

A Romance

Tess in Boots

Courtney Rice Gager

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About The Book



Tess Dougherty plans every aspect of her life right down to the last detail. But she doesn't plan on running her boyfriend off by bringing up the topic of marriage before he's ready. And she doesn't plan to lose her job on the day she's set to receive a huge promotion. So when her perfect world unravels, Tess makes a new plan: disappear.

Tess packs her bags and leaves her city apartment for a remote vineyard in North Carolina. At first, she's put off by the slow pace of small-town life in the South. She's especially irritated by Thatcher, the vineyard's smart-mouth, dimple-faced farmhand. But she soon begins to appreciate the area's charm, and Thatcher's charm, too. She even swaps her trademark heels for a pair of cowboy boots. As Tess spends more time getting to know Thatcher, she finds herself loosening her grip on her old life little by little. Unfortunately, things on the vineyard aren't as simple as they seem. There's a secret here, and when the truth comes to light, Tess is forced to reconsider every plan she's ever made.

Details

TITLE: TESS IN BOOTS

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AUTHOR BIO



Courtney Rice Gager first fell in love with reading as a child on summer vacations by the ocean. Today, she enjoys writing her own humorous and heartwarming stories that are best paired with plenty of sand and sunshine. Courtney graduated from Virginia Tech with a bachelor's degree in communication and a minor in creative writing. She lives in Southern New Jersey with her husband and daughter.

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Chapter One

It wasn't bothering me at all.

And why would it bother me? It was such a minor thing. No one else seemed to be aware of this tiny imperfection, so I wasn't about to let myself get all worked up over it.

Let it go, Tess.

I glanced up at Logan, and then back at the chipped nail polish.

If only it wasn't the nail. All nine of my other nails were polished to perfection. Of course the one on my left ring finger was chipped.

But it didn't matter, I reminded myself. It didn't matter because any minute he would pull out the ring, slip it on my finger, and...

And the biggest moment of my life would be forever ruined by a stupid chipped nail.

It did matter.

I had to fix it. The bottle of polish was stashed in my purse. I could excuse myself, go to the bathroom, and do a quick touch...

"Tess? Sweetheart?" Logan reached his hand out and covered mine, shielding the nail from view.

I jumped in my chair. "Hmm?"

"Are you all right?"

"I'm fine."

He smiled. "Good. You seem a little distracted."

"Is that the restroom in the corner?" I scooted toward the edge of the booth.

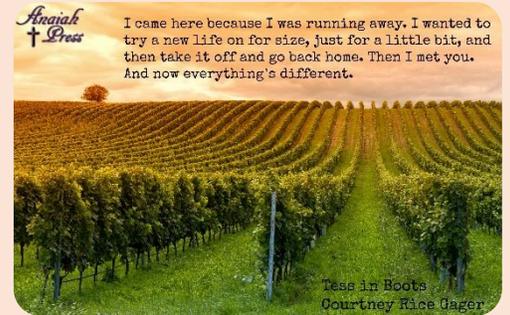
He raised an eyebrow. "Yes. But... do you think it can wait? I have a surprise coming for you."

A waiter in a crisp, white shirt rounded the corner, carrying a small tray covered with a gleaming silver lid. He gave Logan a knowing look as he placed it before me on the table.

I slid back into place and folded my hands on my lap.

It was happening!

He was doing it now.



There was no time to fix the nail.

Forget the nail, Tess! Try to focus on the things that are perfect.

I looked into Logan's eyes and took a long, slow breath. Aside from the chipped nail polish, it had been the perfect evening. First, we took a walk along the waterfront, watching the river glitter under the glow of a dazzling coral sunset. And then we ended up here, at this quaint little candlelit café with its deep mahogany tables and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Hudson. We came here once before, on our first date many years ago. Tonight it was almost empty, except for a small group of diners at the far end of the room.

Logan was rarely spontaneous, so I knew he was planning to propose when he called earlier in the afternoon to tell me he was taking me here for a special evening. I'd waited years for this moment, and it took all my willpower to keep from jumping up and shouting, "Yes!"

But I couldn't. Not yet, at least.

