



Feeling Blue

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Category: Romance, Adult, Crime And Mafia

Description: As a gang member and a professional at breaking the law, Blue had encountered many lawyers, and he'd hated them each and every time. On top of them constantly using their knowledge to conspire against him, they were typically old, ugly, and a pain in his side...so why was he so captivated with Forever?

Maybe It was the fact that she was anything but old, ugly, and a pain. She was gorgeous. The most beautiful woman he'd ever seen, and a fighter. The single-handed champ in the fight for his life. Never relenting, never wavering, and never leaving him in the battle alone. Just when he thought he was the biggest gangster, she waltzed her pretty little self into his life, proving him wrong. If he was big, she was the biggest, and Blue wanted nothing more than to prove It to her. After a painful breakup that shattered her world, Forever rebuilt herself from the ground up, stronger, wiser, and determined never to fall for the wrong man again. She's focused, independent, and thriving in her quiet life. But when she stumbles upon Blue, the street-smart, smooth-talking thug with a past, the sparks ignite instantly. Luckily for her, she didn't technically fall for him. She walked. Walked right into the prison and right into a world she wasn't quite ready for...or was she?

In a world that says they don't belong together, they'll risk everything for a second chance...because sometimes, the good girl does love the thug... and this time, she's not running.

Total Pages (Source): 101

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She may be small, but she's the biggest

Forever Maverick

“For the love of God!” Forever’s eyes squinted as beads of sweat covered the top of her lip. “Will you please stop?” she finally yelled from the pit of her stomach.

Light gray eyes shot to her in fear while two glove covered hands rose in surrender next. “I sorry, ma’am. I not do good job for you?” Helena, the Brazilian esthetician who had been trying to rip her soul from her body for the past two minutes, asked in broken English.

With her eyes being just as weary as Forever’s, Forever momentarily felt bad for yelling and considered taking her abrupt halt back, but the fiery feeling of pain circling the lips of her vagina said otherwise. She’d been getting waxed since her freshman year of college, and never in all her years had one been rendered that ruthless. Forever didn’t know whether Helena was new, inexperienced, or downright hated her, but she’d literally been trying to kill her since she’d walked in there.

Forever momentarily wondered had she somehow, someday, slept with Helena’s man in the past, and she’d found out, because that had to be the only reason, she’d ripped her vagina into threads without remorse. It literally felt like the ring of fire between her legs, and she wanted to slap the piss out of Helena for igniting it. As pretty as Helena was, Forever wouldstill rather see her with a black eye, busted lip, and a bandage over her own lady parts for lighting that match amid her thighs like that.

I wish Goody was here. She'd slap the taste out of her mouth for me.

"I'll do it for you," a deep voice came out of nowhere.

Forever's head whipped to the side rapidly in search of the voice. It was familiar and comforting. It was his voice, but what was he doing there? She'd assumed she'd been alone. Furthermore, had she made that Goody comment out loud? In a rush, Forever's eyes rotated to Helena. She was still down there doing one thing or another, but not looking at Forever, so surely, she'd only thought that remark. But...if she had, then how had he heard it? And what in the world was he doing there?

That breathtaking half smile curved one side of his face as he stared down at her, obviously observing her discomforting confusion. One hand tucked deep into his tailored suit pocket, showing a small portion of his waist and wide sculpted abs. Even through his undershirt and dress shirt, Forever could still see the definition of his stomach, and she loved and missed it to death. His size and mysteriousness taking over the entire room.

"Close your mouth, I'm here," he attempted to soothe her again with those beautiful lying lips.

"But, why? How?"

Marcellus' hand rubbed over the top of her head, smoothing her straight hair down over the small pillow she'd been resting on. His brown skin smooth and glowing like it always did, while his facial hair lay manicured to perfection.

"Because you asked me to come."

"When?"

Forever frowned in perplexity. She hadn't spoken to Marcellus in months, and even then it had been strained, so there was absolutely no way she'd requested his presence to her wax appointment. Especially all the way in California...unless she did. Did I tell him to come to California?

"Yes, you did."

Knitted brows and squinted eyes were all she could muster as she glared at him. "Why do you keep doing that?"

"Doing what?" he questioned with that sickening composure he had no matter what and no matter when.

"Hearing my thoughts."

"Because I can hear them. I'm inside of your body, Forever."

"No, you're not."

"If that's what you want to tell yourself."

Forever rolled her eyes in a huff before looking down to hurry Helena along, but she was no longer there.

"It's just you and me, Forever." Marcellus lifted her from the bed and sat so that she was cradled in his arms. "Like it should be."

"Tell that to yourself, because the last time I checked, it was you, me, and your wife." She tried pushing herself from his lap unsuccessfully.

"It was always just you and me, Forever. I love you,"

“Oh, hell no.” She shook her head adamantly, not the least bit interested in hearing any of his lies.

“You don’t love me?”

“I used to, but not anymore. You ruined that.”

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“How can I fix it?”

Forever’s mind went blank as she lay in his arms, staring up at his face. She’d been so in love with that face at one point. Wanted to live and breathe in that face and still did, sometimes in her inside voice, but out loud where it counted, she was done with him. Marcellus nearly hurt her beyond repair, and it had taken every ounce of strength she had and an overwhelming amount from God to get her through it.

“You can’t. Leave me alone.”

Forever tried once again to get out of his lap, but he held her tighter. Before long, she and Marcellus were participating in a full tug of war with her body, her trying to move and him desperately trying to make her stay. When she could do nothing else to make him free her, she began kicking and screaming wildly. Forever kicked so hard that she ended up falling with a loud thud to the floor.

“Oh, my god!” Forever yelped with her hands hitting the floor to catch herself.

In a haste to catch her breath and make sense of what was going on, Forever rose to her knees and leaned over the side of her bed. With her eyes still squinted in confusion, she circled her room slowly until it all made sense. She’d been dreaming. A wave of relief covered her as she wiped her hand over her forehead before allowing it to drop onto the bed.

“Thank you, Jesus,” she sighed to herself with closed lids.

Even with her heart still beating wildly in her chest, Forever was thankful that it had

all been in her head. She'd come too far and done too much to allow Marcellus and his conniving self back into her space. It had taken months of prayer, fasting, and even burning sage to rid her life of him, only for him to try to pry his way back through her subconscious state. Not happening!

“Lord, I know these nightmares are stress, or maybe they’re not, but I know whatever it is, you can heal me and fix it. I want to be at my best. I have to be at my best, so please touch my heart. Hear the prayers I’m unable to say, but need you to acknowledge. He’s in the past, God, and you’ve blessed me anew, and I’m grateful for it. I want him. The new him. The one that wants me back. Jesus, make me good for him, and him for me. You made us both, so you know more than anyone what we both need in order to be right for one another. Please, God, please. I love you more than this universe you’ve created. Amen.”

Forever lay on the side of the bed for a few more minutes before pulling herself to her feet and trekking toward the bathroom. As she stood staring at her reflection in the mirror, she questioned herself and everything she’d ever known. Was she really ready for this? Ready for a new love, a new life, a new man? Her head dropped as she exhaled with rolling eyes.

“Yes, Forever, you are. Get it together.” She pepped herself up some more before turning and heading for the shower.

By the time she finished and was dressed to leave, she looked around the guest room once more to make sure everything was in place and nothing she needed had been left behind. When she was sure she had it all, she joined her sister, Goody, and brother-in-law Jerrico in the kitchen. Like the lovers they were, they were directly in each other’s faces, giving not an ounce of personal space.

Goody, seated on a bar stool near the table he was standing at. The large knife hung loosely from his hand, dripping with fruit juice, as he fed a piece of pineapple to her

sister.

“Umm,” she moaned seductively while sucking his fingers deeper into her mouth.

“That’s so sweet.”

“Like you,” Jerrico told her as he pecked her forehead and pulled his finger from her mouth. “Want more?”

“I always want more.”

The daring smirk on her face said that she wanted had absolutely nothing to do with the pineapple she’d been given, and everything to do with the love they constantly made. That Forever knew for sure. She’d been occupying their guest room for the past month, and sex was at an all-time high in their household. Though they were newlyweds, there was no way in the sane world that there was that much sex to be had.

“Y’all, please don’t start. We have to go.”

Her sister’s goofy grin said everything her mouth didn’t, while Jerrico gave a casual smile before pushing the tray of freshly sliced fruit toward her. Next to it was a bowl of yogurt and granola.

“Brain food.”

Forever’s mouth watered at the sight of the light breakfast. It was what she needed. On top of her nerves nearly shaking her to death, her stomach was too jittery to have anything heavy.

“Figured you couldn’t stomach too much today.”

“I see why my sister loves you so much,” Forever told him while taking her seat at the table. “You’re so perfect.”

“Yeah, he is. Perfect and fine, bitch. Perfect and muthafucking fine,” Goody openly lusted over her husband. “Jerrico, can you get me pregnant again? You so fine it makes me wanna fuck and have your babies.”

Jerrico and Forever both laughed at her bluntness. It was typical Goody, and as much as she didn’t understand it, Jerrico loved that filthy mouth. With him being so mild-mannered and soft spoken, one would never know that he was madly in love with a female rapper who cursed more than the law should allow.

“You wanna have my baby, Paradise?” The sexual tease that accompanied Jerrico’s words had Forever squeezing her thighs together.

As sexy as he sounded, saying that she wanted her sister to have his baby too. Damn! Already hanging on by a thread, Forever looked at her bowl of food to distract her from what she knew was about to happen in front of her. It never failed. Her nasty sister would start, he’d fall for it, and Goody, being Goody, would take it too far. Further than Forever’s sex-deprived body could take that morning.

“Hell yeah, on the second round. I wanna spend the first one sucking dick while you ask me that again.”

Forever watched Goody stand from her chair and walk to Jerrico like a bitch in heat. As soon as she was close to him, he grabbed her up and carried her down the hall.

“Forever, we’ll be back!”

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“Hurry up! Y’all make me sick!” Forever hollered back just as she heard the door to their bedroom close.

A giggle escaped her as she shook her head at the pair. Since she already knew the routine, instead of rushing, she removed her iPad and law books from her bag and reviewed the notes she’d made for court. It was the biggest day and case she’d ever worked on, and she was so nervous that she could barely sit still. The only thing that was keeping her from floating out of her chair right then was the fact that she knew she was ready.

Not only had she been studying the case, the inmate, and the previous trial recordings, but she’d been consulting and working hand in hand with one of the best appeal lawyers in the country. Hope had been on her harder than she’d been on herself, which was saying a lot, because she nailed herself to the cross anytime her current case came to mind.

Winning would mean everything to her for more than one reason. The first one being because she was a fresh lawyer, early in the law game, and winning would be such a catalyst in her career. The second reason was that this was her baby she was grinding for. Zurich Rose. Her Blue-Blue. She needed him as he needed her, and the only way they’d be able to make good on all the promises they’d made to one another was to win his appeal.

“You got this,” she whispered to herself. “God, please let me have it.”

As if knowing what she needed to get her mind right, her phone rang, startling her from her prayer. When Forever retrieved it from her bag and saw Calvary’s number,

she answered in a hurry. He was her other little brother-in-law who worked at the prison where Blue was being housed and had been the middleman for her and Blue, their entire incarcerated love affair.

“Hey Cal, everything okay?”

“It will be when I see you,” Blue’s deep voice and slight Haitian accent had her eyes fluttering closed again. “How you feeling this morning, Beautiful?”

“Better now,” she whispered. “So much better. You?”

“Scared as shit,” he chuckled, “But I know you got me, so I’m chilling.”

Forever giggled at the apprehension in his voice. Even with him doing his best to sound as calm as he always did, she could still hear the tinge of uncertainty in his tone.

“You sure about that?”

“Hell nah.”

They chuckled together heartily until the line went quiet on both ends. Lost in their thoughts, their connection stayed silent for a little longer until Blue drew them back in.

“Thanks for the suit, it’s fly as shit, and my favorite color.”

“It matches mine.”

“I can’t wait to see you. I bet you’re looking pretty as hell, ain’t you?”

Forever looked down at the blue skirt suit she'd had fitted just for her. The light blue shirt exposed enough cleavage to display her femininity, but not enough to be unprofessional. The same color as the tailored suit she'd gotten for Blue, only his had a white shirt and a tie the color of her shirt. She hadn't been feeling dressing alike, but he'd stressed it over and over, claiming it would bring him comfort knowing she was his, so she obliged.

"I look alright."

"Nothing about you is just alright. Stop saying silly shit."

Silence encompassed them once more. "Baby, I'm scared," his voice was lower that time, in efforts to conceal how vulnerable he was.

Her heart ached for him. She could only imagine the position he was in. To go from having your life taken away from you to gaining hope that you could have it back, only to not get it, was enough to stress anyone. She was more anxious than she'd ever been, and she was only the lawyer. She couldn't imagine being in his shoes.

"Don't be. I got you," Forever made sure her voice held strong as she did her best to comfort him.

"And I got you. On gang nem, you gon' forever be straight. No matter how this shit goes today. Just the fact that you gave it all you've got for a nigga you don't even know is enough for me."

"Ease your mind, Blue-Blue, and think about how much fun we're going to have in Cali tomorrow."

"Aight, aight, bet." She could hear the smile in his voice, which brought one to her face in return. "I guess I'll see you in a minute, lil' bitty woman. We just pulled up to

the courthouse.”

“See you in a few, handsome.” Forever was about to hang up until she heard Calvary calling her name. “Cal!” she squealed.

“What’s going on girl, you ready?”

“I think so.”

“Nah, you know so. You the man, Rabbit. Don’t forget that.”

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“I won’t.”

“Good. Bring your ass. We ain’t got all day to be sitting up here waiting on you.”

She snickered and ended the call just as Jerrico and Goody came strolling back up the hallway. They both looked refreshed but wore guilty smirks. Forever allowed her squinted eyes to scrutinize them for a moment before smiling and standing from her chair.

“I don’t have time to lecture y’all nasty behinds today. Let’s go.”

“Bitch, you wasn’t gon’ lecture me and my man anyway. This my house and that’s my dick, and hoe you know the rest so I ain’t got to say it.”

Forever faced Goody with her nose turned up on one side before looking at Jerrico. “You deserve so much better.”

He chuckled with Goody laughing along with him. “That mouth is terrible, but this my baby mama and I’m a stick beside her.”

The three of them continued their banter until they were out of the house and in the driveway, ready to leave. Then in Jerrico’s car, and her climbing into Blue’s gigantic truck. Another request from him. They trailed each other to the courthouse, with Forever thanking God the entire way. She’d been prepared to take on the trial alone, but with the family members that she had, they wouldn’t allow it.

From Goody and Jerrico to her other cousin, who was more like a sister, Eternity. She

was Calvary's fiancée and the wild card of the crew, which was hard to be anytime Goody was around, but Forever loved them. They were so necessary to her sanity, and they didn't even know it.

"Oh Lord," Forever mumbled as her stomach flipped again.

She'd just turned into the courthouse parking lot, and all she wanted to do was vomit, but decided to pray instead. In her most earnest moments, she prayed to God in her mind as she found a park and prepared to get out. Once she was out with everything she needed, she met her family and two other people on the stairs. They were near Calvary, laughing comfortably.

Forever smiled when the dark-skinned boy rubbed the girl's stomach before leaning over to kiss it. The smile on her face was the kind that made you want to be happy simply because she was happy. Anybody with eyes could see that not only were they together, but they were in love. Though the dark-skinned man's hand was no longer on her stomach, it was still wrapped around her.

With her being a little on the heavy side, his arm didn't go completely around her waist, but his grasp and facial expression displayed there was no other place he'd rather be, and judging from the way the woman kept laughing, she felt the same. It was truly beautiful and just what Forever needed to push her way up the stairs. She wanted to be in love like that.

In front of her were three couples that had found their soulmate, and if God loved her the way she felt he did, hopefully, she'd found hers as well. Goody and Jerrico, Calvary and Eternity, and the other unknown couple all looked to be enthralled in deep conversation with each other and were holding onto their person in some sort of manner while doing so. Forever's heart was bursting.

Me next, please, God. She sent one more plea to Heaven before approaching them.

“We partying or what?”

Everyone looked at her with the dark-skinned dude responding first. “Hell yeah, we are! It’s a party anytime a real nigga is set free,” he slapped hands with Calvary. “Especially when the nigga gang!”

“Oh, now he gang? Not too long ago he was that Crip nigga Blue,” the woman smiled in his direction.

“Stop bringing up old shit, Moo. He my nigga now, even if he is a Crip with his bitch ass.”

His tone was so comical that they all ended up laughing at him.

“Forever, this is Auto and Nova. They met Blue on the yard,” Calvary introduced.

Auto looked her up and down with a light smirk on his face. “I know her lil’ skinny ass. Gang showed her to me a few times.”

Forever was visibly taken aback by his comment on her size and was sure the frown on her face showed it.

“Nigga, don’t be calling my sister skinny like that,” Goody intervened. “You don’t know her.”

“Who gon’ do something about it?” He mugged Goody just as Jerrico sidestepped in front of her.

“Y’all please excuse my husband, he’s not wrapped too tight,” Nova smiled at Goody and Forever while nudging Auto’s shoulder. “What did I tell you in the car?”

Forever tried to laugh when Auto looked at Nova as if he was a scolded child. Anybody with eyes could see that something smart was on the tip of his tongue, but he bit it back.

“You always trying to be on some sweet shit, Moo, and I don’t know the fuck why,” he pecked her cheek before looking between Goody and Forever. “My fault y’all, I didn’t mean no disrespect. I just like big bitches, so I say rude shit about skinny women from time to time.”

“Is that an apology?” Jerrico asked, clearly disgusted with Auto’s commentary.

Auto chuckled with Calvary joining. “From this nigga it is. Trust me. Like his wife said, he’s crazy as fuck for real.”

“For real, for real,” Auto agreed.

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The circle traded smiles and subtle chuckles for a few unaccounted minutes before they heard a female voice calling Auto's name.

They all looked behind them to see a girl with long bouncy dreadlocks walking up the stairs with some fine ass yellow nigga behind her. His wild hair and frowning face made Forever blink twice. He wasn't necessarily her type, but fine was fine, and he was most definitely that.

"Azayna," Nova gushed. "I thought you were going to miss it!"

"I told her ass to hurry up. Dressing up for this nigga like she single or some shit," Mr. Fine Ass snapped just as they stopped next to everyone else.

The frown on his face was so deep that it was almost funny. It was too early in the morning to be that angry already.

"Shut up, Egypt." Azayna rolled her eyes at him and waved at everyone else. "Hey y'all, I'm Azayna. This is my grouchyhusband, Egypt. Excuse him. He's terrible like this twenty-four-seven."

"Girl, I literally just had to apologize to these people for his friend," Nova told her.

"You all friends of Blue?" Eternity asked. "I heard him say you were trying to dress up or something like that."

Forever held in her smirk while Goody did no such thing and giggled. Forever should have known that neither of them had missed that little comment, even if she had tried

to ignore it. She'd heard Egypt too, but was going to let it slide since, clearly Azayna was with him.

"Fuck no," Egypt spat. "We aight, but I'm not the nigga friend. Her lil' hot ass used to fuck with him back in Dade, but I wrapped all that shit up, so they ain't shit now."

Unable to help herself, Forever gave Azayna the once over checking her out. She was indeed a pretty girl with a nice little body, and it made Forever a tad bit jealous. She was just about to look away from her when Auto's voice interrupted them.

"Forever's itty-bitty ass ain't feeling that shit," he chortled hard, as if the situation was really funny.

"Which one of y'all are Forever?" Azayna questioned.

"Her," Eternity said that one word as hard as she could while pointing at Forever.

Azayna looked at her and gave her the same once over that Forever had just given her before breaking out into a large grin and hugging her.

"Thank you so much for doing this for him. My daddy told me all about you."

It took a minute for her to put two and two together, but when she did, Forever hugged her back. "You're Pat's daughter?"

Azayna nodded with a smile.

"Whew girl, I thought I was gon' have to dust your ass. Thank you for clearing that up for us," Eternity told Azayna.

"Oh my god, Yummy. Shut up," Goody shushed her.

“She’s fine,” Azayna assured with her own laughter. “I would have been the same way,”

“Now that the pleasantries are over, we should get going.” Jerrico told everyone while ushering Goody toward the stairs with his eyes on Forever. “The woman of the hour has somewhere to be.”

“Thank you, Man Hoe.”

Laughter and comments were exchanged as they all finally filed into the building. When they found the room Blue’s hearing would be conducted in, they took up the first two rows behind the lawyer table Forever had just occupied. With her nervousness returning, she sifted through her things, preparing herself for court to begin. Her breathing was harsh, and her hands were beginning to sweat, but she had to push through.

“Hey,” Jerrico filled the chair next to her and leaned closer so he could speak lowly. “You know you’re the best person for him today, right?”

Forever exhaled heavily. “Why don’t I feel like it? I’ve been so sure up until now. Now, I feel like I’m about to pass out.”

“Because you’re overthinking it like you did that shirt color question he asked when you all first met.”

Forever smiled at the memory. She’d felt like the most incompetent person in the world that day.

“You were so worked up that you momentarily forgot how good you are, and that’s all you’re doing now.” Jerrico grabbed her hand and squeezed it. “You’re a Black female lawyer, Forever. A fucking good one. If you being a Black woman isn’t

enough to show you're the best person to fight for him today, the fact that you know the law too should be. Whether they admit it or not, every person in the world feels inferior to a Black woman. Especially one in power. Y'all are scary as hell, especially Paradise."

They shared a laugh with him maintaining eye contact.

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“And smart, and strong, and capable, and protective, and unbeatable. The fucking blueprint. Don’t cower to your own fears. Once you stand to speak today, this entire room is going to be under your influence. Today, you’re the absolute biggest person in this room, so act like it every time it’s your time to shine. Understand?”

Forever nodded with a sheen of tears covering her eyes. Unable to say anything in response, but more grateful than she could even put into words. Forever hugged Jerrico tightly. He encompassed her in a tight embrace until she pulled away.

“Thank you doesn’t feel like enough right now.”

“Because you’re too big for something so small. We’re all here pulling for you.”

Forever nodded as he stood and went back to his seat. Her eyes followed, landing on all of her and Blue’s loved ones. She smiled at them all before turning back to face the front of the room. She used the rest of the time before court began to review and prepare her arguments. Before long, the judge entered, then the jurors, and lastly, causing her heart to beat erratically, her Blue-Blue.

In the tailored slim fit suit and Jordan 1’s on his feet, Blue strolled into the courtroom. His long locs tied at the back of his neck, swaying with each step he took. His thick black beard rested just along the neckline of his shirt. He’d looked massive in the small meeting room at the prison, but to see him in the middle of the courtroom, still looking larger than life, made Forever’s panties moisten. His laid back demeanor, calm facial expression, and sexy ass walk made her heart race with anticipation.

As he always was, Blue appeared to be unbothered by any and everything going on around him, until...

“Damn...”

She read the words on his lips the moment she stood to her feet.

His eyes unhurriedly took her in, as he swaggered closer to her the best he could with his ankles shackled together. If their eyes could talk, there was no telling what the room would hear. Their gazes were just that potent. With his suit pants covering his long legs, and impeding just above his sneakers, Blue stopped in front of her with cuffed hands. He outstretched one for her to take. She did.

“Good morning, Mr. Rose.”

“Good morning, Attorney Maverick. Thank you for being here today.”

The goosebumps covering her skin should have been a shame, but she couldn't help it if she tried. Blue standing tall in front of her, inches away from the free world, dressed good and smelling better, had her mind going blank. To reel herself back in, she stepped to the side to allow the sheriff to seat him at the table and uncuff his hands and feet.

She could hear their family saying one thing or another to him, bringing a small smile to his face. It wasn't big as she was sure he wished it could be, but Forever saw enough of a curve to know having them there made him feel better. Once she was back next to him and the court had been called to order, Forever inhaled deeply with her head bowed.

She was about to pray once again when she felt Blue's hand grab hers. She glanced at him, and his head, too, was bowed.

“God, you knew before I got here what was needed, you know now, and I trust you’re going to see us through to the finish. I’m here, use me. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

When her head raised that time, it was game time. Forever didn’t bother backtracking into fear, nor did she bow down to her worries. She bowed to a man who didn’t tolerate fear, so she sent it back to hell where it had come from and stood to her feet next to her man.

“Attorney Maverick?” the judge called out to her. “Let’s hear it.”

He believed her from the inside out

Zurich “Blue” Rose

“Your attorney and family are waiting for you outside, Mr. Rose. Congratulations!” The sheriff, who had been escorting him all morning, gave him a pat on the shoulder. “You dodged a bullet today. Don’t come back.”

“I wouldn’t dare,” Blue assured him while looking through the glass doors at all his family standing on the stairs laughing and taking turns hugging Forever.

He could see her smile from inside the building, and she deserved it. Not only had she done a damn good job and gotten him out, but she’d annihilated the shit. The way she moved around the room on her tall heels, making each of her points better than the last, showed just how good she really was. Blue had been able to tell she was smart just by her chosen profession and how she spoke, but being given a front seat to it was mind blowing.

As much as he’d tried to focus on the fact that his life was hanging in the balance, he hadn’t been able to do anything but marvel in admiration at Forever. A feeling of pride and astonishment overtook him as he watched the way she handled the judge,

jurors, and courtroom as a whole. She'd been telling him that she could do it with her eyes closed and not to worry, but damn.

Seeing it actually happen had taken him by surprise. She was a bad bitch for real, and not on no disrespectful shit, but on some un-fuck-with-able type shit. She was truly in a league of her own, and he couldn't wait to get her home and show her off to his family and gang.

"Scared?" the Sheriff asked as he stood next to an unmoving Blue.

"A little."

"Don't be. Just keep this as a learning lesson and make the best of your second chance. You know with the charges you had, this doesn't happen often, if ever."

"I plan to. Appreciate it." Blue shook his hand once more before taking a few more deep breaths and heading outside to meet his people.

As soon as he pushed the doors open and the free air hit his face, he closed his eyes and held his head back toward the sky.

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“Thank you, Father.”

“Nigga, come on. Been waiting on your hoe ass all day,” Auto’s loud voice prompted Blue’s open eyes.

A big smile covered his face as he took the stairs getting to them. “Shut your ass up. Talking like you did shit.”

Auto held his hands up in surrender while smiling at Forever. “Ain’t no way I’m taking Lawyer Barbie’s credit today. She did so fucking good, it made me wish I’d had her on my murder charge back in the day.”

“I ain’t lying,” Egypt agreed. “I fucks with her the long way, and I don’t even really like your ass.”

Everyone roared with laughter as they enjoyed the feeling of sincere happiness. The vibe was unmatched, and as much as Blue wanted to chop it up with Auto and Egypt, he had someone who deserved him more. Without even taking a second to think about it, Blue walked directly to Forever and grabbed her face. With her cheeks held in both of his palms, he pressed his lips into hers.

Just as eager as him, she followed his lead, parting her lips to welcome his tongue. Blue had never felt more at home with a woman in his entire life. Her presence alone had him feeling like he was ready to be in love. The feel of her tongue being the cherry on top. As if that wasn’t enough, having her small body pressed against his, with her hands rubbing around the bottom of his back, made it even better.

Hearing her moan into his mouth had him hardening against her stomach, so he pulled away. “These dress pants too thin for this kissing shit, lil’ baby.”

Her soft snickers fell into the corner of his neck as she maintained her grip around his waist. “Sorry, I’m just so proud of us, we really did it.”

“You did it.” Blue pecked her lips, nose, and forehead before releasing her face and grabbing her in a hug instead. “I’m so damn proud of you. Do you know how good you look being a lawyer?”

He felt her shaking her head against his chest.

“Real shit, it’s your thing. Don’t ever stop. The streets need you bad.”

“Are the streets the only thing that need me?” she looked up into his face.

“Hell nah. I need you like a muthafucka, you just don’t know.”

Her smile made him give her one in return.

“These freckles working my appetite bad, baby. They make me wanna eat your little fine ass up.” He pecked all over her nose and face again before finally letting her go.

When he did, he dapped Auto and Egypt up, hugged Azayna, Goody, Nova, and Eternity, and shook Jerrico’s hand.

“Y’all showed up for me, ain’t it?” he smiled at the circle of people that looked genuinely happy to see him free.

“I’m really here for my sister, but I guess you alright too,” Goody sassed, making him laugh.

“I thought we were good?”

“We’ll see. That’s still pending on how you treat my sister.”

Blue looked from Goody to Forever and winked. “Oh, this finna be my life right here. What y’all girls be saying? Princess treatment only? Yeah, that’s her new life.”

“I know that’s right!” Eternity squealed while clapping.

“It’s real nice to meet you, man, but if we don’t get off these stairs, we’ll be here all day. We almost missed court this morning because of these same stairs. We can finish this at the house.” Jerrico announced for everybody to hear.

They all began to disperse, giving Blue alone time with Forever. She remained her typically poised self as they walked quietly toward his truck. He’d spotted it along the way and was more than ready to be back inside.

“Why you so quiet?” he grabbed her hand and pulled her to him.

Forever shrugged instead of answering.

“You nervous?”

Her beautiful bright eyes cut to him before nodding.

“Don’t be. I’m cool.”

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“I see.”

“You got our tickets booked?”

“Yeah, we leave tonight at seven.”

Blue’s face brightened when he smiled. He couldn’t wait to get on the plane to California. Even though he was ready to see Forever’s house and the way she lived on a day-to-day basis, he was even more ready to dive inside. It had been too long since he’d had some pussy and he really couldn’t wait. From the moment the judge rendered him a free man, he’d been contemplating catching a quickie as soon as he could, but he wasn’t sure. He didn’t want to ruin their first time together. He owed her too much, and he wanted to make sure she got it.

“You gon’ act shy around me all night?” Blue ran his hand through her long hair before gripping the back of her neck.

He felt her relax against his hand before shaking her head no. “I’m just still trying to process all of this. You really being out and free,” she smiled at him. “I’m so happy and high right now that I can’t really talk.”

“Hell yeah,” he agreed, as they stopped in front of the truck.

His smile grew again when he hit the fob and cranked it up. Forever was right next to him, basking in his excitement. Her happiness made him want to love her up, so he did.

“Aye, let me get some love,” he grabbed her small waist and leaned her against the side of his truck.

His lips and hands were back on her and going to town as his heart beat uncontrollably in his chest. Forever had him so riled up that he didn’t even fight the growing erection that time. Instead, he pressed it further into her and moaned.

“I been dreaming about being inside of you,” he whispered into her open mouth.

“Me too.”

The way she gripped his sides through his suit jacket made him fantasize about how it was going to be when they were both naked.

“You feel my joint rocked up?”

She nodded.

“Let’s go see your people, so we can hop on this plane. When we get to your spot, I’m a fuck you so good, you gon’ cry.”

Forever’s small body vibrated in his hands as she allowed her laughter to take over. Blue enjoyed the moment with her before helping her into the truck and occupying the driver’s seat. He received directives from Forever until they were pulling into the driveway of a big ass house. It was so big, he could hardly contain his surprise.

“Who stay here?”

“Goody and Jerrico.”

“You said bruh a chef, right? And Goody ass still rapping?”

She nodded and began grabbing her things to get out of his truck. He cursed under his breath before reaching for her hand to pause her movement.

“Be still, I’m finna come get it for you.” He told her when she grabbed the door handle.

He winked at her once more before exiting and helping her out. Once they got inside, Blue had to stop to keep himself from crying. He was an extremely emotional man who didn’t mind showing his feelings, so in order to keep them from spilling out, he stood stuck and just took in the scene before him.

The large Welcome Home banner, balloons, table filled with food, and other decorations placed around the living room had him in his feelings bad. Everyone who had been at court was already there with waiting smiles. The three additional people were Goody’s daughter and two older ladies with warm smiles.

One was heavy like his auntie back in Dade and seated on the sofa with a long gray braid hanging over her shoulder, while the other one looked middle-aged and somewhat stylish. She was holding Goody’s baby girl, who he’d talked to on FaceTime a while back, and looked happy to see him.

“You like it?” Forever whispered from beside him.

“You just don’t know how good you getting fucked for this.”

Forever couldn’t contain the squeal she released when his lips brushed against her ear.

“I know what the yell mean. What he say, Rabbit? It was nasty wasn’t it?” Eternity yelled from across the room.

“Chileeeeeee,” Forever sang to her cousin, making all the women in the room laugh.

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“Yeah, he did. Look at her blushing,” Nova interjected. “I think he needs to say that out loud for everybody to hear.”

“The fuck for? You don’t need to hear shit that nigga said,” Auto chumped her off while she giggled. “Sorry, Granny-girl and Mrs. Sofia,” he apologized.

Laughter carried through the room as Blue made his way in and touched bases with everyone again. He was headed to grab some food when Auto’s granny called him to her. He sat next to her, and she grabbed his hand and patted it.

“Are you Haitian, Baby?”

“Yes ma’am, you are too, aren’t you?”

She nodded with a smile so warm, Blue could feel the heat in his chest. “I am, and so is my Auto. Enjoy the red beans and rice. I made you oxtails too,” she nodded toward the table where the food was. “I heard that was your favorite meal.”

Blue’s attention went directly to Forever. She wasn’t looking at him right then, and had shed the jacket to her suit, making him do a double take. That little curvy body trapped him in lust every time he caught a glimpse of her. She was leaning casually against the wall talking to her sister and cousin, with one ankle crossed over the other.

Her long back and legs stretched for miles while the subtle curve of her ass and breasts accentuated her slim frame. The long black tresses hung down her back and moved every time she moved her head.

“She’s a beautiful girl,” Granny-girl patted his hand again. “She works so hard and too much. All she does is work, work, work. No life. She has none.”

Blue chuckled at the disdain in Granny’s voice for Forever’s work ethic.

“But a gem. Such a sweet and quiet spirit. Like you,” she nudged him. “You’ll be a good boy this time around, yeah?”

“Yes ma’am. I’m not getting into no more trouble.”

“You better not. I’m going to ask my Auto to tell me about you.”

Blue looked at her and smiled. “You know he’s crazy, right?”

“He’s special,” she corrected, making Blue laugh as he stood and moved toward Forever. She definitely had a mother’s love for that nigga, because Auto was special alright. A special kind of crazy.

As soon as he approached the women, all of their attention went to them. “Hell y’all over here talking about?”

“How big your dick is,” Eternity said first.

“And if Forever can take it,” Goody added. “She said she could feel it through your dress pants.”

Blue was caught off guard by their brashness, but was quickly learning, those two said whatever they wanted to say. No matter how out of line it may have been.

“Is that so?” he questioned them, all while eyeing Forever. Her innocent staring pulling at him. “What you say, Forever? You think you can take it?”

She nodded.

“Open your mouth hoe, you grown,” Goody urged.

“Leave her alone, Goody. You know this Forever first time being with a thug. Bitch probably don’t understand that hood shit.”

“Damn, you right. I forgot she wasn’t even fucking before he came along.”

“Forget both of y’all.”

“Don’t worry about it baby, whether you can take it or not, I’mma make it fit,” he winked at her. “You good.”

The three of them cackled in amusement as Blue stood smiling at their banter. He stayed with the women, talking for a little while longer before moving on to the men. They were all standing around the kitchen table eating and talking, so he joined. Jerrico shook his hand first.

“I made every Haitian dish I could think of, minus the oxtails and rice. His grandmother made those. She insisted since it was your favorite,” Jerrico smiled at him. “I don’t think she trusted me to make them.”

Calvary laughed with his brother. “Even though you’re a world class chef.”

“And the shits bussing too, so I don’t blame her. Granny can cook her ass off. That’s why her and Nova so big now.” Auto looked over his shoulder to make sure the ladies hadn’t heard him.

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“Blood, you got to stop saying that stupid shit about them women,” Egypt scolded.

“Says the man that cussed his wife out for looking presentable enough to leave the house this morning.”

“I ain’t cuss her out, I was just trying to see why she had to do the fucking most for this nigga.”

Blue’s head went back as he smiled at Egypt’s insecurity, where he was concerned. He contemplated poking the bear, but decided against it. Egypt’s mouth was terrible, as was his attitude. The last thing Blue needed was for him and Egypt to mess up Goody and her husband’s house fighting.

“Aye, leave me out that shit. I got my own woman.”

Auto cocked his head in Blue’s direction with a mouth filled with food. “Nigga ain’t been with that little ass girl for five minutes but claiming her like she his.”

“Happy ass nigga,” Egypt egged.

“Fuck both of y’all muthafuckas, she is mine.”

“After what I saw today, she’s definitely that,” Calvary joined the conversation.

Blue dapped him up while nodding his head. “Tell these niggas.”

“Hey, there’s nothing wrong with knowing what you want and making it known. I

didn't hesitate when it came to Goody. She shot me down every chance she got, but I wasn't giving up until I got her. Now," Jerrico looked over his shoulder at Goody to ensure she couldn't hear him. "She's stuck to me like glue. Making love every free minute we get."

Blue pointed at Jerrico while nodding his head. "Forever told me about y'all nasty asses. Fucking loud enough for her to hear and shit. Y'all wrong for that."

The group of men laughed and ate together. Just when Blue finished making all of his rounds, he finally headed for Azayna. He'd been doing his best to stay away from her because of how sensitive Egypt got where she was concerned, but she was his lil' homie, and he wanted to speak.

"Where that bad ass baby at?" Blue sat on the sofa between her and Nova.

"With his auntie, and don't do my baby. He ain't bad. He's just a little boy and does little boy things."

"Bad, like I said. Just like his fucking daddy." Blue chuckled, as did she and Nova.

"Whatever, Blue. So, what's next? What you about to do now?"

Blue's legs stretched out in front of him as he relaxed backward on the sofa while looking straight ahead at Forever. She was seated in the corner in an isolated accent chair with her legs crossed, eating. Her phone was tucked between her ear and shoulder as she balanced the movements of her body beautifully.

"I can't even call it. I'm going to Cali for a few days with Forever, then heading to Florida to see what's up. Anything after that, I haven't really made up my mind yet. All I know is that it's going to be the right thing. I don't have time for no more slip ups. This one was too close for comfort as is. I thought my shit was over forever. Life

just gone.”

Azayna agreed. “I did too. I’m so glad God gave you another chance.”

“Me too,” Nova smiled at him. “Now you can get married and have a baby like Auto.”

The three of them laughed at her before Blue nodded in agreement. “Hell yeah. I’m trying to do that for real.”

“With Forever?”

Blue’s eyes went to her again before he nodded. She was looking at him and smiled when he caught her eye.

“If she’ll have me.”

Nova stuck her arm through his and pulled him into her. “I don’t think that’s going to be a problem. She seems to really like you, and she’s really nice. I like her for you.”

“Y’all gon’ have some chocolate ass kids, but I’m here for it too.” Azayna joked.

More laughter and conversation flowed from them for the remainder of the party, with everyone joining in on their own here and there. Before long, it was going on four o’clock, and Forever was directing him into Goody’s guest room to change and prepare for their flight.

As soon as the door closed behind him, Blue took a seat on the bed and watched her move around the room, grabbing things for him.

“Thank you for today. It made me feel real good...all loved and shit.”

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The cute little smirk that tugged at her cheeks made him render one of his own. “You’re welcome. I thought it would be a good touch.”

“It was.” Blue walked to the side of the bed where she was and took a seat. “Come here,” he held his palms out, summoning her between his open legs.

She moved slowly, but eventually got there and wedged herself between his legs. His large hands were on her and rubbing up and down the back of her thighs immediately. With not an ounce of hesitation or shame, Blue groped her body softly. The feel of her bare thighs in his hands as he slid them up the back of her skirt made his dick rise again. To make things harder on them both, Forever took it upon herself to straddle his lap.

With her hands running through his locs, she squeezed two handfuls and tilted his head back so that she could see his face. Their eyes met and danced to the rhythm of their hearts. Her angelic face soothed the rapid thumping against his rib cage and mellowed him just enough not to overreact. Something it tended to do whenever she was around. Any other time he was cool as a cucumber, but the moment Forever’s tiny ass showed up, his body showed out.

“I can’t really control myself around you. I’m so attracted to you that I be about to start shaking and shit.”

She sniggled until her eyes closed. “Don’t try to control yourself, Zurich. Feel however you want to feel with me.” Her eyes opened and landed on his again, holding his voice captive.

Forever's beauty was so intriguing that he often found himself just wanting to stare at her. She was truly one of a kind. Something he'd never seen before and wanted to somewhat hide from the world. The darkness of her skin, the bright eyes and fresh white smile, breathtaking brown freckles, and beautifully sculpted facial structure. Everything about her reminded him of how important it was to treat her right. She was delicate and unique. His own personal unicorn.

"You're right at home where you're supposed to be," she whispered against his mouth before scooting closer to him and kissing his lips with the hair from his silky beard tickling her chin the entire time.

Blue's hands squeezed her waist as he deepened their kiss. Her body swirled seductively in his lap, making his erection grow larger. Her small hands were now cupping his face as she slid her tongue in and out of his mouth hungrily. His fervor matched hers and eventually took over their kiss. Subduing her into a submissive state, where she would always remain when it came to passion with him.

"If we don't stop, I'm gone be inside you losing my damn mind in another man's house," he promised with his forehead pressed into hers. "And I don't want that."

"What do you want?"

"I wanna make love to you in our own shit. I want you to be able to moan and scream, and talk to me while I'm in it," he pecked her neck when she shivered. "I want to be alone with you, so when I moan and cry like a bitch, nobody is there to judge me." He pecked her neck again, then her lips.

Forever's body slumped some when she exhaled. "Okay," she whispered while maintaining eye contact.

"You the fucking best, Forever. The best I ever had, Beautiful, and that's on my

mama.”

Her warm smile beckoned one from him as well.

“Well, I guess we better get moving then, before we miss our flight.”

Blue watched her slide from his lap and walk over to the suitcase she had in the corner. Next to it, there were two shopping bags. She extended them to him. One had a forest green Adidas outfit, and the other held a Resin colored pair of Yeezy 450’s. Blue’s smile lit up the room as he admired her choice in clothes.

“Look at your pretty self, knowing how to dress your man. I’m fucking with this.”

Forever blushed uncontrollably while pulling the remainder of the things from the bags. Blue’s smile grew even more when he noticed she had an outfit similar to his with the same shoes.

“Shut up, shut up, just shut up,” she told him while trying to hide the large smile on her face.

“I wasn’t even finna clown you, baby. I like you dressing like me.”

“Sure, you do,” she stood from her squatting position on the floor and walked to the door to make sure it was locked.

On her way back, she stopped and kicked her shoes off. Blue watched her intently, afraid to take his eyes off her. He didn’t want to miss anything when it came to her. Now that he was home, he planned to attend to her every second that she was in his presence; that way, he could learn her. In his book, that was the only way he could properly provide her with what she needed. If he needed to adjust as time went by, he would, but until then, he was on her ass.

“Come over here and let me do it,” he stopped her from removing her shirt.

Obediently, Forever padded toward him and stopped once she was between his legs again. After pulling her shirt from her skirt, Blue allowed his hands to trail up her body, grazing her soft skin gently. Next came the buttons, and the exposing of her bra and smooth, dark skin.

Blue marveled at her for a few seconds before continuing to her skirt. Expertly, he unzipped it and rolled it down her hips, stopping long enough to hold her in place and kiss her flat stomach. Her hands found his head again and held on to him. Torturing them both, Blue pushed her skirt from her body, leaving her dressed in nothing but her panties and bra.

The white lace looked like a sparkle of magic as it lay against her skin. The light and darkness looking like a star shining in the night sky. Her long hair lay around her shoulders and breasts as her stomach muscles showed with each movement of her fingers. They were rubbing his scalp and arousing him with each passing second.

“Baby,” Blue whispered lowly.

“Zurich,” she pulled his head back so that she could look into his eyes. “I want you.”

Blue’s chest expanded when he inhaled and allowed his eyes to close. He wanted her too, and probably way worse than she wanted him, but he’d meant what he said about losing himself in another man’s house. He didn’t want her like that. Unfortunately for him, she didn’t care. His eyes hadn’t been closed a full minute when he felt her pulling his head toward her warm body.

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Going for what he knew without thinking twice about it, Blue's lips touched her skin. Placing wet kisses along her abdomen as she guided him subtly. The warmth from her body against his mouth made him want to go deeper, feel deeper, plunge inside of her, and stay there until the sun set and rose again, but damn. He wanted to be at home to do it.

"Forever..."

"Shh..." Once again, she was straddling him and putting that little body in his lap.

With not much fight left in him, Blue allowed her room to fumble between them and free him from his dress pants and briefs. Every ounce of resistance he'd been mustering dissipated the moment he felt her small hand wrap around his girth.

"You must think you grown?" he questioned confidently.

Her head shook. "No, I just want my man," she whispered while guiding the head of his penis between her legs.

Blue's eyes locked with hers as he held her up in one arm and slid her panties to the side with the other. His chest heaved heavily as he anticipated the feel of her. Their body heat alone was driving him insane, but he was doing all he could to maintain control. She on the other hand, was not. Forever was eyeing him and sliding lower onto him, the best she could without his help.

"Zurich," she whimpered as soon as the head tapped the center of her wet opening.

“Go ahead,” his raspy voice echoed between them. “Sit on it.”

Forever’s head dropped when she looked down.

“Nah, look at me when you ride that shit.”

The intensity in her stare spoke a thousand secrets, and Blue held each one of them in the center of his heart.

“Don’t be scared now. Slide down.”

“Like this? No condom?”

“Just like this. I ain’t thinking about no condom.” He pulled her down enough to coat the head of him with her essence.

Blue’s head fell back some as his eyes fluttered closed. It took him a few blinks before he was able to open them fully and look at her.

“All the way,” he breathed.

With hooded lids, Blue watched Forever slide lower and lower onto him until she’d completely covered his dick. Her face was scrunched up in pain, but she kept her eyes on his as she squeezed his shoulders to death.

“Mhm,” he groaned while burying his face into the skin above her breasts.

Without having to be told, Forever began moving her body up and down on him slowly. Her long limbs resembled a ballerina as she worked herself over him seductively.

“Forever, baby,” Blue pleaded as he felt the head of dick tingling. “I can’t last this time. It’s been too long.”

“I know,” she held his head to her chest. “You can make it up to me later. I just wanted to see how you felt.”

“You sure you won’t be mad?”

Forever’s lips on his was her answer. Her tongue moved with his as her body continued to move against his. Blue’s entire body began to tingle as his toes curled into the soft rug beneath his feet. It had been years since he’d been inside of a woman and Forever’s pussy was sending him into oblivion. As bad as he hated to succumb to pleasure so early, he couldn’t fight it any longer.

“Forever,” he moaned while tightening his grip around her and looking into her eyes.

With a smile that let him know she owned him, Forever nodded her head and held his neck as he came. Blue’s entire body convulsed lightly in her grasp as he struggled to catch his breath. The warmth and feminine comfort he gained just by her holding him made Blue feel complete. He’d been enthralled with Forever from the first time she’d sashayed into the prison, but after being inside of her and releasing his seeds into her body, he was next level smitten. Their session had been peaceful, unrushed, and what he needed to make it through the rest of their day.

“Feel better?” she asked between kisses on his face.

Blue nodded, because he did. She’d given him what he needed when he hadn’t even known it was necessary. Of course, pussy had been on the menu the moment he exited those doors, but in a different manner. However, having Forever force it on him made him thankful for her. Women always knew best.

“Good. Let’s get going. We’ve got a flight to catch.” Her wide smile covered practically her whole face.

“You got that one, but when we get to your spot, you gon’ die on the dick. I can promise you that.”

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The way Forever's smile dropped from her face was almost comical because she looked scared, but he didn't laugh. Something that real didn't need any laughter coming behind it to water it down. That was one thought she needed to remain potent. Raw, Haitian dick with no chaser. Forever's life would never be the same again, and she didn't even know it. Luckily for her, he did.

