

Valentine's Day: A Yasmine and Zack Mini Memoir

As Yasmine and Zack prepare to celebrate Valentine's Day, it's apparent their expectations are not the same.

M.J. Kane Books

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Valentine's Day

Yasmine

“Yasmine, I loooooovvvee it! As always, you know exactly what looks best on me!”

“Just doing my job.” I smiled as Mrs. Hill continued to model the strapless black dress, with the simple short sleeved jacket, I selected for her.

“Harold is going to be blown away,” she chuckled as her cheeks turned pink.

I laughed, too. Mrs. Hill was in her fifties and had been married for nearly thirty years. One of my most loyal customers, she'd been with me since I decided to start my own fashion consultant business a year ago.

“But, we both know the dress is not what's going to blow him away. It's what hidden beneath,” I teased.

Mrs. Hill's attention turned to the sexy red lingerie hanging on the dressing room door. A mixture of excitement and trepidation appeared on her face. “Are you sure about that? I don't have the body of a twenty-year old anymore.”

I inclined my head, putting one hand on my hip. “When have I steered you wrong?”

She wrung her hands. “Never...it's just...it's been a while since I've worn something sexy to bed.”

“Who said you had to wear it to bed? You and Mr. Hill are empty nesters. With Melody gone to college, there are no more kids in the house. You can christen your home all over again. Valentine's Day would be the perfect time.”

A girlish laugh emerged as she covered her mouth with both hands. “I don't know...”

“Look at it this way...at least you won’t get pregnant.” I slid to the end of the chair, gripped the armrest, and pulled my pregnant body out of the chair. Sitting next to the dressing room made it easier to see my clients as they went through each wardrobe change. My hand went to the small of my back.

Carrying twins was kicking my butt. Six months into my pregnancy and I was twice as big as I had ever been. My breasts were swollen and feet aching. How in the world was I supposed to make it for three more months?

“You know, you’re right.” She eyed my belly and smiled. “I remember those days...aches and pains. After four kids, I can’t imagine what it must be like to have two inside at one time.”

I rubbed my belly as my son and daughter took turns kicking, and smiled. “Never a dull moment and I’m never alone.”

“So true. Okay, I’m going to take this off now. Do I need accessories to go with it?”

“Yes, ma’am. I’ll select a few pieces while you change.”

Mrs. Hill nodded, then slipped into the dressing room.

I made my way to the jewelry department of the store to select pieces to compliment her outfit.

Valentine’s Day. The one day of the year when couples were expected to declare their love for the world to see.

I lost my love for the holiday years ago.

After dealing with men on friends-with-benefits bases, for years my February 14th routine involved soaking in the bathtub with a glass of wine, followed by a double date with my two

favorite men, Ben and Jerry. A pint of Karamel Sutra ice cream, and watching my DVD collection of Criminal Minds, filled my evening, taking my mind off of romance completely.

Well, except for imagining what it would be like to be with Shamar Moore.

But this year was different. I was no longer alone. Besides being pregnant, I was married to my best friend and the love of my life. Zachariah was everything I'd secretly wanted in a husband and more. What would I do without him?

I knew the answer too well. After our brief separation, it was obvious; being apart from him would devastate me.

Now that we were together again, why didn't I feel the same way he did about the holiday?

For the past week he'd walked around the house humming; alluding to some secret surprise. I had no idea what it was, but knew it involved leaving the house for the night and having dinner at some romantic restaurant. After that, I'm sure coming home and making love was the next thing on his list.

I forced my attention back to my job and selected a platinum choker and matching earrings. Mrs. Hill would love it.

My client was set, but what was I going to wear tonight?

Over the past few months, my collection of maternity clothes had grown. Being a fashion consultant meant I had to look just as good, or better, than what I did for my clients. Even with a hurt back and swollen ankles.

I had several outfits to choose from, but honestly, I was too exhausted to be in the mood for anything else other putting on my comfortable night shirt and cuddling with my husband in bed.

