



BLURB

She's devoted to her daughters.

Years ago, when her cheating husband left, Ella Brooks realized how much she'd changed and wasn't sure how to get back to the woman she used to be. When she meets Tyrone Evers, the last thing she's looking for is another relationship, but it turns out the police detective is just too tempting to resist.

He's devoted to his job.

Tyrone meets Ella when he's investigating a break-in at her home, but ends up paying more attention to the wealthy socialite's case, and to her, than normal. After his wife cheated on him, he's not looking for romance, he's not looking for commitment, and he's definitely not looking for love. But you don't have to be looking for any of those things for them to find you.

And when life gives you a second chance, do you take it or run for cover?

Do Over by Delaney Diamond

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Chapter 1

“Good evening, Horace,” Ella Brooks said to the doorman as she breezed through. She walked into the brilliant foyer of Presidential Commons, an exclusive building in Atlanta that housed condos and apartments occupied by some of the city’s most affluent families.

The doorman’s craggy gray brows lifted in surprise. “Miss Brooks, I didn’t expect to see you back so soon.”

She paused her stride across the floor. “I decided to take full advantage of the kids being with their father and take a couple of days all to myself.” That wasn’t entirely true, but she didn’t need to burden the doorman with her personal problems.

“May I help you with those, ma’am?” The porter, whose dark hair was cut down to a buzz, stepped forward, his gaze encompassing the rolling suitcase and matching bag over her shoulder. James started working at the building only a few weeks before, and so far, everyone appreciated his friendly personality and attentiveness.

She smiled at him. “No, I’ve got it. Good night, gentlemen.”

Ella made her way to the elevator, currently letting out a few occupants. She nodded at her neighbors and stepped in. As the doors closed, she leaned back against the wall, and the smile faded from her face.

Why did she bother being polite to her ex again? Oh right, because of their two daughters.

She’d become adept at hiding her true feelings for the man who fathered her children. Ever since he was dismissed from her family’s business, Wayne complained constantly about not being able to take care of Hannah and Sophia in the same fashion Ella could afford. He complained about the small apartment he was forced to live in and the fact that he couldn’t take them on nice trips the way she did. Never mind they didn’t care, but because of his constant whining, she booked a couple of suites at a resort in St. Barts and leased a yacht for them to sail around the island.

She only joined them because she herself wanted to get away. But Wayne started a fight, and rather than let their daughters see them argue, Ella disembarked and flew back. Hannah and Sophia were disappointed, but she’d see them in a couple of days when they returned.

Wayne made it hard to be the bigger person. She’d thought about being spiteful and bringing the girls back with her but didn’t want to be the kind of ex who limited her children’s time with their father. Considering she was the custodial parent, she could make his life a living hell, but that would hurt her children, and she didn’t want to do that.

She entered the penthouse, and as the door swung closed, Ella paused. The recessed hall lights were on. Did she forget to turn them off when she left? Unless the staff, who she'd given the week off, returned while she was out, she certainly did forget.

Shaking off her unease, she laughed softly. "You're getting forgetful in your old age, Ella," she muttered to herself.

She hung her coat in the closet near the door and made her way to the back of the penthouse, her suitcase rolling along the wood floor. She'd just turned the doorknob on the bedroom suite when the closet behind her opened. She didn't have time to react before a strong arm clamped around her neck and the bag on her shoulder dropped with a thud. She let out a short cry and writhed frantically, squirming in a futile attempt to escape the intruder.

"Keep still!" The man's gruff voice preceded his arm tightening so painfully, he temporarily cut off her air. She gasped and stopped moving, grasping at his thick forearms, her beating heart slamming over and over against her ribs. Oh dear God, he was going to kill her. She would never see her babies again.

"Be good and you won't get hurt."

Flashbacks to self-defense class rushed through her brain. *Get away. You have to at least try.*

With renewed vigor, Ella slammed her foot on top of the intruder's, grinding the stiletto heel with all her might. The man howled in agony. Gripping the arm around her neck, she did a quick sidestep and slammed the side of her fist into his crotch.

"Fuck!" When he bent at the waist, dragging her with him, she immediately followed up with an elbow to the nose. He hollered louder and collapsed to the floor.

