



Bodyguard Book Boyfriend

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Description: I'm a reporter being attacked in the media. I didn't think the trolls online would cause me to get a bodyguard, but when Grant Ford comes into my life... he's all the protection that I will ever need.

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Prologue

Welcome to the Book Boyfriend Dating Agency

In a world where reality often fails to live up to the fantasies we find between the pages of our favorite books, one company dared to ask: What if you could actually meet your dream book boyfriend?

Enter the Book Boyfriend Dating Agency, the brainchild of a group of a hopeless romantic and tech genius who believes that everyone deserves a chance to live out their literary fantasies. With cutting-edge technology and a vast database of eligible bachelors, the agency promises to match you with the book boyfriend of your dreams.

Imagine sipping coffee with Mr. Darcy, exploring the streets of Paris with a charming French aristocrat, or even spending an evening with a dangerous, yet alluring mobster. At the Book Boyfriend Dating Agency, the possibilities are endless.

But there's a catch... The line between fiction and reality can blur when you least expect it.

So, if you're ready to take a chance on love and embark on an adventure straight out of the pages of your favorite romance, look no further than the Book Boyfriend Dating Agency. Your dream date awaits.

Get ready to swoon, laugh, and maybe even find your own happily ever after. The Book Boyfriend Dating Agency is open for business, and your story is about to begin...

Chapter One

TARAE

“Tarae, girl, you need to take this shit seriously. People are crazy out here nowadays.”

I sigh as I listen to Cierra lecture me for the umpteenth time. I’m just glad she can’t see my face as she fusses.

“Cierra, you’re my best friend, and I love you like a sister, but you are not my mama. You’ve got to chill out. These people are keyboard thugs. If I ever saw them face to face, they would shit on themselves.”

“Tarae, you’re a star. People are invested in your life whether you like it or not. You need to get a bodyguard or something.”

I roll my eyes at the thought of having a bodyguard. Cierra is overacting as usual.

“I’m just a sports reporter, CeCe. People are nosy because of Mark. Once a real celebrity does something, they’ll forget all about me,” I reply in exasperation.

It’s been two weeks since the news of my pro-football player boyfriend was caught red-handed cheating on me. If it wasn’t humiliating enough that the man I thought I was going to marry was cheating on me, I had to relive it over and over again because people kept tagging me on social media. The video vividly replays in my mind...

“Alexa are you and Mark a couple?” The paparazzi yells.

“Of course, I don’t just go around kissing everybody!” Alexa says giggling.

“What about Tarae, Mark?”

“Tarae is a hateful witch that can’t stand to see us happy.” Alexa smirks at the camera before giving a big show of kissing Mark and walking off.

Watching a video online isn’t the best way to find out that your man is gallivanting around Dallas with a barely legal rapper, and I use the term rapper hella loosely because singing nursery rhymes with autotune isn’t what I would categorize as rap.

But hey what do I know, I’m just the hateful witch.

The worst part about all this is I can’t even show my ass like I really want to because of my career. It took everything in me not to smash the windows out of his car and slash three of his car tires. I wanted to crash out so bad.

Instead, I had to constantly say no comment to the paparazzi who were following me and block a few people on social media. I’ve kept quiet while this little twit’s fans have called me every name under the sun, like I’m the one who cheated. CeCe might be right that people are crazy, but I really doubt they’re dangerous.

“Tarae, I’m gonna hold your hand while I say this... you are arealcelebrity, sweetie.” Even over the phone, I can tell CeCe is smiling.

“Ce, just leave it alone. I swear, you’re supposed to be lifting me up right now...”

“Babe, I am lifting you up. Have you seen the latest article that’s out?” CeCe questions in a tone that makes my stomach turn.

“No, I turned off all of my social media alerts after I took my vacation time. I mean, it can’t get any worse, right?”

“Oh sweetie—” CeCe takes a deep breath before my phone beeps with a text message.

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“I’m afraid to open it,” I whisper into the phone.

“Do you want me to come over? You know I will.”

“No, it’s late. I’m a big girl. I’m sure it’s fine.”

I open the message, but my eyelids are shut tight. I count to ten before I slowly peek at the words on the screen. My heart dips into my stomach at the headline.

Is reporter Tarae Green standing in the way of true love instead of standing on the sidelines where she belongs?

The headline sucks, but it’s the source of the article that’s heart wrenching. Person to Person magazine is one of the largest online publications. They have millions of viewers a day. And my name is front and center.

“Why, Lord? When I was manifesting my name in print, this is not what I meant!” I yell, kicking my feet like a toddler.

On the other end of the phone, I hear my best friend cracking up. I frown, but CeCe’s laugh has always been contagious, so before long we’re both dying laughing like a couple of hyenas.

“Friend, I love you. But you need to be specific when it comes to your manifestation,” CeCe says once our laughter dies down.

“You’re right. But hey, at least my name is in print, right? I don’t want to read the

rest. What did it say?"

"Nothing you don't already know, but I wanted you to see the comments. It's some real crazy bastards saying some worrying shit. One wrote, 'You deserve to be alone. If you get in Alexa's way, that white couch of yours will be dyed red with your blood.' Tarae, are you still there?" CeCe questions after she finishes reading.

My heart has dropped for a completely different reason now. That comment was extremely violent and way too specific.

"What the fuck! Painted red with my blood? How the fuck did they even know my couch was white?" I sit up and look around my apartment like someone is watching me.

"Fuck if I know. But like I said, you need a bodyguard. Cause weirdos on the internet should not know what color your furniture is especially talking about blood being on it. That shit is crazy."

"Damn, you're right. But maybe if I stay out of sight, people will forget all about me. Football season doesn't start for another couple of months, so I won't have to go anywhere..." I don't finish my sentence because CeCe interrupts.

"Uhhh, did you forget that I'm styling you for the ELFIEs?"

"Shit, I actually did."

The ELFIEs are the biggest preseason award show in American Sports. And the who's who of celebrities will be attending. Everyone goes to the ELFIEs, and no matter what that headline might have implied, I am important in the entertainment sports world. I'm so important that I was asked to co-host the event with mynowex. We were a popular "it couple" in sports, after all.

“I have to call my agent. Maybe she can get me out of this.”

“If anybody can, Shelby can.”

“I sure hope so,” I sigh in defeat.

The last thing I want to do is be in the same room with Mark Dixon. I sure as hell don’t want to stand beside him while I read a teleprompter with a fake-as-hell smile plastered on my face. Yeah, no thanks.

“Well, if you need that bodyguard and a date— I know just the person who can help you with that as well.”

“I’m afraid to even ask.”

“Don’t worry, sis; not only will you be protected while you’re out in public, but you can also get your back blown out in private.”

Cierra cackled before another text message beeped on my phone with a link to someplace called The Book Boyfriend Agency.

“Oh Lord, what is this?”

“It’s just what you need in your life,” Cierra says.

Before I can respond, my doorbell rings. I frown because I’m not expecting anyone, but I get off my couch and go to look out my peephole. I smile at the person standing on the other side.

“Hey CeCe, Christina’s at the door.”

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My neighbor is a sweetheart. She's always checking on me and bringing me baked goods. Christina probably read the same article CeCe did.

"What the hell does she want?" I can hear the disdain in CeCe's voice, and I roll my eyes.

Cierra has never liked Christina. I'm not sure why; like I said, Chrissy is a sweetheart. But once my bestie gets something in her mind, there's no changing it. Most of the time it isn't an issue because I keep the two ladies separated.

"I don't know, Ce; let me call you later."

"Uh-huh. Just don't forget about the service. You need a bodyguard, especially when inviting creepy Chrissy into your house."

"Bye, Cierra." I hang up the phone to CeCe's laughter as I answer the door.

"Hey, Chrissy. What's up?" I put some fake cheer into my voice so she doesn't pick up on the fact that I've been wallowing in the pits of self-despair.

