



A Street Doctor's Virgin: Standalone

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Category: Urban

Description: dult virgins are like unicorns, rare and unbelievable.

And 24-year old Saige Persaud understands that fully.

Working as a children's mental health counselor is fulfilling as it is exhausting but it doesn't afford her the life that she truly wants.

Even though she is a virgin, it doesn't stop her from entering an exceptionally unique sugar daddy situation.

Except, Saige is not fully aware about pertinent details about her partner's life.

Instead, she is perfectly happy to oblige him at his whim.

After a medical emergency with one of her siblings, life gets a little more complicated while Saige's panties becomes extremely drenched and her heart starts its own racing competition after crossing paths twice in one day with a very attracted man that leaves her speechless.

Will Saige ever lose her V-card to a man that's worthy of her precious prize?

27-year old Dr. Quadir Burrus is a pediatric surgeon by day and the Grim Reaper by night if necessary.

He's no stranger to the street life, with his foot still in deep with the Italian mafia.

Quadir is all about working and f*cking with no plans to ever settle down.

But after encountering one of his patients' sibling, he finds himself in unfamiliar territory.

When he uncovers a surprising secret and a severe threat to the beautiful siren, Q goes into protector mode, finding himself minding the business that is not his.

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Saige

2 4-year-old Saige stepped into the gym and the cool air embraced her. She was glad for that because even though it was early morning, it was still humid outside. It was mid-August in Virginia, and the weather hadn't quite broken yet. Therefore, it still felt like early summer so cold air was much appreciated. As she sipped her water, she headed straight for the cardio room to get her 5 A.M. workout in like she did every day.

Typically, when she worked out, there were very few people in the gym being that it was so early. She was surprised when she hit the cardio room and saw a beautiful, bronze god running on the treadmill at top speed. The shorts and sleeveless tank top he wore proudly showcased his physique which damn near had her drooling. His arms were extremely defined and heavily tatted, and his legs were just as muscular. Her presence didn't cause him to break his stride. He acknowledged her with a head nod but continued running.

Trying not to stare too hard, Saige popped her AirPods in and climbed up the stairmaster. After she found the playlist she wanted, she wrapped her small, knotless braids into a bun atop her head. She set the machine to level five and started her workout. Fifteen minutes later, the man was still running and barely seemed out of breath. Secretly scoffing at him, she stepped off the stairmaster and onto the treadmill two machines down from the man.

Just as she cued her machine up to start running fast like the man, he stopped and got

off the treadmill. Saige observed as he wiped the sweat that dripped down his face and imagined licking it off for him. That was just how good he looked to her. She was lowkey annoyed the man wasn't paying her any attention, so she focused on her run instead. He quietly left the room and left Saige to fantasize on what it'd be like to be with a man like him. Only a few minutes into the run, her music was interrupted by a Facetime call from her 17-year-old sister, Moon.

"Wassup, Moon?" she slowed her run to a brisk walk in an attempt to catch her breath.

"Ramel is in the hospital," Moon informed her big sister calmly.

Saige's brisk walk came to a complete stop. Ramel was their 7-year-old little brother, and he was Saige's entire world. Everything she did revolved around Ramel.

"What happened?"

"He had a seizure in his sleep and his tongue was blocking his airway. We're not sure how long he'd been seizing, but luckily Hailey caught him before..." her sentence drifted off then she sighed. "He's getting a scan of his brain right now."

"What hospital are y'all at?"

"CHKD."

"I'm on my way," she ended the call and grabbed her phone.

Shoving her phone in her pocket, she dashed right back out of the gym. The only thing on her mind was getting to Ramel and making sure that he was going to be okay. Ramel had been born with epilepsy, but it had been well controlled since he was a small child. He had only had a handful of seizures that they knew of in his

entire seven years on Earth. Ramel having a seizure in his sleep wasn't even a thought that had occurred to her at all. She had just seen him the night before when she went to go visit her father, and he seemed to be in high spirits. He was his normal, goofy, bubbly self.

Twenty minutes later, she was parking at the Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughter and hopping out of her pearl white Lexus 500h. Walking inside of the building brought back a flood of memories for her. When Saige was just five years old, she was diagnosed with cancer that kept her in and out of the hospital until she was almost eight. It was the longest battle of her life, but with God, some of the best doctors and her parents by her side, she pulled through. The irony wasn't lost on her that all these years later, she spent more time in the children's hospital because of Ramel.

"Saige," her father, Winston, greeted her with a hug when she located them.

"Why didn't you call me?" She looked up at him.

He shrugged and rubbed the back of his neck. "I knew that Moon would. It's just been so much going on, and I was trying to keep Hailey calm."

Saige rolled her eyes at just the mention of her father's wife's name. She couldn't stand that lady and the feelings were clearly mutual. Hailey tried to get along with Saige and Moon, but the sisters felt like Hailey just wasn't a good fit for their father. It had nothing to do with the fact that she was white and everything to do with the fact that she tried too hard to be black. The constant 'ghetto' act that Hailey put on was annoying to say the least.

When Saige found out that Hailey hadn't grown up in any hoods and actually came from a very affluent family, that's when the issues started with them. Moon just never liked Hailey to begin with so there were always problems between the two of them.

“Mmhmm. How is he?”

“We’re still waiting to hear back about the results from his brain scan,” Winston sighed, praying for a miracle at that point.

“I’m so glad you’re here!” Moon rushed into her big sister’s arms and hugged her tight.

Saige kissed the top of her head. “Everything is going to be okay.”

“Family of Ramel Persaud?” A good looking, younger black male doctor called out, looking around the waiting area.

“That’s us,” Saige stepped forward with Winston, Hailey, and Moon right beside her.

“Yeah, I’m his mom,” Hailey stepped in front of Saige. “Please tell me my lil’ man is gon’ be straight.”

Saige glared at her father who gave her a look that told her to be cool. It seemed like Hailey was always trying to find some way to piss her off. She reminded herself that they were there for Ramel and not each other.

“Hi, I’m Dr. Ascot,” he extended his hand towards Hailey, and she shook it. “Ramel’s brain scans weren’t as great as I was hoping. According to his chart, he was born epileptic?”

“Yes,” Hailey nodded her head.

“Wait, what do you mean not as great as you were hoping?” Saige spoke up, her heart beating faster with every second that passed. “He’s going to be okay, right?”

“I believe so, yes. But if he was born epileptic and he’s been taking his antiseizure meds, there’s no reason he should still be having seizures. The fact that he is, paired with his brain scans, tells me that the meds are no longer working or probably haven’t ever worked. I have a colleague I want to bring in on this that specializes in neuro disorders in children. He’ll be able to give a deeper insight on what Ramel’s options are moving forward,” he looked at his watch then up at them. “He’ll be on shift within the hour. Once I bring him up to speed with Ramel’s case, I’d love to bring him in to chat with you all, if that’s okay?”

Winston nodded his head. “Whatever you think is best. Can we visit with Melly in the meantime?”

“Of course. Follow me.”

Moon grabbed Saige’s hand as they followed behind Dr. Ascot. Truthfully, Saige was terrified of what the outcome may be for Ramel. She didn’t like hearing that anything was wrong with either of her siblings but especially not the little boy that had stolen her heart. Dr. Ascot assured them that he’d be back with his colleague before walking away.

“Saige!” Melly’s eyes lit up with excitement when they all walked into his room.

She rushed over to his bed and hugged him. “Hey little boy! How are you feeling?”

“I feel really tired. Dr. Ascot said I’m going to need to rest.”

Winston kissed Ramel’s forehead. “You do need to get your rest.”

“We’ll all be right here waiting for you to wake up,” Hailey confirmed, kissing his forehead next.

“Yeah, little buddy,” Moon silently moved Hailey out of the way. She ran her fingers through his curls. “Get some sleep. We love you.”

He yawned and stretched. “I love you guys too.”

They all stayed in the room until Ramel dozed off. Saige texted her supervisor, Veronica, to let her know she had a family emergency and wouldn’t be able to make it in for the day. Veronica was always cool and understanding, so she knew it wasn’t going to be a problem.

“I need the two of you to remember that we are Ramel’s parents, not you,” Hailey spoke through clenched teeth, waving her hand between her and Winston.

Saige rolled her eyes. “Girl, please don’t start. This ain’t the time, the place, nor the day.”

“Winston, get a handle on your daughters, I’ve told you once before!” She folded her arms across her chest and gave him the nastiest glare.

Winston opened his mouth to try and diffuse the situation before it got ugly. One thing he knew about his daughters, they’d pop off with no problem with whomever. He also knew that Moon was extremely protective of Saige, so if anyone fucked with her then they had to answer to Moon in the process. The last thing he wanted was to be kicked out of the hospital because the women in his life couldn’t get along.

There were a few taps at the door. “Persaud family?”

Saige’s mouth almost dropped to the floor when the hottie from the gym earlier stepped in wearing a white coat. He looked completely different in his dress clothes but still just as handsome. The shirt and slacks fit his physique perfectly like they were handmade just for him. His cologne radiated through the room, but it wasn’t

overly intoxicating. Once again, he had Saige's full attention.

"That's us," Winston said, thankful for the interruption.

"Hi, I'm Dr. Burrus," he extended his hand to everyone in the room.

Saige became slightly annoyed that he acted as if he hadn't just seen her not even two hours ago. Pushing her own feelings to the side, she listened up as he started to explain the treatment for Ramel.

"I have no doubt that if I were to perform either surgery on Ramel, the likelihood of him having another seizure would decrease dramatically. I've—"

Saige waved her hands when she realized what he was saying. "Surgery? Why does he need to have surgery? No other doctor has ever said that."

Dr. Burrus looked at her. "Whatever the other doctors were doing clearly wasn't effective either. When a patient Ramel's age isn't responding to the medication they are placed on, it's a clear sign that he will continue to have seizures which can cause more damage in the long run," he peeled his eyes away from Saige and looked at Winston. "There are two options on the table surgery wise. The first is brain surgery where I go in and remove the part of the brain that is causing the seizure. The second is placing a device in his left chest cavity that will also connect to a nerve in his neck. The device will stimulate that nerve on a set schedule to decrease his chances of having a seizure. Both surgeries have been extremely successful, and I've performed both with no problem."

"Brain surgery?" Moon's eyes swelled with fear.

"I know it sounds scary, and it can be a bit overwhelming, I won't lie. The recovery time is hell, but the good part is that Ramel is young. Kids always bounce back from

surgeries extremely easily. Both surgeries have their risks, and they both have their benefits. I am only the surgeon, so I can't make a decision for you."

"If this was your child, what would you do?" Hailey questioned with her hand on her chest.

He shrugged slowly. "Again, I can't sway you one way or the other. This is major surgery we're talking about, and I want you all to make the best decision for your family and for Ramel. All I can do is give you all the information and all the facts to ensure you're making the most informed decision."

"W-when do we have to let you know an answer?" Hailey continued with her questions.

"Sooner than later is best. Because of the slight brain damage Ramel has already suffered, I don't want too much time to pass."

"Brain damage?" Winston raised an eyebrow, rubbing his fingertips across his forehead. "No one said anything about brain damage."

"I'm sorry, I thought Dr. Ascot explained that to you. Based on his images, he has suffered some brain damage due to the seizures. It's possible he's been having them and not telling you because he doesn't remember, or he doesn't even know he's having them in the first place. The damage is in the temporal lobe which controls our emotions, how we process information, our memory. It's nothing to be too alarmed about as of yet, but just something to keep in mind. If we don't do either surgery, the damage will continue without question."

Saige stared at Dr. Burrus's fine ass and was extremely impressed by how educated he sounded. To be a doctor, he had to be educated, but to be as handsome as he was, and so damn smart had her intrigued. The confidence he exuded as well as the care he

seemed to have when it came to Ramel had her feeling an attraction. She shouldn't have been because of the situation they were facing, but she'd be lying to herself if she said she didn't want to get to know him.

“Thank you, Dr. Burrus. Can I talk to you outside for a second?” Winston nodded his head at the door.

Dr. Burrus nodded and stepped out the door with him. Saige locked eyes with Moon before pulling her into a hug. She needed to console her baby sister because Hailey damn sure wasn't about to do it. It seemed like they had another battle to get through, but she was confident that they'd all get through it together.

Quadir

Dr. Quadir Burrus let out a long sigh as he collapsed on his white leather couch. It had been a long day at the hospital, and he needed just a few moments of peace and quiet before his second job started ringing his line. Rubbing his temples, he kicked off his Tom Ford loafers and thought about the patients he'd encountered earlier. His mind instantly jumped to six-year-old Ramel. Q wanted to do everything he could to make sure Ramel lived a full, healthy life. He prayed that his family made a decision within the next few days so that he could start getting Ramel prepped for surgery.

Thinking of Ramel made him think about the brown skin beauty that was in his room. He had no idea the relation between Ramel and the woman, but he had to guess they were either siblings or aunt and nephew. Their relationship really didn't matter to him. What mattered was the fact that he ran into her at the gym and again at the hospital. He didn't know if that was a sign from the man above, or if he should run in the other direction.

When he was at the hospital, he purposely acted as if he didn't know who the woman was. He wanted to test her to see how she'd react. Her facial expression conveyed that she felt slighted, but she didn't act a fool, so she got a few points for that in his book. Quadir was used to the ratchet type of woman who caused a scene any and everywhere. Being a doctor, he wanted to keep everything in his work environment as professional as possible. That was the main reason why he never fucked any women that he worked with. He knew exactly what he was working with in his pants, and women never controlled themselves after they got a taste.

“Yeah?” He answered his second phone, seeing his right-hand man, Levi, calling.

“Wassup Grim? You off?” Levi greeted him by his nickname.

Q earned the nickname Grim Reaper a long time ago when he was in the streets heavily. The name was given to him because niggas knew he didn’t play and would put they ass down with the quickness. He had a graveyard of bodies attached to his name. After he went to school to become a doctor, Quadir traded in his dopeboy ambitions to be a lifesaver. That came in handy for his homeboys that were still in the streets. He was a lifesaver for them too whenever they got into some bullshit and needed to be treated.

The money he earned from being in the streets paid for his schooling, and he still had plenty left over which afforded him a life of luxury. Including the entire medical suite set-up in his home that he had to use for his friends and other associates.

“Yeah,” he ran his hands down his face. “Everything straight?”

“We good out here. You trying to step out tonight though?”

“Nah bro, I got a surgery in the morning.”

“Aight Dr. Doolittle,” Levi snickered. “Ima fuck witcha then.”

“Bet. Be safe out there, Levi. I don’t want no calls in the middle of the night.”

“I ain’t the one you gotta worry about,” he chuckled before hanging up.

Quadir knew that Levi was right—his homies weren’t always the problem. It was the mafia that he’d been employed by that gave him the most issues. The head of the Sartori crime family, Luca, hired him as their family doctor, and he’d been stuck with

them ever since. Any member of the Sartori syndicate knew to call him whenever they got injured in their line of duty. The problem was that most of them were located in Philadelphia, so he'd have to hop on Luca's jet immediately to get there and save the day. Often times, he had to have his colleagues cover him at CHKD because he was so busy patching up one of the Italians.

Living a double life was exhausting to say the least, but there was no way out with the Mafia. Luca Sartori owned him and had been owning him since the first day Qua decided to jump into the street life at the age of twelve. Luca made it clear to him that no matter what he did or where he went, he always worked for him. The only way out was a bullet to the brain. Q wasn't interested in dying before his time, so he sucked it up and did what he had to do. His cooperation ensured the safety of his family as well as Levi and his organization's money and drug flow.

Working for the Sartori's wasn't all bad though. Quadir had unlimited access to Luca's jet, and Luca always kept his pockets stacked with money. On top of that, he could find out information on any person he desired. Qua really didn't have to work if he didn't want to, but he had a deep passion for his job. His little sister, Nicole, had been born with cerebral palsy and that's what sparked his interest initially in the field of medicine. He was sixteen when she was born, and that's when he made the decision to get serious about school and college.

Quadir worked really hard to graduate high school early with college credit, all while being a full-time dope boy. By the time he was seventeen, he was attending school at Columbia University in New York. He took accelerated courses which took him from the traditional four-year bachelor's degree to having it completed in two. He graduated at the top of his class from med school at the young age of twenty-three and completed his residency and his time of selling dope at twenty-six. Now twenty-seven, he was at the top of his game as one of the lead pediatric surgeons at CHKD.

Sighing loudly, Qua opened his eyes and picked up his ringing phone again.

“Wassup, dad?”

“Hey son, you sound tired. Long shift?”

“The longest,” he rubbed his eyes. “And I have surgery in the morning.”

“Something simple?”

“That’s the plan. It’s a brain tumor on a seven-year-old boy, but from the images, it should be a clean-cut surgery,” he let his dad know.

Q’s dad, Kadeem, was a retired doctor. He specialized in pediatric medicine as well, but unlike his son, he didn’t take the surgeon route.

“You got it. There’s nothing my son can’t handle, but I’ll let you get your rest so that you’re prepared tomorrow. Call me when you have some time tomorrow.”

“Alright pop, I love ya.”

“I love you too, son,” Kadeem said before hanging up.

Q drug himself off the couch and upstairs to his massive bedroom. He quickly hopped in the shower then slid in between his Egyptian sheets and drifted off to sleep.

He was not ready at all when his alarm went off the next morning. He didn’t even feel well rested, and he hated that, knowing he was about to perform surgery on someone’s child. He got up so that he could get some coffee in his system. That would surely help him. Taking his phone off the charger, he jogged downstairs and got his Keurig going. He sent his mom a good morning text like he did every morning then prepared his coffee. He took it upstairs with him and got ready to head into the hospital. After quickly showering, he threw on a Nike jogging suit, grabbed his

backpack, and was out the door.

On his drive in to CHKD, the woman from the gym crossed his mind again. Her beauty was unmatched, and he was honestly surprised that he hadn't seen her around before. Q felt like most of the fine ass women in the 757 were well known and popular because of their looks. While he appreciated that, he appreciated a lowkey woman even more. Because of his lifestyle, he didn't want to take anyone serious who was going to have his real business out there. As far as the women he dealt with knew, he was simply a very wealthy doctor.

"Good morning, Dr. B!" One of his nurses, Jackie, greeted him when he walked on to his floor.

He smiled and nodded at her. "Good morning, Jack. Our patient good to go?"

"He's nervous but ready," she confirmed.

Qua nodded again then walked into his office. Placing his backpack on the floor, he quickly changed into the emerald green scrubs and slipped his feet into his black Adidas sneakers. He checked his phone to see his dad had texted him a good luck message. After he loved the text, he left his office and headed to the prep room where little Neeko and his family waited.

"Neekoooo," Q greeted him with enthusiasm, a smile, and a hi-five. "You feeling good?"

Neeko looked up at him and nodded slowly. Qua looked over at his mother and father, greeting them as well.

"Yeah? Jackie told me you were nervous. Talk to me man, what's got you feeling nervous?" He asked with pure concern.

“I don’t want something to go wrong,” Neeko confessed with worry written all over his face.

Q playfully twisted his lips up. “I thought you trusted me?”

“I do,” Neeko laughed.

“Ah, I got a smile out of you before surgery, and I bet I’ll get an even bigger one after surgery, right?”

He nodded again. “Yeah.”

“Good, that’s what I like to hear my man,” they slapped fives again. “Who’s your favorite artist again? Lil’ Baby?” Neeko nodded. “Aight bet. We’ll play some Lil’ Baby for you before we start the surgery, sounds good?”

A huge smile spread across Neeko’s face. Qua spoke to his parents, being sure to answer any last-minute questions and comforting all of their concerns. Once he was sure that everyone was on board, he let them know they’d get started shortly then departed the room.

On the way up to the OR, Q said a prayer like he always did with every surgery. His mother was a praying woman and had instilled that trait in him as well. Surgeries were always a scary time for families, so he made sure he got all the assistance he could get from the man upstairs. It put him in the best mental space as well to perform at his best. After the prayer, he kissed it up to God then got prepped to get Neeko back to 100% health.

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Saige

“Hey there little lady,” Saige calmly greeted the timid seven-year-old who waited for her in the hospital room.

Her big blue eyes looked up at her. “Hi.”

“My name is Saige. What’s yours, sweetheart?”

“Lilah,” she replied hesitantly.

“Wow, that’s a beautiful name!”

Lilah faintly smiled then laid back and looked out the window. Working as a children’s mental health counselor had its ups and downs. The initial meeting was always the hardest when she was meeting with children who had been sexually abused or assaulted. The kids were almost always distrusting, and she had to figure out how to get them to open up.

“What’s your favorite cartoon character?” Saige asked, trying the first tactic of many she normally used.

Lilah looked over at her. “Um, My Little Pony.”

“What?” She gasped with a bright smile. “I love My Little Pony too! I bet you can

draw really good, huh Lilah?" She fished for some paper and crayons that she always kept inside of her bag.

"Unh huh," she nodded, eyeing Saige curiously.

Finding what she was looking for, Saige placed the pack of crayons on the table next to the bed along with two pieces of construction paper. She glanced over at Lilah whose attention she clearly had with the items. She pulled up a chair and took a seat then opened the crayons.

"Do you want to draw My Little Pony with me?"

Lilah's eyes lit up as she eagerly got closer to Saige. They started drawing and Saige continued asking her questions to get her to open up. Eventually, Lilah came clean about what her stepdad had done to her. Saige made sure to record everything so that his sick, perverted ass spent the max amount of time in jail.

Her heart was broken for the little girl, but it seemed as if she was extremely resilient. Saige knew that with enough time and therapy, Lilah would ultimately be alright. After spending over two hours together and drawing a few pictures, Saige informed her that she had to go.

"I don't want you to leave," Lilah pouted.

"You know what? I'll be seeing you again soon, sweetheart. Right now, your mommy is waiting to see you. Are you okay with that?" She asked out of habit.

Sometimes, the mothers were in on the assault or had knowledge of it. Kids didn't always disclose that, so Saige regularly asked if it was okay for the mother to be present. If she even got an inkling that the child wasn't okay with it, then it wouldn't happen.

Lilah nodded with a smile. “Yes.”

“Okay, good,” she let out a silent sigh of relief. “Like I said, I’ll see you again soon.”

“Okay. Here,” Lilah handed her one of her pictures.

Smiling, Saige accepted the photo before exchanging one of her own. They said their see you laters one more time before Saige ended the recording, dropped the recorder in her bag, and stepped out into the hall with Lilah’s mother, Lola, and a police officer.

“Is that enough to arrest him?” Lola looked between Saige and Officer Harris.

Harris nodded. “More than enough, ma’am.”

“Thank you,” Lola looked at Saige with tears in her eyes. “Thank you so much!”

Saige half-way smiled. “No problem. I need you to understand that this will be a long road to recovery. Be as present as you can for her. She’ll need it.”

Nodding, Lola suddenly hugged Saige. That was a typical response from parents, so Saige hugged her back then released her. After she gave the tape recording to Officer Harris, she headed to the elevators. Hearing her text tone go off, Saige stuck her hand in her purse to retrieve it.

SD: I’m stopping by in an hour. Be ready for me.

“You getting on?” A male’s voice pulled her from her thoughts.

Looking up, Saige’s heart rate sped up when she realized it was Dr. Burrus standing on the elevator. He was dressed nicely in a navy-blue suit, and Saige didn’t miss the

expensive Ferragamo loafers on his feet. She dropped her phone back in her purse and stepped inside. His cologne wafted through the small space, tickling her nose. She was kind of glad that they were the only two people on the elevator. She wanted to be able to secretly stare at him in peace.

“You’re Ramel’s family, right?” He broke the silence as the elevator slowly went down from the eighth floor.

She looked at him and nodded. “Yeah, that’s my little brother.”

“Ah, okay,” he slowly nodded. “Has your family decided what y’all are going to do? I know it’s only been two days.”

“Um, no. My dad and his wife are still talking their options over,” she informed him, trying to keep her cool around him.

“Hm. Well, tell them if they have any questions, they can always contact me. Have a good day,” he smiled at her which made her pussy yearn for him.

She stood there, stunned at how turned on she was just from being in his presence. At the same time, she didn’t miss the snide emphasis he put on ‘them’ when he spoke to her. Saige felt like the fine ass doctor was taunting her in a way. His bomb ass looks mixed with his swag and his confidence and his seemingly smart mouth had her extremely curious about him.

“Dr. Burrus,” she called after him, rushing off the elevator to catch up with him.

He turned to look at her with one hand in his pocket. “Yes?”

“Um,” she looked around nervously then put her attention back on him.

“Did you...need something?” He asked after a few seconds passed, and she still hadn’t said anything.

“Yeah, what are you doing here?”

“Here...at the hospital that I work at?” He looked at her like she was an idiot.

Saige was kicking herself for asking that stupid ass question. Instead of responding, she rushed off and out of the hospital. She needed to hurry up and get home anyway. Once she was in the safety of car, she finally felt like she could breathe again. Dr. Burrus had her tripping over herself, and she wasn’t feeling that at all.

Pushing him out of her head, she started up her car and headed to her expansive home in the affluent neighborhood of Sea Breeze Farms in Virginia Beach. She arrived twenty minutes later and hopped out quickly. Rushing inside of her five-bedroom, six-bathroom house, she ran straight to her room to get showered. Once she was done getting her body clean, she oiled herself up and slipped into a hot pink, three-piece lace lingerie set that she’d gotten from Fashion Nova. She rubbed her Gold Rush fragrance oil from Zoe’s Essentials on her wrist and neck, then topped it off with her Black Opium by YSL perfume. She flipped her braids to one side because she knew he liked her hair being grabbable.

“Hey, I’m kind of busy, but wassup?” She answered the phone for Moon just in case it was an emergency.

“Oh, I didn’t want anything, really. Call me back when you’re free.”

“You sure? You okay?”

“Yeah, sissy, I’m fine. Call me back,” Moon insisted.

“Okay, I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Saige tossed her phone on her bed and started making her way downstairs. Just as she reached the bottom of the stairs, her front door opened.

“Hey, love,” Carmine licked his lips and smiled at her, dropping his set of keys in the bowl near the door.

Saige jumped into his arms and planted a kiss on his lips. “Hey, handsome.”

Saige met Carmine a few years ago when he was in town celebrating one of his friends’ restaurants opening. When she first saw him, she thought he was very attractive, but she didn’t want to date anyone who wasn’t black. Carmine approached her and wouldn’t let up though. She confessed to him the difference in race bothered her and then he presented her with an offer that she couldn’t refuse.

Carmine offered to be her sugar daddy and get her whatever she wanted in exchange for her being his companion whenever he came to town. He was only seven years older than her, but his bank account was a lot larger than hers. He resided in Philadelphia but came to Virginia frequently on business. Saige was initially hesitant about the whole situation, but when he gave her ten thousand dollars just to think about his proposal, she was sold. Carmine was the very reason she lived in an almost million-dollar home.

Saige hadn’t told a soul about her arrangement with him. Since she had a good paying job, she used that as a means to explain her living situation. On top of that, Carmine required her to be discreet because of who he was. He told her that he owned a very lucrative tech company that was worth millions of dollars. He said that he didn’t want anyone coming after her to try and extort her for any of his money. So far, their

arrangement had been working for both of them. She wasn't blind to the fact that he probably had a family or a wife or something back home in Philadelphia though he claimed he didn't. Until someone presented themselves to her as such, she was going to continue to live in her ignorant bliss.

"Look at you," he put her down then twirled her around. "You're fuckin' beautiful, Saige."

She blushed like always when she was in his presence. "Thanks, C."

Lifting her up in his muscular arms, he started passionately and aggressively kissing her while carrying her upstairs to her bedroom. He gently laid her back on her bed and admired her body, biting on his bottom lip.

"You make my dick so hard, babe," he told her in a husky tone, stroking at his manhood through his slacks.

"Yeah?" She stood up then pushed him down on the bed.

