

# THE AWESOME GIRL'S GUIDE TO DATING EXTRAORDINARY MEN

**AUGUST 2010**

*If you say you want to find an extraordinary man, and you're still in the habit of turning down social invitations, I mean any social invitation at all. Then I just plain don't believe you're serious in your endeavors. When you're searching for the one, you had bet take every invitation you get, because for all you know somebody's handing you an Invitation to Extraordinary.*

--excerpted from THE AWESOME GIRL'S GUIDE TO DATING EXTRAORDINARY MEN by Davie Jones

## THURSDAY

The alarm seemed to go off especially early that Monday morning and Thursday hit the snooze button on the automatic. She would remember later on that she had been planning to wash her hair today and possibly retwist her dreads, something she had been meaning to do since last Friday, but in the cold harsh light of Monday morning, she decided that it would have to wait for ten more minutes. Then another 10 minutes when she pushed the snooze button again. Then after another 10 minutes, she decided to wear a hat to work and pushed snooze again.

Almost as soon as she did, though, a fist pounded on her closed bedroom door, causing it to rattle inside its jamb. “Either get your lazy bag of bones out of bed or shut off the bleeding alarm clock,” a voice yelled on the other side of the door.

At least that’s was Thursday thought he said. Her roommate – no strike that – her *temporary* roommate was Scottish and not clever, charming kind like wee Jame McAvoy from *Atonement* and *The Hobbit*, but some roughneck, street version of Scotsman and he basically spoke a garbled plaid patois that was impossible for even her well-traveled ears to understand.

This hadn’t been so much of a problem when he was just dating her English roommate, Fiona, and she only saw him occasionally. But then Fiona got a production assistant. gig on a World War II movie filming in Prague for three months, and her boyfriend Bennett – Benny to his friends – decided that they should move in together when she got back. And since his lease was up at his Koreatown one-bedroom, he decided to sublet Fiona’s room in her and Thursday’s North Hollywood apartment while

his girlfriend was in Prague, so that they could both save up for a down-payment on a bigger better Silver Lake apartment, which they would rent as soon as Fiona got back.

At least that's how they had explained it to Thursday. But she didn't really buy it. She was fairly sure that Benny was just in it for the street parking. According to Fiona, the reason she and Ben stayed over at their shared apartment so much, even though Ben lived alone, was because most nights neither of them felt up to the desperate search for a space and the possible two-to-three mile hike back to his apartment that came with acquiring a reasonably-priced (for a wannabe producer with a day job) one-bedroom apartment in Koreatown.

Still, Thursday couldn't complain too much. She had gotten to put off searching for a new roommate for three months. And Benny was the best alarm clock she had ever had. Even if she couldn't understand a word he said.

"I'm getting up," she yelled back.

He said something else in Scottish and then she heard him padding away from the door.

She stretched once, twice, let out a big yawn, and finally got out of bed to start her day.

She pulled on some black yoga pants to go underneath the gray-and-blue Smith T-shirt that she usually wore to bed and even though, Benny technically wasn't anybody she needed to impress, she took the scarf that she wore over her dreads off.

This was LA, where the male gaze ruled with an iron thumb. And even though she had gone to a feminist college for undergrad, somehow she just couldn't bring herself to walk around looking too throwdown in front of her male roommate.

She ran a hand through her dreads to give them some volume, and she thought about last night's dream, which had been especially vivid this time.

Lately the same dream had been visiting her at least once, sometimes twice a month. In it she's walking through a Farmer's Market she doesn't recognize, feeling bad for reasons she doesn't quite understand.

There's a vague man in front of her, and she's watching the back of his head as they walk through the crowd.

Then she says, "Fine. I'll marry you."

He stops. And Thursday stops, too, waiting for him to say something back.

Finally, he turns around, and –

Bam! She woke up. Never failed. Her mind would jolt awake, right before the good part.

