

SENSUOUS AFRICAN AMERICAN ROMANCE



EVERLASTING
Moments

TLC #3

DOROTHY ELIZABETH LOVE

Sensuous African American Romance

Everlasting Moments

by

Dorothy Elizabeth Love

Travel and Love Collection

Book-3

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LED Literature and Publication

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Chapter 1

He was *too* fine. Too tempting to be sitting alone like that, looking so effortlessly magnetic. Rhea Hamilton, a normally level-headed and independent woman, found herself feeling far too distracted by the sight of him. It was the kind of distraction that made her breathing heavy and her thoughts stray toward... well, less virtuous ideas. She was trying her best to remain focused, but how could she, with him just sitting there, working on his laptop while looking like a tempting morsel.

Rhea had been seated in Miami International Airport's Red-Carpet Club, waiting for her flight to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. There was still an hour before leaving, but she couldn't help glancing up every now and then at the incredibly handsome man in front of her. He looked like someone who had just stepped out of an ad campaign for "How to Make Every Woman Lose Her Mind in Under Ten Seconds." Broad shoulders, a tailored shirt and jeans hugging his muscular frame, and a chiseled jawline.

Breathe, Rhea, she told herself. *You're a professional, not a lovestruck teenager.* Still, she wondered about the extra gift bags at his feet. Were they for someone special? A girlfriend, maybe a wife? That thought pinched at her, but her curiosity didn't change.

Suddenly, he looked up. Their eyes met. Rhea's heart tripped over itself as his gaze held hers. His—steady and warm. She smiled, trying her best to look composed, though she felt anything but. His lips curved into a slow, irresistible smile that made her warm, as if he were reading her thoughts. Then he mouthed a simple, "Hello."

Rhea's pulse quickened. "Hello," she mouthed back, her voice whisper soft.

Before she could decide whether to walk over and strike up a conversation—or maybe just sit there and daydream about it—her phone rang. She reached into her purse and pulled it out, casting a quick glance his way. He had already returned to his laptop, leaving her both relieved and disappointed.

She smiled at caller ID. "This is Rhea."

"Hey, girl!!" Liz, Rhea's always overly excited friend, said. "Ready for the time of your life, or what? Rio, baby!"

"Liz!" Rhea replied, checking her watch. "You can't be calling from the plane. Please tell me you didn't miss your flight."

"That's why I'm calling. It's been delayed. Bad weather here in the Big Apple. But I think we'll still arrive in Rio around the same time you will." Liz was talking about herself and their mutual friend, LaShawn Williams, who was traveling with her.

Rhea said, "I was depending on you to get me to the Copacabana Palace Hotel. If you're late, I'll have to navigate Rio on my own."

"If the plane leaves soon, we can still hook up at the airport," Liz said. "Check the arrival monitor for our plane. Worst case, struggle with your

Portuguese to get a taxi driver. Only a few will speak English, but all of them should understand the name of the hotel."

Rhea groaned softly. "Right. Sure. And I'll try not to look like the lost tourist I'll undoubtedly be. Is it snowing in New York?"

"Some," Liz said. "That's why I can't wait to get to Rio. It's springtime there. A wonderful 80 degrees instead of 18. Beach, sun, and fun. Calgon and Continental Airlines, take me away!"

Rhea laughed. "Speaking of fun," she said very quietly, not wanting to be overheard, "there's a good-looking guy sitting across from me. I bet he'd be interesting to explore."

"Oh? Where are you?" Liz asked excitedly.

"The Red-Carpet lounge," Rhea said.

"That's why I don't hear any airport background racket. Always cozy. So, you're flirting in the lounge? Spill. I want details!"

"I'm not flirting," Rhea whispered. "Just admiring."

"Speak up!" Liz said. "I can barely hear you."

"He'll hear me," Rhea said a tiny bit louder.

"What does he look like?" Liz asked. "No need to gawk and not share."

