

A Tennis Courtship

Mary finds fault with her tennis instructor boyfriend. Will she let someone else in?

Mary entered the country club for practice but her mind was elsewhere. Thoughts of last night made her feel like she was floating as she entered the court. Frank was showing Julie Williams proper serving form when he spun her around and leaned in for a kiss. Mary dropped her racket.

“You son of a bitch!”

Frank jumped. Mary ran towards the parking lot. Frank followed.

“I can explain!”

“I don't need explanations. Do you use those moves on all your students, pig?”

She stepped backwards into the lot.

“Mary! Car!”

Tires screeched but not in time.

Mary replayed the scene as she waited for the men's tournament to start. She had avoided major injury. It was only a neck sprain. Her emotional scars could last longer. *I can't believe I was that stupid. How cliché, a tennis instructor and his student.*

“Welcome club members and guests to day two of our fifth annual charity tournament. Donations to Children's Hospital can be made at any snack bar.”

Day one had been rather boring, especially since Mary couldn't turn her head. She could only follow the action with her eyes. She scratched underneath her neck brace.

“God damn this thing itches.”

A woman behind her mumbled something about language and children. She couldn't turn to see who it was. *I'm shocked she isn't in church with the other sanctimonious types.*

“Introducing the players. First, our very own, Frank Henderson!”

Frank walked out with a bright smile and waved. Mary's lips pursed while the rest of the crowd cheered. Some women, including Mrs. Sanctimonious, cheered louder. *I guess we know who got extra lessons.*

“Next player, James White.”

Only Mary clapped. James stood four inches taller than Frank. He had brown skin and striking blue eyes. He found his sole fan and they locked gazes. James smiled as Mary's fingers twirled her red hair. *Where did he come from in this lily-white town?*

James served first. He bounced the ball a few times before tossing it high in the air. Frank froze as the serve bounced inside the line. Mary clapped and their eyes met again. James winked and her cheeks warmed as she blushed.

“Fifteen love.”

James squeezed the ball and Mary noticed his biceps bulging. He scored another ace.

“Thirty love.”

Frank glowered as James readied himself. Frank wasn't ready.

“Forty love.”

James' forehead glistened in the sun as he served again.

“Game. White. First Game.”

Mary's eyes remained affixed on James. Each time he smiled, butterflies filled her stomach.

“Game, set, match, James White, six zero, six one”.

Few people clapped for James. Most stayed silent. Frank's harem booed. Frank slammed his racket, drawing condemnation from the umpire. James disappeared into the locker room.

Towards the end of the next match a deep voice startled Mary.

“Excuse me, may I sit?”

Mary forgot about her injury, looked to her right, and winced in pain.

“Absolutely James. I'm Mary.”

She turned her body towards him and smiled while he sat.

“You clapped for me. Why?”

“I recently learned Frank is a scumbag. He's a tennis instructor and...”

“He spends more time trying to score instead of teaching?”

“You know him?”

“I know the type. Was it just because he's your ex?”

“Maybe you can find out over dinner tonight.”

“I can't. Gotta relieve my sitter. Maybe tomorrow?”

“Definitely.”

“It was a pleasure meeting you Mary.”

“You too James.”

They awkwardly shook hands before James left. Mary finished watching the match. As she left, she felt people staring.

The next day James waited by the viewing entrance. He waved like a giddy schoolboy as Mary approached.

“Hey, good luck today, not that you'd need it. When's your match?”

“I'm first. Gotta get home to my boy again tonight. Would you meet me by the snack bar after the match?”

“Sure.”

Both leaned in for an awkward hug. Mary took her seat, avoiding the gaze of Mrs. Sanctimonious.

James entered the locker room and was approached by Frank.

“She's just using you for revenge. She'd never date someone like you.”

“Like me? Black?”

“I'm not racist. I'm just sayin'.”

“Get outta my face.”

James squeezed by and waited by the court entrance.

“Welcome members...”

Mary ignored the announcer and noticed James standing by the door looking more serious than earlier. She smiled and waved but his eyes were laser-focused. He destroyed his opponent, Peter Williams, in straight sets.

Mary walked to the snack bar and felt a tap on her shoulder. Her smile became a scowl when she saw Frank.

“What do you want?”

“You've got a thing for chocolate?”

“What if I do?”

As James came into view, Frank forced a kiss on Mary.

James immediately turned towards the exit.

Mary shoved Frank and slapped him.

“How dare you!”

Frank rubbed his face and laughed as he looked over Mary's shoulder.

She turned and saw James exit.

“Wait!”

As Mary reached the door, James sped off.

Mary arrived two hours early to catch James by the locker room.

“I saw the kiss yesterday.”

“Did you see me smack him?”

“No. I'm sorry. I thought you were using me for revenge.”

“That's what that asshole told you? You're great at tennis. I bet you suck at poker.”

“Well...”

Mary grabbed his hands.

“Listen. I don't care what any of these idiots think. You take care of your son, are very talented, and are sexy as hell. Go out there, kick this next loser's ass, and we'll celebrate with dinner. I'm buying.”

She kissed his cheek.

“Maybe more of that too,” she whispered.

Mary took her seat. Mrs. Sanctimonious booed when James was announced. Mary stood up, turned around, and shouted.

“You complain about my language and then act racist? Your bible allows that? How about adultery? Your God allow that too?”

The audience gasped. James grinned.

He defeated his opponent, a distracted Mr. Sanctimonious, quickly.

He held his trophy high as Mary joined him mid-court. They celebrated with a passionate kiss.