
THE ART OF LOVE

Dangerous Love Book One

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Prologue

She noticed him the minute he entered the VIP section. His group of tables were directly next to hers. Gold bottles of ‘Ace of Spades’ champagne were gripped in the hands of his crew. Scantly clad women on their laps going along for the free ride. He sat back quietly observing it all but not engaging in any of the activities.

Every so often he would lean forward and conduct business in the middle of it all. His butterscotch-hued skin reflected the colors of the strobe lights in crazy shades.

He glanced in her direction and lifted his glass before taking a sip. She smiled when the waitress brought a glass containing the same liquid to her.

She lifted the glass in his direction and pretended to take a drink. She never drank more than a few glasses of white wine and never in public settings like this. If things were to take a turn for the worse, she needed a clear head.

Her own crew carried themselves differently, no popping bottles or making it rain. All female, all classy, all the wrong bitches to fuck with.

Her second in command and best friend, Yolán, leaned

over nudging her. “I saw that,” she teased, casting a gaze at the man in the other VIP section.

“Yolan, don’t start and don’t lose focus. We are here for one reason and one reason only,” Tayana reminded her and stared at the dance floor below. She had four of her crew mingling down there, keeping an eye out.

“Yeah, yeah, Tay, I know. Quiet moves are successful moves.” Yolan shook her head and poured more champagne in her now empty glass. “One day, Tay, you are going to have to let your hair down. I mean, Thirst was three years ago. Ain’t it past time to move on from his treacherous ass?” Yolan continued, trying to reason with her best friend, who was too damn pretty and had too much going for her to be single forever.

Tayana’s eyes narrowed in Yolan’s direction. Yolan was the only one who could bring him up and not catch a beat down, and she knew it. “I don’t control the universe, Yo. When it’s time to move on, I will move on. Now drop it, please. Shay is onto something.”

Her girl Shay could have been a model. She was as deadly as she was beautiful and for that reason, she was very valuable to Tayana.

Tayana caught eyes with Shay and followed her glance. There they were, the only reason she bothered to come to this pit of a club, Raz and Jammy, short for Jamaica. Tayana winked at Shay to confirm she needed to grab Monet and work them.

She saw movement out of the corner of her eye and noticed *he* was now standing to shake the wrinkles out of his slacks. Tall, at least 6’5”, just like she liked them. Judging by his wavy fade and high cheekbones he was most definitely mixed with something. Her one weakness was a pretty man and after Thirst’s double-crossing ass, she was cool on them all but couldn’t help looking when one crossed her path.

“Yo, Tay, where you at?” Yolán nudged her again and motioned her head towards the dance floor.

She immediately returned her glance to her ladies below. Shay and Monet were out front, directly in their line of sight, Khyrs and Jaidyn were mingling in the crowd, being invisible as only her ladies could be. Pretty? Yes, all of her ladies were but she made them dress down so they didn’t stand out. Jammy was slowly walking over to Monet, a drink in each hand. Raz was leaning on the bar watching Shay dance and slow wind. She made it a point to stay in his line of vision using the man she was dancing with as her prop, her focus stayed on Raz. If he didn’t bite, this wouldn’t work.

Yolán signaled to Monet. She knew not to reel Jammy all the way in until Shay had Raz under her spell. Now it was just a waiting game.

Tayana risked a glance over at the other VIP area when the sound of guns cocking in her own VIP area caught her attention. Her bodyguards Rini and Joy were now standing at the entrance of their circle of tables blocking *him* from moving any closer to her.

To the untrained eye they just appeared to be having a friendly conversation, but she knew her ladies. Their hidden guns weren’t just for show. He, however, looked unfazed and undeterred. *Bold, that can be both a blessing and a curse*, Tayana noted to herself.

“Shit, what the hell?” Yolán whispered, fiercely looking over her shoulder, annoyed with the distraction *he* was causing.

“Focus, Yo. Looks like Raz is biting. I will handle this.”

Tayana caught Rini’s eye who un-cocked her gun and moved to let him through. Joy, the only real hot head in the crew, followed closely behind him over to Tayana, gun still ready to sing.

His cologne introduced him a few moments before he was

standing in front of her, looking like her damn fantasies come to life.

Tayana sat back and crossed her legs. Her Dior mini dress slid up a little bit exposing more of her thighs, which he immediately noticed. He licked his lips as he stared at her exposed skin.

“*Ahem*, can I help you?” Tayana asked, throwing him a lot of attitude. Pretty or not, this muthafucka was interfering with her business.

