

A man in a masquerade mask and a woman in profile. The man is on the left, wearing a dark, ornate mask and a denim shirt. The woman is on the right, looking back over her shoulder, wearing a red and gold masquerade mask and a red and gold outfit. The background is dark with blue and orange lighting.

# The Fun House

Does your best friend really know you well  
enough to pick the man of your dreams?

Dana Littlejohn

The Fun House

By Dana

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2015

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# Dedication

I'd like to dedicate this book to two people.

Once upon a time someone said to me “you want to be author when you grow up? Do you know how many people are out there writing? You better shoot for a real job because that’s never going to happen.” To her I want to say, “na-nanny-poo-poo!” and thank you for the push.

Second my husband, Johnny. No matter how weird I get, or how many strange questions and requests I make of him, he’s down for it all.





# Chapter One

Diamond Jones tapped her hands on the steering wheel to the beat of one of her favorite songs. The late afternoon sun and breeze through the windows warmed her. Another day's work behind, the weekend ahead...life was good. She glided down the highway, fighting the urge to swerve from lane to lane to the music. Singing out loud and nodding hello to the drivers who passed her by always made her laugh. Their reactions

were priceless. Just as another of her favorite songs began and she belted the words at the top of her lungs, her cell phone rang.

“Hello.”

“Hey, baby. Are you on your way home?”

She smiled. “Yup, I’m almost there.”

Her best friend gasped in her ear.

“Girl, what the hell are you listening to? Are you still stuck on that oldies station?”

Diamond laughed. “You know I like this station.”

“Girl, The Temptations are old farts

now. Leave them and their old stuff in the past. Change the station so you can hear that fine Pitbull or Ne-Yo if you want some R&B. That's real music."

"Whatever, Tia." She chuckled, turning the music down. "Are you coming out to Atlanta or what?"

"I'm already en route. You know how I feel about the speed limit."

"Yes, yes, it's merely a suggestion."

"That's right," her friend agreed. "So I should be there in about an hour. See you then. Love you!"

Diamond couldn't stop the goofy grin

she knew was on her face. Tia was the closest person she had to a sister. Her father and Tia's father were best friends. Their families only lived down the street from one another for most of their lives. Tia was an only child and Diamond the only girl, they became fast friends. She hadn't seen her best friend since Tia accepted a new position that moved her to Indiana. They were still adjusting to living miles apart from one another. She missed her terribly and looked forward to spending the weekend just hanging with her bestie again.

Diamond pulled into her driveway and made her way through the front door. Kicking off her shoes, she dropped her keys on the little table by the door, then headed for the kitchen. She stuck her head in the refrigerator searching for something appealing. Pushing aside a container of orange juice, a half-gallon of milk and a bottle of white wine, Diamond finally grabbed one of the many cans of soda in the back. Taking the drink with her up the back steps, she stopped to check the room Tia would use during her visit.

Diamond gave the room a quick scan. The room's wallpaper resembled a forest. Trees of all sizes almost reached the ceiling. The blue color and fluffy white clouds scattered about gave the ceiling a realistic sky look. The plants in each corner of the room looked more like mini trees. Her feet sank into the plush hunter green carpet as she pulled the bedspread back on the four-poster brass bed. Satisfied, she took a sip of her drink and went down the hall to her own room with a smile.

She put the can on her vanity and

flipped on the stereo on a nearby dresser. Dancing around the room, she moved to a small dresser by her bed. After yanking out some underwear, she kissed her hand and tapped it against the picture on the wall of an African-American man reclining naked on a beach. “Who loves you, baby.”

Diamond dropped the underwear on the bed and bowed to the pictures of the African Queens on the wall.

“Ladies,” she said in greeting, then danced her way to the closet.

Pulling out the desired outfit, she

bounced her head to the song and took a final sip of her soda before walking into the bathroom.

\* \* \* \*

“Hey, girl, I made it,” Tia said, walking into the bedroom, dropping her bag.

Diamond finished tying her shoe, then met her friend in the middle of the floor.

“Yes, I see that. I missed you.”

Tia’s chestnut brown hair bounced around her head as they hugged.



Diamond felt almost childlike against Tia's Amazon warrior-like physique every time they held each other. The little ringlets on the top of her short haircut only reached Tia's shoulders. They were as different as two people could be physically.

“Whatever, girl,” Tia said jokingly. “We talk almost every other day. You don't have time to miss me.”

“Yeah, but it took you six months to come home for a visit. It's not the same.”

Tia leaned against the wall. “So, what's up for tonight?”

Diamond sat at her vanity sifting through a makeup case. “Well, I was thinking about dinner at that new restaurant downtown, The Floating Saké Hut.”

“That’s cool. Let me freshen up.”

She nodded and completed her makeup. “I’m going downstairs. I’ll meet you outside, okay?” she said down the hall a short while later.

By the time Diamond reached the stairs Tia pushed past her and ran down out the door, giggling like a schoolgirl.

“What in the world?”

Shaking her head, she laughed and continued down the stairs. Diamond stopped short at the front gate. Tia stood proudly in front of a car with the biggest grin she had seen in a long time.

“You like it? I wanted to surprise you,” she said.

Diamond stood in wide-eyed silence. She didn’t know a lot about cars, but she had seen commercials of the car Tia stood beside. It was top of the line and beautiful.

“Well, what do you think?”

Diamond brought her hand to her

chest. “It’s...it’s a Lexus, right?”

“Yes, ma’am, a 2013 Lexus Millennium, to be exact,” Tia added with her hand on her hips. “An aerodynamic, iridescent, two-door, drop-top, dream car, is what it really is.” She sighed, giving the roof a hug.

“I don’t know what to say. The only thing that comes to mind is...wow.” Diamond slid her hand across the back to the passenger door before getting in. “It’s beautiful.”

Tia walked around to the driver’s side. “I know. I was hooked the moment

I saw it. I know a guy at the dealership so I got one of the first ones when they rolled out. I drove it right off the lot.”

“So, what’s the occasion? Your other car was still in excellent condition.”

Tia batted her lashes innocently. “I’m a big-time lawyer now, aren’t I? Don’t you think I should look the part?”

Diamond tilted her head, then twisted her lips and they both roared with laughter as Tia drove away. The Floating Saké Hut was on the roof of the Georgia Peach Plaza hotel. They took an elevator directly to the restaurant bypassing the

rest of the hotel. The maitre d' greeted them as they stepped out.

“Good evening, ladies,” he said with a smile. “Welcome to The Floating Saké Hut. Just two for this evening?”

“Yes,” Diamond answered.

He consulted the seating chart on his podium. “I have a table ready in the rear of the dining room and one by the window with a view of the city. Which would you prefer?”

“The one by the window sounds nice,” Tia said.

“Okay, window seat it is,” Diamond

agreed.

“Very good, ladies. You will have no trouble finding your table as you enter the dining room. Enjoy your dinner.” He extended his arm toward the dining room.

Tia walked passed him to the dining area and noticed a faint glow around the edge of a table near the window.

“That must be for us,” Tia said, pointing toward the table.

They barely had time to get comfortable in their seats before the waiter appeared.

“Welcome, ladies. I am your waiter, Sung Yu. May I offer you a drink?”

Tia looked at Diamond, then shrugged. “I don’t care.”

“Bring us two carafes of your house saké,” Diamond said as she scanned the room.

“He was right about the view. It’s beautiful. Hey, this is a rotating restaurant too.” Tia gazed out the window.

“Too? You know of another one?”

“Uh-huh. There’s a hotel in Indiana with a restaurant on its roof that’s just



like this except they serve Italian food. I haven't been there yet, but I hear the food is really good. When you come to visit we'll go check it out."

Diamond nodded as she looked over the menu beneath the glass top of their table. After a few moments, she turned in her seat to check out the rest of the restaurant. Red, gold and black colors dominated. Long black beams stretched across the ceiling with authentic-looking red and gold Japanese lamps dangling from them. The walls were decorated with medium-sized black squares glued

together with smaller red squares inside them. The bright red carpet had black designs that reminded Diamond of little huts you might see on a desert island. Finally, she brought her attention back to Tia.

“Well, this place definitely gets an A for their atmosphere. I hope the food is good.”

“I like Japanese food, so as long as they’re authentic they’re good by me. I was thinking more on plan B.”

“Plan B?”

“Yeah, girl. You looked around the

whole damn place and didn't see them?" She rolled her eyes. "Plan B is how we can recruit those two guys, sitting over there in the far left corner, for some after dinner drinks."

Diamond shook her head. When she opened her mouth to object, Tia cut her off with a raised finger.

"Hey! I'm only here for the weekend. I plan to have fun every second possible. That means so will you," she said pointing at her. "You haven't had a man since you fired Ken-the-dick and that's been over two years ago."

Diamond rolled her eyes. “The man’s name was Kendrick, Tia.”

“Well, whatever. All I know is Ken-the-dick fit him better.”

Diamond let out a deep breath. “Fine. Whatever you want to do, I’m all yours.” She tipped her head in an exaggerated bow.

Tia smiled smugly. “Great. Hey, did you know we are about to enter our experimental freedom phase? Mmm-hmm. This article I read said women in their thirties are supposed to be very sexual because now that we know who we

are we aren't afraid to experiment sexually."

"Really?"

"Yup."

"But we're not even thirty yet."

"Girl, twenty-nine is knocking on the door to thirty. I think we can go ahead and claim thirty," she said, laughing.

"That's close enough."

"You've got a point," Diamond agreed with a chuckle. "So where'd you read that?"

"I don't remember. Cosmo, Essence, Playgirl, one of them. The point is, we're

supposed to be sexing it up all the time with our sexual selves and enjoying every minute of it. So we need to add those two guys over there to our sexing list.”

Diamond frowned. “We don’t have a list, Tia.”

“Well, we can start one with them.”

“You really are crazy,” Diamond said with a disbelieving laugh. Her gaze shifted to where the men were and spotted the waiter coming their way. “Oh good, here come our drinks.”

The waiter slid a tray with two carafes and two saké cups before them, then

pulled out his pad. “Are you ready to order or would you like a little more time?”

Tia stared at the tabletop menu. “Hmm, I want to taste everything. Give me a sample platter.” She looked at Diamond. “What about you?”

Diamond shrugged. “Sounds good, bring me one too.”

“Very good choice, ladies. The chef will be out shortly. If you run low on your saké, you need only to wave at me and I’ll replace it. Enjoy your dinner.” He left them with a quick bow.

Diamond raised her cup. “Welcome home.”

Tia touched her friend’s glass to hers. “To us and a fun-filled weekend.”

Their first carafe emptied quickly. Just as they poured the second, the chef walked up, pushing a small cart. The table was U-shaped to accommodate the person coming and going. He stopped opposite them at the table, pushed a button on the side and the grill slid out from beneath.

“Ladies, a greeting to you and my thanks for coming to The Floating Saké



Hut. I am your chef, Po.”

Po had a soft, crackly voice and a kind face set with deep wrinkles. He was shorter than average for a man, barely taller than Diamond herself, but the tall white pleated hat he wore made him seem taller. Falling onto the shoulders of his oversized, double-breasted white chef’s coat were several strands of dull gray hair, and when he rolled up the long sleeves, it showed his thin arms and gnarly hands.

Diamond feared for him as he grabbed the large, sharp looking blades

he would use to cut the food, but once he started cooking, her fear disappeared. Po's skill left her and Tia in wide-eyed wonder.

Po chopped and sliced with the skill and ease of years of practice. Throwing mushrooms, onions, shrimp and chicken into the air, he had them sliced up before they could hit the grill.

Tia reached for the carafe, but Po used his blades to pick up the carafe. Diamond and Tia both jumped back with a gasp. He refilled the cup for her, switched blades and continued cooking

without missing a beat. In no time, he placed the food on their plates and bowed to them. Both their mouths were ajar when they looked at each other.

“Enjoy your meal,” Po said with another bow, then pushed his cart away.

They ate and finished off the rest of their saké. Tia signaled the waiter.

“Are you getting us another carafe?” Diamond asked after finishing her drink.

“Nope. I’m sending our cute friends over there a hello gesture.”

“Yes, ma’am. How can I help you?” the waiter asked.

“Will you send those two gentlemen at the back table a drink of whatever they’re having, with compliments from my friend, please?”

Diamond’s head popped up, her mouth too full to protest.

“Of course,” he said with a slight smile.

“Oh, calm down before you choke. We’re about to start our fun weekend.”

Tia smiled brightly. Diamond groaned inwardly and finished eating, staring at Sung Yu’s back as he stood before the men with their drinks.

Diamond continued eating while giving into the frequent urge to glance at Sung Yu's whereabouts. From her seat she could clearly see the men Tia sent the drinks to. They were very attractive and just as different in appearance as she and Tia were. One brown-skinned with a goatee and no hair on his head, the other, lighter with hair on his head but not his face. He spoke to the men for a moment before handing them their drinks. The men turned as Sung Yu indicated her and Tia. Diamond stifled a squeal at being caught staring, then

averted her eyes. Tia, however, lifted her glass.

“What are you doing?” Diamond mumbled, nudging her.

“What? I was saying hello.”

When the men rose with obvious intent of coming to their table, Diamond gasped.

“Look what you did,” she whispered, urgently poking Tia in the side. “Now they’re coming over here.”

“Yes,” she hissed under her breath. Tia wiped her mouth quickly, then reapplied her lipstick. “I call dibs on the

big one.”

Diamond scoffed. She reached up, but dropped her arm. Before she could smack Tia in the head, the men had reached the table.

“Good evening, ladies. We wanted to come over and personally thank you for the drinks.”

“Of course,” Tia said with a smile.

“My name is Treyvon Dillon, but my friends call me Trey.” He extended his hand. “This is my friend Kain Williams.” He nodded in his friend’s direction.

Tia stood to shake his hand and was almost eye-to-eye with him. She smiled at the shocked look he quickly tried to mask.

“Hi Trey, I’m Tia Johnson and this is my friend, Diamond Jones.”

They all shook hands exchanging greetings. Trey and Kain joined them while they finished their drinks and the girls finished another carafe.

“It’s getting late,” Trey said with a quick look at his watch.

“Would it be okay to finish this conversation with you ladies somewhere



more casual?”

“Sure, where do you want to go?” Tia asked, always ready for anything.

“Well, if it’s okay, I’d like to stop by my place and change if we’re going somewhere. I just got off work,” Kain suggested.

Diamond quietly assessed him. His lovely smile, cute dimples and beauty mark on his lower cheek made him very attractive. She thought he was already dressed casually in black pants and a short sleeve mock neck shirt. Turning toward Trey, Diamond’s head tilted

slightly. Trey wore a beige linen suit with a black T-shirt and shoes. His outfit was casual as well, but different in a way, almost sexy. Her brow rose as she wondered where a man worked that he would think to dress sexy. She looked at Tia and shrugged.

“No problem, we’ll meet you outside,” Tia told them.

“Excellent. We’ll be in Kain’s black Jeep,” Trey said, picking up his keys and jacket.

They left the restaurant and went their separate ways. Diamond followed

Tia to the car and they left the garage to rendezvous with the guys. Kain and Trey were in a Jeep beside them. He leaned past Trey to say something to Tia.

“Just lead the way, baby. I’ll be right behind you,” Tia responded out the window. “We’re headed out to Gainsville, girl. I sure hope he ain’t scared to put some speed on that Jeep of his.”

Diamond leaned her head back, blowing out a breath. A shiver raced up her spine at the mention of the city. Gainsville, Georgia held unpleasant

memories.

She and Kendrick were going to his brother's house for a party in Gainesville. Kendrick's brother, Stephan was throwing a birthday party for his lover, Josh, who was celebrating his sixty-fifth birthday. They arrived at the house around ten-thirty that evening to find the party in full swing. People grabbed and hugged on Kendrick,

and though he complained about it, he returned the hugs willingly before walking into the next. Diamond followed him through the crowd in search of his brother when he was done, but ended up at the bar.

“What do you want to drink?” she asked Kendrick.

“Just get me a Kamikaze. I’m probably going to need something strong to deal with this crowd.”

Diamond handed him his drink. Before he took his first sip, Kendrick spotted his brother going into another room. He swallowed his drink in a few gulps, grabbed her hand and dragged her through the crowd again. They walked into the room and Diamond's mouth dropped open. The setting made her feel like Aladdin's genie should pop out of

somewhere any minute.

Pink and white sheer drapes hung from ceiling to floor all around. Huge cushions covered the floor, leaving tiny pockets for your feet and the legs of the small round end tables between each. Kendrick's brother spotted them at the door. He let out a squeal of delight.

Kendrick heard him and walked toward him with a smile on his face. Kendrick's

brother was handsome. Five-foot-ten, smooth caramel skin, eyes so light brown they bordered on beige, with long swooping dark lashes. With his high cheekbones, tight, slim body and smile that could light up a room, he and Kendrick were often mistaken as twins. The only obvious differences were Stephan's neat fashionable dreads on the top of his head and he was a noticeable



three inches shorter than his older brother. Kendrick greeted him with a hug.

“Hey, little brother, how are you?”

“Hello yourself, sweet pea. I’m just fine as usual and just as pretty as you are. I’m so glad you came. Josh is feeling very generous on his birthday. He says everyone can spend the night if they want, so who knows when the party will end.”

Stephan laughed and lightly smacked Kendrick's chest. Grabbing his hand, he led him toward Josh. Looking over his shoulder he spoke to Diamond, as an afterthought.

“Oh, yes, hello, Diamond.”

“Hi, Stephan,” she mumbled, rolling her eyes.

“Still insist on keeping my brother straight, I see.”

Stephan's smile was

blatantly fake. Diamond let out an exasperated sound under her breath and followed them. Josh was a short, balding, portly white man. The hair he did have was a dull gray that he wore combed over to the left.

“Ken, my boy, how are you?” Josh asked in his booming voice. “I see you’re still into women.” He slapped his knee, laughing, then jumped up faster than

his belly would lead you to believe he could, and pulled Diamond into his arms. “How are you, Diamond?”

“Just fine, Josh,” she said pleasantly, pulling herself out of his tight grip. “Happy birthday,” she added, and handed him a small gift-wrapped box.

“Thank you, thank you.” He returned to his cushion.

“I like this room, Josh, but I don’t remember it

looking like this the last time we were here.”

He patted the cushion next to his in invitation. “No, Diamond, it didn’t look like this. I wanted something a little different for my birthday this year, so I had two rooms redecorated. The other one is upstairs. No telling what you might see in this house when you come by, eh?” He winked and roared with laughter again as

Stephan giggled next to him.

The wine had flowed freely as well as the stories of Josh's life when suddenly Kendrick leaned close to Diamond's ear.

“I think it's safe for us to leave now. I'm going upstairs for a minute, when I come back we'll go.”

Diamond nodded and caught Stephan's eye. He cut a look at his lover and shook his head.

“So, Diamond...”

Stephan began, refilling her glass. “Do you think Kenny likes coming out here?”

Diamond sipped her wine, trying to avoid eye contact. Fidgeting and shifting, she opened her mouth to stumble out a reply, but he spoke again.

“You don’t have to feel all weird about it, sweetie. We know he probably tells you he hates it here,”

Stephan told her swirling the wine in his glass.

Diamond willed her mouth to stay closed, but her eyes widened. Stephan smiled and continued.

“Oh yes, we know lots of things, but here’s the million-dollar question.” He leaned closer to her. “If he hates it so much, why in the eight months you guys have been dating, have you spent so much time out here?”



Diamond picked up her drink and peered over her glass at Josh, who quickly looked away. She gazed about her and noticed the few people, who had sat with them telling their tacky and politically incorrect gay jokes, had discreetly left. Apparently they had been coming out here for some really lame reasons lately. Humiliation filled her every pore. Then, as though a light

bulb lit up over her head, she snapped her head up and opened her mouth, but Stephan interrupted her again.

“Please, girl.” He threw his hand up. “Don’t go there with that crap about me being his only brother and he has to make sacrifices or some other bullshit like that to see me,” he said sarcastically as if reading her mind. “That’s what phone

calls and texting are for,” he added, rolling his eyes and taking another sip from his glass.

Her mouth snapped shut and she leaned back against the wall.

“Oh, dear, was that your only answer?” he asked, touching his chest with mock innocence. “Hmm, let me ask you this then. What do you think he’s doing upstairs, right now?”

Diamond blinked several times, dumbfounded. “He’s...he’s using the restroom.”

Stephan tapped his chin. “Really? I suppose you never notice how long he takes using the restroom when he’s here then, huh?”

The hairs on the back of her neck stood up. “What are you trying to tell me, Stephan?”

He stared at her for a

few seconds and put his glass down. “Okay, here it is, flat out, in plain words. It’s not that I don’t like you, Diamond. I think you’re a great girl. You’re just not right for my brother. I don’t think he can be happy with you...or any other woman.”

“What? Why is that?”

“Because he’s in denial,” he answered with a shrug.

Her brows scrunched in confusion. “Denial?”

Stephan picked up his glass, downed its contents and poured another. “Why don’t you go and check on his progress—upstairs and to the left.” He used his glass to indicate the direction.

Diamond sat for a while glaring at him over her glass, tapping her finger against its ridge.

I should go just to wipe that smug look off his pretty, gay face.

She took a deep breath, jumped to her feet and downed the rest of her drink. However, taking that initial step was just the first embarrassment on a short path to a lot of emotional pain. She tripped over a cushion, almost falling on her face. And damn if that bastard didn't sit there giggling behind her. Straightening herself, she put the glass on the closest table,

threw her nose in the air and walked out of the room.

When she reached the top of the stairs, she could see the restroom door was opened and unoccupied. Hearing low voices at the end of the hall, she sighed and walked toward it. There was a door was ajar, so she peeked inside. Shifting her position to see the room better, she spotted Kendrick in the middle of the floor.



He was on his hands and knees between two men wearing togas. The one who stood in front of him had his toga lifted and his erect penis was in Kendrick's mouth. The other man was kneeling behind him with his toga lifted also. Both men had their heads thrown back and the look of ecstasy on their faces could not be denied. As he continued to suck on the man in front of him,

Kendrick eased himself off the man behind him.

The air was heavy with the smell of sex and arousal. A low, but audible moan could be heard throughout the room. Stunned, Diamond sank to her knees watching Kendrick work the men with skill and ease. She leaned too hard on the door, losing her balance and fell onto the floor when it swung open.

The spectators seated around the room turned away from their entertainment briefly to see her at the door on the floor, but returned their attention quickly to the center. Kendrick looked up as well and their eyes met. Tears rolled down Diamond's cheeks as she pulled herself from the floor and ran from the room. Stephan and Josh stood in the corridor. They

raised their glasses in a toast as she ran down the stairs past them. Diamond pushed her way out the front door, removed the extra key from under the mat and started Kendrick's car.

Diamond shook her head when she felt Tia's elbow against her ribs.

“Are you all right? You looked like you were having an out of body experience.”

“Huh? Oh, yeah, I'm okay.”

“Mmm, hmm.”

“No, Tia, really. I’m fine.”

“Well, okay, but let’s not dwell on the past? Instead, let’s see what these cuties have to offer and maybe make us some good Gainesville memories. Yes?”

Diamond smiled. “Yes, you’re right. Are we almost there?”

“Yup. This is our exit.”

# Chapter Two

Tia followed Kain off the exit to his home and parked behind him in the driveway. The guys waited to escort them through the yard to the front door. The well-kept grass on both sides of the path ended with a small rose bush on each side of the steps.

“Your yard looks very nice, Kain. The roses are a nice touch. They’re beautiful,” Diamond mentioned. “Who’s your gardener?”

Kain pulled out his keys as he

approached the door. “I do it myself, actually. I like doing hands-on stuff like that. It’s relaxing.”

“Oh. Your wife must like that a lot.”

Diamond gasped, then pressed her lips together and looked up at her with pleading eyes.

Tia could do nothing to help her friend at that point. She just covered her snickers behind her hand.

Diamond squeezed her eyes shut.

Kain smiled, as he put the keys back into his pocket.

“I don’t have a wife, Diamond and

when I did, she didn't live here."

Tia smirked. She liked how Kain answered the question without making Diamond feel even more embarrassed.

He pushed the door open, extending his hand inside.

"Shall we?"

Kain waited for his guests to enter the foyer before going in behind them. He turned on a hallway lamp and lit several candles on a nearby shelf, filling the entryway with the scent of warm vanilla.

"Please excuse me. Trey, you know where everything is. Make yourselves



comfortable. I'll be right back." He turned to run up the steps near the entryway.

"May I offer you ladies a drink?" Trey stepped down the two steps to the living room toward the bar in the far corner and flipped on the overhead light.

"Yes, I'd love one." Tia followed him.

"I'll take one, too." Diamond walked into the living room, but veered toward the fireplace.

Tia sat at the bar with Trey and admired the pictures along the mantel

from there. Three little girls sat in a row, one a little bigger than the next, dressed in the same short-sleeved white dress, sprinkled with tiny blue flowers and a wide, white lace-trimmed collar. The similarities between them reassured her they were siblings. The same hairdo, two big braids down the sides of their faces with white ribbons on the ends, same toasted brown coloring and dimpled, snaggletooth grins.

A boy wearing a blue dress shirt stood leaning over the girls with his arms enfolding them in a display of

protectiveness. He had a buzz haircut that reminded her of the military, a light mustache, pimples all over his face, and a small gold hoop in his left ear. He too had the same smile and dimples as the girls. Another boy sat in the lap of the little girl at the end of the row, her hands firmly across his chest. The snaps on his little blue pants were opened halfway up one leg and his shirt was coming out of the waistband as he leaned back into her, frowning.

Diamond laughed and pointed to the picture.

“That’s baby Kain!”

Tia leaned forward inspecting the photo. Though the baby was slouched sideways in his sister’s lap, the beauty mark on the left side of the infant’s cheek was clearly visible. She smiled and Trey nodded his head.

There were other family portraits along with several snapshots in small frames. Kain and Trey dominated most of them. As teenagers, someone snapped a shot of them pulling themselves up on the pier with half their bodies still in the water, smiling brightly for the

photographer. Another showed them in a school pool with Kain on Trey's shoulders. One more with them both dressed in white tuxedos leaning on the hood of a black limo.

As Diamond moved along the fireplace to a nearby wall, Tia gazed at the larger portraits there. Trey wore a cap and gown holding his diploma in the air. Kain stood next to him giving the thumbs up. Beside that one Kain wore the cap and gown. Trey carried him like a bride as Kain held his diploma over Trey's shoulder with his fist high in the

air, both smiling broadly. Beside those were a cluster of five by seven photos surrounding a larger photo.

Tia had to leave her seat to see them better. The glare on the glass from the lighting in the room bothered her. Trey wore a yellow hospital gown lifting a baby out of an incubator, showing off the baby's foot. The band on the ankle read, I'm a girl. Kain sat in a rocking chair feeding the same baby in the next picture. There was another larger portrait professionally done. Trey and Kain, both dressed casually in long sleeve

denim shirts and dark blue jeans, leaned on a table facing each other with what Tia guessed was the same baby girl from the other pictures. She was a pretty child with mocha skin, one little ponytail on top of her head and fat cheeks. The baby was sitting between Kain and Trey wearing a short-sleeved jean dress and a happy grin.

On the other side of the professional portrait were several pictures of the little girl growing up. One in a school play dressed as a carrot, another with her wearing a pink tutu surrounded by other

little girls and another with a group of cheerleaders. The last photo to complete the cluster was taken outside. She wore a cap and gown with Kain and Trey standing on both sides of her.

“So Trey, from these pictures it looks like you guys have been friends a long time,” Diamond said turning toward them.

“Yep. Kain was a freshman and I was a sophomore when we met.” He chuckled. “After all we’ve been through together. Kain is more of a brother than a friend. Is white wine okay or would you



like something with a little more kick to it?”

“That’s fine for me,” Diamond told him.

“I’d like some kick. Do you have any brandy back there?” Tia asked.

Trey’s eyes widened at her request, then he chuckled preparing the drinks.

“Who is the little girl in all the pictures, Trey? She’s beautiful.”

Trey handed her a brandy snifter before he walked to Diamond with a half-filled wine glass.

“Thanks. That’s Starr. She’s my

daughter.” He took a sip from his own glass, then smiled. “Ah, here’s Kain. Drink?” he asked extending his drink in Kain’s direction.

Tia laughed behind her glass as Diamond almost choked on her drink. Her poor friend was staring at Kain like a deer in headlights. She looked between them all and bit back a grin. At five foot eleven she stood almost eye to eye with Kain. Diamond was used to lifting her at that angle, but her five-foot-two stature looked childlike against Trey’s wide shoulders, solid torso and tree-like legs.

She shook her head watching her friend's dumbstruck gaze follow Kain as he sat on the couch.

“Yeah, man, whatever you're drinking is fine,” Kain said, answering his friend.

“So, guys, now that we're all here, what are we going to do?” Tia asked, joining them at the sofa.

Everyone glanced around at each other.

“Umm, can we just stay here and hang out?” Diamond asked hesitantly. She sent a look across to Tia, then to

Kain.

Tia shrugged, then turned to Trey.

“It’s your house, man. I’m cool with it if you are,” he said to Kain.

“That’s fine with me,” Kain said. “We can turn on some music and sit right here getting to know each other better.”

“Cool. Let me get you that drink.”  
Trey walked to the bar.

“Thanks, man. So what kinds of music do you like, Diamond? I’ve got almost a hundred CDs in this thing.”  
Kain reached for the stereo remote on

the coffee table.

