

Please, In your Dreams

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In your Dreams
A novel

AIRICIA JONES

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Disclaimer: This book contains scenes of explicit content, including [profanity, sexually explicit scenes and, etc.]. Reader discretion is advised.

From my heart to your heart

Thank you so much for taking the time to purchase my book. It's a momentous occasion for me as my first published work, marking a significant milestone in my journey as a writer. Throughout the process of writing this book, I've experienced a rollercoaster of emotions, pouring my heart into every word, and I'm beyond excited to finally share it with you.

Your support and encouragement mean everything to me. It's because of readers like you that I have the opportunity to bring my stories to life and share them with the world. "*Please in Your Dreams*" is not just a story; it's a piece of my heart, filled with love, hope, and the complexities of human connections. I hope it resonates with you as deeply as it did with me while writing it.

I'm grateful for this journey and the chance to embark on it with you. Thank you once again for joining me on this adventure. Here's to many more stories, emotions, and shared moments through the pages of my books. Happy reading!



To my family & friends who
have supported me through it
all.

My amazing cousin Natasha
Heib created the most perfect
cover beyond my wildest
dreams.

To all the Black women and
men seeking an escape from
the stereotypes of Black love
imposed upon us.

Prologue

“**R**ochelle Reed,” declared the Commencement Speaker. The uproarious cheers from the crowd echoed for miles. Rochelle, her given name, was better known as Reese, a childhood nickname rooted in her exclusive love for Reese’s candy. When it came to Halloween or school party treats, Reese’s Cups were her one and only choice.

A subtle imprint adorned the brim of her diploma, symbolizing the journey she had traversed. Holding it proudly, Reese surveyed her Graduating Class. Floating on cloud nine couldn’t fully capture the depth of her euphoria. Every accomplishment felt like a collective triumph for her community, not just her own. Reese’s charisma remained steadfast, her face card never losing its luster.

Reese possessed a cocoa-brown complexion, smooth to the touch, with curves that tantalized the senses. Her figure was a sight to behold, drawing

admiring glances wherever she went. The glimmer in her eyes reflected her inner warmth, while her smile radiated joy, capable of brightening even the darkest of days.

Entering a room, her presence was felt, filling the air with a subtle allure. Her ever-changing hairstyles, a signature of her identity as a black woman, added an element of intrigue to her persona.

Her scent, a blend of sweet florals and warm musk, enveloped those around her, leaving a lingering trail of allure.

Women inquired about her fragrance, intrigued by its captivating aroma, while men found themselves inexplicably drawn to her presence. Despite her soft-spoken nature, there was an underlying strength in her demeanor, a quiet confidence that spoke volumes.

Her loyalty was unwavering, a quality that endeared her to those fortunate enough to earn her trust. Yet beneath her gentle exterior lay a fierce determination, a fire ready to ignite when provoked. Reese was more than just a woman; she was a force to be reckoned with, leaving an indelible mark on all who crossed her path. Don't forget her impeccable style at every event never went unnoticed.

Night descended, she readied herself for the dinner party, surrounded by her family who had flown in for this special occasion. Unfolding her dress, she knew it would captivate Timothy – then again, anything she wore had that effect on him. Whether it was an elegant gown or a humble brown paper bag, Timothy would still declare her the most beautiful woman in the world.

Timothy to Reese: Hey Baby, I am so proud of you. I can't wait to spend tonight celebrating with you. All your hard work, your dedication and your ambition are paying off. Everything you set out to do you have accomplished. I know you do not like surprises, but I have something for you tonight. No hints, and no backing out. I love you, Reese.

Reese to Timothy: Aww... baby thank you so much! I couldn't do it without you. I do hate surprises but today has been such a special day. All my rules are gone out the window. I really appreciate you being here, mostly because I know you just started your first semester in Houston, Mr. Architect. This means the world to me. I can't wait to spend the few hours I have with you. I love you too, Tim.

Reese and Timothy's journey began in her first year of college. A dedicated student, Reese had her nose in her books until Timothy gave her a reason to look up. Timothy, having observed her for a few months, finally mustered the courage to ask her out. He had noticed her reading under the trees, a spot she cherished. One day, someone occupied her usual seat, and Reese's attempts to reason with the person failed. Eventually, she reluctantly moved to the tables. Seeing this, Timothy took it upon himself to act as a knight in shining armor, persuading the person to vacate her seat in a chivalrous act of service.

