



Tycoon

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Category: Romance, Billionaire Romance

Description: Amara is desperate for a date to her ex-boyfriend's wedding. She takes a chance on a BBF Andrew Del Rossi, a man even more influential than her ex. What starts as a ruse quickly escalates into a sizzling love affair that will leave you breathless. Amara's world is forever changed by the charismatic tycoon.

They say Book Boyfriends are our consolation for men in real life. What if we told you that meeting your fantasy hunk is just a click away?...

Total Pages (Source): 24

CHAPTER ONE

Amara

The restaurant's delicious smells assaulted my nostrils, but I wasn't hungry. I loved to eat, and nothing usually limited my appetite unless I was sick. But this anger coursing through me had me not appreciating the cozy setting of my favorite restaurant on this Saturday afternoon.

"He's a fucking bastard!" Stacy spat out her brown eyes narrowed with indignation then she sipped her iced water, her frustration reflecting in my own brown orbs.

"I agree," I started to say and stopped when the waiter approached our table, interrupting our conversation with a polite smile and a menu held outstretched in his hand. We exchanged perfunctory greetings as we grasped the menus.

"Do you need time to order?"

"No, I know what I would like." I decided not to allow Darriun to ruin a perfectly good meal with my best friend.

"I do too," Stacy replied, and we gave the waiter our orders.

"Your orders will be out shortly," the waiter replied before walking away.

"Darriun is an insensitive jerk, to say the least!" Stacy grunted out, her voice carrying a mixture of disbelief and anger that matches the storm brewing within me.

I traced the rim of my water glass with my finger, the condensation cold against my skin. The invitation sits on the table between us like an uninvited guest, mocking me with its white envelope and delicate script.

“I just can’t wrap my head around it,” I confessed, my voice barely above a whisper, as if speaking any louder might shatter the slight calm I’ve managed to maintain.

Stacy reached across the table, her hand finding mine in a gesture to comfort me. “You deserve so much better, Amara. Darriun doesn’t know what he’s missing.”

Her words are somewhat encouraging to my wounded pride, but they offer little relief to the ache in my chest. Darriun, my once-devoted boyfriend of three years, now feels like a stranger—an intruder in the pits of my soul.

“I thought I knew him,” I murmured, my gaze drifting to the window where the afternoon sunlight danced across the clear blue sky. “But maybe I never did.”

Stacy squeezed my hand gently, her expression softening with understanding. “Sometimes people change, or maybe we just didn’t see them clearly from the start.”

Her words caused me to pause, maybe she’s right. When Darriun and I first started dating our minds and bodies were in tune with one another. Then as the first year passed, we got into a somewhat boring routine. Maybe we started taking one another for granted. I was busy with work working for Smith & Watson’s Real Estate & Graphic Design Firm. Darriun was an Engineer working for the top corporation in developing new products to enhance technology.

Memories of our early days together flood my mind, reminding me of a time when Darriun and I were inseparable, and the excitement of new love was exhilarating. Those initial months were a whirlwind of passion and fun, each moment leading us to a bonding relationship. The very first time we met flooded my memory as if it was

only yesterday.

The steam from my cup of coffee curled into the air like a delicate wisp of smoke, carrying with it the rich aroma of roasted beans and cinnamon. The movie on the television before me had passed in a blur. I nestled deeper into the plush sofa, my fingers tracing the ceramic edge of my cup, as the memories of how I first met Darriun assaulted me.

It was happenstance that I first saw Darriun. He was a striking contrast against the backdrop of the bustling café, his presence commanding and confident. With a stride that matched the confidence in his eyes, he strolled towards me sitting at the table alone.

“Is this seat taken?” Darriun’s voice, smooth as buttery caramel, cut through the murmurs of customers.

I glanced up, meeting a pair of deep-set hazel eyes that seemed to hold flecks of gold in their depths.

“No, it's free,” I replied, my voice steadier than I felt. Our fingers brushed as he took the seat opposite me, sending a jolt of electricity through me, as unexpected as it was exhilarating.

“Thanks. This place is packed,” Darriun said, setting down his coffee and flashing a smile that could only be described as disarmingly charming. “I'm Darriun, by the way.”

“Amara.” I returned his smile, finding it impossible not to mirror the ease that seemed to exude from him.

“Amara,” he repeated, rolling my name on his tongue as if savoring the sound of it.

“Beautiful name for a beautiful lady.”

“Flattery will get you everywhere, huh?” I teased, the corners of my mouth twitching upward.

“Only if it's true,” he quipped back, the twinkle in his eye suggesting a playful mischief.

It didn't take long before we fell into a rhythm of banter as natural as breathing. We volleyed words back and forth, each exchange more animated than the last. It turned out we shared a love for old-school jazz—a genre that often played second fiddle to the modern beats.

“Coltrane or Davis?” I challenged, leaning forward, my elbows resting on the table.

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“Ah, that's tough. It's like choosing between the air you breathe and the water you drink,” Darriun pondered, stroking his chin theatrically. “But I have to said, Coltrane's 'A Love Supreme' has gotten me through some long nights.”

“Correct answer,” I replied with a wink. Laughter danced in his eyes, and as we talked, the world around us seemed to slow its frantic pace. The chatter and laughter of the other customers became a distant murmur, the clinking cups and in that crowded coffee shop my destiny was set. Or so I thought.

The second year we were together I threw myself into my work at, finding excitement in the lives of finding other couples their dream home. The demands of my career provided a convenient distraction from the growing distance between Darriun and me.

Meanwhile, Darriun poured himself into his role as an engineer, constantly cancelling dinner dates and our intimate times together. His passion for his work and the time we made for dating or spending quality time together became less important. I understood his busy schedule because I was busy as well. Both of our minds became consumed with business and making money and the building of our future.

The distance between us only seemed to widen with each passing day. Our once lively conversations became strained and awkward, weighed down by the unspoken tensions that lingered between us. I know I can't blame the distance in our relationship solely on my ex, but he hurt me. The bottom line is he done me dirty. I would have never considered doing that to him.

How could the man I thought I loved for three years suddenly break up with me nine

months ago and then suddenly announces his wedding by sending me an invitation in the mail.

“The waiter walked up placing our meals before us. We thanked her and dug into our plates of steaming pasta topped with marinara sauce.

Fits of doubt and anger plagued my thoughts since Darriun walked out of my life without a backward glance. Was I blinded by love, or was he simply skilled at hiding his true self beneath layers of false promises and half-truths?

Stacy leaned in closer, her voice lowered to a conspiratorial whisper. “Do you think he was messing around with this woman while you were together?”

Her question caught me off guard, a fleeting pang of sadness mingled with the persistent bitterness in my heart. “I don’t know,” I admitted, my tone tinged with resignation. “And honestly, I’m not sure I care anymore.”

Stacy nodded in understanding, her gaze sympathetic as she reached for her glass, taking a sip of her water before continuing. “Well, whatever he’s done, it’s his loss. You’re better off without him.”

Her words ring true, I’ve been trying to convince myself of for months. Yet, despite my best efforts to move on, Darriun’s dumping me left open wounds I’m still attempting to heal. Nine months is too soon for him to be marrying someone else unless he had this woman in his life the entire time we were dating.

“Earth to Amara,” Stacy snapped her fingers in front of my face to gain my attention.

“I’m sorry! What did you say,” my head jerked up.

“I said your phone just buzzed. I know how you get messages from your clients even

on your days off.”

“Thanks,” I said digging into my handbag to scoop up my cellphone.

My heart skipped a beat at the sight of Darriun’s name flashing on the screen.

“What’s wrong?” Stacy asked as I looked up at her with a frown marring my brows. She watched me with a mixture of concern and apprehension as I nibbled on my bottom lip.

“I have a message from Darriun.”

“What the hell does he want? He already hurt you enough by sending you a damn wedding invitation.

“I don’t know what he wants.” I replied taking a steady breath, I swiped to unlock the screen, my pulse accelerating as I read the words across the screen.

“We need to talk. Can we meetup?”

My heart slammed into my chest as I read the message, the words began to blur across the screen.

I met Stacy’s gaze, my own reflecting the storm brewing within me as I whisper, “He wants to meet with me.”

“I can’t believe that bastard has the nerve to invite you to his wedding let alone asking you to meetup with him.”

“Well believe it,” I replied. I laughed but it’s not a laugh of joy. I’m more embarrassed than hurt.

“Are you going to see him?”

“No, I can’t face him right now. I don’t know how I will act seeing he’s all happy after he dumped me and moved on with his life.”

“Hmm.” Stacy’s lips tightened and she seemed deep in thought. “I think you should meetup with him. Tell him you will come to the wedding with your boyfriend. Don’t let him know you aren’t over him.”

“Stacy, I don’t have a boyfriend, and I’m not quite over him yet.”

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“Duh! But Darriun doesn’t have to know that. Look at this article,” Stacy said retrieving her phone off the table. She unlocks her screen and taps it a couple of times before she hands it over to me.

I glanced at the advertisement, its bold letters proclaiming “The Book Boyfriend Dating Agency” in eye-catching fashion. “Download the app and find your match today!”

The idea of seeking a fake boyfriend through a dating app feels both daunting and oddly appealing.

“Damn Stacy! Are all these men for real? I feel like I’ve stepped into Hunkalicious heaven!

“This is the real deal. My cousin Shanda used it and now she’s getting married in the fall,”

My eyes widened; you mean to tell me she found Malcom on this app. Why am I just now hearing about it?”

“I didn’t want to tell her business, but this is for a great cause. I want you to stick it to Darriun and this is a great way to do it. Download this app and pick you out the hunkiest man available. Make that bastard regret ever letting you go.”

Could this really work? I could accept the invitation to my ex’s wedding and keep my pride by bringing a date at the same time?

For a moment, I entertained the notion of not being petty and get back at Darriun but as quickly as the thought arises, I pushed it aside, reminding myself that my pride is worth salvaging. I handed Stacy's phone back and picked up my own. I quickly typed out a message letting Darriun know when and where we can meet. Then I clicked on the apple store to download The Book Boyfriend Dating app.

"That's my friend," Stacy gave me a satisfied look before we began eating again. Already my heart felt lighter. The thought that a swipe of a screen or the click of a button could give me this much hope lessens my anger and fills me with optimism.

CHAPTER TWO

Amara

Once I got home from Stacy's and my lunch date anger coursed through me one again as I took the wedding invitation out of my purse. I tossed it on the center of my living room table. I glanced down at it once again and read, "Please join us to celebrate the union of Darriun Banks and Tina Harris," it read. The date staring at me blurred my eyes. I swiped my hand across my eyes. I will not cry over that man even though I still can't believe my ex had the audacity to do this to me. Now I'm back to questioning myself about should I go, or shouldn't I? All these questions rushed through my head. I'm sure of one fact and that is if I did attend, I wasn't about to show up alone. No, I needed someone who would absolutely turn heads, someone who would make Darriun second-guess his life choices.

I flopped down onto my leather sofa after I poured me a glass of wine, the cushion hugging me like an old friend, and pulled out my phone. It was time to dive into the BBF app—a treasure trove of potential "book boyfriends" who could step right off the page and into real life. The app was exclusivity personified; a digital Rolodex of high-profile bachelors, each more swoon-worthy than the last. CEOs, philanthropists, doctors—they were all at my fingertips, ready to play the part of charming

companion or dashing date.

As I scrolled through BBF, the soft glow from my phone illuminated my face with an array of possibilities. Each profile was a promise of romance, a story waiting to be told. There was Marcus, the jaw-droppingly gorgeous surgeon who volunteered at animal shelters in his spare time. Then came Ethan, the witty tech mogul who enjoyed art galleries and spoke three languages.

But it wasn't just about making Darriun's jaw drop—it was about finding someone who could spark that elusive connection, even if it was just for one dazzling evening. And as I swiped through the app, I couldn't help but wonder if among these curated profiles, there might be someone looking for the same thing I was. Someone genuine and didn't play games.

“Amara Hughes, what are you getting yourself into?” I murmured to myself with a hopeful smile curling at my full lips. But deep down, I knew. I was setting the stage for a night that would be unforgettable and not just for Darriun.

I perched on the edge of my sofa, sipping a glass of wine. My gaze swept over my townhouse, taking in the grey walls trimmed with white. abstract art adorned the walls, the dark burgundy drapes adorning my windows that framed the Georgia skyline. This was my sanctuary, proof of years of hard work and persistence.

I took a deep breath, letting the sweet liquid courage coat my throat as I tapped the screen, immersing myself once again in the sea of potential plus-ones.

“Don't give up,” I murmured in a low tone. There has to be someone that snatches my attention. Let's find you a prince for the night, shall we?” I am half-amused by my own audacity. However, beneath the playful tone, there is a sense of fear and a desire for something authentic despite the charade of profiles parading before me.

I keep scrolling and see there is an opera singer who had scaled the Swiss Alps. A diplomat with eyes that told stories of international intrigue. There was Alex, with his windswept hair and a bio that promised adventure; his photo atop Kilimanjaro spoke of heights I longed to climb, but not alone. Then came Michael, whose scholarly gaze peered. Yet, despite their impressive resumes and airbrushed photos, I sought more than just a handsome face to parade at the wedding. I longed for laughter that would vibrate within my soul, conversations that would remain in my thoughts long after the night had passed.

My finger hovered over the screen, pausing with each new profile. I imagined the tales they could tell, the secrets they harbored behind well-rehearsed smiles. Who among them could transform an evening from a simple ruse into something more beyond my expectations?

“Someone real,” I murmured, the words barely audible above the sounds of the outside noise. Someone who could look beyond the gloss and glamour of my world and see the woman longing to be seen for who she was, not what she had achieved.

I asserted that Amara Hughes deserves nothing more than the conviction in my voice as I continue my search. The wine stimulated my mood, urging me to discover that elusive spark and the promise of a genuine connection.