While maintaining eye contact with him the way he liked, she unbuckled his pants and slid them along with his boxers down to his ankles. Carmine had a kink about her talking to his dick, so she did whatever it took to keep him happy. Keeping him happy meant keeping her mortgage and bills paid, along with her monthly allowance of ten bands.

"Hey, big daddy," she caressed his dick in her hands while staring at it. "I missed you so much," she licked him like a lollipop, immediately drawing a low groan out of him. "And you taste so good. Let mama take care of you."

Slowly feeding his eight inches into her mouth, Saige sucked Carmine's dick just the way he liked it. He stood up a few minutes later and fucked her face because he knew

that turned her on.

“Ahh, fuck, beautiful, I’m going to cum,” he groaned, fuckin’ her face a little faster while gripping her braids.

He shoved his dick all the way in the back of her throat, causing tears to sprout in Saige’s eyes. He smiled because he loved it when she cried from gagging on his length. Seconds later, his seed was spilling out of him and down her throat.

“Good job,” she cooed at his dick when he pulled out of her mouth. She kissed the head a few times. “Can I have some more?”

Carmine grabbed his dick and smacked it on her lips a few times. “You can have whatever you want, love, but let me taste you first.”

She nodded and slowly stood up. They shared a sloppy kiss before C made her lie on the bed. He started grinning when he realized she was wearing crotchless panties. Not wanting to wait another moment, he used his tongue to split her open.

Saige instantly arched her back to give Carmine better access to his meal for the moment. Her mouth fell open in pleasure while he softly nibbled and licked on her clit. He slipped two fingers inside of her and massaged her insides while his tongue massaged her outsides.

“Yessss, Carmine!” She yelled out in ecstasy, looking down into his eyes. “That feels so good, you’re going to make me cum!”

“Good, baby. Cum for me,” he coached before latching on to her clit and flicking his tongue back and forth.

Her head fell back, her eyes squeezed shut, and a slew of curse words flew out of her

mouth as the orgasm ripped through her body moments later.

“Taste yourself,” he told her, climbing on top of her and deeply kissing her. “You taste perfect, baby.”

She opened her eyes and nodded. “Mmhmm. Can I have more of you now?”

“You’re hungry for this dick, huh?” He winked and got out of the bed then stood against the wall.

Knowing exactly what he wanted, Saige got out of the bed and crawled over to him before taking him in her mouth yet again. They spent the next thirty minutes pleasing each other orally until they both tapped out. As Carmine got dressed, his phone started ringing and he answered it. Saige could tell by the conversation who was on the other end.

“Daddy dearest?” She asked him after he hung up.

“You know it,” he grabbed her titties in both hands and gave her nipples a lick then let them go. “I have to go handle business.”

“Okay,” she nodded and pouted.

Even though their arrangement was mutually beneficial, Saige actually enjoyed spending time with Carmine. Sometimes, he flew in on the weekends and kept her in the house for three days straight, giving her back-to-back orgasms. Outside of the fact that he was fine as hell, Carmine was exceptionally sweet to her.

With their agreement, she wasn’t supposed to entertain other men, and she’d stuck to that. Saige was very career driven, so her main focus was her job and her family. Men weren’t even in her realm, so it was easy to not entertain them. The fact that she was

intrigued by Dr. Burrus had her scared because she was sure that Carmine wasn't going to understand that.

"Here," he went inside his suit jacket pocket and pulled out a stack of money. He kissed her forehead then her lips.

She flipped through the money then looked at him curiously. Her monthly allowance had already been deposited into her account. "What's this for?"

"Because you're beautiful," he thumbed her face with a smile.

"Carmine," she blushed then hugged and kissed him. "Thank you, baby."

"Walk me out?"

She nodded again then grabbed his hand and walked him downstairs. They kissed a few more times at the door before he left.

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4

Carmine

Carmine drew his fist back and punched the man in front of him in the face again. Two teeth and blood came flying out of his mouth. “I’m so sick of having to come all the way down here to handle you fuckin’ idiots!”

“Carmine, I—”

C quickly drew his nine and let off a single round, silencing the man for good. He turned and looked at his older brother Gennaro. “Call them muthafuckas and have them clean this shit up.”

“I already did because I knew you weren’t letting his ass walk out of here,” he chuckled and shook his head, knowing his little brother like the back of his hand.

“Good,” Carmine tucked his weapon.

“You went and saw your toy ?” Gennaro taunted.

Carmine yoked G up and gave him a menacing glare. “If I have to tell you one more time to stop calling her that, dad will be burying you next!” He let him go with a shove.

Gennaro chuckled, dusting off his shirt. “For someone who isn’t even fuckin’, you sure are protective over your lil’ fling.”

“Watch your fuckin’ mouth when it comes to her,” Carmine plucked G in the middle of his forehead before walking out of the building.

Carmine absolutely hated it whenever either of his brothers spoke about his situation with Saige. It was complicated, but he enjoyed every minute he got to spend with her. If his father knew that he was messing around with a black woman, he’d lose his fuckin’ shit, but Carmine wasn’t worried about that. He knew Saige hadn’t and would never tell anyone what they had going on. Even if she did, the chances of his father finding out about it were slim to none with him living in an entirely different state.

When Carmine initially met Saige, there was something about her that he couldn’t resist. He knew he was taking a major chance when he approached her, but that was something he was willing to do. Finding out that Saige was a virgin was a shocker to him. It was rare to find a virgin, let alone a twenty-two-year-old virgin. While he was heavily attracted to her, taking her virginity wasn’t a line he was willing to cross. He was certain that if he took her virginity, it was going to change both their lives.

He wasn’t even sure that she’d accept his proposal of being his sugar baby. He had to have her, but that was the only capacity in which he saw fit to work for them. A true relationship was out of the question, which was why he didn’t want to take her virginity. He loved her deeply and if the circumstances were different, he’d make her his wife. Saige was beyond perfection in his eyes. She was pure and untouched, and he’d had the pleasure of teaching her how to suck dick like a pro. He reveled in the fact that he was the only man to see her naked and taste her sweetness. There were so many amazing qualities about her outside of the fact that she was a virgin. Over the last two years, he’d fallen head over heels for Saige Persaud, and there wasn’t shit he could actually do about it.

Sliding into the back of the black Cadillac Escalade that awaited him, he took his vibrating phone out of his pocket and saw that it was his father again.

“Pull off,” he instructed the driver before answering. Since G had pissed him off, he was gon’ let him find his own ride. “Yes?”

“Is it handled?” His father spoke into the phone.

Carminc rolled his eyes. He hated that his dad always felt the need to micromanage him. “If you were going to call and check in every half hour, you should’ve come here and did it your fuckin’ self! It’s done!” he angrily spat before hanging up and turning his phone off.

Carminc and his father, Luca, had somewhat of a tumultuous relationship. Being a Sartori meant he had big shoes to fill and being the last son had given him a bit of a complex. His oldest brother, Domenico, was overly favored by Luca, and Gennaro could do no wrong in Luca’s eyes. For some reason, Carminc got the short end of the stick. Luca put Domenico in a position to be next in line to take over the Sartori empire while he used Carminc and Gennaro as the muscles. If Carminc and Gennaro went to handle business together, Luca would only call Carminc to see how things went. If shit went sideways for some reason, then it was always Carminc’s fault, regardless of whether it truly was or wasn’t.

C loved and respected his dad because he’d taken care of the three of them on his own as a single father. Their mother, Mia, passed away due to complications after giving birth to him. Carminc knew it probably wasn’t easy for Luca to have a handle on them while also grieving his wife and trying to keep his drug empire afloat. In a way, Carminc felt like Luca hated him due to the fact that he lost his wife because he was born. It crossed his mind a lot that if he was never born, his mother would still be alive. Her death wasn’t his fault and yet that was a heavy guilt that he carried with him daily. The only person on the planet that knew that was Saige.

She made him feel comfortable enough to open up to her completely. It could’ve been the therapist in her, but she always made it so easy for him to talk. That was one

of the many things he loved about her.

Thirty minutes later, Carmine was arriving at the hangar where the family jet was kept. He boarded the plane and got comfortable in his seat. Ten minutes later, Gennaro was storming onto the plane.

“You’re a fuckin’ dick!” G yelled at Carmine, pointing at him with his index finger.

A satisfied smirk spread across Carmine’s face. “Watch how you speak to me and about Saige, Gennaro.”

“Fuck you!” He spat, taking a seat in the back of the plane.

Shrugging G’s attitude off, Carmine closed his eyes and prepared for takeoff. He was exhausted from all of the nuts that Saige had sucked out of him, so he fell asleep quickly. A little over an hour later, the plane was landing in Philadelphia. Gennaro rushed past Carmine and off the plane without so much as a goodbye. That shit didn’t bother C one bit. Chuckling to himself, he deboarded and walked over to his midnight blue Jaguar XF.

“Pussy!” Gennaro shouted out of his car window as he zoomed by in his yellow Lambo.

Carmine knew that Gennaro could hold a grudge like no other, so he was fully prepared to not hear from him for a few days. He hit the alarm on his car and slid inside. Starting it up, he made the dreaded forty-minute drive to his home in Rittenhouse Square. After he parked, he shut the engine down and sat for a few minutes. Finally getting the energy, Carmine hopped out and walked inside his home which was quiet. Making his way upstairs to his bedroom, he was surprised to see his wife of seven years, Victoria, still awake.

“Welcome home, baby,” she walked over to him and deeply kissed him. She broke the kiss and immediately slapped him across the face. “Really, Carmine? You could’ve at least washed the bitch out of your fuckin’ mouth!”

Carmine reared back and punched her square in the nose, sending her flying to the marble floor. He squatted down next to her as she lay there whimpering with blood leaking from her nose.

“Let that be the last time you call her out of her name,” he told her before disappearing into the bathroom to shower.

Though Victoria had no idea who Carmine was cheating on her with, she was well aware that he was stepping out on her. That wasn’t the first time he went home with Saige’s pussy on his breath, and it damn sure wasn’t going to be the last. It also wasn’t the first time he’d put hands on her, and anytime he felt like she was disrespecting him or Saige, he’d do it again. Vicky got the evil side of him while Saige got the soft version.

At the beginning of their marriage, Carmine loved Victoria’s dirty drawers. No one could pay him to think that she didn’t shit rainbows and piss sunshine. Three years into their marriage, they welcomed their first child, Carmine Junior. The following year, their daughter, Caterina, came along. Carmine was the happiest he’d ever been, but he had to be out of the house a lot because he was in the streets. Vicky felt alone which led to her stepping out on him. When he found out, he almost killed her. If it wasn’t for Caterina crying in her crib, the vicious beating would’ve ended Victoria’s life.

Ever since then, their marriage had been on shaky ground. They tried to make it work for the sake of the kids and because deep down, Carmine really did love her. However, when he met Saige, everything shifted for him. She was a breath of fresh air and an escape from the nightmare that his marriage had become. Carmine loved

his children with every piece of his heart, and he wanted them to grow up in a two-parent household. He didn't have that, and he wanted to be able to give that to them, so he stayed in the marriage. Saige kept him happy, so he really didn't need Victoria for shit but to help raise his kids and stay in her own fuckin' lane.

5

Quadir

“D r. B, the patient is ready for you in room three,” one of his techs, Brittany, walked into his office and handed him the stack of paperwork.

“Thanks, Britt,” he told her then started looking over all the consent forms.

After he was sure that everything had been signed, he stuck the documents in Ramel’s file then stood up and walked out of his office. When he walked into room three, he was slightly surprised that the brown skin beauty wasn’t there. He’d found out, from Luca’s sources, that her name was Saige, and she worked as a pediatric mental health counselor. That piqued his curiosity a bit because they were somewhat in the same line of work.

She seemed to be doing pretty well for herself considering she lived in a home that was valued at 850K. Something wasn’t adding up for him though because her salary didn’t match her crib. She wasn’t even making six figures a year, so he didn’t know how she afforded a six-figure down payment on her house. Her name was the only one on the deed and the loan which told him there was no man involved. Maybe it was her father who helped her out. Whoever it was made sure that her house was solely hers, and he could respect that.

“Wassup, Ramel? How you feeling?” Qua smiled at him, instantly shifting into doctor mode.

Ramel nodded. "I feel good."

"Good! I love to hear that from my patients. How are you feeling about getting this surgery knocked out?"

"It's cool," Ramel shrugged casually. "My sister Saige said that everything is going to be fine. Plus, I'm strong, so it's going to be fine."

Qua nodded. It was clear to him that Ramel and Saige had a deep bond. "Your sister is right. Everything will be fine, I'm going to make sure of it."

"When can we get his surgery scheduled?" Hailey asked.

"I'll have Brittany come back in once we're done here to get him scheduled, but I believe I have openings within the next three weeks."

Hailey gasped dramatically. "That's so soon."

"Mom, it's okay," Ramel looked up at her.

Quadir smirked at how tough Ramel was being. He didn't know if it was an act or not, but he thought it was brave of him.

"Is there anything we need to be doing in the meantime?" Winston asked, looking slightly stressed.

"Just not worrying. It's best if, on the morning of surgery, Ramel has a good support system around him. Brain surgery is major, and when he wakes up from the surgery, he'll need to see his favorite, familiar faces," he looked between Winston and Hailey.

Winston nodded. "Understood. His sisters will be here with us."

“Great,” he turned his attention to Ramel next. “Who’s your favorite superhero or character?”

“Mmm...Ironman!”

“Ironman?” Quadir stuck his fist out to Ramel, and they fist bumped. “That’s a good one. I’ll have something for you on prep day, alright?” Ramel nodded with a smile then Q looked at Winston and Hailey. “He’ll have to check-in to the hospital the night before surgery. I like to have them here just to be sure they don’t have anything on their stomach and to get everything prepped for the day of surgery. There will be more consent forms to be signed, he’ll have to get another scan of his brain, and get IV fluids going so that he’s well hydrated.”

“Okay,” Hailey squeezed Winston’s hand.

“Like I said before, the recovery process is tough, but we’re going to get through it. That’s a promise. Any questions for me?”

When Hailey and Winston both shook their heads, Q spoke to them for a few more minutes before walking out of the room. He instructed Brittany to get Ramel set up for surgery then went back into his office. His phone was vibrating against his desk with a call from his mother.

“Wassup, mom?” He put the phone on speaker and closed his office door.

“Hey, son. What are you up to?”

Qua chuckled as he changed out of his scrubs. Angie always called him during working hours and asked what he was up to like he didn’t have a job.

“Changing out so I can get out of here for the day. How are you today?”

“Well, I was doing just fine until I ran across one of Nicole’s t-shirts in the laundry room. I don’t know how it got there but...” she sighed sadly. “Lord Jesus, give me the strength.”

Nicole had passed away three years prior after she and Angie were involved in a drive-by shooting at a park. They were there attending an event for the church they went to when bullets started flying. Since Nicole was wheelchair bound, she wasn’t able to duck and dodge the gunfire like the rest of the churchgoers. By the time the bullets stopped, Nicole had been shot a total of twelve times, and Angie had taken two to the back. Luckily for Angie, her wounds were non-life threatening, but Nicole was pronounced dead on the scene.

Angie hadn’t been quite the same since then. Qua was heartbroken that his sister’s life had been cut short, but he stood strong for his mother. Nicole’s father, Jason, wasn’t very present in her life from the time he found out about her having the disorder. Quadir thought he’d at least be there for the funeral, but the nigga never showed. Jason never even sent a sympathy card or a bouquet of flowers which really set Qua off. It was bad enough his mother was grieving, and she didn’t deserve to do it alone when she didn’t create Nicole alone. Seeing how upset Jason’s absence made Angie caused Qua to make Jason permanently absent. Q had no love for deadbeat fathers, so he didn’t bat an eye when he sent Jason to meet his maker. He knew he shouldn’t still be catching bodies as a practicing doctor, but that body was well warranted.

For the last three years, Qua had been his mom’s knight in shining armor. Since his parents were married and divorced within the first two years of his life, they didn’t have a good relationship with each other. Kadeem tried to be there for Angie when Nicole died, but Angie denied him, leaving all of her sadness and grief on Qua’s shoulders. It had been a lot on him, on top of dealing with the mafia, but he was handling it the best way he could.

“It’s going to be alright. You know Nicole wouldn’t want you crying like this, mom,” he did his best to calm her down.

“I know,” she chuckled and sniffled. “I miss her so much that it hurts, you know?”

“Yeah, I know. Did you eat today?” he finished getting dressed, grabbed his bag, and walked out of his office.

“I had some soup. I’m fine, Quadir.”

“Soup? Mom, that ain’t food. I’m going to DoorDash you something to the house.”

“Yo, Qua!”

Quadir turned to see his good friend, colleague, and old college roommate, Dr. Kurtis Ascot, slowly jogging towards him. He held up his index finger then pointed at his ear to show Kurtis that he was on the phone.

“Boy, I said I’m fine!” She fussed.

He dapped Kurtis up. “Yeah, okay. Mom, let me call you back once I get home and situated.”

“Alright. I love you.”

“I love you too,” he hung up then looked at Kurt. “What’s good, my boy?”

“Ah, not much. You had time to look at those x-rays earlier?”

“I did, my bad, I meant to hit you back. My day has been busy. In my opinion, I think it looks like a tumor, non-cancerous though.”

Kurt nodded, shoving his hands in the pocket of his white coat. “That’s what I thought too, I just wanted a second set of eyes on it. ‘Preciate that bro. You got plans tonight?”

“Shiiit, I don’t even know right now,” he shrugged. Qua never made any concrete plans because of the mafia. The minute they called, he had to go, which made it hard for him to make plans.

“Aight, well Alyssa cooking tonight and having a few of her friends over around seven. I’m not trying to be outnumbered,” Kurt admitted with a laugh. “Javon in town too, so he’s going to be there,” he spoke about one of their friends from college.

“My boy Von here? Ah, aight, aight, in that case, I’ll try to swing by.”

“Bet.”

They dapped each other up again then Qua headed over to the elevators. He stepped on and ordered his mom some Carrabba’s on the Door Dash app on the way down to the parking garage. Angie loved her some Italian food, and Carrabba’s was her favorite place, so he knew she wouldn’t be able to resist it.

Stepping off the elevator, he took long strides over to his BMW 760i. Hitting the alarm, he opened the passenger door and tossed his bag inside before getting in and cranking the engine. Once he was sure that the Door Dash order went through, he pulled off and jetted home. It was a Friday afternoon, so traffic was heavy, and it took him over thirty minutes to get home.

After he parked in his garage and got out, his phone started ringing. Going inside and dropping his stuff on the counter, he took his phone out of his pocket. He smirked when he saw it was one of his freaks, April.

“Wassup?” He answered, sliding his shoes off and placing them on the shoe rack near the door.

“Heyyyyy daddy. I miss you,” she cooed into the phone.

“Is that right?”

“Yes. You tryna slide over here a little later? My kids gone for the weekend.”

He chuckled and thought about it momentarily. April was a freak in every sense of the word. He’d had multiple threesomes with her and even a couple of foursomes. She was down to fuck any and everywhere regardless if other people were around or not. Qua’s dick had been in every hole on April’s body a hundred times over. She was his number one draft pick except he had zero feelings for her. It annoyed him that she was always trying to make their situation more than it was. To Qua, they were just fuckin’ and to April, they were working on a relationship.

“Uh, yeah. I’ll hit you a lil’ later though,” he told her before hanging up.

He didn’t want to give her a chance to start worrying him to death about what time he was going to come over. He headed upstairs to his bedroom to get showered and dressed to hit Kurt’s crib. He only hoped that the Sartori family were safe and sound for the night.

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6

Saige

“Can I ask you something?” Moon stopped browsing the clothes racks and looked at Saige.

Saige turned around and gave her sister her attention. “Anything. Wassup?”

“Why don’t you have a boyfriend?”

“Moon,” Saige chuckled and rolled her eyes because they’d already had that talk before. “How many times are we going to have this conversation?”

“I just want you to be happy, and—”

“I am happy, Moon. I’ve told you a thousand times that you don’t need a man to be happy. My life is great, I have you and Melly.”

“Everyone needs love, Saige, even you. I don’t know if mommy turned you off to love or what, but you don’t want to realize later in life that you should’ve given a man a chance,” she advised.

“Am I the big sister, or are you?” Saige raised a curious eyebrow.

“I’m just saying,” Moon shrugged then walked over to the next aisle with Saige trailing her. When she looked up, she recognized a familiar face. “Hey, Dr. Burrus,

right?”

Saige’s heart skipped a few beats when she heard Moon say his name. Looking in the direction that Moon was facing, her heart skipped a few more beats when she saw that he was with a woman. A good-looking woman at that. They complimented each other well, and Saige hated that she was already starting to compare herself to the woman standing next to him.

He smiled at Moon and gave a slight wave. “Hey, Moon. How are you?”

“I’m good! Anxious about Ramel’s surgery,” she glanced at Saige and was surprised that she was so quiet.

“Yeah, well,” he nodded. “Those are normal feelings, but I promise you have nothing to worry about. I can do this surgery in my sleep, and it’s looking like it’ll be pretty straight forward.”

“Good! Oh, um, you remember my sister, Saige, right?” Moon looked between the two of them, trying to figure out why there was a weird air all of a sudden.

“Yes, Saige, hello,” he stated awkwardly.

Saige simply waved instead of verbally responding. Her body temperature was rising just from being in his presence, and she hated that for herself. No man got her bothered in such a way—not even Carmine.

“Awkwarddddd,” Moon sung, stating the obvious.

“Right,” the woman looked Saige up and down before pulling on his arm. “C’mon Qua, let’s finish shopping.”

“I’ll see y’all on surgery day,” Qua told them then turned and walked away with the woman.

Saige finally released the breath she’d been holding since Dr. Burrus entered her presence.

“What the hell was that?” Moon instantly started interrogating her sister.

“What was what?”

“That weird ass interaction between you and Dr. B.”

Saige shrugged and continued looking through the clothes. She honestly didn’t know what it was, and she damn sure didn’t want to explain herself to her baby sister. Hearing her phone ring, she happily reached inside her black Telfar purse and grabbed it out. When she saw it was Carmine calling, she decided to ignore it since she was with Moon. She knew if Moon even detected a hint of her flirting, she’d be asking a thousand questions. Immediately after she ignored his call, her mother, Celeste, started calling.

“Yes, mom?” She answered with a frustrated sigh.

“Did I do something to you today? Why are you answering the phone with an attitude?” Celeste snapped into the phone with her New York drawl.

Saige tried to hold in a laugh while Moon rolled her eyes and fake gagged. “I’m just answering the phone. What’s going on, mom?”

“Hmph. Have you spoken to your sister? She still isn’t answering my calls.”

“Well...she may not be answering because you did call her a black whore the last

time you two spoke,” she reminded her.

Celeste had a nasty habit of addressing her daughters by names that weren’t given to them at birth. Ever since Saige and Moon were little girls, Celeste had been unusually tough on them, physically and mentally. The older they got, the worse it got. In Celeste’s eyes, her daughters couldn’t do anything right, so Saige put distance between them at an early age. She made sure she did what she had to do to graduate high school early, so that she could attend Howard University and get out of her mom’s house.

Things got so bad for Moon once Saige left that she had to move out and go live with Winston and Hailey. Saige knew that Celeste hated them because of how much they loved their father. Winston left Celeste shortly after Moon was born, and she took all of her anger and pain out on the two people that were the spitting images of Winston.

Celeste sucked her teeth hard. “If she stopped posting half naked pictures of herself on the internet, then maybe everyone wouldn’t think she’s a whore!”

“Everyone or you?”

“Both!” She screeched into the phone. “You two bitches—”

Saige immediately hung up because she wasn’t in the mood for a verbal assault. Celeste seemed to dish those out on a regular basis and then wondered why her nor Moon wanted to talk to her.

“I don’t even wanna talk about your mom right now,” Moon started. “I’m still trying to figure out what is going on with you and the hot doc?”

Saige giggled as they strolled out of the store. “The hot doc?”

“That’s what I call him when I’m talking to my friends. But don’t try to deny it, I saw something on your face when he was standing there.”

“Moon, it’s nothing, really,” she looked down at her phone when it started ringing again. She decided to answer. “Hey, I’m with my sister right now, so can I call you back when I get home?”

“Love, you know how I feel when you ignore my calls. I’ll be waiting for you when you get home though,” Carmine said on the other end.

She smiled slightly. “Okay, see you then.”

“Who was that?” Moon questioned as soon as Saige hung up.

“You are one nosey child, have I ever told you that?” She draped her arm around Moon’s shoulders as they walked the mall.

“Inquisitive, not nosey!” Moon corrected her with a laugh.

The two sisters spent the next hour and a half cruising through the mall. After grabbing a few pairs of shoes and outfits, they grabbed some Chick-Fil-A and took a seat in the food court. Saige was enjoying spending her Saturday with her little sister, but she was looking forward to going home and laying up with Carmine.

“Let me go pee and then we can get out of here,” Saige said, standing up.

Moon slurped her lemonade and nodded. “Okay.”

Moving her shopping bags closer to Moon, Saige took off to the bathroom area. She rushed into a stall and relieved her bladder then washed her hands. On the way back out of the bathroom, the woman that was with Dr. Burrus earlier came waltzing in.

They eyed each other, but Saige wasn't planning to say a word to her.

"I know you think that nigga fine," the woman stated, licking her lips then shrugging. "Shit, everybody thinks Quadir is fine. You want him or something?"

"N-n-no," Saige stammered, taken aback by how forward the woman was.

"Mm, your loss," she shrugged again with a smirk. "I'd let you fuck that nigga just as long as I get to be there," she walked up on Saige and started whispering in her ear. "He likes to fuck two bad bitches at the same time and from what I can see, you fit the bill. If you ever change your mind, let me know," she took a step back before extending her hand out that held a card.

Saige looked down at the card then back up at the woman. When she pushed the card further in Saige's direction, she reluctantly took it. The woman blew her a kiss then disappeared inside of a stall. She studied the card and saw that the woman's name was April. The card contained all of her social media handles. Shoving the card in her bra since her dress had no pockets, Saige calmed herself then walked out of the bathroom.

She decided not to tell Moon about what had just transpired. That would only add to Moon's accusations of there being something between her and Quadir. She gathered her things and left the mall with Moon. They talked about the start of the new school year and all the things she planned to do as a senior. Saige was excited for her sister and couldn't wait to see how many scholarships she got. Moon typically maintained a 4.0 GPA, so Saige suspected that she'd be going to an ivy league college.

After she dropped Moon off at home, she headed to her house with Quadir on her mind. April was on her mind as well. Saige had never even thought about a threesome, let alone be propositioned for one. Being that she was a virgin, a lot of sexual acts didn't cross her mind. Saige chose to hold on to her innocence after she

came close to being raped while in high school. The close call traumatized her so bad that she didn't even want a man in her space.

It took a lot for her and Carmine to get where they were sexually. He had to build that trust in her first to make her feel comfortable enough to share her body with him. She was fine with not giving him her virginity because she wanted her first time to be special. She wanted to give her virginity to someone who she planned to spend forever with. Though she and Carmine shared a special bond, she wasn't 100% convinced that he was her forever . And that was okay because she wasn't sure when or if she'd ever be able to settle down.

Fifteen minutes later, she was parking in her driveway and getting out. Walking inside her home, she dotted up the stairs and placed her bags inside her bedroom. She put her phone on the charger and began searching for Carmine.

"There you are," she spoke softly, finding him outside near the pool.

He half-way smiled at her. "Saige, why do I pay your phone bill if you're not going to answer the phone when I call?"

"I'm sorry, bae," she climbed onto the pool chair with him and straddled his lap. She leaned in and kissed his lips a few times. "I told you my sister asks a lot of questions, and I didn't want her in my business."

"Mm, you sure you were with your sister and not another man?"

"Carmine, when I have ever been with another man?" She asked with a serious expression, confused about his line of questioning.

He shrugged slowly while staring coldly into her eyes. "Maybe you're tired of this arrangement. Or maybe you want to keep me around because I benefit you financially

while you build a relationship with another man.”

