



It started with a little white lie...

Lindsay Winthrop's weekly podcast on sex and dating has garnered thousands of listeners across the country, thanks to experience with a loving fiancé she's been with for years. Except, her husband-to-be doesn't exist, and now she's in a bind. With a book deal on the line, she has to find a man fast, and Malik Brooks might be just the man she's looking for.

If he knows what's good for him, he'll stay away from her...

A few years ago, Malik gave up sex and now works hard as a metal sculptor. In doing so, he's created enough pieces to fill a gallery, and his vow of celibacy has kept him focused. When a major deal falls through, Lindsay makes him an offer he can't refuse, and all he has to do is pretend to be her fiancé. Sounds easy at first, but after one kiss, he wants more. Then things really get interesting.

Wild Thoughts by Delaney Diamond

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Chapter 1

If it weren't for bad luck, Lindsay Winthrop would have no luck at all.

She'd spent the better part of her lunch hour in a lackluster sexual encounter with a man she'd met online. Devon didn't know the first thing about giving a woman an orgasm, couldn't properly manipulate the clitoris to facilitate an orgasm, and didn't know where to find the G spot if a cartographer drew a map and pointed at it with red arrows.

Clutching a burrito as she hustled down Peachtree Street on the way to her rented office space, she stared at the text she'd received seconds ago. Hal, her publicist, had informed her of a pending problem she'd been trying to avoid, and from the tone of the text, she'd reached the end of her avoidance rope.

As the voice behind *Lindsay the Sexy Diva*, a weekly podcast that covered issues on dating, sex, and relationships, she'd recently added author to her resumé when she completed her first manuscript for Bear Publishing, a nonfiction publisher out of New York. Unfortunately, she'd told a little white lie to her listeners and to Bear. She'd created a man who didn't exist. The perfect fiancé who shunned the spotlight but with whom she had great sex, great conversation, and confirmed the advice she doled out worked.

Except, there was no fiancé, but according to Hal's text, the publishing company wanted her and her mystery soulmate to do a photo shoot next week, before the book's launch.

Never breaking stride, Lindsay dodged a man cruising toward her on one of those electronic scooters she saw everywhere nowadays.

Where the hell am I going to find a fake fiancé?

She could hire someone. An actor, perhaps. Yes, that's it. There were plenty of actors in Atlanta.

The phone rang, and when she saw the name on the screen, she smiled.

"Hi, Stephan. What can I do for you?" Once upon a time, Stephan Brooks made a heavy pass at her, but she let him know in no uncertain terms that they were better off as friends.

"Hey, Lindsay. Got a second?"

"For you, I have two. What's up?" She smiled briefly at a man ogling her on the sidewalk.

The guy winked, his gaze dropping to the movement of her hips. "Hey, sexy," he said as she walked passed.

Lindsay smirked. He wouldn't know what to do if she stopped. He'd melt like an ice cube in

the middle of summer.

“You remember my cousin Malik, right?” Stephan asked.

Of course she did, and just like that, her mood turned even more sour. “Yes. What about him?”

“I need a favor. I don’t know if you know this, but he’s an artist. He created a unique piece that was supposed to be sold to a company in Miami, but they backed out at the last minute, and—”

“He didn’t get a deposit before he started a commissioned work of art?”

“Listen, I don’t know all the ins and outs, okay? But I’m guessing the answer to your question is no. I need you to find someone he can sell the piece to.”

Lindsay looked both ways before hurrying across the street toward her building. “You want me to what?”

“Help him sell his artwork. He’s an up-and-coming artist and has had a hard time making contacts.”

She refrained from snorting into the phone at the ridiculousness of the request. “Stephan, I’m not an art agent. How could I possibly help?” Not that she was inclined to help that stuck-up jerk anyway.

“Talk to Malik, and then get in touch with Nina and find out who’s the right person to talk to about purchasing this commissioned piece.”

“What? No way.”

Nina was Lindsay’s younger sister, and they had different fathers. While Lindsay’s father passed away leaving her nothing, Nina was the sole heir to her father’s hotel empire.

“Come on, Lindsay. You owe me.”

She held the door for an elderly woman.

“Thank you, dear,” the woman said as she shuffled out.

Lindsay resumed her brisk walk by taking the stairs instead of the elevator, her steps echoing inside the stairwell. “Don’t you dare start with me.”

“I didn’t want to go there, but you’re forcing my hand. I really need you to help my cousin out, so if the only way I can get you to agree is to remind you of how I helped you before, then so be it.”

Guilt stabbed her conscience, and she grimaced as she swung open the door into the shared office space where she worked. She waved the burrito in hello to the receptionist and walked down the hall to her office. She did another wave at one of the other entrepreneurs, plugging away at his

keyboard with earbuds tucked into his ears.

Lindsay lowered her voice. “If you really hated to mention that I owe you, you wouldn’t.” She shut her office door, dropped her shoulder bag onto one of the chairs, and set her lunch on the desk. She was proud of her little space, a location she’d attained mainly because, as Stephan pointed out, he had helped her out.