"Oh, girly, I just saw the article. You must be devastated. I can't believe Mark dumped you for Alexa Ash. I mean, I can; she's a star, and you're just a reporter, but still."

I know Chrissy means well, but damn, can I catch a break.

"Nah. I'm good. Actually, I'm busy with some stuff right now, so I'll catch up with

you later,” I respond, trying to keep the frown off my face.

“Oh, yeah, sure.” Chrissy tucks her curly hair behind her ear.

“Alright, then. See ya later.” I shut the door on a smirking Chrissy.

As soon as I close the door, my phone beeps with a message.

Unknown: Alexa is better than you! When you’re out, I’ll show you just how much!

“What in the actual fuck! I guess I do need a bodyguard!”

Chapter Two

GRANT

“We’re clear stage left. Proceeding backstage for a sweep,” I say into the almost invisible earpiece.

“Copy, Grant. Clear on the right,” the response is immediate.

I nod my head with pride. I’ve put together a spectacular team. I’m the personal bodyguard for Honey Black, who is one of the largest entertainers in the world. We’ve been on tour for six months and the crowd grows with every new city. Dallas, which is Honey’s hometown, is our last stop before she goes back into the studio to record another album.

The great thing about working for Honey, besides the seven figures, is that I’m usually busy. But when she’s recording, I have some time for myself. In the past, I would find myself a gorgeous woman or two... or three and party my life away.

But lately, I need more than that. I want someone who will understand my lifestyle and will be there when I come off the road. I want someone who is as loyal as I am. A woman who is sweet, kind, and fucking passionate about something. But I've been too busy working to take the time to find a woman like that. Hell, I'm too busy to find any woman.

I didn't want to spend any more time alone, wishing that I had someone, so when Honey introduced me to a friend of hers who ran an exclusive dating agency, I signed up.

It was hard for my friends to believe that I needed help finding a date. But even a handsome guy like me needs a little help every now and then.

"Are y'all ready for this ride?" Honey's sultry Texas accent echoes loudly over the screaming crowd, and I know that's my cue to head to the side of the stage.

I see Parker, one of my team, making his way to the front of the stage. I nod when he signals an all-clear. I continue to carefully watch all of the surroundings before making my way to the changing area below the stage that Honey will be lowered into.

When I get there, I see something strange—a box that shouldn't be there. I touch my earpiece and ask my team about the black box. It's in our protocols that when something is out of place, we ask the team before we make a move because someone may know something that I don't.

"There wasn't a box when I checked," Rick's voice comes over the earpiece.

All of my guys check-in, and I hate to do this, but there's no way I'm letting Honey get hurt or worse because I didn't want to be thorough.

"Code red. Honey to the pot."

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My team flies into action. We've done this drill a million times, but we've never had a live threat at a show before. I refuse to take any chances with anyone getting hurt, especially Honey.

The protocols I implemented worked as I expected. As the music and lights fade, the crowd was none the wiser.

It was like an intermission, except the audience was told they had to exit because the pyrotechnics were malfunctioning, and we didn't want anyone to get hurt. There was grumbling and complaints, but everyone was evacuated safely.

I inspect the box, and there's a device inside that is definitely some sort of homemade bomb. With my combat experience, it's easily identifiable. I'm glad I alerted the team, and this isn't some false alarm.

"Grant, the squad is here, and Honey is secure."

"Good, clear out. I'll be here until the team tells me otherwise."

As soon as the words leave my mouth, the local bomb squad shows up and clears me out of the way. They managed to secure the device without it detonating, and I alerted the team.

Honey's PR machine will work their magic so she doesn't receive any backlash for canceling in the middle of the show. But in the age of social media, it's bound to be a clusterfuck.

However, I'm just glad my training kicked in, and I was able to protect an arena full of people. I hate to think what would've happened if we weren't as diligent. I would like to say that I can breathe a sigh of relief, but I can't.

I won't be able to sleep until I find out who in the hell tried to kill thousands of people just trying to enjoy a concert. I will never ask why. I know the reason... people are fucking insane. There's no reason to lose sleep over anyone's why. People do shit because they're crazy as hell and refuse to take responsibility for themselves. But I will sleep easier when we find out who did this.

Until we figure out the culprit, we won't be rescheduling the concert. I won't give any maniac a second chance to get their terrorism right.

Yeah, that would be a huge fuck no!

"Grant, I can't thank you enough for what you did tonight," Honey's sweet voice breaks me out of my thoughts.

"It's what you pay me for, Honey."

"Yeah, but it's more than just a job to you. I don't have to remind you that you're a part of my family, Grant. You're not just my bodyguard, and you saved not just my life but the life of everyone in that arena tonight. I can't thank you enough."

I blush because getting praise for shit like that isn't something I'm used to, but I know Honey is sincere because she isn't just my boss; she is like a little sister to me. We've been in each other's life since we were kids. Her brother is my best friend, and although he's the less famous sibling, Josh has done pretty well for himself as an Air Force General. But he'd kick my ass if I'd let anything happen to Honey.

"Yeah, well, you're welcome. But don't thank me just yet because we're not

rescheduling until the asshole who did this is caught.”

“Yeah, I know.” Honey’s face is tight with worry. “But, while we wait, I’m gonna start recording, so at least you’ll have some time for yourself. Or maybe a date—”

I roll my eyes before responding, “I swear, kid, you’re worse than my mama trying to get me married off.”

Honey laughs, and I’m glad that the worry is erased from her face, even if it still lingers in the air. I won’t think about dating until this whole thing is finished. Then maybe I’ll find someone through the dating service I signed up for.

Chapter Three

TARAE

It’s been almost a week since the Honey Black concert was interrupted due to a bomb. That’s right you heard what I said, a bomb! According to authorities, the would-be terrorist is a man by the name of Donnie Vance, a well-known white supremacist. Vance confessed once he was caught and presented with evidence. Now, the tea is that Honey’s fine bodyguard is the reason the man was caught.

I have been watching all the gossip on social media about the Honey Black scandal. I can’t say that I’m happy that someone almost blew up thousands of people, but the heat is officially off of me and my horrible breakup.

I knew that as soon as something big happened, my little, messy situation would fade into obscurity. Unfortunately, my agent couldn’t, or should I say wouldn’t, get me out of hosting the ELFIEs, so I still need a date. I refuse to go by myself like I can’t get a man.

I mean, yeah, in the back of my mind, I know I don't have anything to prove to anyone, but dammit, I was the victim in this situation. I have been dragged all around the internet like I'm the one who cheated. I've been called names and made to be the bitch. So, if it's the last thing I do, I will show my ex and his new chick that I am better than the situation they put me in.

As soon as the thought crosses my mind, my phone beeps with a notification. I grab my phone, and to my surprise, I have a match on the dating service CeCe talked me into signing up for.

I swipe right, and my jaw almost hits the damn floor. "Well, I'll be damned, it's Honey's bodyguard!"

The piercing dark gaze of a bearded Greek God stares back at me. I have been around plenty of fine men, but even through a photograph I can tell this man is different. He's not just handsome; he's otherworldly.

I didn't even read his profile before I hit accept on the match. My greedy eyes eat up every picture on his profile, and I can feel myself getting hot all over. It's like his pictures were taken just for me. Even though he's popular with Honey's fans, I don't think anyone has actually heard him speak. Even when I see them on social media, he's always in the background.

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He's never been seen this candidly, and I like it. I guess it's his job to fade into the background, but his gorgeous face is definitely worthy of being in front. Grant Ford is definitely my type.

I'm still lusting over my perfect match when a message notification pops up on the app. I smile, giddiness taking over. I haven't felt this excited in a long time.

Hi, I'm Grant Ford. How are you?