"What's this?" I nodded toward the tray.

Logan cleared his throat. "It's for you. I brought you here tonight because I want to celebrate how far we've come since... well, since the first time we came here."

I was so giddy I caught myself squirming a little. I couldn't help it.

He reached out and wrapped his fingers around the handle on the tray's lid. "We've both made a lot of sacrifices, but it was all worth it, Tess. Tomorrow, the whole world will know the big news. But tonight, I want to be the first to say..."

He lifted the lid, and I let out a breathy gasp before I saw what was hiding underneath.

Then I did see it.

And it wasn't a ring. Not even close.

It was a small white cake with the word Congratulations scrawled across it in purple frosting. I blinked several times. Congratulations?

Congratulations?

"Congratulations, Tess!" Logan beamed.

I shifted in my seat and tucked a loose strand of hair behind my ear. I was still baffled when the waiter reappeared, wheeling a beverage cart.

"What's the occasion?" he asked.

"Um... I'm not exactly sure," I said.

"She's being modest!" Logan flashed him a grin. "My beautiful girlfriend got a big promotion at work. A very well-deserved one. And I couldn't be more proud."

My promotion.



We're here to celebrate my promotion.

The realization oozed from my mind down to my stomach where an uncomfortable pit was forming.

"Ah," the waiter said, "I'll bring out some espresso on the house, then. Congratulations."

"Thanks." My voice was almost inaudible.

The waiter made a grand show of cutting the cake and presenting me with the first piece. Then he placed a second slice in front of Logan. "Can I get you anything else?"

"Just the check please," Logan said.

"I'll be right back with that, sir. Enjoy."

Logan grinned as I took a bite of cake.

It was delicious.

And for some reason, that made me feel worse.

We ate our cake in silence for a few minutes, and with every delectable bite, I found myself stewing more and more over the fact Logan hadn't proposed.

"We're happy, aren't we?" I blurted it out so abruptly I even surprised myself.

"Of course we are." From across the table, he sipped his espresso and raised his eyebrows at me.

"Then why aren't we—" I lowered my fork onto the table and folded my hands. "Then why aren't we married?"

Logan spit his coffee back into the tiny porcelain mug he was holding. There was a faint plinking sound as he placed the cup onto its saucer. "Tess..."

I broke the cardinal, unspoken rule of our relationship. I said The M Word, a word reserved exclusively for use at weddings, or occasionally when referencing an acquaintance, never in the context of our future together.

I first learned not to mention the word marriage to Logan a few years back at an engagement party for one of his friends. "They've been dating since high school," he said.

My eyes widened. "They have? What took him so long to propose?"

He put an arm around me and smirked. "Probably because she wouldn't stop pestering him about it. Nothing scares a guy off more."

I'd taken a sip of my drink and silently vowed to never utter The M Word to him.

But I didn't care about the rule now. I needed to broach the subject. I couldn't dance around it anymore, not after tonight.



“It’s just... do you even want to get married?” I tried to smile and keep calm while I waited for his response.

It was an honest question. Logan came from money, it was no secret. Sure, he built his own career and his own life. But all of it was backed by the safety net of a rich father who had a summer house in the Hamptons and a trust fund for his two sons. Was Logan one of those guys who would never get married for fear of losing the family fortune to some gold digger? It wasn’t that big of a stretch. Why else would he have waited this long?

“Tess, let’s not do this here.” He placed several bills into the black booklet the waiter left on the table before standing up and pulling my shawl off the back of a nearby chair. Then he wrapped it around my shoulders and led me out of the restaurant.

I told myself I would remain calm, but my blood pressure rose with each step. My skin grew hot. I yanked the shawl off my shoulders and crumpled it into a ball. Why won’t he answer the question?

As soon as we got out onto the sidewalk, I turned to face him. “I’m not waiting around forever, Logan.”

It was dark, but I could see his bewildered expression under the streetlights.

“I’m not,” I said. “I mean it. I’ll give it until the end of the summer, but that’s it.”

And there it was. I gave him an ultimatum. I hadn’t planned to go there. In fact, I wasn’t quite sure how it happened.

We stood there staring at each other for a long time.

