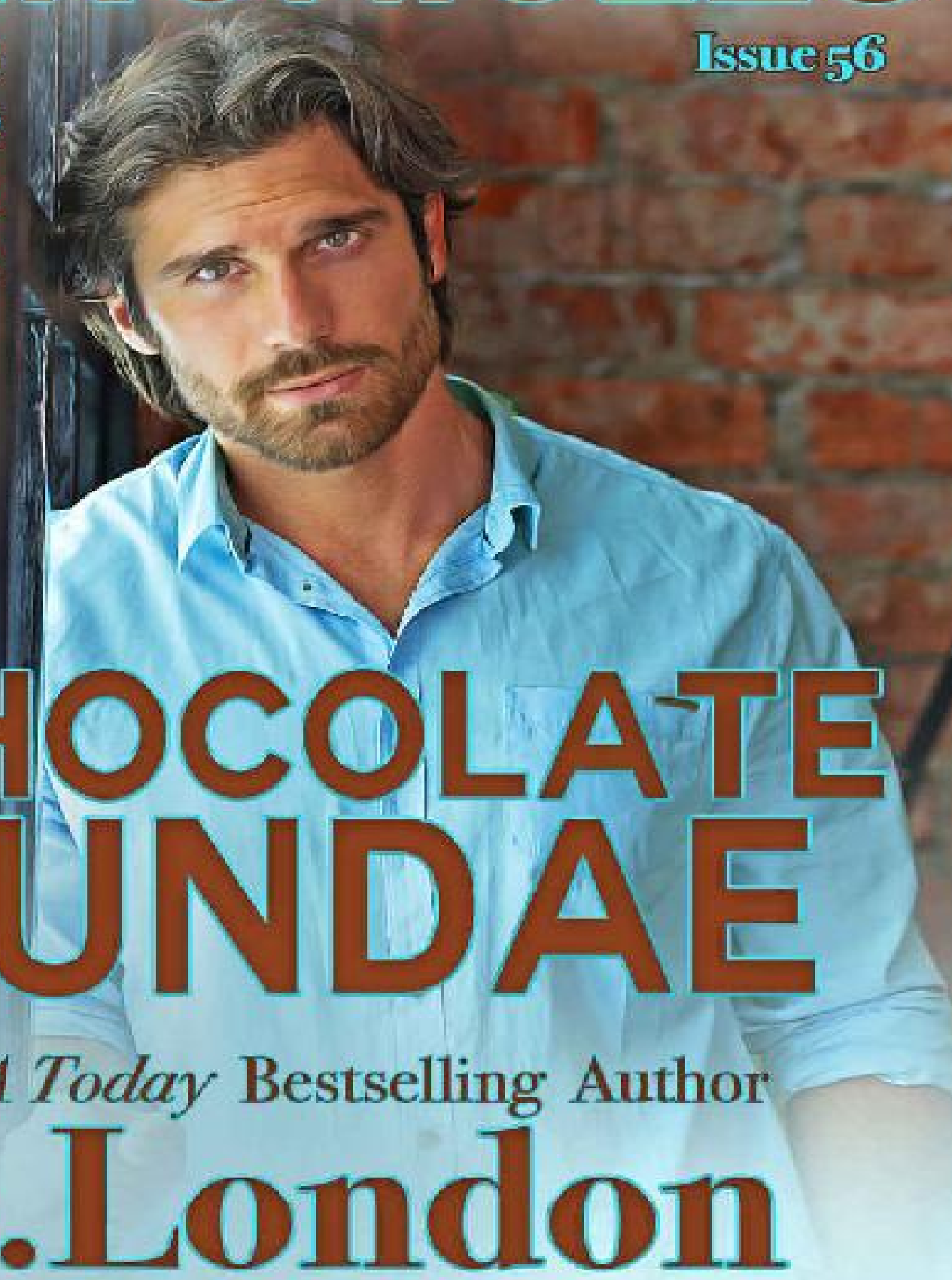


# LUNCHTIME CHRONICLES

Issue 56

I'll make  
her *mine*  
one lick  
at a *time*.



# CHOCOLATE SUNDAE

*USA Today* Bestselling Author

# S. London

# CHOCOLATE SUNDAE

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LUNCHTIME CHRONICLES

SIERA LONDON W/A S. LONDON USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR



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## **CHOCOLATE SUNDAE**

Messy Mandy Presents: The Lunchtime Chronicles

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## DEDICATION

*To my Lunchtime Chronicles (LTC) Season 6 writers, Amaya Black, Peyton Banks, LaQuette, Imani Jay, Tiya Rayne, and Rose Marie— Welcome to the mighty interracial romance sisterhood that is Lunchtime Chronicles. This year has been a particularly trying year for us as individuals, the publishing industry, and the world. What we do with a pen, can be lifesaving, dream-building, and much needed escapism. Thank you for making time to be a part of this project. You've made my life better, and I hope you feel the same about the collective us.*

*To the Lunchtime Chronicles Ambassadors — Thank you for your dedication and creativity. Your everyday efforts to spread book love, joy, and positivity during the most challenging times in world history burns eternal. We are the benchmark of authors and readers working together to elevate our romance community.*

*To the Lunchtime Chronicles Book Club members — Y'all didn't come to play! Thank you for leading the charge with reading, reviewing, and recommending all the Lunchtime Chronicles. We have more coming, so hang on tight, this ride keeps getting wilder.*

*Lunchtime Chronicles promoter and avid romance reader, Martha Spearman-Ruff and Chassity Annette, thank you for lending your names to the Reign family. You and Sundae are going to have some fun together. But, first, spend some time with the Doctor and Jada. Y'all know I have to pay tribute to my military service and all my fellow nurses pulling the long hours.*

*I love ya'.*

*Hugs, Siera*

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

**I'm marrying the woman who hates me to save her life... But my fake wife may steal my heart.**

Zaid Voss

This crazy woman fights worse than a biker and curses more than a sailor. She's straight-up wifey material. She'd better be if she wants to stay alive. Just like her name, Sundae's sweet on the eyes. I look forward to our wedding night, where I'll lick the hellion from her head to her toes.

Sundae Reign

Talk about the wrong time, wrong place. I witnessed a mafia hit, and now Zaid's demanding I be his wife...for protection. I don't care what I stumbled into, I'm not marrying that cocky a-hole. Huh, I can take care of myself, and I'll bury him before he gets one taste of my chocolate sundae.

\*\*\*CHOCOLATE SUNDAE is a twisted dark romance set in the Protectors of The Governor Hotel mafia empire story world.\*\*\*



# PROLOGUE

## **Sundae Reign**

How did I let this man-boy get me fired from my good government job? These damn tired ass men will have me throwing hands one day. I'm on the phone with my ex-fiancé, who seven days ago didn't have the nut sack to tell me face-to-face that our engagement had reached its end.

Nope.

This motherfucka's TikTok page has gone viral because my face is the backdrop of his breakup post. Now, he wants to apologize for exposing me to all these faceless internet bitches giving me relationship advice.

Fuck him, and the bullshit he's pushing uphill. And what the hell is all that thumping and bumping background noise?

Instead of succumbing to my violent thoughts, I toss my Coach briefcase onto my second-hand recliner couch and collapse in defeat. My cozy living room with its red-brick wood-burning fireplace and one large sliding door leading to an ancient cement and iron balcony is most of the main floor. My two-burner oven range and apartment-sized refrigerator are dated 1990s textured white additions.

Sighing, I ask the one question I've pondered through six DC Metro crowded stops, and one sweaty train transfer. "Branden, why couldn't you just burn the sweatshirt?"

"Listen, Sundae, um, I didn't think it was a big deal. I didn't want it anymore, so I got rid of it."

Do you hear this bastard? He's not the one with his personal feelings splattered across social platforms for these fake-ass Dr. Phils and Oprah wannabe's trying to tell me my worth. After surviving my eastside

Jacksonville neighborhood and three online dating apps, I know who fuck I am. I'm the bitch who will show you, better than I can tell you. But damn, I'm exhausted. Physically spent. Emotionally broke.

"I gave you a gift from the heart... with my face on it... that said I love you," I huff, "and you donate it to the fucking Goodwill?"

Silence. All that shit he spouted for his followers, but when confronted with his messy ass, he lacks a pithy retort? Bending, I unzip my Lagerfeld shooties, kick off my three-inch heels, and sink my tired feet into the white faux fur rug.

Finally, he says. "I-I didn't think anyone would buy it, Sun."

I used to love his nickname for me. One week after orienting me to the office, Branden proclaimed I glowed brighter than the Sun. Yeah, I believed him. We both work, correction—worked, for the Department of the Army's supply chain management division.

I should've protected my heart.

Or least, my paycheck.

Why is my default setting to trust?

Even now, he actually sounds apologetic about the sweatshirt in question, not the post. It was not about giving the shirt away, but that someone purchased a sweatshirt with my name and image printed under the words, *My fiancé loves me*.

"You're an asshole, Branden."

"See, this is why I can't marry you. So what, some guy bought the shirt and posted it online. You are too emotionally invested in everything."

No, this motherfucka didn't. Emotional? Hell yes, I'm passionate about the man who professes to love me and has the privilege of getting my puss puss on the regular.

"We were engaged to be married. Of course, I'm emotional. You could have burned it. Trashed it. Wiped your ass with it, Bran-dumb. The sweatshirt I gave you sold for \$1.99." Yes, I'm screaming. Yes, I am name-calling.

"That's on Goodwill. Why are you angry with me? Donating is good for the environment."

Oh, now that this fucker has ruined my life, he wants to go green? I ain't having it.

"This afternoon while you were conveniently out of the office, our boss terminated me for unprofessionalism and creating a hostile working

environment.”

“That’s not on me. You’re the one who posted all those threats. Everybody in the office says it’s not my fault.”

Did I mention everyone in our logistician cubicle farm read his break-up post? I glance at my microwave. It's two o'clock in the afternoon. Gurl, the look on my former boss's face when I grabbed my shit and left before the end of the day; priceless. At least I'm home before sunset. The commute out of DC on Fridays is worse than the day after Thanksgiving at the outlet mall.

“You put our private life in the streets. Who else should I blame? What you did by taking it to social media is worse. At least on that trash-ass street you live on, no one would've seen it.”

I'm pissed, embarrassed, disappointed, and heartbroken. And piled on top of this shit sundae, I'm furious. I slam the phone down on the sofa cushion before pressing it to my ear again. I'd love to crash it against wall, like my heart, but I don't have any extra coins to be breaking shit. “I'm a social media meme. Do you get that?”

“Why do you have to be so negative? Maybe this is good thing. Maybe we shouldn't work together; I...um, it would be awkward, considering—”

Can he be this clueless as to the scrutiny women, especially black women, face in the workplace? How can he not care that he's hurting the woman he once upon a time loved to life? Is he saying he did this shit on purpose? After three years together?

“Considering what, Branden?” I shake my head in disbelief. I was actually going to spend eternity with this fool.

At a clang ringing out from downstairs of my two-story, one-bedroom condo, I bolt upright, heart rate climbing. What was that? Below is my drafty bedroom, even this early in the fall, with an in-bathroom stackable laundry unit. Has someone broken into my single-sister castle?

