meet your new love interest, He sounds delicious.”

“He is.”

Tony made sure we saw him by standing and waving. Once again, a zillion butterflies took flight in my stomach when he smiled at me. I tapped Letta on the shoulder. “C’mon, I see him over there.”

When we got to the table, I was about to introduce Letta, but he grabbed and hugged me, then kissed my cheek before I could say a word.

“I’ve been thinking of you.” He whispered in my ear. Then he turned to my lawyer and took her hand. “And you must be Letta. I’m so pleased to meet you.” Shaking her hand effusively, he pulled her close with his other arm and cheek kissed her. Then, holding our chairs out, he offered, “Please be seated.”

Letta sighed. “Well you sure know how to make an impression.”

Tony’s brows rose. “I’m sorry, did I overdo it? I’m just so glad to see Jamilla again.”

Letta smiled and waved her right hand. “No, no, you were fine. I wanted to meet you for a couple reasons.”

She paused while the waitress, a young woman, probably a college student, deposited water glasses. “My name is Heidi and I’ll be serving you today. What can I get you to drink?”

Everyone ordered iced tea and began to study their menus as Letta continued, “Jamilla tells me you asked her out for a night of dinner and dancing.”

He nodded. “Yes, I like Jamilla and want to get to know her.” His sea-green eyes narrowed. “It is all right, isn’t it?”

Letta raised a solo eyebrow. “Probably. From the look of things, it sounds like you’re interested in starting a relationship.”

“Yes, but obviously that depends on Jamilla.”

Letta cupped her chin between her thumb and forefinger. “Just so you’re aware, I’m just beginning the process of getting Jamilla’s bogus marriage wiped out. That will be easy. Unfortunately, there are complications.”

Tony smiled. “Aren’t there always? What do you mean bogus marriage?”

Before Letta could answer, Heidi was back. “Have we decided yet or do you need more time?”

Letta folded her menu up and handed it to Heidi. “I’m not ready, but I’ll just have a dinner salad with the Roquefort dressing on the side.”

I closed my menu. “I’ll have the same, with creamy Italian on the side.”

Skinny Tony handed the menu back to Heidi and looked up at her. “I’ll have a Philly steak sandwich with fries.” Then he reminded Letta. “You were about to tell me why you called her marriage bogus?”

Letta glanced at Jamilla, who nodded. “He had no right to propose or marry her because he’s already married. Mind you, I don’t think you are, but, I wanted to meet you to make sure you’re not another Max Randle. Once in a lifetime is enough.”

Tony raised his hands in mock surrender. “Hey, I assure you my intentions are honorable and I’ve never been married.”

“Good.”

Tony’s eyebrows dipped. “What other problems are there?”

Again Jamilla nodded when Letta glanced at her. “I must extricate her from an obligation connected to the bogus marriage, which will not be easy. Since the two issues are interconnected, it would not be wise to expunge the marriage until the other issue can be resolved. Therefore I hope you won’t mind if your dinner date is put off until I have these problems resolved.”

Tony’s bushy eyebrows dipped low, his eyes became slits. “How long might that be?”

“Hopefully, a couple of weeks.”

Tony’s brow furrowed as his head shook. “That’ll never do.”

I didn’t like it either, but Letta and I asked simultaneously, “Why?”

“Because my latest movie, *Between the Sheets*, is having its Studio Première this coming Saturday night, and I want Jamilla to be with me.”

Letta’s nostrils flared. “Why?”

“I just do.”

She shifted in her seat. “Look mister, right now you’re on our good side. If you want to stay on our good side, you had better start coming up with some answers. Jamilla has told me everything she knows about you, but it wasn’t that much. Tell me about the sister you used to go with at UCLA.”

Tony glanced my way then back to Letta. “First, I want to ask Jamilla a question.”

I shrugged. “Go ahead.”

Tony’s eyes bored into me. “All right. Jamilla, is your birthday December 3<sup>rd</sup>?”

I exhaled every ounce of oxygen as if someone had kicked me in the chest, then a flash of heat surged through me. When I finally caught my breath, I had to know. “How? How...did you know?”

Letta gave me a serious look. “It *is* December 3<sup>rd</sup>?”

Still shaken, I nodded.

She turned back to Tony. “Yeah, fess up. How the eff did you know?”

“I had a feeling?”

By now, Letta’s large round eyes were slits. “Not good enough, Buster!”

Tony raised his hands, palms up. “All right. They say a picture is worth a thousand words.”

Tony reached in his back pocket and pulled out his wallet.

While he fished around in his wallet, Letta hitched her chin. “Now we’re getting somewhere.”

Tony pulled out a beat up old photo and handed it to Letta. Her eyes bugged out and her mouth formed the perfect shape to blow smoke rings. As she gazed at Tony, she looked dazed. “This is...”

He nodded. “Shana.”

“Her name was Shana?” I blurted.

“Ah-huh, and she used my middle name Nick, short for Nickolas.”

*I couldn’t get over it. They were the couple in the movie he wrote.*

His shrug and tight-lipped smile mimicked what he said, “What can I say?”

Letta handed the ragged snapshot to me and asked, “Is it possible you have amnesia or maybe a twin?”

I frowned. “No.” Peeking at the picture, I gasped, then felt dizzy. I thought I might pass out when Letta revived me by dipping her hand in her ice water and running across my forehead.

I looked younger and thinner, but there was no mistake, the picture was of me.

## Chapter Seven – What’s Going on?

**L**etta, would you please go to the ladies room with me?”

“Sure sweetie.”

I glanced at Tony as we stood,. “We’ll be right back,”

Striding to the restroom, Letta grasped my arm and spoke under her breath, “Is something wrong?”

“What do you think? The picture of his girlfriend in college was me—or my double. What’s more, we did both go to UCLA.”

Letta held the door to the powder room open for me. “That’s strange all right, but we need more information. I need to ask Tony more questions.”

The restroom was empty. “I know Letta, but there’s some things I need to tell you first.”

Her glance at me said go on.

We settled side by side in front of the vanity. Looking at Letta in the mirror, I said, “Friday night was the first time I met Tony, yet from the moment I laid eyes on him I felt as if we had a past.”

Letta’s eyebrows rose high enough to wrinkle her forehead. “You mean there’s more to this than your snapshot?”

Haplessly, I thrust my arms out to the side. “I don’t know, Letta. This is new territory. I just want to tell you what I felt when I met him and about the dreams.”

Her eyebrows dipped. “Dreams? Baby, you better tell this sista everything. Else, how can I help you?”

“I will.” I nodded. “It didn’t seem important until now.”

While I collected my jumbled up thoughts, she prodded, “Go on.”

“We danced. He’s a very good dancer.”

Her lips pursed to one at my irrelevant information. “That’s nice.”

“I thought so. Anyway, while we danced, the sensation that it wasn’t the first time we danced wouldn’t go away. But that’s the least of it. Letta, I knew his hands had been all over my body, and mine his. We danced close, very close. He got hard. I felt him against me and as I did I pictured his thing as if I’d seen and touched it before.”

Letta swung her hands across each other as football referee might signal time out. “Hold on. You talking about his bazooka?”

I frowned into the mirror. “What?”

“You know. His joystick, his weapon.”

I must have looked confused, because she continued. “His talley-whacker, his shaft, his *cock!*”

“Yes, I’m talking about all of those things. I not only know what his...cock looks like, I felt as if I’ve stroked and had it in my mouth.”

“Wow, this is bizarre! You blew some guy you never met.”

I nodded exaggeratedly. “Ah-huh. There’s more. The feeling that we were intimate in every way you can think of, just won’t go away. The dreams I had were so real, they gave me orgasms.”

Her sparkling brown eyes widened. “Yes, the dreams. Tell me about them.”

“Sure. That first night and every night since, I’ve dreamt Tony and I made love.”

“Really. How was he? He looks sexy as hell. Is he a good fuck? How big is he?”

I frowned and pursed my lips disgustedly.

“Sorry, I got carried away.”

“He’s big enough. And he’s such a good lover that I have an urge to feel him in me for real.”

She snickered. “I’ll bet he has the same urge. Is there anything else I need to know before we go back and interrogate your dream lover?”

I laughed. “Just that as sure as I am that we’ve been intimate, I’m equally sure I’ve never met the man.”

Letta frowned and scratched her head. “Now, that’s a conundrum. Let’s go.”

Tony’s piercing eyes studied us as we took our seats. “So did you ladies work anything out about the premiere?”

“I’m working on it, but right now Jamilla and I have a lot more questions. Especially about Shana.”

He leaned forward and rested his chin on his entwined hands. “Like what?”

Letta pulled a recording device from her purse. “You don’t mind if I record your answers, do you?”

Tony raised his hands and shook his head. “Be my guest. What do you want to know?”

“Where did you meet Shana?”

Impassively, he answered, “At UCLA.”

A single eyebrow dipped. “It’s a huge school. How did you meet?”

“In a writing class.”

Letta swallowed a sip of her iced tea. “When was that?”

“Nine years ago. I was a junior and she was a freshman. Everyone in the class was supposed to partner up with another student on a joint project and even though we’d never said a word to each other, she came up to me and asked to work with me. She said she thought I was the most talented writer in the class.”

He paused, looked at the ceiling, smiled, and went on. “Shana, being pleasant to look at, had caught my eye, so at first I was flattered, but once we started working together, I realized it was *she* who was the most talented.”

“Is that right? Anything else?”

“There isn’t much more to say. Initially, it was mutual admiration. We’d have coffee together, then lunch. I was attracted to her from the start and later she told me she’d felt the same way. Soon we started dating--going to movies and parties together. Shana was a lot of fun. There was no stopping us. After two weeks we were in love and intimate.”

“You loved her?”

His stare was so intense I wouldn’t have been surprised if bolts of lightning shot out of his eyes. “From the start. I adored her.”

“And what about her?”

“It was mutual. We wanted to get married.”

Letta leaned back in her chair. “Sounds like a match made in heaven.”

“It was.”

“What about her parents? Yours? What’d they think?”

“They never found out, but it wouldn’t have mattered. We loved each other.”

“Then why’d you break up?”

Suddenly his gaze turned emotional and tears began to seep from his eyes and trickle down his cheeks. “We didn’t. On the way to move in with me, she was murdered.”

“Aww-oww! I doubled over from severe pain, feeling as if I’d been kicked in the groin. Suddenly, biting cold engulfed me as extreme loneliness and sadness descended on me, like a curtain.

Letta, shut the recorder off and laid a hand over mine. “Are you all right?”

“No, something very strange is happening to me.”

Letta lifted my arm, until I stood and addressed Tony, “We need to talk some more. We’ll be back.”

## Chapter Eight - Shana

**S**till feeling as if someone had jumped up and down on my stomach, Letta led me back to the ladies room with her arm around me. Fortunately, there was a divan and we both sat down.

“What happened?”

I shook my head. “I don’t know. I got this mind numbing pain in my abdomen like I’d been stabbed with an icepick, then a severe cold came upon me as if I was at the North Pole naked. Then, I felt agony as though everyone I loved and half of humanity had just been annihilated.”

“Are you still cold? You’re shivering like crazy.”

“Yes, I’m freezing.”

Letta stood and tried to lift me up. “We better go. I need to get you to a hospital.”

My head shook as if it had a mind of its own. “No! It’s not me. It’s her.”

“Who is she? Do you have a sister?”

My head started to nod, but I said, “No, just a brother.”

“Older or younger?”

“Younger, his name is Rondo.” Another pain shot through me and I doubled over.

“Well, if you don’t want me to take you to the Hospital at least let me take you home.”

“I can’t. My calendar is full of appointments this afternoon. Take me back to my salon. I’ll be all right.”

“What’re your parent’s names?”

Through the blazing pain, I wondered why, but answered, “Renata and Jared Turner.”

She rose from the divan. “C’mon. I’m gonna take you out to your car and after I tell Tony we’re leaving, I’m driving you home.”

\* \* \* \*

Tony's gaze followed me as I trekked across the restaurant to his table. As I took a seat, he asked, "What happened to Jamilla? Where is she?"

"She's taken ill. I'm taking her home."

"Can I help?"

"No, I can handle it. I have a question, before I leave. I know you never met Shana's parents, but—"

Tony shook his head. "I never said that."

"You said they never found out."

"I don't know about her father, but I met her mother. I meant she never found out we were sleeping together, that we were in love and that we were going to get married. Her mother knew me. I was Shana's writing partner."

"Okay. I have more questions, but I have to see to Jamilla. Give me your phone number, so I can call you."

He pulled out his wallet and handed me a card.

As I rose to leave, he grabbed my hand. "About the première. It's very important to me."

"Why?"

"The screenplay for this movie was the project Shana and I worked on. As the co-author I would like someone there to represent her and no one is closer to Shana than her twin. Jamilla looks so much like Shana, It would be like having her there."

I felt his pain. I also felt his hope for Jamilla. I liked Tony Castanza. I figured he'd be good for her. "We'll work it out. I'll see that she goes with you."

It was like a cloud lifted the way his face brightened. I waved his card. "I gotta go, Jamilla is waiting."

When I got back to Jamilla, she'd fallen asleep. I wanted to drive her home, but since I'd ridden with her, my car was at her salon. Reluctantly, I drove her there. On the way, she began to squirm and moan. I wondered if she was in pain until she groaned "Oh Tony, I love the way your tongue feels down there." It really was quite distracting, especially since I began to have sexy visions myself. *I need to figure out a way to have sex more often.*

After five more minutes of moaning, groaning, and fidgeting. Jamilla went off like a fog horn as she jerked around spasmodically for a half a minute. Thankfully, the seat belt kept her from hurting herself.

When she calmed and quieted, I called Jamilla's recent dream lover, Tony. "Hello?"

"It's Letta."

"How's Jamilla?"

I exaggerated. "She's sleeping peacefully. Could you tell me how Shana was murdered?"

"She lived in a drug and gang infested part of L.A. where you learned to sleep despite gunshots and sirens or you didn't sleep. Once we became lovers, I wanted her out of there. Finally, after a couple months of living with me by default, she agreed to move her things into my apartment. She never made it. Shana was caught in a hail of gunfire in a drive by shooting. She was D.O.A at the hospital. She never had a chance.

"I was grief-stricken. I'm still not over it. I got drunk and stayed drunk for weeks. For awhile, I felt her presence. It seemed as though her spirit urged me on. Feverishly, I began to write, barely sleeping or eating. I used to weigh thirty pounds more than I do now, but lost it and twenty pounds more as I typed my sorrow away. I went through a hundreds of six-packs and scores of boxes of Kleenex as I wrote about us. About our love, and when I finished, I named it *Mixed Couples*."

I was taken aback. "The academy award winner? You wrote that?"

"Yes, with what I felt was Shana's guiding hand. It didn't win though."

"I know, but everyone said it should've won. Tony, for Jamilla's sake, I need to get to the bottom of this. Did Shana have any siblings?"

"No, she was an only child."

"What was her full name and her mother's name."

"Shana Jean Easton. Her mother was Glenda Easton, sorry I don't know her middle name."

"That's fine. That's enough to locate her."

"You want to find her? I know where she lives. We stay in touch."

"Oh, good. Where's that?"

"7575 Live Oak Street, apt 106, Bell Gardens."

“Got it. Thanks. I’ll be in touch.”

Not long after ending the call. Jamilla woke up. “Where are we?”

“On the way to your shop. How’re you feeling?”