Tia waited for Trey at the bar while he took Kain his drink. “Is that Miles Davis?” she asked, turning her ear upward.

“Yes, Kain is stuck on him at the moment. He has lots of blues and jazz in his player.”

Tia nodded. As she sipped her drink her gaze went to the wall past the fireplace.

“You’ve been staring at those pictures for a while now, Tia. Is there something you want to ask me about Starr?”

Tia looked at him over her glass. “Well, maybe just one question and I’ll never bring it up again, but feel free to offer whatever you like,” she added quickly.

“I’ll keep that in mind. What’s your question?”

“Is Starr’s mother still on the scene?”

Trey finished his drink. “Starr’s mother and I never had a scene. Yeah, we kicked it for a while, but it never really took a turn into serious. We had already gone our separate ways when she told me she was pregnant. I told her I

would take care of my baby and she took me literally.” He chuckled, refilling his glass. “After Starr was born, she left the hospital and left Starr there for me to pick up. I haven’t seen her since.”

“Wow. I thought that was more of a guy thing.”

“So did I until then.”

After a few minutes, she cleared her throat and tapped the counter softly. “Since I said I wouldn’t ask you anything else, this is where you’re supposed to offer information.”

Trey laughed. “I was a freshman in

college when Starr was born. When I didn't hear from Starr's mother Kain and I brought Starr home from the hospital. With help from him and my mother I raised her myself." He topped off her drink and continued, "It was rough at times, but we had more good times than bad. I wouldn't trade the experience, or her, for anything in the world."

"Where is Starr now?"

Trey's whole face lit with pride. "Oh, she's nineteen now. Beautiful, brilliant and a freshman at UCLA. You two may have that in common, I think," he added



and sipped his drink.

“What?”

“Being brilliant and beautiful.”

“How do you know if I’m brilliant?”

We just met. I could be dumb as a box of rocks for all you know,” Tia said with a chuckle.

His head tilted thoughtfully. “No, I don’t think so. There’s an analytical mind behind that beautiful face of yours. Prove me right. What do you do for a living?”

“Well, you’re right. I’m a lawyer.”

“A lawyer. Really? I would have

never guessed that.”

Her brow rose. “Why? You just said I was brilliant. Aren’t lawyers considered brilliant?”

He nodded. “Yes, yes, they are, but I was thinking more on the lines of a nurse or something.”

Tia frowned. “A nurse?”

“Well, yeah, because although lawyers are smart and have to be logical, all the lawyers I know are also...” His face twisted as he searched for the right words.

“What?” Tia urged.

“Well, they’re stiff, stuffed shirts, tight tie-wearing, dull-assed people.” He ogled her openly, then smirked. “And, quite frankly, that ain’t you. The nurse thing came to mind because I saw you as being more helpful to others in some way.”

Tia looked at him over her glass. “Hmm, I think I’m going to take that as a compliment. You’re right, of course. All the lawyers I know are like that, that’s why I’m not. For me it’s a job, not a lifestyle. It’s a full-time job keeping them separate, too.”

“Why a lawyer, then?”

“Well, Diamond and I always said that whatever we ended up doing for a living we wanted it to make a difference. Our job had to have meaning.” She shrugged. “Diamond became a teacher and I became a lawyer.” Tia put her glass down and leaned on the bar. “So that’s my story, Trey, what’s yours? What do you do for a living?”

Trey leaned over his side of the bar until their noses touched. “I own Secret Desires.” His voice was low, husky and sexy.

Her brow furrowed as she sat back on the stool. “What, you mean the lingerie store?”

He nodded before taking another drink.

“Get out of here. You’re not serious, are you?”

Trey nodded again.

“So what are you saying? You’re the secret in Secret Desires?” she asked, her voice unable to hide her surprise.

Trey leaned his head back and roared with laughter. A deep, hearty sound that interrupted Diamond and

Kain's conversation. They turned to look at him.

"It's nothing, pay us no attention. We're okay," Tia explained, waving them away.

Diamond and Kain looked at each other, shrugged, then turned away.

"Okay, it wasn't that funny." Tia rolled her eyes and swirled her drink. "Obviously I was wrong in that assumption. Would you care to explain?"

Trey wiped away a tear and took a calming drink. "No, I'm not the secret in

Secret Desires. It's no big secret our store helps others reach their hidden desires, but their secret desire is the only secret," he explained. "My mother passed the store to me when she retired. It's kind of the family business."

"Oh."

She caught his eye and they chuckled.

The two couples sat getting to know one another, drinking and dancing the night away. Trey walked Tia to her car while Diamond said goodbye to Kain at the door.

Diamond reached the car just as Tia

gave Trey a goodbye kiss.

“Good night, Diamond, it was a pleasure meeting you too.”

“Thanks, Trey, you too.”

“You’re going to call me on Monday, right?” he asked, bringing his attention back to Tia.

Tia nodded as two of his large fingers stroked her face and pinched her chin lightly. She shook her head, watching him walk away.

“Girl, whoo! I might have to make more frequent trips back home. I can’t wait until I can rub on that head. I bet it



will feel real good between the legs too,” she added, her voice growing husky as she started the car. “So, how did you like Kain? Did you give him the paper with your numbers on it?”

“Yes, I did and I think he’s great. Nice personality, sense of humor, great body, and he smelled good too.” She sighed and looked out the window.

“What? What is it?”

“Well, it’s just... I just don’t want him to turn into a freak, like Kendrick did.” She frowned.

“It’s time to shake that off, girl.

Tonight we made a good Gainsville memory.” Tia nudged her. “Right?”

Diamond smiled. “Yes, you’re right. Tonight really was nice.” She leaned her head back and closed her eyes. “Home, Jeeves!”

Tia gave a jaunty salute. “Yes, ma’am!”

# Chapter Three

Diamond arrived in the kitchen the next morning to find Tia already there.

“Well, good morning sleepyhead,” Tia said brightly, pouring herself some juice.

“Morning,” Diamond mumbled, shuffling to a chair. Her head dropped onto the table as she sat. “I sure hope you saved me some breakfast?”

“Of course I did, it’s in the microwave, but at this hour we’ll call it brunch.”

“Did you make me some coffee too?”

She chuckled. “Need some caffeine, do you?”

Diamond lifted her head, glared at her friend, then dropped her forehead back to the table with a thud.

“You sure have grown out of being a morning person. This stuff really is nasty. Orange juice is much better for you.”

A cup slid close to her face. Diamond inhaled the aroma deep into her lungs. She didn’t understand how Tia couldn’t get into coffee. The smell alone

perked her up. She blew across the top, giving the thumbs up sign. After a few cautious sips, she delved into the food Tia put before her.

“Well, I think you’ll live,” Tia said as Diamond ate her food. “I have an idea that’ll help perk you up. Let’s have a spa day at that new place that opened up right before I left.”

“Hmm, that does sound like a good idea.”

“Great. I’ll see if I can get us in today.”

With her meal, Diamond followed

Tia as she left the kitchen. She tossed one pillow after the next from the sofa and slid her hands beneath its cushions before moving to the next. Finally, between the two cushions of the second sofa, she retrieved her cell. She piled a few of the loose cushions under her knees to get comfortable, then dialed 411 on speaker.

“Operator!”

“Yes, I need the number for the spa on the corner of Piedmont and Pepperton streets. Fix You Up, Fixer Upper or something like that. I don’t

really remember the name.”

“Thank you. Hold please.” There was a pause and several clicking sounds before they heard a pleasant young woman’s voice greeting her. “Do you mean We’ll Fix You from Head to Toe?”

“That’s the one!”

“I have the number. I can connect you directly or would you like the number?”

“No, go ahead and connect me. Thanks.”

“Hold please.”

“Thank you for calling We’ll Fix You from Head to Toe. How can I help you?” a perky female voice greeted moments later.

“Hi, I wanted to make an appointment for me and a friend today. Do you have anything available?”

“I’ll check for you, ma’am.” Another pause. “Yes ma’am. We did have someone cancel for today, but you would have to be here in half an hour to get it.”

“We can do that.”

“Okay. What will you be having done?”



She thought only a moment before shrugging at Diamond. “What the hell, we want the works. Hair, nails, toes, massages, we want all that.”

The lady laughed softly. “All right. What name can I put the reservation under?”

“Tia Johnson.”

“All right, Ms. Johnson. I have you down for twelve o’clock with a friend. We’ll see you then.”

“Hmm, that’s a good sign.” As Tia hung up, Diamond returned to the kitchen and put her dishes in the washer.

She went upstairs, took a ten minute shower and was sitting at her vanity brushing her hair when Tia came strolling in, ready to go.

“Don’t bother with your grooming rituals today. Just grab a hat or something,” Tia said, “Are we taking my car or yours?”

“You’re not serious, are you? You’re driving a brand new convertible. We’re doing your car all weekend, sweetheart.”

Diamond walked out the door with Tia in tow, laughing away. The drive to the spa was only fifteen minutes.

“Hi. Thanks for visiting We’ll Fix You from Head to Toe. How can I help you?” the reception greeted pleasantly.

“Hello. We have an appointment. I’m Tia Johnson.”

“Oh, yes, Ms. Johnson. Follow me.” The receptionist took them to an office just inside the entryway. An older woman sat at a large mahogany desk in the center of the room. She stood as they entered.

“Hello, I’m Vanessa Daniels, the manager. Please be seated.” Diamond and Tia took the chairs in front of her

desk as she continued, “Is this your first time here?”

“Yes, we remembered your opening, but just haven’t had the chance to come by.”

“My fault,” Tia confessed raising her hand. “I live out of town.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re here now. I like to meet all our guests and greet them personally. Since this is your first time I’ll explain a few things to you.” Vanessa opened her top drawer then slid two brochures across her desk. “These show everything we do here. We have several

discount packages so you can experience more for less and other options you can do à la carte, so to speak. If you find something in one of our plans is not to your liking it can easily be swapped out for something similar.”

Tia leaned closer to Diamond. “I want to do this!”

Diamond’s gaze shifted to where Tia’s finger lay and laughed. “Yeah, I bet you do. How about this?” she said indicating the opposite page.

Tia twisted her lips. “You can do that anywhere. Come on, do this with me.”

“May I suggest package number four? It is very popular with our younger clients,” Vanessa interjected.

Diamond and Tia flipped the paper back and forth until they spotted the service Vanessa referred to. They scanned the page, looked at each other, then Vanessa and smiled.

“That’ll work!” they said in unison.

“Excellent. You can make your payment by cash, credit or debit card,” she explained pushing the credit card box toward them.

When their transaction was

complete, Vanessa pushed a button on top of her desk and stood with her hand extended.

“Enjoy your day, ladies. In the future, feel free to access us online if that is your desire. The receptionist will hand you a card with our information when you’re ready to exit. We hope to see you again. This is Hassan. He will escort you to the baths.”

They turned to see a beautiful, dark, impressively built man, dressed in something only Tarzan would wear. He went to Vanessa, took two index cards

from her, and turned toward Tia and Diamond with a smile.

“Follow me, ladies.”

His voice was deep and smooth, his smile enticing. Tia grinned at Diamond.

“Baths?” she mouthed at her.

Diamond smothered her giggles with her hand.

Hassan led them down a hallway. They walked through white French doors, into a large steam-filled room. The warm mist cleared enough for them to see eight small pools and several massage benches along the walls. He



continued through the pool area to the locker rooms.

“Please disrobe, ladies, and change into the outfits inside. We’ll meet you by the baths when you’re ready.” He bowed before leaving them.

“We?” Diamond asked.

“Well come on, girl. Let’s hurry up and change so we can see who we is,” Tia said pushing her into a room.

They disappeared into two dressing rooms. Emerging moments later, Diamond noticed they wore the same black string bikini, though they filled it

differently, and wondered if it was standard issue. They spotted Hassan with another man.

“This is Kimbo,” he introduced, when they walked over to him. “He will be leading you through your spa experience, Miss...” Hassan paused to reach for her hand.

“Diamond,” she supplied softly.

Kimbo was easily as tall as Tia. His skin seemed very light in contrast with the tiny black braids that hung past his shoulders. He was dressed like Hassan and similarly built, with several tribal

tattoos on his muscular arms.

Hassan smiled and passed her hand to Kimbo, who kissed it. He then turned his attention back to Tia.

“I shall be leading you.”

“I’m Tia.”

He smiled, taking her friend’s hand and pulling her so close that her nose touched his chin. “Tia.” Instead of raising her hand to his lips, he bent to kiss her neck.

Kimbo led her to the nearest pool, occupied by two other ladies and settled her in, with Hassan and Tia one step

behind. They sat on an underwater bench, submerged to their shoulders.

“We shall return shortly. Enjoy the steam baths,” Kimbo said.

“A girl could get used to this. Handsome men at your beck and call, wonderfully soothing heated pool, massage coming up.” Tia leaned her head back and closed her eyes. “Ahhh...”

“Yup,” Diamond agreed.

The ladies across the pool giggled. Diamond and Tia’s heads jerked up. They looked at each other, then at the women.

“What?” Tia asked.

An older white woman with more gray than brown in her long hair answered.

“Forgive us dear, we didn’t mean to upset you. We can always tell the newbies when they come.”

“Newbies? What makes you think we’re newbies?”

The woman’s friend answered Tia’s question. “Because you’re quite content with the pool and the men, but that’s only because you have no idea what’s coming up next.”

“What’s next?” Diamond asked.

“Go on and tell her, Joyce,” the first lady replied, nudging her.

“The best massage you’ve ever felt, darling, that’s what. This massage will give you orgasms you never knew you could have. That’s why we come here at least three times a week.” She leaned back, mimicking her friend. “I think these boys live, eat, and sleep Tantric touch.”

“Tantric touch?” Diamond asked. She sent a questioning look to Tia, but she shrugged.

“Yes, dear, that’s what they call their massage technique and it’s to die for. Whoo!” She pretended to shake off a chill. “Tell them about the drinks, Jessie,” Joyce suggested.

Jessie sat up in the water. “Oh, yes. The two men assigned to you are going to bring you back a drink soon. It’s not alcoholic but I swear it will make you feel like you’re floating anyway. I think it has to have some kind of aphrodisiac in it or something. They deny it, of course, but I still think it does.”

“Well, do you know what’s really in

the drink?” Diamond asked, nervousness underlining her tone.

“They say it’s just a mixture of fruit juice and vitamins to relax you for the massage and give you back the nutrients you may have lost while you were sweating in the pool.”

The women settled silently into the water after Jessie’s explanation.

Hassan and Kimbo returned with a glass for everyone. Diamond and Tia accepted the drinks and the ladies snickered softly. In a tall hourglass-shaped glass whipped cream floated on



top of a bright red liquid, with a large strawberry pressed along the rim. They sniffed deeply at the juice, looked at the ladies, who urged them to drink, to each other and back to the glasses. With a shrug, they took a sip from their straws and smiled their approval. The four of them leaned back to enjoy the bath with a united, “Ahhh.” A short while later a male voice brought them out of their delirium.

“Joyce, Jessie, it’s time for your massages,” a man said.

Diamond turned to the sound. A

man that looked like he could have been Tia's twin brother stood over them. He and another man, a tall, slim Asian man with a long ponytail, offered their hands to Joyce and Jessie. The women wore the same bathing suits that she and Tia wore and Diamond knew her earlier assumption was right.

“Soon you'll understand why we're here as much as we are. See you girls at the hair salon,” Joyce said, letting Tia's twin wrap her in a towel.

Diamond and Tia waved goodbye and resumed lounging with their drinks.

Finished with her juice, Diamond opened her eyes to put her empty glass down poolside and looked around, stunned. The room seemed to glow in soft pastel colors with waves of rainbow lights floating overhead.

Giggling, she put the glass down and watched it do a slow hula. She closed her eyes again, feeling warm and toasty all over.

“Diamond.”

Kimbo’s voice snapped her back to reality.

“It’s time for your massage,” he told

her, easily lifting her from the pool.

“Whoa!” she exclaimed on a gasp.

Kimbo carried her over to the tables and laid her down gently, then turned her to her stomach. Diamond fixed her hands underneath her chin as he pulled the bikini strings loose. The way he gently slid his hands down her back, over her hips and down her legs to her feet made her feel totally at ease. He retrieved a pretty blue bottle, drenched his hands in sweet smelling oil and began his massage.

Kimbo rubbed and kneaded her

neck in small circular motions, moving down to the small of her back before returning to her shoulders. Leaving her back tingling and relaxed, he concentrated on her legs. His hands were strong and soft at the same time, gliding over her thighs, pressing into the sensitive skin higher up on her inner thighs. Every pass warmed her skin, creating a heated trail.

“Mmm,” Diamond said when she felt him lift her foot and bring it to his lips.

Each time his lips touched one of her toes, a warm tingly feeling washed over

her body. He lowered her leg and raised the other, giving the same treatment to her foot. She turned her head to the other side and sighed. Kimbo's hands disappeared for a few seconds but when they returned, they were cool and slick again. Her tingling increased tenfold and began to localize.

What's going on? A massage has never felt like this before.

She lifted her head to shake off what she thought was a dream, but it felt so good she put her cheek back on her hands. Kimbo's hands were sending

electric currents through her body that landed at her core and caught her breath. She was stuck in a haze of heat that started between her legs and spread throughout her body.

Holy cow! I think I'm horny! Wait a minute...yeah! He's making me horny! Just by touching me? Wow, who knew! She giggled. Mmm, hot and horny, it's been a long time since that's happened. Mmm, his hands feel so good, mmm, on my back, my shoulders, mmm, sliding down my legs, mmm, my butt, and my... oh, oh God...

She floated higher and higher, as her body responded to the rubbing and touching Kimbo did. She could hear someone moaning somewhere in the distance.

Wow, sounds like that lady feels good too. Oh, God...mmm, I wonder if... umm, uhh, what's his name again? Hmm, well, whatever his name is, I wonder if I could buy him and keep him in my closet until I want another one of these massages. She giggled again.

Kimbo gently flipped her over.

Wheee...



He caressed her face, shoulders and then breasts. Everywhere his hands touched seemed to burn with desire. The moaning seemed to get louder.

Hmm, she sure sounds familiar. Ooh! Maybe it's Tia.

“You go, girl,” she whispered.

Mmm, if I didn't know better, I'd swear it was me making all those sounds.

Her eyes popped open for a second. She tried to speak, but her brain and mouth wouldn't work together.

No way! It-it couldn't be me.

She reached up to her mouth to

check if it was open, but other hands on her body moved lower taking her attention. Her breathing quickened as pleasure rose inside her. She no longer cared if it was her or Tia moaning.

The moans were more like screams echoing in her head. Soft electric currents raced over the length her body. Delicious pulsing from her vagina to the tips of her nipples overwhelmed her as her orgasm swept through her. A confusing mix of pleasure and surprise flooded her senses. It filled her every pore, rocking her whole body. When she

was able to speak, she touched Kimbo's arm.

“That was so good. No wait, it was better than good.” She took a deep breath and stretched a long deep stretch. “Mmm, that was...fantastic,” she said finally with a smile of profound satisfaction.

Kimbo returned her smile. He continued his massage for a few more minutes before re-tying her bikini and whispering in her ear.

“Your Tantric massage is over, Diamond. It's time to go to the showers.”

He lifted her off the table and walked her out of the baths. She looked around. Tia walked arm in arm with Hassan, just a few feet away. The men led them past the lockers that separated the shower area to another pair of shutter-type doors.

“Please discard your suits in the designated place and once you’re changed, we’ll be here to escort you to the salon.”

Showered and dressed, Tia and Diamond met the men again. They led them through the building to the salon.

Kimbo turned Diamond to him.

“It was a pleasure to serve you,” he paused to kiss her hand, “please come visit again.”

“It has also been a pleasure for me to have served you this day, Tia.” Hassan turned Tia’s hand over and kissed her wrist.

They bowed and left them standing at the door. No words were needed. In unison, she and Tia sighed deeply and entered the salon.

“Over here, darlings! There’s an empty spot over here!” a voice screamed

at them as they entered.

Diamond and Tia sat heavily in the chairs next to Joyce.

“So is the pool still on the top of your list of favorites here?”

“No way!” the girls answered together.

“My name is Joyce Freeman and that’s my friend Jessica Douglas.”

Jessie waved, without lifting her head from the shampoo bowl. The girls introduced themselves and Joyce went on.

“That massage is worth every dime

they ask for. All this other stuff,” she waved her hand around the room, “it’s all just fringe benefits.”

“Amen!” Jessie said from her other side of Joyce and they all laughed again.

The beauticians started on their heads and there wasn’t any more conversation until they met in the pedicure area.

“So, ladies, what are your plans for the evening? Young girls like you wouldn’t be just sitting around the house doing nothing.”

“Of course not, Joyce. They’re

obviously going to do something special, now that they've gotten all relaxed and done up so beautifully. Tell us your plans, girls."

"Well, actually, we don't have any real plans. We were just going to, umm, wing it," Tia told them.

Diamond nodded her agreement.

Joyce looked at Jessie, then back to Tia and Diamond. "Well, then, ladies, you are invited to a party to end all parties. Are you interested?" She nodded her head at the polish the girl doing her pedicure held up.



Diamond looked at Tia, who shrugged.

“Sure, it might be fun,” Tia answered for them.

Jessie removed her feet from the ultraviolet light viewing her toes. “Wonderful! I’ll leave my card with directions at the reception desk for you. Any time after nine o’clock will be fine.” She tapped Joyce. “We must be off, dear.” Surveying her toes again, Jessie gave them a light touch. “That’s very nice, darling, thank you.”

Joyce got up to join her. “See you

girls tonight.”

Tia turned to her with a huge smile on her face. “I think this is a hell of a weekend already. Met me a fine-ass man and—Oh yeah! Girl, did I tell you he owns Secret Desires?”

“What? No way!”

“Yeah, girl. His grandma started it and then passed it down.” She leaned back with a dreamy smile and sighed. “Who would’ve thought a man owned Secret Desires?”

“Yeah, that’s definitely out of left field for me.” She held out her hands

and feet and nodded. “Secret Desires, huh? I can see perks coming from a boyfriend owning a store like that, Tia.”

“Mmm-hmm. Lots of little teddies, nighties, garter belts and cute little panties in my future.”

Dried a short time later, they headed to the reception desk.

“I trust you had a satisfactory time,” the receptionist asked when they appeared at her desk.

“For lack of a better word, it was perfect. Thank you,” Diamond said.

“Wonderful.”

“Does this card have your online information on it?” Tia asked pointing to the tiny card rack on the desk.

“Yes, it does. You can make an appointment and pay online once you sign up,” she explained, handing her one. “Miss Jessie left this one here for you,” she added, handing Diamond a larger, silver plastic keycard with raised black letters.

You are invited to a night  
of fun and games. Food and  
drinks will be served.

Bring only a change of comfortable clothing and an open mind. Slip this card through the slot on the door then present it to the receptionist.

Directions on the back.

Jessica

Diamond looked the card over as they walked out, then passed it to Tia.

“The directions are on the back. It won’t be hard to find. Looks like it’s just off downtown,” Diamond said as they

walked out to the car.

Tia nodded and flipped the card over.

“I feel fantastic!” Diamond said, checking herself out in the rearview mirror after getting in the passenger side.

Tia sat in the driver’s seat and stared out the window.

“What?”

“Did your glass do the hula while you were in the pool?”

Diamond burst into laughter. “Yeah! Did the room glow for you, too?”

Tia laughed, driving away. “Yup, and

I saw rainbows on the ceiling.”

Diamond retrieved her cell phone as it started vibrating in her pocket.

“Hello.”

“Hey, Diamond, it’s Kain. How are you?”

“Kain! I’m great. How are you today?”

“I’m good. Sounds like you and Tia are having a good time.”

“Oh, yeah. We just spent the last four hours at We’ll Fix You from Head to Toe. It was kind of expensive, but worth every dime.”

“Really? I heard that place has a good reputation with the ladies.”

“Well, you heard right.”

He laughed. “Yeah, I haven’t been in there since my company finished building it.”

Her eyes widened. She turned the phone away. “Holy crap.”

“What? What happened?” Tia asked.

“He said his company built that place.”

Tia looked back and forth between her and the road excitedly. “No way!



That is so cool!”

“No, just a job,” he said, overhearing Tia’s response.

“Hey, I just had a thought. Are you guys free for dinner?” Diamond said into the phone.

“We can be. Are you asking?”

She looked at Tia, who nodded vigorously. “Yes, we’re asking.”

“Then yes, we are free. How about you guys come back out here?”

“Are you offering to cook?”

“Sure. I can cook, you know. My mother always said if you want to eat,

you'd better learn to cook."

Diamond laughed, again. "I think I like your mom already. How about an early dinner? We're going to a party with some ladies we met later tonight."

"Hmm, would six-thirty be okay? We could throw something on the grill."

She covered the phone again. "Six-thirty?"

Tia nodded.

"Six-thirty will be fine. We'll see you then."

"I can't wait." She closed her phone and smiled.

“Look at you,” Tia said, nudging her. “You get all dolled up, get a little orgasm to light that fire that has been out for way too long and you get some balls! I’m proud of you! It’s about time.”

Diamond sighed and leaned her head back.

“Now what?”

“He seems so nice, Tia. Too nice.”

Tia slowed and turned down her street. “He is nice, Diamond. Don’t worry about it. Just take it one day at a time. Don’t go on the defense for something he maybe might be, okay?”

“Okay, you’re right.” She laughed.

“I’m going to stop all this tripping right now. That’s why I keep you around, Tia,” Diamond said, nudging her back.

“You’re my voice of reason.”

# Chapter Four

They walked into the house, stopped in the kitchen for a bottle of wine and went to the den to relax. Tia took a seat in her favorite reclining chair in the corner, while Diamond sat in a large wing back in front of the window.

“So we’ve got about an hour to kill before we need to head out. Do we head on out anyway or kill some time reading?” Diamond asked, snuggling into the chair that made her look childlike in its confines.

“Hmm, let’s just chill for few. Have you gotten anything new lately?” she asked on her way to the bookcase.

“As a matter of fact, I went to a fair with my class and got three new books I haven’t read yet. Plus there’s a few I just recently finished.” She took a sip of her drink. “The new ones are on the bottom shelf.”

Tia looked over her right shoulder and sucked her teeth. “I know where you keep the new books, Diamond. I haven’t been gone that long.”

“Sure feels like it sometimes,” she

replied in a small voice.

Tia closed the distance between them and knelt beside her chair. “Hey, don’t be like that. We’re still best friends—sisters of the soul. The only thing that has changed is our living arrangements. Instead of living around the corner from each other, we live a few states away.” She kissed her forehead. “Besides, they may say it’s an eight-hour trip, but you know I can do it in six, huh, four if I tried,” she added with a wink. “Now that I’m all settled in, I’ll be able to come home more often.” She went back to the

bookcase.

“I guess you shattering the speed limits isn't a concern, huh?”

Tia shrugged. “Speed limit, schmeed limit. What have I always told you?”

She waited a moment, knowing Tia would recite the saying with her. “Speed limits are put in place for the people who can't drive to follow.”

“That's right,” Tia continued. “Stuff like that doesn't apply to me.”

“It doesn't, huh?”

“No girl, I used to be a race car driver in a past life or something. That's



what we do.”

Smiling, Diamond shook her head.

“On the upside, now we have two cities to terrorize.” Tia grabbed a book.

“Hey, what’s this one? What kind of title is O?” she asked, with a raised brow.

“That’s not a title, it’s a letter. Is this some kind of Sesame Street Book?”

Diamond laughed. “No. It’s an old book, from back in the 1960s or something. It’s about this girl who wanted to try different types of sex and she got caught up with this guy who took her to clubs that specialized in bondage and

submission and stuff like that.”

“Uh-huh, and that’s new?”

“Apparently in the ’60s it was.”

“Have you read it yet?”

“Yeah.”

“Well?”

She shrugged and sipped her drink.

“It was different, I’ll say that.”

“Different like, hell no, these people are crazy or different like, hmm, I might be able to get with that?” she asked, lifting her hands like she was a scale.

Diamond thought about it as she watched Tia over her glass.

“Different like, this is definitely not my cup of tea. Pass!”

Tia nodded and smiled. “Mmm, okay.” She put the book back and walked toward the coffee table. “Maybe I’ll just read a magazine.”

She grabbed a book from the table, then passed one to Diamond.

“Oh, Diamond, check this out. This magazine has a female challenge section. As soon as I get the chance I’m going to do this one to Trey.” She turned the book for her to see. “You think he’s too big to do this with?”

Diamond looked at the picture and laughed. “I don’t know, Tia. All those long limbs twisted like that looks dangerous to me. You guys could end up in traction or something.”

Tia looked at the picture again. “Yeah, maybe you’re right. We’ll start off with the basics. I don’t know how limber he is. I don’t want to hurt the man,” she said with mock seriousness.

Diamond shook her head. “Ooo, look Tia. Here’s your car.”

Tia sat on the arm of her chair and read the ad out loud. “The new Lexus

Millennium comes in a two and a four-door design. The two-door cars come in seven colors, a convertible top or hardtop and with fingerprint locks. The new Tracker System, that can find you anywhere and send help to you, voice activated radio, CD player, personal climate controls, power window and anti-theft protection all come standard.”

“Does your car have all that?”

“Yup, but I added a few upgrades. My ride will bring making out in your car to a whole new level,” she said with a smile. “I haven’t had the chance yet, but

now that I've met Trey I'm hoping I can break it in with him."

Diamond chuckled. "Only you would add freaky upgrades to a brand new car."

