



Pieces of Us

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Description: I had always been reserved. It came from being a preacher's kid. My days were filled with abiding by the good book and my father's rules. However, that one semester in high school, Nehemiah Newson changed everything for me. Not even my father could stop our worlds from intertwining and our love from blossoming. He was mine and I was his. Or so I thought.

From the first time I saw her and those long, toned legs running down the track, I just knew she was mine. So many people wanted to see us fail... then it happened. She slipped away, and I had no idea it would take years before I saw her again. Seeing her again made our love more complicated than before. Only, I didn't care about those obstacles standing in our way. I was coming back for what was mine.

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Morgan

The Past

My spine curled as the first orgasm hit me.

“Oooh fuck!” I yelled.

Jolts of my climax ran from my toes to my head like strikes of lightning as I gripped the wings of his tatted back and held on to him tightly.

This was wrong, but it felt so right in my moment of weakness. My first love...my soulmate...he was the only man that could bring me this type of pleasure. I always knew he could, and I should have stayed away. However, in my vulnerability, I allowed what used to be to become what is.

“Stay with me,” he whispered in my ear.

The slight desperation in his tone caused my eyes to mist. I pressed my lips to his shoulder and closed my eyes. If my father knew what I was doing in this moment, he'd douse me in holy water.

He wanted me to stay, but I couldn't. As much as I wanted this life with him, I couldn't leave my old life until I closed that chapter for good. It felt wrong to want this, but if I was being honest, he was my home...my destiny.

“Say you'll stay.” He was still rock hard inside of me, rolling his hips slowly, riling

me up again. My belly toiled as the tears I tried to suppress rolled down my cheeks.

“I-I can’t.”

His head lifted as he looked into my watery eyes. “You can...You will always be mine, Mo Boogie. I ain’t living without you no more, baby. You belong to me.”

“Hemi!” I called out as his thrusts became quicker.

My heart was crying out to be set free from these conflicting feelings I’ve had since seeing Nehemiah again. I just wanted to love who I wanted and not have to choose. My choice should have been easy.

My marriage had been falling apart long before this very moment of having my first love between my legs, separating me further from my lying, deceitful husband. I knew this was wrong, but I couldn’t help the longing I had been feeling since seeing his face again.

“Morgan...” he called out as he gripped the headboard, thrusting deeper as he reached his climax, and his seeds spilled into my unprotected womb. Once his racing heart settled, he looked down at me with misty eyes. “Tell that nigga goodbye, and stop playing with me. If you don’t, I will.”

Morgan Prescott-Coleman

Present Day

The auditorium was filled with the parents of Charles H. Wright Academy scholars. The hushed tones of the attendees serenaded the atmosphere as we waited for the showcase to begin. My eyes perused the auditorium, seeing smiling faces and hearing conversations happening amongst them.

Jolie Dupree sat in the row across from me in all of her snooty glam, talking to her husband in a hushed tone. I was sure she was filling him in on the happenings of other people's lives. The woman lived to gossip. She talked about everyone but kept her shit close to her chest.

But I knew. I knew all about where her husband, Jonathan, had been spending his spare time—at Truth gentlemen's club. In the VIP might I add. While she was home playing Mrs. Perfect Patty, her husband was getting his lap bounced on in more ways than one. I only knew of this because my husband, Justin, took his clients there to close on a deal.

I looked around once more, trying to locate Justin. He said that he'd be here to see our daughter Megan play her violoncello for the first time. My baby spent countless hours and days learning the art, and she was beautiful at playing it. Tonight was important to her, so she wanted her parents here to witness her showcase. However, Justin had been moving funny these past few weeks. I tried to overlook it because he was one of the top sports attorneys in the state of Michigan. Nonetheless, he'd promised our child he would be here tonight.

The lights dimmed as the principal took the stage and greeted everyone.

"Good evening, and welcome to CHW Academy's first annual showcase. Here, we allow our scholars to showcase their talents through dance, poetry, and music. Thank you all for joining us and enjoy the show."

Applause resounded around the auditorium just as I saw movement in my peripheral—Justin. He'd finally made it in just the nick of time.

"Sorry. Traffic was hectic," he whispered before planting a kiss on my cheek.

I didn't bother to reply. Justin Coleman had been on my shit list for the past three

weeks. I didn't know where this sudden change had arisen from, but he had been in the doghouse since the day after our anniversary.

We had spent a beautiful five days in the Philippines. Justin made me feel as if the sun rose and set on me, and I couldn't have fallen any more in love with him. I got to visit my grandmother, Allegra, and my cousin, Santo, while there. That was truly the highlight of the trip because I missed my Ginny so much.

However, since our return three weeks ago, I had seen less of my husband. The late nights, the secret phone conversations, and the quick sex sessions were becoming dead giveaways that something wasn't right. I didn't want to dwell on it because I wanted to look past his shifty ways. I loved Justin. He was the second man I'd ever given my entire being to.

Being a preacher's kid, I grew up with the knowledge that I had to save myself for marriage. My parents, Maylynn and Gioni Prescott, made sure my sister Drue and I remained pure until we got married.

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That didn't ring true for me, though. As soon as I got the opportunity to lose my virginity, I took it. Being caught after the fact, my father made me get baptized, and I couldn't date until I graduated high school. It took a lot of repenting and convincing for him to allow me to date Justin a few months before our graduation in high school.

Although my father was the pastor of Renewed Salvation Baptist Church, he was super cool, and me and my sister had nothing but respect for him at one point. He spoke from the Bible but had a dope way of delivering the Word, and our entire community loved him.

When Justin and I started dating, my father invited Justin over for dinner. I was a nervous wreck because Justin wasn't into church like that, but he did believe in God. When Gio summoned us into his study, I just knew he was about to ban us from being together just like he'd done with Nehemiah.

"Listen, I was once a young man. I did a lot of things I'm not proud of while growing up, but I had to grow up, you feel me?"

"I do," Justin replied.

"So, I know what you expect when you want to be in a relationship. I give my girls the game, then I leave it up to them on how they want to play it. As her father, I would love for her to follow the commandments of the Father. I hope she understands that defiling her temple without being equally yoked and married to whomever she agrees to be with will knock some points off her record with the Big Man.

"I'm not here to preach to you. I leave that in the pulpit. But as her father, I am going

to let you know that my girls are my world. I protect, provide, and love them wholeheartedly. If that's not what you are willing to do, then just bow out gracefully and leave her alone."

"I love your daughter, Mr. Prescott. I will do anything to be with her, be anything she needs me to be, and never disrespect her in any way. My father always told me that a man who isn't intentional with his actions isn't a man of good integrity. I'm being intentional when I say she will be my wife before anything else happens between us."

He didn't lie. Once we graduated from college, we got married at my father's church and began our journey as husband and wife. I gave my heart, soul, and body to him...every piece of me, and I believed I had every piece of him. Our life together had been nothing short of amazing until recently.

They say closed mouths don't get fed. Well, I planned to open my mouth because I needed Justin to feed my growing concerns of his whereabouts and actions.

Focusing my attention back on the stage, Justin took my hand, kissed the back of it, and smiled at me. That smile was why I fell so madly in love with him. He was so cute and charming that I couldn't wait until we went on our honeymoon to allow him to do whatever he wanted with me.

I trusted him. I just prayed that whatever I was feeling proved to be wrong. Him being at a strip club to conduct business didn't sit well with me, but he claimed it was for his client's pleasure, not his own.

Maybe I needed to learn how to dance erotically. If he was into that kind of stuff, then I would do what I had to do to be what he liked. There was nothing wrong with a little extra spice.

As my thoughts continued to roam, we went through countless musical talents before

the time had come for my baby to take the stage. My smile broadened watching her strut onto the stage with poise and grace.

The navy-blue gown with the puffy bottom gave her elegance. I had taken her to my bestie Bailey's shop to get her hair straightened and put in an updo with spirals framing her pretty oval face. Her three-inch heels clicked across the stage before she took a seat on the bench.

"She looks beautiful," Justin commented, smiling wide.

"Always." I beamed. The scouts were in the building, so she had been a little nervous. Next semester, she would be starting high school, and she wanted to attend the Detroit School of Arts to explore her talent. I could see my baby on stage, playing her cello for Beyoncé. Her love for music came from attending my father's church on Sundays. She was a part the choir and worked toward playing the piano as well. For the time being, Mr. Lewis, her music teacher, played the piano for her in the background.

She began her musical piece with Ike and Tina Turner's "River Deep Mountain High." She was required to do three musical pieces, so she chose that one, Beyoncé's "Dangerously In Love," and "A Whole New World" from Aladdin.

Her cheek rested slightly against the instrument, eyes closed, and face serene as her bow and fingers strummed the strings, creating the perfect symphony. My smile didn't leave my face because my baby was gifted. This was a pivotal moment for her, and I could see and feel the passion in her being as she put on a show for the scouts. Everyone watched until she finished the last song, then the auditorium erupted in applause and standing ovations. Megan had closed out the show, stood, and did a subtle curtsy.

"That was amazing," I said, dabbing the corners of my eyes.

“Those rehearsals really paid off I see.” Justin marveled. He shouldn’t have been surprised. Megan had only been practicing since she was eleven. He’d know that had he been present. I understood, though. His business was a hot commodity. Being a sports attorney was very demanding, so I tried not to put too much pressure on him.

“They certainly did. Let’s just hope she gets into DSA. Look at their faces. Do you think she’s got a good chance?” I asked as my eyes traveled across the room to where Mr. Lewis shook their hands.

“I’m sure she does...I think we should give it some more thought, though.”

I frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Morgan!” I looked to my right to see Jolie approaching.

“We’ll talk when we get home,” Justin whispered to me.

Suddenly, I felt a twinge of discomfort after he said that. Jolie stood in front of me, placing her hands on my shoulders, and giving me fake air kisses. Why she thought we were friends, I’d never understand.

“Jolie, how are you?”

“I’m well. Your daughter is such a doll, and she did amazing.”

“Thank you. Your son wasn’t too bad himself with the sax,” I lied. The poor kid was horrible, but I would never say that to her.

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“Thankies! With all the money we pay for those classes, they had better kill it.” She laughed obnoxiously.

I wanted to turn my nose up but decided it wasn’t nice, even though she ground my gears.

“What’s up, good peoples?” Jonathan approached us wearing a bright smile. He shook Justin’s hand and kissed my cheek before wrapping his arm around Jolie’s waist.

“What’s up, Jon? It’s good to see you,” Justin replied.

I watched Jolie as her eyes roamed over Justin’s frame. I wanted to ask her who the hell was she looking at like that but didn’t want to act out in front of the kids.

What the hell was that?

“I was just telling the Colemans that the children did amazing.”

“Baby, I love our son dearly, but he totally fucking sucked.”

“Jonathan!” Jolie grumbled. “Why would you say that?”

He said exactly what I wanted to say, which was the truth.

I wanted to laugh but held back.

Jonathan chuckled. “Babe, come on. You know as well as I do, he doesn’t follow directions well. It’s okay, though. Maybe he’ll be good at something else, like football.”

“Whatever.” Jolie rolled her eyes...right over to my husband.

This broad was really trying it.

I wasn’t naive to not notice that my husband was very attractive. His mahogany complexion, chestnut eyes, and tall, solid frame had the women swooning over him every time. I was by no means an insecure woman. I was confident and secure in myself enough to know I looked damned good, but Jolie was downright disrespectful. I saw the slight lust in her gaze, and before I lost my religion, it was time for us to go.

“Well, we have to go get our little cellist. It was good seeing you all,” I said, moving into the aisle.

“Morgan, let’s do lunch soon, okay?”

I smiled graciously, took Justin’s hand, and moved up the aisle.

“We’ll talk,” I said over my shoulder.

“Don’t trip, Mo. I saw that too,” Justin whispered to me.

“I wonder why she’s so comfortable eye-fucking you in front of me,” I uttered.

Justin stopped me from walking.

“Hey. Are you okay?” I looked up at him and searched his eyes for any sign that he was being something other than the loving, doting husband I’d known him to be. I

knew Justin. I knew his patterns like I knew all the theme songs from our favorite sitcoms from the nineties. Something was off. I just couldn't pinpoint it.

"I'm still trying to figure that out."

Before he could reply, Megan and her music teacher had approached us.

"Mommy, Daddy, how'd I do?" Megan asked, beaming brightly.

I smiled wide, pulling her into my arms.

"You did so good, Gingerbread!" I exclaimed.

"You sure did, baby girl. You were the star of the showcase!" Justin followed up, hugging and kissing her cheeks.

"Thanks!"

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“I can’t say this is on record, but from the looks on their faces, I believe those scouts will be giving you all a call soon,” Mr. Lewis assured.

“I don’t doubt it. Thank you, Mr. Lewis,” Justin said, shaking his hand.

“No problem. See you at school on Monday, Megan.”

“Okay. Bye!”

Mr. Lewis walked away as Megan and I squealed.

“You are truly the dopest kid. I’m sure when your sister gets your age, she’s going to be just as dope,” I told Megan.

She side-eyed me. “Mom, you know as well as I do that Mariah is stubborn. All she’s going to want is her Cheerios and stuffed animals for the rest of her life.”

I guffawed at her statement. My little honey bee was stubborn. At three-years-old, she wanted what she wanted and would throw a fit if she couldn’t get it. She had been under the weather for the past two days, so she couldn’t attend. My sister came over to keep watch over her while I attended Megan’s showcase.

“Don’t do my baby, little girl,” I said, pinching her sides.

“Let’s go get some food, shall we? I’m starving,” Justin suggested.

“Yesss. I’m starved!” I exclaimed.

“Ooh! Daddy, can we go to Fixin’s?”

“We sure can, baby.”

“Yes!” I smiled as we all filed out of the auditorium, heading to get some grub.

Nehemiah Newson

May

The Past

The sound of Jodeci’s “Cry For You” serenaded us through my alpine speakers at a comfortable volume. I sat with my back against the door of my 1976 Chrysler Cordoba, listening to the pretty PK with the long hair and dreamy eyes talk about how much she hated church camp and running track. I could listen to her talk all damn day and never get bored with the conversation. Morgan and I started dating in ninth grade. Well, she was a freshman, and I was a sophomore.

She wanted to keep our relationship a secret because her father didn’t approve of her dating yet. She was now a junior, and I was a senior at Churchill High Academy. While my background was a little jaded, hers was the epitome of silver spoon, but I loved her. She was smart and knew a hell of a lot to be a preacher’s kid. And even though she came from money, she was humble and down to earth. It was one of the things I loved the most about her.

Although her father was a preacher, she didn’t act like a PK. She rarely cursed, but she had that around the way girl persona down pact. When I first met her, I thought she was fronting, but when I had dinner with her family at their home, I could tell her pops used to be from the streets. He didn’t sugarcoat shit.

He forbade us from being together because he knew my pops supplied the hood with drugs. He saw my car, nice clothes, and the money I gave his daughter, and automatically stamped me as a statistic, a lost cause, even though I worked at Footlocker to make my own money. It was how my father raised us to be—independent hard workers that didn't have to depend on him for things that we needed or wanted.

I wasn't my father, though.

Cole Newson might have sold drugs, but he made sure to keep me and my two sisters away from his lifestyle and always pushed us to be better than him. His money kept us living good and eating, but he refused for us to follow in his footsteps.

That didn't mean shit to Mr. Prescott, though. He didn't want us around each other at all, so we snuck around any chance we got. Right now, she was supposed to be at a track meet in Clinton Township, yet she had her friend, Silvia, lie for her so she could spend the two days she was supposed to be away with me. And I was enjoying it. We were currently sitting at the lookout, eating snacks and talking about what we wanted to do after college.

"I've been sitting here rambling for the past thirty minutes, and you haven't said a word yet. What's on your mind, Booby?" she asked, flashing me her perfect grin.

I smirked at her calling me that corny nickname, but my mood was solemn.

"I'm just listening, baby. I love to hear you talk."

"Yeah, but I've been talking since you picked me up. You're not your usual happy self. What's going on?"

I sighed as I took her hand, interlocking our fingers. As much as I loved her, I knew

our time together was coming to an end.

“You know I graduate next month.”

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“I knooow. I’m going to miss kissing you under the bleachers.” Her soft giggle made my lips turn up.

She was so fucking pretty.

“Yeah...I’m going to Atlanta immediately after graduation. I got a scholarship to Morehouse...full ride.” I watched as she let my words soak in, and the smile that once adorned her face disappeared.

Please don’t cry, baby.

“But you said you were going to Michigan State so we could be close.”

“I know—”

“And what about our plan? You said you would wait for me.”

The transference of my melancholy was now laced in her voice. I didn’t like this shit. Morgan was sacred to me. She was who I saw as my wife and having my future babies. However, shit wasn’t panning out like I thought.

“Pops wants me to take the scholarship. Says it’s not an option since he’d rather not pay for my tuition. I don’t want to go, but it’s not an option for me anymore. It’s a requirement.” My eyes searched her angelic face, praying that even though this roadblock was being presented to us, that she wouldn’t say it was over.

It was quiet. She was quiet. The only thing that could be heard was Jodeci projecting

everything I felt in this moment, and my heart beating a mile a minute.

“So, what does this mean for us? How will I see you?”

“I’ll come home for the holidays. I’ll call you every morning and every night. We can do this until you graduate and convince your people to let you go to Spelman instead.”

“You know my father is not going to let me go out of town for college.”

“Convince him. You know Spelman is an all-girls school. I think he’ll be more receptive if he knows that.”

She sighed. “I’m—I don’t know, Nehemiah. I’m scared you’re going to forget about me.”

“Never. You mean so much to me, Morgan. I don’t ever want to lose you. You’re going to be my wife, and I promise you that. I love you.”

“I love you too...Don’t hurt me, Booby.”

“You got my word. Now, give me yours.”

“I’ll never hurt you.”

She leaned over the console and kissed me. Our tongues met as I deepened the kiss. She crawled over the seat and straddled my lap as my fingers massaged her scalp. She pulled away, looking into my eyes lovingly.

“I want you to have me.”

I chuckled. "I already got you, Mo Boogie."

"No...I want you to take my virginity. Right now."

"Now?"

She nodded.

I swallowed. "Are you sure?" She reached in the back seat, rummaging through her bag until she found what she was looking for. When I saw the gold, shiny wrapper, I shook my head and smiled.

"I can get us a room. I don't want your first time to be in the back seat of my old school."

"Why not? I hear that's where the best sex stories start."

I laughed as she joined me. I would have preferred to take her to a bed, but I would do anything this girl wanted me to do.

After countless love songs guided us through her first time, I would always remember that, on this night, I made love to the first girl that stole my heart.

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As we redressed, I saw headlights approaching and frowned.

“Oh my God. Do you think it’s the police?” Morgan asked, hurrying to put on her shirt.

“Nah. Nobody really knows about this spot but me and a few of my friends.”

I started the car just in case I had to pull off quick. I watched as the muscular frame headed our way until I got a clear view of the person approaching.

“It’s your pops.”

“What?” she shrieked.

Before I could put the car in drive, her door was snatched open.

“Get out of this car now, Morgan!” he roared.

“Daddy! I-I can explain!”

“Get out now!” he repeated, yanking her from the car.

“Yo, Mr. P. Chill!” I yelled, hopping out of the car and going to her side. I didn’t like how he manhandled her, and if I had to, I’d lay his big ass out.

“You stay the hell out of this! Didn’t I tell you to stay away from my daughter? Are you that damn hard of hearing?” He turned to Morgan. “You’re supposed to be two

hours away at a track meet, but I get a call from your coach saying you never made it! Is this what you do now, Mo? You lie to me now?"

"Daddy...please. I-I don't want to be on that team anymore. I don't want to run track anymore either."

"Look at you. He has you out here killing your dreams because he has no future."

I scoffed. "I have a future. No matter what you think of me, Mr. P, I am not my father."

He stepped dangerously close to me and sneered. "You will be."

My face contorted. I wanted to steal on his ass so bad, but the frightened look and tears on my girl's face prevented me from laying his old ass out. He didn't know me to judge me.

"Thou shall not judge. Right, pastor? For a man of the cloth, you sure are breaking those commandments you preach about every Sunday."

"When it comes to my girls, I'll lay down the cross to protect them from heathens like you."

He pushed me out of the way, snatched her bag from the back, and paused momentarily. When my eyes followed what he was looking at, I cringed internally. It was the condom wrapper.

"You manipulative son of a bastard!"

I anticipated what he planned to do next, so when I saw his fist coming toward me, I stepped out of the way. He stumbled and landed on the trunk of my car, but he caught

himself and charged toward me.

“Daddy, stop it!”

I could hear Morgan screaming as he tried to grab me, but I swiftly ducked under his arms and pushed him away to give myself room to dodge him.

“I don’t want to hurt you, Mr. P. Come on, man.”

“Baby, please. Just get in the car!” Morgan yelled, pushing me toward my whip.

“Morgan, get your ass in the car now!” He was able to snatch her up and pull her away from me. With a stern finger, he pointed at me.

“You stay the hell away from my daughter, or I promise to God I will have you and your whole family put away for life. Try me!”

With that, he snatched her bag from the ground and stormed away. I watched him take my love away from me. Our eyes locked, and those tears broke me.

“I’ma see you, Mo Boogie. We ain’t over, baby. I promise! I’m coming back for you. Always!” I yelled just as he put the truck in reverse and sped out of the parking lot, taking my heart away with him.

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May

Several Years Later

Present

“My client has made her desires known in this divorce. We won’t settle for anything less.” I sat with my fingers pressed against my mouth, brooding.

How did my life come to this?

Marriage had never been something I thought would happen for me. After losing my first true love, I had no desire to be with anyone else.

That was until Diana came along. She was everything my father wanted me to have, and everything I didn’t want. We were never supposed to get married. However, since my father and hers were best friends that wanted to keep our generations locked in, they forced us into this shit show.

Diana was cool at first. We were best friends at one point, but all of that changed when our fathers forced us into this marriage. I loathed the very day they sat us down and presented the bullshit about keeping the wealth in our lineage and creating a legacy for the next generations to come.

We were too young to make such a big commitment to one another, but our fathers couldn’t care less. Diana was Mr. Victor’s only daughter, and I was my father’s only son, so they thought it would be the best idea for us to mate. It wasn’t.

We got married young. I was fresh out of college and preparing to become a resident at Children's Hospital. My first week of residency, my father and hers sat us down and told us what was about to happen. I was against it. Hell, we both were, but my father could be a total dickhead. He guilt tripped me by bringing up how he took care of me and that we needed to keep the money in the family.

Needless to say, we got married a few months later, and now, we were divorcing. Our fathers were livid, especially since we never bore them any grandchildren. I did everything in my power to prevent that shit from happening.

Diana had accepted the fact that she carried my last name after year two. However, I just couldn't get with any of it, but I did try to make it work. I knew we were manipulated into this, and as much as I hated it, I did try to look at her like our marriage wasn't of convenience.

I even tried to get her pregnant after I finally got my doctorate and became a pediatrician. I loved kids. Diana did not. She let it slip one night when she was buzzed that she hated kids and would have one because her father needed an heir.

After she said that in a not-so-jokingly way, I knew then I had to stop trying. Diana wasn't fit to be anyone's wife, let alone someone's mother. She was selfish, ornery, and all about a quick dollar.

When she started cheating, I knew it was time for me to bow out gracefully.

"Give her whatever she wants," I finally spoke. Shanise, my attorney and cousin on my mom's side, whipped her head over to me.

"Mr. Newson, I beg you to reconsider," she spoke softly through clenched teeth.

"What is there to reconsider? Nehemiah knows just as well as I do that I deserve

everything I'm asking for. Honestly, I'm being quite generous, considering he has way more assets and money in a separate account."

I scoffed. "Deserve? Did you really just say that shit?"

"I sure did!"

"What you deserve is a bullet in your skull, yet you continue to breathe."

"Nehemiah!" Shanise scolded me.

"Yeah...let that little gangsta out of the cage. You always try to pretend you're something that you're not. By night, one way, and by day, another." She laughed. "I tried to make this marriage work, but you never tried. You emotionally damaged me and made me feel like I didn't mean shit to you."

I smirked. "You never tried to do anything. The only thing you tried to do was get access to my money. You put on this façade as if you were trying to make shit work, but I saw through all of that. You openly admitted that you hate children. Even if you don't have a desire to have them, you literally don't care for them, even if they didn't come from you. You were selfish then, and you're selfish as fuck now. Give her what she wants, Shanise. I'm off this shit."

Diana's lawyer cleared her throat, opening her folder in front of her.

"Mrs. Newson—"

"Wilson, Veronica. Just Wilson." Diana corrected her.

"My apologies. Ms. Wilson will obtain the property in New Haven, the property in Livonia, and the property in Livingston County. She will also receive 50 percent of

the 400,000 in you all's joint account, the Range Rover SE Sport, the BMW SUV, and the 1976 Chrysler Cor—”

“She ain’t touching my shit. She can have everything else, but she’s not getting my car.”

“I bet I will.”

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“Diana, you continue to keep trying to push my buttons. I’m being hella nice. Because if we take this shit in front of a judge, I can promise you, you’re going to walk away with nothing but what you walked into this marriage with.”

“You really think so?”

“I fucking know so. I have pictures and videos dating back three years of your infidelity. Just from that alone, I can make you look like scum and walk away with everything I’ve earned. So, walk light, take your little winnings, and be the fuck gone out of my life. You got them papers, Ms. Lady?” I gestured to her lawyer and she slid the papers over to me.

“Give me a moment to speak with my cli—” Shanise attempted to say before I cut her off.

“Shani, it’s done.” I could feel her heated gaze on me as I signed my name on the dotted lines.

“You didn’t allow her to finish, Mr. Newson.” Shanise stressed.

“It doesn’t matter. I already know what she wants, and she got it. Her and her father’s greed will be their downfall.”

I slid the papers across the table and stood. I buttoned my suit jacket while I stared at Diana. I wouldn’t lie and say I didn’t love her. We did try to find the light in all of this, but she just wasn’t my person or marriage material.

She wasn't who my heart belonged to, and she was never supposed to have something as sacred as my last name. That belonged to the one woman who I hadn't had the pleasure of seeing since a few days after that one tragic night...Morgan Prescott.

Even after all these years, I still thought of her. After that night, I saw her one more time before I was shipped to Atlanta. That night, she cried in my arms while I kept mine at bay. We promised to keep in touch, and we did for all of seven days before her line was disconnected. I asked my sister, Shelby, to go by her house to see what was happening, and when she told me that their home had a for sale sign and looked vacant, my heart broke.

It was one of the reasons I couldn't connect with Diana. Morgan was my heart, and I spent the first three years after the split trying to find her to no avail. I had no clue what happened to her, but I knew we would see each other again.

Walking out of Diana's lawyer's office, I shot a text to Loon, my best friend and driver, to pull the car around. Yes, I may have been a pediatrician, but my father's reputation didn't allow me to move around the city freely. The man was still carrying that king pin crown and had Shelby, our baby sister Chelsea, and I escorted all over the city, but I made sure to choose someone I trusted to protect me.

Since he made all the other decisions in my life, I made sure he didn't take away my passion for becoming a doctor and who I wanted at my side to protect me.

"I know Auntie Queenie is rolling over in her grave," Shanise said, shaking her head as we filed onto the busy streets.

I sighed. "I'm sure she has rolled right out of that motherfucka by now with the way Cole has been moving."

“What were you thinking, Hemi? That bitch didn’t deserve any of what she was requesting. I could have stopped all of that shit.”

“That material shit means nothing to me, Shani. The only thing I wasn’t letting up on was my Cordoba. That car was my first whip...a rarity, and it’s sentimental to me. All that other shit can be replaced.” I watched as Loon pulled in front of the building. I pulled Shanise into my arms and kissed her forehead.

“Thanks for everything, cuz. I’ll see you at Pops party this weekend. I love you.”

“Okay, I love you too. And don’t forget to pick up the cake! I know how forgetful you can be.”

“Yeah, yeah,” I said, opening the passenger’s door to the SUV.

“What’s up, Shani!” Loon yelled out to her.

“Hello, Lawrence.”

“Loon, baby. Just call me Loon.” He winked and smiled at her.

This nigga.

“That’s not what your parents named you. See ya, cousin.” Shanise bid me adieu as her car service pulled up.

“Aye, your cousin is fine as fuck.” I looked over at him with a stoic expression. “What? I’m just being honest.”

“Be honest somewhere else, bum.”

Loon chuckled. “How that shit turn out?”

“Fucked up, but I’m just happy to be rid of this shit.”

“I hear that. Where to?”

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“Lem’s. I need a drink.”

“Bet.”

Loon pulled from the curb just as Diana walked out of the building. We locked eyes for a split second before I looked away from her, happy that this was an end for a new beginning.

Morgan

It was 5:00 p.m. when we finally made it home after having dinner at Fixin’s. It had been a long day, and I was ready to relax and nurse my baby girl back to health.

“Drue, we’re home!” I called out to my sister. “Megan, make sure you do that homework before you start YouTubing, missy.”

“Yes, ma’am,” she replied, begrudgingly making her way up the stairs.

“I have to go to the office for a few hours—”

“Jus, you just barely missed your daughter’s showcase because of a meeting, and now, you’re jetting off to go to yet another meeting?”

“I know, I know, baby. I promise I’ll be home before the girls go down. I have a meeting with William Brant, the linebacker for the Ravens. I could potentially score him as a client, which means...” he drawled, pulling me into his arms. “More money, more vacations, more spoiling you.”

He kissed my lips while squeezing my butt. I wasn't impressed with his proclamation. However, I did love the affection he showed me. I laid my head on his chest and wrapped my arms around his waist.

"It's been three weeks, Jus. Are you not attracted to me anymore?"

He immediately pushed me back gently, looking into my eyes with concern.

"Are you kidding me? You're still the baddest woman I was lucky enough to marry. I don't think I'd ever not want you. Work has just been hectic, but I promise when I get home, I'm on you," he said before driving his tongue in my mouth.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and deepened the kiss. Maybe I was being a brat because I needed my boots knocked, but I still wasn't sold on his storyline.

"Eww, get a room," Drue said, coming down the stairs with Mariah in her arms.

"We're in our home, heffa."

"Well...stop."

We all laughed as I moved to take my baby.

"Awww, my honey bee. You look so miserable." I held her in my arms and pressed my lips to her forehead.

"Her fever has been up and down. She's okay right now, but she's still a little stuffy and weary," Drue informed.

I rubbed her back and kissed her forehead again.

“Maybe you should take her to the doctor in the morning, babe,” Justin said, kissing her cheek.

“I will if it doesn’t get better by morning.”

“Okay. I love you, and I’ll be back soon. I promise.” He kissed me then kissed Mariah. “Feel better, munchkin. Daddy loves you.”

“Love you, Daddy.”

I watched him leave, shook my head, and sighed.

“Everything okay?” Drue inquired.

“Yeah...yeah. Is Rudy still with her dad?” I asked her about my niece, her namesake who we called Rudy.

“She is. I have some tea, so go put my baby down and come back so I can spill it.” She giggled.

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I laughed. “Oh goodness. You and your stories. Let Daddy hear about you gossiping, he’s going to make you repeat Ephesians 4:29 until you’re blue in the face.”

“Girl, we don’t live under his roof anymore. And this isn’t gossip; it’s information regarding some tea that needs to be explained. It’s piping hot, too.”

“Mommy, I sleepy,” Mariah declared, laying her head on my shoulder.

“Okay, Honey Bee. Let’s get you down.” I moved up the stairs to put my baby down for a nap.

“I’ll get the wine ready,” Drue called out behind me. I was sure whatever she had to say was going to be juicy.

“I’ll be a minute. I have to get showered and changed.”

“Well, make it snappy!”

“Don’t rush me, heffa!”

It only took Mariah all of ten minutes to fall asleep while I read her Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I kissed her forehead then eased out of the bed. I made sure to turn on her favorite song and put it on a low volume then crept out of the room. I walked down the hall en route to my quarters until I heard giggles coming from Megan’s room.

Lord, I’m not ready for this stage of her life.

I pushed the door open and stuck my head inside.

“That better be Asia or Rudy you’re on the phone giggling with,” I implied with a hiked brow and smirk on my face.

She laughed. “It’s both of them, Mom.”

“Hi, Mrs. Coleman!”

“Hey, Auntie Mo!”

“Hi, girls,” I sang. “Meg, homework now.”

“I got you, Mom. I’m on it.”

