

So Not



Gurlie Gurl

*just for you <3 Slacker Gurl*

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This is the second e-book edition of So Not Gurlie Gurl



~ *I would like to* ~



dedicate this to my Mom because the Angels have no  
idea how lucky they truly are.

To JC & Li'l 1 ... thanks for being there for me and  
don't worry Li'l 1 I will rebuild stronger, faster  
and meaner than ever.

R.I.P. 89 CRX Si Body 10.17.04

To all the racer chics who have learned to say,  
"Exhaust and Speed is all I need to say you got  
beat by a gurl!" - chi town brat.

Don't be afraid to tell them to *Bring It!*

*Ladies & Gentlemen...*

*Start Your Engines*





Do you want to know what I love best about driving? When I am on an open highway around 3:30 a.m., with a full moon out and maybe one or two other cars out on the road with me and no cops. Do you want to know what is even better than that? Posting at the tree in my CR-X for the quarter-mile track waiting for the three yellows to begin to drop. Or sitting at the starting cones in my Civic hatchback waiting to be flagged to hit the autocross course. Want to know what I absolutely hate about driving? Traffic!

I am sitting here once again on a Friday in early evening downtown Tampa traffic with some dumb azz in a white '04 Cadillac Escalade trying to cut me off to get in my lane. So typical, all SUV drivers seem to think we should all bow down to them. "Oh look at me in my big vehicle, be scared of me!" Not! Stay behind the Honda!

The idiot blew his horn at me and I just looked up at his stupid monstrosity of a vehicle sittin

on those ridiculous 22-inch chrome spinners and then into his overly black tinted windows. I am sure my '89 Honda CR-X SI-R looked like an easy target for him to get in front of. Wrong dumb azz! I've got the engine, the charger, and no weight. Figure it out.

I stood my ground and didn't let him in. The guy behind me was not so fortunate. He then had to wait for the idiot to get in the third lane of traffic because he wanted to make a right at the light. Moron.

Okay, so road rage owns me. I've tried to calm it down, especially since we put the Vortech 8 lb. after cooled super charger kit onto my JDM B16A SI-R I motor in my CR-X thus upping my wheel horsepower to 250+ and my torque on an engine that is known as the bottom end torqueless wonder.

But, the combination of traffic, morons and me do not mix. Stop and go, just sucks! Do you want to know how hard my clutch is? Not that I am complaining, but you might when you have to constantly press down on a pedal that feels like it has a resistance weight of 5 lbs. on it. Up and down on the pedal because traffic just inches along blows! But that is what I get for installing the ACT performance street disk clutch with the Xtreme pressure plate.

When I finally had my chance to go through the light, the idiot soccer mom minivan in front of me decided to quit yelling at her kids and move. Yea

thanks a lot it was yellow and I got stuck at the red! Dayum! Nissan claims Mom's have changed, but trust me; their stupid driving habits have not!

Stopped again. Does anybody else have to be at work by 5:30 besides me?

Looking at the traffic ahead of me, I reminded myself to chill and let my Truly Sunday *The View From Here* CD take my aggression out for me.

Just as my favorite chorus from *Flattery Lies* started I heard a guy yell, "Hey girl." Hmm, I don't remember that being part of this song. Since it's not I'll just choose to ignore it.

You know what I really hate, when you ignore someone that is trying to get your attention but they just persist to get it. And that is exactly what this fool did.

Dayum, now what? I love my CR-X but sometimes it does pull too much attention. Could it possibly be the blow off valve? Nah. 🤔

Fine already! Dayum. Just incase something was wrong with my ride and they were going to be cool and tell me about it, I'll be nice. It's not like they are going to give up anyway.

Unfortunately, when I looked over I had to also look up because it was the stupid SUV with a guy trying very hard to get my attention. Great here we go.

He sat in his SUV smiling at me with this gaudy gold watch shining in the sunlight and his boy peeking over his shoulder. "Hey girl, you should

let a brother in sometime."

Shaking my head, I just rolled my eyes.

"Dag, it's like that huh? Don't be so hard. I like a girl who doesn't let a brother step in front."

I looked at him, looked at the light, watched it turn green, made sure my path was clear, stepped on the gas, and let my blow off valve reply for me.

Oh my gawd hi to you! Not! First of all, there's no way I would even date someone who was driving that monstrosity. I cannot be seen in that ghetto azz vehicle. Yick!

Man that was good, I needed the laugh and even better than that, I am finally moving through traffic.

I am so not like these other gurls out there. That's right gurl; in my world it is spelled  
g u r l.

The reason is simple; I am just not like them at all. I am *So Not Gurlie Gurl* it's ridiculous. First of all, I'm a severe gearhead, which means I can't see past my engine bay. Everything just relates and goes easy for me when I am thinking about my engines, how they are running, what I am hearing, how to improve them and so on. It just makes me happy; so I guess it's like when Gurlie Gurls figure out which shoes and purse makes an outfit complete. I give them credit for that, so why do they trip on me because I am not into that

stuff is beyond me.

None of that really matters in my world because today is Friday and I am taking my rex (CR-X for those who don't know) because it is my Li'l 1's day to come out and play. Actually he stays with me the entire weekend.

JC, my Rio Red '91 Honda Hatchback that has been with me since he came off the lot in October of '90, is enjoying his time out of the sun in a nice garage. I just finished rebuilding the high compression SOHC (single overhead cam) VTEC engine (otherwise known as a mini-me swap) using the D16 block from my CR-X for him this year. My boy designed it and taught me how to do all the labor. It's only in Stage I and it's clean. When I lift my hood all the madness about it only being a single cam just stops. Not only is it clean, but it runs and it runs well. I can't wait to finish the car as a package.

See, I just called my cars by name and they are both a "he". Who doesn't name their cars? Most car owners will call their cars a "she", not me. I'm a gurl, what the hell do I want a she car for? It took awhile, but my boys finally got used to it.

That's another thing, I am considered as one of the guys. I am not going to tell you that I worked hard to gain that status because I didn't and no gurl should have to. I am just myself and sooner or later the guys got that I am a gurl who is into her cars not the guys. The real proof of how I am

thought of in the group is when the guys ask, "Got any single girlfriends I can hook my boy up with?"

Now don't start thinking I'm unattractive, cause I'm not. I am single and would love to have a boyfriend but that is another area I would rather not discuss. It's just that I have earned respect as a female who really is in this for the cars and I want it to stay that way. One good thing about all this is that it eliminates any problems I would normally get from my boy's females.

Now that we have covered that area, let us move on to something that I really enjoy talking about, racing. While I try to keep my racing to track only I will not say I am perfect in doing so. Man Florida has put down some harder street racing laws in 2003. They have defined it to one or more vehicles. What is that? So if I am at light when the snowbirds are down here and take off normally and pull on all their slow azzes I'll get pulled over for street racing? F\* that!

And yes, the cops are getting to be such dorks about this don't think they won't, cause they will. Profiling for imports is huge in Tampa. One of my boys got pulled over 4 times in one month for stupid ish. One cop followed him down Kennedy Boulevard because he avoided all the dips, potholes, and uneven manholes that Kennedy is notorious for! The cop claimed he had to stop him because he suspected him of driving drunk. *Right.*

My friend straight out told him no it's because he is a *Mitsubishi* lowered on 17's and has an exhaust. Well that pissed the cop off and earned him a couple extra stupid tickets. The mullet's, a.k.a. domestics, think it's hilarious; and ever since the movie *The Fast And The Furious*...well let's just say you had your problems back in the day, now it's our turn.

Oh well, I'll still keep going out to the street meets, track events and try to behave when challenged on the street. It's not worth losing either of my cars over a stupid street race. Besides when I have been challenged and I do win, the other driver usually does a stupid ricer fly by (definition of a ricer fly by: flying by a car who has already shut down with your flashers on like you won)...*whatEVER!* At how many car lengths that I had on your azz was I not supposed to shut down?

Speaking of meets, tomorrow night is Saturday night and that means the meet up at Fowler and Nebraska is going down. We meet up for an hour or two, then the location is called and we all ride out. In the past I have been the only female driver there, all the rest were riders and some of them have watched *The Fast and the Furious* movie way too many times.

I love when they try to give me attitude. Gurl please, sit behind your *man's* wheel and show me something. You probably don't even know how to

dump the clutch! You probably don't even know how to drive a manual tranny anyway! So step off, get in the passengers seat and shut up!

Well I finally made it to my part time job with only 5 minutes to spare. Ugh! I hate this place, it's boring as hell but the money they are paying me keeps my upgrade disorder financially functional. And that my friend is always a good thing!



After making it through my boring Friday night at work and through the errands and my own "honey do" list on Saturday morning and afternoon, there is only one real thing I look forward to. I mentioned it before, were you paying attention? That's right, the Saturday night street meets. They have just made my life so much easier and cheaper. Well unless I get a ticket they have become so cheap for me. Instead of hitting a club, I run streets.

No need for money or making sure I get in at the right time so I don't have to pay the cover. I used to get dressed up, go to the club, and purchase overpriced alcohol; \$7 for one *Smirnoff Ice Twisted Green Apple* plus a tip for the bartender is just stupid. Well, okay, not the tip for the bartender. Anyway. No need for skirts, heels, and to have my hair pristine. All I need for a Saturday night out are my jeans, a baby doll t-shirt, my resident driving shoes, and a full

tank of premium gas. Bam, out the door at 9:30 - 10:00 o'clock and maybe back by 3 or 4 a.m.

I swear the people that I now hang out with have turned me into a freakin vampire.

My Nextel started again and this time it was my boy Julio or as he liked to be called, J. "Hello."

"What up ma?"

"The usual. And you?"

"You know me. So you going to the races tonight?"

"Why? You finally coming out?"

"Hell yeah! My gurl went out of town for the weekend with her parents, the GSR is finally dyno tuned, and I'm free." And then started singing the word free. LOL! He always cracks me up.

"Ha! Ha! Cool, well where you want to meet up?"

"Well I've got the guys coming over here, so just come over at 9:30."

"Cool. See you then."

"Muah! Bye ma!"

I two-way'd the other guys I was going to ride out with and told them of the change of plans. They were cool with it and would meet up with me to ride over.

It's not my usual to call the shots, but J has been my boy forever and a day. He's a good guy and it's about time life had given him a good gurl. He deserves it. Although it would be nicer if she was into the car scene, but one cannot have it all now can they?

My Batman watch told me that I could follow my usual routine of finding a show on T.V. or putting something in the DVD player while I ate and no, I don't put in racing movies. Man, I really wish I could break people of that stereotype, but anyway, the rex has already been cleaned for the night, so I could chill until it was time to ride out to J's.

Nothing was on T.V., it sucks not to have cable but when am I ever home? So I picked out my *Final Fantasy* DVD, put my food out on my *Sega* game box that has become my dining room table, threw my pillow onto the floor, and sat JDM style while I chilled and ate.

Usually I don't look forward to meeting anyone at the races, I mean street meets. But tonight I was hoping that the one guy I have a thing for would be out with his built B16A '91 Honda CR-X. He used to beat me when we ran against each other NA (naturally aspirated), but after the *Vortech* addition, he now inhales my exhaust. 🏎️

His name is Tarif or T as we sometimes call him. In Arabic his name means rare and uncommon and trust me he is. This guy is just so... Our conversations are always chill, he doesn't ever have a gurl around him, just his boy's, but my stupid ass doesn't know how to approach things. Since I can't see past my engine bay, let alone anyone else's, I suck at this liking someone crap. I know I have a stupid crush thing or something on

him, but oh well. At my age you would think I would have this figured out, but nope.

My mother taught me, "Don't date men you work with." So I applied that suggestion to the group of guys I hang with and so far it has worked. Personally, I believe it is how I earned respect vs. other gurls.

