

Concrete Stilettos: A Love Story

By Mya Kay

(unproofed)

Chapter 11

“Really? That sounds great,” Curran was saying.

They had been talking on the phone for a week, every night for hours at a time. It was funny that whenever they talked, he was cooking and about to eat. Taz had gotten home an hour ago, quickly hopped in the tub and waited 45 minutes before calling Curran. She was telling him about the countries she’d visited courtesy of her father’s military background. He’d been an Army man before becoming a sports agent.

“I’ve only been to Cape Town, South Africa, Paris and Germany,” he continued.

“You say only like those are Chicago, New York and Jersey.”

Taz could feel Curran smiling on the other end. “No, no. I’m blessed. But you’ve been a lot of places. How old are you again?”

Taz cleared her throat. She wanted to tell him the truth. “I’m eighteen.”

“So, when did you finish high school?”

“I graduated at sixteen. Skipped two years. Did college for one.”

“So, are you finishing college?”

Taz leaned forward. She hesitated. Most people asked her ‘why’ or looked at her funny, but Curran seemed interested in her future. “I hadn’t thought about it. Maybe now that I’m at the store, I can do night classes.”

“I’ll help you. I go to Temple at night. Maybe we can meet on campus and I can help you study.”

“That’s sweet, but don’t move too fast,” she said. “Until you asked me, I hadn’t thought about it.”

“No pressure,” he said. “Just know I’m here.”

Taz leaned back against her pillows and smiled. Her phone beeped and she let it go to voicemail. She didn’t even look to see who it was. She was enjoying her conversation with Curran. They talked for another two hours. A few nights ago, she had learned that he was the middle of three children, the son of a deacon and deaconess, who attended the same church as Taz. He was a sophomore in college, studying business; he lived with his older brother in a three-bedroom house in South Philly; he loved God, but didn’t go to church every Sunday and of course she knew that he worked full time for UPS.

“So, can I take you out this weekend?”

Taz wanted to say ‘yes’ but she knew Amina would probably call. “What time?”

“Whatever time works for you.”

She remembered that Shamiyah had given her the weekend off since she hadn’t had one since she started. *We could do early afternoon and I’d be available for a night party.* “Okay. How’s two?”

“Perfect. I finally got a Saturday off.”

“You sound like me.”

“So, would you feel more comfortable meeting at the store?”

“No. I don’t feel like driving downtown on a Saturday,” she said. “We can meet at the location.”

“Okay. There’s a park near City Line Avenue. I’ll text you the address.”

“Park? What are we doing?”

“A picnic. It’s the end of March now and they said it would be almost seventy.”

“Okay. That sounds nice.”

They talked a few more minutes and then hung up. Taz was smiling from ear to ear. All of the guys she’d ever dealt with had been aggressive and by the third night, she’d had oral sex with them and had been over to their place. Curran was patient and respectful, clearly the result of a strong, two-parent household with loving parents. Her phone rang just as she was about to put it on her charger. She saw Daylen’s name pop up.

“Hey, girlie,” Taz said, excited to tell her about Curran.

“Taz,” an older woman’s voice said. “It’s Daylen’s mom.”

Taz sat up, her eyes wide and her hand across her chest. “Hi, how are you? What’s wrong? Are you crying?”

Taz hadn’t spoken to Daylen in three days. They had been missing each other.

“It’s Daylen,” her mom said, sniffing. “She collapsed last night at home and we brought her to U. Penn.”

Taz felt her eyes well with tears. “Oh my God. What’s happened?”

“She has Leukemia. Can you believe that? Cancer. My baby has cancer...”

Taz could hear the phone drop and Daylen’s mom wailing. She wasn’t sure what happened to the connection but she sat there with the phone stuck to her ear. Tears rolled down her face as everything started to make sense: Daylen’s constant complaints of being tired, her voice sounding far away on the phone whenever they talked, her throwing up at the restaurant a few weeks ago and her nose bleed the last time she’d seen her. Taz finally hung up the phone, shaking her head. She picked the phone back up but only to call one person. It wasn’t Raven or Shamiyah.

“Hey, pretty lady. You still up?” Curran answered on the third ring.

Taz tried to get herself together. She sniffled.

“What’s wrong? You okay?”

“No,” she finally managed. “I need to talk. But I don’t know what to say.”

There was a small silence. Then, Curran’s voice came back. “Then I’m here to listen to you breathe. Whenever you’re ready.”