I nodded and closed the door, going to my room to shower and change into my pajamas.

Twenty minutes later, I was dressed, heading out of my room and downstairs to my den where Drue was waiting with wine and snacks.

“Alright. What’s tea, Sis?”

“Girl, you still move like a damn snail.”

“Shut up. Now what’s going on?”

“Here. Drink first, and tell me about that awkward look you gave your husband before he walked out of the door.”

I took a sip of my wine and shook my head. “I will not.”

“Really?”

“I don’t want to give it power, Drue. So, it’s nothing until it’s something. Now spill it.”

“Ugh, fine. So, I was just walking through Walmart, minding my little ol’ business, and guess who I see?”

“Who?”

“Shelby Newson.”

My body grew stoic. My heart sank to my stomach and did a cartwheel down to my ass. Memories instantly came flooding back as I tried to keep my emotions at bay. Just hearing that last name and who she was connected to made my vision blurry.

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It had been thirteen years. Thirteen years of no communication from him...Nehemiah Newson. My first true love, and the person my father ran out of my life. A week after that blow up, my father moved us all the way out to Troy, Michigan, made me say eighty Hail Mary's, and restricted me from using a phone or computer for a year straight. I had no contact with the outside world. My mom tried reasoning with him. However, he wouldn't let up.

It wasn't until I went to college did he get his foot off my neck and allowed me to date Justin my junior year.

I never forgot about him. I never stopped loving him. So many nights I cried at the fact that I would never see him again. I was secretly depressed and grew a deep resentment for my father. It took three years for me to give my heart to Justin, and even still, Nehemiah still took residence there.

"Mo," Drue called out to me. I snapped out of my thoughts and cleared my throat.

"Did she see you?"

"Yes. We talked for a bit. She told me about her owning a dispensary and Chelsea owning a gym. They fine ass daddy still crazy, and Nehemiah has his own practice."

I stood and walked over to the picture window, looking out at our beautiful backyard. My belly was doing flips because Nehemiah didn't know that he had a whole thirteen almost fourteen year old. I never wanted to keep her a secret. I begged my father to let him be a part of Megan's life, but he refused, saying he'd only get us caught up in the streets and possibly killed. Nehemiah wasn't a street thug. He might have had the

swagger of a street dude, but he was nothing like his father. He was smart, kind, and beautiful.

God was he beautiful. The image of his brown skin, dark kind eyes, bushy brows, full lashes, perfect dimpled smile, and straight white teeth had me closing my eyes, envisioning all the times he made my stomach flip and heart flutter when he kissed me. God, forgive me. I shook the image from my mind, becoming angry with Drue for bringing him up.

“Why are you telling me this, Drue?”

Like I don’t have other shit on my mind like my secretive husband.

“Because it’s been years, Morgan. I know Justin is claiming Megan as his—”

“Legally, she is his.”

“But not biologically.”

“I can’t confuse her, Drue. Justin is all she knows.”

I ran my fingers through my hair in frustration. It took years for me to come to grips with Nehemiah never knowing about Megan. I felt so guilty that he wasn’t able to experience her birth. I could have told Megan who her birth father was, but at the time, I was young and listening to my father and Justin tell me it wouldn’t be a good idea. Justin promised me that he’d take care of her, and he did. He treated Megan as though she was his, but I still felt a twinge of guilt about it.

When I found out I was pregnant, that was when the depression started, and my father removed all communication to the outside world from me. He said it was punishment from God for defiling my temple and having a child out of wedlock.

I respected my father when he was behind the pulpit, but in our home, during that tragic time, I lost some of that respect for him because of what he made me do.

Nehemiah wasn't dead. He had an almost high school freshman he knew nothing about.

"This is messed up, Drue. I made myself believe that he and I never existed. That he was just a figment of my imagination, and that I was the Virgin Mary. You should have warned me that you were about to drop this bomb on me."

"I told you I had some tea. Then I told you to drink up because it was piping hot."

"Girl! You had me thinking it was something about you and Ishmael, not about me and my buried secrets."

"Listen. I love Justin. I do, but Detroit ain't but so big, and eventually, you're going to run into him just like I ran into his sister."

"How will I explain this to Megan? I let Daddy and Justin convince me to never tell her, and here we are almost fourteen years later...She's going to hate me."

"Hate is a strong word, and my baby's heart is way too pure to feel that way about you. I never agreed with what Daddy did to you, but I didn't have a choice but to concede because he was the man of the house and our father. Even Mommy tried to tell him that it wasn't right, but he convinced her that Nehemiah was the worst human on the planet."

"And he was everything but." I shook my head. "I can't do this, Sis. I can't complicate my household." I was conflicted.

"I don't know if you'll ever see him again, but by chance that you do, you have to

decide if you want to keep him in the dark or allow him to get to know his child.”

“He doesn’t even know...” I could feel Drue’s presence joining me at the window. I looked over at her as she gave me a sympathetic look. “Your tea is nasty, Sis, real fucking nasty.”

“Oop!” She giggled. “I’m sorry, Morgan, but I couldn’t keep that from you, knowing your secret. It was easy to forget because it’s been so long. You weren’t going to be able to live the rest of your life and not feel this. I know he’s crossed your mind many times over the years. You truly did love him.”

I still do.

I wouldn’t voice that. I couldn’t speak it out loud when I was a whole married woman with children, living in this beautiful home with the man I vowed forever to. This was bad, really fucking bad.

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The Next Morning...

I filled a bowl with cold water, turned off the faucet, then traveled back into our bedroom. I moved to Justin's side of the bed, raised the bowl, and dumped it directly onto his face. He jumped up and started coughing and trying to catch his breath since his mouth was open.

"The hell, Mo! What'd you do that for?"

"Three in the morning? Really? You must think I'm some type of fool, don't you?"

"Baby..." He swiped his face and sighed. "I know what it looks like, but after I left the office, it was after ten. Then Darnell called and asked me to meet him for drinks because he wanted to talk to—"

"Save it! You really do take me for some type of fool. You think because I haven't said anything that you could keep doing this shit? You got me all the way fucked up!"

"I wouldn't play you, Morgan. You know that, baby. Come on, now."

"I don't know shit! All I know is your ass been moving funny since our anniversary, and if you think I'm not going to find out what you're up to, then you have another thing coming. You better tighten the fuck up before I unleash a world of hell on your ass."

He looked at me in shock. I was sure it was due to my behavior. I had never stepped out of pocket on him like this because I never had to. We had our moments where we

debated, but it was never to this extreme. I was glad the kids' rooms were on the other side of the house so they wouldn't hear me chewing their dad out.

"I'm about to go see my mom. When I get back, your ass better be here, and you're going to tell me what the hell you've been up to because I'm not tolerating any of these changes. Furthermore, my mom is retiring from the bank soon, so she's going to keep Mariah while I go back to work."

"I thought you wanted to be a stay-at-home mom?"

"Well, I changed my mind. I don't like sitting in the house with my thoughts. I think I may take the position as your assistant."

"You have a degree in physiology. Why on Earth would you want to work as my assistant? Besides, the position has been filled anyway."

"Well, un-fill it!"

"You're crazy, woman," he muttered, tossing the covers aside to move to the bathroom.

I laughed menacingly.

"Oh, you haven't seen crazy yet. Feed my babies!" I exclaimed, storming out of the bedroom.

If I had to be honest, part of my frustration with Justin was because of what Drue unleashed on me yesterday. I tossed and turned all night from that alone, and then my creeping ass husband creeping his ass in our bed like I wouldn't notice made things worse. I was not having a good morning at all.

Descending the stairs, I grabbed my purse, phone, and keys then headed out of the door.

“Morgan,” Justin called out to me before I got in my car. I stopped and waited for him to reach me. “I want to talk about this when you get home.”

“We will. Obviously, you like to lie.”

“There’s nothing to figure out, Mo. I fucked up by not calling and letting you know where I was or what I was doing. I got carried away, and I’m sorry for that. I love you so damn much. I’d never do anything to hurt you.”

“Sure you wouldn’t. I have to go. Don’t forget to feed my babies some real food and not that nasty oatmeal they hate.”

“Fine. I’m going to make us breakfast, and I’ll have a nice lunch for you when you return.”

“Yeah, okay.” I opened my door, and Justin pulled me into him, kissing my lips softly.

“It’s always you, baby.”

What the hell does that mean?

Him saying shit like that was why I thought something fishy was going on. I ignored him as I got inside of my car and headed to my parents’ home. This man was really trying me.

Nehemiah

Loon pulled through the gates of my residence and into my driveway. I could see Shelby's Durango sitting curbside and already knew she was waiting for me to find out the verdict of what happened today. I was almost sure Shanise called her and Chelsea already, even though her ass wasn't supposed to be talking about my situation with anybody. However, when it came down to our family, none of us played about one another.

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They hated Diana the moment she moved all her shit into my house. At one point, we all were cool, but the moment our father's forced us together, things were never the same.

"A'ight, fam. I'll hit you later," I told Loon as I exited his truck.

"In a minute."

We slapped palms twice and saluted. I made my way up to my door and walked inside. Instantly, the smell of marijuana hit me.

I'm going to kick her little ass.

Shelby became interested in marijuana when our mother fell ill with Multiple Sclerosis. Queenie Newson was our guiding light, our guardian angel if I had to describe her. She was one of those moms that showed up for anyone she ever said she loved.

We never had to worry about if we were receiving enough love, affection, or attention because she never lacked in that department. It wasn't until she could barely get out of bed that we realized how much of an impact she had on our lives.

We'd always known, but when she wasn't able to do the things she used to do, it affected us more than we realized. So, Shelby started researching things to help with her condition. Unfortunately, by the time she figured it out, Queenie was gone.

To quell the emptiness of losing our mother, Shelby continued to grow marijuana to

help save the lives of others or at least assist in helping them manage their pain. I was proud of her. What I wasn't proud of was her smoking in my damn house.

"Anna Mae, what the hell I tell you about smoking in my house?" I asked once I entered the kitchen where she was located. I looked over and saw Chelsea and Shanise playing checkers at the table while Shelby stirred something in a pot.

"In my defense, I was trying out a new strand, and it works because I'm very calm, very sane, and very not about to go slice your ex-wife's throat." Shanise and Chelsea laughed.

"It's not funny. Anyway, hello, ladies. Nice to see you all migrate over here when there's an issue. At least I know y'all will ride at dawn for me." I opened the fridge, grabbed a beer, then took a seat at the table.

"We gon' always ride. I don't know why you thought we wouldn't," Chelsea said as I leaned over and kissed her cheek.

"That's why I love y'all. What you cooking, Sis?"

"Chili."

"Chili in May?"

"What's wrong with that?" Chelsea asked.

"It just doesn't fit the weather."

"Well, it's all you had to cook up in here. That's why you need a real wife. Because what the fuck was her baldheaded ass doing up in here?"

“The bare minimum,” I replied.

“We can see that,” Shanise said.

“So, just to be clear, we’re not putting hands on her?” Shelby queried.

I chuckled. “Nah. Leave her baldheaded ass alone. She got what she wanted.”

“And you just let her.” Shanise rolled her eyes.

“We’ve been fighting for months, Shani. I was over the shit.”

“The boat, though! Mannn, how the fuck you let her get the boat?” Chelsea yelled out.

“That part. But you’ve always been one to avoid conflict,” Shelby countered.

“He should have let me do my job, and that broad would have walked away with just her badly beaten wigs.”

“A’ight, enough. I get it. I really don’t want to show up to Pops party because I know Vic is going to be there. I don’t want to hear shit about what happened between me and his daughter.”

“Speaking of wives...I ran into Drue at Walmart the other day.”

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I paused mid-sip and looked over at Shelby. My heart did a nosedive into my stomach from knowing Shelby ran into a puzzle piece to my lost past—my Morgan, my Mo Boogie, my love.

My eyes cast out of the window I sat in front of as a visual of her in the yard tending to the April flowers she'd planted...watching them as they bloomed in this early May. I closed my eyes tightly, trying to let go of the pain I felt when she disappeared without a trace. How one man could hide a person should have been studied.

After scouring the city to find her, on whatever day Shelby saw Drue after thirteen years, they resurfaced? I had questions. If Drue was back in the picture, I knew Mo wasn't too far behind.

“Hemi? Are you okay?” Chelsea asked me. I was sure she was concerned.

“Y-yeah...of course.” I swallowed down the rest of my drink. “Did you say something to her?”

“I did. She didn't give me much on Morgan, and I didn't want to pry, but I could tell she wanted to. She said after y'all's breakup, they moved to Troy and their dad severed her communication to the outside world. She wasn't even allowed to have friends.”

I scoffed. “That man was a fucking nut job, so I'm not surprised.”

“I loved Morgan. She was so sweet.” Shanise chimed in.

“We all did. I gave Drue my number to keep in touch, but I doubt she will.”

“Drue wasn’t as sheltered as Morgan. I mean, in a sense of having a boyfriend. Sis stayed with the niggas.” Shelby laughed.

“Not gon’ lie. She sure did. She wasn’t letting them hit, though, but she had them wrapped around her finger.”

Shanise offered information that I didn’t care about. I was silent as they continued talking until the conversation segued to my father’s upcoming birthday party.

I wouldn’t say I didn’t want to celebrate my father’s big sixtieth, but I always resented him a little. That showed in me only visiting him on Sundays and holidays. It was messed up, but he didn’t start being extra until my mother passed away. That’s when he started forcing me to do shit I didn’t want to do. I was young and vulnerable at the time. We had just lost our mother, Morgan was snatched away from me, and I couldn’t function enough to stand up to him when it came to what I wanted to do with my life.

However, I wouldn’t let him choose my career or having kids with a woman who only cared about her image more than she cared about anything else.

“I’m just glad you didn’t have kids with that bitch, Hemi. Lord knows I’d really have to clock that bitch for playing with your offspring,” Shelby stated, placing a plate with chili inside a breaded bowl in front of me.

“Yeah...Thanks, baby sis.”

“Anything for you, big bro.” She kissed my cheek as I smiled, digging in.

“Man, bet fifty I beat you.”

Loon challenged Morgan as we sat on the bleachers at Renaissance High. It was after 6:00 p.m., and she would be leaving me soon because her curfew was 8:00 p.m. My arm was draped over her shoulder while she was snuggled under my arm. They were having a debate on who was the fastest on the track team for both male and female athletes. Since they both trained for Renaissance, Loon wanted to flex his muscle on my girl.

“Lawrence, please. I don’t want to have to take your money. I will dust you.”

“Bet me then, PK.”

“Loon...” I said, laughing. “Don’t do it, man. My baby’s stats speak for itself.”

“You put up the fifty for ya girl then, sleeze.”

“You know what, Lawrence? How about we don’t put up any money. I’ll just beat you for the free ball,” she said, standing up.

“If you get beat by a girl, I promise I’m dumping you!” his girl, Delilah, exclaimed.

Loon scrunched his face up. “We ain’t even together. Fuck you talmbout?”

I laughed.

Delilah mushed me. “Shut up.”

“Hey, not too much on my booby, girly,” Morgan told her.

I blew her a kiss and winked at her as she blushed and descended the bleachers.

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“Come on, Mr. Smith. Let me show you how a real athlete gets down.”

“I should have had some popcorn for this,” I said, rubbing my palms together.

Delilah and I both watched as they stretched, and my girl did exactly as she promised. It was a close call, but I knew Morgan had the speed of a cheetah and the ambition of a real go-getter. It was the reason why she was going to be my wife.

When they made it back to where we were sitting, I was already standing at the bottom of the bleachers, waiting to receive her. She jumped into my arms and kissed my lips.

“My winner.”

She smiled down at me with love in her eyes.

“I-I want a rematch!” Loon said out of breath.

Morgan and I laughed.

“Give it up, nigga. You would have lost that fifty if my baby didn’t decline.”

“Man, what the fuck ever. She cheated.”

“Aww, don’t be a sore loser, Larry!” Morgan teased. “Better luck next time.”

“Forget y’all! Come on, Dee. I gotta get up early tomorrow.”

We bid them a good night as I slipped my arm around Morgan's waist.

"I may as well get you home too before your pops put out an APB on you and shit."

"I still have an hour before I have to be in...I want to spend it with you."

I smiled, taking her hand and leading her under the bleachers. There were a few portable chairs under there since it was where most of the high schoolers hung out after hours. I sat down and pulled her onto my lap.

She smiled down at me and kissed my lips. "I can't wait until we go to college. I won't have to worry about my dad stopping us from being together."

"He ain't stopping shit now, so you don't have to worry about anything. Once we graduate, you're going to be my responsibility. I'm going to take care of you. Then after we graduate college, I'm going to marry you and give you five babies."

"Five? OMG! I was thinking more like two!" She laughed.

"Nah, I need my starting five. My family is big. It's only right to keep the tradition going."

"I guess...I want to be a physiologist. After you told me how your mom passed, I want to be more in tune with the human body."

"For real?"

"Mmhmm...First, I want to start with the lips."

She kissed my lips, and I slid my tongue in her mouth. Our hands busied themselves with touching on parts, and I knew if her father saw us, he would probably roll over

and die.

We stayed under the bleachers vibing, talking, listening to Boyz II Men “End Of The Road,” and joking about our night ending.

“Morgan!” We both looked through the bleachers, seeing her sister Drue looking around.

“Oh, shoot. What time is it?” she asked, grabbing my wrist to look at my watch. “Oh no. I’m four minutes past curfew!” she whispered, hurriedly jumping from my lap.

I grabbed my speaker and shut it off as we left from our hiding spot.

“I’m right here, Drue.”

“Girl, Dad will be home in thirty minutes! You better be glad I was looking at what time it is.”

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“Sorry. We lost track of time.”

“Hey, Hemi.” Drue waved to me.

“What up doe, Drueski?”

“A little advice...If y’all are going to sneak around, make sure you have her home on time before Mr. Holier Than Thou brings his ass home.”

“Noted,” I replied.

“Drue, language!”

“Girl, please. Let’s go before you get both of us in trouble.”

Morgan turned to me, wrapping her arms around my neck.

“Just a few more months until you leave and another boring year until I join you. We won’t have to worry about any of this anymore...right?”

“Facts, baby.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, Mo Boogie. Dream about me, a’ight?”

“Always.”

She placed a soft kiss on my lips as her sister smiled and dragged her away.

Morgan

ThePast

I sat on the park bench, waiting for Nehemiah to arrive. He had called me earlier to meet him at the park so he could take me out on a date. Since my father was out of town on business, my mom had extended my curfew to 10:00 p.m. instead of 8:00 p.m.

It had been three years since Nehemiah and I started dating, and every day, I fell more and more in love with him. He was such a gentleman and nothing like what my father said he was when I introduced him last year.

Going against my father was a first for me. I had never been so bold as to disobey his orders, but Nehemiah made me feel as if my life should be celebrated. Before, all I'd ever done was go to school, run track, go to church, and stay at home. I didn't have friends until I met Nehemiah's sister Chelsea. Other than that, it was just me and Drue.

Five minutes later, a clean, dark blue, 1976 Cordoba pulled up the block bumping Jodeci. I instantly knew who it was because Jodeci was my Hemi's favorite group. I smiled as I stood and headed toward him. He got out, came around to the passenger side, and opened the door for me.

“What's up, Mo Boogie?”

I smiled. “Hey, booby. This car is so clean. Where'd you get it?”

“Thank you, baby. Pops just bought it for me as an early grad gift. You like it?”

“I love it!” I replied, grinning as I hopped in the car.

Nehemiah leaned inside, kissing my lips as I blushed. He closed the door, got in the driver’s seat, and pulled off.

“Where are we going?”

“It’s a surprise.”

“I like surprises.” I beamed.

“I know you do, and I love surprising you.”

He interlocked his fingers with mine and kissed my hand. Any time he touched me, I felt my heart swell and saw my future with him. My father would never understand what my young heart felt for Nehemiah because he didn’t want to get to know him. He saw him with the fly gear, fresh kicks, hood swagger, and automatically deemed him unworthy. What he didn’t know was that Nehemiah prayed with me every day. He didn’t care if we were between classes, at lunch, or before a game. He made sure to find me every time at the same time to pray with me, and I loved that about him. If only my father understood.

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We ended up at the fair where we met up with his sisters, Lawrence, and Kevin, another one of his friends. I smiled so much that my freaking cheeks hurt. We played games, rode the rides, ate elephant ears, and cotton candy. By the time we left, it was almost 8:30 p.m. I wanted to stay until at least 9:30, but Nehemiah wanted to spend our last hour and a half alone.

Since we were already Downtown, he drove us to the water, and we sat on the hood of his car with me between his legs with his arms wrapped securely around me.

“I never knew you liked old school cars,” I told him.

“I’m an old soul. I love old school cars, old school music, and old antiques. My moms used to love old things. She said old things could bring good fortune in the future.”

“I believe that too.”

“Yeah. I got something for you.”

“Babe, you do enough for me. All I care about is having you. You’re the best gift a girl can have.”

“Well, this is what having me is like. I’m going to keep spoiling you for the rest of our lives.”

I smiled as he helped me off the car, reached inside of his pocket, and presented a suede, square box. When he opened it, my eyes misted. The pink princess cut

diamond ring sparkled under the moonlight.

“Hemi...it’s beautiful.”

“It is, but it doesn’t have nothing on what’s standing in front of me right now.”

He slipped it out of the box and placed it on my finger. It was a size too big, but it was still beautiful.

“It’s a promise ring...a promise that I’ll always be here for you, that I’ll always take care of you, and that one day this will be replaced with a wedding ring. I love you, Mo Boogie. You’ve made my life feel complete since losing my moms. You give me comfort and peace when I’m with you.

“And although I hate that you have to sneak around with me, I know you do it because you genuinely want to be with me too. That day is going to come when we can be exclusive, and I’m going to tell everybody who got ears that Morgan Prescott is mine for fucking ever, even your ugly ass daddy.”

I laughed through my tears as we shared a kiss.

“I love you so much, booby. There’s no one alive that can ever take your place. Not even my ugly ass daddy.”

We laughed as he leaned inside the car, turning the music up. Surprisingly, it wasn’t Jodeci. This time, it was L.T.D’s “Love Ballad,” and it was the perfect soundtrack to our love story.

Nehemiah held his palm out to me. “May I have this dance, future Mrs. Newson?”

I accepted it and smiled. “Yes, you may.”

Present

“Hey, Mommy. It smells good in here,” I said, walking into the kitchen where she stood over the stove.

“Good morning, baby girl. I didn’t expect to see you this morning,” she replied, turning her head to kiss my cheek once I made it to her.

“Yeah...I’m in need of some advice about some things. You’re the only one I know who can give it to me with some good feedback.”

“Is it serious?”

“Eh...mildly serious.”

“Well, let me turn this stove off and grab us some punch.” She giggled as she moved to the refrigerator, taking out some punch.

“Where’s your husband?” I asked.

“Down at the church to meet with the youth pastor.”

“Oh, good. Because this partially has something to do with him.”

“Oh, Lord.” My mother shook her head, poured us some punch, then sat down at the table across from me. “Go on, baby.”

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“Okay...I think Justin is cheating on me. I can’t prove anything yet, but that’s only because I haven’t started my investigation yet.”

“Why do you think he’s cheating?”

“Because he’s been moving shaky these past few weeks. I mean, I totally get that he’s a highly sought after sports attorney, but it’s like I rarely see him anymore. Then there’s the late-night phone calls. I get the whole being on call for your clients, but it just...I don’t know, Mom. It’s little things he says that makes me question his loyalty.”

“Things like what?”

“‘It’s only you, Mo,’ ‘I’ll never do anything to hurt you,’ and so on and so forth. Why does he feel the need to affirm me when I never said anything about him cheating?”

“Well, maybe you’re giving off those vibes, baby. Could be a look you give him or your body language. You never could hide your feelings, Morgan.”

“Well, what am I supposed to think with him keeping late hours and being secretive?”

“Can I be honest with you?”

“Always.”

“You’re not in love with him.”

I frowned. “What?”

“You heard me. You’re not in love with your husband. I have a pretty good discernment about people and things, and from the moment you brought him to dinner that one summer, I knew you didn’t like him like you swore you did. I believe you were trying to move on from your first love, so you found solace with Justin.”

I looked away from her and shook my head.

“You’re wrong, Mommy.”

Her brow hiked as she stared at me. “Am I?”

“I do love Justin.”

“But you’re not in love with him. You only married him and created a life with him because your father enforced it. He didn’t want you giving birth to Megan out of wedlock, so he pressed you and Justin to get married. Although you still gave birth before the marriage, you felt as if you were pressured into that marriage with him. Am I wrong?”

I didn’t speak right away. I couldn’t admit that she was right, because then it would make it real. I did love Justin. He was there ready and willing to take on the task of being my husband and a father to Megan. I didn’t want him to take on a responsibility that wasn’t his, but he and my father made it seem as if it would be effortless. I struggled for years with this sitting on my mental. I wanted Megan’s real father in her life. She deserved that. He deserved that.

Now, I felt his presence hovering over me since Drue told me she saw his sister. I could feel things turning from sugar to shit once we encountered one another. We never got closure, and I had his daughter.

“No, you’re not wrong. But I feel so bad for even still having these feelings...They won’t go away no matter how hard I try. Drue told me she saw Nehemiah’s sister at Walmart the other day...I just feel as if he’s not too far behind. We were together for three years. Those three years were the best years of my life. You saw how bad I had it for him...then your husband ruined everything. I never wanted to keep Megan from him. This is not going to end well.”

“It has always been something I knew would come back around. Things that are done in the dark always comes to light. I even told your father that. Whatever happens, Morgan, you tell that man the truth. As far as Justin, don’t you go drumming up false accusations in your head. You need to get proof before you start acting out. I don’t think he’d cheat on you, but he’s a man, so get proof first, baby.”

I sighed deeply and leaned back in the chair. My head started to hurt.

Would I even see Nehemiah again? Would he be upset with me about keeping this type of secret from him? I deserved it if he did. What about my baby? How would she feel about all of this? What about the threat my father made to have him and his family arrested if I told him?

“I don’t know if I could ever forgive Dad for what he made me do. I should have stood firm on my decisions when it came to how I wanted to live my life. But alas, he started throwing those bible verses at me about rebellion and honoring my mother and father.”

“You’re still holding on to things of the past.”

My head whipped over, seeing my father’s large frame taking up the entryway.

I rolled my eyes away. “I am. It seems as if the past you tried to bury is coming back for me. And I’m sure he’s coming to collect.”

“Mo, I was only trying to protect you—”

“From who or what, Dad? Please tell me.”

“I was in the streets, Morgan. I know all about Cole Newson and what he stands for. I used to work for the man. Once I gave my life over to Christ, I vowed to keep my family safe and train my children up in the way they should go. The devil comes to kill, steal, and destroy. Nehemiah was a reminder of how easily the devil could wiggle his way into my life.”

“Your life?” I was confused.

“Yes! By way of my daughter. That boy was no good for you. He was only going to do exactly what he did to you—manipulate you into fornicating with him and plant his seed inside of you. I refused for you or my granddaughter to have any connection with him or his family. They are dangerous. So, I made the choice to remove you before he could corrupt you.”

“Nehemiah was nothing like his father! You did what you did because you didn’t want your past coming back on you!”

“Lower your tone when you’re speaking to me, Morgan! I did what was best for my family. You were not going to attach yourself or my granddaughter to that family!”

“That wasn’t your decision to make. Megan is his child! You didn’t think the day would arise that he resurfaced? Do you honestly think he’s not going to want a relationship with her once he finds out?”

“He won’t find out because you’re not going to tell him. As far as everyone knows, Megan is Justin’s daughter. I’ll make sure of it if he ever tries for a DNA test.”

“Gio... You need to cut out all of this foolishness. It’s been almost fourteen years. If Nehemiah happens to find out that Megan is his daughter, you will mind your business and stay out of it. You’ve caused enough distress,” my mom said.

“You will be crazy if you tell that man about Megan. His father is still slinging that crap at his old age, and I’m sure Nehemiah has now taken over.”

I stood from the chair, grabbing my purse to leave.

“You always say ‘Judge not lest ye be judged,’ but you’re standing there judging people. Nehemiah’s a doctor and has his own practice—”

“Still selling drugs...Only it’s prescribed.”

“Right, because you know every freaking thing. You know what, Dad? Goodbye. Mom, I’ll call you later.”

I tried to exit the kitchen, but Gio blocked my path.

“If you tell him about Megan, I promise I’m going to do what I should have done a long time ago...get him and his family locked away for life.”

I scoffed. “It’s hard to believe that you’re a pastor. Behind that pulpit, you’re the perfect man of God. But outside of those church doors, you’re someone totally different. You’re just a wolf in sheep’s clothing, and that’s the worst kind of man to follow.”

I pushed past him and left their home. I used to think my father was the best ever. I used to believe everything he told me. I didn’t know about that now, and I promised myself that I’d never listen to shit else he had to say.

It was after 8:00 p.m. when I finally made it home. Justin had been blowing my phone down since three but I refused to answer. So many thoughts and emotions were running through me. I just didn’t want to be bothered with anyone at the moment.

I stopped to get me something to eat then sat at the local park, sharing the shit with the birds because I could hardly eat. Anxiety crept up my spine as I thought about what a freaking mess my father had gotten me into. If only I had listened to my heart,

I wouldn't have been in this predicament. Now, I was afraid of the unknown.

If Nehemiah was still the same Nehemiah I knew before I was taken away from him, then he'd be understanding. I knew for a fact he scoured the city of Detroit looking for me when he noticed I'd disappeared. Nehemiah always stood on his word and did whatever he said he was going to do. That meant coming back for me.

I was almost positive that Shelby told him she saw Drue. It was like we had vanished without a trace because Gio Prescott made sure of it. The more I thought about it, the more I believed my father was insane. He stood behind that pastor business, but in real life, he was just as dirty and crooked as Mr. Newson. A leopard couldn't change their spots, just disguise them as something else. Gio was a damn hypocrite. I would never believe another word that came out of his mouth.

Finally willing myself out of the car, I was prepared to face yet another battle with my sketchy ass husband. I walked inside the house, and it was dimly lit and quiet. I kicked off my shoes at the door then made my way upstairs to my bedroom. When I made it to the door, I paused, hearing hushed tones coming from my bedroom. Leaning closer, I put my ear to the door to listen closer.

"No. I promised you I'd take you, so that's what I'm going to do...Of course not...Don't do that, Jo. You know I keep my word. Just let me figure some things out, and I'll get back to you...You already—"

Fuck this!

I pushed the door open and it hit the wall. Justin jumped up from the chaise in the corner looking as if he'd seen a ghost. I knew his ass was up to no good. My soul felt it.

"Say it louder for the motherfuckas in the back, Jus."

“Baby...it’s not what you think!”

“Nigga, shut the hell up! You niggas be sounding so dumb when you say that stupid shit. I told you I’d catch your dumb ass, and look. Ya cheating ass got caught! Speak the fuck up! Where you taking your bitch, Justin?”

I hardly ever cursed, but this man was really taking my kindness for weakness. I wasn’t that same young, immature girl anymore, and before I allowed him to play with me, I was going to kick his ass.

“You’ve got some nerve coming in here accusing me when you’ve been gone for twelve hours. I’ve been calling you all day. Where the hell were you? Huh? Answer that!”

“I don’t have to answer shit—”

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“And neither do I. The hell do you think this is? You’ve been trippin’ on me for a month now. I keep trying to tell you that nothing is going on, but you’re so hellbent on making something out of nothing because maybe it’s you who’s doing some shit. Is that what it is? You’re cheating on me?”

“I know what I just heard. Don’t try to gaslight me!”

“Nah, you’re the one that’s gaslighting. You know I had to go into the office today, and you’ve been gone, not answering your phone, and coming in here trying to raise hell on me. I didn’t marry you to cheat on you, Morgan.”

“No...You married me because my father made you.”

“Yeah, you’re fucking trippin’. I’m out of here. I need some damn air.”

He moved around the room putting on his clothes and shoes while I watched him closely. Once he gathered his belongings, he started toward me to leave the room.

“Justin, if you walk out of that door, don’t come back here.”

He stopped and looked down at me.

“I pay the bills in here. I’ll come and go as I fucking please. Get your shit together, or you will lose me.” He grabbed his satchel by the door. “Take my baby to the doctor in the morning. Her fever hasn’t let up. While your ass was being neglectful and not answering your phone, my daughter has been miserable all day.”

