

PLAY CHAPTER ONE

SNEAK PEEK!

M. JAY GRANBERRY

1ST QUARTER

I will steal every fucking star in the sky to make you come true.

-Erin Van Vuren

Fast Break

/ˈfas(t)ˈbrāk/

verb

An offensive tactic to advance the game. It gives the opposition little to no time to defend against the attack...and I never saw it coming.

R yan

New York City
Twelve months ago

At six in the morning, I rise to begin my daily grind. I start with the simple stuff. Brush my teeth, shower, and then blow dry my hair. Yes, I use a hair dryer, and not because I'm trying to channel my inner rockstar. My natural hair is a mess of unruly curls, and I prefer to keep it sleek and straight.

By 6:45 am, I'm dressed and ready to go. Today is Tuesday, which means a blue suit, black shirt, and no tie. I'm not a fan of ties, never was, and I prefer to wear retro Jordans instead of dress shoes. It may seem like a small thing, but in a company steeped in tradition, that was founded fifty years ago and is owned by my father, it's like a rebellious battle cry.

In addition to being Tuesday, today is a big day, maybe the biggest day. I closed the Vegas deal last night. MME is now the proud owners

of an NBA franchise, Las Vegas County money will fund renovations, and I will assume the CEO position.

It's not just big. It's special; its life changing. I have no time for hard feelings or making points.

At 7:15 am, I headed down to the black car, where The Journal is neatly folded on the backseat. I flip straight to the Mergers & Acquisitions section, and it's not there. My deal, the one that I've been chasing for the past year and a half, the one that's supposed to change my life, is nowhere to be found.

I quickly scan through the paper again, but there's no mention of me, MacCrae Media Enterprise, or Vegas. The deal is a sexy bit of business that should have set the tongues wagging in the scotch and Viagra crowd, but there's not a word about it.

I did it despite the naysayers, and without the approval of the old guard. The documents are printed, and the dotted lines inked.

So, what in the hell did I miss?

Today was supposed to be the moment of truth for MME and my inauguration as CEO. Vegas is the deal that is supposed to finally — finally separate me from the legacy of Gavin MacCrae, founder of MME, former CEO, and current president, and my father.

At 7:45 am, I arrive at MME's US headquarters, located in the heart of Downtown Manhattan. I don't walk; I stalk into the building.

My office is on the sixtieth floor, in the corner of the building. It's a long elevator ride and it never gets old. The view of the New York City skyline from my floor-to-ceiling windows is breathtaking, and the sunlight pours in, casting a warm glow over my sleek and modern furnishings. As the seat of power for MME Holdings, my father's company, my corner office exudes power and success. It's the epitome of Wall Street cliches, and I love it.

As I step off the elevator, the sound of hushed voices and the rhythmic click-clack of high heels on polished marble floors create a pleasant white noise. I inhaled the faint scent of freshly brewed coffee and forced a smile. This is all me after all. It's the culmination of hard work, and long nights, and dues paid. I will not flush a reputation years in the making by broadcasting my current disappointments.

My desk is a grandeur display of polished wood, asserting its authority in the center of my office. The space is pristine, reflecting my penchant for impeccable order. Clutter and confusion breed chaos, and I am not one to invite such turmoil. On the desk, you'll find only the essentials: a sleek laptop, a gold pen set, a phone, and an arrangement of orchids - Emilia's doing, to add a hint of warmth and humanity to my austere workplace.

I may be a man of steel, but I'm not immune to the occasional bout of annoyance. The frustration that simmered within me over The Journal's slight this morning was a reminder of my humanness. "Emilia," I called out, watching as her head popped up from around the corner, "get Jason Clarke from The Journal on the line."

Her frown betrayed her curiosity. "Your cell phone, Mr. MacCrae?"

"Please," I responded, adding a courteous "Good morning."

Emilia's smile brightened momentarily. "Good morning, Mr. MacCrae. Would you like coffee before or after the call?"

"Now," I replied, not engaging in small talk, something I'm not particularly adept at, but improving upon.

Just as Emilia departs without uttering another word, I power up my laptop only to be confronted by my father's usual haughty demeanor as he saunters in. "By now, you ought to have been in Las Vegas," he remarks, his crisp British accent laced with a veneer of courteousness, but his underlying criticism is unmistakable.