And Taz cried until she was sure she’d emptied her body of the 70% of water that she had been told her body was made up of. Curran sat silent and patient on the phone, letting her release, not asking any questions or interrupting her. When she was done, it was one in the morning and he was still there. Taz knew that there would be more nights like this to come. She only hoped that Curran would be there through them all.

Taz walked into the hospital room slowly. When she saw her best friend lying there, she choked up all over again. Shamiyah had told her to take the whole day off, but she agreed to come in at two and work until closing. She knew Daylen couldn’t really have visitors for a long period of time and she didn’t want to sit at home thinking about it. The tubes that were coming out of her mouth were so big Taz wasn’t sure how she was breathing. Taz walked over to Mr. and Mrs. Jones and gave them hugs. Whatever issues Daylen’s father had with Taz had gone out the window.

“She goes in and out of consciousness,” he said. “But she asked for you.”

He squeezed Taz’s hand as she walked over to the only person that had been a permanent fixture in her life since she was a child. Stroking Daylen’s hand, she could see her half-opened

eyes struggling to stay open. Taz's tears dropped on Daylen's chest and she didn't hold them back.

"Hey, sweet pea," Taz whispered. "You tryna make me go crazier than I already am?"

Smiling, Taz sat down as Daylen's parent's walked out to give her a minute alone. She laid her head on Daylen's hand and cried. She hadn't cried this much since her parent's car accident.

"Day, I'm so sorry. I've been so focused on the store, growing my business and dancing that I hadn't even checked on you in a few days. When did that start? We never go a day without talking. I love you so much and I need you. We'll get through this together. I promise to never leave you again. You're my sister and I'm yours."

Taz stayed a few more minutes, whispering a prayer for Daylen before she walked out to speak with her parents. "So what are they saying?"

"She has had it for a few months now. Her white blood count is low," Mrs. Jones said. "She needs a bone marrow quick. She may not make it to graduation without one."

Taz flinched when she heard that. Mr. Jones grabbed his wife as she broke down crying again. "And you guys aren't a match?"

"No," Mr. Jones said, shaking his head. "I've called my sister and she's called her brother. We'll see what we come up with. But for now, she's on the list."

Taz could feel her heart beating and for a minute, she thought she saw her heart at the end of the hospital hallway. It had definitely left her chest. *I can't go through this again. Not again. If I lose another person.*

"Taz, you have to be strong," Mr. Jones continued. "We don't want to speak that we'll lose her. Think positive."

Taz hadn't realized she'd said the last part out loud. Mrs. Jones walked over and grabbed her hands. "Baby, you've always been like a daughter. We never judged you. Just know that you have a place to call home. We know what it's like to lose parents and I can only imagine how you're trying to be so strong. Call me."

"Yes, you have a place to call home," Mr. Jones cut in. "I know we haven't always seen eye-to-eye, but my daughter loves you. And you've always been there for her. I'm sorry if I've ever given you a hard time."

"Don't worry about it. I'm a stripper. I'm used to it," Taz said wearily. "But I'll be here every day. No questions asked. I'll come after work. I'll just go to the store early and leave early. Are only family members a match?"

Mr. Jones shook his head. "Anybody can test, but family is usually the best match."

Mrs. Jones eyes lit up. "Oh, Taz, would you?"

"Of course. I'll ask Shamiyah, too." Taz looked at her watch. "It's almost time to go. I'll come by tomorrow and do the test. I want to do some research."

Mr. Jones turned around to the pamphlets on the wall and grabbed some. "Here. These tell you all about the testing procedures and if you are a match, the surgical procedure. I can give you the doctor's number if you have questions."

Taz smiled, noticing Mr. Jones complete change in demeanor around her. *I guess being close to death like this makes you treat everyone nice. Especially if they can help your daughter live.* Taz hugged them both and walked toward the elevator. Her phone vibrated. She knew it was Raven. She had only talked to her twice in the past week and they'd done a party Wednesday night. But Taz could feel her heart growing distant from Raven. The more she talked to Curran,

the more she pulled away. She decided to text her so she wouldn't feel like she'd done anything wrong.

Hey, babe. Daylen has cancer. Just leaving the hospital. I'll talk to you this weekend. Just a lot on my mind. Love ya.

Sorry to hear. I knew something had to be going on. I miss you and I'm here if you need me. Love you more.

