

# White Tent

By : **Cherie Arlavine**

It all started in a White Tent. That was when Will Harris proposed. But Brie had her life planned. Harvard, a nice man to settle down with, then kids and a dog. She liked knowing what was going to come of life. And when Will proposed, it was the first time he'd ever spoken to her. Will is going off to collage, and he wants a smart, ceative, trophy wife to take along. And Will is used to getting what he wants. But Brie is a fighter, and Will just isn't in her life plan.



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## White Tent : Chapter 1

It was a creative and fabulous party, she had to admit. Chandeliers hung from posts in the white tent and made everyone's skin glow. Red and white wine was available, though most of the people here were under age.

The only reason Brie had come was to get out of the house. Her parents had been fighting a lot lately, and she'd heard about this party and since she had been generously given an invitation she decided to be polite and come. She sighed at the whole illusion of the party.

It was elegant, no doubt. The conversation was murmured and sounded polite. Smiles lit up friendly faces. Will Harris was the host of the glorious party. Though he was yet to be seen, his parents stood, allowing the wine it seemed, and looked over the students.

They made sure the two, long, white tables were well stocked with wine and expensive finger foods. Because Brie didn't really know anyone at the party, she sat at a table, sipping red wine, and thinking to herself. The atmosphere was captivating, and her fighting parents didn't exist here.

Tonight Brie had decided to dress up. She wore a white, flowing gown that was backless and of her own design. She hated going shopping, so she made her own dresses and clothes. Sometimes. She didn't always have time. So she was forced to the mall.

Brie saw most dresses were more extravagant, but didn't mind. She didn't like to stand out. She'd put on some makeup tonight, which was unlike her. She preferred an all natural look, which she was criticized on frequently.

But tonight she wore a common black around her eyes and vibrant red lipstick. To bring out her green eyes she wore a dark red violet eyeshadow that contrasted brightly. Her red cheeks had been left alone. Any blush on them and she would look like a blast from the eighties.

Mrs. Harris tapped on her wine glass and the tent quieted down. She smiled sweetly at the faces. "My husband and I would like to thank you all for coming. I am pleased to see that Will knows so many polite friends. But we do request all of you take it easy on the wine." There was quiet laughter.

"Will will be down in a moment. This party was his idea and Mr. Harris and I were a bit objective at first, but we realize that our son is a senior this year and that he will have a long career ahead of him in football." she sighed and looked down at her glass briefly.

"Will has told me that the idea of the party is realized to most of you." Of course it was. Will was looking for a wife.

Brie came because she knew she'd never be chosen. But she had to admit she was curious as to who he would pick. He said he was choosing candidates tonight and at the end of the school year he would choose one to be his wife.

Will was going off to collage for football and wanted to have a wife to join him. His parents would pay for her scholarship. Every girl here who was a possible candidate had excellent grades and were a shoe in for the University of California, then could move on to wherever he choose to go next.

He needed a wife that was willing to follow him wherever he choose to go. Brie had already been accepted to Harvard. She knew she had only been invited to spread the gossip about the candidates and because she was a

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good and quiet girl.

"Oh look, here's Will now." Mrs. Harris said as Will entered, dressed in an expensive tux and with brilliant and cocky grin on his face. He had a smooth tan over his face and hands.

He was a hottie no doubt. He was quarterback on the football team, he had a large trust fund waiting for him, and had been raised right. He was a dream, any girl's. Including Brie.

But she knew she was set for a good man, with a normal life, and that fit her just fine. She liked being in one place, being around subtle people. The woman for Will would have to be very tolerant. Brie might be able to be taught, but she wasn't sure she wanted to learn.

She stood up in respect and clapped. After things settled down and he began talking to his friends she checked the time. It was past her curfew. But she knew she'd get in trouble anyway when she came home a little tipsy and decided an hour or so wouldn't hurt.

Will was suddenly standing in front of the crowd where his mother had been. "I want to thank you all for coming," he began. "Most of my friends think I'm crazy, but I'm glad they're here to support me. I have ten rings." he said and opened a rectangle box holding the ten engagement rings.

"I've given this a lot of thought and I know what kind of woman I want to be with. I see all of my choices are here tonight so I won't have to hunt them down at school."

He stepped forward and faced Amy Grant. She was popular at school, an obvious choice. But Brie smiled anyway. It was, after all, pretty interesting.

His next choice was Sarah Mikes, another popular girl. She watched him give rings to four more girls until she realized she had a voice mail message. She picked up her phone and listened to her Mom telling her in a strict and firm tone to get her butt home.

She sighed and closed her phone. She set the wine down and found her purse. She stood to leave the tent and saw she was face to face with Will Harris. "Oh, excuse me. I'm sorry. I have to get home." she explained.

"Oh, well here." He took her left hand and slipped a ring onto her finger. She stared at him in shock. "I'll see you at school then." he said then turned to place the final ring on another girl's finger.

Brie stared at her hand, her mouth hanging open. She didn't know that he even knew who she was. And he was considering her as a wife?

Was this some kind of sick joke? She suddenly felt humiliated. He would do this in front of his parents? Maybe he wasn't a gentleman like she thought.

He made a speech then talked with the other students. She pushed her way through the crowd, tears beginning to form in her eyes. She twisted off the ring then tapped on his shoulder. He turned around with a smile. Then he frowned when he saw her face. "Brie, is something wrong-""You think this is funny?" she asked. She shoved the ring into his hand. "I came to be polite and you humiliate me like this?"