Her world was safe for him

Forever's hands shook terribly as she approached the sidewalk of her home. It was the same as she'd left it, only this time she wouldn't be occupying it alone. The mint green shutters were the same, the yellow door was the same, and the multi-colored stones along the front were all the same. It would be lovely if she could say the same about herself.

For years, she'd been the only one in her small California home, only allowing her sneaky link the freedom to come and go, then there was that tricky behind Marcellus that found his way inside of her walls undeservingly, and now Blue. Her Blue-Blue. Sexy and intimidatingly confident Zurich Blue. Forever's heart rate quickened as he invaded her mind once again.

All day, he'd been there and refused to leave. Forever had been trying everything she could to push him away enough to settle herself, but that was slowly becoming a lost cause. She'd known allowing him into her most scared vessel would trigger the feelings she'd been doing her best to suppress since leaving Marcellus and meeting him, but now they were back and as loud as a second line festival in New Orleans.

Hopelessness, despair, and fear. Fear was the biggest culprit, and even in her sexiest,

most dependable, and curve accentuating big girl panties, she was still cowering to it. Marcellus had her so afraid of love that she didn't know what to do or how to do it, but she knew one thing for sure: she had to find a way. The eerily quiet man behind her wasn't going for anything less.

"So, this your spot?" His voice carried from behind her as they stopped on the top stair near her front door.

Her head nodded as she cleared her throat. "Yeah."

"Looks like you. Cute, classy, and lowkey expensive as fuck."

Forever giggled as she rambled through her purse, trying to find her keys. When she finally did, Blue took them from her and let them into the house. The moment the door pushed open, and the smell of her home hit her nostrils, Forever relaxed. The soft scent of lilac and vanilla overtook them the moment they crossed the threshold.

"Damn," Blue cursed, while closing the door behind them. "I knew it was gon' be laid up in here." He stopped near the sofa and placed their bags down.

Forever watched as his eyes surveyed the entire room. He looked from the living room to the kitchen doorway, then over to the dining room before stopping on the large pile of packages that were tossed carelessly in the corner. He pointed, but allowed her the freedom of explaining what they were.

"Pat had it all sent here."

"Them my clothes?"

Forever nodded bashfully.

Blue marveled at her with a special gleam in his eyes. She'd really listened to him and obliged all the requests he'd made before being released. The fact that she didn't mind being told what to do and actually made it her business to do it was a good sign and something that he could most definitely appreciate.

"Aye, let me get a hug or something." Blue held his hand out toward her until she took it and walked into his embrace.

The hug felt lovely. Like something he'd been missing for years. So good that Forever didn't rush pulling away.

"You know I'm out my mind right now," he told her.

"Me too, Zurich. I can't believe we're here right now, doing this."

"I knew we would be." He pecked the top of her head. "Go run us a bath."

Forever walked away and down the hallway, disappearing from his sight. Once he was alone, Blue took a seat on the sofa to really take in the reality of the moment. The soft cushions of her crème sofa welcomed him as he lay his head back and stretched his long legs out beneath her glass coffee table. With closed lids, Blue took a couple of deep breaths and allowed the racing thoughts to float away.

Being on the inside, away from all his family, friends, and gang, had given him the time he needed to really focus on his life and what he wanted out of it. One of the main things being a real family. A wife, kids, maybe even a legal job, even though he didn't need it, and Forever presented that.

Though they'd never had the conversation about starting a family, something in him told him she would be game for a happily ever after with him. At least, that's what he hoped. There was no telling how she would feel after visiting Dade, though. Forever

was a tad bit bourgeois, and a day with his boys might send her running for her life.

“Babe? You ready?”

Blue’s chest sank at the velvety softness of her voice. Then adding a pet name to it made his heart smile. Simply enjoying the moment was what kept his eyes closed for a few seconds longer before opening them to land on her. His black beauty in all of her shining, perfect glory.

No longer covered in her outfit from earlier, but decked out in that white lace again. Blue’s bottom lip slid between his teeth slowly as he took in her model type frame. Extra-long limbs, with legs for days, flat toned stomach, dark chocolate skin, soft round breasts, and that gorgeous fucking face that made his lips quiver.

“Babe?” he inquired while standing to his feet.

“Yeah, babe. My babe.” With her hand stretched out toward him, Forever waited in that timid way she had about herself. “You are mine, right?”

Blue’s eyes took her in as he trekked toward her. “Hell yeah, I’m yours. Don’t wanna be nobody else’s.”

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Her laughter was music to his ears as they padded down the hallway toward her bathroom. Blue's eyes took in all the pictures of Black art on her walls, then the bright tangerine-colored decorations lining her bathroom. The large tub was spacious and would probably accommodate them perfectly. Bubbles overflowed near the candles she'd lit, while the fruity aroma from the tub made him think of cereal.

"Undress, Zurich."

Needing nothing more to be said, Blue removed his clothing and slid into the steaming hot water slowly. His skin tingled from the temperature, but he squinted through the pain and felt even better once Forever was naked and cuddled between his legs with her back to his chest.

"Feels so good to be here," he pecked her bare shoulder while holding her tighter.

"It really does. I wasn't sure it would happen."

"Why? You seemed pretty confident about getting me off."

"Not because of me, because of you. I thought once you got home, you'd have Pat or somebody come through to get you and forget all about me."

"That's silly shit, Forever."

"It's the truth."

"Why though? What would make you think I wouldn't want to be with you? I told

you exactly what it was going to be once I got home. I thought you believed me.”

Forever was quiet for a minute, trying her best to think of a way to let him know she didn’t feel worthy of having him without sounding like an insecure fool.

“Lift up.” Blue nudged her upward enough to turn her around to face him.

Once they were eye to eye, he draped his arms loosely around her back and just stared. He stared so long that Forever began to feel self-conscious and tried to cover her breasts with her arms discreetly. They weren’t the biggest, and with him gawking at her the way he was, he was sure to notice.

“What was that nigga’s name again?”

She frowned in confusion. “Which one?”

“Calvary brother. The one you used to fuck with.”

“Marcellus,” his name was a whisper on her lips.

“Fuck him, okay? Fuck that nigga and whatever wack ass shit he did to you. Me and you are new, and we’re not making each other pay for shit that people did in our past. You understand me?”

She blinked slowly.

“Ima fuck him up when I see him too, so you better keep his ass away from me.”

Forever nodded while looking into his deep brown eyes. They were intently focused on her, with his thick brows scrunched up just enough to exemplify a frown. The silky hair around his edges rolled up just a tad from the heat in the bathroom, while

his big, broad chocolate chest bulged with just enough muscles to show he'd used his time wisely in prison, but not enough to assume he was some sort of body builder.

"I want to be in love with you, Forever, like real love. I'm ready for that, and after the trouble you went through with me, nobody else is more deserving of it with me than you."

Against her will, Forever's eyes watered.

"Like I told you when I was in that cell, I'm not gon' be on no silly shit with you. I wanna leave the block and come home to you, make love, get my dick sucked, blow racks, eat and travel and shit. That's it. I'm here to take care of you, but only if you let me, and I can tell you right now, I'm not going for that crazy shit because another nigga got you off in the head. I ain't do it. You feel me?"

She nodded, but he stopped her.

"Yes."

"Good girl," he pecked the center of her chest. "Let's bathe and get out, I'm ready to make love."

Forever's entire body shivered at the promise in his voice. His tone had been so stern and sure that she could almost feel him inside of her again. To get the party started, Forever grabbed the soap and washcloth, lathered it, and began bathing him with him lying there, allowing her the freedom to touch him any and everywhere.

The way his eyes observed her was unnerving, and Forever could hardly stand it. His stare was so intense that she could feel it even when she wasn't looking at him.

"Harder," he instructed as her hand rubbed over his shaft with the soapy cloth.

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Worried eyes went to him, as if asking if he was sure. When he nodded and scooted closer to her, offering more of his midsection, Forever gulped and circled his girth with the cloth. Adding more pressure than she'd been initially using, she cleaned from the head down to his balls. The fire burning in his eyes set her ablaze.

“Don’t be scared,” he assured her, now squinting his eyes at her. “Get acquainted with your shit.”

Her stomach flipped at the thought of his dick being hers. She wanted it bad, and he knew it. The way he lay back on the side of her tub with both arms stretched along the sides, with his head relaxed backwards, showed that he knew he was king.

In a hurry to get done, Forever leaned forward to wash his shoulders and back. The moment his mouth circled her nipple, her back arched, and she moaned loudly.

“Mhm,” he coaxed while still sucking.

Needing to touch him, Forever dropped the washcloth and circled his neck with her arms. Fuck that rag. She wanted some Blue.

“You ready?”

“Yes, please,” her whimper sounded so desperate she almost felt embarrassed, but his next words halted that.

“I like that begging, Forever.”

Her thighs clamped around his back as he stood from the tub and stepped out before grabbing the towel and drying her first, then himself, maintaining eye contact the entire time. When he was done, he picked her back up and carried her into her bedroom. She used her foot to flick the light switch on as they passed. The black and crème decorations came into view, as did her large bed and millions of throw pillows.

Still high in the air, wrapped around her man, Forever leaned back enough to look at his face. He'd stopped, and she wanted to see why.

"I really love it here." His eyes were circling her room, taking in all of her decorations. "It smells just like you," he began walking toward the bed again. "Feels all peaceful and shit."

A soft snicker escaped her as she admired his beautiful chocolate face. His long hair was still tied back at the bottom of his neck, but with a few strokes of her fingers, she'd untied the loose knot and let it free. The moment his locs fell around his shoulders and back, Forever had to take a deep breath. He was so damn beautiful. Like really fucking beautiful.

"Zurich," she whined lowly.

"I know baby," he pecked her mouth. "I know."

In heat for him, and leaking like a faucet, Forever moved her body against his seductively. She wanted to be on him in every way she could be, and he was taking too long to give it to her.

"Hey," he got her attention. "I want you to let loose with me. If it feels good, tell me. If you want it harder, ask for it. If you're ready to bust and I'm taking too long, rush me. You want me deeper, pull me in, anything you want, just tell me. I got you. I want this to be the best dick you ever had."

Forever could feel her head nodding as he lay her in the center of her bed with his large body now wedged between her thighs. His body was god like and needed to be publicized. There was no way a man that tall and that damn gorgeous needed to be hidden behind prison walls forever. Fuck no. He was too much of a man and too much of a high to be anywhere other than where he was... in her bed, with her.

Blue was so fine. He deserved to have as many women as he wanted, and in any way he wanted. He wasn't regular fine, he was the kind of fine that made you feel like you weren't pretty enough to be standing next to him. His chocolate skin was smooth like candy, while his hair, beard, and eyebrows were thick with silky jet-black hair that laid down along the sides of his face.

Bright white eyes, a silky well-groomed beard, and lips that looked like they'd give her pussy the best kisses it ever had. Forever's core clenched just looking at him. Zurich was a drug, and he was hers of choice. Every day, she wanted to do something to please him. Big or small. It didn't matter; he deserved it off his looks alone. So manicured and rugged at the same time.

"Thank you for saving me from myself, Forever," Blue told her while lowering to the floor between her legs. "Saving me from things that had nothing to do with you. I owe you for that."

Forever sat up in a hurry, afraid to miss the sight of what was about to happen. With his face inches from her love canal, he breathed deeply before wrapping his mouth around her. Never in her life had her body electrified like that. With a deep arch in her back and her head dropped backward, Forever enjoyed the thick slither of his tongue against her sensitive skin.

"Mmm," he moaned while feasting on her. "You always taste good like this, or is it just because I'm here?"

“For you, babe.”

“Better be,” he pulled his tongue away and placed kisses up and down her fountain, making sure he allowed her juices to drench his beard.

In pure bliss, Blue nestled his face in the deepness of his lover, worshipping her secrets, staking his claim on her body, and simply enjoying the taste of her inner passions. He’d been dreaming about being in that exact position from the moment he laid eyes on her and he’d be damned if it wasn’t exactly what he’d hoped it would be. With the precision and expertise of a certified lover, Blue ate away all her reservations, and sucked every ounce of apprehension she harbored before letting her rain the freedom of her past life on his face.

“Zurich! Oh my god!” she belted from the pits of her soul.

Blue continued licking and sucking on her folds, pulling out another release, much messier than the last, before standing and crawling onto the bed with her. With his body on top of hers, he nudged her legs open wider with his knee while gripping his throbbing wood in his hand. The head was swollen and bulging with blood. He was so ready to make love to Forever that he could barely suppress the discomfort of being that hard.

“Open them legs.”

Forever did as she was told as he kneeled in front of her, thumping veins visible through his skin.

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“Look at your lil’ fine ass,” he bit his bottom lip as he hovered above her. “I’m so grateful to have you,” Blue pushed in slowly.

Forever’s entire body tensed from the pain as she gasped over and over for air, but he kept pushing and pushing, and damn pushing...until he was deep inside of her and stretching her walls to capacity.

“Mmmm,” his agonizing groan echoed so hard that Forever had to fight through her own pain to catch sight of his face. “Told you I’d make it fit.”

Knitted brows, closed lids, and bottom lip being slaughtered by his top teeth. Each move flexed a new muscle while long dreads covered his bare skin and dangled around her head. Unable to control herself, moans fell from her lips relentlessly.

“Babe,” she gasped when he went deeper.

The passion leaking from her body dampened her thighs and his as she flooded for him. The deeper he went, the wetter she got. His skin slapping hers as he sped up, noise echoed throughout her room that she could listen to forever. The peak of her third orgasm thumped throughout her core as he tapped her spot repeatedly.

“Zurich,” she whimpered as her eyes began watering involuntarily.

“What baby?”

The confidence in his tone sent Forever off the edge, and before she knew it, her body was trembling as her legs shook terribly around his waist. Without pulling out of her,

Blue slid back just enough to watch the way her body performed for him. Her creamy essence coated his Black skin and silky straight pubic hairs near the base of his dick, saturating him with every drop.

Forever was still coming down from her orgasm when she looked up at him, holding both of her thighs in the crooks of his arms. A look of determination was on his face as he drilled her inner flood gates with no remorse. His strokes were long and deep, killing her insides with each entry. Forever felt like she was on the verge of passing out as she admired his exquisiteness in his ecstasy filled state.

“Give me another one.”

“I don’t want to,” she moaned. “I’m too tired.”

“I want another one.” He wrapped her thighs around him and scooped her from the bed in one hand and held her through his strokes. “I’m not gon’ stop until I get it.”

With her arms and legs circling his body, Blue held her to his chest, plunging deeper and deeper, hitting that spot that made her earth quake.

“Babe,” she sniffed.

There went those damn tears again. Cascading down her cheeks as her entire body trembled in his embrace.

“You got my heart beating so fast, baby,” he littered kisses along her shoulders. “Just one more. Give me one more and I’ll stop.”

“Please, Blue-Blue,” her helplessness was loud, and exhaustion filled.

The pleasure was getting unbearable, and she could feel herself about to die for sure.

It felt that good.

“That’s my girl, beg me for it.”

“Please, stop. I can’t do it again.”

“Mhm, yes you can,” he went deeper and squeezed her body tighter at the same time.

He did that same move three more times, and Forever was a ball of snivels and shakes as she came all over him yet again, with him following. She could feel the hot spurts coating her walls, as he continued pleasuring her as if it hadn’t happened. The moisture leaving them would surely have her sheets a mess once they were done, but she didn’t care. Blue’s moans were worth all she had.

“Zurich,” she grabbed his face and kissed him. “I don’t wanna die on the dick,” she mumbled as she felt her body betraying her again.

Apparently, he did because instead of releasing her, he hit that same spot harder, and she died. Her spirit left her body and floated off into the galaxy of pleasure, as did his. The deep grunt he released as he shot what felt like loads of semen into her body again made her mind go blank, and more tears fall.

Instead of pulling them apart, Blue lay them on the bed, still joined as he allowed the wave of pleasure to overtake their bodies. Ragged breathing and damp limbs occupied the sanctity of her bed as they lay together basking in the afterglow of their love making.

“Shit was magical, baby. You did good.”

Forever snuggled closer to his chest and closed her eyes. The next time she opened them, she was in the same spot, but covered with the comforter on her bed. Blue’s big

body made her feel small enough to hide from the world as he lay above her, and she loved it. Being in his arms made her feel safe from everything, and she'd prayed for that in a partner. Blue seemed to be on the same page as her, but only time would tell.

“How you feeling? Your body hurt?” his raspy voice made her jump.

Forever looked up into his open eyes. “I thought you were asleep.”

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“I was. I woke up when you did.”

She giggled. “How you know?”

“My dick still in you. I felt you move.”

Forever’s stomach did a somersault at his brash words.

“Tell me how you feel, I know I went kind of hard.”

“Kind of hard? You went extremely hard, Zurich. My goodness!”

His laughter was melodic and deep.

“Okay, white girl.”

“Boy please, ain’t no white girl taking dick like that. That was some real Black girl magic right there.”

He laughed at her again, and it made her happy because she loved when the person she was with found humor in her.

“You’re so half white, half ghetto. I love that shit.” He leaned closer to her face until he was tongue kissing her again.

Forever welcomed his mouth and savored their tongue play until he pulled away.

“I’m hungry, lil’ baby.”

“What you want to eat? I’ll cook you something.”

“Nah, let’s get out and see the city. I been inside too long. I want to breathe some California air.”

“Let me find out you want to stay in Cali,” Forever joked as he pulled himself out of her.

The feeling of his dick sliding out of her had her ready for some more. She literally had to pause and just lay still to keep her body from getting worked up again.

“Damn, you feel amazing,” he frowned down at her in bewilderment. “Why you feel like that to me?”

She shrugged innocently. “Put it back in.”

Blue wasted no time obliging her request. For the second time that night, he was inside of her, but much gentler that time. Slow and sweet, he made love to her, kissing her face and releasing low moans the entire time.

“You’re such a quiet lover, Zurich.”

“I’m focused on feeling you, Forever. I just want to enjoy being in you.”

Her eyes closed as her heart bled for him. The rest of that session felt like love, familiar and long-lost love, and she never wanted it to end. When it finally did, they showered and got dressed to leave. Already having made sure she had clothes to match his, once he opened his packages and decided what he wanted to wear, she picked the same.

“You plan on matching me everywhere we go?” he questioned while standing in the

bathroom mirror behind her, tying his locs into a ponytail.

Somewhat embarrassed, Forever looked away, hiding her smirk. “I won’t, if you don’t want me to.”

“Nah, do it. I like it. We look good together; we should dress alike.”

Forever nodded, but didn’t say anything. Instead, she continued getting herself together so they could leave. Blue stood in the doorway behind her, watching her through the mirror the entire time. At first, she felt weird having him in her space like that, but quickly realized she actually liked the way it felt. He was literally chilling in that same calm way he had about himself, waiting for her. Not rushing, looking the least bit impatient or annoyed, just relaxed, and in return, it relaxed her.

Jesus, let this be real. She prayed in her mind after he winked at her.

“Ready?”

“Ready!” She beamed while walking to her room to grab her purse and phone.

Once outside her house, Blue followed her to the little black Land Rover and stopped. She hit the locks and was about to slide in the driver’s seat, but he stopped her.

“Nah, come chill, I got you.”

Next to the open passenger side door, he ushered her to him, placing a kiss on the back of her head as she passed. With hearts in her eyes, Forever watched him as he rounded the hood of her truck and got in. All of this was so good that it felt like a dream.

“Where to, Beautiful?”

“Anywhere, I just want to be there with you.”

Her words were low, but sincere.

“Bet. Just program something in the GPS and I’ll make sure to keep you with me.”

The flirty smile that rested on his face made her bubbly inside, but like she’d been doing since meeting him, she did as she was told. Something about Blue deemed him worthy of being followed, so until he did something to prove otherwise, that’s what she’d do. Hopefully, he wouldn’t let her down.

He didn’t want to feel the pain she once felt

“Look at your happy ass,” Goody made fun of Forever as they sat on Facetime talking about Blue. “Can’t even stop smiling. That Black ass got you feeling all the feels, don’t he sister?”

“Man, Goody, you just don’t know,” Forever sighed heavily.

“Yes, I do, girl. You must have forgot who my husband is.”

“I swear I’m sorry for making fun of you all of those times, because now I see how you felt. Being with a man that admires you and isn’t afraid to show it is a different kind of feeling.”

“It’s that thug love, bitch! Just like my dog Trouble used to say,” Goody responded with a little less excitement. “Rest in Peace to a real nigga!” she screamed unnecessarily loudly. “I miss Trouble, man. They ain’t have to do my dog like that,” she spoke about the late rapper. “And I feel like I’m about to just die without Scooter.” Water gathered in her eyes as her head fell. “Scooter was so freaking sweet, mannnnn. A heart of gold. Always so genuine, willing to help me with whatever. I remember he was one of the first rappers to reach out and show me love when I started. Offering studio time, connecting me with people, letting me pull up on his shows. Just the realist nigga I ever met. I can’t believe my friend gone.” Water dripped slowly from her eyes as she continued trying to wipe them.

She’d run into them both at a few shows and eventually developed a friendly relationship with them as time passed, Scooter more than Trouble, but they were both cool, and she was feeling the loss of Scooter heavily. Forever and Eternity both empathized with her and gave her a minute to mourn her friends. She’d taken their deaths pretty hard and still had her moments whenever they were brought up. She hadn’t even gotten over losing Trouble before she was hit with Scooter’s passing too. It had been a rough few years for Goody, but they did their best to hold her down through the pain.

“Bitch, I’m telling you now. Don’t start all that crying shit today,” Eternity warned. “I’m put your ass out of here. Forever trying to tell us about her new dick and you wanna bring the mood down. No hoe. I’m not crying with you today. I got stuff to do. I miss Scooter too, Bitch, but damn not today.”

Eternity fanned away her rising tears before the three of them laughed together while Goody nodded and wiped her eyes as well, even though tears continued falling.

Goody was at Eternity and Calvary's house helping her sort baby clothes, and they decided to call Forever and see if Blue let her up to breathe yet. Of course, they weren't home and were out at the beach, about to chill there for the day. Blue was out of the car and at the small food truck, grabbing them some food and drinks while Forever finished her call. He'd volunteered to give her time to talk to her people, and it warmed Forever's heart in yet another addicting way.

"Now that Goody has gotten herself together, Rabbit, tell us how good that nigga fucked you. I know he dragged your shit."

"I'm telling you! Blue looks like he can knock a bitch shit loose."

"Did bitch!" Forever screamed loudly. "I'm so sore. My back and stomach aching so bad I can hardly walk without limping. That man took me straight to pound town."

The women screamed in unison.

"Not pound town!" Eternity cackled loudly. "He was pounding your shit, Rabbit?"

"The first time he was, the second time he was sweeter with it, but then turned right back around this morning and took me right back to pound town," she sighed heavily. "I'm in love with that dick, y'all."

Eternity clapped wildly. "Ain't nothing like hood nigga dick, whew chile."

"You better shut your loud ass up before Calvary come in here. Reminiscing a little too hard hoe, chill," Goody warned.

“And do what? That nigga gives me street dick every night. His lil’ fat ass is in the category too. He ain’t all white collar like Jerrico and Marcellus. I don’t know if it’s the dreads, the gold teeth, or that gun, but Calvary drops hood nigga dick like he was born and raised in the projects bitch. It be feeling so good, I be begging and crying for it when he mad.”

“Me too, Yummy! I was crying and begging too, cousin,” Forever interjected excitedly.

“Didn’t I tell you? All you needed was a thug. They gon’ do you right.”

“I can tell,” she replied while watching Blue stand off to the side of the food truck with his hands tucked in his pockets, waiting for their food.

His demeanor was chill, but Forever could tell he was watching his surroundings. She loved the way he was not looking at anyone in particular, but was still watching everyone. That was one of those characteristics that made her feel safe. Allthroughout the airport, and at the restaurant the night before, he’d done the same thing while keeping her close the entire time. He was crack, and she was undoubtedly turning into an addict.

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“How long y’all staying out there?” Goody questioned Forever.

“Maybe a few more days, then we’ll go there for a week. He said he needs to check on some things.”

“Like what?”

Forever shrugged lazily. “I don’t know. Maybe his friends and family.”

“Or that gang he’s always hollering about,” Eternity said. “Them gang niggas fine as hell, though, I know that. Did y’all see that lil’ Egypt and Auto? Whew shit, them was some fine muthafuckas.”

“Yes, they were,” Goody high-fived her.

“Man, when I walked up to the courthouse and saw Auto, I almost lost my focus, then when Egypt’s bright self joined, I nearly ran for the hills,” Forever cosigned.

Goody and Eternity agreed with her in one way or another before Eternity came back with her typical outlandish commentary.

“I wanted Egypt to fuck me.”

Goody nodded with her. “You sound like me. I was watching Auto so hard, I’m surprised his dick didn’t jump inside me.”

“I bet you glad you got a Florida nigga, ain’t you Forever?”

Her cheeks warmed from the thought of having Blue to herself, so all she could do was nod her head. She was, in fact, glad, but it was too much to try to explain right then.

“I see who won’t be taking anymore Florida trips anytime soon,” Calvary’s voice startled all three of the women.

With wide eyes and open mouths, all three of them gave Calvary their attention. Not sure what parts of their conversation he’d heard, none of them said anything else until he did.

“Don’t get quiet now. Y’all was just all loud with your gang talk. Don’t hush for my benefit,” the sly smirk on his face let them know they were all caught, so Forever did the first thing she could think of and hung up.

As soon as Goody saw the phone screen blink, she laughed out loud with Eternity chuckling lightly, but not as loud. She was probably still scared of being in trouble. Calvary was, in fact, her man. Goody and Forever might have been able to get off, but she would have no such luck if Calvary decided to have an attitude.

“Leave us alone, baby daddy. We’re just having some girl talk. Don’t come raining on our parade.”

Calvary leaned over and kissed the side of Eternity’s face before standing back upright. “I’m just fucking with y’all. I ain’t hear shit for real. Me and Money just got here.”

“Marcellus here?”

Calvary nodded at Goody as she stood from the floor and hopped down the stairs to go speak. When she walked in, she found Marcellus seated on the living room sofa,

scrolling through his phone. His head raised the moment he saw her.

“Slim Goody, what’s going on?”

“Nothing over here, helping Yummy get ready for y’all new nephew.”

He smiled and nodded his head while lying backward on the sofa. His face was somewhat long and void of its usual glow, and Goody noticed.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Huh?”

“Don’t huh me, nigga? What’s wrong with you?”

Marcellus smirked because he clearly knew that even if he tried, he wasn’t going to be able to hide anything from Goody. The two of them had been friends for as long as she could remember and she was literally the only woman he could tolerate longer than ten minutes at a time...well, one of the only women.

“How’s Forever?”

The smile left Goody’s face as her forehead scrunched in the middle. “Fine.”

“Why you say it like that?”

“Like what?”

“Like you don’t want me asking about her.”

“I don’t.”

“Damn, it’s like that?”

Goody made herself comfortable before crossing one of her legs over the other.

“What’s it supposed to be like, Mr. Husband? Aren’t you happily married?”

Marcellus exhaled heavily while running his hand over his face. “I can’t ask about her just because I’m married?”

“Nah, you can’t ask about her because you broke my sister’s damn heart and acted like you didn’t give a fuck. My sister is trying to find happiness again. Stay your messy ass out of her way, Money. I’m not playing with you.” Goody gave him her best mean face before rolling her eyes for emphasis.

The room was intensely quiet for a minute, him obviously in his feelings about her remarks, and she didn’t care one bit. It had taken Forever too long to get over that nigga, and depending on the day, Goody could tell she still felt a way, but masked it for them.

She’d watched her sister sit at family gatherings, looking uncomfortable as hell because Marcellus and his wife Bridges was there. There was no way in hell that she was letting that nigga play in her sister’s face like that again. Ever. Not on her watch.

“Just tell me this,” Marcellus scooted to the edge of the sofa so that he could look at her. “Is she really with some nigga that just got out of prison?”

Goody glared at him, but said nothing. The distaste in his voice for Blue and Forever’s meeting was loud and clear. Apparently, her silence answered her question because he began talking again.

“I guess I’ll take that as a yes,” he scoffed. “That’s a new low. She fucking with a nigga in jail?” Another scoff filled with disdain left his mouth and pushed Goody to the edge.

“Muthafucka, I wish you would sit here and judge my sister. That nigga from jail, that you’re unnecessarily trying to discredit, treats her good. Very good. Better than you ever did. He’s not married, he’s not lying to her, he’s not making her sit around and watch him be with another woman as if she means nothing to him, and he’s giving her his attention. His heart, and anything else she asks for.”

“That’s probably all he has.”

“Nah, he actually has a lot, and he gave it all to Forever long before he was released. Just wanting to make sure she was good. That’s what real men do. Then, like the boss ass bitch that she is, she did her fucking best to give him a second chance at life and she did that shit unscathed. Forever is too good to be anything other than a nigga’s main priority. Blue made her that.”

“Real men? A real man would have never ended up in prison to begin with. He had to do that shit to keep her around. Shid, she’s a lawyer dating a prisoner. He had to do something.”

Goody’s body was starting to shake, she was so mad. So, to calm herself down, she remained quiet for a while. When she felt she had herself together, she stood to leave.

If she sat there with Marcellus for a minute longer, their friendship would probably be over.

“Look, just do your hurt self a favor and keep your opinions to yourself where my sister is concerned. She’s not your business. You made your choice, so stand on that shit.”

Goody didn’t bother to wait on a response after that. She grabbed her things and left the house. There was no way she would let Marcellus get her riled up because he was in his feelings. If he cared that much about Forever, he would have done her right. Not wait until she was happy again to try to piss on her parade. If it was one thing Goody wasn’t going for, that was it.

By the time she got to Jerrico’s restaurant, she was still seething with anger. How dare Marcellus try to come for her sister on some hating shit. He had the right person if he ever in his cheating life thought Goody was going to allow that. Forever was a tad bit more sensitive than most, so Goody needed to make sure she got him together long before he tried her sister. Knowing her, she’d let him get into her head and second guess what she was doing with Blue, and Goody wasn’t having it.

“Hello, Mrs. Blake. You sure are looking pretty today,” Chandler, Jerrico’s new host, greeted her as soon as she entered the building.

“Hey, Chan. How you doing, baby?”

“I’m well. Would you like me to escort you to the chef or you got it?”

Goody smiled at Chandler. He was such a sweet young man. Southern and still in college, working on his first degree. His manners and polite smile had won him the spot at the door, with Jerrico stating he wanted everyone to feel welcomed the moment they entered, and he did just that. Goody was fighting mad when she walked

in, but his aura chilled her out some.

“I got it, sweetie, thank you.”

In a hurry to see the one person who could keep her from clowning and acting a fool, Goody moved through the building, waving at patrons as she passed. She heard his voice as soon as she entered the kitchen, and her entire world slowed down.

“No, you go ahead and study. We’ve got you covered. The restaurant will be here, those finals won’t,” Jerrico spoke nicely to one of his employees, making Goody swoon.

On most days, she still wondered how her mean self ended up paired with one of the sweetest humans in the world. Jerrico was so perfect, from his inside to his outside. Goody’s eyes took him in from behind. He was facing a grill with his black chef's coat on, cooking steak and vegetables. Wide muscular back, denting in the middle where his muscles cinched the fabric of his clothing. Without thinking, Goody walked until her front was pressed to his back with her arms around his waist.

“I love you,” she voiced as soon as her head rested on his back.

“I love you too, Paradise. What you doing here, beautiful?”

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Goody melted even more and closed her eyes. “I needed you.”

Jerrico turned his head to the side while continuing to cook so that he could see her. “Give me five minutes and I’ll meet you in my office, cool?”

“No, I want to stay right here.” She remained wrapped around him, only opening her eyes to see a few of his employees smiling at them. “You can finish cooking. I’ll wait.”

He chuckled but continued cooking, even humming some sort of tune while he finished. Goody’s anger was long gone by the time he plated the dish he’d been making and stepped away from the grill. He tried to turn around, but she tightened her grip.

“I don’t want to let go yet.”

More laughter came from him and two of the other ladies cooking on the grill next to him. “How am I supposed to get cleaned up with you on me like this?”

“Stay dirty, you know I like you that way.”

“I know that’s right,” one cook responded, making Goody smile. “Tend to your wife, Chef Blake. We’ve got it for a few minutes.”

“Be right back ladies,” he told them while walking up the stairs awkwardly due to Goody still holding on tightly to his waist.

She didn't bother to release him fully until they were inside his office with the door closed. Jerrico stripped from his Chef's coat and hung it on the rack behind his desk before taking a seat and welcoming her into his lap.

"Do you know how spoiled you are?"

"The question is, do you know? You're the one who did it."

His smile covered his face. "And will do it again, what's wrong?"

Goody rolled her eyes as she thought back to Marcellus and the conversation she'd had with him at Calvary's house.

"Your brother is trying to get beat down."

"I would ask which one, but I already know it's Money."

"How you know? He must have hit you up with some bullshit too?"

Jerrico nodded. "He asked why we didn't invite him to the cookout at our house the other day, and Cal told him the truth. He's been acting foolish since."

"Foolish enough to get beat up? Or foolish enough to show his bitter side?"

"Not really sure at the moment. He wasn't feeling Forever dating Blue or taking him to California with her."

"That's not his damn business," Goody flew off the handle immediately.

"I know, Paradise, and I told him that. Surprisingly, so did Cal. You know he's typically on his messy shit, but he sided with me too. Even going as far as stating

Blue is a good dude and that Forever was safe. Money really went crazy then.”

“That’s good for his ass. He needs to go crazy. He just better go crazy in the privacy of his own home that he shares with his wife.” Goody crossed her arms and rolled her eyes again.

“I agree, baby. Trust me, I do, but you can’t let him get you going like this.”

“Tell that nigga that! He the one showed up to Cal’s house trying to shade her to my face, as if that wasn’t dangerous enough.”

Jerrico eyed her with a smirk on his face. “Dangerous? What you gon’ do?”

“You already know how I’m coming behind Forever, so do Mrs. Sofia a favor and tell your brother to let it be. I’d hate to have to kill him.”

As soon as the words left her mouth, she and Jerrico laughed together.

“I’m for real, Man Hoe. I know the situation is weird, but I get a good vibe from Blue, and I don’t want the smallest thing throwing Forever’s mind off. He seems like he genuinely wants to take care of her and make her happy. She deserves that. Especially after Marcellus.”

When Jerrico didn’t say anything, only looked off and nodded slowly, Goody grabbed his chin and made him look at her.

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“What you think? You don’t agree?”

“Nah, of course I do. I’ve agreed since he had his homeboy pay her all that money for taking the case, then after y’all came back from Florida with all that man’s shit, I knew he had to be serious. Ain’t nobody just forking over racks to a complete stranger for the fun of it. I just also agree with Money about her taking him all over the place with her. He’s cool, but how do we know she’s safe?”

“I know you’re not talking? You practically force fed me food that I didn’t watch you prepare the first time I ever saw you, then made me come to your house, where you proceeded to molest me on your sofa. I didn’t know you, and neither did Forever, but she was game. Pushing me to give you a chance. How did we know I was safe with you?”

Jerrico looked at her like what she was saying wasn’t true. “Come on now, you know that was different. We were in the same city, and you’re best friends with my brother.”

“You could have killed me here or in another city, and fuck Marcellus right now.”

“I get the point you’re trying to make, but it’s not the same.”

She was prepared to argue her point some more, but was stopped by his lips on hers. He kissed her deeply before pulling away.

“However, Forever is a very smart woman. Has been since I’ve met her, so if she trusted him, then I do too.”

“Y’all just wanna judge him because he in the streets.”

“You know me better than to ever think I’ll judge anyone.”

Goody didn’t say anything right away, only looked away, contemplating her sister’s situation. As beautiful as it could be, society was going to make it bad, and she hated that.

“I’m not going to let anyone hurt my sister’s feelings again, Jerrico.”

“And I’m not going to let anyone hurt yours, so I’m on your side. No matter what that means,” he rubbed her back before pecking her arm. “I’ll talk to Money again.”

“Thank you. You better.” She looked down at him with a smile on her face. “You know, as soon as I left Marcellus, I came here. I was so mad that I was shaking,” she leaned over, resting her cheek on the top of his head. “You’re the only person I knew would make it better. I’m so happy I have you.”

“That’s what I’m here for. You don’t need a man for nothing else. The least I can do is make your life easier, a little bit more peaceful. Anything else you can do for yourself, so I got to make sure I stay on my game. Can’t have you throwing me out and dropping disk tracks about my dick being bad.”

Her laughter erupted loudly and took over her body.

“I might call you a fuck ass cooking nigga, or a bitch ass chef, but I’ll never say that dick is bad, or that food is nasty. I’m already do your ass dirty, ain’t no point in lying too.”

His deep laughter made her smile. “Spare me, baby, please spare me.”

“I will because I can’t live without you,” Goody simpered while staring into his eyes.

“You’ll never have to,” he pecked the center of her chest a few times.

“Forever deserves this type of love. Me and Yummy already got it.”

Jerrico was quiet as he stared at her for a long, intent moment.

“I understand, love, and you have my word to give her and Blue a real, open-minded chance.”

“You muthafuckin better or else it’s a diss track coming for your ass.”

They laughed together, with Jerrico making Goody even more anxious for her sister to have the type of love she shared with him.

Welcome to the hood life

The sun was bright, and the streets were busy. The buzz from the passing traffic echoed in their ears as the overwhelming heat encompassed them the moment they stepped out of the airport. A multitude of travelers passed them back and forth as everyone did their best to get to their next destinations. It was so hot in Miami that Blue could literally smell the heat, and there was no place he’d rather be.

Home was definitely where his heart was, and he couldn’t explain the feeling his city gave him, even if he was asked. Which he had been, repeatedly, when he and Forever discussed where they would make their permanent home. Initially, Blue had been open to going wherever she went, just wanting to be close to her, but the more he spoke to his friends and family from home, looked at pictures of his gang chilling in clubs or on the block on social media, or recollecting on the days he spent in his hood, he wanted to be home. It was where he belonged. Only this time, with his girl.

With the unicorn type beauty on his brain, where she'd been for the past few months, Blue looked to his right to see Forever observing everyone moving around them. Completely different than she usually looked, her long chocolate legs were covered by a pair of denim shorts, while she showed her flat stomach in a white crop top. On her feet were a pair of gold designer sandals while she sported a wrist full of gold bracelets, a gold Rolex, and two gold chains with a Z pendant on one and a rose on the other.

Blue had gotten them for her the day prior. She'd mentioned in casual conversation that she'd liked the one Azayna had been wearing with the E on it. Of course, he'd made sure she had one of her own plus more. With him, she'd never have to ask for anything twice. Even if she hadn't really asked for it. Everything in Blue wanted to spoil Forever, and he would every moment he got.

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With her being such a simple and independent woman, there wasn't much she asked for outside of food, so he was sure to spoil her. He'd have to pay attention to the things she said. Another problem he didn't have. His attentiveness to her was natural because he was already so deeply infatuated with her.

"Baby, you good?" he inquired, when he saw her eyebrows scrunch above her shades.

They were big and designer as well, covering most of her face. With her hair pulled into a large bun on the top of her head, her perfect face was displayed for his pleasure. Her sophisticated and poised posture, elongated back and neck, and gorgeous fucking skin had Blue feeling like the man in the city. She was so perfect and rare. He couldn't wait to show her off to the gang.

Tall for a woman, but still shorter than him, she looked up to him. "Yes, I'm fine. You?"

Blue smiled big. "Happy as hell to be home!" he chuckled when she did. "The boys finna go crazy over your pretty ass. I can already tell."

She snickered while covering her mouth. "How you know?"

"Shit, I'm having a hard time not fanning out over you right now, and I been fucking with you. You got my heart beating fast as shit, so I know they finna be star struck like hell."

Another bashful smile debuted, but she covered it with her hand again.

“Baby,” he pulled her hand down. “Stop covering your teeth. You ain’t got nothing to be self-conscious about. Nothing at all. You hear me?”

She nodded.

“Good, now give me a kiss,” he leaned down, meeting her halfway.

“Where are we going first? I’m hungry,” she inquired once pulling out of their kiss.

“Let’s slide to my crib to change and drop our bags off, then I’ll feed you.”

Like she always did, Forever agreed with his suggestion and followed him to his black truck he’d had Pat park at the airport for him.

“Okayyyyy, Zurich,” Forever sang playfully. “This cute gang.”

With a wide grin on his face, Blue looked at her and chuckled. “Hell, you talking about gang for? You ain’t banging.”

“My man is, so that means I’m affiliated.”

Her tone was so hood and southern that she’d almost sounded like her sister.

“There you go again on your ghetto girl shit.” He picked her up and sat her in the front seat of his truck. “You know what that does to me,”

“Oh my god, Zurich, get over yourself. This is how I talk.”

“If you say so.” He winked before closing the door and hopping in with her.

It took them a little over an hour to get to his house, change, and get back out into the

city, headed to get her some food. He was ripping the highway when his phone rang.

“What up?” he answered for Pat.

“I know I ain’t Forever, but I know I’m good enough to see your ass, gotdamn! Got to the city and ain’t even hit a nigga line.”

Blue chuckled at his oldest friend, “Bruh where you at?”

“At the house, slide through real quick. Let me lace your pockets.”

“Already.” Blue ended the call after letting him know he was on the way. “You mind if I slide to see Pat real fast before we go eat?”

“Nope, I’m good, but don’t have me out here starving for too long or you’re going to see me on some ghetto girl shit for real.”

“I know you better watch your mouth,” Blue teased while tapping her lips with his pointer finger. “Gimme kiss,” he couldn’t help but ask when he felt how soft her mouth had been.

“You gon’ gimme kissme to death, ain’t you?”

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Busted and somewhat embarrassed, Blue burst into laughter while leaning back over the console. He'd leaned over closer to her in preparation to peck her lips, but after she put him on the spot, he sat back.

“You got down with that one, Baby. Can't even flex.”

Forever's beautiful chocolate face grew even prettier as she smiled and laughed at his expense. Her glasses weren't on, so he was able to enjoy the brown freckles decorating her nose and cheeks.

“I'm just playing, Blue-Blue, give me a kiss,” she leaned over to kiss him, but it was his turn to reject her, so he leaned away. “I hope you don't think that's finna stop me,” she told him while unbuckling her seatbelt and kneeling in her seat.

With the top half of her body nearly in his seat, she grabbed his face and kissed his mouth too many times to count before sitting back in her seat.

“I can see now you bad for my health, trying to make me crash and shit. Wait until I tell Goody and Yummy.”

“Tell them what?”

“That this thug dick got you losing your shit.”

She cracked up with laughter before speaking again. “Wait until I tell them how you're down here calling their names like you know them.”

“What was that shit you just said about being affiliated with the gang? My wife gang, so I am too.”

Blue watched her face light up at him, calling her his wife. He’d already known before doing it that it would make her smile and it had done just that. They continued their lovers' play until they pulled up to Pat’s house. The whole driveway and street was lined with cars, alerting Blue to what was taking place.

“Aww hell nah,” He shook his head.

“What?” Forever looked around at all the cars.

“This nigga got me good.”

Forever continued looking around until her mouth fell open. “Is he having a party for you?”

Feeling the same way as she did, Blue couldn’t even clown her for the irritation in her voice.

“Looks like it, Baby. Is that okay?”

She sat back in her seat and just looked around for a minute before nodding.

“Yeah, I’ll be cool. They’re your people, of course, they’d want to have you a welcome home party.”

She was talking, but Blue could tell she was trying to talk herself into it just as much as she was him. He hated to have to put her on the spot like that, but he hadn’t known either or else he would have at least checked with her first. It was bad enough she wasn’t from Florida and was about to be thrust into some real hood nigga shit on her

first day. That was even worse.

Though an extremely warm person, once knowing her, Forever was different. Quiet, meek, and lowkey bourgeois as fuck. Her sister and cousin might have fit in perfectly if they were in her shoes, but backyard barbeque with street niggas was so far from her, Blue was almost scared to take her in. There was no telling who Pat invited, and the more he thought about it, the less Blue wanted to expose her to it.

“You know what, I’ll just get you some food and take you back to the crib. I can come back here by myself. This too many fucking people.”

Forever’s hand on his arm stopped him. “I’ll be fine, just park.”

“You sure?” he stared at her, not convinced.

“Yeah. How hard can it be? It’s nothing but a party. Just don’t leave me when we get in here.”

Blue frowned slightly. “That ain’t nothing you got to worry about.”

“Then I’ll for sure be fine.”

Blue took a few deep breaths before he was parked and ready. After grabbing his phone and keys, he hopped out the truck. Happy that he’d showered and changed after their flight, Blue ran his hand over the black shirt he was wearing. With black cotton shorts on to match and a fresh pair of sneakers, he moved around the car to get to his girl. Neck and wrists laced with his jewels, while his cologne could be smelled a mile away. Blue looked around and smiled. Damn, it feels good to be home.

When he opened the door to help Forever out, she was leaning forward, looking in the mirror, freshening up the clear colored gloss she had on.

“You still pretty, baby,” he spoke, making her blush as she winked in his direction.

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He watched her continue, making sure her hair and face were in place, enjoying every minute of it. When she was finally done, he helped her slide from the passenger seat and pull the hems of her black outfit down around her thighs. When she'd first put on the black one-piece outfit with all her back out and cut low enough in the front to show the top of her titties, he'd been all for it, but now that she was about to be around his niggas, he didn't know anymore.

The only thing on his side was Forever was relatively small, so versus looking slutty she looked sexy. The outfit hugged every one of her small curves, enhancing her tiny waist and long legs. Both of her chains were still around her neck while big hoops hung from her ears, drawing attention to how long her hair was. It was no longer in the bun, and now flowing down her back.

"I love this so much," Blue picked up a handful of her hair and smelled it. "You don't wear weave?"

She giggled. "Not really. I have before, but it's not an everyday thing for me. I get braids sometimes, though."

"For real? I can't imagine your rich ass with no Black girl hairstyle."

"What?" she half frowned, and half smiled. "I'm Black Zurich, what else would I wear?"

He gave her a lazy grin and released her hair, doing his best to fix it back how she had it. "You really could wear whatever you want because you're really like that, but shoot, I'on know. You just look like you only wear expensive shit."

“Rich Black girls wear weave too.”

“You don’t have rich Black girl energy though, you have rich white girl, my-daddy-is-paid-I-only-date-other-white-billionaires, energy.”

The look she gave him had Blue cracking up with laughter.

“I do not look like that.”

“I do not look like that,” he chuckled. “White girl ass, come on so I can cuss these niggas out for making fun of how you talk.”

He grabbed her hand, but she pulled it away and rolled her eyes at him before grabbing her black Chanel purse with the gold chain and placing it over her body. Blue’s eyes immediately went to where it lay between her breasts. Her chocolate skin, glistening beneath the sun made him want to touch her, so he did.

“Boy, get your damn hands off me,” she snapped.

“Damn, you cutting up, ain’t it?”

“Was that Black enough for you?”

“Baby, I know you not mad. I was only kidding.”

Forever continued fixing her purse before sliding those large ass shades back on her face and closing the door. Blue stood much taller than her, staring her up and down. With her long hair hanging down her back, clothes hugging that sexy, long body, and the black heels with all the straps tied around her ankles, Forever looked fresh off a Paris runway.

“You can be mad as you want, gang, but you ain’t regular like these other bitches and I stand on that. Black, white, blue, or purple, you gon’ stand out every fucking time.” He grabbed her hand again. “Gorgeous ass. Come on, so I can stunt on these niggas.”

He hit the locks and pulled her behind him, smiling when he felt her hand squeeze his. He looked down at her, moving elegantly next to him. Unable to help himself once again, he pecked the top of her head.

“You swear I’m just so pretty.”

“You fucking is.”

Her giggles were tucked in his arm when she leaned her face into the fabric of his shirt. When she finally pulled away and smiled up at him with her white smile, he wanted to say something else about her being perfect, but kept it in. Complimenting her was happening so naturally that it was starting to sound like it was all he knew how to say.

