

# Inbound for Pleasure

*Bound to Him Book One*

By

Mindy Taylor

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## Dedication

For those angels in heaven above that always encouraged me to continue writing. I would not be the person I am today if I didn't have you rooting for me years ago. Thank you for believing in me. This book is for you both. For inspiring me with your romance novels and true love of reading. I know that you will never be able to read my work, but I somehow know that you would be proud. For you, my mother and my nana. I love you and miss you every day.

For the sleepless nights and pulling mom and dad duty so I could write, I thank you, my husband and biggest fan. Without you, I would not have tried picking up the pen and notebook and going for it. You are everything I ever wanted and more than I thought possible. Thank you. Thank you for making the sacrifices of family time and supporting me along the way. This book would have never happened if it weren't for you beside me the entire journey. I love you.

# Chapter One

The bar is dimly lit as I hurry around tables and standing customers. I greet my next table of four businessmen I assume are having a drink to end their week. It's Friday night and Angelo's is packed both upstairs and downstairs in the bar.

"Hello. How are we doing tonight? My name is Kierra and I'll be your server." I smile flirtatiously. In the business of waitressing, you get paid to flirt, this I've learned.

"Good evening, Key-Air-Rah," this gorgeous well-dressed man with shaggy dark brown hair slowly pronounces my name back to me. He looks playfully amused. "We would like a round of Jim Beam and ginger ale to start."

"Certainly. I'll go get those for you while you take a peek at the menu." I briefly explain the happy hour specials and then leave them to ponder. A few moments later I'm back with the Jim and gingers and a side dish of limes.

"Do you need a few more minutes to decide what you want?" I ask passively.

"Although the options are endless, we are going to have the chicken and avocado nachos." Mr. Shaggy Hair with the gorgeous I'm-all-business smile orders.

"Very well, I'd be happy to put that in for you," I reply.

"Thank you, Kierra," he says as he gives me a firm glance.

I hurry back to the kitchen and put their order in. I quickly do my rounds on my other tables and make my way back to the service station. I take a long sip of my iced water, staring off at my new table of four, business whiskey-drinking men.

"Hey, girl, cute crew you had just come in," Chelsea, my gossip-loving work buddy, murmurs into my ear, staring off with me.

"Yeah, they're cute, but you know I never get involved with my customers." I sigh.

"Who are you kidding, Kierra? For as long as I've known you, you don't mix in with anybody. I'm beginning to think you are either a nun or a lesbian."

I choke on my water and glare at her.

She giggles and continues. "You see that one with the long brown hair and those deep blue eyes? Repeat after me: C-E-O. Loaded, girl!" She squeals with delight.

"How do you know all this?" I turn and question her.

"Chandler Thorne. He was in the paper last week. He bought the Mount Washington Resort. They wrote this big article about him being some sort of time-share resort tycoon. But I recognize the photo because that's a face I want to remember on lonely nights!" she boldly declares.

"You are such a pig," I murmur, turning my attention back to his table.

"Just honest."

"Fascinating, really it is." I look disinterested at her as she flips her long brown hair over her shoulder and bounces off into the kitchen.

As I sip on my water, I think this over for a few more moments. In Meredith, New Hampshire, we get businessmen and women often. It's the beginning of May and until after Labor Day we will be serving mostly tourists. But in the past three years that I've worked here, I don't think I've ever met a Forbes Magazine cover model.

"Kierra!" I hear a shout from Ian, the chef. I walk into the kitchen and grab four side plates and the order of nachos and stroll over to Mr. Fancy's table.

"Mr. Thorne and friends, may I replenish your drinks?" Suddenly I'm self-conscious. I wish more than anything I could button the three top buttons on my white-collared shirt, which reveals enough cleavage without looking slutty. He smiles, amused that I recognize him. As if! I think to myself, thank God, for Chelsea.

"That would be great, Kierra, thank you."