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Put a ring on the nerd. Funny, real funny." she snapped then turned and pushed through the crowd. What had she ever done to him? Outside the tent a hand caught her arm.

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Will spun her around to face him. "I would never joke about something like this. I would never humiliate a woman like that either. I am serious about this. You're a good woman.

You'd be a good wife. That's why I picked you. Please, take this. I would hate to lose you. It's not a joke. I'll go in there and tell everyone what a great person you are. Please," he begged. "Consider being my wife."

She could see the sincerity in his eyes. "I don't even know you." she whispered.

"We have the month to get to know each other." he replied. He took her hand again and slipped on the ring. He stroked her hair and placed it behind her ear. "Please Brie."

All she could do was stare. He smiled. "I'll take that as a yes. Drive safe."

## Chapter 2: Why Marry Me?

What was she going to tell her parents? God, she hardly believed it. She sat in the driveway, twisting and turning her hand so the diamond shined in the dim light. The silver band fit her finger perfectly. She wondered briefly how he had gotten her ring size.

She sighed and climbed out of the car. She made sure her dress didn't get caught in the car door as she closed it then took one step at a time back to her falling apart environment. She noticed the black car before she made it half way to her porch.

It was stopped in front of the yard and there was a man dressed in a black suit leaning against it. She gasped as she saw the earpiece. Was he FBI? "Can I help you?" she called. He just shook his head. "Um, who are you?" she asked, an uncomfortable feeling in her stomach.

"I am your body guard. Mr. Harris hired me." he explained.

Wow, Will was serious about this. "Okay." she replied then turned back to the porch. She wasn't in the mood to deal with this. She quietly unlocked the door and pushed it open. The lights were on in the next room. Someone had waited up for her. She quickly twisted off the ring and put it down her bra, not knowing what else to do.

She stepped into the livingroom and saw her dad was the one who had waited up. "Hey." she whispered.

"Your Mom has been worried about you." he murmured. "I'm sorry we didn't say goodbye. It's too bad she couldn't have seen you tonight. You look so pretty, Brie. Where did you get that dress?"

"I made it." she replied. He held out his arms and she walked over to him and sat down in his lap. "She left didn't she?"

He nodded. "She's coming back tomorrow, for you and her things. She wants to take you to the Keys for a little while. She has an Aunt there."

"For how long?" "A few months." he sighed. "You should go."

"I can't." she whispered. She reached into her bra and pulled out the ring. "Will Harris chose ten girls that might be a potential wife for him tonight. I told you about it, remember?"

He nodded. "Of course."

"I went to see who he'd choose and get out for a while. It turns out that I was one of the girls."

He made a face. "Do you even know him?"

"Not really." she whispered.

"Why would you want to marry him?"

She shrugged. "It couldn't hurt to get to know him. He won't pick me, Daddy. Trust me." she slipped the ring on her hand. "I'll go with mom when school gets out. We would have decided that anyway. Maybe things will work out for you and mom. You never know."

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He squeezed his daughter. "I'm sorry you've had to suffer along with us. Be careful with this Brie. Don't let this guy break your heart."

"Well Dad, I don't think I'll go as far as giving him my heart." she replied.

"Get to bed. And don't let your Mom know you were drinking."

"It was just a little bit of wine. It was a nice party."

"I'm glad. Goodnight honey."

"Night Daddy."\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*Brie awoke to the sound of her mother's breathing. She must have come home and fell asleep in her bed. She opened her eyes and saw her mother was sound asleep. She was holding her hand, the one with the ring. There was no hiding it from her now.

Brie got up slowly and carefully got out of bed. Her mother didn't wake and Brie got ready for school. Her mother's face appeared as she had been crying. Brie splashed some water on her face in the bathroom then looked down at the ring. The diamond was big for something like this.

She couldn't really size it. She wasn't good at that kind of thing. Carats and stuff anyway. She sighed and ran her fingers through her hair. This wasn't any contest. It was simple who would win. Sarah would be his choice. She was perfect for him.

Brie didn't know why she'd even subject herself to this. Because of that face, she decided. It was so kind, and begging. She felt mean to say no.

"So he picked you?" her Mother asked.

Brie nodded. "It's just, I don't know." she breathed. "It's hard to say no to him."

"I want you to come-"

"Mom, I have one month of school left. I'll come with you after graduation. I'll stay with you and Aunt Lila until I have to go to Harvard. Don't worry about this Will thing. I won't give up Harvard for him."

She nodded then disappeared.

Brie shook her head and decided to wear makeup today.

She skipped breakfast after getting dressed and headed to her car. The body guard was still there. She saw he followed her to school. She would tell Will to lay off on that. She wasn't in any danger. She didn't need a body guard.

She pulled into the parking lot and saw nine girls with shiny rings on their fingers crowded around Will. She would tell him later. She saw nine other black cars similar to the one of her body guard. She twisted off the ring and put it inside her bra. Everyone was staring at the nine girls. She didn't want the same attention.

Hell, she shouldn't be doing this. She would give him back the ring. He would never pick her anyway. She kept her head down as she trampled across the parking lot. She saw the body guard following her. She turned

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and stopped. She looked at him. He caught up to her.

"You need anything?" he asked.

"Um, yeah actually. Look, I'm not in any potential danger. Why don't you go keep an eye on Will or something?"