Rhea reached for her Portuguese-English dictionary. Since she had recently gotten the assignment of photographing holiday festivities in Rio for *Culture Magazine* she had started trying to learn the language. Luckily, Liz was fluent in Portuguese and helped her practice.

“Fala Português,” she said quickly, switching to Portuguese so she could describe him without being overheard.

“Why?” Liz groaned. “Your Portuguese is terrible.”

“It’s the only way, if you want me to answer you,” Rhea said. “Besides, it’ll give me a chance to practice.”

“Good Lord,” Liz said, regretfully. “Just use your phone’s translator App.”

“It will be too loud.” Rhea flipped through the dictionary, finding all the right words. “Ele é lindo,” she continued in Portuguese. “Tall, muscular, with a smile that could melt glaciers. I bet his arms are just as strong as they look.”

Rhea paused to appreciate more of his body. The little of the skin that was exposed showed enough muscle definition that she knew he must be beautiful naked. Then she looked up more words to describe him.

“*Fala*,” Liz whined, urging Rhea to hurry and speak. “What’s taking you so long?”

“I think I got the words right.” She didn’t have the time to put it into full sentences. So, she had to wing it. Rhea hoped she was telling Liz that his handsome face had the sexiest mouth, one that had her wondering what he tasted like.

“I hope not!” Liz interrupted in English.

“What?” Rhea switched back to English.

“You just said, ‘I would love to kiss *you*’ and unless you were talking to him and not me, that ain’t gonna happen.”

“I meant to say *ele*. Isn’t that how to say ‘him’?”

“Much better,” Liz said.

A voice on the intercom called passengers for a flight to Atlanta. The man looked at his watch, stood and began packing up his laptop and gathering his belongings. He slid on his jacket, all the while watching Rhea watch him. Something enticing in his eyes enhanced his smile. His stare never wavered, never left hers. He waved goodbye, then turned and walked away.

“Well, that’s over,” Rhea said, disappointedly. “He just left to get on a plane to Atlanta.”

“Based on what you said about the guy, I’m surprised he didn’t just grab you and take you to some dark corner for a goodbye romp.”

Rhea laughed. “I was speaking a language he didn’t understand. And I also don’t do romps in busy airports.”

“You’re in the lounge,” Liz corrected. “Comfortable chairs and sofas, and private offices. It’s basically built for *classy* romps.”

“Get real,” Rhea said, then heard her flight being called. “They’re starting to board my plane. I’ll see you in Rio. Bye!”

Looking out of the lounge’s window, she saw that Miami’s late-night sky was filled with planes coming and going. Exhaling, she stood and grabbed her carry-on bag, camera case with tripod. The assignment in Rio de Janeiro was exactly what she needed. And it had come at the right time. She needed to escape from her life in the States for a while, especially at this time of year. Too many bad holiday memories.

She was flying business class. They would seat the first-class passengers before calling business class, followed by coach class, so she had a little time to spare.

As Rhea arrived at the gate, the number of passengers milling around confirmed it was definitely a full flight. A lot of people were going to Rio for Christmas, which was a week away. Rhea, however, was going for business, mostly. Her assignment was to take photographs of how Brazilians celebrated Christmas and New Year's for articles Liz was to write for the magazine. They had planned to vacation for a few days before starting the assignment.

Making her way through the crowd, Rhea got in line with her passport and ticket in hand. Once aboard, she found her row and stored her carry-on in the overhead. She slid over the aisle seat to take her seat at the window.

The friendly flight attendant came by with business-class refreshments. "Champagne? Juice?" she asked.

"No thanks," Rhea said, looking up. Then she saw the man from the airport lounge. When the attendant moved, he placed his gift bags and laptop next to her luggage in the overhead bin and sat beside her.

"Hello again," he said, smiling at her.

"Oh..." Rhea tried to hide her surprise but failed. "Hello."

Then he said something that almost took her breath away.

