

CHAPTER 1



“They make the perfect couple.” Jayne tried to pretend she did not hear the whispered comments as they walked past other couples at the country club.

Paul smiled down at her as he led her toward their private table. He was bursting with pride as other men stopped eating to eye his date. “Look at her long legs,” one said with a whistle.

“I wonder if Paul Deaux realizes how lucky he is to have such an exquisite woman on his arm?”

Paul paused, unable to resist the urge to gloat just a little. “Yes, I do realize how lucky I am. Stay away from my woman, gentlemen. I would hate to hurt any of you, but try to take her and I will have no choice.”

Shaking her head at her date, Jayne tried to reassure Paul she had eyes for no man but him. She could not understand his insecurity. He was a powerful businessman. Though he had an identical twin, her date was the more attractive of the two, definitely more reasonable than his brother, Jean.

Any woman would be thrilled to be with him. Paul was named as one of the top twenty most sought after single men in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Women threw themselves at him constantly. But her man only had eyes for her, Jayne sighed. He fretted endlessly that she might find someone else,

but it was ridiculous to even consider. Jayne Anne only had eyes for her Paul. Since they met six months before when she came to work at Deaux Consultants, it had been love at first sight for them both. Why the sexy man could hardly get any work done, see any clients or concentrate on anything but her. It was only a matter of time before he begged her to marry him.

“Jayne Anne, I asked you a question. Are you listening?”

Paul’s voice had her smiling. Maybe he was going to pop the question right now. Though she really ought to play coy, her love for this wonderful man had her rushing to answer him. “Yes, Paul. Yes, a thousand times over.”

In her haste to help him slip the ring on her finger, Jayne dropped the magazine which featured Paul’s picture. It dropped to her receptionist desk with an obnoxious clatter, knocking over her diet coke and sending liquid dangerously close to her office computer. Paul Deaux had cat like reflexes, and he managed to move the keyboard just in time. Rudely jerked back to reality, Jayne realized her new boss had caught her daydreaming on the job again. She withdrew her hand quickly, hoping he had not seen the awkward way she had held it up at him.

Paul gave her a reproachful glare as he picked up her red solo cup and sniffed the contents. Satisfied it did not contain alcohol, he went back to the topic at hand. “Yes, you are listening? Or yes, my brother called me back? Which is it?”

Closing her magazine so he could not tell she had been drooling over his picture from the article about the top bachelors in the region, she tried to calm her heartbeat. Picking up a list she had made on a legal notepad, she started filling Paul in on his recent calls. “Mr. Jean Deaux did call to say he would be back from his honeymoon by the end of the week. He must be having a great time because his new wife kept calling out in the back ground for him to hurry up and come back to bed. I assume they have been putting in some long hours during the trip to the mountains. It will probably take them a week just to catch up on their sleep.” When she was

nervous, Jayne tended to blurt out anything and everything on her mind. It was a flaw which got her fired from her last job.

Paul Deaux had already given her a warning about providing more information than was necessary once. "Do you think my brother would appreciate you sharing that bit of information with me or anyone else?" His narrowed eyes had her squirming in her seat.

"No, sir. I... Your parents called. They wanted to remind you about the family crawfish boil this weekend. They are such wonderful people, but of course you already know all about that. They invited me to come, too. In fact, they sent an open invitation for everyone working at Deaux Consultants to join the fun." He gave her another reproachful glance. "I'm rambling on again, aren't I?"

"Any more calls, Jayne Anne?" He was the only person she knew who called her by both of her given names. She hated them individually, but even more so when paired. Nobody needed to remind her how common her names were. They were plain and boring, just like her appearance.

"Miss Summers called," she told him, her voice went cold. He might have assumed her tone stemmed from his curt questions, but nothing could be further from the truth. She found it impossible to be mad at her boss. She had secretly had a crush on him long before the darn magazine named him as being a great catch. Not that she stood a snowball's chance in New Orleans' summer heat to realize her dreams of dating someone like him. Women like Erica Summers were more Paul's type. Tall, sophisticated, self-assured, Erica was everything plain Jayne was not.

