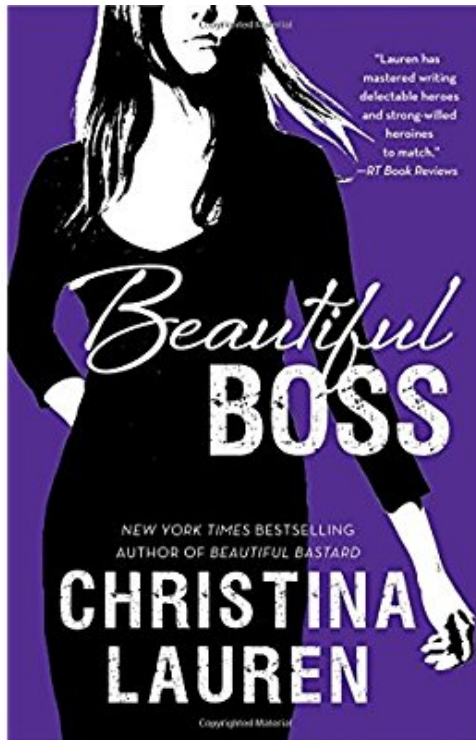


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Synopsis :

About the Author Christina Lauren is the combined pen name of longtime writing partners/besties/soulmates and brain-twins Christina Hobbs and Lauren Billings, the New York Times, USA TODAY, and #1 international bestselling authors of the Beautiful and Wild Seasons series, Sublime, The House, and Autoboynography. You can find them online at ChristinaLaurenBooks.com, Facebook.com/ChristinaLaurenBooks, or @ChristinaLauren on Twitter. Read more Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Beautiful Boss One Will One drive to Boston down. One rehearsal, one rehearsal dinner, one raucous night out with the guys down. A wedding tomorrow, and one wife-to-be sleeping . . . down the hall. I had a feeling this arrangement wouldn't last. Hanna hated sleeping apart on her recent trips for faculty position interviews nearly as much as I did. And the night before our wedding her mother gets us separate rooms, to keep tradition, build suspense? Forget it. It wouldn't last. I reached behind me, fluffing the pillows, and then stretched out on the giant king-size bed. My cell phone buzzed on the bedside table and I laughed, saying, "Called it," to the empty room before answering, "Hanna, my love." She skipped the greeting entirely. "I'm nervous." I smiled into the phone. "I'm not surprised. You're promising to obey me and be my sex slave for the remainder of your days. You know I won't go easy on you." She didn't even spare me a laugh. "Can I come to your room?" "Of course," I said. "I've been hoping you would come down—" "No," she interrupted with force. "No, I can't. That was a test, Will. You're supposed to say it's bad luck." "But I'm an atheist," I reminded her. "I don't believe in luck. I believe in intent. I believe in discovery. I believe in sex before the wedding. In fact, I believe you are three doors down, completely wiggling out, when you could come in here and talk. And then let me put my penis in you. I'll stare at you the entire time, too, and our marriage will still be the most amazing marriage in the—" "My boobs look enormous in my wedding dress." I groaned, throwing my arm over my face. "Are you trying to kill me?" "I just wanted to warn you." Her voice grew slightly slurred and I could immediately imagine her nervously chewing on a fingernail. "I think maybe it's overboard. I wanted it to be a cute thing between us—your boob obsession, our wedding, I mean, you—" "Hanna," I cut in. "I promise to do my best not to motorboat you at the altar." "That isn't what I mean." "Plum. Breathe." I heard her take a long inhale and slowly let it out. "Tell me," I said quietly. "What did you mean?" "Just that . . . what if I look . . ." "Perfect?" I suggested. She blew out a burst of air and admitted in a rush, "Busty—like a busty whore bride." I held back a laugh, because while this was ridiculous to me, I knew it wasn't to her. "Are we seriously doing this right now? This is your pre-wedding freak-out? That your boobs will look too awesome tomorrow?" Hanna had dealt with the wedding planning with ease, handing over the final details to her mom while she traveled all over for job interviews. She was being recruited by schools in nearly every corner of the country, sometimes going to two different places in a single week. And she'd never once complained about the madness of the past few months. I knew my Hanna was laid-back, but—Jesus—given everything, I had expected . . . something. A meltdown while we packed, maybe? But no, we got into a playful laundry war and ended up having sex in the hallway. Maybe a nitpicky fight on the drive up to Beantown? But no, she gave me head. Even a tantrum once we reached the hotel? Nope. She grinned and stretched to kiss me before yelling, "Here we go!" I looked around the empty hotel room, saying, "I feel like I'm getting off easy." Her little growl made my mouth curve into a smile, but it straightened when her voice came out reedy and stressed. "What if my dress is all boob and you're like the only one who doesn't think it's obscene?" "If you came down the aisle topless I would be completely okay with this. And mine is the only opinion that matters tomorrow." "Then why did we invite a hundred and sixty-four other people?" "Hanna. Shut up, right now. Come to my room to get laid." The line clicked dead, and a few seconds later I heard feet shuffling in front of my door, a long pause, and

