

Chapter 1 - Anya

A celibate husband and wife are the two most dangerous people on earth.

That's what my husband Neil told me – one year ago – when our nightmare began. I guess at the time I didn't believe him. But right now, sitting by the phone waiting for Neil to call me from the hospital and tell me the gender of the baby he's having with *her*, well, I believe him.

Lack of affection and regular sex within a marriage is like having a ticking bomb strapped to your body – and you only have so much time before something explosive shatters your whole world.

How did we get to this point? Approximately two years ago, I'd be at home slumped on the couch. Lost in a zone. Neil would swagger into the den looking like a taller, thinner, less insane version of Mike Tyson. Beautiful chestnut complexion, intense eyes, and fine in his own kind of way. Neil would stand next to me starting stuff; swaying his hips back and forth, singing low. And then he'd sit down, getting close enough to press his lips against my neck. I'd beg off claiming, "*Soul Food* is on right now". I'd wave at Neil inviting him to chill out and watch the show with me. But he'd yank his lips from my neck and storm away. And, feeling guilty, I'd look at the show a few more minutes then follow him up to our bedroom. We'd start out giving each other a dry kiss on the cheek, something you'd offer a solidly casual friend. Then Neil would rub me between my legs, trying to generate a fire that would need a whole lot more to ignite than those little matches he was using via his idea of foreplay. Next he'd order me to lie on my side. His goal was to take it from the rear.

"I saw two people doing it in this flick," he remarked. "We can handle this."

Talk about awkward; this position didn't even sound like something an animal could manage, let alone humans. Protesting was useless. So I'd lie on my side, body stiffening up as if I just heard a strange noise, too terrified to move.

Neil pushed into me so rough it felt like someone tried to shove something hot, hard, long, and round inside my one good nostril. I could barely breathe. I'd yell, "Ouch, ouch, ugh." But to Neil it was like I screamed, "Hallelujah" because he kept jamming his huge happy thing inside my tense butt. I'd reach behind my back and grip him. I bucked. Cursed. Pressed my half-inch nails into his sweaty thighs. Dumb jerk thought I was having a helluva time, not realizing how much I ached to escape back downstairs to try and catch the end of my show. But I said nothing. I let Neil do his business. And on a few occasions after that night, I'd continue to do my duty. Letting Neil have an ample supply of sympathy sex. Until the last time we did it; until the day we officially became celibate.

Neil and I were spread out on a huge colorful rug on the floor next to the bed. I was lying on my back. My legs were like a clothes hanger curled around Neil's neck. He was jumping around and slapping my behind, having a jolly good time -- until he noticed that I had seized the nearby cable guide, perusing it for a worthwhile pay-per-view movie. He scrunched up his face, "Screw it; screw this mess." He physically slipped out of me. Left me alone on the floor. I wondered if I'd eventually slip out of his heart and his mind too. I became terrified. That's when I knew something had to give, that our marriage was in the balance. Things may never be good again if I didn't figure out what to do.

Intimacy. Closeness. Feeling each other. Little by little, all those necessary acts disappeared from our relationship. Yet I loved Neil. Couldn't imagine being without him. When Neil wasn't in the room with me, I wondered where he was. When I thought of his spellbinding fragrance, his infectious smile, and how proficient he was at taking care of his family, that and more kept me drawn to him in spite of everything.

Fast forward to now. These days I have to keep myself from stressing about the new addition to the family. If it weren't for Sharvette, my sister-in-law, I don't know what I'd do. She's Neil's half-sister. And ever since their sixty-year old mother pointed at their front door and told the girl to "get the hell out," she's been living with us here in Houston. It isn't too bad. Sharvette is great company, plus she has my back which is imperative because that's the only way I would allow her to live with us.

She's sitting here with me right now. We're in the downstairs den. This room has lots of tall windows and normally that means sunshine fills it from one wall to the other. But today is cloudy so the room is dark. But given the circumstances the darkness kinda complements the moment.

I'm rocking back and forth in my seat. My right hand is clutching the portable phone like it might run away. Sharvette is patting my left hand. She's stroking my skin, rubbing me gently, and acting as if I'm the one about to give birth instead of Neil's other woman.