“I worked there first,” he murmurs absently as if distracted.

On bare feet, I creep down my scuffed hardwood floors, praying they don't groan under my one-hundred and seventy pounds frame. Apprehension tightens my chest, but my legs are steady during the descent. When I turn the corner, guess who's riffling through my jewelry box...none other than—

“Branden” I yell, eyes narrowed in disgust. “What the fuck are you doing in my apartment?”

He swings around, hazel eyes wide. The phone he holds to his ear, clatters to the floor before disappearing under my bed. My flat-screen

television, the one I brought, but he mounted on the wall, is propped against the backdoor that leads to the small car porch behind my place. Heat spreads into Branden's pale cheeks.

"Now, Sundae.... Don't get hyper-emotional. I thought you'd still be at work and I wanted to return your key."

Phone in my slack's pocket now, I place both hands on my ample hips. He tracks my movement with his eyes, his gaze lingering. Dream on asshole, we are done-done. "I asked you a question, Branden."

He extends his hands in front of him. I'm not sure if it's to placate me or to maintain a safe distance. My gaze is still on the wire guts hanging from the back of the fifty-inch LED I paid an extra forty dollars to have delivered because Bran-dumb wouldn't let me drive his car.

"You—you hardly ever watch TV."

"Huh," I nod. "So, you planned to steal my shit on the day I get fired from my job? And you know, I have financial responsibilities outside of these four walls. You know about my pops." I am not okay.

"Okay. Okay. I planned things badly. Just return your engagement ring and I'll leave."

So he wants a ring? No problem, Sundae. I'm a logical adult. Relationships end every day.

I hold out my left hand, where the one-half-carat diamond solitaire adorns my finger. "Here it is. Take it."

Branden's voice takes on a relieved tone, as he steps into my personal space. "Thanks, Sun. I mean—really, this makes for a clean break. And I know you're not like... really into rings and stuff."

The second he touches my left hand, I slap the shit out of him with the right.

He stumbles back. "Ow, shit," he screeches, palming his cheek.

He ducks when I draw back to slap his stupid ass again. "The only ring you'll get from me is the ringing in your ears when I knock you the fuck out. Now get out of my house before I beat your no-good ass the color purple."

"Sundae, I'm going to press charges."

I pause and he straightens to his full height as if he's found a suit of armor. Where I'm from, this little brawl happens at the school board meetings.

"Don't bother," I hiss. "You stay right there. I'll call my damn self to keep me from murdering your ass. You're lucky I need a spotless background

check or I'd throw your lifeless corpse on the curb with the rest of the garbage."

When it comes to men, I go from bad to worse. I'm so done with workplace romances. Hell, I'm done with love.

ONE



## Zaid Voss

I WAIT in the lobby of The Governor in the famed District of Columbia. The haven hotel for the criminal underworld is as magnificent as it is dangerous. My half-brother, Youric Voss is the in-house physician. This morning he called me with a proposition I'm considering refusing. According to his new wife, Jada, her cousin is the logistics expert I can trust to coordinate and account for all shipping through my domestic and international transport company, ZVX.

I've never had the opportunity to mix family with business because Youric didn't know I or Xeno, our youngest brother, existed til one year ago.

The fact that he thinks I want a woman, or a man, to help me run my multi-billion-dollar business, is not lost on me. This is a favor. But, when trying to forge a bond with a brother who never knew that I existed these last forty-five years, I'll try to appear accommodating. My mother, if she were here, would insist. With a mother like ours, Izabele Voschanka Voss, a former assassin, you've learned not to say no in haste.

I glance at my watch. She has ten minutes before she's late.

I ask my brother, who's joined me to wait for this woman who will change my life. "What do you know about this cousin?"

"She's," he searches for the right word, his Palamolu-like burnished mane, a heavy curtain around his shoulders, "eclectic."

"Hmm," I nod. "Can she do the work?"

“I trust my woman’s judgment.”

That’s not an answer to my question, but I don’t press. The traffic in and out of the lobby is consistent. I recognize a few faces, but I prefer indirect contact with the men and women who keep the butchers and undertakers in expensive cars.

“I’ll listen, but I won’t commit until I’m confident she’s the right fit for my company.”

“It’s your prerogative.”

Youric is a smart man. He knows this is not a power play, it’s business. Like him, I’m selective. “She’s family, but if I hire her, I expect her to follow the rules. My rules.”

Jada rushes off the elevator to join us. “Oh, sorry. Takes me longer to get everywhere these days.”

Youric takes her hand, bringing it to his lips. “Don’t rush, Queen.”

The former Navy nurse is round with my brother's child. I watch them in open fascination and longing. The affection they share is open and honest. I feel out of place witnessing emotion this pure.

“Stop,” she gushes. “There,” she waves her hand. “There’s Sundae.”

I follow Jada’s gaze. Damn, this is the woman my brother thinks I can work hours with and not want to fuck every second, of every minute, at hourly intervals? Damn, I need to explain to bro, I’m only human.

Sundae walks in like she owns the place. Her hair is a natural crown of thick sable coils fanning around her in worship. Long lashes, full lips, summer melon-sized breasts my hands ache to squeeze, and legs. Damn, this woman must own a Peleton because she’s got an iconic Tina Turner strut. She knows she’s gorgeous. Yes, I’m interested in our cousin.

Sundae floats over to us, the wind carrying her fresh mint and cool confidence like a York Peppermint Patty and...shit that’s when I see it. Well, a shadow of her ass. She got ass, too. My dick jumps up with his hat in his hand, ready for an introduction.

Sundae walks up to us. “Hey,” she says. “You called. I came.”

That’s meant for Jada because she takes one look at me and frowns.

What the fuck? I’m not a man who disappoints in appearance, thanks to my mother’s pure Italian genes.

I gesture to one of the red leather chairs forming our circle. “Please have a seat.”

She looks at her cousin, Jada, and my brother with suspicion blaring in

her eyes.

"Thanks," she says, the words dripping with reluctance.

When she says nothing else, I look at the two people who invited me here. What the fuck is this?

"Sunday," I began.

"I know they sound the same, but the name is Sundae, as in a treat, not a day of the week."

Okay, she doesn't seem like she's very eager to get a job. But this is family. "Tell me a little bit about yourself."

"Like what?"

"For starters, where are you from? What do you like to do? You know, the simple stuff."

"Look, this place gives me the creeps. And, I'm not interested in another blind date. I'm sure you're just fine and all but you are definitely not my type."

I lean back, bothered but intrigued. "That being?"

"Handsome, arrogant? Probably got a house full of kids already. Well, not in your house, but with they mamas."

"Actually, I have no children." I spent my childhood protecting me and my brother while my mother worked. Izabele never joked when it came to protecting what belonged to us. You live. You fight. You fuck. You die. In our houses, when we actually planted roots long enough to live in a house, love was never discussed. Voss's do two things. We protect the family and we live to see another day. If my father has or had a different philosophy, I'll never know. Mother refuses to discuss my paternal bloodline.

"Uh huh," she frowns as if I have reason to lie. I tolerate a woman who's an obvious hellion. I don't know what it is about her, but I can tell she has zero fucks to give even if she owes you a dozen. What the fuck.

"Jada, what the fuck is going on here?" Sundae, the dessert demands.

"Ah, yeah," Jada, clears her throat. What am I, a sales pitch? Who needs who in the situation? "Zaid owns his own business."

Fuck this crazy ass woman.

"Congratulations. I know your baby mama's must be proud."

"His shipping company could use a logistician. So, my husband," Jada actually looks to my brother with a loving gaze, "I thought that you two could work together. And," she mutters, "Maybe solve that little problem that you have going on."



The hellion sucks her teeth in disinterest.

"Sundae," Jada sings in a warning. "He owns a ZVX shipping."

"And what does XYZ, have to with me catching two trains at peak rush-hour prices and walking six blocks in Calvin Klein have to with any of this?"

At the mention of problems and my little comedian, I pay attention, cause the woman is a walking word tornado.

"First of all, I don't have little problems, I got big ass bills to pay. Pops needs care and I need to eat and maybe, treat myself to a pair of new heels, 'cause a sister's got kickass calves." She turned to me with fire in her eyes. "So if you're trying to step to me with a minimum wage and eighty-hour work weeks, keep it moving, pretty boy."

"Who you calling pretty, gorgeous."

"Nope. Don't go there. I don't fuck the hand that feeds me."

"Noted. I wasn't thinking of paying you minimum wage. Is there anything about me that looks minimum?"

The woman actually looks me up and down.

"Not that I can see," she grins, "but, I have been deceived in the past."

Her eyes actually drop to my groin. I can't help myself. I want to snatch her across my lap and spank that round bubble ass, but instead, I laugh.

"When can you start?"

"The better question is, when can you pay?"

"Today."

She stands up, and moves to the side. "Lead the way, Zaid."

"The last name is Voss."

"Okay," she chides, "And, that's Miss Reign to you."

"Miss, as in single?"

"No," she snaps. "That's miss, as in, miss me with your eyeballs. Keep your pretty browns on my face and nothing below the waist."

"Oh shit. She's going to get fired," Jada whispers. This might be a bad idea."

We reach the door of The Governor. "Don't worry, cuz. I know how to handle my business. And I never mix puss puss and pleasure."

"You already did."

"Bitch, hush. I'm trying to make a good impression. What I meant to say is, not anymore. This sister has learned that is the wrong thing to do. My therapist says—"

"You ain't got no damn therapist," Jada argued.

Sundae put her hand on her hips. "Don't tell me what I got. I listen to Messy Mandy every day, okay. Don't knock my personal growth."

"She's not licensed."

"Neither is Peanut selling fish dinners in the hood, but he for damn sure sells out every weekend. How I get it, is how I get it. And that's free." She turned back to me. "Now, Zaid."

"You remembered this is an interview with your potential boss."

"I never forget a pretty face." She rolls her fucking eyes.

Damn, she's spankable. And that fucking mouth needs my cock in the worse way.

"Ah, Mr. Voss. Do you provide a monthly transportation stipend?"

"Come again?" Honestly, it's a question I've never been asked. Of course, I've never had a big brother who asks me to support him by helping his woman either.

"I catch the Metro. Where are we going, exactly? I need to know so I can add to my account for the DMV transit. And don't worry, I'm on time."

"How about you ride with me? We'll discuss compensation on the way."

"Ah... and hell no. I'm not doing that. I don't know you like that?"

"Sundae," Youric who's been watching this transaction with open curiosity intervenes. "He's my brother."

"Are you your brother's keeper?"

"Well—"

"Hmm, that's what I thought." She looks up at me, fearless, determined, unwavering. "Give me the address. I will check and make sure this place actually exists."

I pull a business card from my holder, passing it to her. She studies it, running her fingertips over the raised embossed seal. She exhales, her breath sweet with mint.

"When I get a signed contract, I will show up." She looks at me then. "I need benefits."

"What kind of benefits are we talking about?"

Her eyes narrow, but not before her fingers curl around the card. Jada notices too. I see the worry in her eyes. Sundae is in financial trouble. Not just bills, this is something more.