“Carmine,” she sat straight up and looked down at him. His demeanor was off putting, and she’d never seen him like that. “What’s really the issue? I told you that I enjoyed our situation. There is no other man.

Saige watched as his demeanor went from menacing and icy back to his usual loving stare. “You’re right, I’m trippin’.”

“Are you alright?” She asked out of concern.

“Yeah, I apologize,” he shook his head and ran his fingers through his short cut. “It’s just...a lot on my mind.”

“Yeah? You know I can ease that for you,” she said seductively, massaging his dick through his pants.

“I know, love,” he gently moved her hand away. “Maybe later. I just want you, right now.”

She nodded and leaned into him, wrapping him in a hug. It was as if she could feel the tension melting away. She closed her eyes and appreciated the moment while he lightly stroked her back.

“I have to go to this event tonight, and I would love for you to go with me.”

She looked up at him in shock. “In public?”

“Yes,” he chuckled. “But no one there knows too much about me, so it’ll be fine. Just a few business partners and their girlfriends or wives,” he lied, knowing that Nico was going to be in attendance.

“Okay, baby,” a bright smile appeared on her face as she kissed him. “What should I wear?”

He nodded his head towards the house. “Go check your closet. Everything you need is in there.”

She quickly jumped off his lap and rushed inside and up the stairs. When she got inside her closet, her eyes widened at the gorgeous gown that hung inside the large walk-in closet. It was a floor-length, black velvet Rosario gown that had a crystal embellished neck. It was backless, and it dipped all the way to the lower back. Sitting on the ottoman in her closet were a pair of silver crystal Aquazzura heels along with a diamond studded Vancleef & Arples bracelet. Her jaw was hanging to the floor.

“You’re going to look absolutely fuckin’ perfect in this, baby,” Carmine joined her in the closet, softly kissing her on the neck. “And then, when we return home, I’m going to take it off of you and kiss your pretty pussy.”

She turned and gripped his face in her hands. “Thank you, baby! It’s beautiful. And I can’t wait for that either. What time does the party start?”

“In a few hours.”

“Shit, I need to start getting ready now!” She exclaimed, racing out of the closet.

Saige was surprised that Carmine had offered to take her on a public date, but she wasn’t about to turn him down. Especially since she knew he’d paid a good grip for her outfit and accessories. She was going to enjoy her night out with her boo and come home to the best head ever.

Carmine

Carmine hungrily stared at Saige as they rode in the back of his Rolls Royce. She looked breathtaking as he expected her to in the dress. She'd done her makeup to perfection and pulled her braids up into a bun to show off the large dragon tattoo on her back. Licking his lips, he wanted to eat her pussy right then and there but knew that if they got started, then they weren't going to be able to stop. He really wanted to give her the whole world, and he hated that he was married to a bitch like Victoria.

"What are you looking at?" Saige smirked at him when she realized he was staring.

He picked up her hand and kissed her knuckles a few times. "I'm looking at the most beautiful woman in the whole world."

"Awh, C," she blushed and batted her long lashes. "Thank you. You always make me feel so special."

"That's because you are, baby, and don't ever forget that."

She nodded and cleared her throat. "A-are you sure you're okay? You worried me earlier. You had this faraway look in your eyes when I got home."

The truth was, Carmine had a terrible jealousy streak that he hadn't shown to Saige. He never had to because she always answered every call and responded to every text. The thought of another man having her drove him up a wall. He knew eventually the

day would come, but he'd just have to kill whoever she thought she was interested in. Carmine had a sick obsession with Saige, and while he couldn't have her the way he wanted, he really didn't want another man to either.

"Yeah, bae," he rubbed her thigh. "Nothing for you to worry about. I apologize again if I worried you. It's just a lot weighing on me right now, but I'm glad we get to spend this night together."

"Me too, handsome," she leaned over and kissed him.

They continued talking until they pulled up to their destination. Carmine's driver opened the door for him first, and then Carmine opened Saige's door and helped her out. He pecked her lips a few times before he guided her inside the building where the event was taking place. It was a meeting of street bosses to discuss business and make sure everything was on the up and up. Since Saige had no idea what he was really into, he had to spin it like it was just a business meeting. Carmine knew that Domenico was going to be there and was certain he was going to pop a lot of shit. He wasn't worried about it though because he knew how to shut his big brother up.

"Carmine, so nice of you to join us," Nico approached them almost immediately when they walked in. "And who is this?"

Carmine's jaw clenched. He was ready to swing on his brother already. "Nico, this is Saige. Saige, this is Nico."

"Domenico. Carmine's brother," Nico extended a hand in Saige's direction with a smirk.

Saige's eyes went wide before she shook his hand. "Oh, hello. C, you didn't tell me you were going to have any family here tonight."

“C? Is that a nickname?” He smirked a little harder. “I’m sorry, how do you know my brother again?”

“Friends, we’re friends. We met a while back,” Saige quickly answered.

“Does Victoria know about this friend ?” Nico sipped his drink.

“Fuck off,” Carmine gritted, grabbing Saige’s hand to walk away from Nico.

“Victoria is his wife , if you were wondering. You seem like the inquisitive type,” Nico called after them.

Saige halted in her steps and snatched away from Carmine. “You’re married?”

“With two kids!” Nico shouted with a laugh.

Carmine groaned inwardly. His gut was telling him that it was going to be a bad idea to have his brother and his mistress in the same room. Turning around, Carmine charged at Nico, knocking him on his ass. He started throwing damaging blows to his face and side. He’d had enough of Nico’s shit, especially when Carmine had information on him that would make their father want to kill him.

“Carmine, c’mon man,” a male’s voice spoke while pulling him off of Nico.

C turned to see their family doctor, Quadir, standing there. “Get off me, Qua.”

“Not here, bro. Not in front of everybody.”

Tuning Qua’s words out, Carmine looked around for Saige and spotted her heading towards the door. “Saige!”

When she kept walking, he took off in her direction. His blood was boiling and as bad as he wanted to go back and whoop Nico's ass again, Saige was more important.

"Baby, wait," he finally caught up to her and grabbed her arm. "Please wait."

"I have got to be the biggest fuckin' idiot in the world!" She spun around to face him. "You've been lying to my face this whole time! I'm only going to ask you this once, Carmine, are you married?"

"Y-Yeah but it's much more complicated than you think."

She pulled her arm away from him and shook her head as tears rolled down her face. "Wow. You know, I've been thinking, there's no way a man as sweet and loving as you is just out here single. But a wife?"

"Please don't cry," he felt guilty as fuck. "Saige, I swear I love you."

"Fuck you," she scoffed then rushed away from him.

He wanted to go after her again until he realized the whole party was looking at him. That anger that was normally reserved for Victoria and her bullshit was now bubbling inside for Nico. Turning back around, Carmine spotted Nico and charged over to him yet again. If it was up to him, he'd kill Nico with his bare hands for exposing his secret like that. The fight between the two didn't last long because Quadir was pulling him off Nico for a second time.

"You've fucked up now," Carmine nodded his head. "Wait until I tell Luca what the fuck you had going on."

Without another word, Carmine stormed out of the building just in time to see Saige hopping in an Uber. He hurried and got in the back of the Rolls Royce and ordered

the driver to take him back to Saige's house. Carmine was fuming with anger and worry more than anything. He was worried that Saige was going to want to end their arrangement now knowing that he had a family. All he could do on the way to her house was hope and pray that she heard him out.

The Rolls was barely in park when Carmine hopped out and ran to the front door. Using his key, he unlocked the door and went inside. He could hear Saige's sobs from upstairs, so he dashed up the stairs and found her on her bedroom floor, naked and crying. The dress that she was wearing was thrown on the floor along with the shoes.

"Baby, please talk to me," he kneeled next to her.

She shoved him hard. "Get away from me, Carmine!" She yelled with her chest.

"Saige, I'm sorry, alright? Fuck!" He hit himself in the forehead out of anger. "I didn't mean for shit to get this deep with you, but it did, and I can't take it back. I love the fuck out of you."

"How!" She screamed, looking at him with tears and make-up running down her face. "How the fuck could you possibly love me when you're married with two kids , Carmine? Huh!"

He teared up seeing how much pain she was in. "Things between me and her are complicated."

"So what am I? Your little escape?"

"No, baby, you are so much more than that. You are everything to me, Saige, I swear," he pleaded with her.

“Get out!” She roared, standing to her feet. “Get the fuck out!”

“Saige, I’m not leaving you tonight. I’ll sleep in a different room, but I’m not leaving.”

“Fine, then I’ll leave!”

He grabbed her up as she tried to rush by him. She screamed and kicked, but he held her in a bear hug as they cried together. He felt like shit since he’d hurt her. When they agreed to their situation initially, he didn’t feel like it was necessary to tell Saige about Victoria. In a regular sugar daddy/sugar baby situation, his personal life would be just that—personal. Their situation, however, was anything but regular because there were feelings involved on both ends.

“I’m so fuckin’ sorry, Saige,” he spoke into her neck before placing soft kisses along it and her collarbone. “I love you so much, and I never wanted to hurt you.”

“You made me a side bitch without allowing me to have a say so, Carmine,” she said barely above a whisper.

He sat her on the bed and stared at her. His heart was aching something serious. “You’re anything but a side bitch, Saige. You are the only woman I think about from the time I wake up until I’m asleep. Shit with me and Victoria got complicated after she cheated on me. I was always faithful to her, and she cheated on me, and it hurt me like a muthafucka that she did that. I wanted my marriage to work, but I couldn’t get past the infidelity. I’m still in it because of the kids. If I could be with you full time, trust me, I would.”

“I-I-I don’t even know what to say,” she stuttered as her eyes darted all across the room. “Am I some type of revenge for your wife cheating on you?”

He knelt in front of her and took her hands into his. “No, love. Saige, when I first saw you, my heart beat in a way that it’s never beaten before. I knew...I knew that I wasn’t going to be able to have you in the way that I wanted, so I settled for this option. We settled for this option, and we’ve been at it for two years. My feelings for you are so real .”

“Carmine,” she whispered as the tears steadily rolled down her face.

“I know,” he kissed her knees and then her thighs. “I know. I’m so sorry,” he gently pushed her legs apart and bit on her inner thigh, forcing a slight moan out of her mouth. “Tell me how to make this right for you because I can’t be without you.”

When he was met with silence, Carmine stuck his face in between her thighs and pulled her clit into his mouth. Since she wasn’t resisting, he was going to thoroughly enjoy her pussy. His fear was that it’d be the last time, so he was going to make the best of it. He spent the next twenty minutes making Saige cum over and over.

“I love the way your pussy reacts to me,” he told her, resting his head on her thigh and looking up at her. “How do I fix this, Saige? Whatever it is, I’ll do it.”

“There’s nothing that needs to be fixed. From now on, we keep this,” she fanned between them with her index and middle finger. “Strictly business. You continue to pay my bills and give me my allowance as usual. We can bump that up to twenty bands a month. I will continue to be available whenever you’re in town. We take the feelings out of it.”

He shook his head and rolled his eyes. “I can’t do that, Saige. I can’t take my feelings out of this. I love you too much. You want twenty thousand? You got it, but I’m not going to stop loving you.”

“Y-you don’t love me, Carmine. You can’t possibly love me when you have a wife.”

“I don’t love her the way that I love you. You and I have something completely different than what I have with her,” he confessed to her.

“Is that why you never wanted to take my virginity? Because of her ?” She looked down at him.

“Love, I knew that if I put my dick in you, I’d want it to stay there forever. I knew that I couldn’t give you forever anytime soon, so I decided not to go there with you. You see how often I’m here just to taste you? Imagine if I knew what your most sacred spot felt like,” he closed his eyes and momentarily relished in the thought before looking at her again. “I’d never leave, Saige. No business would get done, and I can’t have that right now.”

“Are you still sleeping with her?”

“Sometimes,” he answered honestly. “But it’s like... just fuckin’. There’s no emotion there with her. I fuck her to get my rocks off when I can’t get here to you. And yes, I use condoms with her because I know that’s going to be your next question. I’d never play with your sexual health like that.”

They laid in silence for a little while. Carmine could feel his phone vibrating like crazy in his pocket, but he didn’t want to be bothered. He knew it was probably his father or Nico. After he made things right with Saige, he planned to let Luca in on Nico’s little secret.

As he continued laying on her thigh, it was as if her scent was calling out to him. Unable to control himself, Carmine dipped his head down and started licking her essence again. He continued to eat her until she was begging for him to stop. Even then, he didn’t want to stop, but he knew she didn’t have any more energy in her to keep going.

“I love you so much, Saige,” he kissed the lips on her face and lightly stroked her cheek. “Will you let me make this right?”

Searching deep into his eyes, Saige hesitantly nodded. His breathing finally relaxed and so did his heart. Carmine stood up and got completely undressed then slid back into the bed with Saige. Wrapping his arms around her, he nestled his face into the crook of her neck. He’d deal with the rest of the bullshit tomorrow.

8

Quadir

“Suction,” Qua commanded Jackie.

They were almost done with Ramel’s surgery, and Qua was relieved that he’d been able to perform it successfully with the help of his team and colleagues. It took him nearly six hours to cut him open and carefully excise the pieces of his brain that negatively affected him. Since he was also in a teaching position, he chose two residents to sit in on the surgery with him.

“What do you think, Dr. Sheen, is all of the affected brain tissue removed?” Quadir looked at the white, male resident who stood a few inches away from him.

Dr. Sheen looked at the screen that displayed Ramel’s brain then nodded. “Yes sir.”

“Dr. Amos?” He looked at the other white, male resident.

He nodded as well. “Everything looks good, sir.”

When Dr. Ascot agreed, Quadir started closing up Ramel’s scalp. Once that was done, he breathed a sigh of relief and prayed that everything went just as smooth with recovery. Leaving his nurses to take care of the rest, Qua stepped out of the surgery room and removed all of his protective wear. After giving his hands a good scrub down, he dried them and then headed to the waiting area where Saige, Moon, Hailey, and Winston nervously sat.

“Is he okay?” Saige was the first one to acknowledge his presence.

His eyes lingered on her for a second longer than he liked. His thoughts were still swirling from when he saw her with Carmine a week ago. She didn’t see him, but he saw her and the shit show that Carmine had her wrapped up in. In Q’s eyes, Saige didn’t even seem like the type to deal with a street nigga. She had a certain innocence about her that Qua was able to pick up on right away. Ever since he saw her with Carmine, the only thing he’d been able to think about was if she knew who he really was.

“Surgery was a success,” he confirmed with the nod of his head. “We removed every piece that caused the seizures, so he can now enjoy a seizure free life.”

“Thank you, God!” Saige shouted, breaking down into a fit of tears as she hugged Moon tightly.

“When can we see him?” Hailey asked.

“He’s being transported to a recovery room right now. One of my nurses will come and let you know when he’s ready for visitors. It may be about another hour or so, give or take. We just have to make sure he’s able to breathe on his own for at least thirty minutes before anyone can visit with him.”

Winston shook Qua’s hand. “Thanks, doc. We really appreciate you exercising such great care with our son. Yesterday, when you showed up in his room dressed as Ironman, I knew he was in the best hands possible.”

“Awe, I appreciate that. I’m just doing my job,” Qua offered a smile.

Saige threw her arms around Qua and hugged him tightly. “Thank you for saving my brother. Thank you!”

Slightly thrown off by her joyous response, Qua slowly lifted his arms and hugged her back. The ice box around his heart started to melt while feeling her in his arms. It was a weird sensation, and he was taken aback by how good it felt to hug her.

“Of course,” he gently pulled away from her to stop his heart from defrosting. “I’ll be by a little later on to check on Ramel.”

“Sounds good, doc,” Winston smiled.

Nodding his head, Qua turned around and went to the recovery room to make sure Ramel had been transferred successfully. After he told Jackie to come get him when Ramel woke up, Qua went to his office to take a break. He’d been on his feet for over eight hours because he had patients prior to Ramel’s surgery.

Plopping down in his chair, he let out a long sigh and massaged his temples. Quadir knew that he needed to take some time off soon. He’d been working non-stop for the last three months, and he was beyond exhausted. He loved his job and his patients, but he was well aware that if he didn’t take a break, he was going to burn himself out. He prided himself on being able to always power through whatever just like his father. While it wasn’t necessarily healthy for the body, it was the mindset he’d adapted to. His mother always reminded him to take breaks, and he knew he needed to sooner than later.

“Dr. B!” Jackie shook him awake.

He jumped because he didn’t realize that he was sleeping. “Yeah, sorry.”

She chuckled. “It’s alright. That was a long surgery! But Ramel is awake now.”

“Already?” He checked his watch, noting that forty minutes had passed from when he first got to his office. “Damn, I’ve been out for a minute.”

“Yeah, and I’ve been trying to wake you up for the last five!” She laughed and walked back out of his office.

Getting himself together, Quadir stood up and strolled to the recovery room where Ramel was. He was happy to see that he was alert, and his eyes were moving around.

“There’s the coolest kid on the block. I told you that you’d make it through surgery. How you feeling?” Qua asked, accepting his chart from Jackie and glancing over his vitals.

“Sleepy,” Ramel croaked.

“That’s normal, buddy. It’s just the meds. Do you feel pain anywhere?”

“No.”

“Good,” he took the pen out of his scrub pocket and flipped Ramel’s blanket back. Using the tip of the pen, he lightly drug it down Ramel’s foot. “Can you feel that?”

Ramel nodded slightly. “Yeah.”

“Good. Do you remember my name?”

“Quadir,” he answered confidently.

“Perfect. What month is it?”

“September.”

Qua smiled at him and asked him a few more questions, all which Ramel answered correctly. He was pleased with how coherent he was, so he told Jackie to go and get

Ramel's family. Moments later, they all came rushing in with bright smiles and tears in their eyes. It was obvious that Ramel was their world. Watching them interact with Ramel, his curiosity was gnawing at him about Saige.

"Can I talk to you for a minute?" He asked Saige after his curiosity got the best of him.

She nodded then followed him out of the room. "Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, you just don't strike me as the type of woman that puts up with a lot of bullshit, but I saw you with Carmine last week."

Her eyes swelled. "You were there?"

"I was, and I'm trying to figure out what someone like you was doing there with someone like him."

"Um," she rubbed the back of her neck. "I-I don't know. I've known him for a few years now. He asked me to go, and I said yes."

"The two of you are dating?" He blurted out without meaning to.

"Uh...something like that. Why?"

He shrugged casually. "I was just wondering because again, he doesn't seem like your type."

"My type?" She squinted at him and folded her arms across her chest. "How do you know what my type is?"

"I don't know. You just seem...well put together, and Carmine is the opposite of

that.”

“I’m sorry, how do you know Carmine again?”

“Business,” he licked his lips. Something about Saige had his undivided attention, and he didn’t want their conversation to end.

“What kind of business could a doctor and a tech guru have?”

“A tech guru?” Q laughed and nodded. “That’s what he told you?”

“What do you mean?”

He threw his hands up in surrender. “Nothing. If that’s what he told you then that’s what it is.”

“You know what, Dr. Burrus? You sound very judgmental and what about you, huh? Your little girlfriend approached me in the bathroom and offered to have a threesome with me!” She whispered in a huff.

He smirked at how flustered she seemed even saying the word threesome . “She’s not my girlfriend, and if I fucked you, it’d never be in a threesome. I’d want you to myself.”

“W-w-what?” She swallowed hard.

“You’re beautiful, you know that?” He complimented her.

Quadir ran the same game on women, and it worked every time. First, he gave them the cold shoulder, then he laid it on thick. In no time, he was getting the panties. Even though Saige seemed different, he wasn’t about to treat her any differently. She was

going to get the same treatment as the others. He truly did find her beautiful and a bit mysterious, but at the end of the day, his end game was to get inside of her. Nothing more, nothing less.

Saige was still staring at him with a lost expression when Moon stepped out of the room. “Is... everything okay out here?”

“Mmhm, fine. Thanks again, Dr. Burrus,” Saige hurriedly said before going back into Ramel’s room.

Moon looked Quadir up and down. “You like my sister, don’t you?”

“I think your sister is gorgeous. I don’t know her to like her,” he admitted.

“Mmhmm,” she nodded with a smirk. “I knew there was something between you two. Listen, Saige doesn’t date. Come to think of it, I’ve never even seen her with a man. I used to think she was gay,” she laughed at her own joke. “But she’s just all about her career. She needs a nice guy to take her out and show her a good time. She deserves that. She works so hard, and she’s always making sure me and Ramel are good. How about you give me your number, and I set up a little date?” Moon tapped her fingers against each other like she was some criminal mastermind.

Quadir was confused when Moon said that her sister didn’t date when Saige had just told him the exact opposite. It clicked in his head that Saige clearly hadn’t told her sister about her boyfriend. Or whatever Carmine was to her.

“You sure she isn’t going to mind?” He raised a curious eyebrow.

“Dr. B, you let me handle all of that. I will get her there. You just make sure you have something really nice set up for her,” she smiled.

Chuckling, Quadir gave Moon his number then walked back to his office. He was perfectly fine with the little sister playing matchmaker. So long as his end goal was met, he didn't give a fuck about what happened in between.

Saige

Saige let out an annoyed sigh when she checked the time on her Breitling watch and noted that Moon was running late. Moon had begged her to go to dinner at a restaurant in Virginia Beach called Tulu. She had been seeing it all over TikTok and wanted to go with her big sister. The restaurant was located next to the beach, and it even had a pool. The setting was beautiful and with the sun going down, it gave off an amazing glow inside the restaurant. The doors that led to the pool outside were propped open, and the breeze that was blowing off the ocean felt good against Saige's skin.

"Is this seat taken?"

Saige's heart stopped as she looked up into the face of Quadir. She unwillingly licked her lips at him. He looked good enough to eat, standing there in a red, short sleeved Dior shirt that hugged his arms just right and his tattoos on full display, dark colored jeans, and red and white Dior sneakers. His diamond chains and earrings shined brightly and complimented the outfit perfectly. Whatever cologne he was wearing was attacking Saige's pussy in the worst way. There was nothing she appreciated more than a man who smelled as good as he looked.

Analyzing him from head to toe, she realized they were matching. She had on a red Alexander McQueen off the shoulder top paired with dark denim Levi jeans that hugged every curve and red Jimmy Choo heels on her feet. She looked around him to see if Moon was anywhere in the restaurant.

“She’s not coming, beautiful,” he informed her, taking a seat anyway.

Her eyes jumped over to him. “Moon? How do you...”

Her words trailed off as it hit her what was going on. Moon declined her request to come pick her up because she claimed she had a ride. She also urged Saige to send her a picture of her outfit to make sure they were on the same wave. For the last two weeks, Moon had been talking non-stop about how cool of a guy Quadir was. A low chuckle fell off of her lips after she put everything together. Moon was one sneaky ass child.

“This was all her idea,” Qua threw his hands up.

She smiled slightly. “That child is something else.”

“She told me that you deserved a good date, and I wanted to make that happen. Is that true? You haven’t had a good date?”

Saige got lost in Qua’s gaze as he awaited her response. Something about him was just so damn dreamy to her. As she searched her mind for a clever response, the waiter approached and took their drink and food order. Saige was starving, as she hadn’t eaten all day in preparation for her supposed to be date with her little sister.

“Why haven’t you had a good date when you’re dating Carmine?”

She sucked her teeth, hoping like hell that he had let that topic go. “Just because Moon hasn’t seen me on any dates, it doesn’t mean I haven’t been on them.”

“And why wouldn’t your sister know about the man that you’ve been dating for a few years?” He continued probing.

“Um,” she shifted in her seat and looked around the restaurant again.

She’d sworn to Carmine that she would never tell anyone about their arrangement. The aura that Quadir radiated made her feel insanely comfortable though. His demeanor was commanding but calm. Powerful but settling. Everything about him was big dick energy , and while she loved Carmine, he didn’t exude the energy that Quadir did.

“You can tell me,” he let her know, relaxing into his seat.

“Well,” she sipped her water then slowly looked up at him. She took a moment to appreciate his fresh line-up. “Things with me and Carmine are just... different. ”

“In what way?”

“You’re nosey, you know that?”

He laughed which instantly turned her on. “You think me trying to get to know you is nosey? No wonder you don’t date.”

She wanted to be offended but the sexy ass smirk on his face wouldn’t let her. Instead, she was getting turned on even more at the fine ass man that sat across from her. Crossing her legs, she rolled her eyes at him and smiled at the waiter who placed their alcoholic beverages in front of them. Saige took a long sip of her pineapple margarita before looking at Q. It was obvious that he wasn’t about to drop the subject.

“We’re not in an official relationship. He looks out for me, I look out for him,” she shrugged.

“Ohhh, I see. You give him some ass, he gives you some cash?”

She scoffed and rolled her eyes again. “For your information, Mr. Know It All, I’m a virgin, so I don’t give Carmine any ass.”

Qua stared at her for a few moments before he let out a deep laugh that reached the deepest parts of Saige’s lovebox. “A virgin ? Be fuckin’ for real, Saige. Ain’t no way you with a nigga like Carmine, and he ain’t fuckin’. I don’t believe that.”

“Well, I don’t know what the fuck to tell you,” she fired back. Her feelings were slightly hurt that he laughed in her face like that. “You don’t have to believe me. Actually, your opinion doesn’t mean shit to me, Quadir. I’m a virgin, end of fuckin’ story.”

“You dead ass?” He leaned forward after she didn’t crack a smile.

“Who the fuck would lie about being a virgin these days? If anything, bitches is pussy poppin’ on a handstand for free on the internet. Yes, I’m dead ass, and I’m proud of that shit too,” she stated with confidence.

He nodded slowly as he leaned back again. Saige watched as he mentally digested that information. Even though she said she was proud of it, she was slightly embarrassed of it being in Q’s presence. She didn’t want him to look at her like a little girl, but she couldn’t change the facts.

“Carmine knows that you’re a virgin?”

“Yes, he knows! Why does that matter to you?” She rolled her eyes again, picking up her drink and taking long sips from it.

“I was just curious about how you look out for him if it’s not through sex?”

Finishing her drink, she placed the cup back on the table and stared at Quadir. “Why

are you so concerned with the dynamic between me and Carmine?”

“Like I said,” he tossed back his shot. “I’m just trying to get to know you. I think you’re beautiful, but if I’m wasting my time because your focus is on Carmine, then let me know.”

They stared at each other silently. Saige didn’t know how to respond to that statement. She knew Carmine wasn’t going for her entertaining another man, even if he was married. She was still slightly in her feelings about that, but she had been trying to work through it. True enough, she loved Carmine, but she didn’t love the feeling of being second to another woman. Especially a woman that had birthed not one, but two children for him. If she had to be a side bitch, at least it was a paid one, but she wasn’t sure how much longer she could keep up with it.

“You’re not wasting your time,” she lowly stated, breaking their intense stare, and looking down at the table.

He leaned across the table and lifted her chin then sat back down. “Look at me, beautiful, not the table. If I’m not wasting my time, then where do we go from here with you having a boyfriend?”

Her ringing phone distracted her for a moment. Picking it up, she saw that it was Carmine and decided to ignore it. She knew he’d probably just call right back so she put her phone on Do Not Disturb.

“I just told you that he’s not my boyfriend, and we move forward by getting to know each other,” she told him.

“Ima be straight up with you, Saige. I’m not the kind of nigga that you want taking your virginity. We can be friends though.”

Her feelings were hurt a little more. “So...because I’m a virgin, you won’t date me?”

“It’s for your own protection. If I take yo virginity, I can’t promise that I’m going to be the type of nigga that you need. You seem like a sweet girl. Feisty, but sweet, nonetheless, and I don’t even want to do you like that,” he expressed genuinely.

She fought back the urge to cry. Her first official date, and it was already over before it really got started. She didn’t think her being a virgin would be a problem for men. Mainly because the first man she really encountered offered her a different kind of solution. On top of that, Carmine never acted like her virginity was an issue for him. He simply told her that he wanted her to be 100% sure about it if they ever took it there. She’d never reached that 100%, and they were both okay with that.