I might be foolish, but I dared to hope for a fairy tale, even if it lasted only until midnight. And with each swipe on BBF, the profiles blurred into one another, a variety of maybes and what-ifs, until...

Andrew Del Rossi.

His name rolled off my tongue, a whisper of possibility. The profile picture captured him mid-laughing, eyes crinkling at the corners, an air of ease among the trappings of success. His bio read like a challenge; the words of a man who relished life's finer

things yet wasn't defined by them. He was the owner of a thriving tech giant, a tycoon, a philanthropist, a lover of jazz... How easily he could sweep me off my feet in a dance of intellect and wit.

I hesitated, my finger lingering over his image. Andrew Del Rossi was the kind of man who didn't just inhabit a room—he owned it, charmed it, left an indelible mark upon it. Could I step into his world without losing myself? The risk was tantalizing, a gamble against the safe bets I'd placed before. A fluttering in my chest—a mix of fear and thrill—signaled the weight of this choice.

I needed to stop procrastinating. This isn't about forever. It's just one night, one wedding. Yet, even as the rational part of my brain counseled caution, something deeper urged me to give this a try and not allow fear to control me. Even though I've never done anything like this before, there is a first time for everything.

“Take the leap,” I whispered, as much a command as it was a plea.

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My thumb pressed down, initiating contact. The screen blinked in acknowledgment—a small act in the grand scheme, but for me, it was a declaration. I was ready to dance with chance, put my fear on the backburner for a while. And maybe, just maybe, Andrew Del Rossi would be the partner I didn't know I was searching for.

The message composed itself in my mind, words constructing like silk threads through my thoughts. I stared at Andrew Del Rossi's profile picture—a candid shot, a smile caught in the curve of his sexy mouth. His eyes, a piercing shade of gray, seem to stare directly into my soul, holding me captive with their intensity.

Tall and commanding at 6'4", and tanned skin, Andrew possesses a presence that is undeniable. His muscular build speaks of strength and power, hinting at a life lived with purpose and determination. And as the owner of numerous businesses around the world, he exudes an air of confidence and success that is impossible to ignore.

But it's not just his looks or his accomplishments that draw me in. There's something about him, something magnetic and irresistible that tugs at my heartstrings. It's as if fate itself has led me to this moment, this connection with a man I've never met but already feel inexplicably drawn to.

“Would you be interested,” I began typing, my fingers surprisingly steady, “in attending a wedding with me? It's not just any wedding, but one where I need to make an impression.” My heart raced; stirring its energies and beckoning fate to take notice.

“Of course, this would be purely platonic,” I added hastily, trying to sound casual. “A

business arrangement, with a touch of theatrics. Let's discuss the terms over dinner?"

I read the message once, twice, three times—each time my heart raced faster inside my chest. But there was no room for hesitation now. I had stepped into the river, and the current was pulling me forward. With a breath that felt like the first after a deep dive, I hit send.

The wait was agonizing yet held a feeling of allure. Each second stretched, filled with the weight of potential, until finally—his reply arrived, a notification that cut through the silence of my townhouse with the promise of something new.

"Amara," the message read, and seeing my name in his text sent a thrill through me. "Your proposal has piqued my interest. The idea of being your plus-one is rather intriguing. Dinner sounds like the perfect setting to negotiate our little act. Shall we say tomorrow evening?"

His response was confident, decisive—the mark of a man accustomed to seizing opportunities. A smile spread across my face, warm and genuine. Andrew Del Rossi was willing to step into this charade with me, to play the part that destiny had penciled in on a whim.

"Tomorrow evening it is," I replied, the words glowing on the screen before they whisked away into the digital atmosphere.

Even though I detested meeting Darriun on Monday morning. I looked forward to meeting Andrew in the evening. I would meet him, learn the sound of his voice, the texture of his presence. Together, we would create a reality that could only convince everyone, perhaps even ourselves, of a romantic relationship that was born from the necessity to save face due to my ex.

Andrew

A message, nestled in the digital folds of the BBF app, flickered on the screen of my phone, an ember of possibility in the dim light of my office. The profile displayed her name as Amara Hughes, and her words had been dancing at the back of my mind since they arrived.

I swiveled in my chair, a subtle creak breaking the silence that enveloped the room and picked up the phone. With a swift motion, I unlocked the device, the glow of the screen casting a soft luminescence on the leather-bound books lining the shelves around me. The app icon beckoned with the promise of something new, something uncharted. I tapped it, almost hesitantly, as though the act itself were a threshold to be crossed.

As Amara's profile loaded, the warmth of her smile seemed to radiate through the pixels. It was captivating, the sort of smile that hinted at mischievous and her full glossed lips beckoned for me to taste them. Her brown eyes held a sadness lurking beneath. I wondered who had dared to hurt this brown goddess. I scrolled, absorbing the details of her life. She was accomplished—a career that spoke of ambition and dedication—and yet there was a softness to her, an openness that was as inviting as the daylight that graced cloudless Summer's Day.

“Successful, beautiful, intriguing,” I murmured to the quiet of my office, allowing myself the smallest of smiles. There was more to Amara than just her awards and accolades; her interests painted a portrait of depth and diversity—jazz music that swayed with soul, culinary arts that promised a dance of flavors upon the tongue, and literature that spanned from the classical to the contemporary.

An intense desire and lust unfurled within me, delicate yet alluring to my senses. This beautiful woman intrigued me, and I needed to know more. I wanted to know more.

Her smile lingered in my mind's eye, a beacon guiding me toward the unknown. And in the stillness of my sanctuary, surrounded by the trappings of my achievements, I found myself yearning for the warmth of that smile to be not just an image on a screen, but a reality within arm's reach.

“Amara,” I said again, testing the name on my lips, a silent vow filled me to get to know this woman. To find out what made her tick.

My fingers hovered over the keyboard, the cool weight of decision anchoring my thoughts. It was one thing to admire Amara's profile, and another entirely to step into the dance of interaction. But curiosity got the better of me and I answered the call of this beautiful siren.

“Amara,” I began, “your message struck me. How about we explore this intriguing proposition over dinner? There's a quiet place I know, perfect for good food and even better conversation.”

My heart accelerated as I crafted each word, considering the intricate pattern of possibilities this arrangement could possess. A faux romance—a masquerade to benefit one another in our time of need.

The professional benefits were clear; it would be a strategic alliance, a bolstering of images in the scrutinizing eyes of high society that orbited my life. A stop would be put to the false news of me being a ruthless player. Some men might like that title, but I didn't believe in playing with women hearts. I made it clear from the start that I didn't want anything serious, just a sexual alliance to gratify one another's needs. More and more lately my acquaintances seemed to want more and decided they were that special woman to change my mind. I never met a woman that made me want more— marriage, babies, the whole nine yards. But I turned thirty-six this year, maybe it was time for me to settle down. Maybe with Amara by my side, I could seamlessly blend into any gala or fundraiser, her grace and poise the ideal

complement to my own cultivated lifestyle.

But as the thought of her presence lingered in my mind, tendrils of something more personal took root. Was it her smile that seemed to promise laughter and easiness, or the way her achievements spoke of a woman who matched ambition with passion? The prospect of discovering secrets hidden within her interests enthralled me, stirring embers of my thoughts to full flame.

My fingers hovered over the keyboard, and I sent the message. Would Amara find the idea of meeting as compelling as the cadence of my own heartbeat in this moment? The silence of my office wrapped around me, a cocoon of expectancy waiting to be shed.

A grin broke across my mouth when she invited me to a dinner meeting.

The mundane expectations that had long circled my life like vultures seemed to scatter at the thought of meeting Amara. Here was a chance laid bare before me—a chance to break from the pattern woven by convenience and expectation, to taste the thrill of unpredictability.

“Extraordinary,” I whispered to myself, savoring the weight of the word on my tongue. It felt like a key turning in a lock, opening doors to rooms within my heart that had gathered dust from disuse. This dinner with Amara could be more than just an exchange of pleasantries and negotiation; it might be the very thing I didn't know I was searching for.

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“Leave the arrangements to me and I will message you the details. Wear something nice,” I typed out and hit send.

With newfound determination, I reached for my phone again, this time to orchestrate an evening that was worthy of a beautiful woman like Amara. My fingers danced over the screen, dialing the number of the newest culinary gem in ATL—a place where the ambiance dripped with elegance and the flavors promised to ignite the senses.

“Good evening, L'Étoile Dorée,” a voice as smooth as aged whiskey greeted me.

“Good evening. I'd like to make a reservation for two for tomorrow tonight at seven,” I said, my words steadily.

“Of course, sir. May I have your name?”

“Andrew Del Rossi,” I replied, feeling a flicker of pride at the recognition that might accompany my surname. But tomorrow tonight isn't about prestige; it was about providing a good impression for our first meeting.

“Mr. Del Rossi, we have a table with a view of the skyline, quite private for a special occasion.”

“Perfect,” I confirmed, already picturing the city's lights reflecting in Amara's eyes, giving them an extra twinkle that I was eager to witness up close.

“Consider it done, sir. We look forward to welcoming you and your guest on

tomorrow evening at seven pm.”

“Thank you,” I said, ending the call. A smile played at the corners of my mouth as I imagined the night ahead. The restaurant's reputation for discretion and romance was well-earned, and I intended for every detail—the soft glow of candlelight, the bouquet of fine wine, the tasty gourmet delicacies—to complement the intrigue Amara had sparked in me.

I leaned back in my chair, allowing myself to bask in the warmth. The room around me, once a stronghold of routine and business, now felt like the starting point of an adventure, one that beckoned with the promise of connection and the sweet allure of the unknown.

Tomorrow night, the city wouldn't just be a backdrop; it would be a start to new possibilities.

CHAPTER THREE

Amara

On Monday morning before work, with a shaky hand I opened the door to a small café where Darriun and I used to have breakfast before work. The familiar scent of freshly brewed coffee washed over me, mingling with the memories of happier days spent lost in each other's company. But today, there's no warmth in the atmosphere—only a simmering anger that threatened to boil over.

Darriun stood as he spotted me entering the doorway, his tall stature cutting a striking figure against the soft light filtering through the windows. He was dressed in a navy suit with a blue and white striped tie, he looked every bit of the charm and sophistication that first captured my heart. His dark skin is flawless, and he flashed me a smile showing off his bright white teeth

The faithful admiration I once held for him evaporated in an instant, replaced by a seething resentment that bubbled beneath the surface. I crossed the room with purposeful strides, my gaze locked on him as I approached the table where he waited.

“Darriun,” I greeted him tersely, my voice laced with a bitterness I couldn't quite conceal.

“Amara,” he responded, his tone carefully neutral as he gestured for me to take a seat across from him. “It's good to see you.”

I resisted the urge tell him to go to hell and take his fake pleasantries, with him. My jaw clenched tight against the torrent of emotions threatening to spill forth. Instead, I settled into the chair opposite him, my posture rigid with tension as I braced myself for the confrontation that I knew was inevitable.

Darriun cleared his throat, his gaze flickering away from mine as he struggled to find the right words. “I know this is... unexpected,” he began again, his voice hesitant. “But I felt we needed to talk.”

The audacity of his statement ignites a spark of fury within me, and I felt my control slipping as months of pent-up frustration bubbled to the surface. “Talk?” I repeated incredulously, my voice raised with each syllable. “After everything you put me through, you have the nerve to sit here and act like nothing's wrong?”

Darriun recoiled slightly at the venom in my words, his expression faltering for the briefest of moments before he schooled his features into a mask of indifference. “Amara, I understand that you're upset,” he said placatingly, his tone grating on my already frayed nerves. “But I think it's time we put the past behind us.”

“The past?” I sneer, my laughter bitter and sharp. “You mean the past nine months that you've spent avoiding me like the plague? Or the past three years that you threw

away without so much as a goodbye?"

Darriun's jaw tightens at my accusations, his facade slipping ever so slightly as the weight of my words hangs heavy in the air between us. "Amara, I never meant to hurt you," he insisted, his voice tinged with a hint of desperation. "But things just weren't working between us anymore. You know that."

Rage surges through me and brimmed over before I can stop myself, the words come tumbling out in a torrent of pent-up emotion. "You're blaming this on me?" I seethed, my voice trembling with anger. "After everything I gave to this relationship, you have the gall to sit there and tell me it's my fault?"

Darriun's expression softens, a flicker of remorse crossed his features as he reached out to place a hand over mine. "Amara, please," he implored, his voice tinged with regret. "I don't want us to be enemies. I just want us to be civil, for old times' sake. That's why I invited you to my wedding."

"Oh, so your future wife caused you to break my heart. How long have you known Tina?"

"All of my life it seems. We were high school and college sweethearts. She moved away to pursue a modeling career. She married and then I met you. Tina was and is the love of my life. When she divorced a year ago and told me she was moving back to Atlanta, I knew I had to follow my heart. I'm sorry I hurt you and should have told you all of this from the jump, but I cared for you too, I not only cared for you, but we became friends."

"Friends don't do friends dirty, Darriun. And you're right, you should have told me you were hung up on another woman when we met. It would have helped me to decide whether I wanted to invest three years of my life in a relationship that wasn't going anywhere. I'm thirty-one and I always told you I wanted marriage and children.

My clock is ticking Darriun, and I'm so angry at you."

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“I’m sorry you feel this way. It would mean the world to me if you came to the wedding. I want bygones to be bygones.”

I gulped in a deep breath. I wanted to stand and slap the taste out of Darriun’s smug mouth. Hell, I wanted to pick up the chair I’m sitting in and crash it against his head. But instead, I forced out a smile and said, “I will let bygones be bygones. I’m glad you ended our relationship because I wouldn’t have found my current boyfriend, who I’m so in love with. I didn’t know the meaning of love until him. I guess I have you to thank for that. He’s going to be my date for your wedding.”

Darriun’s brows rise in surprise. “I thought you said I broke your heart. How did you move on so fast if you’re still pining over me? Do I know this man? When did you meet him?”

