

Chapter One: Prized Package

JULIAN

Alexis emerged as someone I imagined, but hardly believed was possible: the smart, upstanding woman to show off to co-workers and friends that I wanted . . . and the uninhibited sex goddess in the bed I needed.

A rarity. A gem. Some men – *most*, actually – would call her an impossibility. Most of the time, the man had the wife or girlfriend who was cute and professional and a great mom and all that – but the sex was weak. Or the sex was great and she was weak. Or, worse yet, she was weak *and* the sex was weak.

One of my fellow professors at Howard University couldn't even get his girlfriend of six years to get out of the missionary position. My closest friends, Greg Gibson and Larry Thompson, and I all ran across too many women who were either shut down sexually or needed to keep their mouth shut. Either way, they were a liability.

Other guys I knew accepted the incomplete package with the idea that the total package was too hard to find. Or did not exist. Or, worse yet, was a total myth.

I, as it turned out, was one of the lucky few. After countless empty or unfulfilling runs with women who fell short in one way or another, I discovered Alexis. I say “discovered” because it has more strength than saying I “found” her. You find a nickel on the sidewalk. You *discover* the love of your life. Big difference.

Through Alexis I learned that a man could have it all in a woman. A lucky man, that is. She was smart and conscience and understanding and kind and funny – and it all came in an attractive latte-dark package with dimples and a body that defied the fact that she had birthed a child.

And yet, her best attribute was that she could easily step right out of the professional, congenial pediatrician role into the come-with-me-to-the-bathroom-in-the-restaurant-so-I-can-sex-you-up mode. She could switch dispositions as easily as I could flip television channels.

It tripped me out the first time it happened; we were having drinks at Bluepointe during a weekend trip to Atlanta. She

took me into a small bathroom upstairs and sexed me up – dropped to her knees and opened the fly of my pants and pleased me with her tongue and mouth and *imagination* in a matter of minutes. And she seemed to get as much pleasure out of it as me.

More shocking was this: I knew then the idea of the total package was not a total myth.

Like most men, I had become accustomed to needing multiple women to make one ideal mate. So, I'd have one I could engage in intellectual conversation on politics and culture with (but mundane sex); one I could drink and party with (but uninspired sex); one who would be a sexual pleasure (with no mental stimulation).

It was exhausting. And unfulfilling. Empty.

But Alexis got it. She understood the value of being sexually free with the man she loved. We talked about it every so often, even one night as she relaxed between my wide-open legs. Between soft kisses on my inner thighs, Alexis spelled out why she quenched my sexual appetite with passion and commitment.

It was practically a dissertation that should be shared with women around the world.

“Julian, I love you,” she said. “That’s the first thing. We aren’t married, but we are sharing a life together. I believe it’s my responsibility as your woman to please you. I get pleasure out of pleasing you. Maybe that’s strange to you; I don’t know. But I believe if you are my man, you should not feel a need to get anything from any other woman. Anything.”

She was looking into my eyes.

“I believe if you love me and I love you, we should please each other. There’s nothing wrong with getting freaky or being adventurous. It keeps the spice in the relationship. Maintaining a relationship is hard enough as it is. Giving your man what he needs and wants gives him no rational reason to seek someone else.”

I was looking into her eyes.

“But here’s the thing,” she continued. “You can’t be that way with everyone – unless you just get off on that. What I am with you, I’ve never been with anyone else. This is passion. This is love. This is trust. I’ve let my guard down because I trust you and I believe in us.”

Alexis said all that and then resumed pressing her lips all over my body. I just lay back, fingers folded behind my head, and

absorbed the sensations she created. It was like she was some kind of sexual artist and I was her canvas.

She could paint sensations all over my body that would stimulate hardness in a matter of seconds. She was in control of my pleasure. Powerful.

The bedroom of our Southeast Washington, D.C. townhouse doubled as a pleasure depot. If our walls could talk, they'd only blush.

I could see just a silhouette of Alexis' face as she kissed me across my stomach, moving up toward my chest at a deliberate pace. But every so often the room was illuminated by the fireworks display we could see through the open window; it was July 4th.

The bursts of light helped me see a dark outline of Alexis' curvy physique in the large mirror to the side of the sleigh the bed. Just watching her could make my blood flow in just the right place.