Quite frankly, it was driving her crazy. As her fellow hippie dippie Angelenos might say, obviously the universe was trying to tell her something. But what?

After she had told Risa about the recurring dream, her old friend had been like, "Well, you've got to decide if this dream is a dream of intention, invention, or prediction."

Risa was in a band, so she liked to get poetic as opposed to saying things straight out sometimes. "What exactly does that mean?" Thursday had asked.

Risa looked at her like the answer was obvious. "It means your subconscious is telling you that you should get married, want to get married or just plain old are going to get married. Either way, you're about to die."

That's what Risa called marriage: dying. She also wore black to weddings, when she even bothered to go to them at all. She was kind of special that way.

Thursday padded into the kitchen to grab some breakfast. Benny was at the table when she came into the kitchen. He was eating a bowl of Raisin Bran Crunch and reading the Los Angeles Times. It was a familiar morning sight since Fiona used to do the same thing when she was living there.

After five years of living in L.A., from what Thursday could tell, the only people who ever read the paper version of the Los Angeles Times were from the U.K. They had this cultural thing about reading actual newspapers, and on Sunday mornings Thursday would often find both Fiona and Benny with a pile of them, scattered on the kitchen table, including the *LAT*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and a couple of gossip trades from England, like *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*.

Sometimes Thursday joined them, but she usually just read the *New York Times* on her laptop. She just didn't get the appeal of having to sort through pages and pages of A17s and varied sections just to read the same stuff that you could peruse easier and way more efficiently online.

But like Thursday said, it was an English thing.

Today she just grabbed an unopened box of Kashi cereal out of the cupboard and went to the refrigerator for some milk.

Benny garbled something in Scottish behind her. Something that sounded like, "Fees yandin dah arrow plain row aitch. Carro coh wittoo picker oop?"

"You know I can't understand a thing you say," Thursday answered. She tapped the notepad on the freezer door. "If it's important, write it down."

If Thursday sounded surly, it was because they had had this conversation like three-hundred times already this summer, and he kept trying to act like what was coming out of his mouth was actual English, when they both knew it wasn't.

Benny grumbled some more in Scottish but got up to write something down on the notepad before he threw his dishes in the sink, grabbed his messenger bag and went off to do some last-minute production assistant work on the MTV show he had scored, while the regular sitcom where he usually worked was on hiatus.

Thursday waited until she was finished make her cereal and whole wheat English muffin before checking the note..

It read, "Do you want to come with me in two weeks to the airport to pick up Fi? She's got a friend travelling with her who she thinks you'll like."

Thursday's first instinct was to say no. She had learned the hard way never to let her white friends set her up, because usually they were trying to get you together with the only other black person they knew, never stopping to think that if a black guy only hung out with white people, then he probably didn't date black girls. For whatever reason, white girls never tried to set their black girlfriends up with the awesome white guys.

So there was that.

But this was a social invitation – even if it was a really lame “come with me to the airport” one. So technically, she had to take it.

She was reading this dating book called **THE AWESOME GIRL'S GUIDE TO DATING EXTRAORDINARY MEN** that her friend Tammy's sister-in-law had written. And the author had done like a whole chapter on how women looking to get married

should never turn down any kind of social invite. And she was looking to get out off the crappy single life track, so...

She sighed and made a mental note to text message Benny later and tell him that she'd go with him.

Then she ate her healthy bowl of cereal. Being good was hard.

## **RISA**

If you were asked to write a book on how to be a rock star, you would say, "Can't be learned. The shit only comes naturally. And the world knows when you're just pretending."

But if they threw a bunch of money at you and were like, "Pretty please," you'd probably do it. Mostly because you like telling people what to do.

The first chapter would be all about the rock star schedule, which basically went like this:

Noon: Wake up. Give yourself about ten to fifteen minutes to adjust to your hangover, then rollover and tell last night's girl that you've got band rehearsal and she needs to bounce.