"*Posso lhe fazer uma pergunta?*" he asked slowly in perfectly clear Portuguese.

“What?” Rhea managed to swallow a gasp. She winced at his knowing look.

“I’m sorry,” he said with his slight accent. “Was I speaking too fast?” He smiled with that incredible mouth again.

Rhea managed to shake her head. ‘No.’

“I overheard you on the phone saying that you wanted to practice the language. I thought I could help.”

“I understood you just to say... Ask something of me?” Rhea’s mouth went dry, probably because it was gaping open. Being found out was always a damning thing. She thought she had been cunning by describing him in a foreign language. She managed to work her jaw to form another sentence. “I just hadn’t expected it to be in Portuguese.”

“I’m fluent in Portuguese.” He paused, his sexy smile widening as his gaze went to her lips. “I liked what you said about me earlier. Your description was... *flattering*. Especially the part about the kiss. Makes me want to take you up on your desire.”

Chapter 2

Rhea sat perfectly still, trying to formulate a coherent response. Her usually quick brain failed to produce anything, but luckily for her, the flight attendant stopped next to them.

What a godsend, Rhea thought.

“Champagne? Juice?” The attendant asked the man sitting next to her, but Rhea reached for a glass of champagne like it was a life preserver. “You changed your mind?” the pretty attendant asked Rhea with a smile.

Rhea took a large gulp of champagne. She set the glass in the holder between the seats and glanced around for a possibly empty seat to move to. Embarrassment overwhelmed her. She was actually considering running and hiding by moving to another seat. Shaking off the thought, she decided to figure out how to overcome the awkwardness. She sat straighter and lifted her chin a little, determined to look braver than she felt. Besides, she had a reputation for dealing with things directly. But his next statement caught her by surprise.

“Are you headed to Rio on business or pleasure?” The way he stretched out the last word carried a hint of desire.

“Plea...” Rhea changed her mind. “Uh, business mostly.” She didn’t think it possible for her awkwardness to increase, but it did. And she was sure he realized it. “You said before, in Portuguese, that you wanted to ask me a question. Was that it?”

“I was going to ask if you wanted to practice on me?”

Rhea was absolutely sure there was a hidden meaning in that statement. It was said too softly and wrapped in so much sex appeal for it not to have been. “My Portuguese is bad,” she admitted, “so maybe, I’ll pass on practicing for now.”

He chuckled softly, his gaze still locked on her. “Fair enough. “So, what business takes you to Brazil?”

His switch to a casual conversation gave her time to formulate a better way of explaining that she wasn’t a tramp, just a woman who appreciated a nice-looking man. Yet nothing suitable came to mind. She answered his question instead.

“I’m a photographer. I’ve been hired by *Culture Magazine* to photograph the Christmas and New Year’s celebrations in Brazil.”

“You’ll enjoy both holidays,” he said. “New Year’s is a very spiritual and full of energy. You’ll have great photo opportunities.”

“I’ve heard.” She extended her hand for a shake, hoping the formality would help her reset the conversation. “I’m Rhea Hamilton.”

“I’m Gustavo. Gustavo Owens. Americans like to call me Gus.” He took her hand and held on.

“Since I’m headed to Brazil, I might as well do as Brazilians do,” Rhea said. “I’ll call you Gustavo.”

“Good choice,” he grinned. “Nice to officially meet the woman bold enough to let me know exactly what she thinks of me.”

Rhea almost flinched but forced herself to stay calm. There was probably some etiquette guide on flirting with advice on how to properly dissuade such bluntness by: Looking away, attempting coyness, or feigning angelic shock. She did none of that and blamed it on his appeal.

This is fine, I can handle this. Was her chant to herself. Then she said to Gustavo, “If I’d known you understood me, I wouldn’t have said it.”

“You meant it, though,” Gustavo leaned back, watching her intently as he sipped his champagne. “And I enjoyed it. Would I seem too forward if I suggest we explore your thoughts on the matter further?”