The closer they got to the front door, the louder the party in the backyard could be heard. Smoke from the grill floated in the air as the smell wafted up their noses. Forever’s hand went to her stomach as she exhaled.

“I know I’m hungry if barbeque smells good to me.”

“What’s wrong with barbeque?”

“I’m a vegetarian, Blue-Blue,” she reminded him.

“Damn, I keep forgetting. I hope they got something here for you to eat or we leaving.”

She rubbed the front of his arm but said nothing. When they finally reached the gate to where Pat's backyard opened, Blue stopped and looked at her again.

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“I’m straight cuz,” she said, trying to keep a straight face.

Blue, on the other hand, could not and shot her an award-winning smile. “You better cut that shit out before you get your ass popped. You not gang, Forever.”

“Says the man that I just got off a RICO charge. I am gang,” she tooted her lips up and rolled her neck. “Need to be a leader round this bitch.”

“Aye, I’m cutting down the time you talk to that rapper girl, Slim Goody. She’s rubbing off on you,” he told her through his laughter.

Forever sniggled along with him as he grabbed the gate and pulled it open. As soon as he did, blue and white balloons came into view. They were all over the ground, in the pool, and tied to chairs. People draped in blue littered the backyard while music played loudly from the deejay booth at the back of the yard. Women in bikinis were everywhere from the pool to the screened in balcony.

From where Blue was standing, he had a good view of the entire yard, and he was already smiling at some of the faces he saw. Members from his gang were everywhere, and it made him that much happier to have his Forever standing by him. She’d done what no other could have done, and he owed her his life for it.

“Aye, lil’ mama, let me get another kiss.”

Forever looked up at him, clearly confused by the notion, but he was already leaning toward her, kissing her lips. Her soft hand on his cheek made his eyes close as he deepened the kiss. When he pulled away, she was staring up at him through her

glasses.

“What was that for?”

He looked around at the backyard filled with his loved ones. “For making this possible.”

Her tightened grip on his hand was her response as he swaggered ahead of her toward the festivities. Obviously having just been spotted, the deejay yelled over the mic.

“The man of the muthafucking hour is here. Welcome Home to the biggest gangsta. Blue, we missed you, my nigga!”

Blue’s smile showcased again as he held his hand up, acknowledging the shout out as a few of his people began making their way toward him. Pat being amongst the first. His smile just as big as Blue’s as he walked straight to him and embraced him in a brotherly hug. The way he laughed and smiled while slapping Blue’s back extra hard showed his excitement.

All Forever could do was smile and shake her head at their boyish exchange. Even stepping away a few feet so they didn’t accidentally hit her.

“My boy!” Pat yelled happily again. “Step back and let me look at your Black ass.”

“You showing your age talking about let you look at me.”

“Nigga, you know you my son,” Pat chuckled some more as Blue stepped back and wiped his clothes as if dusting himself off. “I’m so glad you’re home, cuz.” He told him earnestly.

“Facts. This old ass nigga was about to die without you,” Blue’s cousin, Jugg told

him before taking his turn to hug him.

“Hell yeah, I was. Can’t survive without my right hand. Y’all young asses will get a nigga killed.”

Forever snickered at their exchange until Pat looked in her direction. His smile brightened again. “Miss. Forever, it’s good to see you again, baby girl,” he told her before pulling her into a tight hug.

His hold felt sincere, and it made Forever feel good about her job. Her sincerest passion when entering law was to always help her people. Pat and the rest of Blue’s friends and family’s appreciation was her motivation and applause combined.

“Good to see you too. I’m glad I could help.”

“Help?” Jugg said dramatically. “This party needs to be for you instead of this nigga. You did all the work.”

“Sho nuff, gang,” another man agreed with Jugg openly before bowing to Forever. “Love and respect, Queen.”

“It was my pleasure.” Forever nodded her head in his direction and blinked up to Blue, who was standing there eyeing her like a proud father.

“I keep telling her she’s the biggest. Ain’t nobody seeing my baby.”

His admiration for her was so humbling and unnerving all at once. She prayed it never stopped.

“Aight, y’all come on and enjoy the festivities. You know the streets happy you here,” Pat began walking, ushering them behind him.

“I should knuckle up with your ass for surprising me with this party. You know Forever ain’t used to hood shit.”

Blue laughed when Forever punched him in the arm. “Stop trying me, Zurich.”

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“That’s right, Forever. Get on his ass,” Pat chimed in.

“Stop trying her, Zurich,” Jugg mocked Forever in his best proper tone.

Blue chuckled the moment she rolled her eyes. “You got to put on your ghetto girl voice up in here, baby.” He joked with her before grabbing her hand in his again and leading her further into the throngs of people.

With a multitude of more people waiting to greet him, Forever rolled her eyes beneath her glasses. All she wanted todo was find some food and sit down, but Blue refused to let her go and felt the need to introduce her to everyone they interacted with. Not saying that she didn’t appreciate it, but she was starving and on the verge of getting lightheaded. That would be no fun for anybody.

“Forever, what you doing down here, girl?”

Blue and Forever’s heads turned toward the feminine voice at the same time. Forever smiled when she saw Azayna.

“She with her man where she’s supposed to be,” Blue told her playfully while pulling her into a one-sided hug. “The question is, what you doing down here? Don’t you live in Atlanta now?”

“Brought Zon down here to stay with my daddy for a few weeks. Don’t worry about me, nigga. Forever, come on girl. Blue ain’t going nowhere. Leave him here to have girl talk with his friends.”

Forever had never been happier for something a day in her life. She released Blue's hand and was already walking away when he grabbed her back by her wrist. He leaned forward with his lips poked out. She pecked them softly and pulled away.

"Where y'all going?" he directed his question to Azayna, but looked at Forever.

"To the cabana," she told him, already knowing he knew where it was.

Blue nodded before watching them walk away, his eyes glued to Forever and the attention she got. Like he'd known she would; she drew eyes without even trying. He could see the lustful stares of other men while women looked on in what was either envy or amazement. Forever had it like that though, and it was crazy how she seemed not to notice.

She hadn't broken her stride nor turned her head to the left or right, only kept the pace behind Azayna the entire way to the food tables and again on their way to the screened in Cabana with the string lights outlining it. Blue couldn't really make out who else was in there with them, but it looked to be another two or three women. He looked for a few moments longer, trying to make out who the women were. He didn't need Forever around no messy shit, because his girl wasn't like that.

"Azayna got her. She good." Pat nudged his arm and handed him a red cup filled with a liquor so strong he could smell it.

"Got to make sure. You know my baby really a white girl dipped in chocolate."

Pat and Blue carried on laughing with him, giving Forever one last look before partying with his friends.

"I'm so happy you saved me," Forever gushed to Azayna while watching Blue across the yard, laughing dramatically with his friends.

“I saw you as soon as y’all came in. I was like, let me go get this damn girl,” Azayna snickered while drinking from her cup. “My best friend, Zebrina is just like you. It took her forever to learn how to act around the hood niggas,” she laughed while nodding her head in the direction of the other dark-skinned girl sitting with them.

She was a beautiful woman with the skin color of Forever’s and a thick body with a small baby bump. She was sporting a middle part sew-in with a knee-length black strapless bodycon dress. Next to her was Nova. She, too, was in a dress with a much larger baby bump, only her dress was pink with spaghetti straps.

“If it wasn’t for my husband, I’d still be out here bad,” Zebrina reassured Forever.

Azayna smiled. “BB got this hoe, thinking she can go anywhere and do anything.”

“She can, though. Who’s going to play with Zebrina on BB’s watch?” Nova questioned, while munching on her plate of ribs.

“Tell her something friend,” Zebrina high-fived Nova.

Azayna shook her head in laughter while looking toward Forever. “Baby, y’all don’t have to tell me nothing. BB being here said all that it needed to say. What blood you know invited to a Crip cookout?”

“Trust me, girl, we’re not staying long. He told me he’s going to say what’s up to Blue, let me talk to y’all for a minute, then we’re leaving.”

The girls all laughed and made their own commentary until Forever interrupted with a mouth filled with pasta salad. “Which one is BB?”

Zebrina pointed at a tall, slim man standing near Pat and Blue. He had one hand in his pocket and the other holding a little girl. On his head was a bright red hat, while the

rest of his clothing was black. Next to him stood a frowning face Egypt. He didn't look the least bit entertained in nothing going on around him. He actually looked to be two seconds from shooting the party up, using the gun tucked beneath his arm. Similar to BB, he wore all black as well, but instead of a red hat, he wore a red bandanna tied around his neck.

“And look at the little troublemaker standing there like BB's bodyguard,” Azayna joked on her husband. “Ain't nobody scared of his little ass.”

“Lie again,” Nova corrected. “You know, like I do, we got the two craziest niggas in Dade. Everybody scared of that fool. I dare somebody to try BB while Egypt standing there. It'll be blood everywhere.”

Forever cracked up at the women talking about their men. They were so welcoming and friendly that she felt comfortable enough to make her next statement.

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“Crazy but fine.”

Nova and Azayna looked at her with wide smiles before giggling and nodding, and waving their hands in a way that only a proud wife could.

“You ain’t told no lies, Forever,” Azayna grinned. “Then knowing they’ll shoot some shit about you makes it even better... or should I say wetter, bitchhhh!”

“I know that’s right,” Zebrina agreed. “Look at Blaze fine ass. He’ll wet the whole backyard up about me.”

“The backyard?” Azayna exclaimed. “The whole world. BB is quiet and sweet, but when it comes to Breen, the nigga ain’t nothing but a tall Egypt.”

Zebrina smiled at him lovingly while rubbing her belly.

“Ain’t nothing wrong with that. I love to see it,” Forever spoke genuinely.

She loved to see Black women being loved and protected the way they deserved.

“Attorney Maverick, ain’t no point in acting like you’re not a part of the real housewives of gangland now, sis. Blue might not be Blood like our husbands, but don’t play with my boy.” Nova smiled in her direction.

“A big gangsta fa sho.”

“Run down on a nigga quick.”

Zebrina and Nova commented just before Azayna followed them up.

“And ain’t scared of nothing in the world. Breen, you remember when Egypt put that gun in his face?”

Zebrina’s eyes bucked. “Do I? I almost passed out, and Blue didn’t flinch. I was praying Egypt didn’t kill that man. BB kept telling me he wouldn’t, but I wasn’t convinced at all.”

The three of them cackled loudly, with Forever snickering as well.

“Why he do that?”

Zebrina pointed her thumb at Azayna. “Egypt thought she set him up to get shot, so he broke up with her and she started dating Blue.”

“We never had sex though,” Azayna felt the need to tell Forever, making all the women laugh.

“Girl hush, that woman don’t care. She didn’t even know Blue then. Like I was saying, Forever, Egypt saw them together in the park and lost his mind. I don’t know why she loves to try my little friend like that. She knows he’s crazy.”

“That was back in my ass selling days. I don’t try him no more.”

Forever smirked. “Your what?”

“She used to be a prostitute, chile,” Nova told her. “I was shocked when she told me too.”

Forever was flabbergasted as she looked at Azayna trying her hardest not to frown at

her. She did her best not to pass judgement on people, but she didn't randomly meet retired prostitutes every day.

"These two fat pregnant heffas love to bring up old stuff, ignore them, Forever. That's my past life. I just sit at home and be a happy wife to a lunatic now."

"I second that," Nova agreed.

"I'd third it, but my husband isn't crazy like theirs. He's a sweetheart with patience and logic. He controls their men."

Like they'd been doing all day, the girls laughed together, with Forever joining in as much as she could. She was so thankful that they were there.

"Where's Auto, Nova?"

"At his granny's house, cutting the grass and making sure everything is good down here. He said, and I quote, he wasn't coming around all these bitch ass, faggot ass, niggas and their hoes, and to call him if I needed him to come end the shit. End of quote." Nova had them all tripping out again.

"Sounds just like my boy," Azayna told her.

“My baby is so special.”

Zebrina drank from her Sprite. “I’m convinced they all are. It has to be the gang stuff.”

“How do y’all deal with that?” Forever looked around at all of them. “I mean, I don’t even know how to approach it. I don’t know what to say or what not to say. I mean, I’m a lawyer, so I know the legal side of it, but being the girlfriend or whatever, not so much. I feel stupid every time I have to call my sister and cousin to get help on how to talk to my man.”

Azayna and Nova giggled while Zebrina rendered her an empathetic look. “These two right here are from the streets like their men, so they don’t understand, but I do. I was in medical school when I met BB, fresh out of a two-parent home, spoiled only child, and green to everything that wasn’t lacrosse and private schools. Being with BB changed my entire world, but he made it easy. He’s so patient and understanding with me, he doesn’t judge my ignorance or condemn my upbringing when we don’t agree, and above all, he respects my mind. He doesn’t force his lifestyle on me or make me feel inferior to it. He just lets me be me, educating me along the way, allowing me the opportunity to give different insight on things, slip ups whenever they occur. I think Blue will do you the same way if you just explain it to him.”

“She doesn’t even have to explain it to him. Blue’s going to do everything Breen just said BB does for her. Outside of Blue’s silly personality, he and BB are a lot alike. They’re both really quiet, sticks to themselves, and are the most patient and attentive men I’ve ever met. Not even Egypt is as patient and attentive to me as BB is to Zebrina or Blue was to me the short time we hung out. I think those two qualities

alone will make for a good relationship. Don't get me wrong, he loves his gang, but you're going to come first to it. I can see that now. You see how hard he grilled me just to let you sit with us."

Forever giggled. "He's just scared I'm going to embarrass him. He keeps saying I'm white."

They all laughed, with Azayna talking through hers.

"You are, but so what? So was Zebrina."

"She's right. I was probably worse than you. I didn't have a sister or cousin to call. All I had was my bestie and my man."

"Blue is a jokester, Forever, so don't take that to heart. He's only kidding."

"I know," she nodded with a smile. "I just want to make sure I'm what he needs, ya know? I don't always feel like his equal."

"Girl! You are me!" Zebrina waved her hands wildly. "I was the same way. People used to clown me like, how are you about to be a doctor, worried about not being good enough for a gang member?" she giggled. "But BB is one of one. I had to be top tier to be his."

"Oh my god, yes!" Forever squealed a little more hyper now that she'd found somebody who understood her struggles. "I know who I am and who he is, but when I'm with him, titles don't matter. I just be wanting to make sure he's proud of me being his."

"Aww," Nova swooned. "You're going to be us soon. A pregnant gang wife."

Their laughter carried on once again.

“For real though, you have nothing to worry about but these bitches,” Zebrina rolled her eyes. “Even knowing these men are married, they still try it.” She spoke while looking across the yard.

Forever followed her gaze and observed the two girls in swimsuits flouncing around the men. One was close to Egypt and BB, while the other was directly in Blue’s face, smiling. Forever’s whole body got hot as she watched her grinning up at him. His posture wasn’t giving much since all she could see was his back, but you didn’t have to move to smile, and judging by the smile on the girl’s face, he was probably giving one back.

“Don’t let it get to you, girl. I can bet you that Blue’s looking at her like she’s crazy. You know he don’t really smile.”

Forever didn’t know that. He was always smiling when she was around, but then again, that was now. When she’d first met him, he never cracked at all. But he hadn’t needed to. His eyes said it all.

“See, this why I left and never looked back. I hate to even see another woman in BB’s presence.” Zebrina said, while standing to her feet. “Let me go see about my husband before I be out here fighting.”

Azayna and Nova stood right behind her, prompting Forever to do the same thing. With two of the women being pregnant, she didn’t presume a fight would take place, but she wasn’t really sure. This wasn’t her home or anything remotely close to her comfort zone.

“You already know it’ll never get that far with BB standing there, and even if it does, who you fighting with me right here?” Azayna said. “Got to know I’m slapping a hoe

‘bout you.”

“Don’t worry, you’re fine.” Nova grabbed Forever’s hand, reassuring her sweetly.

She wasn’t sure whether the discomfort she felt was visible or not, but she was thankful for Nova’s support. The walk across the yard warranted the same type of stares as it had when she’d crossed it the first time. Only this time was a little worse since Forever wasn’t as peaceful as she had been the first trip, and oddly, because of the other women. The dislike for them was very clear, and though Forever wasn’t sure why, she was almost positive it was due to the different gang affiliation.

As hard as she’d tried to keep herself calm, her heart rate was beginning to speed up, causing subtle tremors to take over her body. The only thing keeping her from completely falling apart was the fact that the girl in the swimsuit was still in Blue’s face, smiling like he was her man and not Forever’s.

“Watch this,” Azayna whispered to the group before walking ahead of them and beneath the covered porch where the men were. “Damn, y’all hoes ain’t got no manners. All in these men faces like they don’t have wives.”

Now positioned in front of Egypt with her back to his chest and arms folded. As if he wasn’t the male version of her, Egypt wrapped one arm around her chest, seeming to keep her calm.

“Dream, please don’t start that shit today. Don’t nobody want Egypt,” the girl who had been the closest to him and BB spoke first.

“First of all, it’s Azayna hoe, and what you over here for if you don’t want problems?”

“You sure were standing mighty close for somebody that doesn’t want him,” Zebrina

made her presence known. “Unless it was Blaze you were looking at,” the smile on Zebrina’s face was a mass contradiction to what was coming out of her mouth.

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If Forever hadn't already known Zebrina wasn't feeling the whole ordeal, her plastered smile and polite tone would have fooled her. Not interested in starting any unnecessary strife, but not planning to stay too far from her man, Forever walked as close as she could get to Blue without making her need to be next to him obvious, and leaned against the side of the house, with Nova doing the same.

"Dylan, let's go and let these wives have their husband's attention back," the girl with all the mouth said nastily.

"My wife never lost mine," BB spoke coolly, eyes diverting between both girls.

Zebrina smiled when he palmed her protruding belly and pecked the side of her forehead while their baby girl reached for her hair.

"It's really not that serious, Azayna. I know you're Pat's daughter, so we weren't trying to be disrespectful, just speaking to the homies and saying what's up to Blue," Dylan, the girl who had just been cheesing in Blue's face, tried to reason.

"Sure, you weren't," Azayna laughed.

"For real, Blue is the homie," she smiled over at him, but he didn't return it. "I'm just happy he's home."

He remained standing upright with one hand in his pocket and the other holding the neck of a beer bottle.

"Thanks to his lawyer girlfriend," Nova shocked Forever when she spoke in her

defense.

She was still looking at her in surprise when she heard the Dylan girl speak again.

“His what?”

“Girlfriend,” Forever said again, this time making herself seen. “Lawyer... whichever you prefer.”

All eyes went to her. Leaning casually in her same spot against the wall with one long leg crossed over the other at the ankle, Forever raised her sunglasses so that they were atop her head. It was as if the world stopped for Blue when she spoke. His head turned slowly toward her, revealing his bloodshot red eyes. They were low and showed just how heavily intoxicated he was.

Before moving, his extremely low eyes trailed from her feet up to her face, with his head leaning slowly to the side as he bit his lip.

“Forever... you on your shit, gang.”

The arm that had been stuck deep into his pocket stretched toward her, grabbing her wrist and pulling her to him. As soon as she was close enough, he kissed her lips.

“You spying on me?”

“Yeah, watching you catch up with your homie.” She rolled her eyes toward Dylan.

Blue’s eyes darted to Dylan as well before sucking his teeth.

“She ain’t my homie, ain’t nobody gang but you,” he spoke against her lips again, this time wrapping one arm around her back and sticking his tongue in her mouth.

Though he was clearly drunk or high or both, Blue's demeanor didn't waver from his norm. Just as calming and tranquil as he always was, he remained. His kiss wasn't rushed, sloppy, or wet. It was passionate and endearing, the same way it typically was when dealing with her.

Forever tried to pull away weakly, not exerting any real effort because she honestly didn't want it to end. Parting from him felt wrong and premature, so she sank. Sank deeper into his body, engaging in real lovers play. The kind she'd watched her sister-and brother-in-law exhibit day after day. When he finally let her up for air, he looked just as dazed as she felt.

"You're giving me exactly what I wanted," he pressed his forehead against hers before pecking her nose. "I don't see nobody but you. You taking up my world."

"Oh shit, my nigga in love," Jugg interrupted the only possible silence they could have had amongst a yard full of people.

Suddenly ashamed of her actions, Forever rested her face in the middle of Blue's chest with his arm circling her back and beard shielding her forehead.

"Damn, this nigga move on quick. Wasn't he just writing your sister, Dylan?" her friend asked her with more attitude than necessary.

"Okay, now I'm finna beat your ass. I tried to be nice, but this girl hasn't done nothing to you and you're trying to be messy."

"Aight, aight," Pat attempted to intervene and keep Azayna off the girl. "Egypt, get your wife."

He chuckled. "You mean your daughter?"

“Yeah, get her ass. She’s acting more and more like you every day.”

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Laughter carried around the men, but Blue's eyes never left Forever's.

"She talking about some old shit, don't listen to her."

Forever heard him talking, just as she felt his hand pressing her back closer to him, but she chose to turn around and face Dylan instead. She was visibly hurt by Blue and Forever's interaction; it was all over her face and in her posture, which was odd all by itself since she'd just mentioned him and her sister having some sort of interaction. The smile that had been there all day was gone, and her shoulders even slumped some.

"You didn't tell us you had a girlfriend." She looked past Forever and at Blue.

"Dylan, don't do this, baby girl. Me and Journey are old, and you... shit, we were just passing time, and that's it. You knew that."

She inhaled heavily like she'd been gut punched. "Passing time? Wow. Okay." She nodded and walked away, but turned back around to face them. "I guess since you got your little high-class girlfriend, then you want to act brand new, or like what we had was one sided. Fuck you nigga, and I'm telling Journey."

"Chill, Dylan," Blue's deep voice vibrated on Forever's back.

"You fucking chill, Blue. Standing there trying to act too cool for me because you got your girlfriend with you."

Forever looked Dylan up and down and shook her head. She was doing way too much

for a woman who was clearly talking to her sister's man. But because she'd been on the receiving end of an unexpected heartbreak, she didn't judge her too harshly.

"Dylan, let's go girl. These niggas ain't even worth the embarrassment." Her friend grabbed her arm and pulled her behind her and away from the group.

Once they were gone, conversation resumed for everyone, except Forever. She wasn't interested in anymore friend fun or casual conversation. Her mood was ruined, and she was ready to go home.

I don't know how to handle this love

"Will that be all for you, ma'am?" The lady behind the counter asked her while placing her items in the bag.

"Yes, thank you." Forever nodded the best she could while situating her bags into her cart.

The fresh food market was packed to the max with way too many people and lively kids for it to be so early in the morning. Not even nine o'clock yet, Forever assumed everyone would still be in bed, and that she could get in and out. Had she known she'd be navigating her way through senior citizens, overwhelmed mothers with tribes of kids trekking behind them, and fake fitness gurus buying up things she was sure would go bad before they actually cooked them, she would have stayed in bed.

Forever was over Florida already. Back home in California, her favorite market was never packed, and her shopping trip was more of a luxury than a burden. She enjoyed grocery shopping. It was one of the main things she enjoyed about her weekends, now it was ruined.

She'd awaken hungrier than she'd ever been, and Blue was knocked out so hard that

he could have passed for dead. Contemplating waking him up had gone back and forth in her mind while getting dressed, but she eventually decided to leave him sleep. He'd been through a lot over the past few years and needed whatever piece of sanctity he could get. Even if it was something as simple as sleeping in late. Plus, she needed to call Marcellus back.

He'd been calling and texting her nonstop since she'd arrived in Florida, and Forever had no idea why. She hadn't spoken to Marcellus in months, and even longer than that if she was talking about a full conversation. She'd exchanged polite pleasantries in passing whenever at family functions or accidental run-ins, but never anything more. So, to have him calling and requesting a call back so urgently kind of pissed her off.

Once she got settled in Blue's truck with all of her things in the backseat, instead of pulling out of the parking lot, she scrolled to Marcellus' name on her call log and just stared at it. For some reason, her stomach was jittering, and she couldn't stop it. She went back and forth between calling him for another few minutes before throwing caution to the wind. He answered almost immediately.

"Forever," he spoke lowly into the phone. "Why you dodging me?"

"What do you mean, why am I dodging you? What do you want with me, Marcellus? What is so urgent that you've had to blow up my phone for two days straight?"

"If you've seen me calling, then why haven't you answered?"

"I'm busy."

He scoffed. "Busy with that nigga."

"Exactly."

Feeling somewhat defensive of her relationship with Blue, she decided to go ahead and stop Marcellus before he got started.

“How’s the wife and kid?”

There was silence. Drop dead silence. It stretched for a while until Forever assumed he wasn’t going to answer.

“Tell me what you need, Marcellus.”

“I thought you were better than this, Forever. This is embarrassing.”

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“What’s embarrassing is you having a wife and pretending that you didn’t. What’s embarrassing is you choosing her over me and having the audacity to still think you control my life. What’s embarrassing, Marcellus, is you trying to judge another man’s shortcomings when you have quite a few of your own. Don’t you ever call my phone trying to condemn Zurich another day in your life. Goodbye.” She spat before ending the call.

Furious, she cranked up and headed for Blue’s house. With her GPS the only noise in the truck, her thoughts began getting the best of her, so she remedied it.

“Hello,” Goody answered groggily.

“Girl, wake up and talk to me,” Forever told her as she changed lanes.

Goody yawned. “I’m up, what’s going on?”

“Your brother-in-law!”

“What the fuck did he do?” she all but yelled.

“Tried me,” she fumed before relaying their entire conversation to her sister.

By the time she was finished, Goody had gone on a rant so wild that all Forever could do was laugh. She should have known before calling her evil twin that she would go from zero to one hundred immediately.

“Don’t answer for that nigga no more. I already told Jerrico to talk to him, because if

I do it, he might stop being my friend and my manager,” she snickered. “He’s just bitter because you’re moving on. This is what he gets, though. I’m glad he’s going through it. You need to bring Blue down here so he can see y’all together, that’ll really kill him.”

“I can’t do that. Blue said I better keep Marcellus away from him or he’s going to fuck him up.”

Goody squealed loudly with laughter. “Hold on, let me add Yummy to the call. My good sis needs to hear this. Blue’s speaking her love language right now.”

Forever continued driving. Seconds later, Eternity answered, sounding just as sleepy as Paradise had.

“What is wrong with y’all sorry heffas? There’s no reason to still be in the bed once the sun rises.”

“Shut up, Rabbit. Goody, I know you didn’t call me with her on the phone doing that.”

Forever sniggled at how grouchy they both were in the mornings. “She called to tell you about my baby, Blue.”

“What his fine ass do?”

“Ain’t he fine, Bitch?” Goody egged her on.

“Y’all better be glad I trust y’all, and that both of your men are equally fine as mine, or else I’d hide him and never let you two harlots see him again. Panties always hot for my man.”

“Don’t get mad with us because that Haitian you like is fine as hell.”

“And tall, Goody. Don’t forget that he tall and a gangsta,”

“How come every time I talk to y’all, you both are foaming at the mouth about these Floridians?”

There was movement on Eternity’s end, her probably sitting up in her bed before she rejoined. “Because they fine, invite us down there after I have my baby.”

“I will soon. Blue’s house is humongous, but that ain’t what I’m talking about. Goody, tell her about Marcellus.”

Before Goody could even start, Eternity stopped her. “Nope, don’t. I don’t want to hear it. He’s just a stupid nigga that’s suffering the consequences of his actions. Tell me what my cousin-in-law, Blue, did instead.”

“Told Forever to keep Money away from him or else he’s going to bang on the nigga!”

The way they screamed and carried on was typical Goody and Yummy behavior. Forever could do nothing but laugh and shake her head at their excitement about fighting. Together, they made jokes and commentary about how good the fight would be. They were so entertained by their conversation that Forever was pulling into Blue’s driveway by the time she found room to speak again.

“Look y’all,” she clicked the FaceTime icon on her phone.

Once both of their faces showed on the screen, she flipped the screen around for them to see Blue’s house. It was a big brick home ducked off behind millions of trees. It sat so far back off the road that you wouldn’t even know the house was back there. The large driveway stretched for miles before leading into his six-car garage. The lawn was cut with thick green grass spreading from one corner to the other.

“Damn.”

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“That shit is huge.”

Goody and Yummy spoke.

“I know, right? Hold on, let me show y’all the backyard. The pool is amazing, I’m about to go swimming since I didn’t at the party.”

Forever had called and told them all about the barbeque and how things played out at his welcome home party, so she didn’t have to go back into that. Her phone was in her hand, giving the girls a mini tour of the lower layer of his home, leading outside to the patio and pool area.

The blazing sun greeted her as soon as she walked out of the door and up the short set of stairs where the pool was.

“Oh, my damn goodness,” Goody groaned.

“Foreverrrrrrr! Bitchhhhhhh!” Eternity commented when the camera landed on Blue.

He was next to the pool, where the makeshift beach portion of the pool was. There was black sand and beach chairs with large palm trees planted around the sitting area to shield the sun. The tall bar, fully stocked with liquor, took up the back of the area, with exercise equipment directly next to it.

Blue told her that was where he usually worked out in the mornings, but she hadn’t known that morning would be one of the workout ones, but dang. She felt her cousin and sister on so many levels. Maybe even more because she knew what his sex was

like.

Hanging from the pull up bar in nothing but a pair of blue swim trunks and black Beat headphones covering his ears, Blue pulled his body up and down ten more times before dropping to his feet to take a break, giving them his back to admire. Sweat dripped over his chocolate skin as his long locs hung freely around his shoulders.

His hands were on his hips as he took deep breaths before reaching for the bar and pulling himself up again. The sun shining brightly behind him made up the perfect visual for Forever, and obviously her family too, because their eyes were glued to the screen as well.

“Y’all,” she whispered, not ready to disturb him yet.

“Rabbit, Blue is fucking fine, bitch.”

“Yes, he is. Go lick his stomach,” Goody urged. “Matter of fact, no. Go kiss his dick through them shorts.”

“Grab it or something. It’s huge.”

Forever’s eyes went to the bulge in Blue’s shorts as he continued exercising. They weren’t lying. Even on soft, probably being held down by his underwear and shorts, it was still very visible.

“I’m scared.”

“Of what? That’s your man. You see how I handle Jerrico. That nigga belongs to me. I can do whatever I want to do to him, and I do it too.”

“Forever lying. She ain’t scared. She just as fast as us. She just being bashful because

we're on the phone."

Yummy was right. Forever was laid back, but she wasn't shy when it came to her man, so she trekked over, still holding her phone up for her girls to see. The closer she got, the wetter she got. Observing his muscles straining and popping out everywhere, while his back and arms flexed with each pull up, was sending her straight to the king.

Obviously, having been in a zone, Blue didn't see her until she was close enough to touch him. He smiled as soon as he saw her and released the bar, dropping down to his feet. The headphones were off and resting around his neck as soon as he steadied his balance.

"You stay spying on me."

Forever basked in his presence. "How can I not? Look at you, Blue-Blue." She walked to him, palming the thickness in his shorts.

With a deep chuckle, he stood still, letting her rub him up. "What you think you doing?"

"Better be touching that dick," Eternity yelled, alerting him of their presence.

Blue stepped back and held up Forever's hand so that he could see her phone. "What y'all wild asses got going on?"

Both girls waved with smiles, with Eternity revealing their truth.

"Well, we were going on a tour of your house until Forever walked outside and put you on the phone."

Blue's eyes went to Forever as a smile graced his lips. "It's bad enough you stalking me, now you got your girls helping you?"

"Nigga hush, you hers. My sister can do what she wants."

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“Why you always talking shit?” he questioned Goody, with humor lacing his tone.

“Don’t worry about me with your naked ass. Worry about Forever.”

Blue, Forever, and Eternity all laughed at Goody because she had absolutely no sense at all when talking to people.

“Out there with no clothes on, what you thought she was gon’ do?”

“Should be sucking dick by now, but that’s not my business.”

Forever snatched her phone away with her eyes big as saucers. “Yummy! What is wrong with you? Why would you say that?”

Unable to answer from her laughter, Eternity just waved her hand at the screen before hanging up.

“Bye, sister. Enjoy your sweetie and call us later.”

When the line was clear, Forever tossed her phone on the chair she was next to and removed her sandals. Once she was in nothing but her biker shorts and tank top, she faced Blue, preparing to say something, but was stopped when he snatched his beats off, picked her up, and jumped into the pool.

Forever didn’t even have a chance to scream before they were submerged beneath the water. An expert swimmer but wanting to be glued to her man, Forever clung to Blue’s body for dear life as he swam with her hanging from him.

When he finally came up for air, Forever was gasping to catch her breath, with him helping to wipe the water from her eyes.

“You good, baby? You not trying to die, is you?”

“You could have warned me.”

“Nah, it was better this way. Needed to cool your hot ass off,” he rubbed his hand over her head, trying to smooth her hair out of her face. “Out here showing my dick to your lil’ homegirls.”

“I didn’t really show it to them. I was showing them the house, and you just happened to be in the way.” She blinked away and scrunched her nose to suppress her smile.

“Aye, we private, aight?” He peered into her eyes. “We can let the world see us on the outside, but when we’re at home in our own shit, nobody needs to be here but us. Especially when we’re half dressed,” he gave her a knowing look. “I know it’s just swim trunks, but I wanna be just yours. The kind of exclusivity that allows only us to see each other in certain realms. I’ on want your sister and cousin to be seeing what’s only for you.”

Forever’s heart was slowly swelling in her chest at the way he so openly expressed his feelings. Marcellus hadn’t done that until it was too late, and none of her other men had been serious enough to desire exclusivity between them. It was such a turn on that he didn’t mind being vulnerable with her. That was a rarity in men.

“I ain’t saying you can’t talk to them and maintain y’all relationship, I’m just saying, let me and you be a mystery to anybody that’s not us. I don’t want nobody knowing or understanding nothing we got going on, not even them.”

“I understand, Blue-Blue.” Her lips touched his eyebrow as he held her up, the water

flowing around them. “I’m sorry.”

“Nothing to apologize for. We still learning each other. We won’t know what the other likes or dislikes unless we talk about it.”

Forever’s mind wandered off to Dylan and her sister Journey. That had been something she’d wanted to talk about, but when Blue was sober. He’d been high and drunk out of his mind after the party, and she hadn’t revisited it since then, but since he was feeling all extra open with their feelings and whatnot...

“Tell me about Journey and Dylan.”

Forever expected Blue to look away, waver, or even look the least bit caught, but he didn’t. Calm as usual, he waded them over to the edge and sat on the pool steps with her on his lap.

“Journey is a girl I dated in high school, and kind of just kicked it with on and off or years. Dylan is her little sister.”

“So, you’ve been talking to them both?”

“Yeah.”

Forever’s mouth dropped at his blunt honesty.

“Me and Journey were actually together, in a relationship. The streets saw it and knew what was good when it came to us. Dylan just played her hand close and pushed up on me right before I got locked up. I could always tell she had eyes for me, but I ain’t think she would actually go for it, until one day she did.” He shrugged, as if messing around with sisters wasn’t a bad thing.

“Tell me more, Zurich, because right now you seem real untrustworthy.”

He frowned slightly as the corner of his right eye jumped. “Don’t start doing that shit.”

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“No, you don’t start doing it. Tell me what I asked.”

“Aight, cuz,” he showed his first sign of irritation with her. “Finna get on your lawyer shit, I see.”

“Don’t cuss at me, Zurich.”

Another frown covered his face as he stared at her before shaking his head in annoyance and looking away.

“Look.”

“You look,” Forever countered, pushing him further. “Just answer me before we fight for nothing.”

Blue looked her up and down as if she was a peasant. “Ain’t nobody finna fight with your ass. Before I argue, I just won’t say shi-...nothing.” He corrected himself.

“Zurich, do you want to be in love with me?”

He nodded grudgingly.

“Me too,” she pressed her lips to his softly. “I don’t want to fight, but I do want to know why you dated two sisters.”

Blue stretched his legs in front of him, dipping her lower into the water, but he held her in his grip tightly, ensuring her foundation on his lap.

“I used to fuck with Journey real hard. She was down for a nigga, but the older we got, the harder stuff became. Back then, I spent my life on the block, and she was always on some sneaky shit, running down on me acting like she was my moms and shit.” He rubbed Forever’s stomach, maintaining eye contact while he spoke. “I’m not the type of man you have to do that with. I flirted around with women when they would push up on me, but I never cheated on her. She didn’t believe that though, so after a while, I just stopped caring and did my thing on the side here and there.”

“Zurich,” Forever sighed.

“I know, baby. I already know. It was fucked up, but I was young. That was years ago. After we established that our love life was messed up, we just messed around here and there, but it was nothing like it had been. I still paid her bills and made sure she was good or whatever, but then she got pregnant by a nigga that was supposed to be gang.” Blue scoffed. “So, it was to hell with her after that.”

“And that’s how Dylan was able to slide in?”

“Nah, not for real. I wasn’t thinking about Dylan’s young ass. I knew what she wanted, and I’m nobody’s fool. She wanted to be taken care of like I did her sister, but I wouldn’t do that for her. I’m a provider, not a fucking sugar daddy.”

Forever’s laughter was soft as she stared down at him. Blue wanted to continue his story, but she was so pretty that it still blew his mind. How did a woman that fine want him?

“You finna think I’m tripping, but baby, what you want with me? I mean, I know I’m a nice looking nigga, but you’re beautiful as fuck.” He rubbed her hair. “Even with your hair all wet and shit, your beauty is too potent for a regular nigga. Any of your other men ever told you that?”

Forever shook her head, blushing from his love.

“Dumb ass niggas,” he blew it off casually.

“Get back to the story, Zurich.”

“You just be glowing man, I can’t help it,” he shivered dramatically, making her laugh even harder. “Where was I? Oh, yeah, on basic ass Dylan. So, she had been checking for me, just looking for help. I shot her some bread here and there justbecause I had it, but when she showed up to my lil’ spot across town one night after the club, begging for dick,” he shrugged and left the rest to her to assume.

“How long did that go on?”

“It was just that one time. Her pussy wasn’t good enough for that type of situation, so I didn’t bother. When I got sent upstate, she wrote me a few times, but I ain’t never write back.”

“Why?”

“I’m not a writing ass nigga, Forever,” he chuckled, as if she should have known better. “I be in the streets. I don’t have time for all that soft shit.”

Forever lay forward on his chest so that their faces were closer and played in his hair.

“You mean to tell me you wouldn’t write me if I was away in California,”

“Nah, I’d call or show up.”

She was a ball of giggles as he massaged her butt through her shorts.

“I wouldn’t even let you get that far away from me. Wherever I’m at, that’s where

you need to be.”

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“What about work? You do know I have a job out there, right? I only got this much time off because the girl that was originally supposed to take your case tossed you in my lap and now she feels guilty.”

“Tell her we appreciate it. Had she never been that lazy, I would have never found my soulmate,” he slid his tongue between her lips and slithered it against her teeth and lips to make her laugh. “I remember the first time I saw you, my dick got so hard.” Blue closed his eyes, recollecting on the day Forever strutted into the prison in her little skirt. “Then when I smelled your perfume and heard your voice, I wanted to fuck you and make you suck my dick,” he laughed, clearly embarrassed by his actions.

“Zurich!”

“I’m sorry, baby,” he tried hugging her, but she pushed him away and watched him laugh beneath her. “You were just acting so hard and stuck up, I wanted to humble you. All I kept thinking was, if I make her choke on this monster, she’d treat a nigga better.”

“I wasn’t even mean to you,” she yelled, flabbergasted at his admissions.

“You didn’t have to be. It was all over you. Your aura was snooty as shit, like a lil’ know-it-all.”

“I do know it all,” Forever stated proudly.

“I see now, but back then I was like she probably don’t even know how to take dick

trying to act like she know everything.”

Blue enjoyed the excitement she showed for his commentary. So much so that he contemplated continuing, but looking at her while talking about sex made him want some.

“You know how to take dick, Rabbit?”

Her eyes shot up to him as he licked his bottom lip seductively. She nodded as her breathing grew more aggressive.

“What about sucking it? You know how to do that too?”

Another nod came, and he really bricked up then.

“Show me.” He stood from the stairs and sat on the edge of the pool, leaving her in the water standing between his legs.

Forever waited patiently for him to release himself from his trunks before taking him into her hands and rubbing up and down it slowly. Blue’s eyes lowered as his breathing rushed outrougher than before. In a sex induced state, he stared down at her as she lowered her head into his lap.

“Sssss,” he sucked air through his teeth. “Go slow.”

Forever nodded and slid her head lower, taking him all the way into her mouth, and allowing his tip to touch the back of her throat. He was so heavy in her palms and her mouth that she could barely move her tongue or cheeks. Blue was huge, long, and thick. The smooth chocolate skin gliding along her tongue with her saliva coating the way.

“Look at me, Forever,” his husky voice summoned her.

With a mouth full of him, Forever diverted her gaze to his and held contact. His hair was falling and shielding some of his face as the rest of him remained there, making her mouth water. His ripped abs and beautiful face were perfect together and hypnotizing her.

“I want you to be my wife so you can suck my dick like this whenever I tell you to.”

Forever loved the way he made his sex talk sound so profound and poetic.

“You doing so good,” he praised her, loving how innocent she looked.

Her dark skin, glowing beneath the sun as she bobbed her head in a rhythmic motion, making sure to please him with each slurp. To have her in his home, topping him off, was one of Blue’s dreams come true. He’d pictured her in that exact position so many nights as he lay in his raggedy prison bunk. Already knowing how he could and would provide for her, he’d prayed and dreamed as hard as he could that he would be given the chance to do so.

“You a boss ass bitch, Forever. You needed a real nigga that was gon’ give you the things you deserve.” He used her hair to pull her off him and leaned it back so that he could look directly into her eyes. “I’m a take good care of you, baby. I put that on everything.” He tongued her down before pulling away and guiding her back to his still, very hard dick.

As patient and willing as she’d been from the beginning, Forever went back to work, giving him some of the best head he’d ever had. Blue was a fan of fellatio and Forever, so having them both had his legs circling her back beneath the water and pulling her body closer to his.

“You gon’ swallow it for me?”

Forever nodded and looked up at him, giving him a full view of her wet face again. Tears on her cheeks and overwhelming emotion pouring from her eyes. Blue hadn’t paid attention to the fact that she was crying, too enthralled with his own pleasure.

“Come cry up here.” Blue pulled her from the water and removed her shorts before sliding her down onto him.

Her head fell onto his shoulder as she groaned into his neck. Covered in her, Blue allowed his body the freedom of experiencing what it felt like when everything was finally right. Her small body fit perfectly in his lap and in his arms. He held her, kissing along her arms and shoulders as she rode him the best she could through his grip.

“Feels good, don’t it?”

She nodded.

“I feel it too, baby,” he pulled back and looked at her. “My love gon’ be the best place for you.”

More tears spilled from her eyes. “I don’t know how to handle it.”

“I’ma show you how. Gimme kiss.”

Her smile cracked through her tears and matched his. As soon as their lips touched, the fireworks blasted off, making the moment that much better. Much like her, he wasn’t sure how he would handle the kind of love he was sure he and Forever were embarking on, but he knew for sure he wasn’t running from it. She deserved it, and so did he.

“Blue-Blue,” she whimpered while holding onto his face and peering at him desperately.

Blue thrust his hips upward, trying to help get her there, and she stiffened with her mouth dropped open as her eyes fluttered close.

“Forever, look at me, baby.”

She did, and just as she reached her peak, he met his head on and spurted deep into her warm body. It was truly a task trying to keep his eyes open as his orgasm took over his whole body, but Forever made it possible. The look of bliss on her face was worth everything. Together, they teetered on the edge of sanity and happily dove off.

“Damn, Gang, you ain’t have to slut me out in the pool like that,” he joked with her as he stood from the pool, fixed his shorts, grabbed hers, and carried her toward the house.

“My sister told me, you my man, I can do whatever I want to do with you.”

Her smile was infectious.

“You can. Come get on this dick and do it again when we get in the house.”

“Say less.”

I’m off that

“I know that ain’t my nigga in the streets by himself,” Pat exclaimed loudly while tapping Jugg’s chest. “That ain’t that nigga Blue, is it?”

Blue chuckled while walking toward Pat, Jugg, and Wale, and Rico. It was the middle of the day, and he’d just left the house to make his rounds. Since he’d been home, he’d been under his girl, the only place he really wanted to be, but there was money to be made, and he needed to make it. He’d been about to ride by Pat’s spot first, but upon calling, he learned he was around the way at one of their little cash spots, counting money with the guys.

Jugg was his cousin and best friend all in one. After Pat, Jugg was most definitely a close second, and only second because Pat was more like a daddy than a homie. Jugg was a light skinned nigga with the heart of a dark skin. Never feeling pretty, never acting soft, and most definitely nothing about the nigga was suspect, and that was only marking off the common things he’d heard said about light skinned niggas.

Black to the bone, Blue didn’t really get into the colorism talk, but when he did, it

was always fun and games. Jugg, on the other hand, was on it heavy, somewhat going out of his way to prove wrong every stigma placed on lighter men. Rico was another yellow nigga that bled blue. With an old school Crip as a father, he'd been born and raised around the gang.

For him, nothing came before Crip. Not women, not fame, not even his kids. As sad as that was, Blue didn't speak on it. It wasn't his business, so he kept it easy. Wale was one of the youngest members. New to the gang, but had jumped in with both feet and did whatever was needed. Though he was still reckless and somewhat immature, he was one of Blue's favorites because he had heart, respect, and a good work ethic.

"Your old ass got all the jokes," Blue slapped hands with Pat first, then carrying on to Jugg and Rico.

Posted on the screened in porch of the house, the three men sat doing one thing or another, but clearly all getting that work. It was a money counting machine, stacks of cash, blunts, and drugs. All things Blue had been missing since being in prison. He looked around the porch for somewhere to sit before taking the chair that had been behind Rico and situating it at the front of the porch near the stairs.

"You been in the house since you touched down. That nigga ain't lying on your caking ass," Jugg spoke with a smoking blunt hanging from his lips. "Saw you at the party and no more since. My mama said she on your ass when she sees you."

"What's cracking, Cuz? You ain't miss your niggas?" Wale chimed in.

"Y'all on me hard this morning, ain't it? Y'all must ain't getting no pussy?"

They all cracked up laughing.

"I stay getting that," Jugg blew smoke out while placing another stack of money into

the counter.

Rico slapped hands with him while nodding. “Hell yeah.”

“It’s that pretty lil’ lawyer that got his ass stuck,” Pat looked at Blue with a smirk on his face. “Where she at anyway? I know you ain’t letting her get too far away.”

Guiltily, Blue turned his head toward the street to hide his smile. “She at the house.”

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“Why you ain’t bring her?”

Blue looked at Rico like he was crazy. “You wanted me to bring a lawyer around this shit?” he circled the porch with everything they had going on.

Jugg frowned in Rico’s direction, as did Pat, while all he did was shrug it off as if it didn’t matter to him either way. That attitude right there was the stuff Blue was talking about with him. He didn’t care about nothing that didn’t involve the street life.

“Shit, she down with you, so I know she knows what’s going on. She got you out of prison for this same lifestyle.”

“Seeing it on paper is different than seeing it in real life. Plus, Forever ain’t even the type for this.”

Blue grinned at Pat. “You talking about my girl like you know her.”

“I do. Who you think was looking out for her while you was up there?”

“Me nigga!”

Blue laughed loudly when Pat joined and held his fist up to pound.

“Real shit,” he continued, laughing at Blue’s expense. “She ain’t though. When her and her lil’ family came down here and I talked to her, I could tell she ain’t with the shit at all. She was even a little snootier than the other two.”

“So, basically she’s on the opposite side of the law than us?” Rico inquired.

Pat nodded. “No other choice but to be, but she’s cool.”

Blue scratched his head and took the blunt from Jugg and inhaled it, blowing smoke circles in front of him.

“She’s not on the opposite side. She just has a job to do, and she does it. She’ll help before she’ll hurt. See what she did for me; my life was gone before my baby came.”

The porch went quiet, all of them looking at Blue before bursting into laughter and making jokes on him about being sprung.

