

Designs on the Carpet Layer

Shyann Ellsworth is a beautiful, hardworking interior designer who believes her work is more important than love, passion, or a family, so she believes she's met the perfect man until the one who really heats her blood comes back into her life. Now, all she has to do is manage to escape her crazy ex, who's decided he doesn't want to let her go. Will she be able to have the life she wants with the man she wants, or will her ex destroy all her dreams?

Jesse Hartley is tired of one-night stands and women who just want him for his money. When he starts a new job, he's surprised to see the one woman who's turned him down at every opportunity and the one woman he wants more than anything. Just when he thinks life is going good, an old enemy decides to rear his ugly head.

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Chapter One

Atlanta, Georgia, 2012

Shyann Ellsworth liked her life just the way it was, simple and complete. She felt she'd accomplished just about everything she wanted to in her twenty-eight years of life. She was a top-notch, savvy interior designer with her own company, designing homes and offices for the wealthy of Atlanta, Georgia. She also enjoyed living life to the fullest. All of Shyann's clients so far seemed extremely delighted with her work.

Shyann liked the city but loved her log home in the beautiful Cleveland countryside with its own large pond just out her back door. She loved the quiet serenity and peaceful nights. She'd tried living in an apartment in Atlanta when she first finished her degree at Savannah College of Art and Design, when she'd started her first job for a major designing firm. Two years later she'd made enough money to open her own design firm, and once it was established she'd bought her home and moved away from all the hustle and bustle of the city nights.

She'd been dating what appeared to be a wonderful man, a little older than her at thirty-eight. He really didn't look his age though. He was still a very handsome man with his immaculately styled sandy-blond hair and baby-blue eyes. Not to mention the body of a trainer, at six foot two and weighing about one-ninety. Bryce tried to keep his physique hidden beneath those dark business suits he wore every day. Why, she didn't know.

There had been a guy she'd met at work just before she started seeing Bryce. He was a carpet layer for one of the jobs she'd been doing...a very sexy carpet layer and, oh, how many daydreams she'd had about Jesse Hartley slash carpet layer, lord only knew.

Shyann had thought about giving into lustful temptation on so many occasions. She wondered what ever happened to Mr. Sexy with an inner chuckle. Jesse had been a lot of the reason she gave into Bryce. He was safe and reliable, not just heart-stoppingly sexy.

Bryce Chandler was a prominent defense attorney with his own firm. Shyann had met Bryce when he'd hired her to decorate his beautiful new lakefront mansion. He'd asked her out several times, but she was too busy to even think about dating at the time. She finally gave into him a couple of months later, and now they had been dating for almost a year.

Bryce had mentioned marriage a time or two, but Shyann always managed to change the subject. She just wasn't sure she was ready to be someone's wife. She wanted to be married *someday*. She just wasn't sure it was the right time, or if Bryce was the right man. The only thing she and Bryce had in common was neither one of them wanted children. Shyann was too afraid she'd have to give up on all the hours she put in working, and she just wasn't ready to do that. Bryce never told her why he didn't want children, and she guessed she never really cared enough to ask.

Shyann considered herself to be fairly pretty and quite healthy. Actually, fit would be more like it since she worked out at the gym whenever she wasn't working. That was the main reason she didn't want to have children. She didn't want to give up her figure to have them. Then there was the matter of where to live. Yes, Bryce's house was beautiful, but she loved her log home, and large pond.

No one knew she kicked her high heels off and stripped out of her suit jacket as soon as she was inside her car, not even Bryce. She hated to have to dress up all the time, but her clients expected it, so she did it every day. They also didn't know she loved her nice, quiet swims in her pond on warm nights, skinny-dipping most of those times since her backyard was surrounded by its own natural privacy fence of trees. Or that she drank her coffee on the deck while she drew out designs for whatever house or office she was working on. Her best ideas came while sitting outside listening to nature. She never did like to work in a stuffy, closed-in office. Going to college in a city had almost been her downfall. Shyann liked living a private life, so no one had her home number or address except for family, Bryce, and a few of her closest friends, and she wanted to keep it that way.

Today she stopped off and bought a bottle of champagne on her way home. She'd just landed a large job overseeing and decorating the construction of the Prescotts' sprawling mansion, and she couldn't wait to get started Monday morning. She had so many thoughts and ideas for their new place. She'd worked for the Prescotts once before. They had been so delighted with her work that they hired her once again for their new home. She'd made a bundle the last time and this home was almost three times the size of their first one. She was pretty sure she was going to buy a new car this time around since hers was on its last leg.