“You’re a pompous asshole,” she spat, grabbing her phone and standing up.

Storming out of the restaurant, she was pissed that she never even got the chance to eat. After she got in her car and started it up, the tears that she fought so hard to hold onto spilled over her eyelids. Saige hated that Quadir had her as emotional as she was. In a way, he made her feel like no nigga was going to want her virgin ass.

She jumped when she heard a knock on the window a few minutes later. Glancing up, she was surprised to see Q standing there. Quickly trying to suck her tears up, she wiped her face and rolled the window down.

“What?” She questioned stalely.

He held up a brown paper bag with the restaurant logo printed on the front. “I figured you didn’t want the food to go to waste. Can I get in so we can talk?”

“Give me the food, first.”

Quadir slid the bag through the window, and Saige placed it in the passenger seat. Without even rolling the window back up, she peeled out of the parking lot. Her feelings were already hurt, and she didn't need him getting in her car making her feel even worse. She planned to go to her father's house, sit with Ramel, cuss out Moon, and eat her food. She was officially over men for the day.

10

Carmine

“W hat?” Carmine answered the phone for Nico, pulling the blanket over his son then kissing his forehead.

“How fuckin’ long do you plan to hold this shit over my head, Carmine?”

“As long as I damn well please,” Carmine smirked, knowing that Nico was cracking under the pressure.

Initially, he planned to tell Luca how much of a snake Carmine was, then he thought better of it. The information he had was worth more to him if he held on to it. He could make Nico do whatever the fuck he wanted him to do so long as he was holding on to it.

Nico sucked his teeth. “I’m not going to do this with you—”

“Actually, you’re going to do whatever I fuckin’ say, Nico, or you can tell Luca yourself. Fuck off my line,” he snapped before hanging up.

“Daddy!” Caterina joyfully shouted as she jumped up and down on her bed.

Carminc grabbed her mid-air and kissed all over her face. “Aren’t you supposed to be getting ready for bed, princess?”

“I am getting ready for bed. First, I jump. Then, I sleep,” she wiggled out of his arms and resumed her jumping.

He lovingly stared at his three-year-old daughter while she jumped and squealed with excitement. Carmine had it bad for his little princess, so he was never able to enforce the rules with her. His kids’ bedtime was eight on the dot, and his Junior typically went to bed with no problem. Caterina, on the other hand, was always a wild card. Sometimes she’d go down without a fight and other times, it was a struggle. Regardless, Carmine always let her get away with whatever she wanted.

“Okay, okay,” he grabbed her again after a few more minutes of her jumping. “Mini me, you must go to sleep now.”

“Wait, Daddy, I didn’t say my prayers,” she tried another tactic.

Chuckling, Carmine put her down and kneeled beside her while she said her prayers. She started telling Jesus everyone and everything she was thankful for. What Carmine thought was going to be a quick prayer turned into a fifteen-minute-long thank-you list.

“Okay baby girl,” he scooped her up and placed her in the bed, kissing her forehead as well. “Time for bed, beautiful. I love you.”

“I love you too. Do you want to read me a story?” She peered at him with her bright, blue eyes.

“I would love to read you a story, but something is telling me that you’re just trying to stay up.”

She pouted. “No, I just wanted you to read to me.”

Carmine looked at her for a few seconds before grabbing a book from her bookshelf. Sitting on the edge of her bed, he read *I Don't Want To Be A Frog* . By the time he got to the last page, Caterina was fast asleep. He put the book back in its place, tucked her in then walked out of her room.

Since he didn't want to be bothered with Victoria, he headed downstairs to the basement that he had converted into his mancave. He prayed that Victoria stayed her ass in their bedroom and didn't come fuckin' with him. After receiving pictures earlier from the person he had keeping an eye on Saige, he was liable to shoot Victoria right between the eyes. Even though Saige was who he was mad at, he would never take it out on her. The way his blood was boiling after seeing Saige smiling in Quadir's face had him ready to kill Quadir on sight. He had no idea that they knew each other or even how, but he planned to end that situation quickly.

Firing up the blunt that he'd rolled earlier, Carmine placed a Facetime call to Saige. She ignored the first call which sent Carmine into an abyss of anger. He tapped her name again and started making mental plans to get on the jet if she ignored him twice.

"Yes, Carmine?" She answered with a look of annoyance etched on her face.

He blew out a cloud of smoke and smiled slightly at the sight of her beautiful face. Looking at her full lips instantly made his dick hard, and his anger melt away.

"Why you answering the phone with an attitude? You're too beautiful for that. What's wrong, my love?"

"Nothing. It's late. Did you need something?"

"I thought you were over me being married?"

She sighed loudly. "I am."

"Then why am I getting all this attitude? Does it have something to do with a certain doctor?" He decided to confront her.

"What are you talking about?"

"Saige," he chuckled, inhaled, exhaled, and stared directly into the screen. "Whatever you thought you had going on with Qua, kill that shit before I kill him."

Her eyes enlarged. "W-w-what? Did he tell you?"

"He didn't have to, Saige. Just know that I know, and you won't keep seeing him," he told her.

"So, you get to be married, but I can't go on dates with other men?" She chuckled sarcastically. "That's classic."

"I pay you good money not to see other men. That's the whole point. And I told you, I don't love her, babe."

"Then how about you stop paying me, Carmine? Huh? I want out of this situation."

Quietly peering into the phone, he continued smoking his blunt as if Saige hadn't said a word. Finishing his blunt a few minutes later, he tossed the roach in the ashtray and reclined comfortably into the sofa.

"Love, you know me and you are a forever thing."

"Tell your fuckin' wife that," she scoffed with an eyeroll.

He smiled at her attitude. "I'm going to come see you tomorrow. You're acting out because you need some act right, but don't worry, papa will come make it right."

"That's not a good idea," she voiced, running her hands through her natural, loose curls.

"Why the fuck not?" He barked more intensely than he meant to.

Saige screwed her face up. "Carmine, who the hell are you talking to?"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Please forgive me. You know I never want to talk to you like that," he quickly calmed himself down. "I just...I need to see you, tomorrow."

"Well, what if I don't want to see you?" She asked quietly, looking down.

"That's fine. I'll just see you another time," he told her before hanging up.

He immediately texted the family pilot, Aden, requesting to be flown to Virginia right away. Saige had him fucked up. He wasn't sure if it was because of Quadir, or if she was still hung up on the fact that he was married, but he was going to get to the bottom of it. Once Aden confirmed that he could be ready in an hour, Carmine went up to his bedroom to shower.

"Going somewhere?" Victoria asked from the bed after Carmine got out of the shower.

"Why?"

"Carmine, I thought we could spend some time together tonight," she spoke softly, slowly standing up and revealing the lingerie she wore. "You haven't touched me in a while, and I know you have her, but I still love you."

Carmine looked at Vicky like she had three heads. “Victoria, what in the fuck are you talking about? I only fuck you when I want to. It’s never on your terms, and it’ll never be on your terms again. You lost that privilege when you decided to sit on the next man’s dick.”

“Why don’t you just leave me, Carmine?” Vic shouted with tears in her eyes. “You’ve already moved on, you don’t love me anymore so just go!”

He dropped a Nike t-shirt over his head and took a few deep breaths. Victoria was begging for him to rock her damn jaw.

“Shut the fuck up!” He yelled at her as she continued nagging him while he got dressed. “I’m doing my best not to put my hands on you!”

“See what I mean?” She shook her head. “Do you knock that other bitch around, Carmine? Or is it only your wife you see fit to abuse?”

Charging at her, Carmine raised his hand to slap the fuck out of her but stopped when he noticed there was no fear in her eyes. Victoria had grown accustomed to the abuse, so nothing he did put fear in her heart anymore. A devilish grin spread across his face once he realized what he needed to do. He quickly walked over to the nightstand on his side of the bed and grabbed his nine-millimeter out. Victoria let out a scream as he shoved it underneath her chin.

“Bitch, say another word, and I will fuckin’ kill you!” He spoke through clenched teeth. “I don’t have to beat her ass because she does exactly as I say and when I say! You know why I keep yo slut ass around? To raise my muthafuckin’ kids! That’s the only thing you’re good at! Keep yo fuckin’ mouth shut and make sure my kids are good, or Ima put yo ass in the ground. Simple as that! Am I clear?”

“Y-y-yes,” she said with tears streaming down her face.

“Good,” he kissed her cheek then tucked his gun in his waistband. “I’ll be back tomorrow. Make sure CJ gets to school on time.”

Carmine grabbed his phone up and walked out of the room. When he reached the living room, he put on his black Nike hoodie, grabbed his car keys, and left the house. Sliding behind the wheel, he started the engine and drove to the hangar. Aden met him there, and Carmine boarded the plane. They were off the ground within twenty minutes and landed in Virginia in under two hours.

Hopping in the driver’s seat of the car that was kept at the hangar, Carmine sped off to Saige’s home that was thirty minutes away. By the time he was pulling up, it was well after midnight. He knew that Saige was sleeping, and the dark house was indicative of that. Shutting the engine down, he got out of the car and strolled up to the front door. Using the key that Saige had made for him, Carmine let himself in and quietly placed his keys on the table near the door.

He kicked his shoes off then pulled his hoodie off and slowly walked up the stairs. He wanted to see if he could hear any movement which he didn’t. Being that it was a Tuesday, he knew she had to work the next day. Saige always went to bed early when she had to work. As he inched closer to her room, the only thing he heard was the voices from the TV. Pushing her bedroom door open, Saige was sprawled out in the bed, naked as Carmine expected.

Licking his lips, he took his phone out and snapped a few pictures of his sleeping beauty before sitting his phone and gun on her dresser. He stepped out of his pants then pulled his shirt off. Sliding in the bed with her, he was relieved that Quadir wasn’t there because that meant that she was still his .

“Carmine?” Saige woke up groggily as he stroked her face.

He smiled. “Yeah, beautiful. It’s me.”

“What the fuck?” She woke up completely and looked at him like he was crazy. “W-what are you doing here?”

“I needed to see you, Saige. You were worrying me when you said you didn’t want to see me. What’s going on with you?”

She stared at him for a few seconds before sitting up. “Why would you just pop up at my house like this? You’d normally call first.”

“Is it because I’m married? You’re still not over it?” He ignored her questions.

“Carmine,” she rubbed her eyes and slid out of the bed. “I don’t want to talk about shit until you tell me why you’re here.”

“Here at the house where I pay the mortgage? The bills? Because I live here too, Saige,” he got out of the bed as well and stood in front of her. He attempted to touch her face, but she leaned away from him, causing him to screw his face up. “Oh, I get it. I can’t touch you now because Qua is touching you?”

“What? No, why are you stuck on that? He has nothing to do with the fact that I think you’re wildin’ for pulling up to my crib unannounced,” she took a step away from him.

“Saige, lay down,” Carmine demanded. “Let me inspect your pussy and make certain that that muthafucka hasn’t tainted you.”

Her head jerked back in shock. “Are you fuckin’ serious?”

“As a fuckin’ heart attack,” his jaw muscles clenched at the thought of Quadir touching her.

“No,” she spoke after an intense stare off between the two of them.

“No?” His jaw clenched tighter. There was nothing more he hated than a defiant woman.

“Carmine, you are seriously trippin’ the fuck out. Just go home, you’re starting to scare me.”

He smirked then walked up to her. Staring down at her, he tried to control the rage inside of him, but nothing was helping. He gripped her neck tightly which made her yelp in fear.

“Lay the fuck down before I lose it on you, love,” he whispered in her ear.

She started swinging on him because she was immediately in fear for her life. Carmine released her neck and grabbed her by the wrists next to stop her assault on him.

“Why the fuck are you being so defensive!” He shouted to the top of his lungs. “You let him fuck you, didn’t you!”

“Let me go!” She shouted back at him.

Letting one of her wrists go, Carmine slapped her across the face then tossed her on the bed like a rag doll. In his mind, Saige was acting just like Victoria, so now he had to teach her a lesson too. After punching her a few times and knocking her unconscious, he spread her legs. Sticking two fingers inside of her, nothing felt ‘off’ to him, and he was satisfied with that. Grabbing the remote to the TV, he changed it to ESPN, got back in the bed, and patiently waited for her to come to.

Quadir

S trolling the aisles at Target, Qua tried his hardest to stay focused on what he came in there for. His thoughts had been scattered since his failed date with Saige a week ago. At first, he didn't give a fuck that he'd made her feel a way. Moon reached out to him and gave him an earful about upsetting her big sister and how bad he'd fucked up. As the days dragged on, he couldn't stop thinking about Saige or how he made her feel. He wasn't trying to be an asshole on purpose, but he thought he should just be upfront as possible with her.

He slowly but surely started to feel extremely guilty because he realized how he must've come across. Wanting to reach out to her and make things right, he contacted Moon who denied him access. For the last few days, it'd been the only thing he was able to think about though.

"Excuse me," Qua apologized as he bumped into the woman who wasn't looking where she was going either.

"It's fine," she mumbled.

Quadir spun around when he recognized the voice. "Saige?"

She halted in her steps but kept her back to him. He slowly walked over to her and for some odd reason, his heart was beating faster and faster with every step.

“Why are you wearing sunglasses in the middle of Target?” He questioned when he noticed the rim of the glasses.

“I’m hungover as fuck, and if you don’t mind, I need to go. I’ve been in enough trouble as is because of you,” she barely whispered.

“Wait, hold up,” he gently grabbed her arm but didn’t miss when she winced in pain. “You good, beautiful?”

She eased her arm away from him, still looking at the floor. “I’m fine , Quadir.”

“What happened to your arm?”

“I fell on it. Now, if you don’t mind,” she tried to walk by him.

He blocked her path, stopping her again. He reached out and lifted her face to his and got the shock of his life. “Saige, what the fuck happened to your face?”

“I got into a fight at the club last night, that’s all. Quadir, really, I have to go,” she pleaded with her voice cracking.

“Nah,” Q lifted the oversized Fendi sunglasses and became pissed. Both her eyes were black along with a purple bruise on her jaw and her lip looked slightly swollen. “What the fuck happened, Saige? And don’t lie to me.”

Tears trickled down her cheeks which tugged at his heart strings, unbeknownst to her. “I told you, I got in a fight. I-I-I can’t be seen talking to you.”

“Why?” He moved her sunglasses from her grasp as she tried to grab them. His thoughts started swirling as he put her comments together. “Did Carmine do this to you?”

“Quadir, please,” she begged softly.

“Ima enjoy beating the fuck out of that nigga, I swear to God.”

“No, please. D-don’t say anything to him, it’ll only make shit worse.”

“Worse? Nah shorty, he ain’t gon’ be able to do worse from the grave. What the fuck he putting his hands on you like this for? Don’t bullshit me, Saige.”

“For going on a date with you,” she fidgeted with her fingers.

Q chuckled out of anger. “He’s a piece of fuckin’ work. That nigga at yo crib right now?”

“N-no. He left this morning.”

“Do you feel safe there?” He asked because he was concerned about her safety. When she didn’t respond, he nodded. “That’s all I needed to hear. Ima follow you to yo crib, you gon’ pack a bag and come stay at my house.”

“I c-can’t. I don’t want him to hurt me again, Qua,” she looked up at him.

He hated the fear that he saw in her eyes. He hated it even more that a Sartori boy put the fear there. “Aye, I got you. As long as you around me, I’ll never let a nigga hurt you, aight? What Carmine did to you ain’t cool. Especially since it was because of me.”

Saige stood there quietly as another stream of tears cascaded down her face. Quadir gently pulled her into a hug and comforted her. He couldn’t even remember why he’d come to Target in the first place. All that mattered to him now was making sure Saige was straight. The wild part was that he barely knew her, but he knew that he wanted

to protect her. Specifically, from a nigga like Carmine. Out of the three Sartori brothers, Carmine was his least favorite. He dealt with him off the strength of the family name, but if Qua never had to see Carmine's crazy ass again he'd be just fine.

Q knew that Carmine was a loose cannon and had the worst attitude of the three boys. Carmine walked around with some chip on his shoulder, and Q couldn't wait to be the one to knock it off. He understood that going after a Sartori would have the mafia on his ass, but he didn't care. Someone needed to teach Carmine a lesson about putting his hands on women, and Q figured there wasn't anyone better than himself.

"Let's go," he instructed her after letting her go.

Hesitantly, she nodded and walked with him out of the store. Ironically, their cars were parked only a few spots away from each other. As promised, he followed her to her house that was twenty minutes away. He grabbed his pistol from under his seat and got out.

"You don't have to come in," she told him when he approached the door with her.

"Shorty, you pulled off on me at Tulu with a bag of food, which I wanted, by the way," he jokingly said, forcing a small smile on her face. "If you think Ima let you go in here alone, you got me fucked up. Yo ass probably lock the door and not come back out. I learned my lesson with you, beautiful."

Letting out a low giggle, Saige unlocked the door and let them inside. "It'll just be a few minutes."

"Take yo time, ma. Ain't no rush."

She nodded then slowly made her way up the stairs. Q decided to stay right by the door just in case Carmine's ass wanted to pop up. Taking his phone out of his pocket,

he sent Levi a 911 text and let him know that they needed to chop it up later. When he looked up, he saw Saige struggling to carry her large Gucci duffle bag down the stairs. He rushed up and grabbed the bag from her then helped her the rest of the way down.

“Have you been to the doctor?” He asked her as they walked out of the house together.

She shook her head while locking up her house. “No.”

“I’ll assess your injuries when we get to my house,” he assured her.

He placed her bag in the trunk of his car, helped her in then got in himself and pulled off. The car ride was filled with silence outside of the tunes from the radio.

“You really didn’t have to do this,” Saige finally broke the silence, halfway through the ride. “Especially since you see me as just a friend.”

He chuckled at her sarcasm. “I’m the type of nigga that always makes sure my friends straight. And, about that night, I apologize if I offended you. That wasn’t my intention. When I said I wasn’t the type of nigga you wanted taking your virginity, I meant that in the most respectful way possible,” he paused for a moment. “Saige, I don’t really date women because I’m busy as fuck. I don’t have time to give a woman my all. Your virginity is something special and should be given to someone who can make you a top priority. I know that I can’t do that, and that’s what I meant by that statement.”

“Oh,” she nodded and relaxed into the seat. “That makes sense now. Thank you for explaining that to me.”

“No problem. How’s Ramel doing? He healing okay?”

She cracked a full smile for the first time since they'd been around each other. "He's doing great. That little boy doesn't listen for shit. We tell him to take it easy, and he's doing everything except taking it easy. He wants to run and play like he didn't just have major surgery."

"Yeah, that sounds like a kid," Q chuckled. "The gravity of the situation isn't real to them. All they know is that they feel a little better, and they want to get back to their normal lives."

"That's....that's pretty much Ramel," she took her phone out of her pocket then rolled her eyes.

"Is that Carmine?"

She placed her phone in her lap. "No."

"Then who else got you rolling your eyes at your phone?"

"Nobody."

When Qua saw her phone light up again, he quickly snatched it out of her lap before she even had a chance to pick it up. The initials SD flashed across the screen, but Q decided to answer anyway.

"Wassup?" He casually answered like it was his own phone.

"Please, give me my phone," Saige quietly begged with her hand stuck out.

"Who the fuck is this?" Carmine's voice came through.

Q smirked even though Carmine couldn't see him. "The big bad wolf."

“Qua?” Carmine asked after a few seconds of silence.

“Ding, ding, ding muthafucka. Since you like to put your hands on women, I want you to come see me about it,” he spoke authoritatively before hanging up and giving Saige her phone back.

“He’s going to fuckin’ kill me,” she shrieked, placing her head in her hands. “Fuck!”

“Aye,” he pulled into his driveway and shifted the gear into park. “I told you I had you, and I meant that. Carmine ain’t getting close to you again. Not as long as I can help it. I hope you don’t go back to him because if he did it once, he’ll do it again, and I need you to know that. I also need you to trust me when I say I got you.”

Saige nodded slowly and Q shut his car off. Hopping out, he rushed to her side of the car and helped her out then grabbed her bag out of the trunk.

“Your house is...absolutely breathtaking,” she complimented when they stepped inside his seven-bedroom castle.

“Thanks, beautiful. Let me show you where you’ll be sleeping.”

Quadir gave Saige the grand tour of his home, excluding the medical suite. He didn’t want her to get the wrong idea about him or start asking too many questions. He examined her injuries and found nothing to be broken. She had swelling and bruises but nothing that wouldn’t heal over time.

“Help yourself to anything in the refrigerator. I have to run out real quick, but I’ll be back soon,” he let her know as they ended the tour in the kitchen.

“Wait, y-you’re leaving?”

“Yeah, but you’ll be safe here, I promise. Carmine has no idea where I live, and I have the best security here.”

“How long will you be?” She questioned with worry and fear oozing out of her eyes.

He rubbed the back of his neck because he felt bad that she was that damn scared. Carmine had really done a number on her, and he hated that for her.

“You know what? I’ll stay here. Get comfortable, let me make a phone call, and then we can just chill for the rest of the day.”

Saige nodded and Q dotted up the stairs to his bedroom. Pulling the French doors shut, he took his burner phone out of his sock drawer. He plopped down on his bed and placed a call to Levi.

“Yeah?” Levi answered on the second ring.

“I ain’t gon’ be able to make it out the crib right now, but I still need to chop it up wit you.”

“Nigga, you aight? The fuck you mean you can’t make it out the crib?”

Quadir laughed at his best friend and filled him in on the events that led to him not being able to leave the house.

“You know if we go at that nigga, we gon’ have the whole mafia on our heads,” Levi said after Q divulged his plan to kill Carmine.

“I’m already knowing, and I ain’t worried about it. We have friends in high places too. Plus, I know all the lil’ homies are strapped and ready for whatever.”

“You sure it’s a good idea to get yourself involved in a war while you’re legit?”

“Nigga, I’m hardly legit. The Italians are keeping me one foot in and one foot out. If we knock down that empire, I’m a free man. We have to go at this smartly, and we gon’ chop it up a lil’ more fa’ sho, but I just can’t leave shorty here right now,” Q let him know.

“That’s a bet. Get at me when you free again my boy.”

“Fa’ sho’,” Q ended the call and put the phone back in his drawer.

The only people that called that phone were the Italians anyway, and he knew they probably weren’t going to be calling now. It was indeed about to be a war, but Q wasn’t worried in the slightest. His nickname wasn’t Grim for nothing. He’d lay any nigga down if it meant protecting the fragile woman that sat in his living room. He might’ve not known her that well, but right was right and wrong was wrong, and Carmine was dead ass wrong.

Joining Saige downstairs, the two of them spent the rest of the day getting to know each other. It was Q’s only day off during the week, and he found that he thoroughly enjoyed kicking it with Saige. He learned so much about her, and though she was bruised, Q still thought she was so damn pretty.

By the end of the night when they were both ready for bed, Q despised the feelings that were sitting in his chest. It was like he had a strong attraction to Saige, but it was different than any other attraction he had for any other female. It wasn’t just a sexual attraction. He liked the way she thought, her outlook on life, and her sweet but fiery spirit. Everything about her was much different than the women he was used to dealing with. He had to keep reminding himself that she was a virgin, and that he was only going to hurt her in the long run.

12

Saige

“ S issy, I think I want to be Ironman for Halloween,” Ramel told Saige with a mouthful of cabbage.

“Ramel, finish chewing your food first before you speak,” Hailey chastised.

Moon rolled her eyes. “Watch how you speak to my lil’ brother, bro.”

“Moon!” Winston said through clenched teeth.

“I think you’ll be a great Ironman,” Saige winked at Ramel, hoping to ease the tension in the room.

Her father had asked her to come over for dinner. That was a rarity since Saige didn’t particularly get along with Hailey. For the sake of Ramel, everyone had been trying their best, but Moon wasn’t about to fake her disdain for shit. Saige, on the other hand, tried to be as cordial as her body would allow her. As long as Hailey said nothing to her, then Saige didn’t have anything to say either.

“Can you get me a custom costume made?” Ramel peeked at Saige with a smile.

She nodded and smiled back. “Of course I can. You’ll be the coolest Ironman out there!”

“Thank you, sissy,” he leaned over and hugged her.

“Anything for you,” she winked at him.

“Do you not think his parents are capable of getting him a costume?” Hailey chirped without looking up from her plate.

Saige cleared her throat and looked at her father, waiting for him to check Hailey the way he’d just checked Moon.

“Nothing to say?” She asked after Winston remained silent.

“Gahdammit!” Winston bellowed, throwing his fork against his plate. “I am sick of this back and forth between the three of you! Every fuckin’ time we get around each other, it’s some bullshit! Hailey, you are my wife and I love you, but I’ve had enough of the slick remarks to my daughters. They are my children, and I will always choose them above everyone else. Saige and Moon, I love you two more than life itself but please try to meet Hailey halfway. We’ve been a blended family for way too long for you all to not be getting along in the slightest. I’m not saying you have to kiss each other’s asses but at least be cordial!”

The only thing that could be heard from that moment forward was forks scraping against plates. Even Ramel ate his food in silence, and he always had something to say.

“Sorry, dad,” Saige broke the silence first. “It’s just...it always seems like Hailey is jealous of the relationship I have with my own brother. I’m not trying to step on her toes, but I’m never going to turn Ramel down when he asks me to do something.”

“Win, tell your daughter to stop talking about me like I’m not sitting right fuckin’ here!” Hailey huffed loudly.

“This bitch trippin’,” Moon snapped, dropping her fork on her plate.

Hailey stood up, pushing the chair so hard that it fell over. “Bitch? I got your bitch, Moon. I’ve been waiting for the day that you really tried me!”

“And what the fuck are you going to do about it?” Saige jumped up next, instantly going into protector mode. “Because that’s a fuckin’ minor you’re talking to!”

“Stop it!” Winston roared, also standing to his feet. “What the fuck is wrong with all of you?! I just said I’m sick of this shit and it fuckin’ continues! In front of your brother who is still recovering from having his skull drilled open!” He shouted with his chest heaving up and down. “You know what? Fuck it. You three hate each other so much? Fight it out. Me and my son won’t be around for it. Ramel, let’s go.”

Ramel looked over at Saige who gave him a nod, letting him know it was okay to leave.

“Did you see that!” Hailey yelled, pointing between Ramel and Saige. “Why does my child feel the need to look at his sister for approval to do any fuckin’ thing!”

“Because they are close!” Winston looked at her and yelled. “Saige is his safe spot! Maybe if you focused more on him and less on being this Instagram influencer then you’d be his safe spot too!”

“Oh, that’s just great! Now this is my fault?” Hailey folded her arms across her chest and rolled her eyes.

Shaking his head, Winston nodded at Ramel for them to leave. Saige and Moon both kissed his forehead before he left with their father. If looks could kill, Hailey would’ve been one dead ass bitch with the way the sisters were staring at her. Moon was ready to pounce any second, all Saige had to do was give her the word. As bad as

Saige wanted to give Hailey the ass whooping she was so desperately seeking, she wasn't in the mood to fight. She had just completely healed from the black eyes and bruises that Carmine had given her two weeks ago. The last thing she wanted was to get into another scuffle where she could possibly end up bruised again. The first time was painful enough.

"You heard my daddy. Make yo move, you weird ass hoe," Moon spat with her fist balled.

"Y'all always acting like I don't know how to raise my fuckin' son!" Hailey shouted. There were a few crocodile tears sitting at her eyelids.

"You don't!" Saige took a step closer, really hoping shit didn't get ugly. "Like our dad said, you're so worried about what's going on with Instagram that you barely pay Ramel any attention. You're sitting up here mad at me because I have a better bond with your son than you do but ask yourself why!"

Looking between the two sisters, Hailey rolled her eyes and stomped off like the spoiled brat she was.

"She's a fuckin' birdbrain," Moon huffed, rolling her eyes as well. "Bitch always talking all that shit, but when it's time to throw hands, she walk away. Scary ass."