Hi Grant, I'm Tarae Green. I'm great now that I've matched with you ;)

I hit send before I can second-guess my horrible flirting. I've never been the sexting type, but I'm willing to continue to step outside my comfort zone. I've never used a dating service either, so I might as well get all my "I nevers" out of the way.

A few bubbles pop up before disappearing, and I start to doubt my response. Maybe my answer was too corny. I've been out of the dating game for two years, and Mark is the one who slid into my DM's.

"If he doesn't like your flirting, it's his loss."

Giving myself a pep talk is the only way I can keep from overthinking and stressing out. I know I'm a catch, and I have a lot to offer, but these last couple of months have been hell on my confidence and ego.

I say months because Mark had started to treat me badly before the story broke of him cheating. I should've seen the red flags, but I was trying to be a ride-or-die and

stand by my man. I learned my lesson with that shit. I won't ride-and-die for not nan other man. Loyalty is reciprocal, and if a man can't ride for me, then he can ride by himself.

Can I call you? I'm not too good at all this texting stuff. I understand if it's too soon, but I would love to hear if your voice is as beautiful as your profile pictures.

I melt into a puddle of heart eyes and butterflies before I shake my head and frown. I have to snap out of it. A couple of sweet words is how I got bamboozled by a narcissistic professional athlete. I have to keep my eyes open, but I will give Grant a chance.

Sure, hopefully, your voice is as sexy as your profile pictures...

I can't help but flirt as I send my number to Grant. I know that with all the paperwork, STD screens, and background checks I had to go through, Grant is safe. There's no way any creep could get past the screening process that the Book Boyfriend Agency has.

It doesn't take a full five minutes before my phone rings, and my face breaks into a glorious smile. A giggle escapes before I take a deep breath and answer.

"Hello?"

"Damn, I was right. Your voice is gonna be my favorite thing to hear," the deep rumble tickles my ears, and I know I'm a goner.

Chapter Four

GRANT

After hearing her sexy, husky voice, I was a goner. Tarae Green was mine from the time I laid eyes on her profile picture. I wouldn't call myself a romantic sort or even a believer in love at first sight, but the way her brown eyes called to me through the screen... was simply mesmerizing.

I knew I had to know this woman. She needed to be in my life, and I wanted to know everything about her. It wasn't a second thought for me to swipe right. I was relieved when she let me call her. I hadn't been on any dating sites before, so I didn't know the proper way to approach in-person meet-ups.

But this wasn't your run-of-the-mill dating site, and the matches that were sent to my account were specifically for me. Although all of the women that I matched with were technically my type, Tarae was above and beyond what I wanted in a woman.

I felt it in my soul, but hearing her voice sealed the deal for me in every way. We talked a few more times before we decided to meet, and our conversations were always easy. I looked forward to seeing her name light up on my phone.

Now, walking into this upscale restaurant, I have to admit that I'm a little nervous. And nothing makes me nervous. I'm the man of steel when it comes to nerves.

I have a lot of experience in dangerous situations, which is why I didn't hesitate when I found a live bomb at the concert. My training kicked in, and I did what was natural to me. The praise the media placed on me wasn't unwarranted, but it took Honey's PR team so my name wouldn't officially be released to the public. However, in the age of social media, my image is everywhere. It couldn't be helped, but it is what it is. I just hope my newfound fame won't get in the way of my newfound dating life.

When I approach the hostess stand, I see a shapely woman with with the smoothest skin I've ever seen. It looks soft to the touch, and the pretty shade of brown is the same color as her hypnotic eyes.

I peruse her voluptuous body slowly. She's wearing a fitted black boat neck dress that skims her curves just right. The shoes she's wearing have to be at least four inches and she still only stands about five-seven. Her shoulder-length jet-black hair is in waves that surrounds her face. Tarae Green is officially one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen in my life.

"Tarae?" I call her name to get her attention.

She looks up at me, and her face lights up with recognition before she smiles. I have to stop myself from gathering her in my arms and kissing her breathless. I have to remind myself that we've only had a few conversations, and this is our first time meeting. We're strangers, no matter how strong the connection may be.

"Grant? Oh, thank goodness!" Tarae tip toes and pulls me into a hug.

I wrap my arms around her and pull her even closer as I inhale her sweet scent. Even though she's a tiny little thing compared to my six-six height, she fits perfectly.

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“Why, thank goodness? Did you think I wouldn’t show up?” I question confused.

Who in their right mind would stand up this gorgeous woman? A fuckin’ moron, that’s who!

“No, it’s not that. I’m just glad to see you actually look like your pictures.” She smiles again, and I can’t help but return the gesture.

“Oh, well, I’m glad I didn’t disappoint,” I good-naturally chuckle. “Why don’t we check in so we can be seated?” I say, nodding my head toward the hostess, who is not so subtly watching us.

“Sure, I’m excited to try this place. I—” Tarae’s words die off, and her eyes round with shock as she looks behind me.

I turn to see what made her uncomfortable, and I see a bunch of paparazzi surrounding a couple. The guy is tall and muscular with light brown skin and the girl is tall and slender with a dark tan and light sandy blonde hair. It’s not unusual to see famous people here in Dallas, but seeing paparazzi is out of the ordinary. That’s more of a Hollywood type of thing.

“Shit,” Tarae mumbles as she turns away.

“Do you know them?”

“It’s a long story,” she sighs, sounding defeated.

“Well, it’s a good thing I’m a good listener. Let’s get seated, and you can tell me all about it.” I smile, leading her to the hostess station, where we are led to our seats.

I made sure to get a secluded table. Even though I’m not exactly famous, I’m still recognized as Honey’s personal bodyguard from time to time. So sometimes, when people see me, they think Honey is around, and it can get hectic.

We’re finally seated, and we are able to place our drink order right away. The paparazzi couple are seated far enough away that they can’t see us, but we can see them. I can tell by the way Tarae is fidgeting that she’s uncomfortable. The problem is, I’m not sure why these people are making her uneasy.

“So, not to pry, but...” I nod my head across the room.

Tarae cuts her eyes in their direction, and I see anger flash for a quick second before she takes a deep breath and pushes her shoulders back. We’ve talked about everything under the sun in the few times we’ve talked. But the look I just saw can only be caused by hurt.

“That’s my ex, Mark Davis. He’s a pro football player, and that’s the girl he cheated on me with. I can deal with the betrayal, but they’ve made me out to be some scorned bitch that was keeping them apart. Their whole torrid love affair was put on hold because I was in the way. It’s ridiculous, but you know how social media is nowadays.” Tarae rolls her eyes.

I nod my head in understanding. I’m pretty sure I’ve seen the girl before, but I can’t place her face. Although I’m a football fan, I didn’t instantly recognize Tarae’s ex, but now, looking at him and hearing his name, he looks vaguely familiar.

“He’s a fuckin idiot for cheating on you, but now I have my chance. Maybe I’ll send a bottle of wine over to their table to thank him for the opportunity.” I smirk.

Tarae laughs before shaking her head, “No, don’t do that. They’ll probably accuse me of stalking them. Even though it’s their fault that I’m the one with a stalker now.”

“Wait, what do you mean? Stalker?” I ask, sitting up.

The smile is replaced with a deep frown. I don’t play around when it comes to safety, and although we just met, I’ve already decided that Tarae Green is mine to protect.

“Well, I’ve just been receiving crazy messages and people commenting online, but you know how some people are. People think they have a say so in your life when you’re a public figure. I was told it came with the territory, especially because I’m one of the few female sports reporters on my network.” Tarae shrugs, but I can see the worry.

“Sounds like you need yourself a bodyguard.”

Chapter Five

TARAE

The look on Grant’s face almost made me want to take the words back. I didn’t realize just how protective the man sitting across from me was. But his fierce alpha male aura, which he’s giving off right now, is making my girly parts perk up.

