

# HER AUGUST RUSH



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# CHAPTER ONE

## THURSDAY

Terry didn't sleep well last night. She never does the night before a dental appointment. She has hated the dentist since she was eight years old with her first cavity.

A most savvy entrepreneur for her age, Terry Ellis sold everything from freeze cups during the hot summers, to Jolly Ranchers and Blow Pops, to emergency school supplies to her classmates in elementary and middle school. Unfortunately, she became a victim of her success. She was sometimes her own best candy customer and ended up in the dentist chair way before time one year with a horrendous toothache. The memory of that time refreshes itself at the very sight of a dental advertisement.

Terry usually took a half day from work since she normally sweats through her blouse. All she wanted to do was curl up on her couch, grab her favorite blanket and watch a couple of shows saved on her DVR until her appetite returned and she felt like herself again.

It was a nice day in Atlanta. It rained the night before and the August heat had yet to settle back in. She rode with her windows down, enjoying the sounds of the city and the breeze blowing across her face. She was still feeling a little flushed and the cool air felt wonderful. "Thank you Lord for getting me through another dental visit."

She pulled her Mercedes into her gated community on Piedmont Road and headed down the lane toward her three level townhouse. She loved living in the end unit and having only one neighbor.

But when she got close to her destination, the sound of loud music caught her attention. That was very unusual for the middle of the day. And it became louder the closer she got to her home. This really annoyed her because she just wanted some quiet time to finish winding down.

"Who is playing their music that loud?" she wondered out loud. She

worse than he thought just moments before. He ripped the door open and ran down the stairs to his car parked around the corner. Terry watched him peel out of the parking lot, her heart beating a mile a minute.

After she closed her front door, Terry just stood there staring at her living room replaying what just went down. If it had not happened in front of her, she would never have believed Reggie was into drugs of any kind. Straight laced and safe is all she knew of him. He was totally not what she envisioned she'd end up with in college, but he fit into the corporate mold she had created and was starting to fill.

How could he do this? What was he thinking? She got angry all over again. "What the f....? Woo Lord!" She braced herself on the table near the door. "You gone have to help me right now. And I do mean Right NOW! Ooo, What was I thinking?"

She stood for minute in silence, breathing slowly to calm herself again before she went to the kitchen to get cleanser and paper towels to remove any traces of Reggie's transgression. She paused in the middle of scrubbing to steady her nerves and thank God for keeping her far enough away from Reggie that she couldn't actually hurt him. That would have only made matters worse.

She had just finished scrubbing the table and was setting up the vacuum to make sure there was nothing left in the carpet when the phone rang. She didn't want to answer any questions right now. But if it was her best friend Leighann, she knew she would have to. Leighann always seemed to know just when something wasn't quite right with her. She decided to answer just in case it was her. She'd just call again until she did. And Terry suddenly wanted to tell it all.

"Hello."

"Terry, you were supposed to call me as soon as you got home. You know the routine." Leighann immediately laid into her. "How long have you been home?"

"About 30 minutes. Maybe a little longer," Terry answered as she flopped down on the sofa.

Leighann didn't like the sound of her voice. "What's wrong?" When

terry didn't answer right away she took a deep breath and asked again, more forcefully. "Terry, what is wrong and do I need to be there now?"

"Yes. But don't run any lights. I'll tell you all about it when you get here." Terry didn't want to cry and she knew she would if she started talking right now. Leighann did not need another reason to speed with two tickets just last month.

"Give me fifteen minutes," and the phone went silent.

Terry grabbed the vacuum and finished cleaning up. True to her word, Leighann knocked, unlocked and entered through the front door just short of her promised time. "Terry, where are you?"

"I'm in here," Terry called from the couch. Leighann took a seat next to her and took her hand.

"So, tell me what's going on. Did your appointment go bad?" Terry took a deep breath and told Leighann what happened. Leighann's eyes grew bigger the more she talked, and Terry got angry all over again. She was pacing the floor by the time she finished.

"And now I have to trash a two hundred dollar vacuum cleaner because I don't want to take the chance of spreading anything he may have spilled all over the rest of my house. And God forbid anything happens that would cause my house to be searched and traces of drugs are found here. I know, I know. I'm reaching here. But there have been people who have been taken down with less." Terry took another deep breath and sat down again next to Leighann.

Leighann sat there in silence. There was only once in all the time Terry had known her that Leighann had no words. And that was the day her mother passed away. For two days she walked around in silence and Terry shadowed her fearing she was having a breakdown.

After a few moments of silence, Leighann cleared her throat. "I'm sitting here trying to figure out how you did it."

Terry turned to her puzzled. "How did I do what?"

Leighann stood and spun around with her hands on her hips. "How

the hell did you keep from shooting that bum?!"

Terry opened her mouth but didn't get a word out before Leighann paced past her and continued her tirade.

"I knew it. And I told you so. This man found every excuse in the book to cancel every time we were supposed to meet him. And you know why? Do you wanna know why? Cause he's shifty and he's sneaky. I always wondered about him anyway!"

She stopped pacing and looked Terry in the eye before she went on. "I told you something was wrong. He's just busy you said. He already had plans. Always something! I bet your behind will listen to me the next time I tell you I smell a rat!" Leighann took her seat again holding her head high with "I Told You So" written all over her face.

Terry got up from the couch ready to defend herself from yet another lecture from her best friend. She loved her but hated when she became Mother Leigh.