I see him tapping his fingers against his empty glass. I immediately feel my heart pounding out of my chest. Why is this guy suddenly getting under my skin? I shake my head to clear my thoughts. I reach for the ice-filled glasses of Mr. Thorne's companions and meet his deep blue eyes. He slowly slides his glass towards me. When his hand gets close, I nearly jump from the unexpected heat radiating from him. I hurry away to get the next round of drinks. As I wait at the bar, my thoughts run in every different direction except where they should be. I'm a twenty-three-year old Plymouth State University nursing student drop out. I work as a waitress in a yuppie restaurant because I like the ever-changing social life I lack in reality. I can barely pay my eleven-hundred-dollar-a-month rent. I walk to work because I can't afford a car or the expenses that come along with driving. I carpool with Chelsea to the grocery store or Wal-Mart when I need to.

"Kierra? Kierra?" Vicky snaps me out of my self-loathing thoughts. "Are you okay? You seem distracted tonight."

"Yes, I'm fine. Just having a moment, I guess," I mumble.

I take the tray of drinks back to the 'do-gooders' table and this time I don't even try to flirt. I just want to go home, get in my bed and hide from the rest of the world. I glance at my watch. I've got three hours left, providing my tables are cleared by nine tonight.

I check my watch again and realize I somehow made it another hour on autopilot. I print out Mr. Thorne's bill and deliver it to his table. He is waiting with his black platinum visa. He flips it a couple times between his fingers and I manage an oh-so-fake but sweet smile. He hands me his card and I tuck it into my black leather check folder. I quickly ring him up and return with his receipt.

"It's been a pleasure serving you tonight, Mr. Thorne and friends." I put my hands on the small of my back and do my best to look casual as I smile at all four of the men individually. "I do hope you'll stop by Angelo's again the next time you are in the area."

"My employees and I will be around for the weekend," he corrects me. "The service has been..." he pauses, running his finger across his lips, "engaging." I blush at his firm, but somehow sexy tone. I walk away from their table without saying another word.

I see Chelsea standing by the service station. I stand next to her and finish off my water. I am completely baffled. Tonight is an exceptionally weird night.

"What's got you so flustered?" she says in her always-dramatic voice.

"That guy, Chandler Thorne. He said his service was 'engaging.' What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"I suppose you've been charming his Gucci socks off?" She laughs like that is a completely normal thing to say.

"Does him having money and being in your vicinity suddenly make you unable to say anything useful?" I'm truly disgusted.

She laughs again. "Having money and being a millionaire-slash-possible billionaire are two completely different things." She sashays off.

I return to the possible billionaire's table to clear it. I tuck my leather check folder into my apron and bring the dishes to the kitchen. I wash my hands and open my folder before ringing out my next customers. I am completely stunned. Unbelievable, he left me two hundred

dollars for a tip and the bill was only one hundred and two dollars. Do I look desperate to pay my bills or is he just happy to flaunt his wealth? Whatever the case may be, I will appreciate it tonight and be pissed in the morning.

As I arrive home from my twelve-hour shift, I place my apron on the counter and count my night's wages. Four hundred ten dollars. Not a bad start to my weekend. I just may be able to fill my cabinets and refrigerator this month. I take all my normal precautions. I check to make sure the slider, windows and doors are locked. I step into the bathroom and turn the lock on the handle, and then slide the latch across. Two locks on a bathroom may seem a bit excessive, but it's for my own piece of mind. I hate living in this prison I created for myself, but if I feel safer it is worth it. The hot water caresses my skin and I'm finally able to relax. I scrub my body with my loofa and gritty body wash twice. Messaging the shampoo into my long, curly blonde hair erases the smell of the restaurant from me. I finish up in the shower and dry off. Sliding into my flannel pajama pants and tank top, I slip into bed.

Every door that closes or horn that beeps makes me jump. Four years has been too long to live this life of fear. God, I need to get a grip.