She was also thankful that Bryce was off on a golf trip with his partner Terry, so she didn't have to worry about him calling and asking her to go out tonight. Hell, she wasn't sure she wanted to go out with him anymore after the way he'd acted and talked to her before he'd left for his trip. She had been a little frightened when he'd lifted his hand as if he was going to slap her, all because she'd refused to go with him. What was she supposed to do while he played golf, sit around sipping tea? Shyann smiled as she slipped out of her stiff clothes and pulled on a T-shirt and jogging pants. She

grabbed a glass and the champagne bottle then padded across the lawn to the pond deck in her bare feet.

She sat down in her favorite lounge chair and poured her glass full. She took a drink, giggling as the bubbles teased her nose. She almost felt like doing a happy dance with the thought of all the money she was going to make, but decided a quiet celebration would work just fine. She looked out across the pond, the last remaining rays of the sun reflecting off the water. It was so serene and relaxing, she pondered staying out there the entire night, and the weather was certainly warm enough. Sometimes she dreamed of having someone at her side that enjoyed all this quiet beauty as much as she did. Shyann knew it definitely wouldn't be Bryce. He liked to be seen and heard too much to laze around the pond enjoying nature.

She knew eventually she was going to have to break up with Bryce. They were just too different and separate people. Bryce needed a woman who would enjoy all those fancy nights out on the town or traveling to Paris for fancy dinners and as for her, she could be alone for a while, or maybe she'd find someone more like herself. She and Bryce would have a lot to talk about when he got back, and if he didn't change then they would be through.

Shyann sat there thinking about her and Bryce's first date. Bryce had shown up exactly on time. He was dressed immaculately in a charcoal, herringbone-stripped suit, crisp white dress shirt, red tie, and black dress shoes. She learned quickly that was the way Bryce dressed most of the time. He had to look perfect just in case he was seen. He looked gorgeous standing in her door holding a bouquet of pink roses and white baby's breath in his hand.

He offered her his arm, walking her to the passenger side of his navy-blue 1969 Corvette Stingray. He opened the door for her and waited until she was seated then shut it before moving to the driver's side to slide behind the wheel.

Bryce took her to the most expensive restaurant in Paris on his private jet, and the place knew him by name. They had been seated immediately in a very private and secluded part of the place. Fancy white tablecloths covered the tables. Their table had a candle surrounded by flowers for the centerpiece and their own violin player standing by them to play romantic music for the whole meal. He ordered their most expensive bottle of wine and then ordered their meals, telling her that he knew what food was the best there.

Of course, Shyann felt completely out of place, not to mention nervous as hell that she'd mess up. She had never been treated that way before and wasn't sure how to react or behave in such a place as this. She'd rather be listening to some classic rock at a pizza or hamburger joint where everyone just sat around talking and discussing the day's events. She might have enough money now

for places like this, but she was still just a farmer's daughter at heart. She almost couldn't wait for this date to end and she wasn't sure she'd ever want to go on another one with Bryce.

The only things Shyann found out about Bryce that night were that he'd been married once and was now a widower because his wife had been killed in a car wreck. They didn't have any children, and he didn't really have any plans of having any in the future. Which was fine with Shyann because she really didn't want any either. Didn't that make him a perfect match for her?

Mostly, Bryce wanted to know about her. Why she chose to be an interior designer? Where she'd gone to school, all the places she'd worked, when she'd bought her own design firm and home? Did she enjoy living in Cleveland, and why not Atlanta? Had she ever been married? Did she have children or want them? Shyann almost felt as if she were in some sort of an interview instead of on a date. She just knew she had no intention of making this a permanent relationship.

Bryce said very little about himself when she asked except that he enjoyed working out at the gym in his office building to keep in shape since he sat behind a desk most of the time. He also loved playing golf and horseback riding, which he informed her that he tried to do as often as he could. Apparently he went riding pretty often since he owned a few thoroughbreds of his own.

Bryce walked Shyann to her door and gave her a chaste kiss on the lips good night before leaving. He had been the perfect gentleman. So, what was wrong with him? Shyann just knew there had to be something. No one was that perfect. She was sure she'd find out soon enough. He was just too good to be true. When she'd agreed to go out with him she'd *thought* it would be a onetime thing. She still wasn't sure how Bryce managed to work his way into her life, besides being nice to her and not taking no for an answer, even though she tried to say it. She just knew it didn't have anything to do with his money or his influence in the community. Maybe it was just that he was comfortable to be with, and he didn't complain about her long work hours since he worked a few of his own.

Shyann wasn't sure that was still the reason though. Their relationship was no longer comfortable. It was still as dull and as boring as it was the first night. Bryce had become obsessive over time, refusing to let her spend much time with her friends, insisting she would be in better company around his friends. Somehow, she'd just gone along with that. She still saw her friends when she was at work with them, so it wasn't like she wasn't seeing and talking to them every day anyway. Shyann's assistant and best friend Traci informed her that she didn't like Bryce, so it didn't bother her that they didn't hang out together when Bryce was around.