“Oh that is perfect!”

Forced out of my thoughts, I turned to find Mrs. Hill standing next to me. I held the jewelry next to her dress. “Do you like it?”

“Absolutely!”

“Good, let’s go find a pair of shoes.”

“I’ll be leaving work soon. I can’t wait to see you. Our dinner reservations are for eight,” Zack said, his voice full of excitement.

I kept my sigh hidden, sat on the edge of the bed, and kicked off my fashionable flats. “You’re not going to tell me where we’re going, are you?”

He chuckled. “No, then it wouldn’t be a surprise.”

I smiled and shook his head. His enthusiasm was infectious. “Well, I’m going to take a shower and freshen up a bit. I’ll see you soon. I love you.”

“Love you, too.”

My husband’s picture stayed on the screen for a few moments before the cell phone shut down to conserve power. I walked to the closet and searched through my wardrobe. Zack would be expecting something sexy...

I chuckled. With the thirty added pounds to my breasts, butt, and hips, sexy was the last thing I felt. Zack, on the other hand, loved every inch of my swollen body. He constantly wore the expression of a man proud of the fact that he’d been virile.

We were on our honeymoon when I suggested we not waste time starting a family. Zack had been eager to become a father. It wasn’t long before I got pregnant.

I selected a hot, red number guaranteed to make my husband happy. The maternity dress was a short crossover knit that featured a V-neck drop, allowing my bosom visibility. I searched the closet floor for the perfect pair of shoes to go with it, deciding to put on a pair of pumps that accentuated my long legs. Those shoes would only be worn from the car and into the restaurant. In-between I'd wear my flats.

In the bathroom, I stepped into the shower, making use of the fragrant body wash that made me feel sexy. By the time I got out, my muscles were so relaxed, I needed to lie down. According to the clock beside the bed, I had at least forty-five minutes to take a nap before getting ready for our date. That would be enough time to rejuvenate for the evening my husband had in store.

Valentine's Day

Zachariah

"I need two dozen calla lilies."

"Lucky lady," the florist said, dollar signs in her eyes. "And this is for Valentine's Day?"

"Yes, for my wife." I would never get tired of saying that.

"Ahh...how long have you been married?"

"Eight months."

"Congratulations. Is this is your first Valentine's Day as a married couple?"

"It's our first, ever." The florist eyebrows rose in surprise. "It's a long story," I added.

She nodded, then walked to the refrigerated portion of the shop where a variety of fresh flowers were on display. "Your wife obviously likes calla lilies since you're not asking for roses."

"Yes, she does."

"Since this is your first Valentine's Day gift, I suggest you do something a bit more unique. Remember, this will set the standard for the next celebrations to come. Tell me about her. What else does she like? Is there something significant going on in your lives? Any accomplishments she's proud of or that you are proud of?"

This was a no brainer. "She started her own business a few months ago, one she's been working hard for since the day we met."

"That's good. What does she do?"

"She's a fashion consultant and works with women who need help building their wardrobe and self-esteem."

Her eyebrow went up. “Hmm...I could use help freshening up my wardrobe.”

I smiled. “I’ll be sure to give you her number.”

The florist perused the flowers, reaching in to select a few stems. “Anything else?”

“She’s pregnant with twins. A son and a daughter.” My chest poked out with pride.

“Oh, now *that* is something to celebrate. Congratulations, papa!”

“Thank you.” Even though the pregnancy was planned, I felt as though we’d hit the lottery. Twins ran on her side of the family, though, according to my mother-in-law, it had been years since a set were born.

“The perfect floral arrangement should represent her dreams, your children, your marriage... and your future.” She studied the flowers. “How about this, instead of calla lilies, we use Stargazer lilies. The full, vibrant blooms and rich pink color will represent your wife’s ambitions. We’ll accent it with traditional red and soft pink roses for friendship and passion, and...,” she searched around some more, then pulled out a few more flowers. “White Gerbera daisies for the innocence of your unborn children.”