Loud voices cause me to bolt upright. I squint at my watch. In the dim light I can tell it is daylight behind my drawn curtains. Eight o'clock. Great, two hours before show time. I'm working ten until close tonight, which on a Saturday in the grotto could be one or two in the morning. I drag myself into my hopeless kitchen. Oatmeal again. I sit on my dilapidated couch and watch the morning news, thankful for basic cable to maintain some sanity. I finish my oatmeal and decide to get dressed for work. I gather my usual required clothing—black slacks and a white button-up collared shirt. After I'm dressed, I reach inside my medicine cabinet and grasp the orange prescription bottle. I shake a little round blue pill into my palm and swallow it down with some tap water. I brush my teeth and throw my hair up on top of my head. It is frizzy from sleeping on it wet the night before but I want to head to the library to write an email to my dad before I head into work. I put my apron inside my purse and check to make sure all my windows and doors are locked before I leave the house.

It's a pleasant May morning; the air is cool and crisp. I take in the view of Lake Winnepesaukee on this quiet spring morning. I make my way down the sidewalk two blocks, then walk up the stairs to the library. Heading to the back of the building, I sit in the media center



where the computers are. I sit down and open a new browser window and login to my email. Since I have no phone, computer or Internet at my apartment, this is my only lifeline to my father.

---

**From:** Kierra Foster

**To:** Bill Foster

**Subject:** Just checking in

**Date:** May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 0855

Hey Daddy,

I haven't heard from you in a little while and I wanted to see how you and Trish were doing? I can't believe Jack is going to be five soon! How is my little brother? I miss you guys so much! I hope I can make it to Charleston in a couple months. I really would like to see you. Have you thought about coming to visit me here? I hope to hear from you soon, Daddy, I do love you so much and I could use some fatherly advice.

Love always,

Brat!

---

With misty eyes, I watch the cursor blink at me after I hit send. My mother died when I was six from an inoperable brain tumor. I don't really remember too much about her except she used to braid my hair every night after I got out of the bathtub. Trish was her hospice nurse the last seven months of her life. When you are young, you are naive to reality. I saw Trish for seven months, five days a week and after my mom died and I continued seeing her weekly I didn't know the difference. Now that I am old enough and very aware of the situation it makes me extremely uncomfortable to think my father was fucking my mother's nurse as she lay dying in the next room.

However, as I grew up with Trish as my stepmother I became addicted to her nightly stories from her day at the hospital depending on where she was working at the time. I loved the stories from when she worked labor and delivery. When I decided on a school and a major, I know I made Trish proud that I decided to become a nurse as well. The pride didn't last very long. I called home and said I decided to put school on hold for a little while and live life. Of course that's not exactly how it happened. That was just what I told my parents.

Trish is from the south and when her father got sick with liver failure, she felt she needed to move back to the Charleston, South Carolina with my dad and two-year-old brother. Jake was my little buddy for the two years that I saw him daily. He seemed like the only innocent thing in this world when my life was so upside down and I couldn't stand to be around people or touched by them. Jake was different. I would hold him and listen to him falling asleep on my chest. It felt like heaven.

I close out the program and stare at the desktop screen. I see the time in the bottom right hand corner and realize I need to get to work quickly. I throw my purse over my shoulder and head for the door. Back out on the street, the sun is warming up and I realize it's going to be a nice day and of course I'll be inside waiting tables all day and night. As I cross the street, I see Chelsea finishing her cigarette in the parking lot as she waves to me.

"I stopped by your place this morning to see if you wanted to get coffee with me before work. Where were you hiding?" she says between drags and exhales.

"I got up early and went to the library to email my dad. It's hard not being able to contact him when I need to."

"I can't imagine. My family is my anchor and if I couldn't call them up or stop in and bitch about my over-dramatized problems, I would be in a strait jacket." She smiles at her own joke.

"I guess it is a good thing I have you then." I giggle, because it sounds so absurd even to me.