Look I won't put down a guy or a gurl who sleeps around but I will question it. I mean hello, how many times do you like to put an STD gun to your head and hope it shoots blanks? Not to mention HIV. Some gurls are just so skanky, not worthy of respect. All they want to do is hook up with a guy, go down on him, and then move on. That's their thing, but I don't have to like it.

It's funny to be around guys and hear about the slore (slut + whore = slore) they did last night. They have no respect for these gurls at all. And why should they? Unless the gurl is like the guy, just looking to hit it.

But these types really ruin it for the rest of us. I mean, you meet someone and you're like cool and thinking hey this could work out, but then they expect you to go down on them or sex them the first night and you're like bye LoSeR BoI!

Same old story I know, but you tell them "Sorry, I'm not the one" and figure if they leave, good riddance to their sorry azz. One guy thought I was a lesbian because I said no. His statement, "You're around how many guys all the time and have

no boyfriend? Here we are tonight and you won't give me any play. So you must not like men except as friends."

I just replied, "And yet this is only our first date. Wow. K. Bye."

Stupid. Nothing is wrong with a gurl that has respect for herself, something is wrong with the guy who doesn't.

I looked at my watch; it was only going on 7:30. Well at 9 I'll get ready to head over to J's. As I explained before, it doesn't take much for my Saturday night fun.

I love this movie, but it freaks me out that I am really watching computer anime and not live people. Computer anime has come so far that now when I watch a *Pixar* film, it just doesn't compare. Well okay, *Monsters Inc.* and *Ice Age* really showed the progression of the technology with the fur of the characters but... I know *Final Fantasy* didn't do well at the box office, but if the title had changed and the ending was a bit less cheesy, it would have cleaned up.

At 8:30 my phone started again, this time it was my gurl Destiny. She is non-car related but very cool. Although one time I brought her out to the street meets with me and I did feel like a lesbian. I mean there I was standing with the guys by my boy's 3<sup>rd</sup> gen Rx7 talking mods and ish and there was Destiny with one of guy's wife talking make-up and hair. Kinda disturbing don't ya think?

"Hey hommie."

"Hey gurl. What's going on?"

Destiny laughed and I heard someone in the background. "Just calling to find out what you are up to tonight."

"Street meet and you?"

"Awe man. I have a friend over here that has a friend who wants a friend so we can all go out tonight."

"Sorry, I would but J is actually headed out with us tonight. What about Camille, she's hot and may be at the house." Umm, yea, I have to quit doing this to myself.

"Yea, I'll try her. Isn't she with ol' boy?"

"Exactly."

"Okay, well have fun and stay safe."

"You too."

I flipped through the channels to chill just for a half-hour more, when I finally found something, my phone went off again. This time it was him. *Breathe.*

I answered in my normal voice, "Hello."

"What up yo?"

Big smile! "Nothing and you."

"Well uh, I was going to the street meet tonight but then my work called and told me they need someone to open tomorrow morning."

"That sux!"

"I know. Are you going?"

Damn. Oh what? Like he'd ask me to join him

somewhere else? "Yea, J is finally coming out; his gurl is out of town and the GSR is tuned."

"Bad azz."

"I know right. He was very happy with the dyno numbers he did Thursday night. So he is free and ready to run the streets."

"He wouldn't cheat on her would he?"

Thanks, now you just made yourself to be the totally perfect man I dream of. "No, nothing like that. Just a night that he gets out with the guys for the street meet."

"Tru."

"So you aren't coming out at all huh?"

"Well I might hang until you guys ride out, but I don't know. My cousins are talking about Ybor tonight, but then I wouldn't get up for work."

Yea cause you would party until the sun came up. "Yea that probably isn't a good idea."

"Well I will probably head up there. What time are you guys headed out?"

"At 9:30 we meet up at J's and then who knows. If he is showered it's all good, if not, it's another hour."

"Dag."

And he drew that word out like he always does. Melt. "I know right."

"Well uh, what are you doing now?"

I looked at the clock, 8:45. "Getting ready to head out of here in a few."

"Well alright. I may see you up there."

Dare I say it? "Cool man." *Chicken!*

"Later."

See, I can't tell if he is interested in me or not. And I am so stupid that even if he was, I wouldn't know how to make that move. Ugh.

I got up and threw the remote on the couch, hugged my teddy bear and said, "This just isn't fair." Went in the bathroom and got ready hoping he would show up.

I threw on my *Express* low cut/low ride jeans, my Emily the Strange *Welcome to My Nightmare* baby doll tee, threw my hair up (humidity and naturally curly hair go together as well as nitrous on an un-tuned stock motor), put on my black *Sketchers*, gave my eyes the dark look, threw on my *Pink-A-Boo* Maybelline lipstick with a coat of *Wet Sand* over it on my bottom lip only, made sure my drivers license and credit cards were in my back pocket (purses are the gay), grabbed the keys to the rex, my phone, and headed out the door.

When I walked out the back door, I just stopped at the top of the steps and just stared at my small view of the water. It just chills me out before I go out for the evening. I continued down the steps, clicked the alarm, got in, put the *Alpine* stereo faceplate on, tuned into 93.3 WFLZ for the techno house party, and said a small prayer that he'd be out tonight.

Of course, if he weren't, I'd survive and if he was.... *Riiight*.

 ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Gear ~ 

We got to J's around 9:30 and what do you know, he was almost ready. I swear the man isn't a pretty boy, but he takes his time like he is. J's mom is cool as well; she has rode out with us before. She doesn't understand why we get into this so much, but she doesn't put us down for it either. Anything is better than her son doing other bad things she says. I have to agree.

We were all sitting in the living room while J was getting ready in the bathroom.

"Hey Rafael, which number motor you got running in that hatch of yours now?"

Rafael just smirked, "Yea right. Doesn't matter, you still don't want none of that."

"Bottle fed boy." Rafael loves the nitrous oxide and the number of motors he has blown up is proof.

Johnny looked over at me, "Hey Rave, when are you going to finish that single cam project?"

"Man my suspension is coming in and then it's

off to D's to rip it all down and build it up again. The last stage of the engine will be by September/October."

Johnny and the guys shook their heads, "Not bad. What do expect to put at the wheels?"

"Maybe like 155 or so. I'm at 150 now, but I have a lot of tuning to do. Well not me, I can't tune."

Christian raised his head, "Who then?"

I shook my head, "I don't know man; D doesn't seem to think he would be the best for it either."

Johnny got up, "Yep that is the part that you have to have an ear for and more. Tuning is the whole key."

Rafael got up behind him, "Yep. Squeeze everything out of that motor that you can."

Nacho (who is Russian with a Spanish nick name ... you gotta love that) got up and yelled through the bedroom door to J, "Hey we headed out by the cars. Finish up and get out there!"

I got up and yelled back, "Yea pretty boy lets go."

All you could hear is J's signature laugh.

We walked outside and looked around. "Well at least it won't rain tonight."

My boy just shot me a hard look, "What are you trying to make it happen!"

I just rolled my eyes. *Dork!*

I walked over by J's teal '93 Honda Civic hatch on Acura LS mesh rims that was now housing a built

GSR motor in it.

Johnny walked up behind me, "That's a bad mother in there."

I just turned to him and smiled, "Yea, yea you did the swap, blah, blah, blah."

Nacho yelled in, "You don't want none of that motor gurl!"

And of course my other boy who was originally riding out with me had to state, "I don't care what you all got, you know you don't want none of this" and pointed over to his blacked out and shaved '03 Volkswagen GTI VR6.

Rafael just walked over to him, "Please, you can't launch for ish and you know it."

"Maybe not in this car, but I bet I could get you from a roll in it."

Oh no, not this topic again. I threw back my head and let out a deep breath, "I think I'll check on J" and walked back into the house.

Don't get me wrong, I love talking shop or racing or whatever. But dayum some topics don't die when they should. From the boards to the streets, once a topic is hot, it's drilled into the ground. The debate whether taking someone from a roll should even be considered a race is something that will be argued until the end of time. Or that is what it seems like.

From a dig, my boy can launch the ish out of a car. No doubt. But his car can only do a roll. The Volkswagen tranny and drive train cannot handle

it. It wasn't meant to. But his VW iron block can handle some heavy repeated shots of nitrous. And so the debate continues on whether or not those who can and cannot launch do to mechanical or traction issues is considered a race when taken from a roll.

I am sure you have caught on by now that racing from a roll is a street thing, and not a track thing. And if you haven't, shame on you.

After entering J's house I rounded the corner and bumped straight into him. "Dude I'm sorry. You ready?"

"Ya ma, everything okay?"

"Yea man, they are just out there debating racing from a dig or a roll again."

"Dayum man, some people just need to let that ish go."

"Yea right. Ready?"

"Yep."

We walked over and gave his mom a hug and kiss on the cheek and walked out the door. When we got back outside the conversation had changed to who could beat who with a naturally aspirated motor to a force induced motor. I just yelled out, "I got all you guys either way." They just laughed.

Yea. Yea. Yea. Whatever!

We got in, started our engines, lined up on the street, and rode out in a semi normal fashion. *Riiight.*

On these ride outs I am always amazed that we

haven't crashed or how we haven't had 50 cops on us. My stomach is always tight, I try to keep my grip under control, and my sight is always fixed on the current situation and my mind ready to maneuver when needed.

I used to be so stupid about this ish, like running a yellow/red light just to keep up with the pack. Yelling at myself, *do you want to lose your car?* Now I find out where we are headed to and if I fall behind, then so be it. I am tired of pulling stupid moves and thanking God afterward. Especially in traffic! Jeez man, I wish they would slow down. I hate that ish of darting in and out of traffic! Just because we can pull on half these slow azz cars out here doesn't mean we should. I mean some people aren't even paying attention to what's in front of them let alone what is coming up behind or on the side of them.

It's not so bad when J leads but some of these guys, 90 mph is the only speed they know.

 ~ 3<sup>rd</sup> Gear ~ 

We safely arrived at Nebraska and Fowler a little after 10. The flea market parking lot was about half full with more and more cars still rolling in. This meet was mostly imports; the mullets have a place of their own. Just kidding.

We parked and gathered up.

"Dayum I haven't been out to this spot in forever." J said as his pulled out his *Black and Mild* to light up.

"I was out here last week, it was alright, we rode out to Apollo Beach."

"That far?"

"Yep. That far to sit at the 7-Eleven station because the cops told us to keep going back there or leave every time they found us."

J just looked at me in amazement, "A cop actually told you guys to go back to the 7-Eleven?"

"I know right. We were parked down on the sides

of the road by the power plant when the cop pulled up. I naturally just got up out of there and waited in an empty parking lot to hear what was up. My boy calls me about 5 minutes later telling me the cop was cool as hell and just asked us to go back up to the 7-Eleven cause they are cool with us there."

Johnny looked over at a lowered yellow Type R Acura Integra sitting on GSR saw blades and said, "How have the cops been over here?"

"Pretty much non existent. I think it is because the guys who run it have worked something out with the property owner. But if we act up, we'll get kicked out."

We all started walking around to look at the cars, two of them took off to talk to a couple of guys they knew. J kept repeating the word *dayum* every time he saw a hooked up ride.

It's not like I know everybody at these meets. In reality, I only know a few. If I were to come out by myself I would probably run into some people to chill with, but I really don't like to do that. There was one night though where I switched up with three different groups. It was crazy cause I just kept meeting different people to run with.

While they were looking at cars, I kept looking for a particular CR-X that I was hoping would show. Yea, I could call him and tell him I am here but....

We were standing around a rattle can flat black Civic coupe with a ball bearing T3/T4 trim turbo B16 set up, when I felt arms come around me and pick me up in a bear hug. "Hi Raven."

