



Forbidden Love

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Description: Sol is smart, ruthless, and loyal to the people closest to him. Especially Casper, who is his father's best friend. Things get complicated when Sol falls for Jeremy, Casper's daughter. She's off-limits. But the connection between Sol and Jeremy is too strong to for him to ignore. As they start a secret relationship, the world around them begins to fall apart. Friends turn into enemies as lies come to light.

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Prologue

Jeremy

They say daughters love their father's first, and I did. I loved my father, Casper, in a way that made other people uncomfortable. Especially if they never had a relationship with their father. I looked up to him and looked at him like he could fix anything with a snap of his fingers or a nod of his head. Although my father was not a good man by society's standards, and he didn't try to be by far... to me, he was everything. It didn't matter if him and Momma wasn't together; he stepped up and did what any man in his position probably wouldn't do... raise me.

Casper was my protector, provider, and professor of hard truths. He wore danger like a tailored suit; smooth and pressed, stitched with blood and loyalty. It's been eight months since I lost him, and my heart still thumped differently when I think of him. My father was feared in every borough and respected by every kingpin who ever touched the kind of power that he had and still have till this day.

It was hard losing a parent that was still alive, especially if you were stubborn like myself. I felt like I had a point to prove, like me and Ramsey could make it through our ups and downs. I wanted to prove that my man, Ramsey, was a good man and would love me correctly besides all the street credit and the bitches that constantly ran after him. It was a hard decision that I made eight months ago; it still hurts me, but I just can't leave Ramsey.

Ramsey didn't understand how I felt. He has no fear of Casper, and I respect him for that. Most men would have never looked my way, just because of me being the

daughter of the infamous Casper. To me, he was just my daddy and best friend. The man who brushed the edges of my hair with hands still dusted in gunpowder. The man who kissed my forehead in the morning before school with the same mouth that gave kill orders.

Casper always said that I was his redemption, that no matter how deep he sank into the mud of the streets, he wanted me clean. He paid every cent of my way through nursing school, even sat in the front row with watery eyes next to my momma when I walked across the stage. He just hated Ramsey, because Ramsey reminded him of himself when he was young.

Same night of my graduation, Casper gave me an ultimatum. We all sat around the table at an expensive steak house that he bought out just for family. He ignored my mom, and I wished he hadn't. He broke her heart each time they ended up in the same room together. I could tell Momma spent her last on getting the updo hairstyle that fit her face. Momma looked good with a skintight, cheetah romper glued on to her curvy short frame. She matched her fit with six-inch black stiletto heels that had cheetah print on the straps.

Instead of Casper showing up to dinner with two new women on each side of him, he showed up with his well-respected men; one of those men was Sol. There was no secret that Sol became Daddy's right-hand man in training. Casper took him under his wing after Sol's father died from a heart attack. Sol was the next new kingpin, and Casper was teaching him all the ropes. I neverknew too much of what all went on behind the scenes. All I knew was Sol looked deadly and handsome as hell. He never said much, just observed everybody surrounding him.

Momma kept eyeing Ramsey, I could the see the concern in her eyes for my man. We all knew how my dad got down, even though it was hard to read him based off his stone-cold facial expression. The only time Casper changed his facial expressions was when it came to me. Casper's chocolate eyes landed on me as he spoke low but

loud enough for everyone to hear.

“I’d rather bury you in silk before seeing you shackled to a nigga like that.” He pointed at Ramsey who stiffened next to me.

I silently thanked Ramsey with my eyes for not popping off on my dad. The servers brought out our food and Casper didn’t bother to eye his plate. Ramsey bit into his bottom lip, his caramel complexion turned a shade red. I knew my man very well. He never allowed anyone to disrespect him to his face. Right now wasn’t the time to play tough with Casper sitting across from him. Daddy was handsome and perfect looking, but so was the devil himself. With the snap of his fingers, Casper would end Ramsey.

“Pick,” Casper said, voice low and deadly.

I still remember the feeling of my stomach dropping and churning. Casper never looked at me that way, his look alone made me emotional.

“Live under my roof and finish the legacy I bled for or run behind that nigga who’s gone get you killed or put in jail.” His voice elevated.

“Casper!” My mom yelled across the table.

“You want her to finish your legacy that can result in the same fucking thing!” Momma rolled her eyes.

“My daughter will always remain clean. She’s my only child, and she will have all of my money when I go. People will always treat her like the queen she will learn to be. She will not be with that nigga, or any other street nigga. I stand on it.” He slammed his callous hands against the table, making everyone except Ramsey and Sol gasp.

“Let the girl be, Casper! You can’t just?—”

“Shut up bitch! Mind yo mu’fuckin manners. I raised her, Yeremy is my child. You ain’t shit but the hoe I cracked on the first night looking for a fuckin’ come up. You never even fought to be a mother. I don’t know why Yeremy even acknowledges you. To keep it a buck-fifty, I blame you, Banita. She want a hood nigga cause when she visited yo ass that’s all you had around her, thinking that shit was gone make me jealous...Instead, it made yo pussy stretch and stank.” He waved her off.

“Enough of the small talk.” Casper snapped his fingers.

I felt for my momma, but she never stood up for herself. None of the women Casper dealt with stood up for themselves. Momma never cared about Casper’s dismissiveness or mean words that he spewed out to her. Anytime he wanted her, he got her. She loved being around him, although their time was never long with one another. She was just the woman that he couldn’t convince to have an abortion. He loved Momma’s cooking, yet hated her ghetto, selfish ways.

“Pick, baby girl. You know I love you and want the best for you. You too beautiful, too perfect to be with the likes of him.”

That night I begged Casper to see Ramsey how I saw him, I poured my heart out only to watch my father have the housemaid, Esmeralda, pack all of my things and sit them outside. He promised to deposit fifteen thousand into my account then told me that I could come home when I came to my senses. I was twenty-five, grown and soft with love. I just didn’t understand why Casper couldn’t see it all the way that I saw it.

Now, I stood at my kitchen sink in the small apartment in Compton that Ramsey and I shared. I stared out the window as I took slow sips of my red wine. I stared out into the street, looking at nothing in particular. It was Friday night, and I was thinking about Casper. I missed my dad’s voice, even missed his silence when he was angry. I picked up my blunt from the ashtray and lit it.

I took a glance at my phone and thought about calling Ramsey but decided against it. I loved Ramsey with my eyes open. I kept my heart locked in a cage but kept giving Ramsey's dog ass the key to it. Every time he took the key, I prayed he wouldn't throw it away, but that's exactly what it started to feel like.

Here I was, trying to prove Casper wrong, when this was the part he already saw coming. Ramsey coming in late was the norm for any woman staying down with a street nigga. The sound of his heavy Timberlands thudding against the floor made my heart rate speed up before he even walked in the kitchen.

"Ma, you up?" He asked, voice low and husky.

I rolled my eyes and kept my back turned in the kitchen. Ramsey knew I was up. Friday nights was supposed to be our night after I got off of work to smoke, chill, and catch up with one another. When it came to Ramsey, he made me feel things in extremes. Half the time it was either me wanting to hold him close to me and never let him go... or it was me wanting to beat his ass so he could remember who the hell he had waiting at home.

"I'm in here." I set my wine glass down.

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“Sorry I missed dinner, Ma. I had some shit going,” he murmured, kissing the top of my shoulder.

The scent of the street mixed with cologne, weed, and alcohol clung to him. His breath was warm against my neck; like always my body betrayed me as I melted into him. I loved the feeling of his arms wrapped around my waist and him holding me close to him. He was my first love, my first everything such as companionship. It wasn't perfect but to me it was all worth it.

“You know Friday's are about us, Ramsey. Not the streets.” I reminded him.

“I know, Ma. Shit got complicated, then moms wanted me to drop a sack off for her Bingo night for her and her umm friends.”

“Oh.” Was all I offered.

His grip tightened; I rolled my eyes as hurt seeped into my heart. It was a feeling that I got tired of experiencing with Ramsey. His favorite excuse for not making me his number one priority was ‘shit got complicated’. Ramsey was fucking lying. I stood in his arms trying to rid myself of my alarming intuition. Truth is, he must have been with a bitch. I hated when those type of accusations popped into my head because eventually, I started to believe them.

I turned around slowly and leaned back against the sink as he gazed down at me. Ramsey's dark eyes looked tired; his pupils still danced with adrenaline.

“What's wrong?” He asked as he grabbed the bottom of my chin.

“Nothing, I just miss my dad,” I whispered.

“I miss the hell out of Casper,” I admitted.

“That nigga hated me.” Ramsey’s eyes flared.

“No, he feared what you could do to me. He hated the hurt that he assumed you’d give me.”

“So you think I’d hurt you, purposely?”

“Not with your hands...” My words trailed as I looked away.

Ramsey stepped back like I slapped the hell out of him. I wanted to slap the fuck out of him. Intrusive thoughts about him being with a bitch was hard to keep out of my head right now. Especially with him coming home close to two-o-clock in the morning. Living without Casper meant I had to do something he always did for me... Protect my own heart.

I watched sadly as Ramsey ran a hand down his face. He released me and started to pace in front of me.

“I’m trying, baby. I swear I’m trying to be better for you. I got to get this money though. When shit gets complicated?—”

“I know you trying, but I need more than effort. I need peace and I want reassurance. I need to feel like I didn’t walk away from my father’s protection just to die in your chaos.”

“The fuck? Why you always mentioning that nigga in my house?”

“What?” I frowned, ready to go to war behind him disrespecting Casper to my face.

“Nothing, man; nothing. You ain’t tired, is you?” He smirked mischievously.

“No, why?” I sipped the rest of what was left in my cup.

“I’m trying to fuck you good, then take a drive down to the store to get some snacks to have after we smoke. You got me all weekend, baby. That’s why I stayed out so late hustling. A nigga just want to lay up with you until you gotta go back to work Monday.”

Ramsey closed the space between us by pulling me up against him. He leaned down and tongued me down. Just that quick, all the intrusive thoughts left my mind as I wrapped my thick legs around him. His hands cupped the bottom of my ass, my night gown bunched up around my waist. Ramsey lifted me onto the counter like my two hundred pounds meant nothing to him.

My thighs parted out of instinct once the coolness from the counter pressed against my ass. My body ached for him before his lips crashed into mine. His tongue tasted like cognac and weed, making me dizzy as I got lost in the kiss. His hands gripped my hips with the same urgency that lived in his voice every time he said he loved me.

Ramsey pushed my gown above my titties then pulled his jeans along with his boxers halfway down his thighs. Our breath tangled as he pushed inside of me. He groaned my name against my lips. I held him tighter. My legs anchored us both. I forgot about the silent war of the thoughts that was about to ruin this entire night for the both of us. I forgot about missing my father along with all the other doubts that I had about Ramsey. I was in love with him, we understood each other.

In the midst of him pulling halfway out of me, he halted when the sound of the front door exploding sounded off. The sound of boots stormed through our tiny apartment.

I just knew it had to be the police. Ramsey jumped into action quick. He pulled me off the counter with his free hand and pulled his pants up. Ramsey eyed his Glock that sat on the kitchen island and moved to get to it, but it was too late.

At least five men dressed in all black, masked up with their guns drawn, stormed into our kitchen.

“Don’t fuckin’ move!” One screamed.

I froze, half naked, and trembling. Confused as hell, Ramsey positioned himself in front of me. The tallest man with broad shoulders and black gloves, stepped forward. His voice was deep and distorted under the ski mask.

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“You think you the next head nigga in charge over Compton?” He sneered as the man cocked his gun to the side.

“Nigga stepping in territory that don’t belong to you?”

Ramsey didn’t say a word. I could hear his uneven breathing in front of me.

“I-I’m pretty sure this is a mis?—”

“Shut up, bitch! I’ll have all of my men bend yo lil thick ass over and run the longest train known to mankind on yo ass,” he stated as the men behind him snickered.

“Get down on your knees, boss man,” he ordered, taking one step closer.

“Ramsey,” I whispered.

Ramsey turned his head slightly, eyes meeting mine. Something passed between us, it felt too final and fragile. His deep-set eyes held sadness and regret. It looked like he wanted to say more but couldn’t find the words. Ramsey blinked his eyes, and just like that, his orbs was void of any emotion.

He dropped to his knees and kept his chin up as he faced the men in front of us.

“Any last words, bitch nigga?” The masked man asked.

“I love you forever, Yere?—”

Pop! Pop! Pop!

My scream never made it out of my throat as Ramsey's body hit the floor hard, face first. I watched him twitch, seconds later there was no movement. My knees gave out beneath me. I collapsed, reaching out to him. The masked men swarmed around us like vultures. I could hear them pull open drawers, they let glass hit the tile floor.

"Snatch that bitch chain," the tall one barked.

"And the earrings too! That's Casper's daughter, this bitch ass nigga thought he was doing it up big with her hoe ass. Anything y'all see shiny on that bitch, take it," he ordered.

I tried to curl up but it was too late, they moved in and ripped the diamond necklace that Casper gave me on my twenty-first birthday. The chain sliced my skin with the clasp, my ears burned as they yanked the stud out. Real diamonds, baby girl; too grown for any lil girl...but just right for the future Queen. Casper's voice echoed in my mind.

I didn't move, didn't have it in me to fight when all odds were against me. Compton niggas was different from L.A niggas. I wasn't even supposed to be here in the first place. I didn't know how deep Ramsey was in the streets of Compton. I knew that most niggas feared him and that he was well respected. I tried to force myself to breathe through the storm of reality locked inside of me.

The men left the way they came, fast and full of power. Minutes later, I was still on the kitchen floor. I gathered the strength to crawl through Ramsey's blood. I whispered his name over and over like it was enough to bring him back.

"Ramsey, baby, please. Pleaseee don't do this."

His eyes were open, lifeless; his mouth slightly parted like he had one more word left in him. I pressed my hand to his chest and waited to feel his heartbeat. In disbelief, I sat down. I maneuvered Ramsey until his head lay in my lap. I cradled him and rocked him back and forth in my arms as I stared into his eyes. The cops busted in with guns raised, followed by loud ass orders. All I could do was cry silently. I asked myself over and over, how would I ever overcome any of this?

Ramsey wasn't perfect, but he was my first love. The first man that I gave my body to. There was so much that we were supposed to do together. He was my forever, and in seconds, he became my end.

Chapter 1

Sol

Two weeks later

"This nigga Casper gone end up killing this fool," Fatz murmured under his breath.

I gave him a stern look and shook my head. Fatz was my youngest, spoiled brother that stayed glued to me like a shadow. Although the nigga worked my nerves, I had his front and back like he had mine. Me and Fatz had different mothers; my father took Fatz in when he was thirteen years old. Raft didn't know that his baby momma had turned into a crackhead. She left Fatz to care of himself.

Fatz' momma was a cold bitch, the type to keep a kid away if Raft didn't want nothing to do with her. My mom was number one in Raft's world, yet it didn't stop him from having a whole flock of bitches right in front of her face. Fatz' momma thought she had a one-up over Raft; she thought she could get to him by getting with a new man. That same new man turned her dumb ass out. Had her selling pussy two months after they got together, and shortly after, she was gone to a glass dick in her

mouth.

As Fatz kept whispering and saying all kinds of shit about the niggas we was surrounded by, I sat still and quiet in the back of the warehouse with my legs slightly spread. My elbows rested on my knees as I watched Casper eye a potential buyer like he had a disease.

Casper didn't speak unless it mattered; every word that left his mouth had weight and was either laced with poison or power. You could see his disdain as he spoke to the buyer who flew in from Houston. The nigga talked too fast, the diamonds that he rocked told us that he was trying to sound bigger than he was. Casper wasn't impressed, I was surprised he even took on the meeting.

Casper was in a position to not have these kind of sit downs anymore. His investments and money were damn near clean now. His right-hand man, Trigga, practically ran everything with an iron fist. I looked over at Trigga, he was a short stocky nigga with a permanent mean mug. Trigga leaned against the metal post away from everyone with a loaded MAC-11 strapped to his chest and a toothpick hanging between his lips.

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Trigga, Casper, and my father Raft all came up together. They was like brothers and moved as a unit. Trigga was always quiet and on alert, ready to black out the whole building if Casper shifted the wrong way. The warehouse that we was in wasn't a regular stash spot. It was a damn fortress, similar to the one my father had over on the East side. Every man inside was someone Casper trusted, except this Houston out of town nigga.

Nobody talked unless Casper looked their way. This was chess, not checkers. Casper never moved his king without lining up his pawns first. The buyer sat across from him at the steel table in the center of the floor, trying to smile his way through the tension. He didn't know that all his pressing to get a meeting with Casper was nothing but a trap that he set out for himself.

"I'm ready to move heavy shit," he said, twirling his diamond pinky ring.

"I'm talking real numbers. I just need access. West, East, and South of the border. Niggas in Cali making that shit happen—I mean, you the only nigga that can make that happen," he uttered.

"Who the fuck told you that shit, nigga?" Trigga stood up straight from leaning against the wall then spat his toothpick out.

Casper looked at his right-hand man and chuckled. Trigga was the only nigga that could speak out of term and made drastic decisions at any given moment.

"I mean, niggas talk. It's why I caught a flight out to meet the man himself." His eyes left Trigga's and went back to Casper's deadly gaze.

Casper's gaze made his pussy ass uncomfortable, so he looked at no one in particular.

"What about Raft?" Casper asked flatly.

I shifted in my seat hearing my father's name mentioned as if he was still here. Then something dawned on me, Casper was still trying to sort through the snakes that was bold enough to come around begging for business when Raft was also a part of the empire. My father ran the Eastside, Trigga never had a desire to take over any side until his brother Casper included him. Everything was split fairly amongst each other; they never had any quarrels about money and percentages.

"I never heard of that nigga." The Houston nigga shrugged.

Casper didn't blink. He leaned forward, his hands pressed together like he was preparing to deliver a scripture.

"You asking me to hand you power that most men die for. Before I decide to give you anything...you need to know something." Casper smiled evilly.

The buyer shifted in his seat and raised his brows.

"What's that?"

Casper's lips curled into a warning.

"I don't shake hands with niggas I plan to bury in the near future," he gritted.

The air seemed to drop by five degrees. The Houston nigga went pale in the face and nodded his head fast, like the threat was a blessing. I felt something in my chest, that pressure of what I was getting ready to insert myself into. It was nothing but a reminder that this is what men like me was born into. Casper, Raft, and Trigga didn't

just build a business. They built a kingdom.

Men of all walks of life bowed to them because they knew the crowns on their heads was heavy with blood and no remorse. I should have been focused on the conversation. On learning the game down to my bones like Casper and my father always told me, but my mind wouldn't stop drifting. To my father.

The hole in the ground that they dug up six months ago still was fresh to me. I still could feel the grip that Casper gave my shoulder as I stood there, numb as hell, trying not to let the tears show. Casper didn't speak that day, neither did Trigga. I didn't need them to; they understood the silence that I needed while all the other snake ass niggas made their way to my face with fake sympathetic speeches about Raft.

Raft always got careless, and Casper always reminded him of how he should have been moving. My father thought loyalty and money would protect him from bullets. It didn't, so now his empire was on me. The weight and all the blood shed that Raft caused was now mine.

Casper glanced over his shoulder, eyes landing on me. They were black as coal, steady and unreadable. I could already tell what he was thinking. Pay attention, young nigga; you next. I straightened my back and swallowed down my emotions, because emotions were for bitches to have.

The meeting ended like most of them do. Every one shook hands except Casper and Trigga. Casper watched every movement like he could smell a set up before it hit the air. He was always the most paranoid one out of the three of them. If Casper thought it, rather it was true or false, he acted out on it. Once the Houston nigga walked out with a big smile on his goofy ass face, the rest of Casper's men fell back into a small conversation with Trigga.

Casper lit a cigar stuffed with weed and jerked his head toward the back staircase.

“Come on, Sol.” He stood and dusted invisible lint off his black slacks.

“Don’t say shit, just wait for me, nigga.” I turned to Fatz and stood.

“Hurry up, a nigga hungry and ready to go. Feels like I been in church for hours and shit,” Fatz complained.

Casper and I walked up into the private loft above the warehouse. It was considered his sanctuary. I could hear the wind whistle through the steel beams. His thick desk sat in the middle with dusty ass picture frames that he never cleaned. A heavy safe was embedded in the concrete wall behind it; it was closed tighter than a casket. The air smelled like aged wood, fresh powder, and weed smoke.

His office looked just like my father’s, they both had shit set up the same. Raft’s office was down the hall from Casper’s office. He didn’t sit behind his desk, he leaned on it with his cigar tucked in the corner of his mouth.

“You good?” He asked just as the ash from his cigar tumbled to the ground.

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“Shit been smooth, just getting situated.” I nodded.

Casper squinted his eyes at me, smoke curled from his lips.

“Don’t lie to me, I see it in your face. You carrying pain like it’s a second spine.” Casper turned and stared out at the warehouse floor through the glass wall.

“I carry my pain differently. It’s still pain, nevertheless. Raft was my brother, we shed blood together, broke bread, and buried too many associates to count. Raft was loyal, not always smart...but loyal. In this new day and age, niggas don’t carry the same loyalty,” Casper said, more to himself than me.

I swallowed the lump in my throat and got mad that I still wasn’t able to contain my raw emotions for my father.

“He wasn’t ready to go,” I stated painfully.

Casper turned to me slowly.

“None of us are. At least not in this lifetime. We get two options. Die early or die legendary.” Casper took steps until he was right in front of me.

“You remind me of him. You got the same heart you don’t wanna admit you have. You smarter though, and much more quiet... kind of like me. Let me tell you something that I never got the chance to tell him. It’s something that my father told me, and it stuck with me throughout life.”

I lifted my eyes to meet his.

“You want to stay alive in this game? You got to decide who the fuck you are before the streets decide for you. You can’t be half killer, half lover. You can’t be half business, half revenge. You gon’ have to bleed one part of yourself out and feed the other. Fuck a bitch, they good for giving life, a legacy to carry your last name. They nurture you and drain ya nut sack when it’s time for that. Let your mind lead and your heart beat, nigga. I can very well take the load off your hands and give your father’s legacy to one of these money hungry niggas. It’s in your blood though, and I know that you can do it. Lot of these niggas go and fall in love with a bitch. Next thing you know, the same bitch they fell for is the cause of them running shit with too much emotion.”

Casper’s words hit like a gut punch. He was right, I had to get up out of my feelings and make shit tick again. Casper stepped back and went behind his desk. He reached into his top drawer and pulled out a matte black gun then set it down on his desk.

“This was Raft’s favorite piece. I’ve been holding it, waiting for you to be ready. You put in work already, caught a couple of bodies for the past couple of months. If you ready to step into his shoes, pick up his piece.”

I stared at it for a couple of seconds then reached out to wrap my fingers around the handle and nodded. Casper didn’t smile, he never did, but his eyes warmed from approval.

“Good. There’s a war coming, niggas gone get real testy because they haven’t seen you on the Eastside. Shit been running, with Trigga stepping in causing the havoc he always bring. But, niggas think that Raft’s spot is wide open. You can’t flinch, it’s time to lay the law down and let niggas know some shit.” Casper grinned, showcasing his gold tooth.

Chapter 2

Jeremy

The grass was still damp from the morning dew; it soaked through my jeans as I dropped to my knees in front of Ramsey's headstone. I felt bad that I didn't bring any balloons or flowers for his birthday. I tossed and turned and couldn't sleep last night thinking about what me and my man could have been doing. Ramsey's funeral was a hot mess.

I was surprised Casper came for support along with my mom. I felt embarrassed from the amount of hood rats that showed up to Ramsey's funeral. With Casper and his men being in attendance, none of them hoes said anything to me out of line. Their cries crushed me though. Some of them cried harder than me, like they laid up with my man every night. I always had a gut feeling that Ramsey had side pieces. He covered his tracks well enough for me not to ever find out.

My mom always said that every man cheated. She also said that if a man never let his bullshit come home with him then it meant he loved you enough. I never got that because if I ever had evidence, I would have left Ramsey's ass. I was too good of a woman to be played with.

My tears came soft at first, then heavy. Minutes later, I was doing the ugly cry. The kind that shook my ribs and made my throat raw.

"Why you leave me, Ramsey?" I whispered as my fingers dug into the grass.

My fingers brushed over the letters carved into his stone. It said that he was a beloved son, protector, and the King of Compton. There was no mention of me, no mention of us. I knew it was because of his weird ass momma. She blamed it all on me but didn't hesitate to accept Casper's payment for Ramsey's expensive home going service. I

wouldn't have been surprised if she also was the reason why all those hoes showed up to his funeral.

The clicking of heels on pavement halted my emotions.

"Damn, our nigga really gone, huh?" A voice called out behind me, laced with attitude.

I turned my head slowly as my breath caught up in my throat. She stood a few feet away, right on the sacred grass of Compton Memorial Cemetery. This bitch was dressed in red lingerie and a silk pink robe that blew in the wind like she was getting ready to shoot a damn music video. She had on silver heels, a pink lace thong that showed through sheer ass fabric. In her hands was heart shaped balloons with the words 'RIP Daddy' in cursive written with a sharpie marker.

My tears dried up instantly. I don't know why she thought for a second to come up here on Ramsey's birthday.

"You lost?" I asked, standing up slowly.

She smacked er lips, then cocked her hip. This chick was beautiful, I was never a hater. Her Hershey-colored skin, long slender legs and perky breasts made her look like a model compared to my short thick frame.

"Naw boo. I'm right where I need to be. I had to pay respects to my man on his birthday. The fuck?"

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“Your who?” I blinked back my frustration.

She walked up, stopped right beside the headstone like she belonged there, then bent down to place her balloons down.

“I was his favorite, I’m surprised he ain’t tell you. Maybe you was too busy playin’ house and shit while he was slidin’ in mine.” She giggled.

My rage shot through me so fast, I almost blacked out.

I stepped forward, close enough to smell her cheap ass perfume.

“You wearing lingerie, lying on a dead man’s name. You bold as fuck. You think I won’t beat yo ass right here in front of Ramsey?” I squinted my eyes.

“Girl bye. Ramsey liked it nasty, and you was nothing but his uppity bitch that couldn’t take dick, that’s why he kept coming back to me! I gave him everything he wanted, so you should be thanking?—”

I don’t even remember swinging, I just remembered the sound of her head hitting the ground. I was on her before she could react. I drilled her face until I felt my nails break off into the palm of my hand. She tried to fight back, but I felt none of her hits. Mentally, I was drowning in pain and anger.

“Say his muthafuckin’ name again, bitch!” I yelled.

I got up off of her and dragged her bony ass over to Ramsey’s headstone and thought

about smashing it into it.

“Say it, hoe!” I let her hair go and kicked her in the face.

“Jeremy! Chill!” I heard my name being called.

I turned and saw my best friend Bianca running across the cemetery.

“You gone fuck around and catch a fuckin’ case out here, let’s go.” She yelled as she got closer.

Everything she said was right, but I couldn’t let this bold bitch off so easily. I really wished Ramsey was here so I could beat his dog ass too. Maybe this would help me heal and get over his ass since he was out here playing me like a sucker ass bitch. I bent down and grabbed a handful of her cheap ass weave and socked her in the face until my knuckles cracked.

She grabbed at my wrists, trying her hardest to soften the blows. Bianca was behind me, her breathing was ragged as she kept telling me to let her go. Overwhelmed with emotion, I let the girl go. I collapsed until my ass hit the grass. My chest heaved up and down, and my throat burned.

“Bitch get yo hoe ass out of here and don’t come the fuck back. I’ll have you resting in piss with this nigga if you try to test me again.” I hissed out.

She didn’t say a word, she just cried softly as she mustered up the strength to get up and go. Once she was out of sight, I dropped my head and sobbed loudly. I felt Bianca behind me; she wrapped her arms around my shoulders then pulled me into her. I looked down at my bloody fists and shook my head.

“That nigga really had me out here looking dumb as fuck.” I laughed in disbelief.

“Niggas is good for that shit. Look at both of my baby daddies, ain’t shit! They tricking on bitches before spending a dime on they sons.” Bianca sighed out.

“That bitch was funky too? It smelled like STD, gel, and love spell when I ran up on y’all,” Bianca stated seriously as she released my neck.

“You stupid as fuck.” I cackled out through my tears.

“I serious, shit. Come on, let me take you to Benita’s house,” Bianca offered.

“Nah, she been getting on my nerves. Plus, Casper been blowing my line down.” I smiled weakly.

I wanted my dad; my momma didn’t give a damn. She was too busy having different niggas from around the way entertain her. I still clocked in at the hospital on a daily after my grievance days was up. The apartment that Ramsey and I had was in hisname. A week after his death, his big sister showed up with a spare key that I didn’t know she even had. I could have beat her ass; instead, I chose to leave.

The way I saw it, that apartment wasn’t worth the fight. Plus, I didn’t want to sleep in the same house them men ran up in. I was sleeping on my momma’s couch since her guest bedroom was occupied with all of her hair equipment for her clients. Benita house was always live with either her loud ass homegirls or a new nigga from around the way coming to lay up and eat free. She didn’t console me once, all she asked was what did Casper have to say about it.

At least at my dad house, I would feel more secure and at peace in my own space until I figured out what was my next step. Casper was gone most of the time, and when he was home, he gave me my space.

“You know you can come crash at my spot, for however long you need to. I wouldn’t

be crying over this nigga after today.” Bianca stood then held her hand out for me to grab.

“Come on, B. You sounding like Benita. Regardless of what it is now...Ramsey was my nigga; I was in love with him. That shit don’t go away overnight. Take me to Casper’s house.” I rolled my eyes before walking away.

I hated when people tried to tell me what to do with my feelings. I handled things the best way I saw fit. Bianca offering her home to me was a nice gesture. She was money hungry and selfish in so many ways. Her offering her place to me was her seeing the dollar signs that would come with it. I loved my friend, but she had no structure with her kids. They was bad as hell; Day Day, her youngest, son was almost two years old and liked to bite people randomly. Her oldest daughter, Lee Lee, was five years old and acted like a teenager from watching YouTube all day.

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I had Bianca drop me off to my car that was parked in front of Benita's house and shot her a hundred dollars for gas. Although she didn't need a hundred, I was able to bless my friends since I had it to give. I understood that it was hard out here. I would never see Bianca nor my other close friend Shardae struggle when I had a rich ass dad that spent money like there was no limit.

Chapter 3

Jeremy

The gates of Casper's estate opened slow and smooth. I felt my emotions creep up on me as the black iron bars parted, revealing the long cobblestone driveway that curved through well-manicured grass. I missed Casper so much, but I didn't imagine myself coming back to live with my dad at twenty-five years old. Sometimes I wished that Casper had more kids than just me. I guess his experience with Benita made him stop at me.

In his eyes, I wasn't grown, and that's what made it so hard for him to accept me dating Ramsey in the first place. It's like he still saw me as the same little girl that he raised since birth.