I can't stand the thought of *her*. Neil's mistress. I guess because, like a dummy, I've created her. Because of me, she is. If I hadn't encouraged my husband to find a sex partner, he wouldn't have done it. I know he wouldn't. He's a good man, and he loves me. In spite of this other baby that's about to enter the world, I know Neil Braxton Meadows loves me.

Right now Sharvette is grasping my hand and shaking her head, stopping and shaking it again. I can't stand to look at Vette, her nickname. Sometimes her body language speaks as loud as her voice. So I stare at my lap, looking inwardly at my life. I don't like what I see.

“Well, I don’t care what gender this little bastard turns out to be, Reesy is gonna always be my favorite niece. And that’s all I have to say.”

I smile. Sharvette is astounding. She’s family. My higher ground. A reliable anchor.

“Because the Negro never shouldn’t have been messing around on you in the first place. I don’t care if y’all drew up that little sex contract. I don’t care that both of y’all signed it. He should’ve known better to even consider that dumb shit. ‘Cause if my brother really loved you, he--.”

She hushed like her conscience kicked in. But I hadn’t done anything to give her a reason to shut up. I know a man can love his wife and still do foolish things. Like making passes at other women while he’s standing two feet away from his wife. Or visiting a woman who lives in the same apartment complex as him and the missus. Or telling his lover he isn’t happy at home, but at the same time telling home he’s not happy having a lover. That’s what some men do. I know this. And outrageous as it sounds, that’s why I pressured Neil into trying something I thought might work.

The deal is this: in addition to balking whenever Neil wanted to experiment with these painful new positions, I was struggling with a couple other issues that compounded our sex life. For one, I was prescribed with having FSAD, an acronym for female sexual arousal disorder, which basically means I have a low sex drive, about as low as a dead person. If you’re lucky, you *might* be able to generate some sexual desire, but the drawback is you rarely get satisfied because your body won’t lubricate. Orgasms are as rare as a San Antonio blizzard. And you can also suffer from Deep Dyspareunia which means sex is too painful to enjoy.

I found out I’m not alone. FSAD is a condition that affects forty seven million American women for a variety of reasons. And to date there is no approved drug to treat this disorder. So even if my delicious-smelling hubby fondles me and gives me the eye, my attitude towards getting it on wanes many nights. Sometimes my lack of desire rattles me, but the truth is I don’t terribly miss having orgasms. If I have them fine, if I don’t, it really doesn’t matter. Of course, this isn’t fair to Neil, but my hormones don’t seem to care.

To make things worse, I gained a good twenty-five pounds in the past five years. I’m thirty-seven years old and my transformed body seldom lets me forget. But yes, I’ve signed up for state of the art fitness center memberships. I’ve bought the useless Paula Abdul workout tapes; useless because two weeks after being gung ho about exercising and getting my fried-chicken-loving self back in shape, the only sits up I do is when I sit up in bed so I can grab a decadent chocolate chip cookie that’s calling to me from a nearby table. And although I don’t consider myself the most unattractive woman in the world, I really feel uncomfortable when Neil takes long looks at me. I’m afraid he’ll see my imperfections, like I’m not everything he expects me to be.

So about a year ago, I walked in our home library unannounced. Neil looked up, eyes enlarged and yelled, “Anya, not now, not now.” He was sitting on the edge of the sofa, naked from the waist down, his dick clutched in his hand, with an unbridled look in his eyes. He grabbed his slacks and clumsily spread them across his lap. I backed up until I was no longer in that room witnessing what I’d driven my husband to do. I felt bad but not bad enough to let him make love to me whenever he was in the mood, which was often.

When I realized our sexless streak had stretched to two years, I thought about what I could do to help the situation. And one day I took a deep breath and blurted, “Neil, why don’t you find a partner? Find a woman you can have sex with up to two times a month, no strings attached, but if you agree to do this you’ve got to promise me something.”

“What’s that?” Neil asked, stunned.

“Promise me you won’t fall in love. That you’re in it only for the sex.”

“Are you *crazy*?”