"People have been making out in their rides since the horse and buggy days. Technology is just making it easier," she pointed out with a wink.

They flipped through a few more magazines, had another drink before freshening up their makeup and driving out to Gainsville. They found Kain and Trey in the backyard. Young trees lined the property in front and behind the

seven-foot privacy fence. In the distance, but still within the confines of the fence, was a small lake. In the immediate backyard, the grass was neat, thick and healthy. A large glass table with umbrella and four hunter green chairs around it, a lounge chair big enough for two and a big green and white cooler, in reach of both, sat on the red bricked patio area in front of the door.

“Hi! We made it,” Diamond said, pushing the gate open.

Kain looked up from the grill and smiled. “Yes, I see that.” He walked

over, opening his arms to hug her, but stopped short. “I’m sorry. That was way too forward. We did just meet after all. I will respect those boundaries.” He took a step back.

“No!” she blurted out, grabbing his arm. Dropping it quickly, she shrugged and softened her voice. “I mean, it’s okay. Hug away.”

He opened his arms again. She walked into them, breathing in that wonderful, woodsy smell again and exhaled.

Trey walked out of the kitchen, salad



bowls in his hand, and quickly turned to look for Tia.

“Hello, beautiful.” Opening his arms to receive her, she smiled and walked into his embrace.

She let out a soft giggle before looking up at him.

“You know, for the record, I don’t have a problem with public affection.”

He chuckled. “Was that my okay to kiss you or hug you?”

She pretended to ponder the question. “Hmm, kiss or hug, tough decision. I’m gonna choose the kiss,

Bob, for two hundred points.”

He laughed and dipped her low.  
“Your wish is my command.”

Trey brought his face close, letting his full lips capture hers. He held her eyes for a moment after the kiss was done, then straightened her up and sat her at the table.

Diamond left Kain’s arms, walked over and sat with Tia. “Are you okay? You look...stunned.”

Tia brought her fingers to her lips.  
“Not too many men can do that to me, girl. I am not a small woman!” She

chuckled. “He all but manhandled me.” A slow smile came to her face. “I think I liked it. That kiss made me feel like I did when I drank that juice at the spa.”

Diamond laughed. “That’s a serious kiss, Tia. You’d better be careful. That’s the kind of man who will have you strung out. I’m talking, waiting in bed all day naked, just so you can keep his spot warm, kind of strung out. Lots of babies, and—honey, here’s your slippers, can I do anything else for you—that kind of strung out.”

Tia laughed with her. “Whatever,

girl. That's your bag, not mine." She fanned herself. "Huh, but I know I need a drink after a kiss like that. Hell, if I smoked I'd need a cigarette too."

Tia and Diamond were still laughing when Trey returned carrying a tray with four glasses and a bottle of wine in an ice bucket.

"Hmm, it's scary to walk up on women when they're laughing in the presence of men," he said as he set the tray down.

"Don't be so paranoid. I don't bite... unless you're into that," Tia added with a

wink.

He smiled. “I’ll have to remember that.”

As Trey poured the wine, he leaned close to Tia’s ear but didn’t whisper. “It’s been a while since I held someone like you. I liked it a lot and you’re welcome in my arms any time.”

Diamond felt like she was blushing and he wasn’t even talking to her. Tia, however, didn’t seem fazed. She downed half her glass of wine, though.

“I’ll have to remember that,” she told him mimicking his tone.

He chuckled, then handed Diamond a glass.

“So...” Kain said, taking his drink from Trey. “How do you like your steaks?”

Tia and Diamond helped to serve when Kain was done cooking. After dinner, Kain took Diamond for a walk around the lake.

“It’s nice and peaceful out here.” She sat by the water’s edge. “The stars seem a lot brighter too,” she added leaning back on her elbows.

“Yeah, that’s because they aren’t in

competition with all the other light sources in the city. I love it out here. I left Atlanta to come out here about five years ago when my divorce was final. I used to live in a house near downtown.”

“Why did you leave? You just didn’t like living in the city anymore?”

“No, it’s not that. I didn’t mind the city at all, but it was always busy. I wanted my home to be peaceful and quiet. I was always a country boy at heart, so I jumped on the chance to get this house. There’s lots of land, peace and quiet, the smell is better and it’s close

enough to the city that I can go back when I want.”

“So is your ex-wife still in Atlanta? Are you guys friends?”

His face grew dark instantly. “No,” he snapped turning away from her.

She sat up quickly. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to pry. I—”

He raised his hand. “It’s fine. Let’s just go back, okay.” He reached his hand out to her.

“Oh, okay.”

When they got the table, Tia left her reclining position on the lounge chair to



stand.

"It's about that time, Diamond," she reminded her.

"I have to go," she said to Kain.

He took both her hands in his. "Thanks for spending some time with me. I know you and your girl were booked solid." He kissed her fingers.

She turned away from him. "I'm sorry I upset you."

"You didn't. I'm the one who's sorry for snapping at you. I just..." He sighed. "Well, I don't like to talk about her." He turned her face to his. "I'm not upset

with you at all. One day we'll sit down and get it all out. Is it okay if I call you, so we can hook up during the week?"

Relief flooded through her. "Of course."

He smiled. She walked to the gate and turned back to wait for Tia. Kain blew her a kiss. Tia stepped out of Trey's embrace, and he put his hand to his head in a telephone symbol. She nodded before catching up to Diamond at the gate.

"I don't think this day could get any better, but I'm willing to see. How about

you?” Tia said, grinning as she closed her car door.

Diamond smiled back. “I couldn’t agree more.”

Tia took out the silver card and started the car.

An hour later, with Diamond calling out directions, they found the place.

Diamond closed the car door and stared quizzically at the building before her.

“That’s the house?”

She gazed up and down the block. Though it seemed wider than the rest,

the house fit in with all the others in the downtown area. Most had red and gray brick covering their two level structures, no front yard to speak of but wide porches that hugged the front of the first floor around both sides. Windows reached from floor to ceiling on the first floor like its neighbors and the empty warehouse-like buildings mixed into the neighborhood.

“Are you sure this is the right place?”

Tia took another look at the card.

“Yup, this is it.”

“Well, it doesn’t sound like there’s a

party going on.”

“Maybe they’ve got soundproof windows,” Tia offered with a shrug.

Tia grabbed her bag out of the back and trotted across the street. Diamond reluctantly followed. Tia stood before the door, flipping the key card over, looking at it, and then the door. With another shrug, she slipped it into the horizontal slot. A beep and a soft green glow over the door knob proceeded. Tia glanced at her, then turned the knob.

“Good evening, ladies. Is this your first time here?” greeted a young woman

scantily clad in a maid's uniform.

“Yes,” Tia said.

“Excellent. The check-in desk is just down this hall.”

She turned to lead the way. Another woman sitting at a desk at the far end of the room stood and extended her hand as they approached.

“Good evening, ladies. I am Cassandra.”

Cassandra's fair skin looked pale against the bright red glasses she wore low on her nose. Her pale orange hair was twisted into an old fashion bun at the

top of her head. The crimson satin trimming her black corset made the freckles on her face and shoulders stand out. A large ruby resting in the cleavage of her large breasts caught Diamond's eye. It twinkled in the bright light of the room, making her wonder if the jewel was real or not.

“Wow,” Diamond said, under her breath.

“I hope I look that good when we get older,” Tia whispered to her as they walked over to the woman.

“Thank you, Sissy, you may go now.”

She reached over the desk and shook their hands. “Welcome to The Fun House.”

“Thank you. I’m Tia and this is my friend, Diamond.”

“Ahh, yes, the ladies Miss Jessie spoke of. Do you have the card? I’m sorry, but she won’t be here tonight. She said she’s caught up with something else and has asked that I extend her greetings and hospitality to you.”

Tia handed it over and the woman swiped the right bottom corner through another scanner. She looked up from a



screen and smiled.

“Wonderful! Come, darlings. Let me take you to where you can change.”

Diamond’s eyes grew wide as Cassandra stood and led them through a door just beyond her desk. Now that she was away from her desk, they could see her outfit in its entirety. Along with the corset, she wore nothing but a matching thong, black thigh high stockings and patent leather stilettos.

Diamond stared at the walls, embarrassed. Tia noticed her reaction and smothered her titters behind her

hand while shaking her head. At the end of the long hallway, Cassandra opened the door to let them into a small locker area.

“The locks are hanging on all the lockers. The ones with the keys still in them are available. When you are done changing, follow the same hall back to my desk and I’ll have a guide waiting for you,” she explained, then left them alone.

“Well, this is different,” Diamond said in monotone.

Tia unzipped her shorts. “Different

doesn't mean bad."

Diamond pulled off her shirt. "Yeah, well, I don't think Joyce or Jessie lives here. I don't think anyone lives here," she added, panic tainting her words.

"No, I don't think so, either. What I do think is if everyone is dressed like Cassandra, we will be grossly overdressed in our tank tops and biker shorts," Tia told her with a laughing grin.

"That's not funny. I'm not so sure about this, Tia." She stopped undressing and sat on a bench.

"Lighten up, Diamond. I don't think

anyone is going to attack you. I don't get that vibe in here. Let's stay long enough to check it out, at least. If you really hate it, we'll leave. Who knows, you may actually have a good time."

"Well...okay. But when I'm ready to go, promise me we'll leave."

Tia threw her right hand in the air. "Yeah, yeah, yeah, scout's honor. Now let's go."

"Yeah, right. Like you were any kind of a scout," Diamond mumbled, finishing dressing before following her.

They retraced their steps. Cassandra

beckoned them over when they emerged from the hallway.

“Come, darlings. I want you to meet Isis. She will be your guide.”

Isis, a beautiful young African-American woman, wore a silky white toga-type dress. The front hung low, showing off impressive cleavage.

“Hello, ladies.”

“This is—” Cassandra started, but Isis held up her hand to stop her.

“Cassandra, please let them choose a name first and I’ll call them by that.”

“We have to pick another name?”

Diamond asked, looking between the woman and Tia. “Why?”

“Because we prefer to protect the identities of those who wish their identities to be protected,” Isis explained, handing Tia a silvery mask. “Because of that, only the staff goes unmasked.” She handed her a black feathered one.

“Are we hiding?” Diamond asked nervously, accepting the mask.

“No, of course not. In this house, every and any fantasy can take place. Some people’s fantasies are a little wilder than others and they may be

embarrassed by them.” She smiled.  
“They could be our lawyers...”

Tia and Diamond exchanged a look.

“Our doctors, teachers...” Isis continued.

Another look.

“Or even our next door neighbors and grocery clerks. They come here so they can watch, indulge, fantasize or just have an uncomplicated no strings attached sexual encounter and then go back to their everyday lives without being judged. It’s for them that we ask all visitors to wear masks.”

“I see your point,” Tia said, adjusting the mask over her face. “I wish I could’ve chosen a cool name like yours. Do names often repeat in here?”

“Yes, of course. But just like outside it’s the person and the personality that makes me different from another Isis here.”

“Hmm, how about Delilah? I always thought that was a pretty name,” Tia suggested.

“It’s beautiful, and what about you?” Isis said, turning to Diamond.

“I don’t know, I don’t think I can do



this,” she replied nervously.

“Oh, come on, girl. We already discussed this. I promised,” Tia said, pouting.

Diamond let out an exasperated breath. “Oh, all right. How about,” she paused in thought. “Ruby?” she finally said and put on the mask.

“No, girl, uh-uh. Don’t use your mom’s name. That’s just nasty.”

“Yeah, you’re right.” She chuckled. “Okay, what about...Sapphire?”

“Hmm, I like it.”

“Good, shall we begin our tour?”

Isis took them down another long hallway. At the end, she pushed through wooden beads serving as the entrance to another room. She stood in the doorway, giving them time to absorb the atmosphere. Delilah and Sapphire both gasped as they walked into what seemed like another world.

The dim lighting and intoxicating smell captivated her immediately. A small stage was erected along the back wall. A plethora of different color lights bounced off its polished surface as a woman danced. The music was loud

enough for the dancer to hear, but not loud enough to drown out any normal conversation. Several chairs were stationed around it. Groups of tables and chairs filled with onlookers lined the wall.

To her right, a long buffet table stood guarded by a man dressed in only black shirt cuffs on his wrists, bowtie and a white apron. He smiled, but she turned away. Delilah tapped her, and pointed ahead of them to a lounge area. On a long couch sat four naked people kissing and pawing playfully at each other. At the

end of the couch, a topless woman accepted a drink from a waitress, dressed in a black and white French maid outfit.

“Wow,” Sapphire whispered.

“Shall we go to the bar?” Isis stepped down the two steps into the room, not waiting for an answer. They followed.

“This is Kurt, ladies.”

Kurt also wore the bowtie and cuff ensemble, with no apron to cover his torso. Diamond wondered if his lower half was naked as well.

“He’s the usual bartender down here and he’s available for...well, for whatever

is needed,” Isis said with a giggle. “Isn’t that right, Kurt?” Her smile had a wicked edge to it as she glided her hand across his chest.

Kurt returned her smile and nodded. “As always.”

Isis left him with a wink. “By the way, he’s very good at everything he does.” They crossed the room and stopped at the stage. “The current dancer is Peaches. She’s on staff and available to you if you’re into women.”

Sapphire and Delilah made a face.

Isis snickered. “However, we also

have a male dancer, Jason, if they are more to your liking. Everyone you'll see on stage is a staff member. We encourage people to live out their fantasies, so if that happens to be one of yours feel free to use the stage yourself. There are also rooms available if you'd like a private dance," she added before moving on.

As they followed Isis, Sapphire caught pieces of conversation.

"...tits I've ever seen. Firm and a good handful," a man said.

"...telling you, these big orbs over

here are the way to go. There's no such thing as too much," another man said laughing.

"...play now, she's doing a tour. We'll find her later when she is done with the newbies and play with her," a woman said. She slapped Isis on the butt as they walked by.

Isis turned to wink at her, while moving to the buffet.

"Ladies, this is the very handsome Raul. Raul, Sapphire and Delilah." She pointed to them in turn.

He bowed his head in greeting, as she

stroked his face.

“Are you hungry?” Both of them shook their heads negatively.

“Well, if you get hungry, the buffet, like the staff, is here for your pleasure. Eat as little or as much as you want.” She walked up the steps, then down another connected hallway. “Oh, by the way, Raul is also available.”

Delilah sent a last look back at Raul, who winked. Smiling to herself, she continued to follow Isis. Halfway down the hall the music started to change as different music coming from the other



end began to take over. At the end of the hall were two doors on opposite sides of the walls with a spiral staircase leading up to a white rail balcony overlooking a small atrium.

Isis entered the atrium turning left. “We’ll see what going on in the theater, first.” She pushed the black curtain used as a door to the side. “We call this the theater because there’s either a movie playing or a live show going on all the time. Once a week, we schedule a special event show and post the times on the bulletin board. That’s when it gets really

wild in here. But most of the time people who just want to watch or be watched will come here and wait for others to perform.”

“Perform?” Sapphire asked.

“Uh-huh.”

Sapphire looked at Delilah who shrugged. “Perform doing what?” she asked Isis.

“Whatever they want. Sometimes you’ll see people doing naked karaoke or a couple will have sex on stage or somebody will just come in here and masturbate. It just depends on the

clientele that evening. Ain't no telling what you'll see in this room," she said with a light laugh. "As you can see..." She waved her hand at the people on the couches by the wall. "There's always someone in here to watch. Well, let's go across the hall."

The music got louder the closer they got. She pushed open the shutter-type doors.

Delilah bobbed her head to the music as they entered.

"This, of course, is our nightclub," Isis announced, raising her voice above

the music. “It’s basically the same atmosphere and has everything any other nightclub has, complete with bar and DJ. The only notable differences are, we wear whatever we want or nothing at all, and our drinks are always free.” She pointed to the dance floor.

A young white woman in flowing white negligee danced seductively with a man in an anatomically correct vinyl body suit. Her outfit glowed in the black lighting. It was obvious she wore nothing underneath. Beside them another couple danced against the mirror-covered wall of

the dance floor. They were completely naked. Isis walked past them. unfazed by what was going on, and knocked on the DJ booth door.

“This is Kyle, ladies,” she said with a chuckle when the handsome young man opened the door. “He’s on staff and he takes requests...in and out of the DJ booth.”

Kyle offered a smile and a wink as Isis led them to the bar.

“Giorgio, champagne, please, we’re celebrating our new members.”

“Okay, so, when you say the staff is

available, what exactly are we talking about?” Delilah asked, sliding onto a stool.

Giorgio poured three glasses of champagne and slid a bowl of strawberries to them.

“Ooo, Giorgio, thank you. You know how I love strawberries.”

Taking one, she bit into the juicy fruit and accepted the glass he offered.

“You can thank me later,” he whispered to her.

She giggled, finishing her strawberry. “Well, Delilah, to answer your question

available means just that. If you desire, let's say, Giorgio here, me, or anyone on staff, for your pleasure, you only have to ask. Of course, no means no, but you hardly ever hear that word spoken in here," she said with a light laugh. "This is a place of pleasure and physical love."

Delilah sent Sapphire a smug grin and turned her attention back to Isis as she continued.

"Some members prefer a booty call type thing. They hook up with the same person whenever they come and they only come for them. Others like to mix

and mingle, having sex with lots of different people. In the larger rooms upstairs there's always some kind of orgy scene going on."

"Can you just watch and not participate in anything at all?" Sapphire asked from her other side, popping a strawberry in her mouth.

"Of course, that's what makes this place so much fun."

"So you can just hang out in the room watching and it's okay?" Her eyes widened as shock underlined her tone.

Isis nodded, sipping her champagne.



“Hmm...” Delilah said, thoughtfully sipping her own drink.

“But people don’t just, you know, just walk up and grab you, right?” Sapphire asked, pushing her empty glass away, taking another strawberry.

Isis’ smile was reassuring. “No, honey, they don’t. This is a very social atmosphere. Nothing happens unless you want it to. All you gotta do is say the word and they will either advance or retreat on your command. It’s all very much tamed.” She finished her drink and reached for a strawberry.

“Are you feeling okay with this now?”

Delilah asked, putting her glass down.

“Yeah, I’m okay. I just wanted to make sure I won’t be walking around minding my business and someone grabs me and throws me into a room, that’s all.”

“We have never had that problem in the time I’ve worked here. I mean, some women like to be thrown against the wall and be taken advantage of, but that’s part of their fantasy. Surely you realize that isn’t the same thing, right?”

Delilah looked at Sapphire with a

raised eyebrow. Sapphire threw her hands up and let out an exasperated noise.

“Fine, okay, let’s go.” Sapphire slid from her stool.

“Wonderful! Next, we go upstairs. You can take your drinks with you. Giorgio, sweetheart, would you top them off please?”

Giorgio refilled their glasses. Sapphire took the last strawberry, then followed Isis and Delilah from the nightclub. Upstairs she took them down a long hallway with bedrooms on both

sides. Most of the rooms were empty as they walked by, but the door to one room was ajar.

Inside a man danced seductively for two women sitting on a small loveseat. His long limbs were lean. Only a glowing green thong covered his genitalia. They left the room muttering to each other and passed another empty room. Dark green walls, plastic trees and bushes planted in large brown pots scattered around the room and the rough-looking green carpet made them stop in their tracks. Delilah stopped, poked her and pointed to the

overhead cargo net filled with leaves hanging from the ceiling.

“Is it me or does this room kind of reminds you of my room at your house?”

Sapphire backed up to stand beside her. “Yeah, it does.”

They laughed and ran to catch up to Isis. Isis passed a room with a man sitting alone. Diamond and Sapphire ran into her as she stooped to stand in the doorway.

“Hello,” the man said.

Isis looked at her two charges and shrugged. “Hi. I was just taking two new

members on a tour and we were just wondering why you were sitting here alone?”

“I’m waiting for someone to come along so I can demonstrate this chair.”

“I’ve never seen a chair like that before,” Sapphire said quizzically. “It looks like some kind of weird butterfly.”

The man stood up offering his hand to her with a smile.

“Please, allow me to demonstrate.”

“Ohh, no.” She snatched her hand away quickly. “I umm, uh—”

Isis chuckled, offering him her hand.

“Allow me.”

Delilah and Sapphire stepped into the room and positioned themselves against the wall.

Isis let the man help her onto the seat in the center and she laid her head back. He put her legs on the bottom set of the wings and her arms on the top, then moved a stool closer to the chair, putting him in the perfect position to catch a birthing baby.

Sapphire's eyes grew wide and her mouth dropped open, while Delilah's face burst into a happy grin. The man

grabbed Isis by the hips to pull her to him and kissed his way from her inner thighs to her vagina. Isis let out a moan of pleasure and, as if it were the call of the wild, people started showing up in the doorway. She rubbed the man's head, careful not to dislodge his mask and pushed him into her. The air filled quickly with the smell of sex and the crowd breathed harder, groping one another.

The man rubbed and stroked Isis' body as he licked and kissed the inside and outside of her labia, sending her



moans to a higher level. The crowd got louder with her and when she grabbed the man's head and let out a low groan from deep within her chest, the crowd all but fell over as they let out a collective sigh.

“Whoa,” Sapphire said under her breath.

“Yeah. Remind me to try that chair later,” Delilah whispered.

The crowd dispersed as quickly and as quietly as they came, satisfied with the climax they had witnessed. The man continued to stroke Isis until her

breathing calmed.

“Well, I trust you get the idea behind the chair, now. Shall we continue?” Isis’s voice was shaky, her cheeks flushed and her smile bright when she led them out.

Delilah stopped when she noticed Sapphire looking back into the room. The man smiled while patting the chair and started laughing as her friend hightailed to hurry to catch up to her and Isis.

“Lots of the rooms are being used right now, so you’ll have to check those out on your own,” she explained,

entering the nightclub again. “The later it gets, the more people will show up, and this is the perfect place to be.”

# Chapter Five

They had their glasses refilled again, then sat at a table just off the dance floor.

“Well, so far I think I can hang out here. What do you think?” Delilah asked, sipping her champagne.

“I don’t know. It’s all right, I guess. I had no clue a place like this even existed outside of books or so close to my house even.”

Delilah shrugged. “No one is getting hurt and everyone looks like they’re

having a good time. So I—” She put her glass down abruptly and leaned forward. “Hey, hey, look at that guy.” She pointed excitedly.

Sapphire turned to the dance floor where a man sat holding a leash in his hand connected to a spiked collar around his neck. He offered it to the women who passed by him. She stared wide-eyed at Delilah for a good minute before cracking up laughing, falling into each other.

“Okay, now that was different,” Sapphire said, wiping her eyes.

Delilah sat back sipping her drink. “Uh-huh, but not as different as watching your face when you were watching Isis getting her thang licked.”

“What are talking about?” She sipped her champagne, trying to cool the heat she felt rising on her face.

“Oh, you know what I mean. You were really into it, almost drooling,” she said in a teasing tone.

“The crowd was really into it. I thought they were going to fall over on top of us.”

“Yeah, but you were into it too.”

She leaned back in her chair. “Well, maybe a little.”

Delilah’s lips twisted.

“Okay, maybe a lot.” Sapphire leaned on the table, rolling her glass between her hands. “I just don’t think it could feel as good as she made it look.”

“Oh, yeah, it sure can.” She crossed her legs. “Especially if he’s got skill,” she added with a wink.

“Well, then I don’t think the guys who have done me had any skill at all because it sure didn’t feel anything like what Isis felt.” She slouched in her chair.

Delilah shot upright, shocked.  
“You’ve got to be kidding.”

Sapphire shook her head. “Wish I was.”

She sat back again and whistled.  
“How the hell did that happen?”

Sapphire opened her mouth to answer but Delilah waved away her reply.

“Well, it doesn’t matter. I’m sure we can fix that little problem while we’re here,” she added positively.

“I don’t know Ti—, uh, I mean Delilah.”

“Hey, hey!” she snapped.



“Remember what we said? Trying new stuff, having a good time, you lightening up? Any of this ringing a bell?”

She sighed. “Yes, okay, I hear you.”

Delilah raised her glass. “All right, then. Here’s to the guy we find to smoke your boots!”

Sapphire mimicked her move and laughed.

“Can we join in that toast?”

They girls turned in mid-sip. Two men stood before them. Side by side the appeared to be identical in height and both had a slender build. The man

speaking had blond hair and a full face beard. The one beside him had dark hair pulled back into a long ponytail with no facial hair.

“Hi, I’m Thor and this is my friend Loki,” the blond man said.

Delilah and Sapphire looked at each other with raised eyebrows and put their glasses on the table.

“What are your names?”

“My name is Delilah and she’s Sapphire,” she said pointing between them.

“Beautiful. Can I have this dance?”

He extended his hand to Delilah.

She looked at Sapphire questioningly.

“Sure, go.”

Loki sat in Delilah’s chair. “Want to dance or people watch?”

“People watch?”

“Well, yeah. The dude with the leash around his neck finally found someone to take it.”

She followed his finger to the dance floor. The woman in the flowing white negligee held the leash in question. The man was on all fours with his head underneath her gown.

“Now see, that could’ve been you,” he said with a laughing grin.

She let out muffled laugh in her glass.

“Yeah, right.”

“Come on, let’s get a closer look.”

He grabbed her hand and pulled her up.

They danced, cutting and spinning through the crowd for a while until the floor became overcrowded. Thor and Loki sat them back at their table and took a walk around the club.

“Hey, did you guys hear? There’s a naked man walking around upstairs,” Loki said when they returned. “We

didn't want to see, but we thought you guys might be interested in seeing it."

"Hell yeah, we want to see!" Delilah said.

She grabbed Sapphire's hand and pulled her out the club and upstairs. As soon as they reached the hall, a sea of women blocked their way. Over the crowd, they could see a tall, tanned and very familiar man.

"That's the bartender from downstairs."

The bartender turned, hearing Delilah's voice. "Ahh, I hoped our

newest members were going to come up and see me,” Kurt said, as the sea of women parted, giving him access to them.

“Really and why is that?” Delilah walked to meet him.

“Why do you think?”

She glided her hand across his chest and walked around him.

“Why don’t you tell me?” She slapped his butt lightly.

“Mmm...” he said, taking a deep breath.

Sapphire gasped.

“What?”

Not saying a word, she just pointed to his crotch.

“Oooo!” the crowd said.

Delilah looked down and smiled.

“Well, well, well. Hey Mikey! I think he likes it!” She grabbed Sapphire’s hand and pulled her around him. “Here, you do it.”

Delilah lifted Sapphire’s hand helping her slap his butt. He tilted his head back moaning softly.

“See?” She smiled and helped her smack him again, getting the same

results.

The next time Sapphire slapped him on her own. Delilah smiled and Kurt's dick responded.

“Now rub it after you smack it,” Delilah instructed.

Sapphire smacked his butt again and rubbed softly. Kurt took a slow deep breath and walked backward to lean against the wall. The crowd followed. Delilah moved next to him and grabbed his dick, gently sliding up and down its length. Kurt dropped his head back and the other ladies moved in on him. Their



hands were everywhere, rubbing his chest, sliding up and down his legs and another woman took turns helping Delilah. Kurt shook all over moments later.

“Enough!” he growled, sounding so fierce that the whole crowd jumped back. “You! Little one!” Kurt reached for Sapphire’s arm. “I will initiate you into the club tonight,” he said with a lusty grin.

Sapphire’s mouth dropped open, but before she could protest, the woman who helped Delilah, sidestepped her and

gripped his lance again.

“No, I helped make him as eager as he is. I will be the one to reap the benefits of my work.” She looked at Sapphire.

She threw her hands up in surrender and took a step back. “No objections here, girlfriend. Go for it.”

The woman smiled her thanks, then with the hardness in her hand, guided Kurt into a room.

Sapphire looked at Delilah, who was laughing. “Well, this place just gets weirder and weirder.”

“Yup. Is it time for another drink yet?” Sapphire asked.

Delilah laughed. “Sure is, let’s go.”

A quick peek into the nightclub told them Thor and Loki were still there. Deciding to go elsewhere, Sapphire and Delilah found their way back to the front room, walking past Raul who winked at Delilah again. She waved at him as they kept walking to the bar where a man dressed like Zorro, wearing an oversized mask that covered his whole face except his bottom lip and chin, had taken Kurt’s place.

“Hello. Two glasses of white wine, please.”

Zorro nodded his head once, slid two glasses to her and poured. Sapphire gave the first glass to Delilah and sipped the second.

“Thank you,” Sapphire said.

He nodded.

She watched him for a few seconds.

“I said, thank you.”

He nodded, again.

Sapphire stared at him, with her eyebrows raised, over her glass.

“Your line is—you’re welcome.”

He smiled and nodded again.

She leaned her head to the side, watching him.

“He doesn’t speak, sweetie. He never does.”

Sapphire turned to the woman sitting at the end of the bar.

“Really? Why is that?”

“I don’t really know. He can hear and he can read and write, too, but I’ve never heard him speak. Don’t even know if he can.”

The woman picked up her own glass and took a drink. “And I’ve been coming

here for years,” she added with a chuckle.

Sapphire turned back to him. “Is she right?”

He nodded.

“So you can speak?”

One nod.

“But you choose not to.”

He gave another nod.

“Why?”

He leaned on the bar staring at her.

“Duh, so no one recognizes his voice,” Delilah surmised, answering for him. She downed the rest of her drink,

then pushed the glass at him. “Fill her up, Zorro baby.”

Sapphire sipped her drink. “So umm, Zorro, are you on staff? The mask kinda goes with the costume so...”