"Hey," declared Timothy, a towering figure, his physique outlined even beneath the casual drape of his loose t-shirt. Reese glanced upward, finding herself overshadowed by the presence of Mr. Timothy. Timothy's eyes sparkled in Reese's presence, a sign of the emotions he had long suppressed. Shy by nature, his mind raced with thoughts, but around Reese, everything else faded away. He awaited the perfect moment to make his move, eager to break free from his reserved demeanor and take a chance on love. It was a single, kind gesture that became the catalyst for an unbreakable bond. Hand in hand and heart to heart, they became inseparable over the ensuing

years. Amidst transformations in hairstyle and wardrobe, their love not only endured but flourished.

The pinnacle of Reese's day unfolded upon her arrival at the restaurant. The impeccably dressed guests added a touch of sophistication to the occasion. Welcomed by her parents, the experience felt dreamlike, enveloping her in a sense of support and love. The room itself was adorned with her favorite roses, infusing the air with their delightful fragrance. The presence of her grandmother served as the proverbial icing on the cake, showering affection with kisses on her cheeks. Everyone settled in, their gaze fixed on her, a sense of confusion arose – everyone was present except for Timothy. Perhaps he was stuck in traffic, a variable that rarely adhered to his plans. Time, in Timothy's world, didn't always conform to the expected course.

Observing the crowd congregating at the back, Reese's attention was piqued. Her grandmother gently took her hands and beckoned her to follow. Stepping onto the back patio, a visual spectacle unfolded – rose petals adorned the floor, guiding her along a path that led to a sign. The words **"Will you Marry me, Reese?"** greeted her, eliciting a profound sense of shock at the meticulous details of the proposal. Timothy had spared no

effort, going above and beyond by remembering Reese's fondness for Egyptian Blue and Winter White roses. These were the very blooms she had passionately discussed for months, inspired by a romance novel she had immersed herself in.

Tears streamed down Reese's cheeks as Timothy guided her with their hands entwined. Descending to one knee, he continued to passionately profess his love while Reese, eyes locked on him. Timothy embodied everything she had ever dreamed of and more, and she anxiously awaited the words about to escape his lips. "Will you...?" Before Timothy could complete the sentence, Reese, unable to contain her excitement any longer, exclaimed, "Yes, Baby, **YES!**"

The crowd erupted in cheers, filling the once empty space with jubilation. Timothy eagerly embraced Reese, their lips meeting in a tender moment. The night unfolded flawlessly, marking the culmination of a perfect day. Congratulations reverberated through the night, encapsulating the celebration.

Later that night, Timothy chauffeured Reese to the meticulously prepared suite for their celebration. The passage of time, their affection for each other remained as fervent as on the first day they met. Eager to freshen up

after getting champagne on him during the festivities, Timothy headed for a quick shower. Reese, in the meantime, kicked off her shoes and removed her earrings.

Turning to her phone, she discovered a plethora of congratulatory messages on her sister Raina's page. The surreal nature of her current reality made her contemplate pinching herself just to ensure its authenticity.

While Timothy showered, Reese received an email from Drexle University, where she had interned during the summer. Drexle had always been her dream workplace, harboring a passion for making a difference in the lives of Philadelphia kids. Even though feeling a tad underqualified, she had applied for the Teachers Assistant position. The email from her Coordinator Morgan brought forth exciting news – Reese was offered the interim Teachers Assistant position, a pivotal steppingstone toward her goal of becoming a professor.

Seeing her name in the same email as the Drexle University headline and the accompanying congratulations nearly brought tears to her eyes once again. The university needed her to commence the role in just three weeks, marking the beginning of an exciting chapter in her professional journey.

Timothy emerged from the shower, the lingering steam enhancing the allure of his already captivating

physique. Clad in a towel that left little to the imagination, he fixed Reese with his trademark gaze, a look that conveyed an unmistakable desire. However, before the night could progress any further, Reese interrupted, a mix of excitement and apprehension in her voice.

“Wait, Sir. Before we get the night off to an even better start, I wanted to tell you. You are looking at Drexle University’s new Interim Teacher Assistant.” Reese smiled while anticipating Timothy’s reaction.