“Much better. Thanks for helping me.”

“It was nothing.” I pulled into the alley behind her shop, where her car had been parked, and where she suggested I move my car, so I wouldn’t get a ticket. Parking next to my Ford Mustang, I announced, “We’re here.”

“Oh good. Only five minutes late for my two o’clock.”

Since I was so close to Van Nuys, I made a pit stop home to check on some things before heading south to Bell Gardens.

After a fifty-minute drive I stood in front of apt 106 on Live Oak Street and knocked. After a twenty second wait the door opened to the extent of the safety chain and a pleasant looking middle-aged lady gazed out. “You must be Letta Storm?”

I nodded and she pushed the door closed to undo the chain, then pulled it open for me to enter. Seeing Shana’s mother was startling. She was the spitting image, except older, of her daughter Shana and *Jamilla*. She invited me to sit in one of the threadbare pieces of furniture, and went to get us both a cup of the coffee she’d just brewed. I sat in one of the occasional chairs and after she came out and handed me a cup of coffee and sat in the davenport opposite me.

She took a sip of coffee and smiled as she set the cup down. “Now, what can I do for you?”

I pulled my recorder out of my purse and showed it to her. “Just to make sure I don’t get anything mixed up, do you mind if I record our conversation?”

She shrugged. “I guess not.”

Setting the recorder on the coffee table, I activated it, then set back in my chair, cup and saucer in hand. “As I told you on the phone, I’m an attorney. What I didn’t tell you was I represent your daughter.”

As I expected her brows dipped and puzzlement colored her face. “I don’t understand, my daughter is dead.”

I chuckled. "Yes, she is, but she seems to be very active, she even seems to be playing matchmaker. However, I didn't mean to confuse you. I represent your living daughter, Jamilla."

"Shana was my only daughter. I have no other."

"Glenda, may I call you Glenda?"

She nodded. "Of course."

"Good. A simple check of birth records showed that you gave birth to twin girls on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1983 and that one of them, baby X was offered for adoption."

She cocked her head and raised an eyebrow. "You have been busy."

"Ah-huh."

"So they named her Jamilla? When I said I only have one daughter, I wasn't really denying baby X. Out of desperation I'd given her away and she no longer belonged to me. How did she turn out?"

"Very nice. She's a go-getter. She owns a beauty salon. Now that she's grown up, you might want to meet her."

"Maybe. I could get ahold of her through you, I suppose?"

"Yes, I do have a few more questions if you're willing."

"Of course, but first I have a question for you."

I smiled. "Go ahead."

"You said something about my daughter being active and playing matchmaker. Could you explain that?"

"Certainly. I should start by saying that I can't prove anything regarding what I'm about to tell you, but I am pretty intuitive."

She nodded.

"From what I've seen and what Tony and Jamilla have felt, I believe Shana is still with us in a spirit form. What's more I think she's trying to bring her sister, Jamilla and former love, Tony, together as a couple."

Glenda looked thoughtful. "You know I'm not surprised Shana found her sister. She must have sensed it herself, because she asked me on several occasions if she had a sister. Though she's dead, it pleases me to know she's still around. I take it Tony is Nickolas."

“That’s right, Shana called him Nickolas.”

“I think, if it’s all right with her parents, I would like to meet Jamilla.”

Thinking Jamilla would like that Letta smiled. “All right, next question. The babies were born at Cedars Sinai Hospital. How were you able to afford all that when you weren’t even working?”

“My, but you are thorough. Whatever problem my other daughter has, I’m glad she has you.”

“Thank you. Would you answer my question, please?”

Glenda shifted in her seat. “The babies’ father, who shall remain anonymous, is a famous actor, who is known to have a thing for black women. I was a seamstress at his main studio, and I caught his eye. Flattered, I went along. I suppose it was the highlight of my life. Handsome, famous, rich and white, all things a woman at my station in life might dream about.”

“Wait a minute. He was white?”

“Yes.”

“Your daughters don’t look that much different than you?”

“I know. That was fortunate for me. Shana was just a shade lighter than me. When she took up with Nickolas, I didn’t like it, but what could I say? I’d done the same thing. She was half white after all.”

“And so is Jamilla.” Letta thought out loud.

When Glenda nodded, Letta said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt you. Would you please continue?”

Her hands held each other, fingers entwined. “The entanglement lasted a little over a month and resulted in pregnancy. He was very nice about it, until I mentioned abortion, then he grabbed my arms and shook me. ‘No,’ he said. ‘I don’t want my baby killed.’ He said he would care for me and my baby until the age of majority.

“Does the father know about baby X?”

She shook her head. “No. He said he would take care of his baby—singular— and me, so I didn’t want to rock the boat.”

“Since Shana died, I lost the support, so I live by providing sewing services such as alterations.”

I took a deep breath and rose. “That’s quite a story. Thanks for your help.” I removed a business card and handed it to Glenda. “Here’s my card. If you want to talk, call me. I will see if the Turners are willing let Jamilla meet you and get back to you.”

It was four forty when I got back in my car. I called Jamilla.

“Hello.”

“When is your last appointment?”

She paused for two seconds. “Oh, Letta. I’m on it now. I’ll probably be done in twenty minutes. Guess what?”

I didn’t feel like guessing. “I don’t know. What?”

“I can pay your retainer now. The check came right to the shop, in one of those orange, purple, and white Fed Express envelopes.”

“That’s great. When you finish with your last customer, I need to talk with you. Don’t go anywhere. I’m on my way.”

“All right, but since I didn’t eat lunch, I’m starved. Why don’t you meet me at the deli two doors down?”

“Good idea. I’m starving too. What’s good there?”

“Everything.”

“Okay, order me what you’re getting, but before you go, give me Max’s number.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“I don’t kid about business.”

## Chapter Nine – The Set Up

**N**ot surprising, I got Max's voicemail. "You've reached Max Randle. I'm busy right now, but if you leave your name number and a short message, I'll call you back."

"Hello Max. You don't know me, but my name is Letta Storm and I work for Jamilla. You've been a naughty boy, pulling enough shenanigans that you deserve to go to jail. However, all is not lost. I might be able to help.

"Why? You ask. Good question. I don't really want to help you, 'cause I think your behavior warrants some hard prison time. However, by helping you, I can help Jamilla, who we all know now you screwed around. Call me so I can tell you what I have in mind. 213-555-1110."

I ended the call and touched in my next call. "La Guerno enterprises."

"I'd like to speak with Mr. La Guerno."

"Do you have business with him?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Letta Storm."

The receptionist put me on hold then came back in a few seconds. "I'm sorry but Mr. La Guerno says he never heard of you."

"That's understandable. Ask him if he knows Glenda Easton?"

After another half-minute on hold, Mr. La Guerno came on with attitude. "This is Robert La Guerno. What do you want?"

Calmly, I replied, "I want you to meet and help your daughter."

His voice raised an octave, "Are you crazy lady?"

"Wait! Don't hang up. Shana had a twin sister who Glenda put up for adoption and never told you about. You have living daughter."

"Did Glenda tell you this stuff?"

"So you do know Glenda?"

“Ah-huh. Nice gal. I went out with her a couple times, but that was about it. Did she tell you I fathered her daughters?”

“No, she wouldn’t tell me. I figured it out. Would you be willing to take a DNA test?”

“What’s you’re angle, Ms Storm?”

“Shana’s sister, Jamilla is my client. She’s in some marital and financial trouble and I’m her attorney.”

I heard him sigh. “Give me your number and I’ll call you back.”

\* \* \* \*

Sitting in my usual booth in Sal’s Deli, with Sal, I’d just finished eating pastrami on rye when Letta walked in. I glanced at the clock on the wall and the two hands read five-forty-two. “Took you long enough.”

Sal rose so she could sit down.

She set her purse on the opposite bench and sat. “You try driving up from Bell Gardens during rush hour.”

“Letta, I’d like you to meet my friend Sal.”

Sal shook her hand, warmly. “Any friend of Jamilla’s is a friend of mine.”

Letta smiled at Sal. “Thank you Sal. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“My pleasure. I need to get back to kitchen. Come visit me anytime.”

After Sal left, Letta took a bite of her sandwich. “Mmm, good.”

I gave her a slight nod. “I told you. What were you doing in Bell Gardens?”

Letta cut a teasing look. “Oh, just visiting your *mother*.”

My confusion was obvious. “But my mother lives in Sherman Oaks.”

“That’s your adoptive mother. Surely you must have sensed something was off when you saw Shana’s photo and found out her birthday was the same as yours”

My lips tightened, I sighed. “Yeah, I knew something was up. What’s her name? What’s she like?”

“Her name is Glenda Easton and I liked her. You and Shana look very much like her. She would like to meet you if it’s all right with you and your parents.”

“I’d like to meet her too.” I shook my head. “This is so hard to absorb. All of a sudden I’m adopted and I have a dead sister, who used to go with my heartthrob.”

“Shana’s dead, but not gone.”

“What do you mean?”

“She’s trying desperately to put you and Tony together. It’s the only explanation for what’s been happening to you.”

“Are you saying—?”

“I’m saying she loves Tony or Nickolas if you like, so much, she’s in agony. She can’t have him, so she wants the next best thing—her twin sister to have him. He’s like he’s a goodbye present for the sister she always wanted, but never met in life.”

I understood what Letta was saying, but it was too much to wrap my mind around. “I don’t know. That’s an awful lot to swallow.”

She shrugged. “You’re the one it’s been happening to. What’s your explanation?”

I shook my head. “I don’t have one. I never knew being hot for Tony would cause so much trouble.”

“Nothing is too much trouble for real love.”

“I guess that’s true. Tell me, if you’re right about Shana, and Tony and I get together, will she always hang around?”

“I don’t know for sure, but I’d bet not. I think her seeing the love of her life find happiness with her twin sister will allow her, in good conscience, to move on?”

I was fascinated. “Move on to what?”

“That *is* the question, isn’t it? The question whose answer has eluded mankind since the beginning of time.”

I placed my closed hand, index finger extended on my cheek and stared off. “You know, when I think about what you’re saying, it sounds quite romantic.”

Letta smiled. “I guess, in a way, it does.”

“Except for Max, nothing really romantic has ever happened to me before and that was a fraud.”

Letta grinned, then came over, slid in beside me and wrapped an arm around me. “Well it’s happening now and it’s not a fraud.”

“Not to change the subject, but when are you heading back to Ojai?”

“I’m not. I’ll go back after your situation is satisfactorily resolved and that is why I want you to call Tony—right now.”

\* \* \* \*

Letta insisted on driving to Tony's place in Hollywood Hills. I'd never been to his home and admittedly, I was more than a little curious. How does a glamorous, movie writing, stud-muffin live? He must have girls clambering to get him in bed. *And he wants me.*

*Yeah, but your twin set it up.*

*What a effing spoilsport you are.*

All of a sudden, I saw red and blue lights reflecting off the interior of the Mustang.

"Shit!"

As Letta pulled over to the curb, I turned around to look. A motorcycle cop had busted her. I wondered why? She wasn't speeding was she? I hoped it wasn't that damned racial profiling harassment shit. The uniformed policeman walked up to the car, but I couldn't see him because he shined a flashlight in our eyes. I breathed a sigh of relief when he asked in an obviously African American phonology, "You know why I pulled you over?"

Obviously tense and looking straight ahead, Letta answered, "Stop sign."

He chuckled, "Give the lady a kewpie doll."

"Skip the sarcasm. Are you gonna give me a ticket or not?"

"What for, I'd just spend fifteen minutes of writing for nothing."

Letta turned her head. "Jonas, is that you?"

"Ah-huh. I know if I gave you a ticket you'd have Captain Hadley fix it in a heartbeat."

"You got that right. What happened to your voice?"

"Had my adenoids taken out."

"Sounds better. What you doin' riding a bike?"

"After I got shot, they gave me a desk job. I hated it and asked to go back outside. The only thing open was motorcycles, so here I am."

Letta turned to me. "Jonas and I went through training together and ever since, we keep bumping into each other." She turned back to Jonas. "This is my client Jamilla Turner." He hitched his chin in acknowledgement as she continued. "I'd love to shoot the breeze, but I have to get her up to her boyfriend's."

“Okay, I’ll let you go. Stay in touch and watch them stop signs.”

“I would if the city would trim the damn branches that block them.”

He chuckled. “Letta, you know the city needs the money.”

“Yeah right. I gotta go. Give me a call. We’ll go have a beer together.”

“Will do.” He tapped the door and walked back to his motorcycle, while Letta started the car.

After the car started, she tooted her horn, stuck her arm out the window, waved, and took off.

I glanced over. Letta had a rare smile on her face. “You like him don’t you.”

She shifted her gaze to me. “A little, but right now I’m more concerned about your bizarre love life than mine.”

“Which makes me wonder why it was so all fired important for me to come up here tonight.”

“Because...God help me...I want you to...”

“Yes?”

“You know...”

“Not really. You want me to...”

“*Fuck* him. I want you to make your dreams come true and go to bed with him.”

“What!” My mouth and eyes opened wide. I didn’t think I’d ever been more shocked in my life. Well maybe when Jeanette Randle told me I was married to her husband, but this was a close second. “I’ve only known him for three days and you’re the one who wanted me to take it slow. You’re the one who didn’t trust him.”

“I’ve changed my mind. Things are different since I found out about your sister. Hell maybe Shana is getting in my mind too, but I suddenly want your budding, nascent romance to become a torrid affair. It feels like it’s Shana’s dying wish. I’m no longer worried about Tony. Hell he’s been scrutinized and evaluated by the best—your own flesh and blood.”

She pulled up to the curb. “Here we are.”

“Letta, even if everything you say is true, which it probably is, I’m not that way.”

I noticed Tony peek through the drapes of a darling mid-sized Tudor style home.

“Why? You want him and he’s made it perfectly clear that he wants you. You’ve had sex with him three consecutive nights in your dreams and even climaxed.”

Tony opened the front door and stepped onto the porch.

“That’s not the same as actually having sex with him.”

I opened my door, glanced Tony’s way and smiled. To do that, I’d have to feel comfortable. I’d have to get to know him better.”

He waved.

I stepped out and waved then turned back to grab my purse.

“Okay fine. Get to know him, then *fuck* him.”

Without warning Letta took off with a screech, slamming the open door as I fell backward and watched open mouthed.

Tony rushed up, helped me to my feet, and embraced me. “Are you all right?”

I made a brief mental examination of my body. “I think so.”

“What happened? Did you have a fight?”

I couldn’t believe what Letta had done to me. She dropped me off at this man’s house the way a pimp would drop a whore off at a john’s house—to get laid. “No. Let’s go in the house.”

## Chapter Ten – Cupid

**I** felt like shit, doing that to Jamilla, but I felt Tony could warm her into bed easier than I could reason her into bed. Despite the fact she wanted him she'd started digging her heels into the ground at the idea of somebody else wanting her to do Tony. So, the best thing I could do was hightail it out of there and let Cupid—I snickered—or rather Shana take over.

My phone rang. "I did that for your own good."

"What'dya mean, my own good? How's not being able to get at my money good?"

It wasn't Jamilla. It was a man. "Who's this?"

"It's Max. Who did you expect? President Obama? You asked me to call."

"Oh Max, thanks for calling. It wasn't exactly your money was it?"

"Picky picky. All I know is I can't even pay my hotel bill now."

"I need to talk with you. Where are you?"