"I have orders to watch you and I will follow them."

"You can't follow me. I'll put a restraining order against you. Just tell Will I don't need a body guard." she reached into her bra and gave him the ring.

"Give this to him while you're at it. If he asks why, just tell him I said I was too young to get married. I'm one of those girls who has a life plan. He'll never pick me anyway." she said then turned back toward the school.

She didn't make it to her first class before Will found her. "Brie! Brie!" he shouted. She sped up and tried to avoid him. She realized after a few seconds how well her chances were of out running the star athlete in school. He caught her arm again. "Brie." he snapped. He jerked her around to face him.

She was face to face with an angry man. "I...I-" she began.

"You are not going to get out of this." he hissed.

"Will...Mr. Harris. I have a life plan. I've been accepted to Harvard. You have nine other pretty, smart, on the go girls. I have huge plans. I can't follow you around. You wouldn't have picked me anyway."

His grip tightened. "You won't embarrass me like this."

"Just pick someone else. No one has to know it was me."

"That's not all I'm talking about. And they will know. Maybe I already know who I want to marry me."

"Then why are you doing all of this?" she asked. "Just go tell Sarah you want to marry her."

He scoffed. "Sarah is a whore. Look, I've already picked the girl. The rest of them are girls I'm just trying to let off easy with diamond rings."

"Well, quit stalling. Go tell Amy then."

"Amy is a bitch." he murmured.

"Well go tell whoever it is and quit these games. And I don't get why you chose me to let off easy. It's not like we've ever even talked."

"It's because you're the one I chose to marry." he said.

She blinked. "What? Me?"

"Yes. You're the only girl I could see myself married to."

She gasped. "You don't even know me!"

"I know enough." he replied. "I'm not looking for love. I'm looking for a good wife."



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"Well you obviously choose wrong. I am not giving up Harvard."

"You don't have to."

She paused. "I thought you wanted a wife who could follow you around."

"I do. But I can make arrangements. I can figure something out. I would never make you drop out of Harvard. After we both graduate, we'll be on the road a lot. I might be going professional. I already have some offers. If I do good in collage," he was being modest. "I might get even more offers and we'll see. So," he took her hand. "What do you think?"

"You mean besides that you're crazy?" she snapped. "I am not one of those girls who get married right out of highschool. I have a life plan. Collage, career, then marriage, two kids, family vacations. See, a life plan."

He chuckled. "Sounds boring. Why would you want a thought out life?"

She fumed. "Because that's the kind of person I am! I like knowing what's going to happen."

His thumb ran soft circles over the back of her hand. "Two roads diverged in a wood. And I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

She stared at him. "Robert Frost?"

He nodded. "I want you to be my wife Brie."

"Why?" she whispered.

"You cook, you clean, you care." he murmured. "You're great with kids, you're a strong woman. You don't give up once you have your mind set. You've never had a boyfriend, that I like. You have a great menstrual cycle-"

"Wait. How the hell do you know about my menstrual cycle? The only person I've ever told was my Mom."

"And your doctor." he reminded.

She gritted her teeth. "You got into my medical files?"

"Yes." he said, seeming unrepentant. "Like I was saying, I like it. You only have it once every other month. It always starts at three pm on nineteenth and lasts exactly seventy-two hours."

"Why would you-"

"If we're going to be married I want to know when I'm going to have to run to the store to get tampons, chocolate, and any other cravings. If we're trying to have a baby we'll know you're pregnant if you're late. See where I'm going with this?"

She rolled her eyes. "The only problem is that I'm not going to marry you."

"Yes you will." he said casually. "You will marry me at the end of the month."

"Are you going to make me?" she scoffed.

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"Not yet. In the mean time I'm going to teach you."

She scowled at him. "Get a life. Just because you're a rich brat doesn't mean you get everything you want." She planned on turning and stomping away but he had a firm hold on her hand.

"No, I don't get everything I want because I'm rich. I do because I want it." he replied. "I need a good wife, I choose you. I'll teach you everything you need to know before we get married." She bared her teeth at him. "I am not a dog to be trained! And getting married will hold back my career. I will not let that happen!" she hissed. She jerked her hand away and turned to stomp to her class. It was while she stormed down the hall in blind fury she remembered he sat behind her in class.

## Chapter 3: Humiliation

She sneered at the back of the head in front of her, ignoring Will. He kept trying to get her attention and she kept ignoring him. She could tell he was becoming frustrated. She figured he'd stop if he realized she was ignoring him. Instead he stood, which caught the teacher's attention immediately.

"Can I help you Mr. Harris?" he asked.

"Well, not exactly. I just need to explain something to the class. I would appreciate it if someone would record this." Six people whipped out their phones immediately then soon after half of the class was recording him. "I want the whole school to know that Brie Michaels is mine. She is my future wife and anyone who hurts her, touches her, or even speaks to her without my permission will regret it." He grabbed her wrist and yanked her up out of her chair. "This girl is mine."

She stood there like a deer caught in the headlights. Her life was ruined at this highschool. She could never show her face again after today. Everyone began sending the video to all of their friends. Will let go of her wrist and she sat down in her chair in complete shock.

She sunk down in her chair and covered her face for the rest of the period. She couldn't believe him! How dare he do this? Who was he to tell her what she was going to do? This was the twenty-first century dammit! She wasn't a slave, she was a free woman and she didn't have to do anything she didn't want to.