Zorro shook his head negatively.

“Oh. So I guess you’re not available then, huh?”

This time he nodded vigorously.

She smiled. “Good. So umm, you want to show me around, then?”

He smiled and started to come around the bar, but stopped at the end.

“What’s wrong?”

He looked around.

“He can’t go, silly,” Delilah said. “He’s got to wait for Kurt to come back before he can leave, right?” she added, turning to Zorro.

Zorro nodded his agreement pointing to Delilah. She laughed.

“All right, well, I guess I’ll see you when Kurt comes back.” She slid off the stool and picked up her glass. “If I’m available, that is,” she said boldly, then turned to Delilah. “You coming?”

“Yes, ma’am.” She slid off the stool following her. “Umm, that was very un-



Diamond like, you know,” she said when they were out of earshot of the bar.

“Yeah, well, I’m not Diamond tonight, am I? I’m Sapphire.” She sat at a table near the stage.

“Oh, I see. So Sapphire can do whatever she wants, huh?”

“Yup, she’s like that. She’s in your face.”

Delilah chuckled. “In your face, huh? Why is that?”

Sapphire shrugged.

“Take your time. I know it takes drunk folk a minute to form their

sentences,” Delilah said with a smile.

“Maybe Diamond just likes being Sapphire.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Or maybe Diamond is too drunk to care right about now.”

“Or maybe Diamond is using that as an excuse.”

Sapphire smiled. She put her empty glass down with a thud. “Well, whatever. Does it matter?”

“Nope, not to me.”

Delilah signaled for the waitress in the French maid outfit to fill their

glasses.

Sapphire stared at the dancer on stage. “I always wanted to do that.”

“Do what?”

“That.” She pointed to the dancer.

“Dance like that.”

“So go do it, Miss I-can-Do-Whatever-I-Want.”

Sapphire rolled her eyes. “Shut up.”

“Well, what’s stopping you?”

“I’ve never done it before. I can’t dance like that.”

“So what? Just ask her to teach you.”

She looked at Delilah and back at the

dancer, sipping her drink. After staring for a few more minutes, she jumped up, threw her nose in the air and walked to the stage, leaving Delilah's laughter behind her.

“Excuse me. Excuse me!”

The dancer looked down and came over.

“Hi. I was just wondering, umm, if, if you know, you could teach me how to do that. I mean, I always wanted to do that and...”

She smiled at her. “Sure, honey, I'll teach ya. I'm Peaches,” she said, pulling

her to the stage. “What’s your name, honey?”

“I’m, uh, Sapphire. You’re going to show me up here? Right now?”

“Sure! What better time or place to learn? It’s real easy, honey. Just swing your hips to the music.” She held her hips, moving them side to side. “You just have to get comfortable with your music.”

Sapphire moved awkwardly for a while until the song started to fade out.

She shook her head and headed off the stage. “Nope, this was a mistake. I

can't do this.”

“Wait, wait, don't leave just yet. The next song will be better for you. Give it a chance, honey,” Peaches said, catching her hand.

Sapphire looked around the stage. Two men in business suits sat at the back of the stage talking to two ladies who sat on their laps. Another man in a suit jacket and pants sat with a woman wearing his dress shirt and tie at a table along the wall, urging her on.

“Come on, sweetie, try it again. Move your hips to the music. You have to feel

it, like it's sliding over your body," Peaches said, as the music began.

Sapphire sighed and tried again. Moving awkwardly at first, trying to copy Peaches. "Hey, I know this song. It's Red Light Special by TLC," she murmured. Sapphire closed her eyes to try again and let the music wash over her.

"Pretend you're making love and you can feel his hands rubbing all over your body. Slide your hands everywhere you want him to touch." She heard Peaches say.

Humming the words, she did what

Peaches instructed and slid her hands over her body slowly and turned around so she could lean against the pole. Starting at her thighs, working her way up she grasped her breasts, rolling and turning her hips, letting the music guide her.

\* \* \* \*

Delilah walked back from the DJ's booth to find Zorro sitting in Sapphire's chair. "Look at my girl do her thing! I always knew she was an undercover



stripper. All she needed was a good song.”

Delilah laughed happily, raising her glass to her. “She’s great, isn’t she?” she added, leaning toward Zorro.

He nodded in agreement.

“That’s her first time ever being on a stage, you know.”

He turned to her, wide-eyed.

“Yup. You know, she’s not one of the average bed hoppers that probably hang out in here. Nope, she may never come here again.”

Zorro brought his attention back to

the stage, and then sagged a little in his chair.

“I know. Sucks, right?”

He nodded again, but didn't take his eyes off the stage.

“Look, I'm only telling you this because she's always had a thing for Zorro. He was her first crush. That whole sexy man of mystery thing did it for her,” Delilah explained with a shrug and sipped her drink. “Anyway, she's got some sex issues I think you might be able to help her with.”

Hesitantly, Zorro turned his head to

look at her, then quickly back to the stage.

“I want her to have a good time and maybe even get her boots smoked so we’ll have something to talk about in our old age. So if you want her, you’ll have a better shot than anyone else in here of having her. You got lucky in your choice of costume, so run with it.”

He slumped back in his chair and took a drink from the cup he had with him.

She smiled and leaned close to his ear. “Just imagine, those could be your

hands sliding over her body.”

“Mmm.” He nodded and kept sipping.

“So if you can get her in bed you’ll be the only one. So you’d better be good.”

He snapped his head around and sat straight up. Delilah straightened, too, with her hands up in surrender, smiling innocently.

“Don’t take it personal, I’m just saying,” she started, but couldn’t hold back her laughter.

He rolled his eyes at her and turned his attention back to the stage.

Delilah leaned over the table toward him again. “You’d better make your move quick, though. Kurt tried to make his upstairs, but somebody sidestepped her.”

Zorro looked over his shoulder and saw Kurt at the bar staring at Sapphire on stage.

“I’ll give you some free advice, too. You need to take her to that room with that chair in it.”

He looked at her again.

“Trust me, dude. Take her to that room and put your demo down. That’ll

get you in the door big time.” She sat back under the pretence of finishing her drink but watched as he contemplated her advice.

Zorro looked at Kurt again then turned his attention to the stage, nodding his head.

The song came to an end and Sapphire opened her eyes. Clapping, Delilah jumped to her feet with the rest of the audience. Tonight might just be the beginning of getting Diamond’s confidence back.

“You were great, Sapphire. You’re a

natural. I just got out of your way and let you do your thing,” Peaches said, coming back on stage.

“Thanks.” As she left the stage, Sapphire had a huge smile and a glow to her cheeks that she hadn’t seen in a long time. Delilah giggled as she watched her friend’s reaction to Zorro dropping to one knee and bowing his head.

“Wow, that’s a nice greeting,” she said as he kissed her hand. “I see Kurt made it back.”

Delilah looked at the bar to see Kurt motioning to Sapphire. Well too bad, he

blew his chance. She had her own plan already set in motion.

“I think he’s ready to take you on a tour, now. Isn’t that right, Zorro?”

Zorro smiled, stood and offered his arm to Sapphire.

“Will you be okay by yourself?”

“Girl, please, I’m cool.”

“Well, if you’re sure?” She took his arm.

“Girl, go. I’m going to refill my glass and people watch, I’m cool.”

“Well...”

Zorro tugged at Sapphire’s arm.



“Okay, but I won’t be gone long.”

Delilah could just barely see a smile under his oversized Zorro mask, but knew he was.

“Right, right.” She flagged down a waitress. “Another white wine, please.” She turned to Sapphire. “Go, see more of the club, girl. I’ll be fine.”

Satisfied with a job well done, she would bet her new car Sapphire came back with an interesting tale.

The waitress, a tall, thin blonde wearing pigtails and a Catholic school outfit brought her drink to her. Just as

she raised it to her lips, someone whispered in her ear.

“Even in this lovely silvery mask, I can still see you’re an extraordinary beauty. Allow me to see more of you.”

She smiled. “By all means.” She reached her hand out. “Ahh, Raul, a pleasant and not so unexpected surprise.”

He tucked her arm in his. “I believe the harem room will suit you nicely.”

Her smile widened in pleasure, ready for a tale of her own. “Ooo, the harem room. I think I could appreciate an

experience like that.”

Raul guided her to a room down the hall. Oversized white silky pillows covered the floor. Pastel colored material hung on the walls extending from a giant golden crown in the middle of the ceiling. A long couch resembling a cushy serving tray on legs rested against the back wall. The arms were heavily padded neck rolls, raised just above the seat. Beautifully decorated with tiny tulips on yellow satin, Delilah had never seen a sofa like it, nor had she seen one as long. It would easily accommodate her

height with room on the ends if she lay across it.

Raul directed her to the sofa. “I’ll be right back.”

“I have to get me a couch like this at home. Look, my legs don’t even hang off the end,” Delilah wiggled her legs.

Raul held the door open to let four other men in. Delilah turned over on her side, resting her head in her hand as they lined up in front of her.

“They are here for your approval, lovely Delilah,” he told her.

The first one stepped forward. “I am

Mocha.”

She let out a low whistle. “Yes, you are,” she said softly.

Mocha was milk chocolate brown, tall as she was, bulky in the chest and shoulders. She followed the light trail of hair on his chest down to the waistband of his shorts. When her gaze reached his shorts, he pushed them down, revealing a bush of black hair and from its center, his male organ stood proudly at attention.

Staring at it, she couldn't help but think it reminded her of a fudge pop.

She covered her mouth to help fight back the urge to lick it.

“Uh, thank you. You can stay.”

He nodded once and stepped back, throwing his shorts to the side. The next guy stepped forward. He wasn't as tall as the last guy. He was more of a honey brown color, but his body was just as nice.

She let out muffled laugh. Did Raul find these guys to make me horny or hungry?

“How you doin', Miss Lady? Cowboy at your service,” the next guy said with a

Southern twang.

He had a firm, hairless chest. As her gaze lowered, he waited until it was waist level and dropped his pants to reveal long powerful legs and a huge penis standing straight out in the middle of them. She blinked a couple of times, but she was right, it was huge, standing there staring back at her like a big ole fat snake. Delilah cleared her throat.

“Thank you, Cowboy. Very nice.”

He smiled and stepped back.

“I’m Blair,” the next man said.

He gave a hard yank and the Velcro

down the sides of his pants came loose.

“Ohh!” Delilah jumped, then snickered.

Blair was so slim she could almost count his ribs. The same sandy brown hair on his head all but covered his chest and stomach, ending at a thick mass of curls from which a long, pale penis protruded with a bright ruby tip.

“Yeah, you will do nicely. Thank you.”

He threw his pants over his shoulder and stepped back.

Hmm, I wonder how all that hair will



feel brushing across my titties. She giggled to herself, sliding her hands across them.

As she lay down, the fourth guy stepped forward. He was shorter than the rest. He was average build, naked, and completely hairless with a beautiful, full body and outdoorsy tan. Delilah pushed herself up to a sitting position and leaned forward.

“May I?”

He stepped closer, putting his hands on his hips.

“Ooo...” She rubbed across his chest,

down his stomach to the top of his pubic area. The closer she moved to his prized possession, it pulsed with a life of its own. She snatched her hand back as it bounced as if trying to touch her.

“Thank you, you can go back now.” She lay back down.

Raul’s olive skin tone complimented the sleek black hair on his head, curling on his chest, going down his stomach. Removing his apron, he revealed slight love handles and no pubic hair at the base of a very impressive male package that curved to the left. Leaving on the

cuffs and bowtie, he winked at her and stepped back with the others.

Delilah smiled. “So where do we go from here?”

Raul clapped loudly. “Gentleman, assume your positions.”

He sat at her head, while the guys went one to each foot and breast. The men at her feet rubbed up her legs until her eyes closed and then pulled down her shorts. The guys at her breasts were squeezing and kneading while they worked her tank top off.

“What beautiful skin you have,

Bellezza,” Raul said in her ear, while her clothes were removed.

“Mmm...” She enjoyed the shiver his voice sent down her back.

They removed her panties and examined her vagina. Rubbing, stroking, and opening her, looking inside. She felt her bra slide off her arm and immediately felt sucking and nibbling on each nipple as she squirmed from their attentions. Raul ran his fingers over her shoulders, across her collarbone, then kissed her neck, causing to her breath quicken.

“You will feel things with us you have probably never felt before. Only one will enter you at the end, you have but to choose the one you desire.”

Nodding, she reached for him, her voice just barely over a whisper. “You.”

He smiled and nodded to the men and the feeling they were giving her intensified.

There were hands everywhere, lips where there were no hands, licking and kissing wherever the rubbing stopped. Flashes from Hassan’s massage came to her and she smiled a dreamy smile.

Hands suddenly replaced lips on her breasts and thighs, bringing her closer to the end of her orgasmic journey.

“She is beautiful down here, Raul. Her scent is driving me crazy. Let me taste her,” said the man between her legs, inhaling her again.

Raul nodded.

Delilah let out a deep sigh of pleasure as Raul continued marking her throat. The other guys nipped and sucked at her nipples, rubbing and stroking as much flesh as they could. Her breathing picked up and she reached up

to grab the armrest.

“Ahhh, you’re almost there.” Raul took her hands, kissed them and held them in his lap.

She couldn’t remember ever being so hot. Delilah squeezed the head between her legs, trying to get closer, but the more she scooted forward the further away it seemed to get, until it was gone.

“Nooo...” she said on a breath.

“We must back up, Bellezza, and let the others have their taste of you. Remember, only I will enter you, so we must let them have some part of you.”

The next man was gentle as he used his fingers and tongue to arouse her. Sliding his finger in and out of her vagina, he made her hotter and wetter, wanting more. But as soon as she got into what he was doing, he was gone, too. Delilah sighed heavily with her frustration. Someone replaced him as the two men at her breasts continued to suck at her nipples and hands continued to work her body into a frenzy.

Oh! Her eyes popped open briefly. What the hell?

The man between her legs covered



her clitoris, licking and sucking at it. The shock of pleasure almost made her jump off the couch, but the men held her firmly.

“Oh, shit! Raul what—” she whispered.

“Ahhh, I see you like Mocha’s tongue ring, Bellezza.” Raul chuckled, kissing her neck.

Raul sounded miles away. She was on fire, shaking all over ready to explode as Mocha brought her to tilt. Skyrockets, firecrackers and bright lights were all around her when she let out a scream of

pleasure she was sure shook the whole building at its very foundation.

Before she could catch her breath and her body could return to normal, Raul moved Mocha out of the way and entered her quickly. Another rush of pleasure rocked her body. She reached up and pulled him to her, pushing him deeper inside her. Raul moaned into her ear, grinding her harder and faster, quickly taking her to the next orgasmic level, where he joined her.

“Ooo shit!”

Zorro lifted Sapphire onto the chair.

“Umm, I’ve only done this a couple of times in my life. I-I don’t exactly know what to do,” she said nervously.

Smiling, he put his finger to her lips. He sat on the empty stool to remove her shorts. His hand slid across her lacey pink panties for a few seconds before pulling them off and sending them across the room with her shorts. Rubbing and kissing her legs, he moved up until he was at the top of her pubic area and

glided his hands over her hips then back over her pelvis. His fingers slid over what looked like a tiny, crooked diamond shape but smudged.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

He pressed on the mark.

“Oh, that’s just my birthmark.”

He nodded and kissed it.

Diamond closed her eyes and let out a low moan as she felt his hands move up the front of her body.

He cupped her breasts and squeezed gently. She moaned again as he dragged his lips over her skin, moving down to

her vagina slowly. Trying to control her breathing, she could feel each tiny current of arousal run from the tip of her toes to her nipples, as he pushed open her lower lips.

Licking with long, deep strokes, she squirmed underneath him as her arms fell off the chair. He grabbed her forearms and rested them on his shoulders. His hands slipped under each butt cheek to pull her to him and hold her in place. Gently, he sucked her clit. She rose from the chair, shaking uncontrollably.

“Ohh, ohh, ohhhhh,” she cried, squeezing his head as she came, hard and fast, tears rolling down her face.

Zorro held her firmly drinking in her essence. When he lifted his head, she sat up and fell onto his shoulder crying. He held her, rubbing her back gently.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered, sniffing.

“Shhh...” he said, softly rocking her in his arms.

“I-I don’t even know why I’m crying. It’s never, I mean, I didn’t think—”

“Shh,” he repeated, putting his finger to her lips. He wiped her tears away,

took her to the mattress across the room, and went down on her again. This time he took his time as if enjoying the feel of her silky flesh and her musky scent. Her body opened to him as she thrashed about. She gripped his head, panting and whimpering her approval. Moments later, her inner walls pulsed around his tongue again.

“Ahhh!”

She shouted for joy once again, crushing his head with her thighs to hold him in place. His grip remained strong on her bottom holding her to him. He

drank her juices lavishly until she had enough. When her breathing slowed, he lifted his head. She reached out for him. He climbed up her body to the top of the bed. She lay beside him still trembling from her climax.

“That was incredible. It’s been a long time since I felt anything like that. Well,” she paused letting out a light laugh. “I don’t think I’ve ever felt anything like that.”

He dropped a kiss on her head.

“Umm, but I think we should go now. My friend will be looking for me



soon. I think we've been gone for a long time."

Zorro let out a deep sigh, then nodded. Together they dressed her and made their way downstairs. He walked her back to her table.

"Welcome back," Delilah greeted with a grin.

"Thanks."

Zorro lifted her hands and kissed them before heading to the bar.

"Well, that was nice. So how do you feel?"

"I feel fantastic. Did you sit here the

whole time?” Sapphire asked with a raised brow.

“Girl, please, you know better than that.”

“Well, I think I’ve had enough of my fantasies fulfilled for one night. So can we—”

Delilah put her hand up to stop her. “Say no more. I’m tired as hell. Let’s go.”

The girls made their way to the beaded doorway. Delilah looked over her shoulder. Raul, back at his station, blew a kiss her way. She returned it with

a wink and disappeared through the beads.

Sapphire took a last look toward the bar too. Zorro was watching her. He stood and bowed. She smiled, grateful with the gift he granted her and followed Delilah out.

They found their way back to the locker room where they dressed quietly and left.

# Chapter Six

“You know, I’m never going to see that room the same way again after visiting The Fun House.” She laughed, pouring herself a cup of juice. “Girl, I had some weird-ass dream about Trey last night...something about him being Tarzan, me being Jane, and a whole lot of sex in the trees. I was a little freaked when I woke up and looked around. I didn’t know where I was for a minute.”

“Last night has definitely left an impression on you.” Diamond laughed, her eyes glued on her friend’s own dark gaze.

“That it has, my friend, that it has. It was a nice vacation spot, I’ll say that. You can get away from everything, including yourself, and though it was fun I wouldn’t add it to my everyday life.”

“I agree. So what do you want to do today?”

“I don’t know. Maybe we could just hang out around here since I have to leave tonight. We can get some ice

cream and I can tell you all about what I did while you were upstairs with that Zorro guy.”

“Ooo, I knew you didn’t just sit there. Let’s go.”

Diamond’s phone rang from inside her purse as she and Tia returned from the store. With bags in both hands, they fumbled their way to the kitchen. Diamond slid the bags onto the table, and then dug inside her purse.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Diamond, it’s Kain. Are you okay? You sound winded.”

“Hey Kain. No, no, just had a bunch of stuff in my hands and couldn’t get to my phone. What’s up?”

Tia waved her out the kitchen. She made her way to the living room and sat.

“Nothing much. I was just wondering what you ladies were up to today?”

“Nothing actually. We’re just going to sit around the house and talk. Tia’s leaving tonight.”

Tia came into the room and offered her a spoon and a bowl.

“Tell Kain I said hi,” she said, sitting on the opposite end of the sofa.

“Tia says hi.”

“Tell her I said hi too. Is it okay if I call you tomorrow, so we can set something up for Tuesday?”

“Kain says hi, Tia. Sure, that will be fine. I’m usually home by four o’clock.”

“Ask him where that fine-ass friend of his is.”

She giggled into the receiver. “Tia wants to know where Trey is.”

“He’s home. Want me to conference him in?”

“No, that’s okay. He’s home, Tia. So you’ll call me tomorrow, right?”



“Yes, and I can’t wait. Bye.”

“Bye.” Diamond ended the call and let her head fall back. “I sure hope he’s not a nut job. He’s so sweet.”

Tia kicked off her sandals and put her feet under her. “Oh shut up, he’s okay. Now dig into your ice cream so I can start my story.”

Diamond giggled and put the phone down next to her. After toeing off her own shoes, she sat cross-legged positioning the bowl in her lap. “I’m ready, go ahead.”

“Well, after you left—” she started,

but stopped when the phone again. “Ugh!” She shoved a spoonful of ice cream in her mouth.

Diamond laughed. “Hello.”

“Hello, sweetheart.”

“Hi Mom.”

“How is everything? Are you and Tia all right? No major disasters or anything happening at the moment?”

Confused by the implication, her brows furrowed. “Uh, no. Everything’s fine, Mom.”

“Well, I can’t tell, dear. Tia’s been here all weekend and no one has called

me or come by.”

Diamond rolled her eyes. “Sorry Mom, we were just—”

“I realize you girls were just doing whatever it is young people do, nowadays,” she said interrupting her. “I was young once, too, you know. I just thought you could spare a little time to see your mother, that’s all.”

“Yes, Mom, we can do that. We were—”

“Good, then I’ll see you girls over here by three o’clock,” she said before the line went dead.

Tia sighed heavily and put down her bowl. “Are we in trouble?”

“No, not yet anyway. But if we’re not there by three we will be.”

“So I guess we do have plans for today after all, huh?” Tia said on a laugh.

“Looks that way. Better put this up and head on out there before we’re late. You know she hates that.”

\* \* \* \*

A short while later, Tia parked across the street from Ruby and Dr.

Derrick Jones' condo in College Park, just after three o'clock.

“What are all these cars doing here? Did she say she was having a party?”

“No, she didn't,” Diamond said, looking up and down the block. “I got a bad feeling about this. I bet this is another husband hunt, Tia. You know marrying us off is on the top of her list of things to do. Remember the last party Mom roped us into? She lined us up with four of the biggest idiots in Atlanta.”

Tia frowned. “She just called us, Diamond. She couldn't have had time to

line anyone up.”

“Uh-huh, fifty bucks says she got at least two husband prospects in there.”

Tia laughed. “You’re on. Mama Ruby is fast, but not even she’s that fast.”

They went into the house looking for the people she considered her second set of parents. Out the back door, they saw their mother sitting with her friends.

“There you are, finally,” Ruby said, standing. “You girls are late.” She hugged them. “Tia darling, you look fabulous. Do you like Indiana? You know you can come home whenever you get ready. You

can stay right here until you get yourself another place and—”

“No, Mom,” Tia said, interrupting her. “Indiana is fine. I like it.”

“Okay, dear, but you always have a home here. Diamond, sweetheart, you live here and you don’t call.”

“Mom, the end of the school year is almost here. It’s a busy time for me. But I promise I’ll call you.”

“A mother just wants to hear from her children. I hear from the boys at least once a week. You too, Tia. I know I’m not your real mother, but you know I

love you like you were my own.”

“I know. I promise to call more too.”

“Now you girls sit down. You remember my friends Renée and Tonya?”

“Of course. Hello,” Diamond said.

Tia nodded and waved. “Hi.”

“Hello girls,” they said in unison.

Tia did remember Ruby’s friends. It was through them, she and Diamond learned more than they wanted to know about Ruby.

“Mom, can we talk to



you for a minute?” Diamond said, knocking at her bedroom door.

“Wait, listen,” Tia said, leaning on her shoulder. “I think I hear her downstairs.”

They sat at the top of the stairs listening to the voices.

“I’m so sick of him right now. I don’t know what to do. He never wants to try anything new,” Tonya said.

“Maybe you can sneak it in bed and just surprise

him,” Renée said.

“Are you trying to get me killed?” Tonya said. “You know how men feel about another man being in bed with them. They don’t want the competition.”

“It’s not a man, it’s just the dick,” Renée said.

“Huh, that’s worse,” Tonya said.

“But it’s not a dick, it’s a vibrator. There is a difference, you know,” Ruby

corrected her.

Tonya sputtered. “Huh, not one that will matter to him.”

“Shit, then get one anyway and use it when he’s not around.”

“I can’t do that. If I can get two or three orgasms with that thing before he even gets home, shit, I wouldn’t need him at all.” She laughed.

“He’s just mad because he thinks it’ll be bigger than

him,” Ruby said, and they could hear her laughter.

“Girl, just shut on up. Everybody can’t have a big ole dick like Doc Jones, now can they? If it wasn’t bigger, what would be the point?”

Diamond and Tia snickered behind covered mouths looking at each other.

“Don’t be mad because you guys didn’t have the balls to go after him back then

and I did. You had your chance!” Ruby yelled to the kitchen.

“You always had more than enough balls for the three of us, Ruby,” she yelled back.

“Uh-huh. Remember when we were in nursing school, the year we spent the summer going to different bases to see who had the biggest dicks, the Army, Navy, Air Force or the

Marines?” Tonya said with a laugh.

Renée came back laughing. “Yeah, but, my favorite was when we were just out of school, when Doc was just an intern. Remember when we talked him and his friends into playing show and tell instead of watching the Super Bowl. That’s how we found out about his big dick in the first place.”

Ruby tittered. “Yes, I remember. That’s how he got the nickname ‘Big Doc Jones’. The children think it’s because he’s six-foot-four.”

They all laughed.

Diamond and Tia laughed too.

“I still think the most fun we had was when we had to go to Michigan for that convention with the Deltas and we ran around the hotel

taking pictures of all the sisters we didn't like, while they were in the shower," Ruby said.

"Yeah, and you cut their heads off and taped it to the bulletin board during the conference," Renée said, and they all laughed and banged the table.

Unable to hold back their laughter any more, Diamond and Tia ran back to her room, forgetting what



they were going to ask Ruby.

Smiling at the memory, Diamond's voice brought her back to reality.

“So Mom, how come you didn't tell me you were having a party?”

“No, no, no, dear, this isn't a party. Your father just wanted to barbecue and you know he always makes too much. So I called a few people over to help eat it. That's all.”

“Oh, so this was a spur of the moment thing?”

“Of course, dear. Now, you girls run

along and go find your father. He's probably by the grill," Ruby said, dismissing them.

They walked across the backyard to the grill. Doc wore the apron she and Diamond had given him a few years ago for his sixtieth birthday that said, Pass the cook a beer.

"Hi, Dad," they said in unison.

He turned around, opening his arms. "Ahh, there's my two little girls." With his cooking fork in the air, he engulfed them both, easily. "How are my girls? You look as lovely as ever."

“We’re fine, Dad,” said Diamond, kissing his cheek after Tia did.

He turned back to the grill. “Tia, how’s Indiana?”

“It’s fine, Doc. I like it there. I’m still learning the city, but when I get a little more settled, I asked Diamond to come up for a visit.”

“That’s good. Have you spoken to JJ lately?”

“No Doc, you know you speak to my dad more than I do. Have you guys gone off on one of your little getaways lately?”

“No.” He chuckled. “Not this

quarter, anyway. You know, we've been going on our trips since before you girls were even born and he still manages to surprise me. I never know where we'll end up next. He's on the move so much we mostly text and talk via email now. I should be hearing from him soon to see where we're going to meet next."

"Does Mom still get mad when you go running off with Uncle JJ?"

"She says she doesn't, but I know she does, Diamond. She doesn't give me a hard time any more though. Ruby just takes that time for her and her girl

friends.”

Tia stared at her unofficial godfather with fondness, remembering how he got that role in her life.

Diamond and Tia cried on each other's shoulders while the minister said the final words over the lowering casket. The crowd thinned, Ruby ushered them and the boys to the limo with her father and Doc close behind her.

Losing her mom broke her heart, but even at such a young age she knew what her parent had was special. Her daddy was destroyed. She was lucky to have Diamond and Ruby to take care of her but daddy only had Doc. That's why she came looking for them. Ever since that night, even when she was in the same room as him he seemed so far away. Hearing her dad's voice, she headed

to the kitchen but stopped outside to see what he was saying.

“I—I just need you to look after her for a while, man. Just so I can get my head together. A few days, max, maybe a week, okay?” JJ said, taking the drink Doc offered him.

“You got it, man, whatever you need.” He sat next to him at the table.

JJ stared at the drink for

a long time before taking a sip. “I can’t believe she’s gone, Doc. He took her away from me, man. How can this happen?”

“It was an accident, man.” He shrugged. “Sometimes—”

“No! This wasn’t an accident. This was carelessness! A travesty! He should have never been driving in the first place! If he wasn’t already dead I



would have killed him myself!”

He stood and slammed the glass to the floor, then just stared at the mess. Doc didn't move as he sipped his own drink.

“I'm sorry, man. Derrick, man, you know I...” He choked on his words as tears slid down his cheeks again.

Doc went to hug her father as he sobbed like a

baby. He caught sight of Tia in the doorway and waved her away. But she didn't leave, just continued to hide around the corner keeping an eye on them.

“I'm sorry, man,” JJ said after a while, wiping his face before he sat back down. “I'm crying like a little pussy, huh?”

Doc shrugged. “It's cool, man, don't worry about it. Look, take as long as you

need, you know we'll take care of Tia."

"I just need to get my head right...get back to work...try to focus on something else." He squeezed his eyes and rubbed his chest. "I miss her so much, Doc. I— I— it's so hard to believe she's..." He wiped his face again and jumped to his feet. "I can't let my baby see me like this, man. I don't know what else

to do.” He looked around and let out a sad chuckle. “I’m sorry, man. Let me get this up before Ruby kills me.”