"Oh no, you don't. So you can have me picked up and sent back to California for bigamy."

"That's the least of your troubles. If you're in the states, you could be charged anywhere for federal bank fraud. Max, I'm a lawyer. Lawyers are duty bound to help their client and by an odd twist of fate, I can help her best by helping you."

"You wouldn't con a con man would you?"

"I told you, I'm an attorney."

"All right, I'll trust you. I'm in Vegas."

"I'm on my way."

\* \* \* \*

Opening the door Tony invited me in with a wave of his hand. I stepped into a good-sized foyer with a dining room to the left, what looked to be a home office to the right, and a great room with a magnificent evening view of The City of Angels straight ahead.

He grasped my hand and remembering what Letta wanted me to do, I pulled it away. He shrugged and walked into the great room. "Have a seat. Can I get you anything? Coffee, iced tea, water, coke, wine."

"Wine would be nice."

As I sat on a quarter-round sofa situated to take advantage of a magnificent city view, he headed into the kitchen.

A minute later he was back, carrying two half full wine goblets of white. Handing one to me, he set his glass on the coffee table and sat beside me. Leaning back, he looped an arm around my shoulders and I slid over enough that his arm fell away.

Furrowing his brow, Tony crossed his arms against his chest. "All right what's up. Are you still sick?"

I shook my head. "No, I'm fine."

"Well something's up. You were a lot friendlier at the party and even at lunch, before you got sick. What's going on?"

Though it wasn't Tony's fault, I decided to get my grievance off my chest. "My lawyer has practically ordered me to have sex with you."

I studied his facial emotions as they evolved from wide-eyed surprise to smiling concurrence. He chuckled. "Sounds like a pretty good idea to me."

I elbowed him.

"Ow."

"You would. All men think about is *sex*."

His manner grew serious. "I do with you. I even dream about it."

That surprised me. "You too?"

Surprise colored his face. "Do you?"

I nodded. "Ah-huh. Every night since the party. I even have..."

"Me too."

I laughed. "Sounds messy."

He laughed. "It is."

"You're very good."

He took my hand and this time I didn't pull it away. "So are you. So tell me, why does Letta think you should have sex with me?"

“She found out some very interesting things.”

“Such as?”

“It’s kinda involved.”

He shrugged and sidled up to me. “Got nothing better to do unless...” Accompanying the twinkle in his eyes, the corners of Tony’s mouth curved upward into a mischievous smile. “You change your mind about having sex with me.”

“Believe me I think about that a lot. I just don’t want someone telling me when to be intimate.”

He kissed my cheek. “I would never want to make love to you unless you wanted to. Just tell me what Letta found out and I’ll drive you home.”

I gritted my teeth. “I...yah. I’m afraid you’re...stuck with me.”

“Why’s that?”

“Letta drove off with my purse. My keys, my phone, my money, and credit cards, everything is in it.”

Tony snapped his fingers. Dang, I guess I *am* going to have to put up with you then.”

“Yes, you are.” Now, that I wasn’t so angry, Tony’s proximity started to affect me. “It’s hot in here. Could we go out on your balcony?”

“Sure, are you ready for some more wine?”

“That would be nice.”

He rose then helped me up with his hand. “Go on outside while I fill our glasses.”

I unlocked and slid the large glass door to the left. It was dark, so I turned on the nearby light switch before stepping outside. The balcony, running the width of the house had scattered patio furniture and seemed to be about twelve feet deep. I eased up to the wood railing at the edge of the balcony and rested my hands on it. The view was even more impressive from outside.

Tony came out with two full glasses and sidled up beside me, handing one of the glasses to me. “What do you think?”

I took the glass and kissed his cheek. “It’s magnificent. I’m sorry I was such a grouch.”

He smiled. "All's forgiven. Would you like to sit down? You could tell me your involved story and then we could just talk and get to know each other."

"I'd like that." I snickered. "Letta did say I should get to know you...before I 'fuck you'."

"How romantic. I'm starting to feel insulted." He took my hand and led me to the exterior loveseat located against the wall beside the sliding door.

Reclining into the small exterior couch, he sat and snuggled in close to me.

The moon over downtown LA contrasting with the song of the crickets, not to mention the attractive man who sat next to me set a mood for romance. Lowering my head to the crook of his neck, the bouquet from his lemon-spice cologne wafted through my nostrils, taunting my senses. I inhaled and sighed. "This is nice and romantic out here."

When he whispered in my ear, "It is, but honestly, anyplace would be romantic with you," aided by a gust of cool air, shivers ran down my arms and my nipples hardened.

\* \* \* \*

He was behind the counter when I walked up to him. "Hi Sal. Remember me. I'm Letta Storm."

"Of course I remember you. Jamilla's friend. Have a seat, would you like some coffee. I just made it."

"No. I can't stay. I wonder if you would do me a favor."

"Sure what do you need?"

"I dropped Jamilla off at her new boyfriend's house and she left her purse in my car. I was hoping I could leave it with you and you could give it to her when she comes to work tomorrow."

Sal scrunched his large nose. "Her boyfriend's house?"

"Ah-huh. Tony Castanza, a nice guy. You know him?"

Sal raised his hands and smiled. "Of course, he's my cousin. I introduced them. Let me have the purse."

Letta handed the purse across the counter.

"Thanks. I'll take it to her when I close up."

I frowned. “Ah, I would prefer you didn’t. With lovebirds, no telling what you might interrupt.”

Sal smiled and winked. “Not to mention she can’t drive her car or get into her house without it.”

Letta winked back. “I see we have a similar objective.”

\* \* \* \*

I yearned to kiss him. It was beginning to seem like what Letta wanted me to do wasn’t so outlandish, so I purposely broke the mood. “I guess you’re waiting to hear what Letta found out.”

“Whenever you feel like telling me.”

I sat up straight, took a deep breath and exhaled. “Well, here goes. As you probably gathered when you found out my birthday was the same as my look-alike—Shana—I’m adopted and Shana is/was my twin sister. Letta talked with Shana’s and, I guess, my mother. She confirmed that my mother gave birth to twins and offered one—me— up for adoption. I haven’t confirmed that with my parents yet. However, knowing Shana and I have the same birthday and seeing her snapshot, I have no reason to doubt Shana was my sister.”

“Yeah. I was fairly certain you and Shana were twins when you said your birthday.” Tony chuckled. “I’m not complaining, but how come Letta’s so set on us becoming intimate?”

“Letta thinks it’s what Shana wants. She believes Shana’s, for lack of a better word, spirit, is trying to fix us up. She says it’s like her last wish.”

“And you don’t think that’s possible?”

“I suppose it’s possible, but how likely is it.”

Out of the blue, I felt cold. I rubbed my bare arms.

Tony must have noticed. “Are you cold?”

“Yes, all of a sudden it got colder.”

“It happens here in the canyons.” He looked me up and down, but seemed to be concentrating on my breasts. “No wonder you’re cold. You have a very thin dress on.”

When I glanced down, to my chagrin, my nipples had stretched the fabric of my dress. “That’s because I put this dress on to meet you for lunch. I didn’t know I’d still be wearing it at eight p.m. in a cool breeze.”

He wrapped an arm around me. “Does that help?”

It felt good, but I was still cold. “Some, but I’m still cold.”

Chuckling, he joked, “Well, then I guess it’s time to get in bed like Letta wants and make love. That’ll warm you up.”

At first, I uttered a hysterical laugh at Tony’s suggestion. However, I must still have been warming up to the idea because an image of Tony and me entwined, naked and going through the motions flittered through my mind. As a result, my nether region, which had been simmering since I arrived, came to life, heated up like a convection oven on pre-heat.

I gulped and stared at him. Feeling how wet my panties had become, I admitted. “I do want to make love. Just give me a little more time. We haven’t even kissed yet.”

Tony snapped his fingers. “You’re right. We need to get that out of the way.”

I got a kick out of his brashness. His hand went to my left shoulder rotating me for a better kissing angle. Turning my head to him, I waited expectantly, as he jockeyed into position to kiss me. Kiss him I would, *fuck him*, I wouldn’t—at least not yet.

## Chapter Eleven - Lust

**M**y pulse soared as Tony's soft lips brushed lightly across mine. His tongue laved my top lip, and my tongue slipped out and met his. Between us, together in mid air, they danced as if performing an erotic duel. As the strum of my pulse increased, I felt the thumping of my heart beating in my ears.

My tongue retreated into my mouth and his followed, drawn in by a vacuum. It swirled around the roof and soft cushions of my mouth as if he couldn't get enough of me—wanting to pass his fever to me with his passionate kiss.

After a short minute, I pulled away to catch my breath. “Phew.” I waved my hand in front of me, signifying I was now hot instead of cold. “I need a break. Could we go inside?”

“Sure. Would you like to watch a movie I just rented?”

“What is it?”

“*Date Night*. Have you seen it?”

I giggled. “Yes. It's funny. I wouldn't mind seeing it again.”

“Are you sure, I have other movies we could watch. Or...we could just talk.”

“*Date Night* sounds fine.”

“Good, let's go into the family room.” He took my hand and led me from balcony past the kitchen, into the next room. We stopped in front of a couch placed in front of a large flat panel screen TV. “Have a seat while I start the movie.”

I sat and made sure my legs remained together with the short shift I wore. I studied him as he inserted the DVD into the player. Straightening up, he started the movie with the remote and bypassed the previews. Tony glanced my way and smiled. “If we had popcorn, we'd be all set.”

“I'm not hungry, but some more wine would be nice. Is there any left?”

He shrugged. “Should be. I just opened a new bottle.”

I admired his poise as he walked through the kitchen. A half-minute later he returned, held up an almost full bottle. “Just like I thought, barely touched.”

After retrieving the empty wine glasses from the balcony, he filled them and sat very close. I gulped when an arm circled around me, and his hand lingered upon my thigh. I looked down, then at him. The proximity of Tony’s hand so close to my nether region spurred a delicious throb of anticipation throughout my body.

Apparently feeling frisky, he dipped his head to my shoulder and tattooed a line of butterfly kisses across the curve of my neck and up to my ear.

I sipped my wine and after setting it down, rested my hand on his thigh. He gasped and I smiled when I noticed him adjusting the bulge that had tented his slacks.

I was having no luck following the movie, with him kissing my neck. I could have asked him to stop, but resisted as an ethereal feeling permeated me. Out of the blue, I turned my head and attacked him. Frenzied, my lips merged with his, my tongue whirling around his mouth on a mission of desire. Still kissing, I pushed him down on the couch. As I straightened and straddled him, confusion crossed his wide-eyed face, which evolved into admiration, then lust. His penetrating gaze seemed to have substance. When he scrutinized my body, I felt it caressing my breasts, soothing my abdomen, invading my privates.

My skirt had risen up as I straddled him and I felt his hardness through the thin silk material covering my nether-lips. Awash in cream, my clit beat a frantic tattoo against the seam of my lace panties. Contrary to what I’d thought, I wanted, more than anything, to be seduced—by Tony. I wanted him to take me, to ravish me over and over.

Reacting brazenly, I rose up and became a mad woman. With buttons flying everywhere, I ripped his shirt off. When he responded with his large hands grasping and kneading my ripe wanton breasts, my back arched, and I rose up on my knees and pulled the sleeves of my dress over my shoulders. Pulling my arms free I lowered the top of my dress to my waist.

Exposed to the air, my nipples, hardened and to Tony’s obvious pleasure jutted out. Like a magnet, his hands were drawn to them, his fingers plucking, pinching and running pleasure circles around each aroused nub. My blood pressure pounded against the top of my skull and I could hear the steady beating of my own heart inside my head.

As one large hand held my breast, the other looped behind me, and urged me down and forward. "Come here. I want to taste your sexy nipple."

"I took a deep breath and sighed at the idea of his mouth and tongue teasing my nipple. When I eased forward, his sensuous lips encircled first one and then the other stiff nub. The erotic sensations that coursed through my body amplified the lust that was building in my loins. My pussy reacted by releasing a fresh quantity of crème to moisten my channel, which ultimately dampened my panties. Tunneling my fingers through his mane, I cried, "Oh God that feels so good. I can't wait to have you inside me."

Tony stopped and asked, "You mean it?"

"Ah-huh."

"Would you like to go into my bedroom?"

"Yes, I'm ready." I slid off Tony and rose. The minute I stood, his cell phone started ringing and I came to my senses. As he reached for his phone, I glanced down and realized, to my shock, my chest was bare. I scrambled to cover myself.

Tony answered, "Hello." Then after a five second pause, handed it to me, "It's for you. Is something wrong?"

I took the phone, but before answering, asked, "What just happened?"

"It's Letta, you better answer it."

"I will, right after you tell me what happened."

"You got very passionate, I responded and we were about to go in my bedroom when my phone rang."

I lifted the phone to my ear. "Hello?"

Letta was laughing. "Sounds like your sister's been busy."

Seeing the humor in the situation, I snickered. "Maybe. It's your fault for leaving me here in such temptation. Why'd you do that to me?"

"So you could do what my call interrupted. Now, I'm sorry I called. Sweetheart, it's inevitable. You know you want to. Just do it and get it over with."

I scrunched my nose and lips. "What did you call for?"

"Two things. First, if you want to go to the movie premiere with Tony, it's all right with me, and second, I left your purse with Sal, because I'm on my way to Vegas."

"Vegas! Why are you going to Vegas?"

“To see your husband. Now, get in that bedroom and fuck that white boy’s socks off.”

“You’re going to see Max? What for?”

I stared at Tony and he asked, “Is there a problem?”

“She hung up. She said, and I quote, I should ‘get in that bedroom and fuck that white boy’s socks off.’ Then she hung up.”

“Boy she’s bound and determined to see us make love.”

“I know, and so is my sister, apparently. This is getting embarrassing.”

Tony patted the cushion next to his on the couch. “What was that about Vegas?”

I sat next to him. “I wish I knew. She said she was going to see my soon to be ex-husband.”

Circling an arm back around my shoulder, he reached for the remote. “Since you are bound and determined to not give me the thrill of my life tonight, shall I start the movie.”

I giggled. “I’m sorry, that must have been pretty hard on you.”

“I’ll live.”

I rested my hand on his knee. “You’re sweet. I just want it to be my idea, instead of Letta’s or Shana’s.”

“I don’t blame you.”

“Can we start the movie from the beginning?”

\* \* \* \*

As Max instructed, I pulled into the beat-up Lucky Louie Motel on a side street, just off Casino Center, in downtown Las Vegas. Driving slowly until I spotted the room, I pulled into the space directly in front. There were no lights on in room 12A, so I glanced at the clock on the dashboard. It was almost two o’clock and chances are Max was in bed.

Locking the car, I knocked on the door. After a few seconds a light came on and Max’s baritone voice mumbled, “Just a minute.” Of course, I’d seen pictures of Maxwell and knew how handsome he was, but I had no idea of the imposing aura the man projected, especially buck naked.

\* \* \* \*

Halfway, through 'Date Night,' Jamilla fell asleep. She'd had a rough day and I didn't want to wake her. I thought about taking her to my bed and cuddling, but I was afraid she might have a fit if she woke up in my bed. So, I carried her into the spare bedroom.

It was eleven o'clock, but I wasn't the least bit tired. I decided it was because Jamilla and I had come so close to making love and having her in the house with the way I react to her had my adrenalin up. I thought about reading a book, but decided I'd bring my laptop into bed and start a paranormal screenplay about twin sisters.