I knew that voice; it was Jordan, "Hi Jordan. Please put me down." When he finally did I turned around and gave him a big hug. Jordan is just cool. He drives a white *Acura Integra* LS that is pretty much stock, but he keeps it so clean it's ridiculous.

"So how are you?"

"Good." He looked around and said his hellos to everyone. "So you riding out tonight?"

"Yep."

"Cool. Which car you got with you?"

"The rex."

"Ahh, does that mean we are finally going to race?"

"Bring it!"

"Yea right."

J turned around to ask, "Hey ma, what time do we ride out of here?"

"Don't know. It doesn't look like the guys who run this are here yet. They'll show about 10:45."

"Cool. I like standing around but I'm ready to go."

"Cause you're free."

"And you know this!"

I spotted Rafael and Johnny talking to a couple of guys I hadn't seen out in awhile, "I'll be

around" and walked over to them.

"Oh my gawd, look what's finally found its way out of the garage."

Kaufmann just gave me that look and said, "Yea. Yea. Yea. So what's up?"

"Nothin. Where have you been?"

"Around."

"Un huh. So where is your girl?"

"Why do you think I am finally out?"

I just shook my head, "Okay. So what else is new?"

"I finally finished building the motor last week, so I won't be running tonight, just wanted to come out and finally meet up with everyone."

"Pop the hood."

"Nah."

"Why not?"

"C'mon Rave you know why."

And I did, Kaufmann had his motor stolen three months ago. We suspected it was someone who had been watching the boards because he was always posting his issues with his build. After it was stolen he swore he would not build another, but we all knew the upgrade disorder was still in him and next to us was the proof. "It's cool, I understand. Some other time then."

"Thanks."

I walked away when I spotted one of my gurls. This gurl is like myself; a gearhead and the guys have much respect for her, even though they want

to get with her. She is just hot. She is totally into cars, works on her own engine, and just has this natural look. She can dress up or dress like a skater gurl or whatever and it just carries on her well.

No, I do not want to hook up with her, I'm not like that no matter what that LoSer BoI thinks; I just have to give my gurl her props. I walked over and gave her a hug, "Hey woman!"

"Hey! What's up?"

"You running tonight?"

"Nope, I just thought I would come out before I head into work."

"Ahh, that explains the make-up."

"I know right, I've told the guys that I am actually just out hooking."

We started laughing.

"So which club are you working at tonight?"

"Club Gotham. They are paying me \$150 for four hours tonight because they are throwing a special party for some Buc's player."

"It's too dayum dark in that club."

My gurl isn't a stripper but a dancer in techno, goth, and industrial clubs. She's a badazz too. She has to put up with a lot of crap from the owners but \$100 to \$150 cash per night is fast money for 4 hours worth of work.

She just laughed at me. "Just find some hot guy to lead you around."

"Yea right, like I could make that happen. I'd

have to be able to see him first to even realize he is a guy or even hot."

"Oh Raven."

"So how is your motor running?"

"Good but it still needs work. I'll be working on it this week if you want to stop by."

"Cool."

The conversations always start the same at these types of events. A simple hey what's up followed, by the car questions of: What all have you done to your car? What times do you run? What mods do you have? When will it be done? It really doesn't change much.

As usual a group of fast n furious wanna be's were walking around and gave her and I a dirty look. I just looked at my gurl with my face scrunched up, "What was that about?"

"Who knows...."

Our conversation was brought to a halt by an overly loud bass system coming into the parking lot. We both just rolled our eyes.

My boys walked backed over shaking their heads. I yelled out, "I know right! Like hey, why don't we just invite the cops to come over."

Finally the system just shut down. "Dayum who is that?"

My eyes scanned over the parking lot to the direction that they were pointing in only to find it was the *Escalade* that had tried to cut me off in traffic earlier. *Oh hell no.*

I just rolled my eyes and turned back to my gurl Cami as she said, "I don't know, but I wouldn't be caught dead in that thing. It's just ugly."

"Tell me about it."

The driver must have gotten out because my boy J almost choked on himself when he said, "Oh hell no, that looks like Warrick from the *Buccaneers*!"

What? I threw back my head and let out a breath. *Great.*

Cami, being the cool ass gurl that she is said, "Who cares that truck is ugly. At least the spinners are real though, I hate when 2 are spinning and 2 aren't."

My mind started racing, why in the hell would he show up here? Li'l 1 is in the back; he couldn't have seen him just by riding by. Does he know I come out here? He couldn't, guys like that aren't into this stuff. Well maybe the high dollar end stuff but definitely not a local street meet. I just kept quiet. *Please do not come over here.*

"Hey ma, why is he walking over by your car?"

Ugh! "Cause today in traffic he tried to cut in front of me and I didn't let him. Then he got next to me at the light and tried to talk to me."

Nacho practically yelled out, "Dayum gurl, do you know who that is?"

Turning to him I just slit my eyes, "No, and I really don't care."

"Ma, you have to go talk to him."

"Why?"

"Cause he is leaning on your car!"

That pissed me off! I shot an evil look in his direction while him and his boys just looked over and smiled.

What the hell is your problem! I rolled my eyes and let out a deep breath. *Eww!*

Think fast gurl, cause you can't get out of this one by just trying to blow them off. I looked over at the group, "So he is with the Buc's. Great. You guys go talk to him."

"You're crazy Rave, a Buc's player is trying to talk to you and you're ignoring him? Gurl what is wrong with you?"

Hoping I'd find support in Cami, I glanced her way; she just shrugged her shoulders, "If anything tell him to get the hell off your car."

Fine. "I guess I have no choice, obviously the idiot doesn't know how to respect someone's ride." Storming off in his direction I was dreading what was coming next. Because he rolled in so loud he had already caught everyone's attention and now to find out who he is, I know he pretty much had everyone's attention, therefore if everyone didn't know me before tonight, they do now. Man, this sucks.

I saw the way he leaned on my car with not one ounce of respect for it being my ride and it pissed me off even more! I walked over with no smile, no warm voice, and no friendly look and

said in a low tone, "Excuse me, but you need to get off my rex."

"See fellas, what did I tell you?"

*Tell them what?* I shook my head, I didn't care that there were three other guys around me besides him, "I don't care what you told them, remove yourself!"

He put out his hands like chill and removed himself, "Sorry girl. I just needed to find a way for you to speak to me."

I rolled my eyes and said sarcastically, "Wow! Impressive, lean on my ride and piss me off, you're brilliant aren't you? Not."

"Are you always this hard?"

"How did you find me?"

They were all dressed to the hilt in their expensive clothes and suits. If the *Escalade* didn't stand out enough, their attire did. I was severely embarrassed and yet I didn't know why.

I recognized his boy to his right with the short top, curly Afro as the passenger from earlier today, he stepped up and said, "I got a Busa and I sometimes run with this crowd. My man couldn't get you off his mind, so I directed him this way with the chance that you might be up here."

Lucky me. I cut my voice again, "Funny bikes don't ride out with us. Try again."

He replied by tilting his head and popping his shoulder as to say oh well.

Warrick looked at his crew as they turned to walk back to the truck saying, "Good luck man."

"Well first of all I would like to introduce myself to you." He held out his hand and said, "Hello, I'm Darren Warrick."

"Yea I know, my boys informed me of who you are" and just looked at his hand.

He dropped it and got a little nasty with me, "Dayum girl, a brother is just trying to holla and you can't even give him a break."

"Look," I cut my voice even harder, "I was informed that you are some big football star, the only reason I am over here is because my boy's over there cannot believe someone like you is here. Personally I could care less."

"Really?" And got that egotistical smile on his face.

I just frowned. "Really. Look, I came over here because you were leaning on my car and if you knew me you would know that is the stupidest thing you can do, especially if you are trying to *holla* at me."

"Well what am I supposed to do?"

I shook my head and started to walk away. I don't have time to deal with this.

"Hey wait."

To be polite, dayum I hate this about myself, I stopped and turned around.

"Alright so I guess who I am doesn't impress you and what I drive doesn't impress you at all. I

just..."

Just then I heard a car pull in runnin open header, no he cannot be here now. I turned to see his CR-X pulling into the parking lot and head my way. He pulled up and parked next to my car, got out and walked over. "Hey gurl!"

I melted. "Hey."

I was quickly brought back to reality when idiot boy decided to cut in, "Dayum bro, don't you got money for an exhaust system on that thing? It's so little it couldn't cost you that much."

My mouth fell open. I was about to say something when he responded first, "Who the hell are you?"

"Darren Warrick."

He just looked over to me and back at him, "Who?"

I let a small laugh out. This is just another reason why I have it so bad for him. I looked at him and said, "Exactly, I'll be there in a minute."

"You're sure your okay?"

"Yep." And gave him a huge hug.

He walked away and Darren just looked at me, "Is that your boyfriend?"

"I wish." Hoping it would take away his interest in me.

"Well uh, I am sure he's nice and all, but I can be that and so much more." He handed me a card.

Dayum, guess it didn't. "I don't want it. Look it was nice to meet you and all, but I am just not interested."

"How can you say that? You don't even know me."

"And I don't want to."

"Oh you think I'm that playa type right?"

I rolled my eyes. "Really. I don't care if you are or not."

"Look..." and stopped when he realized he hadn't gotten my name.

I just shook my head at him like, *what?*

"What is your name?"

"Raven."

"Dayum that name fits perfect with your black hair and dayum what color are your eyes?"

"They change color."

"Okay Raven, with the mysterious eyes, I would really like to get to know you. I've never met anyone like you before. I'm not trying to run game here, I just want a chance."

He walked over to my car and dropped his business card in my open moonroof. "Just call, you can at least have dinner with me."

"No thanks."

"Come on. What lady doesn't like to be picked up and taken out to a nice dinner?"

"Picked up in what, that *thing*? No thank you!"

"Thing?! Man I got mad cash put into that *thing*. I got LCD screens everywhere, DVD's, Playstation and Xbox all hooked up! Not to mention

that I know you heard my stereo system when I pulled in here. You can't tell me that little boy that pulled in that ugly loud ass ride next to yours could pick you up and take you out."

I almost stormed him, but stopped myself; "Take your ignorant football playing azz out of here now." Rolled my eyes and walked over to my boys again.

He yelled out, "I don't give up that easy. Keep making it hard girl, I like it that way!"

Whatever stalker!

I heard his stupid SUV chirp out of the parking lot.

My boys just gathered around, "What was up with that?"

Jordan said, "Yea girl, you could have at least brought him over and introduced him to everyone. Why you gotta be so rude?"

I just let out a deep breath and said, "Look the guy is an azz okay. He talked ish about Tarif's car."

The group said, "Whaaat?"

Tarif got pissed. "What did that fawker say? And who the hell is Darren Warrick anyway?"

J jumped in, "He plays for the Buc's, don't you watch football man?"

"Nope. So what did he say?"

I could hear the anger building in his voice; I knew that sound because anytime anyone tried to talk ish about my ride I got the same way. I just

shook my head, what was I going to say? If I told him what I said then he might figure out my feelings for him and to say that in front of the group, I'm not that stupid. "He was just showing his over inflated ego. Seriously man it's nothing to concern yourself with."

Rafael jumped in, "Well I saw him drop his card in your car, are you going to call him? Cause if not pass, that ish this way, I'll party with him any day."

"Sure, go get it" and held up my keys.

J being the voice of reason as he always is, "Keep it ma, maybe he was just being stupid because he saw you around all these guys."

"Whatever." I looked over at Tarif, hoping any chance I had with him was not diminishing cause of this messed up ish.

Finally Eric and James showed up. The crowd gathered up to hear where we would be riding out to this week. They decided to keep it local and head up to the Gandy Bridge, which meant a night of being chased by a lot of cops and a lot of tickets if they were in of their "Let's clean up these ricers moods." But oh well, it is always like that.