"Medical. Dental. Vision. Paid time off. Federal holidays. Kwanzaa. Harambee. FMLA. Smoke breaks."

"Sundae," Jada takes her arm. "You don't have children and you don't

smoke. Be reasonable."

"This is a hook-up, right? So, hook me up, family."

I press my hand to my temple at what has to be the most bizarre, yet fascinating woman I've ever met. "Do you always talk this damn much?"

"Yes," comes her sharp retort. "Any more questions, Mr. Voss?"

"Are you any good at your damn job? Because you are phenomenal at running your mouth."

She stands straighter as if I've pressed the wrong button. "Are you any good at yours?"

"I'm not the one in an interview."

"Wrong."

Fuck this. "You got one week for me to see what you can do," I almost curse. This woman is under my skin. Normally I'm unflappable. She has my balls heavy and my dick swinging.

"Wrong again. You got one week to learn you can't afford to be without me."

I look at her expression, daring me to challenge her. I know she's thinking about the job, but my mind envisions me utilizing Sundae Reign's talent in a physical capacity.

TWO



## Sundae

I HAVE BEEN WORKING for ZVX Trucking and Shipping for precisely three weeks. The owner and my boss, Zaid Voss, the ZV, is the sexiest, broad-shouldered, arrogant, intrusive asshole I've met since moving to Washington, DC ten years ago. The only reason I haven't told him to kiss my natural black ass is I appreciate three meals per day with snacks and a bed I don't have to share with a drunk named Peanut. Anyway, I should thank his guardian hell's angel, because he's too sinful for heaven to know his name, that the man respects my intellect and business acumen.

Real talk, we work well together. Zaid maintains open negotiations with our vendors and carriers. He understands the importance of my role in record-keeping, and supply management from origination through transport, to final delivery.

And, he knows not to touch anything within two feet of me. From day one, I gave him that narrow-eyed look my Grannie would shoot at me and my sister, Chassity, before she threatened to tear a fresh switch off a tree to spank our little brown legs.

That's right.

I will strike his ass faster than lightning if he tries anything freaky with me. How can I trust a man with smoky bedroom eyes and the right amount of bass in his voice to pucker my nipples?

I can't.

And his scent... every time the man enters the room, my chocolate sundae, that what I call my puss puss, starts singing Maxwell's iconic ballad, "let me break you off a little something, something."

Nope.

I'm here to move and track container shipments from one location to another.

That's it.

My chocolate sundae is not a part of the employment contract. I dated bad boys in high school and college. I wish I'd taken the hint.

Nada. Didn't happen.

Somehow, I found worse dicks as an adult.

I'm done with shit men who—pawn my shit, give my shit to the Goodwill, steal my shit, and call me collect when I have their ass locked up. The next man I get involved with, 'cause a sista is wifey material, needs to come with a ring for my finger, a marriage license, and good credit.

My therapist, Messy Mandy, agrees with me one hundred percent. Well, she's a gossip columnist on TikTok, but the girl spills real tea on relationships. In fact, it's time for Mandy's Lunchtime Dish LIVE. I settle behind my desk, ready to take notes on the back of my latest romance novel, but then I hear raised voices.

It better be Zaid following up on a few discrepancies I found with one of the shipping manifests. From my time working on defense contracts, I know how much food, fuel, and repairs cost for cross-country and international shipping and one of our partner accounts doesn't add up.

I do not look good in orange jumpsuits, so I reported my findings pronto. I'm all about handling business on the J-O-B, but right now it's my lunchtime.

"Hey, keep it down out there," I yell, "Mandy's on."

No one responds, but I hear Zaid's voice, now louder. Seriously? I push away from my desk. Something crashes to the floor and I jump. What the hell happening now? Me and my Ted Baker pumps are high stepping through the warehouse, past rows of wooden pallets stacked four levels high. I shiver against the October chill, wishing I'd grabbed my swing jacket. As I approach the dock, the wind whips through the open bay, but I'm non-plussed. I'm a 4C curly girl, and my afro is reinforced with dense coils that don't bend or break.

"Who the hell is she?"

This comes from one of two men facing off with a stone-faced Zaid. Both men are long and lean in their tailored suits. But, while one looks like a businessman, the other, he's a straight gangster. Trust me. I dated enough of them in my twenties to recognize the stance, the arrogance, and the anticipation of violence in their watchful gaze. I've seen hints of the same in Zaid, but not with me. He can walk in both worlds, I think. He doesn't look at me and I wonder which one I'd see if he did.

"Ivano, Leo, stick to business. She's not important," Zaid rasps.

Did he just say I don't matter? Hell no. There are two things I don't like; being underestimated, being helpless, and liver. Shit, that's three. With everything in me, I can't let what Zaid just said about me stand.

"First, don't ask him anything about me. You got a question. I got an answer—,"

Zaid's rude ass interrupts me. "Sundae, go back inside."

That playful quality I've noticed when he addresses me has vacated his tone.

Whatever.

I, being an independent woman who can think without any man's input, ignore him. "Two," I continue. "I work here. And three, who I am is none of your business."

The thin, lanky one with the tattoo sleeve, Leo, pulls out a gun and trails it up my arm.

Without thinking, I slap his hand. "Hey, don't put your nasty ass hand on me."

Zaid growls and we all freeze.

"Don't fucking touch her. Don't look at her."

"Well, Sundae, who works here," Leo grins, and then raises his gun to my head. "I don't like women who don't know when to shut up."

Uh-oh. What the fuck did I walk into. Okay, I might need to improvise.

"Ivano, control your pet Leo," Zaid says, voice level, but cool. "Our business is done. Leave."

"Fuck you, Zaid. We say when business is done and this bigmouth bitch is dead," Leo hisses.

I take a step forward. "Who you calling a bitch, you hungry-looking, biscuit-needing motherfucka?"

Zaid grabs my arm, pulling me against his body. "I'll handle her."

Leo slips his gun in a shoulder holster and then reaches for his belt. "Oh, I

definitely want to handle those thick lips on my cock before I put a bullet in her head.”

“You and your mini-me ain’t handling sh—”

Before I can finish. Zaid’s arm is around my waist, and his mouth covers mine. Oh. Oh...this is—good. With his tongue, he coaxes my lower lip with a slow stroke, like we have all the time in the universe.

Months without dick does stuff to a woman. Well, to me.

Zaid’s scent, a warm blend of exotic spice wraps over, under, surrounding me. Usual blares of the outside world, horns, the grind of mechanical lifts, and the groan of stiff wood moved against its will, drown in the blare of lust rushing my insides. I soften at his gentle probing. My lips part before my brain registers that I hate Zaid Voss. He swipes my tongue and I suck his. He tastes of bold espresso with a lingering roasted cinnamon to cut the intensity. Weak with hunger, I press closer, demanding more. Oh, the erotic pull-push of our mouths discovering, exploring is drugging. I feel my mind start to flow away with him—

An explosive blast rattles my ears. Percussive drums vibrate me from head to toe, a concert I didn’t pay for bangs in between my ears. Warm liquid splatters my exposed cheek and my neck.

What in the hell—

I shove at Zaid’s chest just as Leo drops to his knees. Ivano rambles for cover. The gun in Zaid’s hand is pointed at the exact spot where Leo’s face used to be.

“Oh shit,” I snap. “Zaid what the fuck did you do?”

I gape at the scene in front of me...at my killer boss. Zaid just shot Leo, the man who threatened me. Dammit, I should have kept my ass in the office. I hope I’m not fired.

## THREE



### **Zaid**

Did I possibly—probably—forfeit my life and business enterprise to protect crazy-ass Sundae Reign?

Fuck, yes.

I knew if I ever touched her, tasted her, I'd become a madman to keep her. Think fast, Zaid before shit goes sideways... again.

I expected Ivano to push back on me halting his shipments through my warehouses. But to roll on me with Leo, his enforcer, that's suicide. Sundae found proof of Ivano's attempt to steal from me. The call that brought him here needed to happen, Leo losing his fucking head—well, that's the cost of business in the underworld that powers the nation's capital.

“Shit. What do you need me to do?” Sundae gasps, while waving her hands in some lame attempt to dispel her boundless energy. “Motherfucka's brains on my face. Damn,” she sniffs her ruined blouse. “Do I smell like burnt baby doll hair?”

What that? From the day we met, I remember Sundae's light mint swirled in melted chocolate fragrance. Now that I've had my tongue down her throat, I want to know how deep she can take more of what I have to offer. I won't lie, my mouth waters at the sight of her, dressed for the runaway every morning, her smooth cocoa-colored legs, toned and on display beneath a hip-hugging chocolate pencil skirt and a silky blouse that settles over her breasts like I imagine my fingers doing far too often.

I look at her, beauty and balls. How'd I get so lucky? I think back to her interview. She was right, I can't be without her. Sundae has inadvertently uncovered something Ivano didn't want me to know.



“Come here, Sundae.”

She stops fucking talking to step to me. “What?”

There’s crimson marring her flawless complexion. With my thumb, I wipe away the stain my actions have levied on her. We both look down at the blood on my hand. This has nothing to do with her, but like so much of my life, I’ve tainted perfection. I dreamed of touching her, caressing skin I knew would feel as soft as a kitten’s coat.

She looks up at me, probably ready to cut me with a new word salad loaded with tons of profanity.

“Thanks.”

I glance at her mouth, waiting for more, but that’s all she says. It speaks volumes in the moment. She’s with, not against me.

“I got you, Sundae.” Is it fucked up that I want to kiss again? Spear her mouth with my tongue and fuck it over and over, until she’s hoarse?

“You got me in the middle of a homicide,” she snaps.

And, on cue, that fucking mouth is running again. That’s what get for thinking with my dick for a second too long. Staring directly into her soft brown eyes. I throw up my hands. “That’s why you need to keep your ass in your office.”

“You’re the one who was making all that noise that brought me out of said office, only to be confronted with a motherfucka who’s more intrusive than you.”

“Leo wasn’t your business.” Where the hell is Ivano anyway? Not that he handles the Esposito’s dirty work, but he’s probably fired off a half dozen text messages alerting the family to what went down here.

“Huh, I was about to get in Leo’s ass with these size eights when you, kat kat, kat kat.”

She actually mimics a finger pistol with her thumb and forefinger to accompany the sound effects. That’s crazy, and so Sundae Reign. The way she expresses life, in blow-by-blow action sequences, I accept it as a part of her take-charge personality. She shakes her head and those deep chocolate coils call for me to wrap them around my fist. The next time we kiss, I will.

Sensing that Ivano is lingering like day-old tuna, I realize the first kill on the day may not be the last. I grab Sundae’s soft hand, and pull her plush curves behind me. I’ll be damned if another fucker will put a gun to her head again. The truth is, I will have to pay the piper for Leo’s murder. But ask me if Sundae’s worth it.

That's a resounding, hell yeah.

Sundae is worth any price. She clings to me, but not in fear. There's no simpering at my back, she stands tall and at the ready. In my book, a woman with her courage has earned a blank credit and the pen to my billions.

"What the fuck is with y'all men trying to manhandle me? My Pops never did it, so back off. Do I look like I need a man to guide me by the nose, throwing scraps of attention my way, hmmm.....hmmm?"