“You feeling her for real?” Jugg asked. “Or you just fucking for now?”

“Nah, I’m with her for real. It’s different with her. She’s so damn smart and bossed up. Like, grown as hell for real. She takes care of business, makes her money, and she’s a good girl. Ain’t did shit in life but go to school and work.” His chest swelled in pride as he spoke about his lawyer bae. “Some of the stuff she says sometimes be making me feel slow as shit,” Blue chuckled loudly and ended up choking on the smoke from the blunt. “The girl is intelligent as hell, the smartest person I know for real.”

“And she don’t care about you being in a gang and doing illegal shit?” Wale’s disbelief was comical.

“If she does, she doesn’t say it. She knows I’m not on no dumb stuff, she trusts me,” he shrugged. “Lets me be the man and shit. Even though I know for a fact, the girl is smarter than me, and she still lets me lead. I fuck with that the most.”

Rico shook his head. “Y’all niggas is weird, Cuz. I don’t trust no woman.”

“You haven’t found the right one,” Pat told him just as the front door pushed open roughly and out ran Azayna and Egypt’s son, Zon.

“That girl know you got her baby at the trap?” Blue frowned at Pat in disdain. “You know better than that.”

“He can handle it,” Pat responded before turning his attention to his grandson.

A miniature version of Egypt, from the color of his skin to his brown dreads and behavior, Zon frowned at everybody on the porch before stepping in front of Pat. In a pair of red gym shorts, a black Nike shirt, Jordans, and gold around his little neck, Zon contrasted terribly with the other colors of clothing on the porch.

“Papa, I’m hungry. Can we go now?”

“Zon, what you supposed to say when you see people talking?”

Blue smirked when Zon balled his face into a scowl and cut his eyes at Blue when he laughed.

“Scuse me.”

“Okay, start over then.”

With his parents’ attitude, Zon stalked back to the door and stomped back to Pat. “Scuse me, Papa,” he growled, making Blue laugh.

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The moment he heard Blue's voice, he faced him and gave him the once over before stopping on his face and putting his hands up like he wanted to fight. Blue was caught off guard by the gesture, but held his laugh in.

"What you laughing at, blood? You wanna fight?" Zon questioned in his tiny baby voice.

Blue looked at his smiling Granddaddy before looking back at him and leaned forward. In the place of his smile, he put on the best serious face he could and stared at Zon.

"Fight who? You? You too little."

Zon took a step closer to Blue so that their faces were close and squinted his eyes. "I'm big enough to beat your ass."

Rico, Wale, and Jugg cracked up while Pat covered his mouth to suppress his laughter.

"Your little ass daddy must have told you that shit."

Before Blue had the chance to see it coming, Zon punched him in the eye, causing it to blur a little. He jumped back at the same time that Zon swung again, catching him in the lip. Clearly, trained to go, Zon began landing punches all over Blue's arms and stomach after handing out that two-piece. Zon was still swinging and kicking his legs when Pat got up and grabbed him.

"Aight, aight now, that's enough. How bad you gon' do him?"

“Don’t talk about my daddy, blood,” Zon screamed while swinging wildly in Pat’s arm like he was ready to break loose and finish whooping Blue’s ass.

“Let him go, Pat, he ain’t done,” Wale instigated.

As soon as Blue was able to recover from laughter, he leaned forward and pushed the side of Zon’s head to stir him up some more.

“Lil’ bad ass. I’m a fuck you up. You better be glad your granddaddy holding you back or I’d give your lil’ punk ass a black eye.”

“Papa, let me go so I can hit this nigga,” Zon screamed again just before Pat let him go.

His little feet carried him back to Blue, where his little fists went to work until Blue stood and picked him up and put him in a choke hold, shaking him playfully.

“Tap out lil’ nigga.”

“No!” He kicked backward, catching Blue in the leg.

“I said tap your lil’ bad ass out. Ain’t nobody finna be fighting you all day.”

The entire porch was in stitches as Blue and Zon continued their banter until Blue realized Zon wasn’t going to give in and put him down. Once on his feet, he pushed him and caused his little body to stumble into Pat. Instead of talking back and swinging again, he leaned on Pat’s thigh and just glared at Blue instead. His fatigue was obvious, but the fact that he wouldn’t give up showed that Egypt had groomed him into a little gangster already.

“How old is Cuz?” Jugg asked Pat, who was rubbing Zon’s hair.

“Four.”

“Your daughter raising a lil’ savage even if he does think he a blood.”

Zon’s eyes cut to Jugg. “I am a blood!” he screamed.

“Settle down,” Pat told him. “Papa, don’t want you beating everybody ass. Then I’m not gon’ have no friends.”

“I told Azayna this nigga was bad,” Blue said through laughter.

“As fuck!” Rico agreed with a smile. “He beat your ass though, cuz. Shit’s embarrassing.”

All of them were laughing again, with Zon not cracking a smile. Only staring at everybody until he took off back into the house. He wasn’t gone a full minute before he bust back through the door with a big iPad covered by a red case. They could hear the line ringing before it picked up.

“What’s up, blood?” Egypt’s voice sounded around the porch.

Blue smirked at the way Egypt talked to his son. That was his problem now.

“I’m mad,” he growled, making the men on the porch chuckle some more.

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“For what? Somebody must have pissed you off?”

Zon cut his eyes at Blue. “Yes.”

“You beat his ass?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Daddy proud of you.”

“He called you little, and I beat him up again.”

Blue could hear Azayna’s laughter in the background as Egypt’s voice went up an octave.

“That nigga said what?”

“Yep, and he told me he gon’ give me a black eye,” Zon nodded his head and looked at Blue, satisfied that he’d told his father. “Daddy, you wanna see this nigga?”

“Hell yeah, let me see his bitch ass.”

“No, Zon!” Azayna yelled, still laughing.

Unafraid of anything, Zon marched right over to Blue and held up his iPad to Blue’s face. As soon as Blue seen Egypt and Azayna’s face on the screen, his smile grew.

“I choked his little ass out too. What you gon’ do about it?” he taunted, making Azayna giggle harder.

“Leave my baby alone, Blue.”

“Fuck him up again, Zon. That nigga ain’t talking about shit.”

Blue snatched Zon’s iPad from him, gaining a kick to the shin immediately after. “Aye, y’all need to whoop this baby. He’s bad as fuck. Cussing and hitting grown folks like he won’t get his ass beat,” Blue spoke that part closer to Zon’s ear, having to duck to dodge the punch Zon threw.

Azayna and, surprisingly, Egypt was both laughing as they watched Blue interact with Zon.

“Blue, leave my child alone. He likes to fight.”

“You better tell him to leave me alone before I take my belt off. I’ll whoop his lil’ ass.”

“My lil’ nigga certified.”

“Yeah, he is. Lil’ punk ass,” Blue pushed him again. “Get this iPad before I break it,” he tossed it back to Zon.

“I don’t like him,” he tried to whisper.

“So, nigga. I don’t like your lil’ baby ass either.”

“He’s grown, Zon. You have to be nice to him. Can you do that for Mommy?”

He nodded, somewhat softening to his mother.

“Just let him live today, blood. He’s your Papa homie.”

“Like Uncle BB?”

“Yeah, just like Uncle BB is daddy homie.”

Zon looked at Blue once more before looking back at his iPad.

“Okay. Mommy, I’m hungry.”

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“Daddy, feed my baby!” Azayna yelled.

“I’m finna feed this boy. Y’all hang up and enjoy your break before I drop his ass back off.” Pat told them before ending the call. “Go get your stuff, we finna go eat.”

Zon nodded and took off into the house. As soon as he was gone, they all laughed and made jokes about him and Blue before the conversation grew serious again.

“So, you’re done with the streets?”

A shrug of his shoulders was Blue’s response to Jugg.

“It’s all I know, but I know Forever ain’t gon’ be trying to hear it.”

“You a man. You got to get your bread. You just said she trust you, she might not trip.”

“She might not, but I’ll see. Got to feel her out some more.”

“I don’t know why this nigga trying to play Forever like she’s green, her sister is Slim Goody.”

“The rapper?” Wale all but yelled.

Jugg and Rico both looked at him with wide-eyed looks. “That girl that sings that Real Bitches Only song?” Rico called out Goody’s newest song, making Blue smile.

“Hard ain’t it?”

“Hell yeah, my baby mama and her homegirls stay blasting it. She play it so much around the house, even I be listening to it now,” Rico continued to rant. “And that’s your girl’s sister?”

Blue nodded.

“Aye, put me on.”

“She married, cuz, and didn’t you just say you stay with your baby mama?”

“So, I just wanna fuck.”

Blue shook his head and laughed. “I dare you to tell her that when you see her.”

“Lil’ bitch don’t fuck around, do she?” Jugg responded.

Blue stood to his feet. “Not at all, but I’mma holla at y’all. Forever got a hair appointment.”

“This nigga turning into a househusband,” Pat commented, making them all laugh.

Finding just as much humor in it himself, Blue laughed along with them as he headed for his truck.

“Fuck all y’all. I’m happy.”

The smell of chemicals and blow dryers took over the air and made Blue cough a

little. It was smoke everywhere, and he could barely breathe. Although he'd blown on his share of weed and smoke was a product of that, hair salon smoke was worse, and he couldn't wait to get out of there. He'd brought Forever to some natural hair shop she'd researched on the computer and was doing his best to stay sane.

As patient as he always was, Blue chilled in one of the salon chairs at the front of the salon, using his phone to check on a few things. He'd watched Forever for as long as he could see her, but she'd been placed under the dryer, and he couldn't really see her anymore, so he handled his own business.

"Blue?"

Contemplating on whether he wanted to look up or not, Blue continued pecking away on his phone. When he felt a presence next to him, he looked to the side before returning his gaze to his phone without uttering any correspondence.

"You must be in here with that girl?" Dylan asked him while looking around the salon for Forever. "Oh, there she goes. I see her. Where she from?"

"Dylan, what's good?"

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Blue wasn't interested in anything she was trying to do at the moment. They'd kicked it a little in the past, and he'd spoken to her a few times while being in prison, but what he told Forever had been the truth. He wasn't interested in her like that. Never had been, so he really wished she'd stop trying.

"How did you just get a girlfriend on me? I thought we were trying something."

"How, when you know I used to kick it with your sister? You already know I wasn't going out like that, and neither were you, with your crazy ass sister."

"Journey doesn't care. She's moved on with her baby daddy."

"Like you need to do."

Dylan moved around in her seat, bumping into his arm in the process. When she finally stopped moving, she crossed one of her legs over the other, with her foot dangling directly near Blue's knee. He knew what she was doing, but ignored her anyway. If she wanted to sit next to him, it was a free country, but he wouldn't be engaging in any conversation with her.

"I get it if you're trying to do the whole faithful thing with her, I know how you are in relationships, but we could still kick it if you want."

"I don't."

"You don't have to be rude."

“I’m not, I’m being straight up. That’s clearly the only way to be with you.”

She chuckled. “Cold, but I get it.”

It was quiet for a minute before she spoke again.

“Journey will be here in a minute, just so you know,” she told him while standing and walking toward the stylist who had just waved at her.

Blue finally looked up and frowned when he did. Dylan was always half-naked. That was another thing that ensured he’d never take her serious. His face was still frowned when he heard the bell ding again. Not interested in whoever it might be, he didn’t bother looking that way. Instead, he stood to his feet, towering over everybody in there, and walked toward Forever. The women looking in his direction didn’t faze him one way or the other. He’d been a boss, been pulling bitches. That was nothing new.

“Zurich? Oh my god, come here!”

The sound of Journey’s voice paused him, but not because he was happy to hear it, but because Forever’s head turned as soon as she heard it. Her eyes were behind him on what he assumed to be Journey. He knew for sure as soon as she turned her nose up and scrunched her eyebrows together. Not even having a chance to prepare for it, Journey was in front of him with her arms around his neck.

Her body hung from his as she circled his neck and held him to her. He looked around the shop at everyone else being serviced, too afraid to look at Forever.

“Dylan told me you were home,” she squealed happily into his ear. “Why didn’t you call me?”

With her still holding him, Blue realized there was no other way to get her off him without touching her, so he grabbed one of her arms and pulled out of her grasp. Obviously, overwhelmed with happiness, she didn't realize his reluctance to hug her back, and let him go with a smile.

Still as beautiful as she'd always been, Journey stood before him, sparkling from her glow. A fair-skinned girl who looked more white than black, with big brown hair and thick pink lips. Her hazel eyes glimmered as she observed him with a smile. Her body was much thicker than it had been, and the weight looked damn good on her, but Blue didn't linger. Their time was up.

"Wow," she exhaled happily. "Look at you. I'm so happy you're home. I was sick when you got sent off with all that time."

Blue nodded at her coolly. "Me too. It's good to see you."

"It must not be. You're looking real stiff. What's wrong with you?"

He tried to force a smile, but erased it when he saw Dylan at the back of the salon with a devious smirk on her face.

"You know me, I'm just chilling."

Journey placed her hand on her hip, leaning all of her weight on one leg while looking him up and down with a smile. He could tell by the way she was looking that she was putting together her own story and would speak on it as soon as she had it all together. That's all she ever did, and he hated it, so he did his best to avoid it.

"Aight then, girl. Stay up." He tapped her shoulder and went to move past her, but she grabbed his arm, stopping him.

Directly in her line of vision and no other choice but to look at her, Blue's eyes went to his Forever. She didn't look the least bit pleased. Her pretty face was straight, but he could see the fire burning there. Like only a black woman could, she cut her eyes at him before looking back down at her phone. He was in trouble. That much he knew.

“Which one of these women you up in here with? I know you're not here for no reason.”

“Journey, go head on with that,” as soon as he said her name, Forever's hairstylist lifted her dryer and led her to the styling chair.

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Blue's eyes stayed on her, doing his best to will her gaze to him. When she didn't falter in her stride once, his stomach dropped. Even with him never having been on her bad side, he didn't have to be told that wasn't a place he wanted to be.

Like the inch high private eye she was, Journey followed Blue's eyes and turned to face Forever. Since the stylist had just combed down all of that pretty hair that Forever had, she was momentarily hidden. When she finally combed it back off her forehead, Blue felt like he was in a commercial. Her stoic face was peaceful, small eyes closed, thick eyebrows perfectly arched, long slender nose, gorgeous wild freckles, and perfect pouty lips all made up the beautiful exterior of her existence.

If he'd never seen anything else that was as close to perfect as perfect could be, it was Forever. She was so rare that she almost mimicked a unicorn for real. There was no other way to describe his girl. Her Black skin making her appear to be fake. Damn. He had it bad. So bad that he hadn't realized he was staring until Journey's mouth interrupted his trance.

"Where you get her from?" her tone was nasty and envious. "And since when you like dark skinned women? That's never been your type."

"Since I met her," he mugged Journey nastily. "Excuse me." He walked away and straight to the station where Forever was.

Of course, she didn't speak or even look at him. Only opened her eyes long enough to look at her phone. When he pulled it out of her hand, she glanced in his direction but didn't say anything. Her not freaking out or attempting to snatch it back showed her loyalty and he would have complimented her on it, but right then wasn't the time for

that.

“How you getting it?” he questioned, gaining no response. “Baby?”

Forever’s eyes went to his briefly before rolling to where Journey was still standing in the middle of the floor. She peered at her casually before going back to Blue.

“Forever, I promise.”

“It’s fine, Zurich.” She gave a fake smile, not even allowing him time to finish what he’d been about to say.

On pins and needles watching Forever get her hair finished with Journey in the same salon as them had Blue feeling a different type of discomfort. Since it had been years since he’d actually cared for someone else’s feelings more than his own, he wasn’t sure what to do. Forever hadn’t spoken one word the entire time the lady flat ironed her hair, while Journey continued talking excessively loud in efforts to keep her presence relevant.

“It looks good,” he told Forever as she stood from the chair to check her hair in the mirror.

A pink crop top and biker shorts matching set showed off her sexy body. Expensive jewelry and a costly purse accessorized her simple outfit, while her fresh, long hair did the same. Black as night, her hair somewhat blended in with her skin, giving her a mysterious look. The only part of her glowing with the rest of the salon was the whites of her eyes and her perfect smile. Granted, Blue only got to see it when she smiled at her stylist, because she sure as hell hadn’t shown it to him.

“Since when lawyers started being this fine?”

Blue walked up behind her so that he could see himself in the mirror with her. She stared at him but said nothing as he ran his hand through her tresses.

“All the lawyers I’ve ever seen be old and ugly, never this young and sexy. They wear raggedy suits and shit, not lil’ naked outfits like yours.”

Forever snickered, but looked away until her face was straight again.

“Move, Zurich.”

He shook his head and pecked her shoulder. “Call me Blue-Blue.”

“No,” she moved away from him and went to her purse to pull her wallet out.

“Here, keep the change,” Blue handed the stylist two crisp hundred-dollar bills and smiled.

Forever stood there as if she wanted to dispute it, but stopped and thanked the lady for her hair before looking around to ensure she had everything and headed for the door. Blue was hot on her heels, trying to catch up with her.

“Y’all look cute,” Dylan yelled sarcastically as they passed her.

“Aren’t you his lawyer?” Journey questioned, clearly privy to the answer she was requesting.

For a moment, Blue thought Forever was going to ignore the women and continue out the door, but she surprised him and turned to face the sisters.

“Thanks,” she gave a flat smile to Dylan before glancing at Journey. “Aren’t you his ex?”

Blue sucked air through his teeth as a few other small comments could be heard from the women around them.

“For now, but Blue always comes back.”

Forever giggled. “Keep waiting on that, sweetie. Y’all have a good day.”

“I don’t have to wait. He and I both know what’s up.”

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Forever raised a brow and looked between the sisters. “You sure it’s just the two of you that know?” She looked at Dylan again and tilted her head to the side some.

Her discomfort was visible as she looked at her nails as if she’d never seen them before, even shifting from one foot to the other. Blue inwardly hoped Forever didn’t out them in there, because Journey was the type that liked to cause scenes.

“What you trying to say?” Journey rolled her neck with each word she spoke.

“Oh, nothing, girl. Take care.” Forever looked over her shoulder at Blue and switched out of the salon with him on her heels.

When they got outside to his truck, he hit the locks to open the doors, but the further in front of him that Forever got, the more he changed his mind about letting her in the whip with an attitude. Blue hit the locks and grabbed her. When they were face to face, instead of pleading his case like he’d been about to do, he pulled her in for a hug instead. Of course, she didn’t hug him back, but she didn’t have to.

“I’m sorry for putting you in situations that’s beneath you,” he kissed the top of her head. “I promise being with me isn’t like this.”

She was quiet, but he eventually heard her exhale and wrap her arms around his torso.

“Show me what it’s like then because this ain’t it.”

“I will. From this moment on, you have my word.”

When he pulled away to look at her, she was smiling. Blue leaned into her and kissed her mouth. She shared his passion and steadied their tongue play until he pulled away.

“Ready?”

She nodded, and he helped her into the truck. Once she was in and headed toward their destination, Blue reached his hand over the console to rub her thigh. She looked to be in deep thought as she stared out of the window absentmindedly.

“I want to talk to you about something. I’m not sure how you’re going to feel about it, but I trust your judgement, so I kind of need you to tell me what to do.”

“What’s going on?” She blinked at him, waiting patiently for him to divulge his feelings to her.

Blue exhaled. “This street stuff, you know that’s how I get and keep money, right?”

She nodded.

“How do you feel about me doing it?”

Forever pondered quietly for a minute before giving him a sincere expression.

“I think God spared your life this time, so to consider returning to what took it is insane, and I’m not trying to be rude when I say that.”

Blue felt a tad dejected, but only because even though that was the right thing to do, he hadn’t wanted to hear it. All of him knew before asking her that she would say something along those lines, but the slither of him that loved being in the streets wanted her to leave it to him to make his own decisions. Sure, he’d asked for her

opinion, but he really only wanted it if it agreed with his.

“There are other ways for you to get money, Zurich,”

“That’s all I know.”

She turned in her seat to face him. “You’re not too old to learn something new. Tell me something you like to do.”

He pondered for a moment, and when he couldn’t think of anything outside of the hood, he just laughed instead. She smiled when she picked up on his silence.

“I’m not sure if you have more than what I was given, but you have so much money, Zurich. We can invest and turn it into something more.”

“Invest in what? Like real estate?”

She nodded.

“Real estate, stocks, start a few businesses. It’s limitless, really. All we have to do is make sure your credit and stuff is good. You could even buy you a few trucks if you want.”

Blue looked over at her, as she should have known better. “My criminal history doesn’t matter?”

“Not as much as you think. All we have to do is start you a business, build business credit, and boom, there you go. A fresh start.”

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“Why can’t you just put everything in your name, and I just give you the startup money?”

Forever was silent as she bit her bottom lip softly. Blue knew what he was asking was probably risky, but he trusted her. He didn’t believe Forever would run off on him, but her current quietness was questionable. She’d proven that she’d be down with him at his worst, so he had no problems with making sure she ate too.

“You don’t want your own stuff?” She glanced at him, touching his arm as she waited for his response. “Like, I don’t mind helping you out, but I think you should build your own legacy. That way, nobody can ever take it away from you.”

“You’d take it?”

“Of course not, but you can’t bet on that. People will say one thing and do another when the opportunity presents itself.”

Pain from her past was present, and Blue wasn’t having it.

“Tell me what I got to do to prove to you that I’ll never hurt you like that other nigga did.”

“You’ve already proved that, Blue-Blue.”

“I don’t feel like I have, but we’ll revisit this conversation. Right now, I want you to meet my sister and my auntie,” he cut the truck off, and her eyes widened.

“Why?” she gasped. “Why do you want me to meet your family?”

“I met yours,” he countered, not liking the way she sounded about meeting his people.

After losing his mother and father to gang violence early in life, his mother’s sister took him and his older sister in and had been their only parent since the age of eight. She meant the world to him; they both did. They were pretty much all he had. Outside of Jugg. He was his aunt’s son, which made them cousins, but they felt like more brothers.

“I don’t know, I guess I just didn’t know we were that serious,” Forever moved slowly, grabbing her purse from the floor and placing it over her shoulder. “But we’re here, so let’s do it.”

She was out of the car before he had the chance to respond, and he thanked God for that because he wasn’t sure what he might have said. When he rounded the truck and met her at the front near the hood, she was fixing the top of her outfit, trying to cover some of her cleavage.

“What you doing that for? My people cool.”

“I just would have liked to look less whorish when meeting your aunt.”

Blue smirked at her nervousness. Now it all made sense. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to meet them; she was just nervous to do so.

“She’s going to love you, watch.” He pecked the top of her head and grabbed her hand.

Blue pulled her behind him all the way to the porch before she squeezed his hand,

getting his attention. When he looked down at her, he had to smile. The pink color on her skin made her look sweet enough to eat.

“I’ve never met anybody’s family before. I mean, I met Marcellus’ mom, but she’s my sister’s mother-in-law, so she’s technically family, so she didn’t count.”

Blue’s brows raised and lips parted as he looked down at her. “You for real?”

She nodded.

“That’s why we need to do this another day, I can feel my back starting to sweat.”

“Your back sweating because it’s hot as shit out here and you’re wasting time acting scary,” he chuckled before pulling open the screen door. “If you’re going to be my wife, Forever, they’ve got to meet you at some point.”

Like he’d hoped it would. Her body relaxed as she blushed. “Hush and just open the door, Zurich Rose.”

“Forever Rose, that’s pretty as hell... like you. It sounds like it should be your name.”

“Zurich, hushhhh,” she hid her face while dragging her words.

“Only thing might be prettier than that is our baby.”

Forever batted her lashes at him slowly. “You want me to be your children’s mom?”

“Have I pulled out since I started fucking you?”

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Forever's chocolate face lit up again as she smiled and shook her head. The chemicals in her long hair blew in the wind and up his nose. Being his typical affectionate self, Blue pulled her to him by the back of her neck and pecked her forehead.

"I want them whenever we have them. I don't care how soon or late it happens."

"What if we break up? You're not about to baby mama me, Zurich. I'm sorry, but I'm too fly for that."

Blue sucked his teeth. "It's Blue and Forever. We're not ever ending, baby."

With her tucked snugly beneath his arm, Blue finally opened the door to enter his auntie Maryann's home. He couldn't see her, but he could hear her television and smell the food he'd requested. When he rounded the corner, she was seated comfortably in her recliner, watching First 48. Blue smiled at the lady who had been his number one since he'd been a boy. The way she treated him and his sister as her own was inexplicable and could never be repaid, but he'd die trying to.

"I still don't know why you watch this shit, Auntie."

Forever hit his arm just as a scream left his aunt's mouth before she hopped from the sofa in her pink pajamas and slippers, running to him. Already laughing at her excitement, Blue trudged toward her with open arms. Without stopping her feet, she slammed right into him, wrapping her arms around his body.

"My baby! Look at you, looking just as handsome as you want to be." She stepped

back with her hands on her hips, looking him up and down before grabbing him and pulling him down to her height for a hug. “I should whoop your ass for taking so long to get over here,” she smiled at him with water in her eyes.

She was still staring when a small yelp escaped her, and she covered her mouth with both hands. “I’m so glad you’re home, Zurich, my God. I’m so happy to see you, baby.” She hugged him once more before finally releasing him to stand to his full height again.

When he did, he stepped to the side and pulled Forever around so that she was next to him and not behind him, where she’d been trying to stay.

“Auntie, this my baby, Forever.”

Shy as she’d been the first time he’d met her, Forever stepped forward with her hand outstretched for a shake. Knowing she would, Blue chuckled when his auntie grabbed Forever in the hug she’d just given him. His chest swelled with love as he watched them embrace lovingly.

“Thank you so much, Sweetheart. Zurich and Pat told me all about you.” She hugged her tighter before sniffing. “I thank God for you daily. My baby deserved to be home,” she pulled away and grabbed his hand while still holding Forever. “You two are just beautiful together.”

“It’s her, she makes us look good.”

Forever couldn’t hide the smile that stretched her mouth, so she dipped her head instead.

“He always does that,” Forever told his aunt in efforts to mask the way he made her blush.

“As he better. I raised both of my boys to love and respect their women, and you’re just breathtaking, Forever. You deserve the praises.”

“Thank you, Auntie!” Blue exclaimed with his hands tossed in the air while rolling his eyes and exhaling heavily. “Maybe she’ll believe you, because she doesn’t be trying to hear nothing I say,”

“Pretty as you are, and you don’t expect your man to comment on it? Honey, you better let this man show you some love.”

Forever smirked in his direction while nodding her head. Blue winked, drawing another bashful smile from her.

“Come on in here and eat,” she walked ahead of them and into the kitchen. “Zurena should be pulling up in a minute. I told her that you were on your way.”

Zurena, his older sister and biggest headache. Not too happy with where she was in life and doing her best to take it out on everyone else, she tended to be a dark cloud, so Blue hoped when she did decide to show up, she wasn’t on her typical bullshit. Forever was too fragile for her. He’d skipped over telling her how his sister could act because she’d been nervous enough. Giving her the rundown on Rena’s attitude would have only made it worse.

“Forever, you like red beans and rice? Oxtails and cabbage?”

“No, ma’am. I’m a vegetarian, but if there’s no meat in the cabbage, I’ll have some of those.”

Blue chuckled under his breath when his auntie faced her with a frown on her face. “A vegetarian?” Her eyes took in Forever’s small body. “That’s why you’re so little now. You need to eat, child.”

“She’s little because of genetics, Auntie, not because she needs to eat. Her sister is small too.”

His auntie rolled her eyes at him and held her open palm up in his face. “You don’t have to protect her from me. I didn’t mean any harm. She’s just a little bitty thing, and I just want to fatten her up some. So, stay out of our business.”

Forever’s genuine smile and following laughter eased Blue’s mind. “She’s fine how she is. I like it.”

“Sure, you do. Your mannish behind.”

The three of them were snickering together when he heard the front door open again. He was out of his seat, preparing for Zurena to round the corner, and as soon as she did, he was happy he’d stood. She was all over him in the same manner his auntie had just been. He’d held off seeing them last because they were his heart. He’d never had them around the gang before and had no interest in starting.

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“Nigga, what took you so long to come see us?”

“You know I had to make my rounds.”

“I bet you seen that ugly ass gang already.”

Blue hugged her again while tickling her. She was bent over laughing and trying to get away when she spotted Forever. She was seated at the round table, smiling at their sibling play, when Zurena stood up and stepped away from Blue. She observed her slowly before pointing in Forever’s direction.

“Who is she?”

Blue exhaled because there she went with her shit. He’d already told her all about Forever, and she still wanted to act ill.

“My wife.”

“Your wife?” Zurena’s nose turned up. “Nigga please. Who is this damn girl?”

“I’m Forever Maverick, your brother’s attorney, girlfriend, and whatever else he’d like to call me.” Forever stood with her hand out, waiting for Zurena to shake. “And you are?”

Astounded by her sarcasm and ballsy behavior, Blue stood admiring her with a smirk on his face. He hadn’t thought Forever had it in her, but that was the second time in one day she’d stood up for herself without fear. Granted, both times had been a lot

nicer than Journey or Zurena deserved; she'd still done it.

Zurena's chuckle was loud and ironically void of humor. "Girl, ain't nobody finna shake your hand. You can sit down."

"Rena, don't start your mess with that girl. She's nice and hasn't done anything but bring your brother back home to you, so apologize." Maryann quipped without even turning around to face her.

"For real, because you out of line." Blue looked at the side of Zurena's head.

She was still in the middle of the floor with her arms folded across her chest, chest rising with self-inflicted anger. Just as dark as him and Forever, with long hair like his, only hers wasn't locked, just wild and curly, wide hazel eyes she'd inherited from their mother, and full lips that looked even bigger since she was pouting. A true beauty that looked better going than coming, Zurena held her stubborn standpoint for a few more minutes before cutting her eyes in Forever's direction.

"Hi."

Obviously, uninterested in speaking back, Forever took her seat again as his aunt placed a bowl of cabbage in front of her.

"Thank you, it smells good."

"Eat as much as you like." Maryann winked at her before switching off.

Forever giggled and bowed her head to pray. Blue watched her silently until she looked up and gave him a thumbs up. He'd wanted to make sure she was good, because he wasn't ready to leave his family just yet, but he wouldn't have her anywhere she wasn't comfortable. Her corny thumbs up sufficed, even if he did have

to keep himself from laughing at her when she did it.

“What your mean ass been up to?” he asked Zurena as she took a seat at the table, so that she was facing Forever.

Still tight about her own issues and preferring to take them out on everyone else, she rolled her eyes at him and scrolled on her phone.

“Nothing for real, just running the streets.”

“Running the streets?”

“Yep. Problem?”

“Rena, please lose the attitude. It’s unnecessary. Ain’t nobody did nothing to you.”

“I just find it funny how you had time to entertain women as soon as you touched down, but you just now pulling up on me and auntie,” Zurena’s tone was nasty at best. “And still invaded our time with her.”

“Rena, Forever ain’t no random woman, so stop.”

“Or what?”

“Or you’ll continue to embarrass yourself like you’ve been doing since you got here.”

Blue and Zurena’s heads snapped in Forever’s direction when she spoke.

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“I don’t know if you think I’m just a pushover or you’re really this rude, but either way, you need to cut it out. It’s not necessary at all. Your brother is grown and can do what he wants. If he wanted to lay up with me before coming to see you, then get over it already. He’s been locked up for two years,” Forever scoffed with a confused frown on her face. “What did you think was going to happen? That man needed some pus-, sex. Sorry, Ms. Maryann.”

“No need to apologize, Forever. You’re just fine, baby, and you’re right.”

The two of them traded smiles before Forever looked back at Zurena with a frown to match hers. The women stared at one another for a long, tense second before Blue intervened with his silliness.

“Alright now, y’all break this shit up before I be over there pulling Zurena up off your head, Forever,”

Her eyes shot to him as she frowned in disdain before falling into a loud fit of laughter. “Zurich, please leave me alone, sir.”

“Nah, he told you right.”

“Zurena, you’re miserable, sweetie.” Forever shook her head while still laughing at Blue. “You’re real messy, you know that?”

He nodded while walking to her and pulling her head back to peck her lips. “You know I had to mess with you. I’m not gon’ let that big bad Zurena hit my baby.”

Forever's giggles were muffled by his neck as she covered her face in it while he hugged her. Blue's hands were around her, tickling her waist, making her fidget in her chair with joyful laughter.

"You're my favorite person, baby," he whispered to her as his face hung inches away from hers.

Forever tugged at his lips with hers while rubbing the back of his head. "You're mine too, cuz."

Their laughter took over the corner of the kitchen where Forever was sitting as he stood to his feet and grabbed the plate his aunt was extending. He caught Zurena's annoyed facial expression in passing.

"Yo, you need to get you a man. That might be your problem."

"I don't have a problem."

"That nasty attitude is saying otherwise."

"So, because I spoke on something that bothered me, I got an attitude?"

"If it's not an attitude? What is it?" Blue did his best to ask her without showing the food in his mouth.

"Don't worry about me, that's what it is," she held a straight face as long as she could before breaking out into a smile. "I really hate you, dog."

"Sure, you do. Just come give your little brother some love."

When Blue stood, Zurena followed suit and grabbed him. The hug they shared was

two years overdue and felt better than ever. The feeling he got from his family was unmatched and had been missed more than he'd known. This time around, he was going to do his best to stay around for them.

Hers, mine, Ours...

With the sun now setting and the sky growing darker, Zurena sat on her auntie's porch in the wicker swing, gliding back and forth smoothly. She was full to the max and needed some fresh air before she popped. The food she'd consumed with her family had her so stuffed she was scared to even move, let alone make the long drive to her house. Though it wasn't hours away, it was too far to drive while she was still so stuffed.

With nothing but a bottle of water and the warm weather, Zurena swayed in the wind, trying to dissect the thoughts crowding her brain. Her day had been better than it had been in a long time, being able to see and spend time with her brother was one of her favorite things to do, so finally being able to indulge had been good for her soul. Even if she did have to tolerate his goody-two-shoes girlfriend, Forever.

"I thought you were leaving," Blue questioned as he exited the house with two trash bags.

"I was, but I'm so full, I needed to sit down for a minute."

"Fat self," he joked while walking to the street.

Zurena admired her brother in sheer happiness. His tall frame leaned a tad as he swaggered back toward the porch. His long hair moved along with him, stopping around his waist, close to his back. She smiled at him, loving how much he looked like their father. Blue was literally the spitting image of their dad, and it always made her feel good to see him again.

Being that she was the oldest, she had more memories of their parents than he did, and she did her best to share them with him every chance she got.

“You look just like daddy, Zurich. I wish he could see you.” Her throat tightened as her eyes followed him down into the cushioned rocking chair across from her.

“I know, auntie just told me the same thing.”

“You really do. I know him, and Mommy would love you.”

Slouched back in the seat with his long legs wide open, he threw one arm over the porch banister and looked her over. Just as relaxed as him, Zurena remained in her position, trading eye contact until she could no longer take it. Although she had the tendency to be just as quiet and mysterious as him, he had her beat. There was nothing in the world more intimidating than the way Blue stared at people.

If you didn't already know him and how he was, you would assume he either had a problem with you or that you had something wrong with your appearance. His gaze made you feel insecure as hell, and Zurena was his sister and felt it. She could only imagine how strangers felt. Unless you were Forever. Zurena rolled her eyes at the thought. Blue clearly loved the girl, and it made her feel some type of way that she couldn't explain.

“What's up with you and that girl?”

“We together,” he told her without hesitation.

“You don't even know her. I get that you feel grateful to her for winning your case, but how long have you really known her for you to be claiming her as yours?”

“Long enough. What's your problem with her? I'd think you'd be her biggest fan since she freed your brother.”

“Never been a fan of anybody,” she brushed him off with a wave of her hand.

His silence was a solid enough response, even if he didn't render one. Zurena knew he was irritated with her. That's the only time he got quiet with her. Any other time, he was all smiles and jokes. Which led her to her next conclusion.

"You're really serious about her?"

"You can't tell? You know me better than anybody outside of Auntie and Jugg. Even both of them are happy for me, why you not?"

When Zurena heard the defeat in his voice, she instantly felt bad. She'd never want him to think she found solace in his unhappiness, but Blue was her baby. Had been since their parents passed away. Her protectiveness over him was next level, and nobody would ever understand it. Not even him. Death broke her heart in a way that nothing ever had, and the only thing she could imagine would be worse than losing her parents, would be losing her brother right afterwards.

"I am happy for you, Zurich. Nothing makes me happier than seeing you happy and here," she smiled in his direction. "I'm just trying to be logical. I know how you are when you love a woman. You let Journey run all over you, have a baby, and everything, and I'm not letting Forever do that."

"Let?" Blue leaned forward, resting his forearms on his knees. "You do know I'm a grown ass man and Forever is a grown woman, don't you? You can't let us do anything," he chuckled.

"You know what I mean, smart ass."

"Rena, tell me what's wrong with you and don't say nothing because it must be something. Forever is not your issue."

Zurena pondered her thoughts and whether she should share them with her brother or

just continue keeping things quiet and to herself until she could figure out what was going on around her. She'd been suffering in silence for a while, trying to piece together her own happiness, but failed or turned to the wrong people every time.

"How you know she's not? She got a smart-ass mouth."

"And you have a mean one. You've been this way for a while. What's good? Let me help you."

A heavy exhale escaped her as she looked out toward the street.

"Is it a nigga?"

Without further thought, she nodded.

"What he do?"

"He just doesn't treat me the way I want him to, but I love him, so I be allowing stupid shit."

"Like?"

Her mouth remained closed as the truth weighed so heavy on her that opening her mouth seemed impossible.

"He's in another relationship, but I had him first," she hurried to say in an effort to make sure she didn't sound like the side chick she'd been for the past five years.

"First isn't only, and that's what you should be shooting for when talking about you love somebody. You're too good to be cheated on and pushed to the side. You're mean as hell, but you're pretty and loyal. You make good money and take good care

of yourself and your family. A wife, Rena. That's what you are, and men know wives when they see one, so if that nigga play on your top like that, then he's not ready to be a husband. Because, if he was, he'd either leave you alone or marry you. He's dragging you along because he can see your wife material too and don't want to let it go until he's ready to step up."

"He says we're going to get married."

"Why he with another woman, then?"

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Her eyes diverted to the side some as she began biting the inside of her cheek.

“They have a baby together.”

“And you’re waiting on this nigga?”

“See, this why I didn’t want to tell you. I knew you were going to get all judgy.”

“I ain’t judging you, but this some bullshit, Zurena.” His stern tone alerted her of his rising anger.

In efforts to calm him down before he got too far out of pocket, she snickered. “You be cussing like Auntie won’t whoop your ass.”

With not a smile in sight, he shrugged.

“Auntie know what’s going on,” he’d just finished speaking when Forever walked out.

She paused once, noticing they were in the middle of a conversation. Zurena wanted to not hate her, but she couldn’t help it. The way her brother fawned over her made Zurena envious, and when there was jealousy, there would undoubtedly be hate too. Unable to hide it, she rolled her eyes away from Forever and back to Blue.

His gaze was on his skinny ass love interest, staring like she’d disappear if he looked away. The stare he used for her was different from the one he used with everybody else. Zurena wasn’t sure if it was on purpose or not, but he definitely switched that

eye contact up for Little Miss Girl.

His eye contact held so much awe that Zurena had to momentarily look at Forever. She was indeed a pretty woman, unique, sophisticated and drop dead fucking gorgeous. Forever looked like the type of woman who would have a man in love and acting lucky to have her. She wasn't ghetto or around the waylike Zurena and the rest of the women she knew. Forever was kept and looked factory made.

Judging by the way she stood confidently beneath her brother's stare, she knew it too. Zurena sucked her teeth in annoyance because that right there was why she felt the way she did right then. Zurich was so smitten with her, Forever could probably do whatever she wanted to do to him, and he'd let her.

"Let me go back in the house and let y'all talk before Zurena decides to try to fight me," Forever's sarcasm hadn't been missed and was duly noted by Zurena.

"Rena ain't gon' do no lame shit like that," Blue held his hand out toward her.

Forever glanced Zurena's way before taking Blue's hand and sliding comfortably into his lap. He allowed her to move around until she was good before looking back at Zurena as if she was about to continue telling her business in front of Forever. With a subtle shake of her head, she let him know that was dead.

"Forever, what you plan on doing with my brother?"

Forever faced her, head on, unafraid. "What you mean?"

"What's your plans with him? Are you just a good girl fulfilling your bad boy fantasy, or are you serious about him?"

"Do I appear to be faking?" she questioned while leaning casually against Blue's

chest, rubbing his head.

“I don’t know, that’s why I’m asking.”

“Well, I don’t have a bad boy fantasy or whatever it was you just said. Zurich is important to me, and I don’t want to lose him, so I’m going to make sure I never do anything to make that happen. Being with him is real to me.”

“And you don’t care that you’re some big shot lawyer and he’s a gang banger.”

“You act like that’s all he is,” Forever sassed. “And I’m no big shot, I just do my job well. I’m no better than he is, so stop insinuating that.”

“I’m not insinuating anything, I’m stating facts. You can live in whatever little bubble you’re accustomed to living in, but down here in the real world, he’s a felon and you’re a fucking lawyer. You can be however you want to be around us, because we’re his people and we love him, so we don’t judge you. But what happens when you take him around the people you deal with on a day-to-day basis? The people at your firm know you fucking your jailbird client?” Zurena sat up some, waiting for a response.

The look on Forever’s face was anything but comfortable, and that’s what Zurena liked. She could play nice and act all stuck up in front of Zurich, because he liked her, but she knew better. Forever’s true colors would show the moment somebody looked down on her for dating Zurich, and Zurena wouldn’t willfully have her brother anywhere he wasn’t wanted.

“Rena, chill bruh,” he spoke up since Forever was still sitting pretty, with her mouth closed.

“She’s good, Blue-Blue.”

“Yeah, Blue-Blue, I’m good. She’s a grown ass woman, remember?”

Forever’s head shook as she looked out past them in a daze before turning her glare on Zurena. “You know something, my sister and cousin was leery about letting me come down here by myself because I’m so easy going. I let things roll off me, even when people are rude, because I like to see the good in others. It’s the reason I went into criminal defense in the first place,” she took a deep breath as if her words were too heavy to unload. “I feel like everyone has some sort of good in them... some even deserve second chances. Although the world has made it their job to place judgement on others, it’s not our place to do that. It’s Gods. I wanted to represent the people that society looks down on. I have a heart for the unwanted people, or the jailbird felons, as you so eloquently put it.”

Forever turned in Blue’s lap so that she was fully facing Zurena.

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“I’m doing my best not to take your behavior so personally because you’re Zurich’s sister, and if my sister was here and seeing how you’ve been treating me for absolutely no reason, you two would have been fighting by now,” Forever released a chortle that sounded more like a scoff, while Zurena sucked her teeth loudly and waved her hand dismissively.

“The same way you don’t play about him, she doesn’t play about me, so I get it. What I don’t get is why, instead of being happy that he found a woman that wants to take care of him, see him free, and living a good life, you’d prefer to make him feel bad about something he can’t control. This man loves me, as he fucking should.” Forever stood to her feet. “You or nobody else is going to change that. I don’t care if we’re in Miami or in California, where the rich white people at my firm live, if anybody and I do mean anybody,” her eyes shifted up and down Zurena’s body to emphasize her point. “Disrespects me, him, or what we have going on, shits going to get real wicked. I’m nice, really I am, but stop trying me, Zurena.”

Forever stood in the middle of the porch, not even a buck twenty, as if she didn’t have a fear in the world. Zurena didn’t know whether to laugh at her or swing on her. She could respect the balls she had because she hadn’t expected to get read like that, but she would also beat Forever’s skinny ass worse than her mama ever had.

“Blue-Blue, I’ll wait on you inside. Let me know when you’re ready, but don’t feel rushed, babe. I’m good. Your auntie loves me.”

Without even glancing in Zurena’s direction, she let herself back into the house, letting the screen door slam closed behind her.

“You being real fucked up right now, Zurena,” Blue’s deep raspy voice was low, but she could hear him just fine. “You coming at Forever like that, but is that how you see me? A jailbird felon? Just a gang banger? Because you’re at her throat, but you’re the one dragging a nigga.” He stood, and Zurena’s heart leapt in her chest.

“Zurich, don’t leave. You know I don’t think that about you.”

“I can’t tell, shit. You doing me worse than everybody. I’ll holla at you, Rena.” He hugged her quickly, pecking her forehead before entering the house and leaving her on the porch alone once again.

With tears rising in her eyes, Zurena snatched her keys from her pocket and headed off the porch toward her car. She’d been waiting all week to see her brother, only to have ruined their time together. When she’d first learned of Forever, she’d been annoyed but had promised herself she’d do her best to be nice, but after seeing how pretty she was and how her brother loved on her, she’d become jealous.

Not in a way that another woman who wanted Zurich would be, but in a way that made her wonder why she couldn’t have a man to love her like that. She was tired of being on the side and getting only half of what she deserved. She wanted love just like everybody else, and for the life of her, she couldn’t get it.

When she was finally in her car and headed home, her mind began to free. It had been on ten since leaving her aunt’s house, but turning into her neighborhood gave her a fresh feeling. Too bad, it was short-lived. The moment she turned into her driveway and saw her boyfriend’s car along the curb, she rolled her eyes. Typically, she’d be happy to see him, but they’d been arguing all day due to his baby mama’s social media story from the night before.

It had clearly been the hoe’s birthday, so her and all her lil’ homegirls were on a party bus drunk and being wild, with his stupid ass dead center, letting her sit in his lap,

kiss all over his face, and dance drunkenly all over the same dick that had just been deep in Zurena's southern walls hours prior. As if that hadn't been enough, he'd had the nerve to have some of the gang with him as well. Just knowing his friends knew the baby mama and not her made her feel betrayed. As small as it was, it still hurt.

"Where you been?" he questioned as soon as she was out of the car and headed toward her door.

"My auntie house, why?" She turned to face him. "Where you been?"

"At the trap."

"Sure, you have." She let herself in, with him following close behind.

"I hope you're not still on that bullshit from earlier. Let it go, Rena. You know what the fuck be going on. You act like I had any other choice."

"Of course you did, Rico! You didn't have to be there. It was her birthday, not yours."

"What it looks like, me not being at her birthday celebration when she's my baby mama, come on Rena. You're being unreasonable."

"But it was okay to miss mine?" she perched on the hallway table with her arms crossed. "When me and my girls were out at the club, you didn't even pull up. I wasn't even trying to blow ourspot up, just wanted you to slide through and show love, but you couldn't even do that."

"I was with the gang the night of your party."

"You were with them last night too. I saw Jugg, Yayo, and Wale. The same three

niggas you claimed you were with on my birthday.”

“I wasn’t with Jugg the night of your party.”

“I know you weren’t because, unlike you, he was a real nigga and he pulled up and celebrated with me, because that’s what people do when they love you!”

Seeing Rico lie to her face always put her deeper in her feelings because he didn’t give a fuck. He’d lie to her and make her feel tiny without remorse, but got with his baby mama and put on like it was the norm.

“Rico, just get out of my house. I don’t even know why I keep playing myself with you.”

Desiring to be blind to the truth, Zurena turned and walked up the hallway toward her room. She listened closely with each step she took, to hear had the front door closed. When she didn’t hear anything, she mentally prepared herself to hear more lies. Her room was just how she’d left it, with the bed made and nothing out of place. A clean house was one of the only perks of living alone. Even with some of Rico’s things lying on the floor and dresser, it was still clean.

“Rena,” he called out from the entrance to her bedroom. “I don’t want you to be mad at me.”

“I’m not mad.”

“Come give me a hug then.”

“We’re good.”

He stared at her like a scolded dog while she began removing her clothing for a shower. Still uneasy after her conversation with Zurich, she honestly didn’t have the energy to keep carrying on with Rico. Especially after the things Blue told her. Whether she’d wanted to hear it or not, he’d been right, and the more Rico stood before her with sorry ass excuses, the clearer it became.

