

# NIC DEE

Adult Romance Novel



## Friday at Seven

Mystery, Adventure and Intrigue

# Copyright



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# Chapter 1

Hi, I'm Kareena Ross. My friends sometimes call me 'Kar', as in 'car', and tease with 'vroom, vroom' sounds. This is because I tend to drive fast, when I drive. Funny, as I don't actually own a car!

I have a dream job at a large software firm, which I adore. I really do!

But my home life is rubbish. I can't find my 'Mr. Right', my knight in shining armour, my miracle man, my dream man. I have really tried, and then tried some more. Of course, I'm told that I haven't tried hard enough. Yeah, right. Like that's it!

I feel 'oh, so awful' and lonely amongst most people, especially my colleagues and friends. And, some days I feel myself teetering on the edge of madness, like I'm going to break down and lose it all in public. The other week I pictured myself on my knees, in the middle of the street, my arms flung high in the air beseeching, and screaming my lungs out. Me? Screaming like a crazed, wild woman! Right then I knew I had to do something about my situation; to change my life.

Don't ask me how. I don't know how. I can't even say I will succeed. All I know, is I must really try. Differently to before. Otherwise I'll go mad.

So now I'm totally scared to bits. I have tried so many things before, been on so many dates and, all without any luck. I'm going to have to throw caution to the wind this time, find my inner strength, and risk everything to find my Mr. Right.

I take a slow, deep breath. My insides shudder with terror facing this unknown. Don't judge me wrong. I'm no shy, pathetic snowflake. But hell, there have been many times that I've cried into my pillow, "I give up!". "I'm a strong, modern woman and I don't need a man!" and "All men are bastards!". Or, my best one, "I'm too damn ugly and smart for a man!" I do know how to beat myself up, when I want to. All garbage of course. Just denial lines to cover my deep pain.

I always use my work as my perfect answer. The harder I plough myself into the lines of computer code, the more numb I become. Tens of thousands of lines of code cover a deal of hurt!

But, I still long for my gorgeous, perfect hunk of a man. Someone to curl up with in bed, and to love with all my wanting heart. Someone strong and sensual to touch my aching body; his hot breath on my neck and his two day old stubble against my shoulder. Woo! I've hit my delirious state now.

"Bugger! Damn you, Kareena!" I whisper at myself and quickly set my wobbling coffee mug down. The spilt coffee drips from the corner of my keyboard, then into a neat puddle on my desk.

I'm losing control of my thoughts, and I shiver with the realisation that my daydreams are getting worse. They're becoming more sexually explicit, even erotic. Yet, I devour each one as if it is reality. I'm beginning to unsettle myself, 'cos I have become vulnerable.

I scrunch up several tissues, mop up my coffee mess and ditch the sodden clumps to the bottom of my bin with a thud.

A work colleague glances up curiously from her desk - all open plan here, no doors, walls or boundaries. And, no privacy! I dismiss her curiosity with my tight lips and a sharp look. She ducks out of sight below her desk barrier, and I smirk inside and straighten up my self-control.

Yeah, I'm twenty four and alone. Not something I ever envisaged. I always remember the little things that niggle, like I might talk too much. I know guys don't like that. And, I think too much. Smart girls don't get laid! Then there is the list of: I'm too tall, too pretty, or not pretty enough, followed by my boobs are too flat, too small, and don't jiggle enough. Oh yes, my arse is too small, too large, too tight, too flabby, or just not right. Wait, there's more. My hair isn't blonde enough, even though I'm natural. My toes look too ugly. My nose is crooked. I'm too tight down there, or, too loose. I'm fat. I'm thin. I'm too round.

After a while one accepts the inevitable of "no man finds me attractive". "Not now, or not ever! I'm a terrible woman, and no man can ever love me, or my body. It's just not humanly possible." Yep, I've worked myself up again, and hold back my tears with a sniffle or two. Glancing up from my desk I don't see any curious stares or blank expressions aimed at me. What a relief!

My work is complex and challenging. I'm a good computer coder. 'Why can't I recode my life the way I want it?' I argue in my mind. What have I got to lose, huh? I muse further.

So I have started to adjust my life by recoding my thoughts in an 'olde-worlde' paper journal. You know, the kind that you write in with a real pen on real paper. It certainly feels weird. But it also feels liberating, like I'm in control of my life, once again. Which got me to thinking. What's the point of working so hard at work, achieving so much, when I'm really sad on the inside? Where's the sense in that? Why not do something about it? And, fight back.