"Seriously though, Kierra. You really can count on me. I know you think I'm a bit out there, maybe a little too honest and maybe even a little slutty at times, but if you ever need someone, you can talk to me." She spews sincerity.

"I'm not becoming a nun and I assure you, I'm not a lesbian either," I declare, trying to end the awkwardly sentimental conversation.

"You are such a bitch." She laughs. "Let's get to work before Ian fires us both."

After the lunch rush, I place my order for my favorite— chicken Caesar salad. Working in a restaurant has its advantages. I get one free meal a day when I work long shifts. Ian tells me that Vicky won't be in so I will have to be bar tending tonight. It's not a bad thing. I really don't mind hiding behind bottles of liquor and the tips come quicker and with less effort. Chelsea is a little pissy, because she's stuck upstairs and she loves bartending.

Three more hours. Then I will go downstairs for the night. I sit outside, eating my salad on the patio, trying to soak up as much sun as I possibly can during my half-hour lunch. Some days I feel fortunate that I work with a really fun crew and other days they are too much. But I have nothing, absolutely nothing, going on in my life so their lives seem like a soap opera.

Before I'm even aware, it's five o'clock and I'm down stairs in the grotto. I have a few tourists sitting at my bar. I'm busy stocking shelves when I hear Chelsea's voice. I look up and see her at the bottom of the stairs, Chandler and a Hispanic man staring at me. They come over and have a seat at the bar. I lean over and smile.

"Good evening, Chandler. If I didn't know better, I would think you were looking for me."

"Very perceptive," he states.

"Are you just stopping in for a drink or would you like the appetizer menu?"

"Just a water for now." He looks at his friend. "Hernandez?"

"I'll have a water and lemon, please?" He has a bit of a Spanish accent.

I grab the waters and place them in front of them. I turn back to my cutting board and start wedging lemons and limes. Ian keeps saying he is going to hire someone to stock the bar on the weekends to lighten the load, but somehow between Saturday afternoon and Monday morning he forgets. After my garnish trays are filled, I wipe down my counters and refill the drinks that are empty. I feel Chandler's eyes boring through me. I turn back to him and he nods.

"Are you all set or can I get you something?"

"I will have a Jim Beam and Ginger and a lime." As he orders, I navigate my way down the bar to get the glass, ice, Jim Beam, lime, topped off with a splash of ginger ale. I place it on a new coaster in front of him.

"Do you always bartend on the weekends? I thought you were a waitress." He sounds weary.

"I fill in down here when I need to. I'm pretty flexible. I began hostessing, next became the salad girl out back, worked my way into waitressing, and then Vicky had a baby and I filled in for her down here." I proudly detail my accomplishments.

"Flexible, in deed."

"What do you do with yourself, Mr. Thorne?" I ask quizzically. He smiles. I place both my elbows on the bar and cup my chin, leaning towards him while he has my full attention.

"What specifically would you like to know?" He smirks and holds his glass with both hands. I am hooked on his one dimple, on the right cheek.

"Your profession? The way you are dressed, I would guess mobster, but that is so seventies. I know you were in the paper for buying the Mount Washington Resort. What else do you do?"

"I buy properties, sink shitloads of time and money into them, attach my name and logo and then collect checks every month." Casually he finishes off his drink.

"Why New Hampshire?"

"Everyone loves the changing seasons. New Hampshire is perfect to experience the blossoms in the spring, summer heat without much humidity, the foliage in the fall and skiing in the winter. Aside from that, reasoning people also love an escape. It is quiet and I personally think of it as a hidden gem."

"Another Sam Adams, Kierra!" A man at the end of the bar tips his empty bottle at me and I nod as I reach into the beer chest to grab one and walk it over to him.

"Why not Vegas or Colorado?"

"Who says I do not have properties there?"

"I don't know. I'm asking you?"

Amused, he laughs, causing me to giggle.

"Do you really care about my business, Miss Foster?"

"A bit. I just would like to know something about a man that was more than generous last night and then comes to find me again today."