then a quiet knock. “Close your eyes,” she called from the hallway. I walked over, closed my eyes tight, and opened the door. “Keep them closed,” she warned. I squeezed them tighter, obediently. Her hands moved to my neck and slid up to my face, fumbling in her nervousness before finally managing to tie something around my eyes. And then she fell quiet. I couldn’t see her, couldn’t feel her. Reaching out, I found her waist, pulled her to my bare chest. “Tell me what’s really going on.” “I don’t like not being with you the night before our wedding,” she confessed into my skin. “I need you.” Blindly, I ran my hands up her sides, over her shoulders, and along her neck before cupping her face. My fingers met soft silk, and I followed the path of the fabric to a knot at the back of her head. Hanna had tied a scarf around her eyes, too. Oh, this one. Laughing, I kissed the top of her head. “So stay with me.” She groaned. “This tradition sucks, but I feel like if there are any traditions I should listen to, it’s the ones about how to not mess this marriage up. We can’t see each other until tomorrow.” I held her face in my hands, tilting it so I could kiss her. My lips met the tip of her nose first, before traveling south to their target. “There is no way to mess this up,” I said, right against her mouth. “Even if we didn’t get married tomorrow, you’re the love of my life. I’m with you until we both die, at the same time, when I am one hundred and you are ninety-three.” With a quiet laugh, she turned me, guiding me to the bed and carefully pulling me down onto it. She pushed me until I was lying on my back and then climbed over my hips. “Are your eyes open now?” I asked her, teasing. “I lifted the blindfold for a second, but they’re closed again. Someone had to navigate us here safely.” “I mean, I think the rule is the groom can’t see the bride, right? You can look at me,” I whispered. She paused. “Really?” “Yeah, Plum.” After a short hesitation, I heard the shift of her blindfold as she removed it and then the sound of her quiet breaths. “There you are.” She ran a hand up my chest and over my neck, and then a single fingertip traced the shape of my mouth. “Husband. Isn’t that crazy?” My skin ignited, hungry. “Hann—” Her mouth came over mine, shutting me up, lips wet and so fucking full, hands working my boxers down my hips. She licked my neck, her hair tickling my skin as she made her way down my chest, past my stomach. . . . “It’s good luck to give head before the wedding,” I confirmed when she wrapped her hand around me, licking near the base and dragging her tongue to the tip. “So we’re on the right track.” Her giggle vibrated against me as she kissed and sucked, licking me hard as fucking stone in her grip. “Goddamn,” I whispered, hips arching from the bed. “Plum, this blindfold. . . your tongue. Fuck.” She played with me just enough to have me rocking up from the mattress and then I felt her shift and pull her little nightie up over her hips and straddle me. Her mouth came down against my ear. “No grabbing my boobs.” “Whatever you say,” I swore immediately. “Just don’t stop.” “You have a gift for bruising boobs. My dress shows boob.” “You mentioned this.” “If you bruise them, no head for a year.” Even though she was probably—I think?—joking, the idea made my heart stop for about three beats. I gave her a reverent “I promise.” She reached for me, rubbing me over the perfect, slippery skin between her legs. My hands made fists around the sheets at my sides. “Hanna?” I asked in a breathless burst. Pausing, she asked, “Yeah?” “Can I grab your hips, though?” I could feel her go still over me and then start to laugh. “What in the world kind of dress would show my hips?” “Sorry, sorry,” I said, laughing. “I’m not thinking. Holy fuck, Plum, just get on my dick.” But she didn’t. I could feel the heat of her, so close, and she slowly settled back down on my thighs, her hands running up over my stomach. “You okay?” I asked, sitting up beneath her and clumsily finding her face again with my hands. “You’re freaking out about the dress again?” I tried to surreptitiously swipe my thumbs beneath her eyes to make sure she wasn’t crying, but she ducked away. “I’m not crying.” I nodded, going quiet, wanting to tread carefully. “I’m just nervous,” she said. My chest twisted. “You know that just because we’re getting married doesn’t mean that anything between us changes, right? We’re still Will and Hanna. We’re still us.” “It feels different already,” she said, and slid her fingertips over my lips when I opened my mouth to protest, quickly adding, “I don’t mean that in a bad way. I mean, it feels deeper. It feels more important. Before, I would look at your body and think, ‘Wow, I get to play with this all night long!’ Now, I look at your body and think, ‘Wow, I get to play with this, and Oh my God what if anything ever happened to him and—’” “Hanna. Breathe,” I said gently from beneath her fingers. She took a calming breath, sliding her hand down my neck almost as if she was tracing a line to my heart. “I’m only twenty-five,” she said after a long pause. “And I know my life would be ruined if I lost you.” The idea of it stabbed sharply into my gut. “You’re never going to lose me.” She didn’t say anything, just drew tiny circles on my chest with her fingertip. “Plum, come on. We already take such good care of each other. This just makes it official.” Her finger came up again, crossing from one side of my bottom lip to the other, stroking. Thunder pounded through my blood. “I take care of you?” she asked. “You do. And when you’re not sure how, you ask.” After a few breaths of silence, she said, “Like now?” I both loved and hated the darkness of the blindfold. I wanted to see her face, but from her voice alone I could imagine it: lip being gently chewed between her teeth, eyes fixed on where her fingers touched my skin with maddening care. This was how we started. She asked, I guided. “You’re not sure how to take care of me right now?” “I’m just anxious tonight,” she whispered. “It helps when you tell me what you want me to do.” My heart seemed to stutter and then explode. It had been a while since we’d played in these roles. “Bring your hips back over me,” I instructed, my voice a rough growl. I felt her shift, and then the heat of her, so intense, barely pressed down on my dick. I bit back a groan. “Take me in. Slow. Tease me a little.” Her hand came around, steadying as she placed herself over me, rubbing, lowering, bit by bit. Good holy fuck. I nearly lost it. “Like that. Like that.” “Will. . . .” A thousand times we’d made love. Maybe more. And it shocked me to no end that I always found myself counting to ten and distracting myself so I wouldn’t explode as soon as she took me in. “Down and up,” I said. “Don’t tease. Let me feel every inch.” Her breath was a shiver of heat on my neck, her hair tickled along my shoulders, and she did exactly what I asked. But she could have easily taken me in in a single stroke. She was wet as the ocean. My thoughts spun off the rails over the intensity of it, as it all seemed to hit me in a rush: here we were, on the cusp of this wild fucking adventure—I’d never wanted anything more in my entire life. And as Hanna moved slowly onto me, and then rocked above, growing confident, forgetting herself, losing herself, I reeled in the truth of that. How many people find the person they ache to touch, to be near, to belong to? How many people married their best friend, the person they admired most in the whole world? I pulled my blindfold off, catching her face just as she fell: eyes fixed on my face, lips parted in a breathless moan. Relief washed over her expression when our eyes met—she needed to see this, see me, be steadied by my gaze—and I knew she could read my thoughts as clearly as I could read hers. Don’t trust someone else’s tradition, I thought, feeling my body work its way higher, closer. Trust me. Trust us to find our own path. Need and pleasure wrestled their way down my spine, hot and urgent. My fingers dug into her hips, shoving her roughly back and forth over me until I could feel it right there, right at the edge, and her whisper, I love watching you come, pushed me over the edge, too. I came into her with a rough groan, eyes clinging desperately to hers. “See?” she whispered, face damp with sweat when she pressed it to my neck. “I needed this. Tomorrow is a formality. Right now it feels like we just got married.” “Tomorrow has been a formality ever since you gave me a hand job at a gross student party.” Above me, she giggled. Hanna was gone when I woke up, and her quickly scribbled note left on my pillow—See you at two!