The bell rang and she didn't make any notion that she was going to move. She was going to do something she had never done before. She was going to haul her butt out of this place and skip the rest of the day. The rest of the year. Maybe she could start college a few months early.

She was smart wasn't she? Her parents would approve, probably. Hell, she didn't mind missing prom. Who liked prom anyway? She didn't go last year, she wasn't really sure if she was going this year. She didn't feel like she'd miss much. Skipping was just her only option now.

She began to gather her books, thinking about the best way to leave without getting caught.

"Are we daydreaming?" Will asked.

She jumped in her seat. "Oh. Why are you still here?"

"I was just waiting for my future wife."

"Quit calling me that!" she hissed. "You have ruined my life!"

"You'll get over it." he replied casually.

She held her chin up. "I think that's for me to decide."

He held out his hand. "C'mon, let's go. We'll be late for class."

"I'm not going anywhere with you." she replied. "I can walk myself to class."

"Just come on. I won't bite."

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"No." she replied.

"Brie-"

"I said no. There is a teacher in this room. Are you going to make me?" she raised an eyebrow at him.

"Fine. I'll meet you in our next class." he replied. He turned and left the room.

She counted slowly to ten before standing up. She gathered her books then with her jaw set marched into the hallway and straight toward the exit.

She walked outside and didn't dare look back. She knew if she did she'd go back inside. She went straight to her car and got in then turned the key.

It clicked. She tried it again, but again it clicked. "Why won't you start?" she hissed and reached for the handle to pop the trunk. She got out of her car and lifted the hood. She gasped when she saw pieces of her engine was missing.

"Looking for these?" a voice from behind her asked. She jumped around and saw Will holding up the missing pieces.

## Chapter 4: Hitch Hiking

"Put those back!" she shouted.

"No." he replied, then smiled.

"I'm not going back into that school. Not after what you did."

"Fine, you can sit in your car. Doesn't matter to me. I'll just be inside." he said.

She watched him leave then slammed down the hood of her car and decided three miles wasn't really that long of a walk. She'd hitch hike if she had to. She was not going back into that school. She marched off school property and down the busy street. A half a mile later a car stopped next to her. Who else could it be but Will? "What do you think you're doing?" he snapped.

"Walking home." she replied.

"Do you know how dangerous it is to walk down this street?" he hissed.

"Sometimes I do stupid things. Still want to marry me?" she replied.

"Of course. But get in the car. We're going back to school."

"You'll have to kill me first." she replied.

"You're going to walk all the way home?" he asked. "It's kind of far."

"You know what, you're right." she replied. She pulled up her skirt around her waist then unbuttoned her shirt a little so some cleavage was showing.

"What are you doing?" Will asked.

She didn't answer, instead she let down her hair, shook it out, then held out her thumb.

"Are you insane?" Will asked. "You could get picked up by some weirdo."

"As long as he's nothing like you I'll be fine." she replied.

"Do you even know what you're doing?"

"You drove me to this. So I blame you."

Will got out of his car and stomped over to her. "Get in the car. I'll take you home."

"No." she replied.

He suddenly bent down and wrapped his arms around her upper thighs then shoved her into his car. She crossed her arms as he slammed the door closed then got in on the other side. He started the car and began driving her home. "You know, some crazy guy could have raped you or killed you."

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"It's not really your business." she replied.

He began muttering incoherently under his breath. "Maybe you were a bad choice."

Though it stung, she held her chin up. "Good. I thought it would take you forever to catch on."

"But maybe you're just acting out. You're a little bit stubborn. I can fix that."

She glared at him. "I am not a broken toy to be fixed. I am my own person and you apparently don't understand that."

"All I know is that you're my future wife and that I have certain expectations for you to reach."

She glared at him and fumed. "What if I just told you to go to hell?" she snapped.

"I'd say, 'make me'." he replied. He looked over at her. "Don't be mad Brie. Some things are just inevitable."

"I'd say that considering we live in a free country that this isn't exactly inevitable. I have rights."

"Of course you do." he replied. He licked his lips and sighed. "Brie, I can take care of you. I want you to go to Harvard. I'm a bad guy because I have a few standards?"

"No. I understand standards. But training me is a whole different issue."

"It's only an issue because you're making it one. And it's not training. It's...preparing." he said.

"Call it whatever you want. You should learn to accept people for who they are."

"So if I dropped the standards thing you would marry me?"

"No! What girl in her right mind would waste a marriage on you?"

"What's wrong with me?"

"That. That you think there isn't anything wrong with you. Maybe you're the one who needs to change." she said.

"Maybe." he agreed. "I can be flexible. So, how many kids should we have?"

She had never wanted to hit anyone before in her entire life. But she wanted to pound Will Harris into the ground twenty times over.

"We are not having any kids. Got it? You need to get out of this little fantasy world of yours and get it through your thick skull that just because you have money you can't have everything you want."

"I don't think I can everything I want because I have money. I think I can because I'm, well, me."

"This is unbelievable. You know, I used to think you were a great guy. But now I see you're just a...a...a jack ass."

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He laughed. "Okay, this cussing is cute now, but don't make it a habit. It's just dirty when you're in your late twenties and thirties."

"Will Harris, I have never wanted to kill anyone before, but you are really pushing it."

"Hey, that's not cute at all, Brie. That's inappropriate behavior. I really hope this acting out dies down quickly."

Acting out? she'd give him acting out. "Will, you don't want to marry me."

