

JORDAN'S JUSTICE

A College Sports Romance

T. Christensen

JORDAN'S JUSTICE
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The following story contains mature themes, strong language and sexual situations. It is intended for mature readers.

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Pinterest Board Message

When I start a manuscript, I create a Pinterest board and pin various items (outfits, cars, rooms, etc...) that I use for inspiration. What follows is my Pinterest page information with the Jordan's Justice Board, if you are interested in seeing some of the pins I used.



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Thank you for reading Jordan's Justice!

Chapter One

Tessa squeezed her eyes closed and breathed deeply to try to dissipate the panic locking up her body.

“This cannot be happening. This cannot be happening.”

Thanks to the *Wish Upon a Star* theme the Student Equality Center had decided on, the ballroom was dimly lit. The lighting must be creating an illusion, making him a figment of her imagination.

NBA superstar Jordan Davis had not just walked into her line of vision. Why would he be at a fundraiser for underprivileged kids? Memories of attending her first benefit with him flashed through her head. Stupid question. Why *wouldn't* he be at this fundraiser?

The Center's mission was to provide poverty-stricken children with free tutors. This wasn't a big enough fundraiser to attract the attention of someone of Jordan's caliber, though, right? Tessa clasped her cold hands together to stop them from trembling and dragged in another breath.

She cautiously opened her eyes and focused on the spot where Jordan's mirage had been. Little by little, her breathing returned to normal as she broadened her search and still didn't see him.

“Are you okay?” Laura, her boss and friend at the Center, startled her out of her obsessive scanning.

Tessa smiled. “I'm nervous. Why am I talking again? Why aren't you?”

Laura touched her arm, and Tessa realized she was searching the ballroom again. She turned her gaze to

Laura's warm blue eyes and tried to soak in her ever-present zen and confidence.

"You're the perfect person. You understand the importance of having this resource, and you're passionate about it."

"I believe in what we're doing and what you started. I just hope I can communicate the benefit it offers. Most of these people are far removed from what is happening in the worlds of the children we help."

"You will, Tessa. Your speech is amazing."

A guest caught Laura's attention, and she walked away. Tessa picked up her speech cards and ran through them. She knew the speech by heart, but she was scared she would forget every word as soon as she stood in front of the intimidating crowd. Luckily, she was the first speaker so she could get it over with early.

The spotlight was so bright that Tessa couldn't see the audience, which was a blessing, but she could still feel their eyes. Hopefully, they would attribute her flushed and sweaty face to the lights and not as a sign of her nerves.

As soon as Tessa uttered the last word, the stress and anxiety that had locked up her body slid away. Before the last of the applause died, she was off the stage and weaving her way to her table in the back.

When she got there, her co-workers stood and clapped for her. Her cheeks heated up, but she was grateful for their support.

"Sit down, you idiots!" She chuckled as she motioned with her hands. As they settled back down, Tessa took her seat and began eating. Most everyone else had finished during her speech, so she let the conversation drift around her while she enjoyed her meal.

There were still a couple of minutes before the next speaker when she was done. Tessa excused herself to go to

the restroom. There were several ballrooms in the convention center, so the bathrooms were in a corridor that all the rooms could easily access.

As she exited the ballroom, a tall man strode toward her. The shadows in the hallway prevented her from seeing his face, but a sense of déjà vu raced across her skin. Goosebumps ran down her arms, and her heart thumped.

Tessa rubbed her arms and quickened her pace, anxious to get past him. Just as she reached him, his looming shadow stepped in front of her, preventing her from going any farther. Her brain screamed *CAUTION!*

“Don’t you think it’s hypocritical to speak so passionately about children considering your past actions?” Jordan spewed, every word coated with disdain.

The world shifted under her feet, and everything stopped. A hundred emotions ran through her shocked body in the span of ten seconds. She’d always prayed she’d never see Jordan again. And if she did, she’d assumed she would have time to prepare for their meeting.

The silence grew, and it became increasingly difficult to breathe in the corridor Jordan had trapped her in. Bit by bit, Tessa buried all her emotions until she was numb. It was a trick she had learned and used out of necessity for the past four years.

“Nothing to say? You actually have a conscious about this?” he sneered.