For her, this isn't a trick question. She needs me to acknowledge she didn't quake or quiver when the trigger was pulled. I quickly turn, put my hand over her mouth, and whisper in her ear through gritted teeth.

"No, you're more than capable. Hell, you might be an OG," an abbreviation used for those original gangsters who came up from the street corners. "Now, shut the fuck up. I'm trying to protect you. If I have to burn this whole fucking city down, I will, but first I need you to shut. The. Fuck. Up."

At first, my command catches her by surprise, but then, I see the defiance rise up in her. However, like the lioness that I know she is, the woman recognizes there can only be one alpha. That's me. She angles her head, the slight tilt, an inch she rarely gives even if I need a fucking mile, to get us out of this cluster alive. With a calculated caution I rarely need to institute with women, I remove my hand.

"Good girl," I utter, at her silence.

"Good woman," she snaps.

Not that I doubt her worth. In the few weeks she's been on my payroll, she's become an invaluable employee. The woman has a mind worthy of the C-suite.

With my Glock in hand, I turn towards the deserted warehouse, the last location of Ivano Esposito. A shadow emerges against the concrete wall.

Turning my head to the side, I keep my eye trained on the other man with a gun in his hand. "Sundae, go into my office. Lock the door. Stay there. Understand?"

In my periphery, I see her look at the door behind us. The feel of her palms pressing against my back surprises me, a man whose mother was a butcher for the mob. Sundae wants to stay by my side. Though I respect her loyalty, I'll give her one second to move her fine ass out of the danger zone. After that, I go caveman. I'm not above dragging her to safety.

Turns out I don't have to. The fast clip of high heels and the quick

withdrawal of her subtle fragrance ease my conscience and center my focus. Now it's me and my real enemy. Easing my finger off the trigger, I lift my hand, my weapon on display. Well, one of them.

"Ivano. Let's negotiate." We both know this conversation is no longer casual. Maybe if I forgive his business slight this once, he'll leave Sundae out of our world.

"She just works here, huh?" Ivano muses with a smirk on his face. He doesn't approach. Instead, he glances at what's left of Leo.

"Yeah," I respond, giving nothing away.

Ivan gestures his head towards Leo's corpse. "You know she has to die, right?"

My internal alarm blares. This shit doesn't have to go down like that.

Fuck.

Sundae and her need to know...and that fucking mouth. That pillowy mouth that needs to be filled with my cock at all times. She's been a beautiful, competent pain in my ass since she stepped foot in here. Listening to that crazy ass Messy Mandy without earbuds, calling the avatar her therapist and is just as crazy as Sundae, like she needs encouragement.

I just killed a man who dared to threaten her life.

The second he lost his damn mind and touched her with an instrument of destruction he punched his ticket to the afterlife. Sundae deserves pleasure, not pain or intimidation. Leo couldn't live after such a violation. Neither will Ivano, if he thinks I'll allow him to harm Sundae.

"Sundae will live," I reply, bringing my gun down and reapplying my finger on the trigger.

"You know the rules, Zaid. A life for a life." He quotes the mafia rules, we all have become accustomed to.

"Yeah, well, she's my wife, so...that rule doesn't apply," I said without thinking. To kill Ivano will start World War 3 in the President's backyard. Leo was low on the totem pole, a fool who thought with his dick. So, no one gives a fuck if he's dead.

Ivano, on the other hand. The Esposito family will burn down this city block to avenge him.

"Thought she worked at the office," Ivano shares with a knowing nod.

"And she's the woman I choose. Mine," I add to the statement. "They both are true."

He holsters his gun. "Leo needs to be cleaned up, and handled with

respect.”

“Done,” I agree.

“I’ll be in touch, Zaid. What happened here... ain’t over. Tik tok,” his voice ominous.

Understood. Business with underworld power brokers rarely ends in a truce.

I watch him leave. Before I find Sundae, I fire off two text messages. The cleaner has instructions to dispose of Leo. And then there’s Fat Tony, a man of the cloth and a man with the kind of sorted past, I’m trying to avoid in the future. In the event, Ivano gets cagey, I place a call to Xeno, the X factor in ZVX Shipping. My brother, skill at changing minds and taking lives is as otherworldly as his name and nomadic existence.

He answers on the first ring. “What’s up, brother?”

“Protect one another.”

“Who and when?”

This is Izabele’s code. A call made is a call answered. “Ivano Esposito. Find his weakness.”

“Consider it done.”

The line goes dead and I go in search of the woman who’s the loudest pain in my ass.

When I walk into the office, I find Sundae, in one of my dress shirts, pacing behind my desk. This is not the type of woman to get frantic about shit, but if she is pacing, that means something is wrong.

“What’s happened?” I ask after closing and deadlocking the door.

She dismisses my question.

“You okay?” she asks, glancing over my shoulder.

“Did I give you cause to worry?”

She grimaces. “You so extra, right now... but, I’m serious.”

I’m flabbergasted at the sincerity filling her brown orbs. She’s concerned. My mother, never bothered with mercurial emotions. She trained us, me and Xeno to be soldiers first, children second. Neither of us knew our fathers. According to Izabele, the men in her life were frequent and forgettable. Losing myself in Sundae’s gaze, I think if she found me worthy of her attention, she would be slow to discard the right man.

“I’m good. But, you can kiss me to make good, great.”

She smirks. “Just when I think you’re not an asshole, you say something ass-holey.”

“What? You licked my tonsils like thirty minutes ago.”

“That was Salacious Sundae. Sane Sundae just read on the internet that when you kill a mob guy, they kill one of your mob guys.”

“Just for shits and giggles, how many personalities are running around in that big brain of yours?”

“When I know, you’ll know.” I believe she’s telling the truth. She picks up her phone to show me a clickbait website. “A life for a life.”

Whew, I exhale. “Where’d you find this?”

“Messy Mandy’s stories.”

“Yeah, well.” I shrug.

“Yeah?” She jerks the phone in front of me again. “That means, somebody’s got to die.”

“Somebody did,” I remind her.

“Somebody else,” she snaps back at me. “Somebody else has to die!”

Instead of parrying, I point to the chair, on the other side of my desk.

“I’ll handle this. Sit and listen.” She does neither. She’s stand toe to toe with me, arms folded over her ample breasts. Will her nipples taste as delicious as her lips, I wonder?

“Hey, Kill Bill,” she snaps her fingers. “Get your eyes off my titties.”

Fuck. I growl at how easily I slip into the male-wants-female mode in her company. “You all but pushed those big tits in my hands after one kiss.”

“That was then.”

Make it make sense. Unbelievable.

“With this shitstorm we’re in, I talk. You shut the fuck up. When I say leave, get the fuck out of here. No questions. No nothing. I lead. You follow. No back talk.”

Sundae’s head jerks and I know this was about to be some other shit.

“Backtalk,” she snaps back at me. “I was trying to help your ass. They were yelling and shit. What was I supposed to do? Let them hurt you? I mean you ain’t family, or my man, but damn...”

She trails off, but I don’t.

“That kiss said I’m something.” The look I give, dares her to deny it.

“Even if that were true, you do not order me to do a damn thing. Do you hear me? My name is Sundae, last name Reign. Not Voss.”

Glad she raised the subject. “I have a plan to protect you.”

“Then make it happen.”

She continues to mumble while I stare at the fucking gall. At one point, I

rub my temples, because this woman is crazy like that glue. She needs to understand how our marriage will work.

A knock on the door disrupts her public ramblings, and did I witness a moment of hesitancy? Did I just witness the fearless one jump back? Good. Because being reckless can get her killed.

I open the door. Fat Tony, who matches the description, and two of his associates come in.

He greets me. "So, this must be the bride."

"The b-bride..." Sundae spits out. "Sundae Reign ain't nobody's fucking bride. I don't even like you, Zaid."

The associates look at one another. Tony pulls a velvet box from the inside pocket of his leather jacket.

"I got the two witnesses and the ring you requested, Zaid. So who's going to tell black beauty the rest of the plan or does Fat Tony have to do everything?"

Then they all start laughing except for Sundae and me. Next thing I know my bride's foot is jackhammering Fat Tony's balls.

"Oh, fuck, that hurts. I can't breathe," Tony doubles over, his beefy, thick hands on his knees.

"Put some respect on my name," Sundae yells, "before I hoof stomp your dick to pate."

"Shit woman," I reach for her. "He's old enough to be your fucking daddy."

I have her in my arms, grabbing her fist before her swing connects. Damn, she's sexy when she's feisty.

"Yeah, well, white Shug Knight and his two death row inmates be warned," she wiggles, bringing her round ass in contact with my lengthening cock. "Watch your mouths in my presence in my motherfucking presence. What woman dreams of being married in a damn warehouse with three assholes with visible prison tattoos wearing leather jackets?"

She glowers at the men in the room. Damn, Sundae. I feel like shit. Looking at the guys, we're in this together. This woman with curves for weeks is a boss and barroom brawler with the filthiest fucking mouth. I think I'm falling in lust and so are they.

Fuck, I'm glad I got to her first. Woman with speaks her truth, unfiltered in a room full of men who bury other men for less, is pure gold, a man's treasure. But I digress.

“We don’t have time for this, Sundae...Ivano Esposito owns half this city.” Again, I have my hand over her mouth to literally shut her ass up.

She keeps mumbling, so I lean in, and bellow. “If you want to live and see another day, you will shut the fuck up and put my fucking ring on your finger.”

For once, she actually does what she’s told without—thinking, doubting, sidestepping, basically being an all-around pain in my ass.

Then I turned to Fat Tony. “Let’s do this shit.”

“Gladly,” Tony grunts. “It’s your funeral.”

Better me than Sundae. She doesn’t deserve to die because I lost control. But, at least I get to taste her.

## FOUR



### **Sundae**

I can't be married. This is not the payday Friday I envisioned. After my wedding, Zaid escorted our officiant and his stooges out of the building. The sun burns bright, but chills tingle down my spine. Zaid kissed me again at an altar that only existed in my mind, but I swear it felt transformative. Women talk about the heightened response, the primal eroticism, that happens in couples after marriage, but I never believed it until. Zaid kissed me earlier, but that man who stood before God, who vowed to love and cherish his wife, claimed me with his kiss. It's crazy, but I'm more terrified of my husband than I ever was of my boss. And that's why I'm crouched down in a single commode stall, calling in an extraction team. My sister answers on the first ring.

"Chassity, come and get me, sis. I need to escape."

"From where and who?"

Only my older sister asks questions after I initiate a code-red getaway. Damn priorities, her nosy ass needs more information. I guess that's why she's a social worker, helping combat veterans, I and work with inventory spreadsheets, bills of lading, and policy manuals. In reality, I'm a people person, too. It's just Chassity has the patience to listen to other people's bullshit. I call a spade, a spade, and keep it moving. See, people-friendly, except when I don't want to be. And I don't want to be nice to Zaid "Kill Bill" Voss.

"My husband."

"Wait. This husband better be another one of your book boyfriends because I know didn't get a call to be your maid of honor." the clicking of her



all-natural nails on the computer keyboard stops. "Explain who, when, where, and how you are married?"