I'd been working on it for about an hour when I heard Jamilla's musical voice coming from the bedroom doorway, "My God it's déjà vu. I remember this bedroom set from my dreams, your walnut bedroom set." She gazed at me questioningly. "Did you have this when you were with...?"

I glanced at her and smiled. "Shana? Yes. Actually, she picked it out. She liked the posts."

Jamilla's eyebrows widened. "She did?"

"Yes, she was quite spontaneous when it came to sex."

Jamilla's eyes glazed over. "There you go with those big words again."

I chuckled. "Sorry, that means impulsive. She liked to have sex whenever and wherever she felt like it."

"I don't think I could do that."

"You don't have to. You are Jamilla. I know that. Just do what feels right for you."

She gazed around the rest of the room in wonderment. Then she sat on the other side on the king sized bed and bounced. "What are you doing up?"

"I couldn't sleep. I should ask you the same question."

"I forgot to tell you. Letta said I could go to the premiere with you this Saturday, if I wanted to."

"And do you?"

"I almost went to bed with you tonight. What do you think?"

His grin was almost wall to wall. "I guess you do? Thank you for telling me, but you didn't have to get up for that. You could have told me in the morning."

"I know. I had another reason for getting up."

“What’s that?”

“Can you put that computer down and turn the other way.”

I did as she asked. “Why.”

“Because I had that dream again and I don’t want to sleep in a strange bed alone.

Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure.”

“Did you have this house when you were with my sister?”

I felt the bedspread flipped forward. I started to turn back to answer her.

“Please don’t turn yet.”

I turned back away from her. I heard movement. It sounded like she was removing her dress. “Yes, I’d just inherited it from my Grandmother. Actually my parents inherited it and they let me live here, but it’s mine now. Why”

“Because I smelled a lilac like cologne in the room you put me in. Did Shana ever stay in there?”

“Yes, she slept in there several times.” Now, it sounded like Jamilla was slipping something on. “When we first started writing together, before we became intimate. She did use a Tommy Hilfiger cologne called Tommy Girl, but sweetheart, that was nine years ago. Can I turn back yet?”

“In a minute.”

I felt movement on the mattress and heard the covers pulled back in place. Jamilla scooted up beside me and kissed my cheek. “Okay, you turn back now. Thanks for the nighty, I love it.”

With a smile on my lips, but a question in my mind I turned taken aback. She was wearing a baby doll nighty I’d bought, all right—a nightgown I hadn’t seen in years—a nightgown I’d bought for her sister. Rattled, I jumped out of bed and stood there, and shouted, “Where did you get *that*?”

“Where you left it. On the bed next to me.”

\* \* \* \*

“Jesus Christ, do you always answer your door in your birthday suit?”

“No, I sleep naked and you woke me. You Jamilla’s mouth piece?”

“Attorney.” I looked him up and down. He really was Adonis...with a magnificent male hard-on. “What’s with you? You bopping some chick you have stashed in there?”

“No, she had to get home to her husband and left at eleven o’clock, but you’re kinda cute.” He wiggled his eyebrows, turned sideways and grabbed his wanger, which stuck out at one-o’clock and shook it at me. “You like? I call it Pleasure. I could give you a go with Pleasure if you like.”

I try to be professional, but truthfully, I’m all woman, and Max, despite his shortcomings, was *all* man. Admittedly, my libido was abnormally high and my needs are great. That’s why my reaction to the image of this People Magazine’s, ‘sexiest man alive’ candidate, jumping my bones, took my breath away and had my pussy salivating. It wasn’t surprising...but.

“Honestly, Max, the idea having a handsome devil like you reaming my you know what with pleasure sounds mighty tempting, but the fact is, I don’t sleep with *jerks*.”

Max’s brow furrowed. “Jerks?”

“That’s right, jerks. What about you wife?”

His frown deepened. “Jamilla?”

“No, by the time I leave here, Jamilla won’t be your wife anymore. Excluding the other wives, I’m talking about Jeanette, who if you go along with what I came here to talk about is going to keep your gorgeous ass out of jail.”

“Hey, she fucks around.”

“Only ’cause you do. Now, why don’t you put something on and we’ll get down to business?”

\* \* \* \*

“I didn’t put that nighty on the bed next to you. In fact, I haven’t seen it in over eight years. Sweetheart, it was meant for Shana. I bought it for her the day she was killed. I never even had a chance to give it to her.”

Jamilla’s pretty face seemed like it elongated from her eyebrows rising high enough to wrinkle her forehead and her jaw dropped low enough for me to see her tonsils. If everything wasn’t so tragic, I could have laughed.

“Turn around again, please.”

I swung around one-hundred-eighty degrees. Then suddenly I heard Jamilla exclaim, “Holy shit!”

I spun back and saw that she was naked and looking *fine*. I licked my lips. “What happened?”

I leered at her, and she used her hand and arm to cover up. “I started to take the nighty off and it vanished.” Obviously mystified, she looked up at me. “I think your house is haunted.

## Chapter Twelve – Meeting Mom

**W**aking up at dawn in a strange place, I hadn't yet understood where I was, but Tony's striking profile reassured me. As the memory of the previous night seeped into my mind, I realized my primary purpose of coming into Tony's bedroom remained unfulfilled.

I had determined to do what everyone, including me, wanted me to do—make love with him. But the peculiar events of last night, had us both so shook that sex was the last thing on our mind. Instead, I spent a sexless night, sleeping in his arms.

Careful not to wake him, I slipped out of bed and stepped over to his closet. Sifting through his shirts, I selected a light blue one and put it on. Turning around I saw Tony sitting up in bed, grinning at me. "I liked the view before you put the shirt on better."

I wagged a finger at him. "You weren't supposed to see me like that, yet. After I lose twenty-five pounds, then I'll be glad to show you what I have."

His eyebrows rose so high it wrinkled his forehead. "Actually, I kinda liked what I saw."

"Good, but I still want to look my best for my man."

"Does that mean we have to wait to make love until you lose weight?"

"Not likely. I'm going to fuck your socks off as soon as we can work it in, without any interference from my clumsy well-meaning sister. We'd do it right now, except I need to get to the shop and do a bunch of things for the première. After all, it's only two days away."

I ran over to the bed and pulled on his arm. "C'mon, we have too much to do to lay around in bed."

Tony drove me to Sal's Deli to get my purse and while there, grab some breakfast.

Just as I was ready to dive into my corned beef hash and eggs, my phone rang. It was Letta. "Don't make any plans for lunch. I'll pick you up at eleven-thirty."

"What for?"

“I have some things to go over with you, and I have a surprise.”

“Like what?”

I heard her sigh. “If I told you, it wouldn’t be a surprise. Gotta go, bye.”

“Dang.”

“Who was it?”

“Letta. She said—”

My phone rang again. “Hello?”

“I forgot to ask you. How’d it go last night?”

“Everything went good.”

“So you had sex?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“I’ll tell you when I see you. Now, what’s this surprise?”

“All right, I’ll give you a little hint. You are now a free woman. See you at eleven-thirty. Don’t keep me waiting.”

“What do you mean...” But the line was dead.

All morning I kept looking at the clock waiting for eleven-thirty and of course, the more I looked, the slower it moved. What had she meant I was a free woman?

Finally, I saw Letta’s smiling face in the mirror. She stood at the edge of one of the short walls that divide the cubicles. I turned to face her. “What do you mean I’m a free woman now?”

“Duh, what do you think I meant? I got Max to sign annulment papers.” I started to say something, but Letta charged forward, “but that’s not my surprise. Turn back around.”

I turned back around and watched in the mirror as she pulled a dignified looking, attractive, middle aged, black woman from behind the wall. “You can turn around now.”

I did. Though she looked familiar, I couldn’t figure out why Letta brought this woman to see me.

“I brought you a new customer. Her name is Glenda Easton, I hope you have time to do your natural mother’s hair.”

*She’s my mother!*

I felt a pain through my sinuses as tears rushed to my eyes. Emotion overwhelmed me as I rushed into her arms. We embraced and cuddled. I must have kissed her face in every possible place at least twice. Finally, after marginally calming down, I glanced at Letta and mouthed, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

I spoke a little louder, “But what about my mom and dad.”

“Oh, I think they approve. Right, Renata and Jared?”

Suddenly, the only mother I’d known came around the wall and joined our embrace, followed by my dad. Then even Letta joined in.

I took them all to Sal’s for lunch. Afterward my parents said goodbye and after insisting on paying the bill, so did Letta. I never did find out how she’d managed to get Max to sign the release, but then again I was preoccupied with happiness.

Back at the shop, I gave my natural mother the works and got to know her. We talked non-stop and when I was done I asked my receptionist, Darla, to have the other operators take my appointments or reschedule.

While driving my mother home I found out she knew Tony.

“I understand you’ve been seeing Nickolas.”

At first I didn’t understand and then I remembered my sister called him by his middle name—Nickolas. “Yes, I like him a lot.” Knowing how many African American mothers felt about their daughters going out with white men, I asked, “Is that all right?”

“Yes, of course. We grew close after Shana was killed. He’s like a son to me. And now, I have you. I know you’re not Shana, you are her sister, Jamilla, but you look so much like her it feels a little like having her back. Thank you for coming back into my life.”

I choked up. My mother was thanking me. I should be thanking her for giving me life.

Arriving at her apartment, she fixed some chamomile tea and I helped her. “Would it be all right if I called you Mom?”

She smiled and brushed a loose strand of my hair back with her hand. “Of course, dear. Whatever you feel comfortable with.”

After taking our tea into the living room, we talked for an hour. I would have stayed longer, but I had to leave to meet Tony at a ritzy dress shop. Since this première was so important to him, I wanted him to help me pick out the evening gown I was going to wear.

\* \* \* \*

“Good afternoon Letta. Where’s my husband?”

“Hi Jeanette, Maximilian is safely ensconced in a nearby state. When it’s safe to return he will, which is why we need to work out the details and get my paperwork completed.”

“I told you what I was willing to do. What else is there?”

“There’s Maximilian’s loan at the bank. They froze his account, but a third of the money is gone. In order to keep them from filing criminal and civil complaints against your husband, that quarter of a million dollar shortfall will have to be addressed.”

“What do you suggest?”

“That you meet with them and work it out. I believe they are willing to eat a portion of the loan, but since the loan is government backed, they refuse to absorb it all.”

“Offer them half.”

“I’d be glad to, but I don’t represent you.”

Jeanette seemed to be frustrated. “Rules, rules...rules. Can you legally represent me?”

“Yes.”

She stood and walked away, returning with a checkbook. “Is a two thousand dollar retainer enough?”

“Yes, thank you. Do want me to do anything about Max’s previous wives?”

She shook her head. “Always problems.”

“I’ve had conversations with both women and it shouldn’t be all that hard to make you Max’s only wife.”

“How much?”

On the high side, I’d say fifty grand plus my expenses which shouldn’t exceed five thousand.

Jeanette pursed her lips to the side and looked heavenward. "See why I get frustrated with Max. Everything about him costs money and every woman that meets him wants to sleep with him."

"I know the feeling."

Her mouth dropped open. "Did you?"

I shook my head. "No, but it was hard."

"All right. Since I'm going as far as setting Max up in the guest house, giving him an allowance and spending money to keep him out of jail, let's get the other wives out of the way, too."

\* \* \* \*

I glanced around the elegant women's store just off Rodeo Drive, as I walked in. Tony's effusive smile welcomed me. "Sorry, been waiting long?"

"Just got here."

"Guess where I was?"

He shrugged.

"Having tea with Glenda Easton."

Tony's eyebrows rose. "Really, you met your mother?"

I nodded. "It was Letta's doing. Oh yeah. Guess what else."

Tony shook his head. "Don't know, but from the way you're acting, it must be a goodie."

"It is. Letta says I'm a free woman." I took his hand and together we walked further into Fanny's.

After thirty minutes of sifting through rack upon rack of gorgeous gowns, I'd narrowed it down to three. I took them into changing room while Tony sat on a chair outside. As changing rooms go, it was large. So large a settee rested at one end and mirrors wrapped around the opposite walls.

Down to bra and panties, I opened the door a crack and peeked outside. No one was in sight so I stepped outside and grabbed Tony's hand. "Why don't you come in here? You'll be a lot more comfortable."

Tony cast a skeptical look, but came.

Tony's eyes grew wide when he stepped inside. "Wow, you could have a party in here."

I wrapped my arms around him. "Baby, you read my mind." As I pulled him toward the loveseat and sat in front of him, his jaw dropped open.

He gasped loudly, as I pulled the tongue of his zipper down and reached in to grasp his half-hard sausage.

Speaking *sotto voce*, "Baby, you're going to have to be quiet while I do this."

He nodded, answering under his breath, "You caught me by surprise. Are you sure?"

"Ah-huh. I'm having one of those spon..."

"tan...e...ous."

"Thank you. Spontaneous moments like you said Shana used to have. It may be her doing, but it's my idea and I just want you to enjoy it. I know I am."

\* \* \* \*

I couldn't believe it. After having my Jamilla half-naked on my couch and fully naked in my bed, our first sex was going to be her blowing me in a dressing room at Fanny's High Fashions. Nevertheless, the idea of getting my cock sucked in a fancy women's store in hearing distance of a half dozen women had me excited as hell and shaking like a leaf. Talk about spontaneous.

After getting my wiener out, she decided she wanted my pants and shirt out of the way; so she undid my belt, and dragged my slacks down to the top of my shoes. Flashing what had to be an evil smile, I unbuttoned my shirt. My semi-erect tom tom was exposed and being scrutinized by my dream girl. Holding it between her thumb and fingers, she licked her lips as she examined it. Then, as she laved the underside of my shaft and tickled the tip with her tongue, my knees almost buckled.

A second before she wrapped her full lips around my shaft, she purred, "Mmm...it smells sexy and tastes good."

Practically falling, I leaned forward and placed a hand on the wall behind her as she ran her mouth and hand up and down my shaft. An indescribable feeling of welcoming, wet, warmth enveloped my cock as it entered the soft confines of her beautiful mouth. The sensation was *so* sublime, I gritted my teeth to keep from verbally expressing my

pleasure, yet soft moans escaped from my throat. As she got more energetic, she vigorously moved her mouth and hand up and down my shaft, making soft sucking and slurping sounds.

I sucked air into my lungs like there was no tomorrow. My heart revved like a racecar at the start line. Swallowing my groans, I grasped the back of her head and guided her as her tongue massaged the most sensitive part of my body—the fleshy underside, between my shaft and crown. I withdrew my cock to the ridges at the base of my crown and paused while her tongue swirled over my tender underside. Every few seconds I would plunge my cock deep into mouth then pull back out enough for her to tongue the sweet, tender spot again. Jamilla had an innate ability to know exactly what turned me on, including gently massaging the soft skin behind my testicles...just as Shanna used to.

Having remained in a state of semi-arousal since the previous night, I knew I couldn't hold out long. I was way too worked up and Jamilla was too good. When her hand closed firmly on my balls and squeezed, a tickly flush of pure pleasure washed through me. With millions of wriggling spermatozoa on the way and not knowing Jamilla's feelings, I quickly weighed my options. When the first spurt of semen came forth, I pulled out of her mouth, ejaculating on her neck and chest while she manually milked me clean.

Licking the come, which had collected on her hand, she asked, "Why'd you do that?"

I assumed she meant pull out. "I didn't know whether to spend in your mouth or not."