Each word Jordan spoke was grittier and harsher. Tessa took a step back to escape the hate rolling off him, and then another. He stepped forward until she felt the wall at her back. Feeling like a trapped rabbit, she desperately looked around for an escape, but Jordan’s breadth and height prevented her from seeing anything but him.

“There is no escape, Tessa. Four years ago, I was furious when I found out what you did. I didn’t know what I would do if I saw you, so you got away without retribution. Now

fate has brought us together, and I intend to take full advantage.”

Every word created more panic. As her world collapsed around her she wanted to run home, but she was frozen against the wall. Tessa balled her hands up at her sides and pressed her nails into her palms to think past her rioting emotions, but each inhale of his spicy cologne brought back countless memories she had tried desperately to forget.

Jordan’s body was coiled in front of her. It felt like he would spring forward to make sure she stayed trapped if she moved even an inch. He clenched his jaw so tightly she could see it ticking.

When Tessa finally gathered the courage to truly look at him, she sucked in a shocked gasp and flinched at the pain cutting up her insides. So much coldness filled the twinkling blue eyes she always remembered looking at her with humor and warmth. They froze her frantic heart.

She closed her eyes to escape the venom in them. Jordan slapping his palms on the wall next to her made them fly back open.

“Say something, dammit!”

Staring at his bulging neck, Tessa firmly told him, “Step back, Jordan.”

“Look. At. Me,” he reiterated between clenched teeth.

Inhaling, she looked up into his cold, stormy blue gaze. “Step back.”

They silently battled, neither giving an inch, until the click-clack of high heels and the sound of conversation intervened. Jordan stepped back.

Just as Tessa let out a breath, he snatched her arm and led her down the corridor until they rounded a corner. When they were in a remote area, Jordan stopped as abruptly as he had started and stared down at her.

“Does it amuse you how easily you can deceive people? Would you even have a job if they knew you had an abortion?”

Tessa opened her mouth to argue and then snapped it shut. His mom’s warning was still fresh in her head, even four years later. Looking directly into his eyes, she said softly but with conviction, “You have no idea what you are talking about.”

Jordan took a slight step back and studied her. After what was probably only a few seconds but felt like an eternity, he asked, “Are you saying you didn’t take a check for an abortion?”

Tessa looked away and heard his snort. Forcing her eyes back to his, she ground her teeth together and repeated, “You have no idea what you are talking about.”

Jordan narrowed his eyes and with a sneer skimmed them down her body. Tessa prickled with the sudden awareness of how much skin she was showing. The strapless little black dress with a sweetheart neckline exposed her shoulders. The bottom flared out into a waterfall swing skirt, landing just above her knees. Tessa knew she was underdressed since everyone else had on formal gowns, but this was the only fancy dress she owned. There was no way she could have afforded to buy something more suitable for the benefit, especially when she knew this would be the only place she would wear it.

When Jordan finished his scathing perusal, he pinned Tessa to her spot with his eyes. In the same cold voice, he asked, “Do you have any idea what I’m worth now?”

Tessa was confused. He’d always been worth millions, so she wasn’t sure where this question came from or why he asked it. Jordan didn’t wait for her answer, but he did clear up her confusion with scathing conciseness.

“I’m worth billions, Tessa. I know the check you got was for more than just the abortion. You demanded extra

money from my mother so you wouldn't go to the press. I thought you were smart. You could've asked for millions. Lucky for us you with your low-class stupidity couldn't comprehend how much you could have gotten away with blackmailing us for."

Tessa reared back in shocked silence. He thought she'd blackmailed his mom? Before she could process everything he'd just thrown at her, Jordan laughed derisively.

"I thank God every day that your ignorant brain thought \$2,000 was a lot of money. You could have taken me for millions, so I guess I should thank you."

Jordan's scornful words tore her apart as tears stung her eyes. He believed what his mom had said. Tessa was gutted, but she needed to talk through the pain. She had to make sure she understood.

"You think I went to your mom and demanded money? And if she didn't give me money, I would go to the press and tell them about the abortion of our baby?"

This was an out-of-body experience for Tessa. Her voice sounded steady, even as her entire body shook.

"Did you think she wouldn't tell me, Tessa? At first she hid it. For weeks I tried to reach you, but it was like you had disappeared off the face of the earth. You played me and my mom for fools. I was actually worried about you."