My heart slammed into my chest. Damn, I didn’t mean to say all that.

“I’m not sure if you’re aware of him or not, but Andrew Del Rossi is his name. He has helped me to get over you, and I’m not pining over you. You have some nerve! No you don’t know him, and we started dating six months ago. I’m deliriously happy and he is everything I can ask for in a man and more.”

Something like fear entered Darriun’s gaze. I gave my head a shake, I’m sure I was imagining things.

“What does he do for work?” Darriun is giving me a look that said he doesn’t believe me.

“You don’t need to know all of that, you will meet him at your wedding. Anyway, I’m glad we had this talk, but I must get to work. Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials.”

“You’re still one of the most beautiful and sweetest women I’ve ever met. I don’t want to see you used or hurt Amara.

“You did that all by yourself, Darriun,” I spat out.

His head bowed and he had the audacity to look repentant. His head raised and his stare met my own. “Can I have a hug?” he asked standing as I stood to my feet.

“No, my boyfriend doesn’t want me hugging other men. He’s very jealous in that respect,” I lied.

“Damn, Amara, it’s like that, huh?”

“Yes, Darriun, it’s like that,” I replied and walked away like Loretta Divine did from Gregory Hines in the old movie *Waiting To Exhale*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Amara

The Meeting

I just pulled up into the parking lot a little early. I got out the keys clutched in my fingers, an attendant promptly appeared and took them from me. “Thank you,” I said and took in a nervous breath of warm fresh air. The evening sky was filled with stars, but I was too nervous to take in its beauty. Since the first time I messaged Andrew on the BBF app I haven’t been able to get him out of my head.

The moment I stepped through the large archway of L'Étoile Dorée, my heart swelled with an orchestra of fluttering notes, each beat pulsating with a mix of hope and nerves. Warmth greeted me like a soft embrace, wrapping around my shoulders as I paused to drink in the scene that unfolded before me. Amber light cascaded from ornate fixtures, casting a glow over intimate tables where laughter and conversation bloomed like night flowers.

With every step I took across the elegant expanse of polished marble, my heels clicked a steady rhythm, echoing the quick tempo of my racing pulse. The murmur of well-dressed patrons blended with the subtle strains of a hidden piano, its melody winding through the air, as rich and smooth as the velvety drapes that framed tall windows. The scent of truffle and saffron teased my senses, promising a feast not only for the body but the soul.

“Mr. Andrew Del Rossi has a reservation for two,” I said to the host.

“Yes, ma'am, follow me,” A host replied and guided me towards the seating area.

“Thank you,” I murmured, allowing him to lead me to a secluded booth. As I settled into the plush seat, I folded my hands atop the crisp linen tablecloth, their slight tremble betraying the turmoil of excitement within.

Then, like the final piece of a puzzle clicking into place, he arrived.

Andrew strode into the restaurant with an ease that made the room seem to pivot around him. His presence was magnetic, drawing gazes as seamlessly as the moon coaxed the tide. When his eyes found mine, they lit up with a recognition that sent a warm ripple skittering across my skin. His smile, radiant and unguarded, held a promise that tonight was more than mere pretense—it was a prelude to something inexplicably real.

“Amara,” he greeted, his voice a sexy grumble surrounded by the clinking glasses and soft laughter. I was too nervous to stand on my feet.

“Andrew,” I replied, feeling my lips curve into an answering smile, one that seemed to bloom from a place deep within—a place I didn't realize craved such connection until this very moment.

He approached with a confident stride, yet there was a gentleness in his steps that belied his towering frame. As he took the seat opposite me, his charm washed over the space between us, a soothing tide that eased the tightness in my chest. The warmth in his eyes promised safety, a harbor in the tempest of my apprehension.

“Wow, this place is even more beautiful than I imagined,” I said, gesturing towards the opulent décor that surrounded us.

“Only the best for our first... meeting,” Andrew replied, the pause in his words filled with an unspoken acknowledgment of the unique nature of our gathering.

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“Indeed,” I agreed, the corners of my mouth tilting upwards. Our gazes locked, a silent understanding.

The murmur of the restaurant faded into a distant hum as Andrew, and I began to get to know one another. My anxiety left me with each second of his soothing voice, and with each passing remark and sip of wine, the space between us seemed to shrink.

“Have you always been a fan of Merlot?” I ventured, swirling the deep red liquid in my glass, watching it cling to the sides.

“Only recently,” Andrew confessed, his eyes lighting up with shared interest. “I used to be all about the whites, but there's something about the complexity of a good red that resonates with me now.”

“Complexity can be intriguing,” I mused, finding a metaphor in his preference that mirrored my own evolving tastes in life. Our conversation flowed easily from there, touching on favorite books, the music that moved us, and snippets of childhood memories that made us both laugh and sigh. In these shared experiences, we wove a tapestry of commonality, the threads pulling tighter, drawing us closer together.

As the evening wore on, the initial shyness that had hovered over me dissipated like mist under the warmth of genuine connection. We lean in, ready to address the elephant in the room.

“So, this arrangement of ours,” I started, tucking a stray curl behind my ear. “We need a story that's convincing. Something... tangible.”

“Right. Something that makes sense for a pair who just met but clicks instantly,” Andrew agreed, tapping a finger against his chin thoughtfully. “How about we met at a mutual friend's art exhibit? You, being a lover of expressive paintings, and me, drawn to the sculptures.”

“Perfect,” I nodded, excitement bubbling at how effortlessly the lie took shape. “And we bonded over a particularly abstract piece that everyone else seemed to misunderstand.”

“Except us,” he added, his smile reaching his eyes. “Because we both saw the hidden message within it—a message about taking chances.”

It led to us spending the rest of the evening discussing coffee, and before we knew it, hours had passed. My voice grew softer, the imagined scenario painting a vivid picture in the dimly lit corner of my mind.

“Exactly,” Andrew said, his gaze holding mine with an intensity that felt all too real. “And in those early morning hours, we discovered how much we had in both our pasts and dreams for the future.”

“Sounds like a couple destined to meet,” I whispered, the romantic notion sending a shiver down my spine despite its fictitious lies.

“Destiny does have a certain appeal,” Andrew murmured, leaning back as if admiring the narrative we'd spun. “Now, we just have to make sure we remember the details.”

“Or live them,” I suggested, the words slipping out before I could call them back. A blush crept into my cheeks at the boldness of the thought.

“Or live them,” he echoed softly, his expression unreadable for a moment before it softened into something that looked a lot like hope.

In that instant, surrounded by the soft clinking of glasses and the low thrum of conversation, the line between pretense and possibility blurred. The story we were crafting for others seemed almost plausible for ourselves, and the thrill of that thought was as intoxicating as any fine wine.

Laughter danced around us, light and free, as Andrew recounted a particularly hilarious mishap involving a mistaken identity at a corporate retreat. His storytelling brought the scene to life with such vivid detail that I could almost see the mix-up unfold before my eyes. The way he mimicked the bewildered expressions of his colleagues sent another bout of giggles tumbling from my lips.

“Okay, okay, your turn,” he urged after the laughter had subsided into contented smiles. “There must be some gem from your world of Real Estate and Graphic Design that can top that.”

I tilted my head, pretending to ponder for a moment. “Well, there was this one time when I sent a draft to a client—”

“Wait, let me guess,” he interrupted, feigning seriousness. “You accidentally included a doodle of a grumpy cat in the corner?”

My eyes widened in mock surprise. “How did you know?” I played along, and we both erupted into laughter again, the sound mingling with the clinking of silverware and soft jazz playing in the background of the restaurant.

The waiter approached; a polite smile etched onto his face as he stood ready with his notepad. “May I take your order?” he asked, casting an approving glance at our joviality.

“Ah, yes,” Andrew said, turning his attention to the menu for a brief second before making his selection. “I’ll have the seared scallops, please.”

“Excellent choice, sir.” The waiter nodded, turning to me with an expectant gaze.

“I’ll go with the roasted duck breast,” I said, my mouth watering at the thought of the rich flavors awaiting us.

As the waiter retreated with our orders, I couldn’t help but savor the sumptuous atmosphere. The warm glow from the overhead chandeliers cast a golden hue over the meticulously set tables, each adorned with delicate china and shimmering crystal glasses. The scent of gourmet dishes being prepared in the kitchen wafted toward us, promising a culinary delight.

“Feels like we’re characters in a novel, doesn’t it?” Andrew mused, his voice soft and tinged with wonder. He reached for his wine glass, swirling the deep red liquid before taking a sip.

“Certainly,” I agreed, mesmerized by the way the light caught the swirl of his drink. “A story filled with unexpected twists and turns.”

“Perhaps even a touch of romance,” he added, a twinkle in his eye that made my heart skip a beat.

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“Only if the protagonists are willing to explore it,” I countered, the playful challenge hanging between us, tantalizing and bold.

“Exploration is key to any great adventure,” he replied, lifting his glass in a silent toast to the evening ahead.

Our meal arrived, and the first bite was a revelation. The duck was tender, its flavor deepened by a cherry glaze that was both sweet and tart. Andrew's scallops were perfectly seared, golden on the outside and succulent within. Each mouthful was evidence to the chef's skill, the intricate dance of tastes and textures elevating the experience.

“Delicious, isn't it?” Andrew remarked, watching me savor my dish with an appreciative grin.

“Beyond words,” I replied, feeling the warmth of the restaurant, the food, and his company wrap around me like a cozy blanket.

We ate and talked, the meal progressing at a leisurely pace that allowed our connection to deepen with every shared laugh and lingering look. The barriers between us seemed to melt away with the candle wax that slowly dripped down the elegant centerpiece.

“Who knew that a fake relationship could taste so real,” I joked.

“Life has a funny way of combining fiction with reality,” Andrew said, his gaze holding mine with an intensity that reflected something genuine unfolding between

us.”

The night stretched out before us, full of promise and potential. I found myself hoping that this, whatever it was, would turn out to be far more than just pretend.

Andrew's voice conveyed a tender timbre, revealing stories of his childhood experiences. I became lost and I never wanted to be found if it meant never hearing the alluring sound of Andrew's voice again.

Andrew

She's even more stunning in person, a vision of beauty that took my breath away. Her skin is the color of rich coffee, with a hint of cream, and it glowed under the soft lights of the restaurant. Her eyes were searching and then they landed on mine. She smiled and I swore my heart halts in my chest, and then she stands and my gaze roams free. I knew from her profile that she stood at around 5'4", Amara exuded a quiet confidence, her curves accentuated in all the right places.

But it's not just her physical beauty that captivated me. There's a warmth in her dark brown eyes, a kindness that drew me in like a moth to a flame. And when she smiled, it was as if the whole world lit up around her, filling the room with an infectious energy that's impossible to resist.

I approached her table, and my heart raced with excitement. I couldn't help but admire the way her lips curved into a welcoming smile, the urge to kiss her on the spot almost overwhelming. But I reigned in my hormones, reminding myself to take things slow, to savor this moment for what it is.

“Andrew,” she greeted me, her voice soft and melodic. “It's so nice to finally meet

you in person.”

“The pleasure is all mine,” I replied, unable to tear my gaze away from her. “You look even more beautiful than your profile picture.”

A blush crept into her cheeks at my compliment, and I feel a surge of pride knowing that I've managed to make her smile. We fell into easy conversation, the time slipping by unnoticed.

Before long, talk turned to the reason for our meeting – Darriun's wedding. And as we discussed our plans for the event, I couldn't help but feel a sense of excitement building between us. There's a chemistry here, an undeniable attraction that crackled in the air between us.

But as the evening ended, I found myself reluctant to say goodbye. I wanted to spend more time with Amara, to explore this connection that seems to have sprung up between us so effortlessly.

And as I walked her to her car, the temptation to lean in and kiss her became almost unbearable.

“Thank you for tonight,” I said softly, my gaze lingering on her face. “I had a wonderful time getting to know you.”

“Ditto,” she replied, her voice just above a whisper. “I can't wait to see you again.”

Before I can stop myself, I lean in closer, my lips brushing against her jaw in a soft, lingering kiss. It's a fleeting touch, and I take a deep inhale. Damn she smells good. Like vanilla bean ice cream.

Amara's breath caught in her throat, her eyes darkening with emotion as she met my

gaze. And in that moment, I knew that I really wanted to get to know this woman on a personal level and not just for one date. When I knew what I wanted I didn't bullshit around about obtaining it.

With a final smile, I stepped back, giving her space. I watched her slip into the driver's seat, a sense of loss filled me. The engine hummed to life, and she rolled down the window to look at me one more time.

"Good night, Andrew," she said softly.

"Good night, Amara," I replied, my voice filled with future promise. I watched her pull away, the taillights casting a soft glow on the pavement, I stood there for a moment. Before I climbed back into my car, the scent of her lingering in the air around me. I drove home, my mind was filled with visions of what could be, and as I pulled into my driveway, I couldn't help but feel grateful for the unexpected turn of events that led me to Amara.

CHAPTER FIVE

Amara

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The next morning Stacy and I met for a run at Creekland park.

“Hey girl, “Stacy called out to me when she pulls up to me just as I’m getting out of my car. “Sorry I’m late. Traffic was held up by road work on the 285.”

“I’m glad I didn’t come in from that way,” I said.

“How did the meeting go yesterday?”

“Let’s stretch first and I tell you about it when we eat breakfast after our run.” A smile blossomed across my face.

Later the aroma of freshly ground coffee beans mingled with the sweet scent of pastries, wrapping around me like a warm embrace as I settled into the cushioned chair at our favorite corner table. Stacy’s laughter, light and infectious, cut through the soft hum of the coffee shop.

“Ooh, he must be fine from the look in your eyes.

“Oh my god, Stacy. His name is Andrew Del Rossi, and he looks like he stepped straight from a magazine. He’s more than handsome, I would say he’s beautiful and masculine at the same time.

“Damn girl, maybe I should consider getting me one of those,” she teased. “Go on, tell me some more.”