Don't just take it all the time. Find a man. Date him. Bonk his brains out. And, if he's right for me, if he likes me, and takes the time

to be with me, then take him, all of him, mind, body and soul, as mine, as my one true man.

This is now my very important pact to myself. From this day forward, I will do what it takes, and try anything, to get my one, true, loving man. Whatever it takes!

So I'm asking myself, what exactly is the man I'm so desperate to call my own, look like? What does he do for a job? And, what does he find important?

I pause and nibble on the end of my biro. A welcome blank pause. Now, all too quickly my brain is processing details of my ideal man. Yeah. He needs to be dead set hot, as in a hunk, with a sexy, spine-tingling, delicious body. He has to be sensitive so he'll see and understand me, the real Kareena Ross. I pause and analyse. He must love me, hold me so my heart melts, be there always to care and listen to me. And, I need to be able to talk to him, way beyond sport and manly and girly things. Things that matter to the heart, and, the world around us.

My cheeks are flush with anticipation and success for the new me! I take a slow, deep breath, and realise, I am very serious. Yes, and I do want adventure, excitement, and to feel the thrill of being alive again.

Then, all of a sudden a result hits me. My perfect man will have to accept me for who I am, unconditionally, with no 'Ifs' or 'Buts'!

I sigh and let those thoughts fade. I'm reassured that this girl's got to have a dream.

How am I going to get my perfect man? I do know one thing, that it's not going to be easy, as I've dated enough men to know that. I will have to take bigger risks than ever before. My heart pounds. I'm

scared half to death! Yet, I'm excited, too! I have found my revelation!

I scroll through an online dating site for the second time. "God he's so handsome!" I exclaim to myself and feel myself weaken. "Just one night with him is all I ask!"

"Steady on girl," I murmur to myself. He's blonde, athletic with brilliant blue eyes. And his name rolls off my tongue smoothly! "Michael G. Gale." I savour the taste his name leaves in my mouth, and the tingle of pleasure on my lips. I reach out and touch his online snapshot with my finger. "I can't wait to meet you, handsome man!"

I shuffle impatiently in my seat with excitement, and scroll down further to review his highlights. He quotes that he is: "Reserved. Shy around women. Appreciates the arts and culture. Passion for old architecture, specifically stone buildings. Physically active, though not into sports. Likes the outdoors and adventure."

"Hmmm, different" I muse to myself, my chin in my palms, with elbows angled on my desk, as I stare dreamily. My mind catches up and I hear myself mutter, "Sounds too good to be true. I smell a rat. A con, for sure." Then I counter in my mind with my 'revelation' of "Do I really care?" It's not like he'd be my 'perfect man', my 'Mr. Right' straight off, and, would I care for some mindless sex? Yes, please!

Looking through his profile further, I decide that Mr. Gale is probably a dud. But I resolve to remain willing and to try, in the pursuit of true love!

Mr. Michael G. Gale is twenty six, two years older than me. Good. I like older men. They usually know how to please. Smugness smears my face and I sip my cold coffee and adjust to the idea of fate.

I use a little of my coding knowledge and manage to obtain his date of birth off the web page. "5th of August." I usually steer clear of Leos. Past experience. A few were quite good, one or two were real firecrackers in bed. But mostly disappointing. I'm usually too intellectual for them.

"Stuff it Kareena, you're desperate!" I berate myself. Another work colleague looks up at me. I pretend not to notice him and continue as if I'm debugging my computer code. He looks away. I focus on my 'Send' button, and before I know it, I've sent my details to Michael. Here I go!

A sexy chime rings from my computer, so I stop and open the instant message. It's from the dating website and it's from Michael!

"Dinner after work?"

I grin. I like him already - he's so direct. "Sure, why not? I'd like that." I reply.

"Nothing fancy - just casual. I know this little restaurant. Are you game?"

I sigh, and blink with dreamy eyes at the monitor, in full delirium. "Sure, I would love to Michael." I reply. It feels wonderful just typing his name.

"Terrific, Kareena. I look forward to seeing you." he replies and leaves the details.



Before I know what's what, five o'clock arrives. It's Friday afternoon. Anything could happen tonight. I stop for a moment and ponder. A wild, passion-filled weekend with Michael Gale. It *could* happen!