Timothy’s expression shifted, surprise and disappointment flickering across his features like shadows dancing in the dusk.

“I thought you were waiting to hear back from Houston UX to see if they had anything available,” he remarked, his gaze meeting Reese’s in search of answers. He felt blindsided, the unexpected turn of events catching him off guard.

“I did, but I also applied to Drexle since I interned there and know some of the staff. Plus, they offer tuition reimbursement for Grad students,” Reese explained, attempting to ease the tension as she sat beside Timothy, rubbing his back.

Timothy’s response was unexpected. He voiced his expectation of Reese eventually becoming a

stay-at-home mom after he completed his Masters, mirroring the traditional role his mother played. Reese was taken aback, vehemently rejecting the notion.

“Timothy, that’s not what I agreed to. I said I would think about it, but I won’t abandon my career aspirations to be a stay-at-home mom before pursuing a career as a professor,” Reese asserted, feeling a sense of disbelief at the sudden clash of expectations.

Timothy stood firm, expressing his reluctance to accept a long-distance relationship. The ultimatum hung in the silence. The door slammed shut, leaving Reese at a crossroads. The man she loved had laid out his expectations, and she now faced a life-altering decision. Reese grappled with the weight of the choice ahead, realizing that a compromise might not be easily reached.

CHAPTER 1

10 years Later

Good ol' Drexle University, her home away from home.

Entering those doors always sent Reese's spirits soaring. The college campus sprawled out before her, alive with vibrant energy and animated activity, basking in the gentle embrace of the morning sun. Tall, majestic buildings stood sentinel, their brick facades adorned with ivy creeping up the walls, a testament to the institution's rich history. Students meandered through the corridors, books clutched tightly to their chests, the soft shuffle of their footsteps a soothing rhythm against the polished linoleum floors.

Reese's eyes swept over the tranquil chaos, taking in the familiar sights that never failed to bring her joy. The rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee permeated the air, drawing a steady stream of caffeine enthusiasts to the bustling café nestled in the heart of campus. There, amidst the ebb and flow of students and faculty, Reese

gracefully navigated the crowd, offering warm greetings to familiar faces along the way.

Finally reaching her floor, Reese's gaze lingered on Tameka, the esteemed head of the department, whose radiant smile never failed to uplift Reese's spirits. With a nod of acknowledgment and a special hello reserved just for her, Reese felt a sense of belonging wash over her, like a comforting embrace from an old friend. The familiar hum of voices and the gentle buzz of activity, reassuring her that she was exactly where she belonged.

Tameka was a woman of efficiency and grace, her phone always within reach, her fingers dancing effortlessly across the keyboard as she managed the department with exceptional skill. Her constant digital tether, she exuded an air of sophistication, dressed in conservative attire that hinted at her professional demeanor. Her blue eyes, a striking contrast against her composed exterior, held a depth that spoke volumes of her wisdom and insight.

Sophistication emanated from her every move, yet she remained approachable and kind, always willing to lend a helping hand to those in need. Whether seated at her desk or standing in the hallway, Tameka's presence exuded a calming influence, a steadying force amidst the day's challenges. Reese admired her ability to maintain

composure in the face of adversity and found inspiration in her poise and grace.

The week flew by for Reese as she meticulously crossed off each day on her planner. Finally, Friday arrived—the day earmarked for the announcement of the new position at her job. The anticipation had tested her composure, but she was now poised and ready to step into the role of a professor. In a predominantly Black area like Philadelphia, Reese recognized the scarcity of professors with brown skin. Determined to be a catalyst for change, she faced challenges advocating for curriculums that included African American literature to benefit students.

The recurring conversations about the necessity of diverse perspectives in the curriculum took a toll on Reese, but she persisted, recognizing the importance of these discussions. The idea of leaving for another college that primarily served Black students crossed her mind, but she dismissed it as a cop-out. She firmly believed that students who chose her department should not be penalized for the lack of diversity. Despite encountering resistance, Reese made incremental progress, understanding that her presence at the school provided a sense of comfort to some students

After investing numerous years of dedicated work, Reese finally ascended to the next level in her

career map. Fueled by a structured approach and an unwavering commitment to her twenty-year plan, she harbored aspirations of becoming the first Black Female Department Chair at Drexle University. To achieve such milestones, she recognized the importance of attaining the position of a professor and securing her Tenure, aligning with her ambitious career trajectory. Having worked only one other job before Drexle, Reese was resolute in her determination to retire from this esteemed institution.