“Shouldn’t you be happy? You just left from seeing Blue, right?”

“Yep,” she faced him head on. “And the whole time I was there, I was mad and snapping on him and his girlfriend because of your ass. He kept asking why I was so angry because this isn’t like me,” her throat got tight. “He asked because he knows me. He could tell stuff isn’t right with me. But what more can I expect from a man that genuinely loves me? Of course, he’d noticed. Just like Jugg did on my birthday, but I ignored both of them and played it off like it’s nothing, just like I always do.”

“Zurena, come on,” Rico came in and sat on her bed.

“The whole time I was there, I was watching the way he is with his girlfriend and was turning green with envy because I don’t have that with you. It’s not fair.”

“That shit is fresh with them. He’s only happy because he just got home and that girl is fucking him.”

“I expected you to say something shallow like that, but that’s not true. They love each other, and it shows. Just like it shows how fucked up we are. I’m tired, Rico. Just go

home. This ain't working for me no more."

"What you mean it's not working?" he stood from the bed and walked to her.

"Exactly what I said." She walked past, and he snatched her back roughly.

Already knowing where they would be going if they kept their pace, Zurena snatched out of his embrace just as harshly as he snatched her.

"Rico, I already told you. I'm not in the mood for this mess today. Go home to your family and leave me the fuck alone."

"You my bitch. You don't tell me to leave. I leave when I get ready to." He gritted out.

"Boy, get out my house." Never scared of a nigga, Zurena pushed past him again, only to be snatched back once more, making her back hit the corner of her dresser.

This time, she slapped his head into next week. As bad as she didn't want to fight, she'd never let a man handle her, and she put that on her parents' grave. Even if that did mean she'd have to throw hands to prove her point. Wasn't like it would be something new. Before she could even catch her footing good, Rico's hand was around her neck.

"Didn't I tell you to stop putting your hands on me?"

"You put yours on me first," she spoke the best she could with the pressure on her throat.

"Because, you on that stupid shit," he released her throat and shook her.

“I’m done with you, Rico. Go home to your family.”

“You ain’t leaving me, Rena.” He glowered at her through squinted eyes.

“Watch me! I’m done playing with you. I’m gonna get a man that actually wants to be with me. Fuck you.”

She was past him and almost to her bathroom when she went flying forward into the marbled top sink. As soon as she caught her balance, she spun to face him, only to feel his palm on the side of her face. Too tired to fight, but too strong to lay down and take an ass whooping, Zurena readied herself for another one of their unnecessary brawls.

It was all they seemed to do. Fight and have sex. As toxic as it was, it was their life, and what she’d grown used to. She talked a lot about getting another man, but truth be told, if she got one that didn’t cheat or beat on her, she probably wouldn’t know what to do with him.

I’m never letting you go

The pink glow from the desk light illuminated the small corner of the room where Forever was huddled. It was going on two o’clock in the morning, and Forever was still up reviewing a case that she would possibly take on. Although she was technically still on vacation when she’d received the email, it piqued her interest too much to leave idle. Blue was laid out, and she’d been up nose deep in her new book, *How Did We Get Here: A Millionaire Love Affair 2*. Just like any other time her favorite author, A’zayler, dropped a book, Forever was up missing sleep just to finish it.

Reading had always been a passion of hers, but after discovering the Urban Fiction genre, she’d become an addict. The bad boy and good girl stories always did her heart

the most good, and even more now that she had her own personal bad boy. Her and Blue's story reminded her so much of a book that she found herself smiling and relating to Azayler's work on a deeper level these days, and she loved it too much to explain. She'd just been trying to choose which man she liked for the main character the most, when she'd gotten the email notification.

She'd considered ignoring it until morning because she couldn't tear herself away from her book, but since she wasn't ready to be done with it anyway, she'd exited her Kindle and reviewed the waiting emails. The first one had been from Hope, and anytime he emailed, she was all in. He'd been nothing but the best to her, teaching and molding her into a mini him and she wanted nothing more than to continue his legacy if allowed. The second one had been from a new client.

It was mid-morning, and Blue had been asleep for the past few hours, so even with her trying to make the most of her vacation with him, she figured a few hours of work wouldn't hurt. It had taken her a few minutes to scan the documents, and when she did, she was floored. She'd known after winning Blue's appeal that she would probably have more clients in his situation coming in fast, but she hadn't known it would be that fast or that many.

She'd been getting referrals by the boatload, many of them coming from inmates who had been housed with Blue. The newest one, and the one that had actually dragged her from bed, was an extremely high-profile case that she'd watched on the news. It had torn her heart to pieces as she watched it unfold for the world to see, and now it was in her inbox, awaiting her review.

"God, you're showing out now," she smiled while shaking her head in awe of his grace. "When you said my gift would make room for me, I didn't know you meant this much room."

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Good evening, Ms. Maverick,

My name is Azerie Rush. I'm currently being housed in Atlanta on a life sentence. I got your information from a friend, Auto Hollis? He said you know him, and that "he fucks with you the long way" (excuse my language).

Forever tittered at Auto's lingo, because, though she didn't know him very well, she knew him enough to know that was definitely something he'd said.

He told me to reach out to you because you're the best lawyer in the world. I keep hearing about the RICO case you just beat and was hoping you could come see me before you go back to California. Auto told me you were down this way and to hurry up and get with you before you left. Hope that's okay. If you have time, please come. If you don't, could you at least schedule a call for us to speak? Thank you.

Forever read over his message again before she replied, letting him know that she'd do her best to squeeze him in while she was there. Unsure of how she would be able to gain him as a client in a totally separate state, she immediately emailed Hope to get his insight. When she was finally done for the night, she returned to bed with Blue and snuggled against his warm back.

"Auto's grandma told me all you do is work," sleep was laced all throughout his grumble while he palmed her thigh, picking it up and wrapping it around his waist.

Forever scooted closer to him, tightening the grip around his waist, even wrapping her arm around his chest as well.

“She’s a sweetheart, she told me that too.”

“She was right.”

“She was. I thought you were asleep, though. What you doing up?”

“You left me,” he rubbed up and down her leg, stopping to hold her calf in his hand.

“And took your warmth with you. The bed got cold as hell.”

Bashful giggles escaped her throat as she buried her face into his skin.

“Don’t do that no more.”

“Do what?”

“Leave me for other niggas. Stay in the bed with me. They can wait.”

With her lips pressed into his back, she whispered, “I’ll never leave you,” before kissing him a few more times, and allowing her eyes to drift closed.

The room was silent, with only the fan bringing about any noise when he turned to face her. Their heads shared the same pillow, with their eyes trained on each other’s. Blue’s dark skin was immaculate and smooth. His long black beard was tamed and neat. The straight hair swirled around his edges and eyebrows as his dark eyes melted in her presence.

“You’re so beautiful,” he pecked her nose. “All day, you’re the most beautiful person I’ve ever met.”

“So are you.”

“Not just on the outside, Rabbit,” he smiled when she rolled her eyes. “The inside too. Rena went stupid hard on you, and you were still a good person about it.”

“Her problems aren’t with me. They’re deeper. I’m not sure what it is, but there has to be something personal she’s dealing with that has her that angry with a complete stranger. You should check on her.”

“I tried. She said she’s dealing with her nigga. Ain’t nothing I can do about that. I like you standing up for yourself, though. I wanted to fuck you so bad.”

Their lovers’ play took over the bedroom as they laughed at his blunt admission.

“I’m convinced that’s all you want to do, anyway. That’s all you ever say to me.”

Forever leaned over, stretching her long, slender limbs, allowing his lips time to grace the arm near his mouth before settling beneath the covers.

“I can’t help that everything you do turns me on. To be honest, I don’t even want to help it. I’m your man, I want to, wanna fuck you every time you do something good.”

Forever watched the way his teeth pulled his bottom lip into his mouth as his eyes grew darker.

“I’m so fucking infatuated with you, Forever. I want my dick in you all fucking day, then you be moaning all sweet andshit, begging,” he gritted with his eyes closed. “Come sit on it for me.”

Without an objection, Forever allowed him to pull her body on top of his. Already panty-less, thanks to his earlier suggestion anyway, all he’d had to do was remove her silk gown and toss it to the floor, and she was nude. Matching him, in nothing but their dark birthday suits, Forever moved slowly, allowing him the freedom to place

her on his hard erection. The feeling of it bumping into her butt, then stomach, made her feel empty. Like he'd gutted her, and the only thing left inside of her was the intense desire that she held for him.

"Lift up," he eyed her rising knees with his fingertips denting the skin of her back and waist. "You feel it?"

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His voice was subtle and deep as his chest muscles flexed.

“Yes.”

“Good. Now ride,” his hands left her waist and found their home on her small breasts.

“Ride real slow, baby.”

She nodded and did as her man instructed. Their connection was monumental, and she nearly fainted on the dick the moment it slid all the way inside.

“I like the way that pussy smelling today too,” he licked his lips while inhaling deeply.

The fact that he could smell her arousal and was open about enjoying the scent flipped her into oblivion, and all she could do was stare at him in wonder. His gorgeous face, sexy parted lips, wide muscular chest, and that protruding Adam’s apple dancing up and down his neck each time he swallowed.

“Look at this lil’ body working,” he hummed his praises. “Keep moving it just like that. You doing good, Pretty girl.”

“Zurichhhh.”

He nodded with confidence. “That’s right, call your man, bae. I’m yours,” his hands rubbed her back, pulling her down onto his chest. “I’m yours and nobody else’s.”

Listening to him declare her ownership over him made Forever’s muscles clinch.

She'd wanted that from Marcellus; for a moment thought she'd had it, but he'd been a fraud. After their breakup, she'd thought the world would end. No other man would ever want her, praise her, make love to and claim her as Blue was doing, and there he was. Doing it the fuck up. Forever was in pure lover's bliss.

"Zurich," her whimpers and tears flowed relentlessly as her body pulsed around him. "This feels so good,"

"Because it's us." He sat up with his back pressed against the headboard.

Seconds later, his mouth was on her nipples, making her back arch out of his reach, but like the thug that he was, he pulled her right back, handling her rough and gentle at the same time.

"You trying not to give me what's mine?" His eyes were on hers. "How you not gon' give me, me, bae? You mine, Forever," he pushed upward harder, and her mouth dropped open. "Only mine. This all me right now."

She nodded, with tears steadily rolling down her face.

"You mine. Whatever we do is us, and we belong to me. Aight?"

As twisted and as husky as his words were coming out, Forever understood perfectly and wanted nothing more than that.

"Take your time, we ain't got nowhere to go." He slowed her hips down when she tried speeding up.

"Blue-Blue, it just feels so right."

"Because it's yours," he pecked the center of her chest. "That's why you cry every

time I make love to you. You're finally home, and your body knows that shit."

Her head nodded as her body transformed into puddles of submission and orgasms all at once. Forever didn't know what to do as her body shivered and shook in his embrace, but he did. Blue's grip on her tightened when he pulled her to his chest and circled her body in a hug. Soft lips trailed up the side of her shoulder and neck, stopping on her mouth.

With their foreheads pressed together, Blue peered deep in her eyes. "I'm finna nut all in you," he grunted roughly. "I want you to get pregnant and have me a pretty lil' baby."

Even more tears left her face when she thought of Baby Blue. The love child she'd thought up months ago when they were within the dirty walls of the prison. Just the thought of Blue being locked away forever, never there to be what she needed, to love and protect her the way he did, made even more tears rush her.

"Oh my god, Zurich," she belted loudly when her body betrayed her again, much harsher that time.

"Mhm. I know it feels good baby, breathe."

He coached her through her orgasm in the sweetest voice.

"Just breathe and feel it, baby."

The grip Forever had on his neck should have choked him to sleep as tight as she held it, but all it did was welcome the early shower of their kids like he'd promised. Deep ragged breaths and a host of sensual touching later, they'd both climaxed and lay tangled in the black sheets on his bed.

“You told my sister I love you earlier.”

Forever’s closed eyes popped open in the darkness.

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“I was just talking, not really thinking about what I was saying.”

He pecked the top of her head. “Nah, you was right. I do for real.”

Her smile spread as much as it could with her cheek pressed into his chest. “I love you too.”

“I know you do.”

Forever’s mind settled deeper into their moment, and before long, she was back asleep, cuddled in the arms of God’s greatest gift to her.

“Rabbit,” Blue’s voice carried from the weight bench and over to the pool where she’d been swimming for the past twenty minutes.

“Stop calling me that, Zurich.”

“Why, Baby? I like it.” his smile was big and wide when he dropped from the pull up bar and onto his feet.

After their blissful night of lovemaking, Blue had gotten up to prepare them breakfast before a workout that he insisted they needed. Forever wasn’t necessarily the exercise type because she’d never had to make it a part of her routine, but he worked out faithfully. Sometimes she’d watch, and other times he’d convince her to do one thing or another. That morning, she’d chosen swimming.

You must have bought this for me? Already know what it's gon' make me do to you. Know I like when your ass out.

After the way he'd carried on about her new swimsuit, she couldn't put it on fast enough. His eyes had been glued to her in the red bikini he'd sworn was purchased just for him since she began her swim. The way he ogled and praised her made Forever feel like the prettiest woman in the world, even when he called her Rabbit.

"Come here for a second."

"What do you want?" She squinted at him, sure he was up to no good.

"Somebody needs to holla at you real quick." He held up the phone she hadn't noticed before.

Forever was pulling herself from the pool when he rushed to help her out, pulling her body out of the water and up against his slowly.

"I didn't need your help."

"Yes, you did, baby. You always need me."

Forever couldn't control the smile on her face when she heard his boisterous laughter. "Give me this phone, Zurich. I don't have time to play with you." She pulled his cellphone from his hand, checking the name on the screen before she said hello.

The high her man gave her wouldn't be ruined by anybody, so when she saw it wasn't Zurena, she answered with no problem. She was the only person Forever refused to waste breath on. Since Blue already had it on speakerphone, she held it near her mouth and spoke.

“Good morning,” her proper voice carried loudly.

“What’s popping skinny ass girl?” Auto responded. “The hell you so chipper about this morning? My nigga must be over there dragging your shit,” he cackled loudly, making Blue join.

“Oh my god, Auto. Really? That is not how you talk to people.”

“Man, I’m just fucking with your white ass. Nova be the same way when she gone off the dick.”

Forever could tell by his laughter that he didn’t mean any harm, which was why she relaxed her guard some. That, and Blue was laughing just as hard as he was, so clearly that was just how he spoke to people.

“Auto, tell me what you want before I hang up on you.”

“That’s right, baby. Get on that nigga head.”

Blue lowered himself on the ground next to her and the weight bench she’d made herself comfortable on.

“Damn, Lawyer Barbie, aight. I got my nigga on the line, he said he emailed you last night,”

“I responded.”

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“I know, but niggas in his position can’t wait. I know you know that, so since I got pull with you, I told my nigga I’ll plug him. Azerie?” Auto joined the calls before she could respond.

“Yeah, gang. I’m here.” A youthful voice with a proper accent, much like hers came through their call.

“I got my girl, Forever on the phone. She said tell her what’s good.”

Forever’s lips parted into an ‘O’ at the way Auto put words into her mouth. When she looked up to see Blue smiling, she knew he’d been in on their little plan. Which she should have known, anyway. Blue would have never let her sit on the phone with two men discussing business he wasn’t privy to. That she knew for sure.

I’m going to kill you. She mouthed to him when he blew her a kiss.

“Good morning, Ms. Maverick. How you doing?” Azerie’s manners brought her back to their call.

Blue’s sexy body had her momentarily distracted.

“This nigga trying to be all proper and shit,” Auto interrupted again. “Nigga, Forever is gang. Talk to her regular.”

Being referenced as gang, made her smile and warm up a little more to Azerie. It wasn’t something she’d been seeking, but to know she was validated enough to be affiliated with the realest hood niggas ever felt good. She couldn’t wait to tell

Yummy.

“You can call me Forever. I’m well, Azerie. How are you, love?”

“Aht aht,” Blue grabbed her hand, pulling the phone away from her mouth. “I’m Love, that nigga is Azerie.”

Forever was a ball of giggles as he pecked her lips hard before getting back into the grass to resume his pushups.

“Yo, bruh wild, but I’m good. I will be better if you agree to take my case. The lawyer I have now is moving too slow. I’ve paid her, but every time it’s time to submit motions for my appeals, she’s got another excuse, or she needs more money. My grandma is getting older and I’m just sitting here on some shit I didn’t even have knowledge of. I know a lot of people probably claim they’re innocent, but I am for real.”

“And he’s good people, Forever,” Auto agreed readily. “Young and green as a fucking tree, but he my lil’ potnah.”

Another verification she appreciated, because let Nova and Blue tell it, Auto didn’t like anyone but the two of them, and Egypt and Azayna.

“I actually followed your case while it was in the news, Azerie. I know you’re innocent. I also did a little of my own research last night after getting your email. I’ve been in contact with my colleague this morning, and he’s going to help me get your case where we need it to be in order for me to represent you. The good thing is you’re serving time in Georgia, a state I’m licensed in, so that’s a plus.”

“Lets fucking go!” Azerie’s youthfulness showed once again, making Forever snicker.

“Don’t get too excited yet. There’s nothing set in stone.”

“Just the fact that you’re willing to do it is good enough for me. Auto told me about how good you were in court. If you can flip a RICO, I know you can win my appeal.”

“That was her nigga though. She was gon’ go hard for him, regardless. But, I have to admit, Lawyer Barbie don’t fuck around, gang, so I know she got you.”

Forever’s eyes wandered near her leg, where Blue was busy doing pushups. His sexy back denting with each dip he took. Hewas her nigga, and she would go hard for him. Again and again.

“I’m happy you all have this kind of faith in me, but I’m not all that. I just do my job.”

“Aye for real, gang, stop doing that shit. You the fucking goat. These old ass white muthafuckas can’t do the shit you be doing. I saw that for myself. You good. Stand on that shit. The gang finna keep your pockets laced. Shid, might mess around and make you blood for real, you get enough of the homies out.”

The way Auto’s words made her smile was insane, but she couldn’t fight it away. He sounded so sure about her talent in the courtroom that it reminded her of Jerrico, and he was one of one. The confidence he had in her was beyond words, and it made her love him even more than her sister probably did. So, to have Auto rallying on her behalf once again made her feel just as qualified. If not more.

She spoke through her smiling. “I don’t want to be blood, Auto, but I appreciate it.”

Auto sucked his teeth. “Your ass just saying that because your nigga a Crip,”

“No, I’m saying it because it’s true, and sometimes against the law,” she sniggled

while pushing her hair over her shoulder.

“It’s against the law but you over there laid up with a gang member now, fuck out of here, tiny ass girl,” Auto’s loud chuckles made her smirk. “Wasn’t worried about the law when you woke up in my nigga’s bed this morning, was you?”

Never in her life had she ever met anyone with a mouth worse than Goody’s, but Auto had her beat.

Standing to his feet, Blue leaned closer to the phone. “Nigga, leave my fucking baby alone. She already doing you a favor. She’s feeling Blue. Getting y’all niggas out ain’t changing shit. She said it’s against the law, so it is, nigga. What my baby says goes. Yo hoe ass trying to argue and shit.”

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The three men's rowdy banter brought a smile to Forever's face as she basked in the sun and her man's presence. He hadn't lied. She was indeed feeling Blue, and that wasn't changing for anybody.

"Lawyer Barbie, you got that nigga talking for you now?"

"Listennnn," she dragged slowly while watching Blue kiss her stomach. "I'm on this man bad, Auto. I'ma help y'all out, but I ain't never coming up off him."

"Awww," Nova's sweet voice could be heard in Auto's background. "I know that's right, Forever. Get in your man's skin, girl."

"You already know how I'm coming about bae, No."

The way Blue blushed at her words gave Forever an indescribable feeling. His head had bowed some, and he was doing his best to hide the smile stretching his cheeks, but Forever's hand on his face revealed it anyway. The moment he lifted his head and allowed her to look at him, his smile grew bigger.

"Welcome to the real housewives of Gangland, sis," Nova squealed with glee. "Now get pregnant!"

"Aye, fuck all that woman shit y'all talking," Auto interrupted in typical Auto fashion. "We talking business, we ain't got time for that. Plus, I'm the only one that can call my wife No, Lawyer Barbie. So, find you a new nickname."

Nova and Forever tittered, with Azerie chuckling as well.

“Y’all wild.”

“Nah, nigga, we family,” Auto corrected him.

“We cut up, but it’s all love on this side,” Blue joined their group call once again.

“Forever that, and Azerie, you already know you, my nigga, so that makes you family too. We got you, blood. She gon’ get your ass out.”

“We sure do. I’ll get back with my colleague Hope and see what’s going on. Once I get the okay, I’ll come see you and we can strategize, Azerie.”

“Thank you, Forever.”

“No problem, gang.”

Their call erupted with laughter at her proper sounding slang before she passed the phone back to Blue. He, Auto, and Azerie carried on for a little while longer before he was off the phone and back on her, where he belonged.

You think it’s time?

The warmth surrounding his body with the sun shining on his dark exterior was one of the best feelings he’d ever felt. The wind was blowing slightly, and the breeze felt cool on his damp skin. The sun was out and had been blazing brightly when they’d first taken their seat, but was finally lowering, and the atmosphere was becoming more tolerable. It was their last day in Dade before heading back to Atlanta, and Auto had taken Nova out on a date just so she could dress up and feel pretty.

Since being pregnant, she’d gained a lot of extra unwanted weight, and as much as he loved it, she hated it. Every morning when he had to help her out of bed, she

complained about being the size of a whale, and with each step she took on her swollen ankles, he was reminded of how they'd disappeared behind all the fat and water weight. He didn't even want to get started on how she tried hiding the stretch marks cascading across her belly whenever he removed her clothing for sex or a shower.

Pregnancy was hated tremendously by her, but all Auto could think about was getting her pregnant again as soon as her six weeks were up with their first one. Nova's size had always been one of his favorite things about her, but for every pound she gained while carrying their baby, he loved her even more. The stretch marks she hated made his mouth water.

The extra jiggle in her ass and hips that had confined her to dresses, made his dick so hard that it hurt, and with the way her breasts had grown and sat up in everything she wore, Auto didn't know how she planned to feed their baby, because he had no plans of sharing them titties with anybody. Not even their newborn. If Nova never loved another thing about herself, Auto would do it for her.

"Stop staring at me, Auto."

"Stop being so damn pretty all the time, and I will."

"Auto..."

"What?" he got indignant because he knew she was about to be on some bullshit.

"Say something stupid and piss me off, Moo."

That baby ass smile on her face was why he was in love with her then. Her cheeks a little rounder than before, making her look like a moon. His moon... his sun... his fucking stars.

“Ain’t nobody finna piss you off. I just don’t know why you keep saying that.”

“Saying what? Telling my wife she’s the baddest bitch in the world? Because you fucking are, Nova. I don’t give a fuck if you think so or not. I do.” He grabbed her hand across the table. “You’re so pretty, Moo-Moo, I wish you knew.”

“I mean, I know I am, but I’m fat too. I may never lose this weight.”

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“And you don’t never have to. You wanna know why?”

The smirk on her face grew as she shook her head.

“No, because I already know what you’re about to say.”

“What?” his daring smile rested on his face.

“You love big bitches,” her eyes rolled, and he laughed at her.

“That too, but because I love you, Moo. I don’t care if you stay that size or get even bigger. I’mma love every inch.”

“I can’t get too much bigger. I’m already bigger than you, we’re going to look terrible then.”

Auto’s eyebrows knitted together. “What you trying to say? I’m a lil’ nigga? You trying to be funny, Moo?”

“No crazy,” she giggled.

“Good. Better not. As long as I can still pick you up and handle that body, that’s all you need to worry about.”

When she smiled and her eyes closed, Auto’s breathing grew lighter. It had been a long time, and he was still just as lost in her as he had been since the day he’d laid eyes on her. Nova had really been his saving grace, and if he never did another thing

in the world, he'd love her, and that was on Granny girl and their baby. Two things he didn't play about.

"You ready to go home?" she asked him, just as their waitress brought their appetizer out.

He waited until she was gone before answering her. "I'm cool either way. I love being in Dade, but our home is in Atlanta now. That's where all our shit at, so I guess that's where we need to be."

"We could move our stuff here."

"Ain't no point. I like being up there with you. Away from all this stuff," he looked out, taking in their surroundings. "I know too many people down here, and I don't like that for you. I want you somewhere safe, where nobody knows me and knows you mine."

Nova's forehead dented in concern. He knew his Moo-Moo, and he knew she was about to go too far.

"Is something wrong? Is there somebody trying to hurt you?"

"No Moo."

"Then why you say that?"

He shrugged. "You know how my mind is. I was just thinking about how much I love you, then it made me think about what I'd do if somebody ever tried to take you from me, and that made me think about that stupid shit. Ain't nobody talking about nothing with me for real. I was just saying, because you never know. I did a lot of shit as a young nigga. People might be harboring hate, or just jealous because you look better

than they baby mama.” He waved her off as if nothing he’d just said was of importance. “Plus, that’s what happened with me and Lo.”

“Logan?”

“Yeah, niggas trying to get at me, got at her instead and tried to rape her. You know the rest.”

“Auto, you can’t hold the blame for that. People are evil on their own. There was nothing you could do to stop them.”

“Yes, it was. I could have kept my love for her on the tuck, then niggas wouldn’t have known she was my weak spot. Any enemy I got will rush you if they can’t get me, and you already know how that’s going to turn out.”

Auto’s teeth gritted as the visuals of Nova screaming for him in the infirmary that day flashed into his mind. To drown out the painful sounds that was taking him to a place he didn’t want to be, Auto squeezed his eyes shut and held Nova’s hand to his nose. Her scent soothed him almost instantly. The soft smell resting on the tips of her fingers reminded him that they were no longer in that era of life, and she was there with him. Safely.

“We’re not doing any of that anymore. We’re happy now. Married and having kids together,” Nova’s voice pried his eyelids apart. “I love you, babe. Stop thinking about stuff that hurts you.”

He nodded slowly while looking around at the other patrons. “You better. Got me in this high ass restaurant spending all my money on you and that damn psycho ass baby.”

He watched the way her eyes closed and belly jumped as she laughed at him.

“Don’t even know her lil’ ass yet, and been cashing out like a sprung ass nigga,”

“What if it’s a boy?”

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“God forbid. I don’t need no other nigga living with us taking you from me,” Auto shook his head adamantly. “If it’s a girl, I can deal with that, but a boy? It’s staying at the hospital, Moo.”

“The baby is going to need me no matter what gender it is.”

“Nah, boys be on they mama hard. If he come out trying to be up under you all the time like I do, me and that lil’ nigga gone have to fight it out. And, you already know he ain’t gone win.”

“Auto, please shut up.”

“I’m just telling you, Moo-Moo, I’m a fuck your baby up and you gon’ be mad at me. Trying to get a divorce and shit.”

“You are really retarded.”

“Glad you finally realizing that shit. You stay on someyou’re not crazy, Auto,” he mimicked her, bringing about even more laughter.

Nova was so busy laughing that she wasn’t even paying attention to the way he watched her. When she finally settled down, she smiled across the table at him. Her gaze was just as potent as the way she loved him.

“You happy, Moo?”

“Happier than I’ve ever been.”

“Me too, ma. I swear. Eat your food before that crazy ass baby start kicking your ass again.”

Auto’s eyes almost watered as he watched her rub her very round stomach. Life was finally where it should have always been for him. Nightmares from sitting in that dirty ass prison in Atlanta still lived rent free in his head and each time they popped up, he was reminded to thank God for blessing him with another chance at life. Maybe it wouldn’t hurt to give him a real shot. If a woman like Logan could love God the way she did, that had to mean something. Lo didn’t openly claim anybody.

For years he’d been mad with God for making him crazy, or making him love hard enough to kill, he’d even hated him for a few weeks after Egypt told him Logan was in love with that alcoholic nigga, but the more he chilled back, he could see Big G really wasn’t too bad. He actually worked in his favor more than he’d hurt, because everything Auto lost, he’d gotten back triple time.

Logan related his sufferings to some old man in the Bible named Job, but Auto hadn’t read about him yet. Whoever he was, he had to have been a tough person if his life had been anything close to Autos. It felt like Auto had been living in hell for years, only to come out on the other side to a beautiful wife and a baby. A baby he still didn’t think he deserved. Auto was a lot of things, but a daddy? That was wild. Even for God.

“Auto, Baby,” Nova groaned while grabbing her stomach with both hands. “Auto,” she gasped again while releasing her belly long enough to slap the table with her free hand.

“What’s wrong, Moo?” he asked while standing and moving to squat down next to her.

He’d been out of his seat and on his way to her the moment she called his name, with

her face scrunched into a frown.

“I think I’m having a contraction, but I don’t know,” she looked at him with wild eyes. “Call Azayna.”

“Call Azayna for what? I’m finna call the doctor,” Auto stood with her hand in his. “Aye, somebody call the ambulance. My wife finna have our baby!” he yelled across the restaurant while fumbling with his phone.

Once he dialed Azayna’s number, he noticed instead of doing what he’d told them to do, everyone was still seated and staring at him wide eyed.

“Alright, let her have this baby in this muthafucka then. Since don’t nobody know how to fucking move! I hope she get blood all over y’all steak dinners and shit.”

When it came to Nova, it literally took nothing to set him off. She may not have meant anything to them, but to him, she was his world, and he’d flip all of theirs over if his didn’t get what she needed.

“I’m sorry, sir. Right away. We’re calling someone right now,” a young white girl stopped at the table next to Nova. “Have y’all timed them yet?”

The long knotless braids slid over Nova’s shoulder when she shook her head, still doubled over in pain, with the waitress staring between her and the watch on her wrist. Auto didn’t necessarily care for the way she was touching Nova’s belly, but she appeared to have some sort of knowledge about the situation, so he tried to chill.

“Timed what?”

“The contractions, sir,” she gave Auto a friendly smile. “We have to time them in order to know how soon she needs to get to the hospital.”

“We need to get her there now,” Auto stressed in a strained voice. “Listen lil’ homie, you look like a nice girl and all, but I willfuck you up if I see my baby head before the ambulance gets here because you sitting here timing shit.”

Nova’s fingers tapped the hand of the waitress who was resting on her stomach, momentarily stopping Auto’s rant.

“Excuse him, he means well,” she whispered while sitting up in her seat again and rocking back and forth. “Baby, stop cussing these people out.”

“Fuck these folks, how you feel?”

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“Fine now, it stopped,” she exhaled while batting her lashes rapidly. “That thing hurt, Auto. I don’t know how I’m about to do this.”

The fear in her eyes was heavy, and it had a vise grip on his heart. “I got you, Moo. Don’t worry about it. I’m gon’ help you.”

“How?”

“Shit, I’on know, but whatever it is, I’ma do it,” he leaned over so that his face was near hers.

His eyes were on hers, staring intently. Unmoving, Nova peered back at him. No words were exchanged as he leaned his forehead into hers, allowing her hand room to snake into his wild locs and scrape his scalp.

“Shits crazy, Moo,”

“I know, baby,” she pecked his lips. “I’m scared.”

“Don’t be, because I’m here and you already know your nigga ain’t scared of nothing.” He pecked her lips a few more times before standing back upright, realizing he still hadn’t called Azayna.

In a hurry, he dialed her number, “Aye sis!” he yelled as soon as she picked up. “Moo finna have the baby. The ambulance on the way here... damn girl, calm down. You ain’t the daddy.” He chuckled. “Yeah, just meet us there... I don’t know the closest one I guess, you know her regular doctor ain’t here. Yeah.Aight... Aye, bring my

brother with you. I can't do this shit by myself."

When Auto hung up, Nova was slumped over, holding her belly once again.

"You having another one, Moo?"

Her head nodded, prompting Auto to stand closer to her and rub her back. As soon as he was inches from her, she leaned her head into his stomach with one of her hands, squeezing the life out of his. Even with him not being afraid of nothing in the world, seeing his baby in that kind of pain had him scared to death. He didn't like being in situations that he couldn't control, and the way that crazy ass baby had Nova feeling right then was well beyond his reach.

"It looks like they're about three minutes apart, that's really fast," the waitress stood to her feet when the wailing of an ambulance sounded out behind them. "I'll go grab them. You stay with her."

"Where else I'ma go, lady?" Auto snapped on her unnecessarily, and even through her discomfort, Nova's nice ass touched the girl's hand softly once again.

"Sorry," she whispered breathlessly.

"You need to be saving your breath for this baby, not this grown ass girl," Auto squatted down so that he could see her face. "You already know this labor finna be a fight. Crazy ass fucking baby." He chuckled, making her smile.

"Stop talking about my baby, Auto."

"You think they got one of them straight jackets in newborn sizes?" His chest eased some when her contraction stopped, and she sat back up with a small smile and still holding tight to his hand.

“I’m so glad you’re here with me.”

His lips littered kisses all over her face and shoulders. “Wouldn’t be nowhere else.”

Once the EMTs finally made their way into the restaurant, things began moving faster than he could comprehend, and by the time they’d slowed down, he and Nova were at the hospital in a room Egypt, Azayna, Blue, and his girl, Forever. The moment Azayna dropped Zon back off with Pat, and Blue and Forever heard that Nova was in labor, they’d made it their business to get there for support, and Auto was glad they had. Having to sit so close to Nova while she was in so much pain was stressing him out.

“How long this shit normally last?” Auto asked Egypt while standing in front of Nova.

She was perched on the side of the bed with him positioned between her legs. Her arms were around his stomach, with her head resting in the center of his chest. He’d been massaging her back for the past hour to alleviate whatever pain he could.

“It could be awhile,” Azayna gave him a flat smile.

She and Egypt were leaning against the windowsill, while Blue sat directly in front of Nova’s bed with Forever tiny ass in his lap.

“Well, they need to give her some medicine or something then, shit.”

“She doesn’t want any.”

“I don’t know why the fuck not,” he fussed as Nova squeezed him tighter.

Another contraction coursed through her body and brought tears to his eyes. They’d

been at it for a little more than five hours, and she'd declined an epidural every time it was offered to her. Letting him know she didn't want anything interfering with her natural birthing plan.

"Man, No," Auto sniffed back his tears as he listened to her groan in agony while her body trembled beneath his touch. "You got to let them give you something... please," he tried to pull away so that he could see her face, but she tightened her hold on his body, pulling him back between her legs. "Please, Moo. It don't have to hurt this bad. You got me feeling like a bitch right now. I don't like not being able to make you feel better."

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His tears finally beat his hold and rolled down his cheeks when she sat back on one arm, with her head facing the ceiling. A tight scowl rested on her face when she propped one leg up on the bed and released a scream that was filled with so much pain that it nearly broke Auto in two. To keep his mind from going off the deep end, Auto sat next to her on the bed and pulled her head to his shoulder as Forever stood up and situated the hospital gown around her so that she wasn't exposed.

"It's almost over, Nova. That sweet baby will be here soon," she spoke softly while rubbing her back.

Auto was so happy that she'd stepped in because he was weakening by the second. There was a lot of stuff he could fight and would fight, but Nova hurting made him hurt, and when he was too down and out, there was almost nothing he could do about it.

"Auto, come walk with me to this nurse's station right quick," Blue stood, joining Egypt.

"Yeah Blood, we need to get one of them to come check her again, see if she's ready to push."

Auto looked at Nova, and she gave him a weak smile while nodding her head. When he was sure she was good, he left the room and hit the hallway with his boys.

"That fucking baby needs to bring its lil' ass on. Got my girl in there shaking and shit."

Egypt chuckled. “Just when I thought she’d finally grown out of that jitter girl stuff.”

The three of them continued talking and lightening the mood as much as they could. Prolonging their walk on purpose to make sure Auto had enough time to calm down.

“Auto!” Azayna screamed down the hallway.

Three sets of eyes flipped to Azayna as she held her head out of the door, screaming loud enough for the whole floor to hear.

“Tell them Nova’s pushing. She said she can’t stop.”

That one declaration sent the floor into oblivion. With Auto and about three nurses rushing to her room, the floor turned into pandemonium within seconds. One thing after another happened at warp speed, and before Auto could grasp one thing, something else happened, but the biggest of them all was when his baby finally slid out, and the cry pierced the room.

“Look at it, Nova,” Auto beamed. “Look at your baby, Moo-Moo. You did it, baby!” He kissed all over her head while staring at the newborn, covered in a bunch of nasty looking stuff with a cord hanging from its belly button.

“Congratulations, mom and dad. You have a beautiful baby girl.”

Auto and Nova kissed happily with big smiles on their faces.

“Dad, would you like to cut the cord?”

Auto moved to cut his daughter’s umbilical cord before freeing them to clean her. Back and forth between her and Nova’s bed, he made sure both of his girls were good. Once they were both clean and situated, their visitors were welcomed

backside. Being the proud husband and father he was, he sat at the head of Nova's bed, with his daughter in his arms.

"What is it?" Azayna questioned while running to him and the baby.

"Auto's third weakness," Nova hinted at her daughter's gender.

Egypt stopped in place with his eyes buck wide. "Nigga, it's a girl?"

The feminine laughter took over the room as Azayna, Nova, and Forever all laughed at the exasperation in his voice.

"Yep. She pretty too. Come look at my baby, blood. You got to see this shit," Auto spoke to Egypt while marveling at his daughter. "Real talk, it's really amazing what women be doing with their bodies. You should have saw the way Nova's shit split open. I probably could have fit up in that muthafucka."

Nova swatted at his arm with a swift shake of her head. "Will you shut up!"

"I already know, bruh. When Zay pushed Zon out, I just knew my sex life was over for good. Ain't no way pussy snapping back after that."

"I really hate the way y'all two think." Azayna's disgust was comical as she shook her head.

The friends all laughed at her while gathering closer to the bed to see the newest member of their crew.

"What'd you name her?" Blue's deep voice drowned out everything that was being said.

“Autumn Jasira,” Nova told them while rubbing Autumn’s little fist.

“Man, I ain’t never think I’d love something as much as I loved my Granny-girl, then I met Nova. Then I knew for sure that was it. Wasn’t shit coming before her, but sitting here looking at my baby,” Auto sighed, unable to finish his sentence.

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“It’s a feeling you can’t even explain.” Egypt’s hand rested on Auto’s shoulder when his head dropped into Autumn’s hair.

“She’s so fucking pretty and perfect with her lil’ fat ass. I already know she finna be bat shit crazy. Pretty girls always the craziest ones, then to have me and this psycho ass girl as her parents. Poor baby gon’ flip the daycare.”

Everyone’s happiness exuded them as they admired Autumn’s sweet exterior. Her warm brown skin held a subtle tan tint to it, while a small layer of black hair lay smoothly along her head, with the chubbiest cheeks they’d ever saw weighing down her pretty little face. The serene ambiance that encompassed her as she snuggled close to Auto’s chest with two pink fists balled beneath her chin gave the whole room such a peaceful feel.

“You happy, ain’t you, Auto?” Azayna’s head and cheek was tilted with a smile.

“You can’t tell by all the tears he’s been shedding?” Blue questioned her. “Nigga ain’t stopped crying since we got in here.”

“Swear,” Egypt dragged. “I didn’t know who was in labor. Him or Nova.”

Auto’s hand left Autumn long enough to shoot them all a bird. “Fuck all y’all. Call my granny... she’s got to see what we made.” He pecked Autumn’s head softly before looking around at all of his friends before stopping his gaze on Nova. “Thank you for everything, No. I love you for real.”

“I love you too. You deserve this.”

Auto didn't know how true that was, but the more she said it, the more sense it began to make. Maybe he did deserve happiness.

How did I get so lucky?

“Sounds good. Thanks Hope. I have a few more days of vacation left, and then I'll be back in the office. I'll need to stop in Georgia on my way to visit him and get as much information as possible before flying out. I need to know what I'm dealing with.”

In a crème satin dress, paired with gold and floral print designer slides, the ‘Z’ and rose necklace hanging from her neck, and a wide chocolate colored headband that looked like it was braided, pushing her long hair back and over her shoulders. The sun kissed her chocolate skin, making her freckles appear to be lighter than they were as she paced back and forth in front of him and Pat.

Multiple gold bracelets slid down her wrist as she scratched her head. The colorful jewels in one of them caught the rays from the sun, casting a glow on the large earrings in her ears. Blue's eyes were trained on her and hadn't moved since she'd walked away to take her call. The way she handled business, speaking every word correctly and enunciating her point precise and clear for the caller to understand made Blue so proud that he couldn't fight the feeling.

“You ain't got to stare. She ain't leaving,” Pat's voice tore his gaze from Forever.

“I just,” Blue shook his head and slouched back in the chair once again. “Can't even explain it.”

Pat blew smoke through his nostrils. “Try.”

“I'm just so proud of her. She's so fucking big, and don't even know it. I be watching

the way she works and how hard she goes all the time, and it makes me want to be just like her.” He released an embarrassed chuckle. “Not on no weird shit, I just wanna make sure I measure up.”

“You do.”

“Come on, Pat. I’m a street nigga. Forever’s taste should revolve around lawyers, doctors, and any other rich nigga job.”

“Her love should revolve around a man that’s going to treat her right. She works hard, which means she needs a release. Be that. You talk like you some busta ass nigga... shid, you rich too. Hood rich, but money is money, son.”

“Nah, I know I’m not, but what I look like walking up in her job? Going around her lawyer friends and shit?”

“Like that person that makes her happy,” Pat’s eyes trailed out toward Forever.

She was still on the phone, but she’d turned to face them and was staring at Blue. As soon as he blew a kiss at her, she smiled and waved giddily. His hand drifted back at her before dropping back into his lap.

“You look like the person that makes her smile and feel like that,” Pat’s pointer finger emphasized his point. “Where all this coming from, anyway? You ain’t never been the insecure type, and you’ve had plenty of bad bitches.”

Blue sighed and thought back on the conversation he’d had with Zurena and just shook his head. Though he knew the root of all of her issues, the things still bothered him when he thought about it. Mainly when he was alone with Forever and got to witness her through his lenses.

“I think it’s because she finna go back home and I don’t like being without her.”

“What’s y’all plan? I can see now the long distance ain’t gon’ work.”

The weight that had been on Blue’s shoulders returned. He knew that too and had been trying to decide for a while. He truly wanted to be wherever she was, but he wouldn’t force her to move to Miami, nor would he fly to California to move in with her. He was too much of a man to do that. If he was living anywhere, it had to be something he’d gotten with his own money and not his girl’s.

“We haven’t really talked about it yet. We called ourselves visiting both places to see which one we liked better, but I hated California.” A deep rumble of laughter left his throat. “I ain’t tell her that because she’s all sensitive and shit, but I can’t go out there. She needs to come down here with me.”

“You the man. Tell her.”

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Pat spoke as if it was the easiest decision in the world, when it was, but it wasn't. Just like he hated California, she might have hated Florida. Then there was her job. He didn't have a job, not a legal one anyway, so if anybody could uproot at the drop of a dime, it should have been him.

"I'ma holla at her," Blue said just as he heard voices behind them.

When he looked over his shoulder toward the back door of Pat's home, he saw a gang of niggas coming into the backyard. He'd known before coming that Pat was having a meeting, which was why he'd come a few hours earlier to chill and talk, but he hadn't known it would be that many people.

"Why you ain't tell me so many people were coming?"

"I ain't know you had Forever with you," Pat stood with Blue following. "Just take her in the house if she's uncomfortable."

The color blue quickly took over the backyard as members of their gang took up space on Pat's patio furniture and the sidewalk near his pool. Already having caught sight of the perplexity dancing on Forever's face, Blue made his way to her, not stopping until his arm rested over her chest, pulling her back to his chest. With his other arm circling her waist, his face was easily nestled into her neck.

"What you got on smelling this good?"

Her warm neck felt good against his nose and forehead.

“You,” she purred timorously.

“Me? How you got me on you?”

“How you think?”

Suck it all, Baby. Keep sucking for me. Let your man bust on them pretty lips.

Blue’s sex induced voice crowded their thoughts as she giggled in his arms, with her hands covering her face. Her impromptu session of head had been a great start to his morning and what he hoped to wake up to every day for the rest of his life.

“That ain’t what I smell. You smell sweet.”

“You taste sweet,” she flirted while turning in his embrace and circling his waist with her arms.

Her lips found his chin through his thick beard and pecked it the best she could.

“What’s on the inside always comes out.”

Her smile touched her eyes as she grinned up at him, showing her sparkling white teeth and Dove chocolate skin.

“Yo, you nasty. Where you get that from?”

She took a step closer to him, so that she was wedged between his legs. “My man.”

Blue’s eye contact intensified when she stood on her tiptoes to kiss him. It started slow, but eventually turned nasty because that’s just how they were. The only reason he pulled away was because he could hear the boisterous commentary coming from

his niggas. Blue ignored them all, focusing only on her, even turning so that his back was to them, and she was hidden by his body.

“I have to go back to Georgia before this weekend,” she sighed, and he felt her chest deflate. “Yummy’s baby shower is this weekend.”

“I be forgetting she pregnant by my nigga,” Blue’s mind was on Calvary and Yummy for only a moment before. “His brother gon’ be there?”

Forever’s eyes shifted to the side.

“More than likely.”

“Aight. We’ll leave tomorrow.”

“You’re going?” she questioned in alarm.

“Why wouldn’t I?”

She shrugged and pulled away a little. Since Blue could tell something was wrong with her, he stood staring and waiting for her to explain her discomfort. He couldn’t really place what it was, but if it had anything to do with him and her ex-nigga, she was going to have more problems than that one.

One thing about Blue when he was in a relationship, he was in it fully. Meaning, he spent all of his time with his girl. He was in her business, no matter how big or small. He prided his relational successes on togetherness, and he’d thought Forever did too; at least that was how she made it seem. Unless she’d lied. Auto did say lawyers were the best liars.

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“I don’t know, I just thought you were staying here.”

“Is that what you want?”

“No, of course not.”

“Then why you acting so stuck up?”

She looked off toward the group of men huddled around Pat, talking.

“You must don’t want your lil’ nigga to see me?”

Forever’s head whipped in his direction.

“Don’t be stupid.”

“Shit, you don’t be stupid. You the one clammed up as soon as I asked about him.”

Forever huffed and shook her head, making the smell of her long hair blow in the wind.

“You said you were going to fight him. I don’t want you to do that.” Her voice was low as she spoke firmly. “It has nothing to do with him seeing us together. I don’t care about that.”

Blue’s eyebrows knitted before a smile stretched his face. “Don’t worry about that. We good.”

“I don’t believe you, Zurich. You can’t go with me acting all crazy.”

“I won’t embarrass you, baby. You should know that by now. I meant what I said about fucking him up, but it’s stipulations to it. I’m not gon hit the nigga on site.”

With curiosity rising in her smile and posture, Forever turned her body from side to side while gazing up at him.

“Expound on the stipulations.”

“He look at you, boom. He talk to you, boom. He mug me, boom boom. He touch you, boom, muthafucking, boom. Baby shower over, take this nigga to the hospital.”

Their laughter erupted simultaneously as she fell into his chest with a wide smile on her face. During the entirety of her amusement, her body shook in his arms a little as she wiped the water from her eyes. Blue loved being able to bring her that type of happiness, and wanted nothing more than to continue it, but he meant what he said. They were laughing now, but it wasn’t going to be funny when the nigga was leaking all over the diapers and wipes and shit.

“Those stipulations work for you?”

“No, Zurich. It sounds like you’re going to mess up Yummy’s shower, and she’s going to kill you, and I don’t want her to do that. I just got you,” Forever’s somberness made him smile, but her next words made him laugh. “Then whose going to give me thug dick that makes me cry and shake real bad?”

He hovered above her, allowing his laughter to flow freely, before wrapping her in a half hug with his arms resting behind her head.

“You’re laughing, but I’m for real. I love the way that Crip dick makes me feel, and I

can't go back to no white-collar man after that."

"Let me get your ass out of this house with my niggas before one of them hears you over here talking shit and thinks they can take what's mine."

