

EXHIBIT A

Int. Cl.: 16

Prior U.S. Cls.: 2, 5, 22, 23, 29, 37, 38 and 50

Reg. No. 2,627,196

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Registered Oct. 1, 2002

**TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER**

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS AGENCY OF THE STATE)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

PAMPHLETS AND BROCHURES IN THE FIELDS
OF LITTER PREVENTION AND LITTER CLEANUP,
IN CLASS 16 (U.S. CLS. 2, 5, 22, 23, 29, 37, 38 AND 50).

FOR: PRINTED MATTER AND PAPER PRO-
DUCTS, NAMELY STICKERS, DECALS, BUMPER
STICKERS, PAPER FOOD CONTAINERS, PAPER
BAGS, PLASTIC TRASH BAGS, PAPER AND PLAS-
TIC LITTER BAGS, GROCERY BAGS, PLAYING
CARDS; PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS, NAMELY,

FIRST USE 3-31-1986; IN COMMERCE 3-31-1986.

SER. NO. 75-981,469, FILED 10-16-2000.

JOANNA MATEJA, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

Int. Cl.: 42

Prior U.S. Cls.: 100 and 101

Reg. No. 2,616,831

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Registered Sep. 10, 2002

**SERVICE MARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER**

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-
LITTER PROGRAMS, IN CLASS 42 (U.S. CLS. 100
AND 101).

FOR: PROMOTING THE BEAUTIFICATION OF
TEXAS HIGHWAYS AND THE PUBLIC AWARE-
NESS OF THE NEED FOR LITTER PREVENTION
AND LITTER CLEANUP THROUGH THE DEVEL-
OPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF EDUCATION-
AL MATERIALS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

FIRST USE 11-30-1985; IN COMMERCE 11-30-1985.

SER. NO. 76-148,544, FILED 10-16-2000.

JOANNA MATEJA, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

Int. Cls.: 9, 14 and 20

Prior U.S. Cls.: 2, 13, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 36,
38 and 50

Reg. No. 2,619,887

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Registered Sep. 17, 2002

**TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER**

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

FOR: DECORATIVE MAGNETS, IN CLASS 9 (U.S.
CLS. 21, 23, 26, 36 AND 38).

FIRST USE 3-9-2000; IN COMMERCE 3-9-2000.

FOR: JEWELRY, NAMELY LAPEL PINS, IN
CLASS 14 (U.S. CLS. 2, 27, 28 AND 50).

FIRST USE 4-1-1995; IN COMMERCE 4-1-1995.

FOR: PLASTIC KEY CHAINS, IN CLASS 20 (U.S.
CLS. 2, 13, 22, 25, 32 AND 50).

FIRST USE 4-5-1997; IN COMMERCE 4-5-1997.

SER. NO. 76-148,549, FILED 10-16-2000.

JOANNA MATEJA, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

United States of America

United States Patent and Trademark Office

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

Reg. No. 3,924,369

Registered Mar. 1, 2011

Int. Cl.: 25

TRADEMARK

PRINCIPAL REGISTER

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

FOR: CLOTHING, NAMELY, SHIRTS, HATS AND CAPS, IN CLASS 25 (U.S. CLS. 22 AND 39).

FIRST USE 4-0-1986; IN COMMERCE 4-0-1986.

SER. NO. 76-160,856, FILED 11-7-2000.

MARY ROSSMAN, EXAMINING ATTORNEY



David J. Kappas

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

Int. Cl.: 21

Prior U.S. Cls.: 2, 13, 23, 29, 30, 33, 40, and 50

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Reg. No. 3,149,283
Registered Sep. 26, 2006

TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

FOR: BEVERAGE CONTAINERS, NAMELY
MUGS AND CUPS, IN CLASS 21 (U.S. CLS. 2, 13, 23,
29, 30, 33, 40 AND 50).

FIRST USE 12-14-2004; IN COMMERCE 12-14-2004.

THE MARK CONSISTS OF STANDARD CHAR-
ACTERS WITHOUT CLAIM TO ANY PARTICULAR
FONT, STYLE, SIZE, OR COLOR.

OWNER OF U.S. REG. NOS. 2,616,831, 2,619,887,
AND 2,627,196.

SN 76-624,639, FILED 12-14-2004.

WON TEAK OH, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

United States of America

United States Patent and Trademark Office

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

Reg. No. 3,930,439

Registered Mar. 15, 2011

Int. Cl.: 25

TRADEMARK

PRINCIPAL REGISTER

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 EAST 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 78701

FOR: CLOTHING, NAMELY, T-SHIRTS, POLO SHIRTS, SHIRTS, BUTTON-FRONT SHIRTS,
Twill DRESS SHIRTS AND SWEAT SHIRTS, IN CLASS 25 (U.S. CLS. 22 AND 39).

FIRST USE 4-0-1986; IN COMMERCE 4-0-1986.

THE MARK CONSISTS OF STANDARD CHARACTERS WITHOUT CLAIM TO ANY PAR-
TICULAR FONT, STYLE, SIZE, OR COLOR.

OWNER OF U.S. REG. NOS. 2,616,831, 2,627,196 AND OTHERS.

SER. NO. 77-816,121, FILED 8-31-2009.

CHARISMA HAMPTON, EXAMINING ATTORNEY



David J. Kyfos

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

United States of America

United States Patent and Trademark Office

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

Reg. No. 3,872,108

Registered Nov. 9, 2010

Int. Cls.: 6, 11, 16, 18
and 21

TRADEMARK

PRINCIPAL REGISTER

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 EAST 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 78701

FOR: NON-LUMINOUS AND NON-MECHANICAL METAL SIGNS; METAL KEY CHAINS,
IN CLASS 6 (U.S. CLS. 2, 12, 13, 14, 23, 25 AND 50).

FIRST USE 6-0-2006; IN COMMERCE 6-0-2006.

FOR: PLASTIC SQUEEZE FLASHLIGHTS, IN CLASS 11 (U.S. CLS. 13, 21, 23, 31 AND 34).

FIRST USE 7-0-2006; IN COMMERCE 7-0-2006.

FOR: PRINTED MATTER AND PAPER PRODUCTS, NAMELY, POSTCARDS, POSTERS,
COASTERS MADE OF PAPER, PAPER FOLDERS, TEMPORARY TATTOOS, TRADING
CARDS, COIN HOLDERS, NOTE PADS AND DECORATIVE PENCILS, IN CLASS 16 (U.S.
CLS. 2, 5, 22, 23, 29, 37, 38 AND 50).

FIRST USE 0-0-1995; IN COMMERCE 0-0-1995.

FOR: LUGGAGE TAGS; BACKPACK TAGS, IN CLASS 18 (U.S. CLS. 1, 2, 3, 22 AND 41).

FIRST USE 7-0-2006; IN COMMERCE 7-0-2006.

FOR: BEVERAGE CONTAINERS, NAMELY, INSULATED SLEEVE HOLDERS FOR
BEVERAGE CUPS AND CANS; GLASSWARE, NAMELY, PITCHERS, DRINKING GLASSES
AND SHOT GLASSES, IN CLASS 21 (U.S. CLS. 2, 13, 23, 29, 30, 33, 40 AND 50).

FIRST USE 3-0-2005; IN COMMERCE 3-0-2005.

THE MARK CONSISTS OF STANDARD CHARACTERS WITHOUT CLAIM TO ANY PAR-
TICULAR FONT, STYLE, SIZE, OR COLOR.

OWNER OF U.S. REG. NOS. 2,616,831, 2,627,196 AND OTHERS.

SER. NO. 77-821,766, FILED 9-8-2009.

CHARISMA HAMPTON, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

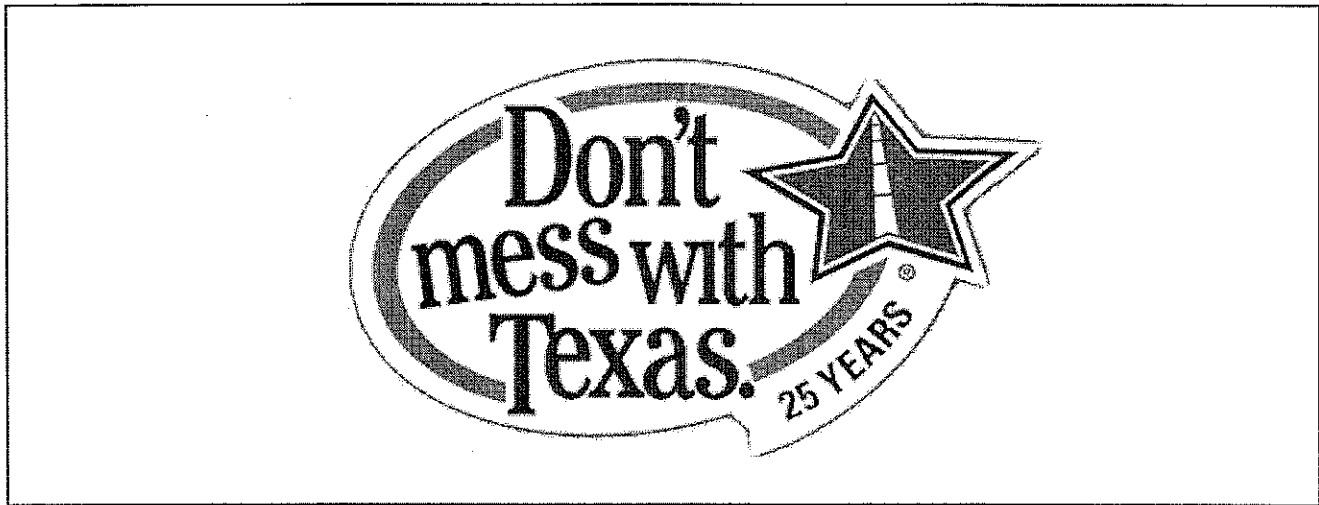


David J. Kappas

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

EXHIBIT B

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AWARDS:

We've always got litter on the brain. Whether we're coming up with new ads, contests or community outreach, it's just what we do. So when someone takes the time to recognize our efforts, you better believe we celebrate. Check out all of our awards below. These belong to all Texans who help keep our state clean — but especially those who have volunteered and partnered with us.

Awards

If we're not picking up litter, we're

thinking about it. Whether it's coming up with a new PSA or community outreach program, litter is always on our mind. So, when someone takes the time to recognize our efforts, we celebrate.

We share the following awards with all of those real Texans who volunteer and partner with us to keep the Don't Mess with Texas campaign alive and kickin' butts.

Best of Texas Award 2011. This award was given by the Texas Public Relations Association in the category of Electronic Communications/PSA for the "Pizzazz" TV commercial starring George Strait.

Silver Spur Award 2008. This award was given for creating a cool way to reduce litter by appealing to Generation Litterer, (16-24 year olds) through the Rock the Bag campaign. Given by the Texas Public Relations Association.

Best of Texas Merit for Litter Force 2008. This award was given for great news writing that kept the judges reading. Given by the Texas Public Relations Association.

Innovator Award 2007. This award was given to the Don't Mess with Texas Litter Force Web site for being a leader in technical capabilities. Given by the Summit International Emerging Media Awards competition.

Gold District 10 Regional ADDY Award 2007 for Don't Mess with Texas "20th Anniversary," Public Service TV Campaign. Given by American Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 2007 for Don't Mess with Texas "20th Anniversary," Public Service TV Campaign. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Advertising Week Walk of Fame 2006 for America's favorite slogan. Given by Adweek.

Silver Best of Texas 2006 for 20th Anniversary Media Kit. Given by the Texas Public Relations Association.

Partnership Award 2005 for exemplary contributions to and support of Keep America Beautiful State Affiliate and outstanding partnership between a State Affiliate and Department of Transportation. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./U.S. State Department of Transportation.