"She wishes you to call her at your earliest convenience." Jayne did not mention the other woman's pouty monologue about missing her Pully Wally. The woman went on for several minutes about how perfect she and Paul were as a couple. It was only a matter of time before they were announcing their engagement, according to the bitch.

“Any other messages?” He locked eyes with her. She found herself sighing with contentment. Those blue eyes were mesmerizing. She could easily get lost in them. “Jayne Anne, I asked you a question. Try to pay attention.”

Shaking her head, she forced herself to look away. “No, sir, Mr. Deaux, sir. Your five o’clock appointment should be here soon. Should I show him in before I leave for the day?”

“Do you have to rush home today?” he asked, and she held her breath.

She shook her head side to side like a lovesick puppy before trying to adopt a more neutral expression. “No, sir. Was there something you needed?” Ask me out, she pleaded with her eyes.

“Would you be willing to join me in my office...” he started to explain, and she jumped up immediately to comply. “Not now,” he motioned for her to take a seat again. “Later, when the client shows up. Jean generally sits in on new client interviews, sort of as a silent observer. I do all the talking, so you don’t have to worry about saying anything. I just like to have a third person there to make mental notes on what is said, plans made, details negotiated. That sort of thing. After the man leaves, we can discuss the meeting over supper. Tonight, is steak night at the country club. What do you say? You can earn some overtime and get a free meal out of the deal.”

Today was a red-letter day for Jayne Anne Richard. She would remember it always as the first time Paul Deaux asked her out. There was no need to dwell on the fact that it was not an actual date. The fact that they would be sharing a working meal was not important either. “I would enjoy going to the country club with you, Paul. I mean, Mr. Deaux. I mean, it will be great to eat a meal with you, after the meeting in your office. Yes, sir. I can sit in when your client shows up. I’ll just shut up now. I better go get a rag from the break area and clean up this coke. Was there anything else you needed, sir?”

“Jayne Anne. You have been here a few months now. I have

asked you repeatedly to call me Paul. There is no need for this Mr. Deaux nonsense. Five of my siblings work here. None of us are sure who you are talking to when you insist on being so formal, especially when there are no customers around.

“If you insist, Mr. I mean, Paul. I will let you know the minute your appointment shows up.”

When he finally walked off, she watched his tight backside until he was out of sight. He wore expensive suits when clients were expected, and he filled out the tailored slacks perfectly. Jayne often imagined herself grabbing hold and giving the globes a little squeeze. Then she scolded herself. Proper little Catholic girls did not waste time on impure thoughts like molesting their bosses. Yet Jayne did so, a lot lately. It was yet another way she found herself falling short of what was acceptable. But there was no time to worry about that right now. According to the clock, she only had ten minutes to visit the ladies’ room and freshen up before she went to meet Paul in his private office.

Weldon Brown arrived a bit after five. Jayne was taken back by his casual attire. Generally, clients of the company showed up in suits and ties. Mr. Brown had on a jogging suit and seemed to be checking behind him to make sure no one was following him. “I have an appointment with Mr. Deaux.” He almost whispered the information to her and she found him to be a nervous man as she showed him back to her boss’ office.

Paul walked across the room to shake the man’s hand and indicated for him to sit down in one of the two leather chairs in front of the large desk dominating the room. Jayne started to remain in the background, but her boss pointed to the remaining chair as if ordering her to take it. Mr. Smith did not appear happy with her presence. “I believe I mentioned this was a very delicate situation I wanted to discuss with you, Mr. Deaux. I am taking a great risk coming here this evening. The fewer people who are aware of this meeting, the better.”

Darn it, the receptionist fumed. There went her red-letter day.

Thanks to old nervous nelly Mr. Brown, she was going to miss out on her chance for a meal out with the man of her dreams. She started to get up, but Paul indicated for her to remain seated. "Jayne Anne is my personal assistant, Weldon. I trust her completely and so should you."

Paul Deaux trusted her completely? Jayne Anne was so thrilled with his words, she missed out on most of the conversation that followed. In her fantasy, Weldon questioned her right to stay for the meeting, but her boss boldly proclaimed there would be no meeting without his personal assistant. It was not until Paul coughed a few times that Jayne realized she had a job to do. Sitting up straight, she watched everything that happened for the next half an hour, paying special attention to Mr. Brown's words and mannerisms.