12:30: Have breakfast: A shot of whisky for the hangover; a Red Bull for the energy; a handful of cheerios eaten dry and straight out the box for the nausea; a protein shake for

the calories. You're done. And don't bitch if you're still hungry, that's how rock stars stay crazy-thin. Live with it.

12:50: Listen to NPR in the shower. If you stay in til one pm when they do the news rundown, you'll learn just enough to sound smart and current when you're trying to pull tonight's girl. It's not hard to sound to sound smart and current in L.A. People usually don't ask you follow-up questions.

1:05: Do your hair. If it takes you under a half-hour to do your hair, you ain't a rock star. You've got to commit to a hairstyle that will get you noticed, and hairstyles that get you noticed never take less than thirty minutes. Right now you're wearing your hair in a Mohawk with the sides of your head shaved down and the middle permed and dyed purple – yes purple. The shit is bad-ass. So you need to get out the product and spend at least thirty minutes to an hour styling it in a way that makes it look spiky and floppy at the say time.

2:00: Put on your make up. If it's just a rehearsal day, then you can probably get away with lip gloss, blue mascara and blue eyeliner, smudged to look like you slept in the shit.

2:30: Throw on some clothes. And by “throw on” of course we mean scour your closet for just the right outfit combination that looks both 1) hot-to-def and 2) like you're not really trying. It might take you up to an hour to “throw on” vintage orange checkered pants, a faded black Motley Crue T-shirt and a green Quaddafi scarf.



3:30: Call your manager, Glen, to check in. Mumble that you just got up. Go out on your balcony and smoke a cigarette while you talk to him, not because you're addicted to nicotine, but because smoking kills your taste buds and makes everything taste like fucking dirt and keeps you skinny. If anyone ever tells you that smoking causes cancer, answer, "It also keeps me skinny, you fat bitch" – but only say that if the person you're talking to is 1) a friend and/or 2) really skinny. If neither of those apply just say, "I love cancer. I can't wait for it to kill me." Then stare back at them like "Yeah, I said it."

People will both love you and hate you for saying shit like this.

Well, at least that's the usual routine. Today is different. Today is the day that your manager finally gives you the good news you've been waiting to hear for over ten years now.

He says, "You know that show you're playing at Spaceland in November?"

Sure, sure – crap pay, but at least it's in the neighborhood.

"Well, the promoter just called to tell me that the A&R guy from Gravestone called and asked about you specifically.

You nearly drop your cigarette. Gravestone Records is one of the biggest indie labels in LA, and unlike every other indie label, they don't already have an electronic rock band with a black female fronting it – because it's like some kind of quota with these guys and they all claim that they can only have one. "

“That’s fucking fantastic,” you say. “If you were here in person, I’d give you the best blow job you’ve ever had.”

Glen chuckles, because he knows you’re kidding. “Just work on that set list, and make sure it’s perfect.

You assure him that you will and you hang up. Then you open your wallet. The one with the picture of the girl that got away, the girl that turned you off of marriage, even it was still legal for two women to marry in LA.

And you imagine the kind of crowds you would start getting if you were signed to an actual label. You imagine her standing in that crowd, looking up at you and swaying with it. You imagine coming off the stage and finding her outside your dressing room looking fucking amazing and making all the other groupies standing outside your door read like skanks.

And you imagine kissing her in front of all of them and her kissing you back, not caring who sees.

And you take another drag off your cigarette, wondering if November’s show is the first step to making that scenario that you’ve been playing over and over in your head since 2008 happen.

You sure as hell hope so.

## SHERRITA

Here's what Sherrita needed after a weekend of filled with a food drive for her accounting firm, a [tax term] filed for a client who had "forgotten" to pay his taxes for six years straight, and a lock-in for fifty church-going-but-horny-as-hell middle-schoolers: sleep, sleep, and more sleep.

But here's when the phone rang: seven AM on Monday morning. Now here's the thing about Los Angeles, even if you don't work in the entertainment business, nobody expects you to get to work before ten AM. Even in the world of accounting. So a seven AM call usually means something is burning to the ground.

