

CUFFING SEASON

Written by

Shaneequa Cannon

BUSY PIZZA PARLOR ON A CHILLY FRIDAY NIGHT.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NIGHT

CASSANDRA PIERCE, a brown-skinned Rubenesque cutie in her early 30s, wearing a fitted bandage dress, sits across from ERICK Johnson, a handsome devil of a guy, 30s with smooth black skin that contrasted sharply against the white smile he gives the waitress as she sets down the large pan of pepperoni pizza and the picture of soda in the middle of the table.

Cassie reaches for a slice of the pizza while the waitress pours the soda into the two glasses on the table. The waitress then leaves, maneuvering her way through the busy restaurant. Cassie folds the large slice in half and takes a bite. Cassie chews. Erick looks at her, his smile gone. He impatiently taps the space on the table next to his cellphone. Cassie takes another bite.

ERICK

Well?

Cassie puts down her pizza and picks up her napkin. She dabs at her mouth then finally looks at Erick.

CASSIE

Well what, Erick?

Erick leans forward.

ERICK

Aren't you going to say anything?

Cassie picks up her coke and takes a long sip through the straw. She puts the cup down.

CASSIE

What do you want me to say?

Erick's phone lights up next to his cup of soda, vibrating with an incoming call. Cassie looks at his phone. Erick covers it quickly with his hand.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

You've said all there is to say.

Cassie looks longingly at the pizza for a brief moment then stands. She gathers her purse and sweater.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Thank you for dinner.

Cassie walks to the front of the restaurant and through the door.

EXT. PIZZA PARLOR - NIGHT

Cassie walks down the steps onto the gravel towards the parking lot. Erick comes through the doors after her.

ERICK

Cassie!

Cassie smiles briefly. She clears her face then Cassie turns around.

Erick (CONT'D)

Sandra, let me take you home. It's too cold to make that five-mile walk. It's the least I can do.

Cassie turns back around and continues walking. Erick catches up to her. Cassie's shoe catches on a rock and she begins to fall. Erick grabs her arms. Cassie grabs onto Erick's arms and lingers a little too long. Erick pushes her to standing up straight. Cassie drops her hands from his arms. Erick steps backwards.

ERICK (CONT'D)

See? I'll take you home. Why did you buy those things anyway? You never wear anything but flip flops and flats.

CASSIE

Go to her. I'll just take an Uber or Lyft or something.

Erick briskly rubs his hands together.

ERICK

Look, it would just take me a few minutes to take you home and then we could go our separate ways

Wind blows Cassie's hair. She shivers.

CASSIE

Fine.

Erick walks towards a black car and hits the button on his remote. He opens the drivers door and enters the car. Cassie walks to the passenger side, opens the door and gets in.

EXT. CASSIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erick's sleek rich black sports coupe with dark tinted windows sits in the middle of the parking lot in front of a 2-story apartment building. Cassie, exits the car, closes the door, and heads for the staircase. The car reverses then speeds out of the complex, a tire squealing briefly.

Cassie digs in her small purse, producing keys, as she walks up the stairs. She fits them into the front door then opens the door to total darkness and steps inside, closing the door.

INT. CASSIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The darkness in the apartment is overwhelming, except for the streetlight shining through the window. Cassie feels along the wall, finds the light switch, and turns the light on. She locks the door then bends down and undoes the buckles on each heel. The body shaper she wore underneath is exposed. Cassie mimics Erick.

CASSIE

"Why did you buy those things anyway?" I bought them for you.

Cassie kicks one of her shoes. It lands in the middle of the hallway.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

\$150 to impress you.

Cassie kicks off the other shoe and it bounces off the couch before landing on the floor.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

This dress...

Cassie struggles to get out of her dress. When she finally gets it off, price tag still attached, she flings it onto the couch.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

This corset...

Cassie begins unhooking the million teeth on the corset but halfway through, she gets frustrated and fights her way out of it, damaging the hooks. Once out of it, she walks it over to the garbage can and roughly stuffs the corset into the garbage.

Cassie then reaches behind her back to unhook her bra.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

This bra...

When the hooks spring free, Cassie pulls down the straps and flings the bra on top of the dress.

Then Cassie begins rolling down the bodyshaper from her stomach.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Who invented this shit?

Once out of the bodyshaper, Cassie throws it onto the heap of clothing on the couch. She puts her hands on her naked hips as she stares at the heap of fabric.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

I'm done trying to impress people  
who don't want me.

Cassie gathers up all the clothes and throws them in the garbage can. She walks away then, panicked, races back to the trash can and pulls out the bandage dress. Ketchup clings to part of the dress.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Shit.

Cassie walks the dress over to the kitchen sink, turns on the faucet, and watches the ketchup fall off. Then she takes a bowl out of the kitchen cabinet, fills it with water, and puts the ketchup-stained section of the dress in the bowl.

Then Cassie walks down the hall to the dark bedroom.

INT. CASSIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassie withdraws a silk robe from behind the bedroom door. She puts on the robe then slides beneath the covers of her perfectly made bed. Her room is immaculate; everything in its proper place except for the magazine on the nightstand. Cassie reaches for the magazine and flips through the pages.

Cassie stops and looks at the picture of the couple smiling up at the reader. The man has his arm around the woman's waist. The woman has her head leaned back onto the man's shoulder. Both of them have a cell phone in their hands. The ad says boldly, "Who will you end up with this cuffing season?"

CASSIE

Cuffing Season. What a joke. Might  
as well call it Desperate Thot  
Season.

Cassie closes the magazine and tosses it back onto the night stand. She then picks up her satin hair cap and puts it on. She turns off the light then settles down in bed. But she doesn't close her eyes. Instead tears form then drop onto her pillow.

INT. MIAMI OFFICE - DAY

The conference room's glass windows overlook the bustling downtown city. The long oval table, lined with many empty office chairs, stretches from nearly end to end of the wall.

JUSTIN MCGILL, early 30s with a slight hint of impending baldness tainting his red hair, sits in one of the swivel chairs near the window, worry etches his face. He scrolls through the call log in the phone he's holding. Cassie's name shows a number of times as unconnected calls. Justin presses her name again and puts the phone to his ear. He stands up and leans against the glass window and looks down at the city.

JUSTIN

Cassie, this is Justin. It's about  
the twentieth time I've called you.  
Pick up and tell me what's wrong. I  
know something's wrong. Was it  
Erick with a K? You're my best  
friend. Let me help. Call me back.

The door opens and Justin turns around. A smile replaces the frown as he slips his phone back into his pocket. CARL BIMMERMAN, a rotund pasty pink-faced man with a shock of white hair on his face for a moustache throws his arms wide open.

CARL

Justin! Com-meer.

JUSTIN

Mr. Bimmerman, I'm so honored to  
meet--

Justin moves forward with his hand out for a handshake but Carl wraps him up in a strong hug.

CARL

No handshakes. So formal. I'm a  
hugger.

Justin does a one-arm hug with two taps to the back.