"You read the article, you know enough," he states flatly.

"Well," I drag out. "I actually didn't read it. My co-worker Chelsea did and told me who you were."

"I appreciate your honesty." He slides his empty glass towards me. I look over and see Hernandez's empty glass as well and he nods as I take them both.

"Why did you want to see me?" I place fresh drinks in front of them and clear the empties. I grab some orders from the other end of the bar as new patrons wander in.

"I liked your service last night and there is not many good restaurants in the area."

"Good enough answer, I guess." I smile.

"What time does your shift end?" he probes.

"Um, well that depend. I'm here until closing. Last call is at one and I could be here until two-thirty cleaning up and cashing out."

"That is too late of a night."

"Or an early morning. Depends on how you want to look at it, Mr. Thorne," I respond playfully.

"One more for myself and then we will be on our way."

"So soon?" I tease.

"Yes, I have a lot of work to do on my suite in Bretton Woods and I should probably get there soon to check on it."

"I wouldn't want to keep you from you work."

"I would not allow it." His voice is suddenly firm and his eyes ever so dark and mysterious. I check the clock and see it is only seven.

"Very well, here you are." I place his drink on his coaster and tuck his bill upside down beside it.

I continue clearing the empty bottles and making small talk with my already neglected patrons at the other end of the bar. I'm sure they think a wealthy gorgeous man would obviously steal the attention of the only bartender. But truthfully, he was just interesting to talk to. I could care less if his credit cards were limitless or if he had millions upon millions stacked up in his own private safe.

I listen to two bank tellers making fun of their husbands and I laugh with them. I watch Chandler and Hernandez walk towards the door. I smile and wave politely. The bank tellers turn to see who I'm smiling at and I swear both their mouths fall open. I chuckle under my breath, thinking, "Get it together, girls."

Suddenly I'm hit with a large pre-graduation party of fourteen and I call upstairs for back up. Chelsea is downstairs in no time picking up receipts and piles of money on the bar and cashing them out. I grab the orders from the party and suddenly I'm feeling quite overwhelmed. I take a moment to myself and watch Chelsea fly back and forth down the counter cashing out the slips and replacing drinks. She is in her own zone and she's working miracles.

"This pile is all the tips before I came down. Mr. Money Bags left you a hundred dollars. Are you flashing him when no one looks?" I pick up on a touch of jealousy.

"You always know how to ruin a moment with something useless. Now I need three pitchers of Bud Light, two large specialty pizzas and a pitcher of water."

"Aye aye, Captain." She salutes me and takes off to fill the order, calling in the pizzas upstairs.

\* \* \*

I'm scrubbing down the counters, tables and chairs as the jukebox plays Jonny Cash softly. Chelsea counts out the drawer and divides up the tips from the last six hours. I'm exhausted. It is two fifteen in the morning and the grotto is finally empty. Now we can catch our breaths.

"I'm definitely going to need a coffee in the morning." I yawn as I empty the bleach bucket into the sink.

"Absolutely, I don't know how Vicky does this every night. I love bartending, but shit I'm tired." She yawns back.

"You ready to lock up?" I ask as I unplug the jukebox.

"Yeah, here's your stack. I'll leave the credit card slips on Ian's desk." She starts up the stairs and I quickly shut all the lights off, stashing my tips in my purse to be counted in the morning. I'm much too tired tonight. I make my way upstairs and out the employee exit. Chelsea is waiting for me in her car smoking a cigarette.

"Let me drive you home. It's dark out and who knows where the creeps are tonight," she yells from the opened car window. I walk around the back of the car and get in without arguing. Two minutes later we are in my parking lot and I'm slowly climbing out looking for my keys.

"Thanks Chels, see you in the morning. Don't forget coffee!" I yell over my shoulder as I make my way into my apartment building and up the stairs. I unlock my door and drop everything on the counter. At a very quick pace, I make sure every window and door is locked and then collapse on the couch exhausted.