Partnership Award 2005 for exemplary contributions to and support of Keep America Beautiful State Affiliate and outstanding partnership between a State Affiliate and Department of Transportation. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./U.S. State Department of Transportation.

Silver Austin ADDY Award 2005 for Don't Mess with Texas "Excuses," Public Service TV-Broadcast/Electronic. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

First Place Rogers Award 2004 for Don't Mess with Texas "Excuses," State and Local Radio Advertising. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

First Place Rogers Award 2004 for Don't Mess with Texas "Excuses," Statewide Television Advertising. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Partnership Award 2004 for exemplary contributions to and support of Keep America Beautiful State Affiliates. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

Partnership Award 2004 for exemplary contributions

to and support of Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

Bronze Austin ADDY Award 2004 for Don't Mess with Texas "Road Reversal," Public Service TV-Broadcast/Electronic. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Partnership Award 2003 for exemplary contributions and support of Keep America Beautiful State Affiliates. Given by Keep America Beautiful/U.S. Department of Transportation.

Bronze Best of Texas 2003 for "If Your Mother Were Texas," printed Media Kit. Given by Texas Public Relations Association.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 2003 for Don't Mess with Texas "If Your Mother Were Texas Would You Still Litter," Regional/National Public Service Campaign. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Best Use of Research or Measurement – Honorable Mention 2003 for Don't Mess with Texas: Visible Litter Study. Given by PR Week.

Second Place – Certificate for Outstanding Creativity International Competition 2002 for Don't Mess with Texas "If Your Mother Were Texas Would You Still Litter," "If Your Daughter Were Texas" campaign, Television Commercial Category. Given by the Mobius Advertising Awards/California.

Partnership Award 2002 for exemplary contributions to and support of Keep America Beautiful State Affiliates. Given by Keep America Beautiful/U.S. Department of Transportation.

Second Place Rogers Award 2002 for Statewide Television Advertising. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Second Place 2002 for Excellence in Statewide Television Advertising for Don't Mess with Texas Campaign. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Bronze Award 2002 for Best Research in Public Relations Evaluation, Don't Mess with Texas Visible Litter Study. Given by Public Relations Society of America.

Silver Best of Texas, 9C Digital Communications Internet Site 2002 for Don't Mess with Texas Web site. Given by Texas Public Relations Association.

Silver ADDY Award – District/Regional Level 2002 for "If Your Mother Were Texas," PSA/Broadcast Media/TV. Given by American Ad Federation, 10th District.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 2002 for Don't Mess with Texas "If Your Mother Were Texas Would You Still Litter," Regional/National Public Service TV. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Partnership Award 2001 for exemplary contributions to and support of Keep America Beautiful State Affiliates. Given by Keep America Beautiful/U.S. Department of Transportation.

Distinguished Service Citation 2000 for Litter Prevention Programs. Given by Keep America Beautiful/Federal Highway Administration.

Crystal Award of Excellence 2000 for Don't Mess with Texas "Jimmy," PSA. Given by Communicator Awards.

Crystal Award of Excellence 2000 for Don't Mess with Texas "Jimmy," humor. Given by Communicator Awards.

First Place 1999 for State DOT Programs Achieving Excellence in the Control and Prevention of Roadside Litter. Given by Keep America Beautiful/Federal Highway Administration.

Bronze Summit Award 1999 for Don't Mess with Texas "Littered" Billboard, PSA/Political-Outdoor/Transit Category. Given by International Summit Creative Awards.

Silver Summit Award 1999 for Vote Don't Mess with Texas, PSA/Political Multiple Media Campaign Category. Given by International Summit Creative Awards.

Best of Texas 1999 for Vote Don't Mess with Texas Public Relations Association.

Best of Texas/Silver Spur Award 1999 for Vote Don't Mess with Texas, Marketing/Non-Profit. Given by Texas Public Relations Association.

Second Place 1998 for State DOT Programs Achieving Excellence in the Control and Prevention of Roadside Litter. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

National Award 1996 for Distinguished Service. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

Second Place National Award 1995 for Keep America Beautiful Agency showing the Most Progress in Litter Control and Collection. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

National Award 1993 for Distinguished Service in the Department of Great Texas Trash-Off, Spread the Word not the Waste, Don't Mess with Texas, and Adopt-a-Highway. Given by Keep America Beautiful Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

Certificate of Merit – National Award Finalist 1993 for Don't Mess with Texas program. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

First Place National Award – Environmental Communication Awards 1993 for George Foreman and Bikers, TV Spots/Broadcast PSA Category. Given by Environmental Marketing and Advertising Council.

Certificate of Appreciation for Don't Mess with Texas advertising campaign for contributions toward the goals of nonpoint source management and the Clean Water Act, and for benefits to the environment resulting from campaign efforts. Given by Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, Dallas, TX

First Place 1992 for Superior Progress in the Prevention and Collection of Litter. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

First Place 11th Annual Public Affairs Skills Contest 1992 for "Great American Trash-Off," Television. Given by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Austin ADDY Award 1992 for Preacher George, PSA. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Merit Award 1992 for Preacher George, Public Service TV. Given by American Ad Federation, 10th District.

Silver TOPS Award 1992 for Preacher George, Television. Given by Dallas Advertising League.

Bronze TOPS Award 1992 for Wrestler w/Tag, Television. Given by Dallas Advertising League.

Second Place 1991 for Distinguished Public Service in the Nationwide Program to Keep America Beautiful. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Special Merit Award 1990 for Distinguished Public Service in the Nationwide Program to Keep America Beautiful. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc./Federal Highway Administration.

National Environmental Achievement Award in Environmental Beautification 1990 for "Don't Mess with Texas" Anti-litter Campaign and Adopt-a-Highway Program. Given by National Environmental Awards Council.

Gold ADDY Award 1990 for "Don't Mess with Texas" National TV, 60 seconds or less. Given by American Ad Federation.

Best of Texas 1990 for Shamu & The Texas Tuxedos, Special Event. Given by Texas Public Relations Association.

Bronze Austin ADDY Award 1990 for "Moon to Givens," Public Service TV, Regional/National. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1990 for "Little Joey La Familia," Non-English TV, 60 or less. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Bronze Austin ADDY Award 1990 for Willie Nelson, Public Service TV, Regional/National. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

FUNEP 500 Winner for World Environment 1990 for "Don't Mess with Texas" Anti-litter Campaign and Adopt-a-Highway Program. Given by Friends of the Environment, International Program of UNEP.

First Place 500 Award for Don't Mess with Texas, the highest award given for excellence in the field of public relations. Given by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials/Best of Texas Award Committee.

Annual Award 1989 for "Don't Mess with Texas" Highway on Transportation Signs, showing the most progress in the Prevention and Collection of Litter. Given by U.S. DOT/Federal Highway Administration.

First Place National Award 1989 for Adopt-a-Highway Program. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Certificate of Merit – Take Pride in America National Awards Program 1989 for Recognition of Demonstrated Commitment & Exceptional Contribution to the Volunteer Stewardship of America's Natural and Cultural Resources. Given by Take Pride in America.

TOPS Award 1989 for TV, Regional/National, more than 30 seconds. Given by Dallas Advertising League.

Pro Bono Publico Award 1989 for Distinguished Advertising and Contributions to the Betterment of Public Good. Given by Dallas Advertising League.

Best of Austin 1989 for Don't Mess with a Good Slogan (Don't Mess with Texas), Advocacy/Public Service. Given by International Association of Business Communicators – Austin Chapter.

Finalist Award 1989 for Willie Nelson PSA. Given by International Film & TV Festival of New York.

National ADDY Award 1988 for Jerry Jeff Walker, PSA, Regional/National TV. Given by American Ad Federation, 10th District.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1988 for PSA, Regional/National Campaigns. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1988 for PSA, Regional/National, TV :60 or less. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Special Merit Award 1987 for Distinguished Public Service in the Nationwide Program to Keep America Beautiful. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Special Commendation 1986 for Demonstrated Commitment and Exceptional Contribution to the Proper Stewardship of America's Natural and Cultural Resources (National Award), Government Category. Given by Take Pride in America, U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C.

Gold Effie 1987 for GSD&M for "Don't Mess with Texas" slogan. Given by American Marketing Association/New York.

Scoop Award 1987 for Don't Mess with Texas Anti-litter Campaign. Given by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

National ADDY Award 1987 for The Fabulous Thunderbirds, PSA, Regional/National Radio :60 seconds or less. Given by American Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for TV, Regional/National Campaign. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for TV, Regional/National Campaign. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Public Service Advertising, Regional/National Campaign. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Radio, Regional/National Campaign. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Complete Campaign, Regional/National, Consumer Advertising. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Silver Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Television, Regional/National, 30 seconds. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for PSA, Regional/National, 30 seconds or less. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Radio, Regional/National, 30 seconds or less. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Radio, Regional/National, 30 seconds or less. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Radio, Regional/National, 30 seconds or less. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Special Merit Award 1986 for Distinguished Public Service in the Nationwide Program to Keep America Beautiful. Given by Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Gold Austin ADDY Award 1987 for Radio, Regional/National, more than 30 seconds. Given by Austin Ad Federation.

Austin ADDY Award 1986 for Radio, Regional :60 or less. Given by Austin Advertising Club.

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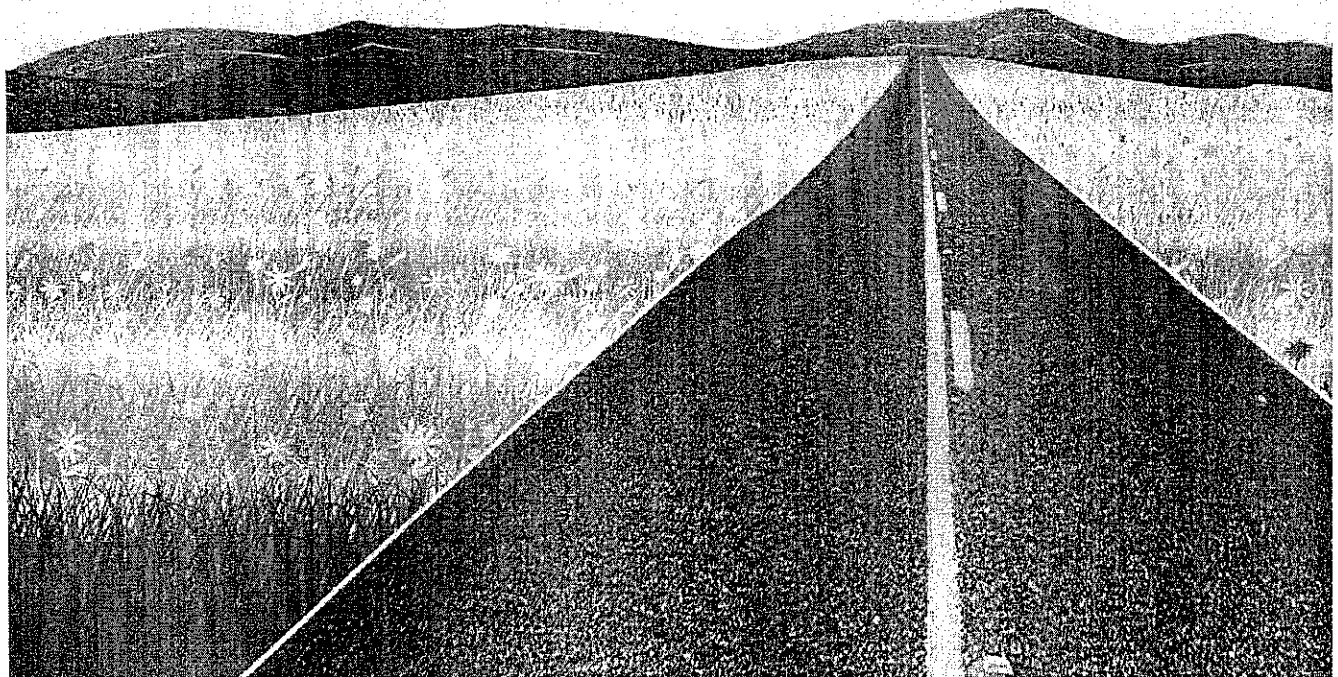


