

**MY WIFE**  
*AND GIRLFRIEND*

**Goran Radanovic**

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My Wife and Girlfriend

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I dedicate this book and my career to my late parents, Zoran and  
Jelica—the two biggest fighters and my saviours.

# CHAPTER 1

“No!” she screamed as two bodies thudded the floor. I dashed into the lounge.

DOOF! The gunshot echoed around the room. The third person ran out as blood dripped on the floor.

\*\*\*\*\*

My wife and I met at a shopping centre four years ago. The square buzzed from the shoppers who snapped their heads left and right, deciding which shop front looked the most enticing to enter. The patrons’ chattering at the restaurants surrounding the square made the area noisier, and I squinted while looking at the sun’s reflection on the windows.

Loneliness had forced me to go out and meet women. The first five either walked away without letting me finish my sentence or looked around as I spoke to them. My affirmations of being lovable had run their course, so I sat at a coffee shop after another three rejections had drained my enthusiasm to persist.

I watched couples walk past and thought about the type of woman who would accept my quirkiness. I wondered what she would think of me playing chess with a computer or that I didn’t know what I wanted to do with my life. She would have to be fine with me believing that animals shouldn’t be inside the house and that Saturdays were for sports. Finding her seemed impossible.

A waiter pursed his lips as he stood at the table next to me, looking at a patron rifling through her purse to find a card that worked.

He swiped the card that she handed to him, and it was declined with the same quickness as the previous two.

“I’m sorry,” she muttered, cheeks flushing. “I don’t know what’s going on with my cards. My husband and I are busy sorting them out with the bank.”

“Can you pay with cash?” asked the waiter.

“I don’t have any in my purse. The cash should be on the cards.”

“I’ve tried every card that you’ve given me. I need you to settle this bill. If you don’t, my manager is going to make me pay. I need that money.”

She picked up her bag and rummaged through it. The child sensed her mother’s anxiety and sobbed.

The mother put the bag on the floor, grabbed the girl, pressed her head against her chest and then rocked her.

“Excuse me,” I said to the waiter.

“Yes.”

I beckoned him over. “How much is the bill?”

“Two hundred and thirty rands.”

“Swipe two-fifty.”

The mother looked at me with her lips pressed against the child’s head. Her head perked up as the slip rolled out of the machine.

“Thank you, sir,” said the waiter.

“Thank you very much,” said the woman. “You really didn’t have to do that. That was so kind of you.”

“It’s not a problem. I know raising kids can be expensive. There’s all that wine you have to drink.”

A smile flitted across her face as her eyes sparkled. “Thanks again,” she said as she picked up the bag, her daughter still in her arms.

I watched them walk away and felt happy for making her day easier.

A woman with two friends appeared from around the corner. Her

blonde, glistening hair was shoulder-length, and she wore a pink shirt and tight black pants. The black heels heightened her by five centimetres, and the way she smiled revealed that she was slow to anger. Her skin complemented her hair colour, and her glistening teeth made her smile more attractive.

She walked past me, and my heart raced as I watched her walk away. The opportunity I had waited for my whole life dwindled.

I sprung off the chair and shouted, "Wait!"

The people within hearing distance snapped their heads at me and gawked as I walked towards the most beautiful woman I had seen. She realised that I was approaching her and glanced at her friends for protection. I shoved my hands into my pockets to hide the trembling and licked my dry lips. The lady to my left smiled to acknowledge my bravery as I walked past her.

I stood in front of my dream woman, my bottom lip quivering as she stared at me.

"Hi. You're like an angel, whose glow pervades the vicinity she occupies," I said.

I cringed on the inside. Her friend rolled her eyes to confirm that it was the worst pickup line I could have used. She smiled, and her shoulders dropped as her pupils dilated.

"It's fine," she said to them.

My heartbeat slowed as I watched them walk away. "By the way, I'm Warren."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Mandelin."

*Such an angelic name.* "I know this is random, but I wanted to say hi. I couldn't let this opportunity pass me by." She smiled. "What are you up to?"

"I came to buy a blazer for my brother."

"That's nice of you. He can't do it himself?"

“He can, but he’s forgetful.”

“Did you remind him this morning to wear underwear?” She chuckled.  
“He’s lucky to have you as a sister.”

“I’m used to doing it. I did the same for dad when I lived at home. Mom taught me that it was important to look after the men in my life.”

That was music to my ears. The women I had met were more worried about their make-up and travelling to exotic destinations. In front of me stood a woman who had traditional values and treated men with respect.

“What are you up to?” asked Mandelin.

“Oh, I just came to see what’s available.”

“Clothes-wise?”

*Women-wise.* “That as well.” She frowned. “Hope you don’t mind me being honest and upfront with you,” I said. She shook her head. “Something about you tells me that I’d like to get to know Mandelin more.”