Taz walked out to the parking lot and couldn't wait to get to her car. As soon as she was inside, she cried again. She was tired of losing the people she loved, tired of feeling alone, even if she was in a room with hundreds of people and tired of not having someone to love her unconditionally. Daylen was the only person who did and she felt like she was losing her. She had just reconnected with Shamiyah and she knew her cousin loved her, but the love Taz was talking about she had never had before. She'd never been in a real serious, committed relationship based on true, unconditional love that never gave up on you – that 1st Corinthians 13 kind of love.

She looked down at her phone as she pulled out to get to work. She saw a text that made her heart smile.

Hey, love. I know you're at the hospital. Wish I could be with you. Thinking of you. Call me when you're done. Can't wait until tomorrow. C.

It had only been two weeks, but Taz felt like she'd known Curran for years. He made her feel comfortable and safe. Their first date, the picnic, was so amazing. She couldn't believe a nineteen-year-old young man had that much charisma and could be so romantic. They had brunch the next day and talked three or four times a day. Tomorrow, which would be Saturday again, they were going to spend the day in Olde City, a popular section in downtown

Philadelphia that had so many restaurants, attractions and lots of shopping. They were also going to see Will Smith's new movie. She couldn't wait.

Hey, baby. I miss you. I'm on my way to work. I feel drained, but Daylen is okay. I'll call you when I get to the store. T.

Taz focused her attention back on the road. Her phone buzzed again.

I miss you more. Glad she's okay. If you need me, let me know.

Smiling, Taz texted a happy face back. She did need him. And she wasn't afraid to say so. She was tired of playing guys for money, using women to fill a void that could only be filled with pure love and not going after her dreams. She didn't even like working for Shamiyah anymore and didn't have to. It had been three months and she was beginning to feel overwhelmed. She couldn't bring herself to say she was tired of dancing yet, but she knew that wouldn't last long. She still hadn't told Curran and she knew she'd eventually have to. Looking down at her phone one more time, she smiled at one of the handbags she'd designed that was her screensaver.

She needed to launch her complete line soon, before her dream got stuck in someone else's. Smiling, she laid her head back and created a master plan in her head. Once again, a black SUV was slowly driving two cars behind her. It had been at the hospital and the guy behind the wheel had even been inside, on the same floor, listening to every word that The Jones' had said to Taz about being a match. Now, he took out his cell phone and dialed a number.

"Yeah," a deep, baritone voice answered. "Any news?"

"Yep. Her best friend has some kind of cancer and needs a bone marrow donor. She's thinking of doing it."

"Isn't the friend only 17?"

“Yep. They’re the same age.”

“Okay. I want to keep her safe until I get to her. Find out how dangerous the procedure is.”

“Sure thing, boss.”

The man hung up and continued to trail Taz. He put his sunglasses back on and smiled, anticipating the day that they’d get to carry out their plan.

Chapter 12

Taz giggled, as Curran swung her around.

“Stop it, silly,” she screamed playfully. “Put me down.”

Curran stopped swinging her and pretended like he was going to drop her, but quickly caught her.

“Alright, alright,” he said, placing her lightly on her feet. The sun was shining brightly for the early spring weather. Taz grabbed his hand and they walked back to their picnic blanket. Taz looked around, smiling at the kids playing and the people walking their dogs. Two teen boys were playing Frisbee nearby. She sat on the blanket and poured some lemonade.

“So, I got tested to be Daylen’s donor,” she started. “I’ll find out today if I’m a match.”

“That’s good,” Curran said, eating the strawberries. He brushed her hair out of her face. “How do you feel, baby girl?”

Taz winked. She loved when he called her that. “Pretty good. I hope I can help.”

Curran opened the picnic basket and grabbed a red velvet cupcake. He handed it to her and took one out for himself. “Happy one month anniversary,” he said, biting into it.

Taz giggled. “You remembered?” Smiling, she bit into hers and took some of the icing off of it and placed it on his nose. He got her back, causing them both to burst out laughing.

“You suck,” she said.

“You don’t believe that,” he said.

Taz phone vibrated next to her. She looked down. It was Amina.

“I gotta grab this, hon,” she said, standing up. “I’ll be right back.”

Walking a few feet away, she answered. “Hey.”

“Hey, you doing okay?” Amina asked. “Raven said she hasn’t heard from you. Anyway, party Friday and Saturday. Be there at eleven. \$5,000 up front for the weekend and you keep what you make.”