He slid into the seat next to her and smiled over at her. “My apologies, I just wanted to come over and introduce myself. I know everyone in this city but I don’t remember ever meeting you. Name’s Jazz, and yours, Boss Lady?” He extended his hand to her.

Tayana caught Yolán’s glance and lifted her eyebrow just before smiling sweetly. “My given name is Tayana, you can call me Whisper like everybody else does, and you have about five seconds to cut the shit and speak your mind before things get ugly in VIP.”

Tayana took his hand in her own, flashing him a venomous smile. Her breath caught for a millisecond from their contact, she quickly pushed the feeling away, now was not the time or place for this type of shit!

Jazz’s eyes met hers for a brief moment before he cleared his throat. Obviously, he felt it too. “Well, damn, like that? I see you, Whisper. Anyway, I came over to ask, as a professional courtesy, to step back this time.”

Catching his meaning Tayana glanced down at the dance floor, seems Raz and Jammy had more than one enemy in attendance tonight. Noting all four of her girls and Raz and Jammy were no longer visible, she looked over at Yolán for confirmation. Her smile told her all she needed to know.

“Unfortunately, Jazz, you’re a little too late with your request, but I can pass along a message if you like.” Tayana

smiled again and picked up the drink he had sent over earlier and took a sip.

Cognac, expensive cognac. If she had to guess she would say *Tesseron Extreme*. Her mother taught her well, she made sure Tayana had a taste of the finer things, how to know the real from the fake on sight or taste. Tayana could spot the best of the best knockoffs as soon as she laid eyes on it.

Nothing about Jazz was fake, especially the deadly glare he was sending her way, now that she had shot him and his request down.

“Hmm, that’s unfortunate. I was hoping we could come to a compromise.” Jazz boldly took the glass from Tayana’s hand and took a drink, watching her with his light eyes the entire time.

If she was ever inclined to come out of retirement and date again, Jazz would most definitely be the type of man she would want to start with. His boldness and confidence seemed to exude from his pores.

“Well, Jazz, that was your first mistake. I never compromise. It implies indecision, weakness. Now, if there is nothing else to discuss, I would like to get back to minding my business, please.” Tayana snatched back her glass and tossed back the remaining cognac.

Jazz’s fine ass had her breaking her own rules already, not good!

“Hmm, Boss Lady has teeth. I like that. Yeah we will most definitely have more to discuss at another time. Good night, Whisper.”

Jazz stood up and shook the wrinkles out of his Dolce slacks. *Clothes whore*. Tayana smiled knowingly to herself. Everyone has a weakness and with that little habit of his, he exposed one of his.

“Good night, Jazz. Thank you for the drink,” Tayana stated, fighting to ignore how his professionally tailored slacks

cupped his bulge, the man was blessed in more ways than one!

He smiled down at her, his gaze running from the top of her head to her manicured toes that were being cradled by her gold Louboutin's.

"Anytime." He turned on his heel, to return to his own VIP and crew.

Joy followed him until he was out of their area, finally uncocking her gun and settling back in her seat at the entrance of their circle of tables.

"So what do you think that was about?" Yolan asked, while watching Jazz who was settling back into the seat he had vacated and was now having a conversation with one of the men sitting closest to him. Once he finished, he glanced over his shoulder in Tay's direction and winked. She smiled a flirty smile and focused her attention back onto Yolan.

"Oh, Yo, you already know, curiosity, plain and simple." Tayana's phone vibrated, she accepted the call and held it to her ear silently.

"It's done," she said before hanging up.

"We are playing with the big boys now, remember, Yo? And what's the one thing I told you they all hate about our crew?" Tayana asked, pouring herself a little club soda to dilute the cognac she drank.

Yolan shrugged, still watching Jazz looking annoyed. "What?"

"That the crew with no dicks is proving to have the biggest dicks of all."

Chapter 1

Jazz stepped into his walk-in shower and turned all four heads on full blast, something he always did when he was deep in thought, times like now. He was still intrigued, impressed and yes, a little annoyed by Tayana aka Whisper and her all-female crew.

They swooped in and hit Raz and Jammy so quick, no one had a clue it had even happened until she pointed out to him that it was too late to call her ladies off. Her attitude left a bit to be desired, no one talked to him the way she did but something about it most definitely turned him on. He'd heard mention of her and her ladies more than a few times and to simply ignore them, as he had done up until now, would be foolish.

After witnessing how she and her crew operated, he needed her to know how he worked and because the way his hormones had been buzzing since their hands touched, he needed to know more about her, period.

Tayana's eyes popped open a few seconds before her alarm went off as they always did. She was never one to sleep in, every minute she wasted in bed was a minute she could never get back and she was about making them all count.