He sighed. "Of course I do."

"No you don't. I'm pregnant with another man's baby."

"No you're not." he said then laughed.

"I'll take a test. I am pregnant, swear it."

He slammed on the brakes and looked at her. "Then who is the father?"

"Jacob Willis. Ask him yourself."

Will glared at me. "I will. And if it's true, I'm going to kick his ass."

"No, no. I was with him before you." she said matter-of-factly.

"I don't care. I saw him making out with Mandy. He's the father of your child and he's with another girl? I'm going to call him and give him a piece of my mind."

"Just take me home! God, you are impossible. A roach, that's what you are. You never die, you never go away, you just keep coming back!"

"Are you pregnant or not?" he demanded to know.

"I guess you'll never know."

"I think I will in a few months."

She huffed out a breath. "I'm not pregnant. Are you happy?"

"Yes, actually." He started the car again. "Brie, I'm trying to give you everything I can. Why won't you marry me?"

"Because I don't love you and you don't love me. I have a policy. If I'm going to spend the rest of my life with a man, share his bed and have his children, it would be nice to actually love him. I don't want to marry a guy just because it works. If that means spending the rest of my life alone then so be it. Do you understand now?"

"What does love have to do with anything?" he asked.

Brie shook her head. "You know, if you weren't such a stubborn jerk I would feel sorry for you."

He pulled up to the house. He grabbed her arm as she began to get out. "I want to meet your parents."

"They're not here. Will," she sighed and looked him in the eye. "I will never marry a man I don't love."

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He smiled. "Then I guess I'll just have to make you fall in love with me."



## Chapter 5: First Kiss

Brie couldn't sleep. She was still deciding whether or not she was going to school Monday. She decided a shower would help her think.

She pulled off her shirt then heard tapping on the window. She looked over and saw Will. He was sitting on her roof, and grinning. She gasped and quickly pulled her shirt back over her head.

She went over to the window and opened it. "Will, what are you doing?"

"I thought this might be romantic." he replied. He slid inside quietly then closed the window. "What do you think?" he whispered.

"It would be romantic if I liked you." Brie replied. "Go home Will."

"Actually, I thought we would go swimming. My parents aren't home and I've set up my pool. Get your swimsuit, come on."

"Will, no. I want to go to bed." Brie replied.

"You've been pacing since I climbed up here. I won't bite, Brie." he paused. "Well I might. But I guess that depends on how far things go." He smiled.

"I don't sneak out." she replied.

"C'mon, my wife has to have a little bit of adventure in her."

"Here we go again. You need therapy."

"C'mon, let's go swimming."

"No! Go home Will."

He took her arms and pulled her to him. He lifted her chin and kissed her. He smiled down at her. "I told you I'm willing to change."

She smacked him. "Get out of my room."

He bit his lip. Then he kneeled to the ground. "Brie, I want you to fall in love with me. And I vow not to leave this room until you come with me. Please, just give me a chance. How much can you lose?"

She gasped. The pool was lit with tiki torches and an endless amount of cream white candles. The bottom of the pool was lit with a dim blue light. Will smiled and looped his arm through hers then led her to the deck. "There's wine, soda, water, and plenty of snacks and fruits."

"No whipped cream?" she murmured.

"Of course." he replied and reached under the bamboo counter and pulled out three bottles of whipped cream. "What's a date without whipped cream?"

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She rolled her eyes but was smiling. "Not much of a date I guess."

He smiled back, his eyes twinkled. "You didn't deny it was a date."

She sighed. "I guess I didn't. I'm not really hungry."

"Would you like to sit?" he asked and gestured to some chairs that were made of matching bamboo.

She shrugged. "Sure, that sounds great. My feet are killing me from walking earlier."

She sat down and leaned back and closed her eyes. She sighed at the lovely heat the candles gave off.

Will sighed too, appreciative of her lovely appearance and in hopes that his plan tonight would help him claim Brie as his own. He sat down next to her. "So do you want to be a lawyer then?" he asked.

She smiled. "You're the one with all the answers, Will. Why don't you tell me?"

"You prefer human behavioral studies though."

"Yes," she murmured. "I find the reactions of humans very interesting."

"Why?" he asked, leaning forward.

She shrugged. "I don't know quite frankly. Like if I do this," she slowly stretched out a long leg and ran her bare foot over his naked leg. She slowly rubbed it up and down until she heard his breath catch. She smiled and opened her eyes. "It intrigues me to see what your reaction is. Do you think I'm a tease, a seducer? Your face says it all though." she sighed.

She closed her eyes again and returned her leg to her own chair. "The chemicals in your body are telling you that you desire sex. Am I wrong?"

He swallowed. "Not exactly."

"I didn't think so." she sighed. "But I wasn't always good at deciding what people feel at a certain moment. I was horrible at it actually. I suppose not knowing made me want to find out. As you can see, I'm much better at it now."

She hadn't opened her eyes, hadn't even peeked as far as he could tell. But she knew.

"Like right now. You're moving in to kiss me. And I'm warning you now, it's a bad idea." she whispered.

He moved over her in the chair, pressed his lips against her neck. "Why?" he murmured.

"I'm not stupid Will. I know why you brought me here."

He stroked a hand softly down her cheek. "And here I thought I knew everything."

"Please don't kiss me." she begged in a breathless voice.

He stroked her hair. "Why not? Why don't you want me to kiss you?"