I studied the assortment of flowers she held in her hand. “Wow, I’m impressed. That’s perfect.”

“Good. I’ll put these together for you. It should be ready in say...twenty minutes?”

“Enough time for me to go next door and look for a card to go with it.”

I left the flower shop and went to the grocery store next door. This evening was going to be perfect. I secured reservations for a dinner in advance of the holiday. The restaurant we were going to was special. It was the Italian restaurant where we had our first date.

I chuckled at the memory.

In truth, it was anything but a date. Instead, it was a last minute decision to go out for dinner to thank her for putting a smile on my mother's face for her birthdate. At the time we were acquaintances; neither of us had any intention of getting involved in a romantic relationship.

Who knew a candlelit dinner would lead to friendship, then love and marriage. And now, a family.

I checked my watch, then searched until I found the card bearing the perfect sentiment and imagining Yasmine's reaction. Tonight was going to be perfect.

"Yasmine, baby, I'm home!"

There was no answer.

I balanced the large vase of flowers in the crook of my arm, then closed and locked the door behind me. The house was dark and silent. Not the greeting I expected. She was usually in the kitchen or sitting in the living room watching TV or reading a book.

On instinct, I walked through the house, my heart racing, checking every room, forcing myself to ignore the flashback of the night we found my mother nearly unconscious.

The moment I reached the bedroom and turned on the light, I took a deep breath.

Yasmine laid on the bed, clothed in her bathrobe, slippers on her feet...and fast asleep. I sat the vase of flowers on the dresser and walked over to the bed, easing down beside her so as not to wake her.

Her hair was damp; her clothes for the evening lay at the foot of the bed. Apparently she decided to rest after getting out of the shower and instead fell into a deep slumber. I checked the

time. There was no way we'd be able to make our reservation. A part of me felt disappointment; the other half understood my wife needed time to rest.

After all, she was carrying our babies.

I reached out to run a hand over her belly and was rewarded with a slight kick. I wished there was a way to tell which one of our children had attempted to say hello.

After a moment, I turned out the light and went into the kitchen to scrounge something up for dinner. When Yasmine woke, she would be hungry. Ravenous was the correct statement.

There was a Bertolli frozen meal for two in the freezer. Homemade Italian would work. I went into the living room and turned on a CD, letting the smooth sounds of Kem fill the house while I put together a salad and chilled a bottle of apple juice.

Once dinner was ready, I checked on Yasmine again; she was still asleep. Instead of waking her, I slid into bed behind her, slipping my hand around her belly, cradling her and our unborn babies once again.

Yasmine stirred when I nuzzled her neck. "Zack, baby, what time is it?"

"After eight," I said, and then kissed her shoulder.

Her hand went to her forehead. "Oh man, I'm so sorry. I ruined everything." She turned her head in an attempt to see me over her shoulder.

I kissed her lips. "You were asleep when I came home. I didn't want to wake you, so I decided to make dinner instead." I massaged her belly. "How are my babies?"

She smiled and placed her hand over mine. "Fine, and starving. It smells good. What did you make?"

"Shrimp Scampi and Linguine, salad, and garlic and cheese bread sticks."

Her stomach growled, making me smile. “Dinner is simmering, so there’s no need for you to rush to get up.”

“Thank you,” she said, resting her head against the pillow and settling her back against me. “Oh wow, Zack, are those for me?”

I followed her line of site to the vase of fragrant flowers sitting on the bedroom dresser. “Happy Valentine’s Day.”

“Oh, they are beautiful. Now I really feel awful. I didn’t get you anything. Between work and being tired...trying to figure out what you would want got pushed to the side. Then I come home and go to sleep...”

Yasmine had a lot on her plate. Managing her business, running our household, and managing her health while carrying our children. I could only imagine how worn out she would be once they were born.