She picked up her cell without looking at the caller ID. "Hello, this is Sherrita," she said, sitting up on one arm.

"Sherrita, it's Nicole." Her sister's voice came trembling down the line, shaky and sad.

Now Sherrita really sat up in bed. "Nicole? What's wrong?"

"I didn't get the Verizon commercial," Nicole answered, her voice heavy and sad.

Sherrita would've put some effort into comforting her sister, but the thing was Nicole was an actress. Which meant at least two or three times a month, somebody was turning her down for something. And the other thing was, "It's seven in the morning. I thought it was an emergency."

"It's an existential emergency," Nicole said. "I can't even land a non-speaking role of Girl #2 in the salon? Why am I even doing this? I don't know. I don't know..."

Then she started crying. Not sobbing of course – she was a graduate of the Yale school of Drama and that would have been too melodramatic for her training to bear – but she was definitely crying loud enough for Sherrita to hear the heartbreak in her voice.

“Maybe you should come out to Los Angeles,” Sherrita said. “Like we talked about. You could stay with me for awhile and audition out here.”

“I couldn’t leave the theater behind,” Nicole said.

Sherrita resisted the urge to point out that Nicole had been in New York for five years and had yet to land a part in anything but the most off-off-Broadway of plays in her entire time there. Instead she chose a more diplomatic answer. “Well the theater scene there isn’t exactly welcoming you with open arms.”

“That’s because all of your untrained actresses from out there come here and steal our roles.”

Every time any Hollywood actresses was given a role in a Broadway play, Nicole acted like they had snatched the part right out of her hands, even though she hadn’t had as much as a Broadway audition since she got to New York.”

Sherrita tried again. “Maybe if you came out here, then you could become a Hollywood actress and go back to New York theater after you got famous here.”

“Why are you always trying to stage manage my life?” Nicole asked. The tears were gone now and her tone had visibly cooled.

“I’m not.”

“No, you are. You think I’m a problem that needs to be solved like the taxes of your shady clients.”

“They’re not shady. They just need help with their taxes because they’re having a run of bad luck. Just like you.”

“Then help me instead of trying to control me.”

“I’m not trying to control you...” Sherrita trailed off. It was too hard to try to reason with Nicole when she was being like this. “Have I mentioned that it’s seven in the morning?”

“I’m sorry, sis,” Nicole said, her voice suddenly soft and pliant again. “It’s ten out here. I didn’t mean to wake you. I’m just so upset. My rent is due in two days and I really needed to get this Verizon spot. My agent thought I had it for sure. I guess I’m going to have to pay my landlord late and hope that I can find some kind of job before he evicts me.”

Sherrita reached over and took her laptop off the nearby side table. “That’s not a good idea, Nic. How much do you need to make rent?”

“No, I don’t want any more money from you. You’re my little sister, and I’m a grown woman. I shouldn’t have to keep asking you for money. I wish mom...”

Their mother didn’t make a lot of money at her job as a concessions worker at PNC Park in Pittsburgh, so asking for help was never an option.

“I wouldn’t offer if I didn’t mean it,” Sherrita said. “How much?”

“Eleven hundred,” Nicky answered. “And I’ll pay you back as soon as I find a waitressing job or something.”

Sherrita typed in her account password. She had paid all of her bills for the month and put money in her savings, but she only had \$1152.00 to get her through until she got paid at the end of the month. Still, Nic needed the money.

“I’m transferring it to our joint account now,” she said.

A couple of years ago, when she had visited Nicole in Astoria, Queens where her sister lived, she had just gone ahead and opened up a joint account at Bank of America for them. It made it easier to get Nic money when she needed it.