## White Tent

She opened her eyes. "Because I might do something stupid if you do."

"How stupid are we talking?" he murmured. "Because I don't want you to do anything you'll regret."

She smiled. "The hell you don't."

He took a deep breath then grinned a sexy half smile. Then he leaned down and kissed her.

## Chapter 6: Love

It was a soft whisper of his lips at first, then the kiss grew deeper and more intense. He pulled away. "You don't have to regret anything. I want to marry you. We are engaged."

She rolled her eyes. "Fine, I guess we are. But I'm only agreeing because you won't let it go- Will," she caught the hand that had been trying to untie her bathing suit top. "No."

He pursed his lips. "You are one stubborn woman, Brie."

"I respect my body." she explained. "And you can't have it."

Will hated nothing more than being told that he couldn't have something. He wrapped his hands round the tops of her arms and tightened them until her skin turned white. She stared at him straight in the eye. "I said no."

"And I heard you loud and clear. I won't hurt you-"

"Will, I'm not afraid to hurt you." she retorted. "No means no. Don't even try it. I do not want to sleep with you and I find that fair considering how much you keep trying to push me into all of this."

"I'm warning you now, I know some self defense and if you don't get off in three seconds I'll be forced to prove it. Now, if you would like to have children one day, I suggest you move."

He narrowed his eyes at her, obviously considering whether or not she was bluffing. "You could be lying." he stated.

"Do you think your testicles are worth the risk?" she asked.

He smiled and released her then stood. "God, you're perfect." he muttered.

"Yes, there's nothing like a woman threatening to castrate you." she retorted and sat up fix the back of her bathing suit.

"Why won't you sleep with me?" he asked.

She sighed. "I thought I explained this to you."

"Because you don't love me." he muttered, seeming annoyed.

"I don't like you much either quite frankly. Not after you thought of raping me." she snapped.

He glared at her. "I got off didn't I?"

"Only for self preservation, Will Harris. If you had thought I wasn't serious you would have done it." she claimed.

"Yeah, well maybe you would have deserved it."

She hissed out a breath and stood abruptly. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

## White Tent

He rolled his eyes. "You were the one teasing me. You know you wanted it. You just chickened out at the end."

"I have no idea what you are talking about." she snarled. She wanted throw him in the pool right about now. Or maybe knock him in with a good round house kick.

"Oh really? So that stuff about reading people and running your foot up and down my leg wasn't you being a little horny, Brie?"

Her face turned red with both anger and embarrassment. "I was just trying to prove a point. And how dare you imply something like that about me! If anyone is a little horny snit around here it's clearly you Will Harris."

He grinned. "You think I'm going to deny that I want you, Brie? I'll say it loud and clear. I want you naked and underneath me. And I think we both know you want it too."

That was it. He lifted her leg expertly and twirled around to knock him in the chest with her foot. But Will dodged the blow and grabbed her foot then twisted it harshly to the right. She fell onto her stomach and scraped her chin against the concrete.

She cried out and Will released her foot. She wanted to be angry with him, but knew he had every right to defend himself. She knew better than to attack someone who wasn't posing a real threat.

She knew better than to try to defeat the star athlete in school. He was used to running down a field with twenty other men trying to take him down from all directions. What made her think she could do the same thing alone?

Stupidity, she decided. She was stupid for trying to kick him, and stupid for ever agreeing to come here with him. She'd never love Will Harris.

Inside she knew exactly what his intentions were. He was a boy, of course he wanted her for more than talking. Hell, he could have probably done without the talking.

She wanted to laugh at the thought but instead she sobbed. And that was the most stupid she'd done all night. Maybe in her entire life.

Will sigh and released her foot. "I'm sorry Brie." he murmured.

She shook her head. "No, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that. I shouldn't even be here. I won't marry you Will. I promise you that. And I don't break my promises." she sat up and looked at him. "It's one of my few good qualities."

He looked at her with a sorrowful expression. "Then I'm sorry I'll have to take that away from you. Because I'm making you a promise. You will be my wife. Whether you love me or not. You'll realize that I'm what's best for you. And your parents will realize that too when they talk to me and my family."

Her eyes widened. "You're going to bring them into this?" she asked, knowing that Will's persuasion could and most likely would influence her parents when it came to what was best for her. So it came down to whether they wanted her to be happy or financially secure. "That's below the belt." she muttered. They would choose financial after a talk with Will and his parents. "But it won't work. Yes, my parents will think it's what's best for me, but they can't make me get married. It will be hard to do but I will defy them."

## White Tent

He glowered at her. "What is wrong with you?" he asked. "I'm offering you everything! Are you just an idiot?" he sputtered.

She shook her head. "Money isn't everything to me."

"Millions of girls would die for this! You'll have whatever you want-"

"Except a man who loves me." Brie whispered. "And what's a life without love? If you can't love me, how could you love our children? You think you have everything planned Will Harris, but you're just a child. Even I can see that. And I can also see that you don't have the makings to be a husband much less a man. Believe it or not, money can't buy manhood."

Will clenched his fists at his side. "Are you saying I'm not a man?" he asked through clenched teeth.

"I thought I made that clear." Brie snapped. She stood, her ankle sore and hurting. But she ignored it. "Grow up Will. I won't marry you. Now quit being a child about this and move on."

"Maybe you're the one who needs to grow up. Love isn't real, Brie. It's just a pile of bullshit. It was made up by some woman who was unsatisfied with her life. If you were an actual adult you'd know to do what's good for you."