“And what was wrong with her father taking her?”

“Unfortunately, her father was taking meetings all day. Do your job, and be a mother to my kids, instead of worrying about what I’m not doing. I’ll be back when I’m back.”

With that, he left the room.

Son of a bitch!

Morgan

“Mommy, Mommy... I want pancakes!” Mariah yelled, bursting through my bedroom door. I groaned as she jumped on the bed and bounced.

“Honey Bee, please. Give mommy five more minutes.”

“I hungry, Mommy! Pleaseeee.”

I removed the comforter from my head as I looked at my baby girl. I was so happy she was feeling much better today. Her funky ass father swore she was still sick, but when I checked her temp last night, she was just fine. If his stupid ass paid more attention to her, he would know the difference between a spiked temp and a normal one.

“Okay, baby. I’m coming. Let mommy use the bathroom first. Go wake your sister for me.”

“O’tay. Meeegannn!” she yelled, rushing out of the room.

I chuckled as I went inside the en-suite bathroom to use it and take care of my

hygiene.

Justin didn't come home until almost three in the morning. My good mind told me to check his ass, but he never came to bed. I was sure he slept in one of the guests rooms since he didn't sleep with me.

He was now on the strike list. This was strike two for his ass. I honestly didn't want to fight with him. He had been amazing to me until recently. I wasn't sure what happened within the three weeks since our anniversary, but something was amiss. I could feel it.

After brushing my teeth, I headed out of the room, bumping into my babies on the way out. Megan held her sister in her arms and smiled at me.

"Good morning, Mommy."

"Good morning, Gingerbread. How'd you sleep?"

"Pretty good. It's Saturday. Can we do something fun today?" she asked as we descended the stairs.

"Sure. What would you like to do?"

"Get my nails done. Dad said he'd pay for us."

"Did he now?"

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“Mmhmm. Can Rudy come with us?”

“Of course. I’m going to call your aunt Drue, and we can make it a day.”

“Period!”

“Oh goodness.” I laughed as we entered the kitchen.

“Me come too, Mommy?” Mariah asked.

“It wouldn’t be a day without you, Honey Bee!”

“Yayyy!”

“Good morning my beautiful ladies,” Justin announced as he entered in from the back door.

Weak ass. Can’t even face me like a man.

“Morning, Dad. Are you still treating us to the nail spa?” Megan asked.

My stomach sank at her calling him Dad now. It reminded me of the secret we had been sweeping under the rug for almost fourteen years. God help me. Show me what I should do.

“Of course, baby. I promised you, and I always keep my promises, don’t I?”

“You do.”

“Alright then.”

I began removing the breakfast food from the fridge as Justin wrapped his arms around my waist.

“Can we talk?” he whispered in my ear.

“Megan, can you start mixing the pancakes and the eggs?”

“Sure, Mom. Can I cook the whole breakfast? I promise I know how.”

I chuckled. “Since when?”

“Auntie Drue taught me and Rudy. I got this.”

“Okay... You can start, but I’ll be right back to help.”

“Fine.”

I walked out of the kitchen and down the hall to one of the bedrooms on the first level. Justin came in behind me and closed the door, pulling me into his arms, but I pulled away.

“Baby...”

“No, Justin. I’m still hurt about what happened last night.”

“I know, Mo, and I promise I’m so fucking sorry. I’ve never spoken to you like that before, and I feel fucked up about it. My right hand to God, you are the best thing that

has ever happened to me. I wouldn't be where I am now if it weren't for you helping me get here. You mean so much to me that I couldn't fathom the thought of losing you."

"Then who was that you were talking to on the phone last night?"

"It was Jonathan. I promised him I'd take him to Atlantic City for his birthday, but with my workload being so hectic, I hadn't found the time to set it up."

"Jonathan? Really?"

"Yes, babe. You can call him yourself, and he'll tell you. I would never hurt you, Morgan. I'm so in love with you that I can't see myself ever doing you wrong."

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I bit the inside of my jaw trying to believe my husband wouldn't hurt me, but something new was nagging at me. I wasn't stupid.

He was trying to make this seem like some brotherly shit, but the way he was talking didn't quite register for him to be talking to a man that way. Even the way he looked at me when he saw me burst in the room didn't measure up.

Just trust him, Morgan. He loves you.

“Why couldn't you just tell me that?”

“Because you were on a rampage. I know how you get when you're mad. I had to do something to stand my ground with you.”

“Whatever. I don't want to fight with you. I'll ease up on my doubts, but you need to start spending more time with us. I miss us.”

“Once I score this client, I promise I'm going to take you and the girls on vacation wherever you all want to go once Meg gets out of school next month.”

“Yeah, okay,” I replied, moving to leave before he caught my arm, lifted me on the dresser, and began sucking on my neck.

My nipples instantly became erect as my yoni felt the familiar tingle of an impending orgasm.

“Just—”

“Shhh, I know why you’re mad, baby. I’ve been neglecting her, but I’mma take care of her real quick, then fuck you all night.”

Those words melted my resolve. Maybe I was bitchy because he wasn’t having sex with me. It’d been a month. Why wouldn’t I believe he was having sex with someone else?

A moan escaped my lips as he captured them into his mouth. My legs spread open wider, giving him more access. His fingers swiped over my clit, and my body jerked slightly.

“Oh!” I yelped.

“Mmhmm. Put him where you want him, baby.”

I lifted my legs, slid his briefs down with my feet, and grabbed ahold of him, putting him where I wanted him. He teased my entrance a little before slamming into me. My hand covered my mouth to stop the scream that erupted from me.

“Shit, Justin,” I hissed through my teeth, grabbing his ass, trying to push him further inside of me.

“Fuck! You feel so good, baby,” he whispered before sucking my neck.

My hips rotated as he began driving his hips faster, while pulling my head back. I was trying to keep quiet. Although I didn’t think the girls could hear us, I still didn’t want them to walk back here and hear their mother yelling for their father to fuck me.

“Yesss! Shit! Yes!” I quietly yelled.

Justin wrapped his arms around my thighs and continued to scratch the itch that I had

been dying to get scratched.

“Shit, baby. I’m about to cum.”

“No. Don’t cum yet...Just a little longer,” I begged.

“I...can’t...hold...it,” he said with each thrust as he came inside of me.

Disappointment flooded me, but I kept my cool as he pulled out of me.

“My bad, baby. I couldn’t hold it. Your shit is so tight and warm.”

Yeah, yeah. Get away from me now, I thought, pushing back gently.

“I promise we’re going to finish later.”

“Okay,” I replied, sliding off the dresser and going to the bathroom down the hall to clean myself up.

I didn’t know how to feel in this moment. All I knew was my nagging ass subconscious was telling me one thing—He’s cheating.

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After breakfast, the girls and I showered and got ready for the day. I called Drue earlier to let her know that we were having a girls' day and to bring Rudy along with her.

Rudy's father, Ishmael, and my sister had been divorced for about a year now. Sad to say, but she had caught him cheating with his ex, and the hell she unleashed on him should have been part of a Lifetime movie. I'd always known that my sister was crazy, but what she did to Ishmael was otherworldly.

Not only did she take him for almost everything he had, but she had sex with his brother and his cousin, voice recorded their sessions, and sent it to him with the words—Checkmate bitch. When Ishmael got those messages, he came crying to our parents about what she'd done. He was literally in tears.

My father, of course, shunned her. He called her everything but a child of God and labeled her the whore of Babylon. Since then, their relationship had been strained... just as my relationship with him, only Drue didn't talk to him at all.

It took about five months before Ishmael got over it enough to start taking Rudy on the weekends. She told me that she had to threaten to fuck his daddy next if he didn't start stepping up for his daughter. I knew that man was still hurt by what Drue did to him, but in her defense, he had sex with his ex and both of her best friends. He even got one of them pregnant. The dirty things men did. Her lick back just happened to be more crucial than his betrayal.

Since it was the weekend, she had to get Rudy from her father, and that proved to be a task in itself. We had been sitting outside of his house for twenty minutes because

he wanted totalkto Drue.

That man was still in love with my sister, even after she took down his brother and cousin. Not to be boastful or brag, but my sister and I were irresistible. I was just more reserved than Drue. Being a preacher's kid wasn't always what people thought it was. At one point, we actually were on the straight and narrow. However, once I started dating Nehemiah, that's when things got bad for me.

I beeped the horn. I was over this already.

"Drue, let's go!" I yelled out of the window.

"You want me to go get her, Auntie Mo?"

"No. I'll do it," I said, climbing out of the car.

I walked up the walkway, opened the screen door, and walked inside. When I stepped further into the living room, Ishmael had her cornered as she told him to get out of her face.

"Um, can we go? We have an appointment to get to," I reminded her.

"Yes. We can go. Move, Ish."

"Mo, let us have five more minutes."

"I don't have five more minutes to give. Bye," she replied, walking around him.

"Well, when you drop Rudy back off, I need to tell you something."

"You had twenty minutes to tell me whatever it was you needed to tell me. Your time

is up. Come on, Sis.” Drue walked out first and I followed.

“Mo,” Ishmael called out to me. I turned and looked at him. “I need your help, sis. Your sister is being unreasonable...I know I fucked up, but—”

“Let’s go, Morgan!” Drue yelled.

“Sorry, Ish. I can’t help you. Give her some time.”

I walked out of the house and got back inside the car, pulling out of the driveway.

“You girls ready to have some fun?” Drue asked.

“Yes! A pedicure is calling my name!” Megan exclaimed and I chuckled.

We pulled up to Glamour House Nail Bar & Spa fifteen minutes later. This place was like a heavenly oasis that me and Drue discovered a few years ago. Their services were top tier and included a full service of nails, pedicures, facials, and massages.

They even catered to children my honey bee’s age, so that would always be a plus to me. The prices were a bit expensive, but it was worth every penny. We opted out of getting the massage since we had the girls with us but kept the other amenities.

“My girlsss! Awww! You all brought the little ones with you today!” Pepe, the owner exclaimed as she approached us.

“Hey, Pepe. Yes, we all need some TLC today,” I replied.

“Well, you know we’re up for the job. And what’s your name, little one?”

“Mawiah! I three.” Mariah held up three little fingers as Pepe cooed at her.

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“Aww, aren’t you adorable? Well, Miss Mariah, I have a special chair for you right here. You beauties can sit anywhere you’d like.”

“We’re going to get our nails done first, Mom. Is that okay?” Rudy asked.

“Yeah. I need to talk to your auntie about some grown people business anyway.”

“Oh goodness. Come on, Meg. I don’t want to hear her shred my daddy.”

They both giggled and headed to the back where the nail station was located. I laughed as we took a seat next to my baby and helped her take off her sandals. I handed her, her tablet and headphones.

After we were settled, Drue told me about the situation with Ishmael. It was just what I thought; he was trying to get back with her.

“You don’t want to give him another chance?”

“Fuck no. Do you think I want a nigga with community peen, or one that had a baby on me? I may be a lot of things, but dumb ain’t one of them.”

“Agreed. I just can’t believe he would even ask you to work it out after all the stuff y’all been through, especially with you sleeping with his family.” I whispered the last part and laughed.

“I only slept with his half-cousin...His half-brother only gave me head.”

“You’re saying half like that makes it better.”

“Girl, they were estranged anyway. I hate for a motherfucka to play in my face. I gave him fifteen years of my life and he does that shit to me? I mean, I was being the perfect wife while he was being the perfect whore and had these hos laughing at me, smiling in my face, and fucking my nigga behind my back. Since they want to play games, I’m going to be a master at it. I’m going to fuck Tanisha’s boyfriend next week.”

“Drue...Come on now. That happened over a year ago. You have to let that go.”

She snickered. “Nope! I ain’t over it yet. I might double back on the cousin because that shit was kind of fire.”

“Oh, Lord. God, forgive my sister.”

“Chile, please. God made that happen, so we’re even,” she said, waving me off.

I snickered.

“Anyway, what’s up with you? Justin still in the doghouse?”

I sighed. “I don’t know if I’m tripping or not, but I caught him whispering on the phone last night, telling someone he promised to take them somewhere. He swore it was Jolie’s husband Jonathan, saying he promised him he’d take him to Atlantic City for his birthday, but the way he was talking...the shit sounded suspect.” I shook my head. “He doesn’t even hang out with Jonathan like that.”

“Mo, if you think that man is cheating, then he’s cheating. Our intuition never lies, darling.”

“You think so?”

“Doyouthink so?”

“I do.”

“Then it is so. We can do some investigating when we get back to your house. For his sake, he better not be because I’ll have you down at theLove House, getting that yoni ate like a fresh peach.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at her crazy ass. “What the hell is aLove House?”

“A place where people go to get their desires met.”

“You’ve been there before?”

“Duh. How do you think I know about it?”

“Drue, there is so much I don’t know about you. Why haven’t you told me any of this?”

“You think I want my little sister to know that her big sister is a preacher’s kid turned freak? Nah.”

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“But you’re telling me now, so what’s the difference?”

“The difference is I don’t do that stuff anymore. I was really doing the shit out of anger anyway. I saved myself for that cheating ass nigga, gave him my all, and he shitted on me. So, I went through a ho phase and enjoyed my time in that phase. Now, I’m just really focusing on my art store and my baby. Can you believe we’re about to have high schoolers?”

“Girl, no. I’m not ready for it at all, but they’re so smart. I know they’re going to excel.”

“Indeed.”

“Morgan?” I looked up to see Chelsea and Shanise standing in front of me.

Shocked, I couldn’t formulate the words to speak. My eyes skirted around the salon to make sure Megan wasn’t around. My heart was moving a mile a minute as I tried to think of a way to hide my child.

This is ridiculous. Not here! Please don’t let them see her here.

It was no secret that Megan stole her father’s whole face. Every day I looked at her, all I saw were those thick eyebrows, light brown orbs, long lashes, and gorgeous smile. If Chelsea or Shanise saw her, they would know immediately that she belonged to Nehemiah.

“It’s so good to see you. Can I have a hug?” Chelsea’s voice brought me out of my

stupor.

“I’m sorry. Of course.”

She ventured around the pedicurist and wrapped her arms around me tightly.

“It’s been so long. How have you been?”

“Awesome. Can’t complain. How are you?”

“All good. Hey, Drueski!”

“Hey, Chels. Hey, Nisi! Y’all looking fab as always.”

“Hey, Drue.” Shanise smiled. “Thank you, bookie. You’ve been alright?”

“Splendid.”

I couldn’t help but feel awkward. My eyes kept going toward the back to make sure Megan wasn’t coming. My anxiety piqued, making me feel even worse than I already did. My first love’s sister, my very first best friend was standing in my face, not knowing that her niece was only a few feet away.

“Mommy, it tickles!” Mariah screeched and laughed.

“I know, Honey Bee.” I smiled, pinching her little cheek.

“She’s adorable, Mo!” Chelsea complimented, smiling down at Mariah.

“Thank you.”

“Well, we don’t want to take up too much of your time. Gotta get our paws done. It was really great seeing you, Morgan.”

“Thank you. It was good seeing you all too.” She pulled a card from her purse, handing it to me.

“Call me sometime. Okay?”

I could see a hint of sadness in her eyes. I knew why and wanted so desperately to reconnect with her...withhim.

I smiled. “Will do.”

They walked away, and I released the breath I was holding in.

“We need to go.”

“No we don’t. I’m not going to let you do that, and maybe this is God’s way of telling you that it’s time, Sis.”

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“I’m not ready, Drue. They’re too close to Megan. What if—”

Drue raised her brow. “What if? What are you going to do?”

“You don’t understand. I can’t explain this right now.”

“Then I think it’s about high time that you do.”

Nehemiah

The Birthday Party

When I pulled onto my father’s block, it was like the Million Man March outside.

I was exaggerating a little, but it seemed as if the whole neighborhood came out to celebrate him. Although my father had a big estate, the neighborhood wasn’t the kind to have huge parties in, especially with a known king pin being the one to throw it.

Shelby told me the party would be small and intimate. This shit was like a damn concert, and I swore I was ten seconds from turning my car around and taking my black ass back home.

What the hell is this man doing?

My father had to be losing his mind to invite people to his home—the place where he rested his head. Although security seemed to be tight and my cousin Ruger and his Rebels were in here deep, I was uncomfortable with all this.

One of his guards noticed me and waved me through the gates, directing me to a spot reserved for me. Only family was allowed to park inside the gates.

I shut off my engine, grabbed the cake and his gift, then climbed out of the car. Immediately, a server came and relieved me of the items as I slapped palms with the guard, Emanuel.

“Good to see you, Hemi.”

“Good to be seen...What’s up with all of this?”

“Man, I’ll let ya pops tell you.”

I shook my head and proceeded to the back of the house where the DJ played “I Get Around” by Tupac Shakur, my father’s favorite artist. Once I made it beyond the gates, I saw people sitting, standing, and in the heated pool. I greeted the people I knew and ignored the ones I didn’t. This shit was ridiculous.

I spotted my father standing on the huge deck with my uncles Lou and Trent along with their soldiers and a few women. When he saw me, he smiled wide.

“My son.” He maneuvered around his people, pulling me in for a hug.

“Happy birthday, Pops.”

He kissed my temple. “Come talk to ya old man for a second.”

I nodded as I hugged my uncles then followed him inside. Shelby and Chelsea had outdone themselves with decorating. There were balloon arches, a banner that read over the hill, and black, white, and gold decor. There was a buffet of food set off to the side of the kitchen and a fruit table on the other side. I followed him through the

kitchen to his study and took a seat in the chair in front of his desk.

“I don’t want to make this a long-winded ceremony, so let me say what I have to say.”

“Look, Pop, if this is about Diana—”

“It is, but it ain’t. If you’d let me speak, I wanted to tell you that I apologize for how Vic and I played this. We didn’t think it all the way through and was only thinking about ourselves and what we wanted. Ya moms told me to take care of y’all and protect y’all, but I failed at that. Victor knew his daughter was a wild child, but he swore she was down with it.

“I also knew you weren’t with it from the jump, and I should have never forced you to marry her. I got beside myself, and I want to apologize for the part I played in this. Morgan Prescott would have been my downfall, Son. I couldn’t allow you two to link.”

“Your downfall?” I queried.

“Yes. Her bitch ass daddy was threatening me. The nigga turned holier than thou and started acting like a bitch. I didn’t want you with her for that reason alone. I could have paid for you to go to whatever school you chose, but I needed you away from her.

“I didn’t want me killing her father to ruin what you were trying to build with her. So, I felt you and Diana would be good for each other, but that proved to be a damn bust.”

“You damn right it was a bust. I wasn’t in love with Diana, and she wasn’t in love with me. She showed me that shit every day, even when I tried to make shit work.

You knew Morgan was the only person I'd ever loved, and you took that away from me."

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“If we’re being technical, I didn’t take anything away from you. You had sex with his daughter, which caused that bitch nigga to take her away from you. I told you that shit wasn’t going to work, Son, but you didn’t want to listen.”

“I didn’t listen because I didn’t give a fuck about what her pops said. I honestly should have just taken my chances with you being pissed at me for not going to Atlanta than to lose her.”

“Then you would have had to suffer the consequences of losing her altogether. Her father would be in the dirt, and you would have still been without her. So, now what?”

I shook my head as I stood. “I can feel myself getting upset, so I’m going to end this conversation. If you would have killed her father, she wouldn’t have known it was you who did it because I would hope you wouldn’t have told me.

“I hated that I allowed you to dictate my life. You knew Diana wasn’t shit, but you still forced us to marry. I’m glad I woke the fuck up when I was trying to get her pregnant. This shit would have been an even bigger disaster, but it’s cool. I’m going to find Morgan now that I have the money to do so and get my girl back.”

“You love her that much? Even after almost fourteen years of being without her?”

“I don’t expect you to understand. What Mo and I had was special. I saw a future with her, and I fucked up by letting her get away. But that’s about to change.”

My father held his palms up in surrender. “I hear you, Son. Just know if her daddy is

still on that bullshit, be prepared to console her at his funeral.”

“Speaking of funerals, are you trying to have one of your own?”

He frowned at me. “What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“Why do you have all of these people where you rest your head? You’re exposing yourself to potential danger.”

“Everybody here has been vetted. You also know I would never invite an enemy to my house.”

“Are you ever going to let the streets go? You’re getting older, Pops. Your children are going to eventually start having children, and I, for one, don’t want mine around this street shit. I’m sure BB and Chels would feel the same way.”

“That time is coming. I already have my replacement in place. Just two more drops, and I’m done. You’re right. I am getting older, and I do plan to be here for my grandkids.”

I nodded as I walked toward the door. “If Queenie never taught me anything, she taught me to only trust actions, never words. Let me know when that time comes. I’d like to be more present.”

With that, I left the room.

“What kind of doctor are you?” Kenzi, Ruger’s wife, asked me.

We were sitting at the table playing spades and talking about everything. I hadn’t seen Ruger since my uncle Honor passed away. Ruger was my cousin on my mom’s side. His dad was my mom’s brother, so to lose them both within a three-year span

had been tragic. I had gone off to college, and he had been going through the loss of his father. We would text every now and then to check up on each other, but other than that, we hadn't seen each other since my mom's funeral.

"Pediatrician."

"That's so cool. I was going to be a pediatrician, but I wanted to help people who have mental health difficulties. I do love children, though."

"I do too. It's why I got into the field."

"You always been smart...just not smart enough to beat me at spades," Ruger said, cutting my jack of spades with the king.

"Damn! I thought you played that shit already."

"We can't be partners if you gon' be losing and shit, bro," Loon fussed, shaking his head.

"My nigga, I literally made all of these books by myself."

"Man, whatever. I'm going to get me some food. Fuck this game."

Ruger and I chuckled just as Chelsea walked up.

"Hey, Mekai. Hey, Kenzi."

"What's up, Chels?" Ruger greeted her.

Kenzi stood to hug her. "Hey, Chelsea. You look so chic, girly."

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“Thank you, love. Are you all enjoying the party?”

“Yeah. This is dope. Unc crazy as hell for having all these people at his house, though.” Ruger said exactly what I said.

“My sentiments exactly. He trippin’. Did you and BB do the guest list?” I asked my sister.

“We did. We tried to tell him, but he wouldn’t listen, so here we are.”

“Shit wild.”

“We up, though. I’ll see y’all soon. Gotta get my wife home.”

“Mekai, we literally just got here,” Kenzi whined.

“Well, I told you not to wear that dress and those heels. An hour is all I had to spare. Bring ya ass.”

Chelsea and I laughed as Kenzi pouted, stood to hug us, then followed her husband out of the gates.

Chelsea sat beside me. “Cousin Ruger is a trip.”

“Always have been. Where’s BB?”

“Somewhere around here flirting with somebody’s son.” I chuckled and sipped my

beer. "I saw Morgan today."

A warm feeling washed over me. "Oh yeah? How is she? Did you speak to her?"

"I did."

"What did she say? How does she look?"

"Dang, homie. Slow down." She laughed.

"That was my problem before, should've moved a little faster."

"Yeah... she still looks the same but gained a little weight. I'm sure because of the baby."

My heart fell.

Shit.

"You're bullshitting."

Chels shook her head, confirming that it was true. "She looks to be about three or four. Looks just like a little baby doll."

"Wow." I didn't know what I would expect after not seeing her for so long. I guess I didn't expect her to have a baby on me. That only further angered me because that was supposed to be my seed.

"I fucked up."

"It's not your fault, Hemi. You did what your father made you do. I hate that he did

it, but us seeing her only confirms that it's time to take your life back. I could tell she was a little uncomfortable with seeing us, though. She was probably thinking about us telling you she has a baby."

"I don't care about that. My only concern would be if she's still with the father. It doesn't matter, though. That man is only about to have joint custody."

Chelsea chuckled. "I know it was hard accepting that you'd never see her again, but like I said, this has to be confirmation that the stars are aligning again for you two. You haven't been happy in years, and now that you both are adults, you deserve the love you've always wanted with her. But don't go breaking up happy homes, Nehemiah."

"She's not happy...Trust me."

Chelsea shook her head and smiled. "Let's go sing Happy Birthday to the old man. I need to get back to the gym to shut it down."

"Yeah...and it's time for me to go get my wife."

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“Oh, goodness. I hate that for her baby daddy.”

We both laughed as we headed inside.

Morgan

“Why do I feel wrong about this?” I asked Drue as we sat outside of Prime Steakhouse waiting for Justin to emerge.

“What do you feel wrong about, Mo? It’s clear you’re having doubts about your marriage, and the only way to get answers is to go seek them.”

“Yeah, but...I mean, he told me where he was going. It’s not like he lied.”

I felt foolish as soon as the words left my mouth. Justin had been lying to me. I could feel it. After spending years with the same person, it was easy to memorize their patterns. Work had never interfered in our marriage. However, I did notice when he started getting bigger clients, his workload superseded his work hours. I could be tripping, but I knew I wasn’t. Those hushed phone calls and staying out late were clear signs that something in the milk wasn’t clean.

“Then go home, Morgan. If you believe your husband, then take your ass home, and leave it alone.”

“Nah. I think I’ll stay...just to ease my conscience.”

“Cool.” Drue pulled a pre-roll from her purse as I frowned.

“Since when do you smoke weed?”

“Since my doctor diagnosed me with bipolar disorder.”

I laughed aloud. “Drue, please. I cannot with you. You are not bipolar!”

“Shit, I might be. Your daddy really did a number on me.”

“Speaking of him, did you know that he used to work for Nehemiah’s dad?”

“Yeah. I overheard him talking to Mommy about it a few years ago. The nigga wasn’t a saint then, and he sure isn’t one now...ol’ hypocritical ass. I’m almost sure he’s taking those folks money to fund his lifestyle. He’s one of the reasons why people don’t believe in God now.”

“He also said that if I tell Nehemiah about Megan, he’s going to get his father arrested.”

“You’re kidding, right?” I shook my head. “Morgan, at this point, I don’t even think this is about you. Daddy has a personal vendetta against Cole Newson. Something happened that he’s not telling us, and it’s clear in the way he’s moving. Why the fuck would he say that shit to you when he’s the sole reason why you’re going through this now?”

“I don’t know, but I don’t want anything to happen to Mr. Newson, even though the man didn’t like me.”

“So, you’re not going to tell him about his daughter? You’re going to let Dad still take the wheel of your life. His ass is manipulating you—”

“I know, Drue, but maybe I shouldn’t tell him. I’m afraid that Megan won’t accept

him, and Nehemiah will resent me. I-I still love him. It never went away, only suppressed. His smile, his kisses, that body, the sex...”

I closed my eyes trying to stop myself from feeling things I shouldn’t.

“God, please forgive me. I should not be lusting after another man when I’m married!” I scolded myself. Drue stared at me as if I had lost my mind. “What?”

“Sometimes, I worry about you, baby sis. In no way am I encouraging you to cheat on your husband, but if this man is deceiving you, then it’s only right that you get your lick back.”

“I’m not like you, Drue. I’m not a cheater.”

“Bih, you just sat there and got wet from memories of him alone. You already damn cheated!”

I slapped my forehead. My sister was a different breed. We may have been brought up in a church but wasn’t anything Christian about my dear sister. She may have followed the rules of saving herself for marriage, but once Ishmael broke her heart, she became a savage.

I may have been the one to break the rules when it came to saving myself, but I learned my lesson and stayed celibate until I married Justin. My sister, however, did not give a damn about the whole religion thing. She was going to do whatever she wanted when she wanted.

“And I doubt Nehemiah was laying it down like that back then for you to still have memories of y’all’s first time.”

My eyebrow raised as a smile crept on my face. “You have no idea, girly. He was

way more skilled than me. So, trust me. It's still imprinted in my memory.”

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“Okayyy, Hemi! You better imprint that dick on my sis brain!”

“Drue, please shut up.”

We both laughed as my eyes went to the building seeing Justin walking out of the restaurant.

“There he goes.”

We watched while he shook hands with William Reed, the point guard for the Pillars. They exchanged a few words then went their separate ways.

“See? He didn’t lie.” I observed Justin get inside of his car and pull out of the parking lot.

“Follow him,” she said, lighting her weed.

“I’m not—”

“Morgan, don’t piss me off. It’s only seven. If he’s keeping late hours, then we need to make sure he’s going back to his office. This shit is suspect anyway because he has a whole office that he can do deals in. Why go to strip clubs and restaurants? Follow that nigga.”

She was right. I started the car and made sure to stay a few feet behind him. It only took me a minute to see that he wasn’t heading in the direction of our home or his office. We lived in Bloomfield, and his office was in Troy, so when he took the

ninety-six freeway heading to Westland, I knew I was about to find out what I desperately didn't want to discover.

My palms became sweaty as I gripped the wheel tightly. I didn't want to be right about this. I was a good wife. I did everything that was required of me and made sure I kept myself up. Whatever Justin wanted, I made sure I lived up to it. I never disrespected him and always gave him my attention.

When he wanted me to be a stay-at-home mom, I put my career on hold and became just that. I loved being a stay-at-home mom, but I desired to do what I worked so hard for.

We pulled into a secluded neighborhood. I hit the lights and watched as he pulled into the driveway of a nice, cozy home. When he pulled all the way to the back of the house, my stomach sank, and tears threatened to fall.

Drue took my hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. "We kind of get the idea of what it is now. I'll understand if you don't want to continue the mission."

"What did I do to deserve this?"

"You didn't do anything, Sis. It's not you. It's his fucking ego."

"I need to see this through. I need to know."

"Then come on. Let's go see what's really going on."

"What if they have cameras?"

"So? At least them motherfuckas gonna know that we're about to fuck some shit up. Let's go." She opened the door as I called out to stop her.

“Drue, wait—”

She shut the door and started toward the house as I got out to follow her. We crept toward the house. Without warning, Drue did a flip and dived onto the ground, doing an army crawl toward the window.

“Drue! What the hell?” I said softly, trying my hardest not to laugh.

No more weed for her!

“Get down, bitch. You want to be seen?”

“Drue Alicia, you are freaking nuts.”

I ducked low and crept toward the front picture window. The drapes were closed, but there was a slight opening in them.

“Can you see anything?” Drue whispered.

“A little,” I replied, eyes scanning the living room.

From what I could see, I saw the open concept of the living room and dining area. The house was plush and looked beautiful. There was dinner on the table with a bottle of wine in the ice bucket.

“Do you see them?”

“Hold on.”

I watched as Jonathan and Jolie entered the dining room, then Justin joined them. I frowned in confusion because he had just left a restaurant, so why was he now dining with the Duprees?

I knew I didn't trust Jolie's raggedy ass. That look she gave Justin at my baby's showcase told me she wanted him. Then Justin's funky ass tried to clear it up as if he noticed she was giving him the flirty eyes and didn't approve of it.

I continued to watch, and just when I thought this was just going to be dinner, I was quickly fooled when Jolie began to undress.

“Son of a bitch!” I hissed through my teeth.

“What? What's happening? Let me see!”

I moved over some to let her see while we both watched this bitch undress in front of them. Jonathan pulled Jolie into his lap, and they kissed.

“What the...fuck?” Drue drawled, mouth agape.

Those tears I tried to suppress resurfaced, watching my husband watch this married couple seduce one another. He undressed while he watched them lustfully until he was down to the Calvin Klein briefs I bought him for Christmas.

A few moments later, Justin abandoned his seat and walked up to Jolie, snatching her mouth away from her husband. He leaned her head back, stuffed his tongue in her mouth, and caressed her breasts as Jonathan looked to be taking off his shirt. I couldn't watch anymore.

"Oh, hell no!" Drue grabbed a brick that surrounded the flowerbed and was about to hurl it through the window before I stopped her.

"No, don't! Let's get the fuck out of here."

"So, you're going to allow this? You're not going to raise hell on this motherfucka?"

I shook my head. "Let's just go...Please?"

I handed her the keys as I backed away and headed back to my car. Drue joined me moments later then pulled away from the house. The entire way to my house was silent. Anger, hurt, and betrayal ripped through me, and the tears began to fall.

How could he do me like this?

I thought we were happy. I thought I was doing everything right. Fourteen years all went flushing down the drain as my heart broke in the passenger seat of my car.

"That bastard! I fucking hate him. What type of sick shit is he on? What have I done to get treated this way?" I asked aloud as we pulled into my driveway.

I didn't even want to go inside after seeing my husband partaking in a three way with the bitch I couldn't stand.