Saige let out a laugh then picked up her plate and finished eating the curry chicken her father had prepared. She might've been annoyed, but she wasn't passing up her dad's cooking for nothing.

"You're so greedy man," Moon laughed at Saige. "Sooo...wassup with you and Quadir?"

It was Saige's turn to roll her eyes. Ignoring Moon, she turned her back and

continued eating the food on her plate.

Moon stepped in front of her and waved her hand. “You know I hate being ignored.”

“Bruh,” Saige chuckled and finished her food then placed the plate on the table. “There’s nothing up , Moon. I told you, we’re friends, nothing more,” she grabbed her phone out of her pocket when she felt it vibrating. A small smile formed on her lips when she saw Quadir’s name scrolling across the screen. “Hey, wassup?”

“You good?” He asked with a hint of worry in his voice.

“I’m fine. I’m at my dad’s house. Why?” Her tone matched the worry in his voice.

“I think Carmine is here. Does he know where your pops lives?”

She swallowed hard, and her heart began to beat a little faster. “Um, n-n-no. Not that I know of. I mean, he’s never been here.”

“I’m sure it’s easy for him to find out. Go to the house. My homeboy gon’ meet you there until I can get off work, aight?”

She glanced at Moon who was boring a hole into her head. She stepped off into the living room to give herself a bit of privacy. “What about my family, Q? I don’t want to leave them here, but I don’t want them involved either,” she whispered into the phone.

“Send me the addy, and I’ll send someone over there to keep an eye out. They’ll be discreet so that your family won’t know anything.”

“Okay. I’m leaving now.”

“Aight. Call me when you get to the crib, so I can know you’re safe,” he commanded her.

She nodded like he could see her. “Okay.”

They hung up and as she went to walk out of the living room, she bumped right into Moon’s nosey ass.

“What are you hiding from us?” Moon looked her up and down.

Saige sucked her teeth because she hated how nosey Moon was sometimes. “Moon, I promise I’m going to tell you everything one day, but I can’t right now,” she kissed her cheek. “I love you, I have to go.”

“Can I go with you?” She followed Saige back to the dining room.

“Not today,” she slipped into her leather jacket. “But soon, I swear.”

“Why do I get the feeling that there’s something big going on? I hate not knowing what’s going on in your life. It feels like you’re shutting me out, and I’m not a baby. I can handle shit, Saige.”

She spun around to face her as they reached the front door. “I know you can, Moon, I know. I promise to you, I will tell you as soon as I can.”

Staring at her sister, Moon nodded then hugged Saige. Saige walked out the door and rushed to her car. Suddenly, she was feeling on edge. Even hearing Carmine’s name brought back the feeling of the pain he inflicted on her.

When he attacked her, Saige truly thought her life was over. The look in Carmine’s eyes was one that she wasn’t familiar with, and it scared her shitless. He didn’t even

seem like the type to raise his hand to women because he was always so sweet and gentle with her. That was a side of him that she'd never seen, and she never wanted to see it again.

Quadir made her block Carmine's number, but that didn't stop him from calling and texting from fake numbers. She knew that he'd been at her house because of the Ring security system she had set up. The last time he popped up, he shouted all types of threats at her through the Ring camera. When Saige showed Quadir, he seemed to become even more determined to end Carmine's life.

Saige had no idea what she'd stumbled into with Q or Carmine, but it seemed as if neither of them were who they appeared to be. She was starting to piece together from some of the conversations her and Qua had been having that him and Carmine were involved in the streets somehow. She wasn't sure how that was possible, but her gut was usually never wrong.

Pulling up to the gated community twenty minutes later, Saige waved at the guard, Frank, and he opened the gate. Since she'd been staying with Q, he'd been allowing her to drive his cars. Saige thought she lived in a bourgeois neighborhood, but Q had her blown out of the water with the security gate. Driving for another ten minutes, she finally reached Q's palace in the back of the community. There was a fire red Camaro parked that she hadn't seen before with a guy sitting on the hood smoking.

"Saige?" He acknowledged her after she parked and got out.

She looked him up and down and took note of how attractive he was. He definitely had some street swag to him. His brown skin was smooth and blemish free, and the nose ring he sported complimented his face perfectly. His jaw and cheek bones were strongly defined but not too strong. She tried hard not to stare at him for too long, but it was clear that the saying 'fine niggas run in packs' was true.

She waved the smell of weed out of her face. Saige had never been high in her life, but she'd been around people who smoked before. She simply didn't have the desire to ever indulge.

"Yes, and you are?"

"My bad, ma," he chuckled, put the blunt out, and hopped off the hood. "I'm Levi, Q's boy. He told me to come chill with you until he got home."

"Oh, yes," she extended her hand in his direction. "Nice to meet you."

He chuckled again and shook her hand. "Cool to meet you too, lil' mama. Why you so formal? Shaking a nigga's hand and shit."

"How else do you greet someone?" She asked, walking to the door and punching in her personal code that Q had created for her.

"A simple 'wassup' would be fine."

Shrugging him off, she let them in then closed and locked the door. "How long have you known Quadir?"

"Since we were lil' niggas running the streets," he pulled his black hoodie over his head and Saige damn near fainted when his six-pack was revealed. His sweatpants sagged just enough to show the band on his Versace boxers.

She swallowed hard and quickly looked away because she was embarrassed that she was even checking him out in the first place. "O-oh um, that's nice. I'll be right back."

She zoomed up the stairs and into the room that she'd made her own. Sitting on the

bed, she took a few breaths to calm her racing heart then took her phone out of her pocket. She placed a call to Qua, but it went unanswered, so she sent him a text letting him know that she was safe and with Levi. She texted Moon as well even though she was sure her little sister was watching her location like a hawk.

Saige lied and told her family that her house was being fumigated due to termites, and that's why she was staying with her newfound friend, Quadir. Her father was surprised but didn't ask too many questions. Moon, on the other hand, had a million and one questions. She was insistent that there was something going on between Saige and Quadir. Saige had no idea what was happening between them, but she wasn't about to admit shit to her sister.

Saige decided to get showered and changed into something more comfortable. In all honesty, she wanted to go to bed, but she didn't feel safe going to sleep without Q being home. Over the last two weeks, he'd made her feel exceptionally safe and like she was his number one priority. Quad made it verbally clear to her that they were just friends, but the way he'd been handling her was starting to feel like something else. He was sweet and attentive to Saige, and she had to remind herself everyday that he was probably nice to all of his friends.

"I was starting to think you'd left me down here by myself," Levi said when she walked into the living room, licking his lips.

She flopped down on the large wrap around couch and shook her head. "Nah, I was just taking a shower. Have you spoken to Quadir?"

"You're so proper," he grinned. "Quadir," he jokingly mocked her. "Call that nigga Q, Qua, Quad, Grim. Don't nobody call that nigga Quadir besides his family."

"Grim?" She raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah. He hasn’t told you anything, huh?”

“Um,” she shrugged because she was lost. “No, I guess.”

“Mm,” he nodded. “Grim said you was fine, but he ain’t say you was fine as fuck .”

Her eyes went wide then she started blushing. “Thank you.”

The sound of the front door opening caught both of their attention. Levi jumped up and pulled a gun from his waistband which scared Saige but turned her on at the same time.

“Damn nigga, you gon’ shoot me in my own shit?” Quadir laughed when he walked into the living room and Levi had his gun trained on him.

Laughing along with him, Levi tucked his weapon then dapped Q up. “Blow yo shit clean off! You told me to protect Saige, and that’s what I was gon’ do, my boy.”

Silently watching the interaction between them, Saige didn’t know what to make of it. Q had been slowly showing her the real him, so she was starting to see more of his ‘hood’ side. She found herself easily attracted to both versions of the doctor. Seeing him with Levi, his hood side was loud and proud, and she was getting turned on if she was being honest with herself.

“Wassup?” Q leaned down and kissed her forehead after he and Levi finished with their banter. “You good?”

She nodded and smiled at him. “Yes, I’m fine.”

“Awhhh shit! You a lying muthafucka!” Levi shouted with a laugh, wagging his index finger in Q’s direction.

“The fuck you talking about?”

Levi waved his finger between Saige and Q. “Y’all two do have something going on. I’m feeling the vibes.”

“No, we’re just friends,” Saige spoke up first.

“Saige, I gotta tell ya...I call bullshit. That forehead kiss said it all,” he playfully sucked his teeth. “Too bad cause if this nigga hadn’t snatched you up, I’d definitely be on yo ass.”

“Excuse him,” Q shook his head and nodded towards the hall.

Levi rolled his eyes, grabbed his hoodie from the back of the couch, and walked in the direction that Q had nodded in.

Q sat next to Saige. “I got confirmation that Carmine is indeed in town. I have two guys sitting on your dad’s house, and they’re going to stay there until Carmine is gone. I need you to stay in the house, no matter what, until I say otherwise.”

“Are you leaving or something?”

“I’ll be in and out. Here is the safest place for you because no one can get to you here. Plus, no one knows I live here. Trust me, aight?”

She nodded and pulled her knees to her chest. “I do.”

“Good. Let me go holla at Levi, and I’ll be back,” his eyes trailed her body then went back up to her eyes. “You look beautiful, by the way.”

She blushed harder than she had earlier when Levi complimented her. “Thank you.”

“I’ll be back,” he squeezed her thigh then stood up and disappeared.

Feeling sleepy, Saige yawned and stretched out on the couch. Within a few minutes, she dozed off.

13

Carmine

Carmine was growing sick and tired of Saige playing with him. He was possessive in every sense of the word, so he didn't want anyone else having what was his. The fact that she wasn't home the few times he dropped by there let him know that she was in hiding. He didn't want her to be afraid of him by any means, but now she had to see the side that Victoria saw.

"Why the fuck do you need to know anything about Qua?" Luca stared at Carmine.

He clenched his teeth so tight that they could've shattered. "Because I just fuckin' do! I feel like he's been moving funny, so I just want to make sure everything is everything."

"Moving funny in what way? He doesn't know shit because he's not involved with shit besides patching you fuckers up."

"Are you going to give me what the fuck I need or not?!" Carmine shouted, jumping up out of his seat.

Luca chuckled, kicked his feet up on his desk, and lit his cigar. "No."

"Bet," he nodded. "That's why the son you hold so near and dear to your fuckin' heart and your big brother is trying to have you killed! Watch your back you old fuck!"

Carmine decided to play his ace in the hole before storming out of his dad's office. He was just going to have to figure shit out on his own. Taking his phone out of his pocket, he texted Aden and scheduled a flight within the next hour. He needed to go home first and see his kids before he flew to Virginia and did some reckless shit.

The moment his ass touched the leather seats in his car, his phone started ringing with a call from Nico. Ignoring it, he started the car and jetted home. Nico called him back-to-back-to-back until C got annoyed and turned his phone off altogether. He knew the only reason Nico was calling was because the cat was out of the bag.

When he overheard his big brother plotting to kill his father with their Uncle Francesco, Carmine was honestly shocked. He already felt like his uncle was a shifty and shiesty character, so he was more shocked about Nico's involvement. Nico acted like Luca was the best thing since sliced bread, and since he was promised the reigns to the Sartori empire, Carmine didn't understand what the problem was. He still didn't know what the problem was because Nico never explained it to him. All Nico told him was that it wasn't what he thought but never gave more information than that. Regardless, it didn't matter to Carmine because all he needed to know was that he had one up on his father's most prized possession. The smug expression on his dad's face earlier pissed him off to the point where he felt like he had to play his hand.

He didn't give a fuck anymore. Not having contact with Saige was making him feel like he was losing control. Saige was the one area of his life where he had complete and total control with ease. It wasn't easy anymore, and he wasn't feeling that shit at all. Things with his dad were always hard, and things at his own house were chaotic because he had two wild children on top of an annoying ass wife. Saige was his calm , and he wasn't about to give that up for anyone. Especially not to another man.

Arriving home fifteen minutes later, Carmine got out of his car and entered his house. It was unusually quiet for two in the afternoon. His kids were normally running

around, screaming, and playing. When he was met with total silence, he was slightly confused. It was early October, so he knew they weren't out in the pool. It'd been cooler than usual for that time of year in Philly, so Vicky had been trying to keep the kids in the house.

"CJ! Baby girl!" He called out, jogging up the stairs.

He checked their rooms and didn't notice anything out of place. Checking the rest of the house, he realized that no one was home even though Victoria's car was in the driveway. He plopped down on the couch and placed a call to Vic to see where they were.

"What?" She answered with an attitude.

"Where the fuck are you with my kids?"

"Gone."

"And what the fuck is that supposed to mean?" He snapped.

"Would you like the definition of gone, Carmine?"

His blood that was already boiling was spilling over. "Bitch, you better mean gone out to get fuckin' ice cream and on the way back."

"We're never coming back," she said after a few minutes of silence. "Carmine, I'm done. I'm done with being your punching bag, I'm done with being a fuckin' nanny for you, I'm just done, Carmine. You can go be with your whore."

Carmine squeezed his phone so hard that his knuckles turned white. "Okay, bet. Fuck you. Where are my kids? You can't keep them from me."

“Goodbye Carmine,” she said before hanging up.

“Everybody wants to play with fuckin’ Carmine today, okay,” he said aloud to himself, opening the banking app on his phone to empty his bank account.

His eyes popped wide open when he saw his account balance was already at zero. The only other person that had access to that account was Victoria, which meant she’d already taken the money. Calling her back, Carmine heard an automated message telling him that the number was no longer in service. The thought of not having access to his kids pissed him off beyond belief. If it was one thing he didn’t play about, it was his Junior and his baby girl. Victoria had just kicked everything up another notch for him. He was about to be on a rampage and there wasn’t a fuckin’ soul that could stop him.

Carmine called the real estate agent in Virginia that he’d bought Saige’s house from. Offering her ten thousand dollars, he asked her to run Quadir’s name and get his address. When she told him no addresses came back under that name, he was confused because he knew for a fact Quadir owned a house. He’d heard his father talking about the medical suite that Qua had there. She ran his name three more times and came back with nothing still. Thanking her for her time, he went to his other bank account that Victoria had no idea about and transferred the money.

Carmine dashed right back out of the house, hopped in his car, and sped over to Victoria’s mother house. He knew that if anybody knew where the hell Vic had disappeared to, it would be her mother. Throwing his car into park forty minutes later, he grabbed his pistol with the silencer on from under his seat, slid it in his hoodie pocket, and got out. He banged on the door a few times.

“What the hell do you want, Carmine?” Vivian snatched the door open with a cigarette hanging from her lips.

“Viv, I’m only going to ask you this once, where are my kids?”

“How the hell should I know?” She rolled her eyes.

He took his gun out and pressed into her temple, causing her to scream and drop her cigarette. He forced her inside of her house. “I know that you know, Vivian. Tell me what the fuck I need to know or today’s the day I end your life. You know I’m good for it.”

“I don’t know wh—”

Before she could finish her statement of bullshit, Carmine silenced her permanently. Her body dropped to the floor, and he stepped over her like she was a bag of trash. Searching the downstairs area, he found her phone in the kitchen. Vivian’s phone was never locked because his kids always had it when they came over. Going through her text messages, he realized there was none between her and Victoria. That was unusual because they talked every single day. He went to her call log and saw that Victoria was the last person she spoke to.

“Lying bitch,” he spoke to himself, tapping on the Facetime button on Victoria’s contact.

“Mommy, I said I’ll call you when I get there,” Victoria answered, looking like she was driving.

“This ain’t your fuckin’ mother,” Carmine flipped the camera so that Vic could see what he’d done.

She let out a gut-wrenching scream. “Carmine, no!”

“Bitch, yes! Bring my fuckin’ kids home or your entire bloodline is finished. And you

know what'll happen if you call the police so don't even try it," he told her before hanging up.

Dropping Vivian's phone on the floor, he stomped on it until he was satisfied then left the house. He got back in his car and headed to the hangar to hop his flight.

"Carmine, I can't keep doing this," Aden told him once they were both onboard.

"Can't keep doing what? Because every time you fly this muthafucka you get paid very well. Now fly this plane before I kill you and yo fuckin' family," he calmly threatened, taking his seat.

Aden's pale white face turned completely rosy red. He turned on his heels and darted straight to the cockpit. Carmine was unhinged, and the next person that came at him sideways was gon' catch a bullet. If he didn't need Aden to fly the damn plane, he would've shot him too.

An hour and a half later, Carmine had landed in Virginia and was on his way to Saige's house. He didn't figure she'd be there, but he still wanted to check and make sure. Once he pulled into her driveway and saw that her car was parked like it had been every other time, he knew she wasn't there. As he sat there, he contemplated his next move. Opening up the web browser on his phone, he searched Quadir's name and found what hospital he worked at. Listed on the website was Quadir's office number, so Carmine decided to call.

"Thank you for calling Children's Hospital, this is Jackie speaking, how may I help you?"

Clearing his throat, he decided to put on his cool, calm, and collected voice. "Hey Jackie, how you doing today? I was hoping to speak to Dr. Burrus about some concerns I have with my child."

“I’m great, thanks for asking. Unfortunately, Dr. Burrus is out of the office for the next week or so. I’ll be happy to—”

Carmine ended the call because he didn’t need to hear shit else. He was at a dead end. He had no way to find out where the fuck Qua lived, nor would he be able to get at him at his job. Instead of driving around, he parked his car and got out. He still had a key to Saige’s house, so he let himself in. It was useless to drive around because with the way he was feeling, he was liable to go on a shooting spree.

“What the fuck do you want?” He answered the phone for Gennaro as he looked through Saige’s refrigerator.

G sucked his teeth. “Man, what the fuck have you started? Pop is on some rampage with Nico because of some shit you said.”

“Oh, you mean the fact that I overheard Uncle Franc and Nico plotting on how to kill dad?”

“What?”

“Yeah, so if he’s on a rampage, it’s not on me, it’s on your fucked up ass brother. Y’all so busy putting that muthafucka on a pedestal and meanwhile he trying to destroy the empire dad built. All of y’all can kiss my fuckin’ ass, straight up,” he snapped then hung up.

Most of the food in her refrigerator was starting to go bad, so he checked the cabinets next and found some snacks. He was going to make himself at home because Saige was bound to return sooner or later. And he’d be waiting for her whenever she got there.

14

Quadir

“Y eah, this place is perfect,” Qua nodded after he finished touring the new home he planned to buy.

He knew that once he got his hands on Carmine, he didn’t plan to let him see the light of day again. If the mafia found out that he was behind the murder, then they were going to come at him with everything they had. While Qua didn’t want a war with the mafia, Grim was with all the shits. That was the very reason he was going to buy another house on the other side of the community that he already lived in. A lot of the mafia knew where he lived because they’d been inside of his medical suite. He wasn’t about to put himself or Saige at risk. If everything went off without a hitch and he wasn’t caught, then he’d simply let Saige have the new house.

“Great, you want to put an offer in?” The realtor, Kensley, looked at him.

“I want to purchase this home, straight cash, and I want to close on it ASAP.”

Her eyes widened then relaxed and she cleared her throat. “And to be perfectly clear, you do know the asking price is one point five, correct?”

“Get it to one point four, Kensley. I know you can do it. One point four, all cash, and I’m prepared to close as early as Friday.”

“Uht, okay,” she nodded with an approving look. “I’ll be in contact with you within a

few hours.”

“Good,” he nodded as well and walked out the front door.

As he prepared to do the two-mile jog back to his house, his phone started vibrating in his pocket. He took it out and saw that it was April calling him. Since Saige had been staying at his place, he had been ignoring April for the most part. It was crazy to him that since Saige had been in his space every day, April didn’t even cross his mind. Sex hadn’t even been on his mind. All he wanted to do was spend time with Saige and continue to get to know her.

She was a breath of fresh air from all the other women he was used to dealing with. She was smart, sweet, and innocent. Over the last three weeks, he found himself attracted to her more and more each day. He went from not wanting to take her virginity to considering it.

“Yeah?” He answered after popping his AirPods in.

“Damn, it’s about time I get you on the line. You must be really busy these days.”

“I am, you need something?”

“Yes, daddy, I miss that dick and that mouth. I’m craving it,” she purred into the phone. “I want you to come fuck me in every hole. I can even call over Treasure so we can have some real fun.”

Usually, hearing April say that would make his dick rock hard. Treasure was their regular go to third, and she was even freakier and nastier than April was. For some reason though, this time hearing April talk dirty to him made him annoyed. Maybe it was because he was starting to grow infatuated with Saige’s innocence. Or he was really just over April. He wasn’t clear on which one was true.

“Nah, I ain’t gon’ be able to do that.”

She sucked her teeth hard. “And why the fuck not, Qua?”

“I’m good on you, April. I got a lot of shit going on, and I can’t be dealing with you too,” he told her before hanging up.

Knowing that she was going to call back until he answered, he went ahead and blocked her. He wasn’t about to even give her the opportunity to blow his phone up. Shuffling his playlist on Apple music, he slid his phone back in his pocket, started his workout on his Apple watch, and started his jog back home.

By the time he reached his front door, he was short of breath. The crisp, cool October air had taken his lungs hostage. While he paced back and forth trying to lower his heart rate, the front door opened, and Saige stepped out. It took everything in him to fight the erection he felt starting. She looked like an angel in her cream two-piece Nike jogger set she wore. Even with her being fully dressed, Saige still turned Qua on in the worst way.

“Good run?” She smiled at him, offering him a water bottle.

He took his AirPods out and gladly accepted the water. Popping the top, he chugged some then smiled back at her. “Yeah, it was straight. Thank you.”

“Mmhmm, can you take me back to my house? I need more clothes. Unless you’re going to let me return home?”

He chuckled because he knew that was her way of asking to go home. “I told you, ma, once I know Carmine isn’t a threat to you anymore then you are free to go back to your crib. That nigga ain’t wrapped too tight, and the last thing I want is for him to try and finish what he started. But yeah, I’ll take you. Let me grab my keys.”

“Got ‘em,” she held them up.

Qua laughed and took the keys from her hand. They slid inside his Range Rover and left.

“My mom called me today,” Saige told him as they traveled to their destination.

He glanced at her before putting his eyes back on the road. Saige had told him all about her tumultuous relationship with her mom. He didn’t like her mom either, just off the strength of her disrespecting Saige the way she had over the years.

“How’d that go?” He asked anyway.

She shrugged. “How it always goes. It ended with her calling me a light-skinned, uppity bitch.”

“Why you let her talk to you like that, Saige? Mom or not, you shouldn’t be letting nobody disrespect you,” he told her, trying to suppress his anger.

“I know,” she said quietly.

“Hey,” he looked at her as he came to a stop at a redlight. She looked up and locked eyes with him. “I’m not trying to be mean, but you have to stand up for yourself too. Don’t let her talk to you like that. You’ve been dealing with enough, on top of your job and seeing what those kids go through, so you don’t need her adding to that, aight?”

She nodded and sighed. “I know. She’s still my mom though, so it’s hard to just say fuck her. I mean, I can go months without speaking to her but somehow she always sucks me back in.”

“So don’t let her next time. Set your boundary with her and let that be it.”

“You’re right,” she smiled slightly. “Have you ever considered being a therapist?”

“Fuck out of here,” he laughed and pulled off.

Twenty minutes later, they were pulling into her driveway. Saige assured him that he didn’t need to go in with her, so he sat in the car and waited. His eyes surveyed the area and didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary, so he figured she was fine. Ten minutes into waiting, his bladder started doing backflips from the bottle of water he chugged earlier. Shutting his car off, he grabbed his nine from the center console just in case and hopped out. As he rushed up to the door, he heard two gunshots fired from inside the house.

When he pushed the door open, he heard Saige whimpering and Carmine cussing her clean out. He sent Levi a 911 text with his location before creeping up the stairs. Standing outside of her bedroom, he drew his weapon and peeked around the door. He saw Carmine kneeling near Saige’s bleeding body.

“Look what you made me do, Saige,” Carmine said with tears running down his face. “Why wouldn’t you just listen? You were starting to act like Vicky, I had to put you back in line.”

“Carmine,” Qua called his name to get his attention.

The moment Carmine’s head jerked up in Qua’s direction, Q sent a single slug ripping through the middle of his forehead. Carmine’s body collapsed as blood poured out of his head, and Q rushed to Saige’s side.

“I’m here, ma, I’m here,” he told her, lifting her sweatshirt.

She'd been shot in the stomach and chest and was losing blood fast. Pulling his own jacket off, he applied pressure to the stomach wound.

"Qua," she whispered his name as her eyes began to roll.

"Fuck!" He shouted.

Looking around, he knew there was nothing inside her home that would help him, help her. The nearest hospital was ten minutes away, so he scooped her up bridal style and carried her down the stairs. Just as he put her in the backseat, Levi pulled up with one of his workers, Ice.

"What the fuck happened?" Levi jumped out.

"Carmin shot her, I gotta get her to the hospital. He's inside," Q informed him. "Make him disappear, Levi."

"I gotchu."

They dapped each other up then Qua got inside his car and sped to the hospital. He kept glancing in the back to make sure that Saige was at least still alive. By the time they got to the hospital, she had slipped out of consciousness. He rushed into the ER and let them know what was going on. They immediately came to his car and transported her inside with promises to keep him updated. Feeling defeated, he took a seat and called Moon to let her know what had happened.

While he sat there, he prayed harder than he ever had that Saige was going to be okay. He didn't want her taken away from him before he even had the chance to figure out what they had going on. If she died, there would be nothing and no one that would stop him from taking down the entire Sartori empire.

15

Saige

Saige blinked slowly as she opened her eyes. Looking around the dark room, she was confused about where she was. She saw the monitor to the right of her that was quietly beeping and figured out that she was in the hospital. When she turned her head, she saw Quadir to the left, sitting in a chair with his head leaned back. She figured he was asleep due to the slow rise and fall of his chest.

She lifted her hands and wiggled her toes to make sure everything was still functioning. She was relieved that she figured out where she was, but she didn't know how she ended up there. Her chest and stomach were sore as hell.

"Quadir," she called his name as loud as she could. "Qua!"

He stirred in his sleep before his head finally perked up. "Saige," he stood up and rushed to her bedside. "Damn I'm glad you're awake. How do you feel?"

"Like a thousand elephants trampled on my chest. What happened?"

"Carmine shot you. You don't remember?"

She looked around the room then shook her head. "No. The last thing I remember is riding in the car with you."

Her feelings were hurt that Carmine had gone to the extreme and shot her. She was

still feeling some type of way about him beating her ass. The fact that he'd shot her told her that he was a bigger threat to her than she thought.

"Yeah, baby girl, we were riding in the car to go to your house to get more clothes, and you went in alone. Carmine was there apparently and shot you."

"I-I-I don't remember," she shook her head again. "Where's my family?"

"It's two in the morning, Saige. They went home a few hours ago, but they'll be back in the morning," he assured her, lightly rubbing her cheek. "I'm just so happy that you're finally awake. I was scared as fuck that I'd never get to look into your pretty eyes again."

She blushed slightly. "Stop, Quadir."

"I'm serious, beautiful. Listen, this whole situation just...made me realize that I'm fighting what I'm feeling about you," he confessed to her.

"And what is it that you feel?"

"I don't know, but it's something. Something that I don't want to keep fighting. I want to see where things can go with us, Saige, straight up. I'd be a fuckin' idiot not to see what could happen."

"You trust yourself to take my virginity now?" She questioned, peering up at him.

"I trust that I won't do anything to purposely hurt you," he said truthfully.

After staring at him for a moment, she nodded slowly. "Okay, Quadir. I'll give you a chance. Don't blow it."

“I wouldn’t do that,” he leaned down and kissed her lips.

Saige felt a jolt of electricity surge through her body and head straight to her pussy. She’d never felt that with Carmine, and she loved the hell out of him.

“I’ve been wanting to do that for a minute,” he smirked and adjusted himself in his sweatpants.

She started blushing like crazy when she noticed that he’d gotten aroused. “So um, w-what happened to Carmine? Is he in jail?”