I laughed. He seems to be nice and not arrogant like Darriun. I get the feeling he’s

dependable, super intelligent, he's successful. He is BBF material.

"Ooh, Darriun is going to be jealous."

"I don't care what Darriun is to be honest."

"Good girl," Stacy said, her eyes gleaming with excitement as she clasped her hands together on the tabletop, "the wedding is just around the corner."

"His smile, Stacy, it's contagious," I began, my hands animatedly painting the picture in the air between us. "We laughed so much, that tears came to my eyes, and when he looked at me, really looked at me, it felt like he saw every inch of my soul. I have never felt like that with anyone—we just clicked."

"Like two pieces of a puzzle," Stacy murmured, nodding knowingly.

"Exactly!" I exclaimed, feeling the corners of my mouth lift in a smile. "When Andrew held my hand, it wasn't just a touch; it was a silent conversation, an electric current that said, one day soon I will have you screaming in pleasure beneath me."

"Ooh wee! You're getting me hot and flustered over here," Stacy teased.

"Me too just thinking about it," I conceded, a blush creeping up my cheeks. "But right now, I need this façade to work for the next phase—making Darriun see that it isn't hard to move on without him. To show him that I've found someone who... well, someone incredible."

"Are you ready for that?" Stacy's voice softened, concern lacing her words.

"Ready as I'll ever be," I replied, my heart pounding with a mix of determination and trepidation. "Andrew and I, we're going to take this fake relationship up a notch.

Public displays of affection, cozy dinners, the works. Darriun will see how happy I am, how good Andrew is for me—even if it's all just an act.”

“An act with a dash of real attraction, by the sounds of it,” Stacy pointed out slyly.

“We will see,” I chuckled, though deep down, the thought sent a thrill through me. “For now, it's all about the plan. It's about showing Darriun—and maybe even myself—that I can have a fairytale too, even if it comes with a little make-believe.”

Stacy said, “Then let's make sure your fairytale has the perfect script,” her voice is genuine.

Stacy's words of encouragement made me believe in a happy outcome even if it was make-believe.

CHAPTER SIX

Amara

On Thursday of the next week, I received a call from Andrew. He wanted to take me on a weekend trip so we could continue to get to know one another. I agreed because I didn't want us to feel like strangers when I finally introduced him to Darriun. Darriun would spot a fake relationship a mile away if we failed to convince him otherwise.

Now Saturday has finally come. The rest of the week had passed in a blur since Andrew had invited me on an outing. Today I just found out we were headed to Gulf Port. The salty breeze fluttered through the open window of Andrew's SUV; I felt an instant sense of release. Beside me, Andrew's eyes sparkled with the same excitement that bubbled in my chest as we entered the quaint beach town that promised a weekend of fun.

“Look at that,” I said, pointing to the stretch of sun-bleached shops lining the beachfront, each one displaying its own charm. A sexy grin formed around his mouth, his hand found mine, and intertwined with my own.

We pulled up to the Gulfport Inn just as the afternoon light turned golden, casting a warm glow on the whitewashed Inn. The Inn had a wraparound porch adorned with rocking chairs and hanging baskets overflowing with vibrant flowers.

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“Wow, Andrew,” I murmured, echoing my thoughts as we stepped into the lobby, “this place is perfect.”

He nodded, “I had hoped you would like it.”

It wasn't just the inn's charm but the promise of being here with Andrew. He checked us in, we were led up a narrow staircase heightening the sense of intimate seclusion. Our cozy rooms with connecting doors awaited us, a haven of tranquility with its soft pastel walls and crisp white linens. But it was the view that held us captive—the ocean, stretching endlessly, its waves whispering secrets to the shore.

“Can you believe this?” I whispered, drawn to the window of the first room where the horizon danced under the waning sun. Andrew wrapped his arms around me from behind, his chin resting atop my head.

It felt natural as his arms enfolded me. With anyone else I knew I wouldn't have allowed them this much intimacy this quickly. The thing is I wanted more. I wanted to feel myself beneath him, skin to skin, face to face.

This was so unlike me. It took three months before I had sex with Darriun.

“It's like it's just for us,” Andrew replied drawing me out of my reveries, his voice a gentle rumble against my ear.

We stood there, two silhouettes framed by the vastness of sea and sky, the rhythmic cadence of the waves syncing with the beat of our hearts. In that suspended moment, time seemed to honor our need to pause, to savor the beginning of something

beautiful. The room, with its subtle scent of salt and the soft hum of the wind, became more than just a place to stay—it set the stage for our romantic escape, a private world where the depths of our connection could unfurl like the sails of the ships dotting the horizon.

“Amara, I hope I’m not moving too fast. If so, tell me and I will slow down and take things at your pace.”

“You’re moving just right,” I said, turning within Andrew's embrace to face him, “I want to explore not just this town but every layer of 'us'.”

His eyes, a mirror of my own desire, met mine with a fiery intensity. “Nothing would make me happier, Amara,” his voice was a thick grumble, sealing our pact with a kiss that tasted of promise and the sweet tang of the sea.

Andrew

Later that evening stepping out into the embrace of the setting sun, the beach greeted us like an old friend, its golden sands a familiar touch beneath our feet. The air held a whisper of the ocean's song, a rhythm that pulsed with promises and whispered secrets only lovers could understand.

“Let's wander,” I suggested. “The sea has stories to share, and I want to hear them all with you.”

My hand found Amara's, our fingers intermingling, we walked at a pace measured by heartbeats and the gentle retreat of the tide, each step an exploration of the shared path unfurling before us.

“Look at how the water catches the light,” Amara murmured, pointing toward the horizon where the sun kissed the sea. It was like a picture of gold and fiery orange.

“It's mesmerizing,” I agreed, my gaze reflecting the wonder of the moment. “But not as captivating as you.”

My words, tender and true, danced around us like the breeze, lifting strands of her curly hair in playful swirls. In that instant, I felt all I wanted to do was cherish her and show her how I could be trusted to be the keeper of her heart.

We continued our stroll, letting the sound of the surf serenade us until a rustic sign caught our eye: 'Captain Joe's Seafood Shack.' The aroma of grilling fish and the tang of salt in the air lured us closer.

“Shall we?” I asked, gesturing toward the shack with a roguish grin.

“Absolutely,” she replied, “I have walked up an appetite.”

“Now that's what I like to see. A woman who isn't trying to starve herself.”

Amara laughed, “one thing to know about me is I love to eat.”

“Great,” I replied, and we entered Captain Joe's. The menu was a simple affair scrawled on a chalkboard, boasting the freshest catch and local flavors. We settled on a spread of grilled snapper and shrimp, each bite a celebration of sea-kissed goodness that had us savoring slowly, deliberately.

“This is delicious,” Amara said between mouthfuls, reveling in the zest of lemon and the subtle spice of herbs.

“Indeed, it is,” I replied, my eyes alight with appreciation for the meal and for the

woman sitting across from me. “It's kind of like us, isn't it? Different paths that led us to this perfect spot.”

She nodded, as we stared deeply in one another eye. Here, with the lap of waves as our soundtrack and the caress of sea breezes against our skin, we feasted not just on food but on the burgeoning richness of our connection.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Amara

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It was late when we finally made it back to our room. It was an unspoken mutual decision that we decided to stay in the same room.

Andrew is like a dangerous animal cornering its prey as he makes his way to the foot of the bed.

“Tell me you want this as much as I do,” Andrew’s voice growls against my thigh. I shuddered and breathed in trying to keep from crying out as pleasure courses through my nether regions.

“I want this. I want you,” I barely found my voice to say.

The air in the room feels charged, thick with desire. His words, laden with primal hunger, sent a shiver down my spine, igniting a fire within me that threatens to consume every rational thought. I bite my lip, struggling to contain the overwhelming surge of sensation that courses through my body, electrifying every nerve ending.

His breath is hot against my skin as he presses closer, his hands tracing patterns of need along the curves of my body. Each touch, deliberate and intoxicating, pushes me further into the depths of desire, unraveling the last shreds of restraint I had clung to.

I find myself lost in the intensity of his gaze, dark and smoldering with unbridled passion. It's as if he can see every hidden desire, every secret longing that I've kept locked away. And with each passing moment, the barriers between us crumble, leaving us both vulnerable to the raw, unyielding hunger that binds us together.

In that moment, there's no room for doubt or hesitation. There's only the undeniable

truth of our mutual longing, a primal force that demands to be sated. And as his lips meet mine in a fervent kiss, I surrender completely to the intoxicating whirlwind of sensation, knowing that what awaits is nothing short of ecstasy. The atmosphere is thick with tension, charged with the unspoken desires that have simmered between us for so long. His words, spoken in a husky whisper against my thigh, send a delicious shiver down my spine. I bite my lip, trying to steady my racing heart as his touch ignites a wildfire of sensation within me.

With every caress, every gentle stroke, he awakens a hunger I never knew existed. It's as if we're dancing on the edge of a precipice, staggering between restraint and recklessness. And in that moment, I realized that I want this as much as he does, perhaps even more.

Andrew's gaze, intense and filled with longing, meets mine, and I see the reflection of my own desire mirrored in his eyes. There's a vulnerability there, a rawness that speaks to the depths of our connection. And as his lips find mine in a tender kiss, I know that this is where I belong, in his arms, consumed by the sweet ecstasy of love.

Tiny bolts of pleasure course through me, Andrew's hot mouth sensually laps at my pussy, I can feel my juices seeping down my thighs.

I feel I can come at any moment now, but I don't want to come too fast. I want to enjoy every leisurely swipe of his hot wet tongue.

"Andrew."

My voice is a low murmur as I bring my hands to my breast and flick a finger across my hard nub.

Andrew trails kisses and his tongue against my thighs before going back to my heated core.

An intense jolt of electric heat runs through my body from his caresses.

Oh my God! I'm going to explode.

"Do you like what I'm doing to you, sweetheart?"

"Yes! Please don't stop."

The stream of light spilling in from the ajar bathroom door illuminates his head between my plush thighs. He slid up my body and I gasped when Andrew pushed inside me to the hilt.

Desire mixed with something else cloaked around us.

"Fuck! Your pussy feels so fucking good wrapped around my dick."

I opened my thighs wider. "More."

Andrew speeds up his movements, but its pure savagery stealing over his expression as he watched me that causes my brown nipples to harden against the cool air in the room.

Andrew's sexy lip's part on a ragged inhale as he zeros in on mine.

The tip of his tongue outlined his bottom lip before his teeth clamped down on his bottom lip.

Lust filled the space between us in equal measure.

A sharp breath leaves me in a whoosh when he runs a hand over my breast and we both give ourselves over to immense pleasure.

Andrew satisfied my body on and off throughout the night and the rising dawn.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Amara

This is our last night on our mini vacation and the evening breeze whispered secrets that only the sea could understand. I walked alongside Andrew on the beach. Our footsteps, side by side, imprinted upon the soft sand like proof to our growing closeness. The hushed sound of each step felt like a heartbeat, pulsing with the same rhythm that fluttered in my chest whenever he was near.

“I never want to forget this place,” I murmured, gazing around us. The beach stretched out, as if it were waiting for a story to unfold upon its backdrop. We strolled toward the water’s edge, where the waves lapped gently against the shore, serenading us with their eternal song. The world beyond faded, leaving just the two of us in an enclave of solitude.

“Perfect,” Andrew agreed, his voice a low hum that resonated with the tranquil sounds of the night. He glanced at me, and even in the dim light, I could see the earnestness in his eyes. It was as if the moon itself had conspired to guide us to this secluded spot, away from the prying eyes of the outside world.

The moon —oh, how amazing it was tonight! Its silvery light casts a shimmering glow on the undulating waves, turning the ocean into an expanse of liquid diamonds. It felt as though we'd stumbled upon a hidden treasure, an intimate theatre set just for us, and nature had dressed the stage in its finest attire.

“Amara, look at the water,” Andrew said, gesturing towards where the celestial luminescence kissed the crests of the waves. I stepped closer to the edge, feeling the cool wetness seep into the hem of my dress as a wave retreated into the depths. There

was something magical about the way the light danced upon the water, a visual symphony of light and shadow, each movement choreographed by the whims of the tide.

“It's beautiful,” I breathed out, unable to tear my gaze away.

I turned to Andrew, his silhouette depicted against the foaming waves, and felt a strong sense of gratitude for this moment, this person who had become so dear to me. Every shared glance and quiet conversation over the past days had led us here, to this place where words were almost unnecessary, where our presence together spoke volumes.

Andrew's hand found mine, his fingers threading through mine with a familiarity that sent a rush of warmth through me. It was a simple gesture, yet it felt sincere, as if our souls were intertwining through this connection. We stood there, hand in hand, listening to the rhythmic lullaby of the ocean, a natural symphony that seemed composed just for us.

“Amara,” Andrew began, his voice barely more than a whisper above the sound of the waves, “these past few days have been... incredible.” He paused, searching for the right words. “I've felt something growing between us, something I can't ignore.”

His confession hung in the air, mingling with the salt and the sea breeze. My heart pounded in response, a mixture of anticipation and fear. I had felt it too—the magnetic pull drawing us closer, the unspoken understanding that had blossomed into something more profound.

“I feel it too,” I admitted softly, my eyes meeting his. In the moonlight, his expression was tender, filled with an emotion that mirrored my own. The vulnerability of this moment, of laying our hearts bare, was both exhilarating and terrifying.

Andrew smiled, a slow, genuine smile that crinkled the corners of his eyes. “I’m glad to hear that,” he said, his thumb brushing over the back of my hand. “I happy you feel the same way.”

For a moment, we stood there in comfortable silence, the only sounds were the gentle rush of the tide and the distant calls of seabirds settling for the night. I took a deep breath, savoring the fresh, salty air that carried the scent of the ocean. It was a scent that would forever remind me of this night, of this turning point in my life.