Forever laid her head backward against his arms and smiled up at him. "You gon' let them take me?"

"What you think?"

She shrugged, allowing the sun to settle on her warm skin. Blue's eyes traveled from her freckles to her small eyes and sharp nose, admiring the handiwork that had been on his mind since the day she'd walked into the prison. Her long hair hung over his arms while her arms wrapped his wide waist as much as they could.

"I used to want this kind of love when I was with Journey, but it never felt like that. It didn't matter how long we had beentogether; I never got that kind of feeling from her. Then when I got with Azayna, I kind of felt it, but not really because I didn't let myself, but with you, everything just happens. I don't even be trying to be in love, I just am."

"Don't tell me about no other women. I honestly don't care to hear it. You're mine and that's it."

"Say swear."

"Swear."

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His mouth was on hers again, enjoying the soft feel of her skin.

“You make me want sex, Blue-Blue,” she whispered. “Can you please find a room in Pat’s house and give me some? Just one stroke and then you can stop.”

“Just one?”

“Yes. Just put the tip in.”

As hard as her words made him, he didn’t want to do her like that. He was all about being spontaneous, especially when it was the love of his life asking, but the kind of respect he had for Forever wouldn’t allow him to smash her in a house full of his niggas. He wanted her to be his secret.

Nobody needed to see how flustered she looked after getting fucked down properly. Hair swelled and swirling in various directions, as her chest dry heaved slightly as if she’d just run a marathon. Then the subtle twitching from her legs and stomach as the aftereffects of her orgasm found a way to settle down. All of that was for Blue to partake in. Not random niggas he shared hobbies with.

“Later. Right now, I’m about to take you in the house real quick while we go over some shit with these lil’ niggas, then we gon’ leave and head to back to the house to pack.”

Forever looked around his body before poking her bottom lip out and sighing heavily. “Why can’t I stay out here with you? I’ll be quiet.”

“I don’t really want you around them fools like that. And, you don’t need to hear the shit they finna be talking about.”

He could tell she wanted to object, but nodded and pulled away instead. With her soft hand tucked in his, fingers intertwined, Blue pulled her behind him and up the side of the pool, discreetly passing the entourage of men speaking to Pat. Like he’d predicted, all eyes were on her as they moved.

“How you doing?” one of the younger ones asked loudly.

“You ain’t lying, Damn. How you doing today, Miss. Lady, I’m Wale. Since this nigga ain’t even gon’ let us speak.”

“What up?”

“What’s cracking?”

The men began speaking simultaneously. Blue didn’t budge or smile to encourage their behavior, but Forever, being her typical polite self, stopped and waved. Even had the nerve to smile while doing so. Blue looked at her, not really appalled at her behavior, but pretending to be anyway.

“Hi, you guys.”

A few of them opened their mouths to say something, but Blue, pulling her into his side, stopped them. The only thing lingering was taunting smirks that let him know they were bothering Forever on purpose.

“Baby, this the gang. Y’all, she mine and that’s all y’all need to fucking know.”

“Damn,” Wale chuckled the loudest. “We can’t even know her name?”

“It’s Forever,” Jugg egged on making Blue look at him first. “She’s his lawyer, she from Georgia, and her sister is that rappergirl Slim Goody. She’s way nicer than this nigga, and half white too.”

“Damn, nigga. Is she yours or mine? And my baby ain’t half white. She’s just white dipped in chocolate.”

The men all laughed, with Forever relaxing into his side while giggling as well. Since she appeared to be unbothered and clearly enjoying their interaction, Blue eased up some.

“This fool running my girl down like she belongs to his ass.”

“I’m just doing what you should have done, rude ass nigga.”

“I like your hair Forever. Is it yours or it’s a sew-in?” Wale cheesed mischievously as he waited for Forever to answer his outlandish question.

Blue’s confused scowl dented his forehead as he looked at them with his nose turned up. He couldn’t believe that they were really sitting there tripping out over Forever, as if he wouldn’t punch all of them in the face. With smiles and eyes on him and Forever, Blue had to admit that it was comical.

All he and the gang did whenever business was handled was laugh and joke around anyway, so even though he was the butt of the joke that time, their behavior was typical. He’d just assumed they would let him slide with Forever since they knew how tender he got about his women, but he was heavily mistaken.

“Yeah, this my baby’s hair.” His hand palmed the back of her head and rubbed through her tresses, making her snicker and cover her mouth. “She got them ends, don’t she?”

“Hell yeah,” Jugg cosigned.

Not wasting any time, Blue pulled her hand from her mouth so her smile could show.

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“Come on now, beautiful. You know I ain’t going for that.”

Her long lashes blinked up at him, softening beneath his gaze. The love she felt was visible and made him want to kiss her, but the last thing his homies needed was some more fuel to add to their already messy fire.

“Your sister Slim Goody for real?”

“Yes.”

“And you’re a lawyer? Like a real one?”

She nodded again.

“She’s the one that got Blue out,” Pat praised her. “She’s the real deal.”

Wale’s eyes shot to her. “So, that means you can help me with my drug case?”

“Me too. Can you be mine too? I got a gun case pending, with some gang charges and shit. I’m just out on bond, and I don’t want that lazy ass public defender. I can tell by the way she wears her glasses that she’s gon’ get my ass jammed up.” Yayo interjected, expressing his interest loudly.

“She’s not here to be y’all lil’ worker bee. Call her office and schedule an appointment. Pay her, then y’all can talk. Until then, let my girl rest.”

“Definitely do what Zurich said, and I got all y’all.” She winked before pulling away

to walk toward the house. "I'll wait on you inside, baby."

"Aye, hold on, Miss. Forever. Call your sister for me," Wale's young face gleamed with a mischievous smile. "I'm a fan."

"Hell yeah, she fine as a muthafucka!" Rico openly agreed.

"Both of y'all are," another gang member mumbled, putting Blue on high alert, but since he couldn't see who'd said it, only hearing laughter in its place, he just shook his head and zoned back in on Forever.

"Baby, hurry up and call her so you can go in the house before I fuck somebody up."

"Why? All we said was that they fine... I meant that Slim Goody was fine," Yayo burst into laughter when Pat slapped him across the back of the head playfully.

"Thank y'all, but she's fine and married," Forever smiled while pulling her phone out. "I'll call her, though. Just don't say nothing crazy if my brother-in-law is around, she's gon' cuss y'all out if you do."

"Been handing my ass to me since I met her," Blue agreed while watching Forever's ringing phone.

He wanted to laugh at how quiet all the men had gotten, waiting on Goody to answer. Seconds later, the call picked up.

"Oooh, where you going looking all sexy, Sista?" Forever's ghetto girl drawl came out as she admired Goody's made-up face on the screen.

The long green hair was straight with a part down the middle, while her nails and eyeshadow matched. The black robe she had on showed she was preparing to go

somewhere, while the heavy iced out necklace did whatever the robe didn't do.

“You know I perform for Megan's tour tonight, but don't worry about me. Where you been? You looking just as pretty. Let me find out you down there getting fine for that Haitian.”

“And is! Been in the city with my man all day, girl!”

“My man, my man, my man! I know that's right, bitch!” Goody squealed, making Forever cackle with her.

Blue loved how Forever's whole demeanor changed when talking to her sister and cousin. She was so homely and down to earth with them that it made him see her in a normal light. Something that never happened because he didn't see her being like everybody else. Ever. She was in a league of her own.

“Where Jerrico?”

“Dropping Jerrica off with Mrs. Sofia. Why?”

“Because Blue's friends wanted to say hi.”

The way Forever's dialect could go from white to black so quickly and without effort was one of Blue's favorite things about her.

“Oh, shit now! Tell them I said what's good?”

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Blue took the phone from Forever and smiled obnoxiously wide.

“I’ma tell your husband on your good flirting ass.”

“Shut up, Blue. My husband knows I’ll suck his dick in front of your friends, so he’s not worried. Now, let me say hey to the gang,” she smiled widely with a smile mirroring Forever’s.

“Man, she talks crazy like that in real life? I thought it was just her songs. Rico stood up and walked to the phone first.

He was all smiles while waving at Goody. Moments later, they were all crowded around Blue, waving and talking to Goody as she smiled and chopped it up like they were her people for real.

“Yeah, I got y’all. Just set it up and I’ll come perform. Just don’t have me in no hole-in-the-wall spots. I got a baby.” She told them after being asked to come to Miami.

“Nah, I promote at all the hot clubs on the side. I got you. When you free?”

“Just inbox me on IG and we’ll get it handled. Y’all niggas just better have my money. I don’t do nothing for free.”

Yayo was so busy smiling at Goody that he could hardly speak, while Wale and another young nigga named Jet kept trying to talk over each other.

“I’ma pay you just for being so sexy,” Jet told her coolly.

“And I’m a take it too. Matter of fact, since you talking like you a big boy, give my sister five stacks right now so I can see if them pockets light.”

All eyes went to him, except Blue’s. He already knew what was up with Jet. One thing about him, he was about his paper and was also a man of his word. Without batting an eye, he pulled a wad of cash out of his pocket and counted off the cash before handing it to Forever.

“Aight, she got it.” He winked at Goody, making her blush.

Still astounded by his lack of care for how much money he’d just forked over, Forever stood with her mouth wide open, hand out, holding the money.

“Girl, give this man his money back,” she told Goody while trying to stuff it back into Jet’s hand.

“Tell him to come back to the phone real quick, let me tell him something.”

Forever flipped the phone on Jet, who hadn’t moved yet. “What up, ma?”

“Take your money back. I see you a real one.”

“Been that, but keep it. It’s yours. When you slide down here, give me a hug and we even.”

Interested to see how she handled herself, Blue watched Goody smile while nodding her head.

“Aight. I’ll see what your lil’ young ass talking about when I come down there.”

“I’ll be waiting, sexy.” Jet went back to his seat and pulled his blunt out before

lighting it.

Blue looked from Forever to her phone before shaking his head with a small smile. “Your sister hell,” he pecked Forever’s lips. “Go inside, I’ll be there in a minute.”

“Bye y’all.” She waved at the gang before heading up the hill to Pat’s door, still talking to Goody.

“Bye Forever!”

They all spoke to her retreating back while Blue took his seat. They were all looking at him, clearly waiting on him to say something. When he didn’t, Yayo spoke up.

“Bruh, how you wife a lawyer?”

“A pretty one too.”

“That wears her real hair.”

Blue looked around at all of his friends in amusement. “She’s smart as hell too,” he further pressed.

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“And related to a fucking rapper!” Wale shook his head as if he really couldn’t understand Blue’s luck. “I need to get locked up in Atlanta.”

Laughter took over the area before they all settled down and got to the business they’d congregated for.

If you want to be here, then you’ll be here

“I’m not finna keep telling your ass to stop this stupid shit, Zurena!” Rico’s loud voice echoed in her ear as she sped toward the location that had just pinged to her phone. “You the only person I love.”

“Nah, you want to keep playing, then so will I. I told you good before you left, to just leave me alone, but you refuse, so it is what it is.”

She’d made up in her mind that she was done with Rico after their last fight, but just like she always did, she reneged on her word and was right back into their toxic cycle of what they dressed up as love. They’d been good for a few days, but like it always did, it got sour again, and they were right back to their same old habits.

When she’d awakened that morning and he’d left his second phone over there, she should have just left well enough alone, but that would have been too much like right. And Zurena had a thing about being wrong. Especially when it came to her lying ass man. Seeing him entertain his baby mama was one thing, but seeing him entertain fifty million others was just gut wrenching.

“Rena, please, not now. I’m with my niggas.”

“You’re always with them, so what?” She shrugged her shoulders as if he could see her while turning into Pat’s neighborhood.

She’d followed his current location all the way to Pat’s home and was about to drop his things off and keep rocking out. After seeing all the women he’d obviously had sex with in his phone, she tossed all of his things into a trash bag, onto her backseat, and began her drive to where he was. She hadn’t realized it was Pat’s house until she was almost there.

Being that she never really intertwined her life with any of the gang members, her interaction with them was minimal, but she’d known Pat the longest, so he didn’t really count. Eventhough she didn’t too much know him either, she knew enough from all the time he spent with Blue and Jugg. On top of that, he was the only one who was allowed to really be around her and her Aunt Maryann. He’d looked out for them the whole time Blue was locked up, so surely popping up at his house would be safe.

“Rena, chill. I’ll come by there when I leave here. The whole gang here. You want them to see you?”

“Maybe they need to. Hell, I been with their friend for years. They should have been seen me.”

“Here we fucking go,” Rico drug out as if he was in some sort of serious distress.

Even with her being somewhat mad and not in the mood to really find anything funny, Zurena had to laugh at him. Rico was such a drama queen and didn’t mind acting an ass whenever he felt it would benefit him. Clearly, right then was one of those times.

“You need to stop your shit, Rico.” Her laughter eased as her stomach began to

tremble from nervousness.

She'd just turned onto Pat's street and could see all the cars lining his driveway. Talking about it and being about it was two different things, because she'd fooled herself into believing she was cool enough to clown on him during her entire drive, and now that she was there, she was second guessing herself. Although her relationship with Rico had been kept a secret since it began, all of his friends still knew she was Blue's sister.

The moment she got spotted and he or Jugg found out, it was going to be hell to pay. They'd both made it very clear to her that she wasn't to date any of the gang members, but Zurena was grown, so she'd done what she wanted to do. Now, her grown ass was seated outside of Pat's house, scared to park.

"See, this why we can't be together now. You don't listen."

Zurena's entire body got hot when she allowed his words to digest.

"You know what, I'm outside. Come get this shit before it be in the middle of the street." She hung up the phone without waiting for him to respond.

In a fit of rage once again, Zurena pulled up right next to his car and got out. She was at her trunk and snatching the bags out of her backseat when she saw him coming out of the backyard. Apparently, on a mission, he marched to her with a vengeance. Unsure of whether he'd hit her in public or not, she planted her feet and turned to face him, so he wouldn't catch her slipping.

His face was frowned in a scowl as he looked at her, then over his shoulder, back toward the gate of Pat's backyard. Maybe if he worried about her as much as he worried about that damn gang they'd be in a better position, but since he didn't, there were in the middle of the street of a nice neighborhood about to act ghetto.

“The fuck you got your ass out here for?” he gritted through his teeth while snatching the collar of her shirt.

“Because I’m done. Get your shit and just let me go.”

“Oh, now you wanna act peaceful?”

“I don’t want to fight with you, Rico. I just want you to get your things and go,” she half lied.

The truth was, she did want him to get his things and decided to pull up and drop them off to him, because deep down, she knew if he came to her house, she’d probably end up back in the same circle again. Making up just to be lied to over and over again.

“Your stupid ass. If that’s what you really wanted, then we could have done this shit later, but nah. You wanna be a crybaby ass bitch like always and want a nigga to kiss your ass.” Rico snatched the bag from her hand so hard that he ended up scratching her.

The stinging on her skin warranted her attention just long enough for him to push past her roughly, knocking her into her car. Zurena’s nostrils flared as she stared at him, refusing to give him what he wanted. She was done fighting. Should have never started to begin with. At some point, she needed to stand up for herself, and he was the perfect place to start.

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“Dumb ass always doing unnecessary shit,” he mumbled while tossing his bags into the backseat of his car.

Refusing to give in, Zurena walked back toward her car and was preparing to get in when she heard him behind her.

“But wonder why I won’t leave my baby mama for your ass. She’d never do no lil’ kid shit like this. Fuck you, Zurena.”

All the restraint she’d had was tossed to the wind when he downed her for his baby mama, when Zurena knew for a fact that she was a better woman than her and held him down through way more stuff than she ever had. The tears in her eyes clouded her vision long enough for her to punch him in the mouth. The moment her hand connected with his lip, the tears fell, and she was glad because she could see his hand coming toward her in enough time to duck.

It went downhill after that. They began passing licks like they always did, only stopping when they heard someone behind them.

“Stop before I call, Blue.”

Zurena and Rico both looked toward the voice, to find Forever standing there with wide eyes and shaking hands outstretched toward them. Zurena wasn’t sure why she was reaching for her, but chalked it up to fear. Forever didn’t look like the type of woman who indulged in domestic violence. Probably had never even saw a fight in real life, let alone seeing a man hitting his woman.

Visibly shaken up, Forever kept her trembling hands facing them, palms out. “Let her go.”

Slowly, Rico’s hand released Zurena’s throat, and the moment they did, she took advantage and snaked out of his grasp before slapping him hard across the left side of his face. When he grabbed his ear and stepped away, she smiled. She hoped his ear would ring until he couldn’t hear out of it anymore.

“Don’t do that! I’m trying to help you,” Forever fussed.

“I don’t need your fucking help. Stay out of stuff that doesn’t concern you!”

Forever gasped, leaving her mouth open in shock. She remained that way, staring at Zurena like she’d grown two heads before finally rolling her eyes and shaking her head.

“You know what, you deserve to get your ass beat. Sir, I would tell you to finish what you started, but it’s against the law.”

Forever walked away without waiting for another word to be uttered in her direction. Once again, Zurena wanted so badly to hate her, but it wasn’t her fault. It never was. Her anger was just misplaced, and Forever was the easiest one to take it out on.

“That’s the shit I’m talking about now. Don’t nobody wanna be around your mean ass all day. Get the fuck out of here.” Rico stalked a few feet away before stopping and facing her again. “If she tells your brother, that’s what the fuck you get for coming over here in the first place.”

Feeling worse than she had on her way over there, Zurena watched him hit the locks to his car while walking away, still holding his ear. Her wet eyes rolled from him to the front door of Pat’s home, where Forever had disappeared to. Inwardly, she knew

she was wrong and should just go home, but Rico was right.

If Forever told Blue about her fight with Rico, there was going to be some serious shit brewing, and she didn't want that. He and Jugg would fuck Rico up bad about hitting her, and he was one of their closest friends. Them falling out because of her would be unnecessary and would only make her feel worse.

Putting her pride to the side, she got into her car and moved it out of the street before heading for the entrance to Pat's house. Unsure of what she was going to find inside, she tried fixing her hair and clothes the best she could before entering. When the cool breeze and quiet living room greeted her, she took slow steps around, admiring his home.

"Looking for something?" A deep voice startled her.

Zurena looked away from the large glass sculpture, taking up the side of the television to find Pat standing near the bottom of the staircase with the neck of a beer bottle hanging between his fingers. His medium brown skin, low-cut black hair, and chill demeanor made Zurena feel self-conscious because she was sure she looked a mess. On top of that, she was moseying around his house uninvited and couldn't think of one good reason she would be there. She'd never been there before, so nothing she came up with would make sense.

"Uh, yeah, umm, I'm uh, Zur."

"I know who you are, Zurena." His crooked grin relaxed her some. "Relax, I'm just here to help." He held his hands up in mock surrender, that beer still hanging there comfortably.

Just here to help.

His words swam around her brain because they sounded so sincere, and after the day she'd just had with the man that was supposed to say those things to her, they sounded too good to be coming from a stranger... but was Pat really a stranger?

"I'm sorry. I just know I probably look crazy roaming around your house."

"Nah, this home. You're always welcome. You looking for Blue or Jugg? I can grab them for you. They're in the back."

"No, I was actually looking for Forever. Is she out there too?"

"Looking for me for what?" Forever sashayed her skinny ass around the corner, looking so perplexed that Zurena's hand itched to smack her.

"I just needed to speak with you before I left."

"No, you didn't. You can go ahead and leave." Forever walked to the big white sofa and sat down like she didn't have a care in the world. Her phone was in her hand, and she hadn't looked back in Zurena's direction again.

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Zurena looked from her to Pat, getting madder by the second. Her palms were sweating, and she was already on ten from Rico's antics. Getting blown off by Forever in front of Pat was about to send her into a rage that would result in Forever lying on the floor with her shit leaking all over Pat's house.

Pat's raised brows and flat smile didn't make anything better. He could obviously sense the tension and thought it was funny.

"Girl, just let me holla at you before shit gets ugly."

Forever raised her head slowly, rolling her eyes the whole way. "See, that's why I'm not talking to you now. You're always coming at me wrong, expecting me to just take it, and I'm not. I'm tired of you. If you want to talk to me, then you will address me with some respect or not at all. I'm not some little ass girl that you're about to keep bullying around. I've been nice to you for the sake of Zurich, but it's really fuck you now. I don't need another sister. I have my own." Forever gave her a snotty look before blinking back down at her phone.

Zurena was shaking with fury by then, and if Pat hadn't walked to her and ushered her back out of the front door, there was no telling what would have happened.

"Yeah, let her go cool off."

She heard Forever say just before the front door closed. Unable to control herself, Zurena released a loud growl while balling her fists.

"Relax," Pat sat his beer on the banister of his porch and grabbed both sides of her

arms. “What’s wrong with you? Why you so mad?”

Overwhelmed with so many emotions at once, Zurena’s eyes watered again as she pulled away from him and began pacing the porch. She took deep breaths and closed her eyes to calm her breathing. The air was too warm to cool her off, but the fresh air did help her rising temper.

“I’m sorry.”

“Stop apologizing. You good. Just relax.”

“I’m trying, but I can’t.”

“Keep doing what you’re doing.” Pat leaned against the bricks of his home with his arms folded over his chest and waited for her to get herself together.

Minutes ticked by before she was able to think clearly again. When she was okay enough to speak, she looked at him and smiled.

“I probably look like a raging bull, huh?”

“Raging? Yes, but a bull? Hell nah, never. Too pretty for that... more along the lines of a stallion. Hell, maybe even Beauty and the Beast,” he smiled, making her smile in return. “You’re a beauty for sho, but it’s a beast in there somewhere. I can see it.”

Zurena’s cheeks warmed as she fought the large smile threatening to surface. She didn’t want to be affected by his words, but they were so chill and seemed so genuine that she couldn’t help it.

“I’ll take that.”

“You should. It was a compliment. Now, tell me why you so mad with ole girl. She’s cool.”

Just when Zurena’s blood began to simmer, he had to go and bring the pretty sadity bitch back up. As much as she hated to feel like a hater, when it came to Forever, she just couldn’t help it. There was just something about her life being stuck in shambles while Forever walked around on the clouds that just made her want to beat her up. Wrong for sure, but she didn’t care.

“She just gets on my nerves so bad, always acting like she’s better than everybody else.”

“Everybody else or you? Because she doesn’t act that way with me, never have.” Pat grabbed his beer and took a sip from it.

The moisture resting on his juicy lips caught Zurena’s eyes, and she had to blink slowly to give herself time to look away.

“Not me, because she’s not better than me. Nobody is, but me and Blue are the same kind of people. She’s all over him twenty-four-seven, but when it comes to me, she always has an attitude. If she doesn’t like me, then she doesn’t like him either and I’m not going to let my brother get used by another bitch looking for a come up.”

“A come up? And you think that’s what she’s looking for?”

“I don’t know, but I know a girl like her doesn’t just want him for no reason.”

“What’s wrong with him?”

“Nothing,” she fussed. “He’s just a felon with a record a mile long. He’s in a gang, and she’s a fucking lawyer. Tell me where the two correlate and I’ll lighten up on

her.”

Pat’s gaze flowed past her head and out towards the streets where cars passed. She heard them but didn’t turn to look. The noise was enough to occupy her mind while she waited for Pat to say something. Even with her not knowing him well, she could tell by the look on his face that he was carefully preparing his next words.

“And you’ve said this to him?”

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Feeling like she was finally getting somewhere, Zurena nodded her head hard before belting out an exhausted, “Yes, but he acts like he doesn’t understand.”

Another long swig of his beer came before Pat stared at her intently. “No wonder my nigga out here worried about whether or not he’s good enough.”

The disgusted tone of Pat’s voice had Zurena’s mouth slowly opening into an ‘O’.

“I was wondering where his sudden change of attitude towards his girl had come from, and it was obviously you. Why you on my dog like that? So, what he’s a fucking convict? He’s smart. He’s also gifted, resilient as a muthafucka, and loyal. Why you shitting on him like that? You’re supposed to be his people. If anybody understands and supports him, it should be you.”

“And let me guess, Forever does that?”

“Hell yeah, she does. I know you see the shit. If she was looking for a come up, she didn’t have to do it within the walls of that prison. Shorty was doing her job, and your brother caught her attention. You ever considered the fact that she obviously saw more in him than all that fucked up shit you just said?”

“She’s got you fooled too, I see.” Zurena rolled her eyes while waving him off. “You’re just as blind as him.”

Pat’s chuckle didn’t sound funny at all. Nor did the look on his face give off humor. He looked her up and down and rubbed his bottom lip with the pad of his thumb. If Zurena wasn’t so annoyed with the wool Forever had over him and Blue’s eyes, she

would have savored the moment his plump bottom lip poked out further from his touch.

“You owe your brother an apology, his girl too.”

“I don’t owe them shit.”

“Damn, beautiful.” Pat walked to her and grabbed the back of her neck, raising her head.

His deep eye contact stirred her soul to the point of uneasiness, but she couldn’t fight the feeling and anger and bitterness long enough to acknowledge what was really wrong.

“You fucked up for real.”

More water rose into her eyes, and she looked away. “I know.”

“Don’t cry, I like fucked up people.”

Her smile pushed through, but it wasn’t big enough to even dent her cheeks, let alone cover her face.

“I’m also good at keeping secrets, you like those, huh?”

Zurena’s eyebrows raised as her eyes widened for a second.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You sure?”

She nodded.

“Cool, I’ll just pretend I didn’t see gang out here fucking you up a minute ago then,” he pulled away and Zurena caught his shirt, somewhat snatching him backwards.

“Please, don’t tell my brother or cousin.”

Pat looked down at the hand she had squeezing his shirt and grabbed it. Once he removed it from his body, he held it.

“We don’t do violence over here, sweetheart. All that grabbing ain’t gon’ fly.” He smiled when she tried to pull her hand away from him. “Your secret is safe with me... this time. I see it again, it won’t be peaceful.”

“Okay, thanks.” She whispered, feeling crazy for grabbing on him. “See you later.” She turned and headed for her car, but heard movement behind her.

When she turned around, she looked directly into Pat’s face.

“You left before I could tell you the conditions of my secrecy.”

Unsure of Pat and his motives, all Zurena’s defenses went up. She even took another step backward to put some distance between them. The way her body took on a more combative stance alerted Pat, and he surrendered his hands again.

“It’s nothing like that, I swear. Me and Rico ain’t the same type of nigga.”

“Just tell me the conditions.”

“Keep our secret too.”

Without an ounce of hesitation, Zurena’s eyes began rolling. Just when she’d thought he might have been different than Rico, he showed his true colors.

“Side bitch must be stamped on my forehead or something? What do I look like to y’all niggas?” she questioned in true detest. “I know I’m a lil’ chubby, but damn, I’m not desperate.”

In a hurry to get to her car before she started crying, Zurena turned and tried to stalk off again, but wasn’t able to. Pat’s strong grip circled her arm and held her in place.

“I’m tired of telling you to relax. I’m not that kind of person, Zurena.”

“Well, what secret do you want me to keep, Pat? And get off me.” She pushed away.

This time, instead of chasing her or saying anything, he allowed her to gain her footing without touching her. When she finally faced him, he looked her over slowly before giving a faint smile.

“Nothing. Forget it. Just keep all that domestic shit away from my house. I don’t fuck with it.”

With that, he turned and walked back to his house with Zurena watching. When he was gone, she hopped back into her car and sped out of his neighborhood and back to

her house. The trip to Pat's house ended up being disastrous, and she'd give anything to take it back. Now, instead of having one man hate her, she had two.

She's fine and she's mine

The green, brown, and nude color balloons were tied together, decorating the arched entrance of the expensive venue. The safari-themed baby shower had been professionally decorated and looked worth every penny that they'd spent to bring Yummy's vision to life. The large statues of the giraffes, elephants, and monkeys positioned in certain areas of the room added a unique feel, and Forever had been obsessing over it since she'd gotten there.

From the low sounds of the R&B playing in the background, accompanied by the subtle sounds of the water fountain flowing around her, Forever was in Heaven. The room was packed with their family and friends, and a host of Yummy's clients. All talking and eating, enjoying the brief cocktail hour implemented to allow Yummy and Calvary time to take pictures. The two of them were positioned at the front of the building, Yummy in a fitting mint green dress, and Calvary in all black, looking like the ghetto shooter he was.

Just as pretty as she always was, Yummy's long sew in hung down her back while her professionally beat face glowed from the growing of her son. With Calvary's long locs freshly twisted and hanging down around his back and shoulders and his gold grill gleaming every time he smiled, he appeared to be glowing as well. The happiness that overtook them while in each other's presence made Forever so happy that she felt tears rising.

"I wish you would," Paradise said from beside her.

"Shut up, Goody. I can't help it. She's so beautiful, and he loves her so much," Forever swallowed back her tears while watching Calvary palm Yummy's large belly

and smile for the photo. “She’s always deserved this. Not that mess Lucky used to take her through.”

“Bitch, you better not be pregnant by that black ass boy from Florida.”

Forever frowned as she faced her sister. “Why do you always have to talk so crazy to people?”

“I’m just saying hoe, what you about to cry for?”

“You know what, don’t worry about me,” Forever’s smile finally showed as she dabbed at her eyes with a napkin.

“I’m not. I’m more worried about my homeboy getting his shit rocked,” her laughter spilled out before she could finish her sentence. “Blue on his ass bad.”

Forever’s eyes widened as she looked around the room for Blue. When she found him, he was standing in the corner talking to Auto. He and Nova had just gotten to the shower, and Forever had been elated to see them. Trying to keep Blue away from Marcellus and Marcellus away from her had been a task, but now that Auto was there, she could kind of breathe. Well, almost.

Auto wasn’t as stable as one should be to prevent trouble. The only reason she’d felt safe enough to take her eyes off him was because Nova was seated right next to them with their baby. If she knew nothing else, she knew Auto nor Blue would do anything to put her and Autumn in harm’s way. Including but not limited to ‘fucking Marcellus up bad’ or putting him in the hospital.

“He’s been trying it since I got here. I’m so sick of him looking at me,” Forever stressed.

“You? Bridges is too, Bitch. Niggas so stupid too, because he’s so busy looking at you that he doesn’t see her looking at him.”

“Goody, this is not funny.”

“What’s not funny?” Yummy took a seat on Forever’s lap.

“Marcellus about to get jumped by Blue and Bridges for staring at Forever.”

Yummy’s smile widened as she surveyed the room quickly, giggling by the time she refocused on their conversation.

“I hate to make it worse, sister-cousin, but here comes your man.”

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“That ain’t worse, that’s good. My sister needs to flex her new fine ass man in her married ex’s face. I love this shit.”

“I do too, Goody!” Yummy high-fived her. “Already know participating in ghetto shenanigans is my favorite pastime.”

“Y’all make me so sick.” Forever had just gotten out when she felt Blue’s hand sliding down her neck, then stopping on her back, where her bra strap would be if she had one on.

Forever’s head dropped back, so that she was looking up at him. Being his naturally affectionate self, Blue leaned over and pecked her waiting lips. Instead of pulling away after one, he pecked her three times, pulling her bottom lip softly with the last one. Of course, Paradise and Eternity ate it up, squealing and clapping dramatically.

“I know that’s right, Rabbit,” Eternity moved around on her lap so that she was facing her.

“Get your heavy butt off me, Yummy,”

“My bad, I forgot you a lightweight.” She stretched to stand up, but was having trouble until Blue stepped around and grabbed both of her hands, lifting her from Forever’s lap with no problem.

“Thank you, Blue. Your girlfriend is a crybaby.”

“Girl, just go up there and enjoy your baby shower. Back here with us like you don’t

have a room full of people here for you.”

“You ain’t lying, here come Sofia now,” Goody followed Forever up, pointing out a sassy Sofia marching over to them.

They all watched her until she got to them, grabbed Yummy, and pulled her back to her spot at the front of the room. It was pure comedy how Yummy practically kicked and screamed the entire time, only stopping when she got to Calvary, and he showered her with kisses. Watching her cousin get loved on made Forever happy she’d brought Blue. With her big, fine man on her mind, she stood and wrapped her arms around his stomach. Like he did any other time she was near, he embraced her back.

“You enjoying yourself?”

“I’m chilling. You?”

“Yeah, isn’t everything so pretty?” she looked around the room with his eyes following.

“Yeah, it’s tight. Can’t wait until its ours.”

Goody stood and snapped her fingers in Forever’s face. “I knew you was pregnant.”

“What? No, I’m not. Zurich is just talking. Blue-Blue, tell her I’m not pregnant.”

The sexy smile that crossed Blue’s face moistened Forever’s panties. His long hair was fresh and tied to the back, while his smooth, dark skin and freshly lined beard made a sexy background for his fresh white smile. His straight eyebrows lying down above his almondy eyes and those lips. Lord, those sexy, soft lips had Forever’s mind on all the wrong things every time she looked at him.

Dressed casually in Navy pants that were tailored to Forever's liking and a white button-down shirt, Blue looked more like money than a gang member, and it was doing every good thing it possibly could for him. All day she'd been catching eyes on him, and because she knew her man was the finest person there, she tried not to catch an attitude, but when it came to her Blue-Blue, she was past territorial. His potent cologne didn't help. It was just as smooth and sexy as him.

That fast, Forever got lost in him and got momentarily distracted until his large hand covered her flat stomach in the white mini dress she was wearing. It fit her frame like it had been made for her and matched her high fashion stilettos that she'd gotten in gold and Navy blue to match her man. Her long hair was pulled up in a sleek ponytail, showing off her long neck, held snugly by the diamond choker Blue gifted her before their flight.

"I'on know sis. I haven't pulled out since I touched down, so my lil' jit might be on the way."

Too busy blushing from the way Blue was smiling down at her, Forever wasn't able to refute his statement before Goody was jumping up and down, clapping loudly.

"She keeps crying, Blue. I bet you hit the target."

"Both of y'all can hush because he hasn't hit nothing over here."

"Damn, pretty, I thought we were on the same page. Oh, I guess since your sister here now, it's a different story? That's fucked up, Forever. I thought you was gang."

"I am gang," she fussed as another presence crowded their space.

When they all turned to see who it was, Forever frowned and turned right back around. Even sinking further into Blue's chest. In tune with her and always fully

aware of what was going on around them, he pecked the top of her head before whispering, “Fuck her,” in Forever’s ear. “Long neck ass.”

The two of them snickered together while ignoring the obvious.

“My neck is long too.”

“Nah, your neck is sexy, hers looks like a worm,” he continued, kissing her face as she giggled into his chest. “Plus, yours needs to be long. How else you gon’ deep throat this monster?”

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Bridges had just stopped next to Goody when Forever squealed loudly at Blue's commentary. She could feel them looking at her, but the safety in Blue's grip wouldn't let up. A few calming seconds passed as she inhaled the woodsy scent of his cologne.

Bridges was too close, and it was annoying as hell to be for real. Forever was doing everything she could not to ear hustle on the conversation she'd started with Goody, but she couldn't help it. Her relationship with Bridges was strained and had been since the beginning. They'd been too many functions together, since she was still actively in a relationship with her lying ass husband, but the tension was still there and very prevalent.

"Girl, Jerrica is over there beating her daddy's butt," Bridges tittered. "I told him I'd come get you."

"What's new? She's always dragging Jerrico's ass. That's what he gets for spoiling her. I told him she was gon' embarrass him one day, now look at her lil' ass over there falling out," Goody's love filled commentary drew all their attention to Jerrica who was indeed bouncing in her father's arms falling out all over the place.

In the corner next to Marcellus and Mr. Clarence, Jerrico stood quietly, doing his best to calm his daughter, who wasn't going for it. A true product of her mother, Jerrica cut the fool however and whenever she wanted to, and like he did her mother, Jerrico allowed it with unprecedented patience.

"Look at that lil' bad baby over there showing her ass. Just like her damn mama. Always on some bullshit," Blue's deep voice made Forever giggle and cream with

arousal all at once.

Goody's loud laughter came before her fist, but a short, swift punch to his shoulder followed immediately after. "Blue, shut your ass up talking about me and my baby."

"Now, Zurich, you can talk about her mama all you want, but leave Tee-Tee baby out of it. That's her mama and daddy's fault. My girl is probably just hungry."

"No, your girl is spoiled."

Blue looked between Goody and Forever. "Don't tell me that runs in the family? I don't do well with that spoiled shit. I'ma whoop some ass if ours come out like that," he spoke while rubbing Forever's flat stomach.

"You're pregnant, Forever?" Bridges' question wiped the smile from Blue and Forever's faces.

"No."

Her answer was flat and void of her earlier emotion, but not nasty or rude.

"Heffa, stop lying to these people. You don't know that," Goody leaned over and tickled her stomach, making her smile before looking at Bridges. "She probably is."

"I hope she is too, sis."

Bridges' smile grew. There hadn't been many instances where Forever desired to pass licks as an adult, but seeing the way Bridge grinned at Zurich made her hot on the inside and out. She was already drop dead gorgeous, so when she began blushing from Blue's words, it did nothing but highlight it even more.

“I hope she is too. Then all the cousins will be the same age. We’re expecting again, too.” Her hand went to her stomach, and Forever’s eyes followed.

“Oh, bitch, you been holding out?” Goody asked her. “Let me find out you being messy because my sister right here.”

In typical Goody fashion, she didn’t miss the opportunity to speak on something that seemed off. However, due to the friendly nature of her and Bridges' relationship, she didn’t take it to heart.

“Of course not, crazy girl. We were just on the topic, so I spilled the beans.”

“Mhm,” Goody nodded slowly before looking over at Forever and Blue. “Well, y’all go ahead and do that. I’m done having kids. Jerrica is enough for me and her daddy.”

The morale of the moment was discomfoting, and Forever wished Bridges would just go away. In no way, shape or form, did she still want Marcellus, but hearing that he and Bridges were about to have another baby made her feel some type of way. It was like every time she found her way out of her feelings where he was concerned, he tossed her right back in.

Determined not to allow her past to interfere with her future, she looked toward Blue. “You wanna go sit by Auto and Nova?”

He nodded while dropping his arm from her waist and grabbed her hand instead. Like she’d needed him to do, he led her away from her turmoil and into a more comforting environment. Nova and Auto were chilling at the table in the back and enjoying the food and festivities when they got there.

“Look at you, beautiful,” Nova gushed with her arms out for a hug, even standing when Forever got close.

“You look amazing, girl! Just had a baby, where?” Forever admired Nova’s thick frame.

A full-figured woman, she filled out the dress she was wearing in every way she could, and she looked stunning while doing so. Nothing about her insinuated that she’d just given birth.

“Girl, Granny-girl got me snatched to death in this girdle. I feel like I’m about to pass out, but she swears by it, so I’m listening.”

“I told her ass to take that shit off, she don’t need to be trying to lose her stomach, anyway. I like it,” Auto mumbled from behind them.

“I don’t want my stomach all loose and hanging Auto.”

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“Might as well leave it how it is. I’m getting you pregnant again, anyway. Soon as we get home.” He eyed her shamelessly while licking his lips and running his hand all over her butt. “Ya booty looking real juicy in your dress, Moo. I’m tearing that shit up as soon as we give Autum’s greedy ass to her Granny.”

Forever and Nova exchanged girly giggles while Blue took his seat next to Auto and made himself comfortable. Nova sat down first, handing Auto a receiving blanket to place over his shoulder for Autumn.

“I have to stay away from him. It hasn’t even been six weeks yet.”

“You ain’t wait six weeks to bring you or my baby out that house, so don’t act like you care now. Always worried about the wrong shit.”

Forever was in stitches as she took the hand Blue had stretched toward her and lowered into his lap. She moved around, situating herself on his leg before turning toward the front of the building where Mrs. Sofia had just began ushering everyone back to their seats. With her heart in her throat, she allowed her eyes the freedom to roam the room until they landed on Marcellus, who was already looking at her.

His glare was potent and fiery as he watched her from his seat near the DeeJay booth. Dressed casually in slacks and a button down, he sat with wide gapped legs and as handsome and mysterious as he always was. No matter how sneaky he’d been to her, it never lessened her attraction to him. Marcellus was a striking man indeed.

She’d be a liar to say anything else. However, that did nothing for his morals. He was a cheater, and that was all there was to it. A fruitful one at that. It was wild how he

couldn't even stay hard for her, but had enough stamina to produce another baby with Bridges. Forever cleared her throat and diverted her gaze when his eye contact became too much.

"Forever and Paradise, come on, girls. Let's get these games started," Mrs. Sofia's voice garnered her attention.

The hostesses, and responsible for the functioning of the shower, Forever looked toward Goody, who was handing Jerrico a sleeping Jerrica before looking over her shoulder at Blue.

"Be right back, babe."

His large hand trailed from her back down to her butt before stopping on the back of her thighs when she was upright on her heels. The look on his face was unreadable as he gazed at her, and it made Forever feel stuck momentarily. To give them some privacy, she leaned over to whisper in his ear.

"You okay?"

"Are you?"

Paused for a moment, she tilted her head back some so that she could see his face. Still unreadable.

"Yeah, I'm fine."

"Long as you're good, I'm good."

"Say swear," she tossed his lingo at him, making him smile.

“Swear.”

“Give me a kiss and let me see.” Forever sat back on his lap again, so that her back was to the crowd.

As soon as Blue leaned his head forward, she parted his lips with hers and slid him her tongue. Their love was transferred peacefully, with only hands and low moans accompanying the moment.

“That’s how Eternity ended up here, Forever. Now get off that young man’s lap and come on, little girl. I know he’s all fine and stuff, but you’ve got stuff to do, Baby.” Sofia’s voice made Forever and Blue chuckle into each other’s mouths while pulling away.

“I love you, Blue-Blue,” she peered at him deeply, ignoring the rest of the room, still laughing at Sofia.

“I love you too, beautiful. Go do your thing. I’ll be watching.” He winked at her and sent her on her way.

Reluctant to leave her man, Forever strutted on her heels toward the front of the room slowly, meeting Goody there. Together, they played games, orchestrated food lines, and gift opening. It was hours before the shower began winding down, and Forever was past happy. She loved her cousin and had thoroughly enjoyed the day, but outside of her feet hurting, she was tired of being away from her man.

Even with Blue seated in the same room as her, not being able to be next to him made her feel sick. Her attachment was real and only made her think of how hard it was going to be in California without him. That thought alone had her zoned out so far that she didn’t see Marcellus approaching her until it was too late. She’d been leaning on the wall behind the gift table, waiting for Blue to walk Auto and Nova outside,

when she smelled him.

“You look amazing.”

Forever’s eyes went to him before circling the room quickly, before realizing it was safe to speak back.

“Thank you. So does Bridges.”

“Are you going to do this every time we see each other? I’ve apologized a million times, Forever. I really am sorry. I truly am,” his voice was earnest and Forever knew he was telling the truth.

Whether or not he’d really been sorry had never been a real worry of hers, she knew he was. She could feel it. It was the act as a whole that pissed her off. Then everything he did afterwards. The way he carried on with his wife and kid in front of her, as if she didn’t have feelings was her problem.

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“Do you think you’ll ever forgive me?”

Against her will, her eyes found his, and she sank a little. The sorrowful look on his face made her want to empathize with him.

“I forgive you now. We’re cool. Just don’t be on no weird stuff and we’ll be alright,” she smiled.

“You have my word.” He looked around the room casually before looking back at her. “You look happy.”

“Extremely...the happiest.”

“Damn.”

She shrugged with a friendly smile, but that was the best she could do. She wasn’t lying.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, but you can do better, Forever. I mean, he looks like a cool dude, but you really want to start a life with him?”

“Sure do, and what’s better?” she faced him with her arms crossed over her chest. “A married man with a secret baby?”

“Forever,” he drug while running his hand over his face. “Do you seriously feel like he’s the best person for you?”

“What’s wrong with him?”

“Come on now, you already know. Do I really need to say it?”

“Hell yeah, you need to say it because I don’t know nothing when it comes to him. Nothing other than he’s one of one. Haven’t met a man that can compare yet.”

“You’re delusional now,” Marcellus chuckled indignantly. “He’s a fucking felon. You just got the nigga out of prison for who knows what!”

“And she’s gon’ have to get me out again if you don’t get the fuck on,” Blue’s deep voice literally knocked Forever off balance.

Maybe it was the situation that had her equilibrium off because there was absolutely no way she’d been about to fall off the sound of his voice alone.

“It’s fine, Blue-Blue,” she found her words, while positioning herself so that she was still between the men.

With her hand on the center of Blue’s chest, she looked up to him, but his gaze was on Marcellus and hadn’t budged.

“Run all that shit back again, everything you just said to her, let me hear it.”

Marcellus shocked the hell out of Forever when he stood his ground. “I was talking to Forever.”

“About me. Now run it back again,” his typical calm demeanor was still there and present, but this time it was accompanied by a silent warning that clearly dared Marcellus to repeat himself.

Forever's stomach flipped at the shivering cold surrounding her. Crip Blue was so scary. His peaceful mien was nothing like it had been since he'd been home. Back was the Zurich she'd met in prison. The one that hadn't even been soft enough to go easy on her. Her tranquil and reassuringly composed baby was long gone, and blue flag wearing Blue was there, about to set it off in the baby shower.

"You guys, please," she begged, while looking around the room for some sort of help.

Surely, there was someone around witnessing the bubbling of their moment that could lend a helping hand. Where was Calvary when she needed him?

"Breathe, baby. I ain't gon' do shit to this nigga." Blue's large hand grabbed the small of her back and pulled her toward him so that they were chest to chest.

His lips touched her forehead while his eyes remained trained ahead.

"Catch your breath. You know I got you."

Even with the world feeling like it was about to spin off the hinges, Forever believed her man. His tone was soothing and calm, like it always was when speaking to her, and since he'd pressed her head into the center of his chest, the beating of his heart really was comforting her. She could only imagine how she looked cradled to him while who knows what took place over her head, but Blue had it like that with her. He clearly controlled her body better than she did.

"Hey, everything okay over here?"

"The fuck y'all niggas doing?"

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Bridges and Goody's voices had Forever raising her head. She bucked her eyes at Paradise, who only smirked in response.

"We cool. Just talking." Blue tore his gaze away from Marcellus and looked at Goody. "Getting acquainted on some Forever shit. Your brother-in-law thought I was about to fuck around about my baby. Got her all nervous, scared I'ma knock his ass out."

"Yeah," Marcellus chuckled cockily. "Aight."

"Oh my god, Zurich," Forever sighed heavily while palming her forehead. "Please, let's just go."

"You ready or you really scared for cuz?"

"Alright fellas, that's enough," Bridges waltzed past Forever and Blue and took up the space in front of Marcellus. "Why are you even over here bothering her?" She tried to whisper, but of course they'd all heard her.

"Speaking."

"And that was necessary?"

"Hell nah," Blue answered for her, prompting Bridges to face him.

She opened her mouth as if she was about to say something, but Forever shook her head, letting her know Blue wasn't her concern. Furthermore, Blue might have been

out of pocket for saying what he was saying, but he wasn't wrong.

"Damn, I missed the fight?" Calvary's playful voice garnered all their attention.

His gold smile shined in their direction as he chuckled loudly, playing entirely too much for such a tense situation, but Forever would be lying if she said she wasn't grateful. With Blue being his homie and Marcellus being his brother, he was the only person right for the job. Jerrico would have been second due to his soothing nature, but soothing wouldn't break up a fight like a trained prison guard would.

"Shut up, crazy ass. Ain't nobody playing with you," Goody chuckled along with him. "Don't you see these folks about to fight?"

"Aight, aight. Y'all good?" Calvary stepped closer to the men and looked at them both. "If not, we can take it outside and let ya'll too-cool-ass-niggas, box it out."

"No need," Marcellus' chest widened in confidence as he stuffed his hands into the pockets of his dress pants.

"We good. Long as he doesn't come at my baby on no more hurt shit, then I won't let the glizzy out on, cuz."

Forever wanted to call his name again, but chose not to. Her man was rightfully sticking up for her and him, so she'd let him do him. It wasn't like Marcellus hadn't asked for it. With enough of her nerve built back up, Forever turned away from the safety of Blue's chest to face everyone else. When she did, her eyes landed on Bridges just as she was at the brink of snaking her neck.