Everyone started heading back to their cars because in about 5 minutes we would roll out. I walked towards my car disappointed, due to Warrick my time with T had been cut short. I stood by my passenger door so that I could talk to him when he

walked over.

"What up yo?"

"I hate guys like that. They think they are better than everyone else."

"Oh yeah. So what did he say anyway?"

F\* it, might as well tell him, right now I had nothing to lose. "He wants to take me to dinner. I said no cause he isn't my type and I that I think his ride is a waste."

"Dayummm, you told him that?"

"Yep. You know me man, I can't stand that ish and I definitely don't want to be seen in it. So he said, well if homeboy came to you in that ugly loud azz car would you go? I got pissed and ended it."

"And who is he again?"

"Some dumb azz football player."

"Who the hell is he to talk about our rides anyway? He probably doesn't know the first thing about cars anyway."

"You don't have to tell me."

He got quiet and looked around as all the cars started up, "So uh, if I asked you to dinner would you let me pick you up and take you?"

Oh my God, for real? Jumping up and down in my mind, I calmly answered, "Of course, your car is bad ass, even if it is slower than mine now."

He laughed, "Well uh, then we have to do that sometime then."

"Cool with me." I just looked at him, dayum

because of dumbazz my chance had finally come; maybe I should thank him. "Well umm, I gotta go. Have fun at work tomorrow" and rolled my eyes.

"Yea right. I'll call you." And gave me a tight ass hug.

The rest of the night I was all smiles, even when some kid in a turbo LS Vtec 5<sup>th</sup> gen hatch beat my ass. I hate when I miss a gear!

 ~ *4th Gear* ~ 

Sunday morning I did my usual routine of getting up early, even though I got home around 4 a.m. last night, got ready for the beach and headed out before church lets out. Usually SR 60 is packed to get to Clearwater Beach, especially with the construction of the new faulty bridge, but if you go early like I do, it's a perfect non-stop ride.

SR 60 actually has a nice view once you get on from the Veteran's and head towards Clearwater. It also has a bridge that was once popular for racing. I heard stories of where guys were hitting over a 100 mph on the Courtney Campbell, which in my opinion is just stupid. There isn't much room at all for error. As if the Gandy Bridge was so much better. Not to mention that if you race before or after the bridge on the Courtney there are too many dayum hidden pull outs for people leaving the beach because there are always the

late night fisherman and more importantly, cops to hide in. Then there are bars and restaurants on the Tampa side like the *Green Iguana*, *The Castaway*, and others that put drunken idiots who think they can drive out on the road. I almost got cremated one night by some drunken idiot. Man I went after that guy so fast he almost lost it and wiped out into the guardrail. Remember when I mentioned my road rage problem, okay. So when it comes to driving on the Courtney, I just chill.

Usually I hit North Beach due to the activity it has. Just around 11 a.m. is when the beach is just coming to life, the sun is in perfect position, and the sand won't burn your feet. It's the perfect time to layout for two hours and then head home. It's my time to spend with God.

Pulling into my usual lot I saw a clean as hell 1<sup>st</sup> gen CR-X, dayum man, keep it up and keep it on the road! I parked in my usual space, got my stuff out of my hatch (I decided to give the rex a break even though I love riding with the moonroof open to the beach), clicked the alarm, and headed towards the sand. My only mission of the morning was to find a spot that was not over taken by children or a large family that would have the radio blasting and people consistently running back and forth from the water. I accomplish this by finding the older people who are there to worship the morning for what it is, quiet time.

After walking down the shoreline, which was not

all grossed out with seaweed, I found a good spot, laid out my Emily the Strange *Wish You Weren't Here* beach towel and prepared. You know the usual, Walkman, tanning lotion, *Aquafina*, e-book *Things Men Do, Women Do The Same* by Xavia on my palm pilot, and eye protection. I sat for a while to watch and listen to the very small waves roll into the shoreline. There were a couple of small kids playing a short distance away; I love to hear them laugh and cringe when they cry. I smoothed on my lotion, set my pilot for flip over time, put in my headphones, laid back, put on my eye protection, and zoned out so I could try to go back to sleep. And I did.

I woke up to my alarm; it is so much easier to lie out at the beach when you can sleep thru your tan time. I got up and prepared to go into the water to cool down. The water felt so good but I don't go to far out. Honestly, I hate the ocean to swim in. Give me a pool any day so that I can see who or what is swimming next to me. Plus, okay, I have a small fear that some stupid bull shark that decided that mealtime wasn't at dusk, but at noon will run into me.

Why is it whenever I go to the beach, even during normal hours, I rarely see a hot guy? I mean for real, what is up with this? I know I am picky, but dayum. Eye candy would be nice every once in awhile. There is a guy who walks the beach with a snake, he's pretty cool, and we've talked a

few times; still I couldn't say that I have ever met anyone on my Sunday mornings that I have went out on a date with.

When it's time to get out of the water and head back towards my towel I start to panic. I always, always forget where the hell I put my stuff down. Usually I try to remember people or things around me to help me look like I am not stupid. After targeting my location, I got out of the water and headed back for my towel, laid out until I was pretty much dry, smoothed on my lotion, changed my flip time alarm, got my e-book ready, and laid back down.

The way Xavia writes, taking you there into the scene, had me engrossed in my e-book until I felt cold drops of water hitting my back. Now I know it's hot and that I am getting sweaty, but not a cold sweat. I turned my head to look back and saw nothing. I turned my head back towards the other way and saw a pair of Adidas running shoes standing near the middle edge of my towel. *Okay, what now?*

I put my palm pilot down and flipped over, thankfully I decided that the string on my bikini top was so minor that I didn't need to untie it for tan lines. I looked up and frowned. "You have got to be kidding me."

"Didn't Vin Diesel use that line all the time in that one racer movie?"

Exhale, now he finds me here! WTF?! He

proceeded to sit down next to my towel. I just looked at him, what the hell is he doing here and why would God do this to me? It's our day remember? Just You, the sun, the water and me. He isn't to be included in the day. Hello!

I looked back over hoping that what I saw was sun damage to my brain, but nope, Darren Warrick was there and those walking by were starting to notice. *Breathe.*

"You look nice in that bikini, is that *Gucci*?"

"Are you high?"

"No."

"Then why the hell would you ask if it's *Gucci*?"

"Oh okay, I'm sorry, *bebe.*"

I exhaled, "Look, what do you want?"

"How about I take you to lunch. It won't be anything special, just a beach side restaurant. You can go like you are, *sexy.*"

I looked at him like *what?*

"I saw you out in that water gurl." *Dayum me for having to cool down.* "I usually don't come out here to run, but this morning I did and now look who I get to have lunch with."

"I'm sorry, did I say I was going to lunch with you?"

"Let me put it this way, you have to."

"Excuse me?"

"Well if we go have lunch at a beach side restaurant, like I have suggested, *'then the thing*

called an SUV' that you love so much is not involved, which doesn't really matter because I took my '04 BMW 645Ci convertible with me today. We can walk down the water to a great place that I know of, sit beach side, share a drink, some lunch and talk. You need to get to know me."

He just stared at me with that stupid egotistical *I got you now* smirk.

"Fine. I need to thank you anyway."

"Thank me? For what?"

"Well your rather egotistical comments last night about my boys CR-X made way for a conversation where he invited me out on a date." As much as I tried, I could not hold in my smile after saying that.

Darren sucked in his lips, then licked them and shook his head. "Cool. No problem. Glad I could help. But this is now and he ain't here."

"And."

"Let's go get some lunch."

It was useless to say no anymore because life or fate or God or whatever was not going to let this joke die. I gathered up my stuff and walked off with him and everyone on the beach staring. Well it seemed like it anyway. He put the hood to his lightweight Adidas running jacket on to become less noticeable. *What does he think; he's a Jedi or something? Weak.*

"So how far is it?"

"Just past the pier. You can walk that right, I

mean you seem to be in good shape for all the driving you do."

"Huh?"

"I've seen you before."

I just shook my head.

"So what is really up with you Raven? Why such the hard core attitude with me?"

The one thing I really hate about myself is that I cannot be mean for no reason at all. Yes this man was annoying as hell but other than that...no reason was really there for my attitude and actions towards him. "Look, I don't hold a good opinion of sports stars. If you are looking for a quick time in the bedroom you have definitely got the wrong gurl."

"Well there goes my desert plans."

I turned and started walking the other way. He jogged up next to me, "C'mon Raven, it was a joke. I already got it that you aren't like the other women that I run into. Just have lunch with me."

I stopped and turned towards him, "You're right I'm not. So fine, let's go to this favorite place of yours, have a drink, some lunch so you can find out how different I really am."

"That's all I ask."

We walked the remainder of the way in silence. Which was fine by me, I needed the sounds of the water to chill my nerves and my temper. This is going to sound stupid, but I really don't like my plans circumvented by unplanned events with people

I would rather not spend any time with!

The more I thought about it the angrier I got.

We arrived at a hotel that looked more expensive than I would feel comfortable staying in and were seated just like he said, beach side. Some of the guests recognized Darren when he removed his hood and sunglasses and stepped up to the table to pay a compliment or say hello.

The waitress, a porn star chest bleached blonde in a bikini top and board shorts, came up to take our drink order while sneering at me. *And this woman is going to serve me my drink?*

She proceeded to run her hand across his shoulder while she suggested a drink for him.

When she looked back at me, I smiled and said, "It's okay, I am just here for lunch, you can have him after."

The blonde nearly dropped her pad of paper and looked at me, "Excuse me, what did you just say?"

Darren who of course loved all of this by the expression on his face said, "Veronica, as usual you have made an excellent choice for me and as usual there will be something special for you."

I looked at her, threw up my hands like *I told you so*, and smiled.

"Okay Darren. I'll be back with your drinks shortly" smiled and bounced away.

Darren quickly turned towards me, "You're probably thinking I've gone a few rounds with her aren't you."

"Since I don't ever plan on sleeping with you, sure tell me the history there."

"You what?"

"No, I won't. So what's the story with blonde?"

"Nothing."

"*Riiight*. Dude I hang with all guys, everyday it's some new store story from one of them. So what's yours? I mean the rich and the famous are probably more dramatic than the young and the broke."

He just shook his head at me, "I don't care how crude your boys get with you, I'm going to show you what it is like to be treated correctly by a gentleman."

"And the smug look on your face of two females getting in a potential cat fight over you was what?"

He was about to answer when the incredibly fast service of Veronica reappeared. She set the drinks down on the table and asked if we had decided on the menu, her attitude completely changed. When I looked around while Darren was ordering I noticed someone looking over at our table that was obviously of management level. I wanted to laugh, but held it inside. I did however order very politely.

Darren just stared at me, as I looked around, my mind blank with nothing to talk about. I looked at him, "So...nice place."

"It is with you here."

"Yea right."

"You don't believe me?"

"Doesn't matter. So what do you want to know?"

"Well not everything about you because some of that I would like to find out on my own."

I just rolled my eyes at him.

"See there you go thinking I mean something that I didn't mean in that statement. What I meant is that if I get to know everything now, that gives you reason not to be around me later, and that isn't what I want."

"Okay. Sure. Let's see..." which was followed by that blank stare at him again. I am usually not like this; I can talk up a storm. But because I have no interest, was not planning on this, my mind doesn't seem to want to put forth the effort. All of which was making me angry again.

"Alright I'll start. What is your favorite..."

"See this is just stupid. I don't know why, but honestly Darren," I exhaled, "this is just difficult. I mean usually a conversation just starts with me with little effort."

"So what's the deal then? Ever since I met you, since that day in traffic, you haven't said one real sentence to me. You roll your eyes at me, stare at me, and defend your boys but you don't really speak to me."

"Maybe it's because you haven't approached me in any other manner except popping up out of

nowhere, excluding the first time."

Darren got up from the table and said, "I'll be right back."