She learned early on in her line of business, women were never taken as seriously as the men unless they were made to. Which, in turn, meant she was always on time, always ready for whatever came her way, and so were her ladies.

Slowly, but surely, those men who had once scoffed and blew her and her crew off were recognizing what they were bringing to the party and, like it or not, they had to eat what she served. Raz and Jammy just found out the hard way what happens to those who disrespected her or her crew.

Standing under the stinging rain of her shower, she allowed her mind to finally stop running a mile a minute. Jazz's sexy ass eyes lingered on the edges of her mind as soon as the chaos stopped. She could tell, just like others before him, Jazz thought she was weak, that he could bully her because she was a woman. Little did he know, because of her mother, she was raised with the mental strength and resolve of any man, all while being one-hundred-percent woman.

For as long as she could remember, Tayana watched from the sidelines as her father Jason, known in the streets as 'Heavy', tried his best to sculpt her brothers and teach them the business only to receive constant pushback and resistance. Both of her brothers wanted to continue to reap the benefits of Heavy's hard work without actually putting in any work themselves. They were spoiled little rich boys with too many toys.

Tayana was the exact opposite, from the moment her mother told her the truth about her father's 'business', Tayana was watching and waiting for her chance to put in work. Unfortunately, Heavy never took her seriously until it was too

late, and now he was the first of many cautionary tales her name came up in.

Her own daddy doubted her, underestimated her strength until she rose above him and her brothers. In the beginning of 'the end' as she called it, she maintained her business in all areas of their city but her daddy's. Then her father got sloppy and his girlfriend fucked up and killed Tayana's mother, Essie in a jealous rage over a one-of-a-kind pair of fur boots. The girlfriend wrongfully assumed he'd bought the boots for her because he'd hid them in her house until Essie's birthday. The girlfriend crept behind Essie and shot her in the back when she saw her out in them.

That's when the gloves came off. Tayana went for the jugular. She took over all his businesses, one by one, and burned his house to the ground with both him and that skanky bitch sealed inside. Her two brothers were spared and given \$5M each to start over far away from Texas, which they were more than happy to do. They were never cut out for this life anyway.

After her shower she dressed in a new custom pantsuit designed by Monet and Shay. She transferred her belongs from her beaded bag from the night before to her Birkin bag that matched her pumps perfectly, today's masterpieces were by Brian Atwood and just looking down at them made her smile. Which was part of the reason she was so quick to notice Jazz was a clothes whore, it takes one to know one. She was one of the biggest ones she knew and that's even with Monet and Shay and their love affair with fashion, which was definitely saying something.

Tayana most definitely proudly wore any and every custom piece Shay and Monet made for her but her walk-in closet was about to burst with clothes right off the runways of Italy, Japan, and New York. She even had a personal shopper who traveled all over the world to secure her fashions many

times throughout the year, you name an occasion and she had an outfit to wear for it.

“Are you having breakfast here this morning, Whisper?” Ms. Lanie asked Tayana as she descended the steps to leave for her meeting about a half hour later. Her crew had a 9 a.m. meeting and she was a firm believer in ‘If you were on time, you were late’.

“No, I’m meeting the ladies for the monthly meeting today, so we are going to grab something to eat afterwards,” Tayana told her cook and housekeeper who had been around her for as long as she could remember.

Ms. Lanie used to work for Essie and Heavy, but jumped at the chance when Tayana asked if she would be interested in working for her when she moved out of her parents’ house. Tayana had been the only reason Ms. Lanie stayed with their family so long anyway.

“Okay, well let me know what you want for dinner and what time you’ll be home, so I can make sure it’s done in time. Loving the shoes by the way, you look fierce, honey!” Ms. Lanie told her snapping her fingers, moving back towards the kitchen.

Tayana lifted her foot and moved it from side to side. “Me too, and thank you Ms. Lanie, you know all you have to do is say the word and Shay and Monet will hook you up something phenomenal,” Tayana offered, opening the front door to leave.

“Chile, please, where am I going besides to the grocery store?” Ms. Lanie laughed, shaking her head at Tayana.

Tayana shrugged. “Who knows, Ms. Lanie you might meet your glass slipper man in the meat department,” Tayana reasoned with a smile.

Ms. Lanie laughed even harder and walked back into the kitchen. Tayana’s smile grew brighter at the thought of Ms.

Lanie finding someone to dress up for and walked out the front door, closing it behind her.

“Aww shit, look at you shine!” her chauffeur, Bruise, and only male bodyguard teased as she exited the house.