—made me laugh out loud in the empty room. My fiancée: what a goddamn romantic. The morning was packed with a groomsmen breakfast; greeting guests checking into the hotel; my mother and sisters constantly finding me to double-check seating details, delivery instructions, and musician requests. Sensing my need to just take a fucking shower and get ready for my wedding, Jensen swooped in, taking them to find the Command Center (Hanna’s mother, Helena), who was more than happy to delegate jobs all damn day. A hot shower, a good clean shave, and three cups of coffee later, I heard a knock at my hotel room door. A part of me wondered if it might be Hanna, but realized that could only be possible if she had escaped her sister, Liv; her mother; George; and both Chloe and Sara. Aka “the Pride,” as Jensen liked to call them, as if they were a pack of lions. If she had somehow managed all that, there would be bodies somewhere, and seeing me before the wedding would be the least of our worries. “It’s me,” I heard my nearly-brother-in-law say. I let Jensen into my suite. He was already dressed, wearing the standard tux, and looking pretty damn great. I’d been with him all day yesterday, but somehow in the packed frenzy of the rehearsal schedule, I hadn’t registered that he’d probably lost thirty pounds since I’d last seen him. “You been working out? You look good, man.” “You’re marrying my sister,” he said, stepping past me. “Please don’t hit on me today.” Laughing, I turned back to the mirror to tie my bow tie. “Marrying,” he repeated, letting out a low whistle. “I know.” She was going to be my wife. I would get to introduce her that way. This is my wife. I couldn’t stop rolling the word around in my head. Wife. It felt good. It felt substantial. It made me want to climb over her, say it over and over again into her ear, tattooing it in her thoughts. You’re my wife, Plum. Jensen jerked me from this train of thought when he clapped a hand over my shoulder. “Married, Will.” I looked over at him, repeating with a curious smile, “I know, Jensen.” “To my little sister.” His eyes narrowed as

he pointed a mildly threatening finger at me. “That’s weird, right?” We’d had this conversation one other time: over dinner, after Jensen had walked in on us—me beneath the counter, Hanna bent over it with the skirt of her old prom dress shoved above her waist while I went down on her. Luckily he didn’t see much . . . but he certainly saw enough to deduce what was going on. In true Hanna fashion, she kept on the dress, put on a pair of sneakers, and made us take her out to pho to smooth over the potential weirdness. Jensen had been surprisingly unfazed until the middle of the meal when he dropped his chopsticks with a tiny clack against his bowl and announced, “Holy shit. You’re going to be my brother.” Hanna and I both knew we would be married eventually, but hadn’t been quite ready then. At the time, we’d laughed. We were certainly ready now. Jensen walked over to one of the leather chairs near the window and sat down. “Did you ever imagine this day? The day of your wedding, you’re getting ready in here with me, she’s down the hall getting ready with the *Pride*?” I shrugged. “I figured I would find the woman for me, or I wouldn’t. I don’t think I gave it much thought.” I lifted my chin, inspecting my handiwork in the reflection. “Now it seems impossible that in some alternate universe I don’t meet up with Hanna. What if she never called me? What if I’d never shown up to run that morning?” Turning to face him, I blinked. “God, that’s horrifying.” He could have teased me for this rare sentimental view, but didn’t. “I can assure you this wasn’t exactly what I had in mind when I suggested she call you to hang out,” he said, running a finger over an eyebrow. “But here we are. The next time you see her, she’s going to be walking down that aisle.” I glanced over at him, having wondered on and off for the past few days how this event felt for him. Hanna and I would be married in the same private garden where Jensen had married his college sweetheart. And where Hanna’s older sister, Liv, had married her husband, Rob. Unfortunately, Jensen’s marriage to his girlfriend of nine years had lasted only four months. Jensen broke into my thoughts before I could think of what to say. “Are you imagining how it’s going to go down?” he asked. “Of course. I’m wondering if she’ll trip on her way down the aisle or stop mid-journey to hug someone she hasn’t seen in years. Hanna always surprises me.” “Or if she’ll give up walking altogether and just sprint toward you.” He laughed quietly. “And it will never stop being weird that you call her Hanna.” “I can’t imagine calling her Ziggy,” I admitted, and then shivered. “That feels pervy.” “Because it is,” he said. “You were seventeen when she was ten. When my little sister was ten, you were sleeping with the mother of one of your bandmates.” I shot him a disgusted look. “Are you trying to make me feel gross?” “Yeah.” He laughed, standing to clap me on the shoulder again just as Bennett and Max pummeled my hotel room door. [Read more](#)