“What do we do now?” I asked, my voice barely audible over the soothing murmur of the waves. It was a question that carried the weight of our shared feelings, the uncertainty of what lay ahead.

Andrew squeezed my hand, his gaze steady and reassuring. “We take it one day at a time,” he replied. “We see where this goes, without rushing, without any expectations. Just... together.”

His words were uplifting to my doubts, a promise that whatever the future had, we would face it side by side. It was enough, more than enough. I nodded, feeling a sense of peace settle over me.

“Together,” I echoed, the word feeling right, fitting perfectly with the rhythm of the waves and the glow of the moonlight.

We continued our walk along the shoreline, the conversation flowing easily between us. We talked about everything and nothing—our favorite memories from the trip, the quirks of our friends, our dreams and aspirations. It was a night of revelations, each word peeling back another layer, deepening the bond between us.

The beach seemed endless, each step taking us further into a world of our own making. Occasionally, we would pause, drawn by the sight of a particularly bright

star their glow as a mirror to the magic we felt inside.

At one point, we stopped to build a small sandcastle, our laughter ringing out in the stillness of the night. It was a simple, childish joy that reminded me of the importance of finding happiness in the little things, of savoring each moment as it came.

As the hours slipped by, the sky began to change, the deep blue of night giving way to the first hints of dawn. The stars faded one by one, replaced by the soft blush of the coming day. We stood together, watching the horizon as the sun began its slow ascent, painting the sky in hues of pink and gold.

“It’s beautiful,” I whispered, feeling a sense of awe at the sight. It was a new beginning, a fresh start, not just for the day but for us.

Andrew’s arm wrapped around my shoulders, pulling me close. “It is,” he agreed, his voice filled with a quiet reverence. “And it feels like the perfect way to end our trip.”

I leaned into him, resting my head on his shoulder. “Or maybe,” I said, a smile playing on my lips, “it’s the perfect way to start something new.”

He turned to look at me, his eyes filled with a warmth that mirrored the sunrise. “You’re right,” he said softly. “Here’s to new beginnings.”

We stayed there, watching the sun rise higher, its light banishing the last shadows of the night. It was a promise of hope, of endless possibilities. As we finally turned to make our way back to the Inn, our steps felt lighter, our hearts fuller.

The walk back was quiet, each of us lost in our thoughts, yet the silence was comfortable, companionable. I felt a sense of anticipation, of excitement for what lay ahead. The vacation might be ending, but something far more significant was just beginning.

As we reached the Inn, the lobby bustling with early risers and staff starting their day, I couldn't help but glance back at the beach, now bathed in the full light of morning. It looked different in the daylight, yet the magic of the night lingered in my heart.

Andrew caught my look and smiled, his hand still holding mine. "We'll come back," he promised.

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I smiled back, feeling a rush of happiness at his words. “I’d like that,” I said, squeezing his hand.

The serenity of the moment wrapped around me like a warm embrace, filling me with a sense of peace I hadn't known I was searching for. Standing here with Andrew, there was no room for the chaos of life, no space for uncertainty or fear, only the gentle whisper of the sea and the tender glow of the moonlight, weaving a spell that promised hope for what could be.

CHAPTER NINE

Amara

A week later I stared at the endless racks of dresses with a feeling of dread. I never thought I’d be shopping for the perfect outfit to wear to my ex-boyfriend Darriun's wedding.

“How about this one?” Stacy held up a slinky red dress. “Too sexy?”

I shook my head. “I don't want to look like I'm trying to upstage the bride. Let's keep looking.”

We shuffled through dress after dress, I was growing more disheartened by the minute. Attending Darriun’s wedding felt like ripping open an old wound.

Stacy seemed to sense my sadness. “Don't worry, we'll find the perfect dress. And remember, you will be the sexiest woman here on the arm of the sexiest man alive.”

I smiled, “Do you know how grateful I am for your support?”

“I know you are girl, that’s what besties are for.”

My smile grew bigger before I turned back to the dresses. Finally, buried deep in the racks, I saw it. A classy knee-length dress in rich emerald, green, with an elegant bateau neckline and fitted waist. It was perfect.

“That's the one!” Stacy clapped excitedly. “You need to try it on now.”

“Okay,” I said and headed to the nearby dressing room.

I emerged from the dressing room a few minutes later, the green dress hugged my curves like a glove. Stacy let out a low whistle. “Darriun's going to regret the day he let you go when he sees you in that dress!”

“I hope Andrew likes it. Forget Darriun.”

“Right! Now let’s find you the perfect shoes.”

After finding some metallic glittery heels, I paid for the outfit, feeling much better about attending the wedding.

“How about we treat ourselves to a spa day?” Stacy suggested. “Mani-pedis, facials, the works.”

“That sounds amazing.” I smiled. Some pampering would be just what I needed.

We arrived at Essence Spa about twenty minutes later and sat side by side, cucumber slices over our eyes, I said, “I can't believe the wedding is only a few days away. Part of me wishes I could just skip it. But I know I need to be since I accepted the

invitation. I didn't go through this whole book boyfriend date for nothing."

Stacy patted my arm. "It'll be hard, but once it's over, you can move on. And I heard the reception has an open bar and a chocolate fountain!"

I laughed. I knew with Andrew by my side I would get through this wedding in one piece.

The next day was Saturday, and I was glad to have time off from a hectic week at work. Since the housing market had improved a little, more couples were buying first-time homes. Today was beautiful and I luxuriated in the soft glow of the early evening sun that bathed my townhouse in a warm, amber hue as I lounged on the sofa, lost in the pages of a romance novel that promised happiness ever after. My cellphone buzzed against the wooden coffee table. Reluctantly, I reached for it, expecting a message from Stacy since she had to travel out of town on business.

I grimaced when I saw who the message was from.

"Amara, you need to be careful with Andrew. There are things about him you don't know." The text from Darriun, like a chill breeze, extinguished the comforting warmth around me. His words, meant to be a warning, mingled with a shadow of curiosity and anxiety within my chest.

Was this some ploy to unsettle me, to claw his way back into my life?

"You couldn't possibly tell me anything about Andrew that I don't already know," I lied. "Please don't text me again with any nonsense."

I put the phone down and tried to refocus on my book, but Darriun's text kept

intruding on my thoughts. What could he possibly know about Andrew? My mind swirled with questions and doubts, each one more disturbing than the last. I couldn't help but wonder if there was some truth to his words, or if this was just another attempt to manipulate me.

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Andrew and I are just pretending but, he had proven himself to be truthful. He said he wasn't dating anyone, and I believed him. What reason did he have to lie? Andrew's patience and understanding had helped me heal from the difficult circumstances I had with Darriun in the past. I had hoped he was everything Darriun was not: honest, gentle, and supportive. But now, Darriun's words were planting seeds of doubt in my mind.

I decided to call Andrew. Hearing his voice would help calm my nerves and, perhaps, provide some clarity. The phone rang twice before he picked up.

"Hey, beautiful," Andrew's voice was warm and reassuring. "How's your day going?"

"Hey," I replied, trying to keep my tone light. "It's been good. Just relaxing and reading. How about you?"

"Pretty good. I've been working on some tedious new contracts for a project. But enough about work, what's up?"

I hesitated for a moment, unsure of how to bring up the subject. "Actually, I got a message from Darriun today."

There was a pause on the other end of the line. "What did he want?"

"He said there are things about you that I don't know and that I should be careful."

Andrew sighed. "Amara, you know he's just trying to mess with you, right? He's

probably jealous since you told him that you were bringing me to the wedding.”

“I know, but it’s just... unsettling. I hate that he still has this power to affect me.”

“Don’t let him. He’s out of your life for a reason. Don’t let him get into your head. I know we haven’t known each other long but I’m really into you, Amara, and I’m not hiding anything from you.”

His words were comforting because I was falling for Andrew too, but the nagging doubt lingered. “I feel the same, Andrew. I just needed to hear your voice.”

“Anytime, babe. We’re going to get you through this wedding and see where we go from there. Don’t let him upset you.”

We talked for a little while longer before hanging up, but even after our conversation, I couldn’t shake the uneasy feeling. I decided to take a walk to clear my mind. The fresh air and the familiar sights of the neighborhood usually helped when I needed to think.

As I strolled through the park near my townhouse, I replayed my relationship with Darriun in my head. Was Darriun a liar? Of course, he was because he didn’t even let me know that he was still in love with the woman he’s going to marry. Darriun had a way of making me doubt myself and question my decisions. Darriun breaking things off had been one of the most difficult things to accept, but it was also the best decision that worked out the best for me.

Now, with Andrew, I had a chance at real happiness. I couldn’t let Darriun ruin that for me. But what if there was some truth to what he said? I had to find a way to know for sure without letting it consume me.

I reached the end of the park and decided to head back home. On the way, I passed a

small café where Andrew and I had breakfast a few days ago. The thought of our happy moments together gave me some comfort. I needed to focus on the present and not let the past dictate my future.

When I got back to my townhouse, I noticed a small package at my door. It was from Andrew. Inside was a note and a beautiful silver bracelet. The note read, “Just a little something to remind you how much you mean to me. Love, Andrew.”

Oh, my goodness! Did he imply that he loved me, or was that just a sentiment that was generic? I was already shocked by the word love because I was already on my way to falling in love with Andrew.

I smiled, feeling a warmth spread through me. Andrew’s thoughtfulness was just another reason I respected him. I slipped the bracelet onto my wrist, feeling a sense of reassurance.

Later that evening, I received another message from Darriun. This time, it was a photo of Andrew with a woman I didn’t recognize. The caption read, “See? He’s not who you think he is. These were just taken last night.”

My heart raced as I stared at the photo. The woman was leaning in close to Andrew, her hand resting on his arm. I could feel the panic rising, but I knew I had to stay calm. I needed to talk to Andrew about this.

I dialed his number again, my fingers trembling. He answered on the first ring.

“Did my beautiful lady like the bracelet?” His smooth baritone voice sent a tingling down my spine, but I really needed some truthful answers. Pictures don’t lie.

“The bracelet is beautiful Andrew. Thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome beautiful. That’s not the reason you called, is it? You sound upset.”

“You’re right. Darriun sent me a photo of you with some woman together last night. You were standing in front of the same restaurant where we first met. Who is she?”

There was a moment of silence before Andrew replied, “That’s a colleague from work. We had a late meeting and I guess someone took a photo. There’s nothing going on between us, I promise.”

I wanted to believe him, but the photo had shaken me. “Is that why you changed dinner plans with me at the last minute?”

“I couldn’t get out of the meeting, Amara. Trust me, I would rather spend time with you than go over boring contracts. I didn’t think it was important. Amara, you need to trust me. I’m not hiding anything from you.”

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I took a deep breath, trying to steady myself. “I want to trust you, Andrew. It’s just hard after Darriun.”

“I understand. But remember, I’m not Darriun and he’s doing this to get under your skin. Don’t let him succeed. We can build something real, and I’m not going to let him destroy that.”

I nodded, even though he couldn’t see me. “You’re right. I’m sorry for doubting you.”

“It’s okay. We’ll get through this together. The wedding is next weekend, and I’m looking forward to working on us as a couple.”

“Thank you, Andrew. I’m looking forward to it too.”

After we hung up, I felt a little better, but the unease still lingered. I decided to call Stacy. She always knew how to put things into perspective for me.

“Hey, girl! What’s up?” Stacy’s cheerful voice was a welcome sound.

“I’ve had a bit of a rough day,” I admitted, explaining the situation with Darriun and the photo.

“That guy is a piece of work,” Stacy said. “He’s just trying to mess with your head. You and Andrew are solid. Don’t let Darriun get to you.”

“Thanks, Stacy. I needed to hear that.”

“Anytime, Amara. Remember, you deserve to be happy. Don’t let anyone take that away from you.”

We talked for a while longer, and by the time we hung up, I felt more at ease. Stacy was right. I couldn’t let Darriun’s attempts to disrupt my life succeed. I had to trust in what Andrew, and I was building together.

The next morning, I woke up determined to put Darriun’s interference behind me. I made breakfast, played some music, and tried to focus on the positive aspects of my life. Andrew called me later that day, and we made plans to have dinner together.

That evening, as we sat across from each other at the restaurant where we first met, I felt a sense of calm wash over me. Andrew reached across the table and took my hand.

“I’m here for you, Amara. No matter what Darriun tries, he can’t break us.”

I smiled, feeling a renewed sense of confidence. “I know. And I’m not going to let him.”

We enjoyed our meal, laughing and talking about everything but the drama that had unfolded. For the first time in days, I felt truly at peace. I realized that as long as Andrew and I communicated and trusted each other, we could overcome any obstacle.

Andrew

Driving back to my place, the soft strains of jazz filled the SUV, creating a soothing backdrop for our quiet conversation. The gentle rhythm of the music seemed to echo

the calm we had found in each other after dinner. Amara sat beside me, her hand in mine, her touch grounding me in a way that was both new and familiar. The city lights blurred past us as we drove, their glow reflected in her eyes, which shone with a mixture of love and tenderness.

“You know,” Amara said, her voice barely louder than a whisper, “tonight has been perfect.”

I glanced at her, feeling a surge of affection. “I’m glad. You deserve perfect.”

Her smile was radiant, lighting up the dim interior of the car. “So do you, Andrew.”

We continued to talk, our voices low and intimate, sharing hopes and dreams, plans for the future, and small secrets that only deepened our bond. Each word was a promise, to the strength of what we were building together. The drive felt like a dream, a bubble of warmth and security that insulated us from the world outside.

When we finally arrived at my house, I parked the car and took a moment to look at Amara, savoring the way the moonlight played across her features. “Welcome to my home,” I said softly.

She squeezed my hand, her eyes full of warmth and curiosity. “I adore this place.”

“Thank you. I want you to make this your home away from home.”

Amara smiled as she nodded. I meant those words. This house was too big for one person. It was meant to be filled with a wife and babies. That thought didn’t scare me, it sent a warm sensation through my heart.