"I can assure you that won't happen."

Forever's arms crossed. "You sure?"

Fed up with her façade at keeping her husband under control when that was obviously not the case, Forever pulled Bridges' card. They hadn't necessarily had their moment, but Bridges had definitely indirectly tried her a few times. Goody's baby shower had been hell on wheels for her and still lingered in her mind every time she saw the fake happy couple together. Never in her life had Forever ever felt that dumb, used, or small, and she owed Bridges for that.

With a raised brow and daunting scowl on her face, Bridges looked Forever up and down. "Positive."

"Well, it's a sad thing that you're not the problem... he is. Marcellus? Is your wife sure that you're going to leave me alone?"

With those same mysterious eyes that he always had on her, Marcellus peered at Forever with a look that silently proved Forever's point. Even in that moment, he was too torn to take his wife's side, unsure of how Forever would handle it. It was evident and noted more and more the longer he took to answer her.

"We ain't waiting no more. This nigga sure." Blue's hand drifted down Forever's chest and stopped once he had one side of her small hips gripped in his hand. "Let's slide, Rabbit."

"Marcellus, are you fucking kidding me?" Bridges could be heard before they even walked away.

All Forever could do was shake her head. After all the mess they'd been through, Marcellus was still clearly on his bullshit, and it made Forever happy that he'd chose Bridges over her. Had he not, she would have been in Bridges' shoes and not her own. Hers felt much better. They were clicking across the floor next to a man who wanted her and only her and didn't mind showing it to her or anyone else.

I'm on whatever you on

“You got to start acting right or ain't nobody gon' wanna hang with you. Nobody likes the girl that's always starting shit,” Blue helped Jerrica hold her balance on his legs as he held a one-sided conversation with her. “Every time I'm around you, you showing your ass. That's not cool, lil' mama. I'm starting to not wanna fuck with you no more.”

Jerrica's smiling face grew brighter as she slapped her wet hands on Blue's face and squealed with laughter.

“It's always funny until you at the schoolhouse fighting because ain't nobody fucking with you.”

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The high-pitched squeal she released made Blue smile and laugh with her. She was such a pretty baby with chubby cheeks and a head full of hair that Goody had styled into pigtails, even with the long stream of slob running from her open mouth.

“You see your mama ain’t got no friends. You wanna be like her?”

“Zurich, leave my niece alone,” Forever’s giggles made Jerrica notice her.

Seconds later, she was leaning over and reaching in Forever’s direction.

“Why you had to say something? We was vibing. Know she don’t be fucking with me when you’re around.”

Zurich’s fake frown adorned his face as he passed Jerrica to Forever. They were both seated on the large bed in Goody and Jerrico’s guest room, babysitting Jerrica while her nasty parents were in the other room, doing what they did best.

“That’s because her know her Tee-Tee girl, yes, her is. Yes, her is,” Forever cooed to a giggling Jerrica.

More slobber and baby laughter carried between Forever and Jerrica as she gripped a handful of Forever’s long hair, laughing as if Forever nuzzling her protruding belly was the funniest thing she’d ever encountered. With skin a few shades lighter than Forever, but still darker than most, Jerrica’s happiness radiated from her in the warmest way that Blue had ever seen.

The weak feeling in his stomach surfaced again as he watched their interaction. It had

been that way since he'd been in Georgia at Goody's house with the baby. The sight of Forever with a baby made him want his own. He'd desired his own family for a while, even months before his incarceration, but after Journey's betrayal, he'd crossed all of that out.

She'd been the love of his life and the woman he'd wanted to mother his children, but after she slid on him just to pop up pregnant by his homie, it made him rethink everything he'd been considering. Women could be the most vindictive and conniving people on the face of the planet, and the last thing he wanted was to be tied to a person who would do something evil to him and use his baby to do it.

Although he didn't foresee Forever doing anything like that, he hadn't thought Journey would either. She'd gone on and on to him about them having a baby for months, for her to lose faith the moment he was down bad longer than a week. That wasn't the kind of loyalty he wanted from his child's mother. He needed that unwavering, even if I hate you today, I'ma still fuck with you tomorrow, kind of loyalty. One where even if he and the mom wasn't speaking, their child was straight.

"Blue-Blue, stop staring at me," Forever mumbled without even looking in his direction.

Caught, Blue covered the rising smile on his face and held in his laughter. "Why you can't come do my stomach like that?"

"Because you're a grown man, it's not going to tickle you like it does her."

"Yes, it will. Come see."

"How about you come do me, and let me see," she faced him with lust in every bat of her lashes.

Zurich slid from the bed and circled it so that he was on her side while rubbing his hands together.

“Shid, say no more.”

As soon as he was in front of her, he slid her to the edge of the bed until her legs were dangling enough to be wrapped around his waist. Forever squealed from his sudden movement, prompting Jerrica to release a squeal of her own.

“Hush, lil’ fat mama. This ain’t about you no more. Matter of fact, come here,” Blue picked her up and held her stationary in the crook of his left arm while sliding the tips of his other hand to graze the skin of Forever’s exposed skin. “Look at Tee-Tee.”

As if understanding him, Jerrica’s head turned toward Forever. Together, they stared down at Forever as Blue continued rubbing her skin, not in a suggestive way, but definitely a comfortable one.

“Tee-Tee, pretty, ain’t she?”

Blue smiled when Forever blushed so hard that she had to look away and cover her face with one hand.

“Yeah, she is.”

“Zurich,” she whined when his hand slipped between her legs, rubbing her through her shorts. “The baby...”

“She’s cool. She bout sleep anyway.”

Jerrica’s little head had just settled against his shoulder, and she’d begun sucking the two fingers she’d deemed as her personal pacifiers. The silence in the room grew

more and more as Blue bounced the baby softly while still massaging Forever just as gentle.

“You look amazing with her.”

“I’d look even better with ours. What we gon’ name it?”

“Baby Blue.”

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“You been thinking about that, huh? Answered quick as shit.”

Forever’s guilty laughter felt good to his heart. At least they were on the same page.

“Want me to lay her down?” Forever sat up some, but Blue shook his head and pulled away from her.

With his free hand rubbing up and down Jerrica’s back, he sent her off to dreamland much quicker than she’d been doing for herself. When he was sure she was down, he headed back around the bed but was stopped when he heard knocks at the door. He opened it to find Goody standing there with a wild ponytail on her head and tights covered by the T-shirt Jerrico had been wearing earlier. A fan of picking with her, Blue turned his nose up at her.

“Did you even take a shower yet?”

Momentarily caught off guard, she cackled loudly with her mouth open. “First of all, nigga fuck you. Don’t worry about me.”

“Nah, I am gon’ worry about yo ass, because you the reason my lil’ niece out here living the way she is. Go take a bath, then come back and get her.” Blue turned his body, so that Jerrica was out of Goody’s reach.

“Nigga, that’s my baby and anything that’s on me came from her daddy.”

“You really should have taken your ass to a refiner’s school or some shit. You ain’t got no home training. Ain’t no way your mama raised you and Forever in the same

house.”

Goody’s loud squeal matched the one Forever released behind him as she reached for Jerrica again. “Rabbit, get this nigga before I slap that shit out of him.”

“Zurich is insane.”

“Aye, you hush over there. You about to get some of what she just got too.”

More laughter carried from the sisters as he finally handed Jerrica to Goody.

“Break her back, Blue!” Goody hollered over her shoulder as she padded down the hallway and away from them.

“He always does, sistaaaaaa!”

Once the door was closed and Goody was gone, Forever scooted to the middle of the bed and motioned for him to come to her. Blue went without hesitating. His long hair hanging down his back, and bare chest on display. When he was close enough, she scooted to the edge of the bed and fumbled with the band of his shorts, but her ringing phone stopped her. She paused for a moment, contemplating whether or not she was going to answer, before pulling them open and sticking her hand inside.

As soon as he felt the pads of her fingers on the skin of his dick, his stomach jittered with anticipation. Slowly, she eased it further down the shaft, not stopping until she’d swiped the oozing pre-cum and rubbed it over the throbbing head.

“You ain’t finna keep teasing me, gang. Put it in your mouth.”

Forever lowered her head, but her phone began ringing once again. Her eyes rolled as he stepped out of her grasp.

“Go head.”

Throwing a tantrum the whole way, Blue watched her snatch her phone up and answer it with a deep grimace on her face. To occupy himself, he grabbed his phone to check the trap as well. As soon as he saw Zurena’s name, he instantly grew annoyed. He didn’t want to be that way with his sister, but she’d been on some other shit since he’d been home, and it wasn’t anything he felt inclined to deal with. Especially after the way Forever and Pat told him how she’d pulled up and got down on Forever for no reason. Luckily, her current messages had nothing to do with that, but instead was some other stupid shit.

RenaBena: Attachment: 1 image

RenaBena: She tweaking, aint it?

RenaBena: Want me to beat her ass? Know I’ll fuck her up real bad

Blue’s eyebrows knitted together as he stared at the picture from Zurena. It was a screenshot of Journey’s social media page. The photo she’d posted was a throwback picture of him and her before he’d gotten locked up. She was seated on the hood of his car with him leaning back between her legs. As if posting the photo wasn’t delusional enough, the caption sealed the deal.

If we locked in...y’all know the rest...xoxo...Been about him and I’m still about him! Paint the city BLUE, my baby’s home. #ForeverAndADayTheBlueWay

“What got you frowning like that?” Forever leaned over his shoulder, peering at his phone.

The moment she snatched the phone out of his hand and held it up to her face with her eyes squinted, his heart started beating faster. Even though he hadn’t been the one

to post it, nor had he done anything wrong, the caught feeling he felt in his chest had him too nervous to look at her.

“Forever and a day, the blue way?” Forever said aloud before sucking her teeth loudly and tossing his phone on the bed.

“I don’t know why she posted that shit.”

“Sure, you don’t.”

“I swear, she tripping. I haven’t talked to her since that day at the salon with you. I don’t even have social media.”

“Mhm,” he heard her mumble while walking into the closet.

He followed to see her pulling clothes from her suitcase. He watched quietly for as long as he could before trying to plead his case once again.

“I swear, baby. She’s off some old shit.”

“Is it old? Because it sure does look pretty current to me.”

“I swear it is. She’s just doing that to get my attention. She knows I’m not fucking with her like that no more. This her only way. She can’t contact me no other way.”

“How’d you get the picture?”

Another rumbling in his gut traveled to his throat making it tight.

“My sister sent it.”

Forever stopped moving and gave him a look of pure disgust before shaking her head.

“Figures.”

“She just asked me had I seen it and if I wanted her to beat Journey’s ass.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?” She stood with her clothes in her hand and walked past him.

Or at least tried to, Blue stopped her and wrapped his arms around her waist. Determined to be difficult, she kept her gaze diverted out of the door so that she was looking past him.

“Baby, please don’t be mad at me about that silly ass shit. Journey dumb. Been fucking dumb.” He leaned down enough for him to be face to face with her. “Rabbit?”

Her silence remained as he held her tightly in his grasp, refusing to let her go. Looking down at her, all he saw was beauty. Nothing else came to mind when looking at her, outside of how fucking pretty she was. Her skin color was his favorite, but that nose and smile didn’t let up. Her long black hair that she kept straight made him want to ball it in his fist and pull it until her scalp grew sore.

“Let me eat your pussy,” his words came out muffled due to his mouth being on her shoulder. “Or at least smell it. You know I love the way it be smelling when you ready for some dick.”

“Zurich stop,” she whined. “You can’t just shove yourself into me every time I’m mad like that’s going to fix everything.”

“Ain’t nothing to fix baby, we happy. Fuck that girl. You my wife.”

“Says who?”

“Says me.” He squeezed her hair in his hand, leaning her head backward. “Let me prove it to you.”

When the whites of Forever's eyes finally glowed in his direction, Blue squatted just enough to pick her up and carry her back into the bedroom. Versus going to the bed, he sat on the floor in front of the bed, with his back pressed to the mattress.

"How are you going to prove it?"

"The way I treat you." His wet mouth circled her nipple as soon as he raised her shirt. "The way I love you and show you off." Her back arched from the moisture of his tongue on her stomach. "The way I make life easier for you."

"You probably do that for everybody."

"Lie again," he challenged with his eyes set on hers.

Not wavering in the least, he stared at her as she stared at him. Flashbacks of being on the yard crossed his mind and made him grip her neck a little tighter. So many nights after meeting her, his thoughts had run wild with how he would treat her. Expose her to his life and make her the gem that outshined the hood. His boujee princess. With the desire to spend money and spoil her at the forefront of his mind, Blue brought her face closer to his so that their noses were touching. Her eyes stuck on his.

"If you gon' be with me, which you are because you ain't got no other choice," he smiled when she giggled. "You can't let silly shit get to you. Especially no bitch. I'm not gon' ever cheat on you. You hear me? Haitian men don't cheat."

He flashed a big smile that attracted an eye roll in return.

"I don't like girls like her. The ones that feel like they can make a man come back to them no matter what."

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“Fuck her.”

“She’s going to keep popping up.”

“Fuck her.”

“You’re saying that now, but when I go back to California, you’re going to be down there with he.,” Forever’s small, slanted eyes squinted. “I won’t know what you’re doing while I’m away.”

“California? Who told you that you’re going back out there? You see that house I got in Miami? That’s where you live now. Gon’ head and tell your lil’ boss you out. You got to be where your man at, Rabbit.”

The subtle tittering was what he’d been hoping for. The grip of her hands around his wrists was an added extra, but he’d take it.

“You like the way it is? Or you wanna change shit around and decorate a lil’ bit? I already know you gon’ need a fancy ass home office and shit, so I’ll get that handled while you out in Cali getting your stuff to leave squared away.”

“Zurich...”

“Don’t Zurich me, Forever. You was on some big shit when I was locked up, but you been acting scary since I got home. You want me or not?”

Zurich loved Forever and wanted her more than he’d wanted anything in a long time,

so he didn't rush her answer; instead, he waited patiently for her to tell him what he already knew. She was in just as deep as him, but because of her past, she was treading a little lighter. Something he could handle, but only if that thread was still headed in his direction.

"Of course, I want you, Blue-Blue."

"Do you like my house?"

Her cheeks rose, and eyes closed. "I love your house."

"You wanna live in it with me?"

She nodded while one hand fell from his hair to his neck, leaving the other on his cheek alone.

"I wanna come home to you like you said I could when I was locked up. Remember what you told me?"

Her head shook as her smile rose even higher. Blue knew she remembered but wanted to be shy, so he fell for her games and went for it anyway.

"You said once I finished putting in work on the block, you'd be at home waiting on me. You switching up on me, beautiful?"

With her chest weighed down a little more from her heavy breathing, Forever leaned forward, resting her forehead on his. Her tiny fingers gripped a handful of his long locs as she exhaled heavily. With her breath taking over his space, Blue hurried to inhale, wanting any and every part of her. No matter how big or small it was.

"Never."

“Better not. Now, turn around and bend it over.”

Blushing harder than she'd done all day, Forever eased from his lap and turned so that she was on all fours. The moment she was steady, Blue gripped her tiny waist and pulled her backward so that she was directly in his face, awaiting his tongue. Already dripping with arousal, Blue pecked both of her small cheeks repeatedly before inserting a finger into her tunnel.

Growing higher by the second, he inhaled deeply before burying his face between her crevices. His mouth aligned with her sweet-sweet love, while his nose rested in the crease of her soft derriere.

“Feed it to me, bae,” he grunted with his tongue already swirling deep in her valley. “You smell so fucking good, damn. This pussy crazy.”

The high-pitched moan she released rocked her body so hard that he could see the goosebumps rising on her skin. Doing as she was told, Forever moved her body on his tongue, feeding him as much of her as she could fit into his mouth.

“Baby?”

“Blue-Blue,” she whimpered, making his toes curl.

Even if he'd never told her, he loved the way she called him Blue-Blue. Her voice was always so soft and sweet as if beckoning him to her.

“I want you to sit on my face every day before you leave the house... the way your pussy smelling make me wanna breathe it in every chance I get.”

“You already do that.” Forever turned just enough to grab the back of his head. With her body turned slightly, they were able to make eye contact, and it made Blue's

insides burn with desire.

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“Baby, you so damn pretty. You make me wanna kill a nigga just cuz. Ain’t no nigga ever gon’ say he fucked you like this again. You mine for life, baby. Lay on your stomach.”

With his hand pressing down the center of her back, Blue helped her to the floor. In a hurry to be inside of her, he removed his shorts and grabbed the base of his dick, leading it home. Her brown eyes and innocent gaze following him the whole way.

“Open it for me,” he nudged one of her legs as he watched her spread her cheeks open just enough for him to slide between her thighs. “You better scream on it too.”

Forever’s mouth opened to say something, but the moment he was fully in, all she could do was rock her hips backward and moan. Her eyes were no longer open, and the dip in her back was so low that her stomach was flat to the floor. With her tiny waist leading to her round hips that he covered with both hands, Forever tossed her head to the side, allowing her hair to fall over her shoulder and display her warm brown skin.

The dark freckles potent and poking through of her blissful moments. The serene look on her face pushed Blue to go slower and simply enjoy the moment. Her body was tight and welcoming him deeper with each stroke.

After a loud smack to her left cheek, Blue belted, “Didn’t I say scream?”

With defiance resting in her dark eyes, matching the sensual frown pressing her lips into a frown, Forever knitted her eyebrows together and rolled her eyes.

“Fucking do it, Forever.”

Blatantly ignoring everything he commanded, Forever’s head dipped to the floor, allowing her hair to cover her face as she released a guttural moan quietly. Blue knew he was in her guts, and it was paining her not to oblige his request, but before he threw in the towel like a bitch, he’d make her regret it. Pushing completely forward and using the death grip on her waist to hold her in place, Blue forced her to take the whole dick. He was sure Forever’s scream echoed down the hallway to her sister’s room after that.

“You been around me too long, Forever. You doing too much bad shit. How you think you not gon’ do what I say, huh? You think you yo’ own or something?”

Longer strokes followed his words, slowing down their lovemaking and intensifying it at the same time.

“You think you don’t belong to me, Forever?” Blue gritted out while leaning down so that his chest was to her back.

On top of her, but still holding himself up with one arm, Blue palmed the front of her throat and rested the back of her head to his shoulder blade so that he could see the side of her face.

“Look at your quiet ass... it feel good, don’t it? Fighting hard not to tell me you love the dick. It’s cool, keep being fucking quiet. I got something for you.”

Sweat trickled down Forever’s neck and shoulder as she fought to tame her pleasure. Utterly enthralled with her, Blue leaned back enough to watch the small droplets trickle against her chocolate skin.

“Baby, you so fine, even your sweat sexy,” he grunted before tilting his head enough

to lick the sweat from her damp skin. “Got me up in here licking sweat off you like you ain’t ask for this punishment... and guess what,” he pulled her head back by her throat once more, “I’ll do that shit again and a-fucking-gin, now tell me you love me.”

Blue littered kissed all over her as she shivered beneath him.

“Blue-Blue!” she gasped. “I love you. I love you so much, baby. I love you.”

“Mhm, Blue love you too, baby. This pussy mine or you thinking about giving it to that lame ass nigga?”

“No,” Forever shook her head the best she could with her neck still being in his grasp. “It’s yours. I’m yours.”

Her soft whimpers teased Blue’s sanity.

“Say swear.”

“I swear, Blue-Blue. I wanna die on the dick, please.”

Blue smiled while laughing at her sexual mania. “At first you wouldn’t even scream for Daddy, now you wanna die on the dick?”

With his chest expanding wider, he fed her all of his inches at the same pace, hitting that spot that he knew would make her body shiver and shake for him. Like the master of her body that he’d grown to be, the moment he applied extra pressure to her neck while licking and kissing her shoulder, she began to unravel beneath him. Tears and moans meshed together as she professed her love for him throughout her entire orgasm and his. Even with both of their bodies still trembling from their combined eruption, Blue helped Forever flip over so that she was facing him. Eye to eye, she

cupped his cheeks and pecked his lips.

“If you give Journey or any other woman what you just gave me, I’m going to have Calvary shoot you right between these beautiful eyebrows.”

“Why you gon’ do that stupid shit just so you can sit around crying?”

“I’ll stop one day.”

“Well, since we on some crazy shit, if I see that nigga around you pushing his luck again, he gone die. Then you gone die to me right afterwards.”

“You wouldn’t kill me,”

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“Hell nah, I wouldn’t, but you’d be dead to me.” He pecked her lips before standing to his feet and pulling her to hers behind him.

He could see her staring at him as he moved around the room, gathering their clothing, but he ignored her. They’d just had some mind-blowing sex, and he wasn’t about to ruin the moment talking about dumb shit. Even if he did mean what he’d said.

Everything about you belongs to me

“Whew, bitch! These folks trying to kill me,” Goody complained as she sashayed off the stage and over to where Forever was standing. “I told these niggas I would do a few songs, now they talking about stay out here until I’m ready to leave.”

Forever smiled at her sister as she watched her be her usually dramatic self. They were at the 11:11 concert that she’d promised to be a part of, and she’d been acting like it was a chore the entire time. Granted, Forever knew she was just talking, because if her sister didn’t like to do anything else, she loved to perform, it was still comical to hear her whining.

“Paradise, please shut your mouth. You just wanna run home and lay up under Jerrico.”

“This my man only off day,” she stomped her feet and crossed her arms, throwing a fake tantrum. “I wanna hunch.”

“You should be tired of all that. That’s all you and him ever do.”

“You the one to talk. All I hear is Blue knocking them walls down. I mean, you know I’m nasty and I love to listen, but damn bitch. Your pussy ain’t tired?”

Forever’s cheeks blushed warm as she fought the smile threatening to rise. When she couldn’t think of anything witty to say, she smiled and shrugged instead.

“Yeah, hush hoe. Enjoy that thug dick. I know it’s good.”

“Damn good!”

The sisters high-five and continued their feminine banter while waiting for Goody to go on. After realizing they were standing in their heels for nothing, they headed for Goody’s dressing room. The moment they entered, Forever took a seat on the small sofa while Goody freshened up her makeup. With nothing else to do and missing her man like crazy, Forever dialed Blue on FaceTime. She smiled, showing all her teeth, when his handsome face popped up on the screen, smiling just as big as hers.

“Hell, you smiling so hard for, pretty girl?”

“Who that? Lawyer Barbie?” Auto’s loud voice halted anything she’d been about to say. “What’s good, Forever?”

“Heyyy Auto! Hey Baby! Where y’all at?”

“Out handling real nigga shit,” Auto interrupted like only he could.

Blue and Forever chuckled at him before Blue answered her with the sense God clearly hadn’t given Auto.

“Just about to hit the bar and give this nigga some time away from his wife and baby.”

“Aww, Auto, you don’t wanna be at home with Nova and Autumn?”

“Man, that’s all I want to do, but Nova being all moody and shit like she don’t want a nigga to touch her, so I said fuck it. I’ll go touch another bitch.”

Forever gasped at the same time that Goody burst into laughter.

“Hush, Goody, that is not funny. Auto, you better not have said that to her for real. She’s going through a lot. Postpartum emotions aren’t a toy. Don’t do her like that.”

“Shid, tell her don’t do me like that. Moo-Moo know I love her to fucking death. I don’t give a fuck about no baby fat. She was big when I met her. Who gives a shit that she just had a baby? I sure as hell don’t. She still sexy as fuck. I like the way her body look. If she’d let me, I’d be fucking her, sucking her toes, making another baby, eating her pussy, all that shit!”

“Oh, my goodness, Auto,” Forever shook her head.

“Oh, your goodness what? You grown as fuck. I know you not sweating me talking about eating a lil’ pussy. I love eating Moo pussy. It tastes so fucking good, I be starving for the shit.”

“That’s all fine and well, but you don’t have to tell me about it.”

Forever watched Auto look at Blue. “Nigga, you be eating Skinny mini pussy, don’t you? Cuz she on her white girl shit right now, blood.”

“The fuck? Nigga, yeah, I eat my baby’s pussy. All the fucking time. Sometimes I don’t even be caring about eating it, I just be wanting to smell it. Lay there with my face in her shit.”

Forever was mortified as she watched the two of them laugh hysterically while dapping each other up as if they weren't completely out of line for their commentary.

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“See, I knew I wasn’t crazy. Nova’s face be all frowned up when I ask to smell it.”

“Okay! That is enough! My goodness!” Forever yelled dramatically.

“Girl, shut yo ass up. That’s normal. Let that boy smell that lil’ twat,” Goody chimed in, embarrassing Forever further. “Sitting there acting scary like you don’t be letting that man snack on that lil’ box.”

“I hate all of y’all so bad right now. I swear I do.” Forever shook her head in distaste.

“Aight, baby. I’m sorry. I’m not gon’ let him talk to you no more. You having fun? You look good as hell. I know them niggas sweating you.”

“And is!” Goody yelled.

The way Blue smiled made Forever’s panties moist. He was so sexy and chocolatey. His long hair was pulled back into a ponytail, resting under a blue new era fitted cap. The thick beard around his face was neat and probably smelled just as good as it looked. His bright white smile appeared to be even whiter in the darkness of the car, and it was making Forever melt.

“I knew they was gon’ be on you when I watched you get dressed. You a bad lil’ muthafucka, bae.”

“And you a bad big muthafucka.”

Blue blushed hard at Forever’s words and smiled even bigger before letting her hear

that laugh that she loved so much.

“I got to start coming up out ya body, bae. I’m leaving too many of my bad habits in you. Next time we make love, tell me to pull out.”

If she could die just to wake up and hear that again, she would. Blue was so much thug therapy that she could barely take it on most days.

“I ain’t gon’ never do that.”

“Aight now. You better stop talking to me like that, you know I love when you get on your ghetto girl shit.”

“See why you need to keep nutting in me?”

More blushing followed before some rude commentary about Blue being a Ken barbie ass nigga came from Auto’s mouth.

“You shutting shit down, baby?”

Now it was Forever’s turn to blush as she nodded her head with her lips tooted up.

“That’s right. That’s what you supposed to do. Blow them niggas mind. Know they ain’t never seen nothing like you.” Forever smiled uncontrollably as Blue gassed her up. “Aye, stand up for me real quick. Remind daddy what them niggas seeing.”

Happily doing as her man instructed, Forever propped her phone up on the table and stood up for Blue to see her.

“Step back, let me see them legs.”

Forever spun on her high heels, modeling the fitted black leather dress with the deep cut back. It stopped just above her butt, actually making it look like something was back there.

“Damn... turn back around and let me see the front again,” the lust in his voice was real, and it made Forever feel prettier than she’d ever felt before. “Hell yeah, you all me for sho. Fine ass. Aye, real shit, you fucking it up, Rabbit. Walk towards the camera again, let me see my legs one more time. Know they my favorite.” He instructed while continuously snapping screenshots of her.

The way Blue lusted over her without hesitation or shame gave Forever butterflies that she couldn’t catch if she had a net. Even with him doing nothing more than gazing at her, her body was beginning to react, and it was making her temporarily crazy.

“Make sure you letting them niggas know what’s good. Already know your man don’t play that fake kicking it.”

“I did. They still be staring, though.”

“Let em’ fucking stare. Long as they can’t have you.”

“Of course, they can’t, Blue-Blue. I haven’t talked to anyone.”

“Good. Keep it that way. Everything about you belong to me. Down to your conversation. That’s mine too.”

More blushes heated her face as she looked away to keep calm. When her eyes landed on a smiling Goody, her smile rose once again.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 8:02 pm

“I love this for you so much, sister. I might actually start liking his talking ass if he keeps acting right with you.”

“Shut up, Goody. You love me.”

“I kinda do. Just a lil’ bit. Not too much.”

“Baby, tell her she love me.”

“Paradise, you love Zurich, and so do I.”

Blue blew her a kiss and winked at her. “Aight now, Love. I’ll see you later. Call me when you ready to dip.”

“I will.”

“Aight Lawyer Barbie and Slim Goody. Y’all ain’t have to tell me y’all loved me.”

“We love you too, Auto.”

“We do love you, Auto. You know you’re our boy.”

Forever and Goody told him, making him smile before ending the call. As soon as Forever put the phone down, Goody was on her feet and walking toward her with a big smile. Without warning, she pulled Forever into a tight hug.

“I am so happy for you. For real. After that bullshit with Marcellus, I prayed it

wouldn't take long for God to send you your husband."

"I am too, sister. You think Blue my husband? For real?"

"You don't?"

"I mean, he could be, but I don't know. I'm just following his lead." Forever shrugged.

"Well, follow it to the altar then, bitch."

With laughter following them, they exited the dressing room and headed back for the stage. Hand in hand, they strolledsexily down the hallway with all eyes on them. Like Blue said they would, the men watched what they couldn't have, even tried shooting their shots. Happier than she'd ever been with where she was in life, Forever declined each pass with her head held high. If nobody else in life ever told her that she looked good, Zurich telling her had been enough. She was literally steel reeling from the happiness that he'd poured into her.

They were at the back of the stage, and Goody was getting her mic and everything she needed strapped onto her, when Forever felt a presence behind her. Seconds later, a strong hand cooled the skin of her back. Forever nearly jumped out of her skin, trying to get away, but he gripped the side of her stomach, holding her in place with a deep chuckle accompanying his movements.

"Relax, Forever. You look amazing," Marcellus' baritone was low and sounded just as sneaky as he was. "...Damn."

For some reason, since finding out about his wife and baby, everything about him seemed like a lie or a ploy to do the wrong thing. It was funny how his voice had once been sexy to her, and now all she could do was shake her head with squinted

eyes every time she heard it. His entire demeanor appealed to her spidey senses, and she felt the need to watch for his next mischievous trick whenever he was near.

“I know. Zurich told me.”

More laughter that she almost couldn't hear flowed from him.

“You gon' stab my heart out every chance you get?”

“Let's just call it reciprocity.”

“Touché, and I'm sorry.”

Forever turned to face him. “You don't have to keep apologizing.”

“I do, if that's what it takes.” The sincerity in Marcellus' eye contact wasn't missed, but Forever was over feeling sorry for him.

That one notion had been the main reason she'd made a fool of herself for so many months. Always having empathy for a man who hadn't had it for her. It had been her downfall with him, but she'd learned her lesson and wouldn't walk back down that path. Not even with Bridges' legs.

“I didn't know you were working tonight,” she purposely changed the subject.

His eyes trailed to Goody as she stood, getting her face touched up by the fluffy makeup brush. “You know that's my partner in crime. I go where she goes.”

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“I appreciate that more than you know.”

Forever rendered him a genuine smile after months of being as polite and platonic as she could be where he was concerned. He may have been a load of bullshit to her, but he'd always been the best manager and friend to her sister, and she truly loved that. With Paradise being in the entertainment business, she'd definitely encountered her share of snakes in the grass, and it worried Forever each and every time she heard about it.

“It's no thing. That's my girl. She's always in good hands with me.”

Instead of responding, Forever nodded and took a step forward. Goody's deejay was announcing her, which meant her segment was about to get started, and she needed to call Yummy. With her phone in hand, she dialed her on FaceTime, and Yummy answered immediately with a bonnet on and a mouth full of chips.

“That baby is making you too greedy. It's showtime, whore.”

“He is for real, but don't even get me started on this damn baby tonight. He's not even here yet, and he's already making me miss all the fun.”

“Don't do my nephew. Nobody told you to hunch his daddy until he got here.”

“Don't upset me, Forever. Just flip the camera around.”

Forever had her hand up, preparing to flip the camera around when she spotted Marcellus in her screen. He was directly behind her and somewhat posted, as if he

was her man. Him being way too close to her body was the problem, and he was really pushing it, but she'd let him live. As long as he didn't touch her or say anything else that would piss her off, then she'd play it cool.

Too bad Yummy hadn't gotten that memo because before the camera could flip, her mouth opened, and belligerence flew out.

"The fuck that creepy ass nigga doing behind you? Let me find out y'all back fucking around and I'ma snitch hoe."

Marcellus laughed first, with Forever snickering immediately after. "Cousin, you have got to start speaking more lady like. That mouth is so unpretty."

"Nah, that married man standing behind you is unpretty, but let me mind my pregnant business. I can't talk. His brother got me at home barefoot and pregnant, eating these nasty ass hot fries that I can't shake. It's clearly something in that Blake blood."

"Good evening to you too, Eternity."

"What's good, brother-in-law?" She waved with a big smile like she hadn't just been at his neck with ridicule.

After taking a few more steps ahead to get a good angle of Goody and to put some distance between her and Marcellus, Forever began bobbing her head to one of her favorite songs by Goody. The bright white lights flashing over her sister's head flickered against the crowd, displaying the packed-out arena. Hands and phones were in the air and swaying back and forth to the beat, overflowing Forever's heart with happiness.

Just as Goody was happy to see her doing good and thriving in life with Blue, she was just as enamored with the blissful life she lived with her career and family. She

too had been on the receiving end of a fuck nigga, so to see the place she was at in life, nearly brought Forever to tears. Misty vision interrupted the sight in front of her, but was quickly remedied when she felt Marcellus' chest on her back.

"I'm sorry. So sorry. Please, give me another chance," his lips pressed against the bare skin of her back.

Involuntarily, her body shivered from the notion.

"Please, baby. I'm begging you. I fucked up."

Stuck silent, Forever didn't say anything, only remained stoic and somewhat uninterested in the pleas she was hearing. An upcoming lawyer with a history of hearing lies and deceit for a living, she'd heard her share of foolishness and people professing how sorry they were when they really weren't, but Marcellus took the cake. Maybe it was his audacity, maybe it was persistence, maybe it was because he was just so damned intoxicating, but she was truly stuck on stupid and unable to move.

Not one coherent thought arose. She could barely even hear straight, to be honest. Even in a room filled with screaming people, all she could hear was him, and it was really messing with her head. For months, those words were all she'd wanted to hear. For him to just apologize and be genuine about it. To choose her and let Bridges feel the pain that she'd been forced to feel, but he hadn't. Instead, he'd walked her down and forced the pain on her. Now he wanted to be sorry.

"You know something, you're just like the people I see in court. You're never sorry when you're out here messing up the lives of innocent people, only when you get caught, and it doesn't turn out how you thought it would." Forever's dark eyes squinted when she took another step forward, putting more distance between them. "If you were truly sorry, you would leave me alone and accept defeat. Let me be

happy with the man that treats me right.”

Marcellus shook his head adamantly. “I can’t do that. I don’t want to.”

“I didn’t want to watch you toss me to the side and love on your wife, but I had to.”

No more of Blue’s time was wasted on Marcellus after that. He’d been very clear on their call about her conversation belonging to him, so since she already knew he wouldn’t have given Marcellus a second of his time, she chose not to either. When she was finally situated in a different spot, she heard Eternity’s voice again.

“Yeah, bitch, you told him! I’m proud of you. He needs to back off already. This begging is getting old.”

“Girl, I almost forgot you was on the phone, but he really does. I don’t have time to be pulling Blue off that man,”

“Pulling me off who?”

Forever’s body jumped so hard that she dropped her phone. When she tried to turn around to see Blue behind her, she bumped into his shoulder as he bent down to retrieve her phone. Her eyes landed on Auto next, since he was upright and smiling at her.

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“We caught your lil’ bitty scheming ass,” his gold teeth shining through the darkness.

“I scared you, baby?” Sarcasm laced Blue’s words as he gazed at her with a knowing smile on his face, before glancing over his shoulder to where Marcellus had been standing.

Forever didn’t see him anymore and wasn’t sure where he’d gone, but none of that mattered in the moment. The only thing on her mind was how long Blue had been there and how much of her interaction with Marcellus he had observed. Judging by Auto’s comments, something had been noted, and she needed to know what.

“Scared me to death,” she took a deep breath, covering her chest with her hand as she took her extended phone from Blue. “Yummy, you still on the phone?”

“Yeah, what you doing? Ima miss the whole show fooling with you.”

“My bad. Blue and Auto snuck up on me and made me drop my phone.”

Forever’s eyes bucked, and Yummy’s mouth dropped open simultaneously. Already knowing the situation, neither of them said another word until Blue did. One thing they knew how to do was hush when they got caught. Never the kind of women to tell on themselves or each other, the line went mute, and the concert watching resumed.

Unsteady on her heels, with the same butterflies she always got from Blue, going on a rampage in her stomach, Forever tried to keep her body from shaking while Goody rapped about being a real bitch. I’m going to kill her! Forever screamed as she finally came to the conclusion that Goody had known Zurich and Auto were coming to the

concert all along. She could have at least warned her.

“Calm down,” Blue whispered in her ear, with his chest tapping the back of her head.

“I am calm.”

“Yeah, I can tell by how hard your hands are shaking.”

Typically, a fan of sarcasm, just not from him, Forever chose not to respond. When nothing else came from either of them, Blue stepped around her, tapping Auto’s arm along the way. Together, they walked closer to the stage to watch Goody. With his hands tucked deep in the pockets of his jeans, hat sitting low enough to miss his eyes, and height towering everyone else’s, Blue stood coolly, nodding his head to the song. Talking and interacting with a very hyper Auto every so often.

“I’m in trouble, Yummy,” she said when she realized he was ignoring her.

“Yeah, cousin girl, you are. What you gon’ do?”

Forever shrugged, as if Yummy could see her. Zoned out in her own thoughts, she watched Blue from afar, feeling like an outcast. The vibe between them was off and stiff, and she hated it. Blue was never cold toward her... ever. So, for him to have come to the concert to clearly surprise her, only to be ahead with his back to her, showed his discontentment.

Annoyed with him, Forever spun in search of Marcellus. He was no longer where he’d been before, but he was still there in the opposite corner. The pitiful look on his face made her want to run up and punch him in the mouth. Why was he looking sad when he’d caused her trouble? Just like he’d been doing since she’d met him, he was making things hard for her. Unable to even take the sullen look on his face, she sucked her teeth and turned away, only to look directly in Blue’s face.

What the fuck kind of luck did she have?

Instead of saying or doing anything that would provide her reassurance that they were good, he faced the stage again.

“Forever?”

Stressed, she looked to the sound of Yummy’s voice.

“Don’t stand there like a stuck bitch. Go where your man at.”

“He just saw me looking at Marcellus. He’s going to think I want him.”

“And you’re going to let him keep thinking that by standing away from him?” Eternity looked at her like she was crazy. “He can be mad. That’s fine, but get your ass over there with him. Show him some love. You can explain the rest of the dumb shit that my stuck on stupid ass brother-in-law is doing later.”

Agreeing with her cousin times a million, she nodded and switched toward him, not stopping until she was positioned in front of him with her back to his chest. With her free hand, she entangled their fingers together and held his hand tightly. He didn’t say anything, but he did look down at her. The twinkle that was normally there was gone, and the corner of his left eye twitched subtly, but Forever didn’t back down.

Staring at him felt good and bad at the same time, but she’d take anything as long as it was him who was giving it.

“Don’t be mad at me, baby. I don’t know why he won’t leave me alone, but I promise I don’t want him back. I swear.” She raised his hand and pecked the back of it.

His angry disposition was melting, but he was fighting to keep it there. His brows

were still knitted deeply while the rigidness in his stance felt hard like a rock to Forever, but the emotion in his eyes began to warm to her again, showing that she still had a dog in the fight.

“Blue-Blue?”

With one swift shake of his head, he stopped her. “I’m good. Just watch the show.”

Forever hated to tear her eyes away from him, but she turned to face her sister once again. She’d just waved to cut the music and had the mic up to her mouth.

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“Aye y’all, put your phones in the air for my boy, Young Scooter! A real muthafucking legend! My friend left way too soon! I’on know if y’all miss my nigga like I do, but rap ain’t been the same for me since he left. Shit, life in general! Some hearts are just irreplaceable, and Scooters was one em’. I won’t ever get over missing him. Ball in Heaven until I get there. We miss you!” She screamed loudly, her voice cracking.

Forever took a step toward her, ready to snatch her off the stage for hugs if need be. She hadn’t taken his death well, and with it still being so fresh, anytime she spoke of him, Forever was immediately on guard.

“Y’all just give me a minute,” Goody mumbled in the mic before dropping her head and wiping at her face with the backs of her hands.

In a rush to get to her, Forever took off, but was halted when Marcellus grabbed her hand, stuffing the handkerchief from his suit in it.

“Give this to her,” his words were quick, as was Blue’s movements.

He’d used Forever’s waist to pull her out of Marcellus’ grip within seconds. Too worried about Goody to entertain them, she touched the center of Blue’s chest and pleaded with her eyes for him to behave before leaving him her phone and taking off toward Goody. She was still crying, and the fact that the deejay had begun to play “Columbia” by Young Scooter hadn’t made anything better.

Strutting fast and tall, Forever glided across the stage with urgency but still gracefully. Her long hair blew behind her as she came into view. The moment the

lights shined on her, she nearly fainted, she was so nervous. There was no way in the world she would ever be able to do what Goody did. Noise from the crowd must have gotten Goody's attention because she raised her head and fell into Forever the moment she was close enough.

"How you go from cussing to crying that fast?" Forever tried to be as lighthearted as she could, which helped because Goody laughed through her sniffles.

"Him not being here just ain't right."

"It's not, but neither is you out here crying in front of all these people. People work hard for their money. Nobody paid to watch you cry, hoe."

Seconds later, laughter could be heard around the room. Forever stepped back just enough to pat Goody's tears dry.

"You done being a punk bitch?" she questioned in a sympathetic tone, drawing more laughter from the attendees.

"Fuck you, bitch," Goody finally laughed for real and began getting herself together.

It took her a minute and a few screams from her fans before she was back to herself. With her hand still clasped tightly with Forever's, she faced the crowd.

"Y'all not seeing my personal Barbie doll, right here! Real talk, this a bad muthafucka! Y'all see her?" Goody tried to spin Forever around but, of course, she shook her head, even trying to pull away, but Goody wouldn't let her. "My girl don't play about me and I damn sure don't play about her. Her nigga always saying she's too small to be so big, and I never really understood what he meant, but I see it now. I finally get it, Blue!" Goody smiled at the tears rising in Forever's eyes before looking over her head at a smiling Blue. "She fine as hell, but she's also a real nigga's bitch,

so don't go getting y'all asses in my sister's DMs harassing her."

Forever snickered while falling into the one-sided hug Goody pulled her to. "I really hate you. I'm finna go. Get back to your show, sista."

"Everybody, tell Mrs. Rose goodbye."

Forever couldn't stop the embarrassing laughter and blushing that overtook her as she turned to walk offstage as the crowd yelled exactly what Goody told them to. It didn't help that she caught Blue's eyes on her the entire way. With him smiling just as hard as her, she couldn't stop herself from switching harder in a hurry to get to him.

"Can't tell me dick won't make you move. Look at her happy ass running to that man. Her lil' boyfriend over there waiting on her y'all. Do me a favor and don't be like her when y'all grow up. Make these niggas wait!"

The crowd laughed loudly before Goody resumed her show.

"Aight, I'ma do this last song for my guy, then I'm out of here!"

The beat to Master P's, "I Miss My Homies" dropped at the same time the arena went completely black, only glowing from the phone lights of the crowd and large photos of Young Scooter working with her and various other artists, pictures of him and his kids, and photos of him alone plastered on the Megatron behind her.

"Rest In Peace, Kenneth!" Goody screamed before rapping along with Master P.

Thankful to be at the edge of the stage, Forever hurried off and right into her man's arms. Goody was about to have the whole arena in tears, and Forever wanted no parts of that. She was a crybaby just like Paradise and would be in shambles like the rest of the world.

“Aye, I fuck with Slim Goody the long way,” Blue told her as soon as she was wrapped in his arms.

Forever’s body relaxed beneath his touch. His embrace was warm and tight, like always. Gone was the rigidness from earlier, and she inwardly thanked God for it. With her head on his chest and eyes closed, Forever tightened her grip around his waist.

“And I fuck with you.”

“Look at me and tell me that.”

Forever’s head dropped backward, allowing her room to stare at him. “I fucking love you, gang.”

“You being ghetto?”

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She nodded her head with a smile. His brown eyes rested on her for a few seconds before he pecked her waiting lips.

“Better be glad I love that shit, or I’d fuck you up for being in that nigga face.”

“He was trying to apologize, and I wasn’t hearing it. I promise. I don’t want nobody but you, Blue-Blue. Swear.”

Blue’s hand gripped one side of her butt and gave it a nasty squeeze, snatching her closer to him before kissing her lips and pushing his tongue down her throat. Forever caught his rhythm and matched it, taking her arms from his waist and circling his neck instead. They were all hands and moans as he held her down with one hand on her butt and the other gripping the back of her neck.

“Understand who you fucking with, Forever.”

She peered into his eyes deeply, “I do understand, Zurich.”

“I’ on think you do. This my heart that you just flip flopping in your hands and shit. You got to be more careful with it.”

Water clouded her vision as she nodded her head hard.

“Skinny ass. Better act like you know what the fuck going on,” Auto chimed in while looking over his shoulder at Marcellus. “Fo’ you mess around and get this nigga’s top blown off.”

Forever gasped and looked from Blue to Auto, then back to Blue. Neither of them smiled or gave her any reason to think they were joking, so for a few moments, breathing became hard to do. She didn't want Marcellus and didn't appreciate how he'd done her, but that didn't mean she wanted him to die about it.

"Zur...Zurich, you can't do that," she stuttered. "He has a family... a baby, a wife... and his mom!" Her eyes widened again when she looked at him for help.

There was probably no swaying Auto, but hopefully she could plead with Blue. He loved her, so he may be a tad bit more partial to her pleas than Auto.

"Tell that to that nigga the next time he feels the need to apologize then."

"Oh, brother!" Forever's forehead fell into the center of Blue's chest, making him and Auto burst into laughter at her expense.

"Calm down, baby. You ain't got to get back on your white girl shit."

Forever could hear him talking, but how did he expect her to take his directives when he was referencing killing someone?

"I'm a lawyer, for God's sake, Zurich!"

His large hand palmed the back of her head. "I know you are, baby."

"Then you should know you can't be with me and do that."

"Bruh chill. Lawyer Barbie about to stroke out."

"That's good for her ass." Blue chuckled, with Auto joining in. "She needs to know her nigga don't play with or about her."

His lips to the top of her head ended the conversation, but did nothing to stop the running of Forever's brain. It was a mile high in the clouds, with no plans of coming down. What in the hell had she gotten herself into? She'd been hollering gang since Blue came home, but being gang for real was stressful... deadly even.

How could you?

Streetlights passed in a blur as Marcellus sped down the highway, headed home. It was nearing three o'clock in the morning, and he hadn't stepped foot in his house since around noon the day before. Between working and holding up the bar, he'd been too occupied to do anything else. Even with him doing the best that he could to maintain a good front, he was slowly losing control, and he couldn't have that. Control was something that he prided himself on in all aspects of life, and not being able to grasp it was gravely annoying.

Being forced to watch Forever parade around in his face with her convict was torture, and if he had to watch it too much longer, he was more than sure he'd spiral out. Everything about that nigga made Marcellus want to do a host of dumb stuff. All resulting in him losing everything he'd worked for, including his career and family. Bridges and baby Bridges may not have been his happiest place, but he'd never want to hurt them if he could stand it. However, he couldn't promise that he'd be able to keep his composure if he had to watch the jailbird that Forever had fallen for, touch and kiss all over her again.

The smart thing for him to do would be to take a step back and just keep himself from around the two of them, but it was like even when he wasn't expecting to see them, they still popped up. The baby shower had been one thing, but the concert was a heavy step up. It was bad enough he had to see the fool in his personal life, but having to see him in his professional life was annoying as fuck! Marcellus was already teetering on the edge, and if he didn't get a grip soon, all hell would probably break loose.

His rift with Forever hadn't been fake for him. He'd truly loved her, just at the wrong time. Getting caught up in the moment with Bridges and remembering all the good times they'd had, the life they'd built together, and the love they'd once shared, had gotten to him, and he'd trashed Forever. So many nights in a row, he'd lay awake visualizing the pain on her face when seeing him with his family, just like the muffled cries she'd released on his shoulder, begging him to choose her. It was all so far away, but still so potent at the same time.