She leaped over his crumpled body, noting the dark suit and tie, black gloves, and black ski mask. Panicked, she raced to the front door. Within feet of it, she was tackled from behind and sent sprawling to the floor. Her elbows collided with the hardwood. Blinding pain shot into her arms and shoulders, and she grimaced, barely preventing her chin from hitting the hard surface.

What was happening? This was a different man, dressed the same but smaller. He'd come out of nowhere.

How many of them were there?

The assailant grabbed her ankles and dragged her away from the door.

Ella realized she'd been so terrified and concentrating on getting away, she'd forgotten to scream. But she did so now—blood-curdling, hysterical cries—tears of panic and dread filling her eyes as she was hauled by her stomach deeper into the apartment. Her manicured nails clawed the

floor. She prayed someone heard her. For the first time, she hated the thick walls and despised the quiet, tomblike quiet afforded by the expensive address.

Back in the hallway leading to the bedrooms, the dress she wore was bunched up under her chest and flipped up at the back to expose her ass in a lacy thong. She was exposed and vulnerable to these strangers.

The Dragger yanked her to her feet and slammed her face first into the wall. Pain radiated from her cheek all over the side of her face.

“Cover her fucking mouth!” the one she attacked earlier said in a loud whisper. He clutched his abused nose.

When the smaller man did as he was told, she bit a gloved finger, and he snatched away his hand.

“Bitch bit me!” He slammed her head against the wall again, harder this time. So hard she saw stars and became temporarily disoriented.

Each man gripped her by an arm and swung her in the direction of a third man who walked up. He was taller than the others and dressed in all black, too. Ella opened her mouth to scream again, but he pressed the cold barrel of a gun to the middle of her forehead. The scream died a sudden death in her throat, replaced by silent terror.

Tears blurred her vision. “P-please don’t kill me. I have children. Two little girls.”

“Then keep your mouth shut and you won’t get hurt.”

She heard a fourth guy come from her bedroom. “Shoulda never come back early, sweetheart.”

“Well, she’s back,” the one with the gun said. He must be the leader. He spoke with quiet authority. “And having her here makes things easier.” He stepped real close. “All you have to do is answer a few questions and behave yourself, and your kids won’t become motherless. Got it?”

The horror of her situation set in. Her knees buckled, and she would have collapsed if not for the two men holding her up by the arms. She hung her head and let out a helpless sob, tears streaming down her cheeks. They could do anything. Rape her, beat her, kill her.

“Miss Brooks, I need you to confirm you understand the terms of our agreement. Behave yourself, and everything will be fine. Understand?”

“Y-yes.” She choked out an answer, afraid that if she didn’t, they would hurt her again.

“Wonderful.”

They used duct tape to bind her hands in front of her and forced her to open the safe

behind a false door in her dressing room. They scraped out all the documents, cash, jewelry, and other valuables and dropped them into briefcases. They did the same to the necklaces, rings, and fine pieces in her jewelry box, as well as taking her daughters' necklaces and bracelets from theirs. They removed the earrings and rings she wore when she entered the penthouse, and a gold bangle from her wrist.

When they finished, The Dragger pushed her into her bedroom. He stuffed a sock in her mouth and sealed it in place with duct tape. He positioned her in the middle of the bed and using twine, secured her still-duct-taped hands to the metal bars above her head. When he produced a red scarf taken from her dressing room, she shook her head vehemently, screams muted behind the gag. A lock of hair fell out of the top knot on her head and blocked one of her eyes.

He smiled, evidence of his maliciousness crossing his lips right before he covered her eyes, knotting the cloth with undo force. Then he closed the door and left her alone.

Ella sat in darkness for a while taking loud, deep breaths, arms stretched above her head. She said a quick prayer of thanks that the girls hadn't come back with her. The thought of them going through any of this made her weep silently. They were safe with their father.

How did these men, four of them, get up here? Presidential Commons was supposed to protect against this type of thing happening.

The door opened and she tensed, listening. Heavy feet tread across the floor, and then the bed depressed beside her.

"Hey," a soft voice said in her ear.

She discerned right away that the person speaking was the first guy. He had an accent, like someone from Boston. Not too strong, but enough that she detected it.