"Fat Tony finished the tired-ass ceremony in ten minutes. I'm in the ladies' room at work praying my phat ass can squeeze through this bathroom window."

I contemplate the iron bars barricading me inside and wonder would my weight be able to bend them.

"Are you serious? You let a grown man who refers to himself as, Fat Tony, utter sacred vows binding you to who again? Sis, whatever pipe this man laid on you, be it dick or crack pipe, you need to rethink your personal choices."

"I didn't marry a man. I'm legally married to Zaid, a monster." With money, muscle, and a thick mane of soft brown waves. I left that part out.

"You fucked your boss again?"

And there it was, my shame, my guilt, my bad choice. Damn Chassity for believing I would make the same costly mistake. I learn fast. The first time I got the man I wanted, only to lose everything I had.

"Chassity Annette Reign," I whisper yell. And yes, I'm animated with my hands and facial expressions. "This is Defcon 1. I ain't got time for no sit down with Whoopi on The View. This is, Avengers, assemble. Jarvis, suit up. Hulk, smash time."

"Okay, damn, Sundae. I'm just trying to understand all the variables of the equation."

"Bitch, hush. You ain't never been good at math. Now, meet me at the East Falls Church metro station in one hour. I called an Uber and shared my location. Bye!"

Chassity is therapeutic, but she's also a former Marine. Sis has combat gear hanging in her closet 24/7.

Okay, breathe. Help is on the way. Time to exit the building. I give a forlorn glance at the tiny transom window above the bathroom stall. No way are my curves threading the needle through a whole window. I'll just have to use my wits and outsmart my husband. Mrs. Zaid Voss, that's me. I shiver at the memory of him sliding a symbol of my dire circumstance, a princess-cut yellow diamond solitaire onto my finger. I glower at the exquisite stone, sparkling on my finger.

I plaster on my best game face, then grip the door handle. It's time to regain my freedom. I step through the door to collide with a hard, warm

body. On contact, I know it's him, my enemy, my fake husband with his fine ass.

Before I can read Zaid the riot act, he snatches my phone.

"Give me back my fucking phone."

"No," he grits out.

I swing at his head with my free hand, but the asshole ducks. Damn, he has quick reflexes. Men don't expect a woman to fight back which gives me an advantage. I usually can get a jab or hook to the nose in before they suspect the attack.

He chuckles. "Nice technique."

"Fuck you, Zaid."

"On this, we agree. Your monster has arranged for our honeymoon."

"Honeymoon?"

"Even a monster fucks his wife on their wedding night."

Now why do I get the sense that he overheard my conversation and he might be upset? Our kisses are already dominating my thoughts, now he's talking about getting in my puss puss. Immediately I'm wondering how talented a monster might get with his bride.

Zaid snags my hand in his, tugging my curves into his iron. And why am I a tiny bit turned on by his brutish caveman routine? I expect his grip to be punishing, but I feel only the calloused skin on his palms. A working man's touch. I remember seeing him lifting boxes, the flexing of muscles beneath his starched, designer dress shirt. Sweat glistens on his forehead and I think might like the taste of his sweat on my tongue.

Dammit Sundae, get your shit together.

This man, I barely know *kat kat'd* Leo, married my ass, and now he's talking about consummating our union. Should a fake marriage include real fucking? Zaid seems to think so. Fat Tony damn sure did not say anything about carnal relations in his drive-thru sermon. Now, I'm all hot and bothered.

We pass the doorpost of his office and go out the rear. I've never been that way. There are signs that say, Do Not Trespass. Granted, I do what I want around the office, but my suspicious nature and my security clearance kept my ass in my assigned seat.

Do Not Trespass is code for under no circumstance are you to see shit, hear shit, or repeat shit.

After I was let go for that Branden incident. I have an up close and

personal understanding that the last one hired, is the first one in the church's food basket line. My cousin, Jada came through for me with the job. Well, her and Youric. Now that I'm married to Voss brother #2, my reputation as a quality employee with great results and no drama might be suspect.

Again, me fucking around with a man, has me mixed up in foul shit, I do not want to do...like thinking about fucking my boss.

"Get in," Zaid orders. "You can call your sister from the road. Tell her, you're okay. You got me."

He still had my hand, but the passenger door of his custom convertible Bentley Continental GTC Speed, opens handsfree.

"Well, damn." Let him upgrade me. I climb my happy ass in the car. I'm feeling things I shouldn't, with the promise of being fucked. And this new car smell and these sports seats have my lady lips plumping like Smores, sticky sweat. He zips and whips through traffic like someone is chasing him. At one point, I turn around to see if someone is, because, exhibit: A, B, C, and D. He just killed a man. This is some real-life, Lifetime movie shit.

We pull into an underground establishment, that looks and smells like crisp money gets minted onsite. Glancing at the gold lion statues mounted on marble pedestals, they remind me that Zaid moves and stalks like a protector in one of my mafia romance novels.

The only difference is, I can't fall in love with Zaid, and then close him away on a shelf. If I crack the spine on the silent words his eyes stroke on my skin, my heart may suffer a real-life massacre. His every glance and every move exudes sensuality. Like he's taunting me with that big dick swinging between his legs.

It's talking to me as I watch his tight ass work his tailored trousers. *We'll see. Won't we, Sundae?*

Zaid ushers me into private elevator that requires a fingerprint scan to enter.

Who is this man?

My sexy, protective, bossy as fuck husband.

I follow him into a penthouse suite with twenty floor glass walls, towering antique gold framed mirrors and white leather furnishings against white Italian marble floors. Wow. This place is a-mazing. Better than any honeymoon with Branden. Maybe we'll test drive the couch tonight, and the kitchen counter for breakfast. I want to freshen up before he gets some Sundae puss puss. A place like this better have more than shampoo and

conditioner miniatures in the bathroom. Afterward, I'll get in a stretch while my muscles still warm, and fluff my curls ('cause the shrinkage is real). My heart actually thumps with excitement.

"This is beautiful, Zaid," my voice filled with awe and the magic of this luxurious palace. "I never dreamed of stepping one foot in a place like this....you know, single mom, absentee father."

"Glad the monster's wife approves. And you're preaching to the choir, my childhood, my brother, Xeno's was the same. Your room is there," he points to a door beyond the kitchen that's barely visible. "I'll be over here."

Wait, what? I ignore the family shit to zero in on our shit.

"My room?" I repeat, because it sounds like we aren't fucking.

"Yes, where you will sleep." He says slower, like I'm the one confused.

"But, I thought—,"

"Sundae. I do not want to argue every fucking time I tell you to do something. Go to your room."

Ummmm, did this man just order me to my room?

The fuck? So he was just teasing about giving up the dick. Shit, now I'm mad.

"Fine, asshole." I pivot and walk away, but decide to stand my ground. I'm so not okay. I want to fuck my husband.

FIVE



## Zaid

I'M TRYING to save her life, but I'm a monster? I down the last swallow of the chilled vodka in my tumbler. My wife, is pacing the length of the living area, like a caged lioness waiting to attack. Her eyes dart to the elevator that could whisk her away into danger every two seconds. Our suite at The Governor Hotel is larger than the first apartment, I shared with my mom and younger brother. The entire facility is AI-controlled by the House, a learning program, integrated into every aspect of the facility. I've locked us in together.

She can't leave and I won't. I did this for her, not to her. Is the crazy woman convinced she'd be safer on her own? She called her sister...a social worker named Chassity. How sweet, argh.

*Hello Ivano, I'm Sundae, and this is my sister, Chassity who helps those in need and served our country with honor and valor. We're here to blow your fucking brains out.*

He'd torture and kill them both in front of his children. But now, isn't the time to show her the error in her logic.

Since she won't go to her room, I give her another command.

"Woman, sit down."

She rounds on me. "Shut up, man."

When I frown, she lifts her chin in defiance. "Don't like my tone, improve yours."

Damn, she's always on guard. Fuck I can't explain why it bothers me to see her unsettled, on edge. I wonder, not for the first time, what man hurt this beautiful woman. I gesture to the white leather couch calling to me to stretch out and map out our game plan to satisfy Ivano without having to put a bullet in Sundae's temple.

"Sit, please."

"No. Why am I here, if I have to sit in a room? And, you're not the boss of me."

"Technically, I am," I remind her.

"Well, you can toss that technical out the window since you killed a guy. Do you think I should continue to work for you after this?" She says with a slight lift of her eyebrow.

Damn.

I knew that this would impact her, but I didn't think I would care about her thoughts of me. I did it for her. Leo shouldn't have fucking looked at her. But to pull a gun, in my house, on my...employee? Guns are pulled out all the time. But laying his nasty ass hands on her.

Fuck no.

He had to go. I'm sure I did a favor to more than one woman in the DMV. His last fucking words spoke volumes about what he'd do. If he was here, I blast another hole in his head. I know she's better than any woman I deserve. I could be the kind of man she wants to be married to.

Maybe it's me trying to convince myself.

I don't know.

Don't really care.

I do care, what she thinks, though. I guess that is what made me ask.

"You think differently of me because I protected you?"

The moving target of a woman pauses. She looks at me, her expression devoid of its usual open hostility when I'm involved.

"No. You did what needed doing, I guess. Leo looked shady as hell, with his bony ass. I talk faster than I retreat, I get that. You know your business partners," she raises her hands, making air quotes. "I should've thought before I interrupted. If I had, maybe you wouldn't have pulled that trigger and we wouldn't be married."

She points to the ring on her finger. I've always appreciated the finer things. Sundae's soft brown skin makes the diamond absolutely radiant. After the ceremony, she could've removed it, given it back. She didn't. That, oddly

enough, makes the twinge in my chest loosen a bit. I did this for her, not for her to turn on me.

I sink into the couch offering my lap. "Come here."

Her gaze lowers to my groin, those long sable lashes brushing her cheeks. I wish I could see behind her eyes, know what she's thinking. Why my wife wants to leave me.

"No."

I regard her. She's antsy. Is it because I didn't touch her? Time to learn what my wife likes. "I asked nicely."

"You did," she smiles.

"I can be incentivized, wife." Her smile slips. "However, what I'm not going to do..." I stand and move towards her with the speed of a cheetah. I snagged her around the waist. She resists at first, then relents. "I'm not going to let my wife be unhappy on her wedding day."

"I never said I was unhappy."

Lifting her arms, I wrap them around my neck. "I know you, Sundae. If you're pacing instead of hurling profanity-laced snarky comebacks, you're upset or worried."

She shoots me a look. It's clear my accurate assessment takes her off guard.

"You watch me?"

"Can't take my eyes off you."

A breathy gasp escapes her parted lips. I'm curious as to how much of herself she'll allow me to see. Is this a new door opening between us? United by necessity, but together by choice. That's what I want from her. Much of today's actions have happened without her consent. She needs to understand when it comes to the two of us, safe within these walls, she has a say in what happens.

"Answer me or do I need to put my hand over your mouth to push your talk button?"

She throws back her head and laughs...with me. It's the most wonderful sound I've heard all day, maybe the entire year.

"Boy, you crazy." she whispers. I feel her as she toys with the hair at the back of my head. The idea that she finds pleasure in twisting any part of me around her finger, makes my dick hard.

"Me? You should meet my wife."