“You must be Brazilian,” Rhea quipped, noticing how effortlessly confident he was. He didn’t just flirt—he owned the conversation.

He chuckled. “My mother is. My father is African-American. What gave it away?”

Gustavo’s skin complexion was about the same shade of pecan tan as hers. Rhea had thought he was solely African American, but as she studied his features, hair texture, golden-tinted skin, she changed her mind. Yes, he had Latin blood in him. *Very nice*, she thought. She liked what she saw.

“I’ve read that Brazilian men are very forward,” Rhea said with a playful smile. “And you, sir, fit the description perfectly.”

Gustavo laughed, a deep, warm sound that made Rhea's heart skip. "You looked me in the eye and said you wanted to kiss me," he said, still laughing. "And *I'm* the forward one?"

Rhea blushed. "Touche. I'm a little embarrassed about that. Can you promise to forget it and spare my feelings?"

"I'll spare your feelings," he said, his voice softening. "But I doubt you're embarrassed."

"Why would you think that I'm not?" Rhea asked.

He managed to stop laughing. "Because I saw the way you looked at me in the lounge. Even if I hadn't known what you were saying, the way you were undressing me with your eyes told me just as much."

Rhea dropped her gaze. Her false bravery could only go so far. She picked up her glass of champagne and took another sip. It was past eleven at night, the end of a long, busy day. She blamed her inability to respond intelligently to her being tired.

"And for the record," Gustavo added, his voice lowering. "I enjoyed every second of it."

Just then, the captain came over the intercom and welcomed everyone on board. He told them that in just over eight hours they would be in Rio, and he promised a safe flight. The attendant hurried around to remove empty glasses while others prepared for takeoff.

Rhea downed the last of her champagne and gave her glass to the flight attendant before turning to look out the window. Nothing outside held her

interest, but it took her attention away from Gustavo, until she saw his reflection in the window. Was there any way to escape his tantalizing stare? She reached into the seat pocket in front of her and found a magazine. Scanning the pages, she made herself look busy.

"I heard you say you were staying at the Copacabana Palace," Gustavo said, pulling her back into the conversation.

Rhea nodded and took a keen interest in some hand-held gadget that ate lint off your clothes without damaging them. She couldn't figure out a reason to ever want the advertised wonder, but she scanned the page for a price.

"It's across from the beach," Gustavo said. "Lots of tourists there. If you're thinking of spending time at the beach, go to the beaches south of the hotel. Fewer people and much prettier."

"I'll remember that," Rhea said to the magazine. Taking another breath, she willed her bravery to return. Small talk first, then deal with the issue caused by her flirtatious comment, she promised herself. "Sounds like you're very familiar with Rio."

"I live in Rio de Janeiro—the state, not the city. Ever heard of Barra?"

"No," Rhea said.

"My home is there."

"You're going home for Christmas? Came to the States to shop?"

"Going home? Yes. Not here to shop." He grinned. "The presents you saw were gifts from my mother. She lives in the States. We celebrated last week since she's planning to spend Christmas in Virginia with friends. I don't have

any desire to spend time in the snow. This was the only way I could get out of going to Virginia for Christmas.”

“That was a nice idea,” Rhea said.

“Mom’s great,” Gustavo said. “But she wasn’t going to take no for an answer.”

Rhea found herself staring at his handsome features again. Something about the pride in his eyes, coupled with the sincerity in his voice when speaking of his mother, softened his demeanor. Up close, his eyes were more penetrating, his mouth more inviting. Toothpaste advertisers would love him. As a photographer, Rhea couldn’t seem to get enough of his face. She mentally framed it, as if preparing to shoot it.

“I would love to know what you’re thinking,” Gustavo said.

“About how I would like to take your picture. I study faces for a living. Yours says a lot.”

“Interesting,” he said. “I was thinking the same thing about your expression. But picture-taking isn’t what I came up with.”