“Come on, Lindsay.”

She rolled her eyes.

“Don’t roll your eyes at me. Just say yes.”

She tapped her foot, irritated. Malik didn’t even like her, and the feeling was mutual. Ever since they’d met three years ago at one of Stephan’s crazy house parties, he’d irked her. They’d only come in contact with each other a few times over the years, and each time he behaved the same way. Not rude, but cool. She couldn’t figure him out.

“All right, fine. I’ll talk to him and get in touch with Nina and see what she suggests.”

“Thanks. Can you do that today?”

Lindsay’s nostrils flared. “Yes, Stephan. Today,” she said through gritted teeth. “But I’m only giving him thirty minutes. I’m a very busy woman.”

“Thank you, sweetheart.”

“Don’t you ‘sweetheart’ me. After this, we’re even. Agreed?”

“Agreed.”

She couldn’t believe he’d agreed to her request, because the truth of the matter was, she owed Stephan big time. Spending thirty minutes talking to his cousin about his art was a small price to pay for the huge favor he had done.

Stephan had introduced her to Atlanta native and *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Rules of Man*, Lucas Baylor. At the time, Lucas had been engaged to Stephan’s cousin, but the couple was now married. He ran a highly successful blog which he’d parlayed into speaking engagements and advice columns for *Essence*, *Cosmopolitan*, and other women’s magazines.

Lucas had become somewhat of a mentor to Lindsay, and his appearance on her podcast catapulted her into national success, growing her localized listeners into a core audience of twenty-one-year-old to thirty-five-year-old African-American women across the nation. He even introduced her to his literary agent, who’d appreciated her shoot-from-the-hip advice coupled with a sassy attitude, and negotiated a three-book deal on her behalf.

She trailed a red-painted fingernail down the planner on her desk. “When can he get here?”

I'm working on my next book, but I'll be free around three thirty. Otherwise, I don't have anything else until next week."

"Oh, did I mention you need to go out to his house where his workshop is located? I'll text you the address."

"Stephan!" Lindsay fumed. "Why do I need to go out to his house? Why can't he come here?"

"Because he's a bit reluctant about getting help in the first place, and you need to take some pictures to share with Nina's contact. I actually had to convince him to agree to this meeting, especially since it was with you, for some reason. What's the deal with the two of you, anyway?"

"Nothing." No way was she going into the embarrassing tale of how she'd been rejected by Malik. She jammed a fist on her hip, her irritation pitching even higher. Thirty minutes, that's it. She could do this. "You're really pushing it, but okay, I'll go out to his house. He better be at home."

"Don't worry, he'll be there."

"Text me his number. If anything changes, please tell him to call me." She paused. "By the way, will you be in town next week?" she asked in a syrupy voice.

"Why?"

"I need a fiancé to take some publicity shots with me for the book. Nothing major. One day, one hour. That's all." Stephan would be perfect.

"No, thanks, I'll pass."

"Stephan, *please*." She hated to beg. If only she hadn't lied in the first place.

"Everybody knows we're friends."

"We could pretend to be friends who've been secretly engaged all along." The more she considered it, the more she liked the idea of being with such an eye-catching, stinking-rich man like Stephan. Of course, she'd have to convince him to scrub his Instagram profile of all the vulgarity and raunchy partying he normally engaged in, but that could come later.

"No. Hell, no. Not interested. Unless..." His voice dropped an octave. "Is there something in it for me?"

"You're the worst, you know that? No, there's nothing in it for you, except the opportunity to help a friend. You never quit, do you?"

"Once a year I have to try, in case you've changed your mind."

"Never gonna happen, Stephan."

He chuckled. "So you say. Just take care of my cousin."

Lindsay walked around her desk, plopped into the leather chair, and crossed her legs. “Don’t worry, I will. By the way, what kind of art does he create?”

“He’s a metal sculptor.”

“Sounds boring.”

“You’ve got to see his work. It’s exceptional and could probably sell itself. I think he could make some serious money if he got his sculptures in front of the right people. But for now, he needs to unload that one piece.”

Lindsay pushed out an exaggerated sigh. “Okay, I’ll see what I can do.” She didn’t plan to do anything, especially not for Malik I’m-Too-Good-For-You Brooks. She’d give his work a cursory review to fulfill her promise to Stephan and then she’d be on her way, debt fully paid.

“You’re going to give this one hundred percent, aren’t you?” Stephan asked.

“Of course, sweetheart. You can trust me.” Lindsay smiled when she said the words so he could hear the smile over the phone.

“Thanks. Love you, Linds.”

“Love you, Steph.”

“And if you ever change your mind and want to know what it’s like to be with a real man, you know how to reach me.”

“Goodbye, Stephan.” Stephan was good for her ego, but she never took him seriously. He had plenty of female companionship to keep his days and nights occupied.

His laughter was the last sound she heard before she hung up.

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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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