Jordan snorted and then grew in front of her, standing up straight and widening his tense body with his fists at his sides. He looked down at her with narrowed eyes.

"My mom was forced to tell me about the blackmail when she realized I was determined to find you, no matter the cost. I thought I was in love with you, and you . . ." Jordan sucked in a harsh breath, his disgust clear. "You convinced my mom you were pregnant and accepted money for an abortion."

The breath left her at her realization that he didn't even believe she'd been pregnant. He'd been in love with her and

ready to leave everything behind to find her? There was too much being thrown at her.

White spots filled her vision. She desperately closed her eyes to try to block out the stone-cold, furious stranger in front of her. Tessa couldn't hold it together anymore, and it didn't matter what she said. Jordan would never believe her, and Mrs. Davis's threat of ruining her family slithered through her.

"I'm going," Tessa rasped.

She moved before Jordan could stop her. From behind, Tessa heard him grit out, "Get back here."

She kept moving, blocking out all of her emotions and not looking back. In a stupor, Tessa grabbed her coat and caught a taxi, finally making it to her apartment. She allowed nothing to enter her head until she stood in her bedroom. She no longer shared a room with Lindy. Now she shared one with her three-year-old daughter, Jordis.

Chapter Two

Tessa's breath whooshed out, and a few silent tears fell as she stared down at the slumbering female version of Jordan. Her toffee-colored hair was the only thing Jordis had gotten from Tessa. Jordis's prominent cheekbones, clear blue eyes, and personality were all Jordan. Every time her daughter stood in front of her demanding something with her piercing eyes and locked jaw, it was like Jordan was in front of her.

Jordis was always active. Tessa was happy that she liked to play outside, but it was hard to keep up with her energy, and trying to get her back inside usually resulted in an epic tantrum. Jordis loved balls, so when Tessa had gotten her a Nerf basketball and hoop for inside the apartment, getting her inside had gotten easier.

She carried around her basketball like most girls carried their babies. Tessa was thankful that such a simple toy made her happy, even if it reminded her of Jordan.

Tessa couldn't ever seem to escape his ghost. Even at three, Jordis loved basketball. She didn't understand all the rules, but she loved watching it on TV. Tessa always made sure they watched if the California Wolves played. The Wolves had drafted Jordan four years ago, after which he won rookie of the year.

It conflicted Tessa to watch Jordis study Jordan, not knowing he was her father. She was still too young to question why she didn't have a one, but someday she would. Tessa had heart palpitations just thinking about how to answer those questions. Christina Davis's threat always

loomed over her head, but she still wanted Jordis to know something about Jordan.

Tessa pulled the covers up over Jordis's princess pajamas. If her daughter wasn't playing with her ball, she was playing with her Barbies. And thanks to Lindy, Jordis had most of the princess Barbies. Her heart squeezed as she thought of them sitting together on the couch watching princess movies.

A knock on their apartment door jerked Tessa from her thoughts, and she rushed to answer. No one ever came to their door this late. The chance that it could be someone drunk or high and at the wrong apartment was good. She needed to get rid of them before they woke anyone up.

Tessa quickly unlocked the three locks reinforcing the door but kept the safety bar on. Her mouth went slack and her gut clenched. It wasn't a drunk—it was Jordan.

Even though he looked out of place in his custom-fitted tuxedo, the low-lit, dowdy apartment hall made his attractiveness even more obvious. His eyes pierced through the shadows, and his dark stubble highlighted the threat in his face.

"You don't get to walk away from me anymore, Tessa."

His carefully controlled words vaguely registered as she focused on not looking over her shoulder into the apartment. There were toys in a basket and some scattered throughout the tiny family room, obvious signs that a child lived there. Even more worrisome were the pictures of Jordis all over the apartment. Tessa could make up something about the toys, but he would know if he saw the pictures.

She gripped the door to hide her shaking hands as she struggled to concentrate on more than her heart's frantic beating.

"You can't come in here," she rushed out in a strangled voice that sounded like she'd just run a mile.

The crease between Jordan's eyebrows increased, and he tried to look past her. Tessa hurriedly stepped in front of the small crack and started to shut the door.

Jordan inserted his foot into the gap before the door closed. "If you don't let me in, I will stand out here and knock until you do."

He stared steadily down at her before finally removing his foot.

