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This is a bad idea. A really bad idea.

Gloria Acosta and John Douglas finished their movie a half-hour ago and had been making out on the couch in his off-campus apartment ever since. What began as tender kissing had moved into touching each other and peeling off their clothes. Her blouse had been unbuttoned, his designer T-shirt had been removed and he was stripping off his jeans as their hands explored each other's bodies.

It wasn't as if she was surprised by the intensity of their passion, but she didn't think she was ready to go all the way. They both attended Foothill University, a Christian college in Southern California, and had signed behavior contracts that forbade the very thing they were doing right now. Gloria, a petite junior with brown eyes and raven black hair, had been

dating John, or “Jackie D” as the college’s two-sport star was called by his teammates and fans, since baseball season the previous spring. He was just over six feet tall, with blond hair, blue eyes and a smile so perfect she thought it may have involved more than just braces.

While they both attended the college’s mandatory chapel services, she found herself texting during the message more often as the years progressed. Being a Christian had been easier when she was younger, when it seemed to be all about loving Jesus and Him loving you back. But as she grew older, and her friends began doing things that went against the values she had been taught on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings, she began to question the need to follow these beliefs herself. Going to Foothill University had been her parents’ idea, an attempt to keep her pure and perfect until she found a man to sweep her off her feet and marry her. She had bristled when she heard people joke about Christian college being a place where young women were sent to earn their “MRS. Degree” or get a “ring by spring or your money back.” While her parents said they supported her academic pursuits, she had accused them of being more concerned with her chapel attendance and looking for the right guy in her life than her desired career in nursing.

And even though she agreed to follow certain rules when she came to campus, she adhered to them less and less as the years wore on. Gloria told herself having one beer at an off-campus party wasn’t that big of a deal and, as long as she didn’t actually have sex with anyone, whether or not she made out with cute guys really wasn’t the school’s business. She had to make sure not to do so on campus because her roommate, Mariah Edwards, was a much stronger believer than Gloria. She

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actually liked going to chapel and raised her hands during the songs and everything. It was not that Gloria had anything against her roommate, but deep down she wondered if Mariah's faith made her uncomfortable because she knew her own actions did not match up to the beliefs she had held as a child.

She wasn't willing to tell Mariah this, but Gloria seemed to be losing what little faith she had as she dated Jackie D. He was required to attend weekly chapel just like her, but he seemed to miss more than he was allowed and had the absences excused for one reason or another. She knew she should have been bothered he was not being held to the same standards as everyone else, but the fact he was able to break the rules without consequence enhanced the bad-boy image that made him all the more alluring.

Before they started going out, she had known about his reputation for dating and dumping girls, but she figured if she kept his interest she might be able to avoid their fate. She had hidden the relationship from Mariah for the first couple of dates, but when she found out, Gloria found herself arguing with her roommate about why dating Jackie D was a bad idea. She remembered how heated the disagreement became.

"It's not like I'm going to sleep with him on our next date or anything."

"Well, you may not plan on it, but even you said Jackie D has a reputation for dating a lot of women and you know they're not spending the whole night just looking into each other's eyes. You know I'm not big on gossip, but common sense has got to tell you he's sleeping with at least some of them."

“Listen Mariah, whatever he did with other girls is his own business, but I’m not ready to have sex and he can’t convince me to do something I don’t want to do.”

Mariah took Gloria’s hands. “I know we don’t see eye-to-eye about our faith, but you’re not just my roommate, you’re my friend, too.” She sighed. “I just don’t trust him and I would hate to see you get hurt because you got lost in his blue eyes and lost sight of what’s really important.”

Gloria began breathing normally again. “I’m glad you’re concerned, really I am, but don’t worry about me. I can take care of myself.”

Oh, was I wrong about that.

As spring turned to summer, her restraint lessened as the temperature rose. Gloria previously had worn more conservative bathing suits when she went to the beach, but as she agreed to go with Jackie D and some of his baseball and football friends and their girlfriends to the Colorado River on a houseboat trip, she found herself looking for a cute, more revealing, bikini so she wouldn’t look like a prude next to the other girls on the boat. Whether or not the players followed the rules during the school year, the alcohol flowed pretty freely during the weeklong vacation. She worked hard to moderate her consumption, something the other girls didn’t seem to be as interested in. And while she and Jackie D limited their intimacy, they were the only two on the boat who seemed not to be having sex.