My phone rings. Oh God, it's him. It's Michael. "Just checking you're good for 7 sharp tonight, Kareena?" The sound of his deep, husky voice makes me go so weak that my lips quiver.

Suddenly I see myself naked on his bed. Silky, white sheets caress my back. I want him so much that nothing else matters!

Michael's manly hands reach down and press me against the bed, as he parts my thighs gently with loving caresses. I wait eagerly. It doesn't happen. Michael teases and tantalises me playfully until I can hardly hold back. Then he enters me, with long, soul-reaching thrusts that rock my very foundation! I'm overwhelmed.

"Kareena? Are you there?"

"Yes-yes, Michael." I murmur as my voice falters.

There is a slight pause before Michael queries, "Are you sure you're alright, Kareena?"

"Oh, yes. Seven sharp!" I quickly muster my wits. My heavenly image flickers and vanishes completely. "Don't worry. I'll be there, Michael."

I hear a faint sigh from the other end of the phone.

"Great. I can't wait. See you soon, Kareena."

My name rolls off his tongue so smoothly! "Woo! What a guy!"

After work I deviate from my normal route home and check out the restaurant. Ironically, it turns out to be just a short walk from my place, in fact, almost around the corner. How strange is that! And, I didn't even know it was there! Now I query, "Does Michael somehow know where I live?"

At home I slip off my work shoes and toss my clothes on my bed then prance, delighted, in my underwear, in front of my mirrored wardrobe. I imagine Michael standing right by me admiring every

inch of me. He draws me close, kisses me deeply while his agile fingers unclasp my bra.

His spell is intoxicating. Tears well up in my eyes, and I'm unable to control my low moans of desire. He lays me down on the bed and enters me. He thrusts slow, deep, and wonderful. I am soaked in pleasure. I stretch my hands above my head and he entwines his fingers in mine. His chest hairs course back and forth over my boobs, teasing me, while he runs his hot, moist tongue around my neck. With a final, tremendous thrust Michael explodes deep within me. Our souls become one. "Oh God!" I scream in rapture.

I open my eyes and pack my vibrator away. I race to the shower, do my makeup and fix my hair. It's now six o'clock. I have less than an hour to get dressed and arrive at the restaurant looking fabulous.

What on earth should I wear? A dress, of course. But which type? Something short and sexy, to show off my legs. Yes, but what sort of dress? Casual upscale, I muse. I don't want Michael to think I'm too aloof, or, too cheap and easy. Either would be a disaster.

Eventually, after much yes, no, yes, no-ing, I finally decide on my skimpy, barely there, lilac affair, with it's high hemline and full leg sex appeal. I do my nails in fast drying lilac to match my dress and put on my new, never worn, silver strappy high-heels with matching silver shoulder bag. "Oh, my. Yes! They look great together." I comment to myself and admire myself in the mirror. "Is that really you, Kareena Ross?" I breathe out aloud in awe.

I've achieved a small miracle as I'm done by 6.55 p.m.! I throw one last, quick, glance at the stunning girl in the mirror - so sexy and stunning, while confident and vibrant. Toni would be so proud of me!

I have a smile on my lips and a spring in my step as I burst out of my one bedroom, corner apartment onto the sidewalk. I feel assured

that tonight is the night everything will change. "Small steps, Kareena!" I check myself. I've learned not to hope too much these days. But, still I can't help it. Everything feels possible tonight.

I pause at a crossing for a moment. My breath is quick and my heart is throbbing. I calm myself a little then cross the road and walk at a brisk pace. I reflect back over my short life - how fast my 24 years have passed. All the dates I've been on. How eager and buoyant with joy I was only to have my hopes utterly dashed. All the failed relationships and the pain and misery that follows. All that pointless suffering.

Yet, tonight, I know it will be different! I can feel it! It's like fate 'herself' has hold of my hand and is walking in stride alongside of me.



The pavement outside the restaurant is bustling with people in jovial conversation. A few are standing and looking rather uncomfortable. I guess they are waiting for a table, or for someone to arrive.

A husky voice cuts clearly through this noisy chatter and calls out my name, "Kareena?" I jump in fright then turn round sharply, to find a well dressed, confident, handsome man, with bright blonde hair. He has piercing blue eyes which look directly at me.

"Michael?"

Michael nods, wearing a disarming smile. In a single heartbeat my whole body turns to jelly, and a mild panic quickly takes hold. I realise nothing like this has ever happened to me before!