“Don’t worry about Ruby, man. I’ll deal with her. You do whatever you have to do.”

JJ nodded and slapped Doc five. “You always been my boy, Doc. You know that don’t you?”

“I know that.” He pulled

him into a hug. “Go handle your business, man, we got your baby.”

“I love her, man. Tell her that for me every day, Doc.”

“Yeah, I will.”

“I’ll keep in touch.”

The days stretched to months and months to years. Doc Jones and Ruby became second parents to Tia. They went to all the plays and track meets. Ruby was there to help her with her first

date, dances and graduations from middle school and high school. Whenever something for Diamond was planned, Tia was added as if she were their daughter also. She became the sister Diamond never had.

“Diamond, Diamond,”  
Tia whispered, shaking her  
awake one night.

She rolled over, rubbing  
her eyes. “Yeah. What’s  
wrong?”

“Your mom and dad are

arguing. I think it's about me."

Diamond looked around the dark room. "What time is it?"

"It's late, they just came home."

"Oh. Okay, come on."

They tiptoed to their spot on top of the stairs where they could hear.

"Ruby, we've been over this."

"I know, Derrick. All

I'm saying is he can be a better father than he's being. That girl has seen him maybe ten times since she lost her mother almost six years ago. I understand he was hurt after losing her—”

“No, you don't understand. Look, JJ is a complicated man. He's been my friend for as far back as I can remember. He loved that woman.”

“I know that.”



“No, you don’t know. He loved that woman with every fiber of his being. That kind of love only comes around once in a lifetime. Once in a million lifetimes, Ruby! A love like that is a gift from God. It’s a soul burning kind of love. Losing her almost killed him. The only reason the man even breathes today is because he’s got Tia.”

“That’s what I’m saying. He’s hardly even seen Tia

since Rosarita died.”

“And that’s part of his problem too. Just looking at Tia is killing him. The older she gets the more she looks like Rosarita. She looks so much like her mother now it’s uncanny. The green eyes, the long brown hair...she’s only darker than her mother because JJ is dark. He can’t even look at the girl without crying. He doesn’t want to do that to her or himself.”

“Well, I just think—”

“Damn it, Ruby, that’s enough! James Johnson is my best friend and until he finds a way to deal with his pain we will be mother, father, uncle, aunt, and whatever else Tia needs. I told him we’d take care of his daughter until he could and we will.”

Hearing her stomp away, Diamond and Tia crept back to their room where

she cried on Diamond's lap for a long time.

“All this time I thought my dad hated me,” Tia confessed with a sniff.

Diamond rubbed her head. “Tia, how could you think something like that? Uncle JJ loves you.”

Tia sat up. “I don't know. I thought since he didn't have my mom, he didn't want me either.”

“Well, my dad says that's

not true.”

Tia took a deep breath and wiped her face on her pajama sleeve. “Yeah. I gotta find a way to talk to my dad.”

Though they still didn’t see much of each other, with Tia’s persistence they spoke a lot more over the next year.

\* \* \* \*

“Tia, get the door! I still

can't get the stupid straps on this suit right!" Diamond screamed from upstairs.

Tia laughed, grabbing her towel and wrapping it around her waist.

"Well, hurry up! Lisa and Rachel are already here!" She swung the door open. "Oh! Dad! What—what are you doing here?"

He spoke hesitantly, opening his arms. "Is that how you greet your father?"

No hug or anything?”

Tia smiled and walked into his arms. He held her tightly for a long time.

“Umm, come in, Dad. Doc and Mama Ruby aren’t here, but they’re—”

“Tia, I came to talk to you.” He sat on the couch.

“Oh. Okay.”

He took a deep breath and ran his finger down her face. “God, you look so much like her. So beautiful

and strong, apparently stronger than I am,” he said. “Tia, I’m so sorry. I should have done this a long time ago.” His voice started to crack as he picked up her hand. “I love you so much. I’m so sorry I haven’t been there for you. I just...”

“It’s okay, Dad. You don’t have to explain. I love you too.” She reached over and they hugged and cried together.



“So Tia, have you found a doctor yet?”

“Huh? What’d you say, Doc?”

“A doctor, have you found one? I know a few out there. I can recommend one, if you’d like. An eye doctor, a dentist, gynecologist, whatever you need.”

“Uh, no Doc, I’ve got those covered. Thanks.” My godfather knowing my gynecologist. How creepy is that! Oh, by the way, Jones, tell Tia I’ve got that cream she needed to get rid of that yeast infection. Eww!

She made a face at Diamond, who smiled before pressing her lips together and turning her head.

“All right sweetheart, but you let me know if you need one. Oh, by the way, I wanted to give you girls a heads up. Your mama has a few husband prospects here for you.”

“What?” Tia said, alarmed.

“Hey, I know, but I just wanted you to have your guard up.”

“But, but she said this was a spur of the moment thing.”

“This little get-together? Oh yeah, it

was, but she knew you were coming to town for over a week. That gave her plenty of time to find some guys. She was just going to have them come to the house, but then this came up so..." He smiled.

Diamond laughed.

"Oh, shut up."

Doc Jones looked between them. "So how much did she lose this time?"

"Fifty bucks!"

Tia crossed her arms and walked away. "Both of you suck."

Doc laughed too. "Hey, don't be mad

at me. You should know how your mother is by now. Don't be so hard on her, Princess. She just wants her girls safe and happily married, like all the other mothers in the world." He turned back to his grill. "Uh oh, here she comes, girls."

Tia sat at the table with Diamond and took a deep breath. Ruby made a beeline directly toward them. She kissed her husband as she passed him and continued to the table.

"Girls, I want you to meet Carlito Hernandez and Desmond Carmichael." She leaned on Diamond's shoulders.

“This is my daughter Diamond and this is Tia, who’s like a daughter to me as well. I picked Carlito for you, dear,” she said in a mock whisper near Diamond’s ear before leaving.

Diamond’s eyes widened as she glared at her mother in disbelief. Doc, a few feet away at the grill, coughed several times in a failed attempt to hide his laughter. Tia covered her mouth to muffle her own laugh.

“Okay, that was probably the most embarrassing thing she’s done to me to date. What do you think, Tia?”

Tia finally let her titters fall free. “Yeah, I think that definitely makes it to the top three ever.”

“What about you, Carlito? What do you think?”

“Call me Carl, please. I think she was only trying to help.” He grabbed the back of the chair. “May I?”

“I’m sorry, of course. Please sit down. You too, Desmond.”

The men talked with the girls for a little while before Desmond asked Tia to walk with him. Diamond stayed a while longer with Carl, then took his number

promising to call him before the end of the week before he left. She went to the grill and took a hot dog from her father.

“So what happened with Desmond?” she asked Tia as she approached minutes later.

“Nothing. He’s a cutie, but I told him I don’t do long distance love affairs.”

“What? You’re so full of crap.” Diamond broke the hot dog in half and handed it to her.

“Whatever do you mean?” Tia asked, batting her lashes.

Diamond twisted her lips.

“Uh-huh. Well, if you don’t believe in long distance love affairs what about Trey?”

“Who’s Trey?” Doc asked.

“Oh, girl, he doesn’t count. I could move back to Atlanta for a man like that,” she said with a wink.

“Is Trey a husband prospect?”

“No, Doc, we just met them.”

“Them?”

“Yeah, Dad, he’s got a really cute friend name Kain. Hey, you think that would keep Mama off our backs for a while?”



“I don’t know, Princess, but speaking of your mama, here she comes again,” Doc Jones said. He used his spatula to point the way. “Let me get you girls a drink. It looks like you’re going to need one.”

They sighed, walking back to the table. Doc Jones brought them back a glass of something. Neither questioned what it was and both drank it in two gulps, just as Ruby returned to the table.

“Darlings, I would you to meet Daniel Davies and Zeak Fleming. Boys, these are my daughters, Diamond and

Tia,” she introduced, pointing to them in turn, and then left them alone.

“You guys don’t look like sisters,” Zeak said, looking between with a frown.

“We’re not real sisters. Diamond’s mom just helped raised me after my mother died,” Tia explained.

“So, Daniel, what do you do?” Diamond asked.

“I work in the pharmacy.”

“Really? Sounds interesting.”

“Not really. It’s pretty boring actually, but, hey, want to know what we do for fun?”

Diamond tried to stifle a groan as she looked at Tia.

“Tell us, man. What do you do?” Zeak asked excitedly.

“Well, you know we got all those drugs and stuff, so we mix and match stuff up to see what will give us the better high. Yeah, sometimes we get lucky and come up with some stuff that will get you higher than the street drugs and it’s cheaper, too, because we’re getting for free at work,” Desmond said triumphantly.

“Dude, that’s just ingenious.” Zeak

slapped him five.

“Yeah, man, but the downside to that is when your combination doesn’t work. Then you’re hurling all night long.”

“Yeah, I could see how that would fuck your night up,” Zeak agreed, laughing.

Diamond and Tia stared at them openmouthed.

“Look, look, I’ve got a fun story, too, dude. Check this out. I work in the morgue, right, and last year I was trying to find a spot to take a nap on my shift—”

Tia scoffed.

“What? I was tired. Anyway, check it out, Des. I pulled this body out of the drawer and took its place, right? You know, I figured no one would bother me in there, right? So anyway, while I was taking my nap, a class of examiners came in the room. They pulled the drawer open looking for the dead dude I took out. So I jumped up and scared the shit out of the whole damn class, man. It was awesome. People were screaming, yelling and just falling all over themselves. This one dude started having an asthma attack and two of the people

that passed out busted their heads on the floor. Dude, it was hilarious.” He beat the table and laughed at the memory. “I got suspended after that, but it was still funny as hell.”

Desmond wiped away tears of laughter. Tia gave Diamond a disgusted look.

Doc cleared his throat as he approached the table. “Excuse me. Diamond, Tia, can I see you for a minute?”

“Yeah, Dad. Excuse us, guys.”

They followed him into the house.

“After I heard that story, I knew you girls had to get away from them fools. Here, sit down, I made you a plate.”

“I love you, Doc.” Tia kissed his cheek.

“Yeah, Dad, I love you too.”

“Yeah, yeah, eat.” He smiled, leaving them in the kitchen.

“Girl, what kind of freaks do they have working up at that hospital, anyway?”

“I have no clue. Everything about those guys was offensive, but the question is why does my mother know all these

freaks?” She picked up her corn.

“Uh-uh, here’s the million-dollar question,” Tia said between bites of chicken. “What the hell makes her think we’d want to go out with these freaks in the first place?”

“That’s the question, right there,” Diamond agreed, shaking an ear of corn at her, laughing.

“You know, we’ve stayed a while, you think Doc will help us escape?”

“I don’t know, but I sure hope so.”

“Hey, girls,” Doc Jones said, walking in. “I just told your mother you had to



leave because Tia hasn't packed for home yet. She sends her love and wants you both to call her tomorrow. Now get out of here before we're all in trouble."

They hugged him simultaneously, grabbed a Polish sausage from their plates and ran out the front door.

# Chapter Seven

Diamond walked in the house and hung her keys on the hook by the light switch.

“See, that’s what I’m saying. I don’t get it. How is it she can pick a wonderful man like my father for herself and she picks the crappy guys for us?”

“You got me, girl,” Tia said on her way to the kitchen.

“Hurry up with the ice cream!”  
Diamond called from the living room.

She plopped onto the sofa letting out an exasperated noise.

“Well at least we can look on the bright side,” Tia said from behind her.

Diamond gave her a questioning look.

“We got lunch for our troubles,” she finished, taking her seat on the couch.

Diamond laughed and accepted the ice she passed her. “Now, where were we?”

“Yeah, yeah. You first.”

“I thought you were going to go first.”

“That was when we had all day to

talk. Now we only have a couple of hours. I want to make sure I hear your story.”

Diamond shrugged. “What’s to tell? Zorro took me to the room with that weird chair.” She took a bite.

“Really?” Tia smiled. “Huh, so how was it?”

Diamond eyes locked on her friend’s interested gaze. She slid the spoon slowly between her lips before returning to the bowl. “It was okay,” she answered finally breaking eye contact.

Tia shook her head and her brows

furrowed. “That’s it? Just okay?”

Diamond smiled. “I’m lying. It was the bomb!” She fell back on the sofa and laughed. “Oh my God, it was so incredible.”

“That’s more like it! Tell me all about it, honey!”

“I have never felt anything like it. Oh, Tia, it was, I don’t know, the only word that comes to mind is, incredible! No... amazing! Wait, wait...fantastic! Is fantastic better than amazing?”

Tia shrugged. “I don’t know. I guess it depends on the person.”

“Oh, man, I was shaking all over. I felt the orgasm all over my body—from the top of my head all the way down to my pinky toe,” she emphasized wiggling her toes.

“Wow.”

“Yeah, and Zorro was so wonderful. Gentle and caring—”

Tia sat up in alarm. “Whoa, whoa, whoa! Don’t be getting all into him like that. There was no him. He was just a body and a mask. That’s all. This was a physical encounter. Nothing personal. Okay?”

“I know, I know.” Diamond ate another spoonful. “But when I cried—”

“Cried?” Her tone softened and her eyes widened. “You cried?”

She nodded. “Mmm-hmm.”

“Damn. It takes a serious orgasm to can scramble your emotions.” She leaned back against the arm. “Go on.”

“Well, when I was crying, he held me and rocked me until I stopped. He went down on me again and it just as good as if he made love to me. It was so good.” She hugged herself with a small smile on her face.

Tia shook her head waving her spoon around. “Uh-uh, stop right there. Look Diamond, it’s been a long time since you’ve been in a relationship or had sex. Any sex would be good sex to someone who hasn’t had sex in a long time. That man did not make love to you. In order to do that he would have to love you. You guys had sex. No love is involved with that. It was all phys-i-cal,” Tia stressed again. “Don’t get the two confused.”

Diamond pointed her spoon accusingly at her. “It’s been a long time



for you, too. How do you know you won't mix them up?"

Tia tapped her chin with the spoon. "Okay, I'll give you that. It's been a minute since I've had the real thing. That's true, but my extensive toy collection helps me with at least four orgasms a week. It stops me from attacking the local men and also keeps me just a little more objective when it comes to sex than you."

Diamond rolled her eyes.

"I can honestly say I know the difference. The question is, do you?"

“Of course I do.”

“Mmm-hmm. You answered just a little too quickly for my taste, missy.”

“I know the difference, Tia,” she said with a little conviction in her voice.

Tia watched her for a few moments seemingly unconvinced, then she raised her hands. “All right, I’ll leave it alone. If you have a wrap on it then go ahead and check this Zorro guy out one more time. Nothing long-term, of course, just see if he’s really as good as you say or if you just needed your coochie cobwebs knocked out, but be careful. Don’t go

getting caught up in that place, okay?”

Diamond chuckled. “Coochie cobwebs? I bet you thought that was funny.”

Tia smirked. “Yeah, a little.”

“Yeah, well, enough about me. Tell me about what you did.”

“Girl, Raul came and got me and took me to the harem room.”

“You had a harem?”

“Yup. Five fine-ass men, girl, including Raul.”

She went into her story, only stopping to answer the questions Diamond kept

throwing at her. “He didn’t have any hair at all? Did you get the chance to feel all that hair on your chest? It was a tongue ring? Did you like it?”

Diamond let out a long sigh at the end of her story. “I’m so out of the loop.”

“No, no, you’re just...” Tia took another spoonful of ice cream. “Well, you’re just one step behind the pack.”

Diamond sputtered around her spoon. “Great. How is that any better?”

“That’s not exactly a bad thing, you know. One day you’re going to find the

perfect guy, he'll be just for you. He's going to blow your mind in and out of the bedroom and believe me, he won't have any problem teaching you what he wants you to know."

"Hmm, here's hoping."

She smiled and clicked her spoon to her friend's in a mock toast. They sat for a while longer talking before Tia prepared to leave. Diamond walked her outside.

"I packed you some food for the trip. It'll be past dinner when you get home," Diamond told her handing her the bag.

“Thanks.” Tia hugged her and got in the car. “Don’t be sad, little one.”

Diamond let out a sad chuckle. “You haven’t called me that since we were little.”

“I haven’t seen that look but once since we were little. Well, except when I moved to Indianapolis that is.”

“Yeah and it took you six months to come back for a visit.”

“It won’t this time, I promise.”

“When will you be back then?”

“Hmm, I might be able to come back in two weeks? How about the weekend

after next?”

“Mmm-hmm, you know I’m going to hold you to that.”

“I know you will.”

Diamond hugged her again through the window. “Safe journey, Tia. I love you.”

“Love you, too.”

Diamond backed up as Tia pulled onto the street.

“Hey!” Tia called out. “Keep Kain! I like him! I think he’ll be good for you!” She waved out the window and drove away.

Diamond went back into the house and cleaned up, deep in thought.

“Tia wants me to keep Kain. He’s cool and I can really like him. Hmm, I wonder if that house is open on Sundays.” She paced. “No, no, I better stop thinking like that.”

She went to the kitchen and dropped the ice cream boxes on the floor next to the trash can, with the spoons in. Sitting on the sofa, she twiddled her thumbs, staring at the clock.

“Dang, it’s only seven-fifteen.”

Sucking her teeth, she got up and



fixed the cushions on the sofa, rearranged a few pictures and repositioned the coffee table. She paced for a while and sat before the clock again. It was seven-thirty.

“Fifteen minutes! That’s all? Ugh!” she yelled, throwing herself back on the sofa, running her hands through her short hair.

“Okay, calm down. I just need to get a grip on myself. Maybe if I read something...”

She got up and went to the den to pick up the book she was reading in her

spare time. Sitting in her favorite chair, she read out loud.

It was so quiet. A deep-seated, hungering stillness hovered around her while she waited for what would come next. There would be something next, she could feel it. Every nerve ending in her body screamed for it. Suddenly, he was there. The hot, carnal caress of his tongue enveloped her,

insinuating itself into her... deeper, moving, pressing, exploring. Her legs seemed to spread on their own. Cheryl pressed her lips together to keep the lingering scream at bay. Lacing her fingers behind her head, she squeezed to hold it in place, fearing it would explode. She bore down, riding the pointed, thrusting tongue wantonly. Finally, the cry burst from her mouth.

Diamond sputtered as she slammed the book. “Oh, yeah, that really helped.” She held her forehead while letting her head fall back against the back of the chair and sighed. “I should have jumped on Kain when I was at his house. Tia kissed Trey. I could’ve at least kissed him. A kiss wouldn’t have been too forward. At least I wouldn’t be feeling like this after letting that Zorro guy do me.” Leaning forward, she noticed her knee jumping and pushed herself from the chair. “I need a bath.”

She went to her room, started a bath, and lit the candles around the bathroom. After putting on her favorite Mozart CD, she grabbed a bottle of wine and a glass from her refrigerator and slid into the tub. Two glasses later, she laid back very relaxed...

Diamond ran down the beach, naked, toward two people sitting on the rocks in the distance. As she moved closer, she recognized them —Kain and Zorro. They

jumped off the rocks when she reached them. Kain dropped to one knee, flowers appeared from nowhere in his hand.

She smiled, accepting them. Zorro made the motions of a long but noiseless whistle. They turned to him and he pushed his cape back, pulling out a handful of diamonds. He smiled and wiggled his eyebrows.

Smiling wider, Diamond threw the flowers over her shoulder and walked toward him.

Kain leaped to his feet and ripped his clothes off. Diamond stopped moving toward Zorro. Kain stood in a Peter Pan stance, proudly displaying a smug grin and an impressive, erect penis. She let out a long whistle, and then shifted her gaze to Zorro. He smirked, nodding

his approval, too. Just as she turned to change direction, Zorro whistled to gain her attention. She looked over her shoulder. Zorro snatched away his pants.

Diamond and Kain both stared as Zorro's member elongated. Once it reached his knee his erection rose to an upright position touching his belly well past his navel. Diamond's eyes grew wide and her jaw dropped. Zorro



grinned, holding his arms open. Hesitantly, she moved toward him. Before she could reach him, Kain whistled.

Zorro and Diamond turned to him. Still in his stance he pointed to his penis. Looking down they watched it grow until the head rested in the sand. Zorro nodded and clapped his hands. Diamond gasped as her eyes widened even

more. She dropped her hands between her legs and fainted dead away. Before she could hit the sand...

She jumped up, holding the sides of the tub, coughing.

“What the—”

Diamond looked around, frantically wiping water from her face. She checked the time and jumped out of the tub. Dressing quickly, Diamond grabbed a bag and shoved an outfit into it. At the door, for just a second, she hesitated

before snatching her keys to drive herself back to The Fun House.

“Good evening, miss, glad to see you back. Follow me, please,” the maid said when the door opened.

“Wonderful to see you again, darling,” Cassandra greeted, hugging her. “Sapphire, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is. How are you?”

“I’m fine, dear.” She led her back to the same locker room and gave her a different mask when she reached her desk again. “Where is that lovely, tall friend of yours?”

“Oh, she went home today. She lives in Indiana. Cassandra, I didn’t know if there was a fee today or not, I just—”

“No dear, you’re fine.”

“Really? But the card said—”

“Yes, dear, I know, but Jessie usually gives the cards to men. We always let the women in free because, well, how else will we get the men?” Cassandra touched her chest and laughed. “Now, would you like me to call Isis to keep you company tonight?”

Sapphire adjusted the silvery-feathered mask over her head. “No, I

think I'll be fine on my own." A sense of power infused her when she slid the mask over her face and her shyness slipped away. "Just down this hallway, right?" she asked with a quick glance down the hall.

Cassandra nodded. "Just come find me if you need anything."

Sapphire turned down the hall, her head held high and her strut full of confidence. She didn't have to be the shy, quiet Diamond in this place. She was Sapphire now. Bold, courageous and sensual. The sensual buzz in the air

washed over her when she pushed past the beads. Sapphire took a deep breath, enjoying the chill slithering down her spine. It was like inhaling an airborne aphrodisiac. All her senses were alive all at once. A new fire burned inside her. She took in her surroundings before entering the room fully.

Raul stood at the buffet again. He nodded a greeting. She smiled and looked to the stage. Peaches waved at her. As she waved back, Kurt caught her eye at the bar as he waved his arms wildly. He pulled out a bottle of

champagne and poured her a glass as she took a stool before him.

“Good evening, little one. I’m glad to see you’ve returned.”

“Please don’t call me that. My name is Sapphire.” She picked up the glass, taking a sip.

He leaned across the bar in front of her. “Sapphire, will I get the chance to initiate you into The Fun House tonight?”

“We’ll see.” She leaned away from him.

“So Sapphire, what do you think of

our little house?”

“It’s different. How long has it been here?”

“It’s about five years old. It was up for about two years when I came,” Kurt mentioned and leaned in closer.

Sapphire spun away from him and smiled as Zorro walked up to her. He dropped to his knees, took her hand and kissed it. She looked at Kurt. His face turned a bright red.

“See you around, Kurt.”

Zorro rose and walked her to a table in the corner near the stage.



“Are you going to dance again tonight, honey?” Peaches asked.

“Not tonight. Maybe next time.” Sapphire sat in the chair he held out for her before he sat opposite her and kissed her hand again. “I get the feeling you’re glad I came back.” She giggled.

He nodded.

“I’m glad too. I had to come back. If only to check...” Her heartbeat sped up. She felt her newfound courage slipping away. “Well, I wanted to see, well, I had to see if...” She sighed lowering her head. “I just...”

He lifted her face.

“Okay, well...I just wanted to see if I needed the coochie cobwebs knocked out or if you were really the bomb,” she rushed out in one quick breath.

His eyes grew wide behind his mask before he burst into laughter. Sapphire yanked her hands from him and wrapped them around her chest.

“It’s not that funny.”

Zorro covered his mouth, muffling his laughter. When he stopped, he stood and pulled her to her feet. He lifted her face to his and kissed her. Her pulse

raced even more by the time he released her.

“Wow, umm, you’re forgiven,” she whispered.

He smiled, adjusted her arm in his and walked her to the staircase. Upstairs, he stopped in the hall.

“What?”

He waved his hand around the hallway, walking slowly.

“Oh, what room? Well, what about...” She looked in the harem room.

I don’t think I’m ready for that. Besides, I’m supposed to be testing my

attraction to Zorro.

“Umm...”

I could do the chair again. She continued down the hall. Good Lord, what's wrong with me? He's going to think I'm so stupid. Where's your backbone, girl? Just pick a damn room!

Zorro pulled her into the next room.

“Wow.” She looked all around the area. “This must have been one of the occupied rooms yesterday. I bet it stays occupied, doesn't it?”

He nodded.

The king size bed had black sheets

with big lime green hearts on them. The floors were covered in black plush carpet. The walls were draped in black velvet with people in different sexual positions and the names of the zodiac underneath them. The ceiling was completely mirrored.

He flipped the switch on the wall making the hearts on the bed and the people on the walls glow brightly in the dark. He gently laid her on the bed.

“Wow,” she said again, giggling.  
“You know...”

She watched him crawl up her body

and lost her train of thought. Her breathing picked up, as he lay on top of her. Her state of arousal skyrocketed as her body responded to his closeness. She felt his full erection pressing into her leg as he moved and bit her lip

Well, at least I know he likes me.

Suddenly, he backed up quickly and sat on his knees, surprising her with his movement. She tried to sit up, but he held his hand on her stomach to steady her and hesitantly she relaxed back.

He pointed to the ceiling, then took his time removing her shorts as a slow

grin came to his face. Gently, he rubbed his hands up and down her legs, gliding over her hips as well.

“Oh man,” she mumbled, closing her eyes.

Zorro pulled her panties off and dropped them on the side of the bed with the shorts, then slid his hands up her hips again. He placed a kiss on her little diamond birthmark and smiled, feeling a shiver go over her body. Pulling her to a sitting position, he pulled off her T-shirt, unsnapped her bra, and put them with the rest. He pointed to the ceiling, again.

Sapphire looked up and drew in a shocked breath.

What the hell is wrong with my titties? She sighed heavily. Gravity sucks.

Sapphire looked back down at him when she felt him kissing her inner thighs. He moved up her legs and caught a glimpse of her looking at him and pointed to the ceiling again. She sighed. He pressed butterfly kisses inside her thighs, making her whole body shiver.

“Ohh!” Her eyes opened wider as she watched him in the mirror.

He reached his target area and she



watched him, amazed as his fingers spread her lower lips. Her mouth dropped open and a small moan of pleasure escaped. Zorro reached up to pinch her nipples as he licked her. Diamond couldn't keep her eyes open any longer. Flashing lights and fireworks passed before her eyes as she closed them, clawing at the sheets. The sensation so powerful, her brain and her body screamed with joy. Neither words nor sounds could be formed to express the feeling, so her mouth hung open with nothing coming out.

Zorro held on to her hips, until she was sated and quickly entered her, stroking her fast and hard. Finally her screams of pleasure shook the walls and threatened to break the glass on the ceiling, announcing another orgasmic eruption. He moaned loudly in her ear.

In a heated frenzy, she slid her hands up and down his back, grabbing his butt and wrapping her legs around his waist as her body pounded around him. His breathing was erratic. Dropping his head down to her forehead, he tried to catch his breath and let out another moan. She

smiled, kissing and licking his neck. His body shook all over. He moaned louder and his thrusts came harder and faster. Diamond responded, pushing back, moving in perfect harmony with him as they came together in a hot, burning fury that left them both shaky and exhausted.

Sapphire lay there trying to breathe normally as he rolled off her.

Wow! That was definitely worth a second trip out here.

They lay on their sides looking at each other for a long while. Sapphire caressed the thoughtful look on his face

and licked her lips before she broke the tender silence.

“So, umm, are you free on Wednesday?”

A slow smile came to his face as he nodded.

They dressed and he escorted her downstairs to the bar where they had one last drink before he walked her to the beaded doorway.

“Don’t forget.” She hugged him and left.

He shook his head and gave her an extra squeeze. Diamond left his embrace

and floated down the hall to the locker room. After stuffing the shorts and T-shirt back in the bag, she lifted her watch from the front pocket.

“Shit!” She slammed the locker and ran down the hall past a waving Cassandra. “Bye! Thanks for everything!” The maid saw her running and met her at the door to hold it open. “Thanks.” Diamond ran through it and down the street to her car.

# Chapter Eight

The alarm went off at the usual time. Diamond smacked the top, silencing it and turned over.

“Okay, okay, five minutes. I’ll get up in five minutes,” she mumbled sleepily.

Mentally deleting five minutes from her shower time, she drifted back to sleep. After what felt like just a few minutes, Diamond forced herself from bed. She was still tired, but felt a little more rested. On her way to the

bathroom, she sent a quick glance at the time. Barely crossing the threshold, she ran back out, slid across her bed and snatched the clock up.

“What the hell!”

She slammed the clock down and ran back into the bathroom, washed and dressed with marathon speed, setting a new personal best. Running down the back steps into the kitchen, void of makeup, her hair barely combed, she stuffed a bagel in her mouth. Hopping into shoes, she snatched her keys from the hook and ran out to her car. Though

her foot lay heavy on the gas as she attempted to apply her makeup, she was still surprised to see lights flashing in the rearview mirror.

“Shit!” she said in a hushed voice.

When the officer showed up at her window, she had her head on the steering wheel.

“So where’s the fire, lady?”

“Hi officer, I-I know I was going a little fast, but—”

“Where are you going in such a hurry?”