Her eyes narrow. "Don't get used to that title."

Why the fuck not? “You planning another escape? Think I can’t protect you?”

She stiffens, and tries to pull away. I hold on tighter.

“Somebody has to die, Zaid. It’s me who owes a debt, not you.”

She looks up into my eyes like she is the solution to my problem. As if I’d allow a fucking hair on her head to be split cause of a fucking threat from Ivano. She thinks I see as a liability. This woman has no idea the growing power she possesses over me.

For a woman like her, this look, her vulnerability—it means something, and fuck if I’m not going to protect her. I lean down, hovering my lips over hers.

“Will my mouth keep you quiet?” I tease, as I brush my lips over hers. “Is that it key to stop you from saying fucked up shit?”

Sundae tilts her face up and whispers, “Nope.”

It takes everything in me, not to spank her ass. She has breasts of steel. Even in the face of danger, just brazen as hell at whatever life throws at her.

So, fuck it.

I leaned in and press my lips to hers. It’s supposed to be a taste, to get it out of the way. Calm her down. Clear my head. But fuck me, she’s sweet like a creamy, nutty concoction, and she melts into my cock. Those soft curves are pliable in my hands as I take her where I want us to go.

Sundae’s hands run through my scalp. Damn. My muscles pull tight with anticipation. What am I waiting for?

She’s under my protection. Not under me with my cock buried inside her. Is this what she wants? Or, is this a gratitude fuck she’s offering.

Those talons of hers scratch my scalp, tempting my lion to break free. Almost wrapping my hands around her waist, I pull back, but we’re connected nevertheless.

“Sundae,” My eyes never leave hers. “I’ll protect you here and now. You have no choice in that. Anything else happens, like us fucking. You do what the fuck you’re told.” Like, don’t try to fuck and run out on me.

Her lips purse, then she looks down at where our bodies touch, where my cock rests against her belly, as if she just realized there needs to be some ground rules.

“So, you’re saying that you can’t protect and fuck me at the same time?” One of those perfectly arched eyes rises in question. Damn, her mouth.

“Yes and no.” I tell her. Because if she tries to end this shit, bodies gonna



drop.

"So, then I can fuck someone else, while you protect me is what you're saying?" She shrugs both shoulders, then pulled her arms back.

That shit isn't flying, though.

With a tighter grip, I pull her against my body, hard dick and all and say in a low, but lethal voice, "I'd like to see you try."

"Oh, honey," she chuckles, before snatching her arms back. "Don't threaten me. You will always lose. Please know that."

"I protect you. I fuck you. When the threat ends, I'm still fucking you. That's the only option."

She crosses her arms. "Zaid. I'm offering you pussy now. I ain't committing to no future pussy." She has the gall to roll her fucking, gorgeous eyes. "So what's it going to be? Now pussy or never pussy?"

Fuck, I know I must be scowling, cause I'm about to explode from both my heads. "You're my wife. Don't fucking threaten to withhold pussy cause I won't let you take it back once I bottom you out."

"You," she points a finger in my face, "ain't bottoming, shit. I hope your balls swell up and choke in your sleep."

Now she storms off to her damn room. The mirror vibrates when she slams the door.

Great.

Finally some quiet, but I can't plan because I'm thinking about being on pussy punishment for claiming what should be mine from this day forward.

Fuck. Marriage is complicated, but she either agrees to be mine or my dick stays in my pants. Two can play this game.

SIX



## Sundae

I KNOW it's a fake marriage, but what woman wants a "fuckless" wedding night? Zaid has knocked on my door three times asking to feed me. He wants to take care of me, but I ain't eating the shit he's shoveling. Husband or no husband, the minute a man tries to feed me, he expects me to be feeding his dick down my throat in return. If he ain't eating my pussy tonight, then I'm on a no-sucking dick diet tomorrow. And the next day, and the next.

My plan is to get my own damn dinner. My new husband can eat off my plate. That way I can fantasize about his thick tongue licking my chocolate sundae without any strings attached.

A chime rings inside my room before a computerized voice announces.

"Hello, Mrs. Voss, this is the House speaking. Is the suite and the gardens to your satisfaction?"

I sit up on my king-sized bed where I've brooding and contemplating well past sunset.

"Oh, hey House. I love this place. I never even knew a real botanical garden could be inside a suite. I mean, I've seen it in Las Vegas strip casinos. But, to have this type of luxury on the regular, that's unheard of. Is Mr. Voss' room identical to this layout?" Now, why am I talking to a computer like we sorority sisters? Marriage got me boing cray-cray.

"Thank you, Mrs. Voss. And no ma'am. You occupy the master suite." He, she, or it replies.

“Call me Sundae until further notice.” Let my husband suck those lemons while I ponder why he gave me the best and regulated himself to the guest bedroom.

“You’re welcome, Sundae. Your food order is ready for delivery. As you have been granted full access to all onsite amenities, please enjoy your stay here.”

Whoa. There’s more? My hubby got bank accounts like this? I mean the company’s assets are impressive, but the car and this penthouse, that’s long money. You know, that kind that doesn’t think in terms of paychecks and annual tax returns.

“Alright now, Zaid,” I say aloud. I wonder about my cousin and her new mate. Does he play wick games, too? I mean, I have little experience with white dick, so this marriage is straight OJT, on-the-job training. “Please thank Zaid for me.”

“Noted, Sundae. Your food has arrived. Goodbye.”

Perfect.

When I enter the living room, push past a slack-jawed Zaid. He’s lowered the verticals and the fireplace flames dance with wild abandon. Like me, my husband has showered and changed. I’m in another of his dress shirts until I can get home to my clothes. Shirtless, with low-slung black joggers and bare feet, Zaid is absolutely edible, and he has a nest of chest hair. A man with a face carpet and a rug that trails down to a cut abdomen and trim hips. Fuck, my husband packing. I want to stare, but I force myself to stay the course. Ignore him, Sundae. He’s not the only one who has experience getting the desired effect.

"Sir, Madame. Your food order." the man at the elevator doors announces.

“Sundae,” Zaid grunts. “What is this?”

I take a brief glance at his face as I ask. “You giving up the dick?”

“Wh-what?”

“Wrong answer. I have nothing more to say.”

Accepting the food tray holding multiple covered dishes, I thank the blushing deliveryman, and pivot back in the direction of my assigned room. Told you, I learn fast.

I feel his presence, a predator with his prey in sight, gaining on me. Zaid is in step with me.

"Wife," he calls. "You turn me down, then order food for us?"

I almost choke on my own saliva at that question. Did he not eat because I refused to? Gurl, don't get distracted, this is a mission.

"Us?" I chuckle, giving my bags an exaggerated whiff. "There's an 'us'?"

"Yes, wife." he hisses, an emphasis on the last word.

"If I have to take care of my own needs, then so do you."

I reach my room. With my hands full, I try to kick the door closed, but no such luck.

Zaid, the unwanted husband, is right there. Stalking with eyes hungry for more than food.

"Why didn't you say you were hungry?" He stands guard against my doorframe, arms loose at his sides. "I asked you if you wanted to eat. You said no."

We face off. "No, you asked if I wanted you to feed me. That's a hell no. I'm capable of getting my own food." I place the tray down on a wood-trimmed glass round table set for two overlooking the flower garden with a black stone waterfall feature.

This place is supposed to be a safe house, but this close I can smell the woody scent on Zaid's skin. This close I feel my insides heat just being in proximity to this man. The trickling water fills the silence. We're both logistics experts right now, but the we're more like chess pieces, moving in an awkward dance around what we both should want. Mate and checkmate.

I sit. So does Zaid.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

"Eating dinner with my wife."

In this moment, I think about all the ways I had given him all types of hell. Literally. Hell on earth. Yet, he protects me at a risk to his own life. He killed a man who thought to harm me. I never asked him for any of this, but his default is to protect. That's who my husband is.

Shit, I inhale as a rush of pride fills me because he's mine. I mean, he did all this. Looking around at the room with an indoor garden and realizing that he did this for me without demanding anything. Whereas some other man would expect my absolute submission, all Zaid wants is to share food, that he's paying for, with me.

Shit, I want to fuck him until I faint. Infuriating that he won't take the pussy until I give him, me. And though I'm a bad bitch, the woman inside, who's been hurt, is terrified. But, I summon the strength, even if it's for a little while, to cater to him.

Standing next to his chair, I uncover the silver domed platter, displaying the two vegetarian meals.”

“You ordered for two.” It’s a statement to the unvoiced question.

“I did.”

He nods, a hint of a smile lifting the corners of his full lips. He’s shocked about the fact that I thought about him and his needs. Does he expect so little of people, too? I can be a self-centered bitch, but I don’t want to be with him. When he reaches for the utensils. I grab his wrist.

“No,” I whisper. “I want to feed you.” Tearing a bite of the roll, I touch it to his lips and Zaid looks at me with an unreadable expression, then licks his lips.

“You first, Sundae.”

The way he said my name, feels like he’s talking about more than our fragrant meals. I want him to feast on me too, but we’ll get to that. I’m starving, so I know he has to be hungry.

“Okay,” I wink. He takes the bread from me. I part my lips, and when he places the warm dough on my tongue, I close my lips around his finger, sucking lightly.”

He clears his throat. “Damn. That good.”

I stare into his handsome face, totally happy to share in this thing with him. “I hope so. Now, my turn.” Slowly forking up a piece of barbequed cauliflower. As I sink the fork into his mouth, I move in front of him the table at my back, spread my legs, and sit my naked ass over Zaid’s cloth-covered cock.

“Fuck, Sundae.” he hisses.

Checkmate, husband. Maybe I’ve read too many romance novels, but I think this shit right here, might get me fucked up and down tonight. And me and puss puss are here for it.

“Come on, eat,” I urge with double meaning.

“You don’t play fair.”

I lean forward, pressing my titties against his bare chest. “I thought you knew, I didn’t come to play.”

Zaid sits stiff as a fucking statue, taking every bite I offer. I didn’t ask if he likes the food, if he has wheat allergies, but I maybe should have. This man is gripping the table in between bites. Downing the apple cider like it’s a drug addiction remedy and he can’t get his fix. His dick is jackhammering like a construction worker making overtime. I admit I’m enjoying him trying

to resist. I decide to turn up the heat. Every time his cock jumps, I grind my hips. Shit, I'm soaking wet. Zaid has to feel my cum soaking through the thin fabric of his joggers. Please universe, don't let me come yet.

"Why the hell aren't you wearing any panties?" he grunts before gripping my hips in his large paws.

"You know why," I pant, getting breathless.

"I'm going to spank your ass for taking your naked pussy to the damn elevator to get food from another man."

Time to push that last button, Sundae.

I tangle my free hand in his hair. "You ain't gonna do shit, remember," I taunt. "You don't want my pussy."

He freezes. Oh no, did I apply too much gas?

"And you remember you asked for this."

His eyes flash with heat and what fuck did I just see? Fuck, I'm in trouble.

## SEVEN



### **Sundae**

Zaid shoves plates, platters, and glasses to the grass. Thuds and clunks clatter around me, but mostly I hear the drumming of anticipation coming from inside me. My husband, my real life action hero, drops to his knees. His face is mere centimeters away from my pussy, and seriously, I feel cornered, but no way am I tempted to run.