My mansion was an old, elegant structure, a blend of classic and contemporary design. As we walked up the stone steps, I could see her taking it all in—the

extensive entrance with towering columns, and the expansive front yard bathed in the soft glow of strategically placed lights. I unlocked the door and led her inside, the familiar scent of cedarwood and vanilla welcoming us.

“Let me show you around,” I offered, and she nodded eagerly.

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The interior of the house was just as outstanding as its exterior, with high ceilings and spacious rooms filled with tasteful, modern furniture. We moved through the living room, with its plush sofas and large fireplace, and into the kitchen, where sleek appliances and marble countertops gleamed under soft lighting.

“You have a beautiful home, Andrew,” she said, her voice filled with genuine admiration.

“Thank you,” I replied, leading her down the hallway towards my bedroom. “I’m glad you like it.”

When we reached the bedroom, I opened the door and let her step inside first. The room was my sanctuary, a place of comfort and peace. The king-sized bed was adorned with a soft, grey comforter and an array of pillows. Large windows offered a stunning view of the garden outside, the moon casting a silvery light over everything. The scent of lavender, from a diffuser on the nightstand, filled the air, creating a calming atmosphere.

Amara walked over to the windows, gazing out at the view. “It’s beautiful,” she murmured.

I moved to stand behind her, wrapping my arms around her waist and pulling her close. “Not as beautiful as you,” I whispered into her ear, feeling her shiver slightly at my touch.

She turned into my arms, her eyes meeting mine. “Tonight, has been amazing, Andrew. Thank you.”

“I should be the one thanking you,” I said, my voice husky with emotion. “You make everything better.”

I leaned in and kissed her, softly at first, but with growing intensity. Her lips were warm and inviting, responding to mine with a passion that made my heart race. I deepened the kiss, my hands roaming over her back, feeling the softness of her skin through the fabric of her dress.

She sighed against my lips, her fingers threading through my hair, pulling me closer. The world outside faded away until there was nothing but the two of us, lost in the moment. I could feel her heartbeat against my chest, matching the rhythm of my own.

I gently guided her towards the bed, never breaking the kiss. As we reached it, I paused to look at her, taking in the flush of her cheeks, the sparkle in her eyes. “Are you sure?” I asked, needing to be certain.

She nodded, her gaze steady and filled with trust. “I’ve never been more sure of anything.”

With that, we fell onto the bed together, a tangle of limbs and laughter. I took my time, wanting to savor every moment, every touch. I ran my hands down her sides, feeling the curve of her waist, the smoothness of her skin. She arched into my touch, her breath hitching in her throat.

“Andrew,” she whispered, her voice a mix of need and affection.

“I love you, Amara,” I said, my voice trembling with the depth of my feelings. “So much.”

“I love you too,” she replied, her eyes shining with tears.

I kissed her from head to toe, feeling the softness of her skin beneath my lips, tasting the hint of vanilla and lavender that clung to her. Each kiss was a promise, a pledge of my love and devotion. Her skin was warm and inviting, her scent enveloping me, heightening my senses and drawing me deeper into the moment.

We made love slowly, tenderly, each touch, each kiss, a reaffirmation of our bond. The world outside ceased to exist, and all that mattered was us, together in this moment. The scent of lavender enveloped us, mingling with the warmth of our bodies, creating a cocoon of intimacy and trust.

Afterwards, we lay tangled together under the covers, our bodies still humming with the afterglow. I held her close, feeling the steady rise and fall of her chest, the soft warmth of her breath against my neck. The room was silent except for the faint rustle of the sheets and the distant sound of the wind outside.

“Promise me we'll always have this,” Amara whispered, her voice drowsy.

“I promise,” I replied, pressing a kiss to her forehead. “Always.”

We drifted off to sleep like that, wrapped in each other's arms, the world outside forgotten. In that moment, there was only us, and the love that bound us together. The challenges we faced seemed distant and manageable, overshadowed by the strength of our connection.

As I closed my eyes, I felt a overwhelming sense of peace. With Amara by my side, I knew we could face anything. And as the night enveloped us in its gentle embrace, I held onto that certainty, letting it guide me into a deep and restful sleep.

CHAPTER TEN

Day of The Wedding

Amara

The mirror reflected a woman on a mission, my cocoa skin glowing against the emerald green of my gown. My hands trembled as I traced a line of kohl around my eyes, steadying my breath to still the quiver that threatened my precision. With each stroke of mascara, I felt the weight of what I was about to do settle in my chest.

“Pull yourself together, Amara,” I whispered to my reflection. The determination in my gaze anchored me. Darriun's wedding wouldn't be my downfall; it would be my vindication.

Slipping into my metallic heels, I took one final glance at the mirror. The woman staring back had fire smoldering in her eyes, the kind that could only be stoked by betrayal and the burning need to set things right.

Excitement was in the air as Andrew and I made our way back into the ballroom. The ceremony was about to begin, and guests were beginning to take their seats. The air was filled with the soft murmur of conversations and the faint, sweet scent of roses that adorned the room.

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We found our seats among the other guests, positioned perfectly to have a clear view of the ceremony. The ballroom had been transformed into a romantic haven, with delicate white drapes hanging from the ceiling and twinkling fairy lights casting a magical glow. Rows of white chairs were arranged in neat lines, each adorned with a small bouquet of roses and baby's breath.

The sound of a harp began to play, its gentle melody silencing the crowd as the ceremony commenced. Darriun stood at the altar, his expression a mixture of nerves. He looked handsome in his classic black tuxedo, but there was an undercurrent of tension in his posture that only I seemed to notice.

The bridal party began to make their way down the aisle, starting with the bridesmaids. They wore elegant, floor-length gowns in a soft blush pink, each carrying a small bouquet that matched the ones on the chairs. Their smiles were bright, and they moved with the grace and poise befitting the occasion.

Next came the groomsmen, each one looking dapper in their matching black tuxedos. They walked with an air of confidence, their expressions reflecting the joy of the day. As they took their places beside Darriun, the mood in the room grew palpable.

Finally, the moment everyone had been waiting to arrive. The music swelled, and the doors at the back of the ballroom opened to reveal the bride. A collective gasp of admiration swept through the crowd as she began her walk down the aisle.

The bride, Darriun's fiancée, looked radiant. She wore a stunning white gown that seemed to float around her as she moved. The dress was an exquisite blend of lace and satin, with a fitted bodice that flared out into a full, flowing skirt. Delicate

beadwork adorned the bodice and sleeves, catching the light and shimmering with every step she took. Her veil was long and sheer, trailing behind her and adding an ethereal quality to her appearance.

In her hands, she carried a bouquet of white roses and lilies, their fragrance mingling with the scent of her perfume. Her face was partially obscured by the veil, but I could see the joy and love shining in her eyes as she approached Darriun.

As she reached the altar, her father lifted her veil and kissed her cheek before stepping back to take his seat. The bride and Darriun joined hands, their gazes locked on each other. The officiant began the ceremony, his voice warm and soothing as he spoke of love, commitment, and the future that lay ahead for the couple.

The vows were heartfelt and deeply personal. Darriun's voice wavered slightly as he spoke, but there was a sincerity and emotion in his words that touched everyone in the room.

"I, Darriun, take you, Tina, to be my wife. From this day forward, I promise to cherish you, to honor and respect you, to laugh with you in joy, and to comfort you in sorrow. I will be your partner in all things, your confidant and your biggest supporter. Together, we will build a life filled with love, trust, and happiness."

Tina's eyes glistened with tears as she listened to his vows, her own voice steady and full of love when she spoke.

"I, Tina, take you, Darriun, to be my husband. I promise to stand by your side through all of life's challenges and triumphs, to be your rock and your comfort. I will love you unconditionally, with a love that grows deeper with each passing day. I vow to be your best friend, your confidant, and your partner in all things. Together, we will create a life of joy, adventure, and unwavering love."

As they exchanged rings, a symbol of their eternal commitment to each other, the room was filled with an overwhelming sense of love and happiness. The officiant pronounced them husband and wife, and they sealed their vows with a tender kiss, to the sound of applause and cheers from the guests.

The rest of the evening was a blur of celebration. The reception was held in an adjoining ballroom, equally as impressive and beautifully decorated as the ceremony space. Tables were adorned with elegant centerpieces of roses and candles, casting a warm, inviting glow. The dinner was a gourmet affair, with dishes that delighted the senses and wines that flowed freely.

Andrew and I joined in the festivities, mingling with other guests and enjoying the joyous atmosphere. There were heartfelt toasts from the maid of honor and best man, each sharing stories and well-wishes for the newlyweds. The first dance was a beautiful moment, with Darriun and Tina moving gracefully across the dance floor, lost in each other's eyes.

Despite the earlier tension, I found myself genuinely happy for Darriun and Tina. Their love was evident, and it was clear they were meant to be together. Andrew was by my side throughout the evening, his presence a constant source of comfort and support.

As the night drew to a close, Andrew and I slipped away from the crowd, finding a quiet spot outside to take a breath and reflect on the evening. The stars above were bright, the air cool and refreshing.

“Thank you for being here with me tonight,” I said, leaning into Andrew's embrace.

“There's nowhere else I'd rather be,” he replied, kissing the top of my head. “You handled everything with such grace. I'm proud of you, Amara.”

“I couldn’t have done it without you,” I said, looking up at him. “Your support means everything to me.”

We stood there for a while, simply enjoying each other's company and the tranquility of the night. Eventually, we made our way back to the limousine, ready to head home and leave the events of the day behind us.

The ride back was peaceful, filled with quiet conversation and the soothing sounds of jazz once more. When we arrived at my townhouse, Andrew walked me to the door, his hand warm and reassuring in mine.

“Tonight was a big step,” he said, his eyes filled with affection. “I’m glad we faced it together.”

“Me too,” I replied, feeling a sense of closure and a renewed sense of hope for the future. “Thank you for everything, Andrew.”

“Always,” he said, pulling me into a tender kiss.

Seeing him go, I knew that no matter what obstacles were in our way, we would overcome them as a couple, with love and steadfast support. And that, more than anything, gave me the strength to move forward.

Inside my townhouse, I slipped off my heels and sank onto the sofa, letting out a long, contented sigh. The events of the day played through my mind, but instead of the anxiety I had felt earlier, there was now a sense of peace and resolution.

I got ready for bed, feeling the weight of the day’s emotions finally lifting. As I lay down, I couldn’t help but smile, thinking of Andrew and the love we shared. With him by my side, I knew that I could face anything, and that our future was bright with promise.

I dreamed of the life we would create together a life full of love, happiness, and limitless opportunities, as I fell asleep.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

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Andrew

Weeks Later

The quiet hum of the engine provided a soothing noise for my thoughts as the limousine easily navigated the downtown streets.

I glanced at Amara, sitting beside me, her beauty glowing even under the soft interior lights of the car. She looked stunning in her midnight blue dress, the color accentuating her cocoa skin and bringing out the depth in her eyes. Her presence made me feel both proud and deeply fortunate.

“Are you nervous?” I asked, taking her hand in mine.

She smiled, her fingers squeezing mine gently. “A little. But mostly, I'm excited. This is a big night for you.”

“For us,” I corrected, leaning in to kiss her softly. “I wouldn't want anyone else by my side tonight.”

As we approached the venue, the Marquee hotel where the business dinner was being held, I couldn't help but feel a swell of pride. My company has grown exponentially over the past few years, and tonight was a celebration of that success. It was also an opportunity to introduce Amara to my colleagues and show the world how integral she was to my life.

The limousine pulled up to the entrance, and a doorman opened the door for us. I

stepped out first, then turned to help Amara. Her hand felt delicate in mine, yet there was a strength there that I admired. Together, we walked up the marble steps, the sound of our footsteps echoing in the massive foyer.

Inside, the atmosphere was one of elegance and sophistication. Crystal chandeliers cast a warm glow over the room, illuminating the guests who mingled and chatted, their laughter a soft hum beneath the strains of a live string quartet. Waiters moved gracefully among the guests, offering trays of champagne and hors d'oeuvres.

One of my important business colleagues, Shauntay, was across the room when we entered the building. She was engaged in conversation with a group of investors. When she saw us, her face lit up with a welcoming smile, and she excused herself to approach us.

“Andrew! It's so good to see you,” Shauntay said warmly, extending her hand. “And this must be Amara.”

“Shauntay, it's great to see you too. Yes, this is Amara,” I said, introducing the two women. “Amara, this is Shauntay. She’s been an invaluable part of our expansion.”

“It's a pleasure to meet you, Shauntay,” Amara said, her smile genuine.

“The pleasure is mine,” Shauntay replied. “I've heard so much about you. Andrew speaks very highly of you.”

Shauntay then turned and gestured to a distinguished-looking man standing nearby. “And this is my husband, Mark.”

Mark stepped forward, shaking our hands. “It's wonderful to finally meet you both,” he said, his voice warm and friendly. “Andrew, you've done remarkable things with your company. We're all very impressed.”

“Thank you, Mark,” I said, feeling a surge of pride. “It’s been a team effort, and I’m incredibly fortunate to have such a dedicated group of people working with me.”

As we continued to mingle, I couldn't help but notice how effortlessly Amara fit into the scene. She engaged in conversations with ease, her intelligence and charm shining through. I felt immense pride watching her, knowing she was not just my partner but also my equal.

Dinner was announced, and we moved to our seats. The table was set with fine china and crystal glasses, the centerpiece a stunning arrangement of white roses and lilies. The aroma of the beautifully prepared meal wafted through the room, tantalizing the senses.

I got up to toast as the light consommé, the first course, was presented. When the room fell silent, everyone's gaze came to me.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” I began, raising my glass, “thank you all for being here tonight. This evening is a celebration of our collective success. It's an indication to the hard work, dedication, and innovation that each one of you brings to the table.”