“It’s okay, really.” I brushed the sting of disappointment aside.

Yasmine turned in my arms to face me, her expression pained. “No, there’s no excuse. I’ve already failed you once as a wife. I promised never to do it again, and yet...here we are.”

“We were both wrong then, and the past is the past.” I kissed her lips. “There’s no looking back, remember?”

“I know.” She sighed heavily, then looked down at her hand resting on my chest. “To be honest, Zack, I didn’t know how to handle Valentine’s Day. I’ve always spent it alone. Besides, spending money to tell someone you love them is overrated. If you love someone, you show them every day. There’s no need to go out and spend ridiculous amounts of money. Do you know how many relationships are ruined over the type of gift someone did or didn’t buy?”

“True, but that’s not us.” I ran a hand over her cheek, brushing her short locks away from her face.

“I know, I’m just saying, that’s how I feel. I guess since we’re married, there’s no need to feel like that anymore.”

I chuckled. “It’s funny, you’re anti-Valentine’s Day, and I’m willing to go all in.”

“And that’s what I love about you, Zack. You wear your heart on your sleeve, even when you think you don’t.”

“Only when it comes to you. You and our children are my future. I’m nothing without you.”

“I know what you mean. I can’t imagine being without you, either.”

I sat up and kissed my wife. The soft feel of her lips and fragrant smell of her skin was all I needed to know my wife loved me. “You know, there’s only one gift you can give that will forever mean the most to me.”

She studied my eyes as if getting the answer meant the difference between life and death. “What’s that?”

I rubbed her belly again. “Our children. Speaking of which, we need to decide on some names.”

“We already have two names. Belinda and Charles. I promised your mother her granddaughter would be named after her.”

“True, and I thank you for it. But don’t you think those names are a bit out dated?”

Yasmine smiled. “You sound just like your mother. She said the same thing.”

“I am my mother’s son. Why don’t we use them as middle names?”

She inclined her head in thought. “I can do that. I’ve been thinking...do you want to have a junior?”

“I thought about it, but since I’m not a junior and want my son to have my father’s name, I’m willing to wait until the next time I get you pregnant.”

Yasmine laughed. “Who said there would be a next time? I’m knocked up with twins. Our hand will be full for a while.”

“True, but I’m willing to bet after a year or two, I can convince you to try again.” I grinned and wagged my eyebrows.

“Yeah, well, I guess you could, especially since you know exactly how to turn me on.” I groaned as my wife ran a hand over my chest.

She had no idea how sexy she was. Full breasts, wide hips, and just the right amount of flesh on her already sexy behind...I loved my wife’s pregnant body. While I would love to have her back at her pre-pregnancy physic, a part of me was going to miss this.

“So, if we don’t name him Junior, and Charles will be his middle name, what do you think about Jayden?” she asked.

“Jayden? I like that.”

“So our son’s name will be Jayden Charles Givens. What about our daughter?”

“Well, I imagine her being as strong-willed as you, so she needs a strong name. I like Mackenzie.”

“Wow, that’s different. Mackenzie Belinda Givens?” Yasmine mulled over my suggestion.

“You don’t like it?”

“Actually, I do. Zack, do you realize in three months we will officially be a family? Your mother would be proud.”

I felt tightness in my chest. “I know, my father, too.” I kissed my wife, grateful yet again for the blessing bestowed upon me and for listening to my mother’s advice. “Happy Valentine’s Day, Yasmine.”

“Happy Valentine’s Day to you, too.”

The End

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I hope you enjoyed this brief peek back into the life of Yasmine and Zachariah. For their full story, read [Jaded \(Book 2 of The Butterfly Memoirs\)](#). Be sure to check out the character bios, and diary post! Look out for book 3, [Lonely Heart](#), which will be available from 5 Prince Publishing on March 6, 2014! Follow this link to learn more about [The Butterfly Memoirs](#). Happy Reading!

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