The beginning of the semester had meant she needed to focus on starting her classes well, and with the start of football season for Jackie D, their love life had to take a backseat for a while. But as the Foothill Lions began racking up victories on the

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field and Gloria had gotten a handle on her classes, things heated up between the two.

All of this rising passion had led up to tonight. Normally, they went out on Friday nights. This weekend was different because the Lions were going up against West Coast Christian, their biggest local rivals, on Saturday night, so they waited until Sunday for their date. Mariah had invited her to go to church that morning, but Gloria felt weird, and not a little uncomfortable, going to church Sunday morning when she had plans for a romantic evening with Jackie D just a few hours later.

But she never expected things to get this hot and heavy. With slow jazz playing from his iPod in the background and most of their clothes off, the kissing and fondling which seemed like a good idea before rapidly devolved into a bad one. Whether it was the repetition of the warning when she was younger, the fear her parents would stop paying for college and she would have to drop out, or the kernel of religious values that still remained inside her, Gloria Acosta knew she didn't want to have sex. The problem was that her boyfriend, who was placing his lips and hands wherever she let him, didn't have the same reservations. In an instant, she realized that the playlist on his iPod, the profession of love a couple of weeks ago, and even the romantic comedy they watched, all seemed like a larger plan to seduce her. It also didn't seem like it was the first time he had put this plan into action.

Well, he may have done this before with other girls, but I don't think I'm ready to lose my virginity.

Gloria was afraid it might be too late to prevent that as she noticed her blouse was lying on the floor under the boxers he

had just removed. He was pulling her underwear just past her knees when she began resisting his advances, pushing against his well-muscled chest with both hands.

“No, Jackie.” Desire and conviction battled within her.

The athlete flashed the camera-ready smile that attracted her to him in the first place. “Come on, babe. We both love each other and this just feels right. We’ve waited long enough.”

If what she and others had believed about him was true, she might have waited for many years, but he’d probably been sexually active for quite some time. She pushed against his arms again and her voice gained in strength. “I said no.”

The smile remained but the glow lessened in his eyes. “You can’t be serious, babe. We’ve practically gone all the way anyways. Don’t be so old-fashioned.”

She shook her head, clearing her thoughts. “I’m not in the mood anymore. Maybe some other time, but not now. Not tonight.”

The smile disappeared altogether. “There’s no way we’re stopping now. You’ve got me all excited.” He grabbed her arms and pinned them to the couch.

She soon realized the toned muscles she had appreciated on the baseball field in the spring and the houseboat in the summer were now being used against her. Even with her trips to the campus fitness center three times a week, she had been more focused on keeping off extra pounds than building muscle. She used her exercise regimen as an excuse not to take self-defense classes, arguing that she was in shape already and, like she had said before, she could take care of herself. *What a mistake that was.* “Please don’t.”

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“Just relax and it will all be over soon.” The smile that curled his lips was much more wicked than nice. “Besides, you’ll probably like it.”

As he moved in, she began waving her hands frantically at him, scratching his cheek with her right hand.

“Oh, you’re going to *pay* for that!”

She continued to struggle, but his weight and strength were no match for hers and the assault continued.

While she didn’t speak, one thought kept going through her mind. *Lord, help me survive this.*

As soon as the assault was over, she jumped up from the couch, hastily buttoned her blouse and snatched her underwear from the floor as she searched for her purse. The smooth saxophone playing in the background suggested the conclusion of a romantic interlude not a violent attack. As she turned to open the door, he called her name.

“I think it’s best we keep this to ourselves, don’t you?” His soft blue eyes had a hard glint to them. This implied threat, mixed with the fear, shame and disgust roiling inside her, prompted Gloria to nod her head but say nothing. She fled the apartment complex and drove less than a mile back to campus, barely noticing the red light at the southwestern edge of campus in time to stop. Slamming on the brakes, she struggled to get her breathing under control.

What am I going to do now?