“I’m a teacher at Bass Elementary



down the street.”

“A teacher?” he sputtered, looking at his watch. “It’s ten-fifteen. You’re a little for class ain’t you?”

“Yes, that’s why I was—”

“License and registration, please,” he added on a disbelieving sigh.

She swallowed her groan, handed him the registration from the glove compartment, then looked on the passenger side for her purse. Seeing only her briefcase, the moan she barely stifled finally made it to the surface.

“I-I don’t have my license with me,

officer. I left my purse at home.”

The cop stared at her again and slid his shades down on his nose. “Uh-huh.” He flipped the page for another ticket. “Is the address on this correct?”

“Yes, sir,” she answered in a defeated voice.

Diamond dropped her head back to the steering wheel as the cop retreated to his car. He returned a few moments later.

“You seem to be clean, Ms. Jones,” he told her, handing back her paperwork and two tickets. “Obey the traffic laws

next time and pay your tickets on time.” He touched his hat and walked away.

Diamond pulled into the school parking lot just as the clock on her dashboard flipped to eleven o’clock. She all but ran into the building and saw her class in the hallway lining up for lunch, led by one of the substitute teachers.

“What happened to you?” the teacher whispered to Diamond.

“You don’t even want to know,” she answered just as low.

“Hello, Ms. Jones!”

“Hello, class. Please follow Ms.

Davis to the lunchroom and I'll see you when you return."

Ms. Davis touched Diamond on the shoulder as she walked into the classroom. She put her briefcase on her desk, sat down and dropped her forehead on top of it. The intercom buzzed startling her. She pushed the speaker button.

"Yes, this is Ms. Jones."

"I see you've finally made it to school, Ms. Jones," a male voice said.

Her head popped up and she adjusted herself to sit up. "Uh, yes, Mr.

Thompson. I was having a few difficulties this morning and I—”

“It would behoove you to report to my office for an impromptu meeting, Ms. Jones,” he said, cutting her off.

“Yes, sir.”

“Now!” His voice was tight and stern as he cut her off again, ending their call.

“Can this day get any worse? Summoned to the principal’s office. What a cliché,” she muttered, hanging up.

Diamond stepped into the outer office and walked past several children to

knock lightly on the principal's door.

“Enter!” said a gruff, monotone voice from behind the door.

Mr. Thompson stood at the window in a dark gray pinstriped suit with his hands clasped behind his back.

“Be seated,” he told her without turning around.

She sat in the chair closest to his desk without a word. Her back straight and hands folded in her lap.

“Ms. Jones, I will get right to the point. When you arrived at school today, you looked rushed, in shambles and very

unprofessional. I cannot have my teachers behaving in such a manner. Is there something I need to know?”

“No sir.”

He turned slowly to face her. “Really? You were extremely late, with no forewarning or phone call once you realized you’d be late.” He leaned forward over his desk, glaring at her. “I had to arrange for Ms. Davis to teach your class at the last minute.”

“With all due respect, Mr. Thompson, isn’t that what a substitute teacher is for?”

He sucked in a long, audible breath as he returned to a standing position. “Do you have any explanation for your actions, Ms. Jones?” his voice dripped with ice as his beady eyes narrowed.

Diamond cleared her throat and tried to push away her nervousness. “I tried to tell you before, Mr. Thompson, I just overslept. I apologize for my tardiness, sir, but in my defense this is the first time I’ve been late in the five years I’ve been here.”

“And you think that excuses you for today’s actions?”



Diamond opened her mouth to speak, but he went on, cutting off her reply.

“I will not have tardy or insubordinate teachers in my school. You are supposed to be an example to your students, not be as delinquent as they are,” he snapped, his Hitler-like mustache twitching as he spoke.

“Mr. Thompson, again, with all due respect, my students are far from delinquents and neither am I,” she said, trying not to clench her teeth.

“I see, but you obviously don’t have a

problem with being insubordinate.”

Diamond took a deep breath, forced a smile and spoke slowly. “I’m just having a bad day, Mr. Thompson. Everyone has them.”

“Hmm, a bad day,” he repeated, sitting. “Are you telling me you need some time off to get some personal problems in order?”

Her shock resonated through her voice. “Time—No sir, that’s not—I only overslept. That’s all.”

Mr. Thompson shook his head. “Ms. Jones,” he said with a deep sigh. “Let’s

stop the charade, shall we?”

Diamond scoffed. “What are—”

He held his hand up. “I will be as sensitive as I can with the matter. I am not the only faculty member that has noticed your lack of concentration due to your...” Mr. Thompson’s lips tightened as he searched for the right word. “Shall we say...frustrations?”

Diamond sucked in an appalled breath.

“You know...Diamond,” he continued in a softer tone. “If you would consider me as an alternative to elective

celibacy, I can make this whole nasty little incident disappear.” He leaned over his desk again, slowly reaching for her hand.

Miraculously, she managed not to scream her disgust.

“You know, I’ve always found you to be one of the most attractive teachers we have,” he continued.

Maybe I’m misunderstanding him.

Diamond slowly slid her hand from beneath his. “Thank you, Mr. Thompson, but I’m going to have to respectfully decline. I realize my error

and will accept the forthcoming reprimand.” She stood. “I’ll just come back to sign it when it’s complete.”

Mr. Thompson’s face turned beet red almost instantly. His beady black eyes flashed with rage.

“I don’t think so, Ms. Jones.” His voice became tight again, full of authority.

“Excuse me?” She stopped at the door and turned.

“I said, I don’t think so. You are hereby suspended—”

Her eyes widened. “What?” she

shrieked.

“Until further notice,” he went on, as if she hadn’t spoken.

“You can’t do that. You can’t suspend me. This is the only blemish on my attendance record. The first tier on the disciplinary track is to get a verbal warning, then a written, then possible suspension,” she told him counting on her fingers. “You can’t just suspend me just like that for a first offense.”

“Really? Something will have to be done about that.”

Diamond stomped back to his desk,

pointing at him. “This has nothing to do with my attendance today! You’re disgusting. I’m taking this to the school board.”

“You can do whatever you like. You are still suspended until further notice. Someone from the school board will call this afternoon to confirm my decision and let you know about the hearing,” he reiterated in a low, sinister voice as he pushed a button on his desk.

A moment later there was a knock on the door.

“Enter!”

“Yes, sir.”

Diamond turned to the voice.

“Yes, Officer Franklin. Please escort Ms. Jones off school property. She is suspended and should not be allowed back on the property until I say so. Is that clear?” Mr. Thompson turned back to the window dismissing them both.

“Yes, sir,” Frank said, opening the door.

Diamond stomped past him back to her classroom.

How dare he come on to me and then suspend me for not wanting him!



Her class had settled back in from lunch when she arrived.

“Hello, Ms. Jones!”

Diamond swallowed her anger to give them a smile. “Hello, class, I have an announcement to make. I will be taking some time off, starting today, to take care of some, uh, personal business. Ms. Davis here will take my place until I return. I want you to show Ms. Davis what well-behaved children you all are.”

Diamond patted Ms. Davis on the shoulder, picked up her briefcase and left. Franklin waited outside the door and

followed her out to her car.

“I don’t know what’s going on, Ms. Jones, but he would’ve fired me if I didn’t make sure you left the building.”

“I know. It’s not your fault. See you around, Franklin.”

“Bye, Ms. Jones.”

Diamond drove home and slipped into a pair of red satin lounge pajamas. She sent a quick look at the clock and shook her head.

“My day was over before it even began. I might as well make some lunch.”

After looking in the refrigerator and slamming cabinets, Diamond didn't find anything appetizing. She grabbed a can of soda and went to the den. Flipping through one magazine after another, then tossing them to the coffee table one by one, she blew out an exasperated breath and left the room. A representative from the school board called saying she was indeed suspended until her hearing, which was scheduled for next week. She grabbed her keys and went out the front door. At the mailbox, she waved at who she thought was a neighbor standing

across the street, but realized she was wrong.

“Carl?” she called out.

He came across the street to her gate.

“Yeah. Hi, Diamond.”

“What are doing here?” she asked, looking up and down the street.

“I just wanted to make sure I knew where you lived, so I wouldn’t be late when I came to pick you up for our date.”

She wrapped her arms around her chest. “I don’t remember giving you my address, Carl. Besides, I haven’t even

called you yet to set up a date. How do you know where I live?”

“Your mother told me.”

Diamond rolled her eyes, making a mental note to slap the back of her mother’s head the next time she saw her.

“Wait a minute. I wouldn’t normally be home from school yet, Carl. Why did you come now, in the middle of the day?”

“Oh, this was just a trial run for me.” He smiled. “But since you are home, can I take you out for lunch or something?”

“Hmm, well, okay. Come in.”

He walked through the gate and followed her to the house.

“Just have a seat in the living room. I’ll be right down. And don’t touch anything!” she added yelling down the stairs.

She returned ten minutes later wearing a pair of khaki shorts with a sleeveless white button up shirt and white sandals.

He chuckled as he followed her to the door. “You look great. Though I’d have been just as happy had you chosen the pajamas to wear out.”

“Thanks.” Diamond walked out to her car and stopped. “So, where to?”

“How about Centennial Park? It’s not too hot to eat outside today.”

“Cool. We could go to the Sandwich Shoppe.” She pulled her door, but he prevented it from closing.

“I thought we could take my car. You know, to save your gas.”

“Umm, no, that’s okay.” She yanked the door away from him. “I’ll just follow you.”

A small tick come and went on his right eye. She almost mentioned it, but

he spoke again giving her an obvious forced smile.

“Fine. Whatever you want.”

They drove down to Centennial Park and parked their cars across the street from each other. The Sandwich Shoppe was a short walk away and they quickly found a table in the park upon their return.

“So what do you do during the week, if you only work weekends, Carl?” She bit her sandwich.

“Sometimes I pick up extra hours during the week, but mostly I just hang



around my house and fix stuff. You know, all that stuff you say you're going to do, but never get the chance to do. Enough about me, what about you? What do you do for a living?" Carl asked pleasantly, unwrapping his sandwich. "You're a teacher?"

Diamond nodded taking another bite.

"I was under the impress that school was in session on Mondays? I mean, it's true that I have been out of school for a long time, but isn't that still the schedule?" he asked on a chuckle.

Diamond giggled, covering her mouth to prevent food from falling.

“How did I get so lucky to catch you home on this beautiful afternoon?”

Diamond smile disappeared. She swallowed and paused her eating. “Yeah, it’s been beautiful all right.”

“Wow. That bad, huh?” Obviously, he caught her sarcastic tone.

“Well, I was running late today because I overslept this morning. First time in five years, mind you. I was on my way to school and I’ll admit I was going a little fast, I mean, I was late. Anyway, a

cop stopped me and I got a speeding ticket. That sucked, but that wasn't the worst thing that happened. When I got to school my principal tried to come on to me."

"What?" he said through clinched teeth.

"The old fart. 'I always thought you were attractive, Ms. Jones,'" she repeated, trying to mimic his voice. "And talk about a bad day getting worse, here's the topper. When I blew him off being as PC as I could, he suspended me for tardiness and insubordination! Can you

believe that crap?” She sipped her drink and continued eating after shaking her head.

Carl stared at her, but said nothing.

“Yes, but here’s the icing on the cake.” She held her sandwich out with one hand. “He said I can go to the school board if I wanted, but in not so many words threatened to change my records. It’ll probably look like I was out of school more than in when he gets finished tampering with them.” Diamond took another bite, shaking her head. “I mean he didn’t come right out and say

that, of course, but he insinuated it, big time. Unbelievable, don't you think?"

He didn't answer her.

"Carl?" Diamond angled her head to look into his blank gaze. "Carl, are you listening me? Earth to Carl."

She touched his hand. He blinked a few times, and then smiled. "Huh?"

Diamond chuckled. "You were really out there. Are you okay?"

"Yeah, baby, that does suck. That principal sounds like a real dick." He picked up his sandwich. "So where is this school of yours again?"

“It’s Bass Elementary, just off of Little Five Points. Do you know the area?” She sipped her drink until loud slurps could be heard.

Carl nodded and finished the rest of his lunch in silence. He walked her to her car and held the door open.

“So since you’ll be off for a few days, can I take you out to lunch tomorrow, too?”

Diamond stepped inside her door to separate them. “Let me call you and we’ll see.”

The dark look returned his face. He

shook it off, but not before the expression gave her the creeps.

“Sure, that’s fine.” Carl leaned toward her to give her a kiss, but she sat and pulled the door closed.

“I’ll call you, okay?”

“Fine.”

Carl walked across the street, fists clenched and jaw twitching, to his car. Diamond shook her head as she watched him go.

“Weird.” She started her car. “Well, at least I got him and my mother off my back by going out with him.”

Diamond returned to her pajamas when she got home. She glanced at the clock, sucked her teeth and sat heavily in her chair in the den.

“I have no life,” she declared just as the phone rang. “Hello,” she answered, in an exasperated voice.

“Hi, beautiful. Just thought I’d call and see how your day went. Are you busy?”

Diamond smiled. “Hi, Kain. No, I’m not busy. How are you?”

“I’m fine. Is everything okay, Diamond? You don’t sound right.”



“I just had a bad day, that’s all.”

“Oh, sorry to hear that. I know I said I’d call on Tuesday, but I just wanted to talk, if you’re not up to it I—”

“Can you come over for dinner?”

“Uh, sure. Are you sure everything’s okay?”

“Yeah, but I could use a little company.”

“That’s cool. Give me the address and I’ll be right over.”

Diamond gave him her address. They talked for a few minutes, then hung up. Looking in the refrigerator, the

freezer, the cabinets and the pantry, slamming doors as she went, she realized a trip to the store was in order.

“This would have been so much easier if I’d have just asked the man what he wanted to eat.”

Putting her clothes back on, she drove to the supermarket and walked up and down the aisles waiting for inspiration to strike.

“Diamond!” A voice hollered from behind her.

“Kain! What are you doing here?”

“I wanted to pick up some dessert for

us. My mama always said when you're invited to someone's house for dinner, you never go empty-handed."

"Your mama has all kinds of good sayings, doesn't she?" She giggled.

Kain laughed. "Yeah, I guess she does."

"How did you know I was here?"

"I went online and searched for the closest supermarket to your house and ended up here."

"May I? You sounded like you needed one." He took a step closer and opened his arms.

Diamond smiled and walked into his arms. “I sure do.”

His arms were strong and comforting. She could get used to being held by a man who felt so good.

“Better?”

She smiled. “Much better.”

“Great. So what’s on the menu?”

“Well, I didn’t know what you wanted and I’ve wasted almost an hour trying to figure it out. I just kind of ended up in the seafood aisle. You like fish?”

“Yeah, that’s fine.” He looked in the case. “Mind if I pick?”

“No, of course not. Go ahead.”

“We can get some wine, too, if you’d like.” He put some fish in the basket she carried.

“Sure.”

He took the basket from her and they walked around picking up everything they needed. They ended up with stir-fry vegetables and rice to complete their dinner. He also picked up some things for future dinners he said he’d cook for her. When Diamond picked up a cherry cheesecake for dessert, he sucked his teeth and frowned at her.

“Well, since we’re having such a healthy and light dinner I figure we can splurge a little on the dessert,” she explained with a big grin.

His laugh sounded genuine and made her feel good as he followed her to the register. As she loaded the groceries onto the conveyor belt, she heard someone else call her name and popped her head up.

“Carl!” Somehow she managed to keep her jaw from dropping. “Umm, hi. What are you doing here?” Diamond walked to the end of the register to meet

him.

“I was driving by and saw you through the window. I thought you might need some help with your groceries.” He reached for her hand.

“Thanks, but no. I’m fine.” She made a face pulling her hand back. “I’m here with Kain.” Diamond looked over her shoulder at him as he paid for the food. “He’s going to help me.”

Carl’s lips turned into a thin line, as he watched Kain walk toward them. The dark look he had earlier threatened to return.

“Kain, this is Carl. He works with my mother.”

Carl frowned at her as if the description of their affiliation peeved him.

“Carl, this is my friend Kain.”

“I’d shake your hand, man, but,” he lifted the bags, “my hands are full.”

“That’s okay, man. Nice to meet you.” He looked back at Diamond.

“I can see you’re in good hands, so I’ll go ahead and leave,” he said stiffly, looking between them. “I’ll call you tomorrow,” he added, walking away



before she could reply.

Kain followed her out to her car. “So was that an old jealous boyfriend I need to worry about?” he asked with a teasing smile.

“Hardly.” She opened the trunk. “He’s just some weird guy who works with my mom. He just showed up at my house today, unannounced and uninvited. He said he just wanted to make sure he had the route down, or something weird like that, so he could pick me up for a date.”

He put the bags in the trunk and she

leaned on the car.

“A date I was railroaded into by the forceful hand of my mother,” she continued and wrapped her arms around her chest. “You know what the really weird part is? I didn’t tell him my address or my number, yet he says he’s going to call me.”

“If he didn’t have your address, how’d he show up at your house?”

“He says my mother gave it to him, but that’s been bugging me, too.” She walked to the driver’s side and paused at the door.

“You’re following me, right?”

He smiled that killer smile she liked so much. “I will follow you to the ends of the world, my lady,” he said with a bow.

“Well, I guess chivalry isn’t dead after all.” She giggled. “We can pick up some wine on the way.”

\* \* \* \*

Kain frowned as he followed her.

“Hmm, I wonder how long it’s going to be before I’ll have to kick this Carl guy’s ass.”

A car moved up next to him with an

elderly couple. The woman stared into his window, but he continued his conversation with himself undeterred.

“She doesn’t want him or she wouldn’t have been so pissed he showed up.” He sighed. “Damn. I didn’t like that look on his face, either.”

Diamond’s turn signal flashed. As he turned the corner behind her, Kain nodded a greeting to the couple.

They picked up four bottles of white wine to go with dinner and for future dates together, then drove to her house. Kain laughed to himself as he looked

around.

“This is a nice little neighborhood... for the city.”

After parking his Jeep behind her car, Kain jumped out to help Diamond with the groceries. She bent over to put the bags down and open the door. Kain almost fell over sideways, juggling his load to gain his balance as he tried to get a better look at her butt.

“Are you all right?”

He nodded vigorously. “Yeah, yeah, I’m fine.”

Kain followed her into the house,

kicked the door closed and walked behind her into the kitchen.

“Nice, very nice.”

“Are you looking from a cook’s point of view or a builder’s?” Diamond asked with a grin.

“Both, actually,” he answered on a laugh. “Do I get to see the rest of the house or am I restricted to the kitchen area only?” he added with a playful smile.

“Sure, let’s get dinner on and I’ll give you the grand tour.”

They put the groceries away, then

worked together to get the meal started. Kain poured them a glass of wine and followed her up the stairs.

“This is the room Tia stays in when she comes. She said she had some wild and freaky, Tarzan and Jane type dream in there about your boy Trey,” Diamond said nudging him.

Kain stuck his head past the door she held open. “Yeah, I can see how that can happen in here. Have you ever, you know, in here?” He bounced his eyebrows.

She choked on her wine, then

smothered her titters with her hand. “No, and neither has she.”

“Well, I don’t think my guy would have a problem helping her out with that dream. Is the bed sturdy? You know how big they are.” He ran in and bounced on the bed.

Diamond laughed harder. “Kain, come out of there!”

“I’m just checking out the sturdiness of the furniture, baby. I’d hate for the two of them to break the bed and go through the floor,” he said jokingly.

“You’re crazy. Get out of there and



come see the other rooms.” She pulled him across the hall. “This is the room I keep for my parents if they come for a visit. They only live out in College Park, but I keep it up just in case they want to stay the night with me.”

Kain looked around and nodded. The walls were sky blue with big, fluffy clouds painted along the ceiling. On one wall was a large brass sun and moon. Pictures hung on both sides of the window. On the left was a picture of the sun setting, with two tall trees, the branches growing mostly horizontal, with

very little leaves on them. Behind the trees, the skyline was a beautiful blend of oranges, reds and yellows.

The other side of the window had a picture of the sun rising over the coastline. The rays of the sun shining down brightly made the water look like it had a path of diamonds on it. The beach was clean with clear turquoise blue water and sugar white sand. On the last wall, over the big, white canopy bed, was a hand-painted picture of what looked like a copy of the sunrise picture and in the corner were the initials, D.C.J.

“You designed the room yourself?”

“Yup.”

“And you painted that picture, too?”

he asked, pointing.

“Mmm, hmm,” she said, sipping her drink.

“Nice, very nice and creative, too. Now for the grand finale, right?”

“Yes.” She smiled and pushed open the last door on the floor. “This is my room.” She walked in and stood in front of the bathroom while he stood in the middle of the room doing a slow turn.

“This is very nice. I think you have a

future as a designer if you ever stop teaching. Brains, beauty, and creativity all wrapped up in a cute and convenient little package.” He moved so close to her his lips brushed across her nose.

Diamond could have sworn she stopped breathing, yet his scent wrapped itself around her. The woodsy smell of his skin and cinnamon aroma of his breath she was coming to know him by.

“It’s a wonder you’re not married yet. But their shortcomings may be my gain.”

His voice was soft and sultry, sending shivers down her back. A warm feeling

flittered over her body, making her nipples hard. She watched him walk into the bathroom and a slow smile touched her lips.

“Now this is a tub!” he shouted from inside. “Hmm, I’m not sure, but this tub looks like it could hold two people very easily.”

Diamond walked in, chuckling. “That may be, but it hasn’t. Not yet, anyway.”

Kain smiled. “Uh-huh. You know my brain transferred that into window of opportunity, right?”

Laughing, they left her room and went down the stairs outside her door to finish the tour. In the living room, he ran his hand over the back of the sofa and gave her a small chuckle.

“Hmm, the words warm and cozy come to mind when I see this room.”

Diamond finished his tour with her favorite room. He walked across the den sliding his hand over the wing back chair. Next, he sat in the recliner and pushed it back, nodding. Lastly, he pushed on all the cushions on the couch, then plopped down, kicked his feet up and lay across

it.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“I’m checking out the possible nap spots. You know when you read, you end up taking a nap afterward. Shoot, depending on the book you might catnap during. This couch has the highest nap points so far.” Kain laughed, then jumped to his feet. “Whoa. Look at that library. Very impressive, Diamond.” His fingers slid over the shelves. “You’ve got all kinds of stuff on here. You have to let me borrow a book or two sometime.”

“Sure, whenever you want.”

“Hold the phone.” He pulled a book off the shelf. “This one is a classic and it’s in great condition too.” Gingerly, he rubbed the cover.

Diamond walked over to him. “Treasure Island? You’ve read it, haven’t you?”

“Of course. It was my favorite as a kid. My father used to read this to me all the time. He died last year.” He shrugged and flipped through the pages. “I guess seeing this book kind of reminded me of him.”

Diamond picked up a pen off the



coffee table, took the book from him, wrote something in it, then gave it back to him. He opened the book.

To Kain,  
Remember the good  
times with your dad.  
Your friend, Diamond.

He looked up from the book and shook his head. “No, I can’t take your book, Diamond.”

“You have to, Kain. I already wrote in it and that’s permanent ink.” She

smiled pushing the book back at him. “Come on, Kain, take it. To me, it’ll just be another book I’ve read on my shelf, that I have to dust once a week—but to you it’s more. Besides, I want you to have it.”

Kain looked between her and the book then pulled her into his arms. He laid his head on hers and sighed.

“Thank you.”

Sighing, she rested her face against the top of his pectoral, melting into his embrace. His arms engulfed her fully, making him a perfect fit—just a bit of a

scary thought still.

“Umm, you’re welcome.”

He leaned down to kiss her, but she turned coyly away with an exaggerated exhale. She took a step back before she spoke again.

“We should get back to the food, before we end up at Mickey D’s or something,” she said, barely over a whisper.

“Yeah.” He put his book down on the table and followed her to the kitchen.

They ate, drank, and had pleasant dinner conversation before taking dessert

and a bottle of wine into the den.

“So you never told me how your day went wrong. Did you have to put anyone in the corner?” he said with a teasing tone.

“Oh, well, I kind of didn’t go to school today.” She sat on her legs in the corner of the couch.

He sat next to her. “You cut school?” His eyes were wide as his hand went to his mouth in mock shock. “No wonder you had a bad day. Shame on you.”

“No, I didn’t cut, silly.” She slapped at him playfully and explained how her

day went until he called.

He put his glass down, listening and nodding. When she finished her story, he sat back shaking his head.

“You know, it’s guys like your principal that make us all look bad.” He leaned over and picked up his glass. “On the plus side, I don’t think you’ll be out of work for long. He may act like it was nothing, but if you go to the school board and expose him that wouldn’t be good for him or the school. I doubt he wants that. He’s just trying to assert his authority over you and give you a little

scare. You'll be back at work next week."

"Yeah, I thought the same thing, but it still sucks." She leaned back with her arms around her chest.

He took a drink. "Well, another good thing is you'll be able to spend some time with me during the day." He smiled and leaned over, putting his arm on the couch behind her.

She smiled and adjusted herself into his arm. "Yeah, I guess that could be a perk."

"Think of it like a mini-vacation. I can take you wine tasting, to museums,

auctions, whatever you want. That's the perk to being your own boss. You can leave work when you think you're done."

He drained his glass. "Hey, I've got an idea. You can read to me. This way you won't miss your students as much."

"Okay, I've got just the book. Refill our glasses." She chuckled going to the bookshelf.

"Elf Quest?" he said making face as she returned.

"Hey, don't knock it until you try it."

"Yeah, but what kind of story is Elf Quest? Sounds like the story of how a

bunch of midgets got lost and someone had to find them.”

Diamond gasped and swatted at him again. “Oh, Kain, you are so wrong for that.”

Kain laughed too. “All right, all right, I’m sorry. That wasn’t very PC of me. Tell me about Elf Quest.”

“I love this series. It’s really cool. It has everything you look for in a book, suspense, fighting, love, hate, sex.”

“Sex, too, huh? Well, let’s do it. Let’s go to the world of Elf Quest.”

She read to him for the next few



hours, breaking only to go to the bathroom and to refill their drinks.

“Damn, I’ve got to go. I had no idea it was after eleven already. I have a seven a.m. meeting with some contractors.” He took the book and turned it over.

She picked it up. “I’ll put a bookmark here, to mark our spot. I’m sorry, I didn’t realize it had gotten so late.”

“No, don’t be sorry. I was enjoying myself, and your world of two moons. I can’t wait to come over and visit you and them again.”

“I’m glad,” she said, as she led him outside, handing him Treasure Island.

“I should be out of my meeting by early afternoon, and then I’m done for the day. Can I treat you to lunch?”

“Sure.” Again, he stood extremely close and she tried to ignore her body responding to the smell of him.

“Good.” He smiled.

He put his book on the passenger side as he got in, and leaned out to slide his hand across her cheek.

“I’ll call you tomorrow.”

# Chapter Nine

The alarm went off at six-fifteen. Diamond slapped the clock across the room and went back to sleep. She dragged through her normal morning routine, with no school at its end sometime later. Just as she bit into a banana her phone rang.

“Heymo.”

“Hello yourself, beautiful. Did you sleep well?”

She swallowed and smiled. “Good

morning Kain. How's your meeting going? Are you done?"

He sighed hard. "Well, that's why I'm calling. It looks like I'll be here all day. Can I take a raincheck on lunch and make it dinner instead?"

Her grin faded as disappointment flooded through her. "Oh. Yeah, sure, that's fine. If you can't come, you can't come. You don't have to take me to dinner."

"Don't be upset with me. I really wanted to see you this afternoon."

"I'm not upset. I just, well, I wanted

to see you too.”

“I really am stuck in this meeting. Let me cook dinner for you to make it up to you. You’ll love my Chicken Marsala.”

“Well...”

“It’s my specialty.”

“Yes, you told me.”

“Will pretty please work in my favor?”

Diamond didn’t bother to hide the schoolgirl giggles that left her. “You’ve twisted my arm. You made that Chicken Marsala sound so good when we were shopping, how can I say no?”

“Good. I promise I will be there tonight to cook dinner for you.”

“I’ll see you tonight then. Around six-ish?”

“I’ll be there.”

Diamond hung up the phone and made some lunch to go with her banana. She tried watching TV after she ate, but channel surfing showed nothing she wanted to see. With a frustrated huff, she picked up the phone to call Tia.

“Tia Johnson.”

“Good afternoon, Tia Johnson. What’s new?”

“Diamond! How are you? I hadn’t expected to hear from you so soon. What’s up?”

“Why does it sound like you’re in a tunnel?”

“You’re on speaker phone. I’m preparing for court.”

“I’m stressed, Tia. I need to talk. Are you too busy?”

“No, no, no. I don’t have to be in there until three-thirty.”

“Whoo! Where do I start?” She ran her hand through her hair, took a deep breath and pushed out her explanation.

“Well, I got a speeding ticket...got suspended...went out with that freak Carl...had dinner with Kain—”

“Whoa, whoa! Slow down. All that happened in one day?”

“Oh, yeah. Uh-huh, all of that happened yesterday. Today I was supposed to meet with Kain for lunch, but he’s stuck in some stupid meeting all day...or so he says.”

“Ahh, so now we get to the meat and potatoes of this call. You don’t believe him, huh?”

“No,” Diamond said quickly. “Well,



yes,” she retracted just as fast, then paused. “Oh, I don’t know. I need some advice. You’re supposed to be my voice of reason, remember?”

Tia laughed. “Yes, I remember. What else did Kain say?”