"Stay there," she ordered.

Tessa shut the door and tried to get her quick, shallow breathing under control. It didn't ease the dread spiraling through her body, but she had no more time to compose herself. She could feel Jordan's impatience. Tessa opened the door, squeezing through the opening before shutting it and facing him in the hallway.

"What are you hiding?" Jordan demanded.

"My mom is sick, and I don't want you waking her up," she blurted out. It wasn't a complete lie.

Jordan tilted his head and stared down at her.

"Sick how?" he asked flatly.

"Rheumatoid arthritis."

"Arthritis?"

Jordan's disbelieving tone made her straighten her backbone. The suffering her mom had been through was not something Tessa would wish on anyone. His skepticism caused her panic to subside and be replaced with irritation.

"Yes, rheumatoid arthritis. It's hard for her to sleep, and you will not wake her."

Jordan's face tensed with anger at her defiant tone, and he stepped closer until there were only inches separating them. Tessa's annoyance slid away, and her alarm returned.

She stayed as still as possible, watching Jordan warily. To her dismay, her body started tingling as it recognized the only man who'd ever been able to bring it to life. Her brain

warned her that the angry, intimidating man in front of her was not the Jordan she knew.

Tessa needed him to leave, so she ignored her body and glared up at him. He studied her face, then raised a finger and gently glided it from her temple to her chin.

Her skin jumped at the trail of heat Jordan left. Tessa struggled to keep her eyes open. She desperately wanted to relish the way her body came alive under his simple touch. Instead, she concentrated on her breathing and tried to cover the way it hitched when he finally dropped his hand.

"I'll be at the Student Equality Center office from nine to eleven on Monday morning. If you don't show up during that time, I will come here, and I won't leave until we talk."

Her brain didn't know what to process first. Why meet where she worked? How did he even know where the office was?

Tessa shook her head, trying to grasp the right words. "Why there?"

Jordan's self-satisfied smirk made the hairs on her arms stand at attention. "Oh Tessa, you should have stuck around for the big announcement."

The smug look on his face dared her to ask despite the sinking feeling she had.

"Why?" she breathed out.

Jordan didn't answer right away. His finger caressed her cheek again, and Tessa closed her eyes. It was a mistake. Instead of it being a way to escape his smugness, she became even more aware of his touch.

Tessa was lost in the heat traveling to every part of her body until Jordan's answer tilted her world.

"I'm the new ambassador for the Student Equality Center, or SEC, as we insiders call it."

Tessa snapped her eyes open and straightened her spine. She could not have heard right. "What?"

Jordan dropped his hand and put both hands in his pockets. He acted like this was just a casual conversation instead of a life-changing event.

“That means I’ll be visiting SEC and coming to some tutoring sessions to meet the kids. I’ll also be making several promotional videos.”

Tessa didn’t even know they’d been looking for an ambassador. Later, she would ask Laura to give her the details. Remaining calm in front of Jordan was all she could do right now.

“What do you think would happen if I told Laura your morals aren’t in line with their mission statement?”

Her heart stopped, and she choked out, “Why would you do that?”

Tessa couldn’t lose her job, even if it wasn’t full time. It was her only source of income, and even with Lindy’s mom Sophia helping, it was hard to get by. Her mom couldn’t work and no longer had insurance. The medical bills were piling up.

“Because it’s true. You pretended to be pregnant and then extorted money from my mom for an abortion. What do you think Laura would say if she knew? If you don’t show up on Monday, you can say goodbye to your job.”

With contempt filling his voice and one last hard look, he turned and walked away. Tessa wanted to cry, knowing she had lost the Jordan she knew and loved. Her Jordan would have treated no one with that callous coldness, especially not her. He’d always made sure she had never felt less than him.

When Jordan rounded the corner and Tessa was sure he’d actually left, she opened the door in a daze. As she sank onto the couch, she tried to figure out how her life had been turned upside down in a matter of hours. It hadn’t been great before tonight, but now she had to deal with Jordan, who didn’t believe she’d ever been pregnant. An

angry and vengeful Jordan was not someone she knew how to handle. Until she figured out what he wanted from her, she needed to make sure he didn't find out about Jordis.