"Look, I need your support not your criticism. And don't you dare sit there all superior because I remember all too well Jason Maxwell, artist extraordinaire, bum magnificent!"

She knew how to stop Leighann. She hated this skeleton that turned her life upside down.

"You did not have to go there," Leighann said quietly.

Terry pushed on. "Like I said, I need your support. And you, of all people, should understand what it is like to deal with being betrayed by someone you put your trust in. So, sorry I hurt your feelings, but I am not going to be beat up on right now. I haven't even had the chance to come down from that damned appointment and I have to deal with this Reggie crap. I can not take any more drama right this minute." By now, Terry was practically yelling.

"Terry, I'm sorry but you know how I get when some joker thinks he can just do what he wants to one of my friends." Leighann defended her behavior.

Just then, the doorbell rang. Terry opened the door to find Angela

standing poised to ring again.

"Oh, baby girl are you alright?" Angela wrapped her in her arms. "Leighann called me on her way over to let me know something else had gone down. I don't know what happened but I'm here now. Where is Leigh?"

"In here."

Angela went to the living room and took a seat between Terry and Leighann. "Now, tell me what happened."

"A snake in the grass sniffin' dirt, that's what!" Leighann chimed in.

Terry rolled her eyes, then took a deep breath and started from the top. She watched Angela's eyes widen, while her mouth opened and closed in disbelief. Her head spun from face to face looking for one of them to say "gotcha" or something.

"I cannot believe it," Angela said shaking her head.

"Girl, if I had not walked in on him, I wouldn't believe it either. And, I know Leigh, if I had listened to you when you expressed concerns, maybe I wouldn't be in this situation."

"That's right, I told you so." Leighann had to get one more in.

Terry and Angela both rolled their eyes at Leighann.

"I'm hungry. Anyone for snapper?" Terry rose from her seat and headed towards the kitchen.

"Why are you changing subject?" Leighann antagonized.

"I said, I'm hungry. And I don't want to talk about it anymore. Now, do you want snapper or are you eating at your house?"

Angela knew that, although she loved Terry dearly, Leighann would take this as a challenge and strike back. She couldn't let that happen after all that already went on today.

"Look! Leighann don't get nasty. And Terry, cool it!"

"What?!" Terry looked at Angela angrily. "I have just had the day from hell and she is supposed to be here in support of me, not tearing me down and taking shots. And if I wasn't saved, I'd have a lot more interesting things to say about all of this and her attitude." Terry turned questioning eyes to Leighann. "I thought we came to an understanding just a little while ago."

"Look, whatever. I did what I came to do. Bet your butt will listen to me next time." Leighann stood, grabbed her purse and headed towards the door.

"Leighann. Leigh!" Angela called after her.

Terry stood in the middle of the floor with her arms folded across her chest.

"Leighann Marie Collins!" Leighann hated when Terry used her whole name. She stopped cold with her hand on the doorknob ready to make a quick exit. She turned back to give Terry a piece of her mind and burst out in laughter at the look on Terry's face.

Terry and Angela tried to keep their composure but couldn't hold in their laughter. The three of them laughed until their stomachs hurt and they were out of breath.

"You know I hate when you do that." Leighann eyed Terry trying to make a stern face through her laughter.

"I know. Why do you think I did it?" Terry replied with a satisfied look on her face.

"Cause you are evil. Come here." The ladies embraced, making up like they always have since their days in college.

They moved into the kitchen and carried on with preparing an early supper while carefully keeping the conversation Reggie free.

They emptied a bottle of chardonnay that magically appeared after one of Leighann's famous "I'll be right back" moments. That always meant something interesting was about to happen. The atmosphere was just right for Terry to relax and make it through the rest of her

night. She only ate about half of her dinner. And not much for drinking anymore, Terry only consumed about half her glass, as did Angela. But Leighann made sure the bottle didn't go to waist.

"Y'all don't waste my wine. This is one of my good bottles," Leighann ordered. "I know ya'll loving Jesus and all but even he turned water into wine."

"Alright Leigh, that's enough," Angela spoke up. "Don't mess with my Lord."

"I keep telling her not to play with Him. One day she's going to call on Him and He's going to say, Louise who." Terry chimed in through her laughter.

"Ha Ha. Not funny T. I know God. We have a very special relationship. You just wouldn't understand. I'm a work in progress. Don't judge me." Terry and Angela looked at each other and burst out into laughter.

They reminisced and joked each other until Angela felt she was ok to drive home. She was a true lightweight. The only thing missing from the impromptu party was their fourth wheel Kristine. Around 8:30, Angela and Leighann said their goodbyes and left Terry with wishes for pleasant dreams and a restful night.

"Now, if you need backup tonight, you call me. You know I'm always packing," Leighann offered.

Terry looked at Leighann and shook her head. "What did Uncle Sam do to my sweet friend? I'm going to start calling you Leigh Annie Oakley."

"Whatever chick. I simply found something I enjoy. A lot! I aim straight and never miss. On that you can count." Leighann struck a Charlie's Angels pose, causing another round of laughter to fill the room. That girl could work her last nerve, but Terry couldn't imagine not having her as a part of her life.

Terry closed the door quietly behind them and turned to look at her empty living room. It once again seemed peaceful. Her extended family, her girls, saved the day. God knew who to put in her life. No



matter what has come her way, her girls have always been able to get her through the madness.