He ran a finger down the side of her face and she moaned, shifted to get away, winced at the awkward angle that stretched the ligaments in her arms.

"Maybe you and I can have some fun."

Oh god, he was going to rape her.

Ella whimpered, weeping quietly as he shoved the hem of her dress higher and stroked the inside of her thigh. If she survived this ordeal, she'd have to burn this dress. She jerked in an effort to get away, but he was persistent and at an advantage. She couldn't see. She couldn't get away. She couldn't even scream. Helplessly, she twisted against the restraint and openly wept. Her fingers and toes curled in distress as this strange man touched her inner thigh with his gloved hand, edging slowly higher.

“What the hell are you doing?” a loud voice barked from the door. The Leader.

“What? I’m having a little fun with the pretty lady.”

“That’s not why we’re here. Leave her alone.”

“Oh, come on, man.”

“I said leave her alone. Get outside and help the others. We’ve been here long enough. It’s time to go.”

The bed moved as Boston Accent stood up.

The room was quiet except for Ella’s heavy breathing, but she knew she wasn’t alone.

Finally, The Leader came to stand beside the bed. “It’s okay.”

She continued crying.

“We have a deal. Nobody’s going to hurt you.”

His hand touched her thigh and she jerked, kicking and screaming in her head.

“Relax. I’m pulling down your dress. If you don’t relax, you’re going to start hyperventilating.”

Slowly, she did as he said and slowed her breathing.

“Easy. That’s it. Stretch your legs out.”

Gulping, Ella straightened her legs and eased back into the original position.

“Good.”

His hand touched her thighs again, but this time she didn’t pull away. He straightened her dress, pulling the hem down below her knees.

“We’re leaving in a few minutes. I would untie you, but I can’t risk you calling the police before we’ve had a chance to get way.”

The door clicked closed. That was the last Ella heard from any of them.

Ella was exhausted. She’d dozed off and spent the night in the same position, which was not exactly conducive to restful sleep. Her arms and shoulders ached, but she was alive. That was the important thing. All the cash and valuables could be replaced, and soon she’d be able to give her daughters hugs. She moaned and twisted to loosen her stiff muscles.

The sound of movement somewhere in the apartment caught her attention. Angling her head, she listened. Were the men back? No. There was no reason for them to come back. It must be morning, which meant that was Mrs. Newcomb, the housekeeper. Ella asked her and the chef to come back early. The chef would be there shortly with the week’s groceries and to prep tomorrow’s

meal.

Ella made as much noise as she could, rattling the bed and kicking her heels. *Help me! Help me!* she screamed silently.

The vacuum cleaner came on. She tried not to cry from frustration, but it was hard. She waited. Eventually Mrs. Newcomb would come back there and see her. She just had to be patient. She'd spent the entire night in this condition. A few more minutes wouldn't hurt.

What felt like hours later, the door clicked open.

Mrs. Newcomb screamed. "Miss Brooks! Ohmigod. Miss Brooks!" She rushed over and tugged on the twine but couldn't get it loose. "Ohmigod, ohmigod, Miss Brooks." She removed the blindfold, and Ella squinted against the brightness of the morning.

Mrs. Newcomb's eyes were wide in her brown face. "Going to get a knife to cut you loose. I'll be right back. Don't move. I mean..." Tears filled the older woman's eyes and she dashed off, leaving Ella alone.

Mrs. Newcomb returned with a serrated knife, which she used to cut the twine and the tape. Finally freed, Ella collapsed against the chest of her servant. With trembling fingers, she removed the tape from her mouth and spit out the sock. The maid held her as if cradling a child.

"It's going to be all right, ma'am. It's going to be just fine," Mrs. Newcomb said. With shaky fingers, she dialed 911.

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About the Author

Delaney Diamond is the USA Today Bestselling Author of sweet, sensual, passionate romance novels. Originally from the U.S. Virgin Islands, she now lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She reads romance novels, mysteries, thrillers, and a fair amount of nonfiction. When she's not busy reading or writing, she's in the kitchen trying out new recipes, dining at one of her favorite restaurants, or traveling to an interesting locale.

Enjoy free reads and the first chapter of all her novels on her website. Join her mailing list to get sneak peeks, notices of sale prices, and find out about new releases.

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