

Dillon Watson



KEILE'S
CHANCE

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About the Author

Dillon Watson resides in the southeastern United States. She fell in love with romances in the seventh grade, and has been writing romantic fiction ever since. Her published stories can be found in *Erotic Interludes 4: Extreme Passions* and *Longing, Lust and Love: Black Lesbian Stories*. When she's not writing, she's reading. For more information about her and her writing, visit www.dillonwatson.com.

Chapter One

Keile Griffen unclipped the leash and said, “Okay boy, you can take off now.” She couldn’t help but smile as she watched her overgrown puppy race across the open grassy field to join the dogs already at play. She shielded her light brown eyes from the brightness of the late fall sun as she made sure the other dogs would welcome her baby.

Satisfied no intervention was needed, she moved to a nearby empty bench and sank down, giving a happy sigh of contentment, grateful the unexpected warm October morning temperature only required a long sleeved T-shirt. She leaned back and rested her arms on the back of the bench, congratulating herself for picking a great weekend to finish a major project at work. Tilting her head toward the sun, she luxuriated in the rays bathing her face.

Over the past six weeks she hadn’t had much time to do

anything but work. Now the pressure was off until Monday and she was determined to make the most of her first free weekend in months. She had already reestablished communications with friends and arranged to meet them for dinner.

She smiled without opening her eyes when she felt her dog rest his head in her lap. She reached down to pet Trashcan, hoping it would deter him from climbing into her lap. Her hand made contact with fur too soft and curly to belong to her pet. Her eyes opened and widened when she caught sight of the brown haired cherub resting his head on her lap. “Uh...hello. Do I know you?”

Raising his head, the toddler smiled, showing four teeth. Keile’s breath caught at the unexpected pull of emotions from the sweetness of his smile. He reached out his arms and said something unintelligible. “I guess you want me to pick you up, huh?” But she hesitated. “Okay, I can do that.” Once she’d lifted the child onto her lap, she looked around the open field, expecting to see someone searching for the boy in her arms. “I bet your parents are looking for you. Why don’t we sit here a minute and wait for them to show up?” She used the soft tone which had worked to gain Can’s trust when she first adopted him.

The child twisted his body around and gave Keile another smile, then rested his head against her chest with easy familiarity. *So this is what all the fuss is about.* She pulled him closer and took a deep breath, enjoying the unfamiliar scents of baby powder and the outdoors. Being around small children was a new experience but, surprisingly, she found herself enjoying the moment.

While the boy watched the dogs play, Keile watched for his parents. Five minutes passed, and she became agitated. Surely somebody should have missed him by now. He was too healthy and clean to be living on the streets. *What if his parents dumped him?* Her stomach churned at the thought of such callousness. No! There had to be another explanation.

Getting a grip on her overactive imagination, she turned the boy around to face her. Eyes, so like her own, were looking at her in complete trust and Keile refused to believe anyone would

intentionally lose this adorable child. He must have wandered away from somewhere. *The playground!* “Well kiddo, looks like we have a mission.” She gave him a reassuring smile. “We need to go find your mommy and daddy.” Holding him close to her body, Keile stood up gingerly, unused to the extra weight, and whistled for her own baby. His tongue lolling, Can raced toward them at full gallop, came to an abrupt stop a few feet in front of her, cocked his head and whined.

Keile shrugged. “Hey, don’t you look at me like that. It’s not my fault he...” But Can wasn’t listening to her explanation. His attention was entirely focused on the child in her arms. “Trashcan this is Kid, Kid this is Trashcan. But you can call him Can for short.”

Boy and dog looked at each other, then without warning the boy lunged toward Can, shrieking in delight. Keile was able to latch on to his overalls before he fell out of her arms.

“Hey! Hold on now,” she admonished gently and lowered the boy to the ground. He immediately toddled to Can and threw his arms around the dog’s neck. Keile watched in amazement as Can sat patiently, allowing himself to be showered with soggy affection.

“Well, kiddo, now that you’ve met my kid, we need to go find your *mama*.” Keile hoped the word ‘mama’ would induce a response. “Where is your mama?” she asked, speaking slowly.

The boy let go of the dog to put his arms around Keile’s jean-clad legs. “Mama, Mama, Mama,” he chortled.