Brie shook her head. "If you don't believe in love then that just makes you a soulless child, Harris. Forget I ever said we were engaged. Push all you want. I won't budge."

"Then you can find your own way home." he snapped.

She snorted. "What makes you think I would want to ride in a car with you?" She said then limped away from him and down the sidewalk.

Will stood there staring after her. He'd never cared what anyone had said about him. No matter what. But every thing she'd said to make him hurt, had hurt with intensifying pain. With a sigh, he pulled out his cell phone and ordered his driver to take Brie home.

Then he stalked into his house to think about what she had said. And it was the hardest thing he'd ever done.

## Chapter 7: Talk With Dad

Will sat alone and wondered how it had all come to this. He'd never had someone see right through him like she did. He had always been confident and sure of himself. And though he was sure that he could have Brie as a wife, he knew if he forced her she would always hate him.

But he didn't want to lose her either. He didn't love her of course, but he'd grown into an affection and didn't like being without her. And it hadn't even been a week. Hardly two days.

He chuckled and twirled an empty beer bottle in his hands. He'd had it all planned. He was going to romance her, she was going to let him make love to her. And then she was going to believe he was in love with her.

And if he got lucky she might have gotten pregnant, only persuading her more that she should marry him the sooner. He ran his hands over his face. He was a man. He was sure of that. She didn't know what she was talking about.

He groaned and leaned back in his chair. "Dammit, Brie." he muttered. "You sure can piss a guy off."

"I told you it was a bad idea." he heard his father say. "Girls don't want to get married right out of highschool. They want to experience life." He sat down next to Will and handed him another beer then opened his own.

Will sighed. "I thought she would be different. I thought she would be smart enough to want to have a secure life. She wants to be in love."

"That sounds about right. What's wrong with wanting to be in love?"

"Besides that fact it doesn't exist?" he asked.

"Of course love exists. I love you and your mother. I know you love us."

"That's different. We're a family."

"Well, I was very in love with your mother before you were even thought of."

Will sighed. "Yeah, I guess you were. But it's not like that with Brie. I don't think we could ever be in love like that."

"You don't have to get married." Darrel reminded him. "You have time."

"I want to get married before my career takes off. That way i don't have to worry about it while trying to work."

Darrel laughed. "A wife is a lot of work, Will. You can't just put her in a nice house and be done with it. Let's just go ahead and say everything she needs financially is taken care of. Okay, you're the provider. That is something well required of a husband. But she needs a permanent friend if she's going to follow you around during your career because she's going to have to leave her own friends behind.

She needs a lover. You're going to get busy, and you're going to be tired, but you're going to have to make love to her or she'll find someone else. And I know you don't want that to happen."

## White Tent

"But women-

"Are better at hiding their hormones, Will. You have no idea how...badly, they can want sex. And the older they get the more they want it. Trust me on that one."

"Gross." Will muttered, knowing he was talking about his mother.

"And they need to know someone cares for them and loves them. You see what I'm getting at?"

"Yeah." Will sighed. "In other words, either I love Brie or I don't."

"Not necessarily. Some love takes time. Sometimes it just punches you in the face at that first moment. You never know."

Will swallowed down a good portion of his beer. "I think with Brie, it's going to take a lot more than time. But I'm willing to wait it out. There's something different about her. And until I figure out why I'm so obsessed with her, I'm going to stick it out."



## Chapter 8: The Dream

Brie sat up, drenched in sweat and convulsing, to her embarrassment. She sat up and rubbed her hands over her face. "Oh my God." she whispered aloud. "I just had a sex dream about Will Harris."

She shook her head, not believing herself. Yes, things had gotten a little close between her and Will, but she had put a stop to it. She shouldn't be dreaming of him like that! She looked at her alarm clock and saw she didn't have to be up for school for another two hours, if she was even going.

She lay back down and sighed. She remembered his green eyes looking down so intensely into her own before he... She couldn't even think the words.

She had told him it was over, told him he wasn't a man, then she'd went and had a sex dream about him. What the hell was her problem?

"Will Harris and popular and really hot." she muttered aloud. "Ugh, I sound like the girls I make fun of."

She rolled over onto her side and whimpered. It was too late. She wasn't going back to him. She said it was over and she meant it. She closed her eyes and tried to go back to sleep, but saw will Harris above her, felt his touch against her skin.

She sat up and got out of bed. After a few minutes of pacing, she decided she needed a cold shower.\*\*\*\*\*

It was the first time she'd stayed home from school all year. She couldn't go after being humiliated or after her dream. She'd told her Mom everything aside from the embarrassing dream and she'd understood.

To make herself useful Brie helped her mother pack. "Why are you and Dad splitting up?" she asked. "I know you two haven't been getting along, but you usually work things out. Did he cheat on you?"

Her mother sighed. "No Brie. He didn't cheat on me. I cheated on him."

Brie couldn't stop the gasp and stared at her mother with wide eyes. "But Mom...why?" she whispered.

He mother sighed and sat down next to her on the bed. "Because I fell in love with someone else."

"Who?" Brie asked, just not seeing it.

"His name is Darrin Ryans. He knew about your father and he gave me a choice. Him or your Dad. I chose your father in the beginning. I tried to make things work between us, but we always just ended up fighting.