In the realm of virtual staff gatherings, Tameka insisted on maintaining a connection by seeing facial expressions. Tameka, the department chair, judged everyone solely on their performance. Jocular remarks circulated among the staff, teasing her as if she had witnessed the construction of the very building they occupied. Tameka possessed a wealth of knowledge and was a commendable individual. The staff meetings served as a conduit for her to disseminate information efficiently. During the staff meeting, Reese's eyes swept across the room. Her attention snagged on a man. Tall, distinguished, and impeccably dressed, he stood out from the crowd.

Dressed in a meticulously tailored suit, the teal hue harmonized flawlessly with his complexion—though,

truth be told, any color would complement that skin. Upon closer inspection, Reese noted his impeccably manicured nails and a gold watch that seemed to demand a second glance. His skin exuded the kind that prompts one to inquire about the coveted skincare routine. He possessed a magnetic quality, every faculty member couldn't help but take notice. Settling in, Reese patiently awaited the commencement of the meeting, anticipating Tameka's introduction of the intriguing newcomer.

“Allow me to introduce our newest Associate Professor Mr. Nelson Green, who will be joining the English Department.” Tameka declared, presenting Mr. Green to the assembled faculty. “Originating from Boston, Massachusetts, he hails from Labury University, where he dedicated a decade of his professional journey.” Tameka, with her adept welcoming skills, encouraged Mr. Green to share a few words with the attentive faculty. Her knack for making everyone feel at ease contributed to the enduring loyalty of the department's longest-serving members, who had steadfastly remained for over many decades. Mr. Green's voice bubbled with excitement as he expressed, “I am happy to be here, ready to dive into literature and empower young minds.” Reese wondered if she detected an accent—maybe French or British? She couldn't quite pin it. Each word he spoke

carried a subtle sweetness, accompanied by the rhythmic motion of his tongue licking his lips. Reese couldn't help but notice how his beard, like a well-tended garden, received nourishment with each flicker of his attention.

Nelson, born and raised in Boston, grew up in the family business of the renowned food chain, "Green Bean Bites" His parents, high school sweethearts, provided him with the best upbringing possible. In spite of the success of the family business, Nelson had a passion for academia. This revelation blindsided his father, leaving him at a loss for words when Nelson expressed his desire to become an English professor.

Nevertheless, Nelson's interests were diverse. When he wasn't immersed in books, he could be found working on new recipes with his mom or spending time with friends. Loved by all, Nelson inherited his father's meticulous nature. Just like his impeccably dressed dad, Nelson thrived in a clean and organized environment.

His unconventional career choice, combined with his community work and academic achievements in Boston, earned him respect and recognition, affirming his deserved place in any room he entered.

Reese couldn't shake off the fleeting thought of Mr. Green's relationship status. At 35, she was firmly entrenched in tunnel vision mode, with her love life not even making it into her top ten priorities.

The meeting concluded, Reese attempted a hasty exit, only to be intercepted by Tameka's voice calling her name.

"Oh, Professor Reed, can you come for a second?" Caught off guard, Reese took a deep breath, redirecting herself toward the responsibility of showing the new colleague around. After all, she was the black representative for the department.

Tameka introduced Mr. Green with admiration, emphasizing Reese's role not only in the English department but also in various others. Nelson extended a hand, and as they stood close, Reese couldn't ignore the tingling sensation brought on by his aroma and the gentle touch of his hand.

"Shall we?" Reese suggested, and Nelson, bidding farewell to his colleagues, followed behind. A curious remark escaped Nelson's lips, "So I see it was no surprise you were picked to show me around, huh?" The glance Reese shot back confirmed all he needed to know.

"Fine and intellectual," Reese thought as she observed him. He seemed to pick up cues quicker than

most, an attribute that caught her attention. Wanting to shift the conversation, she asked, “So Boston, what brings you to Philadelphia? Change of scenery, or are you running from a crazy ex?”

His response was a glare, a clear indication that he knew he was in trouble. Reese could sense a certain boldness in his gaze. From the moment she entered the room, he had already staked a claim, expressing a desire for her. He had meticulously gathered information about her from the campus website but encountering her in person brought a whole new level of challenge. While initially bold, he soon realized the importance of maintaining a respectful distance.