She pulled a tissue from her purse and wiped the semen off. "What did you do with Shana?"

"Came in her mouth."

"I'll tell you what. When we have sex and we're going to, I want to do the whole gamut and if you have any doubts about what to do, do what you're used to. If I have a problem with it, I'll let you know afterwards."

"That said, let's pick a dress, get outta here, and go to my place so I can feel your johnny inside me."

"You don't want to go to my place?"

“I love your place, but disappearing night gowns are definitely a mood killer, and baby, I’m *in the mood!*”

## Chapter Thirteen – First Time

**W**hen Tony and I walked through the door of my domicile, I laid my new gown on the couch. Then I turned and laid a hot kiss upon his lips. When I pulled away, he had a silly grin on his handsome puss. Laughing, I placed hands on his face, and positioned my lips for a long, passionate kiss. As we kissed, my fingers roved around his cheeks and through his dark brown hair.

It felt as if someone turned up the heat when his hand squeezed my breast, kneading it, while his other hand grasped my buttock.

I took his hand from my ass, kissed it, and smiled. “That’s what they make bedrooms for.”

He waggled his eyebrows. “And changing rooms.”

I laughed, “You got me there. C’mon, I’m dying to see you naked.” I turned to lead Tony to my bedroom, but he jerked me back into an embrace as if we performed the tango.

We kissed once more. “Why walk when you can ride.” He took my hand and wrapped it over his shoulder, then he lifted me into his arms. He kissed my ear and nibbled on my earlobe, sending shivers to my sensitive nether regions. Carrying me into the bedroom, he whispered softly in my ear, “I want to remove your clothes and taste you. After that we can do anything you want.”

After setting me down beside the bed, I kicked my shoes off as, button by button, Tony languorously unfastened and removed my print blouse. Freeing the clasp of my lacy ivory bra, he pulled the straps over my shoulders. My areolas and nipples pebbled. I shuddered from the pleasurable pulses that zipped to my lower regions when Tony cupped my breasts, then kissed my swollen nubs.

While sucking on a nipple, Tony’s thumbs hooked over the top my teal blue skirt, edging one side and then the other of the skirt over my hips and butt. Unfortunately, he

broke away to lower it to my ankles. I stepped out of the skirt, and kicked it to the side with a foot. He dragged my lacy ivory panties to the floor and voila, I was naked.

If eyes could ravish, that's what he did when he stepped back and scrutinized my body. "Aren't you going to get undressed?"

"Beautiful." Looking like someone who had his mind on what we were about to do, he began to undress. The removal of his pullover displayed his well formed chest and midsection.

While Tony sat on the bed and took off his shoes and socks, I studied him the way he'd done me. When he rose, he undid his belt and zipper and pulled his feet through the legs his trousers. I felt the corners of my lips curve into an appreciative smile as I admired the nearly naked man who was about to make love to me. There wasn't an ounce of fat on him, yet he wasn't skinny, nor was he muscular. He was lean and wiry except for wide shoulders. Traces of dark body hair were located on a wide area of his chest and ran a narrow path to the waistband of his briefs.

When he pulled his boxer shorts off, I sucked in my breath as if viewing it for the first time. Facing me, he stood alongside the bed, his half-erect sex jutting out. I studied Tony's thick dick for a few seconds, then reached for it and began to stroke his silky smooth shaft. He gasped at my initial touch. I gasped as his hands returned to my breasts tweaking and pinching my erect nipples.

We seemed to be a mass of moans and sighs as we fondled and stroked each other. He hardened and grew larger, so I sat on the bed with my inner thighs brushing the outside of Tony's legs. Still grasping Tony's smooth member, I started to reprise our interlude in the changing room, when Tony interrupted me.

"Nuh-uh. Ladies first. Nothing could please me more than pleasing you. After that, if you still want me in your mouth, fine—whatever pleases you?"

I concurred with a nod, and he gently pushed me back until I lay on the bed. After placing a pillow under my head, he reclined beside me. He wrapped his fingers behind my neck and drew my face toward his until our lips met. After running his wet tongue over my bottom lip, when his lips touched mine a second time, I parted my lips, with a sigh, and his tongue slipped between slipped between them. Desire, engulfed me when

my tongue twirled playfully with his, tasting, exploring, reveling in the ecstasy his tongue promised.

But this wasn't play. It was a prelude to the serious business of having sex with each other. His kiss grew fierce, and his tongue spun across the soft cushions and roof of my mouth. Preoccupied, I gasped when his hand moved past my lightly rounded abdomen to my mound, letting his fingers drape over the cleft, gently tapping my clit with his middle finger.

I stiffened and gulped as Tony slammed what felt like ten fingers in my lusty caldron.

Ending his kiss, Tony removed his fingers and slipping them in his mouth, saying, "Mmm, you are tasty." Continuing his erotic journey to my ear, he pulled back my shoulder length, dark brown hair, then after laving my ear canal with his sensual tongue, he whispered, "I'm going to eat that sweet pussy of yours now."

"Oh, God yes. Please...please hurry, I can't wait!"

Tony chuckled. "Patience, sweet thing."

Laving a path of cooling dampness across my heated skin, Tony's moist tongue headed south. Goose bumps formed in its wake on every accessible, sensuous spot on my body. My neck, breasts, ribs, navel, hips and mons veneris all glistened.

Arriving and settling in at my lower extremities, his thumbs parted my folds like drapes hiding a prize in a TV game show.

"Hmmm, " he sighed.

For embarrassing, if stimulating seconds, he scrutinized my vulnerability then, after inhaling deeply, marveled out loud, "Mmm, you smell sexy. I can't wait."

"Then don't." I bleated impatiently.

Tony chuckled.

I felt warm breath on my soft, fleshy bundle of nerves an instant before a solid, wet warmth engulfed it. Laps across my clit caused me to squirm and moan. Foregoing any remaining inhibitions, I wrapped my hands around my thighs and drew my knees back, exposing myself fully to his mouth. The moment was here, and I intended to enjoy Tony's fingers and tongue playing havoc with my nether regions.

While his hand continued to work me, his tongue explored every fold of skin, every recess, and every secret place. When his warm tongue laved my sexual hollow, I gasped. Dipping his mouth between my heated folds, he slid his tongue into my pussy. God, it felt good as his tongue invaded my feminine recess, slurping and scrubbing its soft, fleshy walls with fervor. My wild reaction was random and involuntary. Unable to hold still, I moved my legs so my feet joined in the middle of his back, then arched my back and thrashed my head. "Oh baby, you are driving me crazy."

Trying to open my overheated pussy to maximum access for Tony's talented fingers and tongue, I flattened my legs horizontally. He took advantage of this by wrapping an arm around each of my thighs. His right hand slid to my clitoris, massaging it with his thumb, while his other hand rose to my breasts, his fingers fondling and massaging my nipples.

My back arched off the mattress as my hips thrust against his mouth. I was so agitated I grasped the sheets in my fists and thrashed my head from side to side. "Oh, Tony baby, your mouth feels so good."

After a few minutes, his tongue switched places with his fingers. While his tongue and lips teased and sucked on my clit, the fingers on one hand delved into my crème filled recess and the other pinched and fondled the nipples.

"God, don't stop!" I moaned long and low. "That's it, more of that, give me more... more...I fucking love it!"

The scorching oral sex sent me spiraling out of control. My arms and torso were in constant motion, making it difficult for Tony to keep his tongue on my clit or in my recess. Running my fingers through his hair seemed to help. I'd thrust my clit into his mouth and close my fist around a handful of his hair.

"That's it...don't stop. Oh God...so close," I uttered breathlessly.

Tony had me so close to orgasmic bliss, tension built in my body and my limbs stiffened. The onslaught of erotic titillation in the form of lips, hands and tongues pressed my libido to the limit. Every nerve in my body was primed for an outrageous orgasm. Then it came. "Jesus fucking Christ, I'm about to explode."

Indescribable sensations rippled through my body, and I slowly lost control as the intensity built. Waves of pure ecstasy lapped against my mind like the immutable tide delivering me into a state of nirvana

\* \* \* \*

After a half minute of convulsions, and aftershocks, she calmed and I joked, “I take it you liked that?”

Breathing hard, she replied, “What do you think, you wonderful lover?”

“I think yes. You like your pussy eaten. What would you like now?”

Still catching her breath, she whispered, “What I’ve wanted since Fanny’s. I want to feel you inside me.”

“Your wish is my command.” I scooted her back toward the headboard then reached into my pants on the floor removed one of the foil wrapped condoms I’d brought and rolled it down my penis, before urging her legs apart.

\* \* \* \*

His lips touched mine and began a short, but adoring kiss. “Umm, I can taste myself on your tongue.”

He laughed. “Taste good don’t you?”

“I guess.” Guiding his sheathed cock to the entrance to my needy pussy, he eased forward and I gasped. Like pain relieving ointment, with minimal resistance, he glided forth into my slippery warmth. The walls of my pussy closed in and welcomed him in a wet, fleshy embrace. Every manly stroke soothed the sweet anguish that had formed within my warm chamber, calling forth a subtle, almost silent, cry of delight.

In a raspy moan, his mouth sought the feel of my nipples again. Alternating between my nubs, he made sure he tasted both nipples.

Periodically, he rose and swabbed my mouth with his tongue before returning, warming my moist cooling nipples with his mouth.

Every cock stroke into my inflamed slit was like a slice of heaven. I gasped from the sinful sensations that threaded through my body and clenched my pussy. The heat stifled me. My heart beat with loud thuds, my skin tingled with electricity and we’d barely started.

The barrage of erotic stimulation teased my libido—hot, cold, wet, dry, hard, soft, smooth, rough, slick, coarse, tender, violent, black, white, the contradiction of senses threatened to short circuit my mind. Nevertheless, I thrived in the frenetic sexual environment in which I found myself. Icy shivers shot through me as I realized I was being fucked by my dreamboat, Tony—a white man—and lovin’ it.

The passion between us made the world go away. We existed in a small bubble of time and space where the only concern was fucking and more fucking. Every nerve jangling pump of his cock brought a pleasure sound from my throat. Pulses of erotic energy jolted through me, bringing me closer to climax.

The achy sweetness, Tony delivered seemed endless and pushed me to the verge of orgasm. A second release was so close and I craved it. Waves of tingly pleasure came over me, slowly infiltrating my body as the swell of pleasure swamped me, drowning me in incandescence, and then *zowwee!* I went berserk, screaming, “Oh, my God. I’m coming. Jesus, it’s a *fuck-i-ng* Cali...fornia earthquake.” My back arched and my head thrashed back and forth, out of control. Sliding my hands into his scalp, I raked my fingernails through his locks.

Before my climax had finished, Tony raised up and shouted, “Oh yeah! Oooh, fuck baby, I’m coming too.” He shuddered, then started convulsing spasmodically. Pushing his shaft hard into my channel while depositing his seed into the latex shield, he joined me in his own rite of ecstasy.

Though I wasn’t ready to stop, I figured Tony would need to rest for awhile. That’s why I was shocked when he rolled me over, raised me to my knees and mounted me doggy style. Pumping me from behind while rubbing my hot button with his hand, I slipped even further into a vortex of lust, and forgot the concept of time. We fucked hard and every way we could think of and we fucked...until the wee hours.

## Chapter Fourteen - Love

**A**t dawn, I raised an eyelid, then raised up on my elbows and looked around. Six-thirty! *Jeeze, I only went to sleep four hours ago.* I rolled over planning on going back to sleep and I probably would have, except I saw Tony and my mind immediately flashed back to the sexfest we'd enjoyed together. Pictures of the previous night flickered through my mind like a slide show. Closing my eyes tightly, I tried to return to slumberland, but a zillion images of my sexy night kept that from happening.

*Fuck it.* Unable to fight it, I swung out of bed, naked as a woman who spent the entire night fucking, and headed to the closet to slip on a kimono.

I felt tired, but couldn't sleep so I decided to make coffee to wake up. I'd just started the coffee when my cell phone went off. *Who the hell?*

Remembering Tony was asleep, I rushed back into the bedroom to retrieve the phone. It was Thursday, a workday. Even so, no one would call me...except...my eccentric lawyer—Letta. "Do you realize it's only six-fifty?"

"Oh sorry, my watch is fast. I got six-fifty-three."

"Very funny. What—"

"Who's that, honey?"

I turned and sure enough, Tony was awake raised up on his elbows. "It's Letta. Go back to sleep, sweetheart"

"Who was that?" Letta demanded.

"Tony."

"Tony?"

"Yes, Letta."

"Did ya do the deed?"

"Yes, Letta."

"Was it good?"

"Yes, Letta."

“Good, I want a blow by blow description.”

“No, Letta.” My voice suddenly went up two octaves. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Shoot.”

“Don’t you ever sleep?”

“Sure. I sleep four hours a day. Anything more is a waste.”

“What about us oddballs who sleep eight hours a day?”

“I’d say you’re missing four hours of life a day.”

I sighed. “All right. What did you call about?”

“Are you going to your shop today?”

“Yep, it’s Thursday and I’m booked solid. What do ya need?”

“I need to bring you up to date. I’ll meet you at Sal’s at noon.”

“All right, but I might run—”

I looked at the phone, then at my new sex partner. “What?”

“I wish she wouldn’t do that.”

“What?”

My nostrils flared. “She hung up on me. She does that all the time.”

\* \* \* \*

I wasn’t able to get away until a quarter past twelve so when I got there, Letta was drumming her fingernails on the table. “Hi.” I slid in the booth opposite her, and opened the menu, “What did you want to talk about?”

“I hope you don’t mind, I ordered already.”

“No that’s fine. Now, what’d—”

Letta waved her hands around. “We’ll get to that. Tell about last night and you and Tony.”

I furrowed my brow. “What’s with you and my sex life?”

She raised her brow. “You have to admit, you sex life is intertwined with the case I’m working on.”

I pursed my lips and frowned.

“Besides, it’s privileged information.”

I fidgeted in my seat and raised my brow, questioningly. “Privileged information?”

“Ah-huh. I’m your attorney. Everything you tell me is privileged.”

“I hardly see what—”

“Just humor me will you.”

I decided to tell her what we did in general terms. After all, she was my lawyer and one of the reasons I did what I did, but once I started, I blabbed everything in excruciating and embarrassing detail. Telling it seemed like reliving it, so I couldn’t spill all the tawdry details fast enough.

Letta’s eyes opened wide after the first sentence and I swear she never blinked. When I got to the end, she said, “Wow, I’d like to have a movie of that.”

“So would I.” I winked and glanced at my watch. “Oh shit. It’s one-ten. I have to get back.” I stood and left a ten on the table. I never heard what you wanted to tell me.”

“That’s all right. I mostly wanted to hear about you and loverboy. I can email what I wanted to tell you.”

When I got home, I checked my email and found Letta’s missive.

*Hi Jamilla,*

*Just wanted to update you on Maximilian. As I told you previously, Max signed the nolo contendere papers for the annulment. Yesterday, I submitted the papers to the court and today your annulment was made official. I thought if you weren’t busy I’d take you out for a drink to celebrate.*

*On a related matter, I got you removed from the bank loan, another reason to celebrate.*

*I’m sure you could care less, but I got Max and Jeanette back together.*

*It’s not important, but there is one more matter, I’d like to discuss with you in person.*

*Warm regards, L*

I thought about calling Letta to go out and celebrate, but the doorbell interrupted my thought.