If Rhea had been able to use her brain instead of her emotions, she would have left that statement alone. Instead, she said, “And just what were you thinking?”

“That your expression tells me you really wouldn’t mind being someplace alone with me. And if you were, I wouldn’t resist. I think you would enjoy a Brazilian man.”

Rhea pulled her lower lip between her teeth-a habit when nervous. Slowly she released it before using the tip of her tongue to moisten its center.

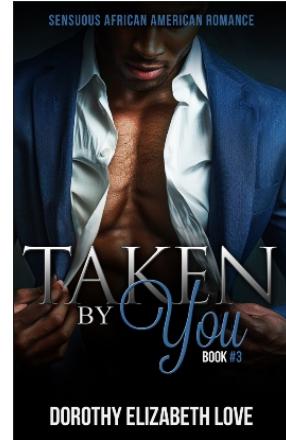
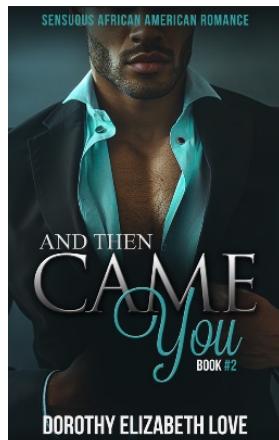
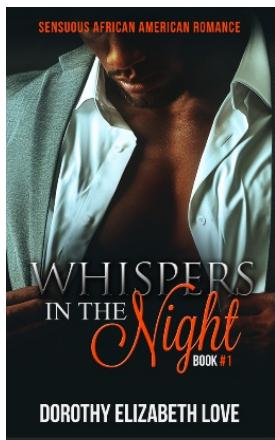
“But you’re half-American.” It was the only thing she could think to say to get his attention off her mouth.

“And all man,” Gustavo said, staring back into her eyes. “A perceptive one at that.”

The plane taxied down the runway as flight attendants started the safety routine. Although she’d heard the spiel a hundred times, Rhea pretended to pay close attention to every word. In minutes, the plane was in the air and heading to an exotic place that was home to millions of erotic men like Gustavo. And she had just over eight hours to figure out how she was going to control her reaction to just one of them.

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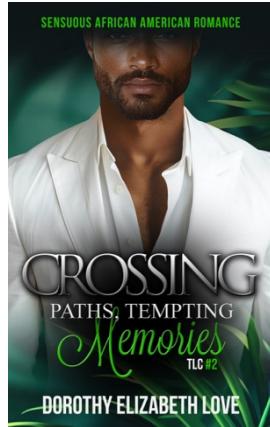
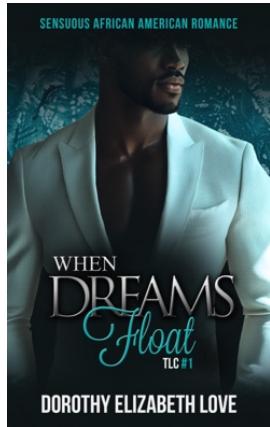
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Everlasting Moments – Set in Rio de Janeiro

In the captivating streets of Rio, *Everlasting Moments* brings photographer Rhea Hamilton face-to-face with a man who stirs her deepest desires. Gustavo Owens isn't just a man of mystery—he's a seductive force that draws her into a passion never anticipated.

Let's Stay in Touch

Hi there!

I just wanted to take a moment to thank you—from the bottom of my heart—for spending your time reading a few pages or possibly one of my books. It means the world to me that you've stepped into this journey with me.

Writing has always been my passion; it's where my heart truly comes alive. Being able to share stories that entertain, stir emotions, and bring joy (and a dose of heat!) to readers is why I do what I do.

I hope you've found moments to smile, sigh, and maybe even blush as you read. Would you be willing to do me the honor of sharing my novels with others who support African American Romance?

With gratitude,



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Book-3 Excerpt

Travel and Love Collection