“Whatever, B, it’s just a business suit but you gotta admit Shay and Monet killed it on this one, though!” Tayana moved to enter the car when he opened the door for her and stopped short.

“Ay, B, what the fuck is that?” She motioned to the bouquet of peach roses on her seat and backed away from the car.

“Shit! Joy, we got a problem!” Bruise quickly alerted Rini and Joy through his earpiece, they seemed to come out of nowhere and moved Tayana back inside the house.

“Whisper, we got this, don’t trip,” Joy promised, deadly serious and rushed back outside leaving Tayana with Rini. The only one of her crew who still called her by her government name was Yolán. She said it was to keep her grounded, to make sure to always remember who she really was.

Her whole house went on lockdown. Flowers for a regular woman were a compliment, a treat. To a woman in her line of business, flowers were the exact opposite, they were a warning and a threat.

Bruise and Joy rushed back into the house a few minutes later.

“All clear. Whisper, that car was detailed yesterday. That must have been when they were slipped in the back seat.” Bruise was all business, all playful banter and his smile from earlier were gone.

Joy shook her head in the negative. “Naw, B, those are fresh, one-hour tops. Someone has a death wish. I’m going to check out the cameras to see whose mama needs a black dress.” Joy moved down the hall towards the security office.

“Whisper, should we call the rest of the crew, make sure everyone is cool?” Rini asked, watching Joy’s retreating back.

“No, they have all checked in this morning like usual but, just to keep Joy calm, let’s move today’s meeting here. B, would you mind sounding the alarm to get everybody here, please? I will let Ms. Lanie know to get started on breakfast after all.”

Bruise pulled out his phone and sent out the coded message that told the ladies to meet at Whisper’s house. Once finished, he quietly left to alert the guard station of what had just happened.

Jazz watched the panicked activity from his vantage point with a small, but amused smile on his face. He had to give Tayana props, her security was a well-oiled machine. He barely had time to get back over the rear wall before they locked her place down. Now that he had her attention it was time to put his plan of attack into action. He had his people digging a little deeper into her background to find out all he could about her, most importantly her love life. He wanted to discover the type of men she dated in the past – so he knew what he was up against – because after a sleepless night, with her on his mind for most of it, he’d made a decision. Tayana Bradley was destined to be his, she just didn’t know it yet.

“Do we know who did it? I know Raz and Jammy’s peeps ain’t this bold.” Shay poured creamer in her coffee looking ready to kill.

Joy’s anger was radiating off of her in waves. She took her job very seriously. No one had ever gotten this close to the

house or Tayana before and Tayana could tell she blamed herself.

“Naw that’s the thing, the cameras didn’t pick up anybody near that car but B, and he never went inside it. Whoever Harry Houdini is he has got a hot one coming, I promise you, Whisper,” Joy snapped, playing with a piece of bacon on her plate.

Tayana sighed and took a sip of her juice, looking around at her crew. “Maybe it’s like B said, the car was detailed yesterday and maybe someone there got careless and missed them. Joy, send Bruise over to check it out but until then, fire anyone who hasn’t been here more than a year just to be safe.”

Joy pushed away from the table to handle the business, Rini looked at Tayana and after her nod, she followed after Joy.

Yolan sitting at her right whistled slowly. “Joy is pissed. You do realize if she figures out who did this she will probably kill their whole family for generations to come right?”

Tayana shook away that image and took a bite of her own slice of bacon. “Anyway, on to business. Shay and Monet, good work as usual. Hope it wasn’t too hard to do once you left the club?” she asked looking over at them.

Monet’s mouth was full of waffle, so Shay answered, “You know how we do, Whisper, had them dope boys eating outta our hands, never saw it coming. Bet H-Town crew will think twice before disrespecting us again.”

“Good to hear. Like I keep telling you all, chances are for suckas. Raz and Jammy got cocky, saw a bunch of beautiful women running shit and thought they could use their dicks to get over on us. No one steals from us and if they do they never live to celebrate the spoils. We don’t make a lot of noise and make a production about it, we just plan and take care of business. Ladies, we are always going to be moving targets, never forget that.

“As long as we are holding down the game the way we do, we are a threat. So make your moves, run the businesses, keep focused, but most of all keep quiet. Men are boasters by nature; they have to peacock, one up each other to see whose dick is bigger.

“I know how females are portrayed, especially women of color. Like we are poised and ready to betray our best friend for some dick, or a few measly dollars, or something petty like that. But the reason why we work is because we are above all of that. We have been the best of friends since preschool or longer and we respect what each one of us brings to the table because, at the end of the day, we are all eating.”

Tayana signaled for Ms. Lanie to start clearing the table as they all stood to move to the office.