I paused, letting my gaze sweep over the room. “Our company has grown beyond my wildest dreams, and it's because of you—our team, our partners, and our supporters—that we've been able to achieve so much. I’m incredibly grateful to have you all here tonight.”

I turned slightly, my eyes finding Amara’s. “And on a personal note, I want to thank Amara for her unwavering support and love. She’s been my rock, and I’m so proud to have her by my side.”

The room erupted in applause, and I felt a swell of emotion. Raising my glass higher, I concluded, “To continued success, to new horizons, and to the incredible team that

makes it all possible. Cheers!”

“Cheers!” echoed around the room as glasses clinked and conversations resumed.

The rest of the meal was a culinary masterpiece, each course surpassing the last. We savored dishes like seared scallops with a citrus beurre blanc, tender filet mignon with a rich red wine reduction, and a decadent chocolate mousse that melted in the mouth. The wine flowed freely, enhancing the flavors and adding to the festive atmosphere.

After dinner, as the music picked up and guests moved to the dance floor, I took Amara's hand and led her to the center of the room. We danced to a slow, romantic melody, the world around us fading into the background. Holding her close, I whispered, “Thank you for being here tonight. You make everything better.”

She looked up at me, her eyes shining with love. “I’m so proud of you, Andrew. This is just the beginning.”

We continued to dance, lost in each other, until the night began to wind down. Slowly, guests started to depart, and the ballroom gradually emptied. We made our way back to the limousine, the night air cool against our skin.

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The ride home was quiet and intimate, the soft jazz playing in the background a gentle contrast to the evening's earlier excitement. We held hands, basking in the afterglow of the night's success and the warmth of our connection.

When we arrived at my townhouse, I helped Amara out of the car, and we made our way inside. The penthouse was quiet, the city lights casting a soft glow through the floor-to-ceiling windows. I poured us each a glass of wine, and we sat together on the plush sofa, the events of the evening replaying in our minds.

"I couldn't have asked for a better night," I said, looking at Amara. "Having you there made it perfect."

She smiled, leaning in to kiss me softly. "It was wonderful. You were amazing, Andrew."

We finished our wine and made our way to the bedroom, the day's emotions and excitement finally catching up with us. As we lay down together, I pulled her close, her warmth and presence a comforting balm.

"Goodnight, Amara," I whispered, kissing her forehead.

"Goodnight, Andrew," she replied, her voice soft and filled with love.

I was so grateful for her that I couldn't stop feeling it as we drifted off in each other's arms. I was fortunate not just for the success of my business, but for the love and support of an incredible woman who stood by my side through it all. With Amara, I knew that we could face anything the future held, together.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Amara

That once dreaded day of Darriun's wedding was months ago. It seems to be a faint memory; overtaken by the happiness and peacefulness I've experienced with Andrew since. We've spent every possible moment together, our bond deepening with each passing day. It's as if the universe conspired to bring us together, aligning our paths perfectly.

Today, we're at our favorite spot in the park, nestled beneath the shade of an ancient oak tree. The air is crisp with the first hints of autumn, leaves tinged with gold and crimson rustling gently in the breeze. Andrew sat beside me, his presence as constant and reassuring as the sun's warmth.

"Amara," he began, his voice unusually serious, "there's something I need to talk to you about."

I turned to him, sensing the weight of his words. His eyes, usually so full of playful light, are now earnest and intense. "What is it, Andrew?"

He took a deep breath, his fingers tightening around mine. "I've been thinking a lot about us, about everything we've shared these past few months. And I realized... I don't want this to be just pretend anymore."

My heart skipped a beat, the world narrowing to the space between us. "What do you mean?"

He shifted closer, his other hand coming up to cradle my cheek. "I mean, I want us to be real, Amara. I don't want to just be your pretend boyfriend. I want to be your real boyfriend, your partner in every sense of the word."

I searched his eyes, finding only sincerity and a love so deep it takes my breath away.
“Andrew, I—”

He cuts me off gently, his thumb brushing against my lips. “Let me finish. I want to build a future with you. I want to take care of you, body, mind, and soul. You’ve become such an integral part of my life, and I can’t imagine a future without you in it.”

His words wrapped around my heart like a warm embrace, each syllable a promise of the life we could have together. “I feel the same way, Andrew,” I whispered, my voice trembling with emotion. “You’ve brought so much joy and love into my life. I can’t imagine being without you either.”

A slow, radiant smile spreads across his face, and he pulls me into his arms, holding me close. “So, what do you say? Will you be my real girlfriend, Amara?”

“Yes,” I breathe against his chest, feeling his heartbeat steady and strong beneath my cheek. “Yes, I will.”

We sit there for a while, wrapped in each other’s arms, the world around us silent and still. Eventually, he pulls back just enough to look into my eyes. “I want to make you a promise, Amara. I promise to take care of you, to cherish you, and to support you in everything you do. I want to be there for you, through every joy and every challenge.”

I felt tears prickling at the corners of my eyes, overwhelmed by the depth of his commitment. “And I promise to do the same for you, Andrew. To stand by your side, to support you, and to love you with all my heart.”

He leaned in, capturing my lips in a kiss that’s both tender and full of promise. It’s a kiss that seals our vows, binding us together in a way that feels both new and eternal.

As we parted, he rests his forehead against mine, his breath mingling with mine. “I love you, Amara.”

“I love you too, Andrew.”

The rest of the afternoon passed in a blissful haze. We talked about our hopes and dreams, about the life we wanted to build together. The park, with its vibrant autumn colors and soft rustling leaves, became the backdrop to our shared vision of the future.

As the sun began to set, casting a golden glow over the landscape, we made our way back to his townhouse. The city lights flicker to life, creating a tapestry of warmth and brilliance that mirrors the emotions in my heart.

In his townhouse, we settled onto the sofa, a comfortable silence enveloping us. Andrew pours us each a glass of wine, the rich, fruity aroma filling the room. “To us,” he says, raising his glass.

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“To us,” I echoed, clinking my glass against his.

We sipped our wine, the flavor smooth and full-bodied, a perfect complement to the evening. As we converse, the conversation flows effortlessly, touching on everything from our favorite memories to our future plans.

“I’ve been thinking about taking some time off work,” Andrew says, his tone thoughtful. “I want to travel, to see the world with you.”

My heart leapt at the idea. “That sounds amazing. Where would we go?”

“Everywhere,” he replied with a smile. “Paris, Tokyo, Santorini... anywhere and everywhere. I want to experience it all with you.”

The excitement in his voice is contagious, and I find myself dreaming of the adventures we could have together. “I’d love that, Andrew. It sounds perfect.”

He takes my hand, his thumb tracing gentle circles on my skin. “You make everything better, Amara. I want to share every moment with you.”

“Me too,” I said, leaning in to kiss him. The kiss deepens, and soon we’re lost in each other, the world outside fading away.

Eventually, we make our way to the bedroom, the city lights casting a soft glow through the windows. We undress slowly, savoring each moment, each touch. His hands on my skin are warm and reassuring, a tangible reminder of his love and commitment.

We come together with a tenderness that speaks of our deep connection, our bodies moving in perfect harmony. It's a dance of love and trust, of promises made and kept.

Afterward, we lie in each other's arms, our breaths mingling in the quiet of the night. "I've never been happier," I whisper, tracing patterns on his chest.

"Neither have I," he replied, his voice a low rumble.

I adore every moment we spend together. Some of the best times are when we talk for hours. Some are when we make love slow and long. Some are like now as we fall asleep wrapped in each other's warmth, the future stretching out before us like a path of golden light. It's a future filled with love and promise, with dreams waiting to be realized. And with Andrew by my side.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Amara

I turned the key in the lock, a soft click echoing through the stillness of the hallway. Pushing the door open, the familiar scent of jasmine from an unlit candle greeted me, but it did nothing to lift the weight from my chest. I missed Andrew. He was on a business trip for the entire week. He called between meetings, but some calls I missed because of my schedule.

The bed's emptiness seemed to mock me in the stillness of my room. I lie down, but restlessness was my only companion as I tossed on the linen sheets that still held traces of Andrew's cologne. The softness of the fabric felt like a cruel reminder of his absence. My thoughts were incessant; every minute we had spent together was recreated in great detail, and every recollection was painfully clear.

A particular memory surfaced, one where we sat entwined on the couch, his fingers

tracing lazy circles on my arm. I closed my eyes, trying to capture the warmth of his touch, the security in his embrace. We'd talked about everything and nothing until the world outside had ceased to exist. It was just Andrew and me, two hearts rhythmically beating in a cocoon of shared dreams and whispered confessions. But even as those moments of pure connection filled me, a sharp pang of regret sliced through the nostalgia.

I loved him so much and feared the vulnerability that came with such an admission. I craved how his presence made the world feel right—now felt like a litany of failures. I hoped I wasn't setting myself up for a world of hurt and betrayal. I knew I needed to leave past hurts in the past and move on with a clean slate. But the mind was a worrisome thing when doubts entered.

Andrew and I were making new memories, and it didn't matter how busy his schedule became he always carved out space for me. Another memory shifted, bringing forth the image of Andrew and I standing under the silver glow of the moon, our shadows merging into one. Andrew had looked into my eyes, a tender curiosity in his gaze, as if he were searching for something he desperately needed to see. "Amara," he'd said, his voice a soft rumble, "you know you can tell me anything, right? Your worries, your sorrows, your accomplishments... I want to hear it all." My response was a nod as happiness from his words overflowed in my heart.

The chemistry between us was undeniable, a magnetic pull that neither of us could deny. Every time our eyes met, sparks flew, igniting a fire that burned with a passion that could light up the darkest corners of the earth. Our moments of intimacy were not merely physical; they were spiritual, emotional. We connected on levels that I'd never experienced with anyone else. How could I have been so cautious, so guarded, when all signs pointed to this being the love I had always yearned for?

Those moments of vulnerability and intimacy we shared—they were the building blocks of something beautiful, a foundation we had both invested in. Now, all I

wanted was wake up with him every morning and lie down with him every night.

The silken sheets tangled around my legs as I shifted restlessly, the moon's glow casting a gentle light across the room that seemed to mock my inability to find solace in slumber. The world outside was hushed, but inside, my mind was a tempest of memories refusing to be stilled.

I closed my eyes, willing myself to breathe deeply—inhale, exhale—to calm the racing thoughts. It was him. Andrew. His image infiltrated every corner of my consciousness, his laughter echoing through the hollows of my heart.

With each breath, the recollection of our passionate kisses crept into my senses. I could almost feel the pressure of his lips against mine, soft yet insistent, stirring a warmth within me that radiated through my entire being. Our kisses were a language all their own, speaking volumes of unvoiced yearnings and tender promises that hung delicately between us like a whispered secret.

I shifted again, the mattress beneath me embracing my form as if to comfort my restless spirit. I remembered our conversations, those heartfelt exchanges where words flowed like a serene river, unhurried and genuine. We had spoken of everything and nothing at all, our dialogue weaving a life rich with the threads of our individual experiences and dreams.

In those moments, there was an undeniable connection that transcended the mere melding of two souls. It was as if Andrew and I had discovered a hidden pathway leading directly to one another's core, a place where the essence of who we were lay bare and unguarded.

A smile found its way to my lips, a remnant of joy from the laughter we shared, the kind that bubbled up from deep within and spilled over, pure and infectious. I could still hear his voice, a soothing timbre that seemed to resonate perfectly with my own

frequency, creating a harmonious symphony unique to us.

My heart ached with the fullness of these cherished memories, and despite the late hour, a sense of hope began to unfurl within me, warm and relentless as the dawn that promised to break the horizon. With every remembered touch, every laugh, every moment of profound connection, the certainty of what I felt for Andrew became a beacon in the night, guiding me toward a future where fear had no dominion over the love that was blooming, fierce and resolute, within my chest.

My thoughts are unbidden and relentless, began to replay the countless conversations with Andrew, each word echoing like a melody that refused to fade.

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“Amara, you're incredible, you know that?” His voice had been a tender caress, one I'd felt down to my very soul.

“Andrew,” I'd murmured, my reply a mere whisper, “you see too much.”

But had I let him see enough? The question gnawed at me, burrowing deep into the folds of my consciousness. In the safety of the darkness, I could no longer evade the truth that had been lingering on the periphery of my awareness.

Had I truly allowed him to see the woman behind the carefully constructed walls? The layers of self-protection that I wore like armor—had they kept him at a distance when all he'd sought was closeness?

A sigh escaped me, swirling into the silence of my room, carrying with it the weight of realizations too heavy for the night to hold. Yes, I had laughed with him, shared stories and dreams, but always with a part of me held back, an invisible boundary that I had not dared to cross.

I finally acknowledged the mistakes that had been woven through the tapestry of our relationship—each thread a missed chance to be vulnerable, to show him the raw truth of my affections. How often had I met his gaze, only to look away just as he was reaching deeper, searching for the essence of who I was?

“Stop doubting,” I whispered, the words punctuating the stillness.

With that reprimand on my lips, I turned over and fell asleep.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Amara

The months have passed. Dating and discovering Andrew has been a great experience. It's August now, on a warm evening and we are on another date. The air hummed with a mixture of eagerness and the sweet scent of my vanilla perfume as I stood before the full-length mirror. My fingers trembled slightly, not from nervousness, but from the sheer expectancy of the evening ahead. Andrew and I had traversed rivers of doubt and climbed mountains of distinction to stand where we were today, and tonight was a celebration of all the steps taken.

I let the fabric of the dress cascade between my fingers—a stunning number in a rich cobalt that made my skin glow like molten bronze. It hugged my curves in all the right places, and as I turned, the skirt flared just enough to make me feel like royalty. Slipping into it felt like slipping into a dream—one where love knew no bounds, and where a woman like me could find her heart's reflection in a man like Andrew.

“Amara, are you almost ready?” Andrew's voice, warm and steady, filtered through the door.

“Just a minute,” I called back, my voice a blend of laughter and butterflies.