While deciding what to do, the bell rang again, so I rushed to the door and peeked through the peephole, but no one was there. “Humph.” I scratched my head and headed back to my office when the doorbell rang again. I ran back to the door, peeked again, and saw Tony’s smiling face. I rapidly undid the locks, opened the door and came face to face with a large bouquet of red roses in lalique vase.

“These are for you.”

How sweet. I took the roses and kissed Tony. “Thank you, sweetheart.” I smelled the sweet fragrant blooms and smiled. “They’re lovely and they smell wonderful. Won’t you come in?”

He nodded and I turned to walk away, but instead of following me he cleared his throat, “Ha-hum.”

When I turned, he held a, just as lovely, equally large, bouquet of white roses also in a vase. I set the red roses on the closest end table and returned to the door. Taking the white roses from him, I squeaked, “How many of these do you have?”

He smiled, bent down, and retrieved a pink and a coral bouquet. “Just these. I didn’t know if you had a favorite, so I bought all of these.”

I picked the vase with the red roses back up and headed into the kitchen with Tony following me. “These must have cost a fortune.”

He shrugged.

After setting the flowers on the island counter, I turned and faced him. “Well, you shouldn’t have. The red ones would have been fine.”

He smiled and cocked his head. “Is that your favorite?”

I took the flowers from him. “No, I suppose I like the coral ones best, but they’re all so lovely, any one of them would have worked for me.”

As I set the flowers I’d taken from Tony with the others, he snaked his arms around me and pulled me into a light embrace. “Well you can’t be too careful when you are trying to get the girl of your dreams to fall in love with you.”

I purposely raised A single eyebrow lifted at his declaration. “Oh, is that what you’re doing?”

My pulse sped up when he pulled me tighter and his lips nuzzled the crook of my neck. “Ah-huh.”

“Well smarty, you may be wasting your time and money.”

He pulled away. His frown was so deep his eyebrows almost met his eyelashes and I had to bite my lip to keep from laughing.

He said one word, “Why?”

“Because I think I already love you.”

His frown transformed into a grin as wide as the Mississippi. “That makes two of us, baby. We should celebrate.”

“I agree because in addition to loving you, I have something else to celebrate.”

“What?” He reached under my arms and started tickling me. “What? What? What?”

I pulled away and shouted, “Stop.”

His grin slid to the side and turned mischievous. “I’m waiting?”

I moved my hands around excitedly. “Letta got my annulment and get this. She got me taken off the huge bank loan.”

“That is reason to celebrate. What should we do?”

I smirked. “That’s easy. Dinner and sex.”

A solo eyebrow rose as he looped his arms around me again. “Which first?”

“Correction. Sex, dinner and sex.”

He laughed.

Just then, my cell phone rang. Picking it up, I recognized Letta’s number. Setting it back down on the coffee table, I entwined my fingers in his and led him into the bedroom.

“Aren’t you going to answer?”

“Naw, it’s a wrong number.”

\* \* \* \*

The day of the première arrived and I was as nervous as an Oscar nominee on the big night. When I first found out I was going to the première, I’d had Darla clear the calendar for Friday, so it was a day to relax. After a hot evening of sex, dinner at a swank restaurant and more sex, Tony and I slept until noon. The dinner was good, but who can think of food when it’s sandwiched between sex with an Italian hunk.

When we woke up, I was still hungry...for more sex, so we stayed in bed until two o’clock. Tony had some things to do, so we kissed goodbye. “I’ll pick you up at five.”

“Why so early, I thought the première started at eight?”

“I’ll take you to dinner first.”

After Tony left, I soft-boiled a couple eggs. I had almost three hours to kill before he returned so I fixed a relaxing bubble bath and brought my portable CD player in the bathroom. I wasn’t in the tub more than five minutes when my cell phone went off. With clusters of tiny bubbles clinging to me, I rose, reached over to the vanity and turned down the music, then answered the phone,

“Hello?”

“Where are you?” Letta screeched.

“What d’ya mean?”

“I went to the shop and they said you were off so I figured you were home, but I’m ringing the doorbell and you’re not answering so where are you?”

I frowned. “I’m here. I’m taking a bubble bath. What d’ya want?”

“What d’ya think? I came here to talk to you. Are you gonna let me in?”

“I’m in the tub and I don’t have any clothes on. Let yourself in.”

“I don’t suppose you could tell me how to do that?”

“Sure. Go around the garage and just behind the gate is a door into the garage. Beside the concrete in front of the door is a flat rock. The key to the door is under the rock.”

“Thanks”

“You’re welcome. Oh, Letta.”

“What?”

“Don’t let the spiders get you.”

“Very funny.”

I sneezed.

“Gesundheit.”

Realizing I was cold, I lay back into the warm water. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Ah here it is. I’ll be in in a jiffy.”

Letta came into the room a couple minutes after we disconnected. “Hi, getting ready for tonight?”

“Trying to calm down. What’s up?”

“Max seems to think you have his clothes and personal effects.”

“I do. Why? I was thinking of having a garage sale.”

She sat on the edge of the tub. “I told Max, if you had them I would get them back for him.”

“Why?”

“I have good reasons. Just humor me.”

I sighed. “All right. They’re in the garage. Six boxes with rat written on them in bold lettering.”

Letta laughed. “Yeah, he’s a rat, but he’s soon to be a caged rat, living on an allowance in Jeanette’s guest house.”

“How *is* she?”

“A bit bitchy, but maybe putting up with Max’s antics for four years could do that to you. She’s all right. Very nice looking too.”

“How long do you think that’ll last?”

She raised an eyebrow. “You never know. Apparently, their sex life is what connects them and they both get bed privileges. From what I can tell that’s what they both yearned for when she threw him out. He told me he missed her and was tired of playing around. Time will tell.”

## Chapter Fifteen – The Première

Upon finishing my bath, I slipped on some workout clothes, then helped Letta load the boxes into her SUV. By the time she left it was past three o'clock so I started getting ready saving my contemporary, strapless, full-length gown for last. By four-thirty I was ready and looking pretty good if I do say so myself. I was also jumpier than a Mexican jumping bean so I pulled the bottle of crème de cocoa down from the cupboard and poured myself a brandy sniffer almost full.

Tony saved me from pouring my second glass, arriving ten minutes early. I opened the door and looked him over. I felt my chest swell with pride. Dressed in a tux complete with bow tie and a lavender cummerbund—matching the color of my gown—he was the handsomest man I ever saw and he'd just professed his love for me. He wasn't pretty like my faux ex husband Max. No, his fabulous looks were more rugged like Patrick Dempsey or Hugh Jackman.

"Wow! You look fabulous."

"Thank you. So do you, baby. This dress you bought is lovely, but you shouldn't."

Tony waved a disagreeing hand. "Don't be silly. I wanted you to go to the première with me and look your best, so it shouldn't cost you a thing."

"Well thanks again for the gown. I never thought I would own a Donna Karan." I noticed he held a corsage. "You'll be hard pressed finding a place to pin that on this dress." I hitched my head toward his hand.

"I know. Hold out your wrist."

I held out my arm and he slipped the elastic band around my wrist. "There. Are you ready, the limo is waiting?"

"Limo?"

He grinned. "Certainly. This is a big night. We're going to arrive in style."

"Let me get my wrap and purse."

The ride to Lawry's was quick and uneventful. Tony started our meal by ordering with a bottle of Tattinger champagne. After the wine steward served the premium effervescent drink, Tony offered a toast. "To happiness in the arms of the new love of my life."

A flush of heat surged through me as our liaison of the previous night flashed through my mind like a pornographic movie.

Tony laughed. "You didn't just blush, did you?"

I set my champagne flute down. "Maybe. Let's talk about something else."

"Like what?"

"Like writing. When—"

I paused when the waiter came to our table with a pitcher of water and filled our water glasses. "Hi my name is Michael, may I get you something to drink?"

"Yes. I'll have an iced tea."

"Very good, and you sir?"

"I'll have coffee later with desert. I'm fine for now."

"As you wish, sir. I'll be back with the lady's iced tea in a minute and take your order."

As the waiter disappeared into the busyness of Lawry's, Tony asked, "You were saying, before Michael showed up?"

"Oh, yes. I was about to ask when you knew you wanted to become a writer?"

He took a sip of his champagne before answering, then snickered, "If you're thinking I had some kind of epiphany, I didn't—nothing that dramatic. From the time I learned to write in kindergarten, I wanted to be a writer," he chuckled, "While my classmates would draw airplanes and dogs, I would draw word pictures."

Michael appeared and set my iced tea down. "Are you ready to order or do you need more time?"

Tony fidgeted in his seat. "We're ready. Jamilla?"

Since this was a special evening on a date with my man, I placed my diet on hold and ordered the specialty of the house. I closed my menu and passed it to the waiter. "I'll have the California cut prime rib, medium with creamed corn."

"Very good and you sir?"

“I’ll have the prime rib also, Lawry’s cut, medium rare and a baked potato.”

Michael took Tony’s menu, said, “Thank you,” and disappeared.

“So you always wanted to be a writer.”

“I guess so. Your sister was a fantastic writer. Did you ever think about writing?”

I shook my head, but said, “I guess so, but not a screenplay. I tried to write a novel in my teens, but I never finished it.”

Tony’s brow dipped low over his brooding eyes. “Why not?”

“It just didn’t seem good enough. Plus I couldn’t come up with a good ending.”

Tony wrapped my hand in his. “Would you let me read it?”

I sighed. “I suppose, if I can find it.”

“When we go back to your place after the première could you look for it?”

The smirk on my lips was from my devious thoughts. “I would, but I want to go back to your place.”

Tony’s face was so incredulous, I giggled.

“Why I thought...you...Shana.”

“I know, but I think since we are now intimate, she won’t bother us. Besides.” I glanced around to make sure no one was listening then continued under my breath, “I want to see what it’s like to be tied up and helpless in your four post bed, like you used to do with my sister.”

With my mind more on the première than sex with Tony, my dinner was spectacular. The première, like so many, was held at Grauman’s Chinese Theater and I had a blast. When the film started, I was mesmerized from the opening credits. Throughout the movie, a wonderful romantic comedy, I kept thinking, my twin sister helped write this. She actually created something lasting. I create too—hairdos and do a credible job, but nothing like Shana did. I was suddenly in awe of my sister and Tony.

After the movie, we stopped off at release party at the studio that had produced *Between the Sheets*. With other things on our minds, we didn’t stay long, but we stayed long enough for me to meet the stars of the movie, as well as the director and producer.

After a couple glasses of wine, we left the party and the limousine dropped Tony and me off at his house. Tony hung my wrap up and we reclined beside each other on the living room davenport. I didn’t know what he was thinking, but he didn’t say anything

and neither did I. Even though we'd intimately shared each other's company the previous evening, and this morning, and had a wonderful evening, an awkward silence persisted. Maybe we weren't sure last night, this morning wasn't a dream and we'd just had our first date.

Finally, Tony asked, "Would you like a nightcap?"

"Do you have any Amaretto?"

"I should have."

While Tony looked through his liquor cabinet, I went to his stereo and looked through his music. When I came across one of my favorite songs by my almost namesake, Jamelia, I decided to loosen things up for the hot sexy evening I'd been looking forward to.

\* \* \* \*

I returned with a bottle of Serrano and two snifters, and took my seat on the couch. Jamilla stood by the stereo sifting through my music. I poured each snifter half full, and after a few seconds she turned and smiled at me. As music started to play, she began to sashay her hips to the rhythm of *Beware of the Dog*.

God, she looked good. I couldn't wait to see her shapely frame naked. *A striptease would be nice*. "Can you sing?"

Her lips formed a lopsided smile and a single eyebrow rose. "A little. Why?"

I shrugged. "You could sing along while dance."

Flashing a seductive smile she began to shimmy her hips and hum the tune. In a voice that seemed younger than her twenty-eight years she sang, "*You know how much you want it,*" as she reached behind and unzipped her zipper. She strolled over to the coffee table took a sip of her drink, then continued humming as she wiggled her hips back and forth until her gown slipped over her hips and down and rested in a pile around her high heels.

Down to her lacy black bra, panties, heels, a pearl necklace and matching bracelet, my jaw must have dropped as I realized she actually was stripping. I started clapping and egging her on. "Take it off baby. You're looking fine."

She blurted out, "*You're like a moth to a flame,*" as she stepped from her dress and kicked it away. Humming again she undid the clasp to her bra as she swayed her hips in

time with the sexy beat. Holding the cups in place with her hands, she smiled broadly and winked at him. Turning her back to him, she wiggled her ass and threw the bra away as she sang the chorus very nice and very loud, *"He's just another girl addict. And if you give it away. You gotta be crazy, crazy"*

She was down to her lacy black panties and I thought when she turned back around I'd see her perky breasts, but as she swayed around, her hands covered them. Smiling seductively, she pranced up to me and blurted in my face, *"You better shake him off. Before he gets ya."* Then she did something that turned me on so much, I nearly came on the spot. Bending down she freed her breasts to pick up one of the snifters. Straightening, she shimmied her sizeable rack before taking a sip of her drink.

"Mmm. I love Amaretto." With a seductive smile on her pretty face, her gaze never leaving mine, when she dipped her index finger in the amber liquor. She sighed as she transferred it from her finger to her burgeoning nipple in a circular motion. "You like?"

"Very much."

Lowering her face as she raised the breast, her tongue slipped through her lips and licked the sweet liquor from her nipple. "Mmm, that felt and tasted good. Would you like a taste?"

"You bet."

She giggled. "I'll bet." Dipping her finger in the amaretto again, she repeated the procedure on her other nipple, then positioned her beautiful, brown breast so it's glistening, chocolate colored nipple hung a hair's breadth from my quivering lips. God I loved her breasts. I loved everything about Jamilla. With a passion I hadn't known since my first love, one hand grasped her buttock and the other grasped her breast as my lips sucked upon the teat of my second love.

For a minute or so she aided me, pushing her breast into my mouth as she moaned and tunneling her sharp fingernails through my scalp. She pulled away grinning and wagging a naughty finger at me. "That felt so good, I could let you do that all night. But if I let you do that, we'd never make it to the bedroom where you are going to tie me up and ravish me."

She spun around and bending over grabbed her ankles. Shaking her ass by putting weight on one leg and then the other, she turned her head sideways and looked up at me.

Reaching behind, her thumb slipped under the top of her panties and snapped the elastic band. “Take them off.”

I laughed. “When you’re naked you can masturbate for me.”

“We’ll see.”

I dipped my fingers between the band and her smooth skin before dragging them over her ass and down to the floor. Bending down to get the panties over her spiked heels, the perfume of her pussy wafted the few inches to my nostrils. I was already hard, but the aroma of her smooth cunt elevated my arousal to another level, driving me mad with lust. When her panties were disposed of and I let go of her ankle she edged backward until her warm, liquid filled snatch rubbed against my nose and mouth, I could take it no more.

My hands grabbed her hips and pulling her smooth rounded butt and liquefied cunt to my drooling tongue. As my tongue violated the warm, wet cushions of her deep recess, she moaned her pleasure. I gloried in the tang and bouquet of her sex. It was delicious—she was delicious. Following along with my tongue buried in her channel, as she edged sideways toward the couch, we literally switched places. While she knelt upon the couch and spread her legs, I ended up behind her kneeling on the floor.

