

SENSUOUS AFRICAN AMERICAN ROMANCE

TAKEN
BY *You*
BOOK #3

DOROTHY ELIZABETH LOVE

Sensuous African American Romance

Taken By You
by
Dorothy Elizabeth Love

The Ryan Family Series

Book-3

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LED Literature and Publication

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Chapter 1

It had to be nervousness.

How else could she explain the anxiety she felt as she waited to meet the man who tiptoed around her dreams, yet didn't know she existed?

Not only was Reese McCoy a stranger to her, but he was also a famed football player, model, and successful businessman. So much rolled into one man. That was probably why her heart was racing.

At Atlanta International Airport, Leila stood in the shadows of the waiting area of baggage claims. She scanned the crowd for the face she had seen many times in online media and TV. She hadn't discovered any of the details about his personal life until last night when she had talked about him while viewing his pictures in the photo album of her friend, Chi. The album was followed by an exciting look through a male pinup calendar. The barely clothed pinups of Reese McCoy told a completely different, definitely more enticing story that she reexamined again and again.

The less publicly known pictures in the album revealed expressions of happiness that seemed to lessen more and more as time passed by and Leila found that somewhat baffling.

When Reese McCoy finally entered the baggage claims area, he flashed that sexy smile—one Leila had come to like—at the airline worker helping travelers arriving from Scottsdale, AZ. His denim jeans and matching shirt nicely emphasized what she knew was an incredibly fit body underneath.

Lord, she thought, tingling, he's too fine in person.

Reese suddenly turned that alluring smile toward her. It masked the troubles she had heard he was having. Yet, still, it caused her breath to catch; she exhaled slowly. Too bad she had never met him in person before now.

Leila was about to wave to get his attention, but he turned and looked about, searching for someone. Leila knew he was looking for his friend but wished it could have been her. She also knew that would never be the case. It seemed Reese McCoy had very little time for things outside of business, especially something as bothersome as a serious relationship.

Suddenly, his gaze returned to hers. This time their eyes locked for several moments. A slow, meaningful smile danced across his face. Leila couldn't stop her mouth from reacting to his contagious smile. When he winked, she realized she had been staring. Did he think that she was just another pretty face on the long list of many that smile, and that sculptured body could entice? Embarrassed, she glanced away to refocus on her reason for being there.

Amazingly, in the short time she looked away, he closed the distance between them.

Standing a few feet away he said, "Hello, pretty lady."

Probably a practiced line, she thought. He had no idea who she was or why she was there.

"I'm here to pick you up," Leila somehow found the confidence to say without breaking her stare.

He chuckled. "I haven't been to Atlanta in a while, but come-on lines have certainly gotten bolder. I guess my next question should be: Your place or mine?"

"My place." Leila enjoyed his surprised look. She'd caught him off guard. Maybe he wasn't as practiced as she thought.

"Ohhh... yes," he growled softly, slowly, as his eyes roamed over her body. "I do miss Atlanta."

I think I'm flirting! That boosted her ego as she extended a hand for a shake. "I'm Leila Chamberlain. A friend of both Parker and Chi. Parker will call you about the change in plans, but he asked that I pick you up. He's stuck out of town on business and won't be back until very late. And Chi can't get away from the hospital. So, I'm to babysit you until he returns." Leila was well aware that Reese had come to town to serve as Parker's best man.

"Babysit?" Reese chuckled, looking away. "I got his text that someone was to pick me up. I expected a driver holding a sign. Not a babysitter."

Leila wasn't sure, but it looked as if there was a hint of something akin to regret behind that sienna stare. He recovered quickly. "I should start over," he said, holding her hand to shake. "Nice to meet you, Leila. It's a pleasure."

Leila laughed then. "Parker thought you would be upset because all your plans for tonight changed at the last minute. He said something about you being a stickler for preplanning. I can't wait to tell him you used the word *pleasure*."

"Mention it's because of his choice of babysitters." Reese adjusted his carry-on luggage over his shoulder. "I'll follow your lead."

His sinfully charming grin had returned and that caught her off guard. "I guess we should get your luggage."

"That's one option."

That certainly has a double meaning! She, however, stuck to the agenda. "We have a stop to make. I'm to remind you to get fitted for your tux today. We can go there next if you like."

"Although Chi and Parker's wedding is one of the reasons I'm in town," Reese said, "I have a few business errands to run. I'll get the tux later. I guess I need a rental car now."

"No, you don't." She dodged a traveler hurrying toward them. "Parker's Jeep and a key to his home are at my place. I'll take you there."

"You *were* serious about going to your place?" Reese smiled down at her.

"I never kid around about inviting a man to my home." She casually tossed that comment out. "It's also my place of business."