And I knew the entire time that I really loved Darrin. And I just can't be with your Dad anymore. He didn't do anything wrong, Brie. Your father is the good guy. I have to go with my heart, honey."

Brie sighed. "I get it. You have to be with someone you love. It makes sense. And as long as we're sharing, I have to tell you the other reason I didn't want to go to school today. As you know, Will and I got into a fight last night, and you know what I told him. Aside from that and the humiliation, I had a dream about him last night." She looked down at her hands. "A sex dream."

"Oh." her mother whispered. "I suppose that would make you want to stay home." she smiled at her daughter. "It's perfectly natural for a girl your age-

## White Tent

"That's not the point, Mom. I know that it's...natural or whatever. It's that I told him that he wasn't a man then I had that dream about him. How am I supposed to face him after that?"

"I'm sorry, Brie." her mother whispered.

"Why are you sorry? You're not the one who was a jack...jerk."

She smiled at her daughter. "I'm sorry because I have no advise other than follow your heart. I never had complications with relationships until just recently. And that's what I did. Maybe you should try to talk to Will without insulting him." she suggested.

Brie laughed. "You might as well ask for the moon."

Her mother smiled and opened her mouth to speak. But there was a knock on the door downstairs. Brie frowned. "Who's here at ten in the morning?" she asked.

"I have no idea." she replied.

A moment later Brie's father appeared in the door. "Rose, someone is here to see us. Brie, you stay in here, this is a matter between your mother and I."

## Chapter 9: Best Interest for Brie

Brie nodded and watched her mother stand then follow her father out of the room. She sat down on the bed in silence and listened for the third voice. She figured it was probably a divorce lawyer. The thought made her sad.

"Mr. and Mrs. Michaels, I need to speak with you about a very important matter. These are for you Mrs. Michaels." Brie gasped and stood up from the bed. She still remembered her father's orders, so she was quiet as she crept toward the stairwell.

She peeked into the foyer and saw Will hand her mother a bouquet of roses. "I brought these for Brie." he said and held out the white lilies, Brie's favorite flower.

"I'll put these in some vases." her mother said, then left the room.

"Sit down, Will." her father invited and gestured to a chair.

"Thank you, Mr. Michaels." Will said then sat as her father did.

"I was surprised you didn't want Brie to be in the room when we discussed this."

"I'll explain that. Besides, I thought she would be in school today. I wanted to talk to the two of you about an important issue."

Her mother reentered then. "Would you like a drink Will?"

"No thank you." he replied and waited for her to sit uncomfortably next to her father.

"I came to talk about Brie." he began. "Because talking to Brie directly is quite difficult. It's about marriage. I know Brie is young, but please hear me out."

Her father nodded. "Go on."

"I realize Brie is going to Harvard, and I would never want her to miss that. But I am also going to a collage, and I need a wife to join me. After collage I'll be focusing on my career and I won't have time to search for a wife."

"And why is it that you want to marry Brie?" her mother asked, crossing her legs.

"As her parents, I'm sure you both realize what a wonderful woman she's grown up to be. She would be the perfect wife for support me in my career."

"Do you love her?" her father asked.

Will sighed. "It's not about love between us, Mr. Michaels. It's about comfort. Brie is a smart and vibrant young lady and I can support her and take very good care of her financially, as she deserves."

"But money is only half of what my daughter needs. Brie needs to be financially and emotionally stable. Brie is our child, Will. We're not going to force her to marry or even try to persuade her to marry unless she has both financial and emotional comfort."

## White Tent

And as you said, she is still young and I'm sure my wife agrees when I say that waiting a few years for her to marry anyone would be a better and wise decision."

"I do agree on that. But Brie is her own woman. She'll make her own choice in the end." her mother added.

Will sighed. "That's the problem. Brie doesn't see clearly what she needs. She may make the wrong choice."

"Who is to say you're the right choice?" her dad asked, glaring at Will now. "She's our baby and no man is or will ever be good enough for her. But the man that tries his best to be is the kind of guy I want to be married to my daughter."

Her mother smiled. "I couldn't have said it better myself. Mr. Michaels is right about everything. We understand that you can offer our daughter financial comfort but I'm afraid she just needs more than that. And it's not our decision to make. You're young Will, and I respect that you'll want to be focused on your career, but you do have four years of collage to make a more...thought out decision."

"Mrs. Michaels, I've spent the entire year thinking about this. I've only just recently let Brie know. Brie is perfect for the kind of woman I want to marry."

Her father leaned forward. "Mr. Harris, I have to ask you. Just what exactly are your intentions with my daughter? She's not a woman who will be used as some sort of trophy wife. She's a person, Will Harris. Not a toy."

Will sat up straight. "Yes, I know very well that she is a person-"

"Then start acting like it." her mother cut in. "If you want Brie to marry you then talk to her instead of going behind her back and coming to us. We're not going to force our daughter to marry and you've just presented yourself with another problem by betraying her trust like this. Not only do you have to convince Brie that you're a good husband, but Mr. Michaels and I will also be waiting for convincing."

"Please, Mr. and Mrs. Michaels-"

"We've heard enough." he father snapped. "I'll show you the door." He stood up and Will stood up too, a shocked look on his face.

Brie herself was astonished. She'd never seen her parents be so rude to someone. And it had been awhile since they had agreed on anything. Her father let will out then slammed the door in his face when he turned to say something else.

Brie went back to the bedroom where she and her mother had been packing...and she laughed.

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