



## Chapter One – Seeing Red

*The Java Nook* had been our favorite bistro throughout our almost three-year relationship. It's brick walls and chic, comfortable environment was a great meeting place for persons who needed a break from their stuffy offices. The smells of freshly baked goods and decadent coffees from all over the world filled the air and its cozy atmosphere always made me feel warm and safe. Jackson had met me there for lunch and was getting ready to return to work at the Bank while I was content to relax in my favorite spot for the afternoon as I had the day off from my retail job.

He is so handsome and while closing his messenger bag he reminded me that he was having dinner with his parents as well on Thanksgiving so he would only be able to stay for a short time at my family's place. I made a sad face at him like I usually did when I wanted to get my way and told him I understood and then tried to persuade him to let me go with him while putting on my biggest and brightest smile.

He reminded me that the drive was over 3 hours long and because I had to work the next day for Max's Mega Store's Black Friday Sale, going to his parents would not be a good idea as he would return very late. I had a very early shift that would start at five a.m. I piped up cheerfully and reminded him that we can always visit them next year. He nodded and grumbled. I hated when he grumbled but I guess that's just one of those quirks you have to deal with in a relationship.

He needed to go to the restroom before he left to go back to work. I needed more coffee so I rose to make my order and knocked over Jackson's bag. The bag flew open and I immediately went to the floor to put everything back that had fallen out and then I saw it – a small red box. Oh my! I put everything back in his bag and held the box gently in my hands and then opening it – saw the most beautiful diamond ring I had ever seen! My heart raced, my knees felt like jelly and my mind began to wander. I quickly put it back in the bag and placed the bag upright in the chair. He's going to propose! He's finally going to ask me! I will be Mrs. Jackson Hollingsworth! Just when I started to practice to sign my new name in my head, Jackson hurriedly emerged from the bathroom, grabbed his bag, kissed me quickly on the cheek and left. I didn't need coffee anymore. I was high on excitement!



Jackson looked at himself intently in the restroom mirror. He had a busy afternoon ahead filled with client meetings and he was going to tour a home – their home. I love her, he thought. I need to move things to the next level. But then he frowned and breathed nervously and thought – this is a mess. But just a few more days and it will all be behind me and I can look forward to the rest of our life together. Our life together – he beamed as a wonderful warm feeling came over him. Just a few more days, and she will say yes to being Mrs. Jackson Hollingsworth. She is going to say yes, he thought as he reminisced about the last few months. They were heavenly, the closeness they shared, the joy they felt, the love they made. It was ecstasy. She's the one – he thought. She's the one I want to sweep her off her feet and make her mine. The surprise home would be an amazing touch along with proposing at that home with the 2-carat princess cut diamond in the little red box – red is her favorite color. She was wearing red when they met. This has to be the most romantic proposal; she has to say yes. I just have to finish things. He grinned broadly, washed his hands and excitedly splashed water on his face. Oh man – I can't be late he mumbled to himself as he rushed out the door.