My eyes welled up with tears as my childhood home came into view. It still felt like safety even though I had been gone for a while. I gasped when my eyes landed on a new car parked to the side of my father's favorite fountain. A matte gray Maybach truck, wrapped with a soft pink silk bow on top of it. I hit the brakes to my Mercedes coup with my mouth wide open.

Nah, Casper probably bought this for one of his women. I thought to myself and then I saw him. He stood at the double doors of his estate like a damn monument. Dark skin smooth and still unbothered by time. His salt and pepper waves laid perfect. He had on his famous black slacks and a short-sleeve knit shirt that hugged his chest. Casper's arms were crossed, one hand tucked under the other while his thick cigar balanced between his fingers.

His orbs were concealed behind gold-framed shades, but I could still feel him watching me. He didn't wave, nor smile, Casper simply waited. That was all my dad ever did, wait for the world to come to him.

My heart cracked as I opened my door. I didn't bother to grab my things. I needed him more than ever. I hate that it took for Ramsey to get murdered in front of my face in order to be back in my dad's space.

"Daddy." My voice broke as I picked up my pace to get to him.

By the time I reached him, I forgot about how grown I was. I threw myself in his arms like I was ten again. His arms wrapped around me without hesitation as I broke down in his arms.

"It's okay, baby girl," he muttered as I pressed my face into his chest, breathing him in.

"It feel like I'm losing my mind...I can't wrap it around everything," I whispered.

"You will never lose your mind. I'd never let you," he stated simply.

He held me for a moment longer, then pulled me back just enough to study my face.

"You're hurting, you entitled to feel how you feel right now. I can't bring him back,

but I can always remind you who you are. Forever royalty, and I will never let you fall. The truck is yours, do whatever with the other car.” He motioned toward the Maybach behind me.

“What?” I blinked.

“Keys already in it. I got it custom right before your graduation. Figured you would need something new to pull up to the hospital in.” He smirked.

Tears welled up again in my eyes.

“It’s money in the car, lots of it. Gifts, new steel, and jewelry in your room,” he added.

“Why you do all this, Daddy?”

A beat of silence passed as he looked at me dead on.

“Sometimes the world will try to break you.” He placed a heavy hand on my shoulder.

“I have to always make sure that you’re sharp enough to break it back. Come on, baby girl, I have company inside. Raft’s son, Sol, and his fat ass brother, Fatz, are inside waiting for me in my study.” He chuckled deeply.

I remember Sol. I used to crush hard on him from afar. I assumed he was older than me. We never had a conversation, and whenever Raft brought him around, Sol was quiet and mean looking. He was cute as hell when we was kids so I could only imagine how handsome his chocolate ass was as a grown man. Hopefully we didn’t cross paths at all, because the last thing I needed was to rekindle a childish crush that never went anywhere from when I was a kid.

I walked up the winding staircase like I was in a dream. My fingers brushed against the polished mahogany banister as I climbed the steps. The house hadn't changed. The smell of Casper's cologne clung to the walls. Every step I took echoed throughout the house. I pushed my double doors to my room open and froze.

Across my plush bed was all designer boxes. Red-bottom heels was stacked in neat rows on the floor. I eyed a flat black box that was in the center of my bed. It had no logo or ribbon on it. I walked to it slowly and picked it up. I lifted the lid and smiled. Inside was a matte black pistol; it was compact and sleek with my initials engraved along the barrel in gold. There was another box on the bed, and I knew it was jewelry. I got sad when I thought about my real diamonds that was snatched off of me when those men ran up in my house.

I opened the box and smiled down at a Cuban link bracelet; it was solid gold, thick with my name encrusted with diamonds. I sat down on the bed slowly, my heart thudded in my chest. There was a note laying on my bed. I unfolded it with shaky hands.

Baby girl....

You don't have the luxury of mourning forever. You can cry... afterwards...you boss the fuck up. Don't ever forget who you are. Queen.

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-Casper

No tears came, something inside of me clicked. I didn't want to grieve Ramsey for too long when, after all, he was just like my father; he just moved sloppily. I got up and put all my new gifts up neatly then ran me a hot bubble bath inside of my bathroom. I had work in the morning and a new car parked out front.

Chapter 4

Sol

"This muthafuckin' Chinese food smell so good! Hurry up and park so a nigga can eat." Fatz grumbled.

I backed into a parking spot right in front of an old ass rec center on The East Side of L.A. Raft had a warehouse just like Casper and Trigga did. I decided to use it for other reasons and switch shit up by making the rec center headquarters. It's where a lot of his men hung out at. Plus, Raft owned it, and it was passed down to me.

"This shit raggedy as fuck," Fatz complained as he looked around.

He was right, this shit was far from fancy. The paint on the outside was peeling. On the inside, the floor squeaked like it would collapse at any given moment. It had broken vending machines that still had candy and chips inside from the early two-thousands. This was the perfect spot to have everyone meet up at. It was neutral ground, tucked low, with disabled cameras. One entrance and one exit... just how I wanted it to be.

Tonight was my first official meeting with them, not as a son but the head. I understood that my name didn't just come with weight, it came with eyes, watching and judging and waiting to see if I would fold like a bitch or rise like a king. Niggas thought I was still mourning my father's death; I would forever mourn Raft. Nevertheless, when I walked inside, none of that mourning would be present.

Niggas was moving like hoes without a pimp. I put my ears down to the streets and heard a lot of hearsay about certain niggas claiming to have stepped into Raft's shoes. Niggas knew that wasn't possible. I was the only way to the drugs that they needed in order to keep feeding their families.

"I saw Tracy the other day." Fatz mumbled underneath his breath.

He looked out the window then dropped his head.

"Pick yo head up, at least she's still alive. You can't let her rejection and self-abuse alter your thoughts. We about to run some major shit. If you ain't with me because you need to get in touch with your pain, then I understand."

"I'm with you, it was just on my mind."

"Get it off yo mind, like I got to keep Raft off of my mind, nigga. That's some shit we can rap about after this meeting. Go inside, I'll be on my way in in a second." I nodded my head at Fatz.

He got out the car and walked with his shoulders and chin up. I knew his momma Tracy was a sore and soft spot for him. He grew up spoiled as hell, a momma's boy. Seeing her cracked out wasn't easy at all on his mental. I made a mental note to rap with him about it later on once we got this meeting out the way.

I reached over into the backseat of my car and got my hoodie. I stepped outside of the

car slow with my black hoodie over my head and my Glock tucked at my waist. My all-black Timberland boots hit the pavement as I made my way to the entrance. Inside had at least twenty men posted up, some sat around the table while others stood up.

They was some true East Side hittas; some was old friends of my pops. The majority was young, hungry niggas that was tryin' to make a name for themselves. They all turned when I entered; all the extra noise died immediately as I looked every man in the eyes. Before I could speak, I heard the sound of plastic crackling and foil being ripped, followed by loud ass smacking.

“This shit is seasoned to perfection.” Fatz stated, loud enough for everybody to hear his dumb ass.

His round cheeks moved up and down as sweat prickled at the top of his forehead. Fatz looked just like my father, except his dark skin was a shade lighter. He was as round as a Thanksgiving plate. He paused to look down at his black pro club Tee-shirt that had sauce on it. He shrugged and shook his head and continued to eat.

This nigga can't be fuckin' serious right now. I fought my hardest to hold in my laugh. A few of the niggas laughed lowly. It was a tall, lanky nigga with bumps all over his face by the name of Lil Eastie, who had the audacity to take it a step further. He sat right next to Fatz with a silly ass smirk on his face. I could tell by the way his lips twitched that he was going to have to be made an example out of. I already planned on handling the nigga since he was the main one claiming to step in for Raft.

“Yo, who let this greedy ass nigga in this bitch. Nigga letting the food eat him.” He chuckled.

Fatz froze with his plastic fork mid-air. My jaw clenched as the room went still. Without a second thought, I pulled my Glock out and shot Lil Eastie right in the center of his forehead. I caught the bitch nigga mid-laugh since he thought shit was so

funny. His body hit the floor with his eyes wide open. Lil Eastie's blood sprayed everywhere across the table and over Fatz' food.

“Aww, hell naw! You got this nigga brain all in my fuckin' food, Sol! This the only plate I got, and that spot close in the next—” Fatz looked at his watch on his wrist for great measure and sighed.

“Shit close in the next thirty minutes. A fat joke ain't never hurt nobody. You could have let me finish first then I would have capped him,” he complained.

“This nigga a fool.” Another nigga next to him chuckled nervously.

Everyone else was quiet with disturbed looks on their faces. Fatz cracked his neck from side to side and turned around and socked the light skin nigga who made the comment next to him. He socked him so hard in the side of his jaw that the nigga flew back and hit the floor with a loud thud.

Fatz stood up and pulled his gun from the small of his back.

“I'm a fool to you niggas 'cause I like to eat? Some of y'all niggas look like you could use a fucking meal!” He retorted as a deranged look took over his face.

Pop! Pop! Pop!Fatz shot the man multiple times, one in the stomach, the other in his chest, then head.

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“I’m a nice nigga, more understanding than that nigga.” He pointed his gun my way then lowered it.

“Don’t fuck with me when I’m eating. Niggas get killed for shit like that. There was times I couldn’t eat, and?—”

“Fatz, enough entertainment for the day.” I gritted out.

I had to reel him back in because Fatz didn’t have it all together upstairs. Tracy really fucked my brother up; it didn’t matter because I would always have him and understood the impulsive mood swings that he went through.

I walked forward, slow and calm, still holding my Glock in my right hand. Nobody, except Fatz, looked me in the eyes.

“Let me make this clear right now. Raft ain’t here no more, his rules and regulations no longer stand. This shit is mine, and every nigga breathing in this room will respect it or starve.” I eyed every nigga with a pulse.

“Fatz is my brother, my blood, my right hand. If a nigga get bold enough to laugh at him again, you won’t make it to sunrise. Every nigga in this room need to gather around the table and sit the fuck down and listen.”

I stepped back and waited as they quickly gathered around the table to sit. The room smelled like gunpowder and soon would smell like death. I told Fatz to use his burner phone to get a clean-up crew to take out the bodies. I stepped forward with my hands behind my back and looked around the table.

“From this moment forward, this shit moves different. No more sloppy shit and pillow talking. Niggas that get big work from Fatz is supposed to control every breath that moves through the East Side.” I pointed to a nigga named Smiley, who was an OG nigga from South Central. He had a lazy eye and was fast with his hands.

“Territories need to stay clean. Y’all corner boys shouldn’t be selling shit unless its stamped with my approval. Anybody that had pushed weight on our turf and ain’t blessed by me, you all better have their name, mama name, and shoe size by sundown. Smiley is who all of y’all should be reporting to and contacting when you need to re-up. If money come up short, you get to chop it up with Fatz. Don’t come to me with petty shit or excuses because my patience is thin. Every nigga in here grown, and I’m not here to micromanage. I’m here to collect my money and provide you all with quality shit that will keep ya belly’s full.”

Smiley nodded his head before I turned to Drex. He was young but a certified hitta. He was a good attribute as well; I did my homework on him. He was one of Raft’s top hit men. He had a small killa crew that moved in on shit with precision. Drex also had a bunch of corner boys moving work at a rapid pace; there was never an issue with money coming up short either. His resume bled loyalty, so he was good in my book, for now.

“You and your crew gon’ run pick-ups from Compton to Watts. Light runs only, cash and dope. Keep ya hittas on standby in case a nigga need that.”

“Done.” Drex tapped his chest twice.

“Fatz, I want eyes on everyone who was close to the niggas that got capped in here. Anybody with a smirk or side eye when we pulled the trigger run they name and pull they phones. I wanna know who’s loyal and who’s playing smart.”

“Bet.” Fatz agreed.

“We ain’t just trappin’. We building infrastructure ’round this bitch. Real moves, routes, and leverage. Raft ruled the streets like a soldier. I’m ruling it like a businessman with a body count. Y’all niggas can call me whatever the fuck you want, just say that shit with respect. Meeting over. Y’all niggas stay dangerous.” I turned to walk out.

Chapter 5

Jeremy

Six months later

“Twirl on the dick (Shake that ass hoe!) It ain’t my fault that I fuck better than yo bitch! I’m so fuckin’ sexy, you can’t even fake it!”

The bass was heavy in the club play Sexy Red ‘Looking For The Hoes’ song. My knees felt heavier, I had both of them bent, hands planted firm right above them as I popped my ass like I didn’t have a single ounce of responsibility in the world.

I was feeling it, and the liquor had me warm and giggly. Strands of hair stuck to my forehead from all the dancing I was doing. Although my thighs was sore, all eyes was on me, and I planned on giving everybody in the club a show from my VIP section.

I had just survived back-to-back shifts at the hospital, dealing with blood, screams, and death codes. Two weeks off felt like God himself opened up the sky and handed me peace. I practically threw myself into work after I moved back in with Casper. I enjoyed being a nurse, my coworkers was cool, but I was drained. It was how I coped through the heartbreak that I felt from Ramsey. I finally felt like I could breathe again, and a vacation was the perfect way to go about it all.

“Shake that ass bitch, make them hoes mad! Show me how you fuck her baby

daddy!”

The words to the song was raunchy as hell, but somehow made me want to throw my ass harder.

“Go friend!! Shake that big ol booty!” Bianca screamed over the music while recording me on her phone.

Shardae sat on the cushion laughing super hard. I arched my back and made my ass clap to the beat. My white mini dress was ruched and short; it rose high with each bounce. I felt free, sexy, bad as hell until the Dj got on the microphone announcing that the Eastie boyz was in the building. Bianca quickly nudged me as if the song hadn’t changed and I didn’t hear what the Dj just stated.

“That fine ass nigga, Sol, just walked in along with the rest of them fine ass Eastie niggas.” She leaned in close, fanning herself.

I blinked a couple of times trying to ground myself through the dizzy haze of Patron and all the flashing club lights. I turned around and plopped down on the couch along with Bianca. My eyes landed on Sol. He didn’t smile or even blink much. From across the club, he looked at me, slow and thick like honey dripping from a spoon.

I crossed paths with Sol once at home. He was talking business with Casper. I said bye to my dad without Sol even acknowledging or looking my way. Tonight, he looked fine as hell, and all the bitches inside of the club knew it. Their eyes was glued on him. Sol was dark-skinned and tatted under a black tee that clung to his chest like it was custom stitched.

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His diamond chain looked heavy across his collarbone. The waves in his head surfed with a crispy ass line up. Behind him was his brother Fatz who matched his fly to be a big nigga. The rest of the men trailed behind Sol and Fatz wearing all black with the same Eastie aura. Dangerous, clean, and rich as fuck.

I swallowed down my lust as he walked right past our section like he owned the club. Maybe he did with the way people parted for him. He slid into his section across from ours, dropping into the cushion like a king reclaiming his throne. He leaned back and just stared at me. That stare crawled up my thighs and circled around my hips before landing on my face like a challenge.

Suddenly, I didn't want to dance or even be in the club. My hormones raged; all I could think about was finally trying to get some damn dick.

"Girl, that nigga staring at you hard as hell. You want 'em? Cause if not, I'll bust a move." Bianca chuckled.

Although I knew she was playing with me, her comment about making a move on Sol pissed me off. I got even more frustrated with knowing there wasn't a damn thing I could do with Sol. Fucking around with him, would be worse than it was with Ramsey. I picked up my bottle of Patron and tried to get back in the same mind frame that I was in before Sol walked in.

"Girl do what you do, I ain't tripping off Sol. Him and Casper close, you know how he is." I uttered.

"Girl shut up, I was just playing. With how y'all was eyeing each other, you want his

fine black ass. I'll take the chubby nigga with the grill. Big baby fine and he look like he can cook." Bianca giggled.

All three of us shared a laugh as we continued to turn up together. I tried to go back to dancing, but my body wouldn't cooperate. It was like I felt Sol watching me without looking over at him. It felt like that man snatched the rhythm out of me.

"You need to sit down before you fall down." Shardae said tugging at my wrist.

I gave in and flopped down laughing. My chest rose and fell as I gathered the courage to look back at Sol. He hadn't blinked once, and he was still eyeing me. It wasn't a lustful stare either, it was deliberate. Like a warning and invitation, all in one. The challenge in his eyes made me turn my attention to my drink. I tried to take a sip from my glass and control my trembling hands.

"Jeremy, you good? We can leave if you feel like you reached your limit." Shardae leaned against me lovingly.

Shardae and I were sometimes closer than Bianca. She was very observant and loving. Although Shardae was happily married, she always tried to make time for us when we went too long without hanging out.

"Hell naw, she fine! Plus, the club just warming up. Here, drink some water." Bianca shoved a bottle of water into my hands.

"Girl, shut the fuck up. You just trying to find your next sponsor." Shardae spat out, already getting tired of Bianca.

Bianca and Shardae was like oil and water. They loved each other, without a doubt, but always had heavy banter between each other. Bianca didn't work like that but somehow kept her bills paid by doing side scams every month or having a man take

care of her. She also got paid to be a video vixen from time to time. Men fell for her high-yellow complexion and pretty ass smile.

Bianca had a banging ass body; one of her men gave her the money for a mommy make-over. She got her ass done and breast lifted. The club life was what she was used to at the age of twenty-six. Shardae was the baby out the three of us. She was twenty-four years old and still in school for her doctorates. Shardae was soft spoken and married with no kids. Her husband spoiled her and did everything for her while supporting and pushing her to reach all her goals in life.

Her and Arthur were high school sweethearts and had been together since ninth grade. Shardae was a beautiful curvy chocolate drop. Her sister locs were always twisted to perfection. Shardae was soft spoken and carried herself with class. I've known both of my friends since high school and out of all of us, Shardae was more mature at an early age.

"You sure you good, babe?" Shardae asked one more time for clarity.

"Yeah, I'm good." I lied, licking salt from the rim of my glass.

The club felt hotter now, the music didn't matter nor did the people. Every couple of seconds, I looked over at Sol. Each time I looked his eyes was on me like I already belonged to him. I fidgeted, crossed my legs than uncrossed them, not knowing how to act all of a sudden. He stood from his section like time owed him something and stepped out of the space with calm arrogance.

When I noticed him heading my way, my breath got locked in my throat. What the fuck? His brother Fatz followed close behind with a silly grin on his face. I smoothed my dress and got mad at my own actions. I didn't want to look like I was pressed. I wanted to bite my lip but didn't want to give him more than he already had in mind.

“Damn, I only came over because I thought y’all had all flats!” Fatz yelled over the music, stepping in front of Sol.

His eyes gazed down at our table in disappointment.

“Flats?” Bianca asked confused.

“Yeah, flats! Bitches love all flats. Me personally, I like flats, drums, and thick ass thighs. Chicken is chicken.” He shrugged, flashing his gold diamond grill.

My stomach knotted up as we all looked at each other and fell out laughing. Fatz chuckled and went to sit next to Shardae, leaving Sol in clear view.

“Order some flats! All hot!” Fatz pulled out a stack of money.

I loved Fatz’ personality already, and I could tell Bianca silly ass was feeling him too.

“You in the club acting like Casper ain’t ya Pops,” Sol said right in my ear.

He was so close with his deep raspy voice that I felt his lips brush across my earlobe. I shuttered and regretted that shit instantly. His hand swooped around my waist and pulled me close.

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“Up in this bitch dancing like your body don’t owe nobody nothing.” He chuckled deeply in my ear.

My eyes rolled into the back of my head as I leaned my weight on him a little. Sol smelled expensive and masculine as hell. He was sinful, and he knew it. His hand left my waist and sat on the top of my ass.

“I’m on vacation, and I’m grown. Casper knows that, just like you do,” I finally managed to say.

“Come home with me,” he said, voice deep and steady.

“Why?”

“I ain’t bout to yell over the music in order to tell you what the fuck I want.” He squeezed my ass.

“What you want?” I teetered a little.

“I want what you want. One and done, we ain’t even pose to breathe in the same space, Ma. I respect Casper but can’t help that his daughter want this dick. I’ll give you this shit and feed you in the morning. After that, whatever infatuation you got with me...dead it. I don’t need Casper getting in his feelings over his baby girl. When I turn to walk away, you tell your friends you’ll call them tomorrow then meet me out in the front. Valet should have my whip ready by the time you bring yo hot ass on.” Sol’s raspy voice tickled my ear drum. For great measure, he bit down into my earlobe then released me.

Before he could walk away, I grabbed his wrist and stopped him. I put my nervousness to the side and stepped into his personal space. I looked up into his chocolate, smoldering eyes and searched them for a couple of seconds. Sol was something cold, I felt it. The red flags was evident as hell. Without a doubt I was going to follow him. I didn't know why I stopped him. He looked down at my hand on his wrist and smirked before looking back up into my eyes.

“The fuck up, Ma?” His voice felt like a strong hand cupping my pussy.

“You act like you God's gift to the world. Like I've been praying and asking for God to send you my way.” I chuckled dryly.

His eyes dropped low, slowly roaming over my cleavage then down to my thick thighs. He licked his lips salaciously then tugged at the beard hairs on his chin.

“I guess you hot ass lucky that it wasn't me you was praying to. I answer prayers with punishments.” He bit into his bottom lip.

The club music thumped between us; my bottom lip dropped open.

“You always talk like that?” I asked.

“Only when I see something I might break,” he said as he leaned in just enough for me to feel his breath.

“Only if she begs me to.” He looked down.

My pussy clenched. I couldn't breathe and forgot to blink. I couldn't even stop the ache of need that rose high inside of me. Sol was not the kind of man you played with, and it was sad that I had already started to play.

Chapter 6

Sol

What the fuck was I even on? Jeremy's fine, thick as grits ass, didn't belong in my car. Yet, she looked perfect in my drop top Benz. She leaned her head back against my blood-red headrest. My engine roared to life before taking off from the curb. I looked over at Jeremy, her hair was wild from dancing, but her plump lips were still glossed up. My gaze fell down to her thick thighs and the way her dress rose up higher since she sat down in my car. She tugged at her dress like it would make a difference, I guess that shit was out of nervousness.

"Why you so quiet?" she asked, side-eyeing me like she could read more than I gave her spoiled ass.

I didn't answer. I just hit the gas as the city blurred past in streaks mixed with the streetlights. Her perfume filled the car, blowing in the wind. I knew what Jeremy needed, and selfishly I could have avoided her. I saw her soon as I walked in the club. Her booty was disrespectfully clapping and shaking for every man in the club to salivate over her. Them same thirsty niggas that looked at her saw just who the fuck she left with.

Casper was proud of his daughter, he bragged about her every chance he got. Jeremy had two weeks off from saving lives and watching people die at the hospital. I shouldn't have even bothered fuckin' with her. I just couldn't take my eyes off of her. If she knew that I was the nigga that stormed in her apartment to kill that bitch ass nigga of hers, she would have never kept looking my way.

I tried to avoid her any time I went to chop it up with Casper. I avoided her for her own sake and out of respect for Casper. Ramsey was a bitch made nigga. He plotted on her since the very beginning. Casper wouldn't have put the hit out him if he didn't

find out how Ramsey plotted on using Jeremy as ransom for money. He was gone have one of his boys kidnap her and demand millions in order for him to climb up the food chain.

On top of that, the bitch that I put Fatz on tonight was in love with Ramsey. He fathered Bianca's kids. Jeremy was just a naïve broad, spoiled by her dad, and wanting some type of fairytale ending. I couldn't give her that, but what I could give her was some good ass dick and a full stomach followed by the morning.

I didn't pillow talk, and it wasn't my place to tell her about all the deception going on right under her nose. Bitches came a dime a dozen in my field of things. I didn't trust them and my heart didn't beat for em'. Tonight, I planned on fucking Jeremy like it was my last night breathin' then cut her cold turkey.

I pulled up to my place and hit the gate. Jeremy looked up as the lights from my house cut through the night.

"You live here?" she asked, amazed.

"Nah Ma, I just rob rich muthafuckas and park out front like this."

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She laughed softly and that shit did something to me. Just like the diva she was, she waited patiently for me to get out of the car and come open her door. Inside, I walked ahead as she followed behind me. I already knew she was going to be amazed like most females would be by all the glass walls and art that came with this spot. I bought the house as is, just a place to get away from the hood.

I turned and watched her, the way her hips moved with each step she took without even trying.

“You good?” I asked, even though I ain’t care about the answer.

She was grown and made her decision when she followed me out the club. She nodded her head as we stood in the front room. I stepped close enough to smell the liquor on her breath.

“I’m only gone say this shit once, and I know yo ass ain’t that drunk to not comprehend.” I walked her backwards then pressed her against the wall.

I wrapped one hand around her neck, the other slid down to grab a handful of ass. Her lips parted along with a gasp.

“I’m gon’ fuck you real good. Ain’t no phone calls, no text messages or none of the fairytale shit you pray for. You still want this shit or not?”

This time, Jeremy looked up at me, lost for words. Seconds later she got on her tippy toes then wrapped her arms around me. I was shocked when she kissed me like she was already addicted. Right then and there, I knew I was lying to myself with the

short speech I gave her.

“Show me to your bedroom then, Mr. One and Done,” Jeremy said seductively.

I showed her to my room and in seconds, I had us both naked. Jeremy was shaped like a pear. She stood in front of me as I put the condom on, eyeing her. Her toffee skin gleamed under my dim lights. My eyes traced the curve of her wide and full hips. I appreciated the view up to the small pouch above her bare pussy. Her face was round, cheeks full and rosy. When she pressed her lips together, I could see the small dimples in her cheeks.

Jeremy’s face was perfect; she had full lips and her nose was small like a button. Her deep dark almond eyes stared back at me with mischief. Her body would make a nigga look, but her face could make a nigga stay. I shook off my thoughts and told her to come here. She walked confidently without covering herself. That was a plus. I dealt with different shapes when it came to women.

I didn’t give a fuck if she was skinny, big, tall, or short. As long as she presented herself right, had confidence and smelled better than she looked, I was with it.

“Tell a nigga what you want, Ma.” I ran my knuckles down her chin then cupped it.

My thumb ran over her bottom lip as I slowly pushed it in and out of her mouth. She sucked it slow and softly with hooded lust-filled eyes. A sexy moan left Jeremy’s lips and that answered my question. I spun her sexy ass around and grabbed a hand full of hair. I slid my hand between her thighs then slid it up and down her wet slit. I took some of her wetness that gushed out from her tunnel and brought it up to my nose.

Smell check cleared; I licked my fingers dry then buried my dick inside of her.

Fuck! I froze inside of her. Jeremy's pussy felt like it never been penetrated before. I gently pulled out and groaned then slammed back inside of her. With each thrust, her ass jiggled as her French tip nails gripped at my comforter.

"Throw that pussy back on a nigga." I smacked her ass then spread her ass cheeks far apart.

Her pussy fluttered then suctioned me further in. She started winding her hips and throwing it back. I leaned down and nipped at her earlobe. My hands crept underneath her to cup her double D titties. I pinched at her pebbled nipples and listened to her soft sexy moans.

"Oh, baby!" She cried out.

It was a battle not to lose my mind while I was deep inside of her guts. This was the kind of pussy that niggas got killed over. It was untouchable pussy, the kind that Jeremy put on a shelf to shine and polish for muthafucka's to marvel at.

"Fuck!" I exclaimed, snatching my dick out of her and slapping it against her ass.

Thinking quick before nutting, I flipped her ass on her back and did the number one thing that I didn't do to hoes. I dived in head first, sucking both pussy lips into my mouth. My tongue parted her slit and flicked at her clit.

"Damn," I muttered against her.

She tasted like something raw and pure; a little sweat didn't bother me. Jeremy was clean. She gasped as her hips twitched, and I decided to slow shit down. I got comfortable between her thighs then ran the tip of my tongue along her slit, light and patiently to tease the fuck out of her. I wanted her to squirm.

I spread her lips wider with my fingers and buried my face deeper. I sucked her bud into my mouth then circled it with my tongue.

“Fuck!” She let out a broken sound.

I wrapped my arms under her thick thighs and pulled her closer to my face. I kept sucking her clit deep into my mouth like it owed me some shit. Her back arched as her fingers tried to grip my waves. I let her grind against my mouth, while my tongue flick and curled with each movement she gave. I groaned against her, wanting the vibration to hit her clit.

Jeremy’s entire body trembled, her thighs tried to close around my head, but I held them wide. She came hard, her moans and cries only made me hungrier for more. If this was the first and last time, I was gone make sure she remembered this shit forever. I wanted to taste more of Jeremy, so I licked every drop she gave me. I hated that I could already envision myself wanting more.

She was still breathing heavy, laid across my bed like I worshipped her ass. I got between her thighs and rubbed the tip of my dick against her slick folds.

“You feel that shit?” I slapped my dick against her swollen clit.

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“I do.” She moaned with her eyes fluttering.

I pushed her leg up then slid all the way in. Her pussy sucked me in. I had to grit my teeth to keep from losing it again.

“You tryna keep me here?”

“Mmmhmm.” She moaned as her eyes rolled back.

“You can’t though.” I bowed my head.

Jeremy whimpered underneath me; her hands gripped my waist. I moved with slow strokes since her pussy was so tight. There was no need to rush shit or fuck like I was scared of the pussy. Her shit was grade A. The type of pussy that I would remember. Jeremy’s pussy clenched around me like it knew I was tryna pretend that this was just one night, and it didn’t believe me.

“You feel too fuckin’ good,” I muttered.

I dipped my head and closed my lips around her nipple. I sucked deep while I kept delivering stroke after stroke. I started to roll into her as she arched off the bed a little. Her moans turned into breathless gasps as her eyes glistened.

“Your mine tonight...say that shit.”

“I’m yours, Sol.” She moaned; her nails clawed at my shoulders.

I picked the pace up, her body echoed with every stroke. She clenched around me again, tighter than before; she was close. I grabbed her throat and squeezed then kissed her hard while I broke her pussy down. Yeremy broke first, howling like a wounded cat while her whole frame trembled. I released minutes later. When I finally pulled back some, still inside of her...my dick never went limp.

I was still hard as fuck, wanting more...this shit was blowing me.

Chapter 7

Yeremy

“Baby girl, wake up.”

I was already woken, but still wished that I was sleep or in the bed with Sol. I wished like hell that I could have stayed the entire day with him. I wanted a conversation, to get to know him more and converse. My body was sore, my stomach growled viciously. I didn't even know what time it was, but hearing Casper's voice snapped me into reality.

“Yeremy, wake up.” Casper's voice got louder.

“I'm up.” I stifled a yawn and wiped the crust from the corners of my eyes.

“Good, we need to talk,” he stated flatly.

“About what?” I opened my eyes all the way and sat up.