Mr. Brown owned a small shop in the local mall. Recently, a shady person showed up to offer his business protection from the recent uptick of crime plaguing the nearby area. At first, he had been tempted to hire the group, but his wife had been wary of the character of the person trying to set up the deal. The young man left the shop, but not before making an ominous comment about hoping Mr. Brown did not regret his decision.

"That night, someone broke into the shop and ransacked it. The same guy showed up bright and early, wondering if I had had a change of heart. He suggested I might want to insure my wife's safety. The man knew what hours my Maddie works and when I'm not around. I got the message. I paid the money, but my wife is pissed... sorry, miss," he stopped to apologize to Jayne. "My wife is quite frustrated with my giving in. She is determined to stop me from making any more payments. She started researching how to handle the problem and ran across an article in the New Orleans Times about your company handling delicate problems for several businesses down there. My Maddie would rather pay your company for real protection instead of giving in to blackmail. Frankly, I don't give a damn who I must pay, but I am going to

protect my wife no matter what. If you think you can eliminate this problem without putting her in danger, I would like to hire your company. But if you can't, please be straightforward with me. With or without Maddie's permission, I will pay the guy's protection money if he is still around by the first of the month."

"According to my calculations, that leaves us ten days to eliminate the issue. What time does your shop open?" The other man reluctantly gave the time. "Fine, Ms. Richard and I will meet you there two hours before that time tomorrow morning. Is there a back entrance you would prefer us to use? Good. We will need to see any surveillance video you have, get a full description of the man involved and a timeline of the events."

"What's the name of your store?" Jayne asked before she realized she was supposed to be seen but not heard. Caught up in the excitement of going on a case with Paul had her bursting at the seams.

"Passionate Pleasures." Mr. Brown seemed even more uncomfortable as he pulled on the collar of his cotton jogging shirt.

Jayne's mouth opened wide with shock, but she quickly shut it. This middle-aged man and his wife ran a sex shop? And the man of her dreams planned on bringing her there to help him investigate? Paul did not know, of course, how sheltered her life had been. She went to private, all girl Catholic schools all her life.

She had yet to even kiss a boy despite being close to twenty-three now. Her grandfather had raised her after her parents' death. Well, Martha and Juan had really raised her. Damien Richard, Jayne's father's father, ran a successful casino and was much too busy to waste time with a child. All in all, she had a very sheltered life. Her grandfather always warned her boys would try to get to his money through her and she was never to trust a member of the opposite sex.

Stop sabotaging yourself, Jayne gave herself a pep talk. Smile and pretend none of this is new to you. Follow Paul's lead and everything will be all right. Smiling at her boss, she sought to

appear confident and open to whatever was expected of her. Did her boss' arrogant smile indicate he knew she was up to the task? No, he probably saw through her brave front and could not wait to see her shocked reaction to visiting a sex shop.



"WHAT AN ODD-LOOKING COUPLE." Jayne tried to pretend she did not hear the whispered comments as she and Paul walked past other couples at the country club later that night.

Paul smiled down at her as he led her toward their private table. "Don't worry, Jayne Anne. I'm not going to eat you up. It's a business meal. Calm down."

"Erica is going to have a hissy fit when she hears Paul showed up here with another woman." An elderly woman wearing a pearl necklace did not even bother to whisper as they passed her table.

"I wonder if Paul Deaux realizes how crazy he is to chance pissing off the Summers family," the lady's husband noted.

Paul paused, unwilling to let the rude comment pass. "Erica and I are not dating, no matter what you may have heard. As for upsetting the Summers family, with a daughter as full of drama as Erica, they are likely upset more often than not."

The elderly lady raised one penciled in eyebrow before commenting. "And who is the young lady you are with tonight?"

"I'm the receptionist at..." Jayne started to answer, but Paul took her hand in his and squeezed. No doubt he was concerned she would start rambling on again and embarrass them both.

"May I present Jayne Anne Richard? Jayne Anne, this is Mr. and Mrs. Adam Depont."