“Okay.” My eyes widened. *What did she just say?* I leaned in and raised my eyebrows. “Yes. We can do something,” she added.

Our plan was to meet at a restaurant the following night. After shaving, I combed my hair to the side and buttoned a white shirt. I sprayed cologne on my neck and stepped into the shoes that had depleted the remainder of my work bonus. Looking good gave me confidence.

At the restaurant, I checked my watch as Mandelin walked towards me in a black dress. To me, a punctual woman had respect for herself and others. I stood up, kissed her cheek and pulled out her chair.

The dimmed lights accentuated the rugged wallpaper, and a Victorian-style chandelier hovered over us. I shifted in the wooden chair, attempting to rid myself of the nerves.

“See anything you like?” I asked, perusing the menu.

“Anything besides seafood is good with me.”

“You’re not a fan?”

“No. It’s not healthy.”

“I can tell you look after yourself.”

Mandelin’s smile made me think that she knew I liked her figure.

“And you? What do you like?”

“Sports. Used to enjoy going out at night, but I’m over the whole nightlife scene.”

“I think I’ve been to a nightclub twice.”

“You’re joking?”

“No, it was never my thing. I love nature and exploring. It doesn’t have to be a foreign country, just as long as I’m surrounded by trees, mountains and flowers. Otherwise, I enjoy spending time with my family.”

“Right. I gathered that, and you live with your brother.”

“No, I live by myself.”

“You mentioned buying him a blazer.”

“I visit him often to cook, and I check his clothes to see if he needs anything because he tends to wear an item until it has holes in it.”

“That’s so nice of you. How is it that nobody has snapped you up?” Her eyebrows raised as she shrugged. “And your relationships?” I added.

“I’ve had two. The last one was four years ago, and it lasted only a few months because he wasn’t interested in marriage or having children. Yours?”

“Best described as disasters.” She compressed her lips as they curled to avoid spitting out her drink. “I’ve had a few. None of them lasted longer than three months, believe it or not. I guess they weren’t right for me.”

“What are you looking for?” she asked, leaning slightly forward.

“Somebody who’ll appreciate me for the way I am.”

“Okay, that’s reasonable. Work?”

“I sell insurance policies. Not exactly my dream job.”

“What would you prefer to do?”

“To be honest, I have no clue. The only thing I know is that I want a child.”

Her eyebrows raised. “Really?”

“It’s been my goal for years.”

“I love children. Actually, I volunteer at the Anglican Children’s Home.”

“Wow. That’s generous. Must be time-consuming combining work with volunteering,” I said.

“I work part-time in an advertising company, and I spend two days a week at the home.”

“Part-time work is tough. I can imagine that it’s challenging keeping up with the bills.”

“I’m fortunate that dad bought me a house and a car when I was in my twenties. Mom had expected him to take care of the family financially while she provided emotional and mental support.”

*Huh. I wish my family were like that.* “Your dad obviously does well for himself.”

“He owns a construction business,” she said. “He’s got contracts to erect buildings.”

“Nice.”

“Would you like a boy or a girl?”

“A boy. You?”

“I would be thrilled with either. Preferably both.”

“It’s funny how life is,” I said. “Sometimes, you don’t get exactly what you want or the way you want it, but it always works out in the end. I’d get frustrated when I tried something, and it didn’t work out, but the alternative was always better.”

Mandelin put her elbow on the table and rested her chin in her hand.

“Like what?”

“Take my studies as an example. I wanted to attend university to get into the insurance industry, but my parents couldn’t afford it. I was extremely upset and thought that my dream was shattered. Then, I ended up working in a call centre at an insurance company and worked my way up. It took me the same amount of time to get to my position as it would’ve if I had studied, but I didn’t have to spend years in class and more than a hundred thousand rands to get there. Instead, I got paid while learning on the job.”

“Interesting. You seem to have a unique way of looking at the world. Looks like I can learn things from you,” she said with a smile.

“Absolutely.”

After dinner, Mandelin kissed my cheek by her car. On the third date, she kissed me on the lips, and my dick rose as I grabbed her tight ass.

We spent almost every day with each other for the following two months. I knew that we were getting closer when she asked me to go shopping with her.

After we walked into several clothing stores, she grabbed my hand and led me into a fragrance store. She sprayed the perfume that she always wore and asked me to smell her.

My nose brushed her neck, and I said, “It’s divine, just like you.”

She smiled, grabbed a bottle off the shelf and then walked in front of me to the counter.

“That’s one thousand nine hundred rands,” said the assistant.

*Wow. That’s expensive. It’s nice but not that nice.* Mandelin turned to me, held a gaze and smiled. I smiled back. The assistant’s eyes darted from me to Mandelin, then back to me.

“One thousand nine hundred rands, sir.”