“Maybe a little of both,” he admitted with a pause, breaking into a smile. “Joking. Yeah, I was overlooked at my old job and have some baggage from the past. However, it is all sorted.”

Reese appreciated his honesty but couldn’t help but wonder if he was subtly flirting with her. They explored the common areas, laughter filled the air, creating an unexpected camaraderie that felt strangely familiar, as if they had known each other from a past life. The connection between them grew, making the tour of his new office feel like a shared adventure rather than a mere introduction.

“Here is your office. If you need anything, Yvette will be able to assist. She is an exceptional woman. Do you need anything else now? If not, I will leave you to settle in,” Reese informed Nelson as they reached his new workspace.

Nelson paused to take in the surroundings, placing his laptop on the desk to start setting things up. “Not at the moment. But thank you so much for taking the time to show me around.”

“Okay, I have to know. Where is that accent from?”

“Reese inquired.

“My family is from Senegal, but we moved to Paris when I was 13. Just when I thought I could fool all the Americans,” they both chuckled.

Reese observed him, she found herself unintentionally focusing on his lips. She quickly realized that dwelling on such thoughts wouldn’t help, reminding herself that dating a colleague could lead to complications.

“Well, I will leave you to it. I am just three doors down if you need anything. My extension is in the directory,” Reese said, walking away with a subtle sway in her hips that Nelson couldn't help but admire. He stood at the door, watching her, shaking his head as he closed it. He knew better than to entertain certain thoughts.

The encounter left Reese with a lingering intensity, something she had been missing in her daily life. While she hadn't had a crush in years, she pondered whether it was merely an attraction. Regardless, she resolved not to invest any energy into it. Reese was the kind of woman who found hope in fictional love stories, particularly those from the '70s and '90s Black love films. Her love for reading books and essays for a living didn't overshadow her preference for the romantic narratives that resonated with her on a deeper level.

In her cozy office adorned with snippets of love from Black films, Reese immersed herself in crafting the romantic narratives that fueled her creative spirit. Each character, each scene, meticulously curated from the vibrant tapestry of cinematic love stories. Yet, for Reese, the line between fiction and reality was as delicate as the flutter of a butterfly's wings.

The slightest deviation from the idealized image of her imaginary leading man could send Reese packing. It was a routine, a self-preserving instinct she couldn't shake off. The lack of control over this quirk perplexed her, but she soldiered on, channeling her focus into the aspects of life where she held the reins.

For Nelson, he found purpose in the realm of academia. Seated comfortably in his role as a professor, he relished the sense of belonging and order that education offered. Organization was second nature to him, a trait that served him well in molding young minds.

From a young age, Nelson harbored the conviction that he was destined for greatness. Always with a book in hand and words in his heart, he navigated the world with quiet assurance. His passion for culture positioned him at the epicenter, where he tirelessly elevated the curriculum to new heights. The promise of ascending further in his career only fueled his gratitude, especially as he reflected on his time at Labury, realizing that the dream of becoming a professor was within reach.

At precisely 2:00 p.m., the anticipated moment arrived, marked by the unexpectedly loud ring of the phone. Tameka's call summoned Rochelle to her office, setting the stage for a potentially transformative conversation.

Expressing her gratitude with rehearsed eloquence, Reese stood poised outside the office, ready to embark on a new chapter. The words she had practiced in the mirror were a testament to her dedication and ambition. The dress she carefully chose symbolized not just a celebration but a visual marker of her ascent to the

coveted title of Professor – a pivotal point in her career ladder.

With a deep breath, Rochelle turned the doorknob, entering Tameka's office with a mix of excitement and anticipation. Tameka's customary praise flowed, acknowledging Rochelle's contributions to the university and her infectious presence among the faculty. The atmosphere was charged with positive energy.

A radiant smile graced Reese's face as she extended her hands for a congratulatory shake, envisioning herself leading a class and crafting her own curriculum. Tameka continued speaking, Reese's mind drifted, distancing itself from the impending disappointment. The weight of the word "but" echoed in her ears, prompting her to retreat into a mental space miles away, shielding herself from the reality she feared. "Rochelle, are you still here with me?" Tameka's voice pulled Reese back to the present, her hand waving to ensure she had not lost her completely.