The only plan she had right now was doing what she needed to do to keep her job. Losing it would force her to find another place for them to live. Somewhere cheaper. The only place more affordable was farther into the slums. Fearful apprehension slithered through her.

Chapter Three

Tessa stood with trembling legs when Jordan entered her work to a hero's welcome. As soon as he'd walked through the door, Laura gushed her thanks and fawned all over him. It was the same reaction everyone had had upon seeing Jordan in college. Only now he seemed to revel in it instead of trying to escape it.

Tessa handled it like she always did, she thought with a quiet snort. She watched while everyone eagerly made their way over for an introduction. Jordan shook their hands, listened to their favorite stories about him, and smiled for countless selfies.

Then they reluctantly went back to their desks, but only after Laura promised to come by and reintroduce everyone. When his last admirer had left, Jordan scanned the room filled with partitions. Her cubicle was in a back corner, and Tessa watched as he methodically searched every space. When his gaze landed on hers, she lifted her chin and refused to look away. Jordan turned to Laura and said something.

Laura nodded, and they made their way toward her. The closer they got, the bigger the pit in her stomach became. Tessa turned away and pretended to straighten some items on her desk. She thought her eyes would pop out of her head when they landed on a photo of Jordis. Quickly placing it face down, Tessa stepped just outside of her cubicle and waited.

“This is Tessa Parker, our most sought-after tutor. Her patience and determination with our most challenging students are legendary.”

A warm, dimpled smile lit up Jordan’s face, and Tessa had to suck in a breath to help with her light-headedness. This was how she remembered Jordan. It was like having the sun shine on you after living under cloud cover for a long time.

To her astonishment, Jordan stepped forward and wrapped his arms around her. Her body instinctively molded into his frame. He still smelled spicy. For a moment, Tessa allowed herself to believe it was a real hug. She took one last inhale and stepped away while struggling to keep her shaky legs under her.

“Tessa and I knew each other in college. It was a surprise to see her speaking the other night. The Tessa I knew never would have stood in front of a group of people.”

That was true, and she smiled tightly as she remained guarded. Why was he acting like they were friends? Laura laughed and set a hand on Jordan’s arm. Tessa couldn’t seem to drag her gaze away from the contact. When Jordan laid his hand over Laura’s, Tessa pressed her lips together.

“Oh, believe me, I worked on her for a solid month before she agreed to give the speech. She has a true passion for her work, and I knew that would shine through.”

Finally their hands dropped, and Tessa relaxed her jaw.

“I know all about her passion, and I agree it’s second to none.” The heavy undertone in Jordan’s words made the hairs on her arms stand up.

Laura looked between them and then focused back on Jordan. “Why do you say that?”

Tessa quickly intervened. “I helped Jordan write some essays, and he knows I feel strongly about my work.”

“So you two knew each other well?”

“We spent many nights together where she tried to get me to forget about my analytical tendencies.” Was it her imagination, or was Jordan’s voice a lower pitch?

Laura’s quizzical face turned to her, and Tessa knew she needed to speak up before Laura could ask any more questions or her heart beat out of her chest. She didn’t know where Jordan was headed, but it didn’t matter. It needed to stop.

“I won’t keep you.” Her high-pitched voice brought their attention to her. “I have to finish my lesson plans for this afternoon.”

To Tessa’s relief, Laura’s face cleared, and she turned back to Jordan.

“This is why I love Tessa—focused at work even though she takes care of her mom and has a three-year-old . . .”

Tessa’s world stopped. Jordan whipped his head toward her, and she took a step back and crossed her arms over her stomach.

He took one look at her white face and stepped around her and into her cubicle. Tessa watched as he picked up the picture frame of Jordis.

She vaguely heard Laura rambling, but all she could do was stare wide-eyed at Jordan as he white-knuckled the frame and stared at the picture. His nostrils flared, and he raised his head to glare accusingly at her. Tessa broke out into a cold sweat as he firmly gripped her elbow and tugged.

Jordan stalked away with Tessa stumbling after him, leaving a dumbfounded Laura behind. Her heart raced, and little white spots danced in front of her as she tried to keep up with him.

A door shut behind them, and for once Tessa was thankful for the drab off-white walls surrounding them. She had always felt claustrophobic in the ten-by-ten conference room and often wished for windows. Today she didn’t mind

as she sank down in one of the cheap office chairs and folded her arms in front of her.