EXHIBIT C

AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

Christie
CRAIG

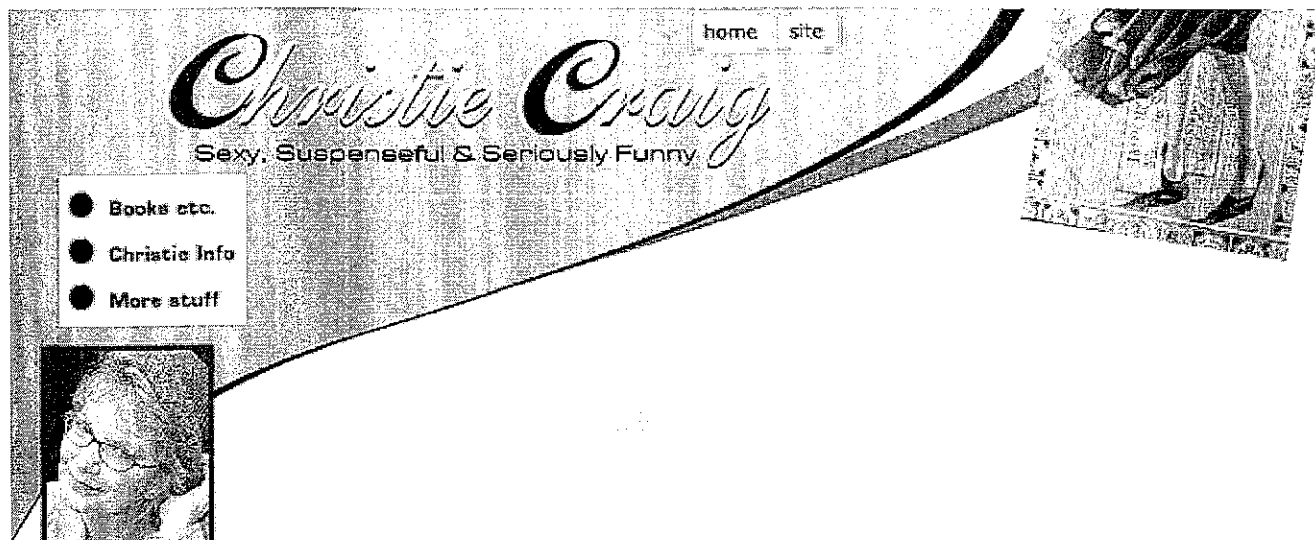
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hunky heroes,
hilarious high jinks,
and heartwarming
romance."

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bestselling
author

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DON'T MESS
With
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ADVANCE
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SEPTEMBER 2011



- Books etc.
- Christie Info
- More stuff



Laugh. Love. Read. Books by Christie Craig

Things are Just Hotter in Texas

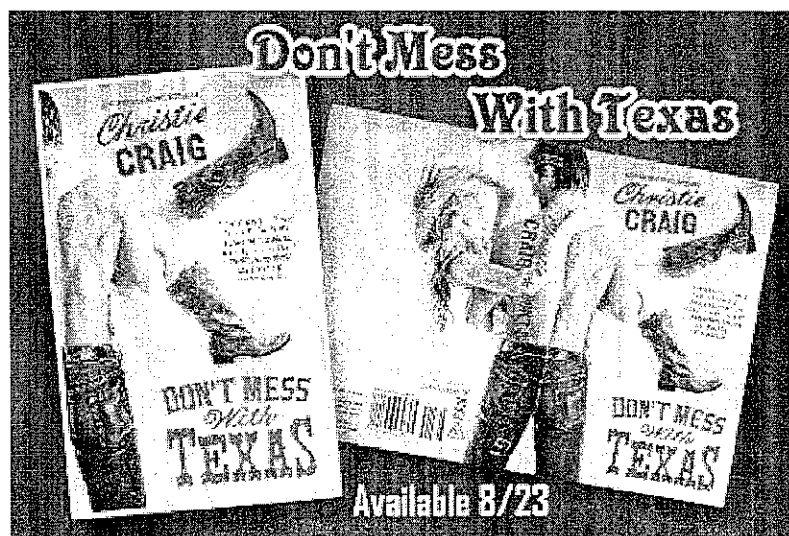
Check out **Killer Fiction** where Christie posts every other Tuesday, and stop by at Christie's and Faye's **writewithus** website for writers.

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**Don't Mess With Texas,
On Shelves - August 23rd**

Nikki Hunt thought her night couldn't get worse when her no-good, cheating ex ditched her at dinner, sticking her with the bill. Then she found his body stuffed in the trunk of her car and lost her two-hundred-dollar meal all over his three-thousand-dollar suit. Now not only is Nikki nearly broke, she's a murder suspect.

Former cop turned PI, Dallas O'Connor knows what it's like to be unjustly accused. But one look at the sexy-though skittish-suspect tells him she couldn't hurt anyone. The lead detective, Dallas's own brother, has the wrong woman and Dallas hopes a little late-night "undercover" work will help him prove it . . .

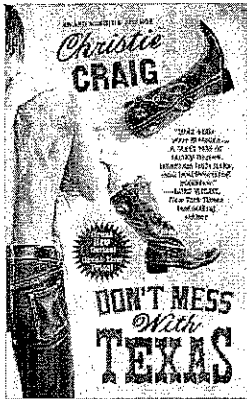
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by Christie Craig

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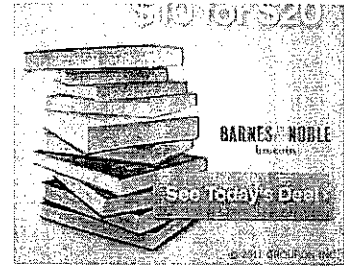
Head Over Heels
Jill Shalvis
\$7.99 BN.com Price

Overview

Nikki Hunt thought her night couldn't get worse when her no-good, cheating ex ditched her at dinner, sticking her with the bill. Then she found his body stuffed in the trunk of her car and lost her two-hundred-dollar man. All over his three-

Overview

thousand-dollar suit. Now not only is Nikki nearly broke, she's a murder suspect. Former cop turned PI, Dallas O'Connor knows what it's like to be unjustly accused. But one look at the sexy-though skittish-suspect tells him she couldn't hurt anyone. The lead detective, Dallas's own brother, has the wrong woman and Dallas hopes a little late-night "undercover" work will help him prove it . . .



Details

- Pub. Date: September 2011
- Publisher: Grand Central Publishing
- Format: Mass Market Paperback , 464pp
- Sales Rank: 35,197
- ISBN-13: 9780446582841
- ISBN: 0446582840

Meet The Author

Christie Craig, an Alabama native, is an award-winning, multi-published writer, multi-published photo journalist, motivational speaker, and writing teacher. Her non-fiction articles and photography have appeared in almost three thousand national magazines. A Golden Heart finalist, and a finalist in more than fifty RWA-sponsored contests, she has gained a well-deserved reputation for writing romance fiction that has both witty humor and a suspenseful, sexy tone.

Customer Reviews

Average Rating

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harstan

July 30, 2011

This is a fun Texas investigative romance

Her manta being "It's the right thing" to persuade her not to bolt, Nikki Hunt meets her former husband Brian and Sterns lawyer Jack Leon for dinner at expensive Venny's Restaurant after he pleaded with her that he made some mistakes. The gallery owner knows she is short paying bills like her Nana's cable and her BFF assistant Ellen's salary. This is why she is unhappy when Jack leaves her with the exorbitant tab. Mumbling she will kill him, Nikki goes to her car to find Jack dead in her trunk.

The police suspect Nikki killed her spouse. Former cop Dallas O'Conner empathizes with the beleaguered Nikki as he worked at Glencoe PD before being accused unjustly of a crime; now he works as a private investigator. He bet against her innocence until he saw her dinner is now the puke on the victim's suit. Since he was once falsely convicted of a crime, he tends to be very sympathetic to those who find themselves in the same position. While his homicide detective brother Tony works to solve the murder while dealing with his broken marriage to LeAnn, Dallas also looks into the killing and that of a related injured victim while dealing with his attraction to the prime suspect.

This is a fun Texas investigative romance that in some ways feels like a throwback to the madcap comedies of the 1930s. The story line is fast-paced from the moment the heroine vomits and never slows down as her knight in shining armor tries to prove her innocence while falling in love with "Leon's leftover". Fans will appreciate this terrific Texas two-step.
Harriet Klausner

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EXHIBIT D



Texas Department of Transportation

DEWITT C. GREER STATE HIGHWAY BLDG. • 125 E. 11TH STREET • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 • (512) 463-8585

August 9, 2011

Ms. Christie Craig
www.christie-craig.com

Re: Infringement and Dilution of DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS®

Dear Ms. Craig:

As you may know, the Texas Department of Transportation ("TxDOT") has used the trademark and service mark DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS® for over 25 years in connection various goods and services, such as anti-litter campaigns, books, magazines, clothing, beverage containers, etc.

Specifically, in 1985, TxDOT began running a series of high profile advertisements for the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark, featuring well-known actors, musicians, and other celebrities. These advertisements have been wildly successful, resulting in a marked reduction in littering in the State of Texas, and saving the state (and therefore taxpayers) millions of dollars that would have otherwise gone towards clean-up efforts. In addition, TxDOT has licensed use of the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark to certain third parties, particularly where the products or services offered thereunder further promote the mark and TxDOT's goals. For example, a book was previously published under the title "Don't Mess With Texas®", which chronicled the development of the slogan for TxDOT's anti-litter campaign.

In addition to such long-standing use, TxDOT has also obtained several United States trademark registrations to the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark.¹ See, e.g., U.S. Reg. Nos. 2627196, 2616831, 2619887, 3924369 or 3149283, among others, attached as **Exhibit A**.

TxDOT has spent years, and millions of dollars, promoting and advertising the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark and the various goods and services offered under that mark. TxDOT has won numerous awards and achieved widespread recognition for the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark and the advertising associated therewith. For example, studies have indicated that the

¹ TxDOT has statutory authority to own intellectual property pursuant to Transportation Code, Section 201.205.

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark is recognized and known by over 95% of the Texas population. In sum, there is no question that there is a tremendous amount of goodwill in the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark, and that the mark is famous.

Because trademarks and service marks constitute very important symbols relied upon by consumers, an owner of intellectual property has a responsibility to consumers to ensure that its marks remain reliable symbols for identifying the owner's products and services, and for distinguishing those products and services from the products and services of others. As I'm sure you can appreciate, unauthorized uses of intellectual property can reduce the distinctiveness and reliability of the marks for their intended purposes. For these reasons, owners of intellectual property must take steps to eliminate unauthorized uses of intellectual property.

The reason I am contacting you is because we recently became aware that you intend to offer a book or series of books under the name "Don't Mess with Texas." See **Exhibit B**. We have no record of authorizing your use of the valuable DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark in connection with your publication. As a result, your unauthorized use of the registered DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark in connection with your book constitutes an infringement of TxDOT's trademark and other rights, and will, among other things, impermissibly dilute the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark.

Given our longstanding use of and registrations to the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark, we must insist that you immediately stop using the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark, or anything confusingly similar thereto, in connection with your book, website, and all other materials.