Keile rubbed her forehead. “Uh... No, baby. I mean *your* mama.” She squatted down to his level and smiled. “Your mama.” She pointed at his chest.

He gave her another wide smile and said, “Mama.” Draping his short arms around her neck, he nestled his head against her shoulder.

“Okay. Have it your way, Buster.” Her voice was husky from the rush of emotion that felt suspiciously like longing. She kissed his soft cheek. “Come on, Can, we need to go find somebody before I start liking this.” She managed to clip on Can’s leash

without dropping her new charge. They set out for the playground which was on the other side of the park, with Keile on the alert for signs of frantic parents.

Keile stood near the playground waiting for someone to recognize the toddler in her arms. She had been sure the boy's parents would pounce upon him immediately. Although it had probably been less than ten minutes since she'd made the tot's acquaintance, it seemed more like an hour. As the minutes ticked away, she hoped she didn't look as desperate as she felt. All she needed was someone to think she was deranged and call the police.

"The police!" She threw back her head, startling both dog and child. "Why didn't I think of that in the first place?" She pulled out her cell phone and called her friend Dani, an ex-police officer who was currently dating a cop.

"Hey, Dani, it's Keile." She raised her voice to be heard over the background noise coming from Dani's cell phone.

"You're not calling to cancel again are you? Jo will have a fit."

"No! I...I need your help."

"Wait a minute. I can barely hear you over the construction. Are you okay? You're not hurt are you?"

"I'm fine. Well...it's this kid. He found me and it's been at least ten minutes and nobody seems to be looking for him. How can you not notice a small child is missing?"

"Calm down, Keile." Dani used the same tone Keile had used on the child earlier. "Carla's on duty. I'll call and have her check into the situation. If he's been with you for ten minutes, there's no telling how long he's been away from his parents. An alert's probably been issued. Tell me where you are, I'll come keep you company."

"You're a lifesaver." Keile exhaled, and felt the muscles in her shoulders relax. "I'm at Woodson Park near the Stratton Street entrance. Look for the playground, and hey, can you bring some juice or water? He might be getting thirsty."

"And you would know this how?" Dani teased. "Never mind,

I forgot you're a mother now."

"If I'm a mother, you're an aunt."

Dani laughed. "Right. Hey, Carla might call before I get there. Give me a buzz if you have to move."

"Thanks, Auntie." Keile clipped the phone to her belt. "Okay kiddo, the lesbian cavalry is on the way. How 'bout we try out that swing while we wait?" Without waiting for a reply, Keile walked over to one of the smaller swings. She fumbled around with the seat, trying to figure out what the extra part was for. Her days of using swings were long behind her.

"You look like you can use some help."

Keile turned to find the owner of the friendly sounding voice. "Please." She admitted with a sheepish grin, "I guess you can tell I'm a rank amateur, huh?"

"I had an inkling." The curvy brunette smiled. "I'm Tina. And this little one is John," she added, referring to the baby on her hip.

"I'm Keile, and this is Buster. This is the first time I've been entrusted to bring him here by myself." Strictly speaking it wasn't a lie.

"That would explain it." Tina lifted the safety latch, motioning for Keile to place the child in the swing. "John is our third. I think that qualifies me as an expert," she joked.

"Three, huh?" Keile pulled down the latch and gave Buster a gentle push. Her head reeled from the thought of caring for three children. She could barely keep up with one dog.

"Yup." Tina sat down on one of the swings meant for bigger kids. "We're crazy like that. I take it Buster is your only one?"

"Aside from Can." Keile pointed to the black lab resting nearby in a sunny spot, then gave Buster another push. Buster grew more vocal as he swung to and fro, letting out gleeful squeals each time Keile pushed the swing. The harder she pushed, the louder he squealed.

Ten minutes later, Keile and Buster were the only ones using the swings and her arms were starting to give out. As she was considering the need to add swing-pushing to her exercise

routine, Dani arrived.

“Aren’t you the domesticated one,” Dani teased. “I have supplies.” She held up the paper grocery bag.

“I owe you big, girl,” Keile said with a sigh of relief. She stopped the swing, to the protest of one small child, and attempted to lift him out. She looked at the swing in consternation. “So much for domestication,” Keile muttered, remembering the safety latch. She removed Buster from the swing. When she tossed him up in the air a couple of times, his frown turned into a grin. She swung him to face her friend, a proud smile on her face. “Buster, meet Dani.” She pointed to the tall, athletic looking blonde.