She worked her way to my stomach, kissed my navel, and traveled lower, pressing wet kisses inside my thighs just as another set of fireworks went off. Alexis knew I loved her down there, exploring, exploiting, extracting. In the instant of a flash of light, I could see the commitment in her face.

"You like that, baby?" she said in a whisper just above my moans.

I answered by moaning again; that was our language of passion.

Alexis eased from between my legs and placed both her hands on my waist and motioned for me to turn onto my stomach. I didn't have any inclination to not oblige her.

I was in such rapture that I did not notice when Alexis poured oil in her hands. She kissed my shoulders and neck and then slowly rubbed oil in those very spots; this was more seduction than massage. She applied little pressure, but lots of pleasure.

All along my back, she kissed me first then applied oil. This was part of her allure, her appeal, her sensuality. We had our times when it was down-and-dirty sex, the kind that quickly satisfies an urge and then you fall asleep.

But on most occasions, we were all we could be. It was the rarest of relationships in that way. The flame was never flickering with us; it was always blazing, like an Olympic torch.

That Was Then, This Is Now

The more we got to know each other, the more we cared for each other, and the more open our sexual relationship got. And the more freaky or adventurous we became. So, her rubbing me with oil and kissing my entire body was not a birthday gift or special-occasion session. It was our norm.

In the nearly four years since I discovered Alexis first in Los Angeles while we both were on vacation and again in her hometown of Orangeburg, South Carolina, we grew into an unshakable force.

And it was more than just the amazing sex, although it did sustain us. When I had to decide on accepting a new position as an English professor at Howard, it was Alexis who steadied my ambivalence. I was comfortable at Bowie State in Maryland. I could see a department chair position my future. Why leave?

“Because,” Alexis reasoned, “you are a true man; you do not run from a challenge. You embrace something that could ultimately take you to a higher place. You would impact more kids. You would grow as a professor. Where you are is great, wonderful. But think about where you could go. I know you would thrive at Howard and, in the end, you could chair their department, too.”

That kind of support and rational and encouragement got my dick hard. Sexiness came in a lot of forms, and Alexis had a Gucci purse full of them. Her words and belief in me not only prompted me to take the job, but it also drew me closer to her.

And so did her sense of humor. We both believed that laughing was a sort of informal therapy, a way to generate good feelings. So we would sit together and enjoy reruns of “Martin” and even “The Jeffersons” and laugh as if it was our first time viewing the episode.

And it really meant something to me that she got “Frasier” and “Curb Your Enthusiasm” – quirky sitcoms driven by white actors and storylines.

And when all else failed, we’d make jokes about each other. “Yeah, you keep sitting there drinking and eating,” she said to me one Memorial Day afternoon we spent alone barbecuing and ingesting margaritas, “and your face is going to swell up and you’re going to float away.”

We laughed a good laugh. “At least it’s my face swelling and not my ass,” I responded.

That Was Then, This Is Now

She was so cool she could even laugh at an ass joke on her. Sexy.

It was also very appealing to me that she always displayed so much heart. She could have practiced anywhere in the country, but Alexis decided to be a pediatrician in Orangeburg, where she witnessed how lacking black youths medical treatment was on her side of the tracks of her hometown.

“If we don’t help, as people from here, then we can’t expect an outsider to do so,” she said. “We’ve got to help ourselves, our own community. I just believe in that.”

I certainly believed that, too. It was a reason I taught at a black college and why I refused to move from Southeast Washington, D.C. One of my good friends from high school, Ricky Bat, could see the set up for gentrification years before most. Moving to Prince Georges County, Maryland became en vogue for black folks; it signified some sort of warped progress to move to the suburbs.

In reality, all it did was open the way for whites to come in and create prime real estate in Chocolate City that many blacks ultimately could not afford.

I refused to be a part of that. So, Ricky and I vowed to never move from D.C. Never will. At the same time, I was not one of those folks who was trapped in his hometown and never saw the value of traveling and seeing the world. I prided myself on being well-rounded, and experiencing how others lived was a big part of that.

Greg and I were on vacation in L.A, in fact, visiting Larry, when I met Alexis in, of all places, a nightclub called The Golden Tale. Our talk that night was so refreshing and so easy that I got excited about her – even though I had a pregnant girlfriend back in D.C.

The trip to LA came at the right time because it was right after Joanne gave me the news. I wasn’t ready to be a father -- I loved running the streets and women more than I loved Joanne – but I convinced myself I could do it. I had to. There was no choice, really. She was having the baby.