“Well, he did say he’d come over and make me his specialty for dinner tonight, to make up for breaking our lunch date,” she answered in a small voice.

“Well, there you go. He must really be stuck in a meeting, or he wouldn’t be offering to make it up to you. Men don’t

think like that, girl. He'd have sent you flowers with some funky excuse you'd know was crap the minute he had spit it out. He wouldn't be offering to slave over a stove and cook for you." She laughed again.

"Look, you want my advice? Here it is—go shopping. It always works for me as a stress reliever. That and getting laid, but since I know you won't do that, go shopping."

She didn't reply.

"Diamond?"

No answer.

“Diamond?”

Still no answer.

“Girl, I know you’re not going to tell me that you’ve already slept with Kain and haven’t told me?” There was joy in her laughter. “That’s my girl! Finally you’ve had sex after all this time.”

“Well, kinda.”

“Kinda? How can you kind of—”

“It wasn’t Kain.” Diamond held the phone away from her head and braced herself.

Tia stopped laughing. Abruptly her voice came through the phone clear and

precise. “What? Not that Zorro guy again? Diamond—”

Diamond didn’t miss the disappointed tone underlying her groan.

“Girl, we talked about this. Remember?”

“Yes, I remember. It was you who said do it one more time to check out the coochie cobweb thing.”

“Hmm, that was me wasn’t it?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Okay, granted, but I meant just the one more time. I just don’t want you caught out there, girl. You know The

Fun House is a place that specializes in bodily pleasures. If you get your feelings caught up in a physical game, you'll only get hurt."

The concern in her friend's voice touched her heart.

"I know, I know. I only went that one time. I spent last night with Kain. We had a great time too. He really is sweet."

"That's good. He's a much better prospect for you, a more positive relationship. Now promise me you won't go back to The Fun House."

Diamond took a deep breath and

exhaled heavily into the phone.

“Please, little one, promise me. I want you to concentrate on your relationship with Kain.”

Diamond closed her eyes, tapped the phone on her forehead, then forced the lie out. “I promise I won’t go back, okay?”

Tia’s relieved breath came through the phone. “Good. Kain really likes you, you know. I got that from a very reliable source.”

Surprised, her eyes popped opened. “Really? So you’ve been talking to

Trey?”

“Girl, yes! That man is so damn sexy! He gives me chill bumps just talking to him on the phone,” she said with a laugh. “I can’t wait to get back home and jump his bones in that green jungle looking room of yours.”

“Well, I hope he’s a willing participant in that bone jumping. That’s a whole lot of man to take on without his cooperation and consent.”

“That’s very true, but he sounds willing enough. I told him if he were nice to me, I might be available to model

something for him off that new line he told me about. He seems to think I'd look, umm, what did he say?" She paused. "I think he used the words, good enough to eat in something green. Something about the color of my eyes," she said dramatically.

There was a short silence before they both burst into fits of laughter.

"Now, what's this about being suspended?"

Diamond spent another forty-five minutes cooling Tia down, trying to get her to agree not go after her slimy boss



before she talked to them, then took her advice to go shopping. Driving downtown to the little shops around the Five Points Station, she popped into three different shoe stores and several department stores before going to a nearby bar loaded up with packages. After piling the bags into a booth, she ordered a drink as she stuffed smaller parcels into larger ones.

“Hi, Diamond.”

She turned to the voice, eyes wide with shock. Her heart beat picked up and the bag she held slipped from her grip.

“Carl! What are you doing here?”

“I was just in here getting a drink when I saw you come in. I thought I’d come over so we could have our drink together.” He waved a waitress over and ordered another beer. “No harm in that, is there?”

“Well, I’m not going to be here very long. I just came in to catch a breather and fix my stuff, then I’m going back home.”

“That’s okay. I’ll talk to you while you do that.”

Diamond took a long gulp from her

cup. “Talk about what?”

“About me and you, you know...us.” He pulled one of her packages over and looked inside.

She snatched her bag back. “Us? There is no us, Carl.”

Carl took the beer from an approaching waitress. “How can you say that? Your own mother set us up. She chose me for you, remember? So yes, there is ‘an us’.” He reached for her hand, but she pulled away from him.

“I’m afraid you’ve misunderstood. My mother’s intention was to only set us

up to go on a date, Carl. That's all, and we've had that."

"No, I think your mother had something more in mind when she hooked us up. Not just dating, but marriage."

"What? You've got to be joking. Nobody does that any more, Carl. People are allowed to pick their own mates today, in case you haven't noticed." She put her drink down.

Carl looked up from his drink. "Oh, really? My family does arranged marriages all the time and apparently so

does yours. Your mother wouldn't have chosen me for you if she didn't believe in such a grand old tradition. Now, I think it's time we talk about dates." He continued drinking.

Diamond tilted her head. "Dates? Dates for what?"

"Diamond," he said with a happy, light laugh. "We need to set a date to officially announce our engagement, another date for our engagement party and then a wedding date. Dates like that."

Diamond stared at him wide-eyed.

Oh, my God, he's serious. He's crazy. He's absolutely nuts. She shook her head, forced a smile and spoke calmly. "Carl, we've just met. We've been out on one date...a lunch date. We had a sub sandwich, for God's sake. You can't tell me you're ready to marry me after sharing the better part of two hours with me, eating cold cuts." She took a deep breath. "Besides, I can't date you." She picked up her glass and gave him a smug look. "I'm already dating Kain. You remember him, don't you?"

Carl nodded. "Ahh, yes, Kain. The

guy from the supermarket. Yes, I remember him. Well, since we hadn't set a date yet, I won't take that as a violation in our relationship. However, since we're about to, you're going to stop seeing him. By the way, I don't think it's appropriate for him to stay over as late as he did last night. We are betrothed, after all, and that would put you in a position to be reprimanded."

A gasp escaped her lips. "Excused me? Have you been watching me?" Her voice was low, full of shock and anger. "Reprimand me? Have you lost your

mind? This is not the dark ages!” She grabbed at her bags and stood up. “Let me make this clear so there are no more misunderstandings. I’ve had the drink I came for and now I’m out of here. You will not call, come by, or contact me in any way...ever!”

She grabbed the last of her bags, pushed the rest of her drink into his lap and rushed out.

“He’s been watching me? That—that freak! I knew something was wrong with him,” Diamond yelled on the way back to her car. She shoved the bags in the



backseat and got in the car. “Ugh! I can almost feel that fool’s eyes on me even now.” She gripped the steering wheel and forced herself to take a deep breath.

“Okay, Diamond, get a grip. Don’t let that fool mess up your day or your life. He’s gonna go away now and everything’s going to be fine.” She took another deep breath and took off. “Whoo saaa,” she said, slowly pushing air from her lungs.

She turned on the radio and bobbed her head to a song she recognized. She pulled into her driveway, put her head on

the steering wheel, and sat for what seemed like an eternity. Getting out and shaking her head, she opened the backdoor for her bags, turned around to kick it closed and felt someone else close it. She squealed and threw her bags in the air.

“I’m sorry, baby. I didn’t mean to scare you,” Kain said on a chuckle, reaching down for the packages. “Didn’t you hear me pull up behind you?”

Diamond shook her head.

“Baby, what’s wrong?”

She looked around frantically and

reached out a shaky hand to pull him into the house. He walked into the living room and dropped the bags on one of the sofas.

“So you did a little shopping, huh?”

She walked around him and sat on the other sofa, not answering. He frowned and sat down next to her, taking her hand in his.

“Okay, something’s wrong. Tell me.”

She sighed. “I think Carl has been following me, well, at the very least he’s been watching me. That’s just as bad, isn’t it?”

“What?” he yelled, as if unable to stop his reaction. He cleared his throat and calmed himself before continuing. “I mean, what happened? How do you know?”

Diamond sat back on the sofa, crossing her arms on her chest. “I went downtown to do some shopping since we couldn’t get together for lunch. When I was done, I went to Fat Tuesday’s for a drink. There I was sitting in my booth, minding my own business, and Carl shows up. He said he was already there having a drink when he saw me come in.

Imagine that,” she added sarcastically.

“Anyway, he was really talking crazy. Something about his family still did arranged marriages and apparently so does mine because my mother chose me for him.” She did quotations in the air and rolled her eyes. “So he thinks because of that I’m his and he expected us to set a date.”

“A date?”

She looked at him from the corner of her eye. “A wedding date, Kain. That fool was under the impression we were betrothed.”

She leaned forward with her elbows on her knees. “He had me so shook up, I practically ran back to my car.”

She shook her head. “You know, Tia’s always wondering why I hardly ever date. Do you want to know why too?”

He shrugged, then nodded.

“Because I’m a freak magnet, that’s why.” She slammed back on the sofa.

Kain burst out laughing. “Hey, I take issue with that. I’m very much attracted to you and I’m far from a freak.” He paused for just a beat and smiled. “I might be persuaded to be a little freaky

sometimes, but I don't think that's the same thing."

"Kain, be serious. He really freaked me out."

"Okay, I'm sorry. What did you say to him after he all but proposed?"

"Well, I umm, told him we were dating." She looked at him out the corner of her eye for a reaction.

"True, we are dating."

She held her excitement in check and continued, "Then I told him to leave me alone. I told him not to call me, don't come by and don't contact me in any

way.”

“That should’ve done it, baby.”

“Yeah, and before he could say anything else I pushed the rest of my drink into his lap and got out of there.”

“Good. That should be clear enough. Now come on.” He playfully slapped her leg. “I’ll start dinner and you can show me all the stuff you bought today. Give me a mini-fashion show while I’m cooking. Who knows, if I’m lucky you’ll have some sexy panties in there that you’ll model for me too,” he said with a teasing grin.



She giggled. “Why are you here so early, anyway?”

“I was done with my meeting and didn’t want to wait a moment longer to be with you.” He kissed her on the forehead.

Diamond smiled and grabbed her bags, her soft laughter ringing around the house as she made her way up the stairs while he went off to the kitchen. He cooked dinner while she went back and forth trying on different outfits, giving him the mini-fashion show he wanted. He set the table with her china from the

hutch and lit candles he brought with him. They enjoyed a peaceful dinner. Afterward, they stood outside his Jeep to say their goodnights.

“Thanks for dinner, it was delicious.”

“Anytime, baby. So, since the exhibit at the museum doesn’t start until Friday, I wonder if you’d like to go on a picnic with me tomorrow. You can wear that jean short set you just got. I like it. It fits your butt real nice.” He smiled.

Her cheeks warmed again, and she tried to laugh it away. “Stop talking like that, Kain. I didn’t buy it for you. I didn’t

know it would affect you like that when I picked it out.”

“Well, it did. Everything you put on looked good, especially that white sundress.” He picked up her hands and kissed them.

“Are you flirting with me?” she said with a teasing smile.

“Is it working?” He pulled her closer, almost crushing her to his body.

“Yes.”

“Then, yes, I am.” He lifted her chin and kissed her softly. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”



# Chapter Ten

For the next three weeks, Diamond took on a new schedule. After the school board ruled in her favor for lack of insufficient evidence when Mr. Thompson failed to show up, she went back to work. When her class finished in the early afternoon, she saw Kain almost every day and Zorro almost every night. Early on a Friday evening, she was enjoying the warm summer breeze blowing in her face as Kain drove them

back to her house from an all-day picnic, when her cell phone rang.

“Hello.”

“Hey girl, where are you? Here I am at your house and you’re not.”

She smiled. “Tia, hi. I’ve just had the most wonderful day with Kain. He took me on another picnic and—” Her smile disappeared as Tia’s words registered in her brain. “You, you said you’re at my house?”

“Yes, girl. Remember the case I was working on ran over and I couldn’t come out until now?”

“Oh, yes. I remember now. Well, we’re on our way back now. See you in a few.”

“So Tia got in safe, that’s good. Trey’s been looking forward to seeing her again.”

Diamond didn’t comment.

“Diamond?”

Shit, I told Zorro I’d meet him tonight. What am I going to do? She bit her thumbnail. I told Tia I wouldn’t go back and I can’t even count how many times I’ve been back since that first night. She exhaled hard. There’s no way I can

talk her into going tonight, either. I know she'll want to see Trey tonight.

I said I'd concentrate on my relationship with Kain. She ran her fingers through her hair. But I did. I have. Her breathing picked up and she threw her head back on the seat. It's so hard to just stop seeing Zorro, though. She sat straight up. Maybe I can talk her into one more trip to The Fun House. She nodded vigorously. Yeah, yeah, I can do that and then I can tell Zorro I'll be back to see him Monday, after Tia goes home.



Kain poked her in the side, making her jump.

“Are you all right?” he asked, looking between her and the road.

“Huh?”

“Are you all right? I’ve been talking to you and you’ve been in some kind of daze staring off into space.”

“No, no. I mean, yes, everything is fine.” Diamond put her hand on his leg. “Sorry, I was just lost in thought, that’s all. I, umm, guess I feel bad that I forgot Tia was coming this weekend.” She looked down at the floor.

“I don’t think she’ll hold that against you.”

Diamond smiled at him. “I know.”

“How’s everything going with school? Has anything else happened since the hearing?”

“Not really, but no one has heard from Mr. Thompson since before the hearing.”

He nodded in agreement as he pulled up behind Tia’s car. He got out and escorted her to the front door before turning her to him.

“You’re not coming in?”

“No, sweetie. You go and spend some time with Tia. I’ll see you later, I’m sure.” He smiled, cupped her face with both hands and kissed her before leaving.

Diamond walked into the house to see Tia running down the stairs. She stopped at the bottom to strike a pose.

“Well, how do I look?”

Diamond’s mouth fell open. “Wow.”

Tia held her arms up, showing off her white gauze sundress. Spaghetti straps rested on sculptured shoulders connecting to a fitted bodice with its V-

neck front accentuating her hourglass shape and the swingy skirt, making her look feminine and flirtatious.

“Thanks, Diamond. I hope Trey likes it, too. So, how’s everything with you and Kain? I want to hear all about it.” She pulled Diamond into the living room and onto the sofa.

“We’re fine, Tia. We just spent the whole day together. We spend almost every day together.” Diamond tapped Tia’s leg, smiling. “So, what’s the occasion? Is tonight the night that poor defenseless Trey will be jumped on?”

“Oh, yes! We’ve talked almost every day since I left Atlanta, you know. I can’t wait to see him again...and to see what he looks like under them clothes. Whoo! We have a double date tonight with the guys at Trey’s house. He’s going to cook this time.” With a dreamy smile on her face and a deep sigh, Tia leaned back on the sofa with her eyes closed.

Diamond’s temper flared instantly. “What?”

“Yeah, girl, that’s what I said. All that and he can cook.”

Diamond’s voice was tight with anger.

“No, I mean, you made plans for me too? What if I already had plans?”

Tia’s eyes popped open. “Huh?”

“I might have wanted to do something else tonight, Tia”

She sat up. “I’m sorry. I just thought —”

Diamond jumped up, interrupting her. “Maybe you should just think about asking me before telling people what I’m going to do.”

Tia stammered in her confusion. “You, you said things were going well with you and Kain. I want to see Trey

and I thought you wanted to see Kain. I didn't see a problem with—”

“Maybe I don't want to hang out with you and Trey, or even Kain, tonight,” Diamond almost yelled.

Tia stood up with her hands on her hips. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“Why does something have to be wrong with me because I might have other plans? Huh? That's possible, you know!” Diamond screamed and stomped off into the kitchen.

Diamond sat with her head down and arms stretched out on the table when Tia

arrived into the kitchen moments later.

“Diamond, what’s wrong?”

She shook her head and sniffled.

“Come on, girl. You just bit my head off and all I’m trying to do is get my freak on and help you get yours.”

Diamond lifted her head and her eyes were filled with tears. “I’m sorry, Tia. I didn’t mean to go off on you. It’s nothing you did.”

Tia pulled up a chair. “Well, I know that. I just got here. Is it you and Kain?”

She took a deep breath, as tears rolled down her face. “I lied to you.” Her



voice was so small she barely heard herself. She cleared her throat and spoke louder. “I lied to you. I’ve been seeing Zorro at The Fun House almost as much as I’ve been seeing Kain.” She turned away from Tia’s shocked gaze and continued, her tears fell faster as she spoke.

“And no matter how happy I was with Kain I couldn’t help myself. I had to see Zorro too.” She wiped away at the wetness on her cheeks. “I know I’m stuck, Tia, but I don’t know what to do! I’m out of control! I’m a teacher by day

and a hoe at night!” she cried between hiccups and sniffs, and fell on the table in hysterics.

Tia sighed and left the room. When she returned, she slid a box of tissue at her. “All right, all right. How did all this come about?”

Diamond pulled a tissue from the box and wiped her eyes. “I don’t know.” She blew her nose, then slouched in the chair. “I went back that one night just to see if I just needed some sex like you thought, or if we had some sort of weird connection. But the sex was so good, Tia.

I mean, it was mind-boggling, shake you to your soul good. I—I just had to go back, and then, well, I couldn't stop."

Tia nodded. "So what about Kain?"

Diamond held her chest and more tears fell. "Kain. Oh God. Tia, I-I think I love him." She paused crying again. "That's why I feel so bad. I'm doing him so wrong, but I can't stop. My body goes crazy just knowing I'm on my way to The Fun House." She shook her head. "What's wrong with me? It's like I'm not even me anymore. I'm somebody else! I don't know what to do! Help me, Tia!"

Diamond put her face in her hands and wailed like an infant.

“Okay, okay, shhh.” Tia pulled her into a hug, rubbing her back. “So the sex is good with Zorro. How is it with Kain?”

Diamond jerked from her embrace abruptly. Her tears stopped as she sucked in a breath.

“I-I, well...umm, I haven’t—”

“Oh...my...God!” Tia interrupted her, wide-eyed with shock. She pushed herself up from the table. “You’re sitting here telling me you haven’t even had sex with Kain, yet you are flipping out over

being some big ole hoe?” she shouted. “You’re only sleeping with one guy? The wrong guy! For all the wrong reasons! I told you to leave that guy alone! I told you not to go back to that place!” she concluded pointing at her accusingly.

“I know, I know! Stop yelling at me!”

Tia sat back down with a huff and rubbed her temples. “Okay, I’m sorry.” She pulled Diamond into another hug. “I’m sorry.”

Diamond cried on her friend’s shoulder until she felt dry and weak. They sat quietly together for a few

minutes afterward.

“I’m scared, Tia. What if he doesn’t like having sex with me? I could lose him and I didn’t want to take that chance.”

“Look Diamond, if Kain means that much to you, that’s the chance you’re going to have to take. Love isn’t always neat and clean like in the books you read. Sometimes you have to take chances. If he’s gotten into your heart, doesn’t he deserve all of you? This double life you’ve been leading has got to stop.”

Diamond nodded and sniffed. “I

know.”

“Is Kain who you really want to be with?”

She nodded again.

Tia smiled. “Good, because I like him. I think he’ll be good for you and good to you. Besides, I think you’re worried about nothing. What you and Zorro have is totally physical. You and Kain have been building something special. Good sex can only add to that. I know you had to have learned a thing or two from Zorro that he’d like.” She chuckled.

“Tia...” She slouched in her chair again, feeling exhausted. “It’s like, everything is so perfect with me and Kain as is. I don’t want to mess that up.”

“How can you possibly mess it up? Are you attracted to the man at all sexually?”

Diamond wiped face her and turned a raised brow to her. “Are you kidding? When he hugs me my whole body combusts. I almost have to change my panties.”

Tia laughed. “Well, yeah. I would say there’s a little sexual attraction



there.”

“Oh, but when he kisses me, Tia, mmm...I just want to back him up to a wall and rip his clothes off when he looks at me with that look.”

“Look? What look?”

Diamond wrapped her arms around her chest and bit her lip. “You know the look I’m talking about. Every man has his own look and you know what that look means too. It’s clear as day. You’re probably going to see that look in Trey’s eyes tonight.”

Tia smiled. “Oh, that look. That

‘ooh girl, if you give me just five minutes I will make you shake and quiver so that you’ll never want to leave my arms again’ look. Is that the look you’re talking about?”

Diamond laughed. “Yeah, something like that.”

Tia chuckled. “I sure hope so, girl. So tell me, why haven’t you done this wall thing to Kain yet if he’s given you the look already? I’m sure he wouldn’t mind. He’s always telling Trey how incredible you are.”

“Really?”

She nodded. “Yup.”

“But, but, he’s never made a move.”

Tia shrugged. “I guess he’s letting you set the pace. I’m sure if you did that wall thing he’d get the picture.”

“Yeah. I guess that would get his attention, huh?” She giggled, wiping her eyes.

“Now, you’ve got to live one life with one man. Either take Zorro out into the light of day or fuck the hell out of Kain at night. You have to pick one or the other.” Tia tipped her hands like a scale.

Diamond slapped at her playfully.

“Tia!”

“No girl, for real. This way you can have your cake and eat it too. But I have to tell you, it’s far easier to teach Kain the few sex moves you like, then to try and give qualities to Zorro that you already like in Kain. You may not like Zorro outside of bed at all. Have you thought of that?”

She shook her head sadly.

“Well, food for thought, then. Now, let’s get you nice and cute, just in case you decide to give the man some ass tonight.”

The cracked grounds, crumbled streets, faded lampposts and dilapidated homes that used to line Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd were all reconditioned. In their place cobblestone sidewalks, repaved streets and old-fashioned brass lampposts now stood. The glory the neighborhood had in the 1940s had returned with a modernized look for the new millennium. Tia found Trey's house easily among the beautiful old structures. She pulled up behind Kain's Jeep and

tapped on the back door before walking in.

“Hi, sweetheart. I’d hug you, but I’m cooking. I only make one dish, Tia, but when I make it, it’s damn good.” He leaned away from the stove to give her a quick kiss. “How are you, Diamond? You look as lovely as I remember.”

“Thanks Trey, I’m fine. Whatever you’re making sure smells good.”

“It’s Jambalaya. I hope it’s not too spicy for you. I like it with a kick.” He put the lid back on the pot and removed his apron. “Oh, good, you got the wine.”

He took the bottle from Tia. “Now for a real greeting.” He pulled her to him. “I’ve waited almost two months to hold you in my arms again. And this dress, mmm, mmm, mmm. You look fantastic in white. I’m like a compass on north just looking at you.”

Tia and Diamond giggled as he spun her.

Trey returned her to his arms. “I bet you look even better out of it.”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“It sure is getting hot in this kitchen,” Diamond said loudly with an amused

grin.

Trey laughed a hearty, deep laugh. He adjusted Tia under his left arm, and then pulled Diamond's arm through his right. "You are absolutely right, Diamond. This is not the time. This way, ladies."

He led them into the living room. Hearing their approach, Kain looked up from loading the stereo and turned their way.

"You look even more beautiful as the day goes on," he said with open arms.

Diamond walked into his embrace.



“I hope this little impromptu dinner they put together didn’t take you away from any plans you may have made elsewhere. I know it took me by surprise.”

“There are no plans I could have had that would be more important than you.”

Kain’s soft, silky voice sent shivers up her spine, making her weak in the knees. Trey sat in a chair and pulled Tia into his lap, then cleared his throat.

“All right there, mac daddy. Take a seat and stop making us ordinary men look bad.” His words held amusement. He turned to Tia. “He’s smooth, ain’t

he, baby?”

“That he is, but it’s cool. I think my girl was liking it.”

Kain laughed and pulled Diamond to the couch with him. “My apologies, Tia. I didn’t even speak to you. How are you?” He put his arm around Diamond, pulling her closer.

“It’s okay. I’m fine, Kain. You just focus on our little Diamond over there.”

He smiled. “Oh, I plan to.”

Trey cackled loudly and everyone looked at him.

“Did you see his face, baby? When

he saw Diamond come through the door, I think he might have stopped breathing. He was, hmm, what's a good word?"

"Stuck?" Tia supplied.

"Yeah, stuck. Thank you," Trey said and kissed Tia's forehead. "It's been a long time since I've seen that look on his face and I've been looking at that mug for years."

They all laughed. The four of them played cards and listened to music until dinner was ready. They enjoyed Trey's Jambalaya and got a good laugh watching Diamond drink twice as much wine

trying to cool her mouth off. When dinner ended, they retired to the living room to relax. After a while, Tia dragged Diamond down the hall to the restroom.

“Whoo! Girl! I’m gonna kill him! I’m going to push one leg up here...” Tia threw her arm up toward the ceiling and the other to the side. “And put the other leg over there. Then when I get him where I want him, I’m going to get on my knees and work his big ass until he starts screaming my name. Go Tia, go Tia, go Tia!” she sang, smacking her own bottom. Finally, she fell against the door

laughing.

Diamond snorted and sat on the toilet. “I wouldn’t be surprised, with your wild ass.” She leaned on her knees, putting her head in her hands.

Tia moved to the mirror to fix her hair. “Don’t hate on me, be like me,” she said smugly, pulling a lipstick from her purse. “Are you all right?”

She nodded, wobbling slightly.

“Well, okay, but don’t drive. I’m going to stay here and get my freak on and you, my friend, should do the same. Tell Kain to do the driving, and I’ll see

you tomorrow. Okay?”

“Tia, I’m still feeling weird about what I’ve been doing. What am I going to do?”

“That depends on who you’re talking about.”

Diamond sucked her teeth. “I’m talking about Kain, Tia.”

“Oh. Then your answer is simple. Do Kain tonight and forever more, and don’t go back to Zorro or The Fun House. Don’t make this thing harder than it is. The only reason you’re so stuck on Zorro is because you think the

sex was good. As soon as you start sexing Kain, you'll be saying, Zorro who?"

"You make it sound so simple."

"It is that simple. Why are you making it seem like it's not?"

"I don't know."

"Well we're both too drunk to care, so let's get back to our men before you slide off that lid." She smiled and pulled her off the bowl. They returned to the living room and sat with the guys on either side of them. Tia bounced on the couch, smiling at Trey. He picked up his drink.

“What?” he asked with a raised brow.

She leaned over to whisper in his ear.

He returned his drink to the table before it reached his lips. “Absolutely.” He looked past Tia. “Nice seeing you again, little Dee. Kain, don’t forget to lock up when you leave.”

Tia pulled him from the sofa and they ran up the stairs laughing. Diamond turned to Kain.

“Did he just call me little Dee?”

They laughed for a few moments, then Diamond abruptly jumped to her



feet.

“Kain, you wanna come back to my house and spend the night with me?” she rushed out in one long breath.

A smile touched his lips. “Absolutely.” He stood to hold her steady. “I’ll drive.”

“Tia said to get her keys from her purse since her car is blocking your Jeep.”

Kain drove them back to Diamond’s house and followed her to her room. Giddy, she strolled in, lay on her bed, and started making a snow angel on the

satin comforter. The soft material always felt so good against her skin. She'd bet money Kain would like it too.

Kain stood by the door studying her. He shook his head hard, walked over and sat, pulling her to a sitting position. "Diamond, baby, as much as I'd like to stand here and watch you do that, I have to talk to you."

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Nothing's wrong." He kissed her hand and held it.

"I just want to make sure you're okay with this. I don't want to take advantage

of you in your uh, present state,” he said with a muffled chuckle.

She brought his hand to her chest, trying to force back the tears gathering in her eyes. “I really want to do this. You have no idea how bad I want to do this.” She sniffed. “I...I need to talk to you, too, Kain.” She took a deep breath as tears began falling in streams down her face. “I’ve done something I really feel bad about.” She took another deep breath. “I should’ve told—”

He put his finger to her lips, cutting her off her words. He cupped her face

and moved in to kiss her, but she pulled away from him.

“No, Kain, please. I have to—”

He put his finger back, waited until she quieted, then kissed her. Her tears fell freely as she threw her arms around his neck and pushed him back on the bed. A happy, hearty laugh left him as he lifted her on top of him.

“I’ve waited so long for this!” He kissed all over her face. “Let me make it good for you,” he said excitedly and flipped her over. “I want you to just lie back and enjoy.” He kissed away the last

few tears.

Pulling her straps down off her shoulders, he kissed a trail along her skin while moving down to the valley between her breasts. Kain stopped long enough to pull her dress off and lay it on her vanity chair. Then he returned and reversed his kisses, pausing to admire her black lace panties and rub his hands over them. His touch lingered a while before he slid his finger under the elastic and pushed it down her legs. Grasping her hips, he pressed his face between her legs.

She moaned. He continued moving

brushing his lips across her stomach. His fingers slid up and down the sides of her hips as he kissed higher. Reaching for her breasts, he pulled them out of her strapless black lace bra before he squeezed their roundness and took one nipple in his mouth.

Throwing her arms around his neck and wrapping her legs around his butt, she ground her body against him, breathing harder, feeling the pleasure surge through her body. He caught her rhythm and pushed her breasts together, sucking hungrily at them. Her body froze

as a small bomb exploded inside her. She felt the blast at her carnal center, spreading to the top of her head, down to her feet, and escaping through her nipples. Yanking his head up to her face, she kissed him and pushed him back to grab at his pants.

“Wait, baby, wait. I want to take my time with you. I want it to be special between us.”

Diamond sat up, kissing his face all over. “Are you leaving afterward?”

“Leaving? No. If you let me stay, I’ll never leave you,” he said, trying to return

some of her kisses.

“Then we have all night for you to make it special, but right now I want you inside me.”

Diamond surprised herself and him with her boldness. She lay back, pulling him on top of her.

Wiggling out of his pants, he didn't bother to remove his underwear as his member had already escaped through the hole in front and he entered her swiftly.

“Ahhh!” they said together.