“Oh.” I looked at Mandelin. She smiled. “Okay, I see.”

I pulled out my card and handed it to the assistant.

Mandelin put her hand on my shoulder and kissed my cheek. I realised that the purchase meant more to her than me paying. She wanted to see that I would provide for her the way her father did.

We spent most weekdays together, but Saturdays were for the boys and me. She spent Sundays with her family.

I was on my way to meet the guys for our bimonthly rugby match, a tradition that none of us had missed in years, when my phone rang.

“Hi,” I said.

“What are you up to?” asked Mandelin.

“I’m on my way to a rugby match. Been looking forward to it for two weeks. We lost the last one, so we’re seeking revenge.”

“Oh.”

I sensed disappointment in her tone. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“Tell me.”

“I’m not feeling well. I’m in bed, and I don’t want to be alone.”

“What’s the matter?”

“I’ve got a bit of a temperature, and I’m coughing.”

“That’s a bummer,” I said. “Are your friends visiting you today?”

“We were planning to go to a retreat for the weekend, but I cancelled last night because I wasn’t feeling well.”

“Right. I hope you feel better.”

“I will if you visit me.”

“Okay. I can do that tonight.”

“Tonight?”

“Yes. We usually go out for drinks after the game.”

“But I’m going to be lonely the whole day.”

I closed my eyes and pinched the bridge of my nose. “Okay, but I’m sure it’s not going to be so bad.”

“Warren,” she dragged out.

“Yes.”

“I want you to be here with me.”

I opened my eyes, craned my head up and exhaled a silent sigh. “I... um...” I didn’t want to neglect her when she needed me as my father did to my mother. “Okay. Let me see what I can do.”

I knew that the guys would give me a hard time but making Mandelin happy was more important. I sent the captain a message that I was attending to a loved one who was sick and then picked up a bouquet of roses on my way to her.

We had dated for six months when she decided that it was time to take the relationship to the next level.

“I’d like to move in with you,” she said.

I had enjoyed solitude for the last six years, but her puppy dog eyes made me give up my freedom. I loved my house and the space that it granted me. It was on auction a couple of years ago after the owner failed to pay the instalments during an economic downturn, so I bought it for a reasonable price. The plot was big and situated on the main road, close to a shopping centre and schools. I had several offers from buyers, but I refused every time. That house was more than a place where I lived; it was a part of me.

Mandelin cooked every day and kept the house pristine. I thanked her after every meal and took her out once a month to a restaurant of her choice.

We got out of the car and held hands as we walked towards the restaurant. I saw an adorable boy standing on the sidewalk as we approached him while his father had his back to him and spoke to his friends.

The boy pointed at a parked car on the other side of the road and stepped forward. His next step landed his foot onto the road.

I released Mandelin’s hand and ran towards him as a car hooted on

approach. I snatched him and stepped back onto the sidewalk as the car sped past us, blaring its horn.

The father turned around and snatched him from me. “Jesus,” he said. “Justin, you naughty boy.”

He walked away without thanking me. I figured that he was embarrassed for not looking after his son.

Mandelin clutched my bicep and smiled. “You’re going to be a great father. If that’s how you look after other people’s children, I can only imagine how protective you’ll be of ours.”

She knew how to communicate with me, which was one reason that we never fought and occasionally argued. She was patient with everyone except me since I didn’t want to marry her right away.

Mandelin was thirty-six years old when we met, and I was thirty-two. I loved her and wanted to be with her, but I needed more time to sort out my finances. I wanted to provide the best life for her since she was accustomed to a certain lifestyle, and I was afraid that she would leave me if I couldn’t.

She was writing in a book as I walked into the bedroom. “What’s that?” I asked.

“It’s my diary. I like to keep my thoughts documented and go back to them to see how I felt and progressed.”

“And what are you writing now? That you’re happy?”

“Yes, but there’s always room for improvement.”

A year into the relationship, we walked past a jewellery store. Mandelin looked at the rings on display, then at me. I looked at her and kept quiet, not knowing how to respond.

“I thought you said that my happiness was more important than anything,” she said.

“It is.”

“So, are we going to go inside or not?”

I smiled and said, “Mandelin.” I saw her glaring at me from the corner of my eye.

Four months later, we celebrated her thirty-seventh birthday. She crossed her arms and looked out of the window during the drive home after dinner since I had not used the opportunity to propose.

For the following week, she spoke to me only when it was crucial to convey information.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“Nothing.”

“Mandelin, come on. Since when do we treat each other like this?”

“Since you decided that you don’t want to marry me.”

“I never decided that. All I need is a bit more time. That’s not too much to ask for, is it?”

“Time for what? You said you love me and want to be with me.”

“Exactly.”

“And what about children?”

“We’ll have children.”

“I’ve got a biological clock, you know?”