I was thankful that I showered and put on my pajamas when I did make it home. I left Sol's house at four in the morning. Even after we went multiple rounds, I allowed myself to close my eyes but not fall asleep. I was determined to excuse myself rather

than him wake up, act funny after he fed me just to kick me out. I left before he asked me to leave. I wanted more but refused to beg or whine about spilled milk. Especially after he made things clear on what it was in the beginning of our encounter at the club. I liked Sol, a little too much now, but I respected his wishes. I'd swallow glass before I chase after a man that I wasn't supposed to have in the first place.

My body still hummed for him, but I knew the type of nigga he was. I didn't need a repeat of what happened between me and Ramsey. On top of that, him and Casper was close.

"Where was you last night?" Casper asked.

I felt my bed dip. The last thing I wanted was to be questioned by my dad this morning. This was the downside of living with Casper. He gave me space when he wanted to. Most of the time I didn't know if he was home or out doing Lord knows what. Casper really lived up to his street name; you never saw him coming or going, he was like a ghost. However, when he wanted to pry and ask questions, chances were he already knew the answers.

"I went out to the club with Bianca and Shardae," I said, not wanting to give more information than I had to.

"You and Sol was in the club as well, right?" Casper tilted his head as he blew smoke through his nostrils.

"Yeah, Dad. Why you ask that?" I played it cool.

"I'm just wondering what my daughter is doing with a nigga like Sol inside of a night club." He chuckled dryly.

"Me and my friends went to the club, Casper. Sol and his men showed up there. So,

whoever you have watching me should have told you that. Or maybe you can bring up the footage and see for yourself. I'm not trying to date Sol! I?—”

“Lower your tone.” He cut me off.

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I sighed and fixed my posture as I looked Casper in the eyes. When we was around other people, his eyes were always unreadable. Whenever we was alone, worry was always etched in his orbs.

“Sol is just as overbearing as you. He saw me dancing and enjoying myself and came into my section to tell me that I was doing too much to be the daughter of Casper. He also said that I was too drunk, so he made me and my friends go eat and sober up. That’s why I got home late.” I took in a deep breath.

“That’s my nigga.” Casper smirked then continued.

“You shouldn’t be out like some hood rat, getting drunk and partying. You’re a nurse with a bright career, all those niggas in the club ain’t worth breathing the same air as you, baby girl. I’m surprised Shardaе’s man even allowed her to go.” He shrugged his broad shoulders.

“I think I’ve found a nice small condo that’s twenty minutes away.” I changed the subject by lying.

I was relieved that he bought what I told him.

“You not moving out of here until you find a respectable man that asks for your hand in marriage. I was only asking you questions to be sure?—”

“Be sure that I didn’t fuck Sol! You really think low of me.”

“Well...you are a child of Benita.” He laughed.

“What if I did fuck Sol!” I asked, pissed off now.

“I’d kill him dead, then pay for his services. I love him like a son, but if he crossed me by fucking you...punishment is death. Now, that I know that’s not the case, I feel better. I’m not treating you like a kid either, Yeremy. I want you to live a good life, be happy and be the queen that I know you can be. Men like me and Sol can’t offer you much of anything. I know it feels good to a lot of young women to be with niggas that’s in the streets, but it also comes with a lot of pain and mourning from the lack of time we offer. Look at Raft...He’s gone, he didn’t listen and operate smart how me and your uncle did things. Sure, we still benefit from the streets money wise, but we no longer get our hands dirty. It doesn’t mean we don’t have enemies and niggas out here that still envy us. Muthafucka’s know who you are because of me, sad to say. That ain’t no shit to brag about, and I ain’t proud of it. I don’t want you like Benita, in her late fiftiesstill looking good but chasing the same shit. Hood dick...and got the nerves to still look good while doing it.” His dark eyes softened a little.

“I know, Dad. I’m going to make you proud. I’m on vacation and just want to have fun with my friends, that’s all. I don’t mind staying here either, I love being here. I just don’t like when you question me like I’m a kid. You act like I don’t make good decisions. Ramsey... I loved him and he didn’t treat me bad at all. I’m over that situation, although it still hurts. All I have is you, mom, and my two friends.” I softened a little.

Casper was overbearing and he went overboard at times. I loved my father with everything in me and understood that he loved me the same. He was paranoid and always wanted to protect me. Benita loved me, too, but it wasn’t the same as Casper. Casper took his time to drop gems, and he taught me not to be some naïve spoiled chick.

“I understand that, but that hoe Bianca is not your real friend. I’m letting you find that

out on your own since the answer is right in your face. Enjoy your vacation, try to relax. I got you an appointment at an all-day spa for tomorrow.” He smiled warmly after insulting my friend.

Casper knew all about Bianca; hell, he knew all about Shardae. Anybody that I came into contact with he did his own research on. Casper didn’t like Bianca because to him, she was nothing but a hoe. He like Shardae because he knew that she went to college like me and carried herself well.

“Thank you, Dad.” I smiled.

“You’re welcome and stop calling me Casper.”

“I call you that when you make me mad.” I smirked.

“Oh, I know, little girl. It’s time for you to clean yourself up. I can smell the liquor reeking from your pores. I had Esmeralda cook you dinner, I’ll have her bring it up by the time you’ve freshened up.”

“Dinner? What time is it?” I looked around my room.

“Nearing seven o clock. You can’t hang...” His words trailed as he stood.

“Out shaking ass and sleeping all day. You really worry an OG.” He chuckled.

“I can’t hang? Nah, you can’t hang! Esmeralda told me the other day that you was tucked in bed at eight o clock.” I giggled.

“That’s my business, and I’ll talk to Esmeralda about telling you what I’m doing. I don’t have much to do these days beside counting the money that’s owed to me every week. I plan on going on a vacation, two of my young hoes want to see the mother

land.” He stood and winked his eye.

“I heard Viagra speeds the heart up. Be careful trying to keep up with young hoes,” I warned him, holding in my laugh.

“I don’t need Viagra, and these young hoes just can’t keep up with me.”

I fell out laughing just from the way he elegantly tied his silk robe and walked out of my room like he knew he was the man.

Chapter 8

Sol

“Itold you to slut that hoe out, not put her in a penthouse suite for an entire week to play fake house with her, nigga.” I drilled Fatz soon as he plopped down in my front seat.

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“Nigga, what? I’m having a lil too much fun with the broad. Aye...” his words trailed off as his eyes gazed around the hotel’s parking lot like someone was in ear shot.

“You ever let a bitch eat ya gooch?” he asked seriously.

I started choking viciously off the weed smoke that got caught up in my lungs.

“The fuck you just say, nigga?” I asked him in disbelief.

“She said it was the gooch, not necessarily my ass. She licked and sucked right underneath my balls. No lie, her tongue traveled a lil further. It felt good as fuck. Bitch been using the room kitchen to cook and shit for me whenever I come back up to this bitch.”

“Nigga, she eating yo ass. If that’s your thing, so be it. The point is, if I was to go up there right now...She’ll be on go. That’s why I tell you not to be too quick to wife a hoe just because she bustin’ it wide open and cooking meals for yo ass.”

“Cooking is a way to a nigga heart. You know how I feel about food.” Fatz looked away from me.

“So you using what yo momma did to you as an excuse to just let any bitch in close? Come on, Rashad, you to grown for this type of shit. Nigga, we ain’t regular ass niggas. And to be honest with you, I don’t plan on being like that nigga Raft. Staying in this shit for life or till death. Tell me what the fuck I done told you about the plan, nigga.” I looked over at him.

I hated to be so hard on my brother, but in so many ways, he was immature as fuck. I hated that his cracked-out momma fucked his head up and wished that Raft got him when he was born. My momma was loving, she made the decision to let my father raise me because she knew I needed the father figure in my life.

Fatz' momma left him for days turned into weeks plenty of times. He had abandonment issues, so when it came to women, it took a little bit to nothing for him to fall hard for them.

“The plan is to start investing once we save up a couple million.” He sighed.

“Then what?”

“Be out the game by the time we in our late thirties because by then we will have generational wealth.” He snatched his hoodie off and scratched the top of his waves.

“How the fuck we gone do that if you out here falling in love just because a bitch with a fat ass ate yo ass?” I smirked then chuckled just from the way it sounded.

“So you just cut Jeremy fine ass off?” he asked, giving me a knowing look.

“I did what I did with her and that was it.” I looked away.

I hated that Jeremy's thick ass kept popping into my mental throughout the day. Impulsive thoughts of her was forceful and didn't stop day by day. She called herself leaving before I woke up, and for some reason, it fucked with me in the worse way.

“Give me the room key,” I told him.

“What?”

“You heard me, nigga. Give me the room key so I can go up there and let that bitch know the deal. You done with her, and on top of that, we got a nigga over in Compton that gots to get handled. That’s some shit that you pose’ to be on top of, now I gotta show face.” I gritted out.

I felt like Fatz and I were fair niggas. We gave niggas outside of our section a chance to eat if they presented themselves to us as businessmen. A nigga named Physc begged for months to be put on, claiming he needed to make money to feed his family. The nigga didn’t even wait to try to run off with my money. He did that shit right away.

“Let me just get one more session out of her, then I’m done,” Fatz said, breaking me out of my thoughts.

“Alright, bet. Give me the key though.” I pressed.

“Here, man.” Fatz handed me the key card with a look of irritation plastered on his face.

I took the card and got out of the car. Bitches like Bianca came a dime a dozen. She thought her body could buy her the lifestyle of being put up by any nigga she laid eyes on. I didn’t plan on cock blocking between her and Fatz. All I could do was school my brother and hope that he listened. Me showing up inside of the room was to serve as a reality check to her smut face ass.

I stepped into the penthouse quietly, the suite smelled like weed and perfume. Music pulsed lowly throughout the front room. My eyes landed right on Bianca. She sat on the edge of a velvet couch, legs crossed with her heels off. She was still in character mode just in case Fatz’ dumb ass doubled back to the room. Her face was made up perfectly, and her hair was slicked neatly in a high ponytail.

Her eyes caught mine, and immediately a devilish smile graced her diamond shaped face. She stood with no words leaving her mouth like I owed her all of my attention.

“I knew you was gone come to see about me soon,” she said seductively.

“Word?” I smirked at her like it was all good.

“Yeap. I knew Fatz was gone brag and tell you just how good I am.” She giggled innocently.

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“What you good at?”

“Everything, I know Jeremy’s good girl ass ain’t with the shits like me.” She shrugged as she took a step my way. Wrong move. I thought.

“So what you gone do to prove her wrong?”

“I want to suck the skin off yo dick nastily and feel your nut all over my face and titties.” She licked her lips hungrily.

“You want that, daddy?” She almost closed the space between us.

I didn’t flinch, I stared her dead in the face, smelling the desperation reeking from her pores.

“You just offering throat like it’s a gift, huh?” I murmured, keeping my tone flat with my eyes still locked on hers.

“That’s real fuckin’ cute.” I chuckled.

Her lips twitched into a smile like she thought I was about to say yes. I leaned down just enough to let my words slap her funky breath ass in the face.

“I killed your baby daddy, bitch. You still want to suck my dick?”

It was comical watching her face go through several different emotions.

“My niggas stormed in right when he was in the middle of fucking your best friend. You love tasting her pussy or something off the next nigga dick?” I taunted her, watching all the color drain from her face.

“Huh?” She blinked her eyes rapidly.

“You heard me bitch. Yeremy don’t know how Ramsey is your baby daddy. She doesn’t know how much of a hating ass bitch you really is. You love to play like you love her cause she loves to be a real friend to you. She pays your bills with Casper’s money whenever you fall short of a new trick. You love sucking every nigga dick for a bag. Even that nigga Casper dick been down that hollow throat of yours. You might as well be Yeremy’s shadow, crawling behind her with a fucked up BBL and no self-respect.” I spat right into her face.

She opened her mouth to speak, I cut her off right away.

“Shut whatever the fuck you ’bout to say up,” I said coldly, straightening my posture.

“You’re not even temptation, ma. You just a nut guzzlin’ ass bitch that’s looking for a come up. Eating ass and sucking balls. Them cavities in the back of yo mouth full of shit and different nigga’s nut.” The silence that fell after was brutal.

Bianca looked like she wanted to cry, instead, she turned her head like maybe if she didn’t look at me nothing I said was real.

“Give me yo muthafuckin’ phone.” I spat.

She moved like fire was attached to her ass to get her phone off the coffee table. Without being asked, she unlocked it and handed it to me. I didn’t know why the fuck I was even attempting to be this thirsty to get Yeremy’s number. Yeremy had me fucked up too, though. She called herself trying to get a one up on me by leaving my

house, when I planned on breaking that pussy down one more time for good measures.

“Enjoy the time you have left with Fatz.” I locked her phone and dropped it down to the floor.

Without any more words, I turned to walk out of the room. Some women thought beauty was currency. Me? I didn’t pay for things that I could destroy with a sentence.

Chapter 9

Bianca

My heart was beating so fast, I could hear the shit in my ears. I stood frozen, lips parted, confused as hell how it went left so fast. If things went how the fuck I planned, I would’ve had Sol’s fine ass first! Sol was an evil ass bastard, yet my pussy thumped wildly for him. He knew my secret, but at the same time I knew that a nigga like him wouldn’t reveal it. I could use all of what he said to my advantage and still probably get the dick along with a nice big bag to go along with it.

Jeremy, Jeremy, Jeremy... Why was it always her? I thought as I plopped back down on the couch. I hated this feeling, how jealous I am of the bitch. I couldn’t help it, it ate away at me, crawled up my spine and coiled around my brain every time I see that stupid ass, effortless smile on Jeremy’s face. It’s not fair and I know that she’s not better than me. I was the perfect and pretty one, always had been. My hair stay laid, waist snatched, face was nothing short of perfection.

I didn’t feel an ounce of sympathy for sleeping with Ramsey behind her back because he was supposed to be mine the night we all was together. He just went for the pudgy, fake innocent, virgin bitch. He saw that Jeremy was green to a lot of shit and knew that she would be easier to manipulate. I fell in love with Ramsey’s ass the first night

we fucked. Later down the line he told me all about his plans on kidnapping Jeremy for ransom money.

That was my man, so I planned to ride until the wheels fell off. Jeremy needed a reality check anyway; she was always happy-go-lucky like that bitch Sharda. It pained me to my core listening to Jeremy speak about my man and his last words. I thought she was lying when she said that they was in the middle of fucking when men stormed in. Sol confirmed the shit, and now I was pulled back into feelings that I tried to bury. It was hard playing along, trying to be there for Jeremy mourning when I was the one with the broken heart and a son that belonged to Ramsey.

I carried his first son and only kid. I won in my eyes, but in the end, we both lost the nigga. I pressed my hand to my forehead and let my tears fall. Right on cue as if the universe just wanted to slap me, my phone lit up. Her name was on the screen as I read the message.

Bestie: Hey babe, you okay? Ain't heard from you...I was thinking we could hit Melrose or Rodeo later. I'm in a mood to blow a bag before I go back to work in two days...Maybe get a drink or something???

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Of course, her spoiled ass wanted to go shopping. Jeremy didn't even have to work a day in her life if she didn't want to. Casper handed her thousands like it was pocket change. Jeremy saw the struggle from me, she never been through it. I wiped my face and forced myself to smile, getting into character mode again.

I texted her yes, because what the fuck else was I supposed to say? I used her and wasn't no shame in my game about it either. I know the truth, Jeremy tried to act like she was some good girl for Casper's approval. But I knew better. She ain't no angel, her creeping off from the club with Sol proved how I felt about her all this time.

Chapter 10

Jeremy

The trauma room smelled like latex, sweat, metal, and blood from the last patient we just cleared out. I wiped my gloved hands on the thigh of my scrubs, even though they was already streaked with blood. The man on the table wasn't going to make it if we didn't move quickly. He came in with multiple stab wounds to his upper abdomen and right side. His pressure kept dropping fast, and he was barely conscious.

Every couple of seconds, his eyes fluttered. I saw the empty look plenty of times, it never got old. It was the look of wanting to hold on for dear life and fight through the temptation to want to let go and be free of pain and suffering. I said a silent prayer for the man and whispered Amen.

"Scissors," I said, my voice tight but steady.

Dr. Larae Min turned toward me without a word, handing them over. He stood on the other side of the patient, focused and very swift with observation. I learned so much from him, because he always had me hands-on in situations like this. Dr. Larae was the best doctor to work in trauma. He usually didn't say much beyond the necessities that he needed or the orders he dished out. Tonight it was just him and I working in trauma; we had multiple patients that came in which spread us all thin, leaving just me and Dr. Larae alone.

"You okay to keep pressure on that while I take over?" He asked, nodding his head toward the chest wound.

I nodded my head and leaned over to apply weight carefully. He glanced up at me, and that was the first time out of all the times that I really got a chance to really look at him. His eyes weren't just green, they were sharp and intense. His skin was warm brown with a golden undertone. Dr. Larae was Black and Asian. A faint scar nicked the edge of his chin which was the only flaw on his face.

I watched Dr. Larae work on the patient quietly until he broke the silence.

"After this, you want to grab dinner since your working overtime?" he asked still focusing on the patient.

"Tonight?" I asked, blinking my eyes up at him.

"Yeah." He paused to look up at me then back down at the patient.

"Unless you're too tired," he added.

Tired didn't begin to cover how I felt. My feet ached, my back was stiff and in pain. My heart was still in overdrive from the last code blue that didn't make it. Yet, somehow, I found myself saying...

“Sure.”

Because why the fuck not? I could use something or someone to keep my mind occupied. Dr. Larae quickly glanced back up with a look of shock covering his handsome face. He played it off by raising a brow and smirking.

“Cool.”

We continued working in silence after that. He finished stitching as I continued to apply pressure than adjust the IV flow. The room was dim except for the overhead lights that burned down on the patient’s pale skin. I refused to let myself think too hard about going out to eat with Dr. Larae.

“His pressure is stabilizing,” I said, as my fingers pressed into the gauze around the chest tube that he inserted minutes ago.

“Good work, Jeremy. He’s fortunate that we moved fast.”

I gave a small shrug, not because I didn’t appreciate the compliment, but because I didn’t want it to mean too much coming from him. Dr. Larae already moved with a lot of confidence, his word proceeded himself and he knew it.

When the patient was finally prepped for transfer to the ICU, we stood in stillness of the aftermath. My fifth pair of gloves were sticky, and I could feel sweat at the back of my neck. Dr. Larae peeled his gloves off with a snap, his eyes cut over toward me.

“You still down for later?” he asked.

“Yes, I could eat but would love to go home and shower first.” I looked at the time on my Apple watch.

It was nearing nine p.m., I was supposed to get off work at six p.m. With a bunch of call offs, I always ended up staying later than I was supposed to.

“You don’t use the staff showers to change before going home?” He asked.

“No, I like being at home, in my personal space to shower and wine down,” I said.

A lot of nurses used the locker room to shower and change out of their scrubs when they ended a shift. Me, personally, I liked my privacy.

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“Okay, you can text me your address. I can come pick you up. I know a place that won’t feel like we’re still in the hospital.” He chuckled.

“I don’t care where it is,” I said honestly, stepping beside him next to the sink.

“As long as nobody is flatlining next to us.” I sighed.

He chuckled under his breath as we washed our hands in silence. Our eyes met in the mirror above the sink. His gaze was direct, laced with softness.

“You okay, Jeremy?”

“No, but I will be...today was just a lot,” I admitted.

Water trickled down my forearms, the scent of antiseptic crept up my nose. A lot of doctors and nurses were immune to it all; death, blood, and the pain that reeked from patients’ family members whenever bad news was delivered. I was always left wishing that I had magic powers to heal everyone. I always gave every patient my all because they mattered in the moment. It’s what I got paid to do but I also had a passion for it. Dr. Larae and I exchanged numbers. I never thought about asking him why he wanted to take me out to eat. The look he gave me when we walked out of trauma bay answered that question. Dr. Larae liked what he saw, he was handsome as hell with a good ass career.

My dad would love seeing him come to the house to pick me up. It was sad that I even entertained the thought of dating Dr. Larae just to please Casper. At the same time, maybe it was a good idea to date someone different. Especially after getting my

heart ripped out by Ramsey, and my pussy beat down by Sol...I couldn't get Sol off my mind to save my own life... This dinner was probably what I needed after all.

Chapter 11

Sol

Soon as I parked my car in the front of Casper's house, his maid was already waiting at the front steps like she had been watching me on camera. Esmeralda was beautiful and quiet, she been with Casper for over a decade. She minded the business that paid her and made everyone feel at home from the time you walked into his house. Her hair was wild and curly today; most of the time it slicked back into a low ponytail.

Esmeralda had to be in her late forties or early fifties. Truth is, she didn't look a day over thirty. She smiled at me as I walked up.

"Mr. Casper is expecting you," she said softly in her thick native tongue.

I stepped past her on the marble floors and inhaled the air that smelled like Cuban cigars mixed with weed and cinnamon candles. I followed her down the long hallway until we reached double doors that opened out to a patio. It didn't take long for me to spot him in his laid-back zone.

Casper's salt and pepper hair was slicked back as he leaned his head back in the built in jacuzzi. Steam curled around him as he blew smoke into the night air. On the other side of him was two naked dark chocolate women. One laid eyes on me then leaned over to lick his chest as the other started massaging his shoulders.

Casper looked up at me over the rim of his dark shades and smiled wide. He took his cigar out of his mouth and lifted it toward me.

“My boy!” His deep voice boomed.

He stared at me with pride and joy as he motioned for me to come closer.

“I see you living good, old man.” I chuckled.

“Always...today’s just a special day. Jeremy is finally making me proud of her.” He took a long pull from his cigar.

“Is that right?”

“Yeah, a square ass nigga knocked on the door an hour ago. Introduced himself as Dr. Larae.”

I raised a brow and slid my hands into my pockets. She was already trying to throw the pussy on another nigga after I fucked her down real proper like.

“A doctor.” He chuckled through the thick cloud of smoke he blew out.

“He a pretty boy mixed kind of nigga with green eyes. He makes an honest living so that’s all that matters. Nigga looked me in the eyes and told me about his interest in her. Jeremy was happy too, she kept blushing when she came down the steps.”

“So you throwing a jacuzzi party because she went out on a date with a doctor? That don’t mean he’s a good nigga, Casper.” I shook my head in disbelief at his logic.

“He’s a good nigga...better than us. What’s the worse he can do?” Casper closed his eyes, enjoying the massage one of the women gave him.

“It’s all kinds of shit that his square ass can do. She’s the daughter of the infamous Casper. He can’t protect her or none of the shit niggas like us can do.”

“Yeah, that is true... very true, Sol. But he damn sure wouldn’t try to kidnap her for ransom money like that bum Ramsey.” Casper opened his eyes and looked me in the eyes.

“That square nigga don’t know shit about me and my lifestyle. His resume will be on my desk before me and these hoes board the private jet in the morning. Since you so worried about Jeremy...that brings me to the reason why I called you over in the first place.” He smirked.

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I sighed and took a seat that was close to the pool.

“You can keep an eye on her while I’m gone.”

“You going where again?” I snapped out of my own thoughts of Jeremy out to eat with another nigga. It shouldn’t have bothered me at all but for some reason it did.

“Ghana, I might even hit Nigeria.” He smiled.

“Jeremy is grown, Casper. I got a lot of shit going on.”

“So add her to the list of things that you got going on. You helped her at the club. I want to make sure she’s good. I’m not saying make the shit obvious. Just check in on her for me,” he said.

“Yeah, I’ll keep an eye on her,” I agreed.

“Alright good. You can hop in and celebrate with me if you want. I don’t share Deliyah, but you can have your go with Ravian.” He chuckled.

“I ain’t getting in no water with your old nuts floating around, old man.” I chuckled.

“Suit yourself and excuse yourself. It’s time for me to do my shit.” Casper lifted his hand and smacked one of the chicks on the ass.

I shook my head and stood to leave. The image of Jeremy somewhere laughing over wine and appetizers with some tall-ass, green-eyed doctor didn’t sit too well with me

the more I thought about it. I pictured her thick ass dressed up and smelling good with her brown skin glowing. Her innocent ass smile was probably wide, making that lame ass nigga lust for her and shit.

She wasn't mine, and never would be that so I swallowed the thought like a bullet. It was something about her being with a nigga with clean fingernails, no blood underneath them. No survival street instincts attached to that doctor to make sure she was good in case shit got crazy. Casper overlooked who the fuck he was just how my father did at times.

It was niggas out here that still would risk going to war with that nigga behind their innocent loved ones that was no longer breathing, just off the principle alone. Jeremy could be a target at any moment. I also understood that she was a good girl. He raised her that way, and only wanted to see her happy.

My biggest mistake was fucking Jeremy. She was like the forbidden fruit that Eve brought to Adam to taste. Although I couldn't quite understand this strong attraction to her, I suddenly wanted her. Jeremy wasn't even the type of woman that I fucked with. Maybe I needed to hit a couple more times and cut her ass off to get it all out of my system.

The unhinged side of me was about to fuck with her in the worse type of way. Something told me she only took that date to rid herself of thoughts of me.

Chapter 12

Jeremy

"Mmmhmm...yeah, no. I'm still up. Larae." I murmured into the phone with a groggy voice.

“You said Sunday you want to check out the new sushi place by the beach, right?” I stifled my yawn, trying to prove to him that I was alert and tuned in to the conversation.

I didn’t want to appear rude mid conversation while talking to Larae by drifting off to sleep. It was Friday night; I was happy that I didn’t have to wake up early in the morning for work. It seemed like Thursday’s and Friday’s was when work took a toll on me. I was tired as hell and just wanted to sleep my weekend away.

Dr. Larae chuckled nervously on the other end. After us sharing dinner together earlier in the week. I learned that he was shy, but very polite at the same time. He was a gentleman who opened up doors and pulled out my chair before I could take a seat. It was the small gestures that he offered that I appreciated. Him and I talked on the phone at night after our long shifts at the hospital. He texted me every morning at five a.m. to tell me good morning. The gesture was sweet but a little corny to me.

Whenever he got comfortable in our conversations, he tended to talk a little too much. I scratched at my head then readjusted my bonnet.

“What are you doing?” he asked, sounding curious and nosy.

“About to get out of bed and go to the kitchen to get a couple of snacks.” I stood and slid on my silk robe that clung to my thighs from the static of my sheets.

“Oh okay, I’m watching Law & Order in my living room. My one-year-old took over my bed for the night.” He chuckled nervously again.

“Don’t do her.” I giggled.

“She’s just probably happy to see you this weekend.” I smiled, loving the fact that he was a good dad.

I learned that Larae's baby momma was bitter as hell and liked to keep his daughter away from him most of the time. Tonight, she dropped her off at his place because she wanted to go out to shake her ass.

"I know, but that little girl kicks and scratches me with her sharp toenails at night." He chuckled.

"So do you like Sushi?" He changed the subject quickly.

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“I’m not really a fan of it,” I told him honestly.

“I also like my stomach in one piece,” I added.

We both laughed together. I walked fast to the kitchen as bad as I hated to admit that I missed Casper, although half the time I didn’t know if he was home or gone. It felt good everyday knowing at least either him or one of the house staff was here. He left two days ago to Africa and took Esmeralda along with him. I loved my father’s relationship with Esmeralda, I didn’t know if he noticed it or not but the two of them were good friends. I caught them on several occasions talking and discussing things together.

Casper was hard when it came to trusting people. Esmeralda served many hats to his estate. She stayed on top of house staff when it came to cleaning and cooking his favorite meals. I felt happy for her that she was getting a much-needed vacation. Casper not only paid her way for the vacation, he offered for three of her family members of her choice to join her which was very sweet of him.

When I turned down another hallway that led to the kitchen, I felt a shift in the air. The silence felt like the kind of me being watched. I shook that shit off as paranoia, because again, I didn’t like the fact that I was all alone in this big ass house. Everything seemed to echo at night.

“Yeremy? You okay?” Larae’s deep voice snapped me out of the paranoid zone I was in.

“Yeah—” My words trailed off as I gasped out loud.

Sol was leaned up against the counter like he was the man of the house. He was shirtless with all his tattoos out on display. A bowl of cereal was in his hand as his muscles flexed. My eyes roamed up his tattooed arms, his body looked like a beautiful well sculpted canvas. His tattoos disappeared by his neck. Sol had a fresh low fade with seasick waves. His goatee framed the sharpness of his jaw like it was cut with intentions to make a bitch melt.

His dark brown eyes didn't blink nor soften. He smirked slowly as his tongue brushed against the inside of his cheek like he tasted something sweet and was trying to savor it.

"Hang up." His gaze dropped down to my robe, then slid back up to my eyes confidently.

"Umm—Larae...my uncle just popped up over here in the middle of the night." I cleared my throat and coughed, trying to play my rudeness off.

"Okay, call me when you get back up to your room," Larae spoke, still sounding concerned.

My throat tightened; I didn't offer Larae a response before I hung the phone up. Sol scooped another spoonful of cereal like he wasn't already making me weak in the knees.

"Uncle?" He murmured, munching on what I saw was my Frosted Flakes.

"What the hell are you doing here?" I asked as my heart thudded hard in my chest.

He sat the bowl down on the island and stepped close to me. My eyes voluntarily dropped down to his stomach as he purposely flexed it. I looked down at his black and red Jordan basketball shorts; my mouth watered seeing the big limp piece of meat

resting on his thigh through the material. He leaned in just enough for me to smell the faint scent of his cologne.

“I’m here to watch you. Make sure you don’t make dumb ass decisions that would disappoint Casper. The look in your eyes, ma...is telling me that you ready to risk it all right now though...and make another stupid decision.” He bit into his bottom lip.

“What stupid decision is that?” I rolled my eyes.

“Me,” he stated flatly.

I didn’t move or speak because he was right. I was feeling the same way from the night he approached me at the club. I dubbed Sol as a one-night thing and a bad decision based off of my vulnerability. My robe suddenly felt thinner as my nipples pebbled until I felt them poking through the silk material of my robe. I crossed my arms over my chest to conceal my nipples as I smacked my lips, trying my hardest not to tell on how aroused I was in front of him.

“I don’t need to be watched. Casper and you are overstepping again, you can leave. I’m sure he doesn’t know that you’re in our house at midnight, standing shirtless to entice me while eating a bowl of my cereal.” I rolled my eyes hard.

“What? You want to call him and tell him?” He took another step, and I damn near fainted.

“N-no! Why would I do that?” I panicked as he kept the same cocky smirk on his face.

“The only reason I could think of, is you wanting more of this dick. You left the door unlocked, like you wanted company, Jeremy.” This time, his charming smile reached his almond shaped eyes.

His hand grazed the edge of the counter near my hip. He was close enough for the heat of his body to lick across my skin.

“That’s a lie, I made sure that I locked the door. I don’t want company at all and I’m not desperate for your dick again.” I lied right through my teeth.

His eyes darkened as he tilted his head to the side.

“Oh okay, you want that doctor nigga you was on the phone with?” He shook his head and laughed like it was a joke.