"Stop asking yourself that, Sis. You didn't do anything but be the woman you were supposed to be. No one deserves to be cheated on and lied to. We give too much in

these relationships and marriages, only to be shitted on and taken for granted. Just like Daddy chose Justin for you, he chose Ishmael for me. And guess what? Both of those niggas turned out to be ain't shit ass bastards."

"Our babies..."

"Will be okay. I'm going to take them off your hands tonight. Do what you feel is best for you, Sis. You felt that he was cheating, and you were right. We allowed Dad to dictate our lives. Now, it's time for you to choose shit for yourself, babe. Show that nigga you ain't one to play with."

I wiped the tears from my eyes as I nodded. Justin Coleman didn't know that he was about to feel my wrath.

By midnight, the locks disengaged as I waited in the dark for my trifling husband to enter our home. For hours, I sat stewing on what I wanted to do with him. I knew if I killed him, I'd go to jail and run the risk of never seeing my babies again. I couldn't have that. I thought about destroying all of his shit, but that wouldn't cure the pain I felt seeing my husband partaking in a threesome with a bitch and her husband, who smiled in my face and was fucking my husband behind my back. I should've known better. I should have been smarter.

All my life, I was taught to be the dutiful wife, to respect my vows, and honor my marriage. Committing adultery was a sin, and I'd be damned to hell if I stepped outside of my marriage.

I still believed that. Now, I understood why my sister did what she did to Ishmael after discovering him bedding her best friends. I didn't have it in me to seek revenge in that manner, but I was certainly going to fuck this nigga in the worse way. As soon as he closed the door, I heard him tripping over his bags.

“Shit. What the hell?” He flipped on the lights, looking around until he locked eyes with me. “Babe...W-what is this?”

I sipped my glass of wine then stood from the couch, walking in his direction.

“It’s just what it looks like. Get your shit, and get your lying, conniving, sneaky, stupid ass out of my house!”

“Morgan—”

“Don’t you dare say my fucking name! I gave you fourteen years, Justin. Fourteen! I lied to myself and made myself believe that you were the love of my life. I allowed you and my father to manipulate me into never finding Megan’s father and giving him a fair chance to get to know her. I gave you my all, went against my better judgment, and you do this to me? Were they worth losing me, Justin?”

“Baby, it’s not what you—”

“Shut the fuck up and answer my question!” I screamed.

“I don’t know what you think you know, but I promise it’s not what you’re thinking.”

“So you’re just going to continue to stand there and lie to me? I saw you—you, Jolie, and Jonathan! I saw you nasty motherfuckas.”

Shock and regret played on his face as he dropped his head.

“Yeah, your stupid ass is busted!”

“I fucked up, Mo. I-I lost the majority of our money in a card game. I lost my office three months ago because I couldn’t get the money to pay the mortgage. Those nights when I told you I was working late...I was really out gambling.”

“What? What the fuck does this have to do with you cheating on me? And why wouldn’t you tell me what was going on?”

“I couldn’t tell you! I asked you to be a stay-at-home mom because I thought I was secured. When I lost Denver Washington as a client six months ago, I tried to keep up with the payments, but it started to get hard. It wasn’t until recently when I started to get the big names did I get back on track, but I lost my office. So, I started meeting with my clients at different places. Jonathan offered to help me out but under the condition that I give his wife a threesome. One time turned into more, and before I knew it, it had become a repetitive thing that I started to enjoy.”

I couldn’t take listening to this shit anymore. I pulled the gun from my robe and pulled the trigger.

Pow!

Justin ducked as the bullet lodged into the wall by his head.

“Morgan, please!”

Pow!

He scurried to the other side of the couch as I pulled the trigger again.

Pow!

That one clipped his ear.

“Fuuuck! Mo, stop! I’m sorry, baby. Please. I didn’t mean to hurt you!”

Pow!

That one went into the floor by his feet.

“Get the fuck out of my house, Justin, or I promise this next bullet is going in your fucking skull.”

He quickly grabbed his keys and briefcase from the floor and scampered to the door. I wanted to shoot him in the back of his head but stopped myself as he hurried out of the door, slamming it shut.

I dropped the gun and dropped to my knees as I released years of hurt and sadness. I didn't want this for myself, and I didn't want it for my girls. I knew they would be sad to lose their father, but I couldn't just let this go. I was starting to believe my father cursed us. His poor decisions for our lives led us down a path of despair.

Both my sister and I married liars and cheaters. If I had told my father to go to hell and reached out to Nehemiah's sisters sooner, he and I would have been married. He would have been Megan and Mariah's father, and I would have never run into a man like Justin Coleman.

Nehemiah would have never done this to me. What we had was special...magical. He was the love of my life, but I allowed a liar to lead me to another liar, and now, here I was. My face was covered in tears while my heart bled on the floor.

Nehemiah

Three Days Later...

“Simon says touch your nose.”

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Kaylee touched her nose.

“Simon says touch your eyes.”

She touched her eyes.

“Raise your arms.”

She raised her arms, and I tickled her as she erupted in a fit of giggles.

“Simon didn’t say it.”

Her mother sat off to the side smiling while shaking her head. Kera Moring was the celebrity wife of the infamous Kamil “K Millz” Moring. It wasn’t often that I got celebrity clients, but I’d been caring for their children since their twins were newborns. Kaylee was their latest addition, and she was the cutest thing.

“Everything looks good, Mom. Her arm has healed nicely, and it doesn’t seem as if there are any complaints of pain, so she’s good to go.”

“Thank you so much. I swear if I didn’t love her father, I’d kill him. He lets our children do whatever they want when mommy’s away.”

I chuckled. “I’m going to act like I didn’t hear that.”

She smiled. “Please do. Besides, isn’t there like a confidentiality clause you have to abide by?”

“It stays off the record, Mrs. Moring.”

“Then you’re alright with me.” She winked and I laughed.

“I’ll see you all in two months.”

“Thanks. Say bye to Doctor Newson, Kaylee.”

“Bye, Doctor Newsome! Simon says open the door!”

I chuckled and pinched her cheek. “Bye, Doctor Kaylee.”

I opened the door and walked out. My pager went off, alerting me that I had another patient to tend to. I was glad my office closed early on the weekends. I was bone tired after turning up with Loon’s ass last night to celebrate my divorce.

I didn’t intend to stay out so late, but Loon ended up calling Ruger, who then called his brother and their entire biker crew showed up. Needless to say, we partied. I crashed around 1:00 a.m., woke back up around five thirty to sober up, then made it to my practice by 7:00 a.m.

I was still tired, but I was happy we were closing in another two hours.

I looked at the room number on my pager and headed to room six. Picking up the chart outside the door, I saw this was a new patient. I quickly read over it before putting on my mask and entering the room.

“Good morning, Ms. Megan. I’m Doctor New—”

My words cut, feet halted, and heart stilled. When she lifted her head to look at me, she shot to her feet, and I could tell her heart stilled as well. She looked scared,

confused, and sad. For a long moment, we both said nothing. Our eyes were the only things conveying everything we wanted to say out loud.

I couldn't believe this. After countless dreams, endless days, and nights of searching, Morgan Prescott was sitting in my practice with a teenager who looked all too familiar.

Chelsea said she had a three year old. This girl is thirteen, not three!

I didn't expect her to have a kid...well,kidswith anyone other than me.

"Oh my God," she voiced. "Nehemiah...It—How are you?" she asked.

I shook from my thoughts, finally able to acknowledge the love of my life.

"I've been decent. What about you?"

"I've been well."

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I nodded, roving my eyes over her frame. Morgan had always been thick, but she was stacked now. Her once long hair was now cut just above her shoulders. Those dreamy eyes were still bright, and her lips were still pink and plump. The diamonds in her ears had to cost a fortune.

“Who do we have here?”

“T-this is...my daughter Megan.”

Baby girl looked at me with those same dreamy eyes as her mother, but hers were the same color as...

“I’m sorry...Can I speak with you outside for a moment?”

“I—She caught a bug. I just want to make sure she’s okay and get her some medication.”

She was stalling. Why?

“It’ll only take a second.”

“I’ll be fine, Mommy. Go.”

Morgan hesitated a bit before she followed me out of the room. I led her down to my office a few doors down then closed the door behind her as soon as she walked in.

“Hemi—”

Before she could finish her sentence, I pulled her into my chest and held onto her tightly. My fingers nestled in her mass of hair to massage her scalp. Fuck, I missed this. I missed her in my arms. I missed kissing her plump lips. I just fucking missed her period.

But there was one thing I had to know...

“Tell me you wouldn’t do that shit to me, Mo Boogie. I need to hear you tell me that’s not my fucking kid sitting in that room.”

Morgan’s arms came around me in a tight hold as I felt her body quiver against me, confirming what my heart already knew.

This couldn’t be real. This had to be a dream. I pulled her back some as I gently took her by the chin, staring into those sad, dreamy, tear-filled eyes.

“Tell me, baby.”

Her eyes fell away before they closed, and she nodded. I stepped away from her, going to my window and staring out of it.

“I-I d-didn’t have a ch-choice.”

What did she mean she didn’t have a choice?

“You never did. Wenever did. Everything that could possibly come against us did. I loved you more than anything. We connected in a way that even after almost fourteen years of being without you, followed me into my adulthood.”

“I never stopped loving you either, Hemi.”

I turned to face her.

“Then why would you not contact me after finding out you had my seed? What am I supposed to do with this information, Mo? Does she even know I’m her father? Did you at least give her that since you couldn’t give it to me?”

“I couldn’t. After I found out, my father cast me away from the outside world. I was homeschooled for a year. After I had her, I started college. He made me believe that it was a good idea to keep her identity a secret—”

“He had that much influence over you? The Morgan I knew would have never kept information of this magnitude away from me.”

“I was afraid, Hemi. He said that he would get you and your family locked up if I told you. I didn’t want that for you.”

“Fuck your daddy, Mo. Disrespectfully. I don’t give a fuck what he told you. He didn’t have concrete proof that my father was doing anything, even though that bum used to work for him. My father moves discreetly. It’s why he was able to do what he does for so long. He hung that shit over your head, making you believe that’s what he would have done, and that bum didn’t know shit. And now, I have a thirteen-year-old daughter that I’m almost sure won’t be receptive to me.”

My eyes traveled over her again, now spotting the ring that was mounted on her finger. I scoffed and chuckled.

“And you’re fucking married.”

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“It’s complicated. Nehemiah, I’m so sorry. I should have never listened to my father. Everything he’s ever said to me is a lie. And me trying to follow the word of God on top of feeling guilty about fornicating before marriage...I just did whatever he asked me to do, and I’m so sorry for that.”

Her tears resurfaced as I walked back over to her, pulling her into my arms. She wrapped her arms around me, and I nuzzled my nose into her neck. We stood like that for almost a minute before I kissed her collarbone.

“I don’t know if I can continue the visit, Mo. I’d be inclined to tell her who I am. I’ll have the other doctor on call check her out, but I will see her again...very soon. So, you need to tell her about me because there is no way I can walk this Earth knowing I have a kid. You’re going to be mad at me, but I don’t care. As soon as I see your pops again, I’m beating the fuck out of that nigga.”

“Ne—”

I held my hand up to stop her from speaking. I paged Doctor Simpson then opened the door for her to walk out. I didn’t give damn what she said. I was going to bust that nigga’s head in for what the fuck he did.

“I’ll expect a call by the end of week. If you don’t, I’m going to find you. You don’t want me to disturb your home, Mo, even though I’m going to disturb that shit anyway. Have a good day. Doctor Simpson will be in in a moment.”

She stared at me for a moment before her lips touched mine. I wanted to slip my tongue into her mouth, but we were in my place of business, so I chilled on the PDA.

“I promise to make it right.”

“You better.”

She nodded and left my office as I closed the door and released the tears I was holding in.

What the fuck?

“Huh?”

“Are you serious?”

“I knew something was off with her when I saw her.”

The plethora of reactions after telling my family what had occurred this afternoon rang around the room in sequence. My father, Shanise, Shelby, Chelsea, and Loon all sat in my father’s sitting room. I sat and nursed a glass of bourbon while I tried to wrap my head around the fact I had a thirteen year old. The love of my life bore my seed, and I wasn’t there to watch her grow. She didn’t know me.

“Yeah...” My voice trailed off, head fell against the couch, and my eyes went to the high ceiling.

“So, what are you going to do?” my father asked.

“I’m going to get my daughter and my girl back. Then I’m going to beat the fuck out of Gio for all the years he stole from me.”

“I want in on that shit, brodie. I love me a good fight,” Loon said, cracking his knuckles.

“Lawrence, please stay out of this. Don’t co-sign the madness,” Shanise voiced.

Loon smiled at her. “I won’t if you agree to let me take you out.”

“Nigga, please.”

I shook my head and chuckled.

“Hemi, this is messed up. I never mistook Morgan to be so reckless,” Shelby countered.

“I’m positive her pops is to blame for all of this. However, once she left that hypocrite’s home, she should have tried to find me. She claims that he threatened to get Pops locked up if she told me, and she didn’t want that.”

“Clearly, I’m going to have to see about him. He keeps making these idle threats and kept my granddaughter away from her father. I may not be perfect and made some bad calls, but one thing I don’t play about is my fucking kids. You ain’t gon’ have to see about that bitch nigga. I think it’s high time we start going to church on Sundays. We need to get reacquainted with the man of God,” my father spat.

“I agree, Pops. We need to lay some holy paws on ’im,” Loon countered.

“Why are you here?” Shanise asked.

“Because you’re here.” Amusement played on his face as he licked his lips and did the Birdman hand rub.

I laughed. “Loon, chill.”

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“He’s so annoying,” Shanise grumbled.

“You like it,” Shelby jested.

Shanise flipped her the bird. Chelsea came and sat next to me, leaning her head on my shoulder and wrapping her arm around me. She and I were the closest since we were closer in age. I was close with BB too, but me and Chelsea’s bond was tighter. There had been countless times I had to beat up her little boyfriends because they liked to play games with her. At one point, one of them got handsy with her, and I almost put him in the hospital. I didn’t play those types of games about my sisters. My parents always taught me to protect them by any means.

Chels got her empath nature from our mom. It was like she knew I needed comforting after hearing the news. I honestly didn’t know what to do, but I was hoping to gain some type of clarity because I just couldn’t believe this was my life right now.

“Tell me what I should do, Sis.”

“I honestly don’t know, Hemi. This could either be a blessing or a curse. She’s a teenager. Prayerfully, she’s not a bad one. I’m assuming she’s not, though. Her mom was the sweetest when we used to hang out back in the day. Maybe this won’t be as bad as we think.”

“I don’t know, Chels. If her husband has been there since she was a baby, this could go left. He’s all she knows since Morgan never told her about Hemi,” Shanise mumbled.

I couldn't listen to this anymore.

"I'm up. I have to get up early tomorrow." I stood from the couch, and everyone did the same.

"We love you, Hemi. Whatever happens, just know that we got your back 100 percent," Shelby affirmed.

"Thanks, baby sis. I love you too." I gave them all a hug and stood in front of my pops.

"I guess you two were destined to be together one way or another." He chuckled as I shook my head. "It's a tough situation to be in, but you know we have your back. Bring my granddaughter home."

"I'm going to try. Thanks, Pops." I hugged him then Loon followed me out the door.

I didn't know what fate lay ahead. Whatever it may have been, I prayed that it ended with Morgan and my daughter at my side.

Morgan

ThePast

"What?" I asked my father, not believing what he wanted me to do.

"You heard me."

"Gio—" my mom started, but he cut her off.

"It's done, May. She has already strayed away from the word of God, getting

pregnant by that heathen when I did all I could to show her the right way. 1st Corinthians 9:6 through 10 says ‘Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.’ You have defiled your temple, and you’re now about to have a baby out of wedlock. You will not tell him about this, and I mean it, Morgan.”

“Mom, please?” I begged her. I needed her to have my back on this. “I know what I did was wrong, but Nehemiah isn’t who you think he is!”

“He’s a heathen! A sinner! One who will get you and my grandchild killed. I forbid you to see him or talk to him. I promise if I find out that you told him, I’m going put him and his family away for life!”

“Let he who is without sin cast the first stone!” I blurted out. “You’re a sinner too, Daddy. I know you’ve done things that God doesn’t approve of either! We all make mistakes, but to make me keep his child away from him isn’t right.”

“She’s right, Gio. You need to think about this,” my mom agreed.

“The difference between my sins and his is that I repented and gave my life over to the Lord. I didn’t have children out of wedlock, and I’ve learned from my mistakes.”

“You can’t do this,” I said, shaking my head.

“I already have. It’s done, Morgan. If you disobey me, I will shun you and go forth with what I promised. Mark my words.”

I cried as I sat in front of my father, hoping he’d disappear. I’d never wish death on him, but I prayed he moved out and far away from me.

“You will regret this decision, Gio. This is going to come back around, and then what will you do?” Mom asked.

“Exactly what I said I’d do. Now, I don’t want to talk about this anymore. You will find a nice, wholesome man who won’t mind helping you raise the baby. Go to your room and read the book of 1st Corinthians. Hopefully, that will make you realize the mistake you’ve made and repent about it. Good night.” He shooed me away.

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I stood and glared at him.

“I hate you!” I yelled before rushing off to my room and slamming the door.

Moments later, Drue entered my room as I cried into my pillow.

“It’s going to be okay, Mo. I’m here, and I always will be.”

“I hate him, Drue.”

“Hate is a strong word, Sister.”

“I don’t care. I love Nehemiah. I know he’ll be a good dad. It’s not fair.”

“I know, but I’m here. I’ll be your baby’s daddy.”

She smiled down at me as I laid my head in her lap. My heart told me to tell him anyway, but I knew my father would have him and his family locked up. I didn’t want that for them, especially not Nehemiah. He had ambition and was going places. I would never do anything to jeopardize his future. So, with a heavy heart, I had to relent to my father’s request.

“Mommy, is everything okay?”

I hurriedly wiped my tears with the sleeve of my sleep shirt and placed the cork on my wine bottle. I looked over at Megan in the entrance of the kitchen and smiled.

“Yeah, Gingerbread. My allergies are just acting up.”

“Mom, you don’t have allergies.”

She crossed her arms and hiked her brow. I chuckled as I waved her inside the kitchen. I patted my lap, and she sat down, wrapping her arms around my shoulders. I wrapped my arms around her waist and held her tight.

“You want to talk about it?” she asked.

“First, I want to know what you’re doing up. It’s late, and you have school in the morning.”

“I can’t sleep. It’s been three days, and Dad hasn’t been home. You haven’t been sleeping, and you’ve been crying since Mariah and I came back from Auntie Drue’s house...even though you tried to hide it.”

I sighed deeply. “You know I love you more than anything, right?”

“Of course, I do. You’re the best mom a girl could have. You know you can talk to me about anything.”

I smiled. “I do. I’m glad you said that because I need to tell you something. Sit in the chair for me.”

She stood from my lap and took a seat in the chair next to me. I took her hand, kissing the back of it.

“Things are about to change for us. I don’t want to keep you in the dark anymore about what’s going on and what has happened. You’re smart, so I know you have some sort of clue what’s going on.”

“You and Dad getting a divorce?”

I nodded. “We are.”

“Why?”

“That I won’t tell you, but just know that he’ll still be around for you girls. He just won’t be staying here anymore.” She was quiet as I stared at her. “What are you thinking? Tell me how you feel.”

“I don’t know how I feel. I guess I’m sad that he won’t be living with us anymore, but I know he did something to hurt you. I’m hoping that, with time, you’ll forgive him.”

“I already forgave him, but we won’t be getting back together.”

“I’m sorry he hurt you.”

She leaned her head on my shoulder as I kissed her forehead. I struggled with finding a way to tell her about Nehemiah. That clock was ticking. Friday was two days away, and I only had until then before Nehemiah made good on his promise. I closed my eyes and prepared myself to tell my daughter her origin story. Shit, this was hard.

“Can I tell you a story?”

She nodded.

“There was this young girl who attended Churchill Academy for her freshman year of high school. She was quiet and didn’t say much, but she was new, so that made her shy and quiet. However, she made friends with this girl named Chelsea that first day. Chelsea was pretty, vibrant, and popular. The new girl didn’t understand why she wanted to be friends with her of all people, but she was grateful for her because she felt her good energy. Anyhoo, Chelsea had a brother, and goodness...he was so fine!”

We both giggled.

“The new girl used to watch him on the football field every time they had practice because she became a part of the track team. She was literally a schoolgirl with a huge crush. She never said anything to him, and every time he’d look her way, she’d look away from him and her cheeks would heat up.”

“Why didn’t she just talk to him? It’s what I would have done.”

“Oh really?” I asked, looking at her skeptically.

“Mom...focus.” I smiled and held up my palms. “You always tell me to go for what I want. It’s clear the girl wanted him, so why didn’t she just talk to him?”

I chuckled. “Well, back in my day, us girls didn’t approach the boys. Your papa always said, ‘A man who findeth a wife, findeth a good thing,’ so we stood on that.

Now, back to the story. One day, he approached her, and she almost fainted! The first thing he said to her made her heart do backflips.”

“What did he say?”

My baby was invested. I was hoping this story would end with her understanding the dynamic in which she came about. I didn’t want to hurt my baby. She was the best thing to ever happen to me.

“He said, ‘My girl doesn’t have to stare at me. She can always talk to me, and I’ll be there to listen.’”

“So lame!” She giggled.

“Hey! Back then, those words were swoon-worthy, okay? Especially with her crush saying those words to her.”

“Ugh, I guess. So, let me guess...they end up dating?”

“They absolutely do. They dated for the three years he had left because he was a sophomore when they met. Now, the girl’s father was very strict. She wasn’t supposed to be dating, but the boy made her feel so safe, secure, and beautiful.”

And gosh did he make me feel beautiful.

“He didn’t pressure her to do anything she didn’t want to do, and he always bought her things... like thoughtful gifts and gave her money. Their young love was so precious that when the haters started to take notice of their magical chemistry, even they couldn’t penetrate their bubble...” My voice trailed off just thinking about those precious moments that we spent together.

“Mom,” Megan called out, snapping me back to reality.

“Sorry, baby.” I looked at the time on my phone. “It’s late. You should get to bed.”

“Aww, Mom! You can’t stop the story when it’s getting good. I want to know what happens next. I’m not even sleepy. Besides, I know there’s a point you’re trying to make.”

“You’re right, but the story gets crazy after that. The girl’s father found them in an uncompromising way, and he forbade them from seeing each other again. He was going off to college, and her plan was to follow him once she graduated, but the girl’s father wasn’t having it.

“The boy’s father was into some illegal things, but the boy wasn’t. He was smart and very ambitious. But the girl’s father was afraid that she’d get hurt, so he restricted her from all communication with the outside world for a whole year. The girl found out she was pregnant within that year. She wanted so desperately to tell the boy about the baby, but her father threatened that if she told, he would get the boy and his father locked away for life.”

“Wow! What a douchebag. Every child deserves a father.”

My eyes stung as I willed my tears away.

“Exactly...”

“So then what happened?”

“The girl had no choice but to follow her father’s rules. She became deeply depressed and almost lost the baby. The baby’s father went off to college, and she never saw him again. Then she went off to college, met a nice guy who agreed to marry her. Of

course, the girl's father set everything up. The girl really did like the new guy, but she wasn't in love with him. She did love him, though. Eventually, they got married and started a family."

"So, the girl's father approved of this guy, but not her first love?"

I nodded.

“Dang. Did she forget about him?”

“Never. She never stopped loving him, even after all those years went by.”

The tears I was trying to keep at bay finally made their way down my cheeks.

“Mommy...”

I looked at my baby and palmed her cheeks. She stared into my eyes and a flicker of resonance showed up on her face as she pulled back from me.

“This is your story, isn’t it?”

I nodded again. “It is.”

“So, my dad isn’t my real dad?” I shook my head as I cried audibly.

“Aw, Mom.”

“Your papa gave me no choice. I didn’t want him or his family to get locked up, so I played by his rules.”

“So, you don’t know where he is?”

“I do now. He just came back into my life, which is why I’m telling you this.”

She looked away then back at me. “What am I supposed to do if I ever meet him?”

“You don’t have to do anything that you don’t want to do. I won’t force you, Megan. Justin is the father you’ve always known. I won’t take away what he has been to you, but your real father wants to meet you.”

“Is that why you and Dad are getting a divorce? Because you’re still in love with my real dad?”

“No. Your father and I are divorcing because of something he’s done.”

We were silent for a moment before Megan got up and left the kitchen.

“Megan!”

She kept going as I placed my face in my palms and continued to weep. I knew she wouldn’t take this well. It was why I tried to give her the backstory instead of just giving her the vague version. I felt terrible, but I knew I had to fix this, no matter what I had to do.

Feeling a tap on my shoulder, my head shot up to see Megan handing me a box of Kleenex. I took them from her hand as she reclaimed her seat.

“Mom, I’m not mad.”

“You’re not?”

She shook her head. “Can I be honest with you?”

“Always, baby.”

“I’ve always felt different. As I grew older and started to look at myself in the mirror, I started to realize that I looked nothing like Dad. I see a tinge of you in me, but not

all the way. Like, I see no traces of my dad.

“It used to make me wonder, but I ignored it because not every child looks like their parents. Mariah looks like you and Dad, and that’s when I really started to question where I got my looks from. That doctor...”

“Is your father.”

“Wow...Is that why you called him by his first name, hugged him, then he called you out of the room and never came back?”

“Yes.”

“So, he doesn’t want to know me?”

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“Oh, he definitely does. It’s why I told you our story first. That was my first time seeing him in almost fourteen years. He knew as soon as he saw you. He just couldn’t face you when his emotions were all over the place. He wants to meet you this Friday, but like I said, you don’t have to if you don’t want to. I don’t want to make you do anything you don’t want to do.”

She was quiet for a moment, then a small smile drew up on her face.

“He is pretty handsome.”

I chuckled lightly. “That he is.”

“I’ll meet with him, only because you had no choice...And I liked your story up until you told me Papa interfered. What did Nana do?”

“Nothing. There was nothing she could do. His word was law, and we had to follow it.”

“I’m sorry that happened to you, Mom.”

“It’s okay, baby. Maybe this is God’s way of giving me a second chance to right my wrongs.”

“But you did nothing wrong.”

“I did. I didn’t tell your real father about you. Your papa had me scared to tell him, but I’m not afraid anymore. He used what your other grandfather did as a

manipulation tool because he knew I wouldn't want anything to happen to your father or his family. Not anymore though. Whatever happens, I'm just glad to get it off my heart."

"I love my dad, but I wouldn't mind having two rich dads." She beamed.

I chuckled. "Good night, Gingerbread."

"Good night, Mommy. I love you, and thank you for sharing your story with me. I'm going to send some prayers up for you and Dad."

"Thank you, baby. I really need them."

She kissed my cheek and left the kitchen. I uncorked my wine, pouring me half a glass as I continued to drown out my pain and look forward to releasing myself from my lying, cheating, trifling husband.

Nehemiah

"Doctor Newson, you have a call on line three," my nurse, Anna, announced over the intercom.

I peeled my eyes away from my computer from going over billing reports to the phone. Usually, I'd have Shawn from the billing department handling this, but he had been out sick for the past three weeks. I picked up the receiver and pressed line two.

"Dr. Newson speaking."

"Hemi...It's Diana."

I instantly frowned.

Fuck is she calling me for?

I didn't speak for several seconds, trying to understand why this unstable creature was contacting me.

"Hello? Are you there?"

"I am. Just trying to figure out why you're dialing my number, D."

"Listen, I know I'm the last person you want to talk to, but I really need you right now...Daddy...He's not doing so well, and I had no one else to call."

"What he has going on has nothing to do with me."

"Nehemiah...please?"

The audible cry that came through the receiver had me clutching it tightly. I was conflicted. Although our marriage was forced and full of shit, I did at one point, care a lot about her. The way she played me had me wanting to hang up in her face. I couldn't block her from calling my office, but I for sure blocked her from my phone.

"Why should I help you, Diana?"

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“I know I wasn’t the best person, Hemi, but I would think our friendship would hold some type of weight, even if the marriage part was fugazi.”

“You stopped being my friend long before the forced marriage. Let’s not forget how you played my sister.”

“BB didn’t even want—Listen. I didn’t call to argue or bring up bad history. My father is dying, and you’re the only person I know that can help him. Please, Nehemiah, he’s all I have left.”

I scoffed. “I really can’t stand you, D. You got balls as big as King Kong to ask me for fucking favors when you just tried to ruin my life. The only reason I’m even considering pulling up is because that’s my father’s best friend. Otherwise, I’d tell you and him to go the fuck to hell with your ancestors. Get off my line. I’ll be there when I get there.” I hung up on her and shook my fucking head.

It was funny how the same person who did me wrong was the same person to turn around and need me. I didn’t expect karma to come so soon, but I wasn’t mad about it. Diana deserved whatever came to her. However, I knew what losing a parent felt like. The shit was a different kind of hurt that I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy. In this case, Diana was that enemy. Even though I didn’t want to help her raggedy ass, I wouldn’t be the asshole I wanted to be.

Focusing back on my computer, I didn’t realize I was frowning so deep that I was making my head hurt. My mind drifted to my daughter...my daughter.

I had no clue how I was even functioning with this information on my head and heart.

I had no idea how she was going to react to me or if Morgan even told her about me. I always felt like there was more to our love story. I would get these weird dreams about us being married and having a family. I saw us with three children, traveling the world, and just living our lives the way that we planned. I would have these weird cravings and potent desires to find her. On those days, I searched social media and around neighborhood I knew she lived in. When I went to her father's church, even that was vacant. He had moved it but never updated the site on the new location. Now I saw why.

That Steve Harvey, toupee-wearing motherfucka wasn't trying to be found. I knew asking my father was a no go because he and Victor Wilson desperately wanted me to marry Diana's conniving ass, so he wouldn't have helped me. This shit was crazy, and I was nervous about meeting my own seed.

The tap on my door had me yelling for whoever it was to enter. Silvia, the receptionist, poked her head inside the door.

"Sorry to bother you, Dr. Newson, but you have a Morgan Prescott here to see you."

How ironic that I was just thinking about her pretty ass and the child she kept away from me.

"Send her back, Sil. Thank you."

She nodded and walked away. A minute later, heaven opened up its gates and allowed God's angel to walk through my door. The emotions I felt just looking at her had me running my palm down my face to clear the sadness I felt.

My eyes scanned her from her to toe. Not much had changed about her. She just gained a little weight, but she still had those runner thighs, blemish-free brown sugar skin, dreamy eyes, and pouty lips. I was now witnessing the adult Morgan, and she

looked oh so fucking delectable.

I stood from my chair, venturing over to her before I closed the door and locked it. She looked up at me, and instantly, our foreheads connected. My arms went around her waist as hers came around my neck. No words were spoken when her lips touched mine and we indulged in a passionate kiss, one that conveyed so many words that were left unspoken. Our tongues fought for control as I backed her against the wall.

“Mmm,” she moaned.

My hands went to her plump ass and squeezed it. My dick was growing impatient, trying to burst through the seams of my scrubs.

Calm down, nigga, she’s married, but you don’t give a fuck for real.

I had to talk myself out of laying her on my love seat and fucking all the memories we shared back into her head. I released her as she wiped the corners of her lips and stared at me. I stepped back and cleared my throat.

“What brings you by?”

“Um, I came to talk to you about Megan. Your daughter. I already told her about you—”

“You did?”

She nodded. “Last night.”

My heart skipped a beat and nervousness filled my belly. “And?”

“She says she doesn’t mind meeting with you and joked about having two rich

daddies.” She smiled lightly.

I scoffed and walked back over to my desk to take a seat. I hated this. I didn’t want to be upset about this, but another nigga playing daddy to my kid didn’t sit well with me. That was supposed to be my job, my role, but here I was on the outside trying to figure out how I would fit in.

“Nehemiah, I love you—”

I shook my head. “Don’t say that, Mo. You can’t possibly love me like you say you do while being married to another man.”

“It wasn’t my decision. In the beginning I was lost, confused, and didn’t want to raise my daughter alone. So, I allowed myself to feel something for Justin. It took me almost six years to love him. I had to mentally block you out of my mind because the more I thought of you, the more depressed I became. I had to make it work with him, Hemi, but I swear to you, I never loved him like I love you.”

“So, what does any of this mean? You’re ready to leave that nigga for me?”

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“After I leave here, I’m headed to see my lawyer. I’m filing for a divorce.”