Well, turned out that sweet, innocent Joanne was pregnant by her old boyfriend. So, that relationship blew up like an over-inflated balloon. I was hurt that she would be cruddy like that to me – ME. And my mansion-sized ego was crushed.

But I realized I had been far less the man I could have been with women, and so karma just came around and kicked me in the ass.

After that disappointment, I ran through a series of women who fell short in a lot of areas, the most glaring of which they were unable to hold my attention, either emotionally, intellectually or sexually. And it didn't help that I never forgot the connection I felt with Alexis in Los Angeles, even though it was a brief encounter.

She helped me understand the power of my instincts. You might need several months or years even to feel comfortable enough to marry someone. But it only took me minutes to determine if there was a connection. That's how it was with Alexis. The connection was immediate.

I saw her standing alone at the club, understated in her attire but so elegant and sort of regal. Not like being there was beneath her, but more like her being there enhanced the club.

From the moment I greeted her, I sensed a comfort level she had with herself that was refreshing. There was not a trace of arrogance or self-importance. It was pure ease. I liked that.

We enjoyed wine and conversation as if we were old friends. She was in town visiting her sister, but we created our own world that night that did not include anyone at the club. It was the first – shit, the *only* – time I'd ever enjoyed a beautiful woman's presence and did not think about sex with her. And for me, that was huge.

We left the club that night planning to talk the next day to set up a lunch date. She gave me her sister's phone number where she was staying to call her. But not five minutes after walking her to her sister's car outside the club, Greg, Larry and I were involved in a serious car accident on Sepulveda and El Segundo – just around the corner from the club.

Thankfully, our injuries were limited to broken bones and not life-threatening, although I was unconscious for a time. When I came to, I was in the hospital with an incredible headache. My first thoughts were to inquire about my boys, Larry and Greg. My second was to ask for my pants so I could get Alexis' sister's number. It was gone. And I was devastated.

A few days later – broken up physically because of the injuries and emotionally because I lost contact with Alexis – I went back to D.C. to pregnant Joanne. But in a matter of days

her dirty not-so-little secret came out: that she had been seeing her ex on the side.

One part of me was relieved I was not going to be a father. A bigger part of me was crushed. I was hardly the best boyfriend to Joanne – I mean, I slept with her sister before going to L.A. – but my ego could not take knowing Joanne had betrayed me.

And when I found out, it was a punch in the gut I had never experienced. My knees literally got weak and my mouth dry. It was devastating. But it was deserved.

I had inflicted that kind of pain more than twice on women and, while I knew it was bad, I had no idea how crushing it was until it happened to me. I eventually got over it, but it changed me. That episode made me do what I called a “baggage check”: I let go of all the drama that I lugged from one relationship to the next, issues that held me back from being a good man to good women.

Without the baggage, I felt better about myself and better about my prospects with women. Only the prospects were far from what I wanted or needed. There was no connection. The numbers might have favored single men, but that did not always equate to quality. I had to wade through a lot of what I did not want to find what I MIGHT have liked.

At the height of my frustration, I drove to South Carolina. It was a dramatic move, but I guess I was desperate. I needed to find Alexis, if possible, and see if what I felt in talking with her in L.A. was something really special.

My cousin, James, lived in the same town as Alexis, but he did not know her. I knew she was a pediatrician and Orangeburg was a small town. This was before the Internet. So James identified a handful of offices in town before I got there and soon after arriving we started our mission.

Just when I was about to get discouraged, I found her office. But as my luck would have it, she was on vacation, I was told by the office receptionist – in L.A. of all places. Still, I was able to leave her a message to call, which was much better than not locating her at all.

South Carolina State’s basketball team had a game on campus that night, so James and I went to it. During a timeout, I went to the concession stand and as I dressed my hotdog, there was Alexis, with her young son, Alex. It seemed unreal at first.

That Was Then, This Is Now

We were shocked to see each other; I thought she was out of town. She couldn't understand why I was in her town.

"To find you," I said.

She was puzzled, especially because I never called her when we were in Cali. I explained about the car accident and losing her sister's number. She was shocked and flattered at the same time.

We got together later that evening – about four months after we initially met in L.A. – and we talked and talked until the sun rose from behind the corn fields. We reconnected. And this time, I did think about sex with her.

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