*Whatever.*

*Mom, (who always knew how to guide me on this guy stuff passed away from cancer but that doesn't stop me from talking to her) I bet you are enjoying this aren't you? Silly. Please make this stop. I have no interest in this boy/guy/man whatever. I like Tarif, don't you guys get it that is who I'd rather be sitting here with right now.*

I stared out at the water and tried to think of a reason to get out of this.

After about 10 minutes, I started to search for my *American Express* Gold card to pay the bill and get the hell out of here. I started looking for Veronica when I saw Darren walking down the steps towards me with flowers in his hand. *Great. Now what?*

Darren came to the table and said, "Hello. My name is Darren Warrick. I saw you sitting here and wanted the chance to express how beautiful I find you to be. These are for you and if you are kind enough to allow me to join you for lunch I would like the chance to get to know you."

I just looked at him with this *what the hell* expression. I looked around and saw the server coming to the table with our food, "Umm, the server is here and thanks for the flowers."

Darren put the flowers in the empty chair next

to me and sat down. He waited for the server to leave, "I don't get it with you."

"No one does."

"You enjoy that don't you?"

"Actually no. No, I don't enjoy it, but it's who I am so I get on with it. Look the flowers are nice and everything, but I'm just not the type for them. It's like, not me."

He shook his head. "I don't give up. I'll find out what is you."

"I think I got that."

"So do you like football? Sports in general?"

"Yea."

"Do you wa---"

I cut him off. "You know what I don't get about you guys though. How is it that Michael Pittman can slam into his wife's car with his babysitter and two year old child inside and get nothing? It wasn't like Kobe Bryant did you or didn't you. There was no question, so what the hell. Seriously, did the kid have to die for someone to go, *Hey that was wrong. Shame on you.*"

"Look man I don't like to talk about that."

"He got suspended for three games and a fine. Big deal! His wife went back to him, why hasn't child protective services taken that kid out of the home? As much as it sucks, the history of him and his wife shows the kid doesn't stand a chance in hell for a normal or happy life anyway. See man, you guys get away with everything and

anything and the rest of the 'normal' world continues to believe that there is no justice because there is the living proof."

"Look Raven, I'm not him, I'm not like that and there is a lot going on that you don't know about. It's not like everyone on the team supported him after that. It's not as easy as you think."

"I doubt it."

I don't know why I stayed to eat, really I just wanted to get up and leave him there and let Veronica go off in a bathroom with him for what I am sure would be all of 1 minute of fun. After the meal he walked me back to my car in silence. When I got there I realized that he would now know the other car I drive. *Damnit!*

"Whose car is this?"

"Mine."

"Dag girl you got it like that."

I just looked at him and rolled my eyes. I clicked the alarm, opened the hatch, put my stuff in, unlocked the door, rolled down my windows, got back out and waited for the car to cool down.

"So tell me Raven, what else do you have? Do you live on your own?"

"Yep."

"Roommates?"

"Nope."

"Pets?"

"Nope. Well I do have a German Shepard that lives with his grandpa in Chicago. I miss him a

lot, but I am not allowed to have pets where I live."

"So where do you stay at?"

"Why would I tell a stalker where I live at?"

"I bet I know."

"I bet you do."

"C'mon. Just a general area, not your address."

"South Tampa."

"Nice."

"Yep."

"What do you do?"

"For?"

"For work?"

"I am an executive assistant to our company Vice President in charge of international business affairs."

"Dag gurl, you all that and have that tatt on your hip."

Darren was referring to my tatt of an evil fairy of death on my left hip, protecting a Honda symbol with the years of my cars underneath carved in stone. Yea I did mention me being a severe gearhead and Honda lover right? Okay, well now you know and knowing is half the battle. He. He. I am such a geek. "My boss is cool. It's not hard to cover up at work or when I attend events."

"Impressive. So you got this whole double life going."

"Yea well, my car has cooled down so I am outta here, thanks for lunch."

"Cooled down? You don't have to leave yet, just put on the air conditioner."

"I don't have that."

"You live in Florida and you don't have air conditioning."

"Yep."

"What are you crazy?"

"I guess."

"Seriously why don't you have it?"

"I bought this car brand new when I was 19 and lived in Chi Town. I didn't want high payments so I bought it without it. Plus an air conditioning system puts a big load on the motor; being that the original motor came as a 1.5L with only about 84 wheel horsepower I didn't find it necessary to kill the engine even more. Not that a *Honda* couldn't handle it cause it can, I just didn't want it."

"So you know a lot about engines huh?"

"Learning. My boy D designed the engine that is in here now, taught me how to do all the labor and how it all works together."

"Dayum gurl, so you get all greasy and grimy."

"Yea big deal."

"I'm impressed. Can I see it?"

"Sure." Like I am going to say no? I popped the hood, walked around to the front to open it and put it up on the stand.

He stood there and looked at it for a moment, "Well as clean as it is it's definitely a girls

car."

"Not only is it clean, but it runs and it runs well."

"So tell me about it."

"Do you know anything about Honda's?"

"Nope."

"Well no offense but I'd rather not go through it then."

"Why?"

"Because I am hot, I want to go home so I can do the other things I have planned for today."

He shook his head and looked at the ground for a moment, "Just tell me the basics. Please."

Can't resist the gearhead urge to speak about the car. Must resist. Ugh! He wins. "Basically this motor is my 1.6L engine from my CR-X, well the block anyway. It's a single cam. The head, which is this area right here, is from a 98 EX, reason being it came with VTEC. To feed the head and the block I used an Y8 intake mani and throttle body, which is this area here. As you can see I used a stock air box, not really by choice, but D was soooo strong headed about the stock look and I was low on cash, so there sits the stock air box and intake. The rest of it is pretty much internals and stuff you replace to make everything brand new again. The clutch is by ACT so it grabs hard but I chose not to use a lightened flywheel. I mean, yea the way it's built it's a high revving motor but I really didn't need it, so I saved the

money. For what comes out of the block I put a *DC Sports* 4-2-1 header with a hi-flo cat and *Thermal* exhaust catback system. It runs and sounds so sweet after we tuned it. The *Skunk2* timing gear really helped out in that along with the *B&M* fuel pressure regulator. We ended up at a higher compression ratio than calculated."

Darren just stood there with a look of *is she for real* look on his face. I'm used to it. As usual, I went way deeper than I had planned on the explanation but little did he know, he doesn't know half of what we really did on this project. Well that was fun, "Well man now you know, so I gotta go."

Darren moved as if to say now but then said, "Alright then. Thank you for having lunch with me today."

*Finally.* "Thank you for lunch. The food was really good." I closed my hood and looked at him. He wasn't bad looking, actually he is hot but he isn't my type. There just isn't enough to hold my interest with him and I could never trust him. I can only imagine how many more Veronica's are out there. No thank you.

"Well I would really like to get your number so I can take you out again sometime and I promise not to pick you up in the *Escalade*."

"I have your card, I can call you." He hung his head in defeat.

"Look Darren, you're nice and obviously very

interested in me, but I just don't see this going anywhere. I don't like drama and your 'lifestyle' would probably bring me nothing but."

"You know nothing of my lifestyle. Just what you see or hear about on the TV or radio about those stupid punks."

"Darren, there are hundreds of Veronica's out there."

"And there is only one you."

Awww. "You got lines don't you."

"Not all of them."

"You know what, I'll give you my number. If you ever want to hang out, not date, just give me a call."

Without a word he immediately pulled out his cell phone, entered my name, asked me for my number, gave me a hug goodbye and left. It was like giving a little boy a complete nitrous oxide system he had been drooling at in the *Summit Racing* catalog. *Sad.*

Nitrous can be dangerous.

 ~ 5th Gear ~ 

I got in my car and headed back to the house. As sincere as Darren was trying to be, I just couldn't buy into it. I don't know what it is about him, but he just isn't my type.

My Nextel paged me when I got to Drew Street and Belcher Road it was my boy J.

"Hey."

"Hey ma. Where are you?"

"Clearwater, headed back from the beach."

"It must be Sunday."

"Ha. Ha. Yep. So what's up?"

"Just wanted to tell you I had fun last night, especially when I spanked that Skittle."

A Skittle for those who don't know is a Dodge Neon SRT-4. They come in a rainbow of colors, not to mention a stock LSD in 2004, so we call them Skittles. "That was a nice kill."

"I know right. Well call me later when you get home."

"Alright. Bye."

"Bye."

I headed up to Mc Mullen Booth Road so I could avoid the pain staking traffic that is SR 60 in the populated shopping area, and turned right to catch that part of SR 60 that is known as the Courtney Campbell back to Tampa. Well at least I've already eaten lunch so that is one less thing I have to force myself to do today.

I hate eating. For whatever reason, I just do, maybe it's because I eat so many days alone. Usually if I go out to eat with someone I tend to eat more, but by myself, I rarely finish a meal. Either way my figure is great, so I can't complain.

When I got on Kennedy Boulevard my phone started ringing, I picked it up yelling at whoever it was to hold on, turned down my stereo which was blasting *Vindicated* by Dashboard Confessional off the *Spiderman 2* soundtrack, grabbed my headset, plugged it in, found the dayum ear piece, stuck that in and finally said, "Hello."

"Damn gurl."

It was Tarif. Big smile. Focus on driving and talk, "What up yo?"

"Just calling to see what you are up to."

"Coming back from the beach. How's work?"

"Almost over."

"That's good."

There was a short moment of silence, "You

there?"

"Yea, I thought a customer was yelling at the cashier. So uh, doing anything tonight?"

"No, not really. There is the usual *Bennigan's* meet up but other than that, nope."

"Which one?"

I could hear him counting down a drawer, breathing numbers as he wrote them down, "The stadium *Bennigan's* off Dale Mabry. The management is chill with us being there as long as we don't go pull stupid moves and start doing burns out and ish like ricers."

"Ha."

"I know right. So what's up?"

"Well uh, if you aren't busy...hold on," I could hear him attend to a customer in the background and then came back on the line "do you want to go get dinner with me after I get out of here?"

"Sure. What time you want to meet up?"

"Uh well I was thinking I would come pick you up cause you know the rex is better than that *Escalade* any day."

I could see him standing there with that sly ass grin on his face, melt. Thankfully I was coming up to a stoplight and could fade off in my imagination for a moment. "Like that is even a question. What time?"

"Well uh I get outta here at 4 or 4:30, so how about 6."

"You remember where I live?"

"Yep."

"Cool. See you at 6."

"Alright, later man."

"Later."

Oh my gawd, he was for real the other night when he asked?! Sweet!

What am I going to wear?

Why the hell am I acting like this?

I had first position at the next light on Kennedy and Dale Mabry, and there was only one way to let this excitement out. The light turned green, I checked for clearance and proceeded to slam through my gears. Ahhhh. Much better.

Driving onto the island is just so cool. Seeing the city as you go across the bridge, the palm trees that line the streets is just relaxing. I stopped at the gas station to pick up my usual Kiwi-Strawberry *Gatorade* for after the beach, got home, threw in a load of laundry, cleaned up a little, showered, and got ready for 6 o'clock which was still three hours away.

By 5 p.m. my laundry was finished, the house was ready for company, I got myself to calm down and just chill until it was time to get ready. As much as I wish I could wear my hair down, I knew better. The rain clouds were already starting to roll in and while it wouldn't be severe thunderstorms tonight, my hair, if down, would go into a frizzy hell and that is something I did not need to deal with at all.

At 5:30 I threw on my *Express* Stovepipe jeans, a black belt, an *Express* black bra-tank, and my *Sketchers*. I put up my hair, left some curls by my face, darkened my eyes, and then put on my *COVERGIRL* creamy beige simply powder foundation to even out my face. To finish it out, I did the same lipstick routine that I always do with *Pink-A-Boo* on the bottom lip and *Wet Sand* on the top lip. As sad as this is to admit, I got the idea from Batman's Harley Quinn. She so rules!