“That easy, huh?”

“It is.”

“Has it always been?” I asked her.

“Been what?”

“That easy for you to move on? That easy to never tell my daughter about me and allow that lame ass nigga to put my crown on his head.”

She frowned. I could tell she was slightly offended by my questions, but I had to know if she thought any of this was okay.

“It has never been easy for me, Nehemiah. You don’t know the shit I’ve been through to make my heart beat again!”

“You let your fuck nigga of a father keep my daughter away from me for thirteen years! You went and settled down with a nigga because that wimp told you to. For thirteen years, baby? Come on with that shit. He stole time I could have had with my child, the love I could have experienced from her, and the love I could have given you both!”

“I regret that so much. You don’t understand how hard it was for me to accept that I wouldn’t see you again. I couldn’t stay in that depressed state, or Megan wouldn’t

have been here. That's how messed up I was." I could see her willing her tears away. "I just want to make things right. I just want you to understand me and allow yourself to love me like you used to."

"I never stopped."

"Then let's get back to us. I feel like this is fate."

"How is it fate when you're still tied to that lame?"

"I just told you I'm filing for a divorce. And don't think I didn't peep that tan line on your finger."

Her brow raised as she stared at me.

"I got rid of my headache. The question is...Are you really going to get rid of yours?"

"Look at us...Both of us got married. Were you even going to tell me?"

"No."

Now, it was her turn to scoff.

"Wow."

"I wasn't going to tell you because you have a ring on your finger that I didn't put there, Mo. Why would I tell you that I was married because I was forced as well? Only I didn't fall in love with my wife, nor did we have children together. It was a business deal gone wrong, and every day, I regret ever allowing my father to rope me into that bullshit."

“Our stories are so similar...”

“Yet so different. I didn’t give a fuck about being married. If you had come to me during that shit show, I would have divorced her ass so quick. A blink of her eye wouldn’t have had shit on how fast she would have been out of my life. But you fell in love with him and gave him both of my children.”

It was quiet for a moment as she stood in her white maxi dress. Her hair fell in layers around her shoulders, and her face glowed, yet she was sad.

“You’re right...I don’t want to bring up the negative in our situation. I just want to make things right. This Friday, she can meet with you. You can choose the time and place.”

“My house, 7:00 p.m. Does she have any food allergies? What’s her favorite thing that she likes?”

That pretty ass smile appeared on her face.

“No allergies, and she loves anything that has to do with Chris Brown.”

She rolled her eyes and smiled.

“Noted. Birthday?”

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She hesitated a moment before she said, “June twenty-second.”

“Wow. A day after mine.”

“There was no escaping you, even if I wanted to. She literally acts just like you—very smart, loving, and selfless. She’s a piece of us—our love.”

“I want you to go through with that divorce, Mo. I want my wife by my side. We need to get back what was stolen from us. I understand that you all made a baby together, so I have to deal with him being around, but you and him...no more. Don’t make me have to show out...because I will. It’s time for you to come back home.”

“Dr. Newson. Your 2:00 p.m. is here.” Anna’s voice sounded over the intercom.

“Be right there, Anna.” I stood and walked back over to Morgan, pulling her into my arms. “I was expecting a phone call, but your presence was worth it. See y’all on Friday.”

“See you Friday.”

She placed a soft kiss on my lips then walked out as I continued on with the rest of my day.

I pulled into the Wilsons’ residence, grabbed my medical bag, then exited the car. Victor had two guards waiting at the front door who I’d seen a few times when I’d visit.

“How are you, Mr. Nehemiah?” the guard I knew as Joey asked.

“I’m good. I’m here to see the man of the house.”

“He’s expecting you. Can I check your bag?”

I chuckled. “Really?”

“It’s standard protocol, sir.”

I handed over my bag as Leo, the other guard, searched my person.

“All clear,” Leo said.

“Have a good evening, sir.”

Joey handed me back my bag just as Diana opened the door. If her heart matched her beauty, Diana and I would probably still be married with me regretting divorcing her for Morgan.

She stood before me wearing a red, short-sleeved blouse with black slacks and black red bottom heels. Her hair was slicked back, showcasing her round, brown face and striking features. Her eyes were red and puffy, so I was sure it had to be serious.

“Nehemiah, thank you for coming.”

“Where is he?” I wasn’t there for the formalities.

“Follow me.”

She closed the door then I followed her down the massive hall to a bedroom on the

right.

She opened the door, and I followed her inside. Victor was sitting up in bed watching CSI: Miami.

“Daddy, Hemi’s here.” His eyes turned from the TV and landed on me.

“My man Hemi. It’s good to see you.”

“Would you look at that? A criminal watching crime shows,” I jested, taking a seat on the edge of the bed.

“Gotta make sure I stay ten steps ahead.” He smiled. “I know why she called you here, but she shouldn’t have. I’m fine.”

“No, you’re not, Daddy. You refuse to acknowledge the fact that something is wrong with you. You’ve been complaining of chest pains and passed out last week. You also refuse to see a doctor, so I brought your son-in-law—”

“Ex.” I corrected.

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I saw where this was going. She was trying to use this as a tool to weasel her way back into my space. I could smell her bullshit from a mile away. The crazy thing was she did everything she could to push me away, and now that she was in danger of losing her only living parent, she tried to tactfully find a way to make this a thing.

Not fucking happening. Not when I finally had the chance to get my love back.

“...your ex son-in-law to see what is going on with you.”

“You’re paranoid. Nothing is wrong with me.”

“Let me check you out, Vic. Just to ease your daughter’s mind.”

He sighed deeply as I reached in my medical bag, retrieving my stethoscope. I moved closer and placed it under his left breastplate while looking at my watch. The slow strumming of his heart let me know that something was indeed wrong with him.

“Take a deep breath for me.”

He did and started coughing profusely.

“Daddy!” Diana yelled, and he waved her off.

“I’m okay, Diana.”

She stomped her foot and whined, “No, you’re not, Daddy! Nehemiah...”

“Vic, you don’t sound too good. While a low heart rate is good, yours is beating at forty beats per minute, and your breaths are short. I’m not a heart specialist, but D has a right to be concerned. You need to go to the hospital, man.”

“No! Them motherfuckas killed my wife—”

“Mama died giving birth to me, Daddy. That wasn’t the hospital’s fault!”

“Because they made her lose all that blood! She said she didn’t feel well, and them motherfuckas ignored it. I’m not trusting them assholes to tell me shit. I’ll take me out before I let another motherfucka do it!”

“So, you gonna leave me here alone? You’re just going to die on me?”

“I’m—Diana!”

She was out of the room before he could finish his sentence. He sighed deeply as I looked at him.

“Don’t look at me like that, Hem. She doesn’t understand how hard it’s been without her mother here. They killed her, and she just expects me to trust they ass to fix me?”

“I don’t know what happened on that table, but what I do know is that you got someone to live for. Your wife’s family is all the way in Bermuda. We all know they can’t come here, and she’s not going there. Don’t make her an orphan because you want to be stubborn.”

We were quiet as he shook his head. I didn’t understand this man’s thought process. Why would he want to hurt the one person that needed him by slowly fading away?

“Hemi,” he called out to me, taking my hand. “I know what me and your father did

was wrong, but don't be mad at your pops. It was me who told him to put his foot down and make you marry my daughter. I knew something was wrong with me back then, but I didn't want to alert Diana. Only your father knew.

"I pressed y'all because Diana would need someone when I'm gone. I wanted you all to have children and start a family because I know I'm not going to be here much longer. Nehemiah...I need you, son. I need you to give my daughter something to look forward to."

I shook my head. "It's over, Vic—"

"It doesn't have to be. You don't have to remarry her, but please, please give her some offspring."

"Come on, man. Don't do this. Diana doesn't even want kids. She hates them."

"She doesn't. She was just afraid because of the story I told her about her moms. She was thinking what happened to her would be her story, so she tried to prevent that from happening. Nehemiah, you're the only one I trust with my daughter. I hate how shit ended between y'all, but she loved you."

"You're asking for a lot right now, Vic. I can't be that man. She elected to opt out of this marriage and the possibility of us creating a legacy the moment she began showing disinterest and sleeping around with different men. I'm sorry, but I can't help with this. Go to the hospital, old man. Don't break your daughter's heart just because you don't care about yours."

I stood, placed my items back in my bag, and exited the room. As soon as I closed the door, Diana was standing in the hall, leaning against the wall, smoking a pre-roll.

I didn't speak, only nodded at her then trekked down the hall.

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“I fucked up.” I heard behind me. I stopped and turned to look at her. “I know we were forced into a marriage, but I really did fall in love with you, Hemi. The only reason I pretended I didn’t was because you set the tone of how life with you was going to be.

“You didn’t love me like I loved you. You were so caught up in Morgan Prescott that you never even looked at me the way you looked at her. On our wedding night, you called out her name in your sleep. I knew then I could never compete with her...not back then and not now. That’s when I started sleeping with other men. I got jealous and wanted to hurt you, so I hit you where it hurts. Your pockets.”

She scoffed while shaking her head.

“And that didn’t even do shit to you.” She sighed and walked closer to me. “I resigned from taking your assets, but I’m keeping the money. I feel I deserve a little compensation for putting up with your grumpy behind for all these years.”

She reached on top of the shelves lining the wall, pulling down a Manila envelope and handing it to me.

“What’s this?”

“It’s a contract I had my lawyer draw up stating that I’ll only take the money and leave the assets. It’s already signed, sealed, and now delivered.”

I stared at her for a moment before I leaned down, placing a soft kiss on her forehead and wrapping my arm around her shoulder. “Good luck with everything, D. I’m sure

you heard the conversation with your old man. He's going to get his shit together."

"Yeah...I'll prepare my black dress because we both know his ass is stubborn." She chuckled lightly.

"Take care of yourself, D. I'll see you around."

"You too, Nehemiah. Good luck with getting your girl back."

I didn't know how she knew that, but I didn't want to protract the moment by asking. I simply nodded and continued my stride out of the door.

Morgan

"Come on, Honey Bee. Nana's inside waiting for you," I told her as I got out of the car. Mariah couldn't get out of her seat belt fast enough.

"Nana, Nana!" she yelled.

Megan cringed and covered her ears. "Goodness, 'Riah. You literally just saw her two days ago. Calm down."

I laughed. "What I tell you about coming for my honey bee? She loves her nana."

Megan laughed. "That has been made very clear."

As we started up the walkway, a horn beeped behind us, and I noticed Justin pulling in beside me. I rolled my eyes because I knew I couldn't duck his ass much longer.

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" Mariah cheered, rushing to his door.

Justin got out with a huge smile on his face that I wanted to slap off.

The nerve of this motherfucka to smile when he'd just ruined our family.

Images of the lustful desire in his eyes watching the Duprees engage in a sexual act flooded my mind. The way he undressed as if that was something he'd been wanting to do had me clutching my purse tighter to refrain from going for my mace.

"My munchkin! I missed you, sweet pea." He kissed her cheeks as my lips turned in disgust.

"I missed you too, Daddy."

"No hug for your old man, Meg?" he asked, smiling at her.

"Of course." She moved to hug him. "Where have you been?"

"Oh, I had to go out of town for a few days."

Lying ass.

"Come on, Mariah. Nana's waiting for you."

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Justin placed her on her feet, then she came back to my side and took my hand.

“Can I talk to you for a second?” Justin asked me.

As much as I didn’t want to, I needed to get his ass away from my parents’ home. If he thought he still had access to my family, then he had another thing coming.

“Go with your sister, baby. I’ll be there in a sec.”

Megan took Mariah’s hand. “Come on, Mariah. I smell chocolate chip cookies!”

“Hurry, Megan! Papa’s going to eat them all!”

I chuckled, watching her pull Megan along to the house. Before I turned to face nasty ass, I dropped the smile and stared at him.

“Baby—”

“Stop calling me that. I’m not your fucking baby.”

“Can you just please hear me out?”

“I heard you loud and clear, Justin. I don’t need to hear your pile of sorries anymore.”

“You know...I always felt like you were never really into me. Our sex life was not as great as I thought it would be. You never wanted to try new things—”

“Justin, stop being a bitch, and just tell the fucking truth. You were never into me. You wanted to fuck Jolie just as bad as she wanted to fuck you. I did every fucking position imaginable to please you. When you started keeping late nights and meeting your clients at strip clubs, I started looking up pole dancing because I was willing to be whatever you needed.

“Your friendly dick ass just got bored and wanted to fuck someone else...Shit, if that’s what you wanted, I probably would have considered it. But none of that shit matters anymore.”

“We can make this work, Mo. I don’t want to lose—”

“I told Megan about her father, and she wants to meet him.”

“You did what?”

“You heard me.”

“Why the fuck would you do that, Morgan? When did you even get back in contact with him?”

“A few days ago when Megan was sick. Her old PCP resigned, so they sent me to him. It must have been fate.”

“You’re so fucking stupid, Morgan.”

“I’m what? Say that shit again!” I warned.

I didn’t know if Justin was aware, but I wasn’t the same little PK he met in college. Life made part of me bitter and tougher. I wasn’t standing for any more bullshit from him or my father.

He shook his head and looked at me. “You will confuse her with this.”

“She’s not confused. I told her that you are still her father, but her biological father wants to know her. You may have turned into a shitty, cheating, dog ass nigga overnight, but my babies love you.”

“Does your father know about this?”

“Not yet, but he will.”

“He sure will.” Justin moved up the walkway toward the house, but I blocked his path.

“I wish like hell you would. Get the hell away from here, Justin, or I promise I’m not going to miss this time.”

“You’re going to fuck him, aren’t you?”

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A smirk drew up on my face.

“Better than I ever fucked you.”

Justin jumped at me, but I didn’t flinch. He chuckled and looked at me then turned his nose up.

“He fucking left you with a gut full of his baby, depressed, and confused. I’m the one who put in the most time to build your broken ass back up, and you think you’re going to ride out into the sunset with him and my kids? I swear if you fuck him, I’ll make your life a living hell.”

Before I could reply, my father emerged from the house, and stood on the porch.

“Hey, son. Come on in. I’ve been expecting you.”

I chuckled angrily. “Don’t acknowledge your daughter, my dear father. Just look right past me like you don’t see me...even though it wouldn’t be the first time.”

I pushed past my father and into the house to speak to my mother then prepare to meet with Nehemiah. I walked into the kitchen to see my mother pouring the kids some milk to go with their cookies and smiled.

“Hey, Mommy,” I spoke, walking over and kissing her cheek.

“Hi, my love. You doing alright?”

“Could be worse, but I can’t complain.”

“That’s right. You want some cookies too?”

“No thanks. Can I speak to you for a moment?”

“Sure. I’ll be right back, Honey Bee, so we can go plant those flowers, okay?”

“Okay, Nana.” My mother smiled at her and led me out of the kitchen into the dining room.

“What’s on your mind, baby?”

“I told Nehemiah and Megan about each other.”

I watched her for a reaction, but she just stood in place with a stoic expression.

“Mommy...Say something.”

“I heard you, baby. What were their reactions?”

“Nehemiah was disappointed...as I knew he would be, but surprisingly, he wasn’t too upset. Megan was okay with it. We’re going to meet with him in a few.”

“Does Justin know about this?”

I shrugged. “I just told him.”

“You shouldn’t have done that.”

“I don’t care anymore, Mom. I think whatever Daddy’s holding over Mr. Newson’s

head is just him blowing smoke. Why after all these years hasn't he said or done anything? He used that to pump fear into me because he knew how much I loved Nehemiah."

"I'm not sure if he does or he doesn't. Your father was transitioning when I met him. He was never like this until Nehemiah came into your life. All I know is I'm not putting up with any more of his foolishness concerning this situation. Megan deserves to know her father. I should have done more, but I saw how much you didn't want that for him or his father."

"Yeah, that's over now—"

"What have you done?" My father came bursting into the dining room looking upset.

I rolled my eyes as I prepared to leave.

"What I should have done a long time ago. Mom, I'll be back to get Mariah in a few hours. I'll see you later."

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“You’re going to regret this, Morgan. I promise you will,” he warned.

“Maybe I will. I know right now, the only thing I regret is keeping Megan away from her father in the first place.”

“Justin is her father!”

I scoffed. “You really psyched yourself into believing that. That lying, cheating bastard will never be her father.”

I made sure to keep my voice low just in case the kids were near. They didn’t need to hear me about to nut the fuck up. I was tired of Gioni Prescott. His ass was nothing more than a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

“If I’m not her father, then why haven’t you told her about that coward after all these years?”

“Ask your advocate and yourself that. Justin, your best bet is to shut the fuck up talking to me before I mace your stupid ass.”

My father looked at me in shock as if I’d just gut punched him.

I should. Stupid ass.

“Get out of my house, you unclean spirit!”

“Gladly, you unclean hypocrite.”

“You have lost your damn mind, Morgan Anissa. Remember, you caused everything that’s about to happen.” He sneered.

I swallowed the fear that was creeping up my spine and stood tall.

“Daddy, go to the deepest corner of hell, and preach to those demons that you allow to corrupt your fake holy mind and heart. You really believed that you were doing a good deed, but in reality, you caused this relationship between us to wither. You’re so hell bent on ruining that man’s life, and for what? Huh? Tell the congregation the real reason you fear Megan getting to know her grandfather or why you didn’t want me with Nehemiah!”

“I know the man he is. But you’re so hardheaded that you won’t listen until I make you listen. I don’t want those people anywhere near me and my family!”

“Gio, enough! I’ve had enough of this. You will leave my child the hell alone. I have allowed you to take charge of our lives all these years because I lived in regret with a heavy heart behind my infidelity, but enough is enough dammit!”

We were silent for a moment as I finally allowed my mother’s words to sink in.

“Mom, what are—”

She held up her hand to stop me from speaking.

“Morgan, go. I’ll explain later. And you,” she said, pointing to Justin, “don’t think I didn’t just hear my daughter say you cheated on her. Then you have the nerve to come up in here playing victim. Clearly, you’re easily influenced by my husband and by those floozies in the streets. You had no right opening your mouth about a situation you contributed to.

“Get your black ass out of my house. And you, Gioni, take your ass to that church, and put those people money back into their pockets by giving back to the community somehow. You think I don’t know what you’ve been doing, and you have the audacity to judge and point fingers at the next man?”

“My oldest child doesn’t even come around because of your judgments. You don’t care that my girls’ husbands are cheating on them because you still hold hate in your heart for what I did to you! Get the hell over it already. It was years ago, and I’ve repented. Don’t take that shit out on my kids!”

My mouth hung open because I never knew my mother cheated on my father. She didn’t even seem like the type to step out on Gio. If I had to admit it, I always thought my mother was a pushover and allowed this man to do whatever he wanted to us. Now, I saw why she never spoke up. She regretted it, and of course, Gio played that to his advantage.

“Morgan...I love you. I really do. I beg you not to do this. We can fix this between us,” Justin spoke.

I shook my head. “I forgave you already, but I won’t be taken for granted anymore. You had a great woman by your side, and you chose to cheat on me with a married couple. You’re sick if you think I’ll take you back after that. My lawyer is getting those papers together, we’ll discuss the kids and everything else once you’re served. Goodbye, Justin.”

“I won’t let you do this, Morgan. I won’t let you separate me from my kids. They need us both.”

“And they will have us both...separately.”

“You cannot divorce your husband, Morgan,” my father said. “The Bible says in—”

I laughed, cutting him off before he started quoting scriptures to me.

“Watch me. Megan, let’s go, babe!”

“Coming!”

“It’s a shame what you’re doing to your own daughter, introducing her to that family just for them to be taken away from her...” Gio voiced.

“Threaten her again, Gioni, and I swear I will spill all of your dirty little secrets! Try me.”

“I’m ready, Mom. See you later, Dad. Bye, Papa. Bye, Nana.” Megan went around the room hugging and kissing everyone before I took her hand and headed toward the door.

“Thanks, Mommy. I’ll be back soon.”

“No problem, baby. Call me when you’re on your way back.”

“Will do.”

I took one last look at Justin’s pitiful ass and my manipulative father before I walked out of the door. I knew then I was making the right decision.

I pulled into the gates of Doctor Nehemiah Newson’s home and almost cried. It was the home we used to come to every weekend and manifest as ours. At the time, the house was vacant. We would have picnics in the huge backyard inside of the empty pool. To see that he actually purchased the home warmed my heart.

“Wow! This is sweet! Doctors must make a lot of money,” Megan exclaimed, eyes

sparkling at the sight.

“They do.”

“I think I want to be a doctor instead of cellist.” She giggled.

“You can be both.” She smiled at me. “How do you feel?”

“I feel good.”

“Are you nervous?”

“No, but I know you are.” She laughed and I joined her.

“I am a little, but I just want to make sure you’re okay with this.”

“I’m okay. If you’re not, we can leave.”

“No. He’s expecting us, so let’s go.”

She nodded as we got out and headed up to the door. I rang the doorbell, and a moment later, an older woman opened the door with a pleasant smile.

“Ms. Prescott?” she questioned.

“I am.”

“Great. I’m Leann. Mr. Newson is expecting you. Right this way.”

She opened the door wider for us to walk inside. Once we stepped through the threshold, Megan and I both stopped in our tracks, marveling over the home.

“This is so dope. Mom, look. He has a waterfall in his house!”

I smiled. Nehemiah had to have had the house designed. It was the exact way we envisioned it to be—white granite flooring, high ceilings with crystal ball chandeliers, a grand piano, waterfall, frosted glass windows with cream, white, and opaque colors. My home was nice and modest, but his was a bit bigger and just the way I told him I wanted it.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” Leann asked, smiling.

“It is,” Megan and I said simultaneously.

She giggled. “Come.”

She waved us on as we followed her down a long hall on the right. We turned right and ended up in what looked like a formal sitting room. It looked like the Oval Office in the White House. It was very spacious with a couch, loveseat, and a chaise lounge. Artwork of Black leaders decorated the walls with a table in the center of the room that housed what I assumed was our dinner for the night.

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Nehemiah sat at a desk in the corner, seemingly wrapping up a phone call. Once he hung up, he stood wearing a cream Burberry button-down rolled up to his elbows, showcasing the tattooed sleeve on both arms, and brown slacks. He approached us as he smiled at Megan.

“Thank you for coming.”

“No problem.” She smiled.

“Not sure if you’re comfortable, but would it be too much to ask for a hug?”

Megan shook her head and fell into his arms. He held her tight and closed his eyes. I could see several emotions cross his face as his eyes opened and landed on me. I smiled softly and looked away.

He released her and ran his hand down her head. “I’m glad you agreed to meet with me, Megan. I know this is new for us both, but I’m hoping you’ll give me a chance to get to know you, and for you to know me.”

“Of course. Mom gave me a little history about you guys...I feel like I know you a little bit.”

He chuckled. “Good. I hope you all are hungry. I made my famous dish.”

“Southwest chicken chili?” I queried.

He licked those kissable lips and smirked. “You know it.”

“You never did give me that recipe.”

“Yeah... I wasn’t able to give you a lot of things, but at least I was able to give you something.” He smiled down at Megan who was looking between the two of us. “Let’s eat because I’m starving.”

A twinge of sadness came over me, but I sucked it up as we all took a seat. After we said grace, it was as if I didn’t even exist anymore. Megan and Nehemiah vibed and talked about everything from music to art. I could tell Nehemiah was impressed by how articulate Megan was. I could see the admiration and appreciation in both of their eyes. They had so much in common considering their birthdays were only a day apart, so they kind of liked the same things.

When Megan told him she played the cello, Nehemiah was impressed. She asked me to pull up the video of her showcase so he could see, and they watched it together. I just sat and watched him with that beautiful smile on his face and wanted to cry. The emotions coursing through me were so overwhelming I had to excuse myself to go to the bathroom. While inside, I splashed some water on my face and looked at myself in the mirror.

On the outside, I looked okay, but on the inside, I was breaking. I couldn’t help that I still felt something for Justin. He was who I spent almost fourteen years of my life with and vowed my life to in front of my family and the members of my father’s church. However, he hurt me to my core when I witnessed his infidelity. I was naïve and vulnerable when we got together and allowed my father to finesse me into marrying him. Now that I was an adult, I looked back on all the years I spent with him and felt nothing but stupidity and betrayal.

Then there was Nehemiah, the love of my life, the man I was promised to the moment we locked eyes on that football field. We may have been young, but our love was potent, pure, and beautiful. We never had the chance to experience what our love

could have been because it was stolen from us.

He and Megan were bonding so well, and even that was stolen from them. Now, I felt wrong for wanting him when I allowed my father to take us away from him.

Tears slid down my cheeks as I placed my hand over my mouth to conceal my inner turmoil. I hated what had become of my life and what I had to take away from my children because their father wanted to be a friendly dick nigga and not think about the consequences of his actions or what it would do to me or his children.

The tapping on the door caused me to straighten up and toss more water on my face.

“I’ll be right out,” I said, trying to sound normal.

“Mo, open the door.”

“I’m okay. I promise.”

“Don’t make me bust this door down, Boogie. Open up for me.”

I sighed deeply and opened the door. Nehemiah walked inside, closing the door behind him. His eyes bore into mine as he took his thumbs and cleared the new tears that were falling.

“I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have to keep apologizing, Mo. I’m starting to believe that it was meant to happen this way. Our love for one another was too passionate, and we were still under our peoples’ thumbs. They would have eventually tore us apart because of how adamant your pops was to break us up. Stop beating yourself up about what we can’t change. Let’s look forward to what we can control now. A’ight?”

“Okay.”

“Come on.” He pecked my lips then took me by the hand, leading me out of the bathroom. “My shorty is dope, man. You did really good with her. I kind of figured she wouldn’t be ill-mannered.”

I smiled. “Where is she?”

“Leann is showing her my art room.”

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“What is she? Like your maid or something?”

He chuckled. “I wouldn’t exactly label her as that. Leann is like my house mother. She makes sure everything runs smoothly while I’m away, and sometimes, she’ll cook if I keep late hours at the hospital.”

“House mother sounds like you’re running a brothel.”

He chuckled again. “Nah, Leann’s like a mom to me and my sisters. She takes care of all of our homes and gets in our asses when we do something we know will get on her nerves. She’s been a nice sub since Queenie passed.”

“You know...using words like house mother and sub would give people the wrong impression.”

His eyes smoldered when he looked at me, and my panties instantly flooded. Nehemiah had always been fine to me, but the older version of him was beautiful. The facial hair, the tattoos, his chiseled face and refined muscles had me swooning even more than I had been back in the day. That one look let me know that he was yearning to damage my insides.

I knew it was wrong to want him while I was still married, but I was on the road to divorcing Justin’s ass. I would still feel wrong if I let Nehemiah have me. I may not have been a saint, but I did respect the Word enough to know not to eat from the fruit of Nehemiah’s tree, even though that tree was very tempting.

“You ain’t ready for this grown man dick, Morgan. The shit I’d do to you would have

you paying for the papers to be signed by morning.”

“Hemi,” I whispered, closing my eyes and thighs tightly.

He stepped closer to me, taking my chin between his fingers and tracing his tongue along the line of my bottom lip.

“You... You can’t talk to me like that.”

“Why?”

“I’m not strong enough not to want to experience the grown you,” I admitted.

He smirked. “At the end of the day, the day gotta end, Mo. And its gon’ end with you on this dick.”

“Oh God.” My head fell into his chest as I laughed.

“Come on before my daughter comes looking for you and find you touching your toes in this hallway.”

I laughed as I followed him down the hall.

Nehemiah

Meeting my daughter was like a breath of fresh air. I hated that I had to meet her in her teens, but she made things feel so effortless. When they first arrived, I was nervous about how she would react to me; however, she made me feel as if no time had passed between us at all.

After dinner, we went into my game room and played air hockey, hot shot, and virtual

reality games on the Meta Quest 2. I may have been grown, but I was still a kid at heart. It was why I became a pediatrician in the first place. There was something about a child's innocence that made me see life through their eyes and appreciate the moments when I was able to be a kid.

Sometime during our game of GTA, Morgan had disappeared with Leann, leaving us to our vices. Once I beat her for the third time, she gave up and we decided to go get dessert. We were currently in the kitchen making sundaes while Morgan was still missing in action.

"Did you always want to be a doctor?" she asked, scooping ice cream from the carton and putting it into her bowl.

"Yup. I always loved helping people, mainly children."

"That's so cool. My dad is a sports attorney. I was able to meet some of the celebrities he worked for."

My heart sank as I swallowed the pain that hit my chest. She shouldn't be calling that nigga her daddy. I was her father. But as it stood, I couldn't do anything to change what she was accustomed to.

"That's what's up," I replied after a long pause.

Her eyes came to me as she laid her head on my shoulder. "I know you feel a way about me calling him my dad. But I can't stop calling him that because he's all I've ever known."

I shook off my emotions and turned to face her. "Listen, baby girl. I would never try to come in between what you and him have established together. He's been there when I couldn't be. Do I feel cheated? Yes. But the fact that you're giving me a

chance to make up for the time we lost makes me very happy.

“Don’t ever feel like you need to filter yourself when you’re acknowledging him. Don’t mind me. I’m just trying to sort everything out and be the best father I can be to you.” She smiled and nodded, wrapping her arms around me. “Now, the next time you come to visit me, I want you to meet your grandfather and your aunts.”

Her eyes lit up. “I have aunties?”

I smiled. “You do. Chelsea and Shelby.”

“No uncles?”

I chuckled. “Unfortunately not, but I do have a best friend who’s like a brother to me. His name is Lawrence, but he’ll keep correcting you if you call him by his first name. So, just call him Uncle Loon.”

“Got it. What about my grandfather?”

“His name is Cole. You’ll meet him too.”

“I can’t wait. All I ever had was Auntie Drue and my cousin Drue, who we call Rudy. Do I have any cousins on your side?”

“Nah. I’m still waiting to be a proud uncle.” I chuckled.

“Oh, I know I’m about to get spoiled! I’m the first and only grandchild!” she exclaimed and wiggled in her seat, looking just like her moms when she did that.

“You have no idea. They’re already talking about taking you somewhere real special.”

“I can’t wait.”

Morgan and Leann reentered the kitchen laughing.

“Your home is lovely, Hemi. I love the enclosed patio. Leann and I felt like queens sitting out there sipping tea.” She giggled.

This is your home, baby. You’re the queen of this castle.

“It’s what it was designed for—queens and princesses,” I said, winking at Megan.

“Yeah...Well, I hate that we have to leave, but my mom is expecting Megan to return to help her with her garden in the morning.”

“Oh, yeah...but can we stay for a little bit longer?”

“It’s already after eight at night, Meg. You know how your grandfather is about opening up his doors after hours.”

“Oh, right.” Megan’s eyes came to me as she playfully pouted. “I guess I’ll see you next time.”

“Absolutely, baby. Any time you want to come over, just say the word, and I’m there to pick you up.”

“Okay.”

We stood from the counter as I walked them to the door. I pulled Megan into my arms and held her tightly as she reciprocated.

“I had so much fun. Thank you for the hospitality.”

“Always, my love. You have my number. Any time you want to come back, just call me...I got something for you. Give me one second.”

I walked into the living room, grabbed what I was looking for, then headed back to the door, handing her, her gift. She looked at the slips in her hand and screamed before jumping into her arms.

“Oh my God! Oh my God! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!”

“What is it, Gingerbread?”

Megan released me and handed her moms the slips.

“Tickets to Chris Brown’s concert next month! Ahhh! Dad, you’re the best! I love you.”

Her arms came around me again in a tight hold as I sniffed away my emotions. I thought it was going to take some time before she said those words to me, but obviously Chris Brown gave her the push she needed.

“Wait, wait. I don’t know if I’m okay with that,” Morgan started.

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“Mooom, please!”

“Megan, I would have to think about that. He’s not the “Yo” Chris Brown anymore, baby.”

“She’s right, baby girl. I probably should have asked first, but she told me you liked his music. Since he’ll be here around your birthday, I thought it was a good idea to grab the tickets, and you can take your cousin or your friends.”

“Mooom, pleasee?”

She sighed. “They’ll need a chaperone.”

“Daddy can come. It’s your birthday too! We can celebrate together.”

I chuckled. “No offense, baby, but his music ain’t my speed,” I lied. I fucked with his music, but I just couldn’t see myself going to his concert. “Ya moms can handle that.”

“I want both of you to come. Please, I’ll be your best friend.”

She looked up at me with those light puppy dog eyes, and I folded.