CeCe told me to just relax and have fun because I would be protected with Grant, and boy, was she right. Even when Mark showed up, Grant protectively stood in front of me without even knowing who he was. That’s a win in my book.

Even though I still don’t wholeheartedly believe I need a bodyguard, I’m glad that Grant is willing to be mine.

“Do you need a bodyguard?” Grant’s words penetrate my thoughts.

“No.” I wave him off. “It’s just some online weirdos. You know how it is. Most of the foolishness has already died down, and hopefully, after the ELFIEs everyone will completely forget about me.

“If you say so.”

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I can hear the doubt in his voice, but Grant doesn't say anything else. I don't want to continue talking about stalkers and exes our entire date, so I smile and change the subject. We talk through our meal and we even order dessert. I forgot all about Mark and Alexa Ash.

Grant is attentive, attractive, and all the positive A words that I can think of. He's way more than what I expected, and the chemistry between us is off the charts. I find myself clenching my thighs together at the deep timber of his voice.

"I haven't been this relaxed in a long time." Grant grabs my hand from across the table, and his thumb caresses me softly.

I can't help the smile that breaks out. I love affection, and touch is my love language. This man effortlessly checks all my boxes. He even knows what it's like to deal with the paparazzi and frenzied fans.

"Me either, honestly. I'm glad we did this." I smile and place my other hand on top of his.

We sit smiling at each other until the waiter comes to deliver our desserts. I got the chocolate cake, and Grant got the crème brûlée. I can't help the moan that slips out when the decadent dessert hits my taste buds.

"Well, shit, darlin'. That's one of the sexiest sounds I've ever heard." Grant licks his lips, and his beautiful dark eyes zero in on my lips.

"Would you like a taste?" I smile before holding up my fork with a piece of the cake

perched on the end.

Grant leans forward, and I stick the cake in his mouth. I slide the fork out slowly as his eyes twinkle and his gaze locks on mine.

“Ummm, chocolate cake is my absolute favorite,” Grant says huskily after swallowing.

I slide the fork into the cake and eat a piece while looking deeply into his eyes. I lick my lips after pulling the fork from my mouth. Grant scoots impossibly closer as he watches the trail my tongue takes.

The heated look he’s giving me turns me on. I’m not going to even pretend that this fine ass man sitting here eye fucking me isn’t the most action I’ve seen in God knows how long, but the heat that’s consuming my body can’t be natural.

“I love chocolate too, but I’m beginning to think I should try more vanilla.” I bite my lip as my eyes roam over his fit chest.

Grant Ford is definitely a sight to behold. His massive chest and arms are just the tip of the iceberg. His dark hair and eyes make him mysterious. So much so that I feel like my name should be Nancy Drew.

I’d love to solve that mystery.

I smirk as my eyes continue to take in the deliciousness of Grant. He’s wearing the hell outta that suit, and when he sheds his jacket, the dress shirt stretches beautifully across his well-sculpted chest.

“If you keep looking at me like that, I’m gonna give you as much vanilla as you can swallow, darlin’.” It’s Grant’s turn to give me an up and down once over.

I feel like I want to holler out, “check,” like they do in the movies. It’s definitely getting heated, and I can feel the sexual tension in the air. CeCe’s words come back to me, “you will be protected while you’re out in public, and you can get your back blown out in private.”

I squeeze my thighs together to keep my pussy throb to a minimum, but it doesn’t work. I try to subtly adjust my position without looking like I’m squirming in my chair. My breathing is coming out shallow, and I know it isn’t just the wine that I had at my meal that’s making me woozy.

“How about we go to my place, and you can feed me some vanilla,” I suggest.

“Check, please,” Grant throws his hand up at the waiter, and I laugh.

Chapter Six

GRANT

I hated that we met at the restaurant because I couldn’t spend the drive to Tarae’s house in her presence. The flirting we did at dinner was just the beginning. I can tell she likes dirty talk, and I plan to talk her through every step of our desires.

We pulled up to a nice apartment building, but I instantly noticed there wasn’t a guard at the guard stand by the door. If Tarae is getting online threats, then there definitely needs to be security on duty. I make a mental note to ask her how many times the door has been left without a guard.

I continue to tail her car into a garage that has a gate, but I frown when we’re both able to go through the gate when she opens it. What’s the point of having a gate if more than one car can get through at a time? I don’t like that either; it’s something else that I make a note of.

Tarae parks her car, and I find a spot close to hers. When I get out, she's already outside of her car waiting. I frown before I can stop myself because I don't like that she has to wait for me. Anyone could've walked up on her while I was still in my truck. It only takes a second for a woman to be caught unaware. My experience with Honey has proven time and time again that when crazed people want to get to you, they'll try anything, and it only takes a second.

"Darlin', if we have to ride in two separate cars, stay in yours until I come to get you. I don't like you standing out here waiting on me." I caress her cheek like I've been doing it for years instead of this being the first time I've actually touched her.

Tarae nuzzles my hand, and her brown eyes twinkle. I can't help the feeling that comes over me, and I pull her into my chest and wrap her in my arms. I've always been affectionate, but I can't stop myself from touching this woman.

"You smell good," Tarae says, looking up from my chest.

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I tip her chin up so that her gorgeous, pouty lips are within reach, and I devour her mouth. Her lips are soft and plump, and I nip, bite, and suck on them until Tarae moans and presses her body closer to mine.

I growl and really put my all into our kiss. My hands roam down her back until I'm cupping her gorgeous ass. I squeeze her cheeks tightly until she moans again. I break the kiss to get my breathing under control.

"You taste good, darlin'. Let's take this inside before I give the tabloids another story." I wink, and Tarae shakes her head.

I escort Tarae to the front of the building with her hand firmly in mine. There still isn't a guard at the front, but I notice Tarae has to put in a code so the door will open. I relax a little at that, but I still don't like it.

"Is there ever a guard at the front?" I ask as we enter the elevator.

"Not really, they just rely on the keypad most of the time. I've lived here for four years, though, and nothing has ever happened. It's a safe neighborhood."

"Hmm."

"You know, it's sexy when you get all protective over me like that," Tarae purrs, sliding closer to me.

She places her hand against my chest then slides it around my neck. Tarae caresses the back of my head before rising on her tiptoes and connecting her lips with mine.

Again, I can't resist her sweet mouth and delicious moans. We attack each other until the ding of the elevator breaks into our desire.

Tarae tightens her hand in mine as she leads me to her apartment door. Once we're inside, I push her up against the door and continue our kiss. I can't get enough of this woman's delectable taste. It's like she was made for me.

"I usually don't do this on the first date," Tarae breathes between kisses.

"Me either," I reply, kissing her neck.

"D-do you have protection," Tarae stutters out, her chest heaving up and down.

"Of course I do, but we only have to go as far as you want to, darlin'." I stop kissing her to look into her eyes so she knows I'm serious.

Tarae nods her head before wrapping her arms around my neck. She studies me for a long moment before nodding again. I'm not sure what decision she made, but Tarae smiles before I capture her lips once more.

Before I know it, we are in the living room. I sit down on her soft white couch before unzipping her dress. I slide the silky garment off her shoulders and down her lithe body. Tarae stands in front of me with a tiny pair of black panties and a matching bra.

"Darlin', you are the most beautiful woman I have ever had the pleasure of laying my eyes on." I take a minute to take in the gorgeous woman in front of me before stripping her undergarments off.

Tarae's dark brown skin glistens in the low lighting, and I instantly want to taste her. I drop to my knees in front of her and take a leisurely lick of her puffy pussy lips. I suck them into my mouth, and her musky, spicy flavor explodes on my tongue. She's

already soaking wet, and I hum as the juices flow down my chin.

“Fuck, Grant. Yes!” Tarae moans, gripping my hair.