“Dr. Larae is?—”

“A soft ass nigga... That’s what you want?” He asked.

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In seconds, his hand was around my lower back, and he pulled me up against him and talked directly into my ear. Sol's lips brushed the shell of my ear, my pussy activated overtime by the small gesture as my entire body heated up.

“Don't stand here and lie. I'd love to prove to you how much of a fuckin' liar you are...go ahead...lie to me...I can see it all in your eyes, Jeremy.” His hand squeezed at the top of my ass boldly.

I hated how it felt like I belonged in his arms, up against him breathing the same air as him had me in a trance that made it hard for me to snap out of.

“Dr. Larae is nice, very charming and he's polite and generous. He treats me like a lady...so yes, that's something I want and like in a man. Not the type that breaks into my house to steal my cereal and start toxic ass arguments.” I spat still finding it hard to breathe properly with him up against me squeezing my ass.

“Oh, is that right?” He clicked his teeth.

“Yes, that's right.”

“I get it...He's soft, safe, and predictable as fuck. That's why you picked him. Bitches love a nigga that they can take advantage of. You need a corny ass nigga like Dr. Larae to help you cope with not having a nigga like me. Yeah...” He sized me up and down with his penetrating ass eyes and laughed.

“Nigga soft as fuck. That's why you picked em. You want an easy ass nigga.” He shook his head, looking down at me like I was a fool.

My jaw clenched tightly. I tried to move out of his grip, but he didn't budge.

"What the fuck does that make you?" I tried to pull away again.

Sol used both of his hands and pulled me up against him roughly by my ass. I could feel his dick on my lower stomach.

"It makes a nigga like me very necessary. You want me bad as fuck, wish you could probably mold me and have me sprung out here chasing yo spoiled ass around. You know you can't run me, and I already set rules out that you have no choice to follow. You want to stand in front of me playing hard to get when I know that little fat monk is wet as fuck...soppy wet for me."

He pulled back, just enough to look me in the eyes.

"Tell a nigga to leave, Y Jeremy," he said voice low and firm as he released me from his hold but still close as hell, all in my personal space.

"I'll leave if you say it...but you won't. All because you still consumed with thoughts of how I had yo pretty ass folded on that bed...how your thick ass legs shook when I made you cum back-to-back." He taunted me.

My knees damn near buckled.

"The worst part about it all." His gaze burned into mine.

"Yo spoiled ass don't like being the one in control...you like to be the cause of a nigga crashing out behind you, so you can try to offer the cure and make it all better." He shook his head then turned to pick up his bowl of cereal.

He took a spoonful and chewed on it slow with his eyes still on me the whole time.

“I missed you, though... go ahead and tell me you missed me too, cause I know you can’t stop thinking about me.” He chuckled.

It was the look of amusement and the cockiness that pissed me off to the max. He also acted nonchalant about everything that came out of his mouth like he hadn’t ripped the truth out of my chest and laid it on the counter next to his spoon.

“Boy, fuck you! I ain’t telling yo arrogant ass shit.” I spat.

I didn’t even have time to breathe before the bowl of cereal clattered against the counter. I eyed the milk that splashed out the bowl then felt Sol’s hands on me. He gripped my waist with both hands and lifted me like I weighed nothing which was a first for me. My ass hit the marble countertop as my legs instinctively parted around his body.

Sol stepped between my thighs and pulled me to the edge of the counter. His eyes bored into mine hungrily as his right hand slid up my thigh underneath my robe. My bottom lip dropped soon as his fingers brushed against the heated damp area that he got to know well weeks ago.

“You still haven’t told me to leave yet,” he muttered low and roughly as he leaned in closer.

His lips brushed mine, my eyes shut waiting for the kiss that I thought he would give. When I didn’t feel his lips press against mine, I opened my eyes and stared into his eyes with disappointment.

“I should have told you to leave,” I said above a whisper.

“You can’t.” His fingers pressed against the thin fabric of my panties that I was sure was soaked through.

He offered me a knowing look as he pinched my pussy lips together.

“Still wet for me, she knows who she belongs too.”

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I opened my mouth to argue but couldn't utter out the words. Two of his fingers pressed against my clit. He moved his fingers slow in steady and circled them repeatedly. It was insane to me how he knew my body and its rhythm after just one time. He had me down pack down to the speed of how I liked it. He stood between my legs and played me like an instrument.

Sol didn't push his fingers pass the barrier of my panties. He rubbed me with precision, building me up and backing away a little each time my hips bucked forward.

"Y—you gotta stop," I whined out and moaned.

He ignored it, those dark deep eyes stayed locked in on my fluttering eyes like a predator.

"Nah, ma...you gone feel this and tell me you miss me. I don't give a fuck if I got to pull that shit out of you."

"Please, Sol." I begged, feeling myself getting ready to fall the hell apart.

I didn't want to look like a fool afterwards and do another walk of shame and battle with myself over the right decision that I should have made from jump. My body was hot and tense all over, lust was overriding my right sense of mind. I started to tremble from the edge that he kept teetering me on. Sol used his free hand to pinch my nipples as my thighs clenched tightly around him.

"You ain't cum since me." He leaned forward to whisper in my ear.

“That doctor don’t know what to do with you. There’s only one Sol, Jeremy.” He chuckled.

“I swear I hate you.” I breathed roughly. My voice broke as my body quivered from his touch.

“No, you don’t.” He chuckled then bit into my neck.

“You miss me, so just say it.” He pulled back again right when I was about to release.

“No.” I choked out, feeling my eyes well up with tears.

His fingers sped up, he circled faster and harder as my hand gripped his forearm. Sol’s thick lips hovered over mine again teasing me with the heat of his closeness. My legs trembled, followed by my hips rolling fiercely without permission.

“You miss this dick...” He growled.

“You miss me too, say that shit,” he demanded.

I whimpered as my pussy clenched around nothing but the pressure of his fingers. My body pulsed with need, I was on the edge and about to give in.

“Say it!” He ordered out again, his thumb pressed down in the right spot making me jolt.

“I missed you, Sol!” I shouted the confession as if my life depended on it.

I grabbed at his shoulders and dug my nails in as he smirked victoriously.

“I know,” he whispered roughly, finally pressing his lips to mine.

“Cum for me, Jeremy.”

On cue, he moved my panties to the side and played in my wetness. The cool of his fingers toying with me made me cum hard. It felt like I was falling apart right on the kitchen counter, like I belonged to Sol.

Chapter 13

Jeremy

My body continued to convulse from the overwhelming orgasm. Sol gave me no time to recover. His rough hands gripped my thighs again as he yanked me forward on the counter. He caught me mid-breath and hoisted me into his arms. I let out a small gasp as he walked us through the kitchen into the dark hallway.

One of his hands gripped the underside of my thigh, the other palmed my ass possessively. I wasn't about to try to be strong when I liked all this rough and controlling shit that he was doing. It turned me on so much that I said fuck my phone that I left in the kitchen. I didn't give a damn that my robe was practically hanging off of me.

My bonnet was barely hanging on to my head as he kicked my bedroom door open with the heel of his foot. Before I could blink, my back hit my soft mattress. Sol's sexy, chocolate ass loomed over me like he was coming to make love to me. When in actual reality, he was doing all of this to remind me.

His hand gripped the side of my robe, he practically ripped it open. He moved fast, ripping my gown off next. I hissed at the feel of his mouth being latched onto my right nipple. He sucked hard then swirled his tongue around my areola until my back arched off the bed. I clutched his broad tatted shoulders as he trailed kisses down my belly.

He yanked my panties off and tossed them wherever. He was moving so damn fast, I didn't know what was next. He proved to me through his actions that he hadn't stopped thinking about me like I kept thinking about him. It was true...Sol missed the hell out of me, and he was proving the shit through actions.

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He stood up and dropped his boxers, along with his basketball shorts. I sat up on my elbows and looked at his prominent, thick, and long ass dick. My mouth watered as he stroked his dick making it slap against his stomach.

“You want to try to play with someone safe. I get that shit, but when I want this pussy...I know for a fact that I will get it. Open her up for me,” he uttered seriously.

My body was under his spell, I spread my legs wide and slid my hands down to my slick folds. I spread my pussy lips apart and watched him get back in the bed. He didn't wait for an indication of me being ready. He slammed into me, deep and rough. I screamed as my nails clawed at his back as he drove into me again and again. His hips rotated and snapped with a rhythm that I couldn't keep up with.

“Tell me, Yeremy. Whose pussy is this? I'm already hitting this bitch raw as fuck with no protection. Don't fuck around with me,” he demanded with his teeth clenched.

I couldn't speak, I was a mess beneath him. My lips parted as he fucked me like I owed him something more sacred than the pussy he was taking. Sol grabbed my throat and held me still. I was locked into his dark stare down.

“Tell me!” He picked one of my legs up and threw it over his shoulder before slamming in deeper.

He buried himself with each thrust, my pussy stretched around him, greedily taking all of the dick that he had to offer which was too damn much.

“Yours” I cried voice cracking.

“This pussy belong to Sol!” I added for great measure, hating how desperate I sounded.

“Don’t forget that shit again.” He hissed out.

“Ain’t no nigga dickin’ this pussy down like me. So go ahead and entertain that corny ass nigga. That’s cool and all, but you give him this pussy, it’s gone be a mutha fuckin’ problem.”

I sobbed out loud as another orgasm rose in the pits of my stomach like a wave that I couldn’t fight.

“Damn, you just cumming all over this dick.” He smirked as my pussy contracted and spat out all over him disrespectfully.

“Yes, baby,” I whimpered as my eyes rolled into the back of my head.

Sol refused to let me recover, he reached between my legs and pressed his thumb against my clit and kept stroking me. He slowed down the pace just enough to hear the wet sounds of my pussy.

“You look pretty as fuck when you cumming all over my dick, Yeremy. You tryna make a nigga sprung off you. Do that shit again for me.” He pulled all the way back and slammed back in.

“I—I—can’t!” I cried out.

“You can.” He growled, picking up the pace.

“You will do that shit, and when you do...make sure you look a real nigga in the eyes,” he demanded.

Seconds later, I came hard as hell. I screamed his name and watched his jaw clench as he pulled out of me and shot his hot nut all over my stomach and titties. He slid back inside of me with a guttural groan leaving his throat. I gasped out when Sol grabbed me and placed me on top of him with his nut still glued to my body.

We stayed like that for a long time before he moved me over to the side. I laid there for a moment, my chest rose and fell like I had just survived something violent and beautiful all at once. My legs trembled against my bedspread as I struggled to catch my breath. I looked over at Sol, he was propped up on his elbow. He offered me the same cocky ass look that made my stomach tighten. Here we go...I thought.

“You can go now,” I muttered hoarsely.

“You got what you wanted, no need to stick around.” I lazily rolled my eyes.

Without a word, Sol stood up and disappeared into my bathroom. I laid still stunned at how my own words made something in my chest tighten. I hated this feeling of not knowing what to expect from a person. A man like Sol was very unpredictable yet, very blunt and harshly honest with whatever came out of his mouth. Casual sex wasn't for me. When I laid down with Ramsey, I connected with him and felt him through intimacy the most.

With Sol, it felt the same damn way down to the way he touched me, even if it was rough. I didn't mean the words that left my mouth minutes ago. I wanted Sol to stay and hold me. I wanted to spend time with him and get to know him better. He was closed off and a mystery outside of me knowing that him and Casper was close. That revelation in itself should have kept me away from him. Sol had warning signs plastered all over him. Warning signs that I refused to take caution to.

A few minutes later, he returned with a rag in one hand and a towel draped over his shoulders. He didn't speak or really look me in the eyes. He got in the bed and knelt between my legs and started cleaning me. The warmth of the towel along with the smell of my soap relaxed me. When he was done, he tossed the rag aside and stood back up.

"Go get some fresh sheets and make the bed. I'm tired as fuck," he said.

I blinked up at him confused as hell.

"Huh?" I yawned.

He narrowed his eyes impatiently with a look of annoyance plastered on his handsome ass face.

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“Sheets. You know where they at, right?” He tilted his big ass head to the side.

My pride almost screamed at me to tell him to get the hell out. But my body moved before I could even try to argue with him. I got up on wobbly legs, I snatched my robe up and practically stumbled toward my closet. I hated how shaky he had my body afterwards. Sol watched me the entire time with his arms folded over his chest.

His dark eyes burned into my back as I stripped the bed in silence. I tossed the ruined sheets to the floor then put on the fresh set quietly. It pissed me off that he didn’t lift a finger to help me. When I asked him to tuck the other end, he acted as if he didn’t hear me. Once I finished tucking in all the corners, he climbed into the bed and sprawled out like it was his bed. With one arm behind his head, the other patted the small space next to him.

Too tired to ask what he was doing, I climbed in bed and laid against his arm. He looked down at me with a smirk.

“I’ll still be here in the morning. I ain’t running from shit, whatever feeling this is that I’m feeling toward you, I’m gone either figure it out or fuck it away.” He yawned.

“You not about to fuck on me until you get tired of me. I won’t let you hurt my feelings, Sol.” I closed my eyes.

“You always have the capability to tell a nigga no or tell me to leave. Since you ain’t did none of that...I expect breakfast in the morning.” He leaned down and pecked me on the forehead.

Seconds later, I opened my eyes and just stared up at him. Sol closed his eyes like he was preparing himself to ignore whatever else I had to say. I just stared at him until my eyes got too heavy. My chest tightened as I laid my head down on his chest. He didn't give a damn what I had to say next. Sol knew that I didn't want him to leave. Deep down, I hated that I didn't want to tell him that either. Because in the end, it was only going to do more harm to my feelings.

I was supposed to call Dr. Larae back but he was the furthest thing on my mind. I even thought about how Casper would feel if he knew what I just did in his home, behind his back with a trusted man of his. Before I dosed off, I thought about the grand breakfast that I was going to wake up to cook for Sol and fell asleep with a smirk on my face.

Chapter 14

Sol

I woke up to the smell of breakfast. It didn't just smell like eggs and toast but a real breakfast that was fit for a king. It smelled sweet in the air, like cinnamon. My stomach tightened as I sat up a little confused. She really listened to me. I chuckled, thinking to myself. The dick must have did wonders for Jeremy, because she was in the kitchen throwing down for a nigga.

I ran a hand over my face, feeling the tightness in my muscles. I got out the bed and walked over to her door, and I heard the faint sounds of music just as my phone rang.

"Yo," I answered.

"You a wild nigga. Come get these clothes. I'm at the back door and it smell good as fuck. She made enough for me too, right?" Fatz breathed loud into the phone like he had to climb several steps just to get to the back door.

“Nah, she ain’t made enough for you. Knock on the sliding glass and give her my shit. Fatz don’t beg for no food, and I mean that shit. I’m about to jump in the shower, give her my clothes, and I’ll tap in with you in a couple of hours.”

“That’s fucked up, man?—”

I hung up the phone with a low chuckle. I hopped in the shower and did my thing. I was in disbelief that I actually hit Jeremy raw with no protection. I had to admit that it felt good sleeping with her overnight. Even in her sleep she looked perfect as hell. I never did no shit like that with no chick. The first girl that I actually claimed as my girlfriend was back in high school.

I learned the hard way about falling for a hoe. I got my first STD at seventeen and made sure to never hit another bitch raw afterwards. I shook off whatever I was feeling and walked back into Jeremy’s room with the towel wrapped at my waist. My clothes were folded neatly on the bed. I quickly got dressed and walked toward the kitchen.

Casper’s house was player as fuck, I could just imagine how the thirsty hoes felt when he welcomed them into his home. I followed the sound of Jeremy humming and singing offkey to Anita Baker. When I got to the kitchen her back was to me. She stood at the stove in a zone, bonnet still covering her head. She had on a black sports bra with black leggings. My eyes fell down to her ass and I had to readjust my dick.

Jeremy’s round ass sat up high, it looked sculpted to perfection. She was shaped with curves in all the right places like God had drawn her just to fuck with a nigga’s discipline. Her hips swayed as she flipped something in the skillet. From her side profile, I could tell she had on no makeup like last night, just authentically natural.

That was hard to come by because with most females, they did the most to ensure an approval from a man. When most men truly didn’t give a fuck about the small petty

shit like make-up on a woman or even a BBL that a lot of women got just to attract a certain kind of man.

Jeremy hadn't even noticed me yet. She was moving around the kitchen in a peaceful zone. She was used to peace, and mornings like this. Me? I didn't know a damn thing about it. I didn't wake up to pancakes and Anita Baker playing. Once again, my chest got tight in a way that I didn't like. I felt something crawl through my ribs trying to make room.

She turned and finally spotted me leaning against the doorway. I smiled at the way she blushed, her lips curled into a slow smile.

"You slept good, I see." She batted her eyes my way.

I didn't speak right away. I took her in, every inch of her.

"You cook like this for all your one-night stands?" I asked.

Jeremy rolled her eyes and turned back to the stove.

"Only the ones that force their way into my space," she stated over her shoulder.

I let out a quiet laugh and stepped all the way into the kitchen.

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“I see you got up and made breakfast like I told you last night.” I stepped behind her.

She stilled for a second, I made Jeremy sexy ass nervous. I enjoyed seeing her sweat. I looked at the plate of pancakes and watched her burn the last two since she was so focused on my words and presence.

“Take them out, Ma. Everything in here looks good. I appreciate you.” I kissed her on the side of her forehead.

She flipped the pancake like my voice didn’t just shake something up inside of her.

“You act like you want more...” Her words trailed off.

“If I want more, I’ll get it. I’m sure you don’t got a problem with giving it.” I chuckled blowing purposely on the back of her neck.

Jeremy’s tone was cool, like she was unbothered. I saw the way her spine straightened and the way her breath hitched every couple of seconds. She felt me, all throughout her.

“From what I learned, Ma...you love when I take that pussy.” I bit at her earlobe.

“Whatever, Sol. Sit down so you can eat breakfast. I know it’s other shit you got to go tend to.”

I laughed under my breath and moved back to give her space. She took the pancakes out of the pan and stacked them on top of the others. She turned toward me with the

spatula still in hand, then looked me up and down.

“I really don’t like cocky ass niggas.” She rolled her eyes.

“I feel it.” I tugged at the bottom of my goatee.

“I don’t like broads who act like they don’t want me, when they get up early as fuck to shower and cook me breakfast in leggings with no damn panties on.” I smirked down at her.

Her jaw clenched; I gave her no choice but to turn back toward the stove in silence.

“You don’t got to play tough with me, Yeremy. I’m a cool ass nigga,” I stated loud enough for her to hear me.

I gave Yeremy nervous ass the space she needed. I took a seat at the island and decided to entertain her a little bit. She grabbed two plates out of the cabinet then stacked three pancakes on mine. She lined up the bacon like she cared all about presentation then added scrambled eggs with cheese. After she made her plate, she sat across from me.

Yeremy avoided my stare at first and gave her attention to cutting into her pancakes. She took her time cutting them into tiny perfect little squares then she finally glanced up at me. Her pretty doe-shaped eyes softened as she licked her lips.

“How old are you, Sol?” She took her eyes off of me to put syrup all over her pancakes then passed it to me.

“I’m twenty-eight,” I answered, stuffing my mouth.

“Oh, what sign are you?” Her eyes lit up.

I didn't know why women thought by asking a man their horoscope could possibly tell them all that they needed to know. I didn't believe in that shit but I entertained her for what it was worth.

"I'm a Scorpio." I stabbed at my plate without looking up at her.

"Oh hell naw! Y'all the worse fuckin' type!"

"So I heard." I chuckled dryly.

"Aren't you going to ask me my sign?" She asked.

"I wasn't planning on it. I don't believe in that shit."

"Damn, you gone die an old lonely ass man with the funky ass attitude you got. I'm not trying to be your girl. I'm simply trying to get to know you as a friend." She rolled her eyes hard my way.

"But you trying to get to know that Dr. Larae nigga." I raised a brow her way.

"Whatever, I sure am going to get to know him. He might be my future husband. At least he polite and like to talk." She shrugged her shoulders and started back eating.

"That's good for you and that nigga. Want to settle just to make Casper happy. Why not give yourself time to be single and get to see what that's like." I bit into the side of my tongue.

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I didn't know why the fuck I cared so much about her and this doctor nigga. All I knew was she was starting to piss me off mentioning the nigga.

"I've been single for a while now, not a whole year but it's healthy for me to date. There's nothing wrong with that like it's nothing wrong with you being my temporary sex buddy." She smirked.

"You got me fucked up." I laughed at her dry ass humor.

"Jeremy, that pussy A-one as fuck, Ma. That shit have the ability to throw a nigga off his p's and q's. I ain't pressed for shit but time and money."

"So you don't want me as a friend?" she asked innocently.

"Yeah, I don't mind being your friend."

She offered me a big smile that automatically made me smile back at her.

"Are you always so intense?" she randomly asked.

"Only when I want something or handling business, I guess," I answered.

"So that means...right now?—"

"I want you." I finished her sentence.

She inhaled slowly and bit into her bottom lip.

“You don’t even know me, you’re not asking questions. It can’t all just be sexual if we getting to know each other.” She complained pushing her plate a few inches away like she lost her appetite.

“I know your scent; I know the sounds you make when you cum. Your body shakes when I put my mouth on you. You get scared when you cum back-to-back because you think you gonna faint. You listen to old school music to make you feel okay the next day after getting the pussy broke in. You an aesthetic type of chick. Small things make you happy. If I was to tell you to get dressed after breakfast to just ride shot gun in my drop top, you’d like that shit. Your spoiled and got a good ass heart, Yeremy. You give muthafuckas the benefit of the doubt and it ends up hurting you in the end. You wear your heart on your sleeve and got a lot of wishful thinking going on in that pretty head of yours. If I met you in another lifetime where our pieces aligned properly, I’d make it more than just what I’m making it to be about now. You a good woman, one day you gone make me jealous as fuck.” I chuckled, not believing how vocal I was being.

“Why would I make you jealous?” She released the breath she was holding.

“Cause you gone allow a square ass nigga into your space while thinking of me and shit. I’m gone respect whatever relationship you got going, but if I want you, I’m gone get you. I just respect Casper enough not to ruin you,” I stated, looking away from her.

Yeremy looked me in the eyes like she could see a nigga’s soul. I suddenly felt fucked up about taking her down in Casper’s house. We didn’t belong. I couldn’t have her, and even if I wanted to try to get Yeremy, it would fuck up the little bit of peace that I had.

“Do you want kids one day?”

Jeremy had a lot of questions, which showed that she was hell of interested in me.

“I do, once I’m out the game,” I answered honestly.

“Wow that’s good! You actually want to get out and not let this define you for the rest of your life.” She looked up at me with hopeful eyes.

“Yeah, I’m just doing this to add more money to my savings for me and my brother Fatz. We already know about investing and got shit put to the side for our exit. Everything be temporary in my eyes, especially this street shit.” I leaned back on the stool and tapped my fork against the plate.

“What kind of woman do you see yourself with when you retire?”

“I don’t know, someone like you probably.” I chuckled.

“I haven’t really thought about no shit like that. Right now, I fuck bitches; if the pussy good, I might drop a band on em’ then I keep it pushing.” I smirked.

Jeremy rolled her eyes so hard that I thought them bitches would get stuck.

“Well, you said my pussy good, so where my band?” She popped her neck to the side.

“Yo pussy worth more than a band. If you want to get tricked on say that shit with pride.” I laughed.

“Go get fly and we can dip up out of here.”

Chapter 15

Fatz

Three weeks later

It was past noon when I hit the last trap. Sweat stuck to the back of my neck as my belly pressed against the wheel of my truck as I pulled into the cracked driveway of the spot on a 103rdStreet. The place looked fucked up and littered with trash like it always did. Boarded windows and a broken screen door with three pit bulls chained to the post on the patio.

I was already pissed from the sun beaming down on me all day. I hadn't ate a damn thing and could feel my blood sugar getting low. I'd been hitting all of Sol's trap spots since early this morning, collecting what was owed. After each spot, I stopped by the warehouse to drop off and count through the money to make sure no niggas skimmed off the top or bottom.

Both Sol and I didn't trust none of these niggas to operate money or drop off weight. So we did the shit ourselves; a lot of shit fell on me. I didn't mind it because making money and saving it was something that I never got to do coming up until I moved with my dad. Plus, I would rather have my brother's back while he made all of the power plays. I opened the door to my truck and noticed that this chaotic block was a little too quiet for my liking.

Usually, besides the niggas on the porch looking nervous to see me coming, it'd be kids and feens out in the streets doing the most. Maybe it was too early in the day for all the extra bullshit. Today I was running early because I had to double back and drop off niggas re-up.

I stepped out of my truck slowly and wiped the sweat off of my forehead. My shirt clung to my back from the excess sweat from ripping and running all morning. I couldn't wait to shower, shit, and eat. With my lips pressed tight, I asked one of the little niggas...

"Where the fuck my money at?" I looked over at the oldest one.

"Rico got that shit in the safe, Fatz." He nodded toward the fucked-up screen door.

I didn't really fuck with going inside of trap spots, niggas usually had my shit ready to go through the corner boys that they had guarding the front. I pulled my gun and pushed the busted screen open. Before I even made it two feet into the living room, I stopped cold in my tracks.

My heart damn near dropped out my chest. My momma was slumped on the couch, eyes glazed with her mouth cracked opened like she was dreaming about some fairytale shit. It broke my heart instantly to see her the way she was when I remembered my momma being the most beautiful woman on earth in my eyes. Her hair was wild and brittle, skin splotched, she looked bony as fuck.

For seconds I couldn't breathe, memories hit me like bricks as my hands curled into fists.

"Who the fuck?" I yelled as I observed the dingy living room.

"Who the fuck been servin' my momma?" I looked right toward the kitchen then toward the small dining area where niggas sat at the table with stacks of money and drugs.

Everybody went quiet, the only sound that I could hear was flies buzzing around and the rattle of my momma's chest as she snored with her eyes wide open. Rico's

footsteps coming down the hall ended the silence. When he appeared, he had the nerve to smirk.

“She a customer, word on the street she stopped being yo mamma when Raft had to?—”

Pop! Pop! Pop!

Rico’s body dropped before he finished his sentence. His blood sprayed across the drywall as his skull cracked open like rotten fruit. I held my Glock low in my hand with my chest heaving and ears ringing.

“Anybody else got some out-of-pocket shit to say to me?” I eyed every man in the front room ready to empty the clip.

“Y’all serving her like y’all don’t know who the fuck she is! I told you niggas—” I stopped talking to pinch the bridge of my nose.

I hit the side of my head over and over as I felt my eyes gloss over.

“Fuck kind of sandwich is that, nigga?” I asked one of the young niggas that stood off in the kitchen with a big ass sandwich in his hand.

“It’s yo kind, big dawg.” He quickly walked over to where I stood and handed it to me.

Soon as the sandwich touched my free hand, I took a big as bite. I wanted to shoot his ass in the head for still eating bologna. He fried the meat so it waseatablebut still, the after taste was nasty. I finished the sandwich in seconds as I watched my mamma stir awake.

“Go put my money in the fucking trunk and if anything missing when I count up, all you niggas dead.” I warned them as I focused on my momma as they moved around.

I should kill all these niggas for playing on my fuckin’ top like this. Acting like she not my fuckin’ momma. Them young niggas in the front knew the fuckin’ deal when I pulled up, after I warned niggas not to serve my fucking momma. Niggas acted like my momma didn’t used to be beautiful, she used to walk with her head held high. I thought as nobody said shit. I looked back over at her and she didn’t even flinch.

She was unaware of where the fuck she was. I walked over to her and damn near wanted to break down as I smelled the strong stench radiating off of her. I crouched down next to her when she opened her eyes. She looked at me like she didn’t even recognize me since she was so fucking high. Her crusty lips curled into a faraway smile as she waved weakly at me.

“I used to love you so much...even when you let me go hungry for weeks,” I whispered, more to myself than her.

I brushed a loose strand of hair from her face and felt my throat close up.

“Trap is closed, and ain’t nobody eating out this bitch until y’all get her to a fifty-one- fifty hospital and tell them she trying to self-harm herself and others. Wait a couple hours until she starts having withdrawals then take her up there and say you found her on the streets. They’ll keep her and offer her rehab or something. Tell my momma when she start going crazy from withdrawals that if she loves Rashad, she’d get clean. Call the clean-up crew to get that nigga body disposed.” I said nothing else as I walked to the front door.

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The sun hit me like a slap, too bright for the way my insides felt. My Glock was still warm in my hand as my chest heaved. The heat pressed down on me like the guilt I felt for making them niggas do the work that I was tired of doing with my momma. I kept my hopes up with her each time I took her to a facility and begged her several times to make shit right by getting clean.

I stared out at the block like it was a battlefield, niggas cleared the way and was no longer standing on the porch. Even the three pitbulls laid on the porch like they didn't want to chance getting shot by me. I tucked the gun into my waistband as I walked to my truck. My hands shook and that hadn't happened in a long as time since I was a kid hiding in the closet, too scared to be left at home by my fuckin' self.

I slammed my door shut and the silence inside of my car hit like a punch to the gut. I gripped the wheel tight as I stared out the windshield. It felt like I was falling apart inside. My cell phone buzzed, and I knew it was Sol. I ignored it because I didn't know how to explain to him once again how I let my momma get me out of character, especially in front of niggas that was supposed to respect me.

I blew a nigga brains out and didn't regret that shit at all. I started the engine to my truck and swallowed down all of the emotions that I kept buried. I wanted to cry but it was no point in crying, it never fixed shit or made my problems go away. I pulled off slowly with the bag of money tucked in the trunk. I thought about pulling up to one of my bitches house and having one of them cook a home-cooked meal for a nigga to make me feel better.

Truth was, nothing made me feel better. Everything was temporary. I joked to make myself laugh, ate to make myself feel worthy. Soon as it passed, I was back feeling

fucked up on the inside. My soul was heavy since a kid. Lately I been moving without much of a purpose besides going along with the plan that Sol had set out for the both of us.

I been moving like I got a shadow trailing me. There was so much pressure sitting on my chest. I couldn't sort my feelings or never knew what my purpose was. I knew the things that gave me temporary happiness, I sought after it and then was still leftfeeling incomplete. The shit that I was feeling on a day-to-day basis wasn't the type of shit that a person could just say out loud.

When you started talking a certain way, muthafuckas would automatically assume that you was paranoid. Sol wouldn't listen to me when I tried to express myself, he'd call me dramatic or tell me to man up and get out of my feelings. I couldn't help but to complain to myself about everything that was bothering me. My joints ached, breath always short. My knees cried when I stood up or sat down. When I smoked weed, it wasn't enough to keep my self-pity thoughts at bay.

It didn't matter how many niggas I killed, none of that shit made me feel powerful. I wasn't suicidal or reckless, but I felt fated, like some clock was ticking somewhere. I didn't know if it would be a bullet or my heart giving out on me. I felt it in my gut that I didn't belong. I thought about the conversation that I had with Dr. Toby. Our conversation never left his office because I didn't go around making excuses for myself.