Mr. Depont stood up to extend his hand for Jayne to shake. She reluctantly did so, worried the other man would notice her poor manicure. She really should have gone to the beauty parlor like Maria had suggested. His wife remained seated and lifted a limp

wrist in a half-hearted gesture. "Richard? Are you by chance related to the Richard's who run a jewelry shop downtown?"

"No," Jayne whispered, getting very uncomfortable.

"How about the Richard family from Baton Rouge? The ones who have several restaurants in the city?" Mrs. Depont feigned surprise. "What line of work does your family dabble in, dear?"

"Don't embarrass the child, Lynn. She is here as Paul's guest. Obviously, her family does not belong to the country club. It's nothing to be ashamed of, dear."

Paul gave the other couple a few seconds to enjoy their gloating, before he set out to shame them back. "I do believe you both know Jayne Anne's family. Her grandfather is Damien Richard. I believe he is one of the original families to have founded this country club. In fact, I believe your temporary employee agency supplies a lot of workers for Damien's casino, doesn't it? I am sure Jayne Anne will mention the warm greeting you gave her when you met."

Jayne felt even more self-conscious now. Her grandfather was a flamboyant member of society. In his youth, he had been a pillar of society. But his personality changed drastically after the death of his wife. Now, Damien was a playboy, despite being close to seventy. His antics both repulsed and intrigued local society. He was easily the richest man in town and many companies relied on his success to make their own living.

The Deponts looked flabbergasted and quickly sought to repair any damage they caused. Lynn stood up and offered Jayne her chair. Mr. Depont was calling over a waiter to order Jayne a drink. Paul just nodded smugly. His little receptionist gave him a pleading look. "I am sure Jayne Anne would love to stay and visit with you both, but we already have plans for the night. If you will excuse us," he pulled out her chair and helped her to her feet.

"Do tell your grandfather we send our regards." Mr. Depont called after them.

"Maybe we can do lunch one day, Ms. Richard?" Lynn suggested, but the younger couple was already several tables away.

Jayne muttered under her breath, "You know perfectly well that my grandfather hardly visits me these days. Why did you imply I was going to report their actions back to him?"

She really hated people treating her differently because of her family ties. All her life, Grandfather had avoided her like the plague. Instead of raising her himself, he hired a couple to move into the guest house of her parents' old home. He paid for her education and expenses, demanding she go to private, Catholic institutions and received all the necessary sacraments associated with the faith. Jayne heard stories about her grandmother and how devoted she had been to the church. Maybe her grandfather pushed for that kind of life for Jayne as a means to make up for his jaded, new life style.

"I don't get you, Jayne Anne." Paul held out her chair for her as they got to the table. "You come from money, but you live a life on modest means."

"The nuns taught us that money does not buy happiness. Besides, I have everything I need and just about anything that I want."

"Your last name alone could open lots of doors both politically and socially, yet you maintain a low-key existence." He took his own seat and studied her carefully.

"I prefer being accepted for myself, not my grandfather's power and position. Even he has always been quick to warn me others will try to use me to get to him. I think it was his way of warning me not to count on him losing any time or money on me."

Resting his elbows on the table, he palmed his chin. "You don't realize how much your grandfather cares about you, do you? I think his warning was a means of trying to protect you from being used. You are a beautiful, intelligent, young lady who stands to inherit a vast empire one day."

She laughed at his jest, but he was not amused. Plain Jayne, beautiful? Never in a million years, she knew. As for being intelligent, her grandfather had pushed for her to enter the

convent. Jayne had known from an early age that she longed for a family with lots of children one day. While devoted to her faith, she did not feel the calling of becoming a nun. One day, with a bit of luck, she would find a God-fearing man and start a family. She certainly would not limit herself to one child, like her parents had. Losing them had been all the more difficult without a sibling to help comfort her.

“My grandfather is not going anywhere soon. He is healthy and active. Besides, I don’t know one thing about his business ventures, and frankly, I do not care to learn. With his active sex life, I would not be surprised if one of his many lady friends does not turn up pregnant with a new heir.” Having him stare at her made Jayne nervous and she found herself babbling on again. “As it is, I think he is sort of embarrassed about having me for a grandchild.”