She rides my face slowly until I grab her cheeks and roughly push her against my mouth. It’s like a starving man has taken over my being, and Tarae’s sweet pussy is the only thing that will satisfy my hunger. I groan and dive in deeper when Tarae starts to twirl her hips faster.

When her legs start to shake, I know that her orgasm is close. I don’t play any games or make her beg, at least not yet, because I want her to cum all over my beard until it’s soaking wet.

“You taste so fucking good, darlin’. The best appetizer ever.” I smirk, licking my lips.

“Appetizer? I thought this was desert?” Tarae breathlessly replies, flopping down on the couch.

“Umm, nope. The appetizer comes before the main course.”

Chapter Seven

TARAE

The man is insatiable. I feel like I have asthma. I’m breathing so hard, and he’s talking about that was the appetizer. Damn, I know I should feel scared. But all I feel is giddy at the thought of Grant sexing me up.

I mean, he’s definitely a certified eater, so I know the dick has to be hittin’. It would be too much of a waste if it weren’t. Lord only knows I deserve a good dicking down

after the imposed dry spell my ex put me through.

He stands up and slowly takes off his clothes. He keeps his eyes glued to mine the entire time he undresses. I have never been so enraptured by a man in my life. Grant is the epitome of masculinity. From his strong arms, powerful chest, and damn, even the man's thighs are massive.

Once he stands in front of me completely naked, I have to discreetly wipe at my mouth to keep from drooling all over the place.

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“We need to take this to the bedroom, darlin’. I don’t want to get your pretty white couch all dirty.” Grant leans down and pulls me from the couch.

I wrap my legs around his waist and direct him to my bedroom. He strides quickly down the hall, kissing my neck and squeezing my ass as he makes his way to my door. Grant pushes the door open with his foot and places me on the bed.

Grant spreads my legs wide and dips his head, licking my core with his thick pink tongue. I moan loudly, moving my hips seductively. Grant’s mouth feels so good that the second orgasm is building quickly. But before I’m too lost in passion, Grant slows down.

He caresses my legs as he kisses his way up my body. When he finally reaches my mouth, I’m a quivering mess.

“You ready for this dick, darlin’?” Grant breathes his question into my ear before sucking my lobe into his mouth.

I wiggle my hips and thrust upward so my pussy connects with his dick. Grant feels so hard and smooth that chills break out all over my body. I continue to rub myself against him because he feels so fucking good. Before I know it, my body is built up, and I’m about to orgasm again.

“Don’t you dare cum again. I need to feel that tight pussy wrapped around me.” Grant holds himself completely still, trapping my body beneath him.

I sit up and put my hands behind his head until I can reach his neck. I lick the column

of his neck all the way to his earlobe, repaying the favor by sucking it into my mouth. The groan Grant lets out is animalistic and reverberates throughout the room.

I tilt my pelvis up as much as I can with Grant's big body covering mine, but he reads my body language because he slips inside my sopping wet core with ease. We moan in unison at the undeniable connection.

Grant moves slowly at first; his hips swivel in a way that makes me hungry for more. I match his pace, and soon enough, the sounds of our lovemaking is like a symphony. I'm surprised my neighbors aren't calling the police with all the noise we're making.

But I can't help myself. My loud screams of ecstasy have been a long time coming. Not even my rose has hit the spot like Grant has. He has the key to my pleasure, and he's not wasting a single motion.

"I knew from the first time I saw you that you would feel this good. I knew that shit. Now, fuck me back like you like this dick, darlin'," Grant pants as he digs into my pussy deeper.

Now, I'm no pillow princess, but he has me all off kilter. I've never been fucked so thoroughly before, and I have to say I don't know how to act. I think I must be in a state of shocked ecstasy before his words snap me out of it.

Grant stands and flips me over so that I'm on all fours. I look over my shoulder and wiggle my ass at him. Grant smirks before pushing my head down and savagely slamming into me. He bends down and licks my neck before caressing me gently.

The contrast between Grant's punishing strokes and his soft touch is driving me crazy. But it's his nasty words whispered in my ear that sends me over the cliff. I'm panting and screaming and throwing my ass back like a mad woman. I want this feeling to last forever, but just when I think I'm coming down from my high, Grant

reaches around and rubs my clit.

“Fuuuuck! Yes, Oh shit! That feels so-ooo...”

“That’s it, darlin’ let it all out. Squirt on my dick. Fuck you feel good. You’re such a good girl, darlin’. Such a good fuckin’ girl!” Grant growls, steadily pumping his hips.

I knew he would talk me through it, but damn! This man is going to have me stalking his ass.

“I’m about to cum, darlin’. Where do you want it?” Grant grinds into me, and his question doesn’t even register in my mind.

Grant groans, and at the last minute, he pulls out and cums all over my ass. We collapse onto my bed, breathing hard and smiling. Grant goes into the bathroom, and I hear waterrunning. He comes out and wipes me clean, then lays down beside me.

I’m in blissful heaven until I hear beating on my door. At first, I thought maybe I’d blacked out, and I was imagining things until the loud yelling starts.

“Tarae, I know you’re in there! I saw your car in the garage! Open the fucking door!”

“Who the fuck is that?” Grant growls before sitting up.

Oh shit, I think my bodyguard is about to whoop some ass!

Chapter Eight

I couldn’t even enjoy my orgasmic bliss because of some motherfucker trying to knock down the damn door. I planned on going at least another two rounds with Tarae before I let her little ass go to sleep. But now I have to interrupt my plans to

have her singing my name and begging me to let her cum.

I storm into the living room, snatching on my pants before pulling the door open. “What the fuck do you want?” I growl, looking at the bastard that needs his ass beat.

“Who the fuck are you?” Mark steps back with wide eyes.

I guess the last thing he was expecting was a half-naked man opening his ex-girlfriend’s door. But what I can’t understand is why he’s here. Tarae told me all about his bullshit over dinner. I knew he saw us. I watched him as he tried to discreetly look in our direction. He might think he’s slick, but I’m trained to point out a stalker or a crazed fan from a mile away. Mark couldn’t even concentrate on his date because he was too busy staring at Tarae.

I can’t say that I blame him because Tarae is a gorgeous woman. She lights up any room that she’s in, including the restaurant. I know Mark is having regrets, I could see it all over his face, but he’s a bold motherfucker for showing up here.

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“You’re asking the wrong questions, buddy.” I step closer to Mark.

He backs up again until we’re both standing in the hall. I can see the fear in his eyes even though I wouldn’t categorize Mark as small. I mean, we are similar in height, and he’s a muscular football player. Now, whether he can fight is something different. But if he doesn’t get the hell outta here, we will soon find out if he is as good at dodging punches as he is running a ball.

“Hey man, I just need to talk to my girl.” Mark puffs out his chest.

I smirk, “You don’t have a girl here, so I suggest you move around before you get fucked up.”

Mark frowns and balls up his fists. I already know he’s going to throw a punch before he makes a move. And just like I knew he would, the asshole swings with all his might. I dodge and lay a haymaker on his ass. Mark goes down hard and is sprawled out on the floor in the blink of an eye.

I hear a faint gasp behind me, and when I turn, Tarae is standing in my shirt with her hand covering her mouth. I love to see her in my clothes, but I have to fight the smile that wants to break out because she looks horrified.

“Darlin’? You alright?” I ask, softening my voice.

“Hell yeah! You knocked his ass out! Finally, he got the karma he deserved!” Tarae cackles, bending over holding her stomach.

I let my smile cover my face before moving toward Tarae and wrapping her in my arms. She hugs me before letting out a deep breath. I look down into her face, and she's still smiling.

"Although I'm enjoying seeing Mark laid out, we probably need to call his agent," she says.

I nod, understanding. Tarae might feel contempt for her ex, but calling the police would exasperate the situation, especially with the online harassment and weird messages that Tarae has been receiving.

"Should I pull him into your apartment? Somebody could see him lying out here."