“God willing, his soul is in hell.”

“Huh?” Her eyes swelled. “You killed him?”

“Saige, what the hell did you think I was going to do? He’d already shot you twice, I had to protect you,” he told her.

She swallowed hard. “H-he had kids, Quadir. What a-about them?”

“ He should’ve thought about them before he decided to shoot you twice, beautiful. His kids ain’t got shit to do with me protecting you. I don’t give a fuck who it is, Ima always do what I have to, to make sure you’re straight. If that includes laying down twenty niggas then...” he shrugged. “That’s what I’ll have to do.”

Hearing him talk that gangsta shit oddly turned her on. The way he spoke about protecting her with so much passion had her ready to hand him her virginity with a red bow on it.

“Is this Grim talking?” She asked.

He raised a curious eyebrow. “Who the hell told you that?”

“Levi,” she picked with the blanket on the bed. “Look, if we’re going to be dealing with each other, I want to know everything about you, Quadir. The good and the bad. I’ll never judge you.”

“You promise?” He checked after a few moments of silence.

She stuck her pinky out towards him. “Promise.”

Locking pinkies with her, he pulled her finger up to his lips and kissed it. “Alright. I’ll give you the shortened version. Once you’re fully healed and out of the hospital, I’ll give you the longer version while we’re on an island somewhere.”

“Okay,” she giggled and nodded.

He drew in a deep breath and stared into her eyes for a brief moment. “Aight, so I was in the streets when I was young. My dad worked a lot and was always out the house, so I just ran the streets with Levi all the time. I worked for Carmine’s father, and he hasn’t let me go since. First, I was selling his dope and moving guns here and there. It helped get me through medical school. Now, I patch up members of the mafia whenever Luca tells me to. Carmine was one of those members that I’ve worked on before. That’s how we know each other. Carmine didn’t own a fuckin’ tech company... he was mafia through and through. He worked for his father moving dope and cleaning up messes, if you know what I mean.”

“Wow,” she said softly after taking in all of the information. “I don’t even know what to say. I had no clue. It all makes sense now why he just had so much money to give away,” she was quiet for a while then looked up at him. “What does that mean for you if you killed Carmine?”

“Doesn’t mean shit. There’s only five people that knows it was me. Two of them are in this room, the other one is dead, and the other two are also involved so they wouldn’t incriminate themselves.”

“Mm. So you’re just living a double life, huh?”

“Indeed I am. I’m trying to figure a way out of it now, but it’s not easy.”

“Well,” she gently grabbed his hand. “I’m sure we can figure it out.”

His eyes lit up. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” she nodded with a smile.

His ringing phone interrupted the moment they were having. Grabbing his phone out of his pocket, he answered. Based on the conversation, Saige could tell it was someone from the hospital.

“Something’s going on with one of my patients, so I have to go. I’ll be back as soon as I can,” he told her, putting his phone back in his pocket.

“Will I be safe here?”

“Yeah,” he leaned down and kissed her again. “Like I said, no one knows. I can have Levi come up here though, if that’ll make you feel better.”

“Um, no. If you say I’m safe, then I believe you.”

He nodded and kissed her one more time. “Alright. I’ll be back, beautiful. I’ll let the doctor know you’re awake.”

“Okay,” she nodded and smiled at him as he walked out.

Even though she was laying there in pain, her heart was fluttering around her chest like a caged bird. Quadir had her feeling alive and that was weird for her. When she envisioned her life as a young girl, she didn’t exactly picture herself being with someone who was in the streets or had ever been involved with that life. She didn’t picture herself dealing with a killer, and yet she was ready to risk it all for the man who had her feeling like a teenaged dream.

“Miss Persaud, I’m Dr. Borelli, it’s good to see you awake,” a small, Asian woman stepped into the room with a smile. “It was touch and go there for a while.”

“A while? How long have I been here?”

“Two weeks,” she replied, checking out Saige’s vitals.

“Two weeks? Oh my God! Am I going to be alright?”

“Well, you’re awake and that’s already saying a lot. We performed surgery and were able to remove the bullet that was lodged. The bullet to your chest was clean, through and through. The one to your stomach was a little trickier, but we safely removed it without damaging any major organs. The areas where you were shot have been stitched and covered. Your body has just been resting and recovering for the last two weeks. How are you feeling right now?”

“Like a thousand midgets did the A-town stomp on my chest.”

Dr. Borelli laughed and nodded. “Okay, that just means the pain meds have worn off. I’m going to push some more, and they’re going to make you drowsy. You’ll more than likely fall back asleep and that’s okay. I just want you out of pain.”

“Okay,” Saige nodded because all she wanted was to be out of pain too.

They chatted for a few more minutes and sure enough, Saige was feeling sleepy as hell. Dr. Borelli encouraged her to go to sleep and assured her she’d check in on her in the morning. Saige followed the doctors’ orders and slipped into a deep slumber. She was having the most vivid dreams about life with Quadir while she slept.

When she awoke for the second time, there was sunlight pouring into the room. Her chest didn’t hurt as bad, but she was still feeling a lot of discomfort.

“Saige! You’re awake!”

She looked over and smiled at Ramel. “Hey, lil’ buddy! Where’s everyone?”

“Dad and Moon went to get coffee. I told them I’d stay here just in case you woke up. And you did! I knew you’d wake up for me!” He beamed.

She reached out and lightly touched his cheek. “You knew that I’d do it for you because I’ll do anything for you, and I’m glad you know that.”

“Mmhm,” he nodded with a bright smile. “I can’t wait until you get out of here. I made you a get-well card, but I left it at home. I will bring it later.”

“Oh, it’s okay, honey. Just waking up and seeing your handsome face is all the get-well that I need.”

“Saige!” Moon gasped when she walked in the room with Winston right behind her.

“Baby girl!” Winston swiftly moved to her bedside and kissed her forehead. “It’s so good to see you up.”

“I’m happy to see y’all too,” she accepted a kiss on the cheek from Moon.

“Quadir said you don’t remember what happened, but is there anything at all that you can remember?” Winston asked her.

She shook her head but didn’t miss the weird expression on Moon’s face. “N-no. It’s all foggy.”

“Daddy, can I talk to Saige alone for a minute?” Moon requested.

“Is everything okay?” Win asked, looking between his two daughters.

Moon looked at him and nodded. “Everything is fine. I just... really need to fill her in on something but...womanly things.”

“Uh, okay,” he tapped Ramel’s shoulder and nodded towards the door. “Let’s give your sisters some privacy. We’ll be right outside.”

Once Ramel and Winston were gone and the door was closed, Moon turned her attention on Saige. “I know what happened, Saige.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Stop playing stupid with me! I forced Quadir to tell me everything and he did. Why didn’t you tell me you had a boyfriend, Saige? You are my best friend, we don’t keep secrets!” She said with a hurt expression on her face.

Saige stared at her and tried to gauge how much she really knew. “Moon, I’m sorry. Things between he and I were complicated and the less people that knew about it, the better.”

“But see what happened? He got jealous and shot you! He could’ve killed you, Saige. Thank God Quadir was there to get you to the hospital, or you could’ve died!”

“I know,” she sighed. “I really don’t remember what happened though. What did Qua tell you, exactly?”

Moon shrugged, folding her arms across her chest. “He told me that you and him were starting to get closer but you had an out-of-town boyfriend who came into town unannounced. Your boyfriend caught you and Quadir leaving your house, shot you, and ran off. Quadir said he told the police everything he knew, and they’re working really hard to find the dickhead. If he contacts you, Saige, you need to let the police know. Do not protect him.”

“Trust me, I have no intention on doing so,” she truthfully admitted.

Saige was relieved that Qua didn’t go into deep detail about what had transpired. She didn’t want to explain to her sister that she had fallen into a sugar daddy situation. Saige always wanted to give Moon something to look up to. Revealing that she was exchanging oral sex for a certain type of lifestyle wasn’t a good look. She planned to take that secret with her to her grave.

16

Quadir

D ING DONG!

DING DONG!

DING DONG!

Hearing his doorbell go off multiple times, Qua jumped out of bed and grabbed his shotgun from underneath it. It was one in the morning, and he wasn't expecting anyone. Whoever it was clearly wasn't an intruder because they were ringing the doorbell. Without even thinking to check the cameras from his phone, he went downstairs, turning on the light in the foyer.

“Qua, it's Luca! Open up!” Luca shouted from the other side of the door.

Gripping his shotgun a little tighter, Qua turned the locks and opened the door. “Luca? What the hell are you doing here this time of night? Are you hurt?”

“Have you seen Carmine?” He questioned with a scowl etched on his face.

“Not since the night him and Nico were fighting, why?” He responded calmly and quickly so that he came across as truthful.

Luca let out an aggravated sigh and pushed his way inside of Q's home. “That fucker

isn't answering his phone, and no one seems to know where he is. I found out my pilot brought him here days ago, but he hasn't had contact with him since. Nico informed me that he's been involved with a woman by the name of Saige. Imagine my surprise when I did my research on her and found out there's a link between you and her."

"Saige? Yeah, I performed surgery on her brother, and we became cordial after that. She's never mentioned having a boyfriend to me though," he kept his calm demeanor.

"Mm," Luca looked him up and down. "Well, you two are the only link he has to Virginia. The last motherfucker we had business with here, Carmine killed them so there'd be no reason for him to be here on my behalf. I dropped by Saige's house, and it seemed as if she wasn't there. Do you know where she'd be at one in the morning?"

He slowly shrugged. "I don't. Like I said, we're cordial but not enough for me to be in her business."

"If I find out you're lying about anything, you know what happens, don't you?"

"Yup."

Luca stared at him intensely for a couple of seconds before going back out the door. Releasing a breath that he didn't even know he was holding, Q leaned his shotgun up against the wall and dashed upstairs. His first thought was to go to the hospital, but he figured that Luca was going to be watching him closely. Saige was set to be released from the hospital in a few hours, but he needed her out of there ASAP. If Luca found out where she lived, then it was only a matter of time before he found out her exact physical location. He yanked his phone off the charger, unlocked it, and called Levi.

"Yo?" He answered, sounding like he was fully awake.

“I need you to go to the hospital and get Saige the fuck out of there. Luca’s here looking for Carmine. He knows that her and Carmine were dealing with each other. If he gets to her, Lee, I will set the entire city of Philly on fire,” he snapped.

“Say less bruh, I got you.”

“Bet. I’ll text you the address of where I want you to take her. Tell her she’ll be fine there because no one knows about it but me and now you. Tell her to lose her phone, and I’ll bring her a new one in a few.”

“I’ll call you when I got her,” Levi promised before hanging up.

Knowing there was nothing he could do, Qua started pacing back and forth. There was nothing more he wanted to do besides go get his future lady and make sure she was safe. He knew that she’d probably be asking Levi a thousand questions. After he sent the address to Levi, a lightbulb turned on in his head.

He slipped into an all-black Nike jogger fit with a pair of black Nike Vapormax. Grabbing his nine from his closet, he tucked it, along with his phone, into his hoodie pocket. He turned the lights off then headed downstairs and turned those lights off as well. After waiting for a few minutes, he slipped out the back door and out of his gate. If Luca had eyes on his house, he wanted to make it seem as if he’d gone back to bed.

Throwing his hoodie on, he walked down the back streets until he got to the other side of his neighborhood. In that moment, he was grateful as hell that Kensley was able to close the deal on his second home. Punching in the code to the front door, he let himself into the semi-decorated six-bedroom home. He’d gotten the basics set up inside the home; beds, living room set, TV’s, and kitchen items. He hadn’t gone into great detail about everything because he honestly didn’t plan to need the space so soon. Plus, he wanted Saige to put her own touch on it.

Flicking the lights on, he took a seat in the kitchen, dropped his gun on the island, and texted Levi to let him know when he was out front. Fifteen minutes later, Q saw headlights pulling into the driveway just as his phone vibrated. He looked down and saw it was a text from Levi, so he knew it was him in the driveway. Going to the door, he opened it and watched as Levi helped Saige out of the car. His heart started to swell with happiness when they locked eyes.

“Don’t hurt yourself, beautiful,” he chuckled and met her halfway as she tried to rush to him.

She wrapped her arms around him tightly. “I’m happy to see you.”

“I’m happy to see you too,” he kissed the top of her head then looked in her eyes. “Wait for me in the house, I’ll be in in a minute.”

She nodded then waved at Levi. “Thank you, Levi.”

“Anytime, shorty,” he nodded at her and leaned against his Audi. After Saige was inside, Levi tossed his hands up. “So, what now, my nigga?”

“You got rid of the body, his phone, and that car, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Then...nothing. If Luca finds nothing, then there’s nothing to it. Carry on with business as usual.”

“Bet,” Levi nodded behind Q. “Whose house is this?”

“Mine. I bought it when I knew shit was about to get sticky with the Italians. I knew that Luca knew where I lived, so I had to cop another crib for the just in case, feel

me?”

Levi dapped him up with a grin. “Can’t hide the money, big dawg. Ima buy a crib around the corner.”

“Yeah, I’ll believe that shit when I see it,” Q laughed and dapped him up again. He knew that Levi had no desire to live in a ‘bourgeois ass neighborhood’ like he did. “Be safe out there, hit me up tomorrow. Thanks again for going to get her. I owe you.”

“Nigga, you always owe me. Ima collect on that sooner or later,” Lee joked, walking around his car and opening the driver’s door. “And I want my shit in all hundos too!”

Q waved him off then turned and went inside the house. Searching around, he finally found Saige upstairs in one of the guest rooms.

“Whose house is this?” She also asked, turning around to face him.

“Mine. Yours if you want it. I got it in case shit got too hot at my house.”

He watched as a wide smile spread across her face. As he studied her face, the urge to kiss her overtook him. He moved closer to her, gripped her chin, and began to passionately kiss her. His hands gently and sensually explored her body while their tongues explored each other’s mouths. Being that she was fresh out of the hospital, he wanted to be gentle with her, but his dick was craving her badly.

“Damn, I want you,” he admitted, breaking their kiss and looking deep into her eyes.

She smiled at him. “I want you too, Quadir. I’m scared though. I feel like there’s a lot going on right now.”

“I know,” he sighed and kissed her nose. “There is a lot going on, but nothing that I won’t protect you from.”

“I know you’ll protect me,” she looked down at his erection and smirked. “Do you always get horny when you’re kissing, Q?”

“Only when I’m kissing you ,” he replied truthfully.

Easing her way down to her knees, Saige tugged at his sweatpants until they were around his ankles along with his boxers. His nine inches sprang out like it was on hydraulics, causing her to lick her lips.

“Ma, you don’t have to do that. I want you to heal—mmmmm...”

His words were quickly replaced with a low groan when Saige started licking the head of his penis. After swirling her tongue around the tip, she gradually guided his dick into her mouth.

“Fuck,” he looked down at her as she stared up at him.

Qua didn’t even think it was possible for him to fall in love, but with the way Saige was staring at him while lustfully sucking him up, he was ready to fall in love. He was ready to give her any and everything she wanted. The sexual connection he felt between them was something he hadn’t experienced with another woman. Not even April who let him degrade her in any way he wanted.

“Aghhh, yeahhhh,” he moaned while gripping the sides of her head and sensually thrusting in and out of her mouth. “Eat that dick just like that, bae. Just...like...that,” he hit the back of her throat with the tip of his dick, forcing her to gag and tears to run down her face. “Yeah mama, I love that shit, mmmhmmm, I’m bout to cum,” he announced.

That only seemed to make Saige get on demon time, drawing the nut out of him quicker than he expected.

“Ahhhhhh!” He groaned loudly as his body jerked and his seeds spilled into Saige’s mouth. “Gahdamn girl,” he muttered, easing his dick out of her mouth.

She grinned and stood up with his help. “My chest has to heal, not my mouth, love,” she winked at him. “But...Qua?”

He chuckled and shook his head at her. “Yes, beautiful?”

“I want you to take my virginity,” she told him, looking at the floor then back up at him. “Tonight.”

“Are you sure?” He asked as his heart rate sped up.

He’d only taken one other girl’s virginity, and that was the same night he lost his virginity. Since then, he’d been fuckin’ on women who were experienced or at least somewhat experienced. He wanted Saige’s first time to be special.

“I don’t want you to feel like you have to do that tonight, ma. We can do that whenever you’re ready,” he added just so she knew there was no pressure.

“I’m ready,” she reached up and kissed him. “You’ve been so protective of me. You’ve killed a man, for me . There’s no doubt in my mind that I want to give my virginity to you.”

Nodding his head, he stepped out of his pants and boxers, then removed his t-shirt and hoodie. He didn’t miss Saige drinking in all of his naked glory. He took her hand and led her to the master bedroom which was right down the hall.

Qua ran her a bath in the garden sized tub so that she could be nice and relaxed. After he helped her into the tub, he got in with her and cleansed her body while softly talking to her. He had suddenly become somewhat nervous about what was about to happen. Taking her virginity was serious, and he just hoped that she didn't regret it once it was all said and done.

Helping her out of the tub, he dried both of them off before laying her down in the bed. He turned the lights down low then went back into the bathroom to find some type of oil. His plan was to massage her to relax her even more. Finding a bottle of Passion Fruit body oil by Ancient Cosmetics under the sink, he walked back into the bedroom and took a deep breath.

Pouring oil into his hands, he rubbed it in before he started rubbing her feet and then her legs. The closer he got to her pussy, the harder his dick got. He massaged around her pussy lips which made her moan and wither in anticipation. Deciding to build the anticipation even more, he continued moving up her body. Being careful not to touch where she'd been stitched up, he rubbed the oil over her upper body as well.

Placing his hands flat on the bed, he dipped his head down and lapped at both of her nipples. Using his fingers to tug on one, he placed the other nipple in his mouth and sucked like his life depended on it.

"Qua, that feels so good," she panted, lightly caressing the top of his head.

"Good, ma. That's all I want to do is make you feel good," he told her before switching to the other nipple.

After showing both nipples equal attention, he kissed back down her body until he reached her center. Kissing around her thighs, he gently pushed her legs wide open and took his first lick.

“Yeah, Ima love it here,” he said more to himself than to her.

Getting into a sniper position, Quadir started making love to Saige’s clit with his mouth. He placed one finger and then two inside of her and smiled when he felt her walls contracting around his fingers.

“Ouuu shit, Quaaaa,” she sung loudly with her thighs trembling. “I’m gonna—”

The orgasm that Saige experienced took her breath and voice away. Qua came up for air and started to deeply kiss her. He grabbed his dick and started to slide it up and down her slippery folds. Protection didn’t even cross his mind because he knew she was pure, so he wasn’t worried about catching anything.

“Are you sure about this, beautiful?” He asked one last time, now hoping that she hadn’t changed her mind.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and nodded. “Yes. Be gentle but make love to me, Quadir.”

“I got you,” he assured her before starting to kiss her again.

While kissing, he tenderly started poking at her opening. He rested his face in the crook of her neck while easing his way inside of her. Hearing her gasp loudly made him stop and look at her.

“You okay? Need me to stop?” He asked, wiping the tears that had begun to escape her eyes.

“No, it’s okay. Keep going,” she encouraged, looking in his eyes.

“Tell me to stop if you need a minute, Saige. I won’t be mad.”

She nodded so he continued filling her up. He took it slow until Saige's gasps and whimpers turned into loud moans and curse words. She started biting on his shoulder and chest which oddly enough turned him on even more.

"Fuck, Qua, ouuu this dick is good," she cried out, wrapping her legs tightly around his waist.

Qua was trying his hardest not to nut but each stroke made it harder than the last. He clenched his teeth together and yelled a Hail Mary, hoping to last for at least ten more minutes.

"Gahdamnnn Saige," he groaned into her neck as she started fuckin' him back. "Shit baby, you about to make me nut."

"I'm...about...to cum...too," she said breathlessly.

Three strokes later and they were both moaning, groaning, and cumming. Saige came so hard the second time that she started crying all over again.

"I'm never letting you go," he told her as he finally pulled out of her once he regained his breath. "Damn."

She giggled. "I can't believe I've waited this long for dick this good. Shit," she leaned up and kissed him. "Thank you for being gentle with me."

"Good first experience?"

"Better than good, baby, that was amazing ," she told.

He rolled out of bed and went into the bathroom to grab a rag. He ran some warm water on it then cleaned himself up. Next, he went and cleaned Saige up before they

cuddled up in bed together. He couldn't believe that he had taken her virginity, but he was glad it was him and not Carmine. He couldn't wait to wake up the next morning and put her in a different position.

17

Saige

“S aige?” A well-dressed older gentleman approached her just as she was about to enter her office building.

She inspected him from head to toe, but she was certain she didn’t know him. “Yes?”

“Luca Sartori,” he extended a hand in her direction.

Her heart started to beat out of her chest as she shook his hand.

“I can tell by the expression on your face, you know exactly who I am. Nico told me all about Carmine’s little black whore in Virginia, so I thought I’d come meet you for myself. I’m going to ask you one time and don’t bullshit me. There are men who are ready to put a bullet in your head on my command if I even think you’re lying. Where is Carmine?” He questioned with an icy expression on his face.

“I honestly don’t know. The last time I saw your crazy ass son, he was putting two bullets in my body. When I woke up, I was in the hospital, so I have no idea where he is,” she responded, trying not to give off the fact that she was scared shitless.

“Why did he shoot you?”

She looked around and shifted her weight before focusing in on Luca. “Because he’s a fuckin’ nut job . He’s your son, you should know. He flew here and beat my ass all

because I said I didn't want to see him anymore. He left so I left my home and went into hiding. When I went back home, he was there telling me that I was acting like Victoria, so he had to teach me a lesson. That's when he shot me."

"So, you knew that he was married?"

"No," she shook her head. "I didn't find out until recently. Your other son, Nico, outed him at a party. They got into a fight about it."

"And he hasn't tried to contact you at all since he shot you?" He continued questioning her calmly.

"Well, I got a new number and a new phone, so if he has, I wouldn't know about it. Look, it's cold out here, so is that all?"

He took a few steps closer, closing the space between them. "If I find out you're the reason why my son is missing, you will be burying sweet little Moon and Ramel, am I clear?"

"Y-y-yes," she stuttered, her heart dropping to her ass even hearing him say their names.

"And then Winston and Celeste will be burying you."

She pulled herself together and drew in a deep breath then let it out with a nod. "I understand."

"I'll never understand why my son decided to cheat on his perfectly good wife for someone like you , so just know that it'll be my pleasure to kill you," he threatened before walking away.

Saige stood, frozen in place until she could no longer see Luca. She wasn't sure if she should go to work or go home. Since she was already at the building, she finally came to her senses and rushed inside. Her hands were shaking terribly as she walked through the halls and her co-workers greeted her. She forced a smile on her face as she fought back the tears that wanted to escape.

The minute she reached her office, she closed the door and took her phone out of her purse. She unlocked it and placed a call to Quadir.

"Wassup, baby?" He answered on the third ring.

"Luca just approached me," she told him, wiping away the tears that fell out of her eyes anyway.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes. No. Fuck, I don't know. I'm just scared, I guess. He said that if he finds out I had anything to do with Carmine's disappearance, then he'll kill Mel and Moon. He called them by name, Qua. My parents too."

"Shit," he sucked his teeth. "Just breathe, mama, and try to calm down. Technically, you don't know shit about what happened to Carmine or where he is, so you have nothing to worry about. I'll talk to Luca."

"No, baby, I don't want something to happen to you," she begged, her heart rate increasing once again.

"Ima be straight, ma, you know me. Ima just make sure he knows that threatening you is threatening me, and I don't take kindly to threats."

"Quadir."

“Baby, it’ll be fine. You want to stay at work or go home?”

She chuckled quietly to herself at how he switched subjects. “I’m going to check on Moon and Ramel first, and then I’ll decide if I want to stay here or not.”

“I’m sure they’re fine but okay. Let me know what you decide, beautiful. And remember, I got you, so everything is going to be okay,” he soothingly assured her.

“Thank you, handsome. I feel better. Let me call my siblings, and I’ll text you my decision.”

“Sounds good, love,” he told her before hanging up.

Saige went from panicking to calm in a matter of minutes thanks to Quadir Burrus. Ever since she’d given him her virginity almost two weeks ago, they’d been attached at the hips, literally. They’d been fuckin’ nonstop. Saige felt like she had to make up for lost time. She’d been saving herself for years, and now that she was getting some dick, she wanted it all the time. It made it even better that Q treated her like a queen, so she was always down to give him some.

They’d been staying at Q’s new house, and Saige thoroughly enjoyed coming home to his fine ass. It was nice to have a partner that could be there every day versus someone who was paying her for her time. Opening her sibling group chat, she sent the eyes and hoped like hell that both Ramel and Moon responded. She knew they should’ve been on their way to school, so they both still had access to their phones. Within a few minutes, both of them responded with the eyes as well, making her chuckle.

“I just wanted to tell y’all that I love y’all soooo much, and I’m going to plan for us to do something this weekend,” she sent a voice message to the chat before shaking her computer awake.

She sent Q a text and let him know that she was staying then got comfortable. Coming out of her knee-length, tan trench coat, she hung it up on the coat rack in her office then took a seat. She was glad she didn't have to be out in the field because she honestly felt safer being inside the building. The last thing she wanted was for Luca to follow her around while she was trying to do her job.

Nine hours later, Saige was getting back into her coat, grabbing her purse, and getting ready to depart the building. She looked around for the security guard to see if he could escort her to her car. When she failed to find him, her anxiety kicked up a notch. Taking a few deep breaths, she convinced herself that everything was going to be fine. She pulled her coat tight and stepped outside. The sun was just starting to set, but November had just begun, and the temperatures had been in the low 50's, so it was pretty chilly outside. Looking around, she surveyed her surroundings before quickly heading to her car. As she got inside, her phone started ringing with a call from Q.

"Yes?" She answered, starting her car and immediately pulling out of the parking lot. She didn't want to take any chances by sitting around.

"You aight?"

She smiled even though he couldn't see her. "Yes, I'm headed home now."

"Aight. Stay on the phone with me until you're there. How was your day, bae?"

"Boring. A lot of paperwork. How's everything at the hospital?"

"Busy. Remember the doctor that started working with Ramel before I took over his case? Dr. Ascot?" He asked.

"Yes."

“He invited me and you to have dinner with him and his wife on Friday, if you’re up to it.”

“Our first double date? Ouu, sounds cute. I can’t wait,” she squealed with excitement.

He chuckled. “Bet, bet. I’m glad you’re excited about it. Kurt and his wife are cool people.”

They continued chatting until she pulled into the massive driveway. She couldn’t stop the grin that spread across her face even if she wanted. Shifting the gear into park, she turned off the engine and hopped out.

“Qua,” she bit her bottom lip and walked towards him. “You didn’t say you were already here!”

“I wanted to surprise you, love,” he pushed the large bouquet of red tulips in her direction.

She took them from him then kissed him. “Thank you so much. These are beautiful.”

“Just like you,” he winked. “I didn’t want you to come home to an empty house and be worried. Plus, I wanted to take you somewhere so...c’mon.”

“I’m still in my work clothes, Quadir,” she looked down at her clothes then up at him.

“And you’re still perfect,” he nodded towards his truck. “C’mon.”

Blushing, she did as he asked and started walking over to his Rover. He opened the door for her and helped her inside. It was hard for her to take her eyes off the flowers.

“You really like them, huh?” He asked after he got inside as well.

She finally looked at him. "I've never gotten flowers before."

"Ever?"

"Nope," she shook her head.

"Damn baby. Well, I'll make sure that I always get you some, okay?" He leaned over and kissed her.

She nodded and smiled as her heart started to flutter again. She loved the way Quadir made her feel. For her first real relationship, she couldn't have picked a better man to give her energy to. He was worth all of her time and then some.

"Where are we?" She questioned when they pulled into an abandoned-looking building.

"You'll see," he hopped out and rushed to her side to help her out as well.

Eyeing him, she placed her hand in his and walked with him inside. When she looked around, she realized they were at a shooting range. There was an older, black gentleman standing behind the counter.