What had I said? What did it mean for us?

After a while he turned and said, “Let’s go.”

We walked in awkward silence for a few blocks until we reached my building.

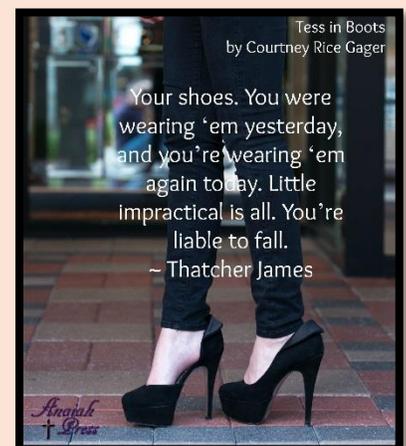
“I have an early flight,” he said.

He was leaving, and I couldn’t let the ultimatum be the last thing I said to him. I needed to make things right. I had to apologize.

“Logan, I’m—”

“I’ll call you. Good night, Tess.”

He didn’t wait for a response. He didn’t even kiss me. He just turned and left me standing there, watching his shadowy silhouette until it faded into the darkness.



Press Release

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PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anaiiah Press announces release of TESS IN BOOTS by Courtney Rice Gager

Tess Dougherty plans every aspect of her life right down to the last detail. But she doesn't plan on running her boyfriend off by bringing up the topic of marriage before he's ready. And she doesn't plan to lose her job on the day she's set to receive a huge promotion. So when her perfect world unravels, Tess makes a new plan: disappear.

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Important Links:

View the Trailer: http://youtu.be/QNneLcbh0tM?list=PLIG_3i4W3xbAy5h1QYIp0iUW3wlnHtPD

iBooks: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/tess-in-boots/id911135042?mt=11>

Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NDBW6ZK>

Barnes and Noble: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/tess-in-boots-courtney-rice-gager/1120200617?ean=2940046115178>

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About Courtney Rice Gager:

Courtney Rice Gager graduated from Virginia Tech with a bachelor's degree in communication and a minor in creative writing. Courtney is also the author of The Buggy List. She lives in New Jersey with her husband and daughter.

About Anaiiah Press:

Anaiiah Press is a Christian digital-first publishing house dedicated to presenting quality faith-based fiction and nonfiction books to the public. Our goal is to provide our authors with the close-knit, hands-on experience of working with a small press, while making sure they don't have to sacrifice quality editing, cover art, and marketing. www.anaiiahpress.com

For interviews, quotes, or general information, please contact: Melinda Dozier, Marketing Director, Melinda.Dozier@anaiiahpress.com

Faith-based Publisher Releases Contemporary Romance Sure to Make You Laugh and Swoon

Anaiah Press, a digital-first publisher of faith-based books based out of St. Petersburg, Florida, released *Tess in Boots* by Courtney Rice Gager on December 2, 2014. Rice Gager's novel is a contemporary romance novel where the main character, Tess, is forced to reconsider every plan she's ever made in her orderly life. When Tess's perfect world unravels, Tess makes a new plan: disappear. She packs her bags and leaves her city apartment for a remote vineyard in North Carolina. At first, she's put off by the slow pace of small-town life in the South. She's especially irritated by Thatcher, the vineyard's smart-mouth, dimple-faced farmhand. But she soon begins to appreciate the area's charm, and Thatcher's charm, too. She even swaps her trademark heels for a pair of cowboy boots. As Tess spends more time getting to know Thatcher, she finds herself loosening her grip on her old life little by little. Unfortunately, things on the vineyard aren't as simple as they seem.

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Anaiah Press is a digital-first publishing house dedicated to presenting quality, faith-based fiction and nonfiction books to the public. More than twenty authors, besides Rice Gager, have signed on with the new company, and their 2015 lineup already promises a variety of genres from adult and children alike. Other titles releasing this winter include *Revenge*, a romantic suspense novel by Paula Rose; *The Last Stored*, a young adult novel, by Sonia Poynter and *The Story Catcher*, an emerging reader, by Donna L. Martin. For more information about the publisher and upcoming releases, visit www.anaiahpress.com.