There had been moments where he'd been in bed with Bridges and wished it was Forever. No matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't close their chapter. In the back of his mind, he'd assumed that she would always be there, waiting for him to give her some time. It was selfish, he knew it, but he'd still thought it.

Function after function, she'd shown up around their family alone, so he knew the door was still open, but the moment he'd overheard Jerrico and Calvary talking about her defending Blue and actually liking the nigga, his head nearly exploded. From the moment they unwillingly disclosed the nature of Forever and Blue's relationship, he'd been feeling weird. He couldn't really pinpoint the feeling or describe the thoughts, but it was weird, and he couldn't control it.

"Damn," Marcellus cursed while swerving just enough to miss baby Bridges' power wheel in the driveway. "I have told this woman a million times to take that shit in the house."

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Marcellus fussed to himself while unloading out of the car and trekking through the rest of Bridges' toys that were scattered around their large yard. After nearly tripping and having to catch his balance more than enough times, he finally made it to the front door and let himself in. The house was dark minus the light in the living room on the table where Bridges was sitting.

Her wild hair was out and free as she sat with her legs tucked beneath her, drawing in her design book. For the past few years, she'd been designing all her runway looks and was damn good at it. Her smooth skin was bare when she looked to him, giving him a glimpse of her peaceful aura.

"You alright?"

Marcellus observed the arched brow that she had raised and nodded.

"Drunk?"

Another nod came as he ambled over to the sofa and fell down next to her. With each foot alternating around the other, he removed his shoes with the tips of his toes and closed his eyes. His head was near Bridges' thigh, so he scooted back until it was nuzzled comfortably on her skin.

"You smell good," he followed with a kiss.

"It would be nice to say the same, but you smell like a pint of Jack Daniels."

"You know I had the show tonight."

Bridges ran her hand through his hair. “I hope you weren’t drunk like this at the show.”

“Nah, I hit the bar afterwards. Needed to unwind.”

The moment those words left his mouth, he felt Bridges stiffen. He knew he’d messed up, but he played it cool, anyway. Unwinding could mean anything, but given the unsteady times they’d been hitting in their relationship, his choice of words should have been better.

“You needing to unwind didn’t have anything to do with Forever being there, did it?”

Marcellus sat up indignantly, ready to lie as hard as he could. “Hell nah. Why would you even say that stupid stuff?”

Immune to his lies, Bridges blinked slowly, not fazed in the least by his outburst. “Hmm, then if it wasn’t her, then maybe it was her man. He was there too, right? Was it them together that had you so tight you needed to sit at the bar into the wee hours of the morning?”

The sarcastic tone she used while tilting her head to the side just long enough to bat her lashes a few times made Marcellus want to ring her neck. Even if she was right, her whole disposition still pissed him off. Her acting like she knew everything when she didn’t was one of the main reasons they hadn’t been able to get on the same page.

“You know me better than that.”

“I used to know you better than that, but ever since, little Miss. Forever has come into the picture, you’ve changed. I saw the way Goody called them out when Forever came on stage. She let the world know that Blue was her sister’s man. I bet that had you stewing, huh?”

Marcellus turned his nose up at her when she began cackling loudly in his face. “You’re being obnoxious for nothing. Stop acting like that. That ain’t even you.”

In the most dramatic fashion, Bridges clutched her chest with her mouth dropped open. “I’m being obnoxious, how? Because I’m calling bullshit? You’re drunk as hell, Marcellus, and it’s probably because of another bitch. Please, save it. This isn’t me, but you coming home drunk as a skunk, is you? Yeah, okay.”

When nothing witty came to mind, Marcellus didn’t bother saying anything. Instead, he lay back down, cuddling as close to her legs as he could get, and closed his eyes. He was sleepy, and his head was spinning out of control.

“Cat got your tongue? Or is it stuck up Forever’s bony ass?”

“You’re being ridiculous right now.”

“No, actually, I’m being exactly how I need to be. I’ve been too slack on you for too long. Ignoring the longing stares in her direction, sitting around looking pitiful whenever she’s near, and barely acknowledging me and my baby because you’re stuck on stupid, but I’m done. If you want her, go get her. Get your things and get out of my house, Marcellus. Me and my babies will be just fine.”

Growing more and more aggravated with the moment, Marcellus lay there, not responding to her mad black woman rant. He didn’t have the energy for it, and she wasn’t going anywhere, so there was no point in pretending like she was.

“I’m serious. You can act like you’re too drunk to speak if you’d like, but I’m done. I’ve watched this go on since you decided to come back home. If I knew you were going to act like this, I could have kept exploring my other options. I’m nobody’s second pick. So, either straighten up, or you’ll be crying over two women instead of one.”

Without an ounce of concern for him, she stood to her feet and walked away. His head hit the sofa cushion harder than he expected, only making his drunkenness that much worse. The room was spinning faster than the cheap rides he and his brothers used to pay for at the local fairs. Desperate to alleviate the rising dizziness the best he could, he sat up and opened his eyes.

For a few moments, he looked around the living room at his home. Outside of his son's toys, the place was clean, comfortable, and well decorated. The entire ambiance was serene and should have been a place he was happy to come to, but it just wasn't. He couldn't explain it, nor did he want to. It just was what it was. He sat there for a little longer before picking up the phone and dialing Goody. He'd forgot to check in with her to make sure she'd gotten home.

"Put my sister down, Blue! I'm not playing with your ass!" She screamed loudly before giving him her attention. "Hello?"

Marcellus sat stunned by the fact that Blue and Forever were still together, and clearly having fun while he sat idly by pining over his loss.

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“Money? You there?”

“Oh yeah, yeah. I’m here. I was just checking to see did you made it home, but I can see that you did.”

“Yeah, I been here. I left when you did, remember? You walked me out.”

Marcellus frowned because he couldn’t remember seeing her leave. Maybe he was drunker than he’d thought.

“Not really.”

“What, nigga? You drunk?”

“Hell yeah,” he wiped his hand over his face lazily before snatching it off when he heard Forever’s loud, squealing laughter.

His stomach churned because she only laughed like that when she was really happy. He used to make her happy.

“Zurich! Stop gang! You gon’ wake up the baby.”

“Don’t try to bring my niece up because you know I’m on your ass.”

Blue’s voice made the hairs on the back of Marcellus’ neck stand up.

“That’s my fucking niece,” he grumbled to himself.

Automatically thinking of Bridges' term from earlier, he was stewing. He could feel his entire body getting warm, even the palms of his hands.

"Aight, Goody. I'll catch you later."

"Wait! Where you at? You made it home?"

"Yeah, I'm here," he told her as he noticed her background growing quieter.

"You straight? Or you in your feelings? Because you walked me out to your brother like you always do when he doesn't come. Now you're calling me, not remembering nothing. What's going on?"

Marcellus exhaled heavily because, though Goody was his girl, he really didn't want to talk to her about his feelings for Forever. She'd made her standpoint crystal clear, and he knew for a fact that she wasn't budging. As she shouldn't. He'd handled Forever so recklessly, that he was surprised Goody even still fucked with him. Not only was she mean, but she was overprotective of her sister and didn't mind letting it be known.

"I'm sure you know the answer to that, but I'm good."

"You lying, but you'll be alright after while. Heartbreak only lasts as long as you let it."

"I feel like shit."

"You fucking should. It never feels good watching somebody you love be loved by someone else. Especially when they tried with you first. It sucks monkey balls."

"Damn, just rip the band-aid off."

“I hope you didn’t think I was finna coddle your grown ass. You made it like this, so be the big boy I know you know can be, and just take this chin check and keep it moving.”

Marcellus balled his lips into his mouth, contemplating his next words. He’d known Goody wouldn’t provide any method of comfort, but he hadn’t expected her to happily make it worse.

“Listen, Money, you my nigga like no other, but this isn’t something you can change. I know you like to micromanage shit, but this isn’t something you can do like that. The best advice I can give you is to just stay away from her until you feel like you can handle it. You have Bridges’ pretty ass over there. Stay in her face until you can get over Rabbit.”

“I don’t want to get over her,” his voice raised some as he removed the hand he’d had pressed on the bridge of his nose.

When his eyes landed on Bridges, his chest sank into his back. She was perched on the door frame with one hand covering her mouth and the other resting on her stomach. The water in her eyes pooled, but didn’t fall.

“Bridges, baby,” his voice was low and empathetic as he summoned her.

“Marcellus, you got to get your shit together. You fucking up all over the place. This isn’t the Money I know. Please find whatever it is that you need to do, and do that. Go holla at your wife. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.”

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He nodded and hung up the phone to chase Bridges into their room. When he reached the threshold of their bedroom, he could hear her in the bathroom gurgling. He rushed to her aid. She was crouched in front of the toilet, vomiting harshly.

“Baby, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that.”

Unable to speak, she continued spewing the contents of her stomach before flushing the toilet and standing weakly to her feet. With her light skin flushed red, she leaned over the sink in her pink pajama set and dashed her face with water. Her red eyes were sunken and swollen from obvious tears.

“Please leave, Marcellus.”

“No, I want to be here,” he rushed to her too fast, and had to lean on the counter to keep from getting dizzy.

“Stop lying to me and just go. I don’t want you here.”

“Baby,” he tried grabbing her, but she stepped out of his grasp and tried to leave the bathroom.

His strong hands on her arms stopped her. “Bridges, please. I’m just in a really fucked up place right now. I got so much shit on my mind that I can’t think straight.”

“That’s your problem, not mine. I have a son that needs his mother, and another one growing inside of me, that also needs me to be healthy. You cause me nothing but heartache. Leave my house, and do not,” she gritted her teeth while staring into his

weary eyes. “And I mean this with all my heart, do not contact me or come by here until you’ve gotten yourself together, and even then, come as a co-parent. Any love stuff between us is over. You’re not about to keep playing over me like I’m nothing.”

That time, when she pulled away, he let her. With slumped shoulders and a bowed head, Marcellus stood in the middle of the bathroom floor, unsure of what move to make next. His life was truly in shambles, and it was apparent that nothing he said or did to either of the women was going to work.

“Fuck,” he groaned before leaving the bathroom, their bedroom, and the house.

With no destination in mind, he got into his car, way past the legal limit of alcohol, and took off into the night. The responsible part of him knew he had no business driving in the state he was in, but trying to tell his heart that was a bust. The feeling he was harboring was foreign, and it was drowning out all his good sense, because none of that mattered. Nothing mattered. Not even life. What was the point of even living if he couldn’t have the woman he loved?

“Fuck it,” Marcellus growled to himself as he pressed the gas pedal to the floor. “Fuck everybody! Fuck Forever, Fuck Bridges, Fuck Goody and that bitch ass jailbird. Just fucking fuck it!” he screamed in a fashion that was so unlike him, he didn’t even recognize himself. Full to the top with anger and pain, he released a few tears while swerving in and out of the darkness. “Mama, I’m sorry.” He whispered while watching his speedometer pass the one-hundred mark. “I love you, ma. I’m sorry.”

I trust that you’ll be different

“Nigga, what the hell you over there smiling so hard for?” Pat glanced over at Blue as they cruised further down the highway.

With the same smirk he'd been wearing moments prior still on his face, Blue grinned at Pat guiltily. "The fuck you watching me for?"

"This my shit. I can look where I wanna damn look."

"And nigga, I can smile if I want to." Blue sat back in the seat again and allowed the warm wind from outside to brush against his face.

He'd just landed back in Miami, and he was missing his baby already. It had taken an act of Congress to even get him to leave her, but he and she both had business to handle and couldn't get it done laid up in Goody's guest room. Though their time together had been everything and more, Blue wasn't a fan of being a guest in someone else's home for too long. Even if the home was big enough for them not to see anybody but each other, if that's how they wanted it.

But I love my sister. I want to be here with them too. Being with everybody I love at once makes me happy.

Forever's soft voice had convinced him to continue laying up at her sister's crib every time he suggested getting a hotel room or an Airbnb while they were in town, and though he'd preferred to be in their own spaces, crashing with Goody hadn't been too bad. The only bad thing about his time in Georgia had been leaving her.

"You might as well stop looking sad. You knew we had to dip," Blue squeezed Forever's hand, prompting her to look up at him.

"I know, but I'm not ready for you to go yet."

"I'm not ready to be away from you at all, but we ain't got no other choice right now. You've got to get yourself back to work, and I have to see what's going on in the city for a minute."

Blue watched Forever's head of dark hair fall when she dropped her head again. Seeing her mope around as he pulled her through the airport behind him made leaving her that much harder, but what he'd said was true. They lived on two different ends of the world, with two different lives, and whether it be for a long or short time, they had to separate for a little bit.

"You want to come with me?" He leaned over enough to see her face.

She nodded her head slowly, still looking at the floor.

"Aye, I'm up here."

Her beautiful, dark face turned in his direction, landing sad brown eyes on him. Her mouth was poked out in a pout, and her body language screamed discontent.

"What day do you have to go back to work?"

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“Wednesday. I’m going to see Azerie tomorrow, and then I’ll fly out so I can prepare my mind for work. Being with you makes me forget about everything in my life. I almost forgot I was a lawyer. All I wanna be is your girlfriend.”

A throaty chuckle left his lips as he pulled them to a stop in front of TSA. “That’s all you ever have to be, baby. Quit whenever you want. Already know I’m trying to take care of you for the rest of our days.”

She smiled, but her eyes watered at the same time, confusing him. He didn’t know whether she was happy or sad, and apparently neither did she, because her arms were crossed over her chest as she stomped, but cried at the same time.

“Zurich,” she whined, prompting him to pull her into his arms.

“Shh,” his lips were buried in her hair immediately, while he gripped her in a tight hug.

With him being much taller than her, he had to lean over some, covering her forehead with his beard.

“I want you to come live in Miami with me, baby. I know it’s a lot to decide, so you don’t have to answer me right now, but I want you to come.”

“As your girlfriend?”

“As my everything.” He pulled away and eyed her. “Come to the city and be my baby full time, Gang.”

“I’m your baby full time anyway,” she rolled her neck while he wiped her tears away.

His lips sank against her forehead softly. “Damn right. Come home... be with daddy.”

The corners of her mouth spread into a smile before she rushed herself back into his arms and rested her head on his chest. Seconds later, he could hear her sniffing and had to laugh.

“Baby, you crashing out right now. You crying like we ain’t gon’ never see each other again.”

“What if we don’t? You just said you’re going to see what’s up in the city. What if your old women see you and take you from me? You already know I don’t like to fight. It makes me nervous.”

“The fuck you on? Can’t nobody take shit from either one of us. I ain’t going for that shit. Not ever... and you don’t have to fight. I got all that.”

Her soft laughter was what he’d been hoping for, so as soon as he saw her smiling, he took that as his cue to kiss her up.

“I love you and that’s it. I’m with you. Can’t nobody take shit from you or I’m a fuck em’ up. Bitches included.”

More laughter came, making him smile harder.

“Aye, you turning me into one of them smiling ass niggas, and I don’t like it. Shit feels lame.”

They both fell into a fit of laughter after his remark, with him stopping first.

“Go catch your flight, Zurich.”

“I’m only going if you promise you’ll come live with me soon.”

The two of them stood staring at one another as the other travelers moved around them, going in all kinds of directions. Even with the room being completely busy with other conversations and activities, all went silent as their eyes connected.

“I promise.”

Blue didn’t bother with any talking, only touching. When he hugged her that time, he picked her up and spun her around as she circled his waist with her legs. His hands dropped to her thighs, holding her up and caressing her soft skin at the same time.

“I love you.”

“I love you too, Forever Rose.”

Her arms tightening around his neck almost made his eyes water, but he held it back. She’d already turned him into a smiling ass nigga. He didn’t need to be a crying ass nigga too. When he finally lowered her back to her feet, they said their goodbyes once more before he headed for his gate while she headed for the exit.

I want to stay with you forever, Blue-Blue.

Blue smiled again as he reminisced on his earlier departure from his baby. She’d whispered those words in his ear just before releasing her hold on him, and it had been everything he’d needed to hear. After bullshit after bullshit with other women, and the debacle that occurred with him and Journey, love had been locked outside of his heart, but he’d be damned if his lil’ chocolate baby hadn’t kicked the door down and let herself in.

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“You know something,” Pat’s voice got his attention again. “You one sucka ass nigga. You over there daydreaming and shit.”

Blue’s leg bounced up and down as he chuckled, fighting the feeling of happiness bubbling over in his chest as he thought about Forever.

“Fuck you nigga. I’m in love.”

“You ain’t got to tell me. I see that shit for myself,” Pat laughed first, with Blue following. “I’m happy for you though, my nigga.”

“Appreciate it. Now all we got to do is get somebody to like your old granddaddy ass.”

Pat frowned while shaking his head. “I’m good.”

“You can’t stay single all your life,”

“Hell, if I can’t. These women be addicted to trauma and toxic shit. I don’t have time for either. I’m too old for that. Any woman I get, gon’ have to wanna sit her ass down and behave.”

Blue cracked a smile.

“Shid, I’ve had my eye on this one girl for a good minute now, but I pushed up on her the other day and she was on some scarred shit from her ex-nigga and came at me wrong, so fuck it.” He shrugged.

Blue nodded because he understood why Pat felt the way he felt, but he still wanted more for his dog. Especially after seeing how good life could feel with the right woman.

“Don’t give up on her yet. Forever still show scars from her past every now and then too, but that’s just how women are. If you want her, put the press on her ass. She’ll crack.”

Pat didn’t say anything, but Blue knew he’d heard him. Not necessarily in the mood to talk either, Blue didn’t press for conversation. Instead, he looked out of the window and considered his next moves. He’d always known him, and Forever being in different places wasn’t going to work for him, but after leaving her at the airport, he knew it for sure now. He had to get his girl out there with him.

“You trying to slide to Yayo’s spot with me?” Pat questioned while pulling to a stop in Blue’s driveway. “That lil’ party for his birthday tonight. Know if we don’t pull up, he gon’ be on his hoe shit.”

“Yeah. Let me shower and shit and I’ll slide,” Blue told him while spotting Zurena’s car in his driveway.

He’d just been about to tell Pat he’d holla at him later when Zurena got out of the car. Like she always did, she looked a little disturbed, but she smiled and waved anyway.

“Let me get out and see what this girl got going on. It’s always some bullshit.” Blue mumbled while opening the passenger door and holding his hand out for a dap. “If she wasn’t my sister, I’d split her shit just for having an attitude.”

Pat slapped palms with him but turned the truck off anyway. “Hold up, I’ll just wait on you. We can head that way together... maybe even perk your mean ass sister up.”

The two of them were out of Pat's truck and headed up Blue's long driveway in no time. Zurena held her arms out for a hug as soon as Blue got closer.

"I missed you," her voice muffled some as he tucked her beneath his arm in a hug.

"I missed you too, but that don't mean pop your stalking ass up at my spot."

Zurena giggled as they walked toward the door.

"When your location showed you were close, I came over," her shoulders shrugged.

"Big sister behavior,"

"No. They call that psycho stalker behavior, baby girl."

The siblings were laughing when Pat walked close enough to be on the opposite side of Blue. "What's going on, Zurena?"

"Hey," she waved with her gaze focused on the front door of Blue's house.

Upon entering his home, Blue headed to the back of the house while Zurena and Pat were left alone in the living room. The silence was anything but comfortable, but Pat didn't acknowledge it. Instead, he took a seat on the loveseat near the window and relaxed backward so that he could admire the way Zurena's denim shorts hugged her curves.

Thicker than the average woman, with big bowlegs and wide hips, Zurena was the definition of a stallion. A full-grown horse at its finest. Every accent of her body matched the other. Her ass-to-leg ratio was perfect and gave way to how good she ate. Her stomach wasn't the flattest, but that was just how Pat liked his women.

Not fat at all, but healthy, with a few extra pounds settled around her midsection and

back. Her wild black hair was just as curly and free as it always was, but in a nice way. It didn't appear untamed, but more so along the lines of the little wash and go style that many black women were gravitating to these days. Long and thick, with soft curls resting on her back and shoulders.

Much like his boy Blue, Zurena's skin was a different kind of black than most dark-skinned people. It didn't mimic chocolate, but an onyx diamond instead. Zurich's was the same way, but of course, Zurena's looked better. It was moisturized and somewhat glowing as she stood facing the wall, doing everything she could to ignore him. Pat smirked because it was comical.

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“I guess you’ve never saw those pictures before?” He finally interrupted the one-sided staring contest she’d been having with the wall of childhood pictures of her and Blue.

“It’s been a while since I have.” Her eyes blinked over her shoulder when she turned just enough to make eye contact. “Problem?”

“Not at all. Take your time.”

She batted those long, curled lashes at him once more before going back to the photos. The moment she stepped closer and caused her hips to turn toward him just a little more, Pat licked his lips and looked away. He needed to keep his thoughts at bay. The last time he’d been alone with her, things didn’t go how he’d envisioned, and he didn’t want to scare her too far away to come back.

It was just so hard when he was so attracted to her. Zurena wasn’t like the typical women that occupied his time; she was a real grown woman with a real grown woman body and demeanor. It may have been bruised and somewhat tainted, but he could feel her energy every time she was near, and it wouldn’t stop pulling at him.

Right then, it was like some sort of gravity hold that wouldn’t release him as he sat back, fawning over her peacefulness. When she leaned over to observe the photos at the bottom, Pat stood to his feet. He needed to take a piss and a few deep breaths before he decided to shoot his shot again, and she slap that shit out of the gym like last time.

He was up and moving past her when she stood up and took a faint step back to

steady herself, bumping right into him.

“My fault, Beautiful,” his palms circled her arms to keep her upright on her feet.

Time stood still when she looked over her shoulder at him once more. Pat didn't know what it was about her sparkling eyes, finding him over her shoulder, that he loved so much, but it was a deep love. One that he could feel being a weakness if he didn't put an end to it soon. Her look was so intense and longing, as if she was beckoning him to come into her dark place and free her from her current tortures.

“You got to stop looking at me like that, beautiful. It's shaking a nigga.”

A pregnant pause accompanied the space between them as she continued peering at him as if he hadn't just warned her. Pat squinted his eyes and grabbed her hand with just the tips of his fingers. His touch helped her find her voice, and she cleared her throat while simultaneously moistening her lips.

“Like... like what?” she stammered while pushing some of her thick coils behind her ear.

Pat's eyes followed her movement before diverting back to her smooth skin that probably tasted even better than it looked.

“Like you need me to save you.”

He watched her swallow and waited with bated breath. When she didn't respond, he brushed her ear with his lips and whispered, “I will. Just tell me when.”

Not waiting another moment, he left her in the living room and found the restroom. By the time he reentered the room where the feminine energy was doing its best to suffocate him, Zurena had taken a seat on the sofa opposite of where he'd been

sitting. This time, when the silence settled over the room, he didn't feel too out of place. Of course, the smell of her perfume and subtle sounds she released while watching something on her phone alerted him to her presence, but he controlled himself much better.

Calm, but with his eyes still on her, he caught her every time she tried to sneak a glance, and it eventually made her snicker quietly. Though he didn't laugh, he rendered her a friendly smile just as Blue rounded the corner, dressed and ready.

"Aight, let's get it."

Zurena stood first. "Where we going?"

"To Yayo's spot. He having a lil' party. You rolling?"

"Nah, I'll probably just head home. I'm not even dressed for nothing like that."

Blue and Pat frowned at her immediately, but only Blue spoke. "Why you always trying to sit in the house? You need to get out and enjoy yourself. That might give your puppy dog face ass something to smile about."

"Hush, Zurich. It's not that. I just don't really have nothing on." Her head dropped as she pulled at the tight fitting denim and black top that stopped right atop her shorts.

"Nothing is wrong with what you got on. You look good. Come on. Ain't nobody gon' be there anyway but the gang... please?"

Her smile curved her face, bringing one from both Blue and Pat. The way the warmth highlighted her cheeks made Pat glad that he was positioned behind Blue. If he saw him gawking at his sister like that, the nigga might choose violence.

“I guess I’ll go.” She grabbed her things and headed for the door. “It’s not like I have nothing else to do anyway.”

Blue expressed how happy he was that she was tagging along while walking to set his alarm. The moment he was out of earshot, Pat rubbed his bottom lip while allowing his eyes to trail up her big, pretty legs. Since she was doing everything to avoid his stare, he didn’t get to whisper anything to her until she was on her way out the door, and hurried out behind her.

“You look beautiful... fucking beautiful. I love what you got on.”

She blushed like crazy, and it made Pat happy that he’d expressed his feelings to her.

“Thanks, Pat.”

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“No, thanks needed. Should be hearing that shit every day. All that pretty hair,” he shook his head dramatically, making her giggle. “You the one and don’t even know it.”

Zurena caught his gaze as she began giving him that look again. They were headed down the driveway toward his truck, and he’d been about to look away, but her pull on him had him stuck.

“Stop, before I run in with my cape trying to save your ass, and you ain’t even ready yet.”

As if scared that he might actually do it, Zurena stopped her eye contact immediately and made her way to the backseat of the truck.

“Hop in the front with me.”

“What about Blue? His legs are too long for the backseat.”

“I’ll take that for today, but you’ll be up here soon.” Pat winked at her, drawing another one of those day-brightening smiles before opening the back door for her and helping her in.

Pat silently thanked God for making thick women when she stepped on the bar to step into the cab of his truck and her ass raised to his eye level. Not paying him the least bit of attention, she moved around, situating herself on the backseat before reaching to close the door and catching him standing there stuck. Probably looking like a fool, chewing his bottom lip. That time no words were exchanged, only an inquiring gaze

from him and blushing from her.

“You see what you doing?”

Her teeth showed when she smiled that time.

“I really don’t.”

“That’s even better. That means you got me weak in the knees naturally.”

When she pushed him back while trying to hide her smile, Pat finally laughed a little before closing the door. His eyes landed on Blue as soon as he turned to get in. He raised his eyebrows as he strolled coolly to his side of the truck. Since he didn’t even know what was going on yet, Pat didn’t bother acknowledging his silent question. He couldn’t speak on something he didn’t even know about... yet. Because, whether Zurena wanted him to or not, he was coming for her.

The noise in the house was well above what it should have been, as was the capacity, but Blue didn’t sweat it. It had been years since he’d been at a house party, and he was more than happy to be there. With the gang any and everywhere they could be, he chilled comfortably in the corner, sipping from the neck of his beer. He’d already faced two blunts and was feeling the potency of it, so adding the beer had him just where he needed to be.

His limbs were relaxed, and the buzz had him feeling so mellow that all he wanted to do was vibe to the music and watch everybody else have a good time. Never having been the life of the party anyway, he was happy that his boys weren’t pressuring him to move or do anything he didn’t want to do. They were all either on the card table, playing dice, or caked up with the women in attendance.

Since Blue had no interest in gambling or fraternizing with any of the women, there wasn't much for him to do but wait for Pat to finish shooting dice. He was in the corner talking loudly and beating all the young niggas out of their bread.

“Nigga, still wet behind the ears, but think he can play with me. Get your young ass out my face!” he yelled to Jet while picking up the money he'd just beat him out of. “Which one of y'all other niggas can get off your mama titty long enough to get next?”

“Me nigga! Talk that shit to a real nigga,” Rico stood up from the card table and walked over to the men.

Blue watched him stumble just a tad and shook his head. Unlike Blue, Rico wasn't a person who could handle being inebriated. He always had to get sloppy and start doing silly shit. Although it hadn't happened yet, Blue knew it wasn't far away. The only good thing about his foolishness that night was that it wouldn't cause any trouble. He was around family and everyone of them knew how he got when weed and alcohol was involved.

“Here comes this punk ass nigga,” Blue whispered to Zurena, who'd found a seat next to him and hadn't moved since.

She'd been nursing the same bottle of beer all night and chopping it up with him since they'd gotten there, and Blue was truly happy about it. Before anything else, she was his nigga and best friend. Whenever she wasn't on her bullshit, they tripped out and had the best time when they were together.

“Look at him, bout to fall already. I hope he bust his shit open so I can laugh.”

Blue looked from Rico to Zurena before the two of them laughed together. He'd assumed they were cackling low, but when a few sets of eyes shifted to them, he

realized they weren't as quiet as he'd thought. Rico, Pat, and the two other niggas crowded around the dice game all looked at them.

"Hell y'all look-a-like ass people laughing at?" Rico taunted.

After sipping his beer, Blue's low voice rumbled, "Yo drunk ass."

Rico's smile was sinister as his eyes went from Blue to Zurena before shrugging. "Don't be mad with me cuz I know how to have fun, while y'all sitting over there hiding out."

"Not hiding, just chilling." Zurena raised her beer, and Blue clinked his bottle with hers.

"Is that right?" He challenged, standing up straighter. "Yall two sneaky muthafuckas call it chilling, I call it hiding. Only people with shit to hide are as quiet as y'all two. Everybody moving around having a good time, and y'all ducked off in the corner whispering like Boy Scouts."

Blue cleared his throat, trying to control the rising tide that was threatening to blow his high. Normally, he would let it roll off him when the gang was cracking jokes, but that was when it was just on him. Not his sister. Zurena was to herself and had been minding her business all night, so if Rico's banter continued to a place Blue didn't like, he was getting his shit rocked. His Auntie MaryAnn, His Forever, and His sister. Three reasons a nigga could die, so knocking Rico the fuck out wouldn't take a second thought.

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“Fuck you, nigga. Play dice,” Blue warned coolly, already feeling his buzz fading.

The way Rico’s hands went up in mock surrender while his smile widened, let Blue know to gon’ and get ready to slap his ass. Moving his feet from the bar on the stool to flat on the floor, Blue resituated his arms so that his beer was in his weak hand. He needed his dominant hand on go, because if the next thing out of Rico’s mouth was towards Zurena in any way, he was going to be picking himself up off the floor.

“Just like a nigga to get sidetracked to keep from getting his ass whooped,” Pat intervened.

Outside of Zurena, he knew Blue the best and, depending on the topic, he knew him better than his sister did.

“You wish I was scared, go.”

Just like that, the party went back to where it had come from. The music was playing loudly, the vibe was back right, and Blue was busy texting his girl.

Mine Forever: Who told you to go to a party? You better have your eyes closed.

Blue: Closed why baby?

Mine Forever: So, you can’t see no other BITCHES

Blue: What I tell you about that cussing? Want me to fuck you up?

Mine Forever: I see you didn't say anything about those other girls *rolls eyes*

Blue: Girls? What are those? I don't know nothing but you baby

Mine Forever: Cute...real cute. I guess you still mine

Blue: Forever and after. Stay up so I can talk to you when I leave here

Blue was waiting on Forever to respond when he felt Zurena leaning over his arm.

"Who you texting, Forever?"

He nodded while tapping away, demanding her to tell him what was taking so long to text back.

"Should have known," her tone wasn't as nasty as it usually was, which made Blue look up into her smiling face. "What? I'm happy for you. She's cool. I'll still drag her by her big ass teeth, but I kinda like her a lil' bit."

"Damn, you had to check my baby teeth like that?"

"They're fucking huge. I know you love her, but you can't miss them big rabbit ass teeth in her mouth."

If Blue didn't know his sister's heart, he would have let her know to keep Forever and her teeth out of her mouth, but he chilled. She was finally loosening up, and he didn't want to ruin it off a few remarks made out of misplaced jealousy.

"That's her nickname," he chuckled.

"Rabbit?" Zurena burst out laughing, slapping his arm and thigh like all black people

did when they were really tickled. “You lying?”

When Blue shook his head, she laughed harder. Before long, they were both laughing. His comedy coming from the sheer joy of having good times with his best girl once again, and hers probably the same. It may have stemmed off Forever’s back, but it was long gone and now replaced with the love and friendship they’d always shared.

“Uh oh, the twins dun joined the party!”

Zurena’s laughter faded when Rico spoke again. Blue felt her rigidness, and it pissed him off, so instead of being the bigger person that time, he finished his beer and sat his bottle on the bar next to him. He’d just rubbed his hands together and was preparing to stand when the girl coming around the corner caught his attention.

“What’s up y’all?” Dylan yelled loudly, moving around the room, hugging everybody she passed.

Blue grumbled inwardly because if Dylan was there, that only meant one thing.

“I know the party didn’t start without us,” Journey made herself seen, confirming Blue’s gut feeling.

She’d sauntered around the corner behind her sister, smiling and waving like she was running for mayor. She and Dylan were both very pretty women and were dressed impressively, but they still annoyed Blue without trying. Annoyed by their presence alone, he voluntarily took the beer from Zurena’s hand and finished it off before looking everywhere but at either of them. They were like twin vultures. His peace would run for the hills the moment one of them noticed him.

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“Hell nah, know it ain’t a party without the gang,” Wale encouraged their ghetto fabulous behavior as he passed them and headed for the bar where Blue was sitting.

Naturally, their eyes followed him and landed directly where they didn’t need to be. It was sad how thirsty they both were when it came to him. Embarrassing even. They wore matching smiles that oozed thirst; however, only Journey spoke.

“Blue, what’s good, my boy? You hiding?”

“Told this nigga,” Rico chimed in while dropping the dice. “Nigga! I’m up. Give me my bread!”

More than thankful for the uproar from the dice game, Blue ignored Journey’s attempt at conversation and tapped Zurena’s leg.

“You good?”

She nodded, making her hair move over her shoulders. “I would have liked to finish my beer before I left, but I guess you took care of that.”

“Man, I’m trying to stay calm and off Rico’s ass. But now that Beavis and Butthead are here, it’s really time to split.”

The high-pitched squeal Zurena released while falling into his shoulder laughing made him laugh too.

“Ole dumb and dumber head ass bitches,” he egged her on, making her gasp to catch

her breath.

“Damn, I wanna laugh,” Rico’s tone was anything but joking that time.

Blue’s whole face frowned as he finally stood from his seat. He was tired of that hating ass nigga. “Bruh, get off my dick. You been in a nigga shit since I got here. The fuck you on?”

Blue’s words were nasty, but the calm way he’d relayed it would make you wonder if he was serious or not. His statement had definitely been fighting words, but could be ignored if the receiver didn’t really want to fight. It was the kind of rude that you had to let digest to decide if you felt disrespected or not.

“I was just trying to have some fun. You and ya sister over there in ya lil’ sibling bubble and shit. Like y’all not at a whole party,”

“And you want to be included?” Zurena questioned, with a hint of confusion.

Rico’s eyes went to her and narrowed some. Blue noticed and tried to redirect the trouble Rico was summoning his way.

“Before you respond to her, ask yourself, are you ready for me to fuck you up about it?”

“Aye, y’all chill this shit out. Everybody enjoying themselves. Blue, get you another beer, Rico, stop babysitting them dice, so I can whoop your ass and go home.”

Pat’s words took a moment to settle over the room, but everybody knew not to test him, so they did what was instructed.

“Damn baby boy, you must not fuck with me no more?” Journey wedged herself

between him and Zurena, leaning against the wall like she was there to stay.

“Nah.”

“For real? It’s like that?”

Blue nodded once.

“It must be your new girlfriend? She’s pretty, skinny as fuck, but pretty.”

It was quiet for a moment, Blue refusing to acknowledge her attempt at getting a rise out of him.

“She’s tiny like a kid... but cute, I guess. Can’t hate on that,” she continued.

“But you’re over here fucking hating.” Zurena snapped at her. “Bitch, he knows how she looks, that’s his lil’ shit.”

Blue knew it wouldn’t be long before she let Journey have a piece of her mind. Zurena hated her and everything that she’d done to him, and didn’t mind letting it be known.

“Zurena, please don’t start with me tonight. I wasn’t even talking to you.”

“You start with Zurich, then you start with Zurena. Everybody in the world knows that.” She turned on her stool so that she was facing Journey.

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Blue watched the two of them face off, with Journey retreating first. He chuckled quietly because Journey knew, before she'd tried it, that she hadn't wanted an ounce of smoke with Zurena. His sister was quiet for a reason, and that reason was to keep herself out of trouble. She'd been a fighter forever and had no problem throwing hands with anybody.

A solid built woman with street skills, there was no way a woman would ever engage in anything physical with her and win. Not ever. Another reason he'd been hovering over Forever like a helicopter. He liked to believe his sister wouldn't fight the love of his life, but he couldn't be too sure, and couldn't do Forever like that. It wouldn't even be right. Journey, on the other hand, could get wiped, and he wouldn't pause it for one second.

"I wasn't even starting with him. I was just speaking."

"But shouldn't you be over there in your new nigga face? I mean, you running up behind your old one with no shame. Damn bitch. Have some class or at least some home training." Zurena faced Rico and looked him up and down. "You ain't got no more of that mad energy for your hoe? Attention been over here all night, but as soon as your baby mama gets over here, you're mute? That's wild, ain't it, bruh?" She looked around Journey so that she could see Blue.

"Hell yeah," his deep voice was low, but she heard it, as did everyone else.

"I always got energy for her, why? You mad?" Rico challenged.

His posture had changed to one more combative, and if Blue wasn't mistaken, he

could see his hands balled into fists. He leaned forward, steadying his vision to make sure he saw what he saw. Oh yeah, that nigga was on one. Hands clinched tightly as his teeth gritted against one another.

“Never that boo,” Zurena waved him off.

“Sounds like a hater to me,” Journey slid in just before catching one to the mouth.

Zurena stood up and swung once more while simultaneously grasping a handful of Journey’s hair, catching her in the eye before Blue snatched her up. Hell broke loose quickly, but sparked an even bigger fire when the sound of Rico slapping Zurena echoed throughout the room. Blue couldn’t even remember letting her go or picking Rico up, but the moment he slammed him into the wall, leaving a hole, he realized what was going on. Fist to face was all that could be heard as he leaned over, beating the shit out of Rico.

Screams and yells could be heard from women behind him, but Blue didn’t stop. Rico had life fucked up if he thought he’d ever slap Zurena and not get his ass handed to him for it.

“The fuck you thought this was?” Blue questioned before standing up just enough to remove his gun and bust Rico across the head with it, repeatedly.

Blue was in an unbreakable zone that was clearly hard to penetrate because all he saw was blood and rage. The pleas for him to stop could be heard in the distance, but he wasn’t ready to stop yet. Rico needed to learn his lesson.

“Blue, lighten up bruh! That’s your boy, just let it go.” Dylan’s fake ass voice finally broke his trance.

With a screwed-up scowl on his face, Blue pulled himself away from Rico to find

Journey and Dylan standing next to him. A guilty look rested on Journey's face as she blinked away from him and down at Rico.

"Fuck you looking crazy for now? That's who you chose, right?"

"Blue," she grabbed his arm. "I'm sorry, I never meant for this to happen. I didn't think you were coming home."

"And you dick hopped before they closed the cell. Y'all been flaw. Didn't take you a week to flip," Zurena spoke from the grip Pat had her in.

Instead of responding, Journey rolled her eyes at Zurena and squeezed Blue's hand again. "Blue, please."

"You begging like your nigga ain't on the ground bleeding out," Wale joked, making everybody chuckle a little.

"What you expect from a bitch that was willingly a pass around for the gang?" Zurena tossed out again, trying her hardest to break free of Pat's grip.

"Girl, shut up!" Dylan yelled.

"Everybody in here knows I'll beat both of y'all up at the same time. Stay in a child's place before you get in something you can't get out of."

Zurena had barely gotten her sentence out before Pat began walking her toward the door, letting everybody know it was time for them to go. He'd almost made it past the sisters, but wasn't fast enough and gave Zurena that space she needed to slap Journey. The sound was almost as loud as when Rico hit her. A satisfied smirk covered Zurena's face.

With a raised brow, she happily taunted her. “Don’t be shocked, bitch. Come fight. Or are you gon’ get your nigga to do it for you?”

“Slap that hoe again, Rena,” Blue encouraged, prompting her to swing again.

Faster than he’d ever saw her move, Journey stepped out of reach, leaving Dylan to catch Zurena’s blow. A few gasps could be heard around the room as Dylan grabbed her face and leaned over to nurse herself.

“Man, get this ghetto ass Phil and Lil up out the spot. They fucking up the mood with all this fighting.” Wale joked again to lighten the mood.

Pat was happy to follow the instructions, nodding his head toward the door, urging Blue to follow him.

The three of them were out of the door and heading to the truck in no time. Once all were loaded back inside, Pat pulled out in a hurry. After Blue forced himself to calm down, the ride back to his house was filled with laughter and banter about their encounter, which helped him keep a positive enough attitude not to kill Rico’s punk ass. Even though he still planned to have another talk with him once they sobered up.

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It could be civilized, or it didn't have to be; either was fine with Blue. Rico had been owed that ass whooping for far too long, but Blue had allowed sleeping dogs to lie. The nigga clearly had other plans tonight. Him and his bitch. Blue could still remember the day he found out that Journey was pregnant by that fool.

It had nearly broken him, but he was in prison, looking to never come home, so he gave them the benefit of the doubt. It was funny how those feelings changed the moment he came home, and the disloyalty was being carried out right under his nose. The only thing that had been keeping him off their ass was his Forever. Forever. That was his saving grace for real, whether she knew it or not.

“Y'all good or do I need to walk y'all to the door?” Pat's eyes shifted between Blue and Zurena.

“Fuck you and goodnight,” Blue answered while pushing the door open and sliding out.

Zurena's door came next. Once she was steady on her feet, they walked up his driveway and over to her car. Blue watched her open her door before turning to face him for a hug. They embraced, him holding onto her a little longer.

“Thank you for always having my back, Rena. I know I don't have to thank you because you my sister and shit, but I'm doing it anyway because I want you to know I appreciate you.”

“You may be bigger than me now, but you're still my baby, Zurich. I'll always slap bitches about you.” Her laughter was low, and it made him smile. “Just like I know

you'll up the strap and pistol whoop a nigga bout me." She tittered with him, only smirking in return.

"Fasho that. Love you. Hit me when you make it home, because we got to talk about why that nigga felt comfortable enough to put his hands on you." Blue paused, giving her a knowing look. "You ain't got to tell me tonight, but you coming up off that info real soon."

Zurena nodded solemnly before getting into her car and driving out of his yard. Blue watched her until she was gone, then let himself into his house. With a hot shower on his mind, he relocated to his master bathroom, stripped from his clothes, and was about to get in, but was stopped by the ringing of his doorbell.

"Who the fuck?" he frowned while covering himself with a towel.

In somewhat of a hurry, he trekked back to the door. The moment he saw Journey's face on his camera, his frown deepened. She'd done enough for one night, and he was tired of her. Blue didn't hit women, but as angry as she'd made him at the house party was still very prevalent, and he wasn't sure he might not slap her around for the theatrics.

More knocking prompted him to open the door. When he came into view, her eyes trailed up and down his chest, stopping back on his face once she was done with her little once over.

"What's good, why you here?"

She sighed heavily, pulling at her hair while taking a step closer to him. "I owe you an apology, Blue."

"No, you don't. I'm good. Get the fuck on."

“Yes, I do. Whether you want it or not, it’s necessary.”

Blue looked around behind her, making sure she was alone before zoning back in on the distressed look on her face.

“Can I come in? I promise I just want to apologize and explain... can you at least let me do that?”

With his eyebrows still knitted deeply together, he squinted at her for a while, trying to determine the sincerity before making up his mind. It wasn’t an issue on whether or not he’d fuck her, because that was a definite no. He’d never in his life do that again, but that was the physical holdup. The mental holdup was his problem. Always had been. He’d be lying if he said he’d never wondered how she’d given up on him so easily, and for his boy at that. It had been torturous to know he’d showered her with his best and she’d still tossed him to the side without a second thought.

“You got five minutes.”

If he would have known the type of bullshit she was on, he would have left her outside on the porch, but like he did with the rest of his life lessons, he’d learn the hard way.

You see right through me

“Put it in your mouth.”

“Noooo.”

“Why are you acting like we’ve never done this before? Put it in there, just the tip.”

With her hand on his, Goody gazed up at Jerrico with her mouth hanging slightly

ajar.

“Come on, taste it... just get the white stuff off the end.”

Forever watched Goody’s eyes close a little more as her body sank in the center from the weight of Jerrico’s chest. Although their soft interaction was over nothing more than a piece of mango cheesecake that Jerrico had finally perfected, it felt like more. It was innocent yet so sensual all at once, and if Forever could feel it, she knew her sister could. It was all in the way she’d relaxed against the back of Jerrico’s forearm, allowing him to hold her up with one hand and feed her with the other.

“If you weren’t talking to me like I’m sucking your dick, then it would probably be gone already, but you’re doing that thing that you always do,” Goody’s voice was void of its usual humor and replaced with a seductive and pleading undertone.

A handsome smile teased the corners of Jerrico’s mouth as he openly gaped into Goody’s eyes. She was kneeling in the recliner opposite of Forever, while he leaned next to her with one knee balanced on the armrest next to her. Her head was cupped in the palm of his hand while the other cradled a piece of cake near her mouth.

“What thing do I do, Gorgeous?”

“That indirect sex talk about something that has absolutely nothing to do with sex, but you’re making it sound sexy, so that’ll entice me to talk nasty to you. You always do that to me,” she whined as if she really hated it, while he smiled knowingly.

“So, it’s my fault that you’re always talking dirty?”

“Yes, just like it’s your fault that I’m always thinking about sex with you,”

“I’m sorry, baby,” Jerrico put the cheesecake into his mouth and leaned closer to her face. “I won’t do that anymore.”

“Yes, you fucking will.” Goody grabbed the sides of his neck and nearly sucked the cheesecake from his mouth.

Forever watched in utter happiness as they kissed each other deeply. The passion that surrounded the two of them was so warm and heartfelt that even though it made her feel like an intruding third wheel on most days, she couldn’t get enough of it. Healthy love was so pure and intoxicating, and Forever couldn’t get enough of it. Watching them together made her think about her Blue-Blue. They shared a love like that, and it was so refreshing that she had to close her eyes momentarily and just thank God for answering her prayers.

Upon opening her eyes, she checked her phone, finally taking notice of the fact that he still hadn’t called her back yet. She checked the time; it was after one in the morning, so surely, he’d gotten home from a house party already. Missing his face

and needing to hear his voice, Forever hit the FaceTime icon and dialed him up. The loud ringing only lasted for a few moments before it picked up. Forever's smile dropped instantly and was replaced with a frown.

"What are you doing with Zurich's phone?"

"Heyy bitch. Told you he'd always come back," Journey's smiling face made Forever want to throw up. "I know you thought you had him, but Blue is in love with me. He's home now, so you can go."

"Forever? Who the fuck is that?" Goody could be heard asking, but Forever was too focused on the words Journey was spewing to pay attention to anything else.

"Girl, go give my man his phone."

"Oh, so you think this is a game? Hold on," Journey chuckled while tapping the screen of the phone. Seconds later, Blue's living room came into view, enraging her further. "I know you know where I'm at."

As if that wasn't enough, when Journey flipped the camera back to her, she pulled it away just enough to show Forever her naked body. If she didn't know any better, Forever would have assumed she was on fire. Her body was so hot that it would probably burn if touched. Her limbs shook so hard that she could barely maintain her grip on the phone.

"Yeah, now go cry me a river, hoe. I'm finna go fuckmyman." The smug look on Journey's face made Forever sick to her stomach.

She wanted so badly to say something, but she was truly incapacitated and could hardly think, let alone act.

"Journey," Blue called out to her in the distance.

The familiar deep voice with the raspy edge made the hairs on the back of Forever's neck stand up when she heard it, but before she could say or do anything else, Journey hung up in her face. Unable to comprehend what had just transpired, Forever allowed her phone to fall from her hand and onto her lap. Tears threatened to fall, but her head fell first. How had she let this happen to her again? Getting played by one man was bad enough, but bouncing back and getting played by two was just too much.

"Forever, what just happened?" Goody's voice broke her trance. "Who was that?"

In a daze, her voice came out low and emotionless, "That was Journey. Blue is with her..."

...Part Two?