Yea, this is probably why I am still single. lol.

Some how I was ready 10 minutes early. I sat on the couch and listened for his rex; remember he is running open header.

At 6 I heard his ride coming down the street and then into the alleyway. *He's here. Now if I could only breathe.*

I walked to my back door to let him in. He got out in a pair of baggy blue jeans, a gray t-shirt, and a black baseball hat. *Hawt*. I remembered to keep calm, chill, not go all emo and try to control my cheesy azz grin.

He walked up the stairs, "What up yo? You heard me coming right?"

"Yea right" and there went my smile. Dayum. Oh well.

"So um, you ready?"

"Yep. Do I need to bring anything with me?" Why did I just ask that?

"Umm no, not that I can think of."

"Cool." I walked in the living room to shut off the TV and light. He followed in behind me.

"Dayum" and drew out that word like he does.

I turned around like and looked at him like *what?*

"When did you get these?"

He was referring to my bronze 15" Volk TE-37's that I had just picked up from a guy out in Kissimmee. "Didn't I tell you about them?"

"Umm, no."

"Dag, sorry. Yea man time to say bye bye to those white Giovanni 17's I have on the hatch. The torque on the single cam is eating up my suspension and those heavy azz rims aren't helping."

He shook his head and said, "Tru."

"I am just waiting for the tuner locks to come in before I put them on."

"Shiii, you better put two sets on there with these."

"Don't think I didn't."

"That's my gurl."

If only. "Well ready?"

"Yep."

We walked out of the house and got in. Basically the conversation ends at that point, with no exhaust system on his car (open header) you can't hear ish anyway. Plus his stereo system is still stock which shows his dedication to going faster, so it's not like the radio can be

heard either. Still I love his CR-X.

The engine bay houses a built B16A SI-R I motor with a Y1 tranny, a AEM full cold air intake, a bored throttle body, *Skunk2* ceramic coated intake mani, RC 320cc injectors, *Skunk2* retainers, Portflow/ITR valve springs, CTR cams, *Skunk2* adjustable cam gears, the head has been milled, a JDM 4-1 header which is a biz-otch for clearance with the cross member, and a PR3 ECU managed by Stage 2 *Hondata*.

All in all the set up is sweet. He dyno'd at 160 wheel horsepower with 115 ft/lbs. of torque but my single cam gives him a good run. I have 10 more ft/lbs. of torque than him and it compensates for my wheel horsepower, which is around 7 less than his. There is no replacement for displacement even though I haven't overbored the cylinders and oversized the pistons. It is the compression ratio that I am running that upped my torque.

His rex sits on 15" Rota Slipstreams with *Falken Ziex's* on them. Thankfully those tires do well in the rain because when we got to Fowler and Nebraska the rain started. He found the nearest gas station and pulled over.

I looked over at him, "Let me guess, gotta switch up the cold air intake right."

He just smirked, "Owned by the rain once again."

I laughed. "Man the water isn't going to get deep, why change it."

"Well uh I don't have the fender well skirt."

"No problem, want me to find you one?" I am the parts queen at times. I can usually find parts for my boys or know where to get them.

"Nah. They are only like \$45 new from the dealer. I just don't want to spend the money."

I just shook my head and laughed.

In less than 10 minutes we were back on the road safe from hydro locking the engine.

When we turned into the *Kash n' Karry* plaza off Fowler I just smiled, he is taking me to *Tijuana Flats*, a college place known for their bomb azz burritos and line up of sauces.

T parked the car and looked over at me, "Is this cool?"

"Mos def."

We got out and walked inside. I hadn't been here before, but everyone on the boards always talked about it, so ya know it must be good. Basically you build your own burrito, they have several different sauces to choose from. To me, this was better than the restaurant I had lunch at with Darren earlier.

We got our order and sat down in a booth. "Thanks for taking me here. I keep hearing about this place."

"No problem."

"So what's up for school this fall? I know you want to go back."

"Yea man the longer I am out the stupider I

feel."

"Yea right."

"No for real. I got to get back in. I could go into business with my cuzzo but without a degree I'll never get out on my own."

"Tru."

"Plus my dad is trippin. If I don't go to college then he wants me to find another job so I can start paying some of the bills around the house."

"Well at least he isn't telling you that you have to move out."

"Nah, he wouldn't do that."

"Really? Why?"

"Long story, basically my parents are going back overseas to retire and I can stay here. So either way I gotta make money to afford the house when they leave."

"That's cool. So applied anywhere yet?"

"Yea but my dad wants me to go to school where he graduated from in Idaho, he's tired of me being in this car ish."

"Seriously I don't think that will cure your upgrade disorder."

"Well if I get accepted in Florida first, I won't have to go."

"Trust me, you and your car will hate the snow and ice."

"Man I don't even want to think about that."

"Okay then, I won't regale you with the nightmare stories of me and JC living up North." JC is my 91 hatch remember? 😊

"Thanks."

I just laughed. We sat there and ate but with him I always feel like I have to start a conversation. I am comfortable with silence but him, nope. If he gets uncomfortable he will try to start something up but that is even rare.

"J spanked a Skittle last night out at 78<sup>th</sup> Street."

"Oh yea?"

"Yep, I don't think the guy knew how to drive. J had him off the line and then just left him in third gear."

"Cops come out?"

"You know they love us. They just rolled through so we would leave, no one got busted, but no races were going off at that time either. We headed to the bread factory next but when everybody was parking I just kept going. I hate that place."

He got excited, "I know right. The only places to park are either in the parking lot or on the side of the street. The parking lot you get blocked in so when the cops come you are screwed. Then if a car wipes during the race and you are parked on the side, game over."

"Tru that. I've been there one time when I didn't know the set up, after that, no more. I

headed back to 7-Eleven off of 78<sup>th</sup> and Palm River and waited for everyone to come back with a few other people."

"Cool. How many cars were out with you guys?"

"Probably around 50."

"Dayum. I hate opening Sunday mornings."

"Well at least it isn't all the time."

"Yea, but if I have to go to Idaho, I am really going to miss out."

"Well yea, but life has to move on ya' know. It's not like you won't be coming home and you know I'll keep you updated on everything."

"Tru, but hopefully I'll end up at USF so I can still be with everyone."

After he said that he just looked into my eyes. Dayum. I hope that look meant what I wanted it to mean. That maybe he wants a closer relationship with me. *Yea right.*

We finished eating and walked back out to the car. The typical Florida shower had already passed through and the humidity was kickin. *Breathe water much?*

We got in and he just looked at me. The way Tarif stared at me was crazy or that is how it made me feel. It was intense without being intense. To me when he stared into my eyes it said *dayum, I finally got this right.*

"So umm, wanna do something else?"

He looked at his watch, "Well its 7:45, what would you want to do? Do you have to work

tomorrow?"

"Yea, but only my full time job. Want to go see a movie? You got dinner, I'll get the movie."

"Alright cool. What do you want to see?"

"Well what movie theatre do you want to go to and I'll check what's playing."

"Well I don't want to really park my car at University mall---"

"Like I blame you."

"So how about *Muvico* off of Bruce B Downs."

"That's cool." I used my phone to get up on the net and checked to see what was playing and what times. "How about the one with the Olsen twins at 9?"

He just looked at me with that smile like *what?* I just laughed, "Man I'm kidding."

"I hope so, I mean like don't get me wrong or anything but...."

"Dork. For real, do you want to check out the *Chronicle's of Riddick* or *King Arthur* which has a bad ass warrior chick in it."

"Mmm, *King Arthur* sounds better, *Riddick* didn't get such great reviews unless you want to check it out for Vin Diesel."

I just looked at him like *please that man does nothing for me.* "Umm no."

"Alright so what time does that one start?"

"There is one at 8:15."

"That'll work."

He started up the car and headed down Fowler

towards I-75 North to get to the New Tampa Muvico. In usual Florida tradition by going the next 5 miles we caught back up with the rain. We got to the theater with time to spare, got our tickets, went in, got in line for snacks where I kept messing with him in line by crashing into him, got our snacks for a ridiculous amount of money, headed into the theatre which was almost full, went for the top row middle, sat down and chilled.

We made fun of the movie music that played before the previews, guessed at the trivia, made fun at some of the couples as they came in, made comments during the upcoming previews, and commented on how kick azz the movie was.

When we got out of the show it was after 11 and the rain had finally stopped. We talked about the movie when we were stopped at the stoplights. It was such a cool night I didn't want it to end but by the time he got me home it was after midnight. It reminded me of that lyric by *Finch*, "Stay with me. Cigarettes and open air, hand in hand..." but without the cigarettes of course.

We pulled up in the yard and he shut off his car. "So uh what time do you start work tomorrow?"

"8."

"Well I guess I will call you tomorrow then."

"Cool."

"Thanks for coming out tonight."

"Anytime. It was fun and it wasn't based around cars or the races."

"I know right."

"Alright. Well umm..." yea this was hard, "can I give you a hug goodnight?"

"Of course" and just gave me that smile.

We hugged and I could feel his heart quicken, or was that mine?

I could not believe what happened after the hug, Tarif leaned in and kissed me goodnight. OMGHI2U! I couldn't believe I was kissing him. It was the perfect goodnight kiss, nothing was behind it, no other intentions and it was beyond. In my usual nervous fashion I giggled after we kissed. "I'm sorry."

"No problem."

"That was nice."

"Yea it was" and gave me a small quick kiss.

I just smiled and giggled again. "Okay well goodnight."

"Goodnight."

The way he looked in my eyes, *dayum*, if I didn't get out of the car I never would. I got out of the car and like a gentleman he stayed until he saw that I got in safely and then left.

*Dayum. Goodnight T.*



~ Reverse ~



When I got up the next morning for work I was still smiling from last night. Tarif had kissed me and the energy from that kiss had me flying. It had taken so long just to get up the nerve to talk to him when I first saw him out, then when we did start talking I was afraid to take it any further or think of anything happening between us. Now, we went on a date and we kissed. Yea, I am liking this.

Unfortunately my day didn't stay that way, my boss was in a cool mood but Darren must have called me about 5 times and text messaged my phone 3 times. Hello, don't you have a football camp to attend to, a life, or something? I was busy so I put his calls to voicemail, which is when the text messaging started. Well I was too busy to even hit the Internet to read my messages. To bad, so sad Darren, guess you'll have to wait for me to find the time to talk to you.

I could have called him back at lunch, but I didn't want to encourage some stalker that had already called me 5 times! After 2 p.m. the calls and text messages had finally stopped. Jeez man, *insecure much?*

I signed onto instant messenger and prayed he wasn't on there. No he doesn't have my screen name but I never thought he knew where I hung out either. My gurl Destiny automatically IM'd me under her screen name 1sexXxyqueen.

1sexXxyQueen: hey gurl!

tru Honda gurl: hello

1sexXxyQueen: what's going on?

tru Honda gurl: Tarif → T kissed me 🍷

1sexXxyQueen: what?! when?

tru Honda gurl: long story but basically when I was out Saturday night this Buc's player who cut me off in traffic friday found me at the meet on saturday, talked ish about Tarif's rex, asked me out, I said see you around, then T asked me out and wah lah! 🤔

1sexXxyQueen: Buc's player? What? Who?

tru Honda gurl: 🤔 some guy named Darren Warrick...the guys all know who he is...i don't & could care less.

1sexXxyQueen: Darren is the bomb Rave!

tru Honda gurl: good I'll hook you up with his stalker azz then

1sexXxyQueen: stalker? wha? 🤔

tru Honda gurl: it goes like this, he cuts me off in traffic 🤔, finds me at the meet, finds me at the beach and has called me 5 x's today and has text me 3x's. h e l l o can we say stalker?