"Oh." The smirk on Reese's face showed he was possibly thinking of 'considerably less than appropriate' business options. Or maybe he just found her seriousness to be funny. "Thanks for coming to pick me up," he said, as they reached the baggage carousel.

"No problem," Leila said as other passengers huddled around in search of... or scampering to catch suitcases in motion. She stepped aside to get out of one man's way and brushed against the side of Reese. That unexpected touch sent heated awareness through her. She took in his wide, firm chest and strong, muscular arm, as his spicy cologne enchanted her.

"What is Mr. Chamberlain going to say about you entertaining me while my friend's away?" His breath sent warmth over her ear.

"My father gave up on advising me years before he died," Leila said. She knew he was attempting to find out more about her personal life. Although single and available, she wasn't quite sure if she wanted to admit that yet.

It tickled her pride knowing she'd done very little to capture his interest, yet clearly, she had. Well, if not counting the blatant stares, the flippant invitation to her home, and the unnecessary closeness they were now sharing.

Her reaction to him was purely physical, the worst kind, and she needed to contain it. His skin coloring reminded her of warm pecan pie, her favorite. She unconsciously licked her lips as she recalled the pictures showing more of that skin. He looked just as rugged and daring as he had in the younger photos, but now the fine lines of wisdom that cradled those eyes suggested an experience she wanted to know more about. She liked his faint beard that surrounded lips that promised heaven in a mouthful. Instantaneously, her mind drifted to a scene where she was experiencing that mouth, those fine hairs against sensitive parts of her body.

And soon, very soon, they would be alone together.

"I would pay big money to know your thoughts," Reese said, watching her. He looked as though he already knew her thoughts.

"I didn't think I would recognize you from the pictures Chi showed me." Leila was proud of how well she came up with a valid, although veiled, excuse for blatantly, probably heatedly, staring at him. "You haven't changed much in the past few years."

His smile disappeared as if memories from the past plagued his thoughts. "Pictures can lie. I'm nothing like that guy anymore."

He was frowning and she blamed herself. "I just meant..." Leila was about to say, 'You look the same physically,' but it was too late because he had turned to retrieve his bag from the spinning carousel.

She was sure his statement had nothing to do with physical changes, but more with the circumstances that surrounded his life. She didn't know all the details, but Parker had labeled them as "difficult times." Since Parker had also labeled his first fiancée's death, his sister being shot, and the car accident that almost killed the love of his life, Chi, as "difficult times," Leila figured Reese's life must have been just as troubling.

Reese collected the last of his luggage and followed Leila outside into the warm June afternoon. They went to Leila's car in short-term parking. She easily maneuvered the car out of the airport only to encounter caterpillar slow highway traffic.

"Is this typical for this time of day?" Reese asked a few minutes later, looking at the dashboard clock.

"Not normally. There must be an accident ahead."

"How far away is your place?"

"Without traffic it's about twenty-five minutes."

"This can go on for a while." Reese reached into his overnight bag to retrieve his cell phone and dialed. "Bill? It's Reese McCoy," he announced when the person answered. "I'm in town but stuck in traffic. First, the plane was delayed. Now this. Can we delay our meeting until this evening?" Reese listened. "No, no. That's okay. I'll get there as soon as I can. I really need you to see my plan and consider supporting it... Yeah... Bill, it's a solid plan. Don't shoot it down until you have a chance to review it." The longer Reese talked, the flatter his tone got. He hung up and stared at the phone for a few seconds, visibly shaking off a difficult mood.

"I can take you directly to your meeting," Leila offered. "Pick you up and take you to get the Jeep afterwards."

"I'm not sure how long I'll be or where we might head afterwards." Reese watched the traffic come to a halt. "The sooner I get to Parker's, the sooner I can shower, change and get to the meeting." His look suggested appreciation. "But thanks for offering."

Leila liked the sincerity she saw. "I have a better idea. You can change at my place, it's closer and we need to stop there anyway to get the Jeep." She looked at her car's dashboard infotainment map for the time delay on the current route. Then reached into the backseat to get her cellphone thinking to use its navigation system for alternative routes. "I'll get off the highway as soon as I can. Maybe get around this."

"Take your time." Reese said, looking down the V neck of her blouse that showed a peek at the tops of her breasts as she leaned to retrieve her phone.

"Are you sure? That call sounded important." She looked up, still leaning back with phone in hand.

"It was, but this..." His eyes roamed provocatively up her chest to her eyes. "...delay is taking my mind off it."

His somber look from moments ago had disappeared, replaced with a warm, much more pleasing smile. The inches between them would only take seconds to remove.

She wasn't sure which one of them moved first, but somehow his mouth seemed much closer to hers. Her heart jiggled a little and she found herself breathing heavier. Then something in his eyes called to her.