Apologizing, Reese struggled to grasp the details, her legs betraying her composure as they shook involuntarily. Tameka, with a compassionate tone, revealed the unexpected twist – promises made above her had introduced competition. Mr. Green, a recent addition,

now posed a challenge, with the board granting him six months to prove himself before the final decision.

The news hit Reese hard, not the outcome she had envisioned on her ladder of success. Tameka, empathetic yet firm, extended support, offering an open door for discussion and reassurance. Tameka affirmed her belief in Reese's capabilities, suggesting that the job was essentially hers in spirit. With concern in her eyes, she asked the pivotal question: "Are you okay?"

Seeking acknowledgment, Reese extended her hand to conclude the conversation, expressing gratitude for the information. She adopted the art of faking confidence, emerging, concealing the internal turmoil. *"Never let them see you sweat,"* she reminded herself, a mantra that echoed in her mind.

Reese re-entered her office, her legs trembling like jelly. The magnitude of what she'd just witnessed still refused to settle in her stomach, churning it into a knot of disbelief. In a matter of seconds, Yvette appeared at her door, armed with a celebratory card for the supposed promotion. Yvette's infectious energy radiated excitement, but she sensed that Reese was not fully present. Closing the physical distance, Yvette tried to bring Reese back to the moment.

However, Reese remained in a daze for a few minutes before snapping back to reality. Greeting Yvette, she seemed disconnected from the celebratory vibe. Concerned, Yvette questioned if something had gone wrong – perhaps Reese had lost her job or wasn't feeling well.

“I can't even make sense of what just happened. I should quit, but I've invested so many years in this department, most of my 20s. Sacrificing events, prioritizing career goals over love, and now I'm just so conflicted,” Reese poured out her conflicting emotions, her thoughts racing at a mile a minute.

Yvette, with a supportive demeanor, guided Reese through a calming breathing exercise, encouraging her to focus and articulate the details of the unsettling news. As Reese took deep breaths, Yvette maintained eye contact, offering a steady presence.

Reese, exhaling the tension, began to share the distressing revelation. The arrival of Mr. Smell Good marked a potential threat to her position. Reese had already coined the name for Nelson. He was brought in to test the waters, interacting with other faculty to assess his fit for Reese's role. The news blindsided her, and the pent-up frustration found an outlet as she expressed her

feelings of anger and the urge to unleash her emotions physically.

Yvette, shocked and indignant on Reese's behalf, half-jokingly suggested a drastic solution involving Nelson's brakes. The dark humor elicited a mix of laughter and tears from Reese, providing a momentary reprieve.

Asserting her commitment to professionalism, Reese acknowledged the challenges of starting anew if she were to leave the university. They shared a hug, but the lingering unease persisted, fueled by the presence of Nelson, the newly arrived contender. Yvette left but assured her that they would figure things out.

The day neared its end, Reese prepared to continue her workday, determined to fortify her position. However, a quiet knock interrupted her thoughts, and she reluctantly turned to find Mr. Smell Good in the flesh, a confrontation she hadn't anticipated. Caught off guard by him appearing at her door.

"Hey," Reese greeted with a warm smile, beckoning Nelson to join her. "Hey, Rochelle, thanks for showing me around earlier. Nice office. I'm new around here and clueless about good eats. How about dinner? Not like a date, just two co-workers hanging out. Would

you be up for it tonight?” Nelson asked, his tone casual yet hopeful. Reese understood the importance of making connections in a new workplace, and she figured a friendly gesture wouldn't hurt.

“Sure, I'm heading to an open mic with some friends. My friend Reggie hosts these events regularly. Great food and good people if you want to meet new faces,” Reese replied.

Nelson's smile widened, a playful glint dancing in his eyes as he looked at Reese. She found herself drawn to the scent of his cologne, momentarily lost in her thoughts about him.

“Well, if that's all, Nelson, I should probably wrap up a few things before calling it a day. Let's swap numbers, and I'll shoot you the address later.” Reese's words were efficient, but her side smile hinted at ulterior motives. Her eyes met Yvette's watchful gaze from the hall.

Nelson left, passing by Yvette, who appeared puzzled by the exchange. Reese assured Yvette that it was a strategic move to keep her potential enemy close, emphasizing her determination to navigate the path she had chosen.