Alternatively, you may have the option of licensing the slogan, provided the ownership of the slogan is attributed to TxDOT and there is an explanation of how the slogan and its purpose are linked with your story and the content and context of the work is acceptable to TxDOT.

If you choose to obtain a license, the licensing fee will be ten percent of your advance and a 5% royalty or no share of your advance and an eight per cent royalty. There are several terms which are non-negotiable and required by state law, including but not limited to non-exclusivity and TxDOT's option to renew the license after the first printing and at the agency's sole discretion.

In the event the licensing terms cannot be met, we demand that any books that are presently available online or in other retail outlets be immediately removed from sale and re-titled so as to avoid infringement and dilution of TxDOT's rights.

Please contact me within two (2) business days as to how you intend to comply with the above demands. If you fail to respond, or if you refuse to stop using the mark in connection with your book, website or other materials, the Texas Department of Transportation will take legal action as necessary to protect its valuable trademark rights. You may contact me at (512) 463-8630 or by email at Julie.King@txdot.gov.

This letter is without waiver of all rights and remedies of the Texas Department of Transportation, which are expressly reserved to the Texas Department of Transportation, a Texas state agency.

Sincerely,



Juliet U. King
Associate General Counsel

JUK:cd

Enclosures

cc: Jerral Wyer, Interim Director, TxDOT Travel Division

Brenda Flores-Dollar, TxDOT Travel Division

Grand Central Publishing Company
Attn: Matt Huben, Legal
237 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017-3140

Hachette Book Group
Attn: Rekha Ramani
237 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017-3140
Rekha.Ramani@hbgusa.com

Barnes & Noble
Attn: Brad Feuer, Vice President & Assistant General Counsel
122 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10111
Fax (212) 463-5683
bfeuer@bn.com

EXHIBIT A

Int. Cl.: 16

Prior U.S. Cls.: 2, 5, 22, 23, 29, 37, 38 and 50

Reg. No. 2,627,196

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Registered Oct. 1, 2002

TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS AGENCY OF THE STATE)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

PAMPHLETS AND BROCHURES IN THE FIELDS
OF LITTER PREVENTION AND LITTER CLEANUP,
IN CLASS 16 (U.S. CLS. 2, 5, 22, 23, 29, 37, 38 AND 50).

FOR: PRINTED MATTER AND PAPER PRO-
DUCTS, NAMELY STICKERS, DECALS, BUMPER
STICKERS, PAPER FOOD CONTAINERS, PAPER
BAGS, PLASTIC TRASH BAGS, PAPER AND PLAS-
TIC LITTER BAGS, GROCERY BAGS, PLAYING
CARDS; PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS, NAMELY,

FIRST USE 3-31-1986; IN COMMERCE 3-31-1986.

SER. NO. 75-981,469, FILED 10-16-2000.

JOANNA MATEJA, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

Int. Cl.: 42

Prior U.S. Cls.: 100 and 101

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Reg. No. 2,616,831

Registered Sep. 10, 2002

**SERVICE MARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER**

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-
LITTER PROGRAMS, IN CLASS 42 (U.S. CLS. 100
AND 101).

FOR: PROMOTING THE BEAUTIFICATION OF
TEXAS HIGHWAYS AND THE PUBLIC AWARE-
NESS OF THE NEED FOR LITTER PREVENTION
AND LITTER CLEANUP THROUGH THE DEVEL-
OPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF EDUCATION-
AL MATERIALS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

FIRST USE 11-30-1985; IN COMMERCE 11-30-1985.

SER. NO. 76-148,544, FILED 10-16-2000.

JOANNA MATEJA, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

Int. Cls.: 9, 14 and 20

Prior U.S. Cls.: 2, 13, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 36,
38 and 50

Reg. No. 2,619,887

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Registered Sep. 17, 2002

TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

FOR: DECORATIVE MAGNETS, IN CLASS 9 (U.S.
CLS. 21, 23, 26, 36 AND 38).

FIRST USE 3-9-2000; IN COMMERCE 3-9-2000.

FOR: JEWELRY, NAMELY LABEL PINS, IN
CLASS 14 (U.S. CLS. 2, 27, 28 AND 50).

FIRST USE 4-1-1995; IN COMMERCE 4-1-1995.

FOR: PLASTIC KEY CHAINS, IN CLASS 20 (U.S.
CLS. 2, 13, 22, 25, 32 AND 50).

FIRST USE 4-5-1997; IN COMMERCE 4-5-1997.

SER. NO. 76-148,549, FILED 10-16-2000.

JOANNA MATEJA, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

United States of America

United States Patent and Trademark Office

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

Reg. No. 3,924,369

Registered Mar. 1, 2011

Int. Cl.: 25

TRADEMARK

PRINCIPAL REGISTER

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TEXAS STATE AGENCY)
125 E. 11TH STREET
AUSTIN, TX 787012483

FOR: CLOTHING, NAMELY, SHIRTS, HATS AND CAPS, IN CLASS 25 (U.S. CLS. 22 AND 39).

FIRST USE 4-0-1986; IN COMMERCE 4-0-1986.

SER. NO. 76-160,856, FILED 11-7-2000.

MARY ROSSMAN, EXAMINING ATTORNEY



David J. Kappas

Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office

Int. Cl.: 21

Prior U.S. Cls.: 2, 13, 23, 29, 30, 33, 40, and 50

Reg. No. 3,149,283

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Registered Sep. 26, 2006

TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
(TEXAS STATE AGENCY)

125 E. 11TH STREET

AUSTIN, TX 787012483

FOR: BEVERAGE CONTAINERS, NAMELY
MUGS AND CUPS, IN CLASS 21 (U.S. CLS. 2, 13, 23,
29, 30, 33, 40 AND 50).

FIRST USE 12-14-2004; IN COMMERCE 12-14-2004.

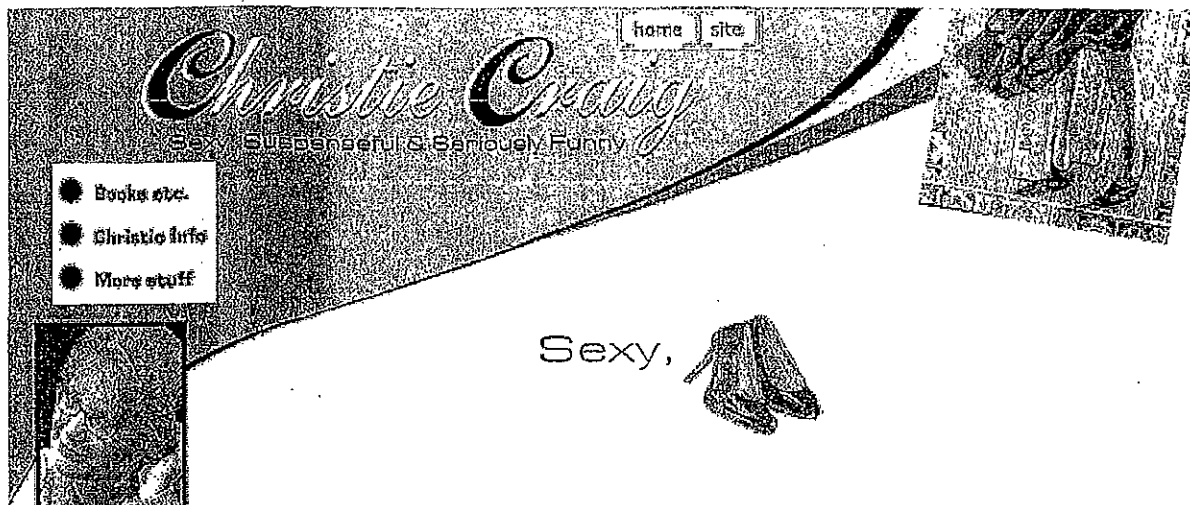
THE MARK CONSISTS OF STANDARD CHAR-
ACTERS WITHOUT CLAIM TO ANY PARTICULAR
FONT, STYLE, SIZE, OR COLOR.

OWNER OF U.S. REG. NOS. 2,616,831, 2,619,887,
AND 2,627,196.

SN 76-624,639, FILED 12-14-2004.

WON TEAK OH, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

EXHIBIT B



Sexy, 


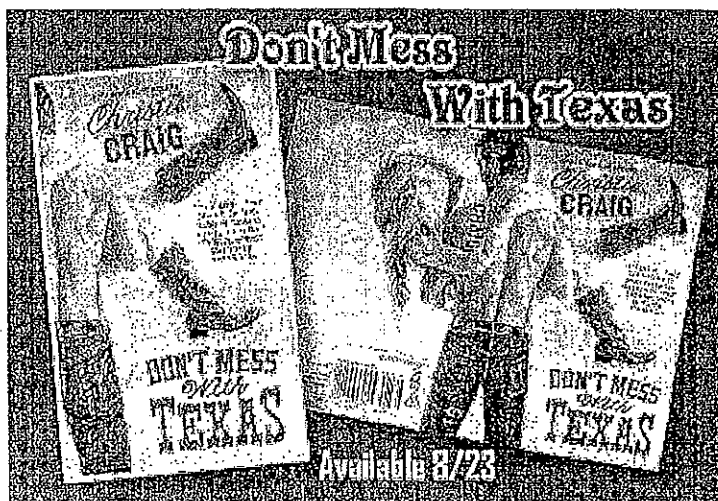
This site last updated April 28, 2011.

Coming Soon!

Check out **Killer Fiction** where Christie posts every other Tuesday, and stop by at Christie's and Faye's **writewithus** website for writers.

Check out some of Christie's magazine work at: **Fort Bend Lifestyles & Home**

Follow me at:

Don't Mess With Texas, Coming Soon, August 23rd

Nikki Hunt thought her night couldn't get worse when her no-good, cheating ex ditched her at dinner, sticking her with the bill. Then she found his body stuffed in the trunk of her car and lost her two-hundred-dollar meal all over his three-thousand-dollar suit. Now not only is Nikki nearly broke, she's a murder suspect.

Former cop turned PI, Dallas O'Connor knows what it's like to be unjustly accused. But one look at the sexy-though skittish-suspect tells him she couldn't hurt anyone. The lead detective, Dallas's own brother, has the wrong woman and Dallas hopes a little late-night "undercover" work will help him prove it . . .

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Don't Mess with Texas

by Christie Craig

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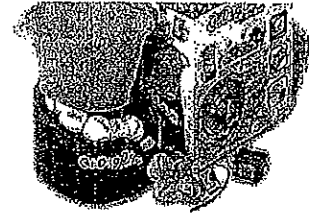
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Overview

Nikki Hunt thought her night couldn't get worse when her no-good, cheating ex ditched her at dinner, sticking her with the bill. Then she found his body stuffed in the trunk of her car and lost her two-hundred-dollar meal all over his three-thousand-dollar suit. Now not only is Nikki nearly broke, she's a murder suspect. Former cop turned PI, Dallas O'Connell knows what it's like to be unjustly accused.



Overview

But one look at the sexy-though skittish-suspect tells him she couldn't hurt anyone. The lead detective, Dallas's own brother, has the wrong woman and Dallas hopes a little late-night "undercover" work will help him prove it . . .

Details

- Pub. Date: September 2011
- Publisher: Grand Central Publishing
- Format: Mass Market Paperback , 464pp
- Sales Rank: 77,943
- ISBN-13: 9780446582841
- ISBN: 0446582840

Meet The Author

Christie Craig, an Alabama native, is an award-winning, multi-published writer, multi-published photo journalist, motivational speaker, and writing teacher. Her non-fiction articles and photography have appeared in almost three thousand national magazines. A Golden Heart finalist, and a finalist in more than fifty RWA-sponsored contests, she has gained a well-deserved reputation for writing romance fiction that has both witty humor and a suspenseful, sexy tone.