I didn't want Sol or my father to feel bad for me and use the medical terms against me. Dr. Toby came into my life as a court ordered therapist back when I caught my first gun charge at the age of eighteen. Back then I had no clue with what was wrong with my thoughts being so fucked up. One moment I could tell myself that I was tripping and then the next, I believed all the negativity that came to mind.

Dr. Toby saw through me; he was quiet and patient, he was never quick to report me

to have me committed with all the nutty shit that came out of my mouth. He didn't flinch when I told him about the blood and the pain. I told him all about the nights my momma disappeared and left me to eat dry cereal and sometimes spoiled ass milk.

He listened when I told him how much I hated my own mind. Three months of Dr. Toby listening to me, he told me...

"You have severe bipolar depression, Rashad. You've been living in cycles called manic highs, where you feel unstoppable, then you go to soul crushing lows where you feel like you don't deserve to live."

I made a joke and ate my chips when he said that shit to me because I didn't want to believe it. I was put on meds; I took them only when my thoughts became overbearing. The pills made me feel dull as fuck. Like somebody turned the world's color into black and white.

"Rashad, don't ever think that nobody could ever love you through all of your different emotions."

Although my mind was fucked up, Dr. Toby's words stuck with me till this day. I let out a few tears then tried to roughly wipe them away. I stopped crying long ago in front of folks because they would only see it as weakness. Dr. Toby's words played over and over inside of my brain. The familiar ache buried deep behind my ribs held on to hope. Something inside of me starved to be loved.

Not on no bitch feminine shit, but I wanted to feel something other than what bitches made me feel like because I had the money to trick. I wondered if someone would ever see me pass the money and the gold diamond grills and nice ass cars. I had a lot of what ifs about the shit.

I ain't never believed in fairy tales or thought a woman could save me. But maybe a

woman could help me save myself because I was spiraling. I could go home right now and take my medicine to tranquilize my thoughts. What good would that do when I would get right back in the same mood whenever the meds wore off.

Chapter 16

Jeremy

“That peach looks like it has been through somethings.” Larae joked as I took a sip of my wine.

I eyed the terribly lopsided version of a peach on my canvas and giggled, because it definitely looked like a struggle painting.

“I told you that I’m not good at this.” I playfully rolled my eyes.

Larae leaned over toward me, his reading glasses slid down the bridge of his nose as he further inspected my painting.

“It’s alright, I guess it’s not that bad.” He smirked.

I covered my mouth to hide my laugh as I leaned into him. I was thankful that he planned this for us tonight. He told me that he wanted to do something together that I had on my bucket list. Since Bianca and Shardae was always busy, I told him that I always wanted to do a sip and paint. He made it happen along with dinner that he cooked. I looked down at his perfectly ironed shirt that had splashes of paint against his Ralph Lauren Tee.

It was definitely the thought and consideration that he put into this that counted. I thought to myself. Larae hadn’t pressed me for any pussy, and we had been talking for a full month. He was very thoughtful and nerdy in an endearing way. They

onlything that was hard for me to do was connect with him. I was giving it my all because he really was a sweet guy.

I inhaled his expensive cologne then looked up at his green eyes. Casper would love if I made it work with Larae. He respected his profession, and I enjoyed having chairs pulled out for me before taking a seat. As we talked, I kept telling myself in my head that I was happy, and lucky to be here with Larae until my phone buzzed in my pocket.

My heart dipped because I already knew who the hell it was.

Sol...

I slowly pulled my phone out and shook my head.

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“Who is that?” Larae asked.

“My overbearing Uncle.” I hit decline on the call, annoyed that Sol was bugging me.

Sol had been texting me since I got to Larae’s house, asking for me to come see him. I’ll admit, I missed him but decided when I found myself frustrated waiting on his call the day after he took me shopping, that it was best to end it. Sol was the type of nigga that made it hard to cut off cold turkey. My body craved him, I wanted him even with the dangers that came with getting him.

I mentally tried to block him out and focus on getting to know Larae. Weeks later, I’m here with Larae, trying to enjoy my time and here he comes texting and calling, expecting me to drop everything for his sadistic ass.

“You and your uncle are very close. That’s good,” Larae stated.

He moved my hair behind my shoulder then leaned down and kissed the top of my nose which surprised the hell out of me. Maybe the wine was getting to him, but I liked the initiative he took. My phone vibrated again and this time I chose to ignore it.

“Him and my dad are alike in many ways. They’re both overbearing.” I chuckled nervously, my stomach turned as I felt my phone vibrate back-to-back.

“I think that’s a good thing.” Larae rested his hand on my thigh. His hand slowly started rubbing in circles.

“You’re a beautiful, bright woman. They just want the best for you, I see nothing

wrong with that. I look at my daughter and get scared when I think ahead in the future.”

“What scares you?” I asked.

“Her becoming an adult. The world that we live in is cruel, you can be here today then gone tomorrow. I just want the best for her. I want to see her happy, although I know that she will have to learn different life lessons on her own. I don’t know, Jeremy...it’s so much to it. I will have one day come second to a man in her life as well and have to accept it.” He shrugged and looked away, never taking his hand off of my thigh.

I felt like shit lying to Larae about Sol being my uncle. We weren’t committed so, really there was no need to make up such a lie like that. I didn’t want to hurt his feelings for a man that wasn’t even as gentle as he was with me. Wasn’t shit sweet about Sol, he didn’t ask many questions or even give me flowers. Besides spending the day with him and letting him buy me whatever wasn’t sufficient enough. Especially when I could spoil myself and buy all of those things on my own.

I pressed the side button on my phone discreetly and hoped that it turned the hell off. Fuck Sol! I tried to convince myself as I looked deeply into Larae’s eyes.

“I guess that’s how my dad saw things with me growing up. I love him so much, nobody could take his place. I try to be understanding to all of his madness because we only get one dad and one mom.” I sighed.

We continued to talk and paint together. I laughed at some of his dry jokes and stop thinking about Sol for a change. That was a hard task when I could somehow still feel him. His voice, his hands, and the way he told me I belonged to him with nothing but a look. Sol’s presence swallowed the air around me, leaving me breathless.

He made it hard for me to focus, and I hated that I missed him. I hated that every part of my body still remembered the way he made me feel. Larae probably couldn't replicate it. I never felt so sex crazed before but my hormones were raging. I looked at Larae and watched him paint. I needed to prove to myself that I could choose something better, some one better.

Now it was the wine buzzing through me that gave me the courage for the next set of words that left my mouth.

"Do you want to rinse off the paint? We can take a quick shower together," I asked with a coy smile.

He blinked at me, caught off guard then smiled nervously.

"Uh...yeah...that's a good idea," he answered.

I could tell by the flush in his face the he wasn't used to women making the first move. He stood then helped me to my feet and led the way. I followed Larae down the hall. I saw that he kept tugging at his shirt, probably trying not to overthink what I just offered for us to do.

I'm doing this shit for me. I need to reclaim control and drown this nigga Sol out of my body. It probably was stupid, but at the end of the day, I was a grown, single woman. Inside of the bathroom, Larae took off his shirt. My mouth watered at the sight of his toned but slim chest. I undid the button to my jeans and pulled them down. My eyes never left his as he stepped out of his boxers.

I froze up and tried to play the shit off. It wasn't because I was shy or nervous. My eyes fell to his boxers, and there was no fucking print. I blinked once then twice then reminded myself not to react. I needed to be mature about the situation so that I wouldn't hurt Larae's feelings. Size shouldn't have mattered, I needed to work on a

connection and everything else would follow. Still, disappointment crept up on me.

I turned before he looked up at me so that he wouldn't notice. I heard the shower door open and turned back toward him, catching him stepping inside.

"You coming in?" he asked nervously.

I hesitated and cursed myself, because this wasn't what I was looking for. It sure as hell wasn't what I needed. I didn't need gentle hands and softness to help me stop thinking of Sol. I needed a nigga with a strong back bone attached to him to at least beat the Sol temptation out of me. Larae was everything I should want. Everything my father would clap for and get off my back to let me breathe and live life. But in the moment, I stood still, thinking about Sol's grip on my throat and him hitting every hidden spot that drove me wild.

"Jeremy?" He called out to me.

"I'm coming, my bad. I need a shower cap for my hair, I didn't bring a scarf." I cringed, thinking about stepping in the shower with Larae now ruining the fresh press I gave my thick crop of hair before coming.

"I have some small ones that I use for my daughter in the cabinet. See if one fits you," he offered.

I hesitated for a second, hating that excuse of not wanting to mess up my hair didn't work. I walked over to the sink and opened the cabinet and spotted the shower caps. I took one out and gathered my hair together and managed to fit it all in. I looked back at Larae, who watched me intently. I smiled at him then finished removing the rest of my clothes.

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Once I stepped into the steam, I took in his wide all glass shower door and matte black tiled flooring. It was clean and nice as hell. Larae smiled nervously under the water. His light brown skin glistened, he looked over at me like he couldn't believe that I was inside of the shower with him. Larae's green eyes looked me up and down. I could see the lust written in his eyes which told me that he liked what he saw.

I wanted to meet him there, wanted to match the lust that he had for me. But the truth sat heavy in my gut. I took steps toward him with a soft smile on my face as the water rushed between us. I forced myself to keep my eyes up at him. I eyed his collarbone down to the beads of water that slid down his neck. I turned to reach for the soap and towel.

"Turn around," I told him gently.

"Huh?"

"Let me wash your back. Relax Larae, we both grown," I reassured him.

He smiled then visibly relaxed as he turned. I lathered the towel then ran it over his back. When I finished his back, I stepped closer and made him turn around. I pressed my titties against his body, his eyes looked down into mine, wide and vulnerable.

"You nervous?" I asked.

His eyes flickered with shame as he dropped his shoulders.

"I am...I'm sorry, Y Jeremy. I don't want to mess this up. I would like to take things as

slow as possible. See if we are compatible first.”

I reached up and rubbed small circles on his shoulders.

“You’re not messing anything up, Larae. We don’t have to do anything sexual tonight. I like this, just being close and taking our time,” I told him.

I could see him relax at my words. He nodded his head and smiled as he picked up a clean washcloth and took the soap from out of my hands.

“Okay, that makes me feel good.” He sighed roughly.

“My daughter’s mother really broke my heart. I like you a lot but don’t want to hurt you. A small part of me still hopes that one day she would at least try to be a family for our daughter,” he stated shamefully.

If I was really into him, I would have cursed him out for trying to use me as the same replacement as I was trying to use him for with Sol. Instead, I remained silent and let him wash me from head to toe. He fondled parts of my body and that didn’t even arouse me. He wasn’t what I craved sexually, and dating wise, he was soft as hell.

Besides his tiny little dick, I could imagine how his baby momma probably ran circles around him. Larae didn’t even realize that he just admitted in so many ways to me that he was still in love with his baby momma, which was fine with me. If he wanted friendship, then I could give him that and let it be what it was.

I wasn’t here to help him get over shit. He was a grown as man responsible for his own feelings like his small package below.

Chapter 17

Jeremy

I didn't remember falling asleep in Larae's bed. One minute I was drying off and making light jokes. The next, I slipped on one of his soft white tees then melted soon as I got under his silk sheets and comforter. His memory foam mattress mixed with the wine and Larae pouring his heart out to me about his baby momma and how hurt she had him in the past put me right to sleep.

A soft shake on my shoulder woke me slightly up. My eyes cracked open, disoriented as my heart thudded hard in my chest.

"Jeremy," Larae said, quietly crouched beside the bed with a confused look painted on his face.

"I'm so sorry to wake you—but...uhhh—your uncle's at the door." He stuttered over his words like he was in fear for his life.

"What uncle?" I sat up, suddenly alert.

Larae's face went through a series of emotions then ended with more confusion.

"The one who kept calling and texting you earlier. You said he was your uncle and... umm... he's here now demanding—well, umm, saying that he needs to talk to you. He looks very intense," Larae stumbled over his words.

I shook my head no and shut my eyes. I had to be dreaming right now. No this could not be happening right now! I pushed the covers back and got up a little too fast.

"Did he say his name...I mean, how the hell you know that it's my uncle Larae?" I shouted, not really meaning to.

I had to remember that it wasn't his fault for a total stranger coming to his door in the middle of the damn night.

“He didn't tell me his name. He looks young...too young to be your uncle. He's, umm ,darkskin and tatted with gold jewelry on...looks like he's in his early twenties.” Larae emphasized, squinting his marble green eyes at me.

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I forced a breath and plastered a fake smile on my face.

“That’s my dad’s youngest brother. He’s barely older than me, he must’ve been worried. Let me see what he wants,” I forced out.

Larae nodded slowly, still looking nervous as hell. I could see the suspicion in his eyes, but he didn’t press me. I got out the bed and padded toward the front door on bare feet. My anxiety took over me, I could already imagine the crooked ass look on Sol’s face when I opened the door.

Soon as the door opened, his charming smirk was plastered on his face. His low fade looked fresh, the gold around his neck glinted under the porch light. His smirk turned into a smug ass smile. I swallowed hard as my fingers tightened around the door frame.

“You didn’t have to fuckin’ come here.” I gritted out with my lips curled tight.

“You read them messages I sent?” Sol asked, looking directly into my eyes dangerously.

“No, the fuck I want to do that for when I’m here?” I tried to talk as low as possible.

“If you read my mu’fuckin messages then you would know why the fuck I came here.” He stepped closer to me.

“I told you weeks ago not to be on some lil girl shit once Casper came back home. Told you I would text and call you when I felt like that pussy and your mental cooled

off. I sent you lots of text messages, Jeremy. Called your ass a couple of times. You want to play games by sharing your location with your contacts but not respond to a nigga when I hit you.” Sol’s jaw clenched tight.

I wanted the floor to swallow me whole right now. I could feel Larae’s presence behind me in the hallway. I couldn’t even find the words to speak so I let the crickets out in the bushes do all the talking. I looked into Sol’s face and his dark brown eyes burned a hole at Larae’s T-shirt that clung to my body. His jaw twitched as his tongue rolled against the inside of his cheek.

“I see you got real comfortable in this nigga’s house,” he murmured.

“Alright Jeremy...” Sol’s eyes narrowed.

The smile on his lips wasn’t pleasant, it said that he was getting ready to crash the fuck out.

“Go get your shit so we can go. Fuck with me and I make a muthafuckin’ scene.” He pushed the door hard out of my grip, causing it to hit up against the wall.

My stomach twisted; heat burned up my chest. I couldn’t begin to explain the shame that made me want to have magic in the moment so I could disappear. I didn’t say shit, I barely could breathe. I turned around and stomped back down the hallway like a scolded child. I felt Larae’s eyes on me and refused to look at him.

I got to his room in seconds, looking around for my things. Soon as I spotted my sandals, I quickly slipped off Larae’s shirt and tossed it on the bed. On his dresser, he had my clothes neatly folded with my bra sitting on top. I didn’t give a damn that I was naked, I marched over to my clothes and quickly got dressed then slipped my feet into my sandals.

“Jeremy?” Larae said above a whisper behind me. “Why’d you lie to me?”

I opened my mouth then searched my brain for the proper words to say. Sol answered for me, making things worse.

“That’s what good dick do to broads.” Sol called out from behind me.

I quickly turned on the balls of my feet and looked at Sol stepping into Larae’s room like he belonged in here.

“Got her dumb ass telling lies, wearing other nigga’s shirts...but dreaming about me.” Sol chuckled.

“You can keep entertaining her after tonight, tomorrow, or weeks from now. But when I call...or knock...that means it’s time for her to come to where the fuck she belongs.”

“Shut the fuck up! I’m getting my shit, can you just give me privacy with Larae please? I have to work with him. I don’t want things awkward.” I begged Sol with my eyes. He gave me an unbothered look and leaned up against the frame of Larae’s door.

That was his answer, he wasn’t moving until we walked out of this house together. I felt the need to make amends and be a woman that owned up to bullshit. Larae was cool, and I liked him as a friend. I hated the way Sol popped up. It was out of line, tacky, and disrespectful. When we left here, I planned on checking the fuck out of him. Right now, I owed Larae a heartfelt apology and the truth.

“Larae, I’m sorry, okay. I shouldn’t have lied but I didn’t want to hurt your feelings, so I went along with it. Sol and I are just friends that ended up having a one-night stand. You are a nice man, and I appreciate all the effort you put into courting me and

talking to me. If you can forgive me, I would like to still be your friend...if that's not asking for too much." I pleaded with my eyes and voice.

Larae didn't respond, he just nodded his head. His face shifted like he was disappointed in me but was too scared to say it.

"I'm sorry," I said, disappointed in my own self.

I grabbed my purse and swallowed down the sting in my throat. I walked out of Larae's room with Sol following right behind me like a fucking bodyguard. Soon as we got outside, Sol made me hand over my car keys. I slammed them in his hand and stood in the driveway, watching him toss my keys over to Fatz. I wanted to protest but didn't want to bring more drama to Larae's house.

Fatz hopped in my Maybach and turned my music all the way up, instantly pissing me off. I got inside of Larae's drop top and remained quiet, seething. He must have felt my anger because he remained silent as he backed the car out of Larae's driveway. He sped off, making sure to make the tires skirt then turned his music up.

Chapter 18

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Jeremy

I'm gone fuck this nigga up! I blinked hard and looked out the window. Each time that I looked over at Sol got me even more heated. Even the night wind couldn't cool me down. I clenched my jaw so hard that I could feel the ache climbing into my temples. I glanced over at Sol, he had one hand on the wheel and the other draped casually over his thigh like he wasn't the reason that things would be weird for me once I went back to work.

I could still feel Larae's stare and hear the hurt in his voice when he asked me why. Sol turned me into a damn liar, and the scary thing about it was, I felt super content in my petty little girl lies.

We turned onto a quiet street and pulled up to a nice, modern, brick one-story house that had wide windows. A matte black truck sat in the driveway. It was calm and quiet in his neighborhood; I imagined Sol living in some big grand place. Then again, he had a lowkey chilled persona. Sol didn't flex his money like most men his age would.

Niggas in the streets would have never thought Sol lived in this house from how simple and clean it looked. He pulled in the driveway and got out without saying a word. I watched him walk around to my side and open the door. He looked down at me like nothing had happened and that made me even more pissed.

"Get out," he said calmly.

The second my foot touched the pavement, everything hit me at once. The shame,

rage, and frustration of this whole ordeal between Sol and I was turning me into someone that I was finding it hard to recognize. I started swinging hard on him.

“Why the fuck would you do that, when you know you really don’t want me for real!?” I screamed, punching him in the chest.

“You just show the fuck up and embarrass me! I gotta work with him!” I socked him so hard in the jaw that it felt like my knuckles cracked.

Sol didn’t say a word, he let me hit him anywhere that I could without blocking my hits.

“I’m not gone let you fuck me up! You want to get in my fucking head! Fuck me, disappear, pop back up, and do the same shit over and over! I swear I fucking hate you!” My fists bounced off his face.

I hit him right in his bottom lip, making it split. It scared me for a bit because he still didn’t flinch or move. My hands was numb, still, I wasn’t done with making him feel me. I wasn’t just some punk ass bitch that he was gonna just play around with whenever the fuck he felt like it. I halted my fist back and in one swift motion Sol gripped my wrist mid-swing. He pulled me close then lifted me off the ground.

I used all of my strength to thrash in his arms. I kicked my legs as my fists pounded his hard chest. None of it mattered, he was too strong.

“Put me the fuck down!” I shrieked.

“I swear! I’m going to fuck you up!” I yelled out of breath.

He carried me up the walkway, his arms was tight around my waist. I buried my face in his shoulder and sobbed out of anger. When the front door opened, he carried me

across the threshold and held me tighter. The door clicked behind us. He walked me deeper into the house past his sleek black furniture and framed art on the walls.

I didn't know what room we entered when he lowered me onto a long leather couch with his hand still wrapped around my waist. The space smelled like cedarwood and clove, I inhaled and exhaled it. I pulled away from him and looked away.

"I'm gonna tell that nigga Casper what the fuck is up between us." He plopped down beside me, still breathing calmly.

I looked over at him, he placed one elbow on his knee. The blood from his split lip dried onto his perfectly shined beard.

"You not about to control me with blackmail," I murmured.

"Nah, this ain't blackmail. I told you that I was trying to figure shit out. At first, I thought that I just needed to fuck...then I'd be over even wanting you in my space."

I looked at him stunned.

"So why did you come to Larae's house...when you haven't even bothered to call me since?—"

"Man, shut the fuck up. Don't ask me no stupid shit after I just said what the fuck I said. You know why the fuck I popped up. You didn't answer the phone nor text messages. You sharing your location trying to play with a nigga's mind. You like to lie to yourself, Jeremy...act like you don't know what the fuck going on and find the fuck out the hard way. Tonight was the hard way." His voice carried the type of weight that felt like an anchor had been dropped between us.

Sol stared at me, his dark brown eyes empty of an apology but full with something

dangerous.

“Your dumb ass was gonna fuck that nigga to try to forget me? Just giving that good ass pussy away to anybody when you should be cherishing that shit...” He shook his head in disappointment.

“I just don’t understand why bitches can’t worship their bodies. Pussies are internal, it ain’t like a dick. A nigga can just hop in the shower and wash pussy off. We can fuck anything with no emotions attached. Y’all women fuck on niggas and it became internal...niggas can leave their kids inside of you and them kids travel or however that shit work. You get what the fuck I’m trying to say. You want to waste good pussy on a nigga that you don’t even dream of...a nigga that don’t got you feeling how I do. You dumb as fuck and that’s a got-damn turn off,” he spat out harshly, causing me to flinch.

“Don’t even say no smart shit, after you just tried to beat my ass. Yeah, I want yo dumb ass. I like you and think about you even when I don’t check for you. You don’t think I’m trying to sort through how the fuck I’m feeling toward you...especially when bitches don’t mean shit to me half the time? This is why, I’m gone have to talk to Casper.” His shoulders dropped.

“You fuckin’ with my head...I’m too real of a nigga to be out here wanting you then trying to hide you. At the same time, it’s some shit that transpired that I would have to tell you...that alone would probably break your fragile ass heart...I don’t want to do that...so I gotta weigh this shit out properly.” He stood up from the couch and walked away from me.

“Sol, we need to stop whatever this is. I’m not trying to disappoint my dad again. He’s tough and gets on my nerves, but I love him. I need to make him proud. You are not good for me, you can’t even sort out your own feelings. You never been with a woman on a serious level and I’m not about to be your trial run either. You don’t got

to tell Casper shit, because after tonight...I want you to leave me the fuck alone.”
Soon as the words left my mouth, I smiled inwardly.

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It was hard for me to stand up for myself most of the time. I didn't do it with Casper, but I damn sure could do it with Sol no matter how good he made me feel when it came down to sex. There was a connection between us beyond sex but if Sol was in denial about it then I was going to let it be.

"You like the way that shit sound, don't you?" He chuckled.

"Jeremy, I know you more than you think I do..." His eyes locked on mine.

"You can try a thousand soft men, sip wine with them, paint little ugly ass pictures, and wear them niggas shirts...None of them gone un-fuck what Sol did to your soul." He smirked cockily.

"You hate me, but you crave me, baby. I crave you...I might even need you to be my fuckin' peace. I don't fuckin' lie...AT ALL. You can ask me anything. Either my actions gone answer your questions or my words will. Tonight was about actions. You worried and I get it. Females want little things like phone calls, text messages, and time. I know what the fuck it is. But...I answered your worries tonight by popping the fuck up where you was at to bring you to my home. What the fuck does that tell you?" His voice boomed.

"Don't yell at me, Sol." My voice cracked.

"Nah, don't get soft and sensitive now. You was just two piecing the fuck out of me in front of the house. So, tell me, what the fuck does that tell you?"

"It means you want me, Sol." I mumbled.

“Bingo, get yo ass up and come clean my lip,” he stated calmly.

I looked up at him and eyed his lip again. I stood slowly with shame licking up my back and followed behind him. His bathroom was dark gray and huge. I took note of how clean Sol’s house was and made a mental note to take a tour of it once I woke up because tonight was too much.

He pointed to the metal rack with clean towels. I grabbed one and went straight to the sink. I soaked the towel then rung it out. Sol stood behind me in the mirror like a dark shadow. I turned to face him and stood on my tippy toes.

“You deserved that ass whooping too,” I whispered as I dabbed gently at his bottom lip.

“Yeah, I liked that shit too.” Sol smirked as I turned around to wet the towel again.

His eyes never left mine when I turned back around to face him. I cleaned his beard then tried to turn back to the sink but was stopped by him roughly grabbing my chin. His eyes fell down to my lips as he forced me to look at him with the motion of his fingers. Once his eyes flicked back up to mine, he kissed me.

It was a dominant, rough, and consuming kiss. My breath caught up in my throat as he tongued me down. He tilted my chin then slid his tongue on top of mine, he guided the kiss beautifully. I moaned into his mouth, feeling weak in the knees. His hand dropped from my face and went straight to the waistband of my jeans. In seconds, he snatched them down along with my panties in one swift motion.

Sol slid his fingers between my thighs, slow and deliberate. He didn’t play with my pussy, he pressed his index and middle finger against my slick heat while maintaining eye contact.

“You hate me but wet as fuck.” His deep voice turned raspy.

He pulled his wet fingers up to his nose, closed his eyes, and inhaled my scent.

“Mmm.” He growled lowly.

“That pussy mine.” He opened his eyes as he licked his fingers dry.

There was no being strong with a man like Sol. Even if you wanted to stand your ground and prove a point. It was all useless to a king in the jungle. Sol lifted me by my thighs effortlessly and placed me on the counter. My hands gripped the edges off instinct as my legs parted without a second thought. My body was begging for him without my consent.

He looked sexy as fuck dropping down to his knees in front of me. His tongue slid down my folds slow and possessively. His eyes locked with mine as his skilled tongue flicked against my clit. He groaned and sucked on my sensitive bud until my hips started to buck.

I cried out, my fingers ran across his waves as my thighs trembled around his head. Sol wasn't going to stop anytime soon, he acted like he was starving. He made me feel like my pussy was his favorite dessert.

“This why we so confused in the mind with why we can't— Oh, Sol!!!” I moaned out.

“Good girl.” He pulled back and blew on my pussy.

Sol consumed my pussy. Helplessly, I watched his head go from side to side then shake like a dog between my legs. He licked all the way down, close enough to my ass. He hummed and dragged the flat of his tongue upward. It was hard and firm,

setting my body on fire.

My moans encouraged Sol to speed up, and he went faster and after a few licks. He started to swirl his tongue hard around my clit. I could barely breathe, it felt like I was getting ready to pass the hell out on the counter. I was about to release all that I had buried inside of me.

“Sol! Wait, baby!” I panted, not wanting to cum just yet.

“Why?” He asked between licks.

“I’m about to cum!”

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“Then let it the fuck go. You got more to go, Ma.”

Before I could respond, he took my clit between his lips and let it rest there.

“You gone cum for a nigga?” He flicked at it nastily.

“Yes!”

His finger slid into my ass as he suckled my clit back into his mouth and spat it out then repeated the same action as his finger pumped in and out of my ass. He pushed his thumb into my tunnel and worked my ass and my pussy as he continued to devour my sensitive bud.

“Fuck! I love you!” I gasped out.

I pushed against his mouth as waves of pleasure damn near paralyzed me. My entire body started to twitch and buck as Sol placed sloppy kisses to my lips and clit. My elbows gave out, my back kissed the cold mirror as I looked up at the lights, stuck in a daze and seeing stars.

Chapter 19

Bianca

“You looking good as hell friend.” I smirked as I looked over at Jeremy.

I couldn’t stand her but was happy that she found a man that was more in her lane

like the Dr. Larae guy. She could leave all the hood rich niggas to me. I hadn't seen Y Jeremy in over a month, we texted every other day. It was the only way to keep up with what she had going on.

"Thanks, babe. I hate Sharda couldn't make it. She been real busy with school and I lowkey think her ass pregnant," Y Jeremy said, taking a sip of her wine.

"Girl, it's so much I got to catch you up on," she continued.

"First off, where the kids?" Y Jeremy looked around.

"With they grandmom." I rolled my eyes playfully.

"Oh, I thought they grandmomma wasn't shit," she pressed.

"Girl, fuck that old bitch, but if she call to give me a break...you better believe that I'm gone take it." I chuckled, serious as hell.

"I ain't mad at it." Y Jeremy laughed.

The fake smile I wore started to hurt the corners of my mouth.

"So what's tea?" I asked as I twirled the stem of my glass like I actually cared about anything she had to say.

Y Jeremy sighed dramatically and laid across my velvet sectional like a queen in love. Her face glowed like she was walking on clouds. Dr. Larae must've been breaking her back in.

"It's Sol, girl." She blushed and rested her head on top of her hand.

My stomach instantly turned.

“What about that nigga?” I pressed.

“He popped up at Larae house weeks ago, in the middle of the night. I was lying to Larae saying that Sol was my uncle. It embarrassed the hell out of me but kind of turned me on. I end up leaving with Sol. He wants to tell Casper, but I told him to wait a while to see if he’s even sure about us.” She closed her eyes.

“I don’t know, I’m falling fast, and I’m scared. I been going to work and not going home. Sol been wanting me at his house every night. On the weekends, he takes me out. We have fun together, he’s different from the asshole of a man I knew in the beginning just wanting pussy.” She opened her eyes, looking stupid and lovesick.

I didn’t say shit right away, I sipped my wine slow, letting it burn my throat a little. I needed something to distract me from the fire that bloomed in my chest. The more she said his name and talked about him the more pissed off I got.

“So what now? This one-night stand-turned stalker ass nigga is romantic to you? You laid up at his house and laying here talking ’bout you in love?” I shook my head and looked at her pathetic dumb ass.

“You sound dumb as fuck, Y Jeremy. Straight up.”

Her face twisted as her smile dropped slightly.

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“What’s that supposed to mean?”

I laughed under my breath and crossed my legs.

“It means you out here bragging like Sol ain’t some kingpin ass nigga. He got lots of bitches that he makes feel the same way. You not nothing special to that man. He the same kind of nigga Ramsey was, only difference is Sol got more money and better connections. That quick, over some dick you done forgot what happened to Ramsey and what comes with dating men like them.” I chuckled dryly.

Her eyes narrowed and I kept going. It was my every intention to slice this bitch joy before she got way to ahead of herself.

“Bitch, what?—”

“You finally had the chance to do better. That doctor? Larae? Fine, educated, with a real future. He the type to marry a bitch. You chose to run to Sol...An everybody ass nigga with community dick.” I doubled down, cutting her the fuck off.

“Larae was nice, but he was corny as hell...still in love with his baby momma. With a small ass dick!” She spat.