Damn, she was worth every minute



of the wait.

He bit his lip and slipped his arms under hers to grip her shoulders, pushing himself deeper.

Diamond reached down to grip his butt, moving him where she wanted him. They found their groove and moved together as one.

“Diamond...” He moaned, trying to catch his breath. “Baby wait...”

She pulled his head down to lick and suck on his neck.

He moaned and thrust into her harder. Damn, that feels good. Then,

like a slap in the face, his eyes popped open and he stopped moving.

“Oh, my God!” he yelled, trying to pull off her, but she wouldn’t let him go.

She wrapped her legs around him and he slipped deeper into her.

“Wait...wait...” he cried breathlessly, trying to hold back when she cried out, holding him in a death grip as she came, and he followed right behind her.

“Zorro...that was...wonderful,” she whispered, panting against his head and fell asleep—the drinking and exhaustion finally taking over.

After sleeping for just a little while, she woke suddenly. Her eyes popped open as she realized what she'd done. She held Kain close to her, afraid to look at him.

How can my heart be breaking as I lay underneath him, but sexually sated at the same time? It's not fair. Tears rolled down her cheeks once again.

She felt Kain take a deep breath as he reached up to pull her arms from around his neck, put them at her sides and look down at her. She turned her face from him, but he turned it back.

“Kain, I-I don’t know what to say. I’m so sorry.” Her tears were like a stream running off the sides of her face into her ears. “I know you probably hate me, but all I can say—”

He put his finger to her lips and kissed her, making her cry harder. Looking into her eyes for a long time, he tried to wipe away the tears that wouldn’t stop.

“Kain, please, listen to me—”

He shook his head and put his finger to her lips again. “I need to verify something, and then we’ll talk.”

She nodded obediently, sniffing. He kissed her lightly on the lips and slid down her body slowly.

Taking a deep breath, Kain closed his eyes until his chin pressed into her closely cut pubic area. He took another deep breath and opened his eyes. That he was staring at her little diamond-shaped birthmark became apparent and so did his smile.

He dropped a soft kiss on it. “Sweetheart, we need to talk.”

He rolled off her, moved to the top of the bed and pulled her up next to him.

“Listen, Diamond, I know you must feel like...” He paused searching for the right word. “Well, you probably feel like shit.”

She nodded, wiping her eyes.

“I mean, who wouldn’t when they break rule number one? Saying someone else’s name in bed is like, whoa, that’s like a federal offense, isn’t it?” he asked in a teasing voice.

Diamond turned her face away from him, nodding and wiping away more tears.

“Sweetheart, I’m just teasing.”

She drew in a shocked breath. “No,

Kain, no you're not."

"Yes, I am. I'm just teasing."

"Kain how could you be teasing, I just —"

"I'm teasing, sweetie, because I'm not mad."

Diamond started to interrupt him, but he held up his hand to stop her and she turned away again.

"I can't be upset with you for calling me Zorro," he turned her face to his, "when I'm Zorro."

Her eyes went wide as she gasped. Kain brought his forehead to hers and

whispered.

“Look at me.”

She was almost afraid to look, but turned to him anyway and drew in another breath.

The same brown eyes. She looked at his lips, reaching out to touch them. Oh my God. She looked back to his eyes. “It is...you are,” she whispered.

He smiled and kissed her fingers. “I didn’t realize it was you, either. Well, not until you started kissing my neck like that.” He brushed his nose on hers. “No one’s ever kissed my neck like that. I



thought it was kind of weird two different women would do the same thing the same exact way.” He smiled, stroking her face. “So I had to verify my suspicions and see if you had Sapphire’s birthmark. I knew there was no way two women could have the same unusual birthmark.”

Staring at him as he spoke, she barely heard his explanation as her brain screamed the questions she needed answers to.

How can this be happening? How can this be true? How can my Kain be Zorro?

She shook her head. “But Kain, how could—”

“Okay, let me back up. See, The Fun House has been active for just over five years. I know because I built it. It was one of my first projects when I started my company.” He laughed as her mouth dropped open again and continued.

“Jessie came to my office with some plans she had in mind for a different kind of club, but they needed discretion, for obvious reasons. One of the reasons they picked my company was because we were new and upcoming. They wanted as

few nonmembers as possible knowing about them, and as a perk, she lets me come and go as I please.”

He took a deep breath. “After my divorce I went to The Fun House a lot. I partied and participated in a lot of things I normally wouldn’t have. Back then, it was really wild, lots of orgies, bondage rooms, S&M rooms, all that. It took some time for Jessie to screen and attract the kind of people she wanted in the club, but once she did it everything chilled out and it became the social gathering you saw.” He shrugged. “I

didn't know what I was doing back then. I guess I tried to fuck away the pain." He took another deep breath.

"Anyway...it didn't take long before that got old. I still went every now and then, but I didn't participate." He readjusted himself so she could lie against his chest and continued, "It's been almost four years since I had sex with anyone in The Fun House, until the night you and Tia showed up." He smiled and kissed the top of her head.

"Even behind the mask you wore, I knew there was something about you.

You were special. Like a red rose in a field of daisies. Misplaced and the most special of all.”

Diamond finally found her voice. “But couldn’t you tell Diamond and Sapphire were the same person by our voices? Even though you didn’t speak, I spoke to you.”

He laughed softly, hugging her. “Well, honey, we weren’t there to talk, so we didn’t do much talking, did we? Besides, it never occurred to me to connect the two. Why would I? I was there for sex, not companionship. I had

no reason to believe you'd ever be in a place like The Fun House."

Trying to assimilate all the information he gave her, she lay against him, silent for a short while, then brought her hands to her face and cried again.

"What the—" Stunned, he faced her. "Honey, what's wrong? I think this is a good thing." He hugged her.

"You probably think I'm such a slut! It was supposed to be a one-time thing. Something wild and crazy for Tia and me to check out on our weekend of fun!" she screamed, wiping away the tears

falling down her face. Moving to sit at the edge of the bed, she cried hysterically.

“All this time I’ve been making love to you as Zorro and spending time with you as you during the day...This has been the most confusing time of my life. I’ve been feeling so guilty that I was cheating on you with Zorro that I could hardly breathe, but I just couldn’t bring myself to stop seeing either one of you.” She wiped her face with both hands. “How could you possibly trust me, when now you know I was doing someone else? Well, at least I thought it was someone

else. And you, you were doing the same thing. How can I trust you?”

He leaned forward, rubbing his neck. “Okay, honey, now I’m confused.”

“Kain, the last thing I want you to think is that I’m some sort of a nymphomaniac slut who can’t get enough sex, who needs two men to satisfy her!” she screamed frantically.

He almost fell over with his laughter. “Diamond, honey, believe me I wouldn’t put that much thought into anything.”

She turned on him. “How can you be laughing? We don’t have any trust in this



relationship. That puts us behind the eight ball out the gate. How do I even know it's me you love and not some made-up part of my personality?" She wiped away more tears. "How can we be together at all as friends or lovers without trust?"

Kain stopped laughing and grabbed her by the shoulders. His voice was stern as if he was resisting the urge to shake some sense into her.

"Hey, listen to me. I knew I was in love with you as Diamond, way before we even had sex." He released her.

“With Sapphire it was just sex. It was great sex, well, it was phenomenal sex, really,” he added. “I mean—”

“Kain!” she shouted.

“Sorry, my mind wandered for a second, but the point I’m trying to get through to you is I didn’t push to meet Sapphire outside The Fun House to pursue anything else because I was seeing you. Lots of people hook up outside that place to see if they could have a real relationship or to avoid the prices, but that’s not what I wanted. I kept going to see Sapphire because I felt a connection,

but I wasn't interested in sharing any quality time with her or anyone else in there."

"But you kept going back, too, even though you had feelings for me as Diamond."

"I can't deny that I was extremely attracted to Sapphire and every time she wanted to meet I was there. When I realized I was falling in love with you I should have just stopped, but our relationship had not moved from the friendship or dating level. I also knew as soon as you were ready to take our

relationship to the next level that would've been the last day I spent at The Fun House.”

Diamond understood his reasoning, but was still unsure if that made it right. She turned away from him.

Kain reached around to turn her to him and sighed. “But I have to tell you, now that I know my sweet, incredible Diamond and the hot and sexy Sapphire is one and the same person, I can’t help but feel elated. We’re complete now. I will always be faithful to you, all of you, with my mind and my body.”

“But how can I know it’s me you love and not some made-up woman you like having sex with?”

Kain let her face go and let out an exasperated breath. “Sweetheart, you’re reading way too much into this. I get to have the woman I love and the woman I love to have sex with in one woman. You get to have Kain and Zorro in the same guy. You can’t get any better than that.” He gave her a quick kiss on the cheek. “Now come on, enough talk tonight. Let’s go to bed and talk more tomorrow, when both our heads are clearer.”

He finished removing his clothes and her bra and pulled back the sheets. Diamond lay silently for a long while on his chest, holding him. Suddenly she looked up at him, kissed him and pulled him until he rolled over on top of her. Confusion still clouded his handsome features as he slid his finger down the side of her face.

“I love you, Diamond Jones. Can’t you see that?”

His voice was soft and sensual to her ears and when he made love to her again, it was slow, passionate, and full of

love. With a deep sigh of contentment, he gathered her in his arms and they fell asleep.

# Chapter Eleven

Kain groaned sleepily and reached for the comfort of Diamond's body. His eyes popped open when it wasn't there.

“Diamond?”

He pushed himself up and felt the note on the bed next to him. Falling back to the pillow, he read it, and then leaped from the bed. Jumping into his pants, Kain ran downstairs. He looked out the window and around the house calling her



name, knowing she wasn't there to answer.

"I don't get it." He plopped on the sofa. "After everything that happened between us last night, why would she leave?" Shaking his head, he pulled out his cell phone.

"Yeah, hello," came the sleepy reply.

"Trey, I'm sorry for calling so early. It's me, Kain."

"I know who it is, man. What do you want?"

"Sorry, man, but I really need to speak to Tia."

“What’s wrong? Tia, wake up, baby. Kain’s on the phone. Something’s wrong.”

Trey’s voice was clear on the line as he spoke to Tia.

“Hmm?”

“Kain’s on the phone. Something’s up.” There was rustling on the line as Trey woke Tia enough to talk to him.

“Hello?”

“I’m sorry, Tia. I wouldn’t have called if it wasn’t important.”

“It’s okay, Kain,” Tia said, stifling a yawn. “What’s wrong?”

“Well, I spent the night out here at Diamond’s house, but when I got up a little while ago she was gone.”

“What do you mean gone? Gone where?”

“That’s just it, I don’t know where.” His sigh came through clear over the phone. “She left me this note and...” He choked on his words unable to finish.

“All right, Kain. We’re on our way over. Don’t leave.”

He chuckled, a sad, defeated sound. “I can’t leave, she took her car. Yours is here but I didn’t want to take the liberty.

Could you ask Trey to drive my Jeep over so I can try and find her?”

“You got it man. See you in little while.”

Kain slipped the phone into his pocket as he went to the kitchen. He searched through cabinets until he found the coffee and mugs. Just as he stirred the milk into his cup and took a seat, Trey and Tia walked into the room. Neither spoke, as he poured Trey a cup of coffee and Tia got herself some juice.

“Okay, Kain, why don’t you just start at the beginning?” she said urging him

with her glass.

Kain took a sip from his mug before he told them everything that happened from the time they left Trey's house until he woke this morning. When his story and his coffee were done he handed her the note.

“I just don't understand. Everything was going so well between us. I thought by the time we went to sleep we were one page away from, ‘they lived happily ever after.’” He dropped his head to the table.

Tia looked up from the note at Trey, then to Kain. “Look Kain, Diamond is

like a sister to me. So before I tell you where I think she might be, I have to ask you something.”

“Ask away,” he said to the table.

“Do you love her? I know you said you weren’t tripping off what happened at The Fun House, but I want to hear it for the record. Just like you and Trey are more brothers than friends, Diamond and I are sisters. I love her and I don’t want her hurt.”

He looked up at her. “Yes, I love her, Tia.” He turned to Trey and added, “More than anyone, man.”

He slumped back in his chair. Tia's gaze shifted between them and her brow rose. "What?" she asked.

Trey sent him a look he had seen often as they were growing up. He shrugged answering Trey's unasked question.

"I don't care, man, tell her," he said wearily.

"Tell me what?"

"Well, Tia, Kain was married before. He really loved her, too, but it didn't turn out well in the end. In fact, it ended really bad. Kain used to spend a

lot of time in school and at work in those days. One day he decided to surprise her. So he went home early with groceries to make them dinner. Well, when he got there it was just like all those cheating songs. She was in bed with another man.”

Tia’s hand went to her mouth, but it didn’t stifle the gasp that escaped.

“Yeah, you can see how that would upset him. He jumped on the guy without thinking and beat him half to death... literally. She jumped on his back trying to stop him and, well, before he could stop



himself, he—he, uh,” Trey cleared his throat. “Well, he jumped on her too.”

Tia glared at Kain, but didn’t comment.

“He didn’t beat her,” Trey said quickly with his hands up. “But he did choke the hell out of her.”

Tia wrapped her arms around her chest. “I supposed you think that was better?”

“No, I don’t and neither did he. Come on, now, Tia. The man snapped, but when Kain realized what he was doing, he dropped her. He panicked

seeing her just lying there, so he called me. When I showed up they were still on the bed barely moving. Kain was sitting in the corner crying.”

She looked at him wide-eyed. “Oh my God,” she whispered, holding her forehead.

Trey touched her shoulder. “No, honey, they were alive. I got them up and told the guy to get his woman and get the hell out of Atlanta.”

“Did he leave?”

“Yeah, he left. He was coherent enough to understand I meant business

and that a trip to the doctor or to the police would cost him his life. I gave him a number and told him to call it with an address that I could send the divorce papers to. I also told them they'd better not call or contact Kain for anything. If they did I'd hunt them down and slit their throats in the dead of night myself."

Tia glanced at him stunned. "Trey—"

"Tia, I'm not a violent man, but I'll do what I have to do to protect mine. Just as Diamond is your sister, Kain is my brother. Would you do anything less to protect her?"

The look on her face said she wouldn't. Kain leaned on the table and sighed.

“Anyway, after all that, Kain went into a deep depression. Starr and I did everything we could to bring him out. We didn't see a lot of him in those days,” he added sadly.

She reached for his hand. “Kain, I'm so sorry.”

“Tia, I don't care about all that, that's the past. Please, Diamond is my future. You gotta know I wouldn't do anything to hurt her. I love her.” He covered her

hand with his. “Do you know where she went?”

Tia looked at the note again, at Trey, then back to Kain. “Well, the note says that she needs some fresh air to think things over. It also says you shouldn’t worry and I don’t think you should.”

“Why is that?”

“Her parents have a cabin up at Stone Mountain. She always said the clean air there helped her do her best thinking. If she’s there she’s safe.” She shrugged. “That would be the first place I’d look.”

“So what do you want to do, man?”

Trey asked.

“I’m taking a trip to Stone Mountain to get my woman.”

Smiling, Kain pushed himself up and went out the door. Tia and Trey were close behind. They drove out to Stone Mountain and Tia led them to the cabin. Turning down a gravel road, she stopped and signaled for Kain to pull up next to her.

“What’s up?”

“This is the only road that leads to her parent’s cabin. I can see Diamond’s

car from here.”

“Okay, good. That means you were right.”

“Yeah, but there’s another car up there. It doesn’t belong to one of her brothers or their wives.”

“Hmm...”

“Maybe we should park down here and take a peek before we go in,” Trey suggested.

They backed up, parked alongside the road, and walked. Going around the back of the cabin, they peeked into the kitchen window. A man walked back and

forth in the living room area, waving a gun around. Tia and Kain drew in a shocked breath. They looked at each other. The fear and shock on her face no doubt match his. They turned to Trey.

“What? Who’s that?” he asked.

“That’s that freak, Carl. Her mother introduced us to him,” Tia said in hushed urgency.

“Carl?”

“Yeah, man. I told you about him. He’s that fool that was following her around like some crazed stalker. Waiting outside of her house, watching me come



and go, shit like that. We haven't seen or heard from him in weeks though, not since she told him off at the bar that day." He looked in the window again. "Shit! I can't believe this! I should have known that asshole wouldn't stop following her so easily. I should have tracked him down and kicked his ass weeks ago. She'd be safe now."

Tia touched his hand. "Hey, keep your voice down. This is not your fault. We have to see where she is and get her out of there."

"You're right, Tia. Why don't you

drive back to that little town we passed down the hill and find some police, or whatever they have? We'll stay here and make sure this Carl guy doesn't do anything stupid," Trey suggested.

Tia stared at them a moment, then nodded. "Okay, but you'd better not do anything stupid either." She kissed Trey and gave Kain a quick hug. "You either."

Trey watched her disappear down the road then turned to Kain. "I had to get rid of Tia, man. She would've stopped us from doing what you know we have to do to get your girl away from this maniac.

Come on, we need to look around to see if we can see where Diamond is.”

Kain nodded and followed him. Testing all the windows they peeked into, they discovered one of the bedroom windows open. They climbed through quietly and peeked through the door, able to see the whole living room. Diamond sat on a long couch, propped on the armrest, tied up. The white smiley face T-shirt she wore was torn at the neck and dotted with dried blood.

Damn

He turned to say something Kain, but

his comment died on a gasp. Kain's eyes were narrowed as he looked through the window. His breathing was harsh and choppy coming through his bared teeth.

“He hit her, Trey! I see blood on her shirt and her lip is swollen!”

Trey jerked him back by his collar. “Keep your voice down. Now is not the time for you to lose your temper, Kain. We have to get her out first, okay?” he said in an urgent whisper, working to control his own anger.

Kain pressed his lips into a thin line. He took a deep breath and then nodded.

“You’re right. I just—”

“You know,” Carl said.

Kain clamped his mouth shut. He and Trey peeped past the doorframe again. Carl tapped the gun on the side of his head seemingly to pretend to think.

“I really thought if I just gave you time to get that Kain guy out of your system you’d do the right thing and come to me like your family wants.” He paced before her. “But no, you just kept right on seeing him, didn’t you?” His angry voice filled the room. Diamond turned away from him when he stopped in front

of her and continued to yell. “But as if that wasn’t bad enough, you were going down to that weird-ass house downtown, too, and seeing somebody else!”

“So you know what I did? After watching you go there for the past few weeks, I had to know who lived there, who else you were seeing...almost every damn night of the week!” he shouted.

Trey sent a look to his friend. Kain bit his lip seemingly to prevent another outburst. His eyes were mere slits and his gaze remained fixed inside the room. Trey touched his friend’s shoulder.

Carl cleared his throat and Trey turned his attention back to him.

Carl took a slow, deep breath and pulled up a chair to sit it in front of her. “Yup. So one night I followed you. Once I knew where you were going, I went back a few times to check the place out. One night while I was out there waiting for you to come out I saw the opportunity to get in. I followed a man about my size and height around a dark corner. I hit him over the head and took his key card. Luckily, he had a mask on him so going back into the house wasn’t a problem. I

didn't understand why until I went inside. The anonymous sexual pandemonium going on all over the place made me sick. It's a good thing my face was covered so no one else saw my disgust. Anyway, I walked down the steps just in time to see you and some freak in a Zorro costume go up some other stairs and down a hallway." He stood and turned her face toward his.

"I saw you and that freak go into one of those rooms and nothing but your screams came out!" he yelled. "I was so fucking pissed!" He tapped the gun on



the side of her head, emphasizing each of his words. “My betrothed, the woman I was going to marry, was having sex with someone else! I almost kicked in the door and shot you both,” he said growling.

Tears rolled down Diamond’s face and he smiled.

Trey grabbed Kain’s shirt, stopping him from charging into the room. “Easy, not yet.”

“But I didn’t, of course,” Carl continued, catching their attention. “I calmed down, went back to my car and

waited. I figured you just needed more time.” He took another deep breath and sat back down. “I gave you over two fucking weeks.” The anger was back in his voice. “Then last night I see Kain bringing you home and does he leave like usual? No, not this time, this time the motherfucker stays the whole night! So not only are you fucking that freak at that weird house, now you’re fucking Kain too!”

Carl jumped up, kicked the chair back and slapped her again. The force of the blow pushed her to the other side of

the couch. Fresh blood oozed from her already swollen lips and another bruise formed quickly on the side of her face.

Trey held his bottom lip with his teeth. His gaze shifted to Kain. His lips were turned inward as he pressed them together. Kain's knuckles were white as he gripped the window edge.

“Hold on, Kain, just a little longer,” Trey whispered.

“I’ve done so much for you already, sweetheart,” Carl said. “I got rid of that asshole of a principal of yours. Remember? I did that for you, honey, so

you wouldn't have to deal with him anymore," he explained his voice softer. "He's in the trunk of my car right now," he added, pointing to the door. "I did that so you could go back to work in peace. I—I gave you time to lose Kain because I knew you liked him and didn't want to hurt his feelings. That was very generous on my part, don't you think? How many men do you know would have done that? I was willing to stand back and let you deal with it. I could've just put him in the trunk next to that Thompson guy."

Trey and Kain shared a look.

“I was going to let you pick anything you wanted for the wedding. I know how you women love that. After all that, after everything I’ve done for you, this is how you treat me?”

He paced in front of her again. Kain reached for the door, but Trey caught his arm, stopping him again.

“Are you crazy? The man has a gun to her head.” Trey’s words were slow and deliberate. “We have to be patient and wait for the right moment.”

Kain’s breathing had become harsh,

but he nodded in compliance. Carl spoke again, grabbing his attention.

“I didn’t want to hurt you, though.” He propped her against the couch arm again, picked up his chair and sat back down. “Not yet, anyway.” His smile had an evil twist to it. “You see, once you’re my wife you will belong to me and as your husband I can do whatever I want with you.”

\* \* \* \*

Carl’s smile made her stomach lurch. She shuddered at the thought of being his

wife. Her head still ached where he'd hit her with the stick just as she opened the door to the cabin earlier that morning. He had smacked her four times since then just talking to her. The last thing Diamond wanted to do was piss him off any more than he was. It would clearly be putting her life in danger. She knew now that Carl had never stopped following her and he truly was crazy.

“You know, I was almost over the fact that you were still seeing Kain, and I was working on the fact you were sleeping with that masked freak, but last

night when you thought it was okay to sleep with Kain as well..." He stopped short and slapped her again, but held her arm so she wouldn't fall over. When she fell back from the force, he jerked her upright so her face was close to his. He stuffed the gun in the front of his pants and shook his finger in her face. "That's when you went too far. Too fucking far!"

Carl lifted Diamond's face. "He went home every night, no matter what! Why now did you let him stay? Huh? Why now! We're fucking betrothed! Don't you know what that means? Doesn't that



mean anything to you?” he yelled, then slapped her again with his open palm.

Diamond struggled not to make a sound as she lay with her face pressed against the rough material of the cushions. Her breathing came in heavy gasps. There was nothing she could do to stop the hot tears from falling, the ringing in her ears or the searing pain on the side of her face.

“You know what, that’s fine. Don’t answer me. I don’t even care anymore. You want to know why? Because you can’t turn a hoe into a housewife, that’s

why!”

He snatched her from the sofa, tearing her shirt even more, slapped her again, then threw her facedown back into the corner.

“What the—” She heard him say.

“Kain!” someone screamed.

“Kain?” Diamond muttered barely able to lift her head.

Someone scooped Diamond from the sofa and rushed her back into the bedroom.

“Trey! How did you find me?”

“Shhh,” he said, frantically trying to

get the ropes untied.

“Please, please.” She gasped. “Go help Kain before that maniac hurts him.”

“I am. I will.” He ripped the ropes off her body and pushed her to the window. “Go out the window and down the road. Tia is in the town getting the police.”

“No, I’m not leaving Kain with that monster!” she said stumbling to the doorway.

Kain and Carl rolled on the floor, fighting to reach the discarded weapon. Kain ended up on top of Carl for the

moment and took the advantage, punching him in the face and banging his head the cabin floor.

“So you like to hit women, huh? Huh? Well this is for all the women you’ve ever hit!” he yelled, smashing his fist against Carl’s cheek. “This is for all the slaps you gave to my woman!” He smacked Carl with the front and back of his hand.

Carl reached up, choking him, then rolled them over again, but Kain was on top of him again in no time. “This is for all the times she cried, was scared, or you

just plain pissed her off.”

Each word was followed by a punch or a slap. Kain elbowed Carl in the face, banged his head as hard as he could on the floor, then got up and kicked him twice in the face. Carl stopped moving. Blood oozed from his mouth and nose, but Kain continued, emphasizing his words with a kick.

“Bastard! Dog!”

“Oh, God, not again. Stay here, Diamond, I mean it. I have to stop him.” Trey propped her up on a chair by the doorway before running into the living

room.

“Kain, enough! The police are on the way, remember!” Trey chastised, pulling him close. “He’s out cold. Let me look at you.”

Trey wiped away the blood on his lip and turned his face to and fro.

“Kain, behind you!” Diamond's warning came too late.

“If I can’t have her, you won’t either!” Carl screamed and a gunshot blast followed.

Trey gasped as Kain fell forward.

“No!” Trey shouted, catching and

laying Kain on the floor.

“Trey, look out! He’s trying to get up and still has the gun,” Diamond shouted.

“You’re next, you whore.”

As Carl pointed the gun at her, Trey ran over to kick the piece from his hand and him in the face twice. After making sure he was knocked out, Trey picked up the gun just as the cops burst through the door.

“Drop the weapon and get your hands up!”

“Face down on the floor! Now!”

“Shit,” Trey said under his breath as

he laid the gun on the floor, then put his hands on the back of his head. “It’s okay, Diamond.”

Tia rushed through the door behind the police, in time to see them handcuffing Trey. “No! No! Not him!” Tia explained who Trey was as she hugged Diamond close before helping her walk to where Kain was lying.

Blood pooled beneath Kain’s body. She could see the hole the blood poured from and ripped off part of her shirt to hold it there. Diamond lifted his head to her lap and the blood seemed to flow



faster.

“Oh, my God. Please be okay, Kain,” she whispered. The piece of shirt she held was saturated quickly. Tears flowed blinding her, as she adjusted him in her sore arms. “Somebody help me! I don’t have anything else to put on this to stop the bleeding! Tia! Trey! Oh, God, somebody help!”

Tia appeared at her side. Tear filled her eyes at the sight of Kain. “Oh, my God. Hold on, I’ll get something.”

“Tia, hurry.” Diamond rocked Kain, crying uncontrollably. “Please don’t die.

Please be okay. Please don't die," she chanted.

"Honey, please, stop crying. You're going to drown me," Kain whispered.

"Oh, thank God!" she whispered. "He's alive! Please, someone call an ambulance. Kain, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I love you, I should have never left."

"Don't cry, baby. I'm fine. It's just a flesh wound." His breathing was strenuous and his words full of pain as he gave her a weak smile.

Diamond tried to smile. "This is not

the time to be cracking jokes, Kain.”

“The ambulance is here. How you doing, man?” Trey asked at her side.

Kain let out a painful grunt. “Just a flesh wound, man, but I’d rather be fishing.”

“Kain, I’m so sorry. It’s my fault you got hurt. I should have never come up here.”

Paramedics came to his side. “Ma’am, we need to move him to assess the damage.”

Diamond nodded as they lifted him gingerly from her lap.

“Sweetheart, I’m fine,” he whispered and turned to one of the paramedics. “Tell her I’m fine.” Kain’s breathing was shallow. His voice seemed weaker.

The paramedic cut open Kain’s shirt, then turned him over slowly. “Well, it’s a through and through,” the man said, looking around. “That means the bullet is around here somewhere.”

Kain groaned and gasped in pain as the paramedic patched the wound and laid him down to do the front.

“He’s lost a lot of blood. We need to get him to the hospital.” Other medics

joined the man helping Kain. They worked together to get him on the stretcher. “We’ll get you something for pain when you get on the truck.”

Kain nodded and smiled weakly. “See baby, I told you, just a scratch.”

One of the medics turned to Diamond. “Come on, ma’am, will you let us have a look at you, now?”

Diamond nodded and let Tia and Trey help her walk behind the two paramedics carrying Kain. The police loaded Carl into another ambulance and they pulled away as Diamond was seated

next to Kain's stretcher. Kain reached for her hand.

“I love you, Diamond. The Diamond side, Sapphire side and whoever else you have up in there.” He spoke low, pushing each word forward. “I want to be with you.”

“I love you too.” She leaned close to his ear. “You know, maybe we can compromise. We could...” She shrugged. “I don't know, maybe we can keep Zorro and Sapphire in the bedroom, our bedroom, just for the two of us, and Kain and Diamond can stay out here for the

rest of the world.” She kissed him lightly on the forehead. “Does that work for you?”

Kain smiled. “That works just fine for me.”

**\*THE END\***

# About the Author

Dana Littlejohn birth interrupted the festivities of a late night Christmas party with her arrival. This may attest for her love of the season. She has always dreamed of being a writer and wrote her first story at 12 years old. As she grew older she put her pen down to enter the world of adulthood taking care of her husband and children. In 2003 her husband encouraged her to pick her pen up again and Dana has no intention on putting it down again. Experience the



wild ride through her imagination with  
her...you will not be disappointed!

[www.danalittlejohn.net](http://www.danalittlejohn.net)

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**Coming Spring 2016**

**The Fun House Print Edition**

**Summer 2016**

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**Print Re-Release**

**Fall 2016**

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**eBook & Print Re-Release**

