



Not Too Late

by Delaney Diamond



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a short romantic story

by

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Cover art by Delaney Diamond

Morgan Jackson was in a hurry. She had exactly ten minutes to make it to her one o'clock meeting, but since she was twenty minutes away, she knew that wouldn't happen.

A string of unfortunate incidents soured her morning from the time she woke up. First, one of the other agents in the real estate office called to beg her to take her place and meet an important client because she was ill. Morgan agreed, only to discover that her computer was down, so she couldn't log into the network to pull up the listings and run a report of potential homes for him to see. Second, she scrambled to get dressed and twisted an ankle on her way out the door of her house, breaking the heel of her sensible shoes. After changing shoes and heading to the office, she discovered she had left her portfolio at home and turned around to get it after she'd already driven at least five miles.

She now sat reviewing the file in the back of a taxi because her car battery died at the office. When the taxi pulled up in front of the hotel where she was meeting the client, Morgan practically jumped from the car while it was still moving. Only when she heard the driver's protests did she realize she hadn't paid him. With an embarrassed smile, she pulled several bills from her purse and threw out a breathless, "Keep the change," before scurrying off toward the front door.

She raced through the lobby of the Hilton Hotel in Atlanta, moving as quickly as her feet, now clad in some very impractical narrow-heeled pumps, could take her. If she was honest, she would admit she was flustered because of the client.

He was Rodrigo Vargas, her high school crush.

When the request for assistance came from the other agent, she recognized his name right away and wondered if it was the same person.

Rodrigo. Just thinking his name was enough to make her heart rate accelerate and her palms dampen with sweat. She wondered how the past twelve years had changed him.

Standing at the entrance of the crowded hotel restaurant, Morgan let her eyes dart to and fro across the sea of heads. Then she saw him, sitting by a window reading the newspaper. She didn't think it was possible, but her heart pumped even faster in her chest, and she suddenly became breathless.

From his profile she could see he was even more handsome than when they were teenagers. Light mocha colored skin, neatly trimmed hair instead of the curly ponytail he wore back then, and a tailored blue suit for his six foot three frame.

The memories came flooding back. He and his family immigrated to the United States from Mexico, and he entered her life when they were both high school sophomores in Austin, Texas. She had even fantasized about having a new name—*Morgan Vargas*.

Morgan hitched the strap of her purse higher on her shoulder and wiped her hands on the skirt of her suit. Securing the portfolio under her arm, she made her way across the room on unsteady legs.

"Rodrigo?" He looked up right away and then rose from his chair. "Sorry I'm late."

Taking her extended hand, a smile lit up Rodrigo's face. Not the polite smile some people used with strangers. It was a real smile, stretching his full inviting lips above a square chin and showing off his perfect white teeth.

"Morgan Jackson," he said slowly, with just a hint of an accent. He kept her hand enveloped in the warmth of his. "I thought it was you when my secretary told me who my appointment was with this morning. You look great." As if to punctuate the statement, his

dark brown eyes made a quick sweep of her body in the tailored suit. “You haven’t changed much since high school.”

Flattered, and pleased he even remembered her, Morgan felt herself blushing. She smoothed her shoulder-length dark hair back from her face. “Thank you. That’s very nice of you.”

He motioned to the chair opposite him and sat after she was seated. “I wasn’t being nice. I was stating a fact.”

He spoke with such conviction, it took her by surprise. Their gazes connected across the table, and her belly flip-flopped. If she didn’t know better, she’d think he was flirting with her.

“I –”

The appearance of the waiter with menus interrupted what Morgan was about to say, which was a good thing because she had no clue how to respond to his comment. The last thing she wanted was to appear to be the same gauche, insecure young woman she was back in high school.

She wanted to convey the confidence that came with being one of the top salespersons in her office. It was ridiculous to become a nervous wreck just because of a silly unrequited crush from years ago. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly to quiet her disorderly nerves.

After they placed their lunch order, Rodrigo leaned back in his chair. “So when did you move here?”

Morgan sat with her hands folded in her lap, her straight-back posture in direct contrast to his relaxed pose. “Right after high school. I moved here to go to Spelman and never left. And you? What have you been doing the past 12 years?”

“Working hard.” He sighed. “I went to the University of Miami, and soon after I graduated, I opened my first translation service. I have five offices in Florida, and one here. I decided to move here about a year ago to further expand my business in Atlanta.” His inviting brown eyes focused on her face. “So what have you been up to?” He sat up and leaned forward, resting one hand on the table as he took a swig of water.

“Just like you, I’ve been busy working. I’m one of the top salespeople in my real estate office. In the region, actually.” She threw what she hoped was a surreptitious glance at his left hand. There was no ring.

“Are you seeing anyone? Any kids?”

Morgan shook her head. “No to both. How about you?”

“Same.”

They both fell silent.

“Morgan –”

“Rodrigo –”

They stopped, laughing uneasily. “You go first,” Morgan said.

“We’re supposed to be discussing houses and relocation . . . and such . . .” As his voice tapered off, Rodrigo waved his hand in the air.

“Oh!” Morgan opened the folder she brought with her. “I have a lot to show you, based on the characteristics and location you listed for your ideal home.”

“Morgan.” His voice was gentle but firm. His masculine hand covered her smaller, brown one. The heat of his touch shocked her into silence. “This is going to sound like it’s coming out of left field, but I’ve –” He stopped, seeming to have difficulty finding the words. “I used to have a crush on you.”

Morgan’s eyes widened. “You had a crush on *me*?”

Rodrigo smiled, nodding. “Why do you sound so surprised?” He stroked his thumb across the back of her hand, sending tiny vibrations racing up her arm.

It took her a moment to speak, but when she did, her voice was low and throaty. “You were popular. You were the school soccer star, and everybody liked you. You had a girlfriend, too.”

“Yeah, I had a girlfriend, but to be honest, I was really interested in you.” He continued when he saw her look of disbelief. “It’s true. We had a few classes together, and I noticed you were different from the other girls. You didn’t feel the need to draw attention to yourself. You were smart, and really funny.” When he eased his hand from covering hers, Morgan missed the warmth of his touch.

“Funny you should mention that after all this time,” she commented.

“And we should both meet up like this again. And we’re both single,” he added.

Morgan looked into his eyes. She hadn’t imagined him flirting with her a few minutes ago. In fact, he was obviously still just as interested in her as she was in him. She decided to take a chance.

“I had a huge crush on you, too, Rodrigo.”

His eyebrows raised in surprise. "I never thought you would be interested in someone like me. I was a dumb jock, and I barely spoke English."

Morgan shrugged. "I guess we both get a surprise today."

Rodrigo's gaze became intense. "I'll be moving here permanently in a few months. I'd like to get to know you better, if you're interested. Are you? Or is it too late?"

Morgan smiled at Rodrigo, feeling the tension leave her body. The day turned out just fine after all. "No," she replied. "It's not too late."

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Delaney Diamond is the bestselling author of sweet and sensual romance novels. Originally from the U.S. Virgin Islands, she now lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She has been an avid reader for as long as she can remember and in her spare time reads romance novels, mysteries, thrillers, and a fair amount of non-fiction.

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. She speaks fluent conversational French and can get by in Spanish. You can enjoy free reads and the first chapter of all her novels on her website.

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