Maybe she had seen the writing on the wall, because Nic had needed money a lot lately. The problem was that her sister had a problem with keeping her day jobs. She would start off in an office or a waitressing job easily enough, but then it would turn out that her boss was a micro-manager or working in an office made her feel claustrophobic or the receptionist hated her. And the next thing you knew, she would be sobbing to Sherrita on the phone that she went for lunch and never came back because she just couldn’t stay in that place a minute longer.

Funny that Nic had never quit a play though. A director had slapped her once and commanded that she not come back to rehearsal until she had “screwed someone’s brains out,” because obviously she didn’t understand how to be a sexual predator on stage. And Nic not only hadn’t quit, but she had actually screwed the director’s brains out that night, then praised him to Sherrita as the man that helped her find her next level of acting.

Mind you this was for a staged reading.

“Thanks so much, sis. I really appreciate it,” Nicole said all traces of tears gone from her voice. “How are you these days?”

Sherrita pushed the Authorize button on the transfer. “Good. Tired. I’ve got a bunch of stuff to do for Foxman & Carroll this week, but I’m also trying to set up an appointment with Foxman. I’ve been a senior manager for a year now, but I think it’s time to have the partner conversation. I know, I know. I’ve only been working there eight

years, and it's supposed to take ten to twelve, but seriously no one works harder in that place than I do, and I have some ideas that I think could take the firm in some new directions..”

“Mmm-hmm.” Nicole answered. She never seemed very interested in hearing about Sherrita’s job. And this morning was no exception. “Are you seeing anybody?” her sister asked without any transition.

“No, not really,” Sherrita answered. “How about you?”

Nic launched into a story about the Verizon casting director. He hadn’t chosen her for the commercial, but Nic thought that might be because he was thinking about calling her and it wouldn’t be right to mix business and pleasure. Sexual harassment laws and all that.

Yeah, Sherrita thought, because people in entertainment are known for following sexual harassment laws to the letter. But she kept her mouth shut.

She loved Nic’s stories. They were always so glamorous. It was like watching an episode of *Sex and the City* and Sherrita pretty much lived vicariously through her sister.

Sherrita had met a few guys during her five years in Los Angeles, and every relationship had gone the same route. Serious for three months, then it would fizzle out. Guys out here were funny like that.

“You need to start dating out,” her friend, Thursday, had told her. “Black guys in L.A. are the worse. All they do is string you along and play games and make you feel bad about yourself because you don’t look like Halle Berry. You’ve got to start dating white or you’re going to be alone forever.”

Thursday pretty much only dated white guys, which was surprising to most people, since she also had dreads down her back and was the daughter of Rick T., one of the most militant black rappers in the history of hip-hop.

But that was how Thursday rolled. And pretty unapologetically, too. And though Thursday got way more dates than her, Sherrita just couldn't bring herself to take her friend's advice.

She had grown up in the black community, had seen black love with her own eyes. Supposedly her parents had had it before her father's drug addiction had forced them apart.

And that's what she wanted. She could see herself standing at the altar in a white dress with a strong brother who loved her by her side, and she wanted that. Wanted it so bad, she thought about it nearly every waking moment these days.

Thursday was wrong. Her future black husband was out there.

It was just a matter of finding him.

## **TAM**

That Monday when Tam Farrell woke up it seemed like any other Monday. She got up at 6:30 and pulled on gym shorts and one of her USC T-shirts, because her personal trainer would arrive at seven AM.

They'd run around Beverly Hills and do a series of boot camp exercises, and then they'd have a healthy breakfast at Urth Café. Then Tam would come home and find



something to keep herself occupied until noon, when she would go on yet another run, this time without her trainer and on a treadmill in the exercise room of her large condo. Then she'd eat a small, nutritious lunch, which would be delivered to her door around 1:30 pm by [company], a fresh food service that specialized in providing food for models and actors and other professionals who were forced to stay stick thin for their careers.

She actually didn't remember until she was pulling her T-shirt over her head that she was no longer a model. Then it all came back to her in a flood of embarrassing memory.