Michael graciously takes me by the hand, steadies me, then leads me inside to a quaint table by the window. It has a neat little sign of 'Reserved'. My mild panic grows more intense. All words seem to lose their meaning. Michael smiles kindly and gestures for me to take my seat. I sit, and try my very best to appear calm.

"Are you cold, Kareena?" he asks in a refreshingly honest tone, and gestures to his jacket.

I wave my hand and reply, "No. I'm fine thanks, Michael. Thanks, though. It's kind of you to offer."

He smiles warmly. "I hope you don't mind me asking," he pauses for a moment, then continues, "What is it you do, Kareena?"

"Do?" I query nervously. My mind is screaming in thought, and I do my best not to shake. I try to hide my nervousness. This is 'so' unusual for me. I'm never like this on a date! Never! I don't know what's wrong with me! Something about Michael *is* very different.

He blushes lightly. I cringe, realising his discomfort.

"I mean your job? What is it that you do? Professionally?" he adds softly.

I struggle to focus. Michael's words wander aimlessly amongst the background noise of the bustling restaurant.

"Oh," I come back with a start. "I work in software." Now, I tense all over. I wait for the standard shock and disappointment to spread over his face like all the men before him. This is when a man gets disappointed. They realise I'm too hard to conquer, yet not dumb enough to trick.

I wait in silence, but don't see a hint of disgust on his face. To my delight, Michael looks squarely at me, with big, disarming eyes, in an irresistible 'loveable puppy' mode. I'm tempted to say something, but hold my silence, for fear of breaking the moment.

"It's quite alright to be nervous, Kareena," he murmurs warmly, reaching across the table to hold my hand. A tingle shoots up my arm from his touch. "I understand how it can feel. I'm usually quite shy around women, Kareena, but with you I feel different, somehow. Almost, like I'm not myself." He sighs and looks a little perplexed. I begin to relax.

I remain doubtful and let it show. "You're too nice, Michael."

The tingling in my hand ceases abruptly as Michael retracts his hand to his side of the table. Damn it, Kareena! Now look what you've gone and done! Keep your damn negative mouth shut! I berate myself in thought and instantly feel sad.

"Oh Michael, I didn't mean to say that, like that. I'm sorry, I am." I glance longingly toward his hand. Although it is just across the table it now feels a million miles away. "Um," I bite my lip anxiously, "your hand felt nice, just before. Will you do it again?" I can hardly breathe as I watch him hesitate. "Please, Michael."

He smiles and slides his hand across and back on to mine. I welcome back the tingling. "I can be a bit awkward on a first date, Kareena. I don't mean to be. Hope you don't mind?"

His smile broadens to confidence, and I smile along with him.

"You're doing just fine, Michael." I tease, playfully.

"How can you be so sure?" he teases back.

"Oh, I just know."

"Woman's intuition, I guess?"

"Something like that." I shift my hand. He holds on, squeezes, then nods slowly in approval. Something about the way he does this makes me burst out in laughter. He joins in. We laugh our hearts out together.

Oh my God! I am falling for him, aren't I? I make this my mental note.

As the time passes, our conversation continues back and forth, casual and easy, like old friends catching up. I learn Michael is a man of taste. Subtle, yet manly and strong. Like cologne. I'm in love with both. He has distinct highlights of refinement, contrasting by cloaked reservation. I sense a man of mystery. A man with a past. Possibly some secrets hidden in the closet. I want to find out everything about him. I want to know him. Be with him. Feel his beating heart on my chest.

"Keep going." Michael urges, insisting yet again, that I keep talking about myself. He wants to know everything about me! My favourite colour, my joys, my fears, my passions, my hobbies. He won't have it any other way. I'm 'so' not used to this in a man.

I talk and talk, till I run out of things to say.

"Alright now, Michael, I've told you so much about myself. Now, what about you?" He scrunches up his face playfully. I frown playfully back. "Come on, it's only fair you tell me something about yourself."

His face smooths then he winks at me, cheekily. "Okay. What is it you want to know about me?"

"Oh, I want to know everything." I watch him hesitate. This time it doesn't appear to be playful, but I insist anyway. "Come on, Michael. You have to. Tell me what you do? What your likes are?"

"You flatter me too much, Kareena. I'm not that interesting a person. I certainly can't compete with someone like you, who's into computer software. Wow, that must be a complex job and a half."