Sampling him was a fantasy that had crossed her mind several times while looking at pictures of his fantastic body. Now she was sure she was the one to move closer this time.

The honking from the car behind startled her.

"Oh!" She jumped and let out a nervous little laugh. Looking quickly about, she then moved back under the wheel. It took her a few seconds to realize the car was already in gear and all she needed to do was remove her foot from the brake pedal. She felt like a clumsy teenager instead of the professional, sometimes sassy, business owner that she was.

That was a stupid gesture I just made, she said to herself, then turned to Reese. "Traffic is moving."

"Uh huh," he grunted, his smile widening.

Luckily, since she couldn't think of anything else to say, jazz music from the car radio filled the air. It bothered her that she'd neither resisted nor gone through with the kiss. A kiss she'd been wanting to experience since the moment she'd dreamt of

him. This kind of indecision was another example of why she would always be the lonely maid of honor and never the bride. She could dream about having this man but couldn't pull off impressing him as an experienced flirt.

Remembering the map app, she busied herself with getting a more convenient route.

"How long have you lived here?" Reese asked.

"I moved back about four years ago. It's changed a lot since I was a kid." She studied the smartphone map display, then looked up at the road ahead. "I think I can get around this by getting off at the next exit."

"I'll leave my comforts in your competent hands."

Leila looked at him. *His comforts.* Was he picking at her for failing to resist him and failing to kiss him? Certainly, kissing was a bit much for someone she had just met. She played it safe and pretended to take a greater interest in getting around the heavy traffic. The ride through the business districts was the perfect distraction.

They arrived at her home, or partial home, as Leila called it, about thirty-five minutes later. They had talked very little en route because Reese spent most of the time on his cell phone discussing shipping matters. The gist of what Leila picked up on was that his cinching an important business deal was imperative to the expansion of his company. Based on Reese's solemn tone, she figured things weren't going well.

Reese noticed the daycare sign. "You have a kid we need to pick up from daycare?" he asked as she navigated into the parking lot.

"I live on the floor above it. My private entrance is around the side." Leila said. She parked and they got out of the car.

"Interesting place to call home." He said as the trunk opened so that he could retrieve his luggage. "How come?"

"I own the building. The daycare center is my business."

"Very clever." He glanced around at the upscale business location.

The daycare was the size of a two-story warehouse with a large playground and an expanse of land behind it. Several cars were in the parking lot. A few parents were picking up their children. On the playground, several kids played on slides, swings, and monkey bars, while others played a game of putt-putt golf on artificial turf. Several kids cheered when another whacked the small ball between the legs of a gigantic parrot.

Upstairs, Leila's loft door opened into an extremely spacious, open area. She had a flair for the dramatic and had reconfigured the large warehouse space into sections with cream Roman columns separating the foyer and hallway from the living room. The floors were bleached hardwood with matching paneled walls. Large plants

were aplenty. A deep purple, leather sofa sat against the back wall, on the other side of the glass top table, matching chairs faced the sofa.

The unusually high windows on the back wall spanned up to vaulted ceilings and allowed a view of blue skies and green tops of leafy trees. A view she considered her peak at heaven. No one could have imagined that a busy playground, a major road, and several businesses were just beyond those walls. It was just like she wanted it to be.

Reese's cell phone rang again. "Hey, Suzette," he said casually.

The female name got Leila's attention. But she shouldn't be eavesdropping. Or at least, not look as if she were eavesdropping. Leila went to her desk at the far side of the room and opened the top drawer, pretending to be busy as she tuned into Reese's conversation.

"I'll rearrange my schedule," he was saying. "I don't want to change the plans for this weekend. Okay. Bye." He walked toward Leila.

Leila sensed Reese was studying her downcast head. She put down the mail she held and reached back inside the top drawer to get a stuffed envelope, which she handed to him. "These are for you. Jeep keys, Parker's house key, and address to the tuxedo shop."

"Parker is finally getting married." Reese shook his head. "I still can't believe it."

She angled her head, slightly confused. "For a best man, shouldn't you sound a bit more supportive?"

He looked at her, his expression tame. "Parker deserves to finally find happiness." Then he added, "And Chi is amazing. She is the yin to his yang."

"Well said." She passed him and headed down the hall. "You wanted to shower and change. Let me show you to the bathroom."

Reese stepped inside a bathroom that only an interior designer could have imagined. It was supersized with the look of two rooms forming one. The high ceiling was painted with clouds and the borders with leafy red and purple roses. It had a Jacuzzi tub, a freestanding glassed-in shower stall, and more Roman columns. The other side of the room featured a vanity area with a leather loveseat with a bookcase.