Her brother, James, who was now the head of marketing at their namesake company, Farrell Cosmetics, had invited her to dinner at Jones, an intimate restaurant that was so dark you had to use the table candles to read the menu.

It wasn't quite a scene. Paparazzi didn't hang out there or anything, but it was right near The Lot, a mini-studio of sorts, so every so once in awhile a celebrity would wander in for drinks and/or dinner.

When she walked in, David Spade and Peter Dinklage were having dinner with a couple of girls she didn't recognize at one of the booths. And her brother was waiting for her at the bar.

"Hey Tammy," he said, standing up like the Southern gentleman he was when she walked over to him.

He still called her Tammy, even though she had taken on the moniker of Tam Farrell almost ten years ago, when she had been named the spokesmodel for what was then Farrell Fine Hair. That was before they had been bought out by Gusteau Cosmetics,

a huge, French conglomerate, looking to break into the American urban market and had been rebranded as Farrell Cosmetics.

Though a French conglomerate now owned Farrell Fine Hair, which had been in her family for over a century before they agreed to sell it, Gusteau wanted to maintain Farrell Fine Hair's "blackness." So they redubbed the company Farrell Cosmetics and kept Tam on as their spokesmodel. They also kept James and her other sibling, Veronica in the company fold, giving them the titles of Company Ambassadors, which basically meant that they were sent out to represent the company at parties and movie premieres on both coasts.

The buyout was so seamless that unless they were in the habit of reading the business section, most of their customers didn't realize that there had been an exchange of ownership.

Though their positions in the company had changed a little bit as of late. Veronica had recently quit after getting pregnant, telling Tammy plain and simple, "I had to quit. Those parties are unbearable if you can't drink alcohol."

Also, James had worked his way up to becoming the Head of Marketing after Farrell Men, a grooming line that he had conceived had become a huge world wide hit, even though they were just getting out of a recession. As it turned out, just like women always managed to find the money for hair appointments during recessions, black men also found it necessary to look good when times were tough.

James himself used Farrell Men exclusively. His hair was worn in a medium size natural that look ad perfect, thanks to his stylist and the Farrell Men Hair product which

he used daily. His skin was also smooth and blemish free, which he owed to the Farrell Men Daily Exfoliation Rinse and the Farrell Men Morning Cleanse respectively.

When she looked at her brother, Tammy wasn't surprised at all that he had gone from professional party boy to Head of Marketing within a two-year time span. He was practically a walking billboard for how well the Farrell Men's product worked.

"How's it going," he asked her as the waitress led them to their table.

"Great," she said with her usual cheer. Not because she was a Pollyanna or anything, but because her life actually was great.

She was beautiful, she was famous, and she was rich. Seriously, could she ask for anything more?

James waited until after they had put in their orders and the waitress had poured them out two glasses of wine before he said, "So Tammy, have you ever thought about what you want to do after the modeling thing?"

Tammy crooked her head to the side. "No, not really. That's a strange question."

"Really?" James asked. "Because I figured you must have thought about it, maybe had a conversation with your agent."

"No," Tammy said. "Sabrina and I only talk when I'm unhappy with a photographer or an artistic director. Stuff like that."

She was starting to get a funny feeling about this whole conversation. James was shifting in his seat and not meeting her eyes. He was acting nervous, and as far as she could tell, her older brother didn't get nervous. So of course that made her nervous in turn. "James what's wrong? Why are talking about this."

He took a sip of wine and said, “You should get a new agent, somebody who’s looking out for your future.”

“I like Sabrina. She’s nice and she’s been with me for almost ten years now. She’s my friend.”

“Like Davie always tells her clients ‘You don’t want your agent to be your friend, you want her to do her job.’ And it doesn’t sound like Sabrina’s doing her job.”

Now he was quoting his self-help guru wife to her? Tammy put down her own wine glass. “James, seriously, what’s going on? You’re scaring me.”