“Embarrassed in what way?” Paul demanded after they placed their order.

“Aren’t we supposed to be discussing your meeting with Mr. Brown?” she asked quietly.

“The night is young. We will discuss that later. Now, explain why you think your grandfather isn’t proud of you.”

“Just look at me,” she gestured toward her face. “You saw how people reacted when Paul Deaux, successful businessman and a member of the top twenty available bachelors walks in with plain, little Jayne Anne Richard. That couple turned their noses up so high, I could count every hair inside their nostrils.”

“You are no plain Jane, young lady.”

She gave a dry laugh then. “Paul, you have always been honest with me and I respect that a lot. Don’t start trying to soften the blow of my average looks by lying. I am no great beauty, but I am okay with it. It works for me.” She shrugged her shoulders and pretended not to notice his angry stare. Jayne started eating her salad and hoped the topic was over. He had called her a ‘young lady’. Why had the title made her want to squeeze her legs together tightly?

“Jayne Anne, look at me. Now!” Paul’s commanding tone had her putting down her fork and locking eyes with him. “You are one of the most beautiful women I have ever met, both on the inside and the outside. Don’t ever let me hear you put yourself down again.”

The uncomfortable tingling between her legs had her squirming a bit. “I am only stating the facts.”

He reached across the table and captured her hand in his larger one. “Have you ever been spanked before, Jayne Anne? Somehow, I doubt it. Continue along these lines of self-deprecation and you will find yourself over my knee having your bottom warmed.”

The wetness filling her panties had Jayne worried she might have accidentally peed on herself. Did he know about her sick fantasy? She had been so careful to hide all hints of her secret obsession. Jayne had never indulged in her fascination with the topic of spanking at work. The ear marked pages in her favorite books, bookmarked websites and collection of DVDs were safely locked away in her bedroom. She assumed being a good little Catholic girl spawned the fantasy. There was something about facing the consequences of your failures and receiving absolution which called to her. And the man she was currently daydreaming about having as a boyfriend just threatened to spank her.

Without any control over her nervousness, Jayne found herself giggling and talking nonstop. “It’s getting very hot in here. Do you find it hot? Maybe I shouldn’t have ordered the steak. This salad is so large, it’s filling me up. Am I really going to come with you to the Browns’ shop tomorrow? Should I bring a note pad? Mr. Brown seemed so normal. I can’t believe he and his wife run a smut shop... not that having a sex shop is evil or anything. Well, the nuns definitely would not have thought it was a holy job choice. I thought about becoming a nun for a while, but it seems a very lonely life.”

“When you blush like that, you are even more attractive, Jayne Anne. I find myself tempted to gobble you up whole.”

She popped out of her seat, positive everyone would see the flooding coming from her underwear. "I'll be right back, Mr. Deaux, Paul. Excuse me, please." She started rushing off as he stood up.

When he grabbed her arm, she groaned loudly. "If you were trying to sneak to the restroom, it's to your left, not the right. Hurry back, young lady. I want to discuss the meeting with Mr. Brown and our plan of action for tomorrow's visit. It might be tempting to hide for a long time, but we really need to get down to business, so I can get you home at a decent hour."

The receptionist allowed herself ten minutes of recuperation time in the bathroom. She stared at herself in the mirror and wondered how Paul Deaux could think she was attractive.

No doubt he would haunt her dreams tonight. She would have to go to confession soon because of all the impure thoughts racing through her mind. Her, bare bottomed, over his solid thighs, the crisp sound of hand meeting flesh, slightly pink cheeks clenching together, more moisture pooling between her legs, a delicious ache she could not begin to comprehend, begging to be satisfied... Jayne knew without a doubt she was on the slippery road to Hell. If Paul Deaux was going to lead her astray, at least she would enjoy the journey.

"I was just getting ready to come chase you out of the restroom, Jayne Anne. I am proud of you for finding the courage to return on your own. You fascinate me, young lady. I have never encountered someone quite like you before. Such an innocent, unassuming little lady, you really don't realize how special and unique you are, do you?"