He says nothing, but his breathing is ragged with exertion.

“I like my pussy licked like—”

“Don’t. Say. Shit.”

“I was just telling you —”

Before I say another damn word, the man shoves me backwards, grabs both my ankles and damn near pulls my black ass off the table. Shit, I’m grabbing for purchase when he splits my ass cheeks and licks me from my rear entrance to my clit. There’s no warmup. This is pure domination.

“You nasty bastard. Oh fuck,” I moan.

“Yep, you going get that too. Fucking running your mouth all the damn time,” he murmurs.

Zaid covers my clit with his mouth. Pure blue flames explode behind my eyelids. He doesn’t let go. The man works my clit over with slow circles and lazy swirls of his tongue. Over and over, he pushes. Add then he pressed his finger to the entrance of my pussy.

“Oh shit,” I clamp down as he pushes in a slow drag deeper into my cunt.

Oh shit. Oh shit. Where has he been all my life? I’m think I’m bleating like a motherfucking sheep. Bah. Bah. This is better than a top tier masseuse. Then out of nowhere, lightning hits my pussy as Zaid presses his teeth into

my clit. A continuous flow of sensations ignites in my head, my chest. He pistons my pussy with one, then two fingers. I feel the stretch when he adds a third. I cry out in pleasure and pain. My calves hang down his back. I'm suspended, totally at his mercy. He uses his tongue as a weapon, punishing me for pushing him to the breaking point.

"Yes." Damn he slamming my hips against his mouth. Parting my pussy lips, over and over, before sucking my throbbing clit between his teeth. Soft. Hard. Tug. Soothe. He keeps alternating between give and take. With each slow lick of his tongue, I hear my voice straining, begging him to never stop. That's when he gives my clit a long pull. Damn, he's captured my soul. Oh my goodness. His tongue is beyond wicked. It's dangerous 'cause I can't control my responses. How is this possible that he's twisting me up and setting me free all at once.

"Oh shit, Zaid, I'm about to come."

"No, the fuck you're not."

And then he stops. I struggle to jolt up. "What the fuck are you doing? Get your ass back between my legs and finish eating my pussy like it's your last meal."

Gurl, I didn't see it coming. Zaid stands, lifting me up like I'm a weightless petal in this garden. He rips his shirt off me and places me on all fours in the grass. When he stand to kick off his pants, I look over my shoulder, trying to catch a glimpse of what he's working with. He slaps my ass.

"Eyes front, wife."

"Ow," I protest, but I lower my head and spread my knees wider. His heat blankets me a second before he breaches my drenched pussy with his massive cock.

As if my body knows we're in for one hell of a rodeo, my back arches and I buck my hips in desperation to control the tremble spreading through my limbs. Zaid must feel it to because he circles one muscled arm around my waist.

"Shit...hold on."

My husband chuckles, sinking his fingers into my hair. "I was about to tell you the same thing."

He shoves into my pussy again. "Zaid, shit, babe. Hold on. And don't white girl pull my hair."

"Shut. The. Fuck. Up." Instead of listening, he drives into my pussy,



moving around my organs and shit. My entire body jolts with each thrust. I can barely stay upright. “Fuck.”

“That’s it. Give that tight pussy to Zaddy.”

“Damn. Damn. Damn.”

“Nah, babe.” He fucks me harder. My toes are digging into the grass. He tightens his hold, lifting my ass higher.

“Shit, your cock is crazy hard.”

“Isn’t this what you wanted, me buried in this pussy? I ain’t going nowhere and neither are you. I tried. I tried to tell your ass you weren’t ready.” Now, he slams into me over and over, until I’m screaming, screaming shit, even can’t comprehend.

“Z, shit. Z-aid. Fuck baby, pull my fucking hair. Pull my shit. Damn.”

“Yeah, that’s it. Put some respect on my fucking name, wifey.”

He’s fucking me so deep my stomach cramps, but a bitch will buy some Theraflu in the morning.

This goes on for what feels like hours. I’m covered in sweat. My titties keep hitting my chin, my vision is blurred as fuck.

“I’m coming.” I scream, praying he doesn’t withdraw as a fucked up punishment that will leave me wrecked and clawing at my clit for release. When the tidal wave hits, I’m wiped out. I’m scream so hard, I choke. Zaid grunts once and then I feel hot cum filling my bottomed up, beat up, swollen pussy.

“Milk my cock, babe.”

I do as I’m told, yet he still spanks my ass in rapid succession. Stinging blows heat my quivering ass cheeks until the bite blends into bliss. I try to maintain control, but fail. My knees buckle and I’m too tired to support my body weight. Zaid catches me before I fall. I’m sprawled across his sweaty chest, heaving, lungs straining for oxygen. My eyelids are already heavy with needs, wants, and exhaustion. I’m a sweating, boiling hot, cum-covered happy bitch. Though Ba-be, Zaid Voss in work. My chocolate sundae is one hot chip challenge screaming for some ice chips. I’m wore out , wrung out, and now it's time for me to dry out.

Literally.

Zaid deposits me in the middle of the bed.

“You good, sweetheart?”

Yass,” I purr, reaching for my human pillow. I plan to curl like cheap shoes on hot asphalt around his hard body and enjoy a sound sleep.

“Don’t move.”

That’s impossible. I don’t know shit about BDSM, but I’m having a supernatural experience. No man has ever loved my body with such focused attention on my pleasure. I think he’s going to grab a wet towel or give a bitch a cooling blanket.

“Lift your head.” When I move too slowly, he lifts it for me, positioning my head where he wants me.

“What in the name—”

“Open your mouth.”

Under the category of, be careful what you ask for, my husband climbs into bed, straddles my upper body, and then he puts his well-used dick on my lips. “Old dirty bast—” He shoves his cock down my throat,

“Shut. The. Fuck. Up,” he moans. My traitorous body ignores the fatigue weighing down my limbs and I relax my jaw, and he’s pushing his lengthening cock past my gag reflex.

“Damn, Sundae. I want an extended honeymoon. Ain’t no way I can work with this pussy, and this deep throat waiting for me at home.”

Fifteen minutes later, cum covers my mouth, chin, drips on my ear.

We got to be done now. My jaws are sunken, my lips are chapped. This fucking man must have a lithium battery pack because he absolutely is not done with my pussy.

He positions my flaccid legs open and slips into home. He brings me to another orgasm. And another. And another.

After the sixth one, I faint. Bitch, I had to get the man to put his dick away.

Damn, I have no fluid left. But with access to dick this good, who could blame me?

## EIGHT



All the fucking that happens over the next seven days is no surprise to me. I knew once I had a taste, I would be hooked like an addict. I told Sundae as much. I warned her. My willpower was good that first night until she offered to feed me. I told myself to keep my blue balls on the couch and leave my crazy-ass wife in our master's retreat. A part of me, the better man that I aspire to be, wanted to protect her from an entanglement with my past sins, my present mistakes, and now my future aspirations. But Sundae, being her authentic self, had to push. Test my resolve. And damn if I can save myself from quizzing her delicious pussy, morning and night.

Sundae is mine. And she's proving to be an exemplary student at pleasing her husband.

She does not know what that means for her. For us.

"Hey sweetheart," I say while moving to sit next to her in bed. "You awake?" I've been awake for hours, following up on the warehouse. The first three days here, I got nothing done but my soul sucked and fucked from my body.

"No," she whines, sitting up in our bed, completely naked physically and emotionally. My dick is hard as fuck, but this woman needs nourishment before we do anything else.

Sundae turns her face up to look at me.

She rubs her red eyes. "What the hell did you do to me last night? My hair hurts."

I laugh, not because of her wit, but at the light lifting of her tone, the sparkle in her eyes. She's happy, relaxed, unguarded.

I'm happy, I think.

Growing up with friends who died in this life, whole families who vanished overnight, I've never understood happiness until her. My Sundae.

"Let's get you some food," I tell her before leaning in to steal a kiss.

She shoves at my chest. "Stop before my pussy needs another ice pack. Feed your wife."

This has me erupting in laughter for the second time today. Only she has been able to do this to me, do the impossible to me. She tries to swing her feet to the floor.

"Stay here. I'll bring your breakfast."

I return with the tray food of sweet rolls, pastries, of course, coffee and place it over her lap. "Breakfast in bed for my goddess."

"And he jokes," Sundae said with a wink.

"He does."

Sitting down on the side of the bed, I begin to feed her. "This is a first. I could be used to this."

"You should." She pauses with the coffee cup in mid-air.

"You're really sweet, Zaid."

"Sweet enough to spend the day in bed together?"

She takes a cautious sip. "Mmm, yummy."

"Glad you are enjoying them. I know that you like those and your coffee with two sugars, no cream."

"How do you know what I like and how I take my coffee?" she asks.

"I make it my business to know a lot of things," I counter.

"About me?" She lobs back.

"Yes, and others."

"But me, first?"

"Always," I assure her.

"What are you trying to tell me, Zaid? Really?" She lowers the cup, her expression morphing to serious.

"This is a fake marriage. It's not a convenience because you have to be here for me to protect you. Understand what I'm putting down. You and me. We're more than fuck buddies. You. Are. Mine."

"Okay..." she breathes. So, you want to know me better? My dreams. My goals. You want us for the long term? A future?" How can I not?

Instead of admitting how hard I've fallen in love with my wife, I whisper. "I do."

She smiles then, shifts herself and the tray on her lap. "Climb in," she

says, reaching for my hand.

I pivot, just as the phone in my pocket rings an incoming call. It's Ivano's ringtone. I stiffen. Sundae noticing change, frowns.

"What is it? What's wrong?"

I stand, placing one finger to my lips, I signal for her to stay quiet. The ringing stops. A text alert sounds.

I read it.

*Time's up. The truce is over. Sundae or you.*

"Get dressed," I snap, walking out of the room.

I hear her quickening steps behind me. "Wait."

"No time, babe. Pack your bags."

"Why?"

I meet her eyes. "If shit goes wrong. I'll kill him. And to protect you, I'll go anywhere you feel safe."

"Zaid, I'm not leaving."

Shit, it feels good to hear my woman say she's at my side, no matter the danger. I know how she felt about this place in the beginning. It feels good to know she's changed her mind about it and me. Serious as fuck, if I ever lost her...I can't think of the terror I'd reign to get her back.

I exit The Governor Hotel's underground structure and head for Xeno's hideout. I should tell Youric about the impending threat to Sundae, but he needs to be with his woman. I understand that more than ever now. She's mine to protect.

I'm on I-66, gunning the engine when the House AI system alerts me that Sundae has left the property.

# NINE



## Zaid

CLICKING on the House's ensuite monitoring app, I scan the audio files for Sundae's voice after I left to fucking protect her. I heard her voice. It's low, but it's her. She placed a call after I left.

Fuck. Did she betray me? Did Ivano get to her. No. No. That's crazy. No one has been there, except the fucking food delivery boy. Did I somehow miss a hidden a message? Overlook a threat?

Damn it. I was so busy fucking, I may be the one to end up fucking gutted by my own damn wife.