Yeremy’s caramel complexion turned a shade red. She sat up and tilted her head to the side as she stared at me like I had shit on my face.

“You really be sounding like a hating ass bitch. That’s why I tell Shardae more than I tell you. Every single time I tell you some shit, don’t matter if it’s good news or bad,

you respond with some negative, hating ass shit.”

“Girl, don’t get in your feelings because I’m simply telling you what you don’t want to hear about your naïve, desperate ass decisions.” I snapped back.

“You think Casper gone be proud that his daughter is out here chasing the same type of nigga? Better yet...a nigga that’s like his fucking nephew! Close to incest ass bitch.” I giggled.

“Oh, I guess you think that this shit ends differently this time around...” I pressed on.

“Daddy Casper?—”

“Bianca, shut the fuck up forreal, bitch. Don’t insult me if you not ready to rumble with me. You just a bitter ass bitch. Mad cause Sol didn’t choose you at the club. You don’t think I don’t know about you fake liking Fatz? Cooking for him and being a little freak nasty bitch just to be content with him dropping money on you any time you ask. That’s the difference between you and I bitch. I work for my money, so if I want to lay on my back when I clock out of work and get fucked down by a rich nigga, I can. You mad hoe, cause ain’t no nigga checking for you forreal like that. Maybe a nigga would like you more or even fall in love if you wasn’t such a selfish, jealous, money-hungry ass bitch!” She yelled at the top of her lungs.

I remained quiet, my leg started to tap as anger took over all of my thoughts and started to consume me.

“Bitch yo words don’t bother me. Niggas love obese hoes, I heard they suck dick better and hold on to a man the longest cause not too many niggas checking for them. To be real, niggas only checking for you because of Casper. You don’t know what’s real or fake. At least with that doctor nigga, he didn’t know who daddy Casper was.”

“You really a hating ass bitch? You want to be me hoe.” Jeremy squinted her eyes, her fists balled up at her sides.

I decided to take it down a notch because one thing about Jeremy...her big ass could throw down when it came to fighting.

“Don’t flatter yourself, bitch. As a friend?—”

“Nah, you was never my friend. Everything you saying about niggas using me because of Casper is all you in a nutshell. You still got this place because of me. When you all out of niggas to pay the bills around here or don’t have a video shoot set to work for, you on my line begging. It’s really the only time I hear from you.”

“Now that’s not true.” I shook my head.

“It is true, bitch.” Jeremy rocked back and forth, something she did when she was ready to pounce.

“I think we just saying shit out of anger.” I chuckled nervously.

“I just hate that you settle, Jeremy. You the type that will throw away everything good for some dick and danger that you truly not ready for. You always ruining shit for yourself. Just like with Ramsey...If Casper was my dad, I’d sit my ass down somewhere and be the true princess that I am. Instead, you chasing niggas that’s not worth your time. Then when you fall from being heart broke, I’m the bitch that’s there picking up your tears and struggling to help put you back together.” I spat.

“You ain’t picking up shit! You hope I fall so you can feel better about being empty, bitch!” She stood then snatched her purse off the couch.

“I love you, Jeremy.” I simmered with anger, trying to control the next set of words

that dared to fall from my mouth.

I wanted to hurt this bitch, since she thought she was so superior and better than me.

“Whatever makes you feel better, you bottom of the barrel ass bitch. You and I ain’t got shit to ever talk about. Fuck you.”

Chapter 20

Jeremy

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I should have kept walking toward the door, my fingers was so tight around my purse strap as I thought about beating Bianca's ass for what it was worth. I always pushed any negative thought about her out of my mind because I really loved her. I turned to look at the bitch standing near the middle of her living room.

Her arms was folded across her chest, with a smug look plastered on her face. She tilted her eyes and narrowed her eyes at me.

"You know what?" I smiled at her.

Through the smile, pain clawed its way up my throat.

"Casper always told me that I was better than you. He told me that you wasn't shit but another hoe looking for a come up." I chuckled painfully.

"My dad said that if I was to tell you that I was in love with you...you'd lie and say the same then be my bitch. Anything for a better life, instead of working to get the things you desire. Now, I believe him. It's all crystal clear for me now." I turned on the balls of my feet, feeling a little better.

"You know..." she said slowly.

"Ramsey always said that I felt better than you!" she spat out.

My blood turned into ice; my feet moved faster than I thought. I dropped my bag and practically flew across the room to beat her ass.

“You stupid ass bitch!” Whap! I open hand smacked her across the cheek.

“You thought you fucking ate?” I stepped back from her to see if she had something to say.

Bianca always talked shit but never could back her mouth up. My vision blurred from the tears building in my eyes.

“You out of all people slept with my nigga? My fucking man? Ramsey!” I asked in disbelief.

Bianca held her bloody lip with wide eyes.

“He was my nigga first, I let you have him; you basically played the front while I was in the backseat. I knew how Ramsey was, you just refused to see the shit. You should be thanking me hoe and?—”

I launched at her, not letting her finish her sentence. We crashed to the floor. She squealed beneath me as my fists landed back-to-back against her face. I didn’t give a damn about her crying and begging for me to stop. I wanted Bianca to feel how she made me felt on the inside. I wanted her to feel every lie, every fake laugh, every backhanded compliment.

I comfortably sat on top of her with my knees on either side of her petite body. My hands went around her throat as I looked into her eyes. I could feel my heart breaking but was numb to all the bullshit.

“You sat across from me every day while I was mourning, knowing what you did.” My voice cracked as the tears rolled down my cheeks.

“You a sick ass bitch! I should fuckin’ kill you.” I squeezed her neck tighter.

Bianca's eyes popped out of socket as she kicked her legs and scratched at my arms. A knock at the door sounded off, snapping me out of my rage. I froze for a couple of seconds above her as I listened to the knocks sound off again. Slowly, I got off of Bianca, my body trembled as she scrambled backwards. On my way over to the door, I picked up my purse, not bothering to look back at her.

I opened the door, and it felt like time stopped. Ramsey's mom stood at the door with her arms crossed over her chest with a look of satisfaction on her ugly ass face. Behind her was Bianca's kids. I got dizzy instantly as shit hit me faster than a train. My mouth opened but no words fell out. I turned my head slowly with disbelief crawling up my spine. Bianca slowly stood up with blood covering her face.

"I hate you but love you for helping me whenever I needed you. You always got in the way. It all started with Ramsey. You got this aura about you, Jeremy...that makes people believe that you're so sweet and innocent. Yeah, you got a college education, but you are a dummy! I'm not the only one that has had my fair share of having my way when it comes to you." Bianca spat out of gob of spit mixed with blood on her carpet.

"The fuck y'all just standing there behind ya Nana for? This is grown folks business! Go to your room!" Bianca yelled at her kids, making them jump hard.

"Sorry, Tee Tee." Bianca's five-year-old daughter Lee Lee looked up into my eyes.

I looked down at her as my chest constricted for her. I hated that she had to be raised by such a trifling ass momma.

"Lee Lee, never apologize for the actions of others. You didn't do anything wrong, baby. I love you always. Respect your mom and take your brother to y'all room." I leaned down to place a kiss on her forehead.

Lee Lee wiped her tears away then turned to grab her little brother's hand. I leaned down and gave him a quick kiss to his cheek and watched them walk away. Once they was out of earshot, everything inside me collapsed. A small hollow laugh slipped from my throat.

I refused to break in front of Ramsey's mom, Larella. I didn't even know why I was still blocking her way in. I stood in the middle of the door frame perplexed as fuck.

"I know it hurts, but the reality of the entire situation needed to hit at some point. You thought I didn't like you, when in actual reality...I didn't like how naïve you were for my son. You deserved better, however...my loyalty is always with him, and since he's not here anymore...it's with those kids."

I slowly nodded my head and stepped around her. I didn't wait to hear the sound of the door closing behind. I walked as fast as I could to my truck. Soon as I got in, my vision blurred with heat and heartbreak. My chest burned as my jaws locked to keep from sobbing. I started my car and peeled off from the curb in desperate need for some kind of relief and comfort.

Source Creation Date: June 23, 2025, 8:03 am

Every light I passed blurred into streaks of white and gold as I sped through the city like something was chasing me. I clenched my steering wheel tightly as I ignored the way my phone lit up again and again on the passenger seat. One second it was Sol, then the text notification lit up. The next second it was Bianca calling back-to-back.

I hated how a small part of me wanted to answer just to hear her say that none of it was true. That those weren't his kids and that she hadn't spent years lying to me with a smile painted on her face like she really was my best friend.

I hit a hundred on the freeway and didn't slow down until I turned down the quiet gated street that led to my father's estate. It had always been an entire world away from the hell that awaited me in the 'Real World'. I needed my dad, and I didn't give a damn if he said 'he told me so' a million times to my face.

His iron gates opened like arms that I needed around me. I drove up the long-curved driveway shaking. After putting my car in park, I left my keys, phone, and purse in the car. Right now, I didn't give a damn about nothing but getting to Casper.

I ran up the steps to the double doors; before I could try the door handle, Esmeralda opened the double doors with a worried look etched on her face.

"Casper?" I asked her with my voice cracking.

"In his study with ju ma ma." She spoke with her heavy accent.

I took off toward the hallway, and the closer I got, the heavier my sobs became. It wasn't a surprise that my mom was here. Casper always talked bad about her and

acted like she was just another woman on his roster. It was something about chocolate drop beautiful Benita that always had her popping up randomly. Most of the time when my mom visited, I wasn't aware. They kept their weird relationship to themselves. Whenever I tried to tell my mom that she deserved better, she got offended and tell me that she wasn't waiting around for Casper.

That was true, she dated different guys. I just hated the way she came running whenever he sent for her. Just like Esmeralda said, I found them in the study. The room was lit by tall lamps and the flicker of the fireplace. My mom sat ghetto-fabulous and unbothered with her legs crossed on my dad's black velvet chaise. She leaned over my dad's outstretched hands and filed his nails with exaggerated care.

Her long acrylics was hot pink with rhinestones that flashed each time she turned his hand.

"I should paint these muthafucka's pink like mine...put a little glitter on that shit." She laughed.

The smell of weed told me that they was both high as hell vibing. This was the side of my parent's that I never got to witness. How they acted with one another behind closed doors had me standing in disbelief.

"Don't play with me, Nita. You spending too much time on my damn hands. I'm ready for you to do my feet." He chuckled, which surprised me too.

My dad's salt-and-pepper waves was shaped enough to slice through tension. His fade was fresh, and his beard shined like he had my mom wash and moisturize it. His cigar was perched in the corner of his mouth as he sat back relaxed in his leather chair. The way he looked at her made my heart crack. It made me wonder who initially hurt who to make them not be together.

He must have felt me, his eyes snapped over toward me. He sat up fast and straightened his posture as he snatched his hands out of my mom's grasp like he had been caught doing something that he wasn't supposed to be doing.

"Move Benita," he said sharply, flicking his wrist.

My mom rolled her eyes then looked at the nail file.

"Don't start all that funny shit now, Casper. Damn always?—"

"I said move! My baby is fucking crying!" His voice boomed.

My mom clicked her tongue, she sighed dramatically then stood with her hand on her hip. Her mouth moved but I didn't hear shit she was saying as I crossed the room. Casper stood, his broad shoulders casted a shadow against the bookshelf behind him. He looked me over, his eyes narrowed at my wet cheeks then his eyes roamed up to my trembling lips. His aura darkened as he licked his lips, his jaws clenched before he spoke.

"It's that doctor nigga?" His brows bunched together.

"No," I whispered.

Casper exhaled like he was relieved.

"Well...who the fuck do I need to kill?" He muttered low enough for just me to hear him.

"Bianca—I don't want you to kill her...she's just?—"

"Not a real friend. I told you this already baby girl." He pulled me into him, and I

broke down.

I collapsed into his chest like I used to when I was a little girl. I poured my heart out with my sobs and no words.

“I’m fenna go beat that bitch ass! What the fuck she do?” My mom yelled out from behind me.

“She—had—kids—by...” It hurt me too much to finish my sentence.

“She only had one by that sorry ass nigga.” Casper completed my sentence.

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I backed away from him in disbelief. Casper stood there calmly; he took his cigar out of his mouth to ash it above his ashtray.

“You knew...didn’t you?” I squinted through my tears as the room seemed to go still.

“You knew everything all along...because you always know shit that you’re not supposed to from not letting me be an adult.” My voice raised higher.

“That bitch was lying to me for years! And you let me continue to be a friend to that bitch! She watched me mourn my man and all along she was mourning him too!”

“Yeah, well he’s a dead nigga now. The problem was fixed. You damn right I knew.” He raised a brow.

The coldness in his tone sliced through me.

“You became hardheaded when you started smelling yourself. You stopped listening.” He shrugged as he placed his cigar down into his crystal ashtray.

“What?” I gasped.

I looked over at my mom, she took a seat and was looking all into her compact mirror. She knew not to step into this conversation; at the end of the day, she was just happy to be here. In the grand house catering to Casper.

Casper stepped closer; his eyes narrowed at me.

“I told you years ago...in this life, you don’t trust people, baby girl. You test them to see just who the fuck they really are. You never do what I tell you to do. You trusted her cause she smiled all of these years calling you sis. You trusted that no good nigga cause he was your first. Then you turned around and left the doctor nigga alone for another nigga that you know that I wouldn’t approve of,” he spat out coldly.

A sharp cramp hit my chest as my stomach dropped to my ass.

“H-he told you?” I asked in disbelief.

“Not yet, but he’s a stand-up type of nigga. He will tell me eventually, but you should know me better than anyone. I know everything there is that I need to know about you, sweetheart.” He chuckled dryly.

“Let me guess...” He clicked his teeth.

“Now you love Sol too.” His words was spoken sinisterly.

“If he wasn’t Raft’s son, that lil nigga would be swimming in the ocean for violating...in a real way.” His words trailed off as a look of recognition crossed his face.

“You gone learn the hard way, baby girl. Daddy hate to see you heart broken. I think it’s time for me to just let you experience it all the way through. You so quick to be defiant, you think I want to control your every move? I just wish you could be smarter, open your eyes to the real raw reality of the life that we live. You laid up with a nigga that?—”

“Now wait a minute, Casper! Don’t you hurt her like that. I stand down with a lot concerning you and Yeremy...only because you are a good ass father and a better parent than me in so many ways. Don’t break that girl’s spirit when she is already

hurting.” My mom slammed her compact mirror shut.

“Shut the fuck up, Benita! Go up to the room and let me and my daughter talk,” he spat at her, still looking into my eyes.

“Casper, please, let it be. I know how nasty you get when things are out of your hands. I know exactly where this conversation is about to go. How about you console her for ending a well over due relationship with that hoe Bianca,” my mom pressed on with desperation in her eyes.

“Fuck that! She think she got good judgement when the nigga she going behind my back to sleep with?—”

“You asked Sol for a damn favor! Whatever he did that night is because of you! That’s not no G shit, Casper. You speaking up on some shit that shouldn’t be spoken on. If she fucking with Sol, let that nigga tell her.”

“Let him tell me what? Nothing more can hurt me than what I am already feeling right now. So go ahead and say it.” I folded my arms over my chest.

“Casper, let it be. It’s not going to make things better,” my momma warned.

“But it will!” His voice roared.

“I will tell her, so she can stop being so fucking dumb like you! I don’t want her to ever experience some of the things that I’ve gone through and kept to myself!” Casper’s eyes went wild as he stared into my eyes with the coldest look that I’ve ever saw from him.

“The nigga that’s blowing you back out now...is the same?—”

“Casper! You’re going to ruin her!” My mom interjected again, this time she stood to her feet.

My heart rate sped up, as fear enabled me from moving.

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“I paid that nigga Sol half a million to run up in you and Ramsey’s rinky dink apartment and blow his fucking brains out. Of course, it was after I found out that Ramsey was planning on kidnapping you in order to get ransom money. He was going broke and owed a lot of people money. I tried to sit back and let shit play out, let you find out who the fuck he was on your own time since he was fucking Bianca and a couple other hoes right underneath your nose. I drew the line when word got back that he was plotting on hurting my only fucking child. It disgusted me further when I found out that he was able to fuck my only child minutes before he took his last fucking breath. You was sleeping with the enemy. Sol killed him, and if you don’t believe me...take your ass to his house and search for the necklace and diamond earrings that was snatched off of you.”

He stepped past me like what he said was nothing, like I was nothing more than a lesson in progress.

“You don’t get to cry about what I let happen,” he added over his shoulder.

“You get to decide what you do with it now.” He stormed out of his study, slamming the door behind him.

My knees buckled just as my stomach turned. In slow motion, I fell to my knees and dropped my head and shoulders in defeat. I realized that what Bianca did was just small compared to what Casper let happen on purpose. I couldn’t be too mad at him because for the most part, I was vulnerable, stupid, and blind.

Jeremy

My ceiling fan spun in slow circles above me as I laid on my side curled up. My pillow was damp from crying, face dry and stained. I had a slight headache and could feel the swelling in my eyes. The weight of everything had me running all kinds of different scenarios in my head on what to do next.

I felt hollow, like something inside me had been scooped out and tossed into the gutter. A soft knock came at my room door, seconds later it cracked open before I could answer. I turned a little and saw my mom walking in. Her hair was tied in a messy silk wrap. All her makeup was off, along with her long eye lashes.

I see why Casper couldn't leave her alone, my mother was authentically beautiful. She had a comb in one hand, and a jar of Blue Magic grease in the other.

"Yes?" I croaked, barely recognizing my own voice.

She didn't answer right away, just walked to the edge of the bed and sat down with a look of concern that I hadn't seen from her in years. My mom loved me, she never mistreated me. In fact, she always tried to be there, but Casper took over, not giving her much room to have any say so in anything while I was growing up.

"You look like you been carrying the whole damn world on your head," she said quietly.

"I'm just here to fix your crown and have a talk with you, baby." She reached out and touched my sweated out, thick, tangled hair.

I sighed and sat up slowly, I was hesitant and confused. I could count on one hand the number of times she ever touched my hair. Casper had the best hair stylist hooking me up since the age of five years old. I watched her unscrew the jar, she dipped her

fingers into the thick grease. She leaned in and started working it through my roots with care.

I closed my eyes as her sharp nails grazed my scalp. We sat in silence for a while as I rested my thoughts, just appreciating the moment.

“You surprised I came in here?” she asked after a while.

“Yes.” I nodded.

She parted my hair gently with the tail of the comb.

“I saw how your daddy talked to you earlier...the look you gave him...I seen it before,” she whispered sadly.

“I’m leaving.” My throat tightened as I swallowed down hard.

Her hands paused for a second then kept moving before she asked me where I was going.

“I don’t know yet, but I can’t stay here. Not in this house, under his roof.” I closed my eyes.

She didn’t argue with what I said, and I was grateful for that. I didn’t need anyone trying to convince me otherwise.

“Is it about what he let happen, or the truth of it all in him just simply loving you and trying to protect you by all means necessary?”

I turned to glance at her, but she stayed focused on parting my hair into thick sections.

“It’s all of it.” I spoke.

“I’m just tired, I got to live my life without him in the background trying to control it. I love Casper to death, but?—”

“I get it. You don’t even have to explain it, Jeremy.”

“Why do you let him treat you the way he does?” I asked.

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She paused for a long time. She sat the comb down in her lap then wiped her hands on top of her cotton gown.

“Casper loves me but refuses to trust me again. I broke his heart, and I’ve spent an endless amount of time trying to gain it back again.” Her voice came out low and rough.

“All the women he passed through just to hurt me has numbed me. I can never turn my back on that man because, even when I thought that he wasn’t your biological dad, he still stepped up and was willing to take the role without knowing for sure. To this day I never shared the positive DNA results, and he has remained a good father.” Her eyes filled with shame.

“What?” I asked in disbelief.

“You’re his daughter, Jeremy... I made sure of it. I’m just saying till this day he never asked to see the results. That’s how I know he still loves me. He’s never tried to deny you or treat you differently. He makes me pay for my reckless decisions while giving you a life that I always dreamed of having. Casper probably will never forgive me, but he has always been there for me in my time of need without throwing in my face what all he’s done...I just feel like shit for the one time that he really needed me, I wasn’t there for him.” She casted her eyes down sadly.

“What happened, Ma?” I searched her eyes for answers.

All I saw was sadness, her gaze dropped down to her nails. She picked at them and looked everywhere but at me.

“It’s clear that he loves you, but he treats you like he hates you. What I saw when I walked up is something that I never saw between y’all,” I said.

“He loves me, but his hate over rides the love. Casper is hot and cold when it comes to me. When no one is around, he’s himself. Casper likes to be babied; he gets to be the real him with me behind closed doors. All them hoes he keep around is a façade and they are meant to hurt me. When we around people, he treats me like what you see when you are around us. What you walked up on today, was how we always are behind closed doors,” she sadly admitted.

“But why?” I asked again.

She took a deep breath and glance back at me. Her eyes welled up with tears as her shoulders dropped.

“It was Memorial weekend...I was happy Casper was leaving because he barely let me breathe. He loved to be literally in my skin if he wasn’t out dominating the streets.” She chuckled sadly.

“Casper went to visit his mom and dad but also had a big drop off to do with your uncles down south. I ended up getting drunk with my girlfriends. I took pills and snorted dope that night. We ended up at a party that I had no business being at. Casper was blowing me up all night, so I turned my phone off. Long story short... When he got to Mississippi, his parents were robbed and killed. It ended up being an ambush connected to the men that was supposed to be new potential buyers, which would have plugged Casper in down south. Casper got shot, he was in critical condition. It wasn’t him blowing up my phone, it was your uncle calling back-to-back to get me to fly out to Mississippi to see about your dad. While all of that was happening, I was at a party with so-called friends on the wrong side of town...getting a train ran on me. I was out of it for days; they recorded and sold the tape for dirt cheap...” Her voice cracked as air left my lungs.

“Mama.” I gasped.

Her eyes filled with shame and sorrow. Her tears threatened to spill over as she rocked back and forth slowly.

“I couldn’t even remember all their names...I just remember waking up naked in my own throw up and cum stains. I contracted a couple of STDs... By the time your father made it back to Cali, the sex tape had already fell into his hands. It didn’t make it no better that I was two months pregnant when them niggas violated me. Your father wasn’t no saint, he was loyal and loved me but I knew he cheated from time to time. I did my dirt too just to make myself feel better. It’s just that this time...I wasn’t there for him when he really needed me. It was embarrassing as well to be Casper’s woman getting passed around like a fucking blunt. Niggas felt like they had one-up on him because I made myself assessable. Before you, I was his trophy; when he said this ‘my woman’, his chest would be all pumped out.” She chuckled wearily.

“He allowed me to stay in his house and made me agree to let him be the one to raise you. He agreed that I could nurse you and be in the house up until you was potty trained. Casper wasn’t that evil by taking you fully away from me when he could have if he wanted to. He let me get you every weekend. But after everything...I stopped trying to be loved by him...I tried to survive without him, but it was hard. I started getting high off dope to survive my own heart ache...became a shitty ass mother, although I loved you so much, Yeremy. I also started to battle being sexually hyper active, it was to the point where I couldn’t control the shit. I haven’t felt like a woman in a long time, Yeremy. Only time that I feel close to being the woman I used to be is when I’m here in the same household as you and Casper. Even that hurts because I wonder what it would have been like if I never went to that fucking party. If I just listened to him and stayed the fuck home.”

My heart instantly shattered for her. It felt like for the first time I was really getting to see and know my mom. She was a woman with her own broken story. Betrayal

through friendships, stuck in her own war with discovering her worth as a woman.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered.

She nodded, sniffed once, and cleared her throat.

“If you leave... do it right. Don’t just leave ’cause you hurt. Leave because you know your life can be more than this. Casper has a hard time with doing things the right way. His way is sometimes wrong, but he means well. He just doesn’t want you to end up like me.

Chapter 22

Sol

One Month Later

Ididn’t do dates, at least not real ones. I took bitches to hotels, fucked them, and then dropped a couple of bands on them. I saw nigga’s wear black ties sitting across from a woman to take the time to get to know her and thought that shit was lame as fuck...

For Y Jeremy, I made the exception. We pulled up to a steakhouse a little past eight. I stepped around to her side to open her door like a gentleman. I watched her thick toned legs swing out slowly as she stood. Her curves was wrapped in a deep olive dress that clung to her caramel skin like it missed her every time she moved.

“Damn, Ma,” I muttered, holding my hand out.

Her cheeks rose as she dropped her head and blushed from my admiration.

“You a real distraction, Y Jeremy.” I talked directly into her ear as we stepped onto

pavement.

She giggled as we walked through the double doors. I still felt conflicted to all of this. Especially the quiet want that crawled under my skin, making me crave more than just her body. I liked her smile, laugh, and how she could carry a conversation. Jeremy knew when to be quiet and listen to me whenever I talked, although I probably never said too much like her.

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We was led to a booth in the back where it was dimly lit. Once we were seated, I couldn't peel my eyes off of Jeremy. She always looked good as hell but tonight she looked like her ass was born to be worshipped. She looked too perfect; her thick hair framed her face. She had a light coat of lip gloss that tinted her lips pink. I didn't want to ogle her but couldn't help that shit.

"This our first actual date," she said taking a small sip of wine.

"I took you on a date before this." I chuckled.

The waitress arrived at our table, I ordered for her and myself then went back to staring at her.

"That wasn't a date. You were tricking big time that day. We spent all day at the mall shopping and ate at the food court. You took me back home and fucked me all night. Fair exchange." She giggled and shrugged her shoulders.

"You don't even look like the type to take women out on dates," she added.

I folded my hands in front of me and eyed her a little longer. I purposely wanted to make her squirm in her seat. I still made Jeremy nervous which meant I gave her pretty ass butterflies. I wanted it to always be that way whenever I was in her presence. Through her nervousness, she didn't take no shit. I didn't need to game her up and tell her all kinds of mushy shit. I already got the pussy. I dropped money on her like it was nothing. To me, it wasn't an even exchange. Her pussy was priceless, she should have known that.

“I’m not, a nigga like me don’t date.” I leaned forward and placed one of my hands on top of hers.

“I didn’t expect to want to date you though...”

She tilted her head then raised her perfectly arched brows at me.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

The waitress came back with our food. My stomach growled soon as the aroma of my food drifted up my nose. I picked up my knife, but before I reached for my fork, Jeremy cleared her throat and eyed me like I lost my mind.

“Answer my question before you stuff your mouth.” She rolled her eyes.

I set my knife down. I leaned back against the leather booth and studied her for a couple of seconds.

“It means you talk back, ask questions. You challenge shit I do and say instead of just going with whatever like most bitches do when they in the presence of a paid nigga. I thought I could fuck out whatever I was feeling and then stop cold turkey, but I can’t.”

She blushed hard; I laughed inwardly then focused back on my juicy ass steak.

“So I guess that got me a date at a five star restaurant.” She smiled softly.

“Nah, that made me not want to let you go so I can see where this shit goes.” I corrected her.

Her eyes flickered. She wasn’t expecting for me to say that...I wasn’t expecting it

either, but I wouldn't take it back since I really meant it. After dinner, we walked out into the night air. I placed my hand on the small of her back. I realized that I loved touching her soft fluffy body. The movie theater was next for us. We made it there before everyone else. Y Jeremy and I sat in the back row. She curled into my side then after a couple of seconds, she shifted and looked up into my eyes.

"Why are you so closed off? You don't talk about shit that matters like that. You really just listen to me talk." She sighed after the words left her mouth.

"I don't trust easy. It ain't 'cause I got a corny heartbreak story to tell. It's because I watched several people beg for love and still get left in the dirt by the people they love. I seen friends turn into enemies over paper or jealousy and greed. Family sell each other out over pride. I just like to keep my heart quiet and mind guarded. Nobody ever made me want to change that. I think it's good you are how you are, though, Y Jeremy. Only down side is...you end up hurt...heart in pieces.... you run back to Casper to put it back together, every time. Nothing wrong with that, but me? I'm a man who can't afford to constantly have my heart shattered or even move with feelings. If my shit break, it's on me to put that shit back together."

"Earth to you, nigga!" Fatz clapped his fat hands in front of my face.

I blinked then focused in on him from across the table. Today was a short meeting at the recreation center. Business was good, numbers was up. There was no nigga stepping to me and Fatz shortchanged. I had a couple of our top men outside the recreation center BBQ. Music thumped loudly as the sound of them laughing and talking shit carried inside of the center.

I sat at the end of the table with my thoughts placed on Y Jeremy. I missed the fuck out of her. She curved me hard, and I didn't know why exactly. I showed up to her job, only to find out she no longer worked there. I took it a step further by going back to that square nigga Larae house. He pissed in his pants at the front door when I barged

my way in. He had a sexy little ghetto broad laid up half-naked on his couch.

He swore up and down he had nothing to say to Y Jeremy. His bitch ass cried and said he was working on getting his family back. I went to the extreme by calling Casper. I didn't give a fuck about telling the nigga that I was dating his daughter. I was ready to deal with whatever repercussions that came with that shit. I wanted her, craved her, and needed to at least talk to her. Shit was starting to piss me off. Her phone number had been changed, or either I was blocked. I cursed her dumb ass out in my mind several times a day and told myself to just let her go.

“Yeah nigga, you tripping! I'm going outside to eat and take these niggas money by shooting some dice.” Fatz huffed and puffed as he scooted his chair back and stood up.

“Fatz, you good?” I asked him, pushing my own thoughts back.

“Yeah, why you ask that?”

“Just wondering, it's something in ya eyes, my nigga.” I squinted at him.

“Something in my eyes?” He laughed and waved me off.

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“Nigga it’s something in my stomach that’s growling. Something in my gut yearning to taste them ribs and potato salad that I brought to this shit.” He sucked his stomach in then released it.

“Sit down and rap with me, nigga...that shit not done yet.” I snatched the blunt from behind my ear and sparked it.

Fatz sighed and mumbled underneath his breath some shit that I couldn’t make out. He eyed a crate that was a couple of inches away from me. He took a seat on it and spread his legs wide. His belly rose and fell beneath the oversized hoodie he wore. He dug into the front pocket of his hoodie and snatched a honey bun out. Fatz just eyed it for a couple of seconds never ripping it open. That was a red flag in itself to me.

He stared at nothing in particular as I eyed him. When he glanced up at me, I saw the look again in his gaze that bothered me. His eyes were soulless and dark.

“Talk to me, Fatz.” I pressed him.

He didn’t look at me right away. He blinked and chuckled as if I was the one with a problem.

“Nigga, why the fuck you keep asking me that shit? I’m simply trying to go outside and shoot some dice and eat. Ain’tshit wrong with me.” This time there was no humor in his tone of voice.

With me, Fatz always kept shit light. He loved to joke and make light of any situation.

“You ain’t touched that honey bun yet...that’s how I know yo greedy ass is lying to me.” I chuckled dryly.