I nod eagerly and wait for him to continue.

"I'm afraid my job is rather stuffy and boring. I must apologise in advance, Kareena."

"Oh, go on, you," I grin and bore my eager gaze into his.

"Well there's nothing much to say, actually. I work in finance. Investment arm, actually, for a very large international bank."

"Uh huh. And..."

"I work with figures all day long. That's it. All rather boring, I'm afraid."

I shrug and add, "Not really. Depends on how large the figures go."

He suppresses a laugh. "Oh, they go quite high I can assure you." Then he snaps his fingers for service and orders for us both - Chicken Grand-Mère with a side order of organic salad and the house white. I prompt him to continue. As he does so, I sense his underlying reluctance. But I dare, and push harder. I get the distinct feeling there is another side to Michael Gale. Problem is, what is it? And, why won't he tell?

"Kareena," he prompts. I look up from my glass of white. "You didn't explain what sort of code you build in your work. I'm curious."

"Really!" I think to myself. He's curious? I cringe. "It doesn't really matter, Michael." I shrug awkwardly, then hurriedly take a mouthful of the delicious organic salad.

Halfway through my mouthful, Michael pauses and looks at me sternly, almost like a chide for something I did wrong! "Of course it matters. I want to know more about you." Michael replies.

"How much more?" I tease light-heartedly.

A sly twinkle sparkles in his bright blue eyes. "Of course I want to know you. I like you, Kareena." His bottom lip has a hint of a quiver. My heart skips a beat. Is he falling for me? It can't be possible, can it?

"All of you." he replies.

Now I feel my cheeks colour.

Michael adds promptly, "I mean, within reason."

I exhale deeply. "Alright, then. But only if you promise not to walk out on me."

He frowns confused.

"I mean it, Michael."

"Of course. I promise not to walk out on you, Kareena Ross. The most beautiful girl I've ever had the pleasure to dine with."

"Oh, my God, he's a charmer!" my brain screams out while my toes, fingers, and my whole body tingles!

"Do you mean it?" I glance down at my glass of wine.

"I do." These words come from him as a soft, warm purr.

I feel myself melt inside. I lower my eyelids then look back up at him. "I'm a software engineer. I design and make graphical interfaces for advanced computer software programs. I spend all day, everyday, debugging, fixing, and writing intricate code." I raise my eyelids just in time to see the last shred of shock dissipate from his face. Michael looks uncomfortable, but tries to hide it, as he pushes back in his chair. He swallows deeply and clears his throat.

"I told you." I accuse, gently.

"Wow. You're really a software engineer?"

"You're really surprised, aren't you, Michael?" I don't want to hear his reply. I'm in fear of what he will say, from now on.

"No, not really." Then he aims a smirk in my direction. "Why would I be? Do you want me to be surprised?" I shake my head. "No? How about shocked?" He pulls a weird look and I shake my head again.

"So, you really don't mind?"

"No. I don't. Not at all."



I can't say anything. My brain won't form any words.

"Do others mind?" he enquires.

I shrug and cast my gaze to my lap. "Usually. I don't know." I'm suddenly in a world of confusion.

"Kareena. Kareena."

Reluctantly, I raise my eyes.

"Look at me." I focus on him. "You're a smart, beautiful, successful woman. And, I mean that. I, and any man for that matter, would be a complete and utter fool to let you go, or, think less of you."

"Really?" I decide to believe him, and leave any darker thoughts unsaid.

"Yes." He affirms.

Things move quickly after this. We talk and eat more. His charm sweeps me off my feet. By dinner's end I am completely caught up in his intoxicating spell, no longer analysing the situation, but simply enjoying his company and having fun!

As we stand to leave, Michael asks, "Would you like to go out dancing, Kareena?" His manly gaze takes a while to admire my long legs, so I pretend not to notice. But secretly, I'm thrilled to bits.

"I would love to go dancing, Michael."

"Wonderful. A friend of mine runs this little nightclub, not too far from here. Are you up for it?"

"Sure. I'm game if you are." I take a step and feel myself wobble from too much wine. Michael wraps his arm around my waist in a dreamy, gentlemanly style, as he steadies me.

We leave the crowded restaurant together for the quiet of the outside. By now it is dark, and the sky is punctuated only by the haze

of overhead street lamps. Side by side, we walk together in wonderful tranquility, towards the nightclub.

I am filled with an immense sense of hope and optimism.