\* \* \* \*

With my legs spread wide and bent over the back of the davenport, his thumbs parted my folds, giving his tongue and fingers full access to my underside. His lips surrounded and sucked on my clit, while his fuck finger pumped in and out of my sopping wet well.

“I thought you wanted to watch me masturbate,” she asked.”

“I did until you backed your delectable pussy into my mouth. Are you complaining?”

“God no. You’re driving me, bananas.”

He rose, appearing to study my nakedness as he unbuttoned his shirt. “Right now I’m going to fuck you. Are you ready for my dick?”

“Oh, yes, baby. Give me your dick.”

He tossed his shirt on top on a chair four feet away and unbuckled his belt. He patted my breasts, which hung down, and joked, “I’m gonna make your fabulous breasts

bounce back and forth like a clappers on a bell.”

Peeking behind me, I watched as he undressed. After slipping his shoes off, he lowered his pants and disposed of them. When he lowered his briefs, I ran my tongue across my upper lip.

I sighed. “Looking at your cock makes my pussy tingle.”

He laughed.

I gasped as his hand ran the length of my slit and chirped, “Oh.” as he shoved two fingers in me.

“You seem plenty lubricated.” she felt another finger join the two drilling her core.

As the walls of my pussy closed around his fingers, he said, “You’re good to go.”

His hand on my back pushed me downward toward the back of the couch as his bold cock began its entrance. “Push your ass up as high as you can.”

As I raised my ass up as high as I could, “How’s that baby?”

“Perfect.”

“Good. Put that beautiful cock in me baby. Don’t make me wait. Fuck me. I gotta have that big thick dick in my wicked little cunt.”

Like an answer to a prayer, his thick cock glided slowly, but smoothly into me, both stretching and filling me, while soothing the sugary ache within my channel. My pussy muscles reacted by tightening around him. As he continued, each incursion titillated my mind and body with jolts of sublime pleasure. Soon each blissful thrust of his cock brought forth a yelp-like sound from my throat.

Our bodies moved together in perfect harmony, Our hearts beat as one. My breath would suspend when he pulled away, then I would gasp sharply when he thrust back in.

Picking up the pace, his penile thrusts became harder and faster. As predicted my breasts swung like the clappers of a bell, but so did his balls beating a nice rhythm against my clit.

My head was suddenly jerked as he wrapped his fist in my hair as he pummeled me and pulled back.

“Fuck woman, your cunt feels wonderful.”

Strangely it excited me and waves of pleasure spiraled through me.

As he drove relentlessly into my silky, smooth core, I wriggled and writhed. His hands gripped my hips, and pulled me into each stroke with a groan. “That’s it baby, Fuck me hard. Bury your cock deep inside me.”

I knew completion was near and I craved it. With each stroke feeling like a whip of pleasure, my mind clouded with lust, and the tickly stirrings of an orgasm began. Then Tony bent forward, his hot breath searing my neck as his hand wrapped around my abdomen, his fingers jangling my clit as he continued to pummel my womanly haven.

As a result my orgasm surged into a new level of intensity I’d never felt before. “My God, it’s coming back. It’s fucking stronger.” Frenzied, I moved erratically as a rainbow of luminance encompassed my mind and an explosion of blissfulness crisscrossed through me. My body charged with energy, trembled and moved erratically. Suddenly, an exuberant ear splitting scream burst free. “Yes! Oh, fuck yes!” I sobbed, as the waves of my climax battered my senses.

Whimpering, I collapsed in a quavering ball on the couch, as pleasure tremors continued to tease my mind. Tony straightened my legs and slipped in beside me, holding me tight and kissing my forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks and finally my lips. When I calmed, I sat up and announced, “I’m ready to go in the bedroom.”

## Chapter Sixteen – Bondage and Happiness

**J**amilla flopped on the bed and spread her arms and legs out. “Well don’t just strand there. Tie me up spread eagle and make me your love slave.”

I cocked my head. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

“Ah-huh. I want to try it. I want be your love slave. I want to try all kinds of things with you, except one thing.”

“Is that right. What’s that?”

“Don’t ever ask me to share you. It’s bad enough I share you with Shana’s memory.”

“Don’t worry. It took me nine years to find you. I’m not going to take any chances.” I walked to my closet. “I’m going to have to use ties. Is that all right?”

“Sure,” came her swift answer.

I grabbed five wide ties from my closet and returned to the bed. After looping a tie around her Jamilla’s wrist and tying it around the post, I leaned down and gently kissed her. “My sweet angel, I can’t do anything about Shana, but I assure you, I only want you.”

“Good.” She glanced at her hand and moved it around. It seemed secure.

Next, I hooked a loop around her left ankle and the post, then, her right ankle and when I secured her right wrist, she was spread eagle and helpless.

\* \* \* \*

I watched as he picked up and pulled the last tie taut.

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to blindfold you, unless you prefer I don’t.”

“What did you do with my sister?”

“Both. She said the things I did felt stronger when she didn’t know they were coming. It sharpened her senses.”

“All right, let’s try it.”

Tony wrapped the tie over my eyes and around my head. After He tied the tie, he asked, “Can you see?”

I shook my head. “I can’t see a thing.”

“I need to get a few things. I’ll be right back. Don’t go anywhere.”

I pursed my lips. “Very funny.”

I don’t know how long Tony was gone, but growing anxious from wondering what was going to happen, made it seem long. Tony must have tiptoed back very quietly, because the only reason I knew he was back was the absolute shock of extreme cold on my left nipple. Then the right. I also felt cool liquid—I assume water—meandering down and puddling between my breasts.

After that, I felt Tony’s forefinger and thumb rolling my stiffened left nipple. “Umm, your nipples are nice and hard. Cold too. Let me warm them for you. Suddenly, warm lips engulfed my stiffened nub assisted from within by a warm wet tongue. The sensation was mind boggling from the pleasure he was giving me and I arched my back, pushing the nub firmer into his mouth.

Tony stopped and said, “Let me warm up the other nipple.”

Waiting for and expecting his mouth to warm my hard right nipple, I was doubly surprised when a splash of burning hot water hit it instead. Then a splash hit the one Tony’d just sucked on. Only I realized it wasn’t water because it didn’t run down and over my breast. “What was that?”

“If I tell you you’ll expect it the next time I tie you up.”

“You stinker. I smell paraffin. I’ll bet it was wax from a candle.”

He laughed. “Good for you.” And kissed me.

“Now, it’s time to warm up your clitoris.”

The idea of hot wax on my super sensitive clit in my ultra-sensitive state had me in a panic. “No don’t please, it’s too—”

Suddenly something soft and very tickly began to brush across my clit sending thrills throughout my body and mind. Shana had been right. My awareness and sensitivity had doubled and my body acted as a pleasure conductor spreading pleasure and bliss... everywhere. “What is that?”

“Another secret and this one I’m keeping.”

I felt the bed jiggle and sensed movement. I listened and tried to anticipate, what Tony would do, but failed when Tony's tongue ran circles around my nipple. I sighed when his lips closed over my bud and began sucking, then moaned when he began to lick it with the tip of his tongue. I wished I could watch what Tony did to me but loved the intense pleasure I felt while blindfolded. My legs quivered like a bowl of Jell-O and when Tony inserted two talented fingers deep into my core my whole body squirmed. My heart raced and my breathing slowed to a crawl as the wiggly fingers fucked my pussy and mind.

His thumb strummed my swollen clit and his fingers pounded my slick channel as my brain slipped into surreal territory. With my pussy seemingly weeping crème by the gallon, I couldn't hold it any longer. I bit my lower lip trying keep from screaming, as wave after unrelenting wave of dreamy pleasure flooded over me. I wanted to hold him, squeeze him, but couldn't, so I arched my back and screeched, "Oh fuck Tony, It feels so good, I might die." Thrashing my head from side to side, I crushed my hair into the bed until the wild feeling diminished.

Tony laughed. "You like being tied up?"

"Sorta."

"What you said when you came, *it feels so good, you might die.*

"Yeah."

The French have a term like that for an orgasm. They call it *the little death.*

I snickered. "I can see why."

He lay beside me on my right side. "Do you feel like making love now?"

I sighed as his right hand slid between my legs. I tried to run my fingers through his hair, but couldn't and when his warm hand cupped my private area in the most intimate caress any man could do to a woman, I was ready for an encore.

"Ah-huh, are you going to take my blindfold off?"

"After we make love and you climax again."

"Hurry up and make love to me, then."

Even with my ankles secured, I managed to spread my legs even more. The feeling of his throbbing hardness at the entrance to my juicy well excited me. I gasped when his cock glided in like a conquering hero, his thickness itching the walls of my aching pussy.

After he was all the way in, he lowered himself on top of me, allowing a few seconds for me to adjust to the size of him. Clever fingers manipulated my nipples, while he slipped his tongue between our lips in a passionate kiss, thus adding two new levels of carnality to the sexy sensations that surged through me.

Languidly, Tony stroked my heated, passion-moistened depths. Eventually, his driving need increased the intensity and velocity of his strokes. As his penile incursions increased, my soft mewls became moans of delight. I wanted to hold him, to squeeze and scratch him. I wanted to wrap my legs around him and pull him into me with each lovely thrust, but I was restrained—I was his love slave.

My limbs secured, while Tony had his way with me, created an aura of eroticism that delighted and appealed to me.

Tony grabbed my buttocks and hoisted my hips holding them in place to meet his swift, deep thrusts. The friction of his cock soothed the sweet anguish that had built in the walls of my pussy and I gloried in the euphoric feelings that careened through me.

“Oh God, your pussy feels good!” His fast pace quickened as he pounded me faster and harder. His breathing became labored and when he raised up off of me, I knew. “Jesus baby, I’m coming.” He rammed deep inside of me and held it there while his cock throbbed from streams of jism spurting into me. I felt his furry pubis rubbing heavily and constantly against my swollen love bud. It and his big cock buried deep in me drove me bananas. I felt this beautiful man, whom I loved, convulsively squirting his seed into the applied sheath.

My orgasm followed closely behind his. My strong interior muscles clutched his dick like teeth, keeping his pulsing shaft submerged inside me after he’d shot his load. With my movements growing more and more frantic and spasmodic, I couldn’t stop it and I screamed as the sensations crested in my womb. “Oh my God! Don’t stop baby, I’m coming, too” While the extraordinary sensations slammed through me, I tried to wrap my arms around him, but my restraints wouldn’t let me. While my legs went rigid, my hands wrapped around the cords that bound them so tight, my long fingernails left marks in my palms.

Too soon, except for a series of aftershocks, it ended. Drained after my third climax in an hour, I lay there, reliving, in my mind, the nirvanic sensations I felt.

Tony reclined beside me and kissed my lips. “What would you like to do next?”

“First, I’d like to see again. Then I’d like to have my arms and legs back before they fall asleep.”

He jumped out of bed and undid my left hand. “How’s that?”

“Better,” I said, opening and closing my hand, “Now the blindfold, legs and other hand.”

“In a minute.”

Tony grabbed my free hand and slipped something onto a finger. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing.”

I felt the blindfold pulled away, but the sudden brightness blinded me. “Are you going to untie the rest of my limbs?”

“Yes.”

Squinting, my vision slowly improved. “When?”

“After I ask you something.”

Tony appeared to be kneeling on the floor beside me, continuing to hold my hand. “Tony?”

“My dear, Jamilla. I love you and want to spend my life with y—.”

This was a bigger shock than when the hot wax hit my nipple. “Baby, are you proposing?”

“Yes? Will you marry me?”

“Let go of my hand.” His grip loosened enough that I yanked my hand away and gazed at it. A very large engagement ring resided on the ring finger. I gasped. “Oh, my-y God. You’re serious.”

“I wouldn’t joke about something like this.” He rose and began to untie my legs and other hand.”

“This is such a surprise.”

As Tony removed the last tie, he climbed back in bed and sidled up to me. “This is the strangest proposal I’ve ever heard about.”

Tony frowned. “Does that mean no?”

I giggled. “No!” I wrapped my arms around Tony and whispered in his ear, “It means, yes!”

Tony’s eyes widened. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, you wonderful man.”

“What would you like to do now?”

I smiled at him and blinked my eyelashes. “I’d like *you* to be *my* sex slave.”

His brows rose, his eyes widening. “Really?”

“Yes, I can’t wait to spank those sexy buns of yours.”

\* \* \* \*

Even though it was two a.m., we were so happy we made love until four.

I would have slept until noon, but my phone woke me up. Yawning, with my eyes half closed I reached in my purse for the phone. “Hello?”

“How was the première?”

“Letta?”

“Who else?”

“Damn, it’s only...”

“Eight o’clock. Knowing you went out last night, I let you sleep longer.”

Worried our conversation would wake up Tony, I took it into the bathroom “Thank you for that, but we didn’t get to bed until four.”

“Really, what did you do? Never mind, I know.”

I turned the shower on. “Letta. Tony asked me to marry him.”

“What.” Letta screeched.

“He asked me to marry him and I said yes.”

There was about ten seconds of silence. “Letta?”

“I’m here. Sorry, I got a little emotional. I can’t tell you how happy I am for you, sweetheart. I better let you go. I’ll call you later.”

After Letta ended the call, I stuck my hand in the shower. The water was hot and I was still naked from our love making so I hopped in.

The hot water relaxed me. I washed my hair and lingered longer than usual. After fifteen minutes or so, I turned the water off and grabbed a bath sheet. Stepping out, I dried off, hung the towel up, glanced at the steamed up mirror and froze.

After a few seconds, I rushed to get Tony. Shaking the poor baby, I pleaded, “Tony get up please. In the bathroom, you have to see this.”

Finally, after prodding for almost a minute, he stumbled toward the bathroom with me. “This better be good.”

“It is.”

But as we entered the room the steam and the message, except for a tiny bit at the top had disappeared. “Oh, shit! It’s gone.”

“What’s gone?”

“The message. When I got out of the shower a message had been written in the steam that collected on the mirror, but it’s evaporated.”

“What did it say?”

“Inside the outline of a big heart, it said,

J & T

Goodbye

Love, S”

## **Epilogue - Eighteen months later**

Eternal Glory Methodist Church, Hollywood, CA

**A**fter the hundreds of guests and spectators all took a seat and quieted, the reverend commenced, “Dearly beloved. We are gathered here today to witness the joining, before God, of his children in holy matrimony...” After a while the reverend paused to ask, “If there is anyone here who objects to the union between this woman and this man, let them speak now or forever hold their peace.”

The wedding couple gazed at each other lovingly while the reverend counted off requisite seconds. When no one in the overflowing, celebrity-studded audience objected, the reverend continued.

The remainder of the ceremony was uneventful. When it ended and the bride and groom completed their wedding kiss, the reverend asked, “Would everyone please stand as the bride and groom depart!”

Accompanied by music, the newly wedded couple slowly strolled out, followed by maid of honor, the best man, the groomsmen, and bridesmaids.

Those privileged with an invitation headed to the ritzy Beverly Wilshire Hotel, to a massive wedding reception was to be held. As the wedding had been, the gala was a star-studded event heavily covered by the media. Guests ran the gamut from actors and directors to studio heads. After all it wasn’t every day one of their own got married.

Jamilla, sat with Tony at the wedding party’s table next to the dance floor. Still having difficulty grasping the remarkable chain of events, which befell her, starting eighteen months ago, she watched the wedding couple as they danced the initial dance to a slow romantic song. She took Tony’s hand. “I love you.”