"Um, what are we doing here?" She quizzed.

"Grim, it's good to see you again young man," the guy dapped him up then looked at Saige. "And who is this lady that's too pretty to be with you?"

"C'mon Mac," Q laughed. "Mac, this is Saige. Saige, this is a long-time friend of mine, Mac."

"Just Saige? Not your girlfriend?" Mac looked at him.

Saige giggled and extended her hand toward Mac. “We’re getting there. Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you too, pretty lil’ thang,” Mac kissed the back of her hand.

“Aightttt,” Q pulled Saige’s hand away from Mac’s. “Not too much on her, Mac... I’d hate to have to kill you.”

“Awh nigga don’t threaten me about no woman you ain’t claiming as yo own!” He winked at Saige.

Saige looked at Qua and giggled again at the expression on his face. It was clear he was irritated. “It’s cool, babe,” she lightly touched his hand.

“I’m cool,” he told her, letting out a breath. “We’re here because I want you to get some target practice in.”

Her eyes went wide. “Wait, what? Quadir, I’ve never even held a gun, let alone shot one.”

“Well, that’s why we’re here, ma. Ima teach you everything you need to know. I can’t have you out here naked.”

She raised an eyebrow and frowned because she had no idea what he meant by that. “Naked?”

“Without protection, a gun,” he chuckled and walked up on her, loosely wrapping his arms around her waist. “I can’t be with you 24/7, and I’ll be damned if anybody catch you slipping out in these streets. Ima teach you everything you need to know to protect yourself if a time ever comes,” he leaned close to her ear. “And when we’re done here, Ima take you home and wear that pussy out.”

Biting on her bottom lip, she felt herself getting hot all over. She was ready to take him up on his offer right then and there. “Okay.”

The two of them spent the next three hours going over gun safety, loading and unloading a clip, and firing. Never in a million years did Saige think she’d ever be shooting a gun. The hold Quadir had on her was something serious, and at that point, there was nothing she wouldn’t do for or with him. He could ask her to carry ten bricks across state lines, and she was going with no hesitation. She was all in with her street doctor. She just prayed that there never came a time where she had to use what she’d just learned.

18

Quadir

“Y ou nervous?” Q asked Saige as he parked in his father’s driveway.

She smiled. “Nope.”

“Ah, see, you started getting dick from a real nigga and now you turned cocky...I like that shit though,” he grinned then kissed her.

Saige giggled and rolled her eyes. “Never cocky baby, just confident. If your dad doesn’t like me, is that going to change anything between us?”

“Nah.”

“Then, I ain’t nervous. As long as I still have you,” she cooed and kissed him one more time.

Q watched as she applied a layer of clear Fenty gloss to her lips. It was wild to him how much he’d fallen for her in a short amount of time. To him, Saige was everything he wanted his perfect woman to be. She was everything he wanted the mother of his children to be. He didn’t even want kids before him and Saige got together. Now, he imagined a house full of them with her by his side to raise them.

It was a few days before Thanksgiving, so Q figured it was the perfect time for his dad to meet Saige. The holidays always brought out the best in people but especially

his dad. Kadeem was an easy-going kind of guy anyway, but holiday time seemed to amplify that. Since Nicole had died, his mother was the opposite. The holidays were a hard time for her, so Q wasn't sure if he wanted Saige to meet her just yet.

"Dad!" Q called out, walking inside, hand and hand with Saige. Kadeem hardly ever locked his front door, so Q knew it'd be unlocked.

"Yeah, son! In the basement!"

Q guided Saige downstairs to the gaming area of Kadeem's house. When Kadeem turned around, Saige gasped loudly.

"Dr. Roberts?"

Kadeem smiled at her. "Little Saige? This can't be!"

"Oh my God!" She wrapped her arms around him tightly. "I can't believe it's really you."

"Y'all wanna fill me in?" Q looked between the two of them, shocked at the interaction happening between his dad and his lady.

Saige wiped at her eyes when she released Kadeem from her grip. "Remember I told you when I was little, I had cancer? Well, Dr. Roberts was my primary doctor and took very good care of me."

"Sweet Saige is what the staff called her," Kadeem smiled. "She was fighting that cancer tooth and nail and was still as sweet as could be. She would always sing songs and put on shows for all the other kids."

"Damn dad. So, you met my future wife years ago? That's crazy," Q smirked.

Saige blushed and playfully slapped his arm. “Stop it.”

“Future wife? Son, I’ve never heard you talk about a woman like that,” Kadeem was pleasantly surprised.

“That’s because I’ve never met a woman like Saige before,” he spoke honestly.

“Well, if she’s still anything like she was when she was a child, then I bet that’s true. It’s not often you meet people who are just genuinely sweet natured like that. Saige, how’s your father?”

She smiled and nodded. “He’s doing good! He got married and had a baby who is pretty much like my baby,” she chuckled.

“Get out of here! Wow. Good ole Winston. You’ll have to tell him I said hello or bring him by. How about your mother?”

“She’s... my mother. After I beat the cancer, her and my father split up, and she just wasn’t the same after that. Took it out on me and my sister,” she shrugged. “But I don’t want to dwell on that. I’ll definitely tell my daddy that I saw you!”

Kadeem nodded, respecting her boundaries. “I understand, sweetie. It’s so good to see you thriving. How’d you meet my knucklehead son?”

She looked at Quadir and smiled wide before looking back at Kadeem. “Well, my little brother was epileptic and Qua did surgery to stop the seizures from occurring. We’ve kind of just been finding our way together ever since.”

“Aht aht, you forgot the part where you saw me in the gym and was trippin’ all over yourself first,” Q stated with a smirk.

Saige sucked her teeth and rolled her eyes with a laugh. “Boy, please! You were the one trying to act like you didn’t see me, but I know you did.”

“I wasn’t paying you any attention,” he joked.

Saige rolled her eyes again, making Kadeem laugh. They spent the next three hours hanging out with Q’s dad, and Q became even more impressed with Saige. Watching her interact with his dad had him feeling good about choosing her. He’d had his fair share of women but none that made him feel like Saige did.

“I really can’t believe your dad is Dr. Roberts! I thought you said your parents were married?” She said when they were back inside of his car.

He nodded. “They were but they weren’t married when I was first born. That happened shortly after, so my mom decided to not give me my father’s last name. That was the start of their problems.”

“Damn.”

Qua started the car but before he could pull out of the driveway, his phone started ringing. Looking at the dash, he was surprised to see Luca’s name scrolling across. Signaling for Saige to be quiet, he picked up.

“Yeah?”

“Get to the hangar, we have an emergency,” Luca demanded before hanging up.

“You think he knows?” Saige asked in a panicked tone.

“Nah, and there’s nothing to know. Just be cool, mama. Ima drop you off at the crib and go see wassup,” he told her as he started the short ten minute drive back to their

house.

Q really enjoyed the fact that Saige had pretty much moved into the second home he bought. She didn't want to return to the home that Carmine had given her because it reminded her of what she'd gone through with him. Even though she continuously said that she was going to look for her own place, she hadn't started yet. Deep down, he was hoping that she would never move out. Coming home to her was everything to him unbeknownst to her.

“What? No, I want to go with you.”

He shook his head, waved at Frank then pulled through the gate. “Nah ma, I can't have you with me. That shit gon' look crazy as fuck with me stepping off the plane with you.”

“Quadir,” she looked at him with worry written all over her face.

“I'm going to be fine and so are you. Have Moon come over and sit with you while I'm gone or something.”

“But I—”

He pulled into the driveway, put the car in park, and then leaned over and kissed her. “Bae... You know I can take care of myself. Now that you've been to the range a few times, I know that you can take care of yourself, more importantly. You trust me?”

“Yes,” she looked into his eyes.

“Aight so trust that I'm coming back home to ya fine ass,” he winked and kissed her one more time. “Go in the house, you have my location. I'll see you when I get back.”

“Get on Grim time if you have to,” she winked back and stole one last kiss before getting out.

Qua’s dick got slightly hard hearing her say that. It was amazing to him how much she’d transformed over the last few weeks. She was still sweet and innocent at her core, but she’d turned into somewhat of a baby gangsta and he liked that shit.

He watched and waited until she was safely inside then left. His mind was racing, and he was hopeful that this wasn’t a trap. He’d received the same call a thousand times before, so he was trying to convince himself that this time was no different. He arrived at the hangar thirty minutes later. Parking his car, he tucked his glock and hopped out. He was surprised to see a different pilot. Luca typically liked to keep his employees consistent since he couldn’t trust anybody.

“Who are you?” Q looked the new pilot up and down.

The new white guy extended a hand to him. “David, nice to meet you.”

“Where’s Aden?”

“Mm, I don’t know. Mr. Sartori hired me two weeks ago.”

Eyeballing him again, Q shrugged and boarded the empty plane. David made small talk before Q dismissed him. He wasn’t in the mood to get to know him. All he wanted to do was get to Philly and get back home to Saige like he promised. He sent Levi a text letting him know what was going on. Then, he sent a text to Dr. Ascot letting him know that he might be running late the next day. He had no idea what he was about to walk into, and he just wanted to be sure all his bases were covered.

Touching down in Philadelphia almost two hours later, Qua was ushered into the back of the black Escalade per usual. He texted Saige and let her know that he had

made it. So far, everything seemed to be going according to the usual routine which allowed Q to relax a bit. When they pulled up to Luca's house, he got out and was greeted at the door by one of the maid's, Madeline. Over the years, he'd grown fond of Madeline. She was in her late 50's and always treated him like a son when he was there.

"It's bad this time, Mr. Burrus," she informed him in a low voice.

He looked at her. "What happened?"

"It's Domenico. Luca shot him."

"What?" Q's eyebrows tried to jump off his face. "What for?"

"He thinks Nico is the reason Carmine is missing," she whispered, nodding towards the stairs. "Go. We'll talk later."

Nodding his head, Q bounded up the stairs and into the medical suite that Luca also had inside of his home. He found Gennaro and Luca standing around with Nico sitting on the hospital bed. He noticed that there was a tourniquet tied around Nico's thigh.

"What happened?" Q asked no one in particular.

"I got shot in the knee," Nico pointed at his bloody knee.

"You're lucky it wasn't your fuckin' chest cavity," Luca snapped.

"I already fuckin' told you, I had nothing to do with Carmine's disappearance!" He grimaced.

“If you’ll try to have me killed then I’m sure you’ll kill the person who told your fuckin’ secret!” Luca sneered, pointing at him.

“Did the bullet come out?” Q intervened, pretending as if he cared more about Nico’s injury than what was transpiring in the room.

“I don’t think so,” G spoke up.

The room fell silent as Qua assessed the extent of Nico’s injuries. After using the portable x-ray machine that was kept there, he was able to locate the bullet.

“Yeah, it’s still in there. Your kneecap is fractured though, so you won’t be able to walk on it. Let me change, and I’ll get you patched up,” Qua told him.

Three hours later, Qua had the bullet out and Nico’s leg splinted. He’d given him a good dose of pain meds, so Nico would likely be out for the rest of the night. It was well after midnight, and Q was beyond exhausted.

“You shot him in the knee? Really?” Q asked Luca once he stepped out of the medical suite.

Luca threw his hands up and shook his head. “Something is fuckin’ up, I know it. I know my son is dead, and I know that Nico knows where he is. I also know that you and Saige have been frolicking all around Virginia, so make this shit make sense because everyone is looking like a suspect right now,” he fumed with a deathly glare.

Q chuckled. “Luca, my personal life really isn’t any of your business. Whether I’m with Saige or anyone else doesn’t matter. You pay me to take care of your people, and I believe I’ve done that. So if there’s no one else around here that needs medical attention, I’m out.”

“Did you kill Carmine so that you could have his black whore all to yourself?”

Q’s fist balled, and it took everything in him not to swing on Luca. “Watch how you speak on my shorty, Luca. I respect you, but I will get on demon time behind her. For the last fuckin’ time, I don’t know what happened to Carmine.”

“Oh, so she is your girlfriend?” Luca smirked, taking a step closer to Q.

Quadir took a deep breath because he knew Luca was trying to get him riled up. The more reactive he was, the more suspicious Luca would become of him. He had to keep playing it cool to keep Saige and himself safe.

“Have a great night, Luca. Try not to shoot anyone else,” Q huffed, stepping around him and jogging down the stairs.

“Mr. Burrus,” Madeline quietly called out from the kitchen.

Qua looked in her direction and quickly walked over to her. “Wassup?”

“Please be careful. Mr. Sartori has been on a rampage trying to find Carmine. I have heard your name brought up a few times,” she worriedly informed him with her thick Italian accent.

“Maddy, it’s okay. I have absolutely nothing to do with Carmine’s disappearance, so there’s nothing to worry about,” he calmly assured her.

“He’s paranoid because Domenico was plotting to kill him. Everything is so chaotic right now in this house,” she shook her head.

“You be careful too, Maddy.”

She nodded slowly so he walked out of the house and got back into the Escalade. Knowing that Luca also suspected Domenico of killing his own brother had Q's wheels turning. He needed to put the whole Carmine bullshit to bed, and he had to figure out a way to do so. Texting Levi, they agreed to meet up later on the following day. Two brains were always better than one, and Q knew that he could count on his right-hand man to help him out.

Saige

Saige ignored her mother's phone call for what seemed like the hundredth time. She had been calling non-stop it seemed, and Saige wasn't interested in dealing with her at the moment. She was busy preparing dinner for Quadir's mom. Her nerves were all over the place because Qua had given her the rundown about his mom. Knowing that his mom wasn't going to be in the best mood had her on edge. All Saige wanted to do was make a good impression on Angie, and she was hopeful that the meal she was preparing would do that.

Saige had left work early to come home and start cooking her turkey wings smothered in gravy, rice, string beans, homemade mac and cheese, and dinner rolls. Everything was just about done except for the rolls.

"Shit, why didn't I bake a cake?" She muttered to herself, realizing that she had no desserts.

Qua chuckled as he walked into the kitchen and kissed her forehead. "Baby, you have cooked more than enough. I'm sure we'll be way too full to fit in any dessert after this meal."

"Does your mom like dessert though? I should just run out to the store and grab a cake or a pie or something real quick," she continued rambling.

"Saige," he gently grabbed her up before she could walk out of the kitchen. "Calm

down. Take a deep breath. Just because my mom may not be in the best mood, it doesn't mean that she's going to be an asshole. She'll just be ... emotional, that's all."

"I just want everything to be perfect," she pouted, looking up at him.

He licked his lips and adjusted himself in his pants. "I told you that when you stare at me like that, it makes me think about you suckin' my dick, Saige. You trying to—"

DING DONG.

His words were interrupted by the sound of the doorbell. Saige's eyes went wide as her heart started racing. Since she was new to the dating business, she'd never had to meet anyone's mom before. Meeting Kadeem was a breeze for her because of their history. Meeting Angie was uncharted territory.

"Because my mother is here, we'll put a pin in this conversation. Once she leaves, I'm trying to see something," he winked at her.

Saige giggled like a shy schoolgirl. Quadir always made her feel like that. "Okay."

Q exited the kitchen to let his mom in while Saige turned the stove off and took the rolls out. The closer Q and Angie's voice got, the faster Saige's heart beat. She felt like she was going to faint from the anxiety that came with meeting his mother. The wave of nausea that hit her the moment Angie and Q stepped into the kitchen was overwhelming. So much so that before she could even get her greeting out, she was rushing to the bathroom and kneeling over the toilet.

"Bae, you alright?" Q came in the bathroom moments later.

Taking some deep breaths, Saige stood up and flushed the contents in the toilet.

“Yeah, my anxiety just got the best of me,” she told him before grabbing the bottle of Listerine and gargling.

Spitting the minty liquid out, she checked the expiration date on the bottle. For some reason, it put a weird taste in her mouth. She grabbed a plastic cup and rinsed her mouth out with water.

“You sure you okay?” Q curiously looked her up and down.

She nodded and took another deep breath. “I’m fine.”

Taking her hand into his, he led her back to the kitchen where Angie was peeking in the pots. “Mom, I’d like you to meet Saige, the lady who’s been making me smile these days. Saige, this is my mother, Angela, but everyone just calls her Angie.”

“It’s so nice to meet you, Quadir speaks so highly of you,” Saige greeted with a smile plastered on her face.

Angie smiled back which put Saige at ease. “It’s nice to meet you as well,” she pulled Saige into a hug. “I’ve heard great things about you.”

Saige melted into Angie’s warm embrace. It had been a long time since she’d gotten a motherly hug, and she didn’t even know she missed it until that moment. She honestly didn’t want the hug to end.

“You needed that hug, huh?” Angie asked, finally pulling away from her.

“How’d you know?” Saige fought the sudden urge to cry.

“A mother always knows,” she offered a half smile. “You’re going to be alright, baby,” Angie spoke as if she knew exactly what Saige was feeling. “Your food smells

and looks delicious.”

“Thank you!” Saige beamed with pride. “Have a seat, let me make you a plate.”

See? Relax , Qua mouthed to her before walking out of the kitchen with his mom.

Feeling like the night was going to go well after all, Saige shook off the rest of her nerves and made their plates. After she served them, she went back into the kitchen to make her own plate when her phone started ringing again.

“ WHAT? ” She snapped at Celeste, finally answering her call.

“You bitches always answering the phone so nastily!” Celeste snapped back.

Saige drew in a deep breath and released it. She was getting sick of Celeste being so nasty towards her, and she was over her breaking point. “Mom, I’ve been nothing but nice to you and yet you treat me like I’ve done something to you! I’m your child and you act like I’m some random bitch that stole your fuckin’ man. I’ve been holding my tongue out of pure respect for the fact that you’re my mom, but I’m done being nice! Being nice to you only gets me berated, and I’m done with that shit!”

“Well look who decided to get a backbone,” Celeste chuckled sarcastically. “You know, word around town is that you’re fuckin’ some drug dealing ass nigga. You’re going to get yourself caught up in a world of hurt, girl.”

“What the fuck are you talking about? Quadir is a gahdamn doctor,” she huffed, ready to end the conversation.

Celeste laughed loudly. “A muthafuckin’ street doctor. Saige, for you to be college educated, you’re one dumb ass bitch. That nigga ain’t gon’ do nothing but fuck you, probably get yo dumb ass pregnant, and then leave you.”

“Ohhhhhh,” Saige let out a sarcastic chuckle of her own. “I see. Don’t project your life’s bullshit onto me. Just because that’s what happened to you, it doesn’t mean that’ll happen to me. You don’t know anything about him. It is wild that you hate me and my sister because you resent my father so much, but that is not our fault. Mommy, I pray for you, and I pray that you find the peace that you so desperately need, but I am done talking to you. I’m getting too old to continue being a punching bag for you. Take your anger out on someone else and leave me and Moon out of it. Take care,” she told her before hanging up.

“I had a rough relationship with my mother too,” Angie stepped in the kitchen. “All I will tell you is that you protect your peace because until she is healed, she’ll never care about yours.”

The tears that Saige had been so desperately fighting came rushing full force down her face. Angie, being the compassionate person that she was, pulled Saige into a hug again.

“I don’t know what I did wrong,” Saige sobbed into Angie’s shoulder.

“Sshhh,” Angie soothed her, gently running her hand down Saige’s freshly silk pressed hair. “You didn’t do anything wrong, sweetheart. When women become bitter, sometimes they are unable to separate the facts from the hurt. The fact is you are her daughter but the hurt in her doesn’t see that. What she sees is that you are a product of your father, and your father hurt her, so she lumps it altogether. I’m sorry that this is happening to you, and I know firsthand how painful it can be. Just know that so long as Quadir loves you, so do I, and you can always lean on me.”

“Wait, what?” Saige quickly pulled away from her.

“Did I say something wrong?”

“Quadir loves me...”

Angie smiled and nodded at her. “Yes. I know my son, Saige. And he is more than smitten with you. That boy is in love just as sure as the sun rises and sets every day.”

“Y’all been in here for a long time,” Q appeared in the archway. His demeanor quickly changed when he realized that Saige’s eyes were red and her face was wet. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. We’re all good here, right Saige?” Angie winked at her.

Saige smiled and nodded then wiped her face again. “Yeah. Thank you, I really needed that.”

“I know, sweet pea,” Angie playfully pinched her cheek, grabbed a fork, and walked back out of the kitchen.

“Bae, for real,” Q walked up on her. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. Your mom just overheard me talking to my mom and gave me some advice,” she told him, deciding to leave out the part about him being in love.

“Awh, so y’all bonded a little bit?” He kissed her forehead and smiled. “Good, that makes me happy. Come on and sit down so you can enjoy your food. Them turkey wings? Straight fire, ma.”

“Thank you,” she giggled and grabbed the plate that she’d made for herself.

They went into the dining room and enjoyed the rest of their evening together. Saige was so relieved that Angie seemed to take a liking to her. It was nice for Saige as well because she’d been yearning for that motherly figure in her life for so long. When it

was time for Angie to leave, Saige found herself actually feeling a little sad. She thoroughly enjoyed the time they spent together. They exchanged phone numbers, and Angie promised to check in on her. Seeing that Angie was so open and willing to play that motherly role for her had her feeling hopeful about her future with Quadir.

“Thank you for cooking, baby,” Qua kissed her as they lay in bed watching TV after showering together.

“Of course.”

“I wanted to talk to you about something.”

Saige’s eyes shot up to his when she heard the seriousness in his voice. “Wassup?”

Instead of saying anything, Qua got out of the bed, picked up his phone, and started playing I Want To Be Your Man by Zapp. It was one of the songs that they both had a love for. He pulled the drawer open on the nightstand next to the bed and took out a small, red box. Saige’s eyes got wide as her heart started beating fast again.

“Saige, never have I met a woman that I can enjoy old school music with and just be my genuine self with. When we went to the gun range, and I didn’t know how to introduce you, it really fucked with my head. I’ve never had to put thought into introducing a woman before because they usually aren’t around long enough for me to give a fuck,” he took a deep breath before continuing. “But I know I want you around. I know that I want to give you a proper introduction when you meet people who are important to me. You accept me for who I am, the good and the bad. You don’t judge me, and I love that about you. I love you? Saige. With all that being said and with this promise ring, will you be my girlfriend?” He popped open the box.

Saige started crying at the sight of the beautiful three carat, heart-shaped, yellow diamond ring that was inside the box. She was somewhat relieved that he wasn’t

proposing to her in the marital sense. His gesture was extremely thoughtful though and had her ready to get on her knees.

“Baby, this ring is so pretty,” she cried, moving over to him and throwing her arms around him. “I love it, and I love you too. Of course, I’ll be your girlfriend.”

After he kissed her, he slid the ring on her ring finger and Saige admired how it looked there. In that moment, she was overwhelmingly grateful for Quadir. Even if shit didn’t work out between them, she felt blessed that he was her first experience of what a relationship looked like.

“When we get married, your ring is going to be three times as big as this,” he boasted.

She grinned while pulling his boxers down. “Oh yeah? You want to make me a wife, Quadir?”

“Damn right,” he groaned, looking down at her as she slowly slurped him into her mouth. “I said I was n-never letting you g-g-go, and I meant it, baby.”

“Mmkay, good,” she stroked and licked his dick until it was saluting her. “Lay down.”

Q got back in the bed and laid down like his woman had instructed him to do. Saige pulled the t-shirt she was wearing off, exposing her naked body. He smiled at her as she positioned herself on top of him. She planted sweet kisses on his lips before working on his neck which she’d come to learn was his spot. His soft moans always turned her on, but it especially turned her on now that she was wearing that beautiful ass diamond ring on her finger.

“Shittt,” she hissed as she slid down his pole.

Planting her feet firmly on the bed, Saige began to ride Q just how he'd taught her. The perk of her being a virgin was that Q had slutted her out to his liking. He took great pride in knowing that any and every nasty, freaky thing she did to him was taught by him. Saige took pride in that also because all she wanted to do was please Quadir. He made life so easy for her that there wasn't anything he couldn't get from her.

"Ride yo dick, ma," he encouraged with a hard slap of her ass.

Leaning forward, she started licking, kissing, and sucking on his neck again. Q grabbed her ass in his hands and started thrusting upwards, meeting her stroke for stroke. The feeling of an intense orgasm started building in the pit of her stomach. Trying to keep her focus on Q's neck and not the dick he was delivering, she shut her eyes but lost the battle within seconds.

"Ouuu fuck, shittttt, Qua, fuckkkk," she whimpered with her eyes rolling.

"Yeah, this my pussy, huh?"

She nodded and leaned further into his neck. "Yessss baby, i-i-it's yourssss."

"Good, go ahead and give me that nut," he whispered in her ear in a husky tone before kissing it. "Show me how much you love me, baby."

"Quaaaaa," she cried out in pure pleasure.

"Yes, that's my name," he gently spoke in her ear.

He knew it drove her body crazy when he talked her through her orgasms. Wrapping his arms around her back tightly to keep her in place, he started drilling her a little faster.

“I feel that pussy tightening. Make it rain for me, beautiful.”

“I love you soooo much,” she whined into his neck. “Oh my...I’m about to cum, Q!”

“Cum for me then,” he demanded.

There was a brief moment of silence before Saige released herself all over Q while simultaneously moaning and cursing loudly. That was only her third time squirting and Q seemed to enjoy it every time. Moments later, he was filling her up with his seeds.

“I love you, Quadir Romaine Burrus,” she kissed his lips after she caught her breath.

He smiled at her. “I love you more, Saige Luna Persaud. I’m not sleeping in this big ass wet spot though.”

“Nigga,” she laughed and rolled off his now limp penis. “Luckily for us, there’s five other bedrooms to sleep in. Pick one.”

She strutted inside the bathroom to clean up the mess that Qua had just made between her legs.

20

Quadir

“Bro, you’re not going to believe this shit!” Levi walked into Q’s office at the hospital, closing the door behind him.

Q looked up from his computer, surprised by the pop-up visit. Levi never visited him at work. “What’s going on?”

“Nico is dead,” Levi informed him, plopping down in a chair.

“What?” Q’s eyes swelled. “Domenico Sartori is dead?”

“Dead as a muthafuckin’ doorknob,” Levi confirmed as he nodded his head.

Quadir started grinning. “So, the plan worked?”

“Like a charm my boy,” Levi leaned forward and dapped him up.

When Levi and Quadir started talking about the fact that Luca believed that Nico was responsible for Carmine’s disappearance, they came up with a game plan. It only took them a few hours to work out the details. Levi knew a tech guy, Bobby, who could hack anything and make it look legit. Bobby was able to hack Nico’s phone, and using Carmine’s cell phone number, he “exchanged” a series of texts between the two brothers. Bobby made it look like Nico had followed Carmine to Virginia and they got into an argument via text. The last text that Bobby sent to Carmine’s phone

read: You're dead when I see you . Bobby then sent a screenshot of the text exchange from a fake number to Luca's phone.

Quadir and Levi had been patiently waiting to see what was going to happen. To hear that their plan actually worked was music to his ears. He didn't give a fuck about anyone with the last name Sartori, so there was no love loss on his end knowing that Nico was dead. It was all part of the game, in Q's mind. As long as he and his shorty could live in peace moving forward, that's the only thing that mattered to him.

"Damn, I was starting to get stressed for a minute."

Levi chuckled. "Shit, me too. Bobby knew what he was doing though, so we all good. You think Luca gon' reach out to you?"

"He really wouldn't have a need to," Q shrugged. "There's nothing I can do for his dead son."

"You got a point there," Levi looked around and inspected his office. "You know you a big muthafuckin' deal when you got a big ass office."

"Man, get the fuck on," Q laughed at Lee.

"I was kicking it with Ma Dukes the other day, and she was going on and on about Saige. Shit getting serious with y'all, huh?"

Levi regularly spent time with Angie just as much as Q did. Levi's mother died when he was ten years old, so his grandfather took him in because his father was nowhere to be found. Once Levi and Q became friends, Angie became like a mother to Levi. He held her in a high regard because she didn't have to look out for him the way that she did.