“No, baby, not crazy. I love you,” I told him sincerely. I loved him enough to trust him to do something that didn’t seem like a big deal at a time. Sure, encouraging your hubby to have sex with another woman is something many wives wouldn’t allow. But I thought if I controlled that situation, as opposed to letting him take charge of an affair, maybe the outcome wouldn’t be as disastrous. Plus I knew that even if Neil didn’t totally understand me, I was certain that he loved me. He was a great reliable husband, thoughtful, and a superb father. And since mostly everything else in our marriage was decent, why break up just because of sex? So I asked Neil to give this arrangement a try. I reasoned as long as Neil didn’t grow attached to the woman, and we stuck to our promises, the arrangement could succeed.

The Marital Arrangement of Neil Braxton Meadows and his wife Anya

1-Neil should seek and find a single, unattached female sex partner.

2-They should only have oral sex, no penetration; giving and receiving is permissible.

3-No falling in love with her. If she falls in love with Neil, he should end the relationship quickly and respectfully.

4-Anya will never accuse Neil of committing adultery *because this entire plan was her idea.*

I made up numbers one, two, and three. And I made up the first part of number four, but Neil insisted I mention *in italics* that the idea was mine. I thought it

was unnecessary to add that part, but I didn't argue. I gave in so he could feel better. So we could move on.

Neil and I stuck the unsigned arrangement in a drawer for one week so we could both think about it. And we debated the issue until we agreed that oral sex isn't true sex. Whether middle schoolers, college guys, or senior citizens, plenty of men get blow jobs. The act means nothing to these guys. Besides, are there any stats on how many men fall in love with blow-job giving women? I thought Neil could share his body without handing over his heart. So we retrieved the document and signed (I signed first) and I locked it inside a file cabinet located downstairs. My biggest concern at the time was making sure Neil believed I was serious. I was, and I still am.

"Damn, what's taking my brother so long?" Sharvette lets go of my hand. I now feel abandoned but understand her anxiety. She stands up, walks across the length of our den, and comes right back and sits at my feet. Vette has recently added blonde highlights to her brown hair. Her hair is teased and wild looking, the long strands touching her shoulders and making her look older than twenty.

"These things take time, sweetie," I assure her. "The lady's only been at the hospital six hours. He'll call." My voice sounds light and airy, me trying to be positive and mature. Who the heck am I kidding? If it weren't for the fact that in Texas, murder means a trip to death row, I'd have already handled that fool. But I need to stay in control. I cannot kill my husband or his mistress just because he broke our contract. Even if he couldn't keep his word, at least one of us should.

"I don't see how you can take it, Anya," Vette whispers. She looks at me long enough to force me to stare into her light green eyes. Her skin is glowing, bronzed-toned, and blemish free. I hope this young woman can look at my marriage and learn from it. Learn what not to do. Learn that marriage ain't nothing nice; that even if things are shaky within the marriage, a legally bound relationship isn't easy to terminate. Not as easy as some folks (the naïve ones) think.

"If I ever get married, which I don't plan to, first I want to live with the Negro for at least five years, just to see where his mind is. Just to see if he's faking it with me or not."

I laugh and cross my legs at the ankles. I have on a cute white blouse, a long blue jean skirt, and some strappy sandals that I haven't worn in years. I just feel like trying to look sexier for a change.

"Oh really, Vette? And what if the dude fakes it for five years, you two hook up, and then he starts tipping out on you soon after he's made it legal?"

"Don't worry. I have a tight game plan in mind, sister-in-law. 'Cause see, I ain't as desperate as some of these single women out here. Doing anything and

everything to get a man, to catch a husband. They catching more than husbands these days.”

“You right about that. Marriage ain’t no joke.”

The phone rings and hums against my hand. I just stare. Breathless.

It rings again.

Sharvette’s eyes grow wider and she snatches the phone from my grip.

“Yeah?” she says.

She puts her hand on her hip.

“She’s right here, what you got to tell her?”

I look at the ceiling.

“Uh, huh, okay, all right, bye.”

I look at Vette.

“They just had a seven pound-five ounce, nineteen inch boy. Neil Braxton Meadows, Jr.”

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