Customer Reviews

Average Rating

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July 30, 2011

herstan

This is a fun Texas investigative romance

Her mental being "It's the right thing" to persuade her not to bolt, Nikki Hunt meets her former husband Brian and Sterns lawyer Jack Leon for dinner at expensive Venny's Restaurant after he pleaded with her that he made some mistakes. The gallery owner knows she is short paying bills like her Rena's cable and her BFF assistant Ellen's salary. This is why she is unhappy when Jack leaves her with the exorbitant tab. Mumbling she will kill him, Nikki goes to her car to find Jack dead in her trunk. The police suspect Nikki killed her spouse. Former cop Dallas O'Conner empathizes with the beleaguered Nikki as he worked at Glencoe PD before being accused unjustly of a crime; now he works as a private investigator. He bet against her innocence until he saw her dinner is now the puke on the victim's suit. Since he was once falsely convicted of a crime, he tends to be very sympathetic to those who find themselves in the same position. While his homicide detective brother Tony works to solve the murder while dealing with his broken marriage to LeAnn, Dallas also looks into the killing and that of a related injured victim while dealing with his attraction to the prime suspect. This is a fun Texas investigative romance that in some ways feels like a throwback to the madcap comedies of the 1930s. The story line is fast-paced from the moment the heroine vomits and never slows down as her knight in shining armor tries to prove her innocence while falling in love with "Leon's leftover". Fans will appreciate this terrific Texas two-step.

Harriet Klausner

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EXHIBIT E



Rekha Ramani
Associate Counsel

August 10, 2011

Via Email and UPS

Ms. Julie King
Office of General Counsel
Dewitt C. Greer Office Building
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483
Julie.King@txdot.gov

Re: Claim Letter regarding "Don't Mess With Texas"

Dear Ms. King:

I'm responding on behalf of Grand Central Publishing, a division of Hachette Book Group, to your August 9th letter to our author, Christie Craig. Thank you for alerting us to the Texas Department of Transportation's "Don't Mess with Texas" anti-highway litter campaign and trademark registration in international class 16. Hachette respects the intellectual property right of others and takes your allegations very seriously. However, we have reviewed your letter, the trademark registration 2,627,196 and related prosecution file history, and the site www.dontmesswithtexas.org, and disagree with your assertion that Grand Central's publication of *Don't Mess with Texas* infringes or dilutes your client's trademark.

The book title, *Don't Mess with Texas*, is descriptive of the contents of the book and does not constitute a trademark use. Grand Central's forthcoming publication is a romance novel with a twist of suspense. Since we have not yet published the book, you are probably not aware that it involves a leading man who runs a private investigation firm called, "Don't Mess With Texas" -- hence the book title. This private investigation firm is central to the entire novel. I have enclosed an Advanced Reading Copy for your review. Courts have narrowly construed the application of the Lanham Act in the area of literary and artistic titles because of the serious concerns that could arise should it encroach on free expression. We trust that your client is not attempting to encroach upon our author's first amendment right to name the fictional private investigation firm Don't Mess with Texas.

In addition, there is no likelihood of confusion among consumers. Most Texans have become familiar with your client's campaign through anti-highway littering media campaigns, highway signage and bumper stickers. Our books, on the other hand, will be marketed and sold nationally to traditional book outlets and targeted towards romance novel readers and book clubs. It is highly unlikely that our respective target audiences would be confused between the source of our romance novel and your



Rekha Ramani
Associate Counsel

client's anti-highway littering campaign in Texas. There is nothing on the *Don't Mess with Texas* book cover or marketing materials that states or implies any association with your client or its anti-highway littering campaign. Nor does our cover make use of any Texas Department of Transportation or "Don't Mess with Texas" logos.

Finally, we note that trademark registration no. 2,627,196 is limited to "promotional materials, namely pamphlets and brochures *in the fields of litter prevention and litter cleanup.*" In addition, when the trademark examiner issued an Office Action objecting to your client's broad identification of goods in class 16 as "indefinite", your client overcame the objection by specifically identifying the applicable printed matter and paper goods to be covered by the registration -- "namely, stickers, decals, bumper stickers, paper food containers, paper bags, plastic trash bags, paper and plastic litter bags, grocery bags, playing cards". Books are noticeably absent from the list of goods.

Please be assured that Grand Central has no plans to use *Don't Mess with Texas* as the title for all of the books in this series; it is only being used for the first novel.

Please promptly confirm that your August 9th cease and desist letter to Ms. Craig will be retracted. Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this further. Nothing stated herein should be considered an admission of fact or waiver of any right, defense or remedy by Hachette or Christie Craig, all of which are expressly reserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rekha Ramani', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Rekha Ramani

Encl.

cc: Christie Craig

EXHIBIT F

his fingernail across the cut, he watched her face. "No pain?"

"No. I think you got it." She started to pull her foot away.

"Not so fast. I have to pour alcohol over it. And then the important part."

She rose on her elbow again. "What's the important part?"

He grinned. "Blow on it."

Her eyes brightened with humor. "You're gonna give me a blow job?"

He chuckled, admiring her daring sense of humor. Before he realized what he was doing, he brushed his hand under her pajamas and up her calf. The loose fit of her pants allowed plenty of room. Slowly brushing his hand back to her ankle, he picked up the alcohol and splashed a little on her foot.

"Ouch!"

He brought her foot to his lips and gently blew on it. Still propped up on one elbow, she met his gaze with hers and held it.

"Feel good?" His hand slipped up her leg again.

"Yeah." Heat flickered in her big blue eyes. Caught in her gaze, he pressed his lips to the side of her ankle again. "Is there any part of you that isn't soft?"

She didn't answer. His hand moved up her leg again. Noting the lack of stubble, he wondered if she'd shaved her legs for him. Anticipation set his blood afire and had his dick thickening.

She leaned back on his bed, but didn't stop staring at him.

"Soft feet. Soft legs." When she didn't pull away, he moved his hand higher, past the back of her knee.

She closed her eyes. Braver, he slipped his hand higher. The smoothness of her thigh took his breath away, and he heard her breath catch. She swiped her tongue across her lips. Her eyes remained closed and he noticed her nipples were tight and pebbled under her soft cotton top. Slowly, he reached his hand higher, inches from the treasure between her legs. He waited for her to tell him to stop, to catch his hand. She didn't.

Stretching out, keeping his hand inside her pajama leg, he rested on his shoulder beside her, and studied her face for the slightest sign that she didn't want this. The tips of his fingers touched the silkiness of her panties and his dick went from hard to rock hard. Running a finger over the top of the soft mound, he sensed the crinkle of hair beneath the smooth fabric of her panties. Lowering his touch, he felt sweet dampness behind the silk.

She moaned and her hips rose to deepen his touch. Deep was good. He pressed his lips to her closed eyes, and slipped his hand beneath the elastic band to touch moist skin.

"You're wet," he whispered.

"Feels... good," she said.

"Just enjoy it." He kissed the edge of her lips, and slipped his finger inside her tight opening. His dick grew harder, wanting to go where his hand was. But not yet. He wanted her wetter, lost in wanting him.

While his index finger moved in and out, he found the tight little nub and massaged it with his thumb. A light purr escaped her lips, and she tightened her thighs around his hand. "So good." She started to move against his hand.

"Not so fast." He moved his thumb from her hot button. "Let's make it last."

He started to pull his hand out and she muttered, "Don't stop."

"Not stopping. Just getting started." Panic stirred his chest when recalled he didn't have all day. He looked at the clock. His gut clenched. Twenty minutes before Nance showed up.

He slid a palm over her breasts. Caught her nipple between his fingers and tightened them. She opened her eyes and he saw the slightest flicker of doubt play in her baby blues.

"You okay with this?" he asked.

Nodding, she reached up and started unbuttoning his shirt from the bottom up. Loosening only one button, she ran her hand across his stomach then shifted lower. She slipped her hands inside his jeans. The tips of her fingers brushed against his aching dick, and it was his turn to hiss. "I think you're okay with it, too."

Working on losing the shirt, he smelled her scent on his hand. Unable to resist, he ran his thumb over his lips. When he saw her watching him, he took his finger deeper into his mouth. "You taste good."

Yanking his shirt off, he unzipped his pants. Then, wanting to see her, all of her—more than he wanted to lose his clothes—he changed directions. "You don't need this." He caught her shirt and pulled it over her head. Her breasts jiggled and while the idea of kissing his way down her body occurred to him, his patience—or time—didn't allow it. He lowered his lips to the round mounds of flesh, and took one tight pink nipple into his mouth. She moaned.

While his lips worked on her breast, he hitched his thumb in the elastic band of her pajama bottoms and

lowered them, panties included. She raised her hips and, in one quick sweep, they were off. Pulling back, leaving her nipple moist and tight, he let himself savor the sight of Nikki, deliciously naked.

"God, you're beautiful." He ran a hand over one breast, down her tight abdomen, and to the curve of her waist.

"Ditto," she whispered, gazing at his torso.

He scooted down a few inches, leaned on one elbow and circled a finger around her tight nipple, still wet from his mouth. Then he touched her slow, easy, memorizing the dips and curves of her upper body. Finally, lowering his hand to the patch of blond hair between her legs, he slipped his finger inside her cleft. Her moan came louder and she tightened her thighs around his hand. He pulled his fingers from her moist center and gently opened her legs. "I like to watch what I'm doing."

When her thighs relaxed and he saw all that moist pink flesh, his dick slammed against his zipper.

His gaze shifted from her, completely naked on his bed, to the clock. Ten minutes. Not enough time to give her the slow first time kind of sex she deserved, but asking for a rain check was out of the question.

"Condoms are in the bathroom." He shot off the bed.

Nikki heard him walk out. She couldn't ever remember being this aroused, this totally not caring if it was right or wrong. "Hurry," she muttered.

He appeared at the door seconds later, a small foil pack in his hands. She watched him shuck off his pants. His sex, so hard, bounced up and slapped against his abdomen. Swallowing, she realized Tyler hadn't been joking. There was plenty of Dallas to love.

The mattress bounced with an unexpected canine visitor. Bud dropped down beside her, resting his wrinkled face on his paws and staring at her.

"Down, Bud," Dallas snapped. The dog must have heard the seriousness in his tone, because he jumped off the bed.

Dallas stretched out beside her. "We have a problem." "Problem?" She glanced down at his sex, still standing completely erect.

He laughed. "Not that kind of problem."

Realizing he'd read her thoughts, she blushed. He kissed her cheek, then her neck. "We're short on time and I need to know how I can guarantee you'll be happy. Do I... use my fingers?" He ran a finger down her chest to circle her belly button. "B, use my tongue?" He leaned in and flicked his tongue at the edge of her lips. "Which I'm very good at," he added. "Or C, do you want me inside you?" He took her hand and wrapped it around him. She gripped the smooth, velvety organ and rubbed her thumb over its moist tip. He moaned and she loved knowing he was enjoying her touch.

"I've never been good at multiple choice questions. She moved her hand up and down his hardness, trying not to think and just act, to lose the embarrassment and replace it with boldness. "Is there not a D choice, all of the above?"

He grinned and caught her hand. "If you keep doing that, you're going to remove C from the option list."

"Wouldn't want to lose option C." She took the packet from him and ripped it open with her teeth. Then she rolled the thin piece of rubber over him.

As soon as the condom was in place, he rolled her

completely on her back and was on top of her. Keeping his weight on his elbows, he adjusted his legs until things were down south lined up. She felt the cool tips of the condom at her center. Closing her eyes, she pressed her head back into the pillow and waited to feel him enter her.

"No. Open those baby blues. I want to see you when I first enter you."

She did as requested and he pushed inside. Slow, easy. Even wet with want, his fit was tight, hitting nerve endings she didn't know she had. Her breath caught.