Buster gave Dani a shy smile before burying his face in Keile’s neck. Keile was so touched by his action she almost forgot to breathe. She couldn’t remember anyone giving her their trust so openly. *Maybe this feeling of euphoria is what having a child is all about.* Her cell phone chirped and she flipped it open.

“Hey, Keile. I think I have good news for you,” Carla said. “Could you give me a description of your find?”

She bristled at Carla’s terminology. Buster was a child, not a find. She tightened her arm around him protectively. “Light brown, curly hair, olive skin, light brown eyes,” she said. “Jean overalls, a light blue, long sleeved shirt with a collar.” *And he’s as sweet as he can be,* popped into her head. What had come over her?

“That sounds like a match,” Carla said briskly. “An officer from another precinct is escorting his mother, Haydn Davenport, to the park right now. ETA is ten minutes. I’ll come meet them and we can get this situation resolved.”

“That’s a relief.” Keile exhaled. “Thanks, Carla. I’ll see you then. By the way, there’s someone here you might want to see. I won’t name any names but she’s tall, blond and cute.” She disconnected without giving Carla the opportunity to respond.

“You should never tease a cop.” Dani gave her a knowing grin. “They carry handcuffs,” she explained, wiggling her eyebrows.

“Please Dani, there’s a child present,” Keile said with mock outrage. “Now let’s go get my young man some juice.”

Both women became quickly acquainted with the drawback of letting young children handle juice boxes. Buster grabbed the box and squeezed, spraying juice on his face and hair and the front of Keile's shirt. Dani managed to scramble out of the way, then watched with amusement as Keile separated Buster from the juice box before he could do more damage.

When he gave a half-hearted cry, Keile relented. This time however, she closely supervised his efforts. Buster tried to push her hand away, but she remained firm.

"Have you ever thought about having kids?"

"Me?" Keile looked at her friend to see if she was joking. There was something in Dani's expression she couldn't read. "Nah. You know I'm a foster kid from way back. What do I know about being a parent? Besides, they need a lot of time and patience and I don't have either one."

"You're doing a pretty good job of it right now," Dani said quietly, her expression pensive. "Edan and I really broke up because she decided she was ready to have children and I wasn't," she admitted, a faraway look in her light blue eyes. "I really loved her, but you can't compromise on something like that."

Keile's eyes widened. She had never met Edan but she'd heard about her from mutual friends. "But I...thought it was because of your job."

Dani shrugged. "That's what I let everybody think. It was easier."

Keile busied herself wiping Buster's face with the hem of her shirt. "Do you ever regret making that decision?" She regretted asking the question when Dani grimaced.

"When I let myself, but most of the time I don't." Dani bent forward and let the long, straight strands of her hair hide her face. "It's in the past anyway. Regrets don't serve a purpose." She tucked her hair behind her ears and turned, looking off in the distance. "Hey, how did we get so serious anyway?"

"Beats me." Keile smiled, glad to leave behind the unsettling topic. "We can blame it on Buster. Nobody will punish him because he's cute."

“That he is.” Dani’s smile was almost wistful. “He also looks sleepy,” she said, watching him rub his eyes.

“It’s probably been an eventful morning for him. I wonder how far he had to walk to get here.” Keile set aside the empty juice box and adjusted the toddler so he was cradled in her arms. She dropped a kiss on his forehead and watched as his eyes fluttered shut. “He sure is sweet to hold.” She smiled ruefully, realizing what she’d admitted. “It’s so strange to feel this way, Dani. I felt it earlier when he smiled at me and called me mama. Imagine... me a mother. It boggles the mind. I’d just mess it up.”

“No way!” Dani shook her head emphatically. “Seriously, you never give yourself enough credit. He looks so natural sheltered in your arms. In fact, he looks enough like you to be your son. Your skin is a little browner but you have similar features. I mean the shape of your eyes, nose and mouth.” She grinned. “He’s a mini-you.”