1sexXxyQueen: ROFL!

1sexXxyQueen: but still Darren ... i mean what's wrong with him?

tru Honda gurl: umm i'm not interested, i like Tarif 🤖

1sexXxyQueen: you would choose Tarif over a Buc's player? gurl! Are you on 🤖

tru Honda gurl: NO dork 😊.

tru Honda gurl: at the beach he insisted on lunch where some dumb barbie doll with a porn start chest was all over him like i wasn't even there. I hate b's like that 🤔 🤔

1sexXxyQueen: what did he do?

tru Honda gurl: enjoy it. 🤔 🤖

1sexXxyQueen: lol...oh well then...

tru Honda gurl: yea! plus he was all like is that a Gucci swimsuit...wtf?!

tru Honda gurl: like I have \$\$\$ for that crap 🤔

1sexXxyQueen: well he was probably just trying to pay you a compliment

tru Honda gurl: whatEVER ... he's freakin clueless  
and can't accept it

1sexXxyQueen: so what's up with you and T?

tru Honda gurl: dude i don't know but i  
am hoping a lot.

1sexXxyQueen: well cool

tru Honda gurl: yeppers!

1sexXxyQueen: phone...ttyl

tru Honda gurl: later gurl <3 ya!

My boss walked out of his office and just  
looked at me, "Everything okay?"

"Yep."

"Okay, when's my next call?"

"In about 5 minutes."

"Alright, I'll be right back."

I looked over at my phone and remembered text  
messages were waiting for me, so I went back on  
line to the Nextel site to bring them up.

*First message:* Hello

*Second message:* Are you there?

*Third message:* Ok...dinner tonight?

You called me over and over; you don't leave a  
voicemail and then text message me for a dinner  
date? I just shook my head.

My boss walked back into his office, I swung my

chair around and said, "Ready for the call?"

"Fire."

I gave him the number and once he was on the call decided what the heck, I might as well find out about his dinner invitation. I looked up my call history then dialed his number. I really don't remember what I did with that business card he gave to me, nor did I care. I looked in my boss's office while I waited for him to pick up to make sure there wasn't anything he needed.

I heard a sexy voice answer and almost forgot whom I was calling. "Umm, hello."

"Hello, who is this?"

"Sorry man this is Raven, I am calling from my work number."

"Ah, so now I have your work number as well."

"Actually you really don't. So what's this about dinner tonight?"

"How about pizza?"

"Sure, where?"

"Dag, that was easy."

"Yea whatever."

"Yea right. How about *California Pizza Kitchen* at the International Mall?"

"Sounds good. What time?"

"8:30"

"Cool."

"Really? That isn't too late?"

"No, it's cool. We'll just have to make it quick; they close at like 10 or 10:30."

"Are you sure this is Raven."

"Yea, why?"

"Because you're being nice to me."

"Yea well, I'll meet you in front of *Cheesecake Factory* at 8:30, sound good?"

"I want to pick you up and take you out. I'll bring the Beamer I swear."

"No man it's cool. Actually some of my boys valet up at that mall and I need to catch up with one of them about something."

"You don't want me to know where you live do you?"

I caught an attitude with him, "Like I said, I got someone I got to meet up with."

"Alright then. 8:30 in front of *Cheesecake Factory*, see you there."

"Yep. Later"

I hung up and checked back in on my boss, he was still on the phone. I turned back to my computer, read some emails, and went up to *tamparacing.com* to read through the current drama or as we call it, tr-ama, that usually filled the board.

Tarif hadn't called all day and that basically sucked but he's a guy, what do I really expect. Dinner would at least keep me busy until he called.

I was glad dinner was not a normal dinnertime considering I didn't get off work until 6:30. I don't mind staying late at all. My boss is fun to

work for because I like the challenges he presents to me. Sometimes I don't think I do enough, that is why I cut back my part time hours. But as soon as the kids (my Honda's remember 😊 ) are done the part-time job goes buh bye!

I got home around 7 and knew it was too late to go play tennis for a half hour, come home, shower and then head out the door, so I decided to chill and watch my soap opera, *Days of Our Lives* until I had to leave. My favorite character is Hope Brady who is played by Kristian Alfonso, dayum she is so fine. After all these years she doesn't look a day older, just more beautiful. Props to you gurl!

After my show I got up, changed clothes, fixed my make-up, put my credit cards and drivers license in my back pocket, my *Maybelline Wet Shine Luminous Lilac* lipstick in my front pocket, grabbed my phone, and walked out the door.

I drove up to the mall, which is really cool cause it is near Tampa International Airport, parked and found my boy Ryle who was working tonight. "Hey man what's up?"

"Nothing gurl" and gave me a hug. "What are you doing up here?"

"Meeting up with a friend for dinner."

"That Buc's player?"

"What? Dude how the hell did you know about that?"

"Word gets around. So are you?"

I wonder if the word had gotten around about me

and T that would be way better than me and stupid Darren. "Yea man, I am meeting up with him, no biggie. Just going for pizza."

"Cool." A car pulled up and he was off which sucked cause I needed to know if he still had a pr28 ECU that my boy was interested in for chipping for his GSR. I was waiting for him to come back when I saw that dayum white *Escalade* pull up with the sound system putting an end to any conversations that were in the immediate area. Oh gawd, he brought that thing. *Puke!*

He got out and attendant immediately ran up to greet him. The *Escalade* went pulling off and there was Darren in a black pair of slacks and a satin blue shirt. Sorry that I can't tell you who the brands are, but honestly, I don't know the who's who of the high fashion world.

I stood there in my army green Hydraulic pants that looked like jeans, my *Evil needs candy too* baby doll shirt from *welovefine.com*, and of course my *Sketchers*. I felt a wave of insecurity coming over me until I saw Ryle return, I nodded my head at Darren and headed straight for Ryle. "Hey man before I forget, you still got the pr28 for sale?"

Ryle looked over at Darren and smiled back at me, "Gurl all you think about is cars, introduce me to your boy."

I just rolled my eyes at him. "Look it's not like that, do you have the ECU?"

"Yea I got it, who wants it?"

"A guy on the other coast. Now come here and I'll introduce you."

We walked up to Darren who was standing there with an impatient look on his face, great. "Darren this is my boy Ryle. He's got a bad azz Supra."

Ryle stood there with his cheesy azz smile and just stuck out his hand for Darren to shake, which Darren finally did. "Yea man whatever, nice to meet you. You played really great ball last season man. Was that *Escalade* yours?"

I just rolled my eyes at Ryle, "What the SUV monstrosity?" to which Darren sneered back at me. I just rolled my eyes while shaking my head, "Yeah that was his."

Ryle just looked at me and then back over at him, "You have to excuse her, she can't stand anything that looks like it will crush those little azz cars of her."

I just looked at both of them, "Whatever man."

Ryle looked back over and realized he had to go, "Well Darren enjoy dinner. Raven I'll have that ECU for you Saturday night, cool?"

"Yea man that will work, I go to Cocoa Beach almost every Sunday anyway. I'll have the money with me."

"Cool." Ryle shook Darren's hand again and with that was out.

Darren looked over at me and moved to give me a hug hello. So yea, I hugged him back. No biggie.

He looked me over and said, "You look good."

"Thanks, so do you. So ready?"

"Of course" and headed into the mall.

We were walking by some of the shops when he moved to hold my hand. I instantly pulled away. "Chill gurl, I just want to direct you into this store." He was trying to direct me into *bebe*.

"Um, I'm really not interested, but thanks."

"C'mon try one outfit on for me, that is all the time we have for anyway."

Something inside me decided to see what kind of taste he had for a woman's style. Maybe what he chose for me to try on would tell me if he was paying any attention to me at all. We walked in and were greeted by some starry eyed sales people who rushed to get me into an outfit. Darren and the gurls picked out a cream-colored suede tube shirt with a very short matching suede skirt. Figures. Fear overcame when I had to remember if my legs were shaved or not, fortunately from going to the beach Sunday they were.

When I stood in the middle of the floor looking at all of them, I wanted to scream about the ridiculous amount of attention we were getting and said, "Sure why not." Rolled my eyes and entered the dressing room the sales gurl had just opened up for me.

I put on the outfit, more like painted it on and yea I looked dayum good in it, but I really didn't want him to see that, not like I had a choice. I was about to walk out when a pair of

suede cream-colored high-heeled boots came over the door.

"Are these your size?"

I looked at them and couldn't believe that they were. "Yea how did you know?"

The sales gurl yelled over something about it being the most typical size for a woman of my height and weight. *You've got to be kidding me.* But in reality I guess it would make sense, show me an engine, I can probably tell you the parts you can swap from another engine on to it, so yea, she can size me up by looking at me.

Fine, whatever, I will put them on, walk out and they will see that I can't freakin walk in these dayum things. I put on the boots and zipped them up, found my balance, and walked out. Darren's mouth just dropped when he saw me. Okay so I enjoyed that. He just stood there with his eyes roving over my body over and over again. *Eww.*

"Darren. Hello?"

He just stood there.

I just rolled my eyes, "Good take that mental picture" and turned to go back in the room. All I heard him say is *I'll take it.*

I stopped and turned around, "Darren, I can't afford this outfit. This top alone is \$150. I don't even want to know what these boots cost, not to mention that I can't freakin walk in them and pain is not my thing. I would rather by a new pulley set for my B16 which just like this outfit

really isn't needed!" The sales gurl at that point looked confused as hell.

He just exhaled and walked to the register saying, *just ring it up for her please.*

The sales gurls must have thought that I was crazy from the way I was acting. A guy who is willing to buy me an expensive outfit, boots included, and I have an attitude about it? Yea I'm nutz right? Not! I just walked back into the dressing room wanting to slam the door behind me, but didn't. I am not ghetto and I am not about to become it, all I wanted to do is change back into Me! I walked out and handed the young brunette the clothes and boots, which she immediately took to the register to take the tags off and put into a bag. *Breathe.*

He grabbed the bag with one hand and my hand with the other. I decided against making a scene about it. Hell let the stupid Gurlie Gurls think a gurl like me could become some dayum Cinderella. We walked over to California Pizza Kitchen and waited to be seated; even being so close to closing time they were busy.

We were shown to our table, and after the server left with our drink order I decided to ask him just what the hell he thought he was up to. "First, I will thank you for the clothes."

"Well as beautiful as you looked in that outfit, I just couldn't pass it up. Some day you'll want to show off that body of yours and

I'll be the one who provided that opportunity."

I just exhaled; there was nothing I could say to that. No, I was not impressed just tired of trying to get through to him.

The server brought our drinks and gave us a few more minutes to look over the menu, even though I knew what I wanted, I had to wait on him.

"Raven, I would buy you outfits like that everyday if I could. I wish we had more time to find the lingerie for that outfit."

I just gave him a short laugh; "Why? It's not like you'd ever see me in it."

"I know that."

"So what are you going to get for dinner?"

"My usual and you?"

"Um k. Well I am going for the roasted garlic chicken pizza." With onions and garlic that should kill any thoughts of him trying to kiss me.

"Can I suggest a bottle of white wine?"

"I can't drink when I have the rex out, one of my personal rules."

"I can respect that. In fact, I can respect a lot of things about you." Then his eyes began to roam from my face down to my chest. Except he forgot that I wasn't wearing a low cut top and even if I was, yea I don't have much for cleavage anyway. *Dumb azz!*

*I am sure you can.* The server came back to take our order and for an autograph. Darren didn't seem to mind as he signed the pad of paper the server

provided. But afterwards Darren made a small comment, "Sorry babe, I just want at some point to enjoy dinner without the fans."

"I guess that is understandable."

"So why was it so easy to get you out tonight?"

*Because Tarif hasn't called.* I shrugged my shoulders, "Don't know."