"You okay?" he asked, his voice strained as he slowly pushed inside.

"Yeah." She managed to say, but she was better than okay. A sense of rightness filled her chest with every slow and measured in-and-out stroke. So right she knew it had to be wrong. Emotion swelled in her chest. Emotion she didn't want to feel. But the tight pleasure building between her legs chased away all negative thoughts.

She wanted this.

"Damn, you feel good." He dropped his forehead against hers, his gaze staying on her eyes, as his strokes became harder, deeper.

She raised her hips to meet his and the sweet ache intensified. The pace increased, and she heard a rumble come from his throat. She wrapped her legs around his waist, and his next thrust brought him deeper inside her, sending the pleasure higher. No awkward movements, they moved together like dancers who knew each other's exact steps. Pushing toward something wonderful, something blissful.

"I can't last much longer," he growled.

He didn't have to. Pleasure exploded inside her and her

entire-body shook with sweet spasms of release. And with it came clarity. This was such a huge freaking mistake. His words from earlier rang in her head. *I'm not asking for forever.*

What was he asking for?

She'd played with fire and she hadn't just gotten singed. She was burnt. Burnt to a crisp.

He gasped, then rolled to the side, taking her with him. Neither moved for several seconds and then he put a hand on each side of her face and brought her lips to his. "That was—"

"A mistake," she finished. And instantly, for a thousand reasons, she wished she could take it back. And yet she meant it. She closed her eyes tight and vowed not to cry.

"No. Hell, no. Look at me, Nikki."

She opened her eyes.

"Why was this a mistake?"

Because I must still believe in forever.

She stared into his eyes. Because she was a smidgen away from falling in love with a guy who didn't want forever. "Because sex makes me ravenous and there's nothing to eat."

He laughed, and relief flashed in his eyes. "Would a chocolate-covered doughnut help?"

She forced herself to smile and lie. "Perfect."

Less than an hour later, Dallas was still reeling and almost giddy from the best damn sex he'd ever had. With a very nervous Nance at his side, he walked into the interview room of the Miller Police Department. His brother, sitting at the table, closed a file and stood up.

Dallas made the introductions. Tony, in complete cop mode, motioned for them to sit, and Dallas found his mood changing.

"Thanks for coming, Mr. Nance," Tony said.

"Your brother told me you were on my side," Nance said.

"Actually, I'm on the side of the law."

Nance looked at Dallas. "But the law thinks I'm guilty."

"Are you?" Tony asked.

"I haven't done shit," Nance said, his tone edgy, but honest. "I went for a jog at a park a few months ago, and the next thing I know I'm being slammed against the hood of a police car and told I robbed a store. And now you're trying to pin a murder on me."

"I just read your file," Tony tapped the folder. "Seems like your brothers have accumulated quite a rap sheet. Into gangs and everything. You gonna tell me you didn't get pulled into it?"

Dallas, seeing panic fill the kid's eyes, clenched his jaw to keep from telling Tony to back off. But down deep, Dallas knew his brother was doing his job, and today's meeting was intended to help.

"They're my half brothers," Nance said. "Ten years older than me. I was raised by my grandmother. But yeah, they tried to get me to follow in their footsteps, telling me I could have money and girls, but I didn't do it. I kept myself clean, sold ice cream at Baskin-Robbins and worked at a friggin' feed store, graduated and everything, and for what? To get accused of this shit anyway? And now 'cause of this, I lost my job. I got no money, no job, no girl, and I'm innocent."

to tell her the good news. For some reason, LeAnn had instantly liked Nikki and was always asking him about how things were going. Today he could tell her that Nikki was pretty much off the suspect list.

She stepped out and his breath caught. She wore a peach-colored sundress, one of those dresses that made a guy wonder how little was worn beneath it. She had her hair pulled up with one of those clippy things that women loved and men loved to remove. Not that her hair didn't look nice. Several strands of warm brown hair hung down to tease her shoulders and led the eye to ample cleavage the dress revealed. Oh, hell, she was hot. And now he was hot. And hard.

"You look...," *sexy as hell*, "great."

"Thanks." Her smile came off all sass. "I ordered Chinese. I hope that's okay."

She walked past him and he got a whiff of something she was wearing, something that smelled like the color of her dress, Peaches.

"Yeah," he said, and repeated his vow that she would make the first move.

They ate, and over dinner he told her about Nikki. "Thank God," she said. "She didn't deserve that crap." She cut him a glance. "Were you nice to her?"

"I didn't see her today, but when I saw her and Dallas at her gallery a few days ago, I was nice."

"Good." She started stacking plates. When she reached, her scoop neckline scooped a little more and gave him a wonderful view of her breasts. Warmth caught in his chest and spread lower. He couldn't help but smile at how happy just... looking at her made him feel. Happy to be this close. Not that he didn't want to get closer.

They did the dishes. Several times, purposely or accidentally, she bumped into him. Sweet torture. When they'd finished, she looked at him as if she had something to say, but then she blinked and started out of the kitchen.

"I think I'll go read." She looked back over her shoulder.

"More weight lifter stories?"

She grinned. "Maybe." And then she sashayed her cute little, peach-covered ass out of the kitchen.

He counted to ten, begged for willpower and then went to the extra bedroom to get ready for his shower. Hell maybe... just maybe tonight she'd join him. And if not, he was going to need a cold one. Of course, maybe it was time he take this game a step farther.

LeAnn plopped onto her bed and moaned into the covers. Would the man do it already? What did she have to do—put a sign on her back that said, "Will have sex, just try me?"

A knocked sounded at the door. She grabbed her book, yanked her dress top down a few inches and pulled up the hem a bit. "Come in."

He stepped in. She looked up and gasped.

"Gonna take a shower," he said, and walked his bare-ass self into the bathroom. "You're welcome to join me," he added over his shoulder.

As soon as the door clicked shut, she buried her face in a pillow and started laughing.

Then, feeling brave, she jumped off the bed, slipped the dress from her shoulders and went to see if he needed someone to wash his back.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

NIKKI HAD FORGOTTEN what it felt like to sit across the table from a guy who had eyes just for her. To feel the sting of embarrassment when her date looked at her like he was more interested in getting her naked than he was in eating.

She'd had him drive her by her apartment so she could get dressed. She had only one black party dress that suited the evening, but it fit really nice. She felt good in it. Dallas noticed, too. He hadn't stopped making love to her with his eyes. As conflicted as she was about where things between them were going, she decided that tonight she was going to enjoy herself.

But when dinner was finished and she stepped on the dance floor and into his arms, Nikki knew how imperative it was that she leave tomorrow. She wasn't falling in love with Dallas O'Connor, she was smack-dab in the middle of it. But for tonight she was going to pretend it wasn't going to end. Tomorrow, she'd pick up the pieces and try to put herself back together.

* * *

Tony heard the bathroom door open. He held his breath and prayed he hadn't imagined it. Seconds later, the door to the two-man shower squeaked open.

"Need someone to wash your back?" She sounded nervous.

He turned and saw her, naked and so damn beautiful it hurt to look at her. Warm steam rose around them, and the spray of water hit his lower back. His heart pounded as he reached out and pulled her against him. Her nipples were hard as they brushed across his chest. He removed the clip she still wore and her hair cascaded down around her shoulders.

"God, I missed you." His voice came out hoarse.

"Me, too," she said.

Leaning down, he brushed his lips against her mouth. He tasted the wine she'd drunk. He tasted the sweetness of the fortune cookie she'd eaten. He tasted LeAnn and nothing in his entire life tasted better. He wasn't sure how long they kissed—a minute, maybe five. Never long enough.

She ran her hand up his chest and touched the scar on the corner of his shoulder. He grabbed her hand and kissed her palm. Then he reached up and touched her breasts. They felt ripe and heavy and he wanted his mouth there. Then he knew what he'd missed more than anything. He knelt in front of her and kissed the top of her sweet mound.

He heard her moan. LeAnn had never been shy about letting him know what she liked, and she liked it when he used his tongue on her. He ran a finger down the sweet cleft of her sex. Felt the slickness of her wanting, and then touched her with his mouth.

He'd barely gotten started when she screamed out and collapsed against the tiled wall. Before he realized it, she'd slipped. He caught her, but they both went down, sitting on the floor of the shower.

"You okay?" he asked, laughing.

"Yeah," she said, breathing hard and grinning. "I think you knocked me off my feet."

She reached out and wrapped her hand around him, shifting it up and down, slowly. Then she leaned over. As her head came into his lap, he stopped her. "No, I want the first time to be inside you."

"Okay," she said. "But how about I just do this?" She leaned down and ran her tongue over the tip of his sex.

He caught her head and pulled her up. "Do that one more time and I swear I'll come."

"Poor thing," she teased and ran her finger over his tip again then popped the sweet little digit into her mouth and slowly pulled it out.

"You want me to explode right now, don't you?" Tony rose, turned off the water, pulled her up and carried her into their bedroom. And for the first time in almost nine months, he made love to his wife.

Slow sweet love that told her just how much he'd missed her. How much he loved her. How happy he was to be back in her life. And most important of all, that he would never leave her again.

Dallas couldn't wait to get that little black dress off Nikki. All night she'd teased him about what color her underwear was. He'd guessed black. He knew women liked matching things. But she swore she'd decided to be daring tonight. Maybe she'd worn red? Red was daring.

Oh, hell, he wanted to see her underwear, then he wanted to remove it and slide inside her. Him hard. Her wet. He wanted to make her scream his name—over and over again. Then he wanted her to promise him she wouldn't leave tomorrow. For a second, he considered asking her to move in with him, but that didn't feel right. Just thinking about it sent him into emotional overload.

He shoved that aside and tried to just think about the here and now.

When they stepped into his apartment, she spent way too long greeting Bud. "Hey, it's my time," Dallas complained.

Giggling, she stood and walked down the hall. "I'll be just a second."

When she stopped by the bathroom, he pulled her against his hard-on, letting her know how badly he wanted her. "Hurry."

Moving into the bedroom, he found the leftover rose petals he hadn't used the other night. He gave them a sniff test and then shook them over the bed. Dimming the lights, leaving just enough to enjoy the view, he removed his clothes and crawled in bed and waited. His dick saluted the ceiling. Damn, even he had to admit it was quite impressive. He thought he heard a door open, but he didn't see the light from the bathroom spill into the hall.

Footsteps sounded and he grew harder thinking about seeing her, wondering if she'd come in only wearing her underwear. Or would she save him the trouble of removing them? Either option appealed.

She appeared at the doorway, wearing something long. "What you got on?" He leaned on his elbow and hoped she'd be impressed with the wood he was packing.

She moved inside the room. "Not very much."

The voice.

"Shit!" He sprang up and grabbed for the lamp switch. Right before he turned it, the bathroom light spilled into the hall. Both lights flooded the room. His gaze shot to the doorway where Nikki stood deliciously naked. His gaze cut to Suzan—also naked, a trench coat around her feet.

Nikki looked at Suzan, then at him. Her eyes widened in shock.

Suzan looked at Nikki and her eyes widened in something less than shock.

Dallas tried to breathe. His lungs refused to work. Since he was fourteen, he'd fantasized about this happening. But this wasn't how it was supposed to go.

Nikki let out a jarring screech and covered herself with her hands.

Suzan smiled. "This could be fun."

Nikki looked at him with so much hurt, his chest gripped. Then she turned and ran. The bathroom door slammed.

Hold on to her, son. You'll regret it if you don't. His dad's words of wisdom played again in his head.

"Fuck!" Dallas jackknifed off the bed. His earlier hard-on was gone. Lost. Completely limp.

He ran to the bathroom door. "Nikki?" He tried to open it. It was locked. He could hear her breathing, as if she was hyperventilating.

Suzan, still naked, appeared at his bedroom door. "There's a problem, isn't there?"