"Very nice. I like your taste." Reese set down his luggage.

"Thanks. I live too close to my job. So, home had to be an escape for me." Leila opened the bathroom's closet door and handed him a towel and washcloth. She pointed and said, "Everything else you might need should be under the sink."

She turned and noticed him unbuttoning his shirt, pulling the shirttails from out of his pants. She froze. Not out of panic but out of pleasure. She'd dreamt about

seeing that body up close and personal. Putting his hands on his hips the shirt parted, turning the pinup calendar view into reality.

His muscles were more chiseled than Leila had dreamt. Fine, silky black hairs called to be touched. She flexed her hand in response.

“Anything else I should know?” Reese asked, breaking her trance.

Again, she was staring. His chest was more enticing than the one she’d conjured up in her dream last night. She dragged her eyes up to his. His cocky grin didn’t help matters. It was one thing to secretly drool and pant like a cat in heat. Being caught, however, was rather embarrassing.

“I need to go downstairs to check on the daycare.” Leila found herself struggling to find something other than him to gawk at. Failing, she walked toward the safety of the door.

Unfortunately for her, he stopped her by catching her by the arm as she passed.

“What is it?” she whispered.

“There is something else,” Reese said, pulling her closer to his inviting body.

She sidestepped. “I’ve delayed you long enough from your meeting,” Leila said to his hand since she wasn’t brave enough to look him in the face. He might see just how in need of his touch she was.

The house telephone rang. Again, she jumped and inwardly cursed because of it. She needed to gain control of herself. “Let me get that.”

Due to her business and the enormous size of the upper level, she had landline phones installed in most rooms so that she wasn’t jogging down long hallways in search of her cell phone. She looked at the telephone that hung on the bathroom wall by the loveseat behind him. Though parts of the too-large bathroom looked and felt like a den, it was still too intimate a setting for her with Reese in it. She decided to take the call elsewhere.

At her desk, Leila found herself breathing heavily when she answered. “Chi! Hi! Your timing couldn’t be better... We just got here. Reese was about to jump in the shower.”

“Stop him!” Chi said. “I need to talk to him.”

“Oh, okay, hold on.” Leila hurried to the bathroom door and called out. “Reese, it’s for you!” When he picked up the bathroom telephone, she went to hang up the handheld on the desk.

As she walked away, Reese stepped out of the bathroom, the cordless telephone resting on his bare shoulder. He had taken off his shirt and shoes, and his pants unbuttoned and barely zipped. “I think that’s a fantastic idea. I’m sure of it,” he said to Chi. “I assume you’ve already talked to Leila?”

Leila came to stand in the hallway, watching him watch her. His stare was disconcerting. So sexy, so disarming, so distracting. Thankfully, the man would be leaving her home forever once he showered and changed. Moments earlier when he touched her, she'd had the impression he was going to do something quite thrilling. That would have been a mistake for her, considering the Suzette call, but she felt disappointed that it hadn't happened for some reason.

Luckily, he was leaving, and her life would soon return to normal. She could sit back and think about her crazy reactions to him later. Whatever he had just said to Chi, Leila hadn't heard; she was too busy enjoying his near nakedness.

In less than an hour he will be gone, she reminded herself. She exhaled slowly to calm her racing heart.

"Leila," Reese said, "Chi was wondering if you could help with something tonight."

"Sure," she said. "Of course."

"More wedding guests are flying to town," he said.

"Does she need me to pick them up from the airport?" she asked.

"It seems Parker has run out of rooms. So, Chi was wondering if you wouldn't mind entertaining me tonight..." Reese paused to smile, "by letting me use your bedroom."

Although his statement was obvious, Leila asked, slightly flustered, "What?"

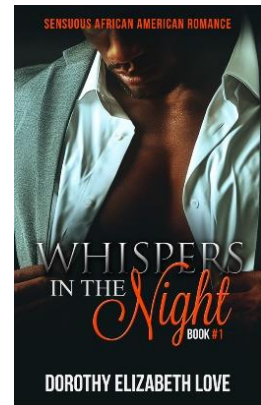
He removed the distance between them and said again, very slowly, very provocatively, "I want to stay the night with you."

The Ryan Family Series

The Ryan Family Series will make you cry, make you laugh, make you cheer.

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The Ryan family reunites in **TAKEN BY YOU** for the wedding of Parker Ryan and Chi. Leila Chamberlain is Chi's best friend and Reese McCoy is the Best Man. A troubled marriage left Reese reserved and hurt. Leila finding happiness with this man she barely knew meant jeopardizing more than she bargained for. When Leila gets too close to Reese, his ex-wife, Suzette—who's still in love with him—will do whatever she can to eliminate the competition... including murder.

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Ryan Family Series