Tarae heavily sighs, "I don't know. Maybe we should..."

She doesn't get to finish her sentence because Mark moans, rolling over on his back. I watch him until he sits up, rubbing his jaw. I frown.

I guess the dickhead can take a punch. Good to know.

"You sucker punched me," Mark groans, holding his head like a pussy.

I smirk and cross my arms over my chest. This motherfucker. The only sucker present is his bitchass.

"T, baby, call the police. He assaulted me," Mark whines and points at me like he's in elementary school.

"Be fuckin' for real. I watched you try to hit him and miss. You got what you deserved. How'd the hell did you get in here anyway? I took your name off the list." Tarae puts her hands on her curvy hips and narrows her dark eyes.

“I’m Mark Davis, I am the fucking list. What the fuck you mean?” Mark rolls his eyes, standing up. “I can’t believe you tried to remove me anyway. Like I said, me and Alexa are just a publicity thing. We’ll be done after a while, and then we can continue on with our plans. You wanted us to be more. We can finally move in together.”

I look between him and Tarae because this idiot cannot be serious. There’s no way he thinks that he can just push a woman like Tarae to the side, and she will be waiting. I may have just met her in person, but I know she’s too smart for a dumbass like him.

“I know he doesn’t think I’m that damn dense,” Tarae mumbles, shaking her head. She looks up at me and gives me a small smile, “Baby, come inside. I’ve wasted enough time with this shit.”

Tarae holds out her hand to me, completely ignoring Mark. I smirk and take her hand.

“I suggest you get the fuck outta here before I lay your ass out again. I’m sure you don’t need any more concussions.”

“Fuck you, you’ll regret this. Do you know who the fuck I am?”

“Yeah, the bitch begging my woman for a second chance that you’ll never get.”

I go inside, slamming the door in Mark’s face. I know it isn’t the last we will see of Mark. Men like him don’t like rejection, and from the way he just acted, I know he’ll be back.

Bring it on, motherfucker.

Chapter Nine

TARAE

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I'm surprised as hell when I see a picture on social media of Grant and Mark standing toe to toe like two boxers about to battle it out. It took less than a week for my black ass to be back in the gossip news cycle. I don't even know who the hell took the picture. Nobody was even in the hall.

The comments online have been wild as hell, but at least not all of them are negative now. Honey's fans are down with the swirl, and they love them some Grant.

On the complete opposite end of the spectrum, Alexa's fans have picked up on the name calling and the body shaming. I say fuck them, I like my fat ass. And they're welcome to kiss it.

I don't understand why they're mad anyway; they should be happy I'm not interfering with their fav and the love of her life. But you can't expect logic from a bunch of teenagers with horrible taste in music.

I sigh as I think about all of the bullshit my agent has had to deal with. I'm just glad Shelby is as cutthroat as they come, and she won't let things get too much out of hand. Even though I begged her to get me out of hosting the ELFIEs, she insisted that I needed the positive exposure. I guess she's right, but I'd still rather hide my head in the sand than host an awards show with Mark.

Speaking of that asshole, he's been calling and texting me nonstop since that night...

Tarae call me back...

T I love you baby... I just need you to wait for me to get my name out there.

Who the fuck do you think you are!

Ur nothin without me!

I should leak his bipolar ass texts to the media, but I won't. I'm trying to move on with my life, but his ass is determined to pull me into his bullshit. If I engage with him, he'll just try harder.

So, I do my best to ignore him, but he's really starting to irk the bad side of my Gemini. And what's even worse I haven't been able to spend as much time with Grant because he's had to work. Honey has to make several appearances, and of course, Grant, as head of her security, has to be there. We've only been dating for a few weeks now, but I miss him.

We talk every day, and when he's in town we spend every second of downtime that he has. But it's still not enough. The more time I spend with him, the more I want to continue to spend with him.

I told myself I wouldn't fall so hard for another man, but I've already slipped. Grant treats me like a queen, and even with the limited amount of time we spend together he gives me the affection and love that I didn't know I was craving.

I've been hiding out in my apartment, only leaving when Grant is in town, but today, I have to venture out for a fitting for my award show dress. It's not like I'm Beyoncé, and the paparazzi are hanging around my apartment, but I'm still getting threatening messages, and it makes me feel like I'm being watched whenever I'm out. I've blocked more unknown accounts than I care to count. But the same stupid messages keep popping up...

You will never be Alexa!!!

I'll make sure to beat your ass when I see you.

Ur a bitch! Alexa is better than you.

Alexa. Alexa. Alexa.

I never thought people could actually be so obsessed with one person while still threatening another. Like CeCe says, they gotta be weirdos.

I take a deep breath and do my best to not think about the trolls. Besides, strangers on the internet can't keep me from shining if I don't let them. So, I get my shit together and do what I have to do.

It doesn't take me long to get ready to go to the boutique down on Wilshire. I don't know why I feel so jumpy when I park across the street from the shop, but when I look around, nobody is paying any attention to me.

When I enter the shop, CeCe is waiting for me. I love the fact that my bestie is a stylist. It saves me a lot of time because she knows me so well. And the fact that my network gave me a clothing budget for the awards show is a win-win. We both can get to the bag.

"I pulled several pieces for you. The stage director said you'll need three costume changes. I want to make sure we have more than that for backups." CeCe's in work mode and I love to see it.

My girl knows what she's doing, and I would only trust her to have me looking right. I go into the dressing room and try on a few outfits. The first ones are cute, but I feel they're a little too sexy for the occasion.

"This one is too short, Ce. Everyone on the front row will be able to see my who-ha."

“I’ll make sure nobody will see Miss Cookie. She’s too sweet to let just anybody see.”

I look up and find Grant smiling at me, and it’s like the sun is shining after a storm. I run to him, and he plucks me right out of the air and into his arms. I wrap my arms around him and kiss his bearded face. Grant’s deep belly laugh warms me so much my cheeks hurt from smiling so hard.

“What are you doing here? I thought I wouldn’t see you for another week,” I say when he puts me down.

“Honey had a break in her schedule, so I thought I’d come to see my baby. How’s my girl?” Grant whispers in my ear.

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He kisses my neck softly, and a chill runs through me. This man does things to my body that I didn't know were possible. Grant has the magic touch when it comes to turning me on.

“How'd you know where I was? Not that I'm mad you showed up. I'm so happy you're here!”

“You have your location on, and you posted on social media. You gotta stop doing that, darlin'. Especially when I'm not with you.” Grant raises a brow at me, and I feel thoroughly chastised.

“You're right. I forgot to turn it off.”

I've gotten in the habit of only posting on my professional account because I'm obligated. I completely forgot to turn off the location when I posted a behind-the-scenes look at my shopping for the ELFIEs.

“You can't forget something like that, darlin'. It's crazies out here. I saw some weirdos hanging around outside when I came in.”

“I promise not to forget again, okay. Stop worrying. You're here right now. You can protect me from all of the weirdos in the world.”

“Speaking of weirdos,” Grant says as he looks toward the shop doors.

I turn to see who he's talking about and shake my head when Chrissy comes bounding into the building. I swear, ever since the day she low-key insulted me, I've

kept my distance. But one day, Grant and I ran into her in the hall, and she treated him like an enemy of the state.

You would've thought Grant pissed in her cereal, stole her purse, and cussed out her granny the way she acted. The whole interaction was odd, but Chrissy is a strange chick sometimes. I couldn't believe she acted so hateful towards Grant, but she used to fall all over herself when Mark came around, even though he didn't give her a second look. He barely even spoke to her and she still acted like he hung the moon.

I guess a little fame can make anyone a fan. I didn't think Chrissy was like that, but I also thought Mark was the love of my life. Boy, was I wrong about that.

"Be nice," I whisper to Grant.

"I'm only nice to you, darlin'."