*Okay. Please tell him, I love him and I'm on my way.*

If it was possible, no one could have told me that a volcano just didn't erupt in my head. Literally, I knew my coloring had shifted because I only saw red.

Who did she fucking love?

Who was she going to see?

What in the fuck.

"House, I bite out. "Activate my link to Sundae Voss' wedding fucking ring. Send location."

The program responses. "Unable to locate wedding fucking ring." Fucking computers.

"Argh," I howl. "Suggest triangulated Sundae Voss' wedding ring," the House continues. "Processing now."

IF I ROLL in on her with another motherfucker doing anything but calling the name of Jesus, I swear with all that's in me, I'll be digging graves. I'll tie her down. That won't work. If I let her leave, she'll be dead within an hour. I can't live with that, no matter if she's chosen someone else.

FUCK.

Who is this man?

When did she meet him?

All I can see is red. I would kill another man for her, I swear on everything. I will kill him dead.

THIRTY MINUTES later I watch from across the street as my wife enters a care facility. Because she prefers the metro trains, I beat her to her destination. This place is morbid inside and quiet. The hallways are quiet, except for the activity of the clinical staff. I stop at the desk and look at the empty visitor registry to find my wife's name. She signed in as Sundae Voss next to a room number. What's really happening her?

Fuck.

I thought her man worked here or maybe he runs the joint. But I don't think so. Shit this is when I realize how little we know of each other, outside of the physical.

Just in case I'm reading the situation wrong, I place my hand on the trigger. I see the halls are vacant and my destination is a few doors down. Then I hear her voice.

She is singing.

"Easy like Sunday morning..." her voice carries the melody as if the song was written, produced, and made for her to sing.

After she hits the chorus, a male voice interrupts her.

"Oh, that's my baby," he says.

I move my body so I could see inside, and my heart stops in my chest.

There was an older black man lying in bed. He had Sundae's eyes, but he looks fragile. Despite his physical decline, he has a bright gummy smile for Sundae.

Fuck me.

Her father. She takes care of her father. No wonder she counts coins, even

though I know her salary exceeds her expenses.

"Yes, Pops," She nearly climbs on the bed. "It's your Sundae."

She is smiling, but there are tears in her eyes. I killed a man right next to her and she didn't shed one tear, but this side of her. This vulnerable part, fuck. This is what I want to protect at all costs.

"You came," he says. "Thought you couldn't come. I called Grace, but she ain't answer."

"Dad, mama's gone, remember? Ten years. That's when we moved up here to be close to Chassity." Sundae said in a soft voice.

"Oh no. Chassity, my baby girl," her father starts to weep, his agitation climbing. "She hates me. Hates that I never let me wife for your mother. I couldn't sacrifice my ministry." He openly sobs, as Sundae cradles him. "I tried to keep them both, but I lose my Gracie... my girls."

Damn, I can't believe what the minister is confessing in his dementia. No doubt Sundae's heard this story before. It can't hurt any less though. Sundae and her sister, Chassity are the mistress's daughters. No wonder she doesn't trust men.

"Shh, daddy, don't cry. Chassity, she'll come around. You'll see." She smiles and wipes his face with the cloth napkin.

Before my eyes, the old man transforms. He jolts as if Sundae's presence startled him.

"Oh, Sundae, you're here. I called you twice. Then, your cousin. Why you crying, baby?"

Damn, Jada knew all this time, but she protected Sundae's secret. My heart breaks as I spy at both their visible pain.

"I'm okay Dad. I met a man. He's a bit intense, but he's a keeper."

I prayed she's talking about me. There was no one else that will ever keep her like a long to do.

"Not like that uh, what's that man, that man..." he gets stuck.

"Branden, Pops?" She provides the name with an eyeroll.

"Yeah, that bastard."

"Language," she chides, responding seamlessly to his elevated mood. "You handsome fella."

He shakes his head. "Sorry, baby girl. But not him, right?"

"Hell no."

"Good, because I..."

Three swift bullets come through the walls. Sundae screams, but



instinctively she shield her father with her body. Damn it, brave, crazy woman. Kicking the door open, I draw my weapon, shooting back and block any shots that are meant for her.

“Zaid!”

I can still hear her screaming. I know she is not going to leave her dad, but I need to get them moving.

Quickly turning, I tell Sundae. "Hide. Get in the closet. Both of you." She nods. "Now. I need to end this."

"End this? What about you? What are you doing here? What the fuck did you do, follow me?"

I move closer to her, yelling, "Shut the fuck up. Move. Now. I got him. Go." I hood her father under his torso. "I'm your son-in-law." I always got time to stake my claim.

"Huh, another white one?"

"Long story, Dad," Sundae climbs off and pushes the bed out of the room as I pull the drapes and follow.

I'm glad that I had let Xeno know my location, so when I texted to tell him what was happening, he texted back.

ETA: 1 min

Good. I clear the room.

Clear that wing.

And now, it's a waiting game. They breached the place in search of her, but they'll get me.

Moments later, I hear an explosion. Moving towards the sound, I take out two goons and hide behind a vending machine. Three more, with bullet proof vests, jeans, and those old Italian shoes come from the opposite end, so I aim for kneecaps and necks.

A bullet flies past me. I hear a thump, and finally see Xeno with eight men behind him as a man drops on my right. "Fuck," I exhale. "Thanks."

"I can't have the man get hurt on his honeymoon. Though, I feel like the bride is probably going to have a red ass when this is over." he chuckles.

I don't because her ass is sure going to get spanked tonight.

"Is Ivano here?" I ask. "Have you seen him? He's the one keeping this going. He's the one I need to take out."

"So be it, Let's find his ass."

Xeno signals them to split up and we began to take over this run-down, decrepit, poor excuse for senior folks home. The first thing I want is to

relocate my father-in-law.

We found Ivano in the back, sitting in his car trying to radio his team.

“Fucking answer me!” the man screams.

Xeno taps on the window with his gun and shakes his head in a taunting way. Ivano quickly tries to shoot at him, but I put a bullet through his shooting hand. The screams could wake the dead, but nobody can save him now.

Once he calms the fuck down, I open the door and point the gun at his head. Payback for Sundae.

“She ain’t nothing to you, huh?” He spits on the back seat. “Then she’s your wife, huh? You know this shit ain’t over, right?”

“A life for a life.” I nod and shoot one clean through his skull.

“Damn, you always had a knack for up-close kills.” Xeno notes.

“More personal,” I muse.

“Now, go get your wife,” he tells me.

“With pleasure.”



**LUNCHTIME  
CHRONICLES**

## EPILOGUE

I hold my wife captive against my body. We fucked the covers off the bed hours ago. We lay tangled in a sweaty jumble of limbs, and I've never been happier.

"Your legs heavy, Zaid. Get off."

That's my wife. Complaining that I'm refusing to let her go. My Sundae trying to convince me to get out of bed. Truth be told, we love my wife's puss puss so much that I'm seriously considering it my work-from-home location. We're still in our suite at The Governor.

After Jada introduced her to a few other women, she's been inseparable from her new friends and me. Sundae has my heart.

Our bond is indistinguishable. Where one starts, the other blends, rather than begins. That's Sundae's gift, uniting people. I see it every time my brother and Chassity joins us on fish fry Fri-yays, at our place.

She pushes against my chest. "You know I hate to be late."

We have time. In fact, we have a lifetime together, I won't rush a second that I can spend with the woman who revived my heart. Who showed me a love I never thought possible.

"Not yet," I tease. "Say it again."

My bride is eager to slip into her Violette Tannenbaum-inspired wedding gown, with a pair of Christian Louboutin Degraqueen Clear Embellished Red Sole Pumps, which I surprised her with last night at our rehearsal dinner.

"Listen you," she giggles. "I screamed it all last night. That's enough."

"Never," I counter, pressing a kiss to her temple.

"You could make me."

This is the new game we play. I stroke my fingers over her thick mass of

coils. “I demanded you to marry me, but I’ll never force you to love me. A man is willing to earn his woman’s love...even his wife’s.”

Her beautiful gaze lands on me and softens. I will never tire of seeing love reflected in my heart burning bright in my wife’s eyes.

“You know I love you, old man. The building hears me scream it every night. Why can’t we just fuck in silence, hmmm? Afterwards, we can drool on the pillows like a normal couple?”

My love for this woman is extraordinary.

“Because that would be too easy, Chocolate,” I chuckle, rolling on top of her, “and you like me hard.”

“Look, I’ve agreed to renew our vows.”

“You have,” I murmur before peppering her face with kisses. This time around, we’re writing our own. Fat Tony says he and his nuts will keep a safe distance in the audience.

With that, she parts those toned thighs, and I push my cock home.

“Awww, I love you, nasty ass,” she moans, lifting her hips in eager welcome.

Damn, I love the sound of this tiny breath of surrender. “You love my cock buried in my favorite chocolate sundae?”

She looks at me, eyes firing daggers. “Your only chocolate sundae. So, don’t be a bastard.”

“Hmm, that’s old dirty bastard. Happy wedding day, best of wives.”

“Shut up and fuck me.”

Damn, I love my Sundae.

If you loved Zaid and Sundae’s story, please leave a review.

Amazon link: <https://geni.us/LunchtimeSundae>



# ORANGE CREAMSICLE

**Amaya Black's Orange Creamsicle is next up.**

Cameron's my grumpy boss....

He's also an enigmatic walking bad mood with a terrible temper.

Along with being easy on the eyes, he's also my brother's best friend who gave me a job as a favor to him.

Of course, I'm counting down the days until I can bid him and his bad attitude farewell, and never look back.

Then just when I've resigned him to being nothing more than my nightmare of a boss, Cameron unveils an offer so delectable, so irresistible....

By the time it's all said and done, I just know I'm going to be left creaming.

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# FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

**Debbie Mason meets Lizzie Shane in this small-town romance where a burned-by-love veterinarian arranges a fake partnership with a down-on-her-luck city girl in order to save his family business.**

WHEN AMARIE WALKER goes for something, she goes big—including starting over. Leaving her cheating ex and entire D.C. life in the rearview, she crash lands in a small town with no plan, no money, and no job. An opening at the animal clinic is the only gig for miles, no surprise considering the vet is a certified grump. If Eli Calvary ever cracked a smile, Amarie might faint on sight from shock. At least his adorable golden retriever appreciates her fabulousness...and shares her love of daily treats!

WHEN ELI TOOK over his late father's practice, he quickly discovered the clinic was facing foreclosure. So there's no time for social niceties, especially not flirting, even with someone as gorgeous, bubbly, and business-savvy as Amarie. Yet when Eli needs to invent an investor on the fly, it's her name that comes to his lips. Now, for the sake of their furry clients, Eli and Amarie hustle to save the clinic, trying to ignore the nonstop sparks between them. Because while their partnership may be fake, their connection already feels way too real.

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## ABOUT SIERA

Siera London is the USA Today Bestselling & award-winning author of contemporary and paranormal romance, romantic suspense, and crime fiction. She crafts stories of diverse characters navigating the challenges and triumphs to find lasting love. Intelligence, wit, emotion, drama, and romance are between the covers of every Siera London novel. Siera lives in Florida with her husband, and a color patch tabby named Frie.

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