“Thanks, Amina,” Taz said. She looked over at Curran. He blew her a kiss. Catching it, she turned back to her call. “I’ll be there. But, I’m okay. Just busy.”

“Hey, I don’t want you to think I don’t care, but I’ve learned to mind my business in this game. I would hate to see something happen to you. Staying away from Raven isn’t a bad idea.”

Taz switched the phone to her other ear, turning her back to Curran completely. “What does that mean?”

“Hey,” Amina shouted. “Didn’t you just hear me say I mind my business?”

“Come on, Amina,” Taz said aggressively. “You can’t say something like that and expect me not to ask.”

Sighing, Amina shouted to someone in the background. “Lyric...Lyric, come tell Taz about Raven.”

Taz waited until Lyric came to the phone. “Hey, Taz,” Lyric started. “What do you want to know?”

“Whatever I need to know that would make Amina say staying away from her isn’t a bad idea.”

Lyric was Amina’s niece. She was the prettiest Asian and Black girl you’d ever meet. She and Taz had gotten close when she first started dancing.

“She’s cray. I used to fuck with her. As much as she can eat coochie, she’s cuckoo. She started calling too much, annoyed when I didn’t return her calls, following me.”

Taz thought about the black SUV she'd seen when she came out of the hospital from getting tested. But it had pulled off before she got in her car. Plus, Raven didn't have an SUV.

Doesn't mean she couldn't rent one.

“So, what did you do?”

“I whipped her ass,” Lyric continued. “She was getting too clingy. When I got a boyfriend, she got upset. I never told her I was in a relationship and she swore that she only liked sex with women, nothing more. She was acting weird about the last month or so before the fight.”

“Other than you fighting her, was there ever any violence?”

“Yep,” she said. “She tried to cut me. But she's not about that life. You and I, we're from North Philly. She's from Long Island. She's heard about the chicks in the Bronx and Brooklyn, but she's not like any of them.”

Nodding, Taz turned back to Curran and gave him the one more second sign. He smiled. “Thanks for telling me. And welcome back to the US.”

Lyric had left a year ago to return to South Korea to be with her grandmother in her last days.

“Thanks, babe. We need to link up. If you want to get your coochie ate and have sex with a female without drama, you need to call me.”

Smiling, Taz put Lyric's number in her phone. “Why wait? See you tonight?”

Taz was tingling in between her legs. She hadn't seen Raven in two weeks.

“You got it, beautiful. I was gonna say see you Friday, but I'm with it. I miss your pretty face.”

“Text me your address when we hang up. Tell Amina I'll talk to her later.”

Hanging up, Taz walked back to Curran. She straddled his lap, without putting any pressure on his manhood.

“Sorry, baby,” she said, kissing him lightly on the lips.

“It’s okay,” he said, leaning in closer to Taz. He fingered her necklace. “I take it you love shopping for shoes.”

“That’s actually not what that symbolizes.”

“Yeah, I just read the inscription. That’s different. What’s it mean?”

Taz looked into his eyes, not ready to share the deepest parts of herself just yet. Sighing, she smiled.

“I’ve been through a lot. Concrete Stilettos just means I’m tough and nobody can walk in my shoes. I may be cute, but I’m strong as concrete.”

He kissed her soft lips and put his forehead on hers. “That you are, gorgeous.”

They stayed for another hour, playing catch and walking around. When he dropped her off, she kissed him good night and went right upstairs to jump in the shower. She couldn’t wait to see Lyric. They had never engaged in sex, but had always been close during their dancing days together. Lyric had left without much word, but Taz knew it was a family emergency. They were so much alike and some people even thought they were sisters. She put on her sexiest dress with thongs and some stilettos, put some makeup on and headed out. This time, she didn’t see the black SUV parked across the street.

She placed Lyric’s left nipple in her mouth and sucked on it gently. Lyric was rubbing on her clit.

“You like that, baby?” Lyric asked. Taz opened her eyes as Lyric straddled her. They were both fully naked. Taz grabbed Lyric’s ass as Lyric started rubbing her clit against Taz’s.

“I love how wet it is,” Taz said. Lyric smiled and grabbed the back of Taz’s head as she kissed her passionately. “Your lips are delicious.”

Lyric slid down and sucked on Taz’s nipples, causing Taz to moan and arch her back. “Damn, baby.”