The return love in his eyes was unmistakable. “And I love you.”

Keeping her eyes on the dancing newlyweds, Jamilla leaned over and whispered, “This is the fourth happiest day in my life and they’ve all happened since I met you.”

Tony’s eyebrows arched. “The first three being?”

“The night of the première when we made love until four and you proposed. A month later when you, Letta, Sal and I, ran off to Vegas to get married. And ten months later when Nicolas Antonio Castanza was born.

Tony chuckled. “Yeah, it’s been a whirlwind year and a half.” Tony hitched his chin toward the newlywed couple. “They look very happy.”

“It took them long enough. I’m twenty-nine.”

“How did they get together?”

“It was Letta’s doing.”

When the song was over, the bride and groom came back to the table, and the bride reclaimed her seat next to Jamilla. “We were wondering where little Nicolas is today?”

Before Jamilla could answer, the her father, Robert added, “Yeah, where is that little bundle of joy? Glenda thinks he looks just like me.”

I agreed, “He does look like you, but he also looks like Tony.”

“Must be them Italian genes. Where is he?”

“Nicolas is spending the weekend with his other grandma and grandpa.”

“I was hoping to hold my grandson one more time before we go on our worldwide honeymoon for two months? I never forgot your mother, you know. I should have married her thirty years ago.”

Tony grinned and lifted up his champagne glass. “Well you’re making up for it now. A toast.”

Everyone at the table picked up their champagne glasses. “To ‘Love.’ When it comes along ya better grab it by the ass and squeeze it for all that it’s worth, because it won’t hang around forever.”

The table laughed, then clinked their glasses together. “To ‘Love.’”

Robert turned to his son-in-law. “I’ve been meaning to ask you. How’s that new screenplay coming? I want to produce it, you know?”

“Yeah that’s what Glenda said. It’s coming along fine, now that Jamilla is helping me.”

Simultaneously with furrowed brows everyone at the table asked, “Jamilla?”

“Yeah, she’s been co-writing with me. Once I helped her and gave her some tips, she became a great little writer. We make a great team, just like...”

“That’s wonderful,” said Jamilla’s mother, breaking in at Tony’s near *faux pas*.

The wedding coordinator came up and whispered in Glenda’s her ear. She rose and grasped Robert’s forearm. “It’s time to cut the cake. Who wants a piece?”

Everyone at the table either raised a hand or said me, except Jamilla. “Not me. I just went through hell to lose thirty pounds.”

“I noticed. You really do look wonderful,” Glenda praised, “How did you manage it?”

After the baby, I was even more overweight so Letta and I finally went to a weight reduction spa near here.”

“Where is Letta?”

Tony spoke up. “I saw her sitting at a table with Sal near the bar.”

Glenda lifted her hand and placed her forefinger to her lips. “You don’t think...”

I shook my head. “It’s possible, love is certainly in the air, but I doubt it. I think they just became good friends, like he and I.”

Glenda shrugged. “Well, it was a thought.” She glanced at Robert who had risen. “Are you ready?”

He nodded. “Lead the way Mrs. La Guerno.”

“We’ll be back. Duty calls.”

As they walked off, I rose, “I need to say hi to Letta. Will you be all right?”

“Sure. Say hi for me.”

“I’ll do that.” I kissed Tony goodbye and headed in the direction he’d indicated.

I eased up behind Letta with stealth and placed my hands over her eyes. In a deep voice I challenged her, “Guess who?”

To my disappointment and surprise, she said, “Jamilla, so good to feel you. Won’t you have a seat?”

I frowned and pulled my hands away. There’s no fooling the woman. She’s uncanny. I leaned down and kissed Sal. “Hi, Sal.”

There weren’t any empty chairs and I needed to speak to her. “Letta, I have some things to discuss, could you visit the ladies room with me?”

“Sure sweetie.”

I wanted a quiet, private place to discuss something with Letta, but the ladies room was in heavy use, so we visited the hotel coffee shop.

After the waitress deposited a cup of coffee in front of each of us, Letta said, "I like Sal, but we're just friends, just like you and he are."

My jaw dropped and my eyes rounded, I was astonished. "How did you..."

"I grew pretty randy, when you and Tony were going at it hot and heavy, and thought seriously about letting Sal...ah, comfort me, but I sensed he wanted more than a fuck buddy. Does that answer your question?"

"But I didn't ask a question."

"I know. Now, I believe you also want to ask me about the paperwork that was Federal Expressed to you."

"I was beyond astonished. I was flabbergasted. "How did..."

"It was an obvious question."

"I'll say. The paperwork said I would be getting a large sum of money."

"Yes, that's your half."

"Half?"

"Yes, I'm getting, or rather the abused women's charity I'm setting up will get the other half. I tried to call and explain it to you, but you were wrapped up in your mother's wedding."

"Well, explain it to me now."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything."

"Okay, in some places I have to fill in the blanks but here it is. Shortly after Jeanette jettisoned Max two years ago, he took up with a woman in San Diego. Her elderly husband had just died and among the things he left her were the land leases in North Dakota. Somehow Max ended up with them. Having no idea of their possible value, he decided to run a con with them, setting up a sham company. You were victim number three and would have been his biggest score, but Jeanette blew that for him with her call to you.

"Lucky me. Go on."

“I went over the leases with a fine tooth comb and did some checking. The leases were all valid and the man who died had been in contact with an energy conglomeration about selling the leases, but Max didn’t know that.”

“So this all has to do with Max’s leases?”

Letta nodded. “He thought the leases were worthless.”

“How did you get the leases from Max?”

“He was going back to Jeanette and would be given an allowance. He didn’t need them any more, so he signed them over to me for the return of his clothes.”

Cognition set in. “That’s why you wanted those clothes.”

Letta smiled. “He signed the leases over to me for the boxes of his clothes and effects and I signed half over to you. What’s ironic is Max was looking for a jackpot and had one in his grasp. Instead we’re going to get it.”

I scrunched my nose and pursed my lips. “May I ask just how big this jackpot is?”

“Don’t know yet. I’m still negotiating. Their last offer was twenty-four million.”

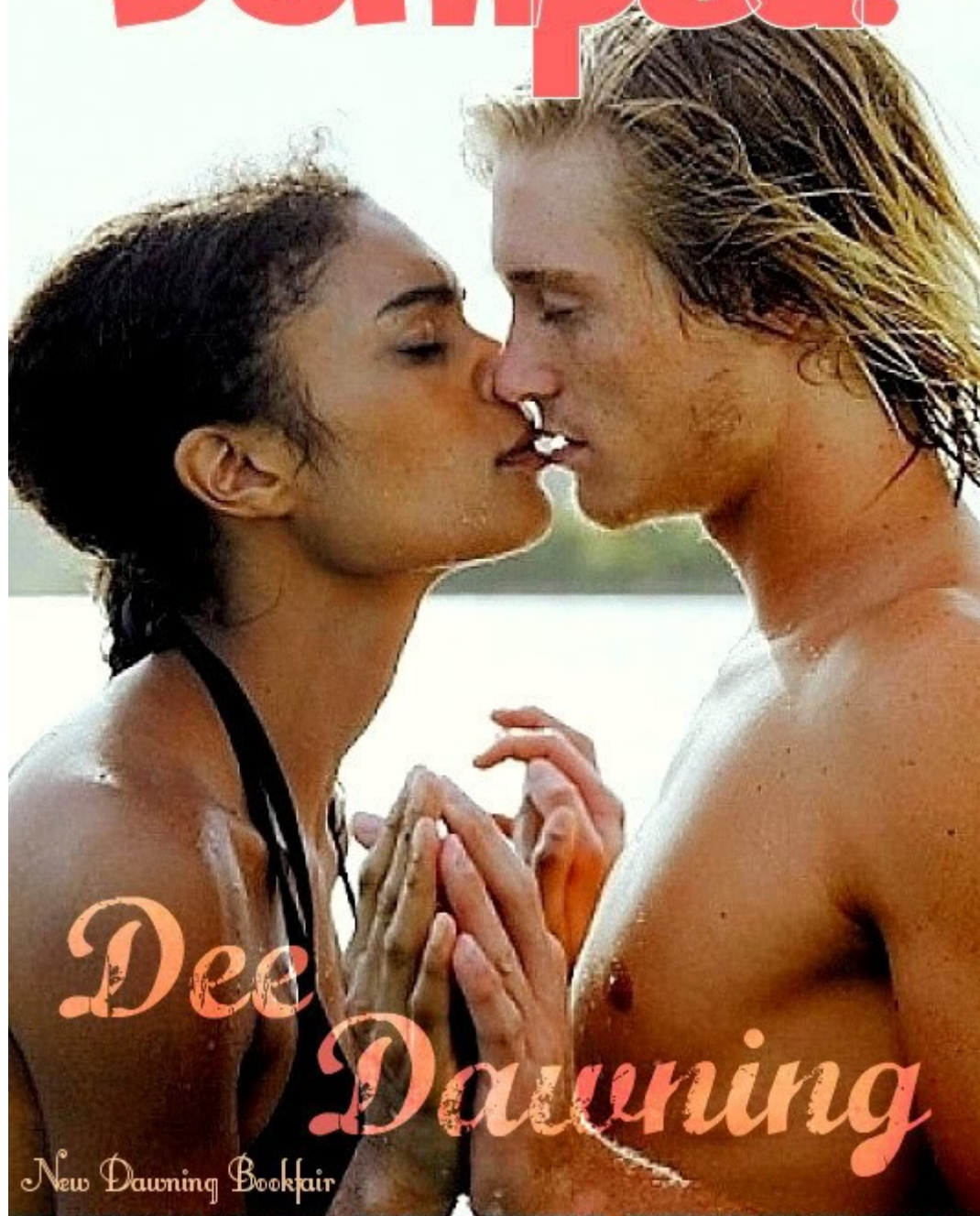
*“Twenty-four million!”*

“Ah-huh. Be prepared to be rich.”

**The End**

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# Dumped!



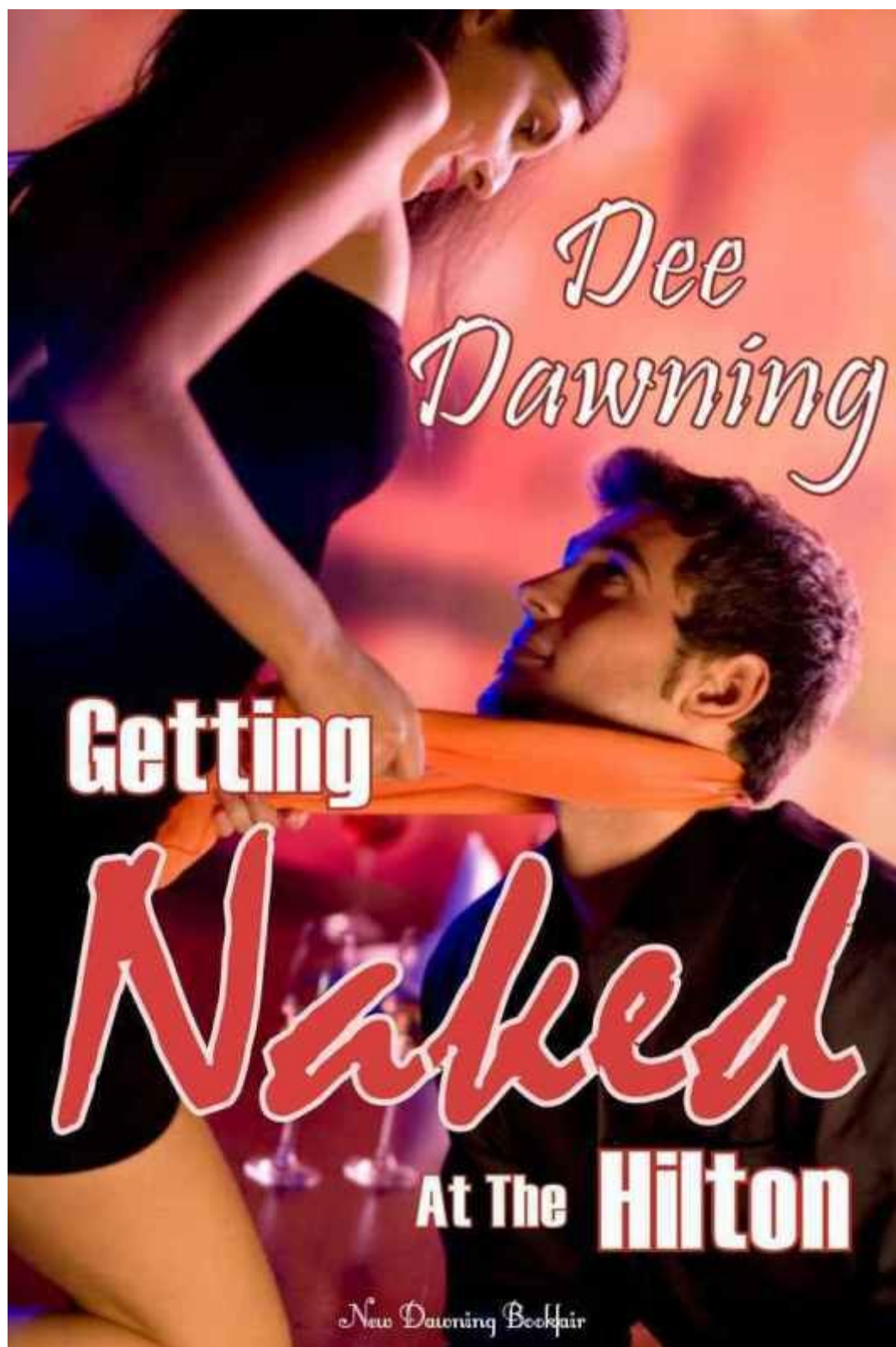
*Dee  
Dawning*

New Dawning Bookfair

A NEW DAWNING BOOKFAIR IS NOW ONLINE

Lila Patterson receives the shock of her life when, after being stood up for lunch by her husband, she returns home and finds her things being moved into a moving van.

Seeing her husband standing on the lawn directing the movers, she storms up to her husband, only to receive an even bigger shock and deep hurt when their lawyer, her long time friend from college, hands her a divorce petition.



Dee  
Dawning

Getting

Naked

At The Hilton

New Dawning Bookfair

Rachel, can't help but notice the luscious man sitting next to her at the bar in Pokey's Las Vegas restaurant and lounge. Rachel, a singer and performer at the club, studies the man. His name is Scott. He seems preoccupied about something, but when he begins mumbling indelicacies about Reverend Robertson and someone named Carol, Rachel's innocent question seems to set inevitable romantic forces in motion.

They go dancing and as the evening progresses, so does their attraction. It's evident they desire each other, intimately, but Rachel has issues. It's not obvious, but Rachel has a mixed race background and after just ending a disastrous relationship with Lester, her agent, she is not about to get close to anyone without laying her cards on the table. When Scott casually remarks that like her, he too, is only interested in getting to know her and if she happened to be sitting naked next to him, he wouldn't lay a hand on her. She takes him up on it.

This leads to our couple spending an informative though, sexless night, fully naked in her Hilton hotel suite, a test of his resolve and character. In reality, Scott has no idea of the sexual adventuress that lies beneath Rachel's demur, delightfully perky persona and after a wet hot passionate interlude in the shower, the following morning, all hell breaks loose and they wind up making love everywhere. Even in the depths of Hoover Dam.

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