Chapter Ten

GRANT

"Hey, Chrissy. What're you doing here?" Tarae leaves my arms to greet her neighbor.

I would like to know the answer to that question myself. Christina Marcus is on my radar. I always trust my gut, and something about her doesn't sit right with me.

It's not just the fact that she was rude as fuck to me for no reason. I don't give a shit about that. But I noticed things that Tarae hasn't. Like the fact that Chrissy just so happens to be in the hall when we are, or the way she's always watching Tarae, or how she just shows up out of nowhere all the time. Even now, she's watching Tarae like a hawk.

I got my eyes on Chrissy. I haven't figured out what she's all about, but I will. I don't like the idea of my woman being uncomfortable in any way, shape, or form.

"I wanted to do a little shopping today, and I saw you come in here. I was surprised you would be in this neighborhood. I didn't think you could afford this place with the little job you have."

"Excuse me? I know you didn't just say... you know what, let me go finish trying on my clothes." Tarae walks away without saying anything else, but I know she's holding back.

"Hey, darlin'." I follow behind her. I pull Tarae to my chest and kiss her soundly on the lips. "She'll be gone when you come back."

Tarae nods, heading into the dressing room. I approach Chrissy like I did the bomb, with a lot of suspicion. There's a reason she's always taking jabs at Tarae, but I don't care what her reason is. Just because they're neighbors doesn't mean they have to be friends. Tarae doesn't deserve assholes in her life after what her ex has put her through.

CeCe comes from the back where Tarae disappeared, and she has a mean scowl on her face. I smirk because I know CeCe is in best friend mode, and now I won't have to look like the big bad wolf. I were caught yelling at a woman. I know exactly how that would look in the press. And what's bad is they would probably find a way to blame Tarae.

"What did you say to Tarae? No, scratch that. Why are you even here? Better yet, when are you leaving? That jealous aura is throwing off the vibe in here, so why don't you go on and get the hell outta here." CeCe doesn't even let Chrissy respond as she throws out question after question with her hands on her hips.

“You can’t tell me to leave. This is a public place.” Chrissy smirks.

“Yeah, but I had it closed down today for Tarae. So, you need to go,” CeCe says.

I signal the owner, and she comes from behind the counter and stands near Chrissy, ready to do my bidding.

“Yo— you can’t do that!”

“Yeah, she can. She asked you to leave, so just go,” I firmly respond.

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“Oh shut up! Who are you? You’re just some security guard!” Chrissy shouts.

“Nah, I’m a bodyguard.” I wave my hand again, and the owner escorts a blubbing Chrissy out of the shop and locks the door behind her.

“You know she’s gonna be a problem, right?” CeCe questions, squinting after Chrissy.

“She’s already a problem,” I say as both CeCe and I stare at the door Chrissy was just pushed out of.

I knew I should’ve done a background check on her. But I will rectify that. I won’t brush off her rash comments this time. I pull out my cell and begin texting my guy. He will have background, phone records, and even Chrissy’s blood type by the time Tarae is finished with her fitting.

It takes about another hour and a half for Tarae to finish up, and I offer to take both ladies to lunch. CeCe declines, saying she has to make sure the outfits are tailored to fit Tarae so they will be ready in plenty of time for the show. I’m just glad all I have to do is wear a black suit, and I’m good to go.

“So, darlin’, what do you wanna eat?” I question, unlocking and opening the door for Tarae.

She doesn’t respond because she’s distracted by her phone. When she abruptly stops walking, I go on high alert. Tarae’s expression morphs into devastation and the look alone has me ready to kill. I can only assume it’s more media bullshit by the way

she's scrolling on her phone, but I can't be sure. With all the shit that's going on there's no telling what has her upset.

"Grant, what is this?" Tarae brokenly whispers.

I frown, looking at her carefully. "What's what?" Tarae holds out the phone, and I take it from her hand.

I scroll through her phone, but I don't react right away because I'm used to this. The fact that there are pictures of me and Honey looking very compromising is nothing new. But they could potentially hurt Tarae, and that pisses me off.

The media has always tried to ship Honey and me since the beginning of her career. They can't tie her to anyone because she's extremely private about her love life, so they make shit up. I'm the closest man in her circle, so they do everything they can to make it seem like our relationship is romantic.

"It's pictures of me and Honey," I simply answer.

"It's you and Honey snuggled in an intimate embrace, Grant. You two look like lovers." She shakes her head. "I can't go through this shit again."

I pull Tarae back into the shop and close the door behind us. The last thing I want to do is argue out in public. And I know this conversation is about to get unnecessarily heated.

"Tarae, you know I wouldn't cheat on you. Honey is like a sister to me. I don't want it to sound cliché, but I swear to God Tarae, those pictures aren't telling the whole story. I swear it isn't what it looks like."

"You think that I think you cheated on me?" Tarae condescendingly questions, still

shaking her head.

“I mean, that’s what the picture suggests,” I carefully respond.

I pride myself on reading situations and knowing exactly what to do and when to do it. I know that Tarae has been hurt, and the wounds from her ex are still fresh. But we’ve been dating for almost two months, and I’m pretty good at reading her moods. But I have to admit that I’m a little confused.

“First of all, nobody in their right mind would cheat on Honey—”

“Nobody in their right mind would cheat on you,” I interrupt her.

Tarae sighs, and her shoulders slump. For the first time, I can’t predict what she’s thinking or how I should handle it. I want to fix this, but the truth is, only her trust in me can fix this situation.

Chapter Eleven

TARAE

I know that Grant isn’t cheating on me. That picture was all about angles. Grant showed me another picture that wasn’t posted that he got from Honey’s official photographer. It’s of Honey tripping and Grant catching her before she fell, which is how they ended up hugging, with him looking so concerned.

I believed him when he said it wasn’t what it looked like. But my knee-jerk reaction was that they were going to drag me again for a cheating boyfriend. I can’t catch a damn break when it comes to the media, and I’m a part of the media. I should have some kind of leeway, but it seems they are going extra hard on me because I am a reporter.

It really isn't Grant's fault, and I need to grow a thicker skin, but I can admit that my feelings were hurt seeing another woman in his arms. Someone he has known way longer than me, I might add.

Okay, jealousy doesn't look good on you, girl.

I need to call Grant and apologize. I was acting childish and had him drop me off at home instead of going to lunch. He took the time to surprise me, and I acted like a bitch. I can't take my trauma from my last relationship into this one if I want this to work.

I grab the phone and call Grant, but he doesn't pick up. I can't say that I blame him, but I need to put on my big girl panties and apologize, so I leave a message.

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“Hey, baby. I’m sorry. Please call me back so I can apologize properly. Bye.”

There’s a knock on my door, and I smile to myself. Maybe Grant didn’t pick up because he was already on his way here. I rush to open the door, but I’m surprised to find Chrissy standing there.

“What’re you doing here?”

“I just wanted an apology for what happened today.” She brushes past me into my apartment.

I frown, closing the door and following her into my living room. This chick has been acting strange and we need to get to the bottom of this. Her little jabs are out of hand, so whatever she needs to get off her chest, it’s time.

“I don’t owe you an apology. But I will allow you three seconds to tell me what your problem is before you can get the hell up out my house.”

“You think you’re so special, but I’m here to tell you the truth. Alexa is so much better than you could ever be. She has more talent and class in her pinky than you could even think about having. Alexa Ash is who you wanna be. She’s beautiful, rich, and sexy. You could never!”

This bitch is crazy.

“Why the hell are you telling me about fucking Alexa? Who the fuck cares? You have been rude to me for the past few months because of some pop star. Girl fuck

you! Getcho crazy ass outta my house.”

I go to walk past her to show her to the door, but Chrissy pushes me from behind as she continues to yell nonsense. I stumble forward, but I am able to keep my balance. I turn around to confront her, but Chrissy swings. I duck just in time and push her in the chest.