Jordan remained standing, towering above her. "Talk," he snapped.

Tessa closed her eyes and tried to take some deep breaths even though it felt like her throat was closing. It was imperative that she block out the fear screaming through her. This was the most important conversation of her life. For her and Jordis, she needed to push away her terror and focus on saying the right thing.

She snapped her eyes open when the picture frame slammed down in front of her, meeting the cold hostility in Jordan's eyes.

Tessa looked down at Jordis's face radiating happiness, praying it would give her the strength she needed. She craned her head to look up at Jordan and declared, "She's yours."

"I can fucking see that, Tessa!" he roared. He paced as he ran his hands through his hair.

Tessa swallowed the emotion bottling up in her throat and tried to relax her tense muscles. She watched and waited for him to calm down, praying that he actually would. Just as her nerves were about to snap, he pulled out a chair across from her and sat down.

The hostility radiating from him caused her body to lock up even further and made her more than ready to run from the room, but she knew it would be a futile effort. Instead, she sat ramrod straight in her chair with her arms crossed in front of her as she tried to pretend she wasn't scared out of her mind.

Tessa had never seen Jordan this close to losing control. She sat as still as possible and continued to watch him. His jaw was locked, but she saw a nerve ticking. What concerned her the most was how he kept closing his hands into fists and then reopening them. Tessa knew he wouldn't

physically harm her, but the hate she saw in his face decimated her.

She had to remind herself that the day she'd gone to his house to tell him she was pregnant and ran into his mom instead, everything had changed. Tessa had made the only choice she could for her and Jordis. Now she had to convince Jordan of that, but she was scared. He obviously didn't have any feelings for her anymore.

Her baby girl was the joy in her heart and the reason she hadn't broken down and spiraled into depression. That Jordan still hadn't said anything about how he felt made her nerves scream. She watched him draw in a breath and tightened her arms around herself, preparing for the anger coming her way. His jaw still ticked.

"What's her name?" he demanded. Anger was still in his voice, but Tessa willed herself to meet his eyes. She had nothing to hide.

"Jordis." She saw surprise flicker in his eyes, but then it vanished.

"How old is she?"

"Three. Her birthday is August 22."

He clenched his jaw tighter and looked down at the picture between them. "It's true. You were pregnant."

It wasn't a question. Tessa tried to ignore the knives poking her repeatedly and prayed her voice didn't shake.

"I went to see you. As I stood at the pool house door, your mom came down the path and saw me. She told me you weren't home."

"Stop. Do *not* fucking lie!" Jordan's voice boomed in the small room, and Tessa jumped. He vibrated with fury and looked like he wanted to kill her. Jordan gritted out, "You went to my parents' house and specifically asked to see my mom."

Tessa answered carefully, like she was talking to a wild animal. "No. I wanted to talk with you and . . ."

Jordan's fist crashed down on the table. "Are you calling my mom a liar? The woman who gave birth to me, made sure I got to every basketball camp and practice, and came to all of my games? The one who had the courage to face me and tell me about my deceitful, money-hungry girlfriend?"

Tessa sensed the danger in the room and did not respond to Jordan's comments. She did flinch when he finished softly, "The woman who stopped me from coming to murder you?"

Tessa was in a state of shock. Numbly, she tried one more time. "I have no reason to lie, Jordan."

"You," he sneered as she shrunk away, "will say or do anything that benefits you, Tessa. You are still fucking lying about that day."

He pushed his chair away and towered over her. Tessa's heart thumped so loudly in her head that she had a hard time concentrating on his words. "You never came over without calling or texting first because you didn't want to see my mom. I know you two didn't see eye to eye, and to think I took your side. If you were coming to see me, you would've texted first. You went to my house to see my parents. You went to get your payday."

Tessa knew that it didn't matter what she said. Tears of frustration and loss rose, and she knew she had to get out of there. She stood up, each of them watching the other warily as she walked to the door. Then Tessa tried one more time to reason with him.

"I'm not lying, Jordan, but I understand why you think I am. When you're ready to calmly talk about this, you can call me. I have the same number I did in college."

His parting words caused terror to strike her body and tears to fall. "We're having dinner at six tonight, Tessa. You'd better be ready to talk, or the next time you see me I will have lawyers with me."