“A’ight, I’ll ride out with you, but only if your moms agree to go too.”

“She’s coming. Trust me!” She wiggled her eyebrows at her mom as Morgan laughed.

“Girl, go to the car.”

“See you later, Dad! Love ya!” She hurried off as I smiled.

“I didn’t expect her to be so receptive to me, but I’m glad she is. This was one of the best days of my life.”

“Yeah...This is the happiest I’ve ever seen her. Well, aside from you giving her tickets to see that filthy mouthed man, she’s always been a happy kid, but the way she smiled all day with you...I know I made the right decision.”

I stared at her for minute, wanting to kiss her lips but not wanting to do it in front of Megan.

“Stay the night with me.” Her eyes met mine as she bit down on her lip. “After you drop her off, come back. We need to talk, and I feel like you’re avoiding having that conversation with me. Your eyes are conveying what your mouth won’t say because of baby girl.”

Her eyes lowered. “You know my situation.”

She’s copping out.

“I do, and I don’t care. I need this...I need you. Don’t tell me no, baby. We’ve been without each other for too long. It’s time to stop fucking around. I need that.”

She sighed heavily before she nodded. “Okay. Give me an hour, and I’ll be back.”

“You got it...Don’t make me come looking for you.”

She smiled and walked off as I watched her ass sway all the way to her car.

One Hour Later...

“Oh my God, Hemi. She’s so pretty!” Shelby exclaimed after I sent her photos of me and Megan from earlier. We were currently on a three-way call. “I already know I’m going to be her favorite auntie.”

“How you figure?” Chelsea asked.

“Girl, because I’m the youngest. The babies always love the youngest auntie more. It’s a known fact that we’re the coolest.”

“Cool my ass. You might have her in that dispensary testing different strands of weed.”

“I’d kick her ass.” I jumped in.

“Really? Y’all really think I’ll have my thirteen-year-old niece around here getting high?”

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Chels laughed. “We’re just joking, BB. Chill.”

“Don’t play like that, Sis. Anyway, I love that for you, Hemi. You deserve this.”

“Thanks, baby sis. Now that I’ve got my daughter secured, it’s time for me to secure her mama.”

“Oh, goodness. I hope that turns out well for you too. I really miss my friend.”

I could hear the sadness in Chelsea’s voice. She and Morgan used to be like yin and yang until the day after that tragic night. I could have waited to take her virginity, but even if we didn’t go further, I knew her pops would have still been on bullshit.

“Don’t fret. You’ll have her back soon, my baby,” I assured her.

The doorbell rang as I set my glass of bourbon down on the coaster and stood.

“A’ight, y’all. I gotta go. I’ll call y’all to let you all know the next time I’ll have her.”

“Okay. Love you.”

“Love you, brodie.”

“Love y’all more. Peace.”

I hung up as I went to the door and opened it. Before I could speak, Morgan tossed her bag to the side and jumped on me. I caught her in my arms, kicking the door

closed, and our mouths found their way to each other. The slow simmer of heat we had been feeling for one another was now a blazing fire as I ascended the stairs to my bedroom.

Once inside, I laid her in the center of the bed and began removing her clothes. Her shirt went first seeing that she wasn't wearing a bra, then the shorts went next. She wasn't wearing panties. She understood the assignment.

Her pretty pussy was calling out to my taste buds as I got down on my knees, pulling her to the edge of the bed. I rotated my thumb over her clit as she writhed from my touch.

“Hemi...”

“Shhh. Take deep breaths,” I told her, dipping my head and swiping my tongue over her engorged clit.

“Shit! Nehemiah...”

I sucked and swirled my tongue over her clit while sliding my fingers in and out of her pussy.

“Fuck! Yes, baby,” she moaned.

My tongue slipped further and teased the rim of her asshole while my thumb rubbed her clit, and my fingers continued tapping her g-spot. The triple stimulation had her lifting off the bed and moaning loudly.

“Nehemiah...I-I-I'm...Mmm...yessss. I'm about to cum.”

I didn't need to tell her what to do because I felt her about to explode. A few seconds

later, liquid splashed in my face and dripped down my chin.

“Mmm,” I moaned.

I had been wanting to eat her pussy since the first day I met her. I’d played in her pussy and licked my fingers, but actually putting my mouth on her gave me a feeling I’d never felt before.

“Oh goodness!” she exclaimed and laughed. “I’ve never squirted before.”

I wiped my mouth and lifted. “Be ready to do that shit all night,” I told her, sliding between her legs.

We locked eyes as she gazed up at me lovingly. I slid my tongue in her mouth, and we engaged in a passionate kiss. I didn’t hesitate to fill her up as she grabbed onto the wings of my back. I had to pause so I wouldn’t cum prematurely. My hips slowly activated, slipping in and out of her warm, tight, and wet pussy. I delivered hard thrusts, trying to tattoo my dick on her cervix.

“Oooh, fuck!” she cried out.

“Stay with me,” I said.

Her eyes misted as her lips came to my shoulder. I needed her here, in my home, in this bed...permanently. There was no way I was blessed to have her back in my life and not have her to myself. God knew she was supposed to be mine. Her daddy may have separated us, but he couldn’t separate the love we had for each other.

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She bore my seed. In my heart, if God intended for us to be apart, He would have never allowed Megan to grace this world. She was my bloodline, my legacy.

“I-I can’t.”

“You can...You will always be mine. I can’t live without you no more, baby. You belong to me.”

“Hemi!”

I lifted, grabbed her thighs, and pounded into her. Her sexy ass sex faces had me delirious with the need to imbed myself inside of her forever.

I slowed my rhythm and gazed into her eyes. I could feel my climax building as my eyes misted. There was no way I could let her work it out with that nigga. She was mine, and I was coming back for my belongings.

“Morgan...” I belted out as I spilled my seeds deep in her womb. Once my racing heart settled, I looked down at her and frowned slightly. “Tell that nigga goodbye, Mo. If you don’t, I will.”

With that, I left the bed to go start our shower. After we showered, I made us a snack while she lay with her head on my chest, and I kissed her forehead.

“He’s going to try to do something to your dad now that I went against him.”

“I ain’t worried about your pops, Mo. I don’t know the full story, but I know it has

something to do with your moms.”

“What?”

“Yeah...I was eavesdropping on one of my pops conversations, and I heard him mention your mom and why your pops is mad at him.”

“Oh my God. My mom mentioned cheating on my dad...Do you think it was with your dad?”

I shrugged. “Could be. I don’t put it past my pops. He was a friendly nigga after losing my moms.”

“Wow...That would explain why he’s so against your dad.” She sat up and looked at me. “I hate what my father did to us. I could understand him being upset, as any father would be after catching their child in a bad way, but he took things to the extreme, and I allowed him.”

Her eyes fell away, and I lifted her head to look into her eyes.

“I don’t want to dwell on the past no more. We’re grown, you’re here, and you make decisions for your own life now. I wish you would have come to me once you went to college, but I understand why you didn’t. You don’t have to be afraid anymore, Mo. I don’t care what that man says he’s going to do; I got us from here on out. Okay?”

She nodded and kissed my lips.

“But now there’s Justin. I know he’s going to try to take Mariah away from me. I know he’s going to use me not having a job and that I’m messing around with you against me. We have to keep this thing quiet, at least until my divorce is final.”

I shook my head as I sat up and leaned my head back in deep thought. I hated this shit. I didn't like it one bit, but I knew she was right. My mind was already formulating a plan to fuck her pops and that nigga up. It was only a matter of time—which was soon. I was about to pay his old ass a visit that was about to have him calling on God to spare him from my wrath. Morgan straddled my lap and pecked my lips.

“It's going to be over soon. I promise. I knew there was no way after seeing you again that I wouldn't choose you. You've been choosing me for a long time.” Her eyes perused our spacious bedroom. “You literally bought our dream home and decorated it just how I wanted it. I still haven't explored everything, but from what I've seen, you designed it with me in mind.”

“Everything I did was with you in mind. I was serious about you then, and I'm serious about you now. I don't care what you have to do to release yourself from that nigga. Just get it done, and let me worry about the rest. You hear me?”

“I hear you, baby... You were right, though. I wasn't ready for that grown penis.” She giggled as I grabbed her ass and smiled. “I'm already thinking of ways to speed up this divorce process so I can get back to you.”

“Don't worry about shit, mama. Everything is going to go how it was always meant to be.”

“I agree. I love you.”

“I love you more, baby. Now, let me see how much.”

Our love was why she got pregnant and gave birth to my daughter. I was robbed. I was cheated. I needed that time back, and to be able to do all the things I told her we were going to do. I needed her to know that fuck nigga she married was never meant

to be in her space.

I walked through the parking lot of Renewed Salvation Baptist Church, seeing people outside setting up for some type of event. Memorial Day was a few days away, so I assumed Gio put something together for the church.

Before I stepped through the doors of the church, I asked God to forgive me for what I was about to say and do. This man was no man of God. I'd met a sinner with more compassion than this man. This man didn't know me and never tried to, but he was about to meet the nigga I keep bottled up.

Walking inside, the church was empty. The church was big, and it probably held up to a thousand members. I walked down a hall seeing multiple doors until I came upon the one that had his name on it. Without knocking, I opened the door and wished I could unsee what the fuck I was seeing. He had his back turned toward the door with a woman on her knees. The nigga was so engrossed in getting his dick sucked that he didn't even hear me come in.

Good.

I moved hurriedly over to him, putting his ass in a tight chokehold. Ol' girl screamed and ran out of the room as Gio bucked against me. He had about a hundred pounds on me, but I had been taught early on how to squabble up. Cole wouldn't have it any other way because we had to protect the women in our lives.

“Wha—Gah!” He tried to get out, but my grip was tight.

“Yeah, call on the Lord. You gon' need Him to save ya ass from me killing you.”

I took my fist and pounded it on his big ass stomach twice then dropped him. His pants were at his ankles as he coughed profusely. He struggled for a good minute before I let him get up to fix himself. Once he was on his feet, he swung at me. I dodged it and hit him twice. He fell into his desk but quickly regained his footing and charged at me. Upon his approach, I grabbed him, flipping him on his back, giving him body shots.

“One. Two. Three...” I counted each hit. When I got to thirteen, I made sure I hit him directly in the mouth. Blood spilled from his lip as I stood upright, breathing heavily.

“You motherfucka!” He spat. “You will regret putting your hands on me!”

I smirked at him. “There he is. The real man beyond the pulpit.”

He struggled to his feet as he fixed himself, still groaning in pain.

“You don’t know my life. You don’t know anything about me, little nigga.”

“That’s funny. I said the same thing about you.”

“I know everything about you Newson niggas. Y’all think y’all hot shit, but ain’t nothing but hell raisers...poisoning your own people, taking their hard earned money—”

“Shut the fuck up.” My ears were starting to burn from the heat searing through me.

“You were the same motherfucka on the block doing the same exact shit. How can you help people renew their salvation when you in here getting your dick sucked by a woman who is a member of your congregation? Tell me that, pastor.”

He rubbed his jaw as he stared at me. I could see the evil man resting inside of him. This man was a false prophet, leading his flock to eternal damnation.

“You need to mind your business. Just because I have my demons to deal with, doesn’t mean I can’t lead someone to their salvation.”

I chuckled. “You’re fucking sick, man. I’ve always known it. You even had your wife and daughters fooled into believing you cared about them, yet you force them into marriages with fuck niggas who do the same shit you do. They just don’t claim to be holier than thou.”

“How’s your wife Diana?” He smirked at me as if he was waiting to call me out.

I laughed. “I don’t know how my ex-wife is doing, Luci. But fuck all of that. I have a good mind to kill your stupid ass, but I know what it’ll do to my girl. Even though she can’t stand your bitch ass, I know she doesn’t want to see you dead. You’re the worst type of nigga and should be ashamed of yourself for putting on that robe and

claiming to be a man of God. There's a special place in hell for niggas like you."

"Fuck you. I should have turned your punk ass daddy in when I had the chance and made you and those bitches you call sisters orphans. You won't get away with putting your hands on me."

I moved my foot far back and kicked him in his shin like I was playing soccer. He almost fell before I grabbed him by his collar and looked him in the eyes.

"That evidence you think you have on my pops is long gone. And guess who got rid of it? The very woman you lay next to at night. I paid her a visit before I came here. I had to know why she allowed your potbelly ass to break up my happy home. Why she allowed you to keep my fucking daughter away from me." I sneered, getting even more pissed. "And she told me that before Morgan and I even got together, she sat on a real nigga's lap and had a good time. It was so good that she was considering leaving you for him, and that's why you're mad. Glad she didn't, though."

I tossed him into the lounge chair that sat in the corner.

"I was going to let my pops handle you, but this shit was personal. I know why you didn't want me with your daughter, but answer me one question, Lucifer. Why would you make my wife keep my daughter away from me? Huh?"

"You think I wanted some hoodlum with my daughter?" He whimpered. "The shit that your father was into would have killed her. My daughter was too good to be slumming with the likes of you niggas. I refused for her to be associated with you evildoers. You had already corrupted her; I wasn't letting you do the same to my grandchild."

"Do you know me, my nigga?"

“I do!”

“You don’t. You ran with my father. He put food in your punk ass mouth and kept you living lavishly. You decided to ‘follow the Lord,’ ran off with a million dollars of his money, opened a church, and kept a video tape of him killing someone as leverage if he ever decided to come for you. Little do you know, he spared you because of your wife and kids.

“My father may have made some mistakes, but his heart was good. He taught me and my sisters the right way and how not to follow in his footsteps. You don’t know me, motherfucka. But you should thank God, my mother, and your daughter that you’re being spared today.

“You allowed a fuck nigga to marry my wife, get her pregnant, and claim my seed as his own. Good thing Queenie showed me grace because I really want to wrap your belt around your neck and strangle you for that bullshit you pulled.”

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He scoffed. “You need to be thanking me. Justin is a great father to Megan, and no matter what you say, you can’t convince me that you would have been any different from your fuckedup father. Look at what you just did to me. You call yourself a professional doctor acting this way?”

“You just don’t quit, do you?” I chuckled menacingly. “All of your sins are about to come crashing down on you, and I’m going to have a front row seat of your downfall. If I were a snitch bitch like you, I’d tell Mrs. May how you got another woman in here sucking on your rotten dick.

“But I’m sure she’ll find out everything you’ve been doing in the dark. Keep my name out of your fucked up mouth. I’m sure Morgan is going to find out that I beat your ass, but the good thing is she won’t care, and she still gon’ fuck with me. You can’t stop shit this time, big boy.”

I patted him twice on his cheek then turned to walk away just as Mrs. May entered the office. Tears were streaming down her face. I was sure it was from hearing about her husband’s infidelity and ungodly ways.

“May—” Gio started, but she held up her hand.

“My flight is already booked to go to the Philippines to stay with my mother for a while. I came here to tell you that she was sick and needed me to come down, and this couldn’t have come at a better time. I’m done with you, Gioni. It’s been a long time coming, and it couldn’t have come sooner. I pray that God forgives you for all the wrong you’ve done.”

His eyes fell and face grew solemn. “You can’t leave me, Maylynn. You vowed your life to me.”

“Tuh. Watch me. I wish I would stay married to you after the mess you’ve been doing! I can’t believe you, Gioni. You really are the devil, and you really need help. Goodbye.” She then looked at me. “Thank you, Nehemiah. I’m glad somebody finally beat his ass.” She shook her head. “Go get my daughter. I should have done something a long time ago. You two loved each other no matter what that nasty, evil man said. You were always good to her, and she loved you dearly. The proof of that is in human form.”

She smiled at me as I gave her a hug then left. My deed was done. I got my ones with his fake ass, and now, I could move on to finally living happily ever after with the woman of my dreams. There was just one more obstacle we had to get through, and I prayed I didn’t have to hurt that nigga too.

Morgan

One Month Later...

The month following my blow up with Justin and reuniting with Nehemiah had been a whirlwind. I tried my best to be reasonable with Justin, but he was being the asshole I knew he would be. He fought me on everything concerning our divorce.

He wanted the house, my car, and full custody of Mariah, which he was never going to get. We had court next week, and I had been a nervous wreck. Justin stayed too busy with his job and fucking married couples to even care for Mariah like I could.

I still hadn’t faced the Duprees. I assumed Justin told them that I knew about them because they had someone else picking up their son from school. I honestly didn’t give a damn anymore about their trysts. I wasn’t fucking with Justin anymore, and

that was a known fact.

Then there was Nehemiah. I knew he was getting fed up with Justin stopping me from completely moving on with him. Even though he never voiced or expressed his feelings about it, I knew him. We had been sneaking around because I couldn't let Justin hold anything against me when it came to the custody of our daughter. I knew this reminded him of the old days because he voiced his dislike of our situation one night when we were having dinner at his home.

I completely understood that, but I could do nothing until this was over. However, he and Megan had been hanging out almost every weekend. She had finally met her grandfather and aunts, and since then, I barely got to see my baby. They had missed so much time with her, so I didn't fret whenever they would pick her up during school days to hang out with them. And Megan ate it all up.

I didn't blame her. She deserved to have everything she had been missing from them. Justin only had his mother and aunt. They were too old to do fun stuff with Mariah, but I still allowed her to be with them...even if it was for a few hours.

I could tell Mariah's love was different for Josephine than it was with my mom. She didn't get excited when she would visit Justin's mom like she would with mine. However, she did love her grandmother, and Josephine was sweet compared to her nefarious son.

Today was the day of the concert and Nehemiah's birthday. He purchased more tickets so his sisters, cousin, and best friend could attend since he wanted to celebrate with them also. Lawrence ended up declining going to the concert, so I told him to give his ticket to Drue so we could all celebrate together. We were going to meet back up with Lawrence after the concert.

All day, I had been running around trying to get Megan's pre-birthday items since she

was inviting some friends to her father's house for a pool party and sleepover. I was currently trying to find something to wear while Drue did something to Megan's wild mane. My baby was so cute in her Balenciaga sneakers with rhinestones on the toe and an airbrushed photo of Chris Brown on the side.

She wore light denim shorts and a white tee shirt with an airbrushed photo of him on it that read team Breezy. She had diamonds in her ears that Nehemiah bought her as a birthday gift and had to cost more than my car payment. My baby was excited, and I loved that for her. I walked out of my closet with a slinky black dress just as Megan stood from the chair.

"Mom, please put that back. You're going to a concert. Why are you trying to dress like you're going to a formal dinner?" Megan asked while Drue snickered.

"I have never been to a concert before, Gingerbread. You tell me how I'm supposed to dress."

"Say less."

"Oop." Drue laughed as Megan walked inside of my closet.

"Not your lingo changing! I see your father and his family are rubbing off on you."

"Hey, not too much on my pops."

I chuckled and shook my head as Drue laughed harder.

"I love that for you, Meggie pooh!" Drue exclaimed. "They must be getting closer."

I lowered my voice. "Girl, that's like her best friend. I kind of feel bad, though."

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“Why?”

“Because she rarely talks to Justin. She’s not mean to him or anything, but she hasn’t been wanting to go with him like she has been with Hemi.”

“He hurt you. Megan isn’t stupid, Mo. A child feels their mother’s energy, and she saw you in pain. Did you really think their relationship was going to be the same? Not to mention, she has her real dad in the picture now.”

“I know, but—”

“Here you go, Mom.”

Megan returned to the bedroom holding up a black leather skater skirt, my black mesh bodysuit, and lace stockings.

“I am not wearing that,” I said, shaking my head.

“Why not? You bought it.” She shrugged.

“She’s right, Sis,” Drue agreed.

“I know, but I meant to take it back. That’s why the tags are still on. I thought I wanted it until I put it on and realized I didn’t want to dress that sexy in public as a married woman.”

“Umm, not to burst your bubble, but you’re kinda single now. So, go get dressed

before we're late."

"Yeah, Mom. I don't want to miss a minute of his show!"

I rolled my eyes at them as I went to get dressed. I had a feeling this night was going to end with my ass in the air.

By 6:30 p.m., Nehemiah pulled into my driveway in a brand-new Cadillac truck. I could see Chelsea, Shelby, and Shanise in the truck as Drue, myself, and Megan filtered out of the house.

"What's up, Newson gang!" Drue exclaimed.

"Drueskiii!" Shelby exclaimed, jumping out of the truck and hurrying toward her. They embraced then Shelby wrapped her arms around Megan.

"You ready to sing Breezy's songs, niecey pooh?"

"I aaam! I'm so excited!"

"Me too! You know that's your auntie's man, right? Let's get it!" She laughed.

Shelby walked over to me and hugged me tightly. "Girl, you had my brother drooling when you walked out here. You look bad ass, Mo Boogie."

I giggled as my eyes went to Nehemiah standing outside the truck staring at me. Only when Megan approached him did he tear his eyes away from me and smile down at her. I walked to the truck, heading to the passenger side as Chelsea stepped out. We locked eyes then fell into an embrace. I hadn't seen the Newsons since coming back into Nehemiah's life. When I saw Chelsea in the nail salon, I was frozen, not knowing whether to hug her or run. So when we hugged, I felt the tears surface.

“I missed you so much, Chels.”

“You have no idea how much I missed you. Please, don’t cry. You’re going to ruin your makeup.”

“Fuck this makeup.” I laughed and she joined in.

“Oop! Not my little church friend using profanity!”

“If you knew half of what I’d been through, you’d be cursing too.”

“Touché. Glad you’re back, Boogie.”

I smiled. “Glad to be back.”

Nehemiah approached us as he opened the back door for Chelsea, and she climbed in. He opened the passenger door, smiling down at me.

“You look like you’re ready to get fucked tonight,” he whispered.

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I bit my lip and tried not to blush.

“I just might be.” I winked then climbed inside.

“Hi, Shanise.”

“Hey, Boogie. It’s good to see you.”

“Same,” I replied, blowing her a kiss.

On the way to the Pine Knob Music Theatre, we played all of Chris Brown’s older songs for Megan. I knew she listened to his recent music, but she always had headphones on. I really didn’t want to seem like a bad parent, but I couldn’t stop what she had been exposed to. Prayerfully, he would keep some of his songs PG. That was far-fetched, though. As long as she didn’t let his music influence her to do bad things, then I was okay with it.

The good thing about it was, Megan wasn’t easily influenced. Yes, she sang inappropriate songs, but she wouldn’t reenact any of them—at least I hoped.

My phone buzzed with a text notification. I looked at Nehemiah as he nodded for me to look at it. I opened it and couldn’t stop myself from blushing.

My Hemi:Them braids is doing shit to me, Mo.

Me:Watch the road, sir. You’re carrying precious cargo.??

My Hemi: I'm hip, but I got this. Once we get everybody to their seats, we're sliding to the bathroom.

Me: We can't!

My Hemi: Bet we can.

Me: You're such a freak... But I'm with it. I have a birthday gift for you.??

My Hemi: That's all I needed to know. The only gift I want is my??in that??

I laughed and focused my attention out of the window. This man was going to ruin my underwear.

We pulled into the parking lot thirty minutes later, and we all filed out of the truck. Megan took Nehemiah's hand as we followed the large crowd into the theatre.

I couldn't lie. I was excited to experience my first concert, especially spending it with the man I was supposed to experience all of my firsts with.

The concert was lit with the DeeJay egging the crowd on to sing along to Deborah Cox's "Nobody's Supposed to Be Here." The ushers smiled graciously as they directed us to our seats which were three rows away from the stage. Nehemiah had to have paid a lot of money for these seats for us to be so close.

"We'll be right back, y'all. Baby girl, you want something from the concession stand?" Nehemiah asked.

"A beef sausage with mustard and relish and a cherry slushee."

"Gotcha." He grabbed my hand as we headed back up the stairs to the concession

stands.

“Don’t get lost!” Shanise yelled after us.

I laughed and shook my head because I was sure we wouldn’t be back right away.

As we moved toward the restrooms, I spotted a familiar face standing in line to get an alcoholic beverage.

I paused my stride. “Diana?”

She turned and looked at me. Shock covered her face before she looked at Nehemiah and frowned, then her eyes came back to me.

“Morgan Prescott, what a surprise.”

“It’s been a long time. How—”

“Baby, let’s go,” Nehemiah urged.

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“Oh...right. It was good seeing you, Diana,” I lied.

“I wish I could say the same.”

Now, it was my turn to frown. It was no secret that she never liked me. Although Hemi always told me that she was a friend of the family, I always felt there was some underlying feelings she had toward him whenever I'd see her around. Not to mention, she used to try to bully me in school.

“You got some sort of problem with me, Diana? I always felt like you did,” I asked.

She smirked slightly. “Nah...There's no problem. I guess I shouldn't be surprised to see you with my leftovers.”

“Diana, cool the fuck out,” Nehemiah warned.

“Leftovers?”

“Oh, he didn't tell you?”

“Mo, let's go.” Nehemiah took my hand, trying to pull me away, but I snatched my hand away.

“No, but why don't you tell me?”

“Wow, Hemi. You didn't tell her that our divorce was only a month ago?”

“Divorce? You married her?” I asked in shock.

“He sure did.”

“It definitely wasn’t my choice. You know that, Mo.”

“Yeah, but...her? The same broad that put gum in my hair and hid my trainers right before a tournament?”

“Yeah, me. And I didn’t do those things to you. My friends did.”

“Because you told them to. I always knew you wanted him. How long were you two married for?”

“Morgan.” I held my hand up to his mouth as I stared at Diana.

“Ten years.” She informed me with a smirk on her face.

“Wow...I guess he wanted you too.”

“That’s a lie. I never wanted her, and she knew it. Our fathers forced that shit on us, Morgan. You know the story behind that shit, so don’t trip. It’s me and our daughter’s birthday. Let’s not ruin the night, baby. I’ll explain more when we get home.” Nehemiah tried to convince me, but I knew there was more to the story.

“Daughter?” she asked, frowning.

“Yes. I had his baby. She’ll be fourteen tomorrow. Enjoy the concert,” I told her, walking away, but I pivoted. “Oh, and while you’re talking about leftovers, remember I had this nigga first while you were begging on the sidelines.”

I headed toward the concession stand instead of the restrooms because that good feeling I had was gone.

“Morgan...”

“It’s okay, Nehemiah. I’m not mad. Just disappointed that the same woman who lowkey tried to bully me and always said that you were going to be her man actually became your woman...your wife. Did you love her?”

“I will always have love for Diana, but I never loved her or was in love with her like I am with you. I don’t want you to feel a way about this, Mo. That marriage didn’t mean shit to me.”

I sighed deeply and nodded. I was hurt that he married her. That woman did everything in her power to make me feel insecure. She would make it her business to share stories about how Nehemiah would sleep over at her house or she would sleep over at his.

I trusted Nehemiah, though, so she never made me feel as if our relationship was being threatened. Chelsea and Shelby used to make sure she never got close to him when I wasn’t around, so I believed and trusted my man. But to be married to her for ten years? Forced or not, he married my arch nemesis.

“I don’t want to dwell on that. Let’s just enjoy the concert and your birthday.” I dismissed him.

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Yes, I was jealous. I knew I shouldn't have been, but he married Diana Wilson, was having sex with her, and even said he was trying to make a baby with her. That was my ring he put on her finger. Just thinking about it had me even more vexed with my father and myself for allowing him to dictate my life. Hell, I was even pissed at Justin's raggedy ass.

Because I didn't want to be the rebellious kid, I went with the flow, and it cost me and Megan years without Nehemiah and almost cost me to never be with him like this again. I didn't care what Nehemiah said. He had to have loved her enough to want to give her a baby.

Nehemiah turned me to face him. My eyes instantly watered looking at my first true love. So many roadblocks stood in our way the moment we got together, and it took now fourteen years for me to see him again. I loved this man with my soul and hated that life took us in different directions, being with two different people who we didn't love or want. While Nehemiah may not have given Diana children, she still had his last name first, and that bothered me. It was supposed to be me.

"Don't do that, Morgan."

"I can't help it. Everything is so messed up."

"It's not, baby. We're here in this moment together. I got you back, and there's no way anybody is going to fuck this up for us. I guarantee the next person that tries is going to get their ass handed to them."

"You married that stupid broad."

“And you married that lame ass nigga and gave my daughter his last name, so we’re even. Did he sign her birth certificate?”

“No! That was one thing I wouldn’t allow him to do. She wasn’t his. I didn’t care what the doctors or my father said. I may have given her his last name for school records, but your last name is on her birth certificate.”

He took a deep breath and let it out.

“I don’t want to ruin our day. Let’s just enjoy this time before you have to leave me.”

I nodded as he kissed my lips then moved up in the line. I hated this for us, but I was determined to end this season and start anew.

No one would ever replace the love I had for Nehemiah Newson, and Diana Wilson wasn’t getting her claws into my man. I was now and forever going to have his heart.

Nehemiah

The Next Day...

My baby girl’s pre-birthday was everything she imagined it to be. She got to see her favorite artist in concert for the first time and stayed the night at her aunt BB’s house for the first time. I knew she would love it over there because, much like mine, Shelby’s house was kid-friendly too.

I was trying to make up for lost time, so whatever Megan wanted, I was going to be sure she got it.

That shit with Diana pissed me off. She knew telling Morgan that she was my ex would set her off, and as bad I was wanted to strangle her, I knew she only did that

shit out of pure jealousy. It was in her DNA to be a mean girl. Diana tried that shit in high school, but my sisters always put her in her place when I wasn't there to defend Morgan.

Morgan wasn't weak by any means, but back then, she was on her church girl trip and always wanted to see the good in people. I could see remnants of that in her now because she was playing with this divorce shit. I knew the process of dividing the household and money all too well, but this had been going on for a month now, and a nigga was getting agitated with this bum trying to play in her face. It was only a matter of time before we came face to face to have that conversation.

"See you later, Anna," I said, heading out of my office to go be a host for my demanding teenager.

"Have a good weekend, Dr. Newson," she replied.

I hurried out the door, so I could make it across town to get her birthday cake from the bakery before they closed. My cell rang, and Loon's name flashed across the screen.

"What up, sleeze?"

"My nigga, since when do you start driving yourself around?"

I chuckled. "Since now I guess."

"You foolin'."

"I mean, I can take care of myself, G. You know I keep that thang on me."

"I know that, but I'm the eyes behind ya head."

“True that. Where you at?”

“Driving behind your slow ass.”

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I looked in the rearview, seeing his silver Silverado tailing me.

“My bad. I’m still kind of off from last night.”

“Yooo, last night was like that.”

It truly was. After dropping Megan and Shelby off, the rest of us hit the town and went dancing. Well, the ladies did all the dancing, while me and Loon chilled and had drinks. Morgan blew mind when she got on the dance floor and started shaking her ass. I had never known her to dance, especially not as good as she did last night. My shorty was throwing that ass like she created that shit. So much so, I had that ass up in the air as soon as we crossed my threshold. Little Morgan wasn’t little no more. My baby was Big Morgan now. Just thinking about her tight, wet pussy had me ready to say fuck this cake and go eat hers. I shook from my thoughts as I tuned back into the conversation.

“Tell me about it. I can’t party like I used to, but Mo did her big one.”

“Fa sho. Who knew Lil Jesus had it in her?”

We both laughed.

“Chill on my girl, nigga.”

“Aw shit. I forgot how sick in love you was with her. I see you about to start acting funny and shit now that you got her and your shorty back. That’s why your funny looking ass driving yourself around and shit.”

“Yo, fuck you, man.”

“Nah, but that Rollie she gifted you was dope.”

“It was. I never thought to buy me one, but now, I need me a few of them shits.”

“Late ass nigga. And Shani gon’ make me fuck her ass up if she keeps playing with me.”

I laughed. “Loon, leave my fucking cousin alone, man.”

“Nah, G. I need that.”

“Fuck my people look like dating a criminal when she’s a whole defense attorney?”

He laughed. “Perfect balance, my nigga. I do a crime, and she gets me off. Simple.”

“So, you basically saying you trying to use her?”

“Aye, chill with that. I’m licensed to kill, my guy. You know I been feeling Shanise since before I started cutting up in these streets.”

“Yeah, whatever, bum.”

“Where the fuck is we going, anyway?”

“You know it’s your niece’s birthday. She’s having a pool party at the house, so I’m on cake duty.”

“Aw, damn. How the fuck I forget that quick? I ain’t used to you saying my niece. I gotta get her a gift or something.”

“I know, man. Shit sounds foreign to me too sometimes, but she’s mine no doubt.”