I heard the soft rustle of his suit jacket and imagined him adjusting his tie, that same navy blue that matched my dress, as if our very clothes were conspiring to bring us closer together. The thought sent a wave of affection to me, and I couldn't help but observe the path that brought us to this moment, two hearts entwined in a world that had a lot of uncertainties.

“Wow,” he breathed out as I finally emerged. His eyes, a clear gray, held mine in a gaze so intense it felt like the first thread of connection we ever spun. “You look...

incredible.”

“And you,” I replied, my voice soft as I straightened his tie, “are the very picture of handsome.”

We shared a smile, as we headed out to another glorious event of many to come.

We arrived twenty minutes later, and the large room of the event spread out before us like a scene from an old Hollywood film—timeless, elegant, and brimming with life. Crystal chandeliers cast a warm glow over the room, their light dancing across the walls and reflecting off the sequins and jewels adorning the other guests. Soft, romantic music played by a string quartet filled the space with a melody that seemed to wrap around each couple, each conversation, weaving everyone into the fabric of festivity.

Around us, people mingled with glasses of champagne in hand, their voices blending into a symphony of celebration. The air was infused with the aroma of gourmet hors d'oeuvres and the subtle scent of floral arrangements that adorned each table. Every element of the location, from the polished marble floors to the towering columns wrapped in ivy and fairy lights, spoke of a world created for nights like this—nights where love was not only present but exalted.

Andrew took my hand, his touch grounding me in the swirl of colors and sounds. We moved together, a single entity in a sea of faces, finding joy in the simple act of being side by side. Tonight, the rest of our story would unfold, but for now, we basked in the glow of the present, our hearts beating in time with the rhythm of the night.

“Ready to celebrate?” Andrew whispered, his words feather-light against my ear.

“Always,” I replied, my hand tightening in his, “especially with you by my side.”

And with those words, we stepped further into the embrace of the evening, our spirits soaring on the wings of newfound dreams, ready to dance the night away.

Later that night I was spread out on Andrew's bed in nothing but a thong. My breath escaped in short, shallow gasps. Andrew gaze alone sent shivers of excitement through me. A tension grew between my thighs. I had the sudden urge to squeeze my thighs together.

“My beautiful Amara. I want you to come all over my cock.”

I was mesmerized by the sound of Andrew's voice. I watched him ease out of his suit jacket. The slit between my thighs leaked with my desire as he unbuttoned his shirt.

He flashed that knowing grin at me. I know he knew how much I craved his hands on my body.

“Your breasts are so perfect sweetheart. The size, the shape, the nipples are perfect. I love how your tits feel in my hands. I love when you feed them to me while you ride this dick.

Andrew discarded the rest of his clothes and hovered over me to lie claim to my breasts. Andrew's hands continued down her body, my nipples hardened I could feel the teasing warmth of his lips a hair's breadth away, my anticipation of it in his mouth almost too much to bear.

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“I love it when you moan. I love when you're vocal, I love when you call my name while I fuck you.” Andrew's voice trailed off, as he took my swollen flesh into the warm cavity of his mouth.

A loud moan escaped me, and he sucked long and hard.

I dug my nails deeper into the corded muscles of Andrew's neck. I wanted to cry out my love for him but swallowed my words at the last minute.

Andrew released my nipple, his face inches from mine as he sought my gaze.

“You do realize this was fate from the moment we met, don't you? No more pretending between you and me. Ever again.”

I nodded.

Andrew used one hand to cup my cheek, slowly running the tip of one finger along my lips. “Such perfection,” he added, his mouth replacing his fingers.

I purred my response, as I leaned up into him. I caressed his shoulders and moved my hands down his arms. Andrew's body was tight and lean with defined corded muscles.

Andrew wrapped one arm around my waist and pulled me closer so that my pelvis was against his taut thigh. As he deepened the kiss, I felt a jolt in the bottom of my stomach and a throbbing between my thighs. I pressed myself tightly against his thigh to put pressure on my throbbing of my clit.

Andrew's hand moved to my breasts again. He pulled and teased one nipple then the other, the pleasure shot to my slick core. I moaned into his mouth; our kiss became more urgent as I responded to his bold caresses.

I placed my fingers in the soft waves of his hair at the base of his neck. His mouth was hot and wet and slippery and soft and everything you expected to find in the bliss of a kiss. Andrew smelled so good, like citrus and a woodsy scent.

I gasped loudly and bucked up into Andrew's hard masculine body. He took full advantage of my response, grinding his hips into me, sending a fiery amount of pleasure coursing through my core.

He sat up, his eyes moved appreciatively over my semi naked body, landing on the sliver of silk thong that passed for my panties. He looked directly into my gaze and ripped the silky fabric, increasing my excitement. He pulled the torn material away, leaving me completely bare in his all-consuming gaze.

"I want you so bad," I gasped.

"Not as much as I want you," Andrew expelled before reclaiming my mouth, one had slid between my legs.

"So wet," Andrew groaned as his finger slid over my swollen clit.

My back strained as I tilted up to him, my nails digging into his back. He kissed me harder, as his finger strummed my clit like an instrument.

I opened my legs wider, my hips finding and slipping into the rhythm of that insistent finger. "Oh god I'm coming," I breathed into his mouth.

"You're fucking beautiful; I love the way you feel around my fingers and around my

dick. I love how soft your skin feels under my fingertips,” Andrew growled, continuing his perfect rhythm up and down my slick walls.

I cried out in passion. “Oh, my goodness please don't stop. Please don't stop,” I cried, my hips lifting faster and faster. “Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god!” I exploded.

“That’s a good girl,” Andrew removed his finger from me and brought it to his mouth, drinking in the taste of my essence. He shared the sweetness with me, his lips against my mouth, his tongue delved and swirled.

“I love your body sweetheart. Every fucking inch, roll, crevice, dent and curve. I adore it all,” Andrew declared.

He positioned himself over me, one hand guiding the tip of his hardened shaft up and down my slickness.

“Andrew,” I gasped, my hips arching and begging him to enter.

“I am going to fuck you hard and long Amara. There will be nothing gentle about it. Do we understand each other?” he asked, his gray eyes carrying an inferno of desire.

“Yes,” I softly replied, becoming half dizzy with desire.

“You will feel me in you for days to come,” Andrew promised, dipping the head of his erection into my soaked opening.

“Let me in,” Andrew commanded.

My legs spread wider.

“Please,” I whimpered. “Please Andrew.”

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Andrew was hesitant to delay his entrance any longer, he ripped into me, driving deep and hard into my tightness. He let out a guttural groan, one that matched the scream that escaped me. I closed my eyes and turned away from him.

“Look at me,” he commanded.

I opened her eyes, my walls pulsing around him.

My face burned in passion.

“So sweet. So tight. I'll never get tired of fucking you Amara. Never,” Andrew said, grabbing my hip bones and driving into me again.

I felt the shimmering waves of pleasure from the pit of my stomach all the way down to bottom of my feet.

“You are perfect sweetheart, you're mine You make me feel so fucking good. I'm going to feed you all of this cum because you fucking deserve it. You deserve all of me sweetness.”

I moaned louder from all his dirty talk. Andrew's strokes came harder and faster.

“Yes! Oh yes!” I cried, my fingernails embedding tracks of our passion into his back. Andrew placed one hand on my thigh. The other gripped a plump breast, giving more pleasure.

“That's it my sweetness,” Andrew growled. “Take it. Take it all,” he said, his mouth

closing fiercely over one breast as he plunged deeply.

“Oh my,” I cried out, my cries becoming husky. “Please don't stop,” I begged as my climax roared deep inside me. I arched my back, chasing the summit that remained just within reach. I closed my eyes and reached the peak.

Andrew suddenly stopped moving.

Andrew smiled and slapped my buttocks and flipped me onto my stomach. He grabbed a pillow and shoved it under my stomach.

I barely had time to adjust to the new position before Andrew slammed into me from behind, his strokes hard, fast and commanding. I buried my face in the softness of the bed face down, ass up. Electrical shocks of pleasure careened through my body.

With each delving thrust, Andrew held onto my hips tighter, gripping as he plowed powerful stroke after powerful stroke into core. I came again.

“I'm fucking coming,” Andrew grated out as he splattered my walls with his seed.

Our sweaty bodies fell to the bed in a tangle of limbs. Andrew pulled me close and pulled the bed covers over us. I sighed in bliss, finding comfort in strong his arms.

Epilogue

Andrew

Ten Years Later

The sun was setting, casting a golden glow over our backyard, where the laughter of children echoed through the air. I stood on the porch, watching my twin boys, August

and Austin, chasing each other around the swings. Their bright blue eyes and sandy blond hair were a mirror image of mine, and every time I looked at them, I was reminded of how far we had come.

Amara stepped out beside me, carrying our one-year-old daughter, Journee, on her hip. Journee was the spitting image of her mother, with her rich cocoa skin and dark, curly hair. She had my eyes, though, and whenever she looked at me with that twinkle of mischief, I was helplessly wrapped around her tiny finger.

“Look at them,” Amara said, her voice filled with a mixture of pride and amusement. “They never seem to tire, do they?”

I wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her close. “Just like their father,” I replied with a grin. “And their mother. I remember a time when you used to wear me out with your boundless energy.”

She laughed softly, leaning into me. “We’ve built quite a life together, haven’t we?”

I pressed a kiss to her temple, feeling the warmth of her against me. “We have. And I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world.”

Our relationship had been one of growth and development. From the early days of misunderstandings and guarded hearts, we had built a bond that was unbroken. Our love was a sign of the power of trust, vulnerability, and relentless devotion.

The boys, noticing us watching them, ran over with matching grins. “Daddy, can we have ice cream?” August asked, his eyes wide with expectation.

“Yeah, please?” Austin chimed in, bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Amara chuckled. “You two and your sweet tooth. Alright, but only one scoop each,

okay?”

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The boys cheered and ran into the house, leaving us laughing in their wake. I glanced down at Journee, who was looking up at me with her big, curious eyes. “What about you, little princess? Do you want some ice cream too?”

Journee clapped her hands, a delighted squeal escaping her lips. “Ice cream!”

Amara handed her to me, and I relished the feeling of her tiny arms around my neck. She was the apple of my eye, and I was hopelessly in love with every little thing she did.

We followed the boys into the kitchen, where they were already pulling out bowls and spoons. Stacy, Amara’s best friend and the godmother to our children, was sitting at the island, sipping on a cup of coffee.

“Hey, you two,” she greeted with a smile. “Looks like I came just in time for dessert.”

“Perfect timing as always, Stacy,” I said, handing her a bowl. “Want to help me dish out the ice cream?”

She laughed, taking the bowl from me. “I’d love to.”

As we scooped out the ice cream, I couldn’t help but reflect on how much our lives had intertwined. Stacy had been there from the beginning, a constant source of support and love. She was family in every way that mattered.

Once the ice cream was served, we gathered around the kitchen table. The boys dug

in with gusto, while Journey made a mess with hers, much to everyone's amusement. Amara and I exchanged a glance, a shared moment of pure contentment.

After dessert, we settled into the living room. August and Austin played with their toy cars on the floor, while Journey dozed off in my arms. Amara sat beside me, her head resting on my shoulder.

"Do you remember our wedding day?" she asked softly.

I smiled; the memory as vivid as if it had happened yesterday. "How could I forget? You were the most beautiful bride I'd ever seen."

Her eyes sparkled with the same love I saw in them every day. "And you, the most dashing groom."

Our wedding had been a magical day, filled with joy and surrounded by the people we loved. Stacy had been Amara's maid of honor, standing by her side with tears of happiness in her eyes. I was overwhelmed with emotion as I watched Amara walk down the aisle, knowing that she was about to become my wife.

The ceremony was a blur of vows and promises, but I remembered the way Amara looked at me as we exchanged rings. It was a look of unwavering trust and love, a promise that we would face whatever came our way together.

The reception had been a celebration of our love, with dancing, laughter, and more happiness than I had ever known. We had danced our first dance as husband and wife to our song, the one that had always been proof of our experiences that brought us this far.

"Forever feels possible with you," I had whispered in her ear that night, echoing the words we had once shared under a heart-shaped cloud.

“Always,” she had replied, her voice filled with certainty.

That promise had held true through the years. We had built a life together that was rich with love and filled with the laughter of our children. Our marriage was not without its challenges, but we faced them with the same determination and trust that had brought us together in the first place.

As I sat there, holding my sleeping daughter and surrounded by my family, I felt an overwhelming sense of thankfulness. Amara had not only given me her heart but also the gift of a family that I cherished more than anything.

“I love you, Amara,” I said, my voice low but filled with the depth of my feelings.

She looked up at me, her eyes shining. “I love you too, Andrew. More than words can ever say.”

We sat in comfortable silence, the kind that only comes from years of knowing and loving each other. The boys eventually tired out, and I carried them to their room, tucking them in with gentle kisses on their foreheads.

Journee stirred in my arms, her tiny hand clutching my shirt. “Daddy,” she murmured sleepily.

“Shh, princess,” I whispered, placing her gently in her crib. “Daddy’s here.”

Amara joined me, watching as Journee settled back into sleep. She slipped her hand into mine, and we stood there for a moment, marveling at the life we had created together.

We made our way back to our bedroom, the moonlight casting a soft glow across the room. As we lay down, Amara nestled against me, her warmth a soothing balm to my soul.

“Thank you for this life, Andrew,” she whispered. “For our children, our love, everything.”

I kissed her forehead, my heart full. “It’s our life, Amara. And I’m grateful for every moment.”

Our eyes grew heavy, and I held her close as we fell asleep, confident that we would face whatever lay ahead of us together. Despite being put to the test, our love had only gotten stronger. It was an unbreakable relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and love.

With Amara by my side, I knew that forever was not just a dream, but a beautiful reality. I knew every day wouldn’t be easy. I felt ready for anything that might come my way. The greatest gift of all was our family and our love, which I wouldn’t sacrifice for anything in the world.