He looked back up at me with hollow eyes.

“You been quiet all week long,” I added trying to get him to open up.

“I ain’t know you looked at me like I was a part of the Eastie entertainment committee.” He scoffed, stuffing the honeybun back into his front pocket.

“I ain’t joking nigga. I know you well, something is off about you. I’m your brother. If something is wrong, you need to say it so we can figure this shit out. You sitting there staring off into space and shit like your forgot how to exist.”

Fatz just stared at me, something flickered behind his eyes momentarily as he licked his dry lips.

“Ain’t nothing worth mentioning. I’m good, you got enough to be worrying about. Real shit, ain’t nothing that I ain’t been through before that I can’t get through today. My mind just be fucking up sometime. Got to get my shit together mentally, that’s all.”

“What about your mind, Fatz?”

He didn’t speak for a long time, his big frame hunched slightly forward. He placed his elbows on his knees. I wasn’t going to push him, I understood that it sometimes took time to express yourself while trying to search your mind for the best way to explain what was going on.

“You ever feel like...you been sad so long that it just feels normal?” His voice was low and flat. I wasn’t used to hearing him sound the way that he did in the moment.

“I ain’t talking about no heartbreak shit either. I never had love from a woman, and I probably never will. Neither is it about money, my crackhead ass momma nor the block. This feeling that I feel on and off come in fucked up waves. I force myself to feel good about shit when I’m around you. I even pop a perc or two just to alter my mood. Today...I woke up and it felt like a nigga chest was too heavy to stand. I tried to eat, and it didn’t hit the same. I smiled when I saw you...but it pained me to do that. I be feeling doomed sometimes...like I ain’t meant to be here.” He dropped his head and started to rock back and forth.

I stayed quiet and watched him take in short breaths.

It started when I was young...” He started tapping his fingers against his thigh.

“It got worse when my momma used to disappear for days and sometimes weeks. I’d sit at the window waiting. My belly would growl until that shit hurt. I’d get paranoid and sad all in one thinking that maybe she wouldn’t come back. I’d always think the worse about her leaving for days, then think the worse for my existence in the process. After so long it felt like I trained my mind to think all kinds of fucked up.” He let out a bitter chuckle.

“I used to steal food from school just to eat it at night. Raft didn’t know shit, and I started to hate him and you. I felt like he loved you more, wondered why he never would pop up when she left me all them days. He always popped up with you in tow on her good days to say what’s up and drop off a couple of bands. I wondered why the fuck he didn’t noticed that she was a fucking crackhead. He should have known that all that money wasn’t going to me. Her ass would do one good deed with the money, that was buy up food and me a couple of fits and shoes so I could look fresh for the next time his ass came back around. I let that hate go for y’all when he finally came to get me.” Fatz didn’t pick his head up.

“But back to this feeling, bro...” He tapped his chest.

“That empty shit that I felt back then...never left me. I just learned how to be funny as fuck around it. I taught myself how to shoot through it...but it’s still there, Sol. Every day, it’s like sitting in a room with no windows, and even when people knock on the door, I don’t got the energy to answer.” He sniffled then wiped his face with the sleeve of his hoodie.

“I think I’m just growing more tired every day, man...” He looked up at me.

Before I could speak, we heard gunshots real close. Me and Fatz jumped up at the same time as our instincts took over. No words needed, I grabbed my .45 off the table just as he pulled his chrome from under his hoodie. We moved fast toward the side exit. My blood was already hot as the anticipation took over me. We pushed outside and then saw multiple cars skirt off. Across the cracked pavement of the rec center’s parking lot were two bodies sprawled out. A couple of nigga’s had their guns out while some stood behind whatever they could shield themselves.

“Who the fuck you think that was?” Fatz stepped beside me.

I squinted my eyes just as all of my men walked toward the two dead bodies. I could hear sirens faintly as I glanced over at Fatz.

“It was Casper, nigga tryna send an indirect message on some bitch shit. Let’s be out.”

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“Nah, that nigga don’t do indirect...if he sent niggas our way everybody would have been?—”

“Dead...All these niggas would have been left stanking. That nigga wants me to come holler at him.” My jaws clenched as I moved to the driver side of my car.

“He about to see about me right now, directly.”

I already put two and two together weeks ago when I couldn’t get in contact with Yeremy that Casper probably knew. I wasn’t rushing to get to that nigga to have a talk about shit just yet since I had a lot on my plate. I’ve been tempted to pop up over at his house anyway behind Yeremy. She thought she could just play me to the left like we didn’t bond. I don’t know why she made me feel the way that she did.

All I knew was the feeling that she gave to me when she was around was better than smoking weed. Yeremy had this aura to her that was unmatched. For the first time, she actually had me missing someone other than my mom and dad.

Chapter 23

Sol

“I see you got your appetite back.” I glanced over at Fatz just as he bit down into the honey bun from earlier.

“Yeah, all a nigga needed was just a little action to snap me out of the bullshit that was weighing me down.” He chuckled with half of the honey bun in his mouth.

“I’ll give you a pass right now, but you know I don’t allow eating in the whip.” I frowned, trying to tune out Fatz’ heavy smacking.

“I want you to get some help. That shit you said before the shooting not normal.” I switched lanes and glanced over at him.

Fatz sighed roughly then pressed the button to let his window down. He sparked up a blunt and looked out the window.

“I told you, I’m good now. That shit come in waves,” he uttered.

“Yeah, I know...I’ve been watching you,” I stated seriously.

“Everybody thinks the muscle is what runs these fucked up streets. It’s not our fists, guns, or the threats we make, Fatz.” I paused, cracking my neck from side to side.

“It’s the brain, your brain is the throne. Everything Raft built, the respect, fear, and empire that he left behind...came from up here.” I tapped the side of my temple.

“The real power is always in the mind...without it? You’re nothing but a loaded gun in a shaking hand.” I looked over at his side profile.

He didn’t respond, but I saw the way his jaw clenched. Fatz’ lip twitched as if he wanted to protest against what I was saying.

“You got to protect your mind, like you protect me and your momma.” I nudged him with my arm.

“You lose your mind Fatz, everything falls with it. Doesn’t matter how tough you are, how many niggas out here that fear you. If your brain turns on you, that’s a war you won’t fuckin’ win. So I’m not saying this shit to tell you to man up or be strong. Fuck

all that tough nigga talk. I'm telling you to get help, real help, Fatz. A therapist, a doctor...somebody who knows how to untangle what's choking you inside. That shit not weakness, it's strategy and survival. It's the kind of power most men are too scared to reach for. Ain't shit to be ashamed of either. You know I don't waste my breath with nobody. I love you, you my blood, and I want what's best for you. You could have been come to me with all of this." I shook my head.

"I didn't want to be no bur?—"

"You ain't a burden, so dead that shit. I ain't got that much on my plate to the point where I can't help you figure this shit out. It's been us together, Fatz. Raft died, you was the main nigga to help me cope...I helped you cope. I know that his death was hard on you, especially since y'all started to bond late. We all we got, which is why I don't want to subject us to this street shit forever like him," I admitted.

"I'm gonna fight. I got good insurance, I just been lazy not caring to set any appointments." He rolled his window all the way down.

"I spazzed out seeing my momma in the trap house. Killed them niggas and?—"

"You had them take her to a nutty facility. I don't blame you for keeping hope alive. We only get one momma, but you can't allow her to navigate your moods and emotions. Don't lose faith in her, Fatz. But don't be surprised either when she keeps disappointing you. Somethings you just have to expect from certain people, no matter how much you love them."

"You right."

The rest of the drive to Casper's warehouse was dead quiet. Fatz was lost in his own thoughts as my fingers drummed against the leather steering wheel. Fatz broke the silence to tell me that one of our men texted in code that the two bodies at the rec

center was some young niggas not even eighteen yet that ended up getting capped.

There was only one man in this state that moved like that. Casper moved swift and well calculated like he was performing surgery any time he put the word out for something to be done. His way of sending a message was with bodies turning up dead. Today was a warning.

There was no other reason besides me crossing the line in his eyes why he did what he did.

“I hope I don’t got to end up capping this old nigga.” Fatz spat as I pulled in front of the warehouse.

“Chill,” I told him.

I eyed Casper’s men that was already outside, they stood armed like statues. They didn’t move when we hopped out the car, they just watched with icy looks plastered on their bitch ass faces. Shit didn’t move me, the way I saw it...If Casper wanted me dead, I wouldn’t be here. Nigga wanted attention, he wanted for me to answer to him. I gave him that off the strength of what I viewed him as. I respected Casper, and in return, I met him with disrespect.

Fatz and I walked in through the wide metal doors without being frisked for guns although we had it on us. I eyed the crates that were stacked damn near to the ceiling with artillery and whatever else that Casper had illegally shipped to him. Instead of taking the elevator, we climbed the steps. Fatz complained with each step that we took.

Two more guards were outside of Casper’s office door. They let us pass without a word. Casper sat behind his massive oak desk rocking a black suit with no tie. His cigar burned between his fingers as he rubbed down his salt and pepper waves. He smiled slow and deviously like he was proud of his actions from earlier.

Fatz remained by the door as I stepped further into his office.

“I have loved you like a son, boy. Fed you, protected you, and added to the power you possess now after Raft.” He slammed his hand against his desk after the first set of words left his mouth.

“And what the fuck did you do in return?” His voice rose before he continued.

“Why my daughter, Sol? Why my Yeremy?” He leaned back in his seat like I gut punched him.

I clenched my jaw, then stepped forward. This visit was going to be short and straight to the fucking point. Old heads loved to be dramatic as fuck, I understood the fucked-up position that I was in. By the end of this conversation, I would take accountability. In my own set of facts, Casper needed a reality check.

“She ain’t yours to control. Last I checked, wasn’t no chain around her neck.” But my hand was...I laughed inwardly.

He exhaled a sharp laugh.

“She’s mine by blood, which means you outta pocket for putting your hands on her like she one of your hood rat bitches from around the way,” he spat.

“I didn’t take her, she chose me.”

“No,” he said darkly.

“She’s confused and you?—”

“I like her a lot. I can’t sit here and say that I love her, but I care a lot about Yeremy. I can’t get her off my mind, I miss her. I planned on coming to you on some real nigga shit. She wanted me to wait so I respected that.” I cut him off.

My words cut through the tension in the room. Casper’s face went still, stone cold. He sat up slowly with smoke trailing out of his mouth.

“I could have killed you, today. You and your brother. I thought about doing it for a month now. Trigga thinks I’m overreacting like he doesn’t know about my word

being law. I haven't seen nor heard from my daughter..." He blinked his eyes then cleared his throat.

"It's been a month...I know she's not with you...my men told me so." His words trailed off.

He leaned all the way forward, his elbows hit the desk as his face hardened.

"You must love her for trying to fuck with me. Funny thing, though...she's missing with no phone, no card swipes, no sightings...not even a whisper from her name in the streets. Something tells me, you are helping her and?—"

"I ain't helping her with shit!" I frowned.

"You did this shit! She was fine with me! We was good as hell when she left to go back home or where ever the fuck she went!" I yelled.

I hadn't heard from her in a month, I thought she wanted space. I didn't know how that shit worked with women, but I knew that they could be a bit dramatic once feelings got involved. Once a week went by, I thought that Casper found out and was just waiting for me to come and talk to him as a man. I had shit going on and planned on showing up to his house, but I wanted to talk to Jeremy first.

I went to her job and found out that she transferred and that's when I felt like that was her way of cutting me completely off. Jeremy knew that I wasn't about to let up off of her just because she wanted me to.

"She found out about Bianca and Ramsey. I should have just told you to kill that bitch too. I just didn't want to put her in too much heartache. All of this shit is too much on her... Now I don't think she..." Casper's shoulders dropped.

He ran his hands down his waves again and sighed.

“I got so mad, you not good enough for her, Sol. I told her that you killed Ramsey. Hopefully that keeps her on the right track and away from you. I don’t want to control my daughter; I want the best for her. Until you have a daughter of your own...you’ll understand it. Right now, I want to know where the fuck my daughter is.” He shook his head in disgust.

“So snitching is cool with you now?” I chuckled angrily in disbelief.

“This ain’t ’bout no street shit, it’s about protecting her!” His voice boomed loudly.

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“I could have told her that myself! On my own fucking time!” I yelled.

“Where the fuck is she then, Casper?”

He chuckled without humor.

“Oh, you asking me? Like I’d keep her hidden without me knowing where the fuck she is? You think I’d send niggas out to send a message to get your attention, nigga?” He gritted out.

“You hear how stupid that shit sounds.” He shook his head.

“You ask Benita? I guarantee she knows where the fuck she is. There’s no way Yeremy would just disappear without taking money off her cards if?—”

“Bingo.” Casper snapped his rough fingers.

“That bitch Benita knows where my baby is.” He scoffed, visibly pissed that he hadn’t thought of that before he went through the troubles of getting me here.

“Stay the fuck away from Yeremy. I mean that shit,” he spat and waved me off like the conversation was over.

“Sooner or later, you got to get with the program, old man. I got nothing but love and respect for you. If I didn’t have that...I wouldn’t mind going to war behind her with you. If I find her before you...” I took steps backward.

“She’s mine and I ain’t letting up off her.” I smirked.

We stared each other down for what felt like an eternity before I turned on the balls of my feet and stomped out with Fatz behind me.

“Damn, this shit crazy, nigga,” Fatz said from behind me.

I could hear his heavy ass breathing which told me he was struggling to keep up with my fast footsteps.

“What’s crazy?” I pulled my gun from the small of my back just as I reached the last step.

I didn’t have to look back at Fatz to know that he had pulled his gun as well. The way I saw it, this was an eye for an eye situation. We was outnumbered; Casper didn’t want no smoke with me. Since he capped two of my men, two of his would go before I drove off the premises. I aimed my gun and shot the first two guards that stood at the steel double doors. Their bodies dropped like a bad habit as I kept the same pace to my car.

“Bitch ass niggas.” I chuckled, watching all the guards rush in after me and Fatz to see what had taken place.

“Yeah, you in love. If it ain’t love, it’s something. You willing to go to war behind some pussy. Take me to get a steak plate off a hundred and third, nigga.” Fatz laughed as I made my way to the driver’s side of my car with Jeremy heavy on my mind.

I had to find her but didn’t know where to start looking. Casper would be able to find her now with no problem. Benita was going to fold and give up her daughter’s whereabouts just to get him off her back. Casper was Benita’s lifeline and source to a

hefty income. I had to figure out a way to chop it up with Jeremy. I wasn't going to force her to fuck with me...but there was something inside of me that told me that I couldn't just leave her alone.

She felt the pull just like I felt that shit. I killed her bitch ass nigga Ramsey, and I didn't see nothing wrong with that shit. She should have been thanking me, since I did her a favor. If the nigga was still alive, she would have been stuck on stupid with that nigga.

Chapter 24

Benita

"You been applying for jobs out in Vegas or partying?" I asked Jeremy.

"I don't know if this is somewhere I want to stay permanently at, Ma." She sighed into the phone.

"Plus, it's hot as fish grease out here, I haven't been outside like that. I think I have a stomach virus," she continued, sounding like the spoiled princess Casper raised her to be.

"You got to do something...I can't keep you concealed for too long, Jeremy. Casper is going insane?—"

"He will be just fine, I needed this time away. To think and feel free with my thoughts on what's my next steps. It's not like he haven't went this long without talking to me before," she stated.

"Don't compare this to that, little girl. Casper might have not talked to you for a while when you was with Ramsey's bitch ass but he knew where the hell you was!

He made sure you was taken care of, and you didn't have no problem spending that allowance that he deposited into your account like clockwork." I reminded her.

I wanted to support Yeremy's decision in leaving to find her way but she had no damn plan. Her logic was starting not to make any type of sense to me either.

"Money getting tight, I gave you all of my savings just so you wouldn't have to use your limitless black card that Casper gave you. If I start asking him for money, he's going to start pressing me and?—"

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“Ma please! This is why I didn’t want your help with this. I’ll call you tomorrow, I don’t feel good, and I just need to rest.”

“Jeremy, are you—” She hung up before I could get the word pregnant out.

I sat for a couple of minutes in silence, my intuition was stabbing at me. Something deep in my guts told me that my daughter was pregnant. Casper was going to lose his fucking mind. I sat up and reached for my pack of Newport’s Long. I took a cigarette out and placed it to my lips. Inhaling the smoke, I held it in and released it seconds later. All of this shit with Jeremy and Casper was starting to take a damn toll on me. I snatched my bob wig off and tossed it to the side of me.

“They not about to ruin my damn mood.” I mumbled to myself.

I sat back and started to take the braided cornrows out of my head. Once I was done, I hopped in the shower to ease my nerves more. My room smelled like vanilla from the candles that I lit before getting in the shower. I dimmed my lights then sat in the middle of my bed with my legs folded under me in the center. I took a sip of my red wine then placed my neatly rolled blunt between my lips.

I missed Casper whenever I was away from his mean ass. This whole thing with Jeremy was too much for him and it showed through his shitty attitude. So, it felt good for me to be in the comforts of my home, with no drama or phone calls. I took another sip of my wine then leaned back on my bed in deep thought.

After the fourth refill of wine, it started to hit different. I got up and sat on my small couch inside of my room as smooth jazz crooned lowly through the speakers. My

heart started to ache as I became consumed with thoughts of Casper. No matter how bad I tried to let him go, I couldn't. I still felt like there was more. He was never supposed to just be a chapter in a book that I skipped pass like it was nothing. He was the chapter that I reread, and he was the end as well as my forever.

Casper was everything that your mom would warn you about. I closed my eyes then let my head fall back against the couch. I could feel the way he used to touch my cheek with his rough hands and look at me with so much adoration. I missed the feeling of him pulling me into his lap after a long day, I was once his peace. He used to sigh into the crown of my head and hold me tight like I was the only source of peace that he could find in the middle of all the chaos that went on outside of our house.

I held on to all the promises he told me that sounded like vows. I broke the belief that he had in me, and he would never look past it. I would give anything to have him like I used to have him. The bits and pieces he gave me just wasn't enough. The men that I tried to replace him with didn't come close. My eyes started to burn as they welled up with tears.

"I know you know where the fuck my daughter is." I heard his deep raspy voice.

I blinked my eyes and chuckled to myself, thinking that I was really tripping until the smell of his cologne traveled up my nose. I sat up straight, tensed as hell. Casper's eyes was locked with mines. He wore all black pressed slacks, leather shoes topped with a black dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His salt-and-pepper waves were neat as always.

A cruel smirk tugged at the corner of his lips. My stomach dropped, seconds later anticipation got the best of me. Casper didn't come to my house at all. He always shot me a simple text and I would come running to wherever he wanted me to be.

“Casper...” I whispered his name.

He didn't say nothing, he stepped fully into the room. His judgmental eyes scanned my small space with disgust.

“I know...” he said, voice low and lethal.

“You know where the fuck my daughter is,” he said it so calmly.

It wasn't a question, Casper was waiting for me to lie. I tried to stand; panic crawled up my spine. His eyes pierced me, the buzz that I had from the wine sobered me up as I sat my ass right back down on the couch.

“I—I haven't talked to her.” I stammered over my words.

Casper took one slow step forward, he placed his cigar in the corner of his mouth. The chuckle that left his throat rattled me as he took a long pull from it. He snatched the cigar out of his mouth then ashed it on my floor.

“You think I give a fuck about anything when I don't know where the fuck my daughter is at?” He tilted his head to the side.

“You think I don't know the way your little snake-ass mind works? Bitch I'll kill you and keep your ashes in my room, next to my bed to mourn the good piece of hoe pussy I lost,” he spat out.

I swallowed hard, my bottom lip trembled as I searched my brain for the right response.

“Casper, please stop treating and talking to me this way... I'm sorry...I love you?—”

“Bitch, if I ask one more muthafuckin’ time about Jeremy’s whereabouts...” his words trailed off as he clicked his tongue.

“She left, Casper. She ain’t tell me shit.” I uttered as I roughly wiped my tears from my cheeks.

I realized something then smiled inwardly. Casper would do just about anything to get to Jeremy. This could work to my advantage...I thought. I stood up and started walking toward my bed.

“You ever seen a body get dropped in acid?” he asked suddenly. I froze and turned around to face him.

“It don’t melt fast, it bubbles, pops...then skin starts to peel off like wet tissue. The teeth...always float up last. Did you know that?” He raised a thick brow at me and smirked evilly.

My mouth opened, but nothing came out.

“People that crossed me the worse, I used to let them beg,” he said stepping a little too close.

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His cigar smoke curled around my face as his deep dark eyes scanned my face.

“I wouldn’t allow you to beg me though, Benita. You crossed me for the last time with this?—”

“Casper.” I pleaded and backed up until my calves hit the edge of my bed.

“I swear on my life?—”

“Your life don’t mean shit to me no more, the moment you let a bunch of niggas run through that pussy on the day my parents were murdered. I stopped giving a fuck when I was in the hospital without you there to—” he dropped his eyes for a couple of seconds.

When he looked back up at me, his eyes held no emotion. He stared at me long and hard.

“You right, Casper.” My voice broke.

“My life doesn’t mean shit without you.” I whimpered out.

“I don’t want to hear none of that begging shit, Benita. I’ll be in the living room. You have five minutes to tell me what the fuck I want to hear.” He turned to walk out.

The smoke from his cigar hung in the room alone with the scent of his cologne. His heavy foot steps down the hallway could be heard as I stood in the same spot. My mind was scattered in every mistake I ever made when it came to him.

“Fuck this!” I said aloud.

I rushed after him and choked over my words a little from the painful lump that formed in the center of my throat.

“I’ll tell you where she is,” I said desperately.

He turned around slowly and shook his head.

“I knew you was lying.” He shook his head.

“Where is she?”

The truth was caught in my throat because I didn’t want to tell him until I he gave in a little to me. Something told me that deep down, he still loved me even with all the hate that he still tried to hold on to.

“Casper, baby, if I tell you...can I have another chance?” My voice faltered.

I loved him like it was my religion, I didn’t fear the threats that he spat out at me seconds ago...I feared his rejection. His eyes narrowed slightly, the cold look that he had before was gone. I never asked flat out for another chance. I didn’t work hard enough to get him back. All I did was be available for him any time he reached out.

“Another chance at what?” he said, even though he knew.

“Us.” Tears blurred my vision as I stepped forward.

I felt a little hope when he didn’t respond. His stare penetrated me as if he could see into my soul.

“I know I fucked up; I lied a lot...I didn’t fight for you back like I should have because I knew that I would still at least have you, even if it was part time. I didn’t fight to be more of a mother to Jeremy... But I never stopped loving you.” My throat burned as I swallowed down hard.

“I don’t sleep right and don’t feel as good unless it’s with you. You on my mind all day, even at night I think about you. Allthese other men don’t do it for me, all I end up doing when I’m with them is think of you.”

He didn’t react, his face was still the same as I searched my mind for something that could get through to him. I dropped down to my knees, my eyes on the carpet as I broke in front of him.

“I miss you,” I whispered with my tears falling.

“I miss the way you used to look at me, your voice when you actually cared...” I crawled toward him.

“I miss belonging to you, Casper. You was proud to claim me.” My hands gripped the hem of his slacks as I stared up at him.

“Give me another chance. Please, I’ll tell you where Jeremy is. Let me prove that I can still be what you need.” I begged.

For what felt like forever, he said nothing and just looked down at me. He removed the cigar from his mouth then rolled his neck until it cracked.

“Get up, Benita,” he said lowly.

My heart slammed inside of my chest as I remained on the floor.

“Get the fuck up!” He yelled.

I jumped hard, then stood slowly. I felt shameful and could no longer look into his eyes. I was giving it all that I had. His finger touched my chin, he pushed my chin up forcing me to look into his eyes.

“You can’t bargain my daughter for love. I ain’t the type of man that want what’s spoiled either.” He released my chin.

His words felt like knives aimed straight at my heart. He gave me his ass to kiss and walked toward the door. I didn’t give a damn how pathetic I looked. All I cared about was him and Y Jeremy. I wanted to get whatever I could back, I was tired of holding on to all the what ifs in this.

“Casper, don’t walk out,” I whispered loud enough.

“I can be better for you and everything you built,” I continued.

He exhaled, I could tell by the shift in his back that he was battling with something inside of himself. The part of him that never looked back, and the part of him that once looked at me like I was the last piece of peace that he had in his life.

“We can go to Y Jeremy together... Why not show her how a man is supposed to be

with me? You kill people for less, Casper...If there was nothing there for me...you would have killed me a long time ago when Yeremy was much younger so she could believe whatever lie you would say about me dying. There's something in your heart, Casper, that still yearns for me. I yearn for you, I'm not ashamed to admit that. You take me back...I know I'll make you happy..." My voice broke.

I dropped my head in defeat then picked my eyes up to see him turning back around. His eyes met mine, something shifted in them. I saw the hate and resentment, and all of the distrust and disappointment that he had for me.

"You don't deserve a second chance," he said flatly.

"I know," I whispered.

I wept softly, my shoulders shook as my world started to fall apart slowly.

"You deserved a bullet for all the bullshit that you put me and Yeremy through. Still, I take care of you..."

"I know, you do," I agreed brokenly.

He stepped forward, my heart skipped a beat.

"You think I'm fuckin' weak for you. I ain't no stupid pussy ass nigga, Benita," he spat.

"I know you not, Casper. But maybe you can be just a little stupid enough to want me a little." I cringed at my own words.

He stared at me, seconds later he chuckled dryly as he looked at me with a dull look. He closed the space between us and sighed roughly then grabbed me. His hands were

hard on my waist, he squeezed painfully tight. I melted right before him and cried my heart out with my head bowed at his chest. Casper used one of his hands to lift my head up. His lips crashed into mine, he kissed me like he hated that he still craved me. He pulled back, breathing hard with disbelief masking his handsome rugged face.

“We get my daughter...” he said through gritted teeth.

“After that, Benita...you prove to me everything through actions, in my home. Prove that you can be a wife and not what the fuck I regret.”

I nodded my head before my heart could even process what he just said.

“Okay, don’t shut me out and make it hard...I know you, Casper.” I grabbed his dress shirt and looked into his eyes desperately.

He nodded his head, and I exhaled; it felt like I could breathe properly again. I buried my face back into his chest. He wrapped his arms around me as my hands traveled to his back. I cried silently as I thanked God.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered into his shirt.

“I’m so sorry, Casper.”

He didn’t say nothing, he just stood and held me. Minutes later he finally spoke.

“Is my baby safe?” he asked.

“Yeah, she good. Stubborn like you, but she’s good. I actually want us to wait a few days or weeks. Me and her been talking a lot, I listen to her speak. She’s her own woman. Although some of her reasoning be a little off, we have to let her make her own decisions. That includes, Sol. I don’t think she will forgive him for the role he

played in killing Ramsey. But, she did express how good he treated her,” I said a mouthful.

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“Where is she?” he asked, pulling me back just enough to look down at me.

“Vegas, I gave her the money that I keep saved in the safe for her to get out there to get her mind right,” I admitted.

His expression didn’t change much but I saw relief behind his dark eyes. I loved how much he loved our daughter. It was overbearing but he meant well. There was so many dead-beat ass niggas that didn’t even acknowledge their kids. Casper was the total opposite. He would give his life for Jeremy. He nodded his head then tightened his grip on my waist.

“Alright, let’s get some rest then.”

I blinked my eyes and frowned.

“Huh?”

He released me and took my hand without asking. He led us to my bedroom.

“We will figure this shit out in the morning. I wanted to go to her tonight, but I think you right about letting her be for a minute. All of this been stressing me. I thought about killing Sol, but I didn’t. I love the little nigga, I just don’t think he good enough for my Jeremy. I wanted her to have the world, Benita. I never wanted her to be exposed to some toxic type of love. I understand now that it started with us. We both should have fought harder to show her something different.” He paused from talking and swallowed down hard.

“I needed somebody to place the blame on. That somebody was you. I never got over that shit. A part of me blamed myself for not being there to protect you from them niggas. I killed every last one of them that violated...I was just still stuck on the part of you defying me. You had everything that you’ve ever wanted but still defied me when I left to handle business. I needed—” His voice cracked.

We stood outside of my bedroom as he looked me deep in the eyes. We never talked much about the past but maybe this was needed.

“I needed you for a change and you weren’t there. It cut me deep...I should have been man enough to forgive and help you work through your own trauma. Instead, I aimed to hurt you after that day. It’s been torture to my soul because I love and think about you as much as you do me.” He sighed.

He placed a firm kiss to my forehead then my nose. He pressed his lips to mine then stared into my tear-filled eyes.

“We gone be good; right now, I need to shut my eyes. I haven’t gotten sleep in days.”

My heart thudded wildly, I could barely process his words, but I heard him and felt him. He was willingly taking me to be with him. I followed him wordlessly. I held on to his hand tightly. Casper sat at the edge of my bed and took his watch over. He sat it next to him then glanced up at me.

“Don’t just stand there all nervous. Come get this shit then get in bed with me.” He kicked off his shoes then stood to take off his slacks.

I smiled and watched his spoiled ass undress in front of me. I picked up his clothes then took it to my hamper. I placed his watch on the nightstand then took his cigar and placed it in my ashtray. Once I was done, he laid in the bed with his hands folded behind his head. I let out a shaky breath and climbed in beside him. I rolled toward

him and just looked at him.

“Thank you, Casper. This means a lot to me,” I whispered.

He didn't say much as I expected. I curled into his side and rested my head on his chest. One of his arms slowly came down to wrap around me like old times. My tears returned gratefully; after all the damage that we both caused, I thought we would never come back to this.

Chapter 25

Jeremy

Two weeks later

I came back to Cali and used the last of my money to get a hotel for a couple of days. I found a nice two-bedroom condo downtown L.A. Tomorrow was the day for me to see my new place that I had gotten approved for. I felt good about myself and was over all the drama and hurt that took place before I up and left. I planned on using my card later this week to pay my mom back all the money she gave me.

The main reason why I didn't want to use my card was because I knew Casper would end up finding out where the hell I was. My mom supporting my decision on leaving for a while to get my mind right meant a whole lot to me. A day didn't pass without her calling to check up on me. Although she was just as worried as I imagined my father to be, she still offered words of encouragement.

I appreciated her so much because for once she had been there for me every step of the way. I missed my dad and planned on going to see him today. It was time for him and I to have a well overdo talk. Things was starting to look up for me. I had a job interview next week at a hospital that would be close to my condo. I mentally let go

of Ramsey and took the whole situation with him and Bianca as a lesson learned.

It hurt like hell when I thought about it all. How could people just do other's dirty especially when I never even thought twice about hurting either one of them. Ramsey and I shared something, that's what I believed. Once he was gone, all of his skeletons came falling out of the closet. His betrayal echoed inside of me, it felt like a bruise to the heart that refused to fade away.