Q leaned back and smiled big just thinking about Saige. “Yeah man. I love the fuck out of her.”

“Awh yeah, she the one for you, my nigga. She got you out here smiling hard as fuck you tender dick muthafucka,” Levi roared with laughter. Even though he was making fun of him, Levi was genuinely happy for Qua.

“Fuck you, nigga,” Q laughed along with him.

“Dr. B?” Jackie knocked then opened the door. “Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t know you had a visitor.”

“It’s fine, Jack Jack, wassup?” He directed his attention to her.

“Dr. Flannigan is requesting a bedside consult with you. She’s in room eight with a ten-year-old patient,” Jackie informed him, briefly looking at Levi who was staring her down.

Qua nodded and stood up. “Tell her I’ll be right there.”

“Okay.”

“My nigga, who the fuck is that?” Levi questioned as soon as Jackie walked away.

“Hell nah, Levi! Jackie is my nurse, and she works with me. The last thing I need is yo crazy ass fuckin’ her mental up because that’s going to fuck her up here at work. I can’t have that. She’s too good at what she does,” he shook his head hard. “Fuck no.”

Levi sucked his teeth and stood up as well. “Grim, c’mon, it’s ya boy! If you think she’s on her A game now, just wait until she get a lil’ D from Levi in her life.”

“Fuck outta here, Lee,” Qua laughed and dapped him up.

They said their goodbyes then Q went to give Dr. Flannigan a hand. Once he was done with that, he checked the time and noted that it was time for him to leave. Changing back into his street clothes, he left the hospital quickly and headed over to Winston’s house.

Ever since Winston found out that Q was Kadeem’s son, he’d grown even more fond of Q. They’d been building their own bond along with Moon and Ramel. Hailey came across as stand-offish to Q, but he still made the effort to at least speak to her. He really didn’t give a fuck because any opp of Saige’s was an opp of his, but for the sake of Ramel, Q tried to play nice.

“What’s going on, doc?” Winston greeted, opening the door for him.

Q chuckled because no matter how many times he told Winston to call him Quadir, he still called him doc sometimes. “Not much. How are you?”

“I’m doing just fine,” he leaned towards the stairs. “Moon! Quadir is here!”

“Quadir!” Ramel came running from the living room with a smile.

Qua dapped him up. “Wassup, lil’ man? You feeling good?”

“Yup. And guess what?” He bubbled with excitement.

“What?”

“Kesha is my girlfriend now,” he gleamed proudly.

“Awh snap,” Q laughed and dapped him up. “That’s what I’m talking about big

dawg.”

“Don’t have kids,” Winston teased, playfully rolling his eyes. “This one right here is the reason I have gray hair,” he nodded at Moon as she came down the stairs.

Moon also jokingly rolled her eyes. “Oh, whatever daddy. Ramel and your wife are the reason for that. Ready, Quadir?”

“Yep,” he nodded and opened the front door. “I’ll see y’all later.”

He opened the passenger door for Moon, the same way he would for Saige. Since he’d been getting to know Moon, he wanted to treat her the way he wanted a young nigga to treat her. She had become like a little sister to him for real, so he wanted to make sure he treated her as such.

“When are you and Saige going to have a baby? I asked her last night, and she hung up on me,” Moon looked at him the second he pulled away from the curb.

Q almost choked on his spit then laughed. “Moon, you gotta chill. I want to marry her first. We’ll have babies when we’re ready.”

“That’s funny. I hope you’re ready now,” she stated, sitting back in her seat.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” It was his turn to look at her.

“Do you know why my mother named me Moon Stone, Quadir?” She met his gaze.

He shrugged slowly and focused on the road. “Because she had a thing for astrology and the universe?”

“No, it’s because she knew I’d be able to see into the future and sense things. I’m

very in tune with the Earth, and it never steers me wrong. Saige is pregnant.”

“Okay,” he chuckled then looked at her again and noticed how serious she looked.

“Did she tell you that?”

“My dreams and my gut told me, Quadir. I know you’ve taken her virginity because her whole demeanor is different. Saige and I are very close, so I just wouldn’t start dreaming about her being pregnant out of nowhere. It’s because she is ,” she reinforced without cracking a smile.

“Well, I think your sister would know if she’s pregnant, and she hasn’t mentioned anything to me.”

“No, she wouldn’t know. Qua, seriously, she was a 24-year-old virgin when you met her. Getting pregnant was never on her mind, so what makes you think she would know if she was or wasn’t?”

He remained silent because he was thinking hard about if he had noticed any changes in Saige. The longer he thought about it, he kept coming up with blanks. He knew he had been dumping off in her every time they fucked though. There was a possibility she could be pregnant, but she was showing no symptoms. With him being a doctor, he knew what to look for and Saige had been showing none of the typical signs of pregnancy.

“I’ll talk to her about it when I get home,” he told Moon just to satisfy her.

Moon nodded and they continued talking until they reached the Bayside Rec Center. Moon had organized an event for Qua to come and speak to kids from her high school about becoming a doctor. She thought it’d be good for her classmates to hear it from a young, black man’s perspective. She was shooting to become valedictorian of her class, and Q was down to help her in any way possible.

After spending over an hour talking to the students and answering questions, Q was ready to leave and get home to his woman.

“Ready?” Q asked Moon.

She pointed at a group of girls that were still hanging around. “We’re about to go and get pizza.”

“Your dad know that?” Q raised an overprotective eyebrow.

She laughed and rolled her eyes. “Yesss, Quadir. Call him and ask him, he’ll tell you.”

“Aight,” he chuckled. “You got money for pizza?”

She nodded her head. “Never leave home without it.”

He unlocked his phone and sent her one hundred dollars through Cash App anyway. “Just in case. And call me if you need me, Moon, for real.”

“I’ll be fine. I’ll hit the group chat once I’m home,” she quickly hugged him. “Thanks for supporting me today. It really means a lot.”

“Anytime,” he winked and turned to leave.

“Qua?” She called out.

He slightly turned and looked at her. “Yes?”

“I’m glad you and Saige found one another.”

“Me too, baby girl,” he smiled.

Exiting the building, he rushed to his car and got inside. It was the beginning of December and cold as fuck already. While waiting for his car to warm up, he realized that he hadn’t heard from Saige. Just as he went to tell his car to call her, a call came through from her.

“I was just about to call you,” he told her.

“Quadir,” her voice came through shakily.

He tensed up. “Baby, what’s the matter?”

“I shot them,” she said just above a whisper.

“Shot who?” He yelled without meaning to. The news of her shooting anyone really caught him off guard.

“L-Luca and another man. They approached me aggressively, and I got scared. Luca said he couldn’t be sure that Nico was the real reason Carmine was dead, so he had to tie up all possible loose ends. He was going to kill me and you next,” she cried.

“Fuck. Where you at, beautiful?”

“At the house.”

He was confused because he knew for a fact that Luca didn’t know about his second home. He always purchased shit in Levi’s name for that very reason. If anyone ever ran his name, they’d never be able to locate him.

“The new house?”

“No, the other one. I realized that I left some documents that I needed for work, so I came here, and they just came out of nowhere.”

Luca had access to that neighborhood because of Qua which was how he was able to get through the gate. Q knew he should've revoked Luca's access a long time ago, but he didn't want to raise any red flags.

“Damn. Okay. Just stay there, I'm on my way. I love you.”

“I love you too,” she responded then hung up.

Qua did eighty all the way home. All he wanted to do was get to Saige and make sure she was alright. As he approached his old home, he noticed the black Escalade parked on the street across from his house. He figured that was the car that Luca and whoever was with him had arrived in. Pulling into his wrap around driveway, he saw Luca and Gennaro laid out on the lawn. At that moment, he was thankful that that specific house was at the end of the street and there were no neighbors around to hear the shots.

“Baby,” Saige melted into his arms after he checked their pulse to make sure they were dead.

He could tell she was extremely shaken up as he hugged her tightly. “It's okay, bae. I'm gon' take care of this. You did what you had to do to protect yourself and me, and I'm proud of you.”

“I can't go to jail, Quadir,” she pulled away and looked at him.

“Have I ever been to jail? No. Have I ever killed a man? Yes, plenty. This...” he pointed at the two bodies. “Never happened, aight?” He took the gun she was still holding from her hands. “Go home. Take a long bubble bath. Drink a few glasses of

wine. Put on something sexy so when I get home, I can take it off of you,” he told her calmly.

“Where are you going?”

“I can’t just leave them laying out here,” he gestured to Luca and Gennaro.

“I want to go with you,” she told him with a straight face.

He shook his head. “No, Saige. I can’t have you wrapped up in anything else.”

“Quadir,” she pulled her loose curls up into a bun and looked him dead in the eyes. “I don’t care what you are talking about. I’m going with you and that’s the end of the story.”

After a brief stare off, Qua could see just how determined she really was. Deciding that it wasn’t worth the argument, he shrugged and gave in. He patted Luca and Gennaro down until he found the car keys that he was looking for.

“I’m going to drive their truck into the driveway, then we have to put their bodies inside. I’m going to leave first, and I want you to leave ten minutes after me, understand?”

She nodded. “Yes, baby.”

Nodding his head as well, he jogged down the driveway and hopped into the truck. Starting it up, he backed it into his driveway then popped the trunk. With the help of Saige, they got both bodies into the back of the truck. He texted Saige the address of where to meet him at, kissed her, and then left. Qua wasn’t feeling the fact that she was involved at all, but there was no turning back now.

Being sure to obey all traffic laws, he arrived at what he and Levi had called the burn pit forty minutes later after making a quick stop at a gas station. It was a deserted patch of land that they used to make niggas disappear for good. Since it was in the middle of nothing, no one ever called the cops to report the smoke. It was secluded, which was perfect for their needs. While waiting for Saige to show up, Q called Levi and filled him in on what happened.

“You done turned that girl from a nerd to a thug in a few damn months!” Levi joked like he always did.

“Ha ha nigga, you always got fuckin’ jokes. Did you not hear what I said? Yo plug is gone!”

“I ain’t trippin’. It ain’t shit for me to get another one, I know a few people that was trying to do business anyway.”

Q let out a sigh of relief. “Bet, bet. That was the only thing I was worried about.”

“Fuck them Italian muthafuckas. I can get money with anybody. Luca had us on a leash, remember? We been wanted to get away from his racist ass.”

“Yeah, you right,” he watched as Saige drove up and parked a few feet away from him. “Let me hit you back, she just pulled up.”

“Aye, tell Bonnie I said, ‘welcome to the family’,” he snickered.

Rolling his eyes, Q ended the call and hopped out. Q told her what they were going to do, and he noticed that she didn’t seem bothered in the slightest by it. Using the cans of gasoline he’d grabbed from the gas station, he started to pour the flammable liquid all over the car with Saige’s help.

“You sure you good?” He asked her after they finished dowsing the truck with gasoline.

“Quadir, once you told me who you really were when I was in the hospital, I had the opportunity to run, but I didn’t. I didn’t run then, and I’m not running now. This needs to be done so that we’ll be straight from here on out,” she stated calmly.

His dick twitched at her gangsta, bossy demeanor. Leaning over, he kissed her deeply. “I love you so much, Saige. I can’t wait to make you my fuckin’ wife.”

“I love you too, daddy,” she winked at him.

Leaving a trail of gasoline from Luca’s car to Saige’s car, Q threw the gas cans hard and they landed near the truck. Saige grabbed the lighter from his hand, kneeled, and flicked it until a flame jumped out. She stood back up and kept her eyes on the trail of fire as it spread quickly. He watched as she jumped slightly once the car caught fire and started exploding.

“Let’s go home, baby,” he grabbed her attention after a few more minutes.

With a smile on her face, she nodded and jumped back into the driver’s seat. Quadir knew he was going to have to keep an eye on her. Taking a life wasn’t easy, and yet she was acting like it was no big deal. Either she’d done it before, or she was just batshit crazy. Either way, she was his lady, and he was going to do everything in his power to make sure she was straight. Their bond was forever cemented now that they’d committed the ultimate act together.

21

Saige

“W hat the fuck!?” Saige whispered to herself after she finished throwing up.

Flushing the toilet, she stood up and stared at her reflection in the mirror. Honestly, she looked and felt like shit. She was one hundred percent sure that she was coming down with the flu or COVID or something because she wasn't feeling quite like herself. Initially, when she started throwing up a few weeks ago, she chalked it up to the fact that she'd taken two lives. Surprisingly though, she wasn't losing sleep behind killing muthafuckas who were trying to kill her. She just figured the sickness was some type of adverse reaction to killing two men. Weeks later, she wasn't so sure which was why she thought she'd caught something.

It was the night before Christmas, and she was going to be pissed if she had to spend Christmas day in bed. Ramel had been begging her for a new bike and of course, she'd gotten it for him. All she wanted to do was gift it to him and see his reaction, but she didn't want to risk spreading her sickness to everyone else. Gargling some Listerine, she spit it out and took a deep breath which just made her feel nauseous all over again.

“Bae, are you pregnant?” Qua asked her as she walked out of the bathroom.

She rolled her eyes hard and flopped face first into the bed. “Quadir, you can be anything in this world, so please...be fuckin' for real. Ain't nobody pregnant.”

“I don’t know, baby... when Moon said it a few weeks ago, I thought she was trippin’, but I’m seeing it now. You are moodier than usual, and you’ve been throwing up like crazy.”

“I’m throwing up because I have the flu or somethin’,” she whined, rolled over, and looked at him. “And why the fuck did Moon tell you that I was pregnant?”

“It slipped my mind because that was the same day Luca rolled up on you, but Moon said she had a gut feeling. I’m starting to think she was right. We don’t use condoms, and I never pull out,” he reminded her.

Saige shot straight up when she started realizing that two plus two was equaling four. Grabbing her phone from the nightstand, she opened the Flo app. Scrolling back, she realized she hadn’t logged in a period since the end of October.

“Ain’t no fuckin’ way,” she whispered as she stared at the app like something was going to change.

“What?” Q peeked at her phone. “What’s wrong?”

“I might really be pregnant.”

“I thought you’d say that,” he grinned and got out of the bed. He disappeared into the bathroom for a few seconds then came back with a pregnancy test. “I bought this just in case.”

Staring at him, she became overwhelmed with fear and started crying her eyes out. Rushing around to her side of the bed, Q pulled her into a hug and rocked her back and forth in an attempt to calm her down. Saige finally calmed down, went into the bathroom with Qua, and peed on the stick. They waited for the results in a thick silence. With every second that passed, Saige felt like the oxygen in the room was

running out.

“Gahdammit,” she hissed as she picked up the Clearblue Digital test that read positive

.

Qua took it from her hand as a wide smile spread across his face. “Damn baby. You having my baby.”

“H-how do you feel?” She looked up at him from her position on the toilet.

“Like I could kiss you a million times in one minute! I’m happy as fuck!” He exclaimed with joy.

She stood up and smiled back. “Yeah?”

“Yes, ma. I’ve never really wanted to have kids until I met you. You make everything in life worth having, including a family. I’m honored to be bringing a baby into the world with you,” he confessed with tears in his eyes.

“Babyyy,” she pouted and wiped the tears that escaped his eyes. She knew if he was crying then he felt strongly about them having a baby. “I’m so happy that I can make you happy. I love you.”

“I love you more, mama,” he hugged her tightly as the tears flowed freely down his face.

Saige was feeling a rush of emotions, but the one she felt the most was love. She was terrified as fuck to raise a child because she always feared that she would turn into her mother. She vowed at a young age to never treat any child the way her mom treated her, let alone her own child, but she was sure that she’d be a virgin forever. Never in a million years did she think that she would run into a nigga realer than

Quadir.

“Awh bae, I can’t believe I made you cry,” she giggled and let him go.

He wiped his eyes and sucked his teeth. “Saige, you can be anything in this world so be fuckin’ for real, ain’t nobody crying,” he threw her game back at her.

“Whatever!” She slapped his chest and laughed. She ran back into the bedroom, grabbed her phone, and then returned to the bathroom. “Hold up the pregnancy test, bae.”

“You trying to catch a nigga slipping on camera, awh hell nah,” he wiped his face a few more times before holding up the stick and smiling.

She snapped the picture. “Your eyes are still red as fuck, so I can still tell people that you cried,” she stuck her tongue out at him.

“We’re really going to have a little you or me. That shit is wild,” he looked at the pregnancy test again. “Thank you, Saige. I truly feel like my life didn’t start until you came in it.”

She started crying all over again after hearing him say that. “Qua! Oh my God.”

“I’m being for real, ma. No other woman got me crying in front of them and shit, so that should tell you everything you need to know,” he chuckled then kissed her. “So, thank you. You really gave me a second chance at life in more ways than one.”

“Well, I want to thank you . You have been the greatest gift from God that I didn’t even know I needed. The way you love and protect me shows me just how much you care. I never have to question where I stand with you, and I never want to do life with anyone besides you,” she told him while lovingly staring into his eyes.

“Are you about to propose?”

Saige doubled over in laughter at his goofy ass. “Shut yo ass up.”

“I’m just saying, bae. You know Chrissy proposed to Jimmy. I just wanted to make sure that’s not where this was about to go,” he continued joking.

“No! I’ll wait for you to do it,” she giggled and kissed him.

“Okay, good,” he picked her up and carried her back into the bedroom. Laying her on the bed, he lifted her nightgown up and kissed her belly repeatedly. “Wassup lil’ baby? This is your daddy. You’re going to be hearing my voice every day.”

“Q, the baby probably doesn’t even have ears yet,” she looked down at him.

He looked up at her and shrugged. “I don’t care. I want to talk to him or her every day.”

“Okay,” she giggled at him again.

Q resumed talking to her belly, and Saige thought it was the most adorable thing ever. She couldn’t help but to feel blessed that God had given her such a wonderful man to create life with. Every little thing that Qua did for her on a daily just reminded her how lucky she was to have him. There truly was no one else she pictured doing life with besides him.

A Year And A Half Later

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday dear Quinn, happy birthday to you!

“Now we gotta sing the black version,” Levi shouted with a laugh. “Haaaappyyyy birthday, happy birthday, c’mon y’all!”

Saige burst out into a fit of laughter along with everyone else. “Levi, stop it! Jackie, get yo man!”

Jackie threw her hands up in surrender with a laugh. “I just let him do him, girl!”

“Let me sing to my God daughter,” Levi took one-year-old Quinn from Saige’s arms and started singing the black version of the birthday song to her.

Quinn’s eyes lit up with excitement while Levi sung to her. One thing about Quinn, she loved the fuck out of Levi. It warmed Saige’s heart to see everyone in attendance for her and Quadir’s baby girl.

Quinn Stone Burrus came into the world on June 27th, just a week shy of her due date, and stole everybody’s heart. She was a tiny little thing, weighing just six pounds and two ounces at birth. Since then, she’d grown and changed so much that Saige could hardly believe her eyes some days.

Quadir felt the exact same way about his little princess. He didn't even know he could possibly love a human more than he loved Quinn who was the spitting image of him. All Saige did was carry his daughter, everything else about Quinn was all Quadir. From her lips to her eyebrows to her facial structure, Q couldn't even jokingly deny her if he wanted to.

"Yeah, get all your practice in now, my boy," Qua joked, rubbing Jackie's pregnant belly.

"You see what I'm doing here," Levi grinned, kissed Quinn's cheek, then passed her to Moon who was reaching for her.

"I hope y'all are ready for two of these little people running around y'all house," Angie looked at Qua while rubbing Saige's pregnant belly.

Qua nodded with a smile. "You know I can't wait."

Saige and Jackie were both coincidentally six months pregnant. Their due dates were two days apart, and Jackie was set to give birth to a baby girl while Saige was bringing their son into the world. Neither of them planned to get pregnant at the same time, it just happened, but they were both glad that they were going through the process together. Even though Saige had already been through it once, it was nice to have Jackie with her this go round.

When Levi and Jackie started dating a year ago, Quadir was pissed but Saige was happy. Since she didn't have any close girlfriends, she was hopeful that Levi would do right by her so that she could stick around. He'd done that and then some. Jackie was able to get Levi to settle down and even get out the streets. Quadir never thought he'd see the day that Levi Brown walked away from the street life. Knowing firsthand that it took a special kind of woman to do that, Qua knew that what Levi and Jack had was real. He was proud of his brother for doing right by Jackie, and he was even more proud when he proposed to her. Just like Levi was happy for Q, Q

was equally as happy for him.

“Just don’t pop out anymore anytime soon after y’all give birth to Junior, aight?” Moon butted in. “I am a struggling college student. I can’t afford to keep up with the demands of three children.”

“Girlllllll,” Saige rolled her eyes hard and waved her sister off. “ Nothing about you is a struggle. Your brother-in-law spoils the hell out of you and then some!”

“I know that’s right,” Moon stuck her tongue out and laughed while slapping high-fives with Quadir.

Moon had gone off to attend college at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. Following in Qua’s footsteps, she wanted to become a pediatric surgeon. She’d just completed her freshman year and was ready to tackle her sophomore year. Q promised her that as long as she stayed in school, then he would make sure that she wanted for nothing, and he’d kept to his word. He got her an off-campus apartment, bought her a car with the help of Winston, and made sure she kept money in the bank. It was all the things he wished he could’ve done with Nicole but never got the chance to. Q definitely had Moon spoiled rotten, but he had all the women in his life spoiled like that.

“Pop Pop! Up!” Quinn shouted, staring at Winston and stretching her arms towards him.

Just like the sucker that everybody else was for her, Winston did exactly what Quinn asked of him and picked her up. Saige giggled but she loved to see the interaction between her father and Quinn. It hurt her a little bit knowing that her mother wouldn’t get the same opportunity as her dad to be a grandparent. Celeste still hadn’t made amends with Saige, and Saige wasn’t going to force her to do so. The last time she’d spoken to her was the last time, and Celeste hadn’t reached out since. At first, it deeply bothered Saige but when she realized that her mom was the one missing out and not the other way around, she got over it.

Hailey still hadn't really come around to a relationship with Moon or Saige either, and they were both fine with that as well. Saige was surprised that Hailey had even sent a gift to Quinn for her birthday. Deep down, she felt like her dad bought it and said it was from Hailey, but she had no way to prove that.

"Okay, let's cut the cake," Saige yelled out because she was getting tired as hell.

After the cake was cut, Saige started wrapping the party up. Quadir took note of what she was doing and assisted her in getting the guests to start leaving their home. Their baby girl's first birthday turned out perfect, and they were glad they could celebrate it with the people that loved Quinn the most. Kadeem, Moon, and Ramel stayed behind to help them clean up the mess from the party which Saige was grateful for.

"Sissy, can I spend the night? I promise I'll be good, and I'll help you with Quinn," Ramel pitched after they were done cleaning.

She chuckled because she knew there was a reason he wanted to 'help' clean up. "Ask Qua. If he says yes, then it's a yes."

"Q, can I?" Melly looked at him with hopeful eyes.

"Of course you can stay lil' man," Q winked at him.

"Yes! Okay, I'm going to be in the game room for an hour. Saige, just come get me when it's time to put Quinn to bed, I will help you!" He said in a rushed tone before running upstairs.

Saige shook her head. "That's the only reason the boy comes over here."

"And to spend time with you," Q kissed her.

"Oh yeah, I meant to ask before I came, is it cool if I stay here too?" Moon cheesed

like a damn Goldfish snack.

“What is this, a hotel!?” Saige playfully rolled her eyes.

“You know you good over here, Moon,” Q confirmed.

“Great, I’ll just go get my bag out the car,” she laughed and dashed by them and out the door.

“Well, son,” Kadeem gripped Q’s shoulder. “This was a real nice party you and your wife put on today. I must say, I really enjoyed myself.”

Q nodded because even though he didn’t need it, he always appreciated his father’s approval. “Thanks, pop.”

“Yeah. I’m proud of you, Quadir. I don’t say it hardly enough, but you’ve done so well for yourself with your career and starting this beautiful family with his beautiful lady,” he winked at Saige. “Keep God first and keep on striving.”

“Yes sir,” Q nodded again with a smile. “I appreciate that.”

“Saige,” Kadeem turned his attention to her next. “Well, you already know how I feel about you, but I’m damn glad my son decided to marry you. You’ve been a great addition to the family, and you’ve given me the greatest title of all, which is grandpa . I love you, daughter in-law,” he kissed her forehead.

She smiled and hugged him. “Awh, thank you, Kadeem.”

“I guess I’ll get my old ass on home now,” he laughed.

Q, who was holding a half asleep Quinn in his arms, walked his dad to the door. As he let him out, Moon came back in with her stuff and dotted straight upstairs to a

guest room.

“Let me get her in the bath,” Saige reached for Quinn.

Qua swatted her hand away. “Go relax, baby. I got her.”

“Are you sure?” She raised an eyebrow because she knew he was just as tired as she was.

Earlier that day, he had to perform an emergency surgery and after that, he came home and helped her prepare for Quinn’s party. He gave her a look, so she threw her hands up and retreated to their bedroom. She took a quick shower, changed into a silk nightgown, and got in the bed. Turning the TV on, she started rubbing her feet together and put on Law&Order: SVU . It was her comfort show, plus she loved her some Olivia Benson.

“That girl fell asleep in the damn tub,” Qua told her, walking into the room and pulling his shirt off.

She licked her lips at the sight of her fine ass man. “Damn. She must’ve been tired as hell.”

“Yeah, I guess that party wore her ass out. Hopefully, she sleeps in in the morning. You’re off tomorrow, right?” He came out of his pants next.

“Yes,” she nodded.

“Cool. Maybe we can all go out to breakfast or something? I only have one patient tomorrow but that’s not until noon.”

“That sounds good. I’m sure Moon and Ramel will love that.”

“Aight,” he walked over to the bed and kissed her. “Let me go shower, then Ima come talk to my son.”

“Okay baby.”

Just like with her pregnancy with Quinn, Qua talked to Saige’s belly every night with their son. Watching him be a father attracted Saige to Quadir even more, which was exactly how she found herself pregnant again so soon. She didn’t care though. She would continue to pop out babies for Qua for as long as he treated her like the queen that she was. When she was pregnant with Quinn, Q offered her to be a stay-at-home mom.

While the offer was tempting, Saige just couldn’t quit her job. Even though it was stressful at times, she loved it, and she never pictured herself being a stay-at-home mom anyway. Qua made it perfectly clear to her that she could quit whenever she wanted, but she had no intention of doing so anytime soon.

Glancing down at her ring finger, Saige still couldn’t believe that she was married. Right before she found out she was pregnant with Quadir Junior, Qua proposed to her. Two months after she found out, they got married in a small ceremony at Botanical Gardens. Qua didn’t see the point in waiting to change her last name when both of their children carried it. There was no doubt in his mind that Saige was the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with.

Quadir was relieved that none of the Sartori’s deaths came back to bite him in the ass. With no bodies, it was pretty much like they vanished off the face of the Earth. For the first few months after he and Saige took care of Luca and Gennaro, he was on edge thinking someone was going to hunt them down. He wasn’t so much worried about himself but more about the safety of his lady and her family. Luckily, no one came snooping around which really made things easier for him.

With his life of crime behind him, he was able to focus on being a legit doctor. His

career had flourished even more, and he was well on his way to becoming the Chief Pediatric Surgeon at CHKD. He knew that meant more responsibility and probably less time in surgery, but he was up for the challenge. Every day, Saige prayed for him to get the position, so he knew it was coming. Saige seemed to have a direct line to God, so any prayer she spoke out loud seemed to happen in no time.

Quadir and Saige's love story was definitely one for the books, and neither of them would change a thing about it. Everything that happened between them happened for a reason. When Saige caught a body to protect him, there was no doubt in Quadir's mind that she was the one for him. Ironically enough, Saige felt the exact same way about him. Qua had taken a sweet and innocent good girl and turned her into a good girl who didn't take shit from anybody. Saige had taken a beast with player ways and turned him into a family man. They had made each other better in a lot of ways, and their love was only going to get better with time.