Lyric slid all the way down and pulled Taz down with her until her head was in between her legs. She put one leg around her shoulder and the other she pushed back. She started licking and sucking on Taz’s clit slowly. Taz rubbed on her own nipples, sucking each one slowly.

“Lyric, baby, yes,” she moaned and groaned.

Twenty minutes later, they were in a sixty-nine position and Taz was sucking Lyric’s clit and fingering her at the same time. She was loving how Lyric was smacking her ass and sucking on her clit. It was the best female, love making session she’d ever had. Lyric was gentle and sucked on her with patience. She fingered her but not too rough. She even rubbed on her nipples from where she was, causing Taz to cum twice.

“Come here,” Lyric said. Taz came up and Lyric sat her on her face and finished the job. Then, they switched again, with Lyric sitting on Taz’s face until she came.

“That was so good,” Lyric said, kissing Taz again. Taz pulled her back on her lap.

“Shit, you might have me acting crazy,” Taz teased. “That pussy was so good.”

Lyric put her arms around Taz’s neck. Taz grabbed her around her waist. “Sorry, I left like that.”

Taz shrugged. She was used to it. “No worries. I know you had an emergency. Sorry about your grandmother.”

“Thanks.”

Taz grabbed Lyric’s face and kissed her again.

“You staying the night?” Lyric asked.

“Of course.”

It was a Saturday, so she could get away with it. She’d go to the second service at church, but she didn’t have to work.

Lyric ran some bath water and they took a bath together, continuing the session. Taz loved every minute with Lyric, not once thinking of Raven. But she did think about Curran. A lot. But not enough to remove Lyric’s tongue from her clit.

Daylen was smiling as Taz told her about Lyric. Her parents had gone to church.

“So, you do like having sex with women?”

“I never said I didn’t,” Taz answered.

Daylen was looking much better and had been making progress. Taz had missed the call from the doctor yesterday, so she came to see Daylen after church. This was her main focus for the day. The nurse told her the doctor would be in after three and could tell her then. She’d made it to the eleven am service and then came straight to the hospital. It was only two, so she still had another hour. She’d been there since one, catching Daylen up. She’d even prayed with her and read her some scriptures.

Daylen still had all her hair, even though she’d started her treatments. She’d been in the hospital for a month now and hadn’t once complained. Taz sat on her bed with her and they laughed and joked until Doctor Russell came in at three. He seemed startled, but didn’t speak until the door was closed and he had sat down on his stool.

“Hi, Taz,” he said, giving her a handshake. “Daylen, how you doing, hon?”

He checked all her vitals and spent some time talking with her. He was avoiding Taz’s eyes and Taz could feel it. Her heart dropped. *Maybe I’m not a match.* Finally, he turned to her.

“Taz, would you like me to read your results in front of Daylen?” he asked.

“Sure.”

“Well, it seems you’re a match,” he said. Taz screamed and ran over to hug Daylen. Taz was excited, but what her and Daylen were feeling didn’t match the doctor’s face.

“Doctor Russell, I don’t understand,” Daylen started slowly. “If she’s a match, why do you look so sad?”

“Maybe you should call your parents,” he responded, getting up. “Call me when they come in.”

Taz beat him to the door. “No. I’m an adult and I don’t have to wait for parents. What is it?”

Doctor Russell cleared his throat. He looked at Daylen, then back at Taz. “It seems that you’re a perfect match. So perfect, that there’s no way you and Daylen can’t be related. It’s just not possible.”

Taz looked at the doctor like he had three heads. Daylen’s hand flew to her mouth just as The Jones’ walked in. Daylen looked at her parents with daggers in her eyes.

“What is it?” Mrs. Jones screamed. “Oh my God. Is my baby okay?”

She ran over to Daylen and hugged her. Daylen pushed her away. She looked at her father. “Daddy, what is going on? The doctor said that Taz is such a perfect match, that there’s no way she can’t be related to me.”

Doctor Russell cleared his throat. “She can’t be less than a sister.”

Mrs. Jones stood up and walked over to Taz. "I'm sorry they never told you," was all she said before leaving the room.

Mr. Jones looked at his baby girl, then at Taz. "Your father made us promise we'd never tell you guys and I was trying to respect the dead."

Taz walked closer to Mr. Jones. "Tell me what, Chris."

She was pissed, because she knew what he was about to say was what she'd felt in her heart all her life.

"That your father had an affair with my wife seventeen years ago. Daylen is your baby sister."