“I’m happy for you, G. Shits gon’ work out between you and Mo Boog. It always does.”

“Thanks, brodie. I receive that. I’m just ready for her to be released from that clown ass nigga she roped herself into a marriage with. That nigga gon’ make me come see him next.”

“You want me to handle it?”

“Nah...not yet. I’ma let the shit play out. We’ll see if he needs a little reinforcement soon enough.”

“Facts.”

I pulled into the parking lot of the bakery and stepped out. Loon followed me as we walked inside of the bakery. There were a few people inside getting serviced as we waited in line behind a dude and his girl. I took out my phone to retrieve the order number when my ears tuned in to the couple in front of us. I wasn’t trying to be in their business, but their conversation caught my attention.

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“I don’t want to keep talking about this, Jo. It’s my daughter’s birthday. I’m just trying to make her happy today.”

“I’m just saying. Why are you dragging this out? Jonathan and I take great care of you. It’s not like you really loved her anyway.”

“So, it’s okay for you to be married, but not me? She has my kids. I won’t let her leave me and take them away from me.”

“I’m not saying that, and I’m not trying to be insensitive to your feelings. But she caught you, Justin. The cat is out of the bag now, so there is no reason why you should fight her on this. Let her have what she wants and split custody. What’s so wrong about that?”

“Can we not talk about this here?”

“Fine. Did she even respond to you taking her out for a few hours?”

“I talked to Megan, and she said she would come over for a few hours. Apparently, her father is throwing her a party at his house. For some reason, I think Morgan is only doing this because of his ass. Fucking coward. He ran away from his responsibility and now wants to come back and play daddy of the fucking year.” He scoffed.

Loon and I locked eyes, and I signaled for him to chill. I couldn’t believe this was the goofy ass nigga Morgan chose to marry. The fact that he was standing in a fucking bakery with a whole other woman talking mad shit was crazy work. This man sounded like he wasn’t just having a regular poly relationship; he sounded like he was

getting fucked by her husband too.

Pussy ass nigga. He wasn't taking my daughter nowhere.

"I'm so sorry for the delay. We had some orders that were backed up." The baker came back to the front with his little cake.

"It's fine. How much do I owe you again?"

"Twenty-seven fifty."

While fuck boy paid for that cheap ass cake, Loon and I went back outside and waited for them to come out. As soon as they stepped out, I bumped into him purposely, making the cake fall out of his hands.

"What the hell, man! You can't fu—You!" he exclaimed, looking at me.

"Oh, you know me?" I asked.

"Of course, I know you. You're the deadbeat asshole who now wants to start coming around after fourteen years."

"You and fat boy seem to have gotten your wires crossed about me. Neither one of you clowns know me. Because if you did, you wouldn't even exist in my girls' world."

"Clown? It seems like you're the one that likes to do magic tricks, Houdini."

I didn't have time to stand here and go back and forth with him. I checked my watch, realizing I only had twenty minutes until the bakery closed.

“Considering you’re standing here with your side piece, buying a cake for your soon-to-be ex-stepdaughter, I’d say the biggest clown out here is you. I appreciate you for standing in for my daughter when motherfuckas like your ex-father-in-law did everything in his power to shut me out, but I got it from here, homie. Daddy’s home, and I’m here to stay.”

“You will never be a father to my daughter. That’ll only happen over my dead body.”

“What color you want baby girl to wear to your funeral?”

“Justin, let’s just go, okay?”

Shorty looked scared. I understood, though. I had shed my lab coat and rolled up the sleeves on my shirt, so I was sure my tattoos and my size were intimidating. I played football in high school and a little in college, so I outweighed homie by at least a hundred pounds. Not to mention, I had two inches on him.

I wanted to squeeze his head like a sponge just from how he looked at me.

He chuckled menacingly. “It’s hard to believe you’re a doctor. You look just like the thug Gio said you were.”

“Fuck you and him. Megan’s good. She don’t need your two-dollar cake or five minute date. Stay the fuck away from Morgan and my daughter. They don’t need shit from you, my nigga.”

“We’ll see about that.” He took ol’ girl by the hand and stormed away. I shook my head and went back inside the bakery.

“You know he’s going to be a problem, right?”

“Yeah...but I’m the bigger problem.”

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Having a kid wasn't something that I'd always dreamed about, but it had always been on my agenda when Morgan and I were together. We always had talks of being married, having children, and living in this very home. The night before I left for college, we both were emotional—her more than me, but knowing that I was leaving her behind had a nigga sad as hell.

I wasn't thinking about protecting us, and it all happened so fast, so I knew she wasn't thinking either. That night produced this fourteen year old that had my house full of teenagers that I was about to put out. These little heathens were live as hell, but the smile on my baby's face was priceless.

I had no idea how I was living without her in my life. In the matter of a month, she had shown me what true love really meant. Coupled with having Morgan back in my life, I was a grateful man.

The DJ mixed the tunes while my uncle Trent manned the grill. If uncle Trent didn't know how to do shit else, he knew how to grill.

I had to put my eagle eyes on because Megan neglected to tell me that she was inviting boys to the party. Although my family was in attendance, I still kept my eyes on these little horn ball niggas.

Morgan emerged from the patio doors rocking a teal one-piece with cut out sides, a sheer teal cover up, and gold three-inch sandals. Her hair was wild and curly with a pair of gold-tinted glasses. She had her little mama on her hip matching her fly with her hair wild and curly too.

My heart galloped as I let out a slow breath. A nigga had been waiting to exhale since our separation. She walked around hugging everybody, and when she got to my father, I watched their exchange. My pops was never mean to Morgan, but I could tell because of who her father was, he kept his distance. He would speak and be cordial, but he never showed her any affection. Of course, Morgan took it as he didn't like her, but I knew my pops was cautious because of who she was connected to.

I watched as they said a few words, then he tickled Mariah's side and she erupted in a fit of giggles. He then hugged Morgan and kissed her cheek just as Megan walked up. She wrapped her arms around my pops and he cringed from her being wet and laughed while kissing her forehead. I grabbed a beer from the cooler and made my way over to them.

"Daddy, are you getting in the pool with us?" Megan asked.

"In a minute, baby girl."

"Okay. Come on, Mariah."

"Him not you daddy," Mariah blurted out.

We all looked at each other before Morgan kissed her cheek.

"He is, Honey Bee. Your sister has two dads now."

"Can me have two daddies too? Pleeease!"

"Soon, little one," I assured her.

"Yayyy! I like you now, Megan."

“Yay! Come on. Let’s go swim.”

“Make sure you put on her floaters and goggles,” Morgan told Megan.

“I know. I know.” She took Mariah and walked off.

I slid my arm around Morgan’s waist and kissed her temple. I looked at my pops, and he smiled at us.

“Y’all look real good together. Picture perfect as it should have been.” He patted my shoulder before he walked off as well. I looked down at Morgan and smiled.

“Hey, sexy.”

She smiled up at me. “Hey, handsome. Can I talk to you in private?”

I nodded and took her hand, leading her back inside. I felt bad for Leann as I looked around the house at all the shit she was going to have to clean. I wouldn’t put it all on her, though. I was going to help her since this was my daughter’s birthday.

I led Morgan into my den and poured us a drink. I was almost sure she wanted to talk to me about her father, so I prepared myself to tell her that I warned her about what I was going to do.

I handed her the drink. “Talk to me, baby.”

“Did you beat up my dad?”

“I did.”

She paused, biting the inside of her jaw, looking worried.

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“He wanted to press charges on you, Nehemiah. If my mom hadn’t threatened him, you’d be in jail right now.”

I chuckled. “Mo, I’m not scared of going to jail, baby. I told you I was going to beat his ass. He kept me away from my daughter for years, making me miss experiencing all of her firsts because of some stupid ass beef he has with my father. If I’m being honest, he deserves to be lying in a casket looking up at the roof of his church. He’s lucky I spared him.”

She walked up to me, wrapping her arms around my waist.

“I just got you back. Why are you trying to leave me again?”

“I ain’t going nowhere, Morgan. Ain’t shit else going to stand in the way of me having you and my daughter in my life. Ever again.”

“That’s not all.” She pulled her phone from her swimsuit, clicked around on it, then handed it to me. It was a text thread between her and fuck boy about what occurred between us today. He was calling her all kinds of names and threatening to take Mariah from her. I handed her the phone back.

So, I see gotta introduce this nigga to these hands too.

“I see these niggas want to keep testing me.”

“Nehemiah, what did you say to him? You know I’m trying to make things less complicated for everyone.”

“Listen. I know I only showed you the nice side of me. That’s all I ever want you to know and see. But when it comes to the people I love being fucked with, I’ll go to hell or jail about them. I wasn’t trying to step to homie, but when him and his side bitchstood in the line at the bakery poppin’ mad shit about my wife thinking he was about to take my daughter from her party, I had to address it.”

“He was with Jolie?”

“I don’t know who the broad is. The fact of the matter is he cheated on you first. So, all that shit you saying about us being careful is dead. If I want to stand in the middle of Downtown with a bullhorn to let motherfuckas know that you’re mine, then that’s what I’ll do.

“Also, you work as a receptionist at my practice. I’ll have Shani draw up some fake check stubs or whatever we gotta do to move this process along faster because I’m getting very impatient.”

She sighed and kissed my lips. “I know. Whatever you have to do to get me back to you, I’m here for it. I do want to brush up on my physiology degree. I really allowed myself to be reduced to...nothing.”

“You are something. You’re a dope ass mom, a beautiful soul, and got some bomb ass pussy. Now that’s a whole lotta something, baby.”

She mushed me and laughed just as Shanise came rushing inside the room.

“What happened?” I asked.

“Gio is here, and your dad, my dad, and Loon are about to act the fuck up.”

“Shit.”

“Oh, God!” Morgan exclaimed, rushing out of the room as I hurried behind her.

This nigga had to have a death wish.

“Keep the kids out back, Shan.”

“Okay.”

Once we made it to the front, I saw Mrs. May standing in between my pops and Gio. The stare down between them could have dropped a million men. Morgan rushed over to them, assisting her mother.

“No. Hell no! Y’all are not doing this at my daughter’s birthday party! Dad, I asked you not to come here.”

“That is my granddaughter, and it’s her birthday. Am I not allowed to celebrate with her?”

“You weren’t invited here,” I told him.

“So get the fuck out,” my pops added.

He was pissed. Even though he didn’t show it, I’d known the man all my life to know when he was about to turn up.

“Please, everybody just calm down. This is my granddaughter’s birthday party. Do not embarrass her with this foolishness,” Mrs. May said. “Gioni, I told you not to follow me here—”

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“As long as you’re here, I’m here. I’m not leaving you around these people.”

“Because you see what happens when you leave her unattended.” My pops smirked at him.

Mrs. May whipped her head around toward him. “You shut your mouth. Stop bringing up old stuff to antagonize him!”

“If you don’t get him out of here, it’s going to be more than me antagonizing his big ass.”

“I didn’t come here to bring trouble. Just want to see my granddaughter on her birthday.”

I chuckled. “Humbled that ass, didn’t I?”

Morgan elbowed me. “Okay, stop this. Please. Dad, can you wait by the car? I’ll get Megan.”

“I want him off my property. He can see her another time.”

“Nehemiah, please,” Morgan pleaded.

Gio scoffed. “And this is the man you want to be with?”

“Daddy, stop. You need to understand that I am a grown woman now. I make my own decisions. And if my decisions end with me making a mistake, then that’s on me.

I have always followed everything you taught me aside from getting pregnant. I respected you, even when you didn't deserve it. I won't let you ruin this for me or Megan. I'm going to be with Nehemiah, and that's the end of that. I'm done allowing you to manipulate me."

"I was only doing what was best for you and Megan. This man slept with my wife, sells drugs, and kills people. I didn't want you all caught up in his mess!"

"Nigga, get yo' hypocritical ass away from my son's house. You praising the Lord on Sundays but big tricking on every ho in this city off my million dollars you stole during the week! If it wasn't for your daughter and my granddaughter, I'd do your bitch ass in. Get the fuck on before you won't make it back to your whip."

"Let me lay his ass out," Uncle Trent said, cracking his knuckles.

"Go, Gioni. I'll bring Megan by tomorrow," Mrs. May told him, pushing him away from my pops and uncle, who were inching closer to him.

"I want you to come home, May. I don't want you around him."

"I'm not you, Gioni. I've learned my lesson. Now, you have to learn yours. I can forgive a lot of things, but the things you've done, you need to take up with God. I'm over it, and I'm done."

"What's going on out here?" Drue asked, coming out front with Shelby and Chelsea behind her.

"Your mother and sister are treating me as if I'm some stranger," Gio replied.

"Oh, okay. I'll see y'all back inside."

“Really, Drue? Your own father?” he asked, acting appalled.

The nerve of this nigga.

“You stopped being my father after I married that scum. Stop trying to play victim when you’re the one who caused all of this. Like I said, I’ll see y’all back inside.” She turned to leave.

“So, this is it? My wife and my daughters are choosing these people over me? I did everything I could to keep you all safe and protected. I sacrificed my life so that you ungrateful broads could have one, and this is how you repay me? Fuck all of you!”

When Gio hit the ground, I didn’t budge. I knew my pops wasn’t going to let him walk away without him catching a fade. I almost felt bad for the nigga—almost. I watched as Uncle Trent and my pops delivered blows to his face and body as Morgan and Mrs. May screamed for them to stop.

“Oh my God! Please, stop! Nehemiah, do something!” Morgan yelled.

I sucked my teeth and went to break it up.

“Pops, Unc, that’s enough,” I told them, pulling them away.

“Get your ass out of here!” Pops yelled. Morgan and Mrs. May tried helping him up, but he yanked away from them.

“You all are going to regret this. Vengeance is mine saith the Lord. The wrath of God will come upon you all. You don’t mess with a child of God!” he yelled, picking himself up from off the ground.

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“Child of God where? Daddy, cut out the act please. Before you get struck by lightning for lying,” Drue said, laughing.

“You all will regret it. Watch.” He stormed off as we all gathered back inside.

“Mr. Newson, you just apologized to me. Now, you beat up my father?” Morgan asked.

“Baby girl, your daddy deserves a bullet in his head, but I spared his ass for the sake of my granddaughter. I know she loves that coward ass, thieving motherfucka, so because of her, his ass ain’t leaking from the hollow tips of my pistol.

“If you want to take up for a man who kept my grand away from her father, manipulated, and threatened you, then you’re not the girl I thought you were.”

“I’m not taking up for him, but he is still my father, and I wouldn’t want to see him hurt no matter how much he hurt me.”

“Mo, Daddy deserved that ass whupping—point, blank, period,” Drue countered then walked off.

“Whatever. I’m over this. Let me get back to my daughter’s party,” Morgan said, walking off as Mrs. May looked at my father, shook her head, then followed her daughter. I looked at my father, and his eyes were glued to her ass.

I chuckled. “Leave that alone, Pop. My girl is not about to become my sister.”

He smirked. "I ain't fucking with it. It was a one-time thing. I only did it to get my payback on his punk ass...However, if you weren't with her daughter, she'd definitely be the next Mrs. Newson."

"I thank the Big Man for that roadblock."

He chuckled. "You gon' have some making up to do later. A new car will make this little situation go away."

"Yeah, write that check, old man." I laughed as I headed back to my daughter's party.

Morgan

One Week Later...

I sat across from Justin and his lawyer as we waited for the judge to return. I had been stressing all week. Shanise was able to get all the proper paperwork so that Justin couldn't use me not having a job to support Mariah against me. Even though I had over twenty thousand in my account, I still needed to show that I could support her when our divorce was final.

The asshole had removed the money from our joint account, not knowing that I had access to all of the accounts. I didn't take it back like I wanted, because at the end of all of this, I knew I would be getting half if not all of it.

"Stop fidgeting, girl. Don't let this man see you sweat," Shanise whispered to me.

"I'm not. I'm just aggravated with all of this."

"It'll be over today. Trust me. This judge handles all my cases. She's tough, but I know her personally, and she owes me a favor. So, like I said, you got this in the

bag.”

I sighed and nodded. Judge Collins returned from her chambers and took a seat.

“After reviewing this case, I am granting Ms. Prescott’s divorce decree. Mr. Coleman will sign off on the documents immediately following dismissal. As far as assets, Ms. Prescott will receive 80 percent of what’s inside the joint account, her car, and the home you all reside in. As it goes for the custody of Mariah Coleman, you both will split custody, but the child will remain in the home with the mother during the week, and with the father on weekends. Mr. Coleman, you have thirty days to remove yourself from the home and relinquish all monies within those thirty days. Court is adjourned.” She banged her gavel as Justin shot up from his seat.

“That’s bullshit!”

“Mr. Rose, control your client, or he will be held in contempt.”

“My apologies, Your Honor.” His lawyer whispered something to Justin as he lowered his head.

“I’m sorry, Your Honor, but this is unfair to me. She just recently started working...if she’s working at all!” Justin stated.

My head reared back. This nigga had to be smoking crack to say something like that.

“Considering there are photos confirming your infidelity, I’d say the divorce is more than fair. As far as the money goes, there was no prenuptial agreement in place. Since the child will be living in the home with the mother, she will obtain the majority of the joint account. Life isn’t fair, Mr. Coleman, and since it’s clear that you make more money than Ms. Prescott, I’d say I’m being very fair. Court is dismissed.”

She banged her gavel once more as Shanise and I stood to leave. I breathed a sigh of relief as we headed out of the doors into the hall.

“You’re a piece of work, Morgan. You know I’m just now starting to get my clientele back up, and you want to take my money and my daughter away from me? Just so you can go be with that bum!”

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“Don’t respond, Morgan. Just keep walking,” Shanise advised.

“I deserve an answer, Mo. The least you can do is give me that.”

“I don’t owe you anything, Justin. You caused this. I was faithful to you and did everything you asked of me, only for you to turn around and do this to me. Just leave me alone. Don’t make this worse than it already is.”

“What? You’re going to sic your thug ass baby daddy on me?”

I shook my head as we continued out of the courthouse and into the parking lot. I bid Shanise a good day and thanked her. I got inside of my car and sat there for a moment.

I didn’t want this for my life. Justin used to be a great substitute that mended my broken heart. I may have been wrong for using him in the beginning, but I actually did fall in love with him. I gave his ass a baby when I was dead set on never giving him children.

Tears flowed from my eyes for my baby. All she’d ever known was Justin, and I didn’t want to take their bond away from them. I didn’t want to break up what she was used to. I had spent so much time living by the rules that I lost myself within those years. I had to get back to the young, vibrant woman I used to be. However, Mariah was young. I prayed that she would eventually get over the fact that her father wasn’t in the home with us anymore and that she’d be seeing Nehemiah a lot more than usual. I wouldn’t move in with him right away, but eventually, I knew we would be living together. Now that I was free from my marriage, it was time we started to

live the life we always dreamed of.

I wiped my tears just as a call came through from Nehemiah.

“Hey.” I answered on second ring.

“Hey, my love. How’d it go?”

“It went good...I just...I hate how life turned out for us. You marrying Diana and me marrying Justin and having a baby with him...it wasn’t supposed to be this way.”

“Morgan...”

“Yes?”

“What did I tell you? Didn’t I say we’re going to stop dwelling on the past? We got each other now, and no one is going to tear us apart this time.”

“I know...I’m just upset that my baby’s life has to be altered because of this.”

“Altered in a good way. She’s young, so this won’t affect her as bad as you think it will. She will adjust.”

“What if she doesn’t take to you like we think she will?”

“Pshh, girl, me and Ri locked in. That’s my mini bestie. What you talking about?”

I giggled. He was right, Mariah clung to him at Megan’s birthday party after all the shenanigans died down. They played in the pool, and he fed her all the ice cream and cake her little heart desired. I didn’t doubt that Mariah would adjust to Nehemiah. I just didn’t want the bond with her father to be forgotten. Nehemiah had this air about

him that people just loved him, and if he loved them back, it was up and stuck from that point on.

“You’re right. I love you, Booby.”

“I love you forever and always, baby. I’ma eat that pussy later.”

I smiled and bit my lip.

“Promise?”

“On my mama.”

I laughed as we said our goodbyes, and I pulled out of the parking lot. I loved that man so much. It had to be God’s plan to place us back in each other’s path. Our love for one another never wavered when we got separated, and although life dealt us a shitty hand, the cards reshuffled, and now, we were playing to win.

“Wait a minute. Repeat that again!” Drue exclaimed after listening to Shanise’s story of her and Loon.

We were at Flood’s Bar & Grill in Downtown Detroit having drinks. The ladies wanted to take me out to celebrate my divorce. I didn’t realize how dull my life had been since leaving home for college. It seemed as if I’d been a shell of myself since leaving home and marrying Justin. Being here with Chelsea, Drue, Shanise, and Shelby made me realize I had been living a boring life.

“Listen. I’m only telling y’all this because I need some advice. Hemi is probably going to kick Loon’s ass, but...I do like him a lot.”

“So, what happened again?” Drue asked.

Shanise rolled her eyes. “You just want me to repeat how dumb I am for letting him eat me alive.”

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We all laughed.

“You weren’t dumb, Shani. I been telling you that you been wanting to sit on the man’s face and lap since we were younger. You just wanted to play hard,” Shelby said, waving her off.

“Whatever. Anyway, how are you and Hemi working out, Boogie?” she asked, taking the heat off of her.

“Everything is how it should have been. It feels surreal at times but feels good no less. He hates when I bring up the past, but it’s what defines these moments we have together. I regret a lot of things, and I’m working on letting it go.”

“Girl, y’all daddy was a mess back then, and he’s a mess now. I’ve never known someone who hates someone so much, that he would keep a child away from their father,” Chelsea countered, shaking her head.

I sipped my margarita as I watched the partygoers dance. “He never used to act like this. It wasn’t until Hemi and I got together did he change. And now I know why.”

“I still can’t believe Mommy cheated on him with your baby daddy’s daddy. That is some mess for your ass.” Drue laughed.

“I can’t believe it either. I’m just glad that situation didn’t go any further. However, it did create problems for me and Nehemiah.”

“When Uncle Cole found out you two were dating, he said they both agreed to not go

any further. That would have been bad business for y'all," Shanise spoke.

"Tell me about it," I replied.

"How's Meg? Like how does she feel now that you and Justin aren't together and finding out she has a completely different father?" Chelsea asked.

"She loves it. Nehemiah is like her best friend, and their bond has been beautiful to witness. She still talks to Justin, but with everything that's been going on, I don't want her going anywhere with him."

"Yeah, I say let this situation calm down first. I don't think Justin would do anything to Megan, but he may say some shit that will have the Newson men turning up on his ass," Drue said.

"Right, and that's something I don't need. I want to live peacefully with my babies and my man." I beamed.

"We're so happy to have you back, Boogie. Now, we can hang like we used to, and since you're not as reserved as you used to be, we're about to cut the fuck up!" Chelsea exclaimed and I laughed.

"I missed y'all so much. Let's take some shots to celebrate!"

"Oh, hell nah. The last time you got drunk, you was dropping ass all over the place. Don't have Reggie and Ussef calling your man to come get you!" Drue said, looking over at Chelsea and Shelby's security.

Their eyes and head were on a swivel, while their faces held the meanest mug. I just knew they could kill someone with their bare hands.

“Trust me. He won’t mind when I’m dropping it on him.”

“TMI, bitch!” Drue exclaimed, covering her ears.

We all laughed and continued to enjoy the night. By the time midnight rolled around, I was feeling nice and ready to go.

As I said before, it had been way too long since I hung out with anyone besides Drue. I had no friends because I didn’t trust anyone. I should have known something was off with Jolie when she kept trying to make friends with me. I thought I had a good discernment about people, but never did I think Justin would step out on me.

I tried to overlook it, and that was my problem. Maybe I didn’t care enough to look into him sooner, or maybe I was too afraid to find out what he was really up to. However, I couldn’t keep that nagging feeling from attacking me, and I couldn’t have found out at a better time.

Nehemiah coming back into my life had to be a sign from God. I truly believed that because he was my soulmate, my one, and now, we had a second chance to be together with no distractions.

Drue pulled into Nehemiah’s driveway twenty minutes later. I looked over and smiled at her as she placed the car in park.

“What?” she asked.

“I love you, Sister.”

“Oh gosh! Get your drunk ass out of my car.”

I laughed. “I’m being serious, Drue. You’ve always had my back no matter what I

was going through with your dad.”

“That’s yo’ bald headed ass daddy, not mine.”

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We both laughed.

“But I’m happy for you. All those nights you’ve cried from losing Hemi has finally paid off. You look happy, and my niece looks even happier. You both deserve this.”

“Thank you. I didn’t think I would ever love anyone the way I love him. He truly is my peace.”

“And I know for a fact you’re his.”

“I agree. I love you, Drueski.”

“Girl, get your ass out of my car. It’s bad enough your people call me that shit. You ain’t about to start.”

I laughed as I kissed her cheek. “Get home safe. Text me when you get in.”

“I will. I love you more, Boogie.”

I smiled and got out, heading up to his door. After putting in the code, I walked inside to a quiet house. Megan and Mariah were staying at my mom’s new apartment for the weekend, so I was happy about that. Justin’s weekends wouldn’t start until next week, so they decided to go with my mom.

I headed up the stairs to his bedroom. I was still in awe of this home. Its opulence and beauty made all of this seem so surreal.

As I approached the door, I pushed it open to find Nehemiah stretched out on his back asleep. My eyes roamed over his big frame, and instantly, I felt my panties flood.

I wasted no time stripping out of my dress and undergarments as I slowly climbed in the bed and ducked under the sheet. I kissed up his thighs until I reached his briefs, tugging at them. He stirred as I felt his fingers in my hair. Finally releasing my favorite part of him, my tongue slid up his shaft until my lips latched on to the head, and I tongue kissed it.

“Sss. Shit, Mo.”

I curled my tongue around him a few times before I took him all the way in my mouth. In my drunken state, I imagined his dick was a lollipop, and I was trying to get to the center of it. I grabbed ahold of him and began twisting my wrist and head in a circular motion. His grip on my hair became tighter as he rolled his hips to match my movement.

“Fuck, Boogie. Just like that.”

He tossed the sheet from us, and we locked eyes.

“Mmmm,” I moaned, loving the taste of him.

“You like sucking my dick, Boog?”

“Mmhmm.”

“Make it sloppy, mama.”

Gathering all the spit in my mouth, I did as he asked, and it seemed as if that made

him excited as he pumped faster into my mouth. I massaged his balls as his breaths became erratic. Before he could explode, I lifted and climbed on his dick, slowly sliding my way down to adjust to his size. Once I felt him deep inside of me, I rocked my hips and rode him slowly.

He reached up and pinched my nipples, and my body shuddered from the chills it sent raging through me. I missed this...I missed us. Although we had been engaging in sex since we first got back in contact, this time, I didn't feel wrong about it. I was free from a marriage that didn't give this much passion, love, or clarity. Nehemiah was it. Always had been and always would be.

"Hemi..."

"Yeah, baby."

"I love you so much!"

"Show me how much, Boog. Bounce on this motherfucka."

I planted my palms on his tatted chest and bounced up and down on him.

"Mmhmm, just like that, mama."

He grabbed the meat of my waist and thrust his hips upward as my body became overstimulated with pleasure.

"Shit, baby. Make me cum!" I yelled.

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Nehemiah sat up, capturing my nipple in his mouth and sucked it hard. I grabbed his head, holding him as I continued to bounce. My body started to perspire as he slapped my ass while continuing to help me grind on him. Heat rose from my feet to my head, and my orgasm hit me hard.

“Ahhh, shiiiiit!”

My nails dug into his shoulders as he kissed along my jawline then flipped me on my back.

He smiled down at me. “My turn.”

He lifted my legs and began pounding into me with delicious force. If I wasn’t crazy about him before, I sure as hell was now.

Thirty minutes later, I lay in his arms as he fed us grapes and pineapples while talking—our favorite pastime.

“Listen. I still got the juice. Don’t underestimate me,” I said, laughing.

“I doubt it, shorty. I bet you can’t even run a mile now.”

“Wanna bet?”

“How much?”

“No money. If I win, you have to take me to Turks & Caicos for a week. If you win,

you get to pick whatever you want from me.”

He seemed to think about it for a moment then nodded his head.

“A’ight bet. It’s on.” He slid out of the bed as I frowned.

“Wait. Now?”

“Yeah, I want to see you prove me wrong. All I did was run when I played football, so you know I got speed. Let’s see if you still got it.”

“Hemi...”

“You want that trip or not?”

I laughed. “Fine.”

I climbed out of bed and we both dressed. I had brought some of my belongings over a couple weeks ago since I’d been here more often than I’d been home. After gearing up, we both stepped out of the house and walked to the end of his driveway.

“To the corner and back,” he suggested.

“Running after sex is crazy business.”

He laughed. “You sound scared.”

“What Bone Crusher say? I ain’t never scared!”

I walked into the middle of the street and stretched my limbs. Nehemiah stood beside me and began his countdown from three.

“A’ight. Three...two...” He took off running.

“Cheater!” I yelled, taking off behind him.

Although he had a head start on me, I gained on him, and we were head to head. It didn’t take me long to leave him behind until I felt him grab me and swoop me up. He spun me around as we both fell with me landing on top of him as we laughed. My lips fell on his, and our tongues wrestled for a good ten seconds before I pulled away.

“I won.”

“I wanted you to.”

“It’s giving real Omar Epps around here!”

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He chuckled as we got up from the ground.

“I almost had you, though, but you still got it, Boogie.”

“I told you I never lost it. I’m going to feel this in the morning.”

“Nah, I’m going to give you a bath, massage, and make you cum again. You won’t feel shit in the morning but satisfaction.”

“Mmm...say it again.”

He chuckled. “I’m gonna make you cum again and again and again.”

“Oooh, don’t threaten me with a good time. Booby and Boogie back together again. The world better watch out!”

He laughed aloud. “Bring ya ass on, girl.”

After the crazy night I’d had, I was ecstatic about my night turning into a happy ending.

Nehemiah

August

The months seemed to roll by quickly. Megan had gotten accepted into Detroit School of Arts, so we were shopping for back-to-school clothes and supplies. While

our bond seemed to grow tighter, I could tell something had been a little off about her lately. Morgan had also been concerned, which prompted me to set up this daddy-daughter shopping spree. Although I was still learning my daughter, I did notice that when she got upset, she grew quiet. I wasn't a therapist, but when it came to her, I was willing to be whatever she needed.

While walking out of Neiman Marcus, I suggested we take a break and get some grub, so we headed to the food court to get some Subway. After getting our food, we sat down and began eating. I wanted her comfortable, so I waited a minute before I addressed the issue.

"So, what's been up with you lately? It's cool if you don't want to talk about it, but your moms seem a little worried about you."

Her eyes lowered before she set her phone on the table then looked at me.

"My dad told me not to call him Dad anymore," she revealed.

That shit had my temper rising. We hadn't been hearing much from him or Gio over the past month or so. I figured their asses finally caught the hint and knew I wasn't going anywhere any time soon.

I wanted to tell her fuck that nigga, but I wouldn't match that bum's energy. He took over my role as Megan's father, pretending to be this loving, caring father figure, but at the first sign of trouble, he did shit like that.

I ran my fingers through my beard a few times, thinking of a positive thing to say before I spoke. I didn't want her to think I didn't care about her feelings because I absolutely did.

"Did he say why?"

She nodded. “He said it doesn’t feel the same now that you’re back...that you and Mom didn’t want me calling him that.”

This bitch ass nigga.

“Meg,” I called out, wanting her to look at me. She lifted her head and looked at me. “Hear me when I say your moms and I never said that, a’ight?” She nodded again. “He shouldn’t have ever told you anything like that. He’s been your pops for fourteen years, and because I’m here, he may feel a bit insecure about that. But that’s not on you, okay?”

“Yeah...It just felt weird when he said that. I know Mom wouldn’t say that, and since getting to know you, you don’t strike me as the type of person to be malicious. I don’t know. It just hurt my feelings is all. I’ve just been trying to move past it and not make it a thing because I didn’t want you all at odds. It’s why I’ve been quiet.”

“I understand, baby girl, but don’t ever feel as if you can’t come to us. As your parents, it’s our job to protect you, love you, and show up for you no matter what. Although it’s unfortunate that he dropped out on you, just know that you won in the end. I think I’m a pretty cool pops, no?” I asked, popping my collar. That made her laugh.

“You are.”