"Well I am glad that you did because..." his cell phone started ringing, he looked at the caller id, apologized for having to take the call and left the table.

Yea. Okay. Whatever.

I just zoned off into space for about 5 minutes or more until he came back saying *okay where were we?*

"Nowhere really."

"I am really interested in you Raven. Having lunch with you yesterday was really nice. Not perfect but nice. So did you get everything done when you got home?"

"Yea and then some" and my sly smile just appeared out of nowhere as I remembered the kiss T and I shared.

"I won't ask."

"Probably better that you don't."

"Now you've peaked my curiosity."

The server came back with our dinner salads. I began to pick through my salad as I looked over at him. Should I tell him what happened? Well if I am that serious about Tarif I should. "Tarif took me

out last night."

"The one with the loud ass car?"

"You mean the one runnin open header, yea that one."

"So a car without exhaust is actually cool?"

"It's more risky than cool. Some engines perform better and gain horsepower when unrestricted by an exhaust system, others actually lose their performance."

"Hmmm" and just shook his head. "So what did you two do on this date?"

"Dinner at *Tijuana Flats* then we went to see *King Arthur*. It was a cool night."

"Yea if you like that whole high school/college date scene."

"Excuse me?"

"Raven that is cool for the people who you hang with that haven't made it yet like you have. It's time for you to step up in the world. Up your game. You can have nicer things than what these kids have, so you should just go for it."

"Oh so what is this to you dinner at *Bern's Steak House*?"

"No. If we were there you would definitely be in that outfit. And the desert room would actually have desert going on if you know what I mean." Then proceeded to give me that sly look, ya know like a dog gives you. "So yea, you deserve that and can have it."

"What does it matter if I can? I like the

people I hang with, they aren't kids they are cool as hell and most of us really don't have much but that's cool. More importantly I fit in with them."

"You could fit in with me and my crowd to. That outfit I bought you today is just the start of what I want to do for you."

"Darren, what you did tonight was uncomfortable for me. I really don't know where I would wear that outfit. I mean if I wore that out to the races the guys would probably freak and be like *wtf? Rave go fast n furious on us?* Besides if it takes an outfit to be in, I'm not interested. I mean with us, it's not about your car so much as it is your love of the car."

"Well they shouldn't be like that, you're too beautiful to always be hiding like you do."

*Hiding?* "What? I wear small, tight, baby doll t-shirts that are cut above my waist line to show off my stomach. I can't stand jeans that are too tight but what I do wear shows off my non-white gurl azz pretty well."

"That they do."

"Look Darren, you seem to have good intentions with me but the buying me stuff and trying to change me is making me regret telling you I'd hang out with you."

"I won't apologize for what I did tonight or the things I want for you and us in the future?"

"Future? What do you..." with that his cell phone began to go off, and once again he excused himself

from the table. I just rolled my eyes, must be some chic that is going ballistic on him for being out tonight. *Pathetic.*

This time he did not return so quickly, in fact the food came to the table and the waiter brought me another water with lemon in it. Well if he has disappeared at least I don't have to worry about how I am getting home.

About 15 minutes later Darren finally returned to the table with a pissed look in his eyes. *Should I dare ask?*

He looked at me for a moment, exhaled and smiled. "Sorry."

I just looked at him.

"How's the pizza?"

"Good." When is this night going to end? "Do you need to go?"

"Nope."

"Should I be looking over my shoulder for some chic that is going to go all psycho on me?"

"What?"

"Never mind."

"So are you busy after this?"

"I gotta work both jobs tomorrow, I need to go home after this."

"Both jobs? What?"

"Yea I am working full and part-time right now to support my upgrade disorder."

"Upgrade disorder?"

"Yea the things I do to my cars are upgrades

and it's a disorder cause you can't stop yourself from doing them no matter how hard you try."

"So what would you say to me upgrading you? Maybe that is my disorder."

Like Little Jon I just looked at him and said, "Whaat?!"

"Clothes by designers you never heard of, cars that don't need to be upgraded to have speed, spa treatments, lingerie that will make you look better than any model out there, shoes from Nordstrom's, you name it girl, it's yours."

My left hand started to rise up from my lap to smack him when I stopped it with my right. I inhaled, "Darren, are you saying I am not good enough the way I am right now?"

"Are your cars not good enough the way they are right now? By the way, where is your purse? Did you leave it in the car?"

"Nooo, I don't carry one."

"What? Where do you put everything?"

"What's everything?"

"You know all that lady stuff that you primp yourself with."

I just shook my head and excused myself from the table. I had half a mind to throw a drink in his face and walk out but nope that would make a scene. I walked towards the bathroom, which fortunately for him wasn't close to the exit. Trust me, I was ready to unhook my keys from my belt loop and get the f\* out of here!

I walked into the ladies room and just stared into the mirror. Finally I exhaled. I don't get it, I just had an unbelievable night with Tarif and now I am here with this idiot who is making me feel like I am not.... *Ugh!*

I swear if I were in my car right now I would be screaming. Okay, either I go back to the table and be polite or I let him have it. The man is just stupid, how Destiny, J, Ryle or anyone could think he is so great is beyond me. At least Tarif was aware!

I ran my hands under some cold water, grabbed for a paper towel and walked out. When I got near the table there was Darren at the table with some Asian chic that was basically trying to sit in his lap. *When the hell does this ish stop?*

I walked up unnoticed by her, sat in my seat and went back to eating my pizza while she continued to be all up in his ear. Darren just looked at me and said, "Gwinn this is Raven."

Gwinn who stopped and snapped her head at me for the rude interruption barked, "Who?"

She looked like some chic that the import mags have draped over one of the feature cars. Jet-black straight hair, over made face, surgically enhanced chest, tiny waist, no ass, shorter than short black ruffle skirt and stripper heals. "Hi. I take it you may be joining us for dinner?"

She just sneered at me and went back to whispering in Darren's ear while shooting evil

glances over at me. Well she wasn't as nice as the import models I have met. "Okay then you don't. But it's almost over so if you give us about 10 minutes I am sure he'll take you back to his *Escalade* and you can b---"

"Raven!"

Gwinn just smiled, "Better from me than trash like you."

I just laughed in a very evil tone while dead looking into her eyes, give it a second, there it is, *fear*. Perfect. Got'cha now. 🤩

Gwinn promptly stood up, looked at Darren and left the scene.

Darren's face was in awe, "I've never ---".

"Well that was fun," I stated in a very evil voice.

"I like."

I exhaled, "I am sure you do. So is this how every date with you goes? With some porn star chest bimbo trying to exert herself all over you? And by the way I am serious, you can totally meet up with her in about 10 minutes."

"Look," his voice got very stern "I don't give a dayum about girls like that."

"Yea right. Had I not walked out when I did, I am sure you'd be in the parking lot smiling right now."

His voice got even more intense, "You think I am some kind of man whore don't you! That I couldn't possibly have respect for myself because

I am a NFL player!"

"Oh and I am so special that you would give up free azz. Whatever!"

He leaned in, his face tense and his voice commanding, "I will get up in front of everyone in this restaurant to tell them that I cannot...no that I hate girls like that. That I am sick and tired of women turning into sluts for a little money and fame!"

"Whoa, chill dude. Dayum."

He fell back in his seat and opened up his arms like he let all the anger go, "What do expect Raven? You have done nothing but stereotype me since we met."

"And you haven't done anything but tell me that I am not good enough unless I drop my friends, upgrade my clothes, lifestyle, and expenditures. What is that? You haven't gotten it from the first moment and you never will."

"What?"

"Fine Darren you have respect for yourself. Congrats on that. Really I mean it because most of my friends don't.

I appreciate that you have respect for me but you don't get it with me. And before you say anything, no I don't enjoy it.

I like who I am, who I hang out with, what I drive, that I am a gearhead, that I spend most of my Saturday nights getting chased by cops place to place, that I don't dress all Gurlie Gurl, that I

don't carry a purse with 5 million things I don't need in it, that I don't worry about what I look like to the rest of society, or even that I am at a place in life where I should be with the norm, instead of what makes me happy.

You will never accept that of me and I'm not going to waste my time and I am better than taking your money. Take that stuff you bought me and return it or find another gurl that size because I don't want it. This is how I dress daily, these are the *Sketchers* I wear daily and you know what, I'm happy. I don't kill myself to attract just any guy; it's not worth it. Trust me after the daily slore stories I hear, I know it's not!

Tarif could care less about anything about me except who I am. That is someone I am willing to take a risk on. You? Please, I don't have time to be somebody's redemption."

I got up, took 10 dollars out of my pocket and placed it, not threw it, on the table. "I'll be fair and get the tip. Bye."

With that I walked out. Since I wasn't screaming or yelling I hadn't caused much of a scene. My voice had been low and direct. I am not ghetto, psycho or crazy. I am a gearhead, I am someone who knows herself and someone who has enough respect for herself not to live a life that others think would be so perfect. Take your money, clothes, diamonds, platinum, Escalades, Beamers, and all that other crap and have a nice day. And

for once and for all, *stay behind the Honda!*

On my way out I saw Ryle who immediately asked where Darren was. I just laughed, gave him a hug and told him I would see him Saturday.

When I got to my car, someone grabbed my arm, "Gurl I run a football field more than once everyday, don't think you can out run me."

"Let go of my arm!"

He immediately let go. "Look," he was hardly out of breath "I am sorry. I am sorry for everything. I am especially sorry for lying to you. You saw right through me, I don't even know why I kept trying. The phone calls at dinner were not business related they were stupid girls. That chic Veronica and I have hooked up before, she called me to tell me she almost got fired for what she did that day. But I would not have left dinner to go out to the parking lot with Gwinn."

To further drive in the point that I already had known and really and truly did not care, I simply said, "And?"

His face got intense and his voice hardened, "And!"

I simply got my phone out of my front pocket, flipped it open and asked him nicely, "Is this a situation where I need to call 911?"

He grabbed his head, turned away from me and exhaled, "No."

"Okay then, may I go?"

"No."

"Oh look I have car keys, yes I can."

"Wait, please."

Dayum that nice gene in me, "Yes?"

"I'm sorry, can you at least accept my apology?"

"Sure. Just do me a favor, go back to who ever it was that you broke their heart and then figured out what you really did was break your own and apologize to them."

"What?"

"Yea well gotta go."

"Raven, you really were---"

"I know. Bye."

I got in my CR-X, skirted out and once again let my blow off valve tell him exactly what I thought of him. If you know anything about the function of a blow off valve it releases unused waste exhaust from a turbo or on the *Vortech*, a supercharged system. So yes that is what I think of Darren, unusable wastes of my breath!

When I got to the edge of the parking lot, Tarif called asking why I hadn't called cause he wanted to hang tonight. I guess to him saying *I'll call ya* was a guy's typical way of saying *call me*. *Awww, it's so cute.*

I am so back on my high again. 🤖



~ *The End* ~



# So Not Gurlie Gurl



Some things you might want to know about Raven. One, she is definitely a driver not rider, in other words you won't find her in the passenger seat. Two, she can barely see past her engine bay. Three, she is definitely considered as one of the guys, which is a very nice status to have in the import scene. Talk about saving yourself some drama. And four, she has a crush and now she's stuck.

Some things you might want to know about Tarif. One, in Raven's eyes he's hot. Two, in her eyes he drives a bad azz import. Three, he's a bad azz driver; she is determined to beat him one day. And four, Raven would rather hide in her engine bay then deal with her crush on him.

Some things you might want to know about Darren. One, he is a famous NFL player. Two, he thinks Raven is hot. Three, he swears he is not like the media stereotypical bad boy NFL player. And four, he just has no idea what play to run to catch Raven's attention but he'll try them all to get at least a first down.

So what happens when Raven can't hide in her engine bay anymore? Ladies & Gentlemen start your engines...



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