"Yes! Get your coat on."

"I'm sorry," she said, but she didn't sound sorry. "I thought... we had a thing."

He tried to think how he could have let this happen. "Every other weekend," he snapped at her. "Your ex only gets the kids the first and the third weekend. You weren't supposed to be here." He had to work to keep from screaming.

"Since I didn't come last week, I found a sitter and thought I'd surprise you."

He raked a hand through his hair. "I want you to leave, okay? Leave the key, it's over. Got it?"

He tried not to sound furious at her, but he was. Or maybe it wasn't Suzan he was furious with, but himself. He'd fucked up. Royally.

When Suzan came out of his bedroom, she wore the trench coat. She looked at him and said, "Sorry." This time it sounded real. Not that it helped.

"Me, too," he said and he meant it, too.

"She's leaving, Nikki." He leaned his head on the door.

"She doesn't have to," Nikki called back. "I'm out of here."

About twenty minutes later, Nikki realized she couldn't stay in his bathroom forever, so she took a deep breath and walked out.

He stood leaning against the hallway, still naked. "That wasn't what it seemed."

"Really," she said, swearing on everything holy that she wasn't going cry. "Did I just imagine a naked woman standing in your bedroom?"

"No, but—"

"Then how is it not what it seemed?" Storming past him, she snagged her purse.

He moved in front of the door. "I haven't slept with her since I met you. You can't hold this against me."

Nikki nearly choked on her bread. What? No condescending remark about her lack of manners? Jack was playing nice. Jack never played nice unless he *really* wanted something.

Did he want her back that badly? It wouldn't change anything, but whose ego couldn't use stroking?

He picked up his linen napkin and dabbed at his forehead where she'd just noticed he was sweating. Sweating was right up there with playing nice. Jack didn't sweat.

Her pinching gut said something was up and it had to do with more than just her. She leaned in. "What's going on, Jack?"

Dallas O'Connor walked into the building that housed both his business and apartment. Stopping just inside the doorway, he waited. Five seconds. Ten. When Bud didn't greet him, Dallas looked over at the coffin against the nearby wall. Someone had opened the dang thing again.

He growled low in his throat, "Get out of there."

One soulful second later, Bud—short for "Budweiser"—raised his head from inside the coffin and rested his hanging jowls on the edge of the polished wooden box. The pain of being chastised flashed in his huge bug eyes. Bud, an English bulldog, hated being chastised.

"Out," Dallas said, lowering his voice. "It's not a doggy bed."

The prior owners of the building, which had been a funeral home, had left the damn casket when they moved out six months ago. Dallas had called and left numerous messages asking them to remove the dang thing, but no response. The last time he'd told them they had one more

week, and he was going to sell it on eBay. He was tired of having to explain the casket to his clients.

The dog leaped out of the coffin and barreled over to Dallas. After one swipe over the dog's side, Dallas glanced at his watch and shot back to the office. He found Tyler, one of his Don't Mess with Texas Private Investigations partners, listening to the police scanner, as he watched the television. Tyler's expression had worry stamped all over it, too.

"He hasn't called yet?" Dallas removed his gun from his holster and placed it in his desk—a habit he hadn't broken from the seven years he'd worked for the Glencoe Police Department. Seven years he wished he could get back. The only good thing that had come from those years was the friendship of his PI partners, Tyler and Austin.

Tyler glanced away from the television. "Not a word. Any luck at the park?"

"There were two female joggers, but neither of them fit the description Nance gave."

Frowning, Tyler leaned back in his chair. "I'm afraid we're not going to get anything to save this kid. He's going to go down for robbery."

"It's not over." No way would Dallas let that innocent boy do time. But right now, both he and Tyler should be worried about one of their own. Dallas motioned to the police scanner. "Have the cops been called out yet?"

Tyler nodded and concern pinched his brows, making the two-inch scar over his right eye stretch tighter. "Thirty minutes ago."

"Shit," Dallas said. "Why the hell hasn't he called?"

"You know Austin," Tyler said. "He's a lone wolf."

"That's not how we operate," Dallas said, but in his gut

four years she'd loved him. Adored him. Her world had revolved around him, trying to make him happy, trying to be the wife he wanted, and then he broke her heart. "Don't think about it."

"Don't think about what?" a male voice asked from the door.

Dallas, shirtless, parked between Austin's and Tyler's cars in front of the office. Grabbing his hurled-on shirt from the floorboard, he hurried inside. Bud, his tongue hanging out and his whole short and stocky body wagging in joy at his master's return, met him at the door.

"Hey, Bud." Kneeling, he patted the dog. "No!" Dallas said when the canine went straight for his shoes as if he smelled something appetizing. In a hurry, Dallas stood and walked toward the office where he'd heard voices. Bud followed—his paws clicking against the hardwood as they went, and his nose still sniffing the air.

Popping his head in the office door, Dallas said to his partners; "Do me a favor and Google a Nikki Hunt and give me the highlights of what you find. Then get me the address to Venny's Restaurant while I take a really, really fast shower." He met Austin's gaze. "Good job on the Nance-case. I owe you a beer."

Tyler tapped into his computer. "Nikki Hunt, come to Papa." He looked up. "What's up? Did the woman steal the shirt off your back?"

"Not quite," Dallas said. He'd tell them later and give them a good laugh—not that he thought it was all that funny. But the guys at the scene hadn't stopped laughing when he left. Frowning, Dallas headed down the hall with Bud following. Home, sweet home.

When Dallas had found the building and approached Tyler and Austin about opening Don't Mess with Texas, their own PI agency, both guys had flinched at the price of the building. Dallas remedied that by paying the extra fifty thousand and having a portion of the building converted into a small apartment.

Stepping into his bathroom, he started to toss his shirt into the dirty clothes but tossed it in the garbage instead. Kicking off his shoes, he set them up on the counter, away from Bud. Undressed, not even waiting for the water to warm, he popped into the shower, lathered, rinsed, and then grabbed a towel.

Half-dressed moments later, he opened the door that led into the hallway back to the office. "Get anything?" he called.

"There's two Nikki Hunts," Tyler called back. "One's a dancer at a men's club—very hot—the other's an artist and almost as hot. Which is she?"

"You know which one we're voting for, don't you?" Austin called out.

Dallas slipped a shirt over his head and envisioned the woman back at the parking lot. She'd been hot, but was she the stripper kind of hot? Were strippers that soft?

"I don't know," he answered and ran a hand through his wet hair. "They both local?"

"Almost," Austin answered. "The stripper's in Houston."

"Blond?" Dallas offered.

"Both blond," Tyler's laughter rang out. "Wait, I know. Is she a C or double D?"

"C," Dallas answered.

"The artist wins," Tyler answered.

you know how long it's been since I've been happy? Oh, and I love your body. I really love your body."

She smiled. "I love you, too."

"And my body?" he asked, his blue eyes twinkling with sexy humor.

She laughed again. "I love your body, too." She pressed a quick kiss on his lips. "No more one-day-at-a-time crap?"

"Oh, hell no." He pulled her close again. "We're going for the long haul."

TEASER OPENER

TK

CHAPTER ONE

"SPIDERS. DEFINITELY SPIDERS."

"Don't forget snakes."

"Trust me, it's clowns." Zoe Adams removed her waitress apron and added her two cents to the conversation the other waitresses of Cookie's Café were having on their biggest fears. She plopped down on one of the stools lining the breakfast counter, and pulled out her tips to count them. She hoped she had enough to pay the rent. Looking up at the other diner employees, she added, "And considering my regular gig is that of kindergarten teacher, I've had to face that fear more times than I care to admit."

"I'd take a clown over a spider any day of the week," said Jamie. Like Zoe, she was in her mid-twenties.

"I can step on a spider," Zoe said looking from Jamie to Beth and Melinda. "Clowns are too big for my size sixes." She held up her foot. "I don't know what it is, but I see one and it's like I hear scary music and my mind starts flashing *Friday the 13th* images." In truth, clowns weren't her biggest fear. Small, dark places scared Zoe more than anything. Not that she'd ever share that with the ladies at

"I heard that the old man isn't doing so well. The kids and grandkids are already fighting over his inheritance. Lucky for me, all I've got is this run-down café, and neither of my kids want anything to do with it."

"It's not so run-down," Zoe said. "Best food in town." She spooned another dumpling and a big chunk of stewed chicken into her mouth.

Dixie chuckled. "That's because you're not a citified gal-like my kids. My son ran off to California to learn to talk like they do on the six o'clock news. Works for a radio station out there. Boy's ashamed of his southern roots. And my daughter—you wouldn't catch a dumpling within six feet of her lips. Says she's allergic to carbs."

Zoe frowned. "I haven't met a carb I haven't loved. Guess it shows, too. I'll bet I've gained five pounds since I started working here."

"And you're wearing it well, too, honey. You should see the guys checking out your butt when you walk away." Dixie looked back at the computer screen. "If you're real curious about the Bradfords, you should ask those PIs who come in for my chili cheeseburgers on Tuesdays. They do something for the Bradfords."

Zoe's interest peaked. "What PIs?" She surely didn't have money to hire a private investigator, but if they had knowledge of the Bradfords, she could at least ask them some questions. How much would they charge just to talk to her? Nothing, she hoped.

"Those three hunk-a-hunk men, two dark haired and one blond. All of them drool worthy, especially that Tyler Lopez. They own that PI agency, same name as the litter campaign, Don't Mess with Texas." Dixie shook her head. "Are you seriously telling me you haven't noticed them?"

Zoe tried to think. "They only come in on Tuesdays?" While she didn't recall them, she mentally stored away the title of the agency.

Dixie dropped her spoon in her bowl. "Girl, you are either blind or a lesbian not to have noticed them."

"Neither. Self-preservation. Just mending a broken heart," Zoe said honestly. "I'm not sure men are worth the risk so I've trained myself not to notice things like sexy bedroom eyes or wide shoulders." But she was getting a little breathless just thinking about it. Maybe she should reconsider dating again. If for no other reason than to have someone call her every now and then, and make her cell phone worth its monthly charge.

"Oh, honey, these would be worth it. Then again, 'cause I like ya, if you noticed them too much I'd reel you in so fast you'd leave skid marks on my linoleum."

"What's wrong with them?" Zoe tried to feign only a mild curiosity while she pushed another dumpling around her bowl. But on the inside she was chomping at the bit and felt her excitement growing by leaps and bounds. This might be her one big break. The one that answered the questions Zoe had been looking for all her life—questions that had exploded after seeing the special on the unsolved mystery on the Bradford kidnapping and murder.

God knew all her other plans had seemed to fail. Phone calls to the Bradford businesses, a visit to their lawyer, and even a couple of drop-in visits to the mansion—not that she'd gotten past the security gate. The last time she'd been told by one security guard that if he saw her there again, he was calling the cops.

Heck, she'd even tried following the limo when they'd left the house, and got herself a nice little ticket

for running a red light that she didn't run. The cop who gave her the ticket suggested she go find another old fart to attempt to seduce because Mr. Bradford wasn't in the market for an Anna Nicole.

"Nothing wrong with them if you like suspected murderers." Dixie arched her painted brow.

"They're murderers?" Zoe asked.

"I said suspected. They used to be cops. Supposedly they got involved in some seedy drug deals, and then they got arrested for brutally murdering this couple. Practically decapitated the woman." She ran a finger across her neck. "It was big news in town. Then they got convicted and went to jail."

Zoe reached up to touch her neck and felt her jaw fall open a bit. "And what? They escape every Tuesday just for your chili cheeseburgers?"

Dixie laughed. "Hey, my cooking's that good. But actually, they got let go."

"So they're not guilty?" Zoe really hoped that was the case. If she was going to look them up, and you could bet she was, she'd like it if they weren't really murderers.