“Thanks. And always know I’m going to show up for you every time and never give up on you. Like who wouldn’t want you as a daughter? You’re the dopest kid I ever helped create.”

Her smile brightened the messy mood she had been in, and that’s all I ever wanted to see.

“Are you going to tell Mom?”

“As your parents, I think she should be privy to why her child has been solemn. She was really concerned about you, kid.”

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“I know. I just didn’t want her going off on him. She thinks she be hiding stuff from me, but I be knowing.”

I chuckled at her vernacular.

She’s been hanging around Shelby’s ass too much.

“Yeah...She never could hide anything...only you from me, but that wasn’t her doing.”

“Yeah, even Papa’s acting different.”

I frowned. “Toward you?”

She shook her head. “No. He’s just been really sad lately. I know it’s because Nana left him, but he’s not the same happy granddad I remember.”

“I’m sorry you have to experience these adult breakups, but just know that I’m here and I’m staying. You won’t ever see me and your moms at odds with each other, and even if we are, I’m going to do my very best to fix it before it ever graces you and your sister’s ears, you understand?”

“Yes.”

“Do you trust me?”

“I do.”

“Good. Let it stay that way. You have a father...the OG triple OG.”

“Oh my God! Please don’t ever say that again!”

We laughed.

“I love you, Dad. Mom seems happier with you than I’d ever seen her with Justin. I’m glad to have you back with us.”

“I love you more, baby girl. We locked in, my baby.”

“Fa sho.”

We laughed again as we continued to eat our food. I would let Morgan handle this situation however she saw fit. If homie didn’t tighten up, I was definitely going to do it for him.

After tearing down a few more stores, we left the mall then headed back to their home. I planned to let Boogie know this wasn’t going to be happening for long. I wouldn’t force her to move in with me, but she was dragging her feet on the matter. After living without her for so long, I wanted her to take her position on her throne and make our house a home.

Pulling into her driveway, I stepped out, opened the door for Megan, then retrieved all the bags we had accumulated. It was still wild to me that I had a daughter that I was spoiling the hell out of, but it felt good to spend my money on people who deserved it.

As we stepped through the threshold, Megan called out to her mom as I set the bags on the floor by the stairwell. My eyes did a quick scan of her home, and I was impressed. This was my first time stepping foot in here, and I had to say it was nice

and big.

At least the bitch assnigga put her up nicely.

“Really, Nehemiah?” Morgan asked, bringing my attention to her pretty, thick ass.

She rocked some biker shorts, a cut off tee-shirt, and some Crocs with her hair in that big curly Afro that I loved so much. I subconsciously licked my lips while staring at her beautiful ass.

“Hello, earth to Hemi,” she said, waving her hand in my face.

Megan giggled as I smiled.

“My bad. What’s wrong?”

“She didn’t need all of this stuff, Nehemiah. The child still has clothes with tags on them in her closet.”

“Mom, those clothes are so last season,” Megan declared, grabbing all of her bags and heading up the stairs.

“They’re not all hers either. I got you and lil bit some things too,” I told her.

“You didn’t have to do that.”

“I know I didn’t, but I did. Where is lil bit anyway?”

“With her father.”

I pulled her closer to me, leaned down, and kissed her neck. She smelled sweet, and her hair smelled amazing.

“Is that how you greet your man, Boogie?”

Her arms came around me and her head came up, puckering her lips. I pecked them a few times as she smiled at me.

“Hi, Booby. I missed you.”

“I missed you more, Boog.”

“You and your family need to stop spoiling us.” She smirked.

“It’s never going to happen, so you might as well get used to it.”

She kissed me again. “I see she’s in a better mood. Did she tell you what was wrong?”

“Yeah. Let’s put the bags away before we get into all of that,” I told her, grabbing all of the bags as she led the way up the stairs. We walked by Megan’s room. Morgan

paused. She put her ear to the door after hearing Megan talking to someone. I bumped her with my pelvis to move her along.

“Stop being nosy, Boog.”

She giggled. “I can’t help it. I just want to make sure she’s okay.”

“She’s good.”

I nodded my head for her to continue. She led me further down the hall and around a corner to the master suite. I set the bags on the bed and looked around the room.

She grabbed my hand. “Let’s go on the terrace.”

She led me out on the terrace, and I appreciated it. I sure as hell didn’t want to sit in a room she shared with another nigga.

I sat in the chair and patted my lap for her to sit. Once she did, my hand went to her ass and rubbed.

“So? How’d it go?”

I sighed. “Ya mans is a fuck nigga. I have a good mind to fuck him up, but I’m going to let you handle it, because if I do, homie won’t be alive to see his seed grow.”

“What the hell did that bastard do?”

“Told my shorty not to call him dad anymore—”

“What!” Morgan screeched. I could feel her body tense as I rubbed her back.

“Calm down.”

“How can I when he’s saying things like that to her? Like what kind of shit is that to say to a child you helped raise?”

“Because he wasn’t real from the beginning, Mo. There were possibly moments he showed his true colors, but you didn’t peep it. I know Megan did, though.”

“Did she say that?”

“She didn’t have to. For her to feel how she feels is the reason I know she did. You really married a ho ass nigga, but it’s cool. She has me now, and ain’t no way I’m ever leaving her side. Fuck that nigga. She never needed him in the first place.” My work pager went off so I took it off my hip, seeing the emergency code.

“Shit. I have to go.”

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“Nooo, do you have to?” She pouted, looking so fucking cute.

I laughed. “It’s a nine-one-one emergency. I promise I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

She slid her tongue in my mouth, and I deepened the kiss, squeezing her ass in the process.

“Real soon,” she said, licking my nose.

I smiled and stood with her in my arms.

“You got it, mama.” Kissing her once more, I placed her on her feet and left.

I hurriedly moved down the hall of the emergency unit to the nurses’ station. Nurse Trudy saw me and stood from her seat.

“Good afternoon, Dr. Newson.”

“Afternoon, Trudy. What do we have here?”

“Three year old came in with bruising on her arm and backside. She was also vomiting profusely. We finally got her to sleep. Child Protective Services has been notified.”

“And no doctor has been in to see her?”

“We’re so backed up it’s crazy.”

I nodded to her as she handed me the chart. I looked at it, and instantly, my heart plummeted.

Mariah!

I hurriedly moved to room fifteen and opened the door, hoping to see Justin's bitch ass, but instead, an elderly woman sat next to her rubbing her head. She was hooked up to an IV, and her skin looked pasty and pale.

"What happened?" I asked, shedding my professionalism.

The woman looked up at me and frowned before noticing my lab coat and scrubs.

"I'm not sure. My son said that she ate something bad. Please don't let those CPS people take my grandbaby."

"Where is your son now?"

"He had an emergency at his company and asked me to come in his place."

Fucking bitch ass clown sending his moms in his place, and not here for his own kid.

I moved to her bedside and rubbed her back.

"Mariah? Lil bit, can you hear me?"

She stirred a little before she opened her eyes and looked at me.

"Mr. Hemi?"

"Yeah, baby girl, it's me. Can you tell me what happened?"

“Mr. Hemi, I not feel good.”

“I know, lil bit. Can you tell me what you ate or drank?”

“Mrs. Jolie made me a sandwich and gave me juice.”

“Okay...What else happened?”

“That little boy hit me.”

“What little boy?”

“At she house. Him hit me on my butt with a string, and him grab my arm.”

I looked over at her grandmother. If she was even her damn grandmother.

“Why wasn’t her mother notified?”

“Everything happened so fast. I hadn’t had the time.”

“The time should have been while she was lying here asleep.” I sneered.

“Excuse me if I’m only being concerned with my grandbaby—”

“Ma’am, I don’t care what you were being concerned with. Her mother should have been called if her father couldn’t be here.”

“What kind of doctor are you? It’s clear she knows who you are.”

“She does. I’m Megan’s real father.”

Her eyes ballooned, but she didn’t say anything.

“I’m going to have the nurse come in and draw her blood to run some tests. I’m going to try to keep CPS at bay but only because of my girl.” I turned to Mariah. “I’m

coming right back, lil bit. Okay?”

She nodded. “Okay.”

I left the room and immediately took out my phone to call Morgan. The phone rang twice before she picked up.

“Hey, my love. I guess it wasn’t that big of an emergency for you to be calling so soon, huh?” She giggled.

“Mo...”

“Yeah...What is it?” Her voice held alarm.

“I need you to get to Providence as soon as you can. It’s Mariah.”

“What? What’s wrong with my baby?”

I could hear her scrambling around.

“Just get here, Mo. But be careful. We’re in room fifteen in the emergency room.”

“Oh my God! Hemi, please...”

“Get here, baby.”

“Okay.”

I hung up and sighed.

It was definitely some foul shit going on, and I knew this shit wasn’t going to be

good.

Morgan

Drue, my mother, Megan, and myself hurriedly moved through the emergency room. My heart was beating fast thinking of what could have possibly gone wrong with my baby.

“Morgan.”

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I heard Nehemiah's voice and rushed in his direction.

"Hemi, what happened to my baby?"

He shook his head and took my hand, leading me down the hall to Mariah's room.

When I entered, I immediately hurried to my baby's bedside.

"Honey Bee, mommy's here."

She opened her eyes and tossed her little arms around me. I picked her up and cradled her in my arms.

"Mommy, I not feel good."

"I know, baby. Do you know what made you sick?"

She shook her head as my mom rubbed her back. My eyes went to Josephine as she wiped her tears. Before I could speak, Drue was standing in her face.

"What happened to my niece, Josephine?"

"I don't know what happened. All I know is that Justin called me, telling me that he needed me to come sit with Mariah. Hedidn't tell me much, and Mariah doesn't know much. All she kept saying was that her stomach, arm, and back hurts."

I looked down at my baby and lifted the arm of her gown and instantly became irate.

“What the fuck happened to my baby’s arm, Josephine!” I screamed, now lifting the bottom of her gown, seeing bruises on her back.

“Oh, hell fucking no!”

“Morgan, calm down,” my mom said, standing in my way because I was about to catch a case.

“Baby, you gotta keep it down,” Nehemiah said.

“My daughter has bruises on her and saying she’s sick! Jo, you better start talking, or my hands are going to start talking to your fucking face!”

“Why are you saying this to me when I’m just as clueless as you!” she yelled back.

“Somebody get that nigga on the phone right the fuck now. Josephine, I need you to get out, because the way I’m feeling, you’re going to get all this rage I’m feeling right now.”

“He didn’t do this, Morgan,” she tried to say.

“If he didn’t, then he let it happen!”

“Lady, you need to listen to my sister and leave.”

“Hey, you all are going to have to keep it down or you’re going to have to leave,” the nurse said, coming into the room.

“Get Justin’s ass here right now.”

Just as the words left my mouth, a woman walked in with a briefcase as two officers

flanked her side. I knew then that this had to be CPS.

“Unh uh. This isn’t on me so you can walk right back out of that door,” I told her.

“Can we have a moment with the parent or guardian and the doctor please?” she asked, looking at everyone in the room.

“Come on, Megan and Drue,” my mom said, leading them out of the room.

Tears streamed down my face as I held on to my baby tightly. Nehemiah stood at my side, rubbing my back to calm me.

“I’m Felisha Durham from Child Protective Services.”

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“I’m Officer Langly, and this is Officer Steele,” Officer Langly spoke.

“Can you tell me what happened?” Felisha asked.

“I don’t know what happened. This was her father’s weekend, so she was in his custody. I get a call from my boy—Dr. Newson, telling me that she was here.”

“Do you know where the father is?”

“No, I don’t. His mother said he rushed out of here. The bastard didn’t even call me to tell me anything.”

The officers and Felisha started writing shit on their pads.

“May I speak to the child, please?”

I nodded to her as she walked up to Mariah.

“Hi, pretty girl. Do you know what happened to you?”

“Mrs. Jolie gave me juice and sandwich.”

“Okay. How did you hurt yourself?”

“Me not do that. That boy did.”

“What boy, baby?” I asked.

“Me dunno. That boy at Ms. Jolie house. Him hit me with a string and squeeze my arm.”

“She’s talking about Mrs. Jolie’s son, Seth. That’s the only boy that lives there. We used to go to school together. He’s crazy,” Megan said, standing by the door.

My blood boiled. I needed this shit to be over with so I could stab Justin in his dick.

“Okay. Dr. Newson, I’m going to need to see those lab reports. Considering the child wasn’t in your care, Ms. Prescott, I’m not going to report this. However, I will need to visit the home to be sure it’s stable enough for her to reside there. I can tell by your face and body language that you’re raging. I need you to allow these officers to do their job. Also, I’ll need a urine sample from you.”

“For what?” I asked. My eyes went to Nehemiah as he gave me a nod of assurance.

“Just to make sure there are no drugs in your system.”

“Okay.”

“What’s the father’s name?” Langly asked.

“Justin Coleman,” I replied.

“Address?”

“21980 Prest Street.”

“Do you know this Jolie’s address?”

“No, and her name is Jolie Dupree.”

“Got it. Thank you. We’re going to go by his home to see if he’s there. Thank you for your time, Ms. Prescott.”

“Dr. Newson, can I speak with you for a moment?” Felisha asked.

“Sure.” He leaned down, pressing his lips to my temple. “Relax, baby. Everything’s going to be okay.”

I nodded and wiped my tears as they left the room. Drue, my mom, and Megan reentered and gathered around us.

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My mother kissed Mariah on her forehead and looked at me. “I don’t know what the hell that man’s problem is, but I hope he gets his ass locked up for letting this happen to my baby.”

“I swear I’m going to kill that asshole when I get my hands on him. And that bitch Jolie is going to see me too about letting her deranged ass son put his hands on my baby.”

“We tag-teaming that ho. My niecey pooh is the sweetest. I don’t see how anyone could harm her.”

“I’m going to kick her son in his family jewels,” Megan spoke. I smirked because I was going to let her do it too.

I swear it was like my life had taken one blow after another since learning of Justin’s infidelity and Nehemiah coming back into my life. I was tired and needed to get away because I was ready to kill someone.

I closed my eyes and said a silent prayer for myself and my baby. Only God was going to be able to save Justin and his raggedy ass side bitch.

An hour later, I had calmed down enough to allow myself to think about what I was going to do to Justin and Jolie’s asses. Mariah was finally able to put something on her stomach as I sang her a song before she went back to sleep.

Nehemiah entered the room fifteen minutes later with a stoic expression on his face. I knew him long enough to know when he was plotting or ready to explode. I saw him

take a deep breath before closing the door and looking at me.

“We ran a toxicology report. She had a large amount of alcohol in her system—”

“What!” my mother shouted.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I asked, placing my hands on my head trying to understand what the fuck was happening.

“So what’s about to happen? Are they about to go arrest that bitch?” Drue asked.

“They are...” His voice trailed off as he looked at me. “Step out with me.”

I slid out of the bed with Mariah and followed Hemi out into the hall. He led me down to an empty room and closed the door.

“I found ya mans. Loon is bringing him here, and I’m going to have a little conversation with him before I turn him over to the police.”

“I want to speak to him too,” I told him.

“Nah...”

“Hemi, it’s not a request. That motherfucka left my child with people who were out to harm her. Alcohol, Nehemiah? To a three year old? Like who the fuck does some wicked shit like that? Then he’s telling my child not to call him the name she’s been calling him since she learned to talk. No, I need to talk to that bitch nigga before you handle his ass.”

The smirk on his face confused me for a moment. I didn’t know what was so humorous about what I said, but I was five seconds from slapping his ass too.

“My Boogie done turned savage. I have never heard you get out of pocket like this. No lie, that shit is turning me on.”

I wanted to smile, but I was too serious about what I said.

“I’m serious, Nehemiah.”

“I know, baby. I’ma let you get your shit off.”

“Thank you.” His cell went off.

“Yo? A’ight. We’re coming down now.”

He hung up and took me by the hand. We traveled down three different halls until we were in the parking garage. He led me through to a part they were reconstructing, and I saw Lawrence leaning on the trunk of a Malibu.

“What’s good, family?” he asked, dapping Nehemiah and hugging me.

“Hey. Where is he?” I asked.

Lawrence popped the trunk and pulled a bound Justin from it. He ripped the tape from his mouth, and Justin started his rant.

“What the fuck is going on, Morgan!” he yelled.

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Lawrence slapped the back of his head. “Nigga, stop all that fucking yelling. You know this damn garage echoes. We can hear your slow ass.”

“Why, Justin? She’s your fucking daughter! Why would you allow this to happen under your care?”

“I didn’t know. I swear I didn’t know. This was my first time ever leaving her there, and I thought I could trust Jolie to take care of her. I didn’t know her stupid ass son would do anything malicious to her. I wouldn’t do that to our baby, Mo.”

“You would, though.”

“I would never—”

“You did the moment you fucking cheated on me with that fucking bird. You were supposed to protect her!”

My hands had a mind of their own as I began wailing on him. He ducked and tried to cover his face because that was my main target. I wanted to see his nose or mouth bleed or maybe a black eye or something.

“She’s your daughter! How could you?” I cried while continuing my assault. I felt hands grab me.

“That’s enough, baby. Calm down.”

I took my foot and kicked him right in his balls. Justin curled over and dropped to the

floor.

“You got CPS investigating me because of your carelessness. I promise to God you will never see my daughter again!” I screamed.

While he writhed on the ground, Lawrence picked him up and pushed him against the car.

“I was going to fuck you up, but my baby handled your pathetic ass just fine,” Nehemiah said.

“Damn, Molifield! I ain’t know you had it in you!” I cut my eyes at Lawrence, and he wiped the smile from his face. “My bad. Bad timing.”

“Y-you can’t keep me away from my baby, Morgan. This isn’t my fault.”

“It is your fault. The judge will rule in my favor. You will get supervised visits from now on, and that’s if you get any visits at all. You cheated on me with a fucking lunatic with a lunatic son. You brought our daughter around that slut, and she harmed her. I swear the next time I see that bitch, I’m going to gouge her eyeballs out and have Megan drop kick that little fucker of hers in his balls!”

“Let that bitch go, Loon,” Nehemiah instructed.

Loon pushed him away as Justin keeled over and began bawling.

“I never meant to hurt you, Mo. I tried to do everything right because I knew you never loved me like you love him. I just got tired of you calling out his name in your sleep, making me feel inferior as if what I did to and for you was never good enough.

“You know I would never let anyone hurt Mariah. You know that. I’m sorry I let your

father talk me into a marriage with you when I always knew you weren't really in love with me. I was just hoping you would learn to love me. It never happened, and that's why Jolie happened. I'm sorry."

I shook my head in disbelief then walked away. I was over this shit. My father caused a whirlwind of pain, depression, lies, and deceit. All because of my mother's infidelity. He projected his hurt onto me and my sister, and now, this was where we were. It was safe to say that I loathed my father for doing this and was mad at myself for allowing him.

Justin was right. I didn't love him like I loved Nehemiah. He couldn't compete where he couldn't compare. I did love Justin, but my love for him came with me forcing myself to do so over time. I gave him a chance to show me that there was a better love for me and loose me from the stronghold Nehemiah had over me. However, I didn't allow him to, and this was why he stepped out on me and allowed that sketchy broad to harm our child.

It was on sight with her ass. As soon as my baby was better, I was pulling up at that brothel in Westland and stomping that whore's pussy through her ass.

Mariah wasn't able to be released until two days later. Because of the incident, CPS came out to inspect my home before they could release her to me. I was so exhausted and drained that Nehemiah took a week off from work to cater to me and the girls. I told him that he didn't need to do that, but of course, I was ignored.

Mariah had been clinging to my side since it happened. I understood. My baby was traumatized, which only made me want to hurt Jolie that much more. The police had taken her and Justin in for questioning, and of course, that whore denied everything. They told me she claimed she didn't know how Mariah had ingested the alcohol, but my baby wouldn't lie. She didn't know how to lie yet at her age, so that bitch knew what she had done.

I had just gotten out of the shower and was putting lotion on my body when there was a knock on my bedroom door. I knew it had to be Megan because Nehemiah or Mariah wouldn't have knocked.

“Come in.”

Megan walked in and sat down beside me.

“Justin just called me.”

My nostrils flared. “What did he say? I forgot to tell you to block him.”

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“Nothing. He just apologized about everything that happened, about what he said to me, and that he didn’t mean to hurt us.”

I sighed deeply and took Megan’s hand.

“I’m the one that should be apologizing.”

Megan frowned. “Why?”

“I should have been stronger—wiser. I should have never let your grandfather scare me into thinking I wasn’t going to be anything in life unless I had a helpmate. I let that man tell me so many lies that I started to believe all of them. All of this could have been avoided had I stood on what I believed in. Had I just left home and never got involved with Justin, I would have found your real father, and we wouldn’t even be in this situation. But then I wouldn’t have my honey bee, and there’s no way I could see my life without her in it.”

“She would still be here. She would have just come from my dad instead of her dad.”

I giggled. “You’re right. I’m sorry, Gingerbread. I promise from here on out, I’m going to start making better decisions for you girls.”

“I’m not mad or sad anymore. Things happen, and I hate to say it, but my dad is waaay better.” She laughed.

“Oooh, because he buys you all that designer crap and never tells you no?”

“I mean, how could he say no to moi?”

“You know what!” I laughed as I tickled her. She erupted in giggles, reminding me of when she was little. “Leave my man alone.”

“Your man?” she questioned, hiking her brow with a smirk on her face.

“Yup. My man, my man, my man!” I exclaimed, laughing.

“Period, Mommy. You better flex!”

“Girl, get out of my room. Check on your sister for me.”

“I already did. She’s watching Moana 2 and eating her dry Cheerios.”

I laughed. “Good. I’m glad she’s back to her normal self.”

“Me too. So, when are we riding out on them? I always wanted to drop kick Seth in his breastplate and snatch his heart out. I want to do like a Kill Bill move on him and snatch his eyeball out too.”

“Megan!” I yelled in disbelief.

I never ever heard her talk like this. Maybe the Newson bloodline had always been hidden somewhere inside of her. Chelsea and Shelby were reserved, but if anyone ever came for them, they would jump crazy in a heartbeat. I’d seen it a couple of times in school, so I knew how they could get.

It had me worried that those Newsons were teaching her these things. Megan wasn’t a violent person. However, with the way she was talking, I had a feeling she was tapping into her father’s side.

“Although I don’t encourage this, that lil nigga needs to get handled for fucking with my lil bit.” Nehemiah walked into the room looking so fucking good I couldn’t stop myself from lusting after him.

“And I agree, but no matter the situation, he is still a child.”

“Who said I was gon’ be the one to fuck him up?” He smirked at me.

“You certainly aren’t making our child do it.”

He stared at me.

“Nehemiah!”

“Meg, give me and moms a minute.”

“You got it!” she yelled, racing out of the room.

I hit him in his face. Well, not his face but close enough.

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“Nehemiah Davion Newson, I’m not playing with you!”

He picked me up under my arms like a damn toddler and tossed me on the bed. My towel unraveled as he licked his lips.

“You’ve been a little stressed since the incident. Let me help you with that.”

He locked the door and quickly grabbed my legs, pulling me to the edge.

I closed my legs. “No! I’m not playing with you, sir.”

He got on his knees, rubbing my thighs, licking and kissing the outline of my hip bone. I was trying so hard to keep my legs closed, but the more he kept licking and kissing, the more my legs loosened.

“You’re not playing fair!” I groaned.

He chuckled. “Open up, Boogie. Let me take your stress away.”

I did as I was told and allowed him to do what he did best—love me and make love to me. There was no way I could ever live without him again.

Nehemiah

“That’s him right there.” Megan pointed to the group of boys by the basketball court in the park.

“A’ight. Y’all remember what I told y’all right?”

“Yes, sir,” Meg replied.

“What about you, Rudy?”

“I’m always down to ride, Uncle Hemi,” Rudy replied.

“Cool. Y’all mask up.”

Megan and Rudy pulled their masks down as I came to a slow creep then stopped. The little fucker just looked like he was plotting to cause trouble.

“Mom’s going to be so mad.” Megan giggled.

“What she don’t know won’t hurt her. We ride at dawn for ours. On gang?”

“On gang,” they replied, dapping my fist.

“Go run down on that nigga.”

Megan and Rudy exited the car and walked with confidence toward the group. One of them must have peeped them because he began backing away as the others began to follow. I couldn’t see his face, but I knew he must have been confused.

When he turned around, Megan took her steel-toed boot and kicked in directly in his family jewels, then Rudy followed up with an uppercut with the brass knuckles on her fingers. Seth hit the ground with blood gushing from his mouth, while holding both his little nuts and his mouth. Rudy did a hop and stomped down on his hip, then she and Megan ran back to our getaway car, got inside, and I pulled off. Megan stuck her head out of the window as we rode by him.

“On gang, lil bitch!”

“Yoooo!” I laughed as I bent the corner. “Y’all moms are going to murder me.”

“What she doesn’t know won’t hurt her, right?” Megan smirked at me as I pulled off her mask, kissed her forehead, and laughed.

Yeah, I was going to get my ass kicked for this.

Morgan

November

“I’m a gangsta, but off liquor, I’m throw this ass fa sho!” Shelby yelled in excitement as we partied on the yacht in Turks.

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“I’m about to push her ass off this boat,” Nehemiah said as I laughed.

“Leave her alone. It’s her birthday,” I told him with my arms wrapped around his waist.

Chelsea, Shanice, and Drue were huddled around her, hyping her up.

My mom was at the villa with the girls, while Nehemiah, Chelsea, Shelby, Shanise, Lawrence, two of Nehemiah’s colleagues, Martel and Brandon, and his cousins, Ruger and Jaxson, and their wives joined us on the yacht.

Shelby was turning twenty-nine tomorrow, and she had been turned up since Wednesday when we left.

Since Thanksgiving was approaching, we decided we were going to extend the vacation and celebrate the holiday here. Although I loved to see the snow around the holidays, I didn’t mind spending it in the sun this time around.

“She’s doing that shit on purpose, trying to get Brandon’s attention. I’mma fuck her little ass up.”

“Do you not want your sisters to find love, Hemi?”

“No.”

I laughed. “Well, that’s too bad. You can’t expect them to be alone forever. At least if she does kick it with him, he’s not a broke man or sells drugs.”

“Whose side are you on?”

“Hers this time.”

“Oh yeah?” he said, pinching my ass cheek.

“Oh, now you want to abuse me?”

“Just that pussy, mama.”

“Oh my God!” I laughed as I looked out at the setting sun.

It had been months since everything had transpired. That one day in May when I caught my ex-husband cheating had created some type of good and bad omen. The year of 2024 had revealed so much. I knew it was only God working to remove the demons out of my life and to allow my angel to return.

There was a buzz going around on social media saying that Katt Williams had set this year off, spilling truth serum around the world from his interview with Shannon Sharpe. I believed that wholeheartedly.

Six months ago, everything that I had been blindsided by had finally began to reveal itself. Pastor Gioni Prescott had been catching hell from every which way. He had lost 70 percent of his followers, had to sell the home out in Troy, Michigan, moved back to Detroit, and lost his family. My mom hadn't spoken to him since Megan's birthday party, and neither had Drue and I. I loved my father, but what he'd done to me and allowed to happen between me and Justin wouldn't allow even the God-fearing part of me to accept what he'd done. I still prayed for him. Even after all his wrongdoing, I still loved him and wanted the best for him.

Megan and Mariah still loved their grandpa, so I made it happen to where they went

to visit him twice a week, but they could never set foot back inside his church.

Papa Cole had finally retired from the drug game and had him a girlfriend whose name was Kym. She was a Pilates instructor and in her late forties. My girls adored her...I felt like they adored any damn body, though. However, I was happy for him. They were also at the villa with the kids. I just hoped my mom and Papa Cole behaved.

Jesus, kill the visual!

A few weeks after the incident with my baby, Drue, Chelsea, and I ran down on the Duprees. There was no way I wasn't going to get my revenge on that ho, so I waited until she was heading out to wherever the fuck she was going, and me and my sisters beat her ass so bad she had to be hospitalized.

A few weeks after that situation, her son mysteriously got his ass beat too...and something told me that it had something to do with the man standing before me. I didn't know who he had do it, but I honestly wasn't mad about it as long as he didn't do it himself. The Duprees moved shortly after that.

Justin still had his career, and he was doing good. I guess he didn't need to sell his dick to another man's wife anymore since he had gotten back on his feet. He was only allowed to have Mariah with supervision on the weekends. I hated that for him, but it was what it was. He left my baby in the hands of that evil woman, so he had to suffer the consequences behind that.

Mariah didn't seem to have any ill will toward her father. I was happy about that because I didn't want them to lose the relationship they had with one another. She loved her father, and knowing how detrimental the lack of a father's presence was, I wanted my baby to have that relationship with him.

I was cordial with him for the sake of Mariah, but our friendship was completely done. I had my king by my side.

“Aye! Sit y’all asses down somewhere! And turn that ratchet ass shit off!” Ruger yelled, walking inside the yacht and cutting the music.

“Mekai! Would you stop it? Let them have their fun!” Kenzi scolded him.

“I don’t want to see my little cousin out here shaking ass in front of these niggas.”

Source Creation Date: July 7, 2025, 7:04 am

“Come here. Let me talk to you for a minute.” Kenzi stepped inside the yacht, pulling him down the stairs. I laughed at her little self pulling him away.

“That’s right, Kenz! Get his ass together! Ruining my damn fun!” Shelby mused.

“You a soft ass nigga now, Ru!” Nehemiah yelled after him and chuckled.

“Y’all need someone to make y’all hard asses turn soft,” Shani jested.

Lawrence leaned over and whispered in her ear as she blushed. Those two—well Shani—was trying to hide their little relationship from us, but I had already peeped their game.

“Aye, can everybody gather around please? I have an announcement to make,” Nehemiah said, pulling me to the center of the deck.

Everyone gathered around, then I heard the soft sounds of a cello strumming the tune of “If This World Were Mine” by Luther Vandross and Cheryl Lynn. I glanced up on the top deck and saw Megan up there playing her cello in shock.

She’s supposed to be at the villa!

Nehemiah stepped in front of me, taking my hands, and kissing my knuckles.

“My Morgan, my Mo Boogie, my heart, my soul, my life...I don’t even know where to start or how to explain the insurmountable love I have for you. How life had taken us in two totally different directions, but somehow still kept us connected. We may

regret a lot of things, but one thing we can never regret is our love for one another. Morgan, as I looked back on all that I'd accomplished, I realized I have yet to accomplish my main goal."

He got down on one knee, and I was no more good. My palm came to my face as I bawled as if someone shot me. All the heartache, lonely nights, depression, and longing I'd endured over the years came rushing out of me.

"Awww, it's okay, Morgan," Drue said, wrapping her arms around me.

"I-I'm sorry. I've dreamed of this moment for so long...I never thought it would come."

"No more dreaming, baby. I'm turning all your dreams into reality from here on out. God doesn't make mistakes, Mo. I knew you were mine when we locked eyes on that field. Chels told me to stop being a wimp and come holla at you, and from that point on, you are and were the only woman I wanted. That cool ass, genius kid we created that's playing the soundtrack to our love is how I knew the Big Man knew what He was doing. He brought you back to me."

"He did, and I'm so happy...like genuinely happy."

"And that's all I want for you—for us. The pieces of us that led to this moment. Morgan Anissa Prescott—"

"Yes! Fucking yes, Nehemiah!"

"Boogie! Let him finish." Chelsea giggled.

"Fuck all that," I said as everyone laughed.

Nehemiah pulled the ring from his shirt pocket, and he opened the box. Inside sat a

Now+Forever oval-cut diamond that I knew for sure cost a grip. My eyes sparkled along with the diamond as he slid it out of the box and onto my finger.

“Eek!” I screeched and wrapped my arms around his neck.

He stood, lifting me with him as we kissed like long lost lovers. The tune kicked up some as my eyes went to my baby girl in her zone.

“Aye! Roman numeral seven, bae, drop it like it’s hot!” Shelby started.

“If this world was mine, I’d take your dreams and make ’em multiply,” Chelsea followed.

“If this world was mine I’d take your enemies in front of God, introduce ’em to that light, hit them strictly wit’ that fa!” Drue added.

“Fa fa, fa fa fa, fa fa... fa!” Everyone yelled out as Nehemiah and I looked at each other, shook our heads, and fell over laughing.

“I love you, Boogie.”

“I love you more, Booby.”

“Boogie and Booby forever.”

“Forever and always.”

The End