This hoe wants to tussle. Let’s fucking go!

Chrissy stumbles from my push, but I don’t let her catch her balance. I move forward and swing on her ass. I catch her jaw with my punch. Chrissy falls to the floor, holding her face.

I know the saying goes don’t kick a man while he’s down, but she’s a woman. So, I kick my foot and connect it to her stomach. Chrissy curls up, moaning so I rush to grab my phone to call the police.

However, I realize someone is beating on my door. It’s probably another neighbor wondering what all the screeching and crashing is going on. I open the door, ready to explain, but Grant is standing there.

“Are you okay? What the fuck is going on in here?” Grant pulls me behind him as he goes into protector mode, and it makes me fall for him even more.

“I’m good. Chrissy attacked me, but I handled it. We probably need to call the police, though.” I come from behind Grant and point to a still moaning Chrissy.

“I heard all the noise, and it scared the shit outta me.”

“She attacked me out of nowhere. Pretty sure she’s an Alexa Ash fan.” I shake my head at the craziness of it all.

“No, she’s a lot more than that.”

Once the police get here, they pretty much tell me that they can’t arrest Chrissy because it’s her word against mine. She told them I attacked her first, and I told them the truth.

But they said I willingly let her in, so she wasn’t trespassing. We were advised to just stay away from each other. The fucking police. They won’t do anything unless somebody is hurt or worse.

Grant insisted that we go to his place because he didn’t like the idea of Chrissy and me being in the same vicinity, so I packed a bag and went with him without any pushback. I called CeCe and told her what happened, and of course, I got all of the “I told you so” from my bestie. She was right, so I just took it.

But now that we are settled in at Grant’s he’s ready to give me the rundown on my cray cray neighbor.

“So, Chrissy? What’d you find out about her?” I ask, curling up beside Grant on his couch.

“Yeah, she’s actually Alexa’s cousin and she works on her marketing team.”

“Wait, what?” I sit up, looking into Grant’s dark, serious gaze.

“You heard me, darlin’. Not only is she her family, but she runs all of the social media accounts. And a few troll accounts as well.”

“So, you’re telling me Chrissy isn’t just a crazed fan. She’s her cousin! And she was

getting paid to harass me. Chrissy was my crazy online stalker.” I shake my head at the absurdity of it all. “Well, at least she was paid. It could’ve been some dude in his mama’s basement doing it for free.” I shrug.

It doesn’t make me feel any better about being harassed online, but at least I don’t have a stalker. I was worried about some man being obsessed, and it was my neighbor the entire time. I hope now that we know it’s her the harassment will stop.

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“She was also the one who leaked the picture of me and Mark that night. She’s been leaking lots of pictures. I think that’s why she showed up today; she was probably planning to leak something else online.” Grant shakes his head.

“The police won’t arrest her for any of that, though,” I sigh.

“No, but I guarantee that she will stay away from you. I took care of that. I let Alexa’s team know that I will leak every negative piece of information I have on her online. And I have plenty. I even gave them a little preview.

Grant shows me an arrest record that’s a mile long. Apparently it was expunged. How he got it, I’ll never ask. But as I scan through the document the charges go from DUI’s, drunk and disorderly charges, assault, and even public nudity.

Damn! This girl is a whole mess.

“I’m sure her team doesn’t want her squeaky clean teeny bopper image to be ruined by the truth. So, you don’t have to worry about Chrissy or Alexa anymore. Both have been warned to stay away from you.”

“Well, damn. I guess I don’t need a bodyguard after all.” I smirk at Grant he frowns.

I can’t keep a straight face for long because Grant’s pout is adorable. I smile at him, and he shakes his head, grabbing me by the waist. He kisses me soundly, and I know everything will be fine.

Epilogue

GRANT

“Baby, you feel so good. Oh my God,” Tarae moans as she moves her hips seductively.

“No, baby. You feel good. Take this dick like I know you can. That’s it. Move those hips. You’re such a good girl.”

Tarae loves it when I talk her through it. She loudly groans and circles her hips wildly. I can’t get enough of this woman. She was made for me. Her body, mind, her fucking soul is mine.

“I’m going to cum. Baby, please. I need... I need...”

I know exactly what she needs, so I place my hand between our bodies and rub her clit. I can feel Tarae’s orgasm building. Her sweet pussy is clenching around me so deliciously that I have to concentrate extra hard so I don’t cum.

I stroke into her roughly, rubbing her clit in tandem. Tarae shoots off like a rocket, screaming my name while her whole body shakes. I continue to thrust through her orgasm while holding mine back.

As soon as Tarae’s head lulls back, I know she’s had enough. But I pull her head up and kiss her roughly. I let myself go, and I fill her sweet pussy with cum. We lay back, breathing hard, and I know there’s no other place I’d rather be.

I don’t know what I was expecting when I signed up for a dating agency, but I didn’t think I would ever find a woman as smart and beautiful as Tarae. It’s like she was written just for me.

Tarae may not have needed a bodyguard to protect her from Chrissy, but that doesn’t

mean I won't be there to shield her from any harm for the rest of my life. My woman deserves to be treated like a queen, and I'm just the man for the job.

TARAE

The cheering of the ELFIEs crowd never felt so rewarding. I have been killing it all evening, and I'm so glad that I went through with this. Shelby was right, this has been a positive experience.

Too bad Mark has been off his game tonight. He's been stuttering through the lines from the teleprompter, entering and exiting at the wrong time on stage, and not landing any of the jokes.

The last one isn't really his fault; the writers were in charge of the jokes. But I didn't have any problems with my delivery. I feel bad for Mark...

"Our next category is about pure talent. Speaking of which, we all know a reporter isn't as talented as a world-renowned pop star or a world-famous athlete, but hey somebody has to be a fan. Isn't that right, Tarae?" Mark smirks in my direction.

That wasn't on the teleprompter. Oh so this motherfucker wants to write his own jokes huh. He didn't stutter through that, did he... asshole.

"That's right, Mark. Some of you have to be fans. I mean some people lack the talent to lip sync autotuned lyrics and dance off beat. And some players have the talent to actually run and catch a ball without fumbling. I mean, you used to have that talent, right Mark?" I smirk as the crowd oohs and the laughs get louder and louder.

Take that bitch. We can both go off script.

“Alright, Alright.” I wave my hands calming the crowd. “While we’re on the subject of talent,” I continue while Mark stands seething, staring a hole in the side of my head. “This next presenter is known for her talent as the greatest tennis player of all time. We like to call her the GOAT. Let’s give a big round of applause to Simone Williamson.”

When the applause starts, Mark and I are given the cue to exit the stage. We both walk toward the dressing rooms, but as soon as we get away from people, Mark gets in my face. I know he’s mad because his dark brown face is scrunched up with fury.

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“You think you’re so smart. You tried to embarrass me in front of millions of people. You know I can have you—” Mark doesn’t finish his sentence because he’s snatched away from me.

“If you value your life, I suggest you get out of my woman’s face. I would hate to knock your ass out again.” Grant has Mark’s arm twisted behind his back so fast I barely registered what happened.

I don’t even know how Grant got backstage, but I won’t question it. His timing is always impeccable.

I’m not scared of Mark. Even though he’s a large man, he’s good at talking shit, but he’s really a pussy. He’s a man who uses intimidation to get his way, on and off the field. Too bad I have a bodyguard that doesn’t get intimidated.

“Just let me go...” Mark whines.

“Get the fuck outta here before you have to explain to your coach how you got a concussion in the off-season.”

Mark grunts when Grant lets him go. He doesn’t even look back as he hurries away like the coward he is. I never thought I would say this, but I’m glad Mark cheated. He’s her problem now.

“My hero.” I bat my lashes at Grant and wrap my arms around his neck.

“No, your bodyguard.”

THE END.