There is finality in death, Sol made sure of that with Ramsey. But there was no finality in Ramsey's and Bianca's betrayal because it still lingered. I didn't want it to ruin me, ruin how I always gave others the benefit of the doubt. With Bianca, I looked to her as a sister. She was always there like Shardae was.

We confided in each other, lifted ourselves whenever one was feeling down. I never imagined me and Bianca falling out, what she did was unforgivable. Bianca had built a life secretly behind my back. I couldn't fathom being a fake bitch, sleeping with my best friend man and carrying kids by him.

I wanted to feel better about it and just let it the fuck go. I had to forgive in order to push forward. I even kept saying out loud at night as I laid in bed. "I release." Just so I could feel the heavy weight of it all lift off of me. I didn't want to stay stuck on it, I was ready to move pass it and live my life.

As far as Sol, I felt so much confliction. My mind kept going back to the night that he stormed inside of my apartment. The way he coldly killed Ramsey right in front of me. It had to be deeper than what Casper revealed. Today, I wanted to get all my questions answered from my dad and move forward to put it all behind me.

I just couldn't help to wonder if Sol was really feeling me how he said he was. I still felt a pull that made me feel shameful. How would any of it work in our favor when we started off all wrong. I was confused, hurt, but knew that I had to let him go.

Casper wasright, there was no point in getting hurt all over again by another street thug.

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Esmeralda stood outside Casper's double doors with a huge smile on her face. I felt uneasy, didn't know what his reaction would be once I walked through the doors. I had a lot to get off of my chest, and no matter what, I was going to make it clear that I was grown.

I tried to call my mom before I showed up here, but she didn't answer the phone. I wanted her here just for support. I spoke with Esmeralda then pushed past the heavy double doors. Soon as I made it pass the foyer I stopped mid-step. My dad sat on one of his overstuffed, white leather couches with my mom. They were hugged up like teenagers in love. Her hand was resting on his chest as his lips brushed her temple like he adored her.

I blinked my eyes rapidly to see if I was dreaming. My parents showing affection to one another out in the open wasn't normal at all to me. They never hugged, kissed, or even smiled at each other like this in front of me.

"What the fuck?" I asked, barely above a whisper to myself.

My mom looked up first with relaxed eyes. She stood up, smoothed down her satin blouse, then smiled warmly at me.

"Hey, baby, your father and I decided to—"

"Be as one, again." He cut her off to finish her sentence.

I looked to him, expecting to see the usual smug look of disgust on his face. Instead of him even looking at me, his eyes were glued to her. He looked up at her like he

meant every word he said.

“Bullshit.” I mumbled, still in shock.

“You always look at her and speak to her messed up. Now y’all playing house?” I spoke up eyeing them both.

“People change, Yeremy. Time sometime can soften things. We’ve both have done some soul searching?—”

“Casper has a soul?” I looked to her dully.

“Since when did he have a soul? Before or after he put a hit out on, Ramsey?” I cocked my head to the side.

“If you coming up in my house expecting an apology...you might as well turn the fuck around. It seems as though you need to walk the fuck back out anyway to restart your entrance. Don’t forget who the fuck you talking to, little girl.” He sat up coldly.

He snatched his Cigar from the glass ashtray on the coffee table. Without even acknowledging my mom, she quickly picked up his lighter and lit the end for him. Casper spread his legs out and puffed on his weed filled cigar, never blinking as he eyed me like he dared me to say anything else slick.

“I’m grown and?—”

“Act like it! I’ve been waiting for you to act grown for the longest.” He chuckled dryly.

“Casper, baby.” He snapped his fingers as his eyes cut over at my mom.

All she needed was a look from him that told her to shut up and let him lead. She took a seat next to him then laid her hand on top of his leg.

“You never gave me a chance,” I stated.

“I did, right after your graduation dinner. The same dinner you chose Ramsey over me at. You came home and packed your things to go be with a nigga?—”

“Casper, no need in going into all that...she’s back, we don’t want to?—”

“Don’t cut me off again, Benita.” He looked at her sternly.

He cleared his throat then looked over at my mom. He noticed the sad look of defeat on her beautiful brown face. I saw his eyes soften, he leaned in close to her and whispered something lowly into her ear. I couldn’t even stand in front of them to be mad from the way my mom blushed and melted right into him. He kissed her on the cheek then grabbed her chin to peck her lips.

She got up with a silly grin on her face and looked at me with a look of embarrassment.

“I’m going to start dinner for us,” she said lowly and walked off quickly.

Casper watched her until she disappeared down the hall. He sat his cigar back down into the ashtray then stood.

“I hope you don’t hurt her. She really loves you,” I stated lowly.

“I really love her too, I never stopped. We both never fought hard for each other. My pride got the best of me, and I realized my wrongs.”

“You hurt me, Daddy. Really, really bad.” I choked the words out.

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He rose and stared at me like he saw the little girl that I used to be.

“I ain’t perfect, you know that more than anybody. That’s no excuse for the way that I try to control every aspect of your life. I went about things in a way that I knew would protect you.” He took stepped around the table and into my space.

“Ramsey was setting up some foul shit, baby girl.” He sighed.

“Foul shit like what? As far as Bianca...you could have just told me about it. It would have hurt, but—but he didn’t deserve to die,” I stated.

Ramsey was wrong, I knew a hundred percent that I would have left him for good if my father came to me about Ramsey and Bianca fucking behind my back.

“I’m trying to listen to your mom...protect your feelings more. I’ve always been open and honest with you. You say I have no soul when you are that for me. You gave me life when I didn’t see life outside of the streets. You the reason I have invested,cleaned my money...I try to walk a better path because of you. There’s just certain things that I can’t let slide, baby girl. That nigga was going to have you kidnapped. He was going to hold you for ransom through a third party while he pulled the strings to the puppet ass niggas that was going to take you. No telling what them niggas would have done to you. All because of greed. He saw you...you’re close to perfection. Instead of him letting you be his peace...he only saw all the money he could come off of. You know I keep the gritty shit away from you. But you’re not oblivious to how this shit works, baby. He violated, so at the time there was no coming to you to explain it. I took action. The only reason why that bitch Bianca made it this far is because I wanted her to think she had the last fucking laugh.

That bitch is resting in piss right along with him.” The evil look in my dad’s eyes gave me the chills.

“Sol wasn’t supposed to look your way. But he did, he violated too. I’ve been doing some thinking though. He really likes you, I just don’t want you trying to put the broken pieces to him together. He’s still mourning his father and happened to find some sort of solace with you. It’s understandable. I no longer want to control or block you from doing whatever it is that you want to do. I see that you’re determined.” He chuckled.

Seconds later, he leaned down and placed his forehead against mine. My bottom lip trembled as tears rolled down my cheeks.

“You should have just killed Bianca right along with him,” I whispered, feeling all the hurt resurface.

“She knew about his plan,” I continued.

“Yeah, she knew. I made her admit by sucking my dick until she?—”

“Casper, ugh! Please!”

I stepped away from him and we both shared a laugh.

“She begged and cried her heart out. I told her she had a certain amount of time to tell you before the grim reaper himself showed up at her door. Time was up. I’m glad you got to whoop her ass before she got what she deserved.” He smirked satisfied.

“What about the kids?” I asked hating that I still had a heart for her.

“None of my concern, their alive and well.” He shrugged.

I nodded my head, swallowed the painful lump that formed in my throat. Casper reached out to gently wipe the tears that spilled down my face away. He brought me against his chest and held me tight.

“I bought a condo and got a job interview next week.” I blurted out.

“That’s good, no way you was gone lay up in my house and have sex with that nigga Sol under my roof.” His deep chuckle vibrated through his chest onto the side of my face.

“How do you know me and Sol will be a thing? I’m a little upset with him,” I admitted.

“Jeremy, when you get the chance...let that shit go. Sol did what he did as a favor for you. I doubt that he knew at that time that he was going to fall for you. I’m only saying this shit because I know you almost better than you know yourself. I know that nigga too. He had determination in his eyes...he was willing to go to war behind you with me. He’s gonna come for you in due time. I won’t interfere anymore with whatever y’all got going on. As long as he don’t hurt you...” He cleared his throat and waited for a couple a seconds before speaking.

“We good. Now let’s go in there with Benita. She got on me about always shutting her out when it comes to you. I’m happy she’s back in my life and I want to fight to make shit back right. No more hoes and all the other bullshit that I’ve been on. Ya mamma fine as hell, she cook good, smell good, cater to me, and she fuck?—”

“Casper!” I gasped with a disgusted look on my face.

“Alright baby. Stop calling me Casper, now come on before I start talking about how sprung she got me.”

Chapter 26

Sol

“I need you to be nice to these hoes tonight.” Fatz picked up a party wing and cleared the meat off the bone in seconds.

“Nigga scoot the fuck over.” I gritted.

The smell of Buffalo wings and ranch was getting on my nerves. The sound of Fatz smacking down on them made it worse.

“I don’t pay these hoes enough attention to even be mean to them.” I shrugged as I eyed the strippers across from our section.

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I chuckled inwardly as I read one of their lips. They couldn't wait to get over here and get their bills paid. Especially with Fatz in the building. He was just getting warmed up for the night. I didn't care for the club scene and everything that came with it.

Tonight, I gave in for my brother since it was his birthday. He had half of the Eastside out tonight. I pinched the bridge of my nose just as he leaned back in close again and talked loud as hell in my ear.

"You probably not mean to them. That's what they say though, it practically scares them the fuck away."

"That ain't my problem." I spat.

"It's my birthday tonight nigga!" Fatz yelled then looked at me with pleading eyes.

"That's why we here, nigga. You got the help here." I nodded my head toward a couple of niggas that ran certain trap houses.

"A couple of lieutenants in this bitch. The hoes over there plotting ready to get all of this money. Nigga you good, be happy, eat them fuckin' wings and relax yourself. Stop worrying about what hoes gone think. Trust, you pay what you weigh nigga. I ain't stopping no motion for you." I chuckled.

"Yeah, alright." He smirked.

Fatz tossed the bone of his party wing on top of the big platter. That was a clear

message to all the other niggas in our section to not dare touch any of his damn wings. Soon as we got here, he ordered fifty wings and fries then told the waitress to keep bringing them out every thirty minutes because he wanted them fresh and hot.

“I’M BOUT TO GET LOOSE IN THIS BITCH!” He yelled over the music.

All the niggas in our section cheered him on. I sat back, spread my legs, and just smiled at my brother. I wanted him happy like this all the time, although this was just temporary happiness. Fatz started back taking medicine for his severe depression. He wanted to stop because most of the time it either stabilized him or made him feel tired as hell. He found a therapist; I could tell how he talked about her all the time he was feeling her.

I wanted what was best for Fatz. I put certain niggas in place so that Fatz could get his mind right and not worry too much about what was going on in the streets. The money was flowing, shit was good. I planned on sticking to the script by getting out of this shit sooner than later.

The bass of the music hit my chest like a defibrillator. Women with glitter all over their bodies brought more bottles to the section. Fatz was already acting a damn fool. He stood up and removed his shirt with a bottle of Hennessey in his hands.

“Flood this bitch out with the baddest hoes! I want ass and titties showing all night.” He bounced up and down on his tippy toes, making his belly jump.

I sat up and rolled me a fat Backwood blunt, by the time I had that bitch lit, strippers entered our section with money-hungry eyes.

I got ass cheeks on my white tee! All these hoes keep grindin’ on me. Coming in the club every night of the week. Keep a nigga poppin’ them crispy white tees!

The bass to the song dropped and a tall brown skinned stripper with stretch marks on her thighs stood in front of me. She cupped her titties and jiggled them in front of me. Seductively, she turned around and bent over twerking to the beat. She was fine as hell, and she smelled like she cared about her hygiene. I picked up a stack and tossed it up in the air making it rain all over her.

I looked around her to see what Fatz was doing. I damn near choked on my own smoke as I watched him dance in the middle of the club like he got released from a ten-year bid. Shirtless, his big belly hung; he made it bounce with the beat. Nigga had a whole chicken wing in one hand and the bottle of Hennessy in the other. Somehow, he managed to slap a stripper's ass with enough force to make her knees buckle. I picked up another band of money and stood up moving around the stripper that still danced in front of me.

Two Eastie niggas followed behind me as I maneuvered through a sea of people to get to Fatz. I popped the rubber band from around the wad of money and threw half of it up in the air. The strippers' eyes grew big; all that money was all the motivation that they needed to shake that shit harder.

Fresh from the spot got a brand new pack! Fresh from the trap got a brand new sack! White tees on deck, just pop the tag! No way shit could happen twice. Caught me a chick looking oh so nice. Started out with one dance, ended up with ten!

“Let these hoes know, Fatz!” I yelled over the music laughing.

He turned around, eyes red and wide like he was living his best life. Shit made my heart swell with pride as he held up the chicken wing in the air and yelled. A stripper got in front of me, and I moved her out the way quickly. Fatz started doing the belly roll as he shook his head from side to side in a zone. His stomach looked like it was doing the wave. Sweat poured down his forehead and chubby cheeks as his thick gold chain swung side to side.

A woman half his size struggled to keep up with his movement. This nigga picked up his belly and flopped it down on her ass. I lost my composure and doubled over laughing. Fatz dropped down low and it felt like the club went quiet for a half a second. I was concerned for his kneecaps, it showed on his face that he knew he took a great risk on his damn knees. My blunt fell out of my mouth as my bottom lip dropped to the floor.

“I still got it bitches!” He smiled as he stuck his tongue out like a damn city girl.

“Fatz, you gotta chill nigga.” I wheezed out.

The chicken wing was gone, I damn near cried. My stomach was cramping up from laughing so damn hard.

“That’s your brother, sexy?” A stripper pressed her breasts against the side of my arm.

I simply nodded my head with a smirk on my face. I threw the rest of the money and made my way back to our section to make myself a damn drink. Minutes later, Fatz stumbled over to our section and collapsed next to me. His shirt was now tied around his head like a headband.

“One of them hoes had the nerve to ask me if I was fuckin’ pregnant.” Fatz exploded with laughter as he struggled to catch his breath.

“Bitch said my stomach looked like I was in my third trimester,” he added, snatching up a bottle of D’usse.

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“That’s a disrespectful bitch.” I managed to say between laughs.

“She still gave me her number; I can tell she eat ass. I told her, I like my women built just like her with baby teeth so they don’t bite my dick when they deep throating it.” Fatz held his belly and laughed.

“Why the fuck you say that?” I chuckled.

“Shiddd, I don’t know nigga. It sounded poetic as fuck and she liked that shit.” He smiled.

I stared at Fatz and just shook my head. We sat there enjoying the moment as two more strippers stepped in front of us, making it clap. Fatz stopped one of them and had her pass him a wing.

“Happy birthday, nigga.” I passed him the rest of the blunt.

I sparked up a new blunt and leaned back to catch a vibe. An hour into being in the strip club, I made Fatz drink two bottles of water. The bottle of D’usse he had was half gone. He bopped toward the DJ and had him play ‘Return Of The Mack’. Fatz owned this club tonight, and I made a mental note to talk to the owner to see if he was looking into selling the place.

If not, I would just have a couple built from ground up. Besides being in the streets heavy, I wanted to start making investments for my exit out. I already invested into a couple laundry mats, I had about four dry cleaners and was looking into getting a couple of restaurants as well. I wanted to create nine to five businesses that would

keep a steady revenue to clean my money up.

I couldn't help but to keep thinking about clean money and generational wealth.

"Fatz is on one tonight." A nigga by the name of Dro chuckled and pointed to him.

Fatz was back in the middle of the dance floor, slow grinding with a girl that looked like she was falling in love with him by the second. She rubbed on his belly and rotated her hips. I scanned the club and suddenly everything slowed the fuck down.

Jeremy walked past security; it was like the room bent in her direction. She stepped in this bitch like sin dipped in honey. Her hair was slicked back in a long braid that kissed the top of her round ass. Her cream-colored dress was tight, hugging her curvaceous thick body. Jeremy's caramel complexion had a glow to it. I barely noticed the chick that was with her until she followed behind Jeremy.

My chest tightened, dick stiffened, it felt like I had got sucker-punched in the heart. Damn. Was all I could think in my head over and over. I fucking missed her sexy thick ass. I needed to play shit cool but the urge to get up and go after her had started to ride me hard. Where the fuck you been?

I watched her, ignoring the stripper in front of me. Fatz was still on the dance floor, now he had strippers picking up the chicken bones off the floor. They kept coming back to our section to bring him more. Jeremy had only been in this bitch for about ten minutes now, and I watched her every step. My jaw tightened each time she smiled at another lame nigga. I watched the way niggas looked at her.

They was thirsty as fuck and hungry for her. I blew out a cloud of smoke, the stripper next to me failed miserably to get my attention. I finally looked at her; not wanting to fuck her money up for the night, I picked up a wad of hundreds and stuffed them in the front of her thong. She blushed hard when my hand grazed her bald moist pussy.

Yeremy was all I saw. She laughed, tossed her head back like she didn't know the power she held. Finally, I saw her tell her friend something, she rose from her section and made her way toward the back of the club. My pulse kicked up; I watched her pull at the hem of her dress with each hurried step she took.

I crushed the end of my blunt against the table then got up. Adjusting my chain, I made my way through the club toward her direction. I waited outside the restroom door with wild thoughts running through my head. I could have sworn that I smelled her sweet perfume lingering in the hall way. I ain't never chased a female or wanted a female to want me just as bad as I wanted them.

This shit with Yeremy was out of my control. Since the first taste of her, I couldn't stop myself from craving her. Right now, I wanted to see if two months apart made her forget how to breathe when she looked at me. Fuck it, I'm going in!

Chapter 27

Yeremy

Shit! Don't fuckin' panic, Yeremy! I thought as my heels clicked against the restroom floor. I tried to stand in front of the mirror but couldn't even look at my worried reflection. I wiped invisible sweat from my brows and ignored the way people stared at me inside of the restroom. I saw Sol, my heart dropped down to my stomach. I tried to play the shit cool but I started to freak the fuck out.

I felt him, all of him. My body reacted to him soon as I laid eyes on him when me and Shardae first got here. Before his eyes could land on mine, I tried to act like I didn't even see him at all. I clutched the edge of the sink, there was two girls near the hand dryer whispering shit about how the Eastie niggas were paid and had been tossing money all night long for Sol's brother Fatz.

They argued about who was getting at who, the shorter woman claimed Sol while the taller woman claimed Fatz. I sighed and bowed my head in defeat. I thought after two months, I wouldn't still want him. I tried to hate him hard enough to stay far the hell away from him. I spent plenty of days looking at his contact stored in my phone, wanting to call him. I talked myself out of even wanting closure.

We never got into a real relationship so technically he didn't owe me any type of explanation. If anything, I owed him a reason why I cut him off the way that I did. I told myself that his cocky ass already knew why. I also felt like if he really wanted to find me he would. Maybe I was just something that he wanted to conquer and be done with.

It took a cold ass nigga to kill your ex then end up fucking you. Sol snatched my soul and made my body feel things that it had never felt before. I hated how my heart sped up and my breath got caught in my throat like I belonged to him. Like I was ever his, sixty-four nights of hearing his deep sexy voice in my head. Now that I knew it was him that coldly killed Ramsey, I couldn't forget the chill of his rage, how he pulled the trigger without hesitation.

I end up pressing my back against the wall, my breathing was shallow as hell.

"Get it together, Y Jeremy," I whispered to myself.

Soon as the words left my mouth, the restroom doors creaked open. I shut my eyes and opened them. The women surrounding me froze, their eyes were on Sol. He stood tall, about six feet with a crisp fresh cut. His goatee was perfectly edged up, he smirked at me and ran his hand over the waves in his head. His Cuban link sat on his chest like royalty and glinted with each step he took toward me.

My stomach did somersaults the closer he got. His dark eyes searched the bathroom then landed back on me. I was the target; he had a look in his eyes that screamed how

much in trouble I was in. It all happened too fast for me to react. His large hand wrapped around my throat, his cologne invaded all of my senses.

I melted from his touch; I hated the way my mind said no but my body said yes. He squeezed harder and didn't say shit. His free hand reached underneath my dress, he yanked my pantiesto the side and skillfully slid his index finger up and down my wet slit.

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“You still feel me, baby.” He chuckled then latched on to my bottom lip.

His tight grip on my throat loosened a bit as he stared into my eyes. I couldn’t speak, forgot to breathe as I got lost in his stare.

“You got me fucked up, ma.” He shook his head and removed his finger from my throbbing center.

Sol stepped back an inch, ignoring the wide eyes from the other women. His eyes ran over me slow, like he couldn’t believe that it was really me. His jaw clenched once and then softened.

“I didn’t know—” He looked away and swallowed down like it was painful for him to say his next set of words.

“A nigga ain’t know if I would ever see you again, ma. I was determined at first...but then...I told myself that you deserve a different kind of nigga. We ain’t on the same level, Yeremy. I figured that shit out, but I still want you...bad as fuck.” He closed the space between us.

“Talk to me, baby.” His rugged hand reached up and caressed the side of my face gently.

“I didn’t think you would be here, Sol.” I managed to get out.

I felt myself getting emotional but swallowed my emotions down.

“So if you knew...would it have stopped you from coming tonight?” He asked.

I looked away, that question was a trap. The truth was ugly because I knew deep down, I would have come if I knew he was here...just to see him...to be close and in his space.

“I don’t know what to do with you, Sol. You too much, I know you would hurt me and then?—”

“You don’t got to do shit with me, Ma. Just stop fucking running. Let a nigga in, all the way in.” He parted my thighs with his knee.

At that very moment, everything faded to just him and I. I didn’t hear the footsteps to the women walking in and out of the restroom. Nor did I hear their voices and what all they was saying. All I saw and heard was Sol.

“Y—you killed someone...right in front of me, Sol. Someone that I was once in love with.” I spoke so only he could hear me.

“Fuck him. I protected you,” he said with no hesitation, no apology, and no shame.

“That don’t make it less real.” I snapped.

“I still dream about it, it’s a fucking nightmare. You, the gun, how you looked so dark and evil. You don’t give a fuck.” I continued; my voice cracked as I stared up into his heartless eyes.

“I won’t ever give a fuck about some shit like that. I’d do it again, and I don’t apologize for it. You need to let it go and stop feeling anything for that bitch ass nigga. He resting in piss,” he spat out coldly.

My throat closed, it felt like my knees wanted to give in. I wanted to smack the arrogant smug look off of his face. I was so conflicted, turned on and in so much heat that I couldn't even think straight enough to process the coldness of his words.

Sol reached up. I flinched then relaxed. I don't know why I flinched, it made him shake his head in disbelief. He ran his fingers behind my ear as if he was tucking a piece of hair behind it. His fingers grazed my cheeks, sending a shiver down my spine.

"I want you the right way. I need you to understand that I am who I am. You..." He licked his lips then tucked them into his mouth. His gaze was intense.

"Jeremy... You the light, the only light that I want to keep even though I'm surrounded by a lot of darkness, baby. I don't want to taint you. I don't need you to be no ride or die street bitch for me either. I want you to be you, soft, delicate, and caring. I love that shit about you. You not trying to be no hood bitch just because of who Casper is. You wear your heart on your sleeve, just because I know that shit, I wouldn't dare take advantage of that. You the closest thing to being pure as fuck. I know that because even though that bitch ass nigga Ramsey did you wrong...I can see it in your eyes that you want to give love a second chance with me," he said, this time his tone was genuine.

"Hoes come and go, I can already see all the questions you gone have for me...since I know you gone give me another chance." He chuckled.

I rolled my eyes and bit my bottom lip to keep from smiling.

"I been smashing bitches in your absence. I only bust a fat ass nut with them when I would picture your face. You jealous just like I am when it comes to entertaining other people. You gone want it to stop and I'm telling you straight up that it will starting tonight. You don't want to make this shit easy either for me. You want a

nigga to work for it, to earn your trust. I know you want that mushy shit, real romance, and to be taken seriously. I want that shit too, I like it and I need it.” His deep voice went low.

My eyes burned; I looked up at the ceiling, not wanting to cry. I covered my mouth with my hand then grabbed my throat. It felt like my emotions was choking the life out of me. No man had ever stepped to me in the way that Sol was. He smoothly moved my hand away from my mouth and eyed me with concern.

“Why didn’t you just tell me everything, Sol?” I asked all choked up.

“You ain’t give me the chance to. You ran when I wanted you to stay. We was just getting to know each other. I needed to figure a way to tell you without hurting you. I never cared about hurting a person’s feelings, Y Jeremy. Until you, real shit. I didn’t give a fuck in the beginning. Thought I could fuck whatever this attraction that I had for you away. The more time I spent with you made it hard. You was forbidden, I wanted to respect that nigga Casper. I just couldn’t resist.”

He leaned in close, his lips smashed against mine. Soon as he pulled away a little, his forehead pressed against mine.

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“Let’s fall hard for each other, take shit slow...we can do it your way, Ma.”

I gasped, not because of his words but how my body responded to him. That’s what terrified me the most. No matter how much I tried to dislike him and stay away from him. My soul yearned to be tied to his. I felt him always before I heard him.

Chapter 28

Sol

“Jeremy, wake up.” I placed a kiss to the side of her face.

She stirred but didn’t budge. I smiled down at her beautiful face then reached underneath the covers to cup her bare pussy. Her eyes shot open, she grabbed my hand and shook her head from side to side.

“Stop, Sol, I didn’t even shower last night after we?—”

“I don’t give a fuck. I like that pussy filthy sometimes.” I chuckled.

I glided my index finger over her clit, her eyes fluttered as her mouth fell open with soft moans. Today was Jeremy’s first day at the new hospital she got hired at. It made me happy that she was back to doing what she loved. Last night, after I fucked her into a coma, I went in her closet and got out her work clothes. I ironed her clothes and hung it on the back of her closet door. I called Fatz and told him what I had just done just to get a kick out of his reaction.

“Look at you being all domesticated and shit.” Is what he said before he hung up in my face to smash whatever broad he had at a hotel.

Jeremy just made a nigga want to give her the world. I couldn’t get enough of her fine ass, even if she did want space. We were moving fast as hell with all of this shit. I saw a future with her close to perfect ass and didn’t want to fuck it up. I wasn’t trying to rush shit; we both went with the flow of everything. I was either at her house or she was at mine.

“Sol, I’m about to?—”

“Let that shit go and quit stalling, Ma.” I cut her off.

I pulled the covers off of her body and shook my head at the sight before me. Jeremy had the sheets beneath her soaked. I watched her shake, her eyes rolled back like she was possessed.

“That’s a good way to start your first day at a new job. Get up and shower so I can drop you off.” I smirked down at her.

I examined my hand with a hard dick. If I took Jeremy ass down right now, she’d be late to work. I licked my fingers dry and watched her slowly get out of the bed.

“Why are you taking me to work?” Her arched brow went up.

“So all them lame ass niggas can see that you don’t need no work husband,” I stated seriously.

She snorted; her eyes widened in shock like I never heard her ass snort before laughing. Jeremy doubled over in laughter, her laugh was soft and warm like the kind of music that made you feel good as fuck. I sat on the bed just staring at her. Her

laugh was my confession to the three letter words that I had been reluctant to say.

Even with her hair all over her head, sleep crusted in the corner of her eyes with not a trace of make-up on. She was beautiful as fuck, every curve, stretch mark, love handle, including the small pouch of a stomach that hovered over what I considered to be my treasure honey pot. I picked up a pre rolled blunt and lit it up. Taking a deep pull from it, I released the smoke from my nose.

I continued to talk shit just to make her laugh more. That shit was a beautiful sight to see. I didn't even realize that I started to stare at her for a long ass time. All I could focus on was her laugh and how it made something inside of me ache. The good and dangerous kind of ache.

"Baby, why you looking at me like that?" she asked, breathless. She wiped at the corners of her eyes and continued to smile at me.

I took another hit of my blunt then put it in the ashtray.

"I ain't never hear nobody laugh like you, Ma." My heart thumped harder inside of my chest.

"I laugh like what?" She tilted her head to the side.

"Like it's coming from your soul. I can tell it makes you feel good," I said.

"Sounds like you forgot that the world was ugly for a couple of seconds," I continued.

Her smile softened; I leaned back, pondering over those three words that were at the tip of my tongue. My mind started to spin with things that I never done nor said to a woman before. The high school girlfriend that I did have, really didn't count. I never

had this feeling pounding throughout my entire body. I always thought that relationships weren't meant for niggas like me.

I moved through the shadows of the streets now, and bled niggas of their power. Jeremy felt pure and perfect to a man like me. My heart started to thump; I grabbed my chest then patted it twice before clearing my throat.

“Sol, what’s wrong?”

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I opened my mouth, about to say some other shit to try to change the subject but couldn't.

"I love you," I uttered lowly.

I blinked, and Jeremy's mouth fell open. I looked away for a second, my mouth was still slightly opened like the words couldn't be sucked back in. I meant that shit. My tongue pressed against the back of my teeth, I cursed myself inwardly, thinking that I said that shit too soon.

"Say it again, Sol," she whispered, stepping close to me.

"I love you," I said it louder.

"You really mean it?" Her lip trembled, and her eyes glistened.

"Yeah, I do." I nodded my head.

Her chest rose like she had to inhale the moment to believe it.

"I love you too," she said softly, voice shaking.

"I just didn't want to be the first to say it. I really didn't know if I could trust it, but I feel it Sol...I feel it so much that it scares me." She casted her eyes down to the carpet.

"Why?"

“Because it’s easy to love someone when they’re perfect. When they untouched...but I come with baggage, fear, trauma...and you...you’re not a saint, Sol.” She raised her perfectly arched brows at me.

I chuckled and shook my head in agreement with her.

“I’m definitely not and will never pretend to be. You shouldn’t either. I love you just the way you are,” I told her.

“I love you because you make me feel safe and seen. You make me feel like all the ugly parts of me got a home with you. The way you look at me, and the way that you challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone just to see me smile. Besides, who you have to be in the streets, you don’t act that way with me. You’ve opened up, you talk more, and I could see the love in your eyes every time we together. I also love you because you not afraid of Casper.” She giggled and blushed hard.

I scooted closer to the edge of the bed and reached for her hand. I gripped them firmly and looked her in the eyes.

“I love you, Jeremy because I’ve been surrounded by snakes, liars and people who only want what I have. Not who I am. Notstreet Sol, the nigga that can make shit happen. Just me. You’re not afraid to call me out when I’m wrong. You look me in the eyes and confirm your feelings. You laugh like the world still got some good in it...sometimes that shit makes me believe it too. You are the peace that I learned to appreciate and treasure. I can’t get that shit from nowhere else but you. I tell myself every day to not mess this up. I know I love you ’cause I refuse to lose you. The very thought of that, makes me experience fear, Ma.”

I brought her hands up to my lips and kissed them.

“Then let’s never mess this up and make it last forever.”

The End!