James set down his wine glass, too. “Listen, Tammy. I didn’t want you to have to hear this from somebody else. Plus, I’m the head of marketing, so technically it’s my job to pass on bad news.”

“Oh my God,” Tammy said. “Is Farrell Cosmetics getting shut down? I know the economy is bad, but I thought we were doing all right.”

“We’re doing more than all right. We’re doing great,” James said, with no little amount of pride in his voice. “But we don’t want to get stuck in a rut, which is why we’ve decided to make a few changes. We’re redesigning the Farrell logo and we’re taking our women’s campaign in a new direction. Tammy, we’ve decided to bring in a new spokesmodel.”

Suddenly the restaurant got very hot and all of its background noise came to the forefront as Tammy realized what he was saying. They were firing her. She was fired. And moreover, she was being replaced.

“Tammy?” Her brother’s voice seemed to be far away and it was like he was calling to her at the other end of a tunnel. “Tammy? Are you okay? I’m really sorry to have to tell you this.”

She called back down the tunnel, her voice shaky. “Who’s replacing me?”

“Naki Okwelo,” James said.

Naki Okwelo. Ethiopian. Tall, gorgeous, cheekbones almost to her hairline. She had only been on the scene for three years, and she had already landed shoots in Vogue, Elle and anchor spots in several runway shows for A-List designers. She had been the only consistent spot of color in the 2009 Fashion Week season. She was only 21.

And now Tammy was no longer in the hot tunnel. Everything in her body went cold, and she felt like she was vibrating when she said, “You’re not going in a new direction. You’re going in a younger direction.”

“That’s not fair,” James said. “We’ve kept you on for longer than almost any other cosmetics company has kept their spokesmodel. Did you think it was going to last forever?”

The truth was Tammy hadn’t thought about it. Her life had always been blessed. She’d been born into one of the richest black families in the United States. She had gone to good schools, been handed her first and only job right out of college. And she had always assumed life would be like that for her. She was lucky.

But apparently luck had an expiration date. And now that she was over 30, hers had run out.

“You could have at least replaced me with somebody original,” she said. “Naki is the same black girl that everybody uses for everything.”

“But no one has asked her to be a spokesmodel yet,” James said. Tammy could just see him pitching this same concept to a boardroom full of his mostly male counterparts. “We’ll be the first.”

Tammy shook her head. “James, I know you’re the boss now, but I don’t think you’re playing this right. I think African-American women liked having a fellow African-American as the face of Farrell. Especially since everyone else is trying to tell them that only non-American blacks are worth being photographed.”

James sat back with his arms folded. “Well thanks for telling me how to do my job, little sister. I really appreciate your heavily researched advice, because it’s not like we marketing people send out surveys or have test groups or anything. That’s why I’m only taking a random guess and definitely not reading the results of several studies that we’ve done, when I say that the majority of your fellow African-Americans prefer Naki to you at a rate of four to one.”

Tammy froze. It wasn’t just that her normally easy-going brother was using biting sarcasm with her, but also the cold statistic. Four out of every five black women would rather see Naki as the face of Farrell Cosmetics than Tammy.

And something suddenly became very clear to her. She wasn’t lucky. She was privileged. Things had been handed to her all of her life. Things that she didn’t necessarily deserve. And the people that she had assumed were her fans, were only fans of the product she schilled. They didn’t care about her at all.

“Wow,” Tammy said.

James unfolded his arms and he looked contrite now. “Tammy, I shouldn’t have said that. I’m sorry. I don’t want to hurt you.”

Tammy picked her cloth napkin up off her lap and put it on the table. “I’m going now,” she said.

“Tammy, please don’t go. Let’s talk about this...”

She didn’t hear the rest of what he had to say, because she was already on her way out the door.

She had been happy and she had been sad before, but she had never felt like this. Numb. And she floated on that absence of feeling all the way out of Jones, which being not too downscale and not too sceney, turned to be the perfect place to fire someone who thought she was famous.