"Well, that depends on who you talk to. You know small towns, folks around here get one thing in their mind and changing it is about as easy as chewing glass. My neighbor has a son-in-law who works for the Glencoe Police Department where they worked. According to him, they had those three down and dirty. But then they got themselves... What you call that when the governor lets someone go?"

"Pardoned?" Zoe asked.

"No, the other word. Oh, yeah. Exonerated. That's what they got."

"Dixie," Jamie called from out front. "Lunch crowd is dripping in."

"Guess I'm on again." Dixie stood up and pressed a hand on Zoe's shoulder. "I like you, kid. I really wish you'd stick around here."

Emotion filled Zoe's chest. Reaching back, Zoe put her hand on top of Dixie's. "I like you, too. But I've a job waiting for me in Alabama."

As soon as Dixie disappeared, Zoe sat there a few minutes letting that wonderful feeling of hearing Dixie's words stir in her chest. Nothing like feeling someone actually cared about you.

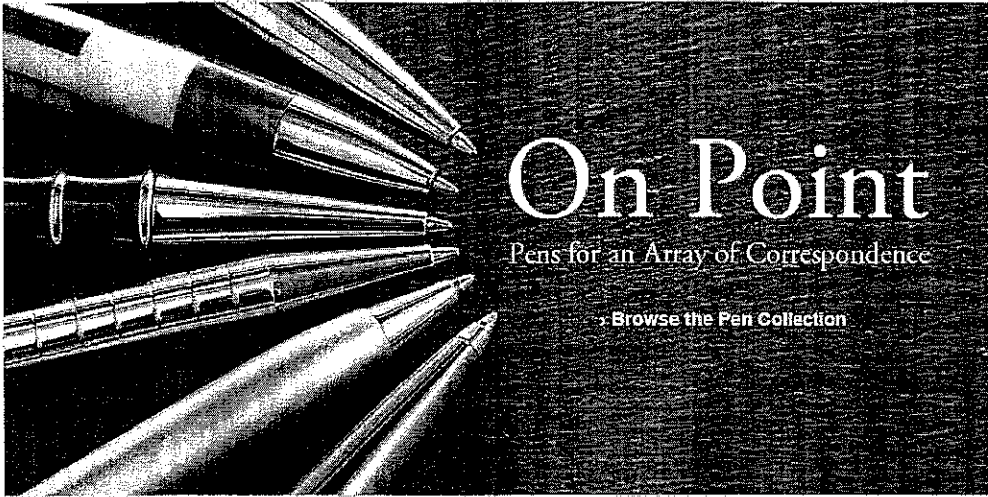
Then she shifted her thinking gears and wondered if she should wait until Tuesday and hope the PI threesome showed up, or if she should take matters into her own hands. A surge of impatience stirred inside her and she hit the Google search engine. Typing in the agency name, she whispered, "Come to Mama." Then she reached up and touched her neck again, hoping her impatience didn't lead to her losing her head. Figuratively, of course.

Less than thirty minutes later, Zoe parked in front of the Don't Mess with Texas building. The sign in the window read they were open. The fact that her little Google search informed her that until recently the place of business had housed a funeral home almost seemed absurd. Convicted—albeit exonerated—murderers had bought an old funeral home to house their business. Was there not something slightly off about that? Maybe three angry ex-cops making a point to the townsfolk who'd judged them unfairly?

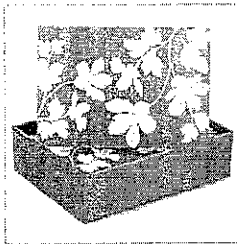
But slightly off, or angry men or not, she wanted

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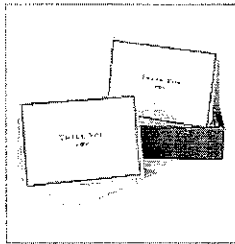
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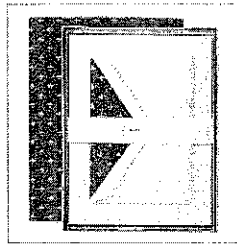
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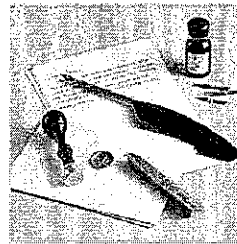
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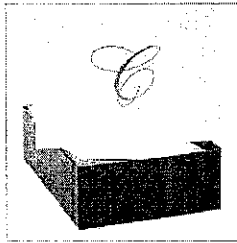
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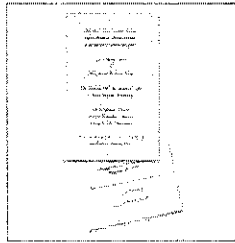
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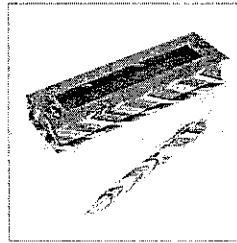
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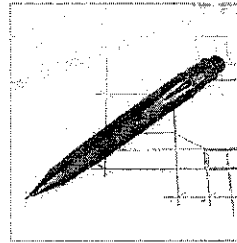
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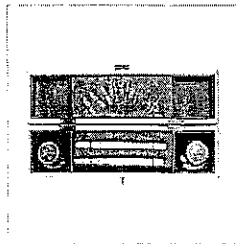
› Invitations & Announcements



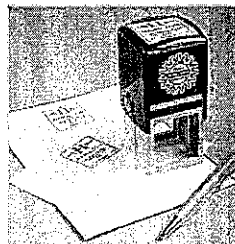
› Pens



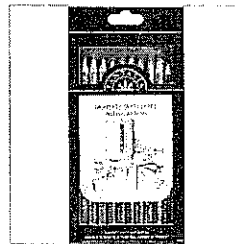
› Pencils



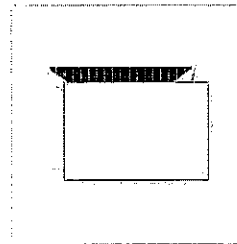
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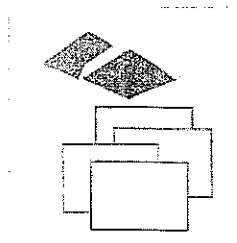
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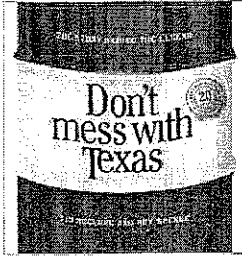
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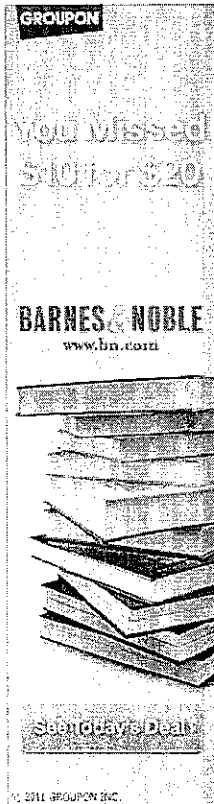
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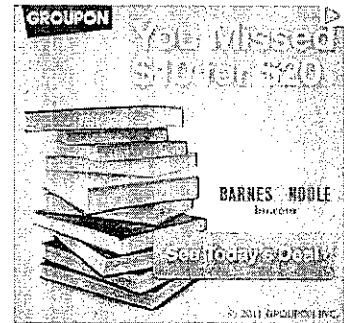
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Overview

In December 1985, a bumper sticker bearing the words "Don't Mess With Texas" began appearing on pickup trucks across the Lone Star State. There was no explanation, no sponsor, just those four words and a small red, white, and blue Texas flag.

Fast-forward twenty years to 2006. Today, the longest-running public service campaign in Texas is also the most successful anti-litter campaign in history. Until now, only a handful of people knew the true stories behind the legend: the stories of famous commercials and the stories about dozens of the biggest and brightest Texas stars who donated their time and considerable talents to help Texas reduce litter on its highways by an astonishing 72 percent.

Advertisement



Details

- Pub. Date: September 2006
- ISBN-13: 9780972282512
- Publisher: Idea City Press (GSD&M) (GBG Press)
- ISBN: 0972282513
- Format: Hardcover , 85pp
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EXHIBIT H

as 1985 in connection with anti-litter campaigns, and has continuously used the mark in connection with those goods or services since that date. TxDOT has also used the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks in connection with printed materials and clothing as of 1986, as well as in connection with many other items as diverse as key chains, jewelry, beverage containers, decorative magnets, metal signs, flashlights or luggage tags since that time. TxDOT has continuously used the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks in connection with these goods or services since the dates of first use set forth in the respective registration certificates.

4. The DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks have become distinctive of the TxDOT's goods and services through TxDOT's substantially exclusive and continuous use in commerce, or through such licensed use of the mark that has been granted by TxDOT (for example, TxDOT licensed use of the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark for use in conjunction with a book regarding TxDOT and the creation of the mark that is currently offered and sold by at least one of the named defendants).

5. TxDOT's DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks were distinctive for the goods and services offered thereunder, and famous, by virtue of the advertising, promotions, marketing, and expenditures by TxDOT since 1985, as indicated by the exhibits attached to the Complaint. All of the exhibits from TxDOT that are attached to the Complaint are true and correct copies of the documents they purport to be. The DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks were distinctive prior to the proposed publication of Defendants' book entitled "Don't Mess with Texas."

6. By 1996, for example, TxDOT had been using the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks for approximately 11 years. In that time frame, TxDOT had spent in

excess of \$20 million in publicizing and advertising its goods and services under the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark.

7. TxDOT has used its advertising budget to establish its presence in print media, television, and radio. For example, television ads featuring TxDOT's trademarks have been viewed in virtually every city and town in Texas since 1985. As a result of such widespread usage, a survey found that the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark was recognized by over 95% of the population in Texas alone.

8. As a result of the extensive use, promotional activities, publicity, recognition and revenues, the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks became distinctive of the goods and services of TxDOT well prior to the proposed publication and sale of the book entitled "Don't Mess with Texas."

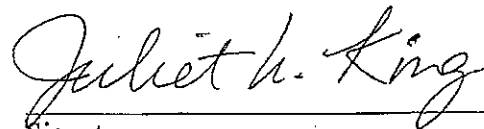
9. TxDOT's use of the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS trademarks in connection with various goods or services has been open, obvious and widespread, and occurred for years prior to the Defendants' plan to publish a book with a title that is the same as TxDOT's famous mark. Defendants not only knew of TxDOT and its DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS marks, Defendants purposefully and intentionally refer to the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark in the context of the book, and in connection with TxDOT's services (see p. 436 from the book, which is attached as an exhibit to the Complaint).

10. Defendants' book is a "romance novel," which refers to various sexual acts and states of sexual arousal. The DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark is used in connection with more "family friendly" advertising and products, and not only does not convey the messages or themes contained in the book, TxDOT does not want its famous

mark to convey such a message or theme, or be associated with such subjects.

11. If Defendants are allowed to publish their book entitled "Don't Mess with Texas," consumers will be confused, and will think that TxDOT has sponsored, approved, or is otherwise affiliated with, Defendants and the book at issue. If Defendants are allowed to publish their book entitled "Don't Mess with Texas," the mark will no longer serve to identify and distinguish TxDOT's products and services; instead, the book title will create a likelihood of association with TxDOT's mark, will impair the distinctiveness of TxDOT's famous Mark, and will harm the reputation of TxDOT's mark. As a result, irreparable harm will result to TxDOT, the State of Texas, and to the valuable goodwill inherent in the DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS mark.

12. All statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further, these statements are made with the knowledge that willful, false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment or both, under § 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code.



Signature

Juliet U. King

Printed Name

Associate General Counsel

Title

August 19, 2011

Date