“Yeah, right,” Keile snorted, holding back the sense of pleasure the comparison brought her. “Can is about all I can handle, right boy?” She stroked her faithful companion who was patiently stretched out by her side. “Besides, this little fellow is only showing his adorable side.” As she looked upon the sleeping child, she felt an unfamiliar yearning. Having children had never been in the master plan she’d mapped out as a young teen.

“There you go again. Not giving yourself enough credit. Think about how many times you cleaned up after Can when you first got him.” Dani said, pointing at her. “I won’t even ask how many Trashcans you had to rescue before you decided that should be his name. And what about that time he was sick—”

“Okay, I get your point. But that was totally different,” Keile argued. “One is a dog and the other is a child.”

“Duh! I didn’t know.” Dani rolled her eyes.

“Bite me, Dani.”

“You wish, baby.”

“Only in your dreams.” She spotted movement over Dani’s shoulder and smiled. “Oh good, here comes your girl to the rescue.” Two police cars had pulled up. “It looks like they have

the anxious mother in tow,” she added, as a harried-looking woman jumped out of the first squad car and looked around frantically. The slender redhead looked nothing like the sturdy baby in Keile’s arms.

Dani waved to get Carla’s attention. Carla nodded and pointed the woman in their direction. Haydn Davenport stopped short of reaching Keile and the sleeping child and fresh tears fell from her already swollen green eyes. “Thank God.” She brought her hands to her quivering lips and greedily drank in the sight of the child in Keile’s arms. “He’s safe.”

Keile stood and moved forward. “Hi, I’m Keile. I think I have someone you need,” she said, and transferred Buster to willing arms. She crossed her arms across her chest to cover the immediate feeling of emptiness and loss.

Crying silently, the redhead held the child close to her heart. She put her head against his and rocked him unmindful of the tears spilling down her face and into his brown curls. “Thank you,” she whispered brokenly, never taking her eyes off her son. “Thank you so much.”

Keile tucked her hands in her back pockets and shifted from foot to foot. “It was nothing...really. He found me. Why don’t we go sit on that bench?” she suggested, seeing the trembling in the mother’s arms. Keile glanced at Carla to make sure it was okay. Carla nodded and turned to talk to the other officer and Dani in a low voice as Keile assisted Haydn to a nearby bench, away from curious eyes.

The mother ran her hands over her child’s body as if she needed to make sure everything really was okay. “He always has been a good sleeper.” She let out a sound that was between a sob and a laugh. “Oh, my sweet baby,” she crooned, rocking him as her tears continued to flow. The motion seemed to calm her, and gradually her breathing became more even.

Keile bit her lip, observing the intensity of emotions evident on the woman’s face. Having held Buster in her arms, she could imagine how much the mother had suffered once she realized her child was missing. For a moment she had an almost overwhelming

desire to take the distraught woman into her arms and offer the safety of her broad shoulders. She placed her hand on the other woman's arm and was rewarded when Buster's mom leaned into her touch.

"Ms. Davenport, is there anything I can get for you?" Concern etched Carla's handsome face.

"No," Haydn Davenport replied softly, shaking her head. She took a deep breath, and blinked. "I'll be okay, I promise. It's just..." She bit her trembling lip. "I was imagining all kinds of crazy possibilities and to see him sleeping so peacefully...shook me up." She glanced at Keile and smiled her gratitude.

Keile was blown away by the smile, so reminiscent of the ones Buster had given her earlier. "You really are his mother," she blurted without thinking. "He gave me that same sweet smile."

"Thank you." Haydn Davenport's cheeks reddened as she dipped her head. "Thank you for everything."

"Ma'am, we need to get you back to the station." The male cop was clearly apologetic. "I know you must want to get your little one home."

"Yes, of course." With another smile and a thank you for Keile, she followed the officer to the police car.

Keile stood stiffly, watching as mother and child walked out of her life. She rubbed her arms, suddenly aware of how empty they felt and of how empty she felt inside. *Get a grip. You don't have time for a family anyway.* She gave a deep sigh and turned to her two friends with a melancholy expression on her face.

"You okay?" Dani placed a hand on Keile's arm.

"I...I really don't know," she admitted, thrown off balance by her tumultuous emotions. "Something happened...and I'm not exactly sure what it was." She felt dazed as she whistled for Can. "I'll